

No. 53

Living Water

'Living Water' is published by the Stone Publishing Trust
(Registered Charity 1034689)

'The Eagles', Headcorn Road, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BU

If you know of any one who might be interested in receiving this magazine, please pass their name and address to the Stone Publishing Trust. Copies of the next few issues will be sent to them free of charge.

Correspondents in the UK are welcome to use the Freepost address:–
Stone Publishing Trust,
FREEPOST TN3448,
Staplehurst,
TONBRIDGE, Kent, TN12 0BR

Quotations from the Bible in 'Living Water' are normally from the Darby translation or from the Authorised (King James) Version.

The permission of the Editor should be obtained before reproducing material contained in this magazine. It is the policy of the Trustees to encourage the use of articles for the work of the Lord wherever this is possible so long as it does not infringe the rights of others.

Articles are sometimes shortened or otherwise amended and for this the Editor takes full responsibility.

Editor: Mark Lemon

Printed by Christian Design & Print, High Street, Bures, Essex. CO8 5JG. UK

Living Water — Issue No. 53

Recent Ministry

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS — CHAPTER 7	4
Continuing the series on Romans based on Bible readings in Bromley	
LOVING ONE ANOTHER	Simon Burr 7
LEARNING FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT THE LORD ALLOWS	Jim Strachen 10

Poetry Selection

TEACH ME THE TRUTH	Francis Lockwood Green 14
ANOTHER DAY FINISHED	Alexander Carruthers 14
A SONG OF THE SAVIOUR	C. A. Tydeman 15
WE SEE JESUS	M. S. S. 17

Testimony Section

A SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH	18
The conversion of Arthur Roberts	

A Voice from the Past

GUIDANCE FROM THE LORD	George Muller 20
George Muller is best remembered today for the orphanages he founded in Bristol. Here he talks about the way he sought divine guidance.	
VISION	Stephen Carruthers 21
Can the vision that filled the early church be recovered?	
SECRET PROBLEMS — EVIL THOUGHTS	F. S. Marsh 23
The first of a series on practical problems that face believers	

A Word for Today

THREE MARKS OF TRUE SERVICE — SPIRITUALITY, PATIENCE AND POWER	J. H. Trevvett 25
---	-------------------

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS - CHAPTER 7

(Highlights of a Bible reading)

This chapter is one which we often find difficult to understand because it involves distinguishing between flesh and spirit in soul experience. The flesh in each of us wants its own way but the spirit of a converted person desires to please God. The apostle is speaking from his own experience, he had godly desires but he found something else getting in the way.

The first part of the chapter shows the proper place of the christian: we are to be to Another, and we are to serve in “newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter” (v.6). From God’s side that is settled through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus but getting it settled in our own souls is another matter.

The apostle has very skilfully prepared the ground for this part of the epistle. In chapter five he introduced the basis of the gospel, that we have been justified on the principle of faith and that we have peace towards God. The reality of forgiveness has been fully set out. Then, in chapter 6 Paul speaks of how we were bondmen of sin and have become bondmen of righteousness; now, in this chapter he is leading us to see that sinful flesh remains with us. It is doctrinally easy to see but practically difficult to cope with.

In its way, that is a good thing since there is a real need in our christian experience to be deeply exercised in soul by what we find in this chapter. The apostle is writing as a man who has come this way in his own experience and has found the way through it. He writes with the knowledge of the glorious prospect that he is going to develop in chapter eight. He therefore sets the spiritual exercise of this chapter before the saints in Rome as something well worth going through with because he knows what lies beyond it.

In the earlier part of chapter 7, Paul makes reference to the law because it is God’s standard. It is “holy...just and good”, but we can never answer to that standard. The apostle has already resolved the question whether our obligations are to the law or to Christ - they can only be to Christ. Now, any believer who acknowledges that seeks to please Christ as the new husband (see vs.2-4), and will want to do what is right. We come under the headship of Christ. It is not a matter of obedience to the law but to Christ. It is not that the divine standard set out in the law has been weakened, but that the law and Christ risen cannot both have authority over the soul.

To bring out the truth of this, the apostle uses the example of the law of marriage. The woman would be an adulterer if she were to be to another man while her husband is alive; it is also clear that one cannot be under the authority of two husbands at once. But in the application of this to us, the law does not lose its force by its dying but by our dying. It rules over us only while we live. We have died with Christ, so then we, “are made dead to the law by the body of the Christ”, that we should be to Him who has been “raised up from the among the dead in order that we should bear fruit to God” (v.4).

This is how the conflict of flesh and spirit comes about. There is the old sinful nature which we know so well, but the Spirit of God has started a work of new creation in each believer. What is linked with that new creation has desires after God, desires for what is right. We have to wait till chapter 8 to find how the Holy Spirit identifies Himself with that new creation.

The soul struggles and trials recorded in chapter 7 are those of a believer here on earth and seeking to find a way through. The question of our sins has been resolved for ever at the cross but the sinful nature of our flesh is still with us. The chapter is not dealing with sins committed, it is concerned with the root principle of sin found within us and it addresses the question of where relief is to be found. The evil spoken of here is the evil that is in our nature and the complete lack of power which we have to get rid of it. God has not given His Son to die for us so that we might then set about improving ourselves. He is insistent that we should look to the Lord for relief and support throughout - that we find Him as Deliverer. It is a mercy from God that takes any of us this way. By faith we have come into the wonderful relationships opened up in the next chapter and Satan is active to hinder our enjoyment of them. It is deliverance that clears the way.

The chapter deals with the practical experience of christians. It is worthy of note that the apostle refers to himself as “I” 37 times in this chapter. He is also prepared to say very definitely, “with me evil is there”. He even admits, what we have all to admit, that to be told the right thing to do provides an opportunity for the flesh to rebel and seek to do what is wrong. This battle is very wide. We are not just dealing with what we or the world may think of as corrupt, we have to recognise what Paul says here: “For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell” (v.18). The result is an inward struggle. When we discover what is in our hearts it shocks us sometimes. The devil works on what is within.

In our experience we may find that the same wrong things manifest themselves again and again. Yet underlying all, we do really desire the things of God. It is very encouraging thing, although we may feel very despondent about it, that we do want to do what is right even though we cannot find the power to do so. The strongest human desires to overcome the flesh will fail. We find that we are powerless to meet the enemy within. It is the realisation of our powerlessness that brings forth this cry:- “O wretched man that I am” Paul speaks of the law of sin which exists “in my members”. We find that is very real. Paul reached a point of utter weakness. He is conscious of his inability to do anything to alter that situation. Our only hope is to turn away from ourselves and fix our eyes firmly upon Christ. When we reach that we have arrived on safe ground.

So while we may be very often under the weight of these spiritual exercises Paul quite clearly got through them. That is an encouragement to us.

Under divine grace the believer, as renewed, learns:

that in our flesh good does not dwell;

to distinguish in ourselves between the one who wills to do good, and the sin which dwells within; and,

that when we will to do good, sin is too strong for us.

Having thus acquired knowledge of ourselves the remedy is not to seek to be better in the flesh, but for deliverance and this we have in Christ. The cry is not ‘How shall I?’ but ‘Who shall deliver me?’

What is established in the chapter are the great principles of how to give pleasure to God. There is much for regret in what we are speaking about but none the less the chapter shows what God is looking for from us by way of treasure and fruitfulness, and the real gain to be found in serving in “newness of spirit”. These are shining lights in the chapter and are set over against what we experience in ourselves - the great war that goes on within our hearts secretly and which Paul reveals here from his own experiences for our help and encouragement.

Highlights of a Bible reading in Bromley, 31 July 2001.

LOVING ONE ANOTHER

John 13: 34-35

15: 9-14

1 John 4: 7-12

My desire is to speak tonight about loving one another. If we know something of the love of God, it is to shine out from us.

In the law in the Old Testament we find our relationship with God is the first matter to be addressed, then we come to our relationship with one another. The law was not an arbitrary list of directions; God loved his people and gave instruction so that their relationships might be right both towards Himself and towards one another. We need to understand the spirit that lay behind the law. We need help from God Himself that we might love one another in a right way.

Loving our enemies

The Lord tells us to love our enemies and to “pray for those who despitefully use you”. The great example is found in the Lord Jesus Himself. There were those who hated Him without a cause but, the Lord loved them. He came to make known the love of God to such persons. Think of what it meant to the Lord to be rejected and hated. The people of Nazareth wanted to cast Him down the cliff. He was, as scripture says, cast away indeed as worthless by men. Because of who He was, He felt rejection and hatred as no other could but it did not change His attitude to convey the love of God.

If, for our part, we are going to love our enemies we have to get an impression of how God sees them. The start is to see how God sees us! We see what He has done for us because He loved us.

When I think about the grace of God, and the holiness of God I realise how unworthy I am. I have nothing to plead. Yet despite that God commends His love to us.

Joseph came to God’s view of his brothers. He was a young man and his brothers hated him. They cast him into a pit, they really wanted to kill him but they sold him into slavery instead. Joseph had all those years, to dwell on his anger but when his brothers came before him he had God’s view of the matter. God had sent him to Egypt before them to preserve life.

In our day there are those who hate the gospel and do all they can against christians.

May the Lord help us to pray for them. The great example of that is seen in Stephen. You cannot imagine a greater enemy than someone throwing a stone at you, to take your life away. What helped him to say “lay not this sin to their charge?”. He saw the Lord Jesus where he is now, and saw that He is the Son of Man. We are not be able to love anyone in this way unless by faith we see Jesus, and know that He is alive, and lives at God’s right hand and that He is still full of grace and love.

Loving one another.

The Lord sets the standard in His word: “love one another as I have loved you”. Think of His love! “Jesus having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end.” That is His love, a love that went all the way to the cross. That is the standard that we are asked to set ourselves. “As I have loved you.”

When we speak about love we are not speaking about sentiment, or even ‘liking’ I may like someone because of their personality, or even their sins. God does not say He likes us, He loves us! The Lord did not ask His own to like their enemies, or to like one another. He told them to love. You find a striking example of it with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. When he was brought so low he could not see, Ananias was told by the Lord to go and lay his hands on him and Ananias found that difficult. If we have similar difficulty let us remember the prayer of Ananias. He spoke to the Lord and expressed his fears. Yet the Lord told him to go, and he was obedient, and he reached out with both hands to Saul and said, “Saul, brother”.

Then the brethren in Damascus came into the matter, too, because when Saul’s life was in danger they was lowered him over the wall of the city in a basket. Have you ever been dependent on someone holding the end of a rope? Some years ago I was on one of those action courses that are supposed to help you to work with others in a better way. We were taken to a high disused railway viaduct and a rope was attached to the middle of arch. We had to let ourselves down on the rope. Once you had gone past the brickwork you were just in space. There was a safety rope which was held by a colleague. If anything went wrong I was dependant entirely on my colleague. Paul had no safety rope. He was in that basket with just that rope, and the people holding it were the same people in Damascus who knew he had come to seize them and put them to death. Years later Paul referred to this incident, he remembered how he was let down, and his life depended on those he had sought to destroy.

God's love is amazing, it can set people together. One might be afraid of another, yet God sets them together. That is marvellous to me. Without the love of God few in this room would ever have even met each other. I say to myself, 'Do I really appreciate those I am set with?' I recently listened to someone who was converted about six years ago and they said that until they came to know the Lord they had no idea that such a thing as christian fellowship existed! They had no concept that there was this network of people who loved each other. The Lord says "as I have loved you". Now I cannot say I have even come close to that, but that is the standard. God's standard does not change because of the way I am or because of my ability to meet it.

We read: "by this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine if ye have love among yourselves". What a wonderful witness! We know from the scriptures that "no one has seen God at any time" but there is to be a witness in God's people. In one sense, of course, God is His own witness in creation and the way that He acts but there is a witness in the church that God is love, that we love one another.

Was it easy for Peter, James and John to love one another? No! They were diverse personalities. The scripture tells us a little about some disciples, and a lot about others, and God set them together, and the Lord gave them this commandment, that they love one another. They could see how much the Lord cared for them, and loved them, and they would always remember it. Our measure in expressing love is our measure in having appreciated it ourselves.

All the New Testament writers had an appreciation of the love of the Lord and speak of different aspects of it, but John brings something additional in that he writes from the perspective of an old man, and can look back. By the time that he wrote his gospel and the epistles the other apostles had all gone, he had seen assemblies damaged and scattered, and he had seen error come in. Yet, as someone has put it, John's epistles spiral outwards and inwards but they come back to the same point: that God is love, that we are to have love amongst ourselves, and that "love is of God, and that everyone who loves has been begotten of God". I wonder whether the amazing truth of that has entered my soul? That if I show love to others it comes from God Himself, and therefore the standard is pure and holy.

I want to say one more thing about this matter of loving one another. I believe much of it is done in secret. If it is all show, and we are trying to receive glory from others for our great love, that is worthless. God would help us to love in secret.

Love finds its expression in care for one another. I sometimes wonder how much damage has been done through not caring? The first break down in the church, as recorded in the book of the Acts was because some of the widows were overlooked in the daily ministrations. The Lord would encourage us all to think of others more and ourselves less, and I say that to myself first and as an accusation to no one here.

We read here: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son...” (1 John 4:10). That is the most amazing comfort to me. If everything was based on my love for God, things would ebb and flow. I have bright days, and not so bright days, but God loved us and His love is perfect and utterly reliable. Then the apostle adds, “Beloved, if God has so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (v.11).

We will not get into the joy of christianity through our own thoughts, or study, but through appreciation of God’s love. The Scriptures bring to us the light of what God has done in His wonderful love. All is established perfectly in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord help us to love one another in a greater way

Simon Burr

Shortened version of an address at Preston, 7th April 2001

LEARNING FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT THE LORD ALLOWS

John 21: 1-14

Mark 4: 35-41

Luke 24: 26-35

My concern tonight, is that we might get the gain of the circumstances that the Lord allows. I have read of three different circumstances:

- first, Peter going to fish and toiling all night but catching nothing;
- then, the disciples in the boat with the Lord and the storm coming on the boat;
- finally, the two going to Emmaus, disappointed and disheartened.

There are many different circumstances that come upon us in every sphere of life, whether in our health, businesses or families. Sometimes we arrange our circumstances ourselves, without considering the Lord's mind. That is what Peter did in John 21. He went to fish. What happened? He caught nothing! He needed to be adjusted as we often do.

My concern is how we proceed in the various circumstances that arise so that we are able to find where the Lord is. I challenge my own heart about this. We may accept the circumstances we are in and recognise that they are ordered of the Lord, but how far do we recognise that it is the Lord Himself that is in it?

Peter went to fish. I do not think they would have been very jubilant that night in the boat. They toiled all night and caught nothing. How often we find that when we arrange our own circumstances there is no positive result? Does the Lord leave us like that? No! Here He comes Himself and calls to them saying: "Cast the net at the right side of the ship and ye will find". At the Lord's command they do so and have a great haul of fish.

John immediately says, "It is the Lord". John had gone off on the fishing trip as well as Peter but he recognises the Lord. This is for Peter's education. Peter had arranged this fishing expedition himself, without an indication from the Lord. Yet he comes to see where the Lord is and he wants to be where He is. Let us get to the Lord in these matters. That is the only way we will get the good of these experiences.

When they went out on the land they see a fire with fish laid on it and bread. What does the Lord do next? He says: "Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken". It was what they had taken themselves that the Lord intends to use. Then He says, "Come and dine". Think of the dignity of it!

Peter had something to learn here. He was about to be commissioned by the Lord to "feed my sheep". If he is to feed the sheep, he had to be fed himself. Let us rest in the blessed sovereignty of God. Then there is "the fish which ye have now taken". Peter was to have care and consideration for the sheep but he has a provision: there was that of which it could be said, "the fishes which ye have now taken". The Lord does not speak of them as what He had provided but "what ye have now taken".

When we come to Mark's gospel, chapter four where I read, everything is suitable. The Lord says, "Let us go over to the other side: and having sent away the crowd, they take Him with them, as He was, in the ship". There is nothing detrimental here. The Lord sets the journey on and the disciples take Him with them in the ship. All seems to be well. The Lord is leading and the disciples are of one mind in being with Him. Then, suddenly there is this violent gust of wind and the boat fills with water. This is the kind of circumstance which it is often difficult for us to get the gain.

If we put ourselves in a circumstance, as Peter did, we may well find that the Lord will bring in adjustment but here the disciples were doing the Lord's bidding yet there was this violent gust of wind and the boat was filled with water. Who had that in control? The One who was sleeping on the cushion. He had all in control. Yet we find it particularly difficult when we are doing the Lord's will and we encounter difficulty.

I remember an incident in my own life. I was about 17 years old at the time and I had taken a preacher to the railway station to catch an early train. It involved leaving the house on a dark winter morning at a quarter to five in the morning. Coming back there was ice on the road and on a corner I skidded and hit lorry coming the other way. I remember how discontented I felt. I had got up at four in the morning to do something for the Lord and the Lord had allowed me to come home with a bashed car! I never did get the gain of that matter because I never got the Lord in it.

We do need to get the Lord in these matters and it is more difficult when we are doing what is right. The disciples had nothing to do with this great gust of wind. The One who allowed it was asleep! Have we confidence in Him? That is the lesson of this. He is there, nothing could overcome Him. When we pray have we confidence that He is with us in things and He will see us through?

Now in Luke 24 we read of two people who are disappointed. They were going away very down hearted. Everything that they had built their hopes upon seemed to have failed. We know the disappointments we have had in the testimony and we know how the Lord has served us and continued to serve us by drawing near to us and attracting us to Himself.

As these two journey away from Jerusalem the Lord draws near to them. They are saying in effect, 'We have finished with this. We have pursued it and it has all come to an end'. How often we may feel like that! Well, the Lord draws near Himself and He ministers to them. He ministers something of Himself to their hearts. When they stop, it says, "he made as though he would go farther". He would have gone many mile farther still if it were needed. Oh what grace! Then He is made known to them in the breaking of the bread. What a revelation! He sets their hearts on fire so that immediately they want to return to Jerusalem and find the disciples. A little while before it had been too late to travel, but not once they had a touch from the Lord.

When they get back to Jerusalem they find that the Lord has served His own there. he made Himself known to them and then asked them if they had anything there to eat. He would draw their attention to what they had. We are not to live on negatives. We need to live in what is positive and living.

He asks, "Have ye anything here to eat? And they gave him part of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb" It is only a part. When things come from the divine side they are whole. When things come from our side it is part. That is all they could do. It is all we can do. But it says, He ate before them.

I think He enjoys what we enjoy together. The broiled fish had come through the fire. It speaks of God's sovereignty again, the recognition of God's sovereignty in how He has taken up each one of us. How could we arrange to be together in a company like this? We are all different, humanly it could not be done; but God in His sovereignty, has taken us up and we have to recognise that. They gave Him part of a broiled fish, it had gone through the fire, it had gone through what death was.

Then there is the honeycomb. It speaks of the sweetness of fellowship. Are we enjoying it? If we are enjoying it, He also enjoys it. Because it says, "and he took it and ate before them". The Lord rejoices in what we enjoy together.

May we be able to see where the Lord is in all these matters and therefore get the gain of them, for His name's sake.

Jim Strachen

Peterhead, 3rd March 2002.

TEACH ME THE TRUTH

Teach me the truth, Lord, though it put to flight
My cherished dreams and fondest fancy's play;
Give me to know the darkness from the light,
The night from day.

Teach me the truth, Lord, though my heart may break
In casting out the falsehood for the true;
Help me to take my shattered life and make
Its actions new.

Teach me the truth, Lord, though my feet may fear
The rocky path that opens out to me;
Rough it may be, but let the way be clear
That leads to Thee.

Teach me the truth Lord. Then false creeds decay,
Then man-made dogmas vanish with the night,
Then, Lord, on Thee my joyful soul shall stay,
Thou living Light.

Frances Lockwood Green

ANOTHER DAY FINISHED

Another day its course has run;
Its conflict past, its labour done.
'Tis time for silence and for sleep.
Have I sown good? Then good I'll reap.
Have I sown ill? the harvest day
Comes without fail, without delay.
Have I occasions used? They never
Return: are lost or gained for ever.
What did I do? What did I say?
I shall nor pass again that way...

O Lord, these things give serious thought.
But not the work that I have wrought.
Nor yet the word that I have said
Shall be the pillow for my head
To rest on from this day of mine,
This weary day! Nay, Lord, but Thine
Unchanging, and unmerited
Eternal love. There shall I rest
(Lord. I am Thine, when all is said!)
In happy peace, secure and blest,
As tired child on mother's breast.

Alexander Carruthers

A SONG OF THE SAVIOUR

I have a Friend, whose faithful love
Is more than all the world to me,
'Tis higher than the heights above,
And deeper than the deepest sea;
 So old, so new,
 So strong, so true;
Before the earth received its frame
He loved me. Blessed be His name!

He held the highest place above,
Adored by all the sons of flame,
Yet such His self denying love,
He laid aside His crown and came
 To seek the lost,
 And at the cost
Of heavenly rank and earthly fame
He sought me. Blessed be His name!

It was a lonely path He trod,
From every human soul apart,
Known only to Himself and God
Was all the grief that filled His heart;
 Yet from that track
 He turned not back
'Till, where I lay in want and shame,
He found me. Blessed be His name!

Then dawned at last that day of dread
When, desolate, yet undismayed,
With wearied frame and thorn crowned head
He, now forsaken and betrayed,
 Went up for me
 To Calvary's tree,
And, dying there in grief and shame,
He saved me. Blessed be His name!

Long as I live my song shall tell
The wonders of His matchless love:
And when at last I rise to dwell
In the bright home prepared above,
 My joy shall be
 His face to see,
And, bowing then with loud acclaim,
I'll praise Him. Blessed be His name!

C. A. Tydeman

“WE SEE JESUS”

“Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”

(Acts

7:56)

Behold, the Son of man
At God’s right hand on high,
’Tis by that glorious risen One,
We are to God made nigh.
Ah ! see His hands and feet,
His wounded side behold,
From thence for us on Calvary’s cross
The blood once freely flowed.
What matchless, wondrous grace,
That’s God’s beloved Son
Should stoop so low, and bear the cross,
For sinners lost, undone!
But oh ! what boundless joy !
His grief and shame are o’er;
God’s glorified, exalted Son
All heaven doth now adore.
Nor is He there alone,
The people to Him given,
Raised up and quickened with their Head,
Have now their place in heaven.
In spirit there with Him,
We rest in that bright home,
In patience waiting for that day,
When Christ our Lord will come.
Then we shall see His face,
And bear His image bright,
And cast our crowns before His feet
With rapture and delight.

M. S. S.

St. Petersburg, June 10th, 1877

A SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

The conversion of Arthur Roberts

Arthur Roberts was born in 1912 in Barrow in Furness. His father, Thomas was a government inspector in the shipyards and also a leading Freemason who drank heavily. His mother, Beatrice, was a church attending woman whose only yardstick was that everybody should do their duty. He had two sisters, Rita and Myrtle. It was by local standards a respectable family, if a thoroughly worldly one. One of his grandmothers was however a real love of the Lord Jesus and she prayed often for the family. Arthur was a typical local boy, attending the grammar school and often in his spare time, going on long bicycle rides.

The family moved to Portsmouth and Arthur went to the Dockyard School and qualified as a marine engineer. When he had finished his studies, against advice, he joined the merchant navy as a sea-going marine engineer. he wanted to see the world and to get away from home! Life on ships in the Middle East was not the best for his health but there was a great deal of freedom and he enjoyed playing the mandolin, the company, the Indian food, cheap cigarettes, good money and the lack of responsibility. Of course, during the depression there was not much work going in Britain. On his forth voyage he became very ill with dysentery and sinus trouble and he was hospitalised in Port Said, Egypt. Smoking sixty cigarettes a day did not help and he deteriorated an it was not thought that he would live. The Hospital Chaplain who was sent for started crying and Arthur told him 'It is not you who is dying, it is me!' However, God had other plans for Arthur and he recovered.

While on the ships he met many people of different faiths, including Hindus, Muslims and Jews. He read many books including the Koran and the Bible. he saw life as a struggle by man to reach God - whoever and whatever God might be. Life seemed to him to be futile and pointless.

Arthur returned to England where he was in an out of hospital and had a several operations. While off work he bought a car and toured the country. On one of these trips he visited his sister Myrtle who was studying at Reading University. She had been converted through the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. One evening there was a preaching by Dr Howard Guinness (of the beer and finance family) who was very active in the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. Arthur said afterwards 'No doubt he preached the gospel well, but it meant nothing to me'. He was more affected by

the happiness of the young christians at the university. he told Dr Guinness, 'It is alright you telling people this, but I have seen the world and what you are saying will not work'.

Dr Guinness was scheduled to preach at University College, london and he invited Arthur to attend. He also invited him to visit him at his room in the Bonnington Hotel. Arthur maintained that all religion was a futile attempt by men to reach God, and that he himself was caught up in this attempt. In reply, Dr Guinness explained that God had reached out to humanity in Christ. Furthermore through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross the distance between men and God had been completely removed and that those who put their faith in that finished work God would accept, as He had accepted His own beloved Son. He drew a diagram showing bridges across a ravine, and then a cross which removed the ravine. Arthur's problem was simple now, he just did not believe it. Even so, he carried the diagram around in his pocket for years - long after he had come to know the Lord Jesus for himself.

On one occasion Howard Guinness invited all those who had received Christ to stand up. Arthur was, as far as he could see, the only person left sitting. Young men would try to encourage him to 'just believe'. His standard answer was 'I can't'.

The last preaching at University College was a powerful one, but as usual the message left him with an empty, unfulfilled desire. The call came, 'Stand up all those who have accepted the Lord Jesus as Saviour'. In front of him was a row of Indian students. Arthur said to himself - 'I have been amongst you and I know that you do not believe, if you say you believe this, then I will say it too'. So when they stood up he did as well. He avoided the preacher knowing that he had deceived those there and embarrassed by the young men who shook his hand warmly, welcoming him as a brother and offering him tracks. He vowed to get out of the hall as quickly as possible and that he would never come back.

Feeling utterly miserable and dejected, he boarded the train for Abbey Wood to get home. Over and over he asked himself 'Why can't I believe'. Then he heard a voice - he never knew whether it was within him or outside - 'Arthur. its not that you can't believe, it is that you won't.' That word hit him and he got out his Bible saying 'If that is the case Lord, I don't know what it really means, but I will believe Your word from cover to cover'. He immediately realised that God had reached

him and that he was the Lord's. he got out of the train happier than he had ever been in his life!

Walking back home through Abbey Wood he was filled with joy. 'Wow', he thought, 'the Bible says, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this sycamore tree be rooted up and cast into the sea and it will happen - I had better be careful, just think of what could happen to one of these trees in the wood!' He was certain that if he had told a tree to move that evening it would have done so!

He was different at home but unsure what to do next. He was the Lord's but he was just starting the path of discipleship. The challenges of the path of faith lay ahead and, though he did not then know it, the hard battle he was to have to give up cigarettes.

This account is based on material provided at the request of Mrs Gladys Piper.

GUIDANCE IN THE WAY OF THE LORD

George Muller (1806-1898) is best known for his work in Bristol and especially for founding a well known orphanage there. Here, he sets out how he ascertained the will of God in matters both large and small. In seeking the Lord's mind, nothing can be substituted for our individual relations with God, but what George Muller has to say is worth pondering.

I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to the matter to be considered. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling, or to simple impression. (If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.) I seek the will of the Spirit of God, through, or in connection with, the word of God. The Spirit and the word need to be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He lead in any way con-

trary to the scriptures.

Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will when considered in connection with the word and the Holy Spirit.

I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.

Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.

George Muller

VISION

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

Proverbs 29:18

We cannot read in the Acts of the Apostles the account of the early spread of christianity without being strongly conscious of the powerful dynamic forces which the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost released among men. Hostility, ridicule, ostracism, persecution, physical hardships and sufferings were unable to stop the power of the witness of those ordinary men, indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Every weapon aimed at them by the enemy fell blunted to the ground as with the irresistible force and speed of an explosion, the testimony of our Lord spread over the earth.

Within thirty years of the crucifixion, by the prodigious labours of a small band of dedicated men the truth of the gospel had reached nearly every province of the far-flung Roman Empire, with christian communities established in practically every important commercial centre. By the end of the second century there were christian colonies all over Asia Minor and the near East, in Spain and France, Italy and Germany, the Adriatic Coast and North Africa. In Rome alone, historians tell us, believers numbered no less than 50,000. Outside the boundaries of the Roman Empire christianity had spread eastward all over the Persian kingdom and beyond. In the first 250 years of our era, without modern means of transport or communication, thousands upon thousands of souls had been won for Christ over an area

stretching from Spain in the west to Central Asia in the east, from Ireland in the north to the Upper Nile in the south. If the momentum had been maintained there would not today be a corner of the earth where the story of God's grace had not been announced, and where believers in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ could not be found.

We may well ask what it was that achieved so much in the early days of christianity and made it so effective among men, and why it is that today christian witness is largely so insipid and fruitless, marked by so much labour and so little result? Is there a way back to first principles and to first love, to truly effective witness in our selfish, modern, Godless world? What made our brethren, who lived in the first and second centuries so different from ourselves, so vital and so effective?

I believe that the answer to these question may be summarised in one word: 'vision'. The early christians had a vision of world need; they had a vision of the sufficiency of Christ and the Holy Spirit to meet every human need; they had a vision of their returning Lord, so they laboured, not allowing their vision to grow dim, as if each day of their lives was the last! Can we recapture that vision?

"We beheld his glory", said John and the vision held him through a long life of service and through exile on Patmos. "I press toward the mark", said Paul, "Have I not seen Christ Jesus my Lord?" The vision held him, "in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings...in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own race, in perils from the nations, in perils in the city, in perils in the desert, in perils on the sea...in hunger and thirst, in fashings often, in cold and nakedness". Martyrdom awaited him, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand"; "the Lord the righteous judge", held his vision, and he was faithful and effective to the last.

"Shortly I must put off my tabernacle", said Peter; the moment was approaching of which the Lord had spoken to him: "Another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not". Yet the vision held him: "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty".

Stephen, the first martyr, is sustained in the crucial moment of his testimony by a vision of the "glory of God and Jesus". The vision that inspired his effective witness ("they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke") held his gaze to the last. He dies triumphantly, with his eyes on Him, speaking to Him; "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit".

As we approach the great climax of human history, as the conflict between good and evil, light and darkness, truth and error, becomes more acute, what will hold us and inspire us, what will inject strength into our weakness? What will produce convicting impact on our fellow men and women in this day of such spiritual need? The vision that held our brethren at the beginning, and sent them forth conquering and to conquer, “every way afflicted, but not straitened; seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up; persecuted but not abandoned; cast down but not destroyed”, tireless, firm immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, in unselfish, dedicated witness. The Lord held their affections and their vision; the Holy Spirit; ungrieved, indwelt and empowered them, and no obstacle could bar their way, no enemy overcome them.

At the end of the age responsibility lies heavily on every believer in Christ and unprecedented opportunity beckons the disciple of Christ. Are we prepared to leave all and follow Him, and “looking steadfastly on Jesus” have our part in witnessing to Him and His saving grace, before the night comes in which no one can work? The radiancy of the glad tidings of the “glory of the Christ” will then dispel the darkness in the souls of many, and something of the irresistible power of this witness will be known at the end as well as at the beginning, and many the world over who are turning in their disillusionment from nominal christianity to false but very active cults will see a power at work and catch a vision, which will eclipse in their souls all the devil’s counterfeits.

We have nothing to lose but our sloth, and a world to conquer for Him! With our vision held by Him, what could not yet be done in the cause of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us?

Stephen Carruthers

SECRET PROBLEMS — EVIL THOUGHTS

Owing to their very nature, evil thoughts are kept secret and often occasion great distress of soul. Jesus said, “Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts”. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” The Apostle Paul wrote, “Evil is present with me . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this body of death?”

When evil thoughts arise Satan would suggest that we never could have been converted at all or such thoughts would never occur, and thus would he harass and seek to cause doubt and unbelief.

The truth is that “sin in the flesh,” our evil nature, is not improved when we are converted. The believer in Jesus can truly say, God has forgiven all my sins; but then has to learn that the flesh is still the flesh and unchanged. Scripture never speaks of “sin in the flesh” being forgiven. It says, “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh”. God judged it unsparingly at the cross. We are called upon to align ourselves with God’s view and judge it with all its fruits unsparingly too. Deliverance is known when the soul turns in faith to the risen and glorified Christ, and the heart triumphantly cries, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”,

Though the flesh is still in us that is no reason why it should be allowed to act. Although evil thoughts arise, they are not to be encouraged, but, on the contrary, must be judged before God. The believer has the power of the Holy Spirit of God to this end.

Practically, we need ever to remember that our minds cannot maintain a void. Thoughts we will have - good or evil, pure or impure. Hence the import of the exhortation, “Whatsoever things are true ... honest ... just ... pure ... lovely ... of good report ... think on these things. A similar word is given to Timothy, “Meditate upon these things: give thyself wholly to them”. “Refuse the evil and choose the good”. We can decline to allow our minds to travel on the line of what is evil, and we can occupy them with that which is good. Read what is pure. Refuse to listen to what is not pure. Speak what is pure. “Keep thyself pure”.

It must and will be a continuous conflict. We are in a corrupt world which is constantly making its appeal to every element of the flesh within. Yet there is power for overcoming, for we have the grace of Christ, the support of the Spirit of God, the cleansing effect of the word of God, and the wholesome atmosphere of the company of the people of God to preserve us.

We may well pray, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer”.

F. S. Marsh
1924

THREE MARKS OF TRUE SERVICE SPIRITUALITY, PATIENCE AND POWER

Acts 6: 5 & 8

11: 1-5

13: 6-12

Romans 12: 12

Introduction

I want to draw attention to three servants — Stephen, Peter, and Paul. With each of these servants there is an outstanding feature. With Stephen it is spirituality. In Peter’s case it is patience, and with Paul, power. Those are the three things I want to speak of — spirituality, patience and power.

Stephen — Spirituality in Service

Most of us are acquainted with the history of Stephen. I refer particularly to his beginning. It is said that “they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit”. He was a filled vessel, “full of faith and the Holy Spirit”. These features marked him as amongst the saints, but we also read of Stephen’s public movements in service, and then he is said to be “full of grace and power”, not faith exactly, for faith is the inward thing, but “full of grace and power”.

These four features regarding Stephen are of great importance. He was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and then he was full of grace and power. That is the basis from which Stephen’s remarkable service flows forth. It was not a lengthy service, but it was powerful and he served as being filled. Oh! that one might serve like that! If the servant is filled, there is no room for admixture no room for ulterior or double motives in the service.

Then it is said that being full of grace and power, Stephen did great wonders and miracles among the people. His deportment, as serving, reminds us, surely, of the grace and features of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would plead for greater attention to this matter of spirituality in service. In Luke’s gospel we are reminded of persons who were filled with the Spirit. Thus John the baptist, and Zacharias, and Elizabeth, are all said to have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Then it is said of Mary: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee” (Luke 1: 35), and again of Simeon that “the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he should see the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2: 25, 26). Then, it is said of Simeon that “he

came in the Spirit into the temple” (v. 27). What a trustworthy vessel is this man, one, as we may say, moving under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Now these are the individuals who have to do with the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Simeon had spiritual power, for as he took the Babe in his arms, he blessed God. That was an evidence of His spirituality; and after he had blessed God, he blessed Mary and Joseph.

Stephen was full of grace and power in service and he is almost at once arraigned before the Jewish Council. It is as if Satan would say, ‘This cannot go on!’ At first the Council could not resist the wisdom and Spirit with which he spoke but his spirituality shines through his countenance for they saw him as having the face of an angel.

Another very precious thing about Stephen is that he was not only marked by spirituality, but by a very wide knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. In Luke 12:12 the Lord in encouraging His disciples, tells them they were not to be careful as to what they should say when brought before the synagogues, magistrates, and powers. He says, “for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the hour itself what should be said”. Now we have the thing exemplified in Stephen. He is full of grace, full of power, full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit and he begins to speak. One has often been ashamed of one’s little knowledge of Scripture when reading this seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. How few of us could give an impromptu resume of the testimony, and the ways of God in it, as Stephen does here! He has no time to prepare his address, but he is taught in the same hour.

He begins by speaking about the “God of glory”, and says, He appeared to our father Abraham. There are no partial thoughts or feelings with Stephen, he would claim even those men sitting in the council as of Abraham. Then he speaks about eight others who were links in the chain of testimony Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David, and Solomon, showing what wonderful knowledge he had of the Holy Scriptures, how he must have read them.

How we are challenged by our comparative ignorance of the Holy Scriptures! Here is one who can give a summary of the ways of God, beginning with the “God of glory” and coming down to the Just One, interposing this delightful remark as to Moses: “This is the Moses who said ... A prophet shall God raise up to you out of your brethren like me” (Acts 7: 37). What kind of man was Moses? He stands unique among God’s servants. He said “My doctrine shall drop as rain, My speech flow down as dew” (Deuteronomy 32: 2). He was a gracious minister, a faithful servant and the Spirit of God says of him that he was very meek, above all men

that were upon the face of the earth. Do you not think that the spirit of Moses had its counterpart in the spirit of Stephen as he stood before the council? Has he hard feelings about his circumstances? Is he becoming irritated by this persecution? Not at all! He is concerned about the testimony of God. He speaks with power of the coming of the Just One, and as he mentions the Just One we find that there is a remarkable change over the council. They show their hostility. But Stephen with great courage continues his witness, for spirituality involves great moral power and courage and he says, “O stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers, ye also” (Acts 7: 51).

Then as these men were gnashing their teeth against him, Stephen looks up into heaven. Has Stephen’s demeanour changed? Has he lost his spirituality? Is he weakened in any degree? Listen to this: “But being full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7: 55). There is no diminution, no deterioration; he is still full of the Holy Spirit. Whether in persecution or in public testimony, or as in the company of the believers, he is full. He, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven and sees “the glory of Godly and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”. Again he renders testimony not as to all that he had seen, but to part of it. He does not say, ‘I see the glory of God and Jesus’, but “I behold ... the Son of man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7: 55, 56). It was the Son of man. How discriminative! He was a man of spiritual discernment. The Son of man, refers to the testimony publicly, involving finally, the supreme authority of Christ in that day when He will cover the whole earth with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.

As Stephen was saying these things, they rushed upon him. Now mark again this great feature of spirituality in Stephen. They “rushed upon him with one accord;” — a serious word that — “and having cast him out of the city they stoned him” (Acts 7: 57, 58). How did they stone Stephen? They stoned Stephen as he was praying! Does he change his position? No. He does not alter his posture. “They stoned Stephen, praying, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7: 59).

Peter — Patience in Service

Referring to Peter, what is emphasised is the great need of patience. It is said of Peter that as he went up to Jerusalem those who were of the circumcision contended with him. Now we have an atmosphere of contention. What were these men contending against? Consciously or unconsciously, it was against the operations of God, and of the Holy Spirit. Think of that! They contended with Peter. Does he assert his apostleship? Does he say, ‘The thing is so plain and apparent that I do not need to give an account of it?’ Not at all The scripture says, “But

Peter began and set forth the matter to them in order”. These contenders are to be met by patience.

Think of the kind of man that Peter was naturally. He had been an impulsive! forceful man; he had cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. As they came to Capernaum on one occasional men came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the didrachmas?” And he said “Yes” (Matthew 17: 24). Why should he reply for Jesus? Why not wait to ask his Lord about the tribute money? But the Lord, in His tender, ever patient, grace, anticipates Simon and says “the kings of the earths from whom do they receive custom or tribute? from their own sons or from strangers?” (v. 25). But, He says, “that we may not be an offence” (v. 27) — that is the principle that Peter must learn. We are not to offend.

Peter in this chapter is marked by great patience; a quality totally foreign to him on the line of nature but having acquired great spirituality and patience he “set forth the matter to them in order” — not always an easy thing to do. The tendency is ever present with us to exhibit the irritability of the flesh in such matters, for impatience marks us naturally: instead of which the Lord would have us in patience and grace to rehearse what we have known to be the operations of God through the Spirit. So, as Peter rehearses the matter and speaks of the Holy Spirit falling on them he adds “Who indeed was I to be able to forbid God?” (Acts I 1: 17).

The first impression that Peter would give to these contenders was just this, “I was in the city of Joppa praying”. Think of ministry coming like that! His patience flowed from that same dependence upon God. Many things are given to us, committed to us on this line of praying. Peter says, “I was in the city of Joppa praying,” not preaching, nor being entertained by Simon the tanner; but the first thing in his mind was that he was in the city of Joppa praying, and he became “in an ecstasy”.

Our service as amongst the brethren, and even those that may contend because they fail to understand what is said, needs to be marked by this precious feature of patience. Peter stresses it: he says, “in your faith have also virtue ... in temperance endurance” (2 Peter 1: 5, 6). He encourages the saints to be patient in relation to all that they are passing through. Again Scripture reminds us of the long patience of the labourer: he has long patience; he waits for the early and the latter rain.

Peter was able in moral power to silence the contenders; and we should be ready to serve like that.

Paul — Power in Service

I refer briefly to Paul, who was serving in a scene of hostility. He was serving in the

glad tidings, and the scripture says that at Salamis “they announced the word of God” but there is no record of any results. Now, I believe the patience of Peter finds expression in Paul, in relation to this service amongst men. It says, “Having passed through the whole island” the whole of it, as if to say they were combing it out. And when they came to Paphos, there was there an intelligent man, Sergius Paulus. The Spirit of God designates him thus — an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God. Would that there were more like that today! Paul is in the public sphere: he is serving men along with Barnabas, and as he seeks to serve the enemy becomes increasingly active. I believe we are surrounded by this kind of thing today.

There was a man named Bar-jesus; what a fine name that seemed! How many of the simple and unsuspecting ones have been deceived by names like that — Bar-jesus — son of Jesus. He is with the deputy — an influential man. The Spirit of God unmasks him, calling him “Elymas the magician”. saying, “(for so his name is by interpretation)”. He withstood Barnabas and Saul, “seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith”. Here is a direct and definite opposer of the truth and opposed to the gospel preachers. How is that kind of thing to be met?

We meet this kind of person time after time in our course through this world. There are the magicians, there are the spiritualists, the so-called christian scientists there are the millennial dawnists. How are we to meet these deceivers? How did Paul meet them? Would Gamaliel have helped him here? Anything he had learned at the feet of Gamaliel would be useless in such a crisis as this. Paul did not attempt to meet him as come from a school of modernism, or from a theological institute, or from the universities of the world. Paul came from Antioch, where there was a spiritual atmosphere, charged with piety and dependence. That is the spirit in which Paul meets this challenge.

See what strength and moral power he has acquired! “Filled with the Holy Spirit ... said, O full of all deceit and all craft: son of the devil.” He names this magician according to his right designation. He did not root him up. He left him as he said, “Thou shalt be blind ... for a season”. Such was Paul’s power, and I believe we may have something akin to that in these last and difficult days.

We may ask what was the secret of this great power, wielded by the apostle? The secret of it was prayer. He began with it. “Behold, he is praying” (Acts 9: 11), is what was said to Ananias. He finished up with praying; for in 2 Timothy he reminds Timothy that he prayed night and day, having in the meantime exhorted the Thessalonian saints to pray without ceasing. Do we pray night and day? Paul says,

“unceasingly I have the remembrance of thee in my supplications night and day” (2 Timothy 1: 3). That was the kind of servant Paul was. His power in a hostile scene came that way; he was a man of prayer.

Conclusion

I would remind you in closing of that remarkable expression in Romans 12: 12 — “As regards hope, rejoicing”. That was seen in Stephen: he was rejoicing in hope. He was soon to be actually taken up, for he could say, “Lord Jesus receive my spirit”. What kind of spirit was that? A spirit ready to be transported. Are our spirits like that? We must often feel how much mellowing is needed to take place in our spirits but Stephen says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”. He was rejoicing in hope, and that in regard of “the glory of God” (Romans 5: 2).

Then we have “as regards tribulations, enduring”. A remarkable and much needed word in these last days, when the pressure falls heavily on believers, as upon people in general. But we need patience in serving. Then finally there is to be perseverance in prayers so that our service publicly might be marked by moral courage and power, so that we might rebuke what is unholly and not of God.

We need skill to watch over and guard carefully the work of God however faintly it may appear; for we are reminded in the two persons, Sergius Paulus and Elymas the magician, of two results from the preaching: the one a savour of life unto life and the other a savour of death unto death. Sergius Paulus was as a plant which the Father had planted: an intelligent man, desiring to hear the word of God. As he saw the effect of Paul’s power and teaching, he believed being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. But alongside of this delicate plant there is this noxious weed, this deadly poison and how much skill is needed so that we should secure the good and discover the work of God in souls.

May the Lord help us in these three things, so that we shall be found in our service “As regards hope rejoicing: as regards tribulation, enduring: as regards prayer, persevering”.

J. H. Trevvett, Abbreviated address at Belfast. (Date unknown).