

No. 47

Living Water

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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD — 3

God made known through our Lord Jesus Christ

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father), full of grace and truth; (John bears witness of him, and he has cried, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that comes after me is preferred before me, for he was before me;) for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

(John 1:14-18)

We come now to John’s gospel. Here we have the evangelist, led of the Holy Spirit to speak of what he, and his fellow disciples, came to know of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament tells us something about the knowledge of God but it is not to be compared with the New Testament and the knowledge of God that the believer can now have in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing to be compared with christianity.

But John goes back; he goes back to the very beginning, “In the beginning was the Word”. It focuses our thoughts on the greatness of God Himself, dwelling in eternity as to which we can say so little. We are used to day following day and although we do not look for death we recognise that there are horizons set by birth and death in this world. As to eternity and what it will be to “be always with the Lord”, let alone what it would be to be for ever away from the Lord, that is something that is really beyond us to take in and thus scripture says little about it. But I do commend to you to reflect a little that there is such a thing as eternity. From eternity God was there, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, He was there.

John has some very profitable things to say about how things came to be in the beginning, how the world came about — nothing was made without this One, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”. At this point he is not speaking about the greatness of creation. He is not even speaking about the greatness of God, as such, as to His eternal power and divinity. He is speaking about how the disciples came into intimate contact with the One whom they learnt to be the Son of God. They had the company of the One by whom the worlds were made. They were privileged to contemplate His glory. We should be careful in supposing that the glory of the Lord was hid when He was here. He came into circumstances of limitation and of humility but what John says is, “and we have contemplated his glory”. He says that the glory that

they saw was that of a Son who had come forth from the Father. In every way, as they saw the Lord Jesus go about in the world, they saw One who was receiving His guidance from the Father.

The Lord waited on the Father's word as to what He should do. They saw someone who was at liberty to speak to the Father in prayer, who could speak of the Father with first hand knowledge. He had come out from God and was going to God. He was such a One and John says He was full of grace and truth and "of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace".

I believe that the Spirit of God would encourage us to prove the truth of God by its effect upon our spirits. If God has begun in us a good work, it says, He will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day. So, has He begun a good work in you or me? That work begins with the forgiveness of our sins and the knowledge of Christ as Saviour. But what about, "of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace"? Is grace something that is written up on the wall or has grace affected my heart? Has the goodness of God affected me? If it has, there will at least be something of this grace of God showing itself in my relations with God, with my fellow believer and with my fellow men.

Thank God, I can see in so many fellow believers a clear evidence of the work of God forming them. The only formation that is worth having is after the pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ. Growth is "until we all arrive at ... the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). That is what God is looking to see expressed: His Beloved Son formed in His people.

In a man like John we see the work of God. Throughout scripture, where there is a work of God the men who are used of God to write the scriptures show their own formation. They may sometimes show their experiences on the way to formation. They show that God is working with them. We need to make room for Him to work with each one of us.

Now comes this important verse, "No one has seen God at any time". No one can presume to have seen God. He is spoken of plainly in scripture as the invisible and inscrutable God. "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him". It is the Lord Jesus who has truly brought God to light and the term used is a very distinctive one: "declared him" — brought God out into the measure of light in which we as creatures can know Him. As we go through the gospel of John, we see God made known in our Lord Jesus Christ, God's heart and nature made known, His love made known, His righteousness, holiness, goodness, commitment to the work which He gave to the Lord Jesus to do. And the Lord Jesus has finished that work to the glory of God. We shall never have any greater knowledge of God than what the Lord Jesus has brought

to light. I know that we get help in the epistles but the knowledge of God that we have is what has come to light in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is in the bosom of the Father. John points out that it was in that distinctively affectionate relationship that the Lord made the Father known. As we reach the end of the gospel I think we can say that it is not only the Father who is made known to us; God Himself is made known.

The Lord has told us about Himself and He has told us about the Spirit. We learn that God is One and that He is made known to us as Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit. These are great foundation truths of christianity. They are beyond us to take in but make sure you make them your own and do not let them go.

David Burr

Part 3 of an address at Croydon, July 2000.

In the next issue DV: "Paul, a man who knew God"

JOURNEYING OR WANDERING

Luke 10: 30–34

Psalm 56: 8–13

Exodus 13: 17–22

Psalm 107: 1–9

Introduction

I would like to speak about journeying and wandering. We all know what it is to journey. Most of us made a journey to come here today. A journey involves having a goal to reach and we usually work out a route to reach our destination before we start a journey. When we wander, we travel haphazardly, often eventually having to recognise that we are lost. I expect most of us could tell of experiences of wandering and losing our way before we got onto the right track again.

I would like to speak about journeying and wandering in relation to christian life. Some people speak about the journey through life from the cradle to the grave. When people refer to life's journey, they may think of their experiences to date and they may seek to chart their own course. I was speaking to a young man in his twenties the other day who talked about his proposed career and of when he was going to retire. He had planned his life. But the Bible speaks of people, whatever their ambitions, as wandering in error until the light of the gospel

reaches them and changes their lives (see Titus 3:3). In our society people are planning for this new millennium but God views the vanity or emptiness of human activities where men, women and children wander in error. Thank God, He has provided the answer in Jesus. Jesus never wandered!

The journey of Jesus

I love to speak about the journey of Jesus. He came from heaven. Coming into the world He says, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:9). Think about the steps of Jesus as He went through this world. Think of Him particularly in His service, anointed by God and serving men in His three years of service here. That was a wonderful journey.

Some of the writers in the New Testament describe His journey. For example, Paul in Philippians 2 said He “did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form” (vs. 6 & 7). He traces the journey of Jesus down from the glory into this world. Then, “having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross” (v 8). Paul traces the journey of Jesus right from the heights of glory to the cross.

Paul then looks beyond the cross. “Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (vs. 9 & 10). Jesus went that way for me! He went that way for you. He went that way to take away the sin of the world. He went that way in order that God might secure myriads of men in His presence who will be like Jesus, for ever. What a wonderful journey Jesus took!

The Samaritan journeying

In the parable we read of in Luke 10, Jesus speaks of a man who went from Jerusalem to Jericho. I suppose he thought he was on a good journey, like many people in this world today. But it was a descending journey and he got into the hands of robbers who inflicted wounds and left him in a half-dead state.

How like many people in this world who do their own thing, living in independence of God. Someone once described the journey of people in Western society during the twentieth century as a journey away from God. This man was descending from Jerusalem, the divine centre then, to Jericho. He was on a downward way and he got into a mess. He was like someone wandering.

But others saw him. The priest saw him. It says “a certain priest happened to go down that way, and seeing him, passed on on the opposite side”. There was something indeterminate about that priest. A priest should have had a purposeful

life. The job of a priest, according to the Old Testament, was to serve God, to offer sacrifices, to teach people out of the law, to care for the erring and the ignorant. The priest should have had oil and wine as part of his resources. But he “happened” to go that way. There was no sense of purpose in that priest’s activities.

Then Jesus speaks about a certain Levite, being at the spot. Levites were expected to undertake activities, to carry burdens for God and serve Him and His house. This Levite seems to lack purpose and resources. These two people, representing many good features of the Old Testament, were indeterminate and of no use to this man. I believe God wants us to get onto a journey in our lives and to have a purpose in what we are about.

Jesus then speaks of “a certain Samaritan journeying”. He had the wherewithal to provide immediate relief and to help the robbed man further by transporting him to the inn and ensuring his long term care. That is just what Jesus did when He was here and what He is still doing now that He is seated at the right hand of God. In the gospels we read of a number of journeys that Jesus took in order to bring help and blessing to one and another.

The Gennesaret journey

Throughout the gospels we see the deliberateness that marked the Lord Jesus in every step that He took. Every day He was in communion with His God and Father. Scripture speaks about Him spending the night on the Mount of Olives. It also speaks about His ear being opened, morning by morning, to hear as the instructed (see Isaiah 50:4).

Take, for example, Jesus going across the Lake of Gennesaret to meet the demoniac (see Mark 5:1–20). On one particular day He went across that lake to meet the man who was in the tombs and deliver him from the demons. He brought blessing and deliverance into the life of that man in the tombs. After He saved the demoniac He went back again to get on with His work elsewhere. What a wonderful journey in the life of Jesus! Think of the purposefulness in the journeys of Jesus and the blessing that was brought to others.

The Sychar journey

It is wonderful food for our souls to contemplate the journeying of Jesus. Think about Jesus at the well at Sychar. He went by a route that a Jew would not normally have taken. Why? He went that way in order to deal with the need of the woman that we read of in John chapter 4. There was nothing haphazard in what Jesus did. He went that way to save that woman, overcoming all the prejudice that was extant at that time between Jew and Samaritan.

He was, “wearied with the way he had come” (John 4:6). The journeying of Jesus, we might say, was a tiring journey. The prophet speaks of him as labouring, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain” (Isaiah 49:4). Jesus had a hard and difficult journey yet He went to that well of Sychar to draw near to that woman to secure her heart for Himself. What food for our souls to think about the journeyings of Jesus!

The Lazarus journey

We can also think about Jesus going to where Lazarus died. Jesus did not immediately go. He waited. Why? Jesus was deliberate. He was not governed by what men wanted Him to do; He was not even governed by what His disciples wanted Him to do. In everything He did as a man here, Jesus was governed by the will of God. So He waited four days and then He says, ‘Let us go’. When He went forward to where Lazarus was buried the result was blessing.

He says, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it” (John 11:4). The movements of Jesus are very purposeful and always so that there might be a result for the pleasure of God and for the help of others.

The Emmaus journey

Think about the journeying of Jesus after He rose from the dead. He went after the two who were going away from Jerusalem, disappointed and downcast. Things had not worked out the way they wanted. But Jesus drew alongside them and He walked with them. It says of Him as He walked along, “He made as though he would go farther” (Luke 24:28). How interested He is in each one of us. He wants to guide us, just as He did with these two dear believers who were going away from Jerusalem.

The Christian’s journey

When we come to us who believe, if we are honest we have to admit that we do wander. I like Hymn 51 that we began with. When referring to our wanderings, the hymn-writer says:

*‘And, if I wander, teach me
Soon back to Thee to flee;’*

Thankfully if we wander from the Lord in our affections we can flee back to Him and freshly know His wonderful love. His love took Him once to Calvary and that same love now serves us from the glory and we can all know that in our individual experiences. That is why I read from that Psalm of David.

David's experiences (Psalm 56)

David is one of the very interesting characters whose lives are detailed in the Bible. David characteristically did what pleased God. He is described in the Bible as a man after God's heart (Acts 13:22). He served in his generation according to the will of God (see Acts 13:36). Yet David had his wanderings too. This passage we read from the Psalms was obviously written after he had escaped to Gath. Saul was pursuing him as we read in 1 Samuel. How difficult it was for him. When you become a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ the way sometimes is difficult. For David at this particular time it was very difficult.

Sometimes his faith was strong and he relied upon God, praying to God for guidance on the course of action he should take. In 1 Samuel 23 David prays four times in relation to steps that he should take. God answered him every time and gave him a clear, definite answer to guide him on a prudent way.

But at other times, David was frightened and for the time being he was not marked by faith. He goes away to one of the kings of the Philistines, to Gath, even pretending to be mad. He comes to a low point. It is one of his wanderings. How easy it is to wander away from the Lord. How easy to wander away from what is set out in the Bible.

David says in this Psalm, "Thou countest my wanderings; put my tears into thy bottle". Think of God's interest in us. I would like to encourage everyone here. God is interested in us as believers. He wants to help us through the difficult situations of life. Jesus never pretended to any one who wanted to become His disciple that everything would be plain sailing. He promised His support, His love and His blessing but He never promised that everything would be a bed of roses.

When David writes this Psalm he says, "Thou countest my wanderings". Think of God doing that. No doubt David shed a lot of tears. He says, "put my tears into thy bottle". It must have been very painful for David to be pursued by Saul. It must have been very strange for David to be himself in the country of the Philistines whose champion Goliath he once had killed. Yet he has a sense of God's intense interest in him, even in his failures.

From this Psalm we see how he freshly realises this. He says: "this I know, for God is for me". That is tremendous. God is for us! "If God be for us, who against us?" (Romans 8:31). Every one of us here who are believers in Jesus should know that God is for us. His kingdom is for the support for those who seek to be here for His pleasure.

Then David says in the Psalm, “In God will I praise his word”. He is being restored to admire the word of God. “In Jehovah will I praise his word. In God have I put my confidence”. There is a fresh surge of realisation that he did not want to rely upon the Philistines. He did not want to rely upon the king of Gath. He puts his confidence in God.

If any of us turn aside we can quickly repent and turn to God in prayer. We can quickly turn to the Lord Jesus and restore our communion with Him. Sometimes through physical weakness we might wander. Sometimes it might be through the pressure of circumstances. Sometimes it might be through actual sin. How easy it is to wander away from God!

So David says twice in this Psalm, “In God will I praise his word; in Jehovah will I praise his word. In God have I put my confidence: I will not fear; what can man do unto me?” Oh, that we might get an impression of the greatness of God, the power of God that is available to see His people through while we are in this world. So he ends up by saying, “Thy vows are upon me, O God”. David was a man who had committed himself to God. When he went forward to Goliath, he said, “Was it not laid upon me?” (1 Samuel 17:29). David had a very deep sense of the will of God and what it is to have committed himself to God. And, as we were reminded this afternoon, as a young man he had vowed to the God of Israel that, “I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for Jehovah” (Psalm 132:4). David was marked by what he vowed, by his commitment to God. He is restored here to God’s vows being upon him in the sense that he was to be here for the will and pleasure of God. Later, as a recovered man, he gave a right lead to God’s people.

It is a wonderful thing in christianity that God still cares for us if we make mistakes — and we all fail — yet God still looks after us. He still cares for us. He longs to bring us back into the enjoyment of His wonderful love. God has a goal for each one of us. Our goal is to be with Jesus Christ. It is wonderful to have a goal before us, to realise what christian life is all about, to be here for the will of God, in obedience to God and with our eye upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the key elements of christianity is obedience. The apostle Peter said: “God must be obeyed rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Obedience is proper to every creature of God. Adam and Eve fell through disobedience. They disobeyed God and their lives were ruined and they dragged the whole human race into a line of disobedience. The Lord Jesus, as a perfect Man, was marked by obedience. And believers in Jesus are sanctified, “unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2). God’s standard for us is set out in Jesus. He

was the obedient One and we who are christians are called upon to be obedient to Jesus, to come under His Lordship.

You may say, 'Well if I am obedient I might be obedient to something that is wrong' but God is not asking us to do that. The Holy Scriptures become our standard because they set out God's word for us. When Peter was asked to be obedient to an authority that wanted him to stop preaching, he said, "God must be obeyed rather than men". He stated clearly that obedience was proper to every man, woman and child. But he also stated that God must be obeyed rather than man.

Journeying in the wilderness from Egypt (Exodus 13)

We read in Exodus of the children of Israel beginning their journey to the Promised Land. They were sheltered from the destroying angel by the blood put on the door posts and the lintel of their houses. Then they ate the passover lamb (roast with fire) with unleavened bread and began on their journey. This is all given to us in the Old Testament as a figure (or type) of what we do when we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and commence our christian journey.

The scripture says: "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh let the people go, that God did not lead them the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, That the people may not repent when they see conflict, and return to Egypt". God was particularly considerate for the people as they left Egypt. He did not take them into an area where they would have had to engage in aggressive conflict with the Philistines; He took them another way that they might learn Him, His love and His care experimentally.

When they crossed the Red Sea they did not have to do anything except obey God when He told them to go forward. He divided the Red Sea and they went through it. Then they came to Mara and they murmur and complain yet God does not reproach them but provides for them. God is very considerate for us too, particularly for those who are young in the faith, those beginning the christian road. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are called into the journey of faith. To walk by faith, to walk "looking steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

The journey of faith involves that we, with all the saints, will be with Christ in glory in a coming day. Some of the New Testament expressions indicate that we are there already. For example, in the epistle to the Ephesians the apostle says that, "God, ... has quickened us with the Christ ... and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4 - 6). Well, you say, we are not there already, we are sitting on seats in

Wolverhampton but in the mind of God He regards His people as having reached the end of the journey already according to that passage in Ephesians. Then in the service of the Lord Jesus as priest on high and in the service of the Holy Spirit within us He provides the wherewithal for our journey. Their help enables us to go on the journey of faith while we are here until we come into the presence of the Lord Himself.

When the children of Israel started this journey, “Jehovah went before their face by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; so that they could go day and night”. Once they went into the wilderness they did not know where to go. It was not like coming here today, where there are so many road signs to help us to get here. They had no signs as they journeyed through the wilderness. It was just a desert, “a waste, howling wilderness” according to Deuteronomy 32:10. But God provided a clear way for His people to reach the promised land. And God provides a way for us. Sometimes we sing:

*‘For the path where our Saviour has gone
Has led up to His Father and God,’*

The way for us is the way that was set out in perfection in Jesus. In fact the early christians were known as those who were ‘of the way’. That is the christian way, the way that leads to God, the way that is different from the way of life in this world. It is a way that involves living in Christ’s life while we go through this world.

Wandering in the wilderness (Psalm 107)

When we come to Psalm 107 we find reference to the people wandering. It should have taken them only eleven days to go from Sinai into the promised land but it took them 40 years. There was a lot of wandering in the wilderness. The Psalmist writes, “They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way, they found no city of habitation”. It is not only easy to wander individually, it is possible for God’s people collectively to wander — but there is always a way of escape. What did they do here? They cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses. God listened to their cry. Once you are one of God’s people, once you belong to His family — which we all do if we have accepted the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and are sealed with the Holy Spirit — once we belong to the family of God, God treats us as His children. His ear is always open to hear the cry of His people.

In Psalm 107 we find a genuine cry — they cried unto Him in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. I am thankful that the Bible says so

much about God's people behaving badly because these passages are such a help to me. I can look at these people; I can see how they went astray and I can see how God helped them when they cried unto Him and how He brought them into times of prosperity again. We see things set out for us in the Bible to help us in our own, individual lives and in our relations with others.

So it says, "they cried unto Jehovah in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by a right way". I would like to encourage us all to remember this. There is a right way. God has got a right way for His people. It was set out by the Lord Jesus Himself. It is set out in the Holy Scriptures. There is a right way, even today! Sometimes God's people talk, alas, as if we are only in the time when, "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). But the Bible tells us there is a right way (see 1 Samuel 12:23) and I believe if we seek God's help He will show it to us.

Think of the children of Israel when they marched through the wilderness. The ark went before them "to search out a resting-place for them" (Numbers 10:33). It is like keeping our eye on Jesus. And then it says, "they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them: (now the rock was the Christ;)" (1 Corinthians 10:4). God provided refreshment and help for His people. And then "At the commandment of Jehovah they encamped, and at the commandment of Jehovah they journeyed" (Numbers 9:23). God has His commandments set out in His holy word. And I believe today we need to respect the Bible more. Let us seek to be governed by it. It is so easy to have our minds controlled by current ideas of this world but let our minds be controlled by God's word.

Ruth and Rahab

In Psalm 107 we read: "And he led them forth by a right way, that they might go to a city of habitation". God causes unexpected people to learn the value of a city of habitation. Ruth and Rahab, in the Old Testament, are examples of this.

Ruth did not belong to the people of God but she saw something valuable in Naomi; she heard about God through Naomi and she clung to her. By listening to what she had to say, Ruth came to know something of the city of habitation and enjoy a new way of life amongst God's people.

Rahab was not of Israel either but she "received the spies in peace" (Hebrews 11:31). She was like someone who accepted the gospel about our Lord Jesus Christ. She received the spies in peace and through being obedient to their message she found herself in a city of habitation (Joshua 6:25). I believe God wants us to enjoy relations together. Chapter 3 of Malachi shows it is possible even in difficult

times to enjoy happy relations together while we wait the time when the Lord comes and raptures all His church to be with Himself.

Practical affairs and christian service

I think we should be concerned to be purposeful both in our individual lives and in anything we might seek to do for the Lord. James says in his epistle: “Go to now, ye who say, To-day or to-morrow will we go into such a city and spend a year there, and traffic and make gain, ... instead of your saying, If the Lord should so will and we should live, we will also do this or that” (James 4:13, 15). Let us seek God’s help in the practical affairs of life so that in what we do or in where we go, and in what we get involved, we might do things that are in keeping with His word.

And then in relation to Christian service we should seek the Lord’s directions so that we might be purposeful in what we do. Think of the apostle Paul. According to Acts 16 he was not sure at one stage where to go. He knew that God was directing him to spread the good news about Jesus but he had to be guided as to where to go. He wanted to go one way but God said, ‘No’. Then he was not sure where to go until he got clear direction through a vision from God. Once he concluded where the Lord was directing him he was purposeful in his activities and God eventually opened a door of great blessing at Philippi.

Conclusion

I believe we all need more purpose and direction in our lives. May the Lord help us to think of His journeyings, to think about how purposeful He was in everything He did. May the example of Jesus and the experiences of others outlined in these scriptures help us to be in touch with the Lord so that there might be more purpose in our lives for the glory of God.

Ken Hollands

Address at Wolverhampton, 13th March, 1999.

“wander without a home”	(1 Corinthians 4:11)
“in journeyings often”	(2 Corinthians 11:26)

“I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU TO MYSELF”

O Lord, Thy precious words of love
Do calm the troubled heart;
We now await Thee from above,
With Thee to have our part.

Within Thy Father’s house on high,
Thou hast a place prepared
For those who “Abba Father” cry,
His love forever shared.

How wondrous is Thy love for those-
The Father’s gift to Thee!
Now in Thy love they find repose,
And soon Thy face shall see.

Thy heart is longing to embrace
Thine own, for ever Thine;
Thou wilt receive them to that place
Where all Thy glories shine.

That glory all Thine own, blest Lord,
The Father’s gift to Thee;
Expressing in that wondrous word,
Love from eternity!

We shall behold that glory, Lord,
In rapture face to face;
Thyself for evermore adored,
Within that heavenly place.

Joseph Pellatt

THE PORTION OF THE OVERCOMER

“I quickly come”, we’ve heard Thee say,
And, Lord, we long for that bright day
When Thy blest face we’ll see;
In Thine own image ever shine,
Mid scenes of glory all divine,
Throughout eternity.

In Thy God’s temple we shall stand,
As “pillars” planted by Thy hand,
And stay for ever there!
On us Thy God’s name Thou wilt write,
The name, too, of His city bright,
And Thy new Name we’ll bear.

We’ll share Thy throne and kingdom, Lord,
According to Thy faithful word,
And reign a thousand years.
We’ll share Thy triumphs here below,
And gladly in Thy service go,
Free from all pain and tears.

Joseph Pellatt

Bo’ness – 26 September 1912

A TESTIMONY FROM THE GRAVE

(A selection of inscriptions from tombstones)

THOMAS BLAMIRE

The tomb of Thomas Blamire contains details of his birth (1848) and his death (6th January 1894) on one side, and on the other, his last message to his brethren and a last message to the unsaved. These messages were sent on the last Sunday of his life. Both were written in Spanish but a translation is:

My last words to my brethren are —
Give yourselves anew to the Lord
to live as never before unto Him;
and my last to the unsaved —
that they flee unto Christ from the
wrath to come before it is too late.

(From a stone in Marin cemetery, Galicia, Spain.)

The information on Thomas Blamire was kindly provided by Mr Bill Anderson of Bebington, Merseyside.

Dr. JOHN CONDOR

1714 – 1781

Dr. Condor composed his own inscription for his grave stone. It emphasises his faith in the completeness of the work of Christ.

I have sinned
I have trusted
I have repented
I have loved
I have rest
I shall arise
And through the grace of Christ
However unworthy
I shall reign

(From a stone in Bunhill Fields, London)

EUPHEMIA STEWART

Died suddenly 14th February 1847

A soul prepared needs no delays
The summons comes, the saint obeys
Swift was her flight and short the road
She closed her eyes and saw her God

(From a memorial plaque in Holyrood, Edinburgh)

ROBERT & SOPHIA ROGER

This extraordinary inscription contrasts the self-important Robert Roger with the christian confidence of his believing wife.

In memory of ROBERT ROGER J.P.

of Hadlow Castle

Lord of the Manors of Hadlow & East Peckham

Who was born 2nd February 1796 & died 17 August 1882

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end
the first and the last"

and of Sophia his wife

Born 14th March 1817

Converted by the grace of God in 1884

She went to be with the Lord Jesus Christ

on 20th June 1887

Jesus says:

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess
also before my Father which is in heaven.

BUT whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before
my Father which is in heaven" Matthew 10:32-33

(From a stone at Hadlow, Kent)

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Following in Service

John 12:26

“If any man serve me, let him follow me.” It is important not to divorce these two great thoughts of serving and following. This verse is the Lord’s own words: “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be”. Precious as service is, it is of no value to Christ, or to His own, unless the service is rendered in relation to following; that is to say, the servant must be characteristically a follower. He is himself progressing. He is near the Lord and is himself under the Lord’s leading.

Let us dismiss from our minds the limited use of the word ‘servant’ as applying only to those who serve publicly. The Lord has entrusted to some that responsibility and privilege but in this verse the Lord is not limiting the application of His words to such. You cannot love without desiring to serve and becoming characteristically a servant.

A young child heard for the first time the story of the cross and the love of Jesus. She came to her mother the next day and said, ‘Is there anything I can do for Jesus? I do love Him!’ That is the spirit of service; it is what the work of God produces in the soul. Every true lover of Christ has that spirit, but it has to be worked out according to God. You cannot serve at your own dictation; it is too holy, too dignified, too magnificent, for anyone to take up of their own volition and according to their own ideas.

Remember, dear fellow believers, we are servants. We may have to say we are unprofitable ones (we all have to say that!), or perhaps we have not done much but we are all servants who belong to Him. The Lord’s service is being carried forward by those who love Him and everyone who loves Him has the spirit of service implanted in his heart but then, if we are to serve, we must follow. How often we have to lament the poverty of our service, and when the matter has been faced it is seen to be because we were not following closely enough to the One who alone can make that service effectual.

The Lord sets out the principle here: we do well to heed it. “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be”. Then the Lord gives a further word of encouragement: “If any man serve me, him will my Father honour”. How that would encourage any of us who may have felt they have little opportunity to serve the Lord. It may be the Lord leads them to take up some apparently insignificant service (though, really, there is no service which is insignificant) and out of true love for Christ they take it up and pursue it in

devotedness. The Father will honour them. The Lord is disclosing to us the wonderful secret that the Father's heart is gratified by everyone who is pursuing service for Christ's sake. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

Oh, to think of spending the few days that may be left to us, rendering no service! What a serious thing! We believe the Lord is pleased to develop greatly the souls of His people as they pursue with diligence and devotedness the dependent path of service.

Perhaps you say, 'I would love to serve the Lord, but I do not know what to do.' The Lord Himself is the only One who can answer that question for you. What did Saul of Tarsus say? "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord said, "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do" (Acts 22:10). The Lord may use those who are His to indicate to you and to encourage you as to service for Him, and to support you in it, but you have to go to the Lord first of all for the answer to that question. Think of the Father honouring the one who follows and serves Christ! What a dignity attaches to that service! It will involve reproach, sacrifice, and often-times putting our own matters on one side but "him will my Father honour!" so it is worth while.

F. S. Marsh

(In the next issue DV:— "Following in Reproach & Testimony")

CHRISTIAN HABITS

The Habit of Praise

You find throughout the five books of Psalms that, whatever the experiences recorded and however varied they may be, at the end of each book there is an ascription of praise to God. At the end of the last book you will find half a dozen psalms which conclude the series, which end, not only the last book, but the whole of the five books; they are the culmination of God's ways as experienced by the writers. If you study the detail you will see how the experiences of the Psalms culminate in praise in each book but each of the books individually ends in praise.

Psalms 72, which is the last psalm of the second book, concludes at verse 17: and then in verse 18 there is praise. "Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things! And blessed be his glorious name for ever!

and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen, and Amen.” And what does the psalm commence with? “O God, give the king thy judgments, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son ... In his days shall the righteous flourish.” It speaks of Christ as the millennial King, and that is the culmination of the experience of that book. God introduces Christ and the world to come and you get this ascription of praise to God, because the soul is entranced with Christ and with what God is going to bring in through Him!

Psalm 41 closes the first book. There it says, “Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity! Amen, and Amen”. The Psalms are experimental, even the prophetic ones, and you do not get the outcome of God’s ways and dealings with you until you turn to Him in praise. That is a principle and you will find it true in your own experience. If you have been through concern which has led to meditation and prayer, and holy conversation also, then the effect on your soul will be that you turn to praise. At the end of Jacob’s life, you will recollect, he “worshipped on the top of his staff” (Hebrews 11: 21). He had a long and varied experience — not all to his credit; can any of us say that all has been to our credit? But we can say that all has been used of God for our profit and when you see the profit your heart rises up with thankfulness to God.

How often we get the thought of thankfulness in the New Testament! “Singing with grace in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3: 16), or “making melody in your hearts to the Lord” (Ephesians 5: 19). That is the outcome of your concerns. Take your sorrows, for example; you have sorrows and you learn in them, perhaps, what you are but on the other hand you get enriched by learning what God is. The Lord has become more precious to you and you have gained spiritually; you have gone through the deepest sorrow but in the end you raise your heart in thankfulness to God; you have reached the object God had for you in it.

God loves the praises of His people; all heaven is to be filled with His praise; that is the blessed result of all His ways with us. You have come to know Him better and you cannot know Him better without praising Him. God being what He is and we being what we are, the result of a knowledge of God must be worship! That is a wonderful end. How it defeats the machinations of the devil! How it sets aside all that Satan desires! He would get us into trouble and make us doubt God and fill our hearts with fears and discomfort. But God would make us know Himself and in the knowledge of Him we not only get comfort but we turn to praise.

How far is this true of us? It was true enough of those servants of the Lord, Paul and Silas, in prison when they were praising God and singing and the prisoners heard them! We may be in places where it is impossible to raise our voices but

we can sing in our hearts. If we have the happy sense of what God is to us and of what He is in Himself, in His character, we turn with praise to Him. How that is exemplified in the Lord, the great Model for us! When He had done all His wonderful works in those cities and had to say, “we have piped to you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned to you, and ye have not wailed” for they refused Him, He turns to the Father and says, “I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight” (Matthew 11:25). Although He had to say, “Woe to thee, Chorazin! woe to thee, Bethsaida!” He does not complain; He says, “I praise thee, Father”. His ways are absolutely perfect. In another place He says, “In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises” (Hebrews 2:12). After the sorrow, the forsaking of the cross, as come forth in resurrection, He says, “In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises!”

Dr. C. C. Elliott.

This article concludes this series.

THE LAST APPEAL

“He sent his servants.... Again he sent other servants—but last of all he sent his Son!”

Matthew 21: 34-37.

We are met together to face as before God eternal issues which demand the immediate attention of every member of the human race. Our first parents came under the penalty of death through wilful disobedience to the specific commandment of the God who had lavished upon them every token of His goodness. The commandment was plain and carried with it its own solemn warning: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”.

We know what transpired and how the human race through disobedience has been plunged into ruin and confusion. The devil, the enemy of God and man, was trusted by man in disregard of the God who alone is worthy of His creatures’ confidence. Were God to overlook sin in His creature He would compromise His righteousness, His majesty and glory before the whole universe. Will He abdicate His holy throne to suit the desires of a sinner? How could He remain the holy and blessed God He is if He did so?

What disaster man has brought upon himself in the vain attempt to take his happiness into his own hand at the expense of losing God, who had taken such pains to ensure the satisfaction of His creature in relation to Himself. People

have a false name for death; they call it 'the debt of nature'. God's true name for it is "the wages of sin". So death continues as the unwelcome reminder to man of the brevity of his sojourn here, in a scene in which he would like to remain, but from which he must pass out by way of death, as having incurred the solemn displeasure of God.

Whatever change of wages for the better or the worse your labour may receive, God's wages in relation to the human race remain unchanged: "The wages of sin is death". When I first started work we had to line up each pay day to receive our wages. Each person's name was on the pay-roll, and gradually each one draws nearer and nearer to the pay-desk to receive their wages and go their way. In the same way you are every moment moving up in a human queue to receive the most solemn wages of all at the hands of God, and that is death. If death upon humanity be the witness here to man's solemn and unsettled issues in relation to God, what shall be said of the eternal judgment of which God speaks in no uncertain tones in the Bible?

It tells us "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). How, then, can any impenitent heart expect to escape the solemn and awful sentence of a sin-hating God, when finally he is called to account in judgment at the great white throne?

Now I want to speak of the provision which a just God and a Saviour has made for us, in the Lord Jesus Christ. In His name the full and free forgiveness of sins is announced by God Himself; and thank God it has been humbly received by many, upon the principle of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). The Lord Jesus has a Saviour's interest in you and how He longs to impart forgiveness to you this very hour. None but Himself could do this! Indeed, how vain would be the assurance of divine forgiveness from any other lips than His! He longs to have you alone with Himself to tell you of the God who gave Him so freely, to die for man on the cross of Calvary. How skilfully and tenderly would He unravel the tangled skein of these eternal issues in your heart! God through Him would gain your ear for His transcendent and universal scheme of divine blessing for man, which Scripture calls "the gospel of God ... concerning His Son."

This world's advertisements teem with schemes of professed human advantage but is there a proposal which man can put before his fellow which will assure the solution of those moral issues which sin has raised in man's conscience in regard of God? However much a person may pursue material advantage in this world they cannot rest in it or find true and lasting happiness there, try as they will; for we are moral beings with a heart and conscience in which we are accountable to

God. Do not, I beg of you, be deceived with the human remedies with which are sought politically, socially and religiously to alleviate the human condition; all this but touches the surface. Get down to the root of the matter alone with the God who has His own blest solution to all that human misery, which is the fruit of sin. He will direct you to that victorious risen Christ, once the sin-bearer upon the cross but now dispensing from the glory, to those who will own their sin and cry to Him, the fruits of His mighty victory at Calvary over death and Satan.

Do you not realise what you owe to that blessed Saviour? You and I are of that human but guilty race, which would long ago have been swept away in the just vengeance of God had not He Himself in our Lord Jesus Christ stepped into the breach, "that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man". Have you turned to Him, humbly confessing your sins to God, and putting your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? I beg of you to do so this moment.

I would add a word as to the Holy Scriptures; they are the object of constant attack, even shamelessly discredited from some so-called Christian pulpits. These very attacks but bear witness in a negative way to the divine origin of the sacred writings which like the sharp edge of a knife cut into man's conscience and heart. Men will approve of much in books that they know to be untrue, but what folly it is to join issue with the only book on earth which is absolutely true! The Bible tells the truth about humanity unsparingly; nowhere else will we find it as it is written there but we find there also the truth as to God. We learn that God loves us and wants to forgive and bless us.

God cannot renounce His rights over you as His creature and He would fain assert them over you in mercy; for He has, in the Person and work of Christ, an unchallengeable right to bless with divine forgiveness all those who submit now to the One whom He has made both Lord and Christ. He brought you into this world to that end. Men ask why they were born? The only answer to that question is in the gospel: you were born that you might be blessed of Him who is your Creator. You have been born but have you received the gospel? You had nothing to do with your coming into this world but you are responsible as a sinner before God to take the place of repentance towards Him, which calls forth the blessing of the forgiveness of your sin. This is a blessing which He is longing to impart to you on the principle of faith, in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel is all about one blessed Person, our Lord Jesus Christ. People becloud and mystify religion with creeds and outward observances and yet God is shining upon us in one blessed Man, the only Man out of death. Jesus, in the glory of God, is His glorious answer, His marvellous provision for a ruined race!

People think that somehow they will escape that which inwardly they dread, hoping to claim the mercy of God; but do you think that God can weaken His throne by what is falsely called mercy?

Never! God's throne must be satisfied by One who knows every claim it has against us and who, in His Person, is great enough to meet it all. Only One can meet such a demand, the Lord Jesus Christ, a divine Person, God manifest in flesh. What a holy mystery! Only a divine Person could meet and exhaust divine judgment but if ruin and death came in by one man, by one Man came also the resurrection from among the dead!

It is so like God that if all the disaster has come in by the guilty man all the blessing should come in through that glorious Man, who looks down from heaven into your heart today and lays claim to you! Have you any good reason why you should not give Him your heart? Is it so satisfied with what you have sought to fill it with? Now, come, our hearts are barren, empty and solitary—from the little child who cries for its mother because it is lonely, to the aged man or woman ending their days in the solitude of death feeling the solemnity of thus having to leave this scene. How ceaseless, yet futile, has been the effort to drive away this solitude! The devil, the god of this world, does his utmost to engage people in a thousand pursuits to keep them going but the sorrowful solitude of the human heart will assert itself and you are no stranger to it! God has formed depths in the human heart which only He can fill! People give a multitude of reasons for their dissatisfaction and seek to remedy it but the supreme cause of our woe is that we have lost God! How appalling is this fact! But what can be more blessed than that God has pursued men in marvellous grace, warning them on every hand, yearning over them and appealing to them in His glad tidings.

God's heart is towards the whole human race for the gospel is for all but it is for you particularly. Oh! what do we not owe to God? Every heart-beat we owe to Him and He has been interested in every one of them; but for Him your heart would long ago have stopped its beating. He has surrounded every one of us with the tokens of His mercy, the glorious sun in the heavens, the air, the food; look around your table at meal-time and see the infinite and detailed care of your God!

God is at work; He is yearning over you and appealing to you; He wants to have you for Himself for ever! He would draw you to Himself, as Scripture says, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4). The destitute sought Jesus when here; the gospels are full of a glorious company secured for God; many of them despised on earth, drawn from all classes, they form a wonderful host of saved and satisfied persons. God is adding to that host the world over and one prays that He may gather some more today. God would make

Christ indispensable to you, as He has done to them. These persons found the answer to all their woes in Christ; they were all destitute; they could not do without Him for another moment! With what joy the Lord Jesus welcomed them! What joy He gave them. They became His for time and eternity and He became theirs. How blessedly has God come to the rescue of His fallen creature!

You may say, 'What have we to do?' Ah! let go your pride, your self-vindication and take the only place before God which suits a guilty creature. Take that place in repentance; there is room for you there! People who are at the Saviour's feet never find that place overcrowded and they are welcomed there as only God can welcome His creature. I beg of you, be simple and own there is nothing but sin and need in you and you will find nothing but forgiveness in Him for the guilty; yea, everything you need for time and eternity is at this moment for you in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will now add a word about the provision God has made for your present blessing. Jesus was forsaken of God! Think of it! So that you might never be forsaken. Repentant, broken heart, put Him to the test today! His power is marvellous! He will set you free from the haunting fear of death and from the burden of sin and misery in this poor world. He will do everything for you; for time and eternity He is indispensable to God; God cannot do without Him, how can you?

Think of the Saviour as He died! Think of the manner of His wonderful death for no one ever died as Christ did! He chose to die! Others have to die; death could say nothing to Him for He had never sinned but He had to say to death for you, for me. The hymn puts it:

*'He Satan's power laid low;
Made sin, sin's reign, o'erthrew;
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew.'*

As a weary child lays its head to rest upon its mother's breast, so do the lovers of Christ depart from this scene; in the arms of the Saviour they never see death; they see Him who conquered death for them. As the Scripture says "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51).

A doctor told me recently, 'There is nothing more terrible in our profession than the sight of a Christless deathbed'. I trust, dear friends, that you will never have that! The only way to make sure of Christ is to put your trust in Him now; the feeblest cry for mercy He will meet and with faith in Christ comes repentance; you judge yourself, you write yourself off a total wreck. We have all had to do it and the only regret we have is that we did not do it earlier! You are surrounded

by many who have put Christ to the test, in a long or short life, and they are all unanimous that there is nobody like Christ! We want you to add your testimony to that! What a marvellous provision God has made for man's blessing!

What a message the gospel is! Far and wide it is going out to-day! "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38, 39).

To commit sins is easy but their removal is another matter. God is keeping books and infinite accuracy marks them. We are told that the Lord Jesus Christ will open the books and will enter into the solemn and awful dealings of the vengeance of God with the unrepentant and unforgiven. I beg of you to take warning! You may never have another opportunity to escape eternally the solemn vengeance of the God of whom it is said, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13). Why not embrace the marvellous opportunity now which is yours, of facing in your soul with God the solemn issue of eternity? We beg of you to participate in that meeting between the Saviour and the sinner, on God's own glorious terms. If you humbly bow to Jesus you will find that God will receive you and fill your heart with joy; He will give you the Holy Spirit to be His power in you to lift you out of the wreckage of this doomed world and link you up already with Christ and His own.

There is no alternative to the divine proposals of the gospel; how worthy are these proposals of the God who makes them! I beg of you to seek the Lord in simplicity now; tell him the worst — He knows it but would hear from your own lips the confession of your sin. His answer will be, "Thy sins are forgiven...thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:48-50). He will take you up and will see you through and at last will have you eternally in His presence and glory, with all His saved ones. I beg of you to submit to Him tonight. He is worthy to be your Lord and Master; no one is so worthy of your confidence as the Lord Jesus Christ!

I pray that this hour may be memorable in your soul for time and eternity, the precious hour when He, the seeking Saviour, found you, the repenting sinner. May God grant it for His name's sake.

Percy Lyon

It is believed that this preaching was given early in the 1950s.

This article concludes this series.