

***No. 46***

# *Living Water*

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## THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD — 2

Hagar, to whom God spoke but who was not profited by it

**“And Sarai said to Abram, My wrong be on thee! I have given my maidservant into thy bosom; and now she sees that she has conceived, I am lightly esteemed in her eyes. Jehovah judge between me and thee! And Abram said to Sarai, Behold, thy maidservant is in thy hand: do to her what is good in thine eyes. And Sarai oppressed her; and she fled from her face.**

**“And the Angel of Jehovah found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai’s maidservant, whence comest thou? and whither art thou going? And she said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the Angel of Jehovah said to her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.**

**“And the Angel of Jehovah said to her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the Angel of Jehovah said to her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah hath hearkened to thy affliction. And he will be a wild-ass of a man, his hand against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell before the face of all his brethren. And she called the name of Jehovah who spoke to her, Thou art the God who reveals himself, for she said, Also here have I seen after he has revealed himself. Therefore the well was named Beer-lahai-roi: behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.” (Genesis 16:5-14)**

Earlier in the book of Genesis we read about Abraham who was marked out in the epistle to the Romans as a man of faith and commended for his faith. As it says in the previous chapter here, “And he believed Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness”. But in this chapter, which is faithfully recorded in scripture, something has gone sadly wrong. There is something wrong with Abraham and with Sarah and with her maidservant, Hagar. If God had promised Abraham a son, he and Sarah did not need to despair and start looking for other ways of bringing that about. Their need was to depend on God and wait. I say this as having no more patience myself than any one else apart from the grace of God. Waiting patiently day after day is not easy. But that was what Abraham was called upon to do if he believed God. And God had already counted him righteous on that account.

Sarah, of course, sets the idea forward of bringing this Egyptian maidservant into the family, as we might say. I do not say anything about the kind of

relationships that are implied here. They are not a model for us. The arrangement leads Hagar to feel that she has now got the best of her mistress. It says, “her mistress was lightly esteemed in her eyes”. That is not a good sign either. So we have three people who are not, for the moment, going on well at all. I can say immediately, however, that Abraham and Sarah soon came to something in their souls and they are found in scripture in the line of faith.

Hagar is a different case. Here she is running away as a young woman without any knowledge of God, and just feeling pressure. She has boasted and she is having to pay the price of her boasting. It is as she is running away that God speaks to her. An angel of Jehovah found her. He has something to say to her. ‘Where have you come from? Where are you going?’

It does not look as if she knew where she was going. She just says, ‘I am running away’. The angel of Jehovah gave her a word of counsel, “Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands”. It is an old saying, that the point of departure has to be the point of recovery. She needed to get back. If you are on a wrong course, hard as it may be, the best thing is to get back.

Then God speaks to her with a promise. It is a promise rather like the one that is made to Abraham, but different. “I will multiply thy seed exceedingly”. Great numbers are to come out from Hagar but this is not to be a happy family. He will be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man’s hand against him. Plenty of people in the world are like that. The way to be saved from it is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. He can make sure for you that you are not a wild ass, under no control. It is a sad thing, too, if your hand is against everyone else. It is a sad history, the history of Ishmael: it goes on to this day.

It is at that point that Hagar realises that God has spoken to her. She says, “Thou art the God who reveals himself”. Then she gives this place a name. She names it after the fact that God saw her there and made Himself known there, “the well was named Beer-lahai-roi”, the ‘well of the Living who was seen’.

So Hagar went back and had a child, Ishmael. Then the child that Abraham and Sarah were really looking for and were meant by God to look for, Isaac, was born. There came a day when Isaac was weaned. What Ishmael did then showed for the first time the truth of this verse. He started to mock; he ridiculed the rightful heir. So he was put out. Then came about the day for him to get married and have a wife. It says of Hagar that, “his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt”. So here, sad to say, is someone to whom God spoke, to whom God made Himself known, made His mercy known, and she was none the better for it. Yes, she may have gone back to her mistress, but her spirit was not

changed by having to do with God, or by God having to do with her. If there is one thing that is vital it is that in having anything to do with God, that what He is, and His nature, should affect us and we should come to know Him for ourselves and be formed by what we know.

*David Burr*

*Part 2 of an address at Croydon, July 2000*

*In the next issue DV: "God made known through our Lord Jesus Christ"*

## **THE HOLY ONE, THE HOLY BRETHREN, AND THE HOLY MYRIADS**

John 6:66 – 71

Colossians 1:1 – 8

Jude :14 & 15

I desire to say a word as to the Holy One, the holy brethren and the holy myriads. It is right to begin with the One who is perfect, the Lord Jesus. No other could bear the unique and distinctive title of the Holy One.

John 6 is a wonderful passage for contemplation, where the Lord is seen as the great giver of food and the world of hunger is met by Him. He speaks firstly about the bread which comes down out of heaven, then His flesh which He gives for the life of the world, and finally the importance of eating in relation to His death. "Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves" (v. 53). That is a solemn word for us all to take account of, that unless we are feeding now on the death of Christ in its separating character from all that is around, we shall descend into lifelessness and be marked by spiritual death.

You will remember that the Lord rebuked one of the assemblies in Revelation. When He addressed Sardis He says, "thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1). We are living in the time of Sardis, one of the four churches that go on to the end of the dispensation.

It is salutary for us to go over the Lord's addresses to those seven assemblies and see how the Lord views them all. He has not surrendered His rights in christendom. It bears His name and He will assert His rights finally. That is why it will come under such intense judgment in the day to come after the true church is gone. He will deal with that which professes His name and how terrible will be its end.

We are in the midst of it and we can see the trend so rapidly developing. Some of those who profess the name of Christ are allying themselves with government in its promotion of what is desperately wicked and an abomination before God. I think we need to be alerted as to the seriousness of the day in which we are when behaviour which scripture speaks of as an abomination is being publicly promoted and we need to pray about it.

We pray for government that it might restrain evil but there are those in government who are bent on promoting evil and imposing it on the populace. These things God takes account of also. The end of it is portrayed for us in the two cities lying under judgment (2 Peter 2:6). Jude also speaks of them as a demonstration of what God feels about it. Oh, we need to feel the same as God.

In John 6 the Lord brought out wonderful truth. He did not modify it because His audience did not agree with it. It says, "Many therefore of his disciples having heard it said, This word is hard; who can hear it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmur concerning this, said to them, Does this offend you? If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before? It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing." The Lord was not accommodating His word to His audience; He was the Holy One.

He desired to carry His hearers along with Him but, alas, they said, "It is hard". "From that time many of his disciples went away back". You will notice the Spirit of God puts that little word in. He could have said they just went away but it says that they went away "back". That is a solemn word for each one of us, the speaker included, to take account of today. If I go away, which way am I going? Alas, so many have gone away back. They have surrendered the precious truth which they may have been brought up in, or have come into, at least by way of profession. We need, dear brethren, to cling on to the precious things that God has given. May we be faithful in relation to the good deposit entrusted. (1 Timothy 6:20, 21).

Paul saw a time of going back in his day. He was in prison, unable to move about to minister to the saints, but he had in Timothy a young man that he could trust. He says, 'You keep the good deposit, keep it, do not let it go'. Think of what a depository Timothy was of Paul's ministry, how he had listened to him as he opened out the wonderful counsels of God.

Some of us have listened to wonderful truth and can recall a time when it was ministered in great power. Is it to be surrendered? Are we going to surrender it and go back? Oh, may we have revival in our day. Let us see that we continue in the things which God has brought to us.

So the Lord brings a challenge here to the twelve. “Jesus therefore said to the twelve, Will ye also go away?” What a test that was. Did not the Lord feel it? Of course He did. His path was onward. If we were to be blest and saved, if the glad tidings of God’s grace were to reach men, He could not turn back. He had to go all the way to Calvary’s cross.

Oh, the depths of agony, sorrow and anguish that filled His holy soul in the garden of Gethsemane, and then on to that shameful cross. What an appeal that should be to our own affections, that He has surrendered all for us. He gave up His precious life, a life that was holy and precious in the eye of God. He gave it up that we may come into blessing. Is He not then worthy of our committal?

So “Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?” (It has often been pointed out that he speaks of a Person, not a position.) Then Peter says, “thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God”. What an experience Peter had of the speaking of the Lord. He realised he was in the presence of One who was intrinsically holy. He was the Holy One of God.

Peter had listened to “words of life eternal”. The Lord did not teach like the ecclesiastics who were around Him. Elsewhere it says, “His word was with authority” (Luke 4:32). The Lord Jesus in His teaching was teaching as One from God and that is the kind of teaching that we desire to sit under in our present day; as Peter says, “If any one speak—as oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

May He therefore be before us in all His distinctive uniqueness as the Holy One.

What I would look for in any company of believers is that Christ might be exalted, not man. For ten years I followed a system of teaching in which man was exalted. I say that to my shame. I am thankful for the grace of God that delivered me from it. I do not desire to go into anything of that kind ever again. May God preserve us all from it, that Christ, and Christ alone, may be before us.

I think that word of the servant of old (a type of the Spirit) in Genesis 24 is to be precious to our hearts: “that is my master” (Genesis 24:65). That is what the Holy Spirit would say as we come together on every occasion. It is to quicken the affections and draw them out to Christ and has its own sanctifying effect upon our hearts that we may be preserved.

The path of decline is so easy to follow. We drop one thing and then we drop another and we think there is no harm in it but it detracts from Christ and from His glory. Hence the power of the word has less effect upon us and finally we are immersed in the world that is around us and its activities. May we be kept



from it. The Lord is looking for a sanctified company, those who are committed to His interests.

That is why I read in Colossians. Paul writes from prison to a company in a place, as he might speak to brethren here in Yeovil today, or elsewhere. “Holy and faithful brethren in Christ which are in Colosse”. What tribute that was to those dear saints. They had been delivered from idolatry and its corrupting influences and they were set for the interests of Christ. They were not taken up just with themselves; Paul speaks of the love that they had for all the saints. In our day there may be just a few available to us, to walk together, yet how wonderful that is when we take account of the many different personalities. Perhaps some of us are very awkward and difficult but the grace of God would subdue us and set us together in relation to the truth which is far better than being occupied with our shortcomings.

The saints in Colosse were together as holy and faithful brethren but there was a danger sign. Paul was anxious about them. He says, “See that there be no one who shall lead you away as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit” (Colossians 2:8). There is a danger today of being led astray into the world, maybe not the wicked world, the corrupt world, but the religious world. The believer names the name of the Lord and he departs from iniquity. That is a divine provision for the present day because of the confusion that surrounds us. We by profession have taken that path together. Therefore let us walk in it in grace and consideration one for another but let us not deviate from it. Then we shall find the truth and the blessedness of these heavenly things being enjoyed. Paul was able to open to these beloved Colossian brethren something of the purpose of God, perhaps not in its full light (we have to go to Ephesians for that) but nevertheless there is a great deal unfolded in this letter, particularly as to the glory of the Person of Christ.

(There are three major passages of scripture that all of us could well read to apprehend the glory of Christ: Colossians 1, Hebrews 1 and John 1. I would commend them to you, particularly to young believers here, read them and remember them. Use your time to read all the scriptures and you will remember them the better.)

Well now, these dear saints were in a locality. What would the Lord say about our local meetings? Could He say, “holy and faithful brethren in Christ”? We would love to hear His word, not what I would say, but what He would say.

The Lord stood in Revelation 1 clothed with a garment reaching to the feet and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle and with eyes as a flame of fire. How terrifying it was for John to look upon Him. The Lord was looking at His

assemblies; He was looking at His church and He reviewed them one by one. He gave credit where He could and then He pointed out what was wrong that they might repent.

He would do this now; as we listen to His voice of admonition we shall be found able to answer to His mind. In every one of those assemblies in the Revelation you will find there is an overcomer mentioned. Even in that sad locality of Laodicea you have the appeal to the overcomer and a wonderful promise made to him. He says, "if any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me. He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:20, 21). What a prospect! What an impetus He gives us to go on and preserve the things that are precious to His heart.

However small a gathering may be, it is very precious in the eye of heaven and the Lord would encourage us to enter into the wonderful character of divine things that He unfolds. Let us see that we are not led astray, that we do not follow philosophy, vain deceit and persons who are not governed by the truth that is conveyed in the Holy Scriptures, which is for our guidance and protection.

Now, finally, in Jude. This is a wonderful epistle. Jude does not waste any words but how much ground he covers. He wrote to the brethren to stir them up in relation to their most holy faith. He wanted to write to them about their common salvation but he says, "I have been obliged to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints".

We are in a difficult day. I think we should wake up to the fact that it is a critical time and we need to be suitably alerted as to the great issues that are at stake. We need spiritual skill that by the scriptures we may meet all opposition.

Christendom has not improved but rather it has got worse with the things it has allowed. Also there is that great system of Rome, spreading its tentacles everywhere, the great false system that is spoken of so forcibly in Revelation 17 and 18, where its overthrow is recorded. She says, "I sit a queen, and I am not a widow". That is no position for a believer to be in. So the Spirit's cry comes there, "Come out of her, my people, that ye have not fellowship in her sins" (Revelation 18:4). Oh, come out. Have you been defiled by religious associations? Come out, come out from that which is heading to judgment and the most severe judgment of all. These two chapters in the Revelation are devoted to the destruction of Babylon. We need to think seriously about these things.

Jude speaks here of Enoch and his prophecy which was hidden for thousands of years but comes to light at the end of the scriptures. Jude records the conditions

of wickedness that existed, the moral conditions of Sodom and Gomorrah. They lay there as an example undergoing the judgment of eternal fire (v. 7). Then he says, “And Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied also as to these, Behold, the Lord has come amidst his holy myriads”. As far as we know Enoch did not have any company but he walked amidst a wicked and defiling world. It says, “he has the testimony that he had pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5). He walked with God three hundred years and then it says, “he was not”. Suddenly he disappeared. We do not know what the next door neighbours thought! I do not know what they will think when we disappear, when the church is raptured. That is what will happen. Enoch is a figure of the catching up of the church by the Lord.

Here he is speaking a prophetic word. He prophesied that the Lord is coming amidst His holy myriads. Oh, what a time of vindication that will be. Not a few scattered saints but holy myriads that have been redeemed through the precious blood of Christ.

The Lord will come to execute judgment against all. He will come with kingly power and dominion to put down everything that is opposed to Him. Do you love that day? I love to think of the Lord coming as the mighty Victor as seen in Revelation 19, wielding a sharp two-edged sword in view of the subjugation of all and the putting away of all that is opposed to Him.

Let us have that day before us. That is the way in which we can be sanctified, kept from this present scene and kept from the Laodicean conditions that are around us. May we have the Lord’s appearing before us. We assemble tomorrow to remember Him in the breaking of bread, to remember Him in relation to His pathway of love and devotion and the way in which He has made us His own, but also to announce the Lord’s death until He come. We are a testimony here to the present world and a testimony to its final overthrow. We announce the Lord’s death until He come.

May we be kept in relation to it, kept in holiness and in faithfulness until the day He comes to call us to Himself, for His name’s sake.

*David Bond,*

*An address at Yeovil, April 2000.*

## THE RESOURCE BELIEVERS HAVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

**“But when he is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”.** John 16:13-14

What a resource we have in the Spirit. “When he is come”, it says, “the Spirit of truth”. These words were uttered by Christ on the last night He had with His own before His crucifixion. How much He put into that night in precious teaching! He felt it that He was leaving them but, as going away, He would leave them with a sense that they were not to be alone. He was going to leave them with a resource that would stand them in good stead in the difficult times ahead. What resource is this? The resource that lies in the Spirit of God. I wonder if we fully value this resource that is resident in our hearts. It is nothing less than God taking up His presence with believers in the time of the absence of Christ.

The Lord says, “when he is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth”. I love to think of the guiding service of the Spirit. It is a gentle service, a little at a time, just guiding us towards the heavenly objective. The Ethiopian eunuch looked for someone to guide him (See Acts 8:31). Without the Guide the Scriptures would be a darkened page. The Spirit of truth (over against all that is untrue and false in the world and in Christendom) would guide into all the truth. He does not speak from Himself but as in direct contact with the source in heaven what He hears He speaks and announces what is coming. There is a two-fold service of the Spirit in John’s gospel. Chapter 14 gives you the look back — He brings things to our remembrance. Then in Chapter 16 He announces what is coming.

Then we read, “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”. For 2000 years the Spirit of God has been glorifying Christ. He has been magnifying one blessed Man. The church’s journey here is almost completed now. His service here with the church will soon be over but it will continue until the rapture. Let us make more use of the Spirit as He continues to glorify Christ.

How lovely the conversation must have been between Rebecca and Abraham’s servant during the journey we read of in Genesis 24. Then there comes the moment when she says, “Who is the man, walking in the fields to meet us?”

The servant's final recorded words are, "That is my master". Soon we are going to be with Christ in glory and we shall delight to sing and celebrate the victory of Christ. But I think that when He presents the church to Himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things, we shall also celebrate the victory of the Spirit of God. What a victory! What a triumph! And the end result? Christ and His bride! Love's story fulfilled in the presence of Christ Himself!

*Alex Mowat*

*Extract from an address at Peterhead, 16th September 2000.*

## **O LOVE, THAT WILL NOT LET ME GO**

O love, that will not let me go;  
I rest my weary soul in Thee;  
I give Thee back the life I owe,  
That in Thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

O Light, that followest all my way,  
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;  
I give Thee back my borrowed ray,  
That in Thy sunshine's blaze, its day  
May brighter, fairer be.

O joy, that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to Thee;  
I trace the rainbow in the rain  
And know the promise is not vain,  
That morn shall tearless be.

O Love, that lifteth up my head,  
I dare not ask to flee from Thee;  
I lay in dust, life's glory dead  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.

*George Matheson*

## THE VOICE OF THE PILLAR OF CLOUD

Lead, light divine, amid the encircling gloom—  
    Lead, Thou me on;  
The night is dark and I am far from home,  
    Lead, Thou me on.  
Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see  
The distant path, one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou  
    Shouldst lead me on,  
I loved to choose and seek my path; but now  
    Lead Thou me on.  
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears  
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

Thus far Thy power hath blessed me, and it still  
    Will lead me on,  
O'er moor and fen, and crag and torrent till  
    The night is gone.  
And with the morn the everlasting joy,  
Which led me on, is mine without alloy.

*John Henry Newman*  
(As adapted by J. N. Darby.)

**“BLESSED IS HE... WHOSE HOPE IS IN THE LORD HIS  
GOD”**

(Psalm 146:5)

Sometimes most trivial things in life  
Our wily foe employs,  
To clog our soul with care and strife  
And rob us of our joys.

If wounded by his fiery darts  
Or hurt by lesser foes,  
Let this request rise in our hearts  
To Him, who loves and knows:

‘Lord draw me closer to Thy side,  
My drooping spirit raise;  
In Thy love help me to confide,  
And fill me with Thy praise.’

When tried and tempted, let me turn  
Away from all but Thee;  
And on Thy faithful bosom learn  
How much, Lord, Thou canst be.

Thy love is mine, whate’er may cause  
One sorrow here for me;  
So may I welcome all that draws,  
Or drives me, nearer Thee.

*A. G. Bedford*

## OIL & WATER DON'T MIX

I came to the Lord when I was seventeen. I had been meeting William, the boyfriend I later married, for some weeks. Our relationship had begun when he had come on the bus with me when I was going to see a film. He had asked me to go out with him and I had agreed.

I did not know that my boyfriend was a christian. He never said anything about it until one night when we were just getting near to my house in Willesden, north London, he suddenly said, "Oil and water don't mix". I was taken by surprise. I said, "What do you say that for?" I was even more surprised by his answer, because he said somewhat shyly and hesitantly, "Well, I am a believer in the Lord Jesus and I cannot continue this friendship with you any longer unless I know that you are a believer too".

Needless to say, I was somewhat shattered! I replied, "What do you mean? I go to church occasionally and I have been to the Mission Hall at the bottom of our road once or twice."

"Oh, no. It's not like that at all", William responded. "I was hoping that you would say that you were a believer. I had better tell you about it". William told me about Jesus coming to this world to save sinners. I found it somewhat mysterious. I had always regarded the account of what Jesus did as something historical but here was someone telling me that it was important and that I needed to know about it! He said, "If you are not the Lord's you can easily speak to Him. It is very simple to trust Him and to be saved."

William went on to tell me that the Lord Jesus was coming again to call all those who trusted in Him to be with Him for ever. "I will go then, and if you are not His you will be left behind", he said. I got a bit tearful over this and yet through this strange yet deeply sincere testimony the Holy Spirit was beginning to cause my heart to be stirred.

I just wanted to be alone. I said, "I think that you had better leave me". I dashed into the house, anxious to find some place where I could just be on my own. In our tiny, rather overcrowded home the only place way I could be sure of not being disturbed was to lock myself in the toilet! There and then I prayed to the Lord asking Him to receive me. I felt so wonderful after that prayer! I knew that the Lord had heard me.



I wanted to tell William and hurried to the front door to see if he was still there. He was waiting for me and as soon as he saw me he said, “You don’t have to tell me, I can see by your face that you belong to Jesus”.

There have been many things which have entered into my life since then. There have been happy times and trying times. I married William but he was taken to be with the Lord when he was only fifty-five. Through many varied experiences I have proved how caring, faithful and loving the Lord Jesus is. Down all the years I have never forgotten the moment when I first asked Christ to come into my life, and I have never regretted doing so. In all the years the promise of Christ’s return (which so upset me when I first heard about it that night outside my house) has become a brighter and more real hope.

‘With mercy and with judgment  
My web of time He wove,  
And aye the dews of sorrow  
Were lusted with His love.  
I’ll bless the hand that guided,  
I’ll bless the heart that planned,  
Where Christ in glory dwelleth  
In the heavenly land.’

*Eileen Whiley*

## **FOLLOWERS OF JESUS**

### **Following with the Flock**

#### **John 10:3-5**

The Lord said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). In the first nine chapters of John the work of God is seen proceeding and developing. Individuals are brought forward to illustrate certain stages of the work in souls. In our spiritual history it is intended that we should step into the blessing indicated in these individuals; in other words, that each should:

- receive the blessing Nicodemus gained in his interview with Jesus;
- receive the living water which the woman of Samaria was given;

be empowered to walk as was the paralytic man in chapter 5; and, as the man in chapter 9, each should have his eyes opened, and be developed until he becomes a worshipper of the Son of God.

Then in chapter 10 the Lord begins to speak of His own collectively, as a flock, or a company, and He talks about leading them and of their hearing His voice.

This brings us to this very interesting point: as a follower of the Lord Jesus, you will not be called upon to follow alone. The Shepherd will lead you to the flock. You will find He has His objective in mind as well as you having yours. As the bride says in Song of Songs 1:7, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Ah! she was learning the lesson. She had just said, "Draw me, we will run after thee" ; now she says, There is only one place in which I can be found - by the flock! A lonely sheep is a sick sheep and resourceless. The only safe place for a sheep is to keep with the flock. We need to follow our Shepherd by the footsteps of His flock, not that of any other.

It is not an individual path in which the Lord would lead you as the Shepherd. Each has his own personal path to tread, we know, but what is involved in this thought of following is that, under His leading, you find yourself with the flock.

Has everyone here experienced what it is to come in this way under the leading, shepherding and feeding of Christ, under the care which He exercises towards the flock? Are you following where He leads? How we need His Shepherd care! We are not wise enough, either individually or collectively, to get on without the service of the Shepherd. The whole secret of getting the gain of His shepherd care lies in following.

We should appreciate this much better if we understood the conditions in the East where the sheep are absolutely dependent upon the shepherd's leading to find their food in a land where there are no fields, only patches of grass here and there. We do well to recognise that despite all the wealth of ministry which is being given, with the Scriptures in our hands, and all the privileges which are available to us, we still need to come under the shepherd care of Christ to find the pastures of spiritual food and to be kept together. What power there is with Him to hold us together! He says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of

this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd”. The Shepherd is the point of attraction: He holds the sheep together.

The power of the Shepherd to hold the sheep individually and collectively makes unnecessary the use of humanly devised means to hold together persons who are following Jesus in the path where He leads. The Lord has raised up leaders certainly and we thank God for them! We should remember our leaders and follow their faith but the Lord Jesus Himself is the Shepherd of the sheep and He is the One we follow. So He takes us in chapter 10 from the individual into the collective thought. He says not only, “I know my sheep”, but He speaks of the one flock that we might each know consciously our part in it, proving all that the Shepherd can be to that flock collectively.

*F. S. Marsh*

*In the next issue DV “Following in Service”.*

## **CHRISTIAN HABITS**

### **The Habit of Holy Conversation**

Colossians chapter 3 says, “Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God”. Malachi says, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another”. That is a very important and helpful Christian habit — that habit of those that feared the Lord. You may be sure that they spoke of what pertained to the Lord’s interests. So that there is not only personal meditation and personal prayer but how much help we can get from conversation with each other - holy conversation.

How often we get help in our places of business through meeting another christian; we may be working with worldly people and we meet a believer and say a few words about the Lord. Or at other times we are engaged in holy conversation, speaking to one another about the Lord’s interests, and we get encouraged and cheered and helped. The Lord Himself did not live the life of a hermit but He gathered round Himself those to whom He refers in the psalms as the saints, the excellent in the earth, (Psalm 16: 3). He found them often of little understanding; still He spoke with them and they went wherever He went. It must have been a very remarkable sight to see the Lord passing through

Palestine on foot, accompanied by a number of people. There were the twelve and there were the women who ministered to Him of their substance, quite a distinct gathering of people, and the Lord went with them and spoke to them. He was a great Teacher; still He spoke with them; they were His; He loved them despite their faults, despite their bluntness and their stupidity. I find it difficult to think of anything more wonderful than the Son of God, the Lord of glory, leaving the angelic hosts of heaven and being found down here, passing His life in obscurity with a few humble folk, going about with the fulness of divine love in His heart, and conversing with them on such wonderful, intimate terms.

Is it not a wonderful thought that He, the Lord of glory, One of the three Persons of the Godhead, should come down here and go about with these humble men and women, receiving of their sustenance, taking what they had to give Him, accepting even a garment woven from top throughout from them, when, had He asserted His rights, He could have commanded legions of angels! But He accepts this lowly place and engages with His disciples in holy conversations, some of which we have a record in the Bible. He instructs them, He hears and answers their questions — some of them, no doubt, we should think unintelligent. But there He was treading this lowly path and engaging in pure, wonderful conversation!

You remember on one occasion how their hearts burned within them as He talked with them by the way and while He opened to them the Scriptures (Luke 24: 32). He was heavenly in His thoughts, heavenly in His character, and heavenly in His conversation. That is an important habit for us. I find myself deficient in it; that is one of the reasons why I am speaking of it. I find myself deficient in this habit of engaging in holy conversation about the things of God. Perhaps you say you find it difficult to speak to others about the Lord's things; well, I would say, break the ice and begin, because the habit formed grows and it becomes easier as you go on.

*Dr. C. C. Elliott*

*In the next issue DV "The Habit of Praise"*

## HAPPINESS

**“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile ... Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.”**

Psalm 32: 1-2, 10-11.

I want to speak about happiness. The first word of the Psalm we read is “blessed”, which simply means “happy”. I desire to show the way to happiness and where it is to be found. Many people long for happiness but, alas, comparatively few find it. The blessing (or happiness) that this Psalm speaks of is not something remote and elusive but real and lasting and is within the reach of everyone here this evening.

I suppose there are many here who have long sought this happiness, looking for it in this city, may be in social circles or places of entertainment or even in religious circles, and have not found it. Many seem to think that happiness is secured by money but it certainly will not buy it for you.

In whatever circle or sphere in this world in which you have been searching for happiness, you have been looking in the wrong place. Real, substantial, lasting happiness is the thought of God. God says, in the prophet Isaiah, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8, 9). In the light of that scripture it is evident you are wasting your time looking in circles where man’s thoughts are dominant and where God is excluded, for how can you expect to find God’s thoughts there? How active the devil is in filling up our time, with the object of excluding the thoughts of God from our minds! God in His goodness has brought us here this evening that we may for a brief time be occupied with His thoughts.

Now happiness is a characteristic of God Himself. The apostle Paul writes to Timothy of the “glorious gospel of the blessed God”. What a wonderful expression but who can tell the volumes of meaning behind the glorious gospel of the happy God? It means that God is so happy that He wants us to be happy, too! God is inviting each of us to join Him in His happiness. Can you think of anything more amazing than that? God who has brought into existence

this marvellous universe, who said, Let there be light, and light was! How amazing, dear friends, that God invites you to share His happiness!

We read in the first chapter of the Bible that, “God created man in his own image... And God blessed them”. So, at the beginning of the Bible God shows us clearly His desire to bless. God has not changed. His desires and thoughts of blessing are the same now as they were then. God wants you to be happy. I want to point out a few sign-posts on this road to happiness. Surely, if it is God’s thought and characteristic of Him, we need to follow the way God has taken.

We are told that God planted a garden in Eden and put there the man whom He had formed, and blessed him. A garden suggests a place of liberty, pleasure, and happiness. Think of God planning and planting a garden! When we want a delightful garden we may employ a skilled gardener. God so set His heart and mind upon this that He did it Himself! He did not entrust it to Adam. God Himself plants the garden, then in this enclosure He places the trees, plants, and herbs; they are all His own handiwork.

I ask you to think for a moment of these plants, herbs, and trees. Those who are fond of gardening say that the more you study plant life the more wonderful it appears. These plants, herbs and trees are the handiwork of God and the expression of the thoughts of God and are put into that garden. God plants the garden and does everything in relation to it, suggesting to us how much it is to Him.

Tonight God is wanting to put you into such a sphere, to draw us right into His most wonderful thoughts. God is inviting you to have a part in that in which He finds His happiness. For we read that God came down into that garden; “they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day”. The happy God comes down into His enclosure to find His happiness, longing for His creature man to join Him in His happiness.

What happened? It says that Adam and Eve “heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” God, having set His heart upon getting happiness from that garden, to enjoy it with man, what grief it was to Him that man hid from Him! Think of having

been set there in ideal circumstances amidst the expression of God's own thoughts; it is there man is hiding from the God who has been so good to him.

Is there anyone here tonight hiding from God? Where are you hiding? Are you hiding in your business, in your studies, in your circumstances, excluding from your mind the thoughts of God? God would say to you, 'Where are you?' He wants you. Man was hiding because instead of pleasing God he had pleased himself. He listened to the enemy of God and he disobeyed God who had set him there, the God who showered blessing upon him, the God who wanted to make him happy. How it grieves the heart of God to think that you are hiding from Him! He wants you near to Him.

So God had to deal with this man. Scripture says, "the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat ... And the Lord God said ... unto the woman ... I will greatly multiply thy sorrow." Here we have the contrast to happiness. God's thought for you is happiness but as the Psalm says, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked". That is the portion of the wicked but God's portion for you now is happiness. Then God speaks to the man and says, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." Think of the feelings of the heart of God who, after having come down to share happiness with man, has to drive man out of the garden.

It does not stop there, for in the Bible we read how this act of disobedience had grown to alarming proportions. In Genesis 6 it says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

Dear friends, what is the hindrance to your happiness? Why is it you have not found it? The answer is 'Sin!' Scripture tells us that "sin is lawlessness," and that "all unrighteousness is sin". God tells us that all have sinned. So, dear friends, instead of there being that which was conducive to the happiness of God and man, there was that which brought in sorrow. Is God thwarted? No! God is not giving up His thought of happiness! How then is this great problem of sin to be solved? Sorrow is the fruit of sin. God's heart is grieved and man is labouring under sorrow. What is to be done?

God is not to be thwarted, but who can solve this great sin problem? Can I? No! It takes me all my time to look after myself; how can I touch a problem of such proportions? There was never a greater or more serious problem in God's universe than this great problem of sin. So God Himself takes up this question of sin and solves the great obstacle to His happiness and ours.

God does not settle this question of sin theoretically. If God had proceeded in that way I know my heart well enough to know that I should say, 'Where is the evidence that it was settled? How do I know it is solved and settled once for all and that it will never come up again? I want some proof that this matter which is a hindrance to my happiness and to the happiness of God, is settled once and for all'.

We read in 2 Corinthians 5: 21 that God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". Now God has taken this most amazing way of solving this problem of sin. He has dealt with it in Christ whom He made the thing itself! What an amazing solution to this problem! A way that God alone could take. What man could solve this awful problem? Only one Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, who knew no sin. That Man alone could take up and solve this problem for it is quite plain that the Man who was made sin was a Man who knew no sin.

How could a man who was a sinner solve the problem? There are those today who say that Jesus was capable of sin. It is a lie of the devil; anyone who thinks that is charging God with lying. If Jesus was capable of sin then the work of atonement at Calvary would be null and void; my soul's eternal salvation would be a myth! But God cannot lie and He has given us in His word a three-fold testimony to the sinless character of the Saviour. He tells us through the apostle Paul that He "knew no sin"; He tells us through the apostle Peter that He "did no sin"; and He tells us through the apostle John, "in him is no sin"! God has given us this three-fold testimony to the blessed sinless character of Jesus, through whom He solved this great sin problem. God made that sinless One to be sin, the very thing itself, and God deals with that Man. How good God is to make things so plain and clear to us.

God deals with that blessed Man who could say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart". How delightful it was to God to see the Lord Jesus here upon the earth. His one desire was to please God. How different from the man we read of at the beginning of Genesis! Jesus



came to do the will of God and to solve this great problem for God; He was made sin and all the judgment of a holy God fell upon Him as the sin-bearer.

We can never know what took place in those three hours of darkness at Calvary. The sun itself was darkened. Think of that awful darkness: who can know the holy judgment of God which fell upon that sinless sin-bearer?

I would like to have read to you a chapter out of the prophet Isaiah, but am going to ask you to do so, if you will please, before going to sleep tonight. Get down on your knees and ask God to throw the light of heaven upon the chapter; then just quietly and prayerfully read Isaiah 53. I can promise you this, if you do so in dependence upon God, He will let the light of heaven shine upon it and show you how that great problem of sin was solved in the sacrifice of Jesus.

So we come back to Psalm 32: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered". Now, having seen the way God has taken, it tells us in 2 Corinthians 5, "if one died for all, then were all dead"; then it says, "he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again". Now, our Lord Jesus Christ did not die for Himself; He died for you and for me. He died for all. So the Psalmist says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Psalm 32 says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven". "Blessed" there is the thing itself, 'happiness'. Then "transgression forgiven", that is the solid basis of the happiness. God is offering you happiness this evening which rests upon a solid foundation. "Transgression forgiven" is part of the way to happiness. How did it come about? Through the death of that blessed One who died for all. He died for me! God's judgment having fallen upon Him and He having died for me, my transgression is forgiven. God can forgive me righteously, so that I can now be happy!

"Transgression forgiven...sin covered" is the foundation for God's happiness; God has forgiven me on the basis of the death of Jesus, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9: 22). My transgressions are forgiven upon the ground of the precious death and shed blood of Jesus. That means that this blessed sin-bearer, the sinless One who took this sin question upon Himself, has dealt with it so adequately and to the entire satisfaction of God, and put it out of God's sight, that God can now be happy and I can now be

happy. That is the basis of it: my sins are gone in the death of Jesus and God's eye rests upon His precious blood. What evidence that precious blood is, that this question has been solved and solved eternally to the entire satisfaction of God.

Our Psalm also says, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity". That is a step further. Not only "transgression forgiven, sin covered", but, having laid every charge upon the head of that blessed sinless Man, there is not a single charge God can lay against me. What can lead to happiness like that? I can be happy now! Thank God I am, knowing that everything with which God could charge me has been dealt with and settled in the death of Christ. What happiness that brings, friend!

Now let us look at the way to it. So far, we have only seen the way that God has met the problem with absolute righteousness. If I am to get any benefit from that I must make it my own. This is the way that I must do so: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid" (Psalm 32:5). I see that the Lord Jesus, that sinless Man, was made sin for me; I see that He died for me. I see something of the abhorrence God has of sin; I see something of what it means to God and I confess that that Saviour died for me. I own that His blood was shed for me and then I say, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord". What happens next? "And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (v.5). Here is one who begins to confess his sins and without waiting for another verse we have the answer, "thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin".

God is waiting to answer you now, if you will own to Him that you are a sinner. He is waiting to give you the answer, for there is forgiveness in His heart. He is waiting for you now, if only you will believe and confess to Him your real and true place as a sinner in His sight.

Everything is clear now, so verse 7 says, "Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance". Perhaps, you say, 'Why do I want a hiding-place?' Ah, if there is one heart who does not know this real, substantial lasting happiness, I warn you that you will need a hiding-place. Never before in your life-time have you been so near to meeting God as you are this evening. How do you feel about that? Does that make you feel happy? Never before have we been so near to eternity as at this moment; does that give rise to feelings of anxiety in

your mind or does it make you feel happy? God wants you to know Him as a Saviour God. He wants you to join Him in His happiness. The Bible says, “a man shall be as an hiding-place,” Isaiah 32: 2. The Man Christ Jesus who settled that sin-question for God and man is the hiding-place for you and me.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth God could open the heavens upon Him and say, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3: 22). God has found His delight in Him. Tonight, God would direct your attention to Jesus. God wants you to know Jesus and to express your appreciation of Him.

We read in Psalm 16, “to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight”. Think of a people upon the earth upon whom God can look and say, “the saints”. Perhaps you may say. ‘I cannot aspire to that. I am not as pious enough to be called a saint’. Well, the word means that in some cases but here it means ‘set apart’ or ‘sanctified’ ones.

God looks down upon those who have judged this sin question, who have a sense of what this great question is to the heart of God, what an obstacle to happiness it is and who desire to “depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2: 19). God loves to look down upon those who have departed from iniquity and desire to follow righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, (2 Timothy 2: 22). Thank God He has not left us here to find our own way. He did not leave Adam to find the way to happiness; He put him in a place of happiness and God wants to bring you into that place where happiness is to be found.

Think of God putting us amongst those whom He regards as the excellent of the earth, where He sees features of Jesus who was so delightful to His heart that He could open the heavens upon Him. God wants you in that place amongst His own, bearing features of Christ, enjoying with God His delight in that One. All is based upon the precious death and shed blood of Jesus.

Do not think this is beneath your notice. A young man was invited to these meetings on a former occasion; he said in answer to the invitation, ‘No, thank you, it is all right for children, but it does not interest me’. I ask you, in all solemnity, to think of the anguish of that soul when in eternity he finds he has missed the blessing, the happiness, because God made it so simple! That is just like many sinners; they find fault with God’s prescription, for they want their own way. God has His way to true happiness for you, and that is by

accepting the death of Jesus, acknowledging that His precious blood was shed for you.

The Psalmist goes on: “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

God has forgiveness for you and it is only on that ground happiness can come. He wants you to join Him in His happiness. May God grant that you may accept His way. Many here can assure you there is only the one way to find happiness and that is God’s way; it is within your reach tonight, if only you will take it. God grant you may for His name’s sake.

*E. H. Dible*

*In the next issue DV: “The Last Appeal”*

**“O God, thy way is in the sanctuary: who is so great a god as God?...”**

**“Thy way is in the sea, and thy paths are in the great waters; and thy footsteps are not known”**

(Psalm 77:13, 19).

**“Jehovah, — his way is in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet”**

(Nahum 1:3).