

No. 60

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. C08 5JG. UK

Living Water — Issue No. 60

Recent Ministry

Page

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS — CHAPTER 16 Concluding the series on Romans based on Bible readings in Bromley	1
VICTORY	John Greeves 3

Poetry Selection

THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE	J. W. Wilkinson 8
HEAVENLY FAVOURS	George Cutting 9

Testimony Section

THE FORTUNE TELLER AND HIS FEE	10
--------------------------------	-----------

A Voice from the Past

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY — 1929 Continuing the extracts from Robert Dunn's diary. In this issue he shares his thoughts on the prophet Haggai	Robert Dunn 12
THE MAJESTY OF GOD'S WAYS Extracts from the notebook of Frank Purday.	13

A Word for Today

GOD'S WORK IN US IN GRACE AND GOVERNMENT	Gerald Cowell 14
---	-------------------------

Reprint From "Living Water" No. 13

GOD'S WAYS IN GOVERNMENT The final extract from the early issues of "Living Water"	George Cutting 21
---	--------------------------

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS — CHAPTER 16

(Highlights of a Bible reading)

In the opening verses of the chapter we get the commendation of a sister, Phoebe, she is described as, “minister of the assembly which is in Chenchrea”. A little later she is spoken of as a “helper of many” and Paul includes himself amongst those that had been helped. It would bring home to us how wide the service of a sister in the Lord may be. Women are to be silent in the assembly (see 1 Corinthians 14:34) and obviously Paul is not saying anything here which would be contrary to that. Nor may a woman teach in the church and the reason for that is found in 1 Timothy 2:12-14.

Phoebe was a sister who would be a benefit to the christian company that she was in. The word “minister” here relates to one who fills out the needed service. That is Phoebe’s part, yet to do what is needed it is necessary to have spiritual discernment as to what the need is.

The basic meaning of the word “minister” here is ‘to serve at table’ but it extends well beyond that. We get some examples of the service of the sisters in Scripture. After the Lord healed Peter’s mother-in-law we are told that she “rose up and served them”. Then Philip the evangelist had four virgin daughters who prophesied, they had the ability to bring in the mind of the Lord and would do so while recognising the headship that God has ordained.

Whatever the variety of needed service the idea of lowliness and meeting the needs of others is never to be lost. The Lord Himself set the pattern of this, telling His own that He was amongst them as the One that served. He demonstrated that it was so by washing the disciples feet.

Phoebe was ready to take up responsibility. That is necessary for each one in the christian company and we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in it. Church history records how many cases of revival have sprung from the concerns of Godly sisters who have committed themselves to prayer as having a clear discernment of the need that existed in a place.

“Minister” is not given in the list of the gifts in either Ephesians or Corinthians and that helps us to understand its meaning. Ministry, in the broad sense in Scripture calls for a sense of responsibility and desire to serve. It is really to take up whatever will advance the interests of the Lord’s people and thus of the Lord Himself. Where ministers are mentioned in the first epistle to Timothy the qualifications are substantially of a moral kind, they were to be “grave ... holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (1 Timothy 3:8-9). This is intended to cause us to have an elevated view of what is done for the people of God. Whatever Phoebe did she would have done as unto the Lord, and for the believers

in the place. This is ministering in the assembly and is it to give dignity to anything that is done in the way of service whether it is practical things or more spiritual matters, they are to be done for the Lord.

As privileged to have part in the assembly of God, we should each take up responsibility in the measure in which the Lord may give us grace and capacity for it. It is not right that I should be a passenger: I should contribute what I rightly can. Then, there is also the side of seeking grace from the Lord and recognising that it is a dignified company into which we are called and therefore it is not an optional matter whether we take up our responsibilities. As doing so all should be done for the glory of God and is in no way to feed my natural ambition or desire for a place.

Paul characteristically concludes his epistles with a series of practical exhortations. Following this pattern, Paul gives us a list of persons who are examples of what Christians should be. We might well look for some connection between what the apostle has given us in this letter and the results to be looked for in those who received it.

For those named in this list it must have been very encouraging to know that Paul was thinking of them. Each of these persons had their own place in his affections. We should seek to be able to name persons because of the features of Christ we have found in them and value them accordingly. Paul speaks of some as “my fellow-workmen in Christ Jesus”. Paul is not elevating himself, he is making much of what he knew was in the believers in Rome. He was not seeking to establish himself as some great apostle, but takes the ground of a fellow-workman with others.

There is a very serious warning in verses 17 and 18: “But I beseech you, brethren, to consider those who create divisions and occasions of falling, contrary to the doctrine which you have learnt, and turn away from them. For such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting”. There were dangers abroad and the believers in Rome were to be on their guard. The fact that there were solid and reliable persons in the assembly in Rome was not to be taken as proof that things were going to continue, hindrances could easily come in and there was a need to use “diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). There have always been those who oppose. It was so in the apostles’ day and Paul says that after my departure perilous times shall come. Those times continue until now.

The question therefore is how can a believer find a right way. The Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation but also Christianity is to be exemplified in those who practise it. It is good to see that there were so many who were practising

their christian faith in this chapter.

Paul exhorted the Roman believers to turn away from those who created occasions of stumbling. This is a challenge to us and we can each test ourselves. Do we have a moral resentment about such things. Do we turn away from bad doctrine and bad practice or are we drawn to it in some way?

This is so serious because there is the deliberate bringing in of what is wrong. There are persons who are creating divisions and occasions of falling and they do it for their own gain and to feed their self importance. It is not just a difference of understanding or difference of opinion. This is someone deliberately bringing something in to promote themselves rather than the Lord. Where it is allowed it brings damage to both companies and individuals. Paul knew what he was talking about to the christians in Rome. Godly, and committed to the Lord as they were, they needed this warning and so do we.

Through God's mercy we can join in together in the last verse, "the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Amen." What a God we have that gives us the opportunity to be found in this way, gathered to His name.

Based on a Bible reading at Bromley, 27 August 2002

(This concludes the series on the Epistle to the Romans based on Bible readings in Bromley and Croydon during 2000-2002.)

VICTORY

Luke	24: 1-9
1 Corinthians	15: 51-57
1 John	5: 3-5
Hebrews	13: 5-6
John	16: 33

I want to speak tonight about victory, the victory of the Lord Jesus. His victory was very different from every other victory. Down the years there have been victories won but often they have proved to be very hollow and the problem comes back again. The victory that the Lord Jesus has won was a victory once for all, a victory over this world and Satan and all his power. Part of the wonder of it is that those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ can be victorious too.

We see the Lord's victory at every stage in His life. Right at the beginning of His life of service He met the power of the devil in the temptations and was victorious. The Lord had been forty days without food and was hungry. At that time of weakness the devil made his great attack. Jesus defeated him in every

temptation. The devil came back in many guises throughout the Lord's life. Think of that man, Legion, whom the Lord met when He went into the land of the Gadarenes. Satan had that man totally under his power but Jesus was able to defeat Satan and secure that man for Himself. What a wonderful result that was. There were those like the Pharisees and Sadducees who sought to attack, criticise and belittle the Lord. The Lord was able for them and to make nothing of their arguments. He had the victory. They planned to catch Him out in what He said but not one was able to do it. Some had to acknowledge that "never man spoke thus, as this man speaks".

I suppose Satan thought when Jesus was betrayed by Judas, given that mockery of a trial by Pilate and then crucified, that he had got the victory, but it was not so! At Calvary Jesus had to suffer; there He went into death. What outward weakness marked Him as going that way yet, even at that time, what a victory He was accomplishing as He went through with everything there on the cross. He was bearing our sins on Calvary's cross. If you do not know Him as the One who has borne your sins there, I want you to know Him in that way. God had the right to move in judgment against the whole of humanity at that moment. His wrath did come but it came upon Jesus as He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice on the cross. It is wonderful to think of what He did there at Calvary and the victory that was won by Him there.

He was taken down from the cross and put in a tomb but after three days He rose out of death. That proved the reality of His victory over Satan. The power of death had been broken. Throughout time Satan had used the fear of death to keep people in bondage. Christ had broken that power. He was risen.

That is why I started with this reference in Luke 24 because He is the One who has won the victory. He is the only One who was any match for Satan. You and I are no match for Satan. We are not able for him but Jesus has had the victory. He has broken Satan's power but is Satan any different? He is never any different; he still wants to prevent people from coming to Jesus, coming to know Him as their Saviour. Still he seeks to hinder believers in their offering of praise and worship to the Saviour who has died for them.

The devil may act in many ways and bring various things upon us to occupy us and hinder us from having our place in worship before the God who has created us and the Saviour who has died for us. Yet when he seeks to hinder us, let us remember that he is a defeated foe.

I read in Corinthians because there we see the wonderful part of a believer in the Lord Jesus who has died. Death holds no power for a believer in the Lord Jesus.

Satan is defeated even there. A person who has been saved by Jesus, if death comes, goes to be with the Saviour.

Then the Lord is coming at a time fixed by the Father for those of us who believe in Him and are alive at that time. The Lord's victory will be seen in that too. All will be caught up to be with Jesus and thus we shall for ever be with Him. As we read, "We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed".

I was thinking particularly of the end of the passage, "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is thy sting? where, O death, thy victory? Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin the law; but thanks to God, who gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ". It is only in Him that we have this victory! The Lord Jesus Himself is the One who has done the work. He is the one who will have the victory by taking each one of us to go to be with Him. Every hindrance will be removed. God will have finished His work.

We can think of our brother up in Scotland who has just finished his earthly course. In one sense he finished in absolute weakness, wasted away to nothing, but Jesus claimed one of His own. What a victory! It is this that helps the believer to view death rightly. It is going into the presence of Jesus Himself. We can think too of the christian martyrs, down through the years. They had to suffer for the Lord Jesus but through Him they have the victory! The believer on the Lord Jesus has the victory in death. It is the Lord's victory. It is all to do with Him.

In the section read in 1 John, I was thinking about the way that there is a testing and practical side to this. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. For all that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world; and this is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, our faith". Victory over the world is victory over Satan for he is its god and prince. When we trust implicitly in our Lord Jesus Christ we get the victory over the world and over Satan. Maybe we need to become weak in our own estimation before we can actually have the victory as it is in Jesus. Some examples from the Scripture may help us.

Peter was one who was ready to say, "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death". Yet when the Lord was taken and Peter followed into the house of the High Priest he was not able for the situation. When he had denied the Lord three times and the cock had crowed, he suddenly realised that he had done just what the Lord had said he would do. What weakness marked him in the flesh. His trust in his own flesh, everything that he had, was dashed to nothing; he was a broken man. The Lord had said to him, "Satan has demanded

to have you, to sift you as wheat; but I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou, when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren” (Luke 22:31-33). You might say, ‘In his absolute weakness, how could he later confirm his brethren?’ But he had learned something. He had learned to trust in the Lord and not in himself.

Paul, too, had to learn the same lesson. He had great zeal, determination and energy. He had to be broken right down before he was able to have the boldness to speak in the name of Jesus.

I speak for myself, and probably for others, for I expect that most of us know what it is to trust in our own strength in the things of the Lord and then to go through the bitter experience of realising that we did not show forth properly the right testimony of Jesus. I have trusted in my own strength and I needed to be broken down. You have had experiences of that kind perhaps and realised that we have no strength other than in Jesus Himself and the Holy Spirit He has given to us to help us.

There is a wonderful encouragement that we can have in the Lord Jesus. He is with us. He will never leave us. As we read in Hebrews, “I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee”. He will stay with us. If there is a hindrance it is on my part. When questions come up with us at school or at work, when someone says something that touches my belief on the Lord Jesus, how often we feel weak. Yet we need to feel weak, and then we can use the name of Jesus. It says that the name of Jesus is a strong tower: “the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

The children know these experiences at school. There are those who are ready to criticise because of our trust in the Bible and its teaching. We are no match for Satan. People can tie us up in knots with all their arguments. Sometimes it is better just to state our belief in Jesus and leave it at that. The Lord Jesus was the One who was able to meet all the arguments Satan brought against him. I am not able for it. Maybe I can answer some things but I do not need the victory in an argument. My victory is trusting in Jesus and being able to stand for Him. That in itself can often be seen by those around us. They say, ‘How is it that he can hold to that?’ We have Jesus on our side, the One who will be with us right to the end. How wonderful.

We can have the victory over this world. Who is he that gets the victory over the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God? I believe that it is as we appreciate more and more (and maybe it takes us a long time to appreciate it) the victory that Jesus has won over Satan that we can know something about what it

is to have victory. Too easily we can trust in our own strength but the power has to come from God — it comes from the blessed Spirit that the Lord Jesus has provided.

So I read the scripture in Hebrews 13. What a wonderful comfort it is. Sometimes we may feel that we are on our own. The Lord was on His own at the cross. At no point during that time when He suffered did He cease to trust in His God. We may feel on our own at times, surrounded by people who use the Lord's name blasphemously. Power is available to show a right testimony to our Lord Jesus Christ even in circumstances where we are greatly opposed. "I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee. So that, taking courage, we may say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid: what will man do unto me?" I do not know that I have necessarily arrived at that but it is the truth.

We can often be in fear in our circumstances. In the incident recorded in the gospels, where the disciples were caught in a sudden storm on the Sea of Galilee and the boat filled with water, they were afraid for their lives. The Lord was asleep and the disciples woke Him up. The lesson we get from that scripture is that with Jesus in the boat they should have realised that they were safe. The disciples cried to Jesus for help and He rebuked the storm and there was a great calm. But He also rebuked the disciples. He said to them, "Why are ye thus fearful? how is it ye have not faith?" (Mark 4:40). That is where we are often tested, our faith in what the Lord can do for us.

Perhaps we are not tested too much in this part of the world. There are parts of the world where many believers have to suffer for the Lord's name. They prove in a very real way that the Lord is with them, that He is their helper and that they have no need to be afraid. It is a word for us as well. The Scripture was written so many years ago but it is true and it is to be our experience.

I read, lastly, in John 16. The Lord is telling the disciples that they were going to suffer. As we read the early part of the Acts of the Apostles we find a lot of disciples, a lot of dear christians, who had to suffer all kinds of things. The Lord says, "In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world". Remember that Jesus has overcome the world. We have got everything on our side. We might feel so weak but as John tells us in his epistle, "all that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world" (1 John 5:4). It is our victory too. It is a daily concern. Satan will do what he can to destroy and distract us with other things. So many things can occupy our minds so that we have no time to trust in and no time to think about the Saviour. As that continues, we begin to get less and less interested and our affection for the Lord grows

cold. Then we get to the stage when Satan will put his attack in the way and we are not really able for it. The important thing is to keep near to the Lord.

Keep near the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has done so much for us, the One who loved us so much that He died for us. How right it is that we should keep in His company. We need to be sure that our link with the Lord is a present reality. As that is maintained there will be a testimony, too, that the Lord Jesus is with us.

May we be encouraged further to consider that wonderful victory that Jesus has won. Satan has been defeated. There is coming a day when Satan will be banished for ever. Those who love the Lord Jesus will be taken right through into that eternal day where Satan cannot touch them. God will have the victory right to the end. May we be encouraged in laying hold of that, to have the victory over Satan ourselves, for His name's sake.

John Greeves

An address in Belfast, 22 February 2003

“THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE”

“The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1 Peter 5:10).

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6).

A God of love, in mercy viewed
The sinner's hopeless case;
And by the gift of Christ revealed
The glory of His grace.

In Christ, who bore the curse for all,
God's love to men we trace;
For Calv'ry's cross made manifest
The glory of His grace.

The Saviour, in compassion, sought
The lost of Adam's race.
From God He brought glad tidings of
The glory of His grace.

The grace of God, whose glory now
Shines in the Saviour's face,
Transforms the heart that knows, by faith,
The glory of His grace.

For Jesus, now enthroned above,
Once took the sinner's place;
Now ransomed hosts through mercy know
The glory of His grace.

With their Redeemer they shall dwell,
Rejoice to see His face;
And through eternal ages praise
The glory of His grace.

J. W.

Wilkinson

“We all, ... beholding ... the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”

(2 Corinthians 3:18).

“ For God ... hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”

(2 Corinthians 4:6)

HEAVENLY FAVOURS

Love proved on a cross of shame,
Love worthy of God's great name,
Love, eternally the same,
Wins a heart like mine.

Grace, knowing my every sin,
Grace, dying to make me clean,
Grace that ran to bring me in,
Wins a heart like mine.

Peace, still as the sea of glass,
Peace knowing the judgment's passed,
Peace that will for ever last,

Calms a heart like mine.

Joy, fruit of the Father's kiss,
Joy, foretaste of heavenly bliss,
Joy, that springs from love like this,
Fills a heart like mine.

Lord, while in this world below,
Still more of Thy love I'd know,
So shall sweeter praises flow,
From a heart like mine.

George Cutting 1843-1934

THE FORTUNE TELLER AND HIS FEE

(A train journey from Oxford to Reading)

A friend of mine was travelling in a train one day between Oxford and Reading. Five men in the carriage began to play cards. They were 'sharper' and challenged other travellers to join the game. All declined. At last they turned to my friend and said, 'We can see by your face that you understand the game. Come, take a turn.'

'I did know the cards once', my friend replied, 'but it is so long since I played that I forget.'

'Nonsense! You could win all our money if you only tried' they said.

'No, I will not attempt it. Five of you are enough for your game'.

As they still persisted my friend said, 'Gentlemen, I tell you I cannot play, but I can tell fortunes.'

'Capital. Will you tell ours?' they asked eagerly.

'If you wish but I warn you it may not be very flattering!'

'What card do you want?' they asked.

'The five of spades, please'. The card was quickly passed to him but they were somewhat taken aback when he said that he also needed a Bible. In any case none of them had one. 'Ah well, I have one' said my friend, taking a Bible from his pocket. A pistol would hardly have been a more unwelcome object. The fortune teller began: 'Gentlemen, you see these two pips at the top of the card? I wish them to represent your two eyes, this one in the middle your mouth and these other two, your knees. Now, in Revelation chapter 1 I read, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him". The speaker is Christ, who

once died for sinners like you and me, and your eyes shall see Him. You have to stand before Him to be judged. That is the future for your eyes.'

'Now, concerning your mouth and knees, let me read from Philipians chapter 2: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father". From this I foretell that your knees will bow to Jesus and your tongue will have to confess that He is Lord of all. Your eyes will see Him, and when you see Him, your knees will become weak, and you will fall before His majesty'.

'Gentlemen, that is only the first reading of the card. Now for the second, if you please. These five spades represent five actual spades that are already made and before long may dig the graves of you five sinners and later your souls will be in hell and you will wish that you had never been born.'

'Gentlemen,' continued the fortune teller, 'you may escape this terrible future, if you will do what I did. I was perhaps far worse than you, but I took account of Jesus dying on the cross for me and bearing my doom. My tongue confessed Him as Lord and my knees bowed to Him in lowly submission. If you do this I can foretell the very reverse of all I have said. I have told your fortunes as I promised and if I am right you ought to cross my palm with a coin, but I do not want your money; I will be content if one of you will promise to trust the Saviour whose blood cleanseth from all sin.'

They would neither pay nor promise and when the train pulled up at Reading they tumbled out as if the carriage had contained a smallpox patient, leaving my friend in possession of the five of spades.

Years later, walking near his home in Shepherds Bush, my friend was accosted by someone, saying: 'Good evening, are you still telling fortunes?'

'That is not my line' said my friend.

'Well, you told mine about ten years ago'

'I think you must be mistaken.'

'No, I am not. We were on a train from Oxford to Reading', was the reply.

'Ah! I remember and you left without paying the fortune teller!'

'I am your payment', replied the stranger. 'Your words came true of three of us; three spades have dug their graves. The other I saw in Reading a few days ago and he is anxious to be saved from the fortune you foretold.'

'What about yourself?' my friend asked.

‘When you saw me I had been visiting my sister. My mother had just died and when I went to visit her for the last time she said ‘I will leave you with this passage from the Bible: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Revelation 1:7)’. When you quoted those very words, it sent quite a shiver down my spine. That text followed me. I tried every way to forget it but it kept coming back into my mind. In the end I went to California. Having nothing much to do when I first got there I stopped to hear some singing. The singers formed into a procession and I followed them to a mission. When the speaker got up he gave out his text and it was: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” It was more than I could bear. That night I bowed my knees to Him. I saw Jesus as my Saviour, and with my tongue confessed Him.’

This account was published by Dr Shirley Roberts

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY — 1929

October 7th. Haggai was our minor prophet this time and we enjoyed his stirring yet cheering exhortations, which were so effectual in setting the people in movement. He is a sample prophet, for if he directly exposed the conditions prevalent among the people, calling them to consider their selfish ways, how speedily does he also confirm the first move. The shame of comfortably dwelling in our own houses and leaving God’s house waste is felt through his first prophecy. Then there are four prophecies and the dates very near to each other.

The first is to the people. “The time is not yet come”, say some, but the prophet urges immediate action — “Go up to the mountain”. This means action now. It means the gathering of constructive material (the bringing in of positive good among the people of God). They ran “every man to his own house” (Haggai 1:9); now he appeals for energy for God.

The leaders and then the people hearkened to this voice and immediately there is the confirmative word, “I am with you”.

The second prophecy is spoken to Zerubbabel. Less than two months later (and how little surely could be accomplished in such a short time) another comforting word comes: “I am with you” (Haggai 2:4). God is still with them and the latter glory is assured. What is coming in will excel all the glorious past, “And the silver and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah”.

The third prophecy, three months or so after the second message, is to the people and was a call to holiness. How fully God would bless them. The foundation was laid and how delighted was God to see it; much still had to be

done, but God would give everything needful in abundance to those who cared for His interests. It is like John 16, “Whatsoever ye ask”.

The fourth prophecy is given on that very same day. It is to Zerubbabel, for it was a day of great interest to God; this tells of the overthrow of God’s enemies and the installation of Christ as the signet.

Now the figure of a signet is a significant word. Christ is referred to in many ways — Branch, Stone, Corner-stone and the like but here it is a Signet. What is that to convey? That nothing is sanctioned that is not stamped by Him — His supremacy surely, but the divine approval of all that He does. Nothing fails in all His doings and each has the divine stamp. Everything He does is of God and has His approval. Whoever acts contrarily is condemned and does not secure the stamp. There is guidance from Christ. Then we are to hold Him in supreme regard who is Jehovah’s Signet.

Robert Dunn

THE MAJESTY OF GOD’S WAYS **(Extracts from the notebook of Frank Purday)**

When man was fully tested and tried, God had a Man in reserve — He laid help on One that is mighty. No one ever knew what sin is in God’s sight except the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has removed it. He has the full sense of what it was to be under the judgment of God. “Him who knew not sin, he has made sin for us”. After perfectly glorifying God in His life here... He dies for the man who was under judgment; that man must go in death; he is made an end of, not atoned for... Christ in His death atoned for sins, not for sin. “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh”. If God sent Christ... He comes to remove all that was not according to God.

J. B. Stoney (6:89)

In the old creation God began by making the heavens and the earth — the earth, the trees, the animals, and ended with the man. The new creation has begun in the reverse direction; it begins with a Man — the Son of the Father — He is the beginning of the creation of God — and it will wind up with the new heavens and the new earth.

J. B. Stoney (2:2)

There are three kinds of revelation — the works of creation, the word of God, and God manifest in flesh.

J.B. Stoney (10:256)

God was not taken aback by sin. Sin came in, but sin existed even before the world; the devil sins from the beginning. God put the first man on the scene first, but His purposes were in Christ before the first man. God had everything before Him. It is a mistake to suppose that He brought in Christ as a remedy. When the responsible man had failed God brought in the Man of His purpose; but all His ways and purposes were ever before Him.

F. E. Raven (12:414)

References (given only so that any extract may be considered in its context, if desired), relate to the “New Series” editions of the ministry of the individuals named. The reference for the first extract in this article is expressed as 6:89, i.e. the reference is taken from the “Ministry of J. B. Stoney” (New Series) Volume 6 page 89. All of the above is published by the Kingston Bible Trust, Wembley Avenue, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 9LX, UK.

GOD’S WORK IN US IN GRACE AND GOVERNMENT

Hebrews 2: 10-13

Isaiah 8: 5-8, 11-18

10: 11-12 & 24-25

Matthew 18: 2-5 & 20

What God has before Him at the present time is to work, not only in His grace in ministering to us spiritually, but also in His government in disciplining us. He has in view to bring about in us correspondence with the Leader of our salvation — Christ. If that is to be so, it implies that we should not only know our position before God as sons, but that we should be here in this world as true children.

In Hebrews 2, there are three quotations from the Old Testament brought in and attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is presented as Leader of our salvation. God has appointed Him in that way to bring many sons to glory. That is the great end in view and in the quotations which are attributed to Him the highest thought is presented first: “I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises”. That implies that believers are brought into accord with the Lord Jesus Christ as sons with Him in the presence of God. He can speak of them as His brethren; we correspond with Him in that way. As His brethren we are able to take up the song that He sings and to join in it, so that He leads the praise in the midst of the assembly. That is the marvellous outcome that is before God in providing us with the Leader of our salvation.

The next quotations refer to the other side, the second one being: “I will trust in him”. God would have us to correspond with our Leader in that. We have enjoyed having our part in the service Godward but what is the substantial value of that if we do not also correspond with Christ in connection with these other

quotations? I would raise the challenge: what is the value of a people who can come together and praise God, but who in their practical life are out of accord with Christ in their trust in God? Surely if we are to be ever with Christ before God, God has it before Him to bring us into accord with Christ in a practical way during this brief period while we are here.

Christ is spoken of in this epistle of the Hebrews as One who, “though he were Son, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Again, who, “in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death, with strong crying and tears; (and having been heard because of his piety)” (Hebrews 5:7). God would have us brought into accord with Christ in that. Think of what God has before Him today! He would have us, in our measure, trust Him as Christ did, and He would have us to be marked by piety as Christ was when here, and to say, “Preserve me, O God: for I trust in thee” (Psalm 16:1). God will bring this about. Surely this is attractive to our hearts that we should honour God by the same kind of trust as characterised His own blessed Son down here, in those days when He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

Unless we learn the lesson of trust in God we shall not answer to the third quotation, which means that there is a people on earth whom the Lord Jesus can point out: “Behold, I and the children which God has given me”. This shows the heart of Christ delighting in having a people here on earth who are like Him as He was down here in practical everyday life. We are to walk as He walked, as John says in his epistle, and to be righteous as He is righteous, pure as He is pure and loving as He loved. That is the idea of children — true representation. We never grow out of being children of God in one sense. There is the idea of true representation and likeness to the features of the parents continued in the children. The Lord Jesus Christ looks for that. His heart requires that He should have those here like Himself in practical day-to-day life. The Lord would have those in testimony here to whom He can point in this way, those who trust God, in their measure, as He trusted Him, and who walk here as beloved children.

Paul says: “Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children” (Ephesians 5:1). From the point of view of substantial formation and likeness to God it is the highest truth. Sonship is a higher truth according to position and status but it is in Ephesians that we read this exhortation as to being beloved children, and Philippians 2:15 says, “That ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation”. God is looking for children like that. The flesh does not like to be simple, small, meek and gentle but that is the kind of children for whom God is looking, shining as

lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. It is in the character of children that we are in testimony.

I believe God is working to secure this substantial formation in His people, so that we might truly be those that the Lord can point to in our practical lives here and say, “Behold, I and the children which God has given me”. To bring this about discipline is necessary.

Two things are always necessary to achieve God’s end: firstly, the ministry of grace from His own heart and, secondly, His ways in government, or discipline. The two sides come out in the epistle to the Hebrews. The early part of the book is full of the provision of God’s grace. It speaks of all the grace resident in the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; it speaks of our place with Him within the veil, of the Minister of the sanctuary, and of our liberty of approach to God. God would minister that side to us continually; but then when we are exhorted to be here in practical faith, corresponding with Christ here, we get the thought of discipline brought in chapter 12 of Hebrews. In fact, in chapter 10 of the same epistle the apostle speaks of the way the saints were going through suffering, persecution and the spoiling of their goods. In chapter 12 he exhorts them to endure discipline, reminding them that the “Father of spirits” is over the whole matter. God’s government and grace work to one great end, to achieve His purpose in us, that we might correspond with Christ in every sphere: in the church, in our place before God, and down here in testimony and in our practical lives. How patiently God works in His grace and government to bring about this great end — correspondence with Christ!

The early part of Isaiah bears on what we are passing through at the present time. Up to chapter 39 it is the Assyrian invasion which is largely in the prophet’s mind, an invasion which occurred in Hezekiah’s day, although it has a future bearing, alluding to the overflowing scourge which will again pass through the land in the near future. But this early part of the book had its immediate fulfilment in Hezekiah’s day, and that section of the book closes with that, dealing with Hezekiah and the coming of Sennacherib, king of Assyria.

Chapter 8, which speaks of the invasion, had its first fulfilment in Hezekiah’s reign. If you read the account of this invasion in 2 Chronicles 32, you will find that it occurred at a peculiar time, as we might think. We read in the chapters preceding, of the early years of his reign and of the remarkable spiritual development in connection with the house of God and His service. It is remarkable to read how the service of God in His house was restored, the priests and the Levites set in their places, and then the song of the Lord began. They were so

enjoying the restoration of the service Godward that Hezekiah sent to the ten tribes to gather others in to keep the feast of the passover in Jerusalem; he longed for more of the brethren to enjoy it. The people were giving so freely that great heaps accumulated, and Hezekiah asked what they were, and had to make special provision because of the way divine love was flowing in the hearts of the saints. You might say, That is a peculiar time for God to order this terrible invasion! It says in chapter 32:1, “After these things and this faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered into Judah”. We often think that God brings in discipline when there is a low state; well, He does in His mercy but God is concerned to help forward a good state, to make what is good really solid, to consolidate it in the souls of the saints.

So the Assyrian comes up, and Hezekiah says, “This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of reviling” (Isaiah 37:3); but, thank God, Hezekiah gets to the root of the matter. If we see the reason for the discipline, we can be with God in relation to it. Hezekiah puts on sackcloth — it would be well for us today to put on sackcloth — and he says, “This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of reviling”, Then he gives the reason: “for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth”; as much as to say, We have had wonderful privileges, we have enjoyed the service of God together, but there has not been a really practical state that answered to it!

Now, if I search my heart I know that is true of me, and perhaps it is true of others. We have had wonderful privileges; we have enjoyed the praises of God, and the spiritual privileges into which we have been brought but have we not felt that in our public lives we were hardly equal to our privilege? Have we not often felt ashamed that we could enjoy the presence of God when together, and outside our faith in God was so small, our trust so little, not like the trust which marked the Lord Jesus Christ? Have we not enjoyed divine things in our spirits amongst believers, yet outside our spirits have been so unlike the spirit of Christ, that He could hardly point to us and say, “Behold, I and the children which God has given me”.

We have not really been representing Him in our spirits, ways and words outside. To represent Christ in such a way involves having that as our one aim in life, and making everything else secondary; otherwise we shall never really be children who represent Christ as He was here, acting like God, speaking God’s words, doing God’s works. Christ filled out His place in testimony perfectly, and if we are true children in the sense in which I am speaking, it implies that we are like Him in that way, marked by His spirit, His acts and His words.

You may remember how in John's gospel, which speaks so much of the children of God, the Lord, as the great example in testimony, says, "I cannot do anything of myself" (John 5:30). Again, "I have not spoken from myself, but the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what I should say and what I should speak ... What therefore I speak, as the Father has said to me, so I speak" (John 12:49, 50). Perfect dependence marked the Lord. We cannot speak of the Lord as a child, in the way I am speaking of it, but what a beloved One He was in the humble dependence in which He trod His way, not speaking from Himself, but as the Father commanded Him so He spoke. What dependence, humility and lovability marked Christ, before the Father's heart, as He moved with one object, to represent His Father in this world! If we know our place with Christ in the church, what a great thing it is that God has before Him that we should go out from that sphere and really represent Christ in this world, in our measure acting like Him.

Hezekiah realised where the weakness lay. The children had come to the birth but there was no strength to bring forth. Have we found ourselves in that condition? We have conceived the idea of being here to represent Christ: all our desires are that way, but there is no strength to bring forth. When a test comes, it is self that is seen, and not Christ. God says, I will help you as to that! The ministry of grace alone will not work it. God moves in a way which we might think most drastic: He brings up the king of Assyria. God in that way brought home to the people of Jerusalem their helplessness.

In coming to this point, I would like to make clear that when God brings up an instrument of His discipline He effects many things at the same time. Though His foremost concern is to bring about formation in His people, at the same time He chastens many nations. Isaiah speaks of what happened to many nations. God deals with matters between nation and nation, between man and man, in His perfect over-ruling government. He deals with persons who profess His name, represented by Samaria and Judah. But what He had mainly before Him in Hezekiah's day was to perform "his whole work upon mount Zion and upon Jerusalem". After that He had in mind to "punish the fruit of the stoutness of heart of the king of Assyria". So God is doing many things today; His ways in government are past finding out. We can thank Him whenever we can see what He is doing.

You might say, 'Well, the work seemed complete before God began to bring in this discipline: Mount Zion was inhabited, and the service of God was going on in Jerusalem'. But there was no strength to bring forth, and God had before Him to perform His whole work, that there might be a practical answer to the truth

and strength to bring forth. Strength to bring forth lies in the knowledge of God in a practical way, and we often have to pass through difficult circumstances to know Him in this way. It is as passing through affliction that we learn God.

While this great affliction was going on God exhorts them not to be afraid. He says in Isaiah 10:24: “O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian”. If we are dwelling in Zion, if we are truly set for the truth of the church — Zion representing the privilege and praise side of it — we need not fear the Assyrian. The whole work will be performed. It may be very painful, but we need not be afraid, for God says, “For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall be accomplished, and mine anger, in their destruction”. It is very encouraging that God’s work of discipline is always short; it is always but for “a little while”. God says of Jerusalem, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee” (Isaiah 54:7). Even the final tribulation, as recorded in the book of Revelation, is only for a little while, three-and-a-half years. It is never God’s way to prolong affliction of this kind. The point is to get the gain of it during the little while. So the writer in Hebrews 10:37 says, “For yet a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay.”

I wanted to show the bearing of this on the great thought of Immanuel, “God with us”. It is in knowing that God is with us that we find strength to bring forth. I cannot go out and face the world for Christ if I do not know that God is with me. So in connection with this discipline the thought of Immanuel is brought in: “The stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel!” If God is with us we are under His wings. We have come to trust under the wings of the Lord but it is because those who profess to trust in the shadow of His wings have given up confidence in Him that He allows alien wings to come over them. He allows these other wings to cover the land because they did not know the reality of “God with us”. If God was to give them to know the blessedness of Immanuel’s land, they must know it as in contrast to the other wings being stretched over them. God would give that remnant at Jerusalem to know what Immanuel really meant — that the Holy One of Israel was in the midst of them.

How can that come about for us? Only as the work of the ministry goes on and we are formed by it; so it is that God is with us. We may say, Where two or three are gathered, the Lord will be in the midst! Not at all, dear friends: it is “Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them”. It implies this state of which I am speaking — that we are truly formed as children whom the Lord can own.

In this actual invasion, Immanuel became an immense reality to this remnant. In that emergency, in crying to God they learned the full meaning of “I will trust in Him” and they learned the reality of God with them, and the enemy was overthrown.

I read in Matthew 18, because it brings in the moral features of these children. We do not get in that chapter the thought exactly of children in the way I have been speaking of it, but we get the moral features of a child. If we are to be true children of Christ in the way I have been speaking of it, and true children of God, it can only come about by putting on the moral features that belong to a child — simple trust and harmlessness. The Lord says, “Unless ye are converted and become as little children, ye will not at all enter into the kingdom of the heavens” (v. 3). Then He says, “Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens” (v. 4). When we come to the public testimony it is this that makes a person great, that he is able to humble himself as a little child. We shall never really represent Christ unless we have learned that. Think of moving among men like that — humble, small, simple, and restful as a little child, so that men who meet us say, ‘Well, he does not trust in himself but in God!’ It is only in that spirit that we can represent God. So the Lord goes on to say, “Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receives me” (v. 5). That is the idea of representation: in receiving such an one, you are receiving Christ.

This chapter begins with the Lord Jesus taking a little child and setting it in the midst of the disciples, and the verse with which I ended says, “For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them”. I think it helps to connect those two verses in our minds. I would suggest that it means this: If we want to know the Lord’s presence in our midst, we must put the spirit of the little child in the midst first, then we shall have the Lord in the midst. It is the kind of spirit with which He can link Himself, and that indicates how we reach this great thought of ‘God with us’. It is no longer a matter of alien wings being stretched over us; we do not need their protection; but we are under the wings of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a spirit now among the saints, as having been brought into practical accord with the Lord, by reason of which we can know the Lord with us.

May the Lord help us in these matters that we may have the gain of what has been before us, both individually and collectively, for His name’s sake!

Gerald Cowell

An Address at Weston-super-Mare, August 1940.

GOD'S WAYS IN GOVERNMENT

Perhaps there is no subject less thought of, and less understood even by christians generally, than the ways of God in government; yet how distinctly they stand out upon the pages of His Holy Word and in the history of His people in all ages.

The broad principle of God's ways in government is expressed in Galatians 6:7-9: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not".

There are certain consequences which follow certain lines of conduct in this world, and God permits them, both in the case of His own people and in that of unbelievers. Whatever a man sows, he reaps. It is a well defined principle in the record of God's ways with men and entirely distinct from grace. We shall see presently that a man may be in the full enjoyment of God's grace and yet be the subject of some governmental dealing at the same time and, moreover, that God can overrule the results of fleshly sowing to further the ends of His grace.

It may help us to understand more clearly the difference between grace and government to draw attention to the fact that, when it is a question of government, a sin is not necessarily done with even when it is confessed.

'But', I can hear you saying, 'I had always understood that it is done with and done with for ever!'

Yes! As a question of God's judgment upon it as guilt — i. e. as to the matter of our salvation — the sin just confessed was done with on the cross when Jesus said "It is finished"; that is, before it was even committed. Then, secondly, as to the enjoyment of our relationship, it is done with the moment we honestly confess it. But be it remembered all the same that there is a sense in which it may not necessarily be done with and that is in connection with God's government.

Here is a simple illustration. Take the case of a man who before his conversion was a confirmed drunkard. He makes a clean break with the world and his old habits and for years goes on brightly. He grows in the truth and is used of God in preaching to others. In his employment he fills a position of trust. A few years roll by, and alas! his love begins to decline; his appetite for heavenly things decreases, while his relish for what is earthly and sensual increases; old tastes are afresh cultivated and old worldly associations, especially those of the more refined type, become gradually revived. They do not in these circles consider him nearly so 'narrow' as he used to be and welcome his gradual return to their

more convivial gatherings. One day he has been out on business, and in the evening he calls to see a friend — one of those semi-religious, love-the-world type of people so common in the present day. He is offered a drink, and though at first he refuses, with a little friendly pressing he takes it, and then a second also. The old thirst is so thoroughly revived by this that on leaving his friend's house he slips into a public house and drinks a great deal more, so that he can only stagger his way home. On the road an office colleague meets him and taunts him over his drunken condition. In a rage he strikes the colleague down and leaves him bleeding by the kerb.

He reaches home and goes to bed. Having slept off the effects of alcohol he awakes. Imagine his mortified feelings as he says to himself, 'Was I the worse for drink last night? Is it possible? Is it not all some horrid nightmare?' His wife confirms the first part of his enquiry and he gets out of bed; and like a wounded worm writhing from the cut of the ploughshare, he lies prostrate on the bedroom floor, in anguish. How he lashes himself! How he loathes himself! No words can express the intensity of his mental agony. God's ploughshare has entered his soul and he reviews the past in His presence. He traces the various steps in his spiritual decline; judges himself unsparingly; weeps over the sad dishonour he has brought upon his blessed Lord; confesses his sins, and is forgiven (1 John 1:9). But is the matter done with? Far from it! He receives a summons for assault. His employer, a worldly man, is shocked at such conduct from a professing christian and dismisses him. Nor is the reaping even now done with. For many a long day he is made to feel the effect of his worldly course. He is reaping what he sowed. He is out of employment for months; his wife suffers, his family suffers, and oh, how keenly he suffers! Then there is his testimony as a christian. What a blow it has sustained! And all this though his soul has been restored to happy communion with God.

Now this principle runs through the whole of the Bible. It is stamped upon the whole page of history, sacred and profane; it is interwoven in the affairs of nations; it makes its mark on families and individuals; let even sceptics say what they will, it will be found that their own histories furnish no exception.

Take the history of the Jews since the death of Christ. They chose, on that momentous occasion, "a robber" in preference to Christ. "No king but Caesar" was their cry. And how have the world's 'Caesars' treated them since then? Read their history. Witness their treatment in modern times, even in cultivated, religious Europe and say whether they have not reaped what they sowed in

preferring a gentile monarch or even a “robber” to Jesus. What nation has been robbed in such a wholesale way as they?

Again, they cried, “His blood be upon us and upon our children”. They gave thirty silver pieces to a traitor to get rid of Jesus; and then, when poor Judas threw the money at their feet in bitter remorse, being too religious to put it in the temple treasury they bought a piece of ground with it, and called it “the field of blood”, a place “to bury strangers in”. Now where upon the face of the earth could you find a country of the same size that has been such a scene of bloodshed as the land of Canaan? It has for that guilty nation been indeed “a field of blood”. Could any other place be found where so many “strangers” have been buried as that land? Witness the crusades. How many thousands of the flower of Europe fell in those years of conflict! Yes, truly it has been a place “to bury strangers in”.

Take a case from the Old Testament. Adoni-bezek was one of the heathen lords of Canaan. The combined forces of Judah and Simeon made battle against him and took him captive, cutting off his thumbs and his great toes. It seemed a very severe treatment, but there was God’s government behind it. Adoni-bezek was only reaping what he had sown and his own lips are made to confess it. Mark what he said: “Three-score and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath required me” (Judges 1:6-7). Be not deceived, ye stout hearted, ye unconverted doing your own will. “God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”.

Take again the history of one of the patriarchs. At his mother’s instigation Jacob killed a kid, and while he was entertaining his father with its flesh, he deceived him with its skin. Then a second bit of deception is practised. ‘To get a wife’ is the plea for Jacob’s hasty departure, although the real reason was Esau’s rage against him. Now, mark first how the mother reaps. Her plan that Jacob should spend a “few days” with her brother Laban turned out to be a twenty years absence and, as far as history records, she never set eyes again on her beloved Jacob! Then when Jacob gets to Laban, he is called to reap what he has just sown. Laban deceived him in promising to give him Rachael. Jacob had taken advantage of Isaac’s darkness to deceive him, and now Laban takes advantage of the darkness of the evening to deceive Jacob.

It does not always follow, however, that we reap as quickly as this. It was many years after Jacob had killed a kid to deceive his father that his sons killed a kid and sprinkling its blood upon Joseph’s coat, deceived him with it!

Turn now to the history of another Old Testament saint. David had stained his character and disgraced his throne by two of the darkest crimes of which man could be guilty (2 Samuel 11:12). He committed adultery with the wife of one of his most faithful subjects and then, to cover his crime, planned the death of her unsuspecting husband. “Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword” (2 Samuel 12:9) is the charge subsequently brought against him. It was a kind of second-hand murder.

A year of apparent indifference on David’s part follows. But was David’s God indifferent? Far from it! Faithful Nathan waits upon the guilty king. The touching story of the ewe lamb is told and David’s anger is “greatly kindled” against the man. Could he possibly have a subject so base? (Wait and see, David!) “As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold...because he had no pity!”

It is wonderful how indignant we can be with other people’s failings and how marvellously tender with our own! But if we thought a little more of God’s government it would assuredly make us more tender with one another. For it is a principle of His government that “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matthew 7:2). “He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy” (James 2:13).

How little David weighed what he was saying, or guessed for whom he was legislating, until those terrible words: “Thou art the man”, fell upon his ears. Let them have issued as gently and tenderly as possible from Nathan’s lips, they must have come like one of heaven’s thunderbolts to his royal hearer’s conscience. David is now reminded by Nathan of God’s past kindness to him, of the many deliverances that had been wrought for him when Saul unrighteously sought his life, of the many favours He had bestowed upon him. Had He not lifted him up from the sheepfold to the throne? And if that had been “too little” He would have given him still more. What had been his return for such favours? He had proved himself a despiser of God’s commandments, an adulterer, a murderer!

Such had been the guilty sowing; now for the righteous reaping: “The sword shall never depart from thine house”. This opens David’s lips and from the depths of his inmost soul, and without a shadow of excuse for himself, he bursts forth with honest confession, “I have sinned against the Lord”. With equal promptness Nathan replies, “The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die”.

Ah! God is more merciful to David than David would have been to one of his subjects. "Thou shalt not die". How "rich is his mercy", how abundant in mercy and truth is our Saviour God. Still there is the governmental side to be looked in the face. David had but re-echoed the claims of God's own government in Israel when he had said "He shall restore fourfold" (see Exodus 22:1). It is true, the judgment of God for David's crime was to be borne by Jesus, the Lamb of God. It is equally true that David was restored to communion with God, restored to the joy of his salvation, and that he wrote many a precious inspired psalm after that. Yet the sword never departs from his house until he has restored "fourfold". David had pronounced the sentence. God would see it faithfully carried out!

First, Bathsheba's son dies. One lamb has gone! Then David sees his own sin reproduced in his two sons; incest in Amnon is followed by murder in Absalom. Thus another lamb is gone! Then Absalom is slain by Joab's dagger. A third lamb has gone! Another still remains, and in him David appears to reap in a twofold way. Adonijah was apparently a good-looking youth and a favourite of his father's. David seems to have neglected to exercise the necessary rule and discipline in his own family circle, for we read, "His" (Adonijah's) "father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" And we may be sure of this, that if a head of a house fails to exercise proper authority, somebody else will soon take the reins. This is sadly verified in the case before us. Adonijah says (before his father dies), "I will be king". What is the solemn sequel? At the command of Solomon (the son of Bathsheba) David's fourth lamb falls by the sword.

How deeply must David's heart have felt all this, for he lived to see at least three out of the four cut off by the sword, and the fourth was on the way to it. Perhaps the bitterest part of all the results of our fleshly sowing is what we reap in the bosom of our own families!

The Lord grant His rich blessing to both the reader and the writer, and so deepen in our souls the sense of His holiness and love, that we may walk more softly before Him, cleave more closely to Him, and work more heartily for Him, until the goal be reached.

George Cutting

Reprinted from "Living Water" No. 13