

Living Water

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DRAWN AND HELD BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

John 2: 23-3:8

John 4: 19-26

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John 21: 15-17

I suggested these scriptures as feeling a good deal of concern that any ministry should draw us closer to the Lord Jesus Christ and that we should have the experience of drawing nearer to our Lord Jesus, following more closely after Him and understanding His will and heart a little better. These scriptures cover the dealings that the Lord Jesus had with three people: Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, and Peter.

Nicodemus

It might seem some time before much fruit came to light from the conversation between the Lord and Nicodemus, but it did come to light. Nicodemus reappears twice more in this gospel and at the end of the gospel he becomes identified, in his measure, with the Lord Jesus in His death.

We began to read where we did because in the last few verses of John 2 we find that, “many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he wrought”. Then the Spirit of God adds the sobering remark, “But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men, and that he had not need that any should testify of man, for himself knew what was in man”. He did not, therefore, put confidence in the many until a sure and certain work of God had come to light with any of them. I greatly desire, not to unsettle any soul at all, but that we might take stock together and personally as to being certain of having a substantial and abiding link with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nicodemus comes on the scene and he begins in some uncertainty. His opening remark is, “Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God, for none can do these signs that thou doest unless God be with him”. We might wonder where it is going to lead, but the Lord saw where it needed to lead and immediately took up the question of being born again. We need to be impressed with the sovereignty of God. Throughout Scripture we have reminders that every believer was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is God’s sovereign choice that we are drawn to the Lord. The Lord comes back to that in chapter 6

of this gospel. “No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him”. It is very reassuring for believers that God has had His eye upon us.

Where we read, we are drawn back to the sovereignty of God Himself and the Lord did not hesitate to minister that to a supposedly well-taught Jew. Nicodemus needed to understand that for anything enduring to take place in his soul there must be a beginning that was entirely new. That is a lesson for us to learn as well.

Nicodemus had a lot of baggage with him. He brought all that he had learnt as the teacher of Israel. The Lord cuts that right off and speaks of an entirely new beginning. We cannot afford to bring any baggage with us.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and it demonstrates the availability of the Lord Jesus here. All of us can give thanks for the Lord’s availability. His conversation with Nicodemus is very gracious. He is having to point out that Nicodemus did not even understand the force of the Scriptures that he must so regularly have taught. The Lord says, “Thou art the teacher of Israel and knowest not these things”. Israel was yet to be, and is yet to be, raised up from an entirely dead condition. Nicodemus should have had some sense of that. Nonetheless, the Lord gently takes him along so that he might understand the need for this work of God in his soul.

Inquiring about the things of God may well be a sign of God working with the one concerned. We need to be simple and discerning about that and be able to contribute something that will help that work forward. It is God’s work, not our work, but a believer should be able to help the work of God forward and never set it back.

It is interesting that, when Nicodemus is mentioned at the end of the gospel, the Spirit of God says, “Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night”. There was to be no doubt who this person was. Something had grown with Nicodemus over time. He had meditated on what the Lord had to say to him. It is lovely to see progress with the work of God. We would hope to see that with all of us. It was not for Nicodemus just to say, ‘Well, if God is working, He will work. If the wind blows my way it will blow’. No! He was responsible to hear what the Lord had to say and to believe on the One that God had sent.

The woman of Samaria

The results of the Lord's dealings with the woman of Samaria were unmistakable. She became an effective minister of Jesus Christ in a measure that was suited to her. She encouraged others to come to Him and as a result they were convicted too.

By the world's standards this woman was not likely material. She was a woman with a shameful history. She is a good witness to the words of the Lord elsewhere, "I am not come to call righteous persons, but sinful ones to repentance" (Luke 5:32). The Lord did not open His conversation with her by speaking about her sins or her history. He sought to engage her interest by showing her that He had something better to offer than all her tangled history had ever been able to give: "the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life". To get the joy and lasting gain of it would require exercise of soul for her, as it does for any of us, but the result was to be an abundant, copious supply which she would find within herself by the Holy Spirit. (The later chapters confirm that the Lord is speaking here of the work of the Spirit within.)

There comes a moment when the Lord speaks of her history, but the outcome of that is that the woman says, "I see that thou art a prophet" and seeks to engage the Lord with disputed questions of religion. Those do not help any soul to grow. This woman would have sought, perhaps even unintentionally, to take the Lord down a byroad. The Lord's answer to her has had a lasting effect with many as revealing what God looks for by way of a response from those who are called His worshippers. The Lord, with amazing grace and rapidity, drew the woman into the purpose for which He had come — to secure worshippers for the Father. It is the happy fruit of God's dealings with us and it would be right to say that we worship God for what He is and that takes us beyond all history and His ways with us. But what we learn of God down here is to form us as worshippers. A spirit of thankfulness is a good way to start and we go on from there.

It is a very blessed thing to have a satisfied heart. It is the beginning of the outflow of worship because worshippers are those who are engaged with the Person who met their need. We cannot be too simple about that and He is able to hold us. The woman of Samaria became one who had a satisfied heart and therefore, being blessed thus, her heart goes out in glory and honour to the One who met her.

The Lord tells her that “salvation is of the Jews” and in a sense that must have been a matter of sorrow to Him. Paul writes of the Jews “whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the service, and the promises; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as according to flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever”. The Lord did not open all that up here but “salvation is of the Jews” shows that they were heirs to the promises of God. Sadly, they despised them so the Lord moves immediately away from any earthly centre to speak of worshipping the Father in “spirit and truth”. That remains a word for us all today. That is the only way to real worship.

The way we sometimes speak of worship may make it seem a bit beyond many of us but the Lord is saying to this woman, ‘You could be in that company; it is for you as much as for any one else’. If our sins are forgiven and we know the Lord Jesus for ourselves and are enjoying the water which He gives, the challenge is whether there is going to be any response to the God from whom these blessings come.

This woman had a history which she knew to be shameful. A word about a new beginning, a new source of supply, would be music to her ears. Some of her remarks do not sound very much like those of one born again, but the Lord has got her interest. He had something that she needed. The Lord knew the material He was working with and He speaks to her about worshipping and about worshippers. If she found herself as a worshipper she would have company; there would be other worshippers too.

Worship is wide in its expression. There is nothing in Scripture to limit it to particular occasions though the opportunity to call the Lord Jesus to mind in the Lord’s supper would normally lead to worship to the Father whom He has revealed. It is the Lord’s desire to have a worshipping company: “in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee” (Psalms 22:22). Yet repeatedly in Scripture we find worship at unexpected moments. When Gideon was contemplating how he was to overcome the Midianites it says that he worshipped: “And it came to pass when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshipped” (Judges 7:15).

Then, as noted earlier, worship is to be in “spirit and truth”. Our spirits are to be toward God. In grace He has given to us of His Spirit. We should always be conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Then, too, we learn something

from God's dealings with us in ways that we do not always understand but are unmistakably God's intervention with us. This causes us to realise the majesty of God, that He can be hindered in no thought of His and that He works all things according to the counsel of His own will. All of that brings about a spirit of worship. It finds an outlet of a distinctive kind when the saints are together because there is to be glory to God in the assembly. That will continue into eternity.

Then worship can be individual as we see in the writings of the apostle Paul. Worship springs up with him when he thinks of God as Creator and he says, "who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 1:25). The same thing arises when he thinks of God's mercy and he breaks out: "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!..." (Romans 11:33). Several times it appears that Paul has broken into his theme, but his real theme is the glory of God. So when he feels truly affected by that he breaks off to speak of it.

The Lord says, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming...and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth". The words "now is" give a very elevated view of the present dispensation in which God has made Himself known as Father. As a result this dispensation is to be characterised by worship. We feel how often we are bound down, but in Christianity the normal thing is for our hearts to be engaged with God because of His love.

The Lord says to this woman: "I who speak to thee am he". It is a very personal touch and the Lord would have us each to know it. It is open to all, to every concerned soul. You cannot rest on what others have done, nor even on the verses of Scripture. Each must have a personal link with the Lord Himself. He only can give the living water. There is much to turn souls aside in the present day but our link with the Lord is to endure and His link with us. Never forget that side. If we are His sheep His gracious care for us will not fail.

The woman of Samaria had got to go back to circumstances which were not likely to be easy, but she would go back with a new light, a new spring in her step. She had got something that she had never had before, a link with the Lord for herself, and she knew now that she could be among God's worshippers with a good conscience and with her heart engaged with the God who had made Himself known.

Jacob when he has reached the very end of his history looked back and told Pharaoh: “Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life” (Genesis 47:9) but none the less God had brought him through. There is fruit from the way God had taken him and he “worshipped on the bed’s head” (Genesis 47:31). Those long histories in the Old Testament of Abraham, Jacob, David and others are given to us so that we might trace God’s ways with His people and we might learn from their experience with God.

Peter

The third person I thought we might speak of is Peter. Peter comes into this gospel and into other passages of Scripture many more times but there are these two distinctive occasions, in chapter 6 and chapter 21 of John’s gospel, where we see something of God’s work coming to light in Peter as a result of the Lord’s dealings with him.

In John 6 the Lord speaks about the necessity for His death and resurrection so that His people might live. The Lord speaks initially of Himself as the true bread out of heaven, the bread of life. Then He continues, “I am the living bread which has come down out of heaven: if anyone shall have eaten of this bread he shall live for ever” (John 6:51). He then says “the bread withal which I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”. For us to get any gain from the giving of the Lord Jesus Christ we must accept the necessity of His death and take it home to ourselves.

It is worth reflecting on why what the Lord said in this chapter was such a cause of division. We read, “From that time many of his disciples went away back and walked no more with him”. The fact of the Lord having to die, and that I have no life outside of Him and His death, challenges us all. They said, “This word is hard; who can hear it?” It was a great test to many but there were some who were left. “Jesus therefore said to the twelve, Will ye also go away?” And it is at that point that Peter says, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou has words of life eternal”. We do not know how much Peter understood of what the Lord was saying, but he knew that the Lord had words of eternal life and that He was the Holy One of God. As such, there could be no one else to go to.

The Lord had touched something in Peter’s heart and he was able to speak for the others as well. He may not have understood very much but he knew that the Lord was speaking of what they really needed: eternal life. Therefore they would

cling to Him because they were convicted that He had the truth. “Will ye also go away?” It is a good question for us all. Peter’s answer was that however little he understood or however hard it seemed, he must stay. There was nowhere else to go and there is nowhere else to go; we must cleave to Christ.

When we come to the last chapter of the gospel we see the Lord asking Peter what he has gained in soul experience. In a way He takes Peter back to his failure before the crucifixion. The Lord’s first question is a gentle reminder to Peter of the strong ground that he had claimed to take. “If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended” (Matthew 26:33). The Lord also has something to say about Simon Peter going off fishing. The Lord did not put all that into words; He just asked Simon Peter the question, “lovest thou me more than these?” Well, we know these probing questions, twice repeated, all with a view to settling where Peter really now stood. We might well ask ourselves, ‘Have I learned any of Peter’s lessons?’

I trust we could all look back and say that there have been times when the Lord has had something to say to us that convicted us and we felt we could not go back from that. These things become landmarks in our souls. They remain with us and they should build us up so that we become more mature; as the hymn puts it:

‘Each day more to Thy stature grow,
To Thine eternal praise’.

The Lord having dealt with Peter in his soul gives him some responsibilities and the Lord is looking to us, in however simple a way, to take some as well. We must accept such responsibilities as the Lord puts our way. These three different ways in which the Lord speaks, “Feed my lambs ... Shepherd my sheep ... Feed my sheep”, show us Peter being given a task and the epistles show him carrying it out as seeking now to please the chief Shepherd.

David Burr

Based on a Bible reading in Gardenstown, 6th September, 2003

REKINDLED

Luke 24: 15-17 & 25-32
2 Timothy 1: 5-7

I wish to speak about being rekindled. The word 'rekindled', suggests that there has been an earlier fire, but perhaps the fire has dwindled in its brightness. It may even have been reduced to a few glowing embers, or even gone out. There was a time in Israel's history when it was said that, "the word of Jehovah was rare in those days; a vision was not frequent". It then adds, "the lamp of God had not yet gone out" (1 Samuel 3:1-3). There was still an ember that could be fanned into a flame.

So it is with the believer in the Lord Jesus. How bright that day when Christ was first appreciated as Saviour, when the soul yielded to Him and discovered the wonder of His work at Calvary, and found what He could be as Saviour, Lord, Friend and Helper!

Then, time passes and what has happened to the fire that initially was burning with such vigour in the heart? Distractions and other things come in and, we may ask, what is the position tonight in the heart of every person in this room? Is that fire still burning brightly, or has it diminished so that the initial love for Christ needs to be revived?

Rekindled in love for Christ

In Luke 24 there was a situation where there was just such a need. Cleopas and his companion were on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. If you had a close look at them, you would have seen signs of dejection, heaviness in step, and certainly a lack of brightness in the eye. As they are walking and talking, it says, "Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them". These are some of the finest words in Luke's Gospel — that the risen Christ, fresh from His victory over death and the grave, should draw nigh and go with these two heavy-hearted persons in order to rekindle in their hearts the hopes that had been shattered and set their hearts on fire.

The Person who drew nigh to them is the same One who will draw near to anyone of us, as we walk with our concerns, our shortcomings and our dispiritedness. He will draw nigh just as He did in Luke 24. How many in this small company could speak from experience of knowing His drawing nigh and going with them, when they felt overwhelmed!

The Lord does not come in front of them and stop them. The grace of God was such that He drew nigh and went with them, with the intention of speaking a word to their hearts that would strike home and rekindle the fire in all its brilliance. May these meetings today cause the glow of love for Christ to increase a little in every heart present!

So Christ listens to their conversation. He did not need to come alongside of them to know what they were saying. Wherever He is He knows our conversations; He is the best Listener! He listens, not as an eavesdropper, but as interested in the concerns of His own. He would detect the tone of dejection, and lack of hope, as these two go over the events of the past few days. The One on whom they had pinned their hopes as coming to redeem Israel and set up His kingdom had been taken. They had witnessed Him being bound and dragged away to the Sanhedrim and finally being led out to be crucified and to die. All that they had built up on Him, all their hopes, had been smashed. He listens to it all, even to them recounting the report as to certain ones saying that His body was no longer in the sepulchre.

Then He speaks to them. First, and very briefly, He speaks to their conscience. He says, "O senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" That was a word to the conscience, but generally His conversation on that road was a speaking to their hearts. Mr. Darby has an article on the need of grace and in it he speaks of the conscience being often addressed, with the heart unreached or even unsought. In Luke 24 this stranger who joined their walk was aiming His word at their hearts, the seat of the fire. He was not going to leave them until these embers had been fanned into flame, infused with fresh love for Him.

What a matter it is today in a world which is so against Christ, and so dark in its rejection of Him, to come across a real lover of the Lord Jesus, bright in their love for Christ. That is my first point in Luke 24, that what He sets out to do is to rekindle desire after Himself. Oh, let us love Him a little more. Think of what He has done for us at Calvary's cross. The witness to what He has done is the empty tomb. There is the evidence of where He has been, but He is there no longer. Now, He is seated at the right hand of God and is interceding for every one of His own, serving us from that exalted position in glory. As He served His own in all their weaknesses and shortcomings whilst among them, so from His present position He would draw alongside and serve us with the same love. What a Person! Are we not glad that we know Him and as knowing Him to love

Him? May it be the case that today our love for Him is a little deeper than it was yesterday.

Well, here He proceeds with His conversation with them, “having begun from Moses and from all the prophets”. What believer would not have wanted to be in on this! We gather impressions from these books of Moses especially as to the tabernacle and all the offerings that follow in Leviticus. Yet what would it have been as He “began from Moses”? Christ Himself, the very theme of all Scripture, would have brought to their attention things that they would never have known before. Think of what He would have said about the offerings — the burnt offering, the oblation, the peace offering, the sin offering — each was personified in Himself. Nobody was more qualified to interpret from Moses the things concerning Himself.

Then from all the prophets! Think of some of the things He might have said from Isaiah, Malachi, and Zechariah. What would He have said from Obadiah, or Nahum, as He brought out some precious treasure concerning Himself? All the time their hearts were getting warmer. “Was not our heart burning in us?”. Not now just a glowing ember, but the fire; it is alight, it is really going now. As He speaks to them He is adding a little more fuel to the fire and what is it going to culminate in? It is bringing them to an experience of a little more love for Christ.

So affected are they that, as they near the village where they are going and He makes as if He would go further, they constrain Him saying, “stay with us”. How beautiful that is! To have Jesus not only on the way but to have Jesus in the house. They constrained Him; such was their developing love for Him and still they did not recognise Him! Then He takes the bread and blesses, and breaks it, and gives it to them, and their eyes are opened to recognise Him. There had been that most marvellous exposition of scripture: Moses and all the prophets. What ground He would have covered during that journey, and still the veil is on their eyes! Then there comes a personal touch from Himself, when He reveals Himself to them. Having seen their hearts set aglow and their eyes opened, He disappears from them. Well might they comment, “Was not our heart burning in us as He spoke to us on the way, and as He opened the scriptures to us?”

Have you had an experience of the Lord Jesus speaking to you on the way? If the Lord will, tomorrow some of us will gather to remember Him at the Supper. In a sense our pathway during the week is “on the way”. What has He said to us on the way? Has He caused that heart burning, that fire in our hearts, so that we can

hardly wait for the moment when we remember Him? Let it be the case that as He draws alongside each one of us in this meeting we feel the warmth of His love in such a way that it produces in our hearts a deepening and brightening of our love for Him. Paul says in 2 Corinthians, “the love of the Christ constrains us” (2 Corinthians 5: 14). How constraining is His love!

So He goes from their midst and they make their return journey. That return journey would be far quicker than the outward one. They were going with a lightened step, with faces that were aglow with joy, and with hearts that were brightened with the love of Christ. They were going to share their new experience with those of like mind in Jerusalem. When they arrive there they find the eleven and are told, “The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon”. They relate what happened to them “on the way, and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread”. Let me encourage each one of us to have an experience with Jesus “on the way”. It is good to be here in this meeting today and to enjoy collectively what He might give us, but let us also enjoy “on the way” a walk with Jesus and let it also be a talk with Him as well. The outcome will be a heart that is burning in love for Christ.

Rekindled in energy for Christ

2 Timothy presents a different day. The pristine glory of the church as we see it at Pentecost has faded. It did not last very long because Satan was so active. Along the way, the Lord has given the apostle Paul ministry as to the gospel and also as to the church and he has delivered it faithfully. Now the apostle is at the end of his days and he writes this epistle which is so important for the believer in a dark and difficult day.

He writes the letter as a prisoner knowing that his time was short. In the last chapter he says, “At my first defence no man stood with me”. Shortly he was going to face Nero again and be condemned to death. It is from this background that he is writing and recalling to Timothy the unfeigned faith “which has been in thee, which first dwelt in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in thee also”.

Here we have Paul going back two generations. As we look around this little company today we feel the sadness of the absence of young ones, but let us in our prayers have the unfeigned faith that marked Timothy’s mother and grandmother, so that if the Lord leaves the testimony here these prayers will be answered in future generations. In this case it was in Timothy, one of Paul’s spiritual children. He is seeking to encourage Timothy, to rekindle what might

have dulled for the moment in Timothy's experience. He draws attention to the unfeigned faith in the two preceding generations. So as we ourselves are found in a day of breakdown and smallness, let our faith be revived and unfeigned. It may not be tomorrow that we will see the results of our prayers; it may await a future generation, but if these prayers are in faith we can be sure that they will reach the ear of God.

“For which cause I put thee in mind to rekindle the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands”. Now, if you look at the footnote here, the translator says that the whole subject of this epistle is energy in the darkening state of the assembly. That was the character of the day that Timothy faced, a day of darkness and decline, a day when the love of the many had grown cold. These are the conditions that exist today and there is a great need to be rekindled in energy for Christ. If Satan can get persons to sit back, if he can get persons to be dulled in their service for Christ, he has won the victory. Paul here says it is a day for being revived, re-energised in not only love for Christ but also in energy for Him.

In the next chapter he says to Timothy, “Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. And the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also”. What a chain has been the chain of Christ's testimony! Link after link has been forged in generation following on after generation! And His testimony is still here today! Am I going to be part of it or am I going to let the fire die down? Is my energy going to be rekindled in relation to Christ?

Paul goes on to say how in days of public breakdown “the Lord knows those that are His”. That is a great comfort in the great ruin we see today. Then he puts the responsibility on the true believer in Christ to take certain steps in faithfulness to Him. This is all part of being rekindled in energy for the Lord Jesus.

Then in chapter 3 Paul sets out the equipment that Timothy is going to need if he is going to be re-energised in service for Christ. Paul writes, “Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”. There is much needed teaching in this epistle.

Finally, in chapter 4 he finishes with a personal appeal, pointing out that he was about to finish his race. “I have combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”. His work was over. “The crown of righteousness is

laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render to me in that day; but not only to me, but also to all who love His appearing”. Are we among those who love His appearing and are looking for the day when the rejected One will be fully owned and accorded the rights that He was refused when on earth? Oh, let us love our Saviour more! But let us not leave it at that; let us use our love for Him as leverage to be energised for Him in testimony. It says in chapter 4, “do the work of an evangelist, fill up the full measure of thy ministry”. There is much to do, so do not let our hands be idle in the work of the Lord. Paul says to the Corinthians, “So then my beloved brethren, be firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

He would touch our hearts and set them aglow concerning Himself. As the fire takes a hold, let it take hold of our service for Christ in whatever small measure is given us. Remember He assesses even the cup of cold water given in His name as of great value (Matthew 10:42).

Alex Mowat

Extracted from an address at Sydney, 20 September 2003.

RACHEL IN THE SCHOOL OF GOD

Everything began fine for her, but soon in that wounded heart rebellion began. Conflicts in the family came up. We read: “Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die” (Genesis 30:1). Jacob responds by being very angry; he never seems to think of praying. Poor Jacob, he was so occupied with material riches that he lost the secret of the life of faith.

Rachel did not find help in her family — the household were not in deep paganism but were content with a limited knowledge of God, while immersed in prospering in the things of the world. When Rachel understood that God was her only resource, she prayed alone to God. What did she know of God? What did she say in prayer? We are not told; it is a secret between her soul and God but we read: “And God remembered Rachel, and God harkened to her” (v.22) and He gave her Joseph. Rachel learned the answer to the question: ‘When depression gets hold of you, when suddenly joy leaves you; what voice will comfort you? What kind of a friend have you?’

In chapter 31, we see Jacob coming back home with his family. Rachel was there with the child that God had given her. But, Rachel, ‘Was God the God of your anguish only? What was hidden under the saddle of the camel? Do you still believe in your father’s idols?’ (See Genesis 31:34)

Only when Jacob is called of God to return to Bethel does he require all the strange gods to be put away (Genesis 35:3). Rachel should have put them away long before, if she was going to be a faithful wife to Jacob, the traveller and the worshipper. By the time of the move up to Bethel, life’s journey was nearly at an end for Rachel!

If you are disillusioned or discouraged take out of all these scriptures examples of learning in the midst of difficult circumstances. Some of you who are younger will one day get married. What will you keep in your luggage for the great journey of your life together? You might answer: ‘My knowledge, gifts, the riches of my heart’. Maybe in the secret of your heart you would also have the hope of external protection and support. Yet perhaps even unconsciously you would carry as well so many habits, customs, worldly defects... in a word, so many idols! Rachel had all this in her baggage. It was too late in her life when she found deliverance, when she changed them for something better.

A christian life passes very quickly! For the journey take first, and maybe only,

the little but infinitely precious bag of faith, trusting in God and His resources, depending on Him and seeking to obey His word. He will be pleased and make it sufficient for you for the whole way.

Robin Garvie (August 2003)

A POETIC MISCELLANY

What bursts of praise shall fill yon courts above
When, in the blessed purpose of Thy love,
The journey's over and the race is run,
And we, in company with Thy blest Son,
Shall sing that endless song, for ever new,
To Thee, our God, whose love has brought us through!

Gwyneth Bloomfield

When this passing world is done,
When has set yon glaring sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know —
Not till then how much I owe.

R Murray McCheyne

Father, Thy care is not to make
The desert a waste no more,
But to keep our feet lest we lose the track
Where His feet went before.

Francis Bevan

Thou art not here and though we never saw Thee,
Nor heard Thy words of power and grace to men,
The Spirit here has taught us to adore Thee
And made us long for Thee to come again.

Robert Everitt

Bring forth the gold; also bring forth the frankincense,
Hallow the myrrh to its sanctified use;
Bring forth all treasures, bestow them on Jesus,
Bring all that homage and love can produce!

W. Lawrence

O Lord, we know it matters not,
How sweet the song may be;
No heart but of the Spirit taught
Makes melody to Thee.

Mary Bowly

Jesus, Deliverer,
Near to us be;
Help Thou our voyaging
Over life's sea:
And if the storm of death
Roars sweeping by,
Whisper that truth of truth,
'Peace — it is I!'

John Mason Neale

One hour there is in history's page
Pre-eminent o'er all the past;
'Twill shine and shine from age to age,
While earth, while heaven itself, shall last.

Christian, 'tis yours alone to know
And prize it more than all beside;
So bright with love, so dark with woe —
The gracious hour when Jesus died.

Edward Denny

Suffice the past for selfish thought and pleasure;
To Thee, my Lord, henceforth alone I'd live.
All this world's glory by Thy death I'd measure;
But, Oh! — an echo of Thy love I'd give.

W. Lawrence

Depths of mercy, who can tell?
Sinners saved from death and hell!
Heights of blessing, who can know?
Higher than our thoughts can go!
Lengths of grace our souls explore —
Infinite, for evermore!
Breadths of wisdom without bound,
In the Christ of God are found!

E. H. Chater

Let us go on till travelling days are over,
Let us keep on until the race is run,
Go on until the combat here is finished,
Go on until the victor's crown is won.

Charles Deayton

A FISHER OF MEN

Jimmy Maw emigrated from England to Canada when he was sixteen, but after working on a farm and then in a gold mine for a few years he decided to work his passage back to England. He got himself to Montreal and after one or two unsuccessful attempts to work his passage across the Atlantic he eventually stowed away on board a cargo vessel.

When the ship was safely at sea Jimmy came out of his hiding and offered his services. The Captain was prepared to cover the young man on hearing his story, but later in the voyage two other stowaways were discovered in the coal bunkers and on arrival in England all three were taken into custody and detained for trial at the Petty Sessions. Fortunately only a small fine was imposed at the Sessions and Jimmy found work on his uncle's farm in Lincolnshire.

Later he joined the Royal Air Force and was posted to a Lincolnshire air base where he was a popular member of the base. He was particularly friendly with a young Irishman, though this Irishman puzzled Jimmy since he took no part in the many pursuits that Jimmy thought were essential to life. One time when Jimmy asked him why this was his Irish friend replied, 'I have no need; I have Christ and He satisfies me'.

Jimmy turned this reply over in his mind for some time and a longing for such satisfaction seized him. Shortly after his leave falling due, he accepted an invitation to accompany his friend to his home in Ireland. On Sunday his friend announced that he was going to a Mission Hall and Jimmy decided to go there too. Here he listened to a stirring gospel message, which greatly impressed him, based on the Lord's words to Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again". God used the word to arouse him to his real need. The Holy Spirit did not strive in vain. Jimmy saw himself as a lost sinner but accepted the truth that Christ came into the world to save such. He there and then accepted Christ as his own personal Saviour and made a bold confession of Jesus as his Lord. Now he understood why his friend needed no husks of worldly entertainment to bring joy into his life.

Jimmy's soul was soon burning for the conversion of others and on arrival back at the air base, he lost no time in spreading the news which had aroused him to the sense of his lost condition and had turned him from darkness to light.

About this time a Free Church Rally was being held in a nearby town and Jimmy

decided to go. There were some 200 present and the speaker was giving a semi-political speech relating to the serious European situation in 1937. Finding that there was no mention of the Lord's name and nothing said of the work of salvation he expressed his disapproval of the proceedings and boldly informed the audience that the man on the platform should not be taking up their time with political problems but should be telling the plain gospel story.

His intervention was noted in the local press and another christian having read the account managed to make contact with Jimmy at the air base. As a result, they met and had a long conversation. During their talk Jimmy exclaimed, 'Oh, brother, wouldn't it be fine to purge the camp!'

'But', said the other, 'Scripture does not say that', and together they read the passage in Hebrews 13: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:12-13)

This was light to Jimmy's soul and before long he was "outside the camp" bearing the reproach of Jesus. He discovered that it was the christian's duty to purge himself from vessels of dishonour, to flee youthful lusts and to follow righteousness, faith, love and peace with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

About this time he was transferred to the Fleet Air Arm and served on the aircraft carrier HMS Glorious where he continued to be a bright testimony to the Lord and this was never more evident than in the last days of the Glorious.

On 9th June 1940, after assisting with the evacuation of British troops from Narvik, 'Glorious' was sailing for home. No doubt most of the ship's company were looking forward to getting back to wives and families but at 4.30pm she was surprised by the German pocket battleship, Scharnhorst. Despite trying to escape under cover of a smoke screen, in just over an hour "Glorious" was sunk. Only forty-five of the crew escaped.

One of the survivors gave an account of those last minutes. When the bombardment was at its height and all hope of the ship being saved was gone, Jimmy Maw stood on the deck fervently preaching the gospel. With death staring them in the face some had only a few minutes to make a decision which would affect their eternal destiny. How thankful we can be that many accepted Christ as their

Saviour.

The previous day Jimmy had obtained permission from the Captain to preach to the crew. Captain Guy D'Oyley Hughes has been severely criticised for his part in the loss of the 'Glorious,' but in the ways of God he gave his permission for Jimmy Maw to preach that day and about 500 members of the crew had come to Christ. The following day when the ship was about to sink, according to the testimony of one of the survivors, many more confessed Christ.

Jimmy went down with the vessel and with 1,428 of his comrades — but what a harvest for God! How good of God to have extended such mercy to hundreds on that doomed vessel and to have brought such great salvation within their reach at the last hour of their lives! Those who received it passed not from life unto death but from death unto life — “absent from the body, present with the Lord”.

Based on an account written by E.A. Elliman

(Supplementary information provided from the official history of the war at sea.)

THE HEAD AND THE BODY

(Extracts from the notebook of Frank Purday)

Christ's body is on the earth. Here, where He was rejected, “by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”, so that Christ's name should be maintained here in a scene where He is not. It is a wondrous testimony, exceeding in divine beauty and power any that preceded it. The heavenly Man, the Head of His body, the church, was to be maintained here on the earth by a body composed of many members, all bound together by a greater and more perfect bond than that ever known to a natural body and its members.

J. B. Stoney (11:84)

He is the Head in heaven while His body is here on the earth. The members of a natural body are not more dependent on, or connected with their head than the members of Christ's body are dependent on and connected with Him, though He is in heaven. Besides, we are the habitation of God through the Spirit; the Holy Spirit not only dwells in each believer, and forms the unity between one and all, but He dwells in the company who form God's house...

J. B. Stoney (11:128)

The perpetuation of Christ here, that is the true character of the body — continuance, the perpetuation of Christ here in this scene where He has been rejected.

F. E. Raven (19:43)

I just show you the two sides of the mystery; on the one, that Christ has become the Head of a joint body composed of Jew and Gentile; and on the other that the Gentile has become a joint heir, and a joint body, and joint partaker of God's promise in Christ through the gospel. The gospel being the way by which it has been brought about.

F. E. Raven (7:303)

You are united to Christ as Head over His body, and you are brought into association with each other because of your union to Himself. It is a question of holding the Head. I must have to do with the One who is the source of it all. I have to do with Him. I have to do with the Head and not with the members.

J. B. Stoney (2:20)

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 11:84, i.e. the extract is taken from the "Ministry of J.B.Stoney" (New Series) Volume 11 page 84. All the books from which the extracts are taken are published by the Kingston Bible Trust, Wembley Gardens, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 9LX, UK

THINGS ENTRUSTED TO US — 1

Our Natural Life

1 Timothy 6:20

As Christians we are left here as trustees to take care of, and to be concerned for, that which God has entrusted to us. I suppose every one of us has been entrusted with some charge from God. It should be a matter of deep personal interest with everyone to answer to it.

Our natural life is a trust from God. God has given to each one of us a life to live. He has given us health, ability to think, the possibility of influencing others and of using our life, our time, and all we possess, for His glory. Everyone is either true to that trust or unfaithful to it.

It is no mere accident that we are here in this world; we are spending our days by the mercy of God. Each day comes and passes, carrying with it a definite and specific responsibility, and we should be awake to the solemnity and reality of life. It is a sad thing to go through life and at the end to realise that it has been misspent, and then to say, 'How I wish I had spent my life differently'. Let us seek that we may be awakened to the value of life, to come under the hand of Christ and have that life saved for God, devoted to Christ, and used as realising the value of it, so that, instead of a misspent life, it may have been well spent.

We realise what a triumph of mercy it is when God comes in and saves an old person who has spent a life-time in self-will just as they are slipping into eternity. What mercy it is that such a one should be given a welcome as a repentant sinner; but it is a greater triumph of our God to secure a young life, that the soul may be saved for eternity, and, in addition, that the life may be spent under the hand of God for His glory, for the testimony of Christ, for the furtherance of the interests of the house of God here on earth, and for the encouragement of His people.

It is a joy to look at young believers and think what possibilities are open to them, until the Lord comes, to spend the life which God has given them for

His glory. Hence I read in the Epistle to Timothy: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust”. Timothy was a young man with his face turned Godward, with his soul saved and his life devoted to Christ. The apostle knew him and loved him, and had a deep concern for his welfare. He therefore wrote this letter to him and in true affection said, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust”.

It is sad indeed to see so many really fine young men and women throwing their lives away. Many able and promising young men are devoting their lives to the pursuit of the pleasures of sin, consumed by their love of honour and fame, or wasting their lives in folly and vanity. There are many young women capable of being used greatly in God’s service, yet spending their lives like butterflies, with no objective but self-love and self-gratification. In contrast I look round with joy upon the beloved young men and women who have come under the influence of Christ and would say to them, “Keep that which is committed to thy trust”. Do not regard it lightly that the Lord has put His hand upon you and touched your affections by the power of His love. There is a wonderful life to live for Him, a marvellous sphere to live it in, a remarkable company to walk with, a great incentive to use your energies, and then there will be eternity to spend with the Lord you love.

Now the thought of faithfulness arises. Oh, that we might be prepared to face it! We are called upon to keep that which is entrusted to us. What sort of custodians are we going to be? If I were appointed to be a trustee of an estate, how concerned I should be to be governed by the principles that should control one with a trust. Since there may be some here who do not quite understand the proper position of a trustee, I will endeavour to explain it a little. There are three distinct points about a trustee. The first is that they are dealing with property which is not their own. The second is that they are bound by law to invest trust money suitably in the very best investments that are available to them. The money is not their own, and therefore it should be put out to the best advantage. Thirdly, they have to give an account of all paid out or received. That makes it a very practical matter.

God has put us, as loving the Lord Jesus, in possession of a trust, and we do well to realise our helplessness and to say, 'Lord, help me, for what I have is not my own, it is Thine'. My health, my body is the Lord's; all I possess is His; I am only a trustee. My energy is not given me to spend in the interests of this present evil world. I cannot claim my possessions, but only say, 'It is all The Lord's, I am only a steward'. Then I would turn to the Lord and say, 'Lord, give me wisdom. I would like to invest what Thou hast entrusted to me in the very best way that I can find'.

I wonder whether the younger ones have ever weighed over the suggestion that the Lord made to His disciples, that all they invested in the interests of God down here brought forth a hundred-fold. A hundred-fold means that an investment of £100 brings ten thousand pounds in return — ten thousand per cent. A man of the world would say, 'That is good interest; I would like to invest in a concern that entitled me to ten thousand per cent. interest'. If, out of true affection for Christ, you put your life at the disposal of the Lord you will never be able to calculate the joy, the blessing and the privilege that the Lord gives to those who surrender their lives for His pleasure and for His glory. A life spent for God is the finest investment you can find on earth; there is nothing to be compared with it. Just trust, and you may go forward with all confidence, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things, and you will find how to invest your time, your energies, your mental powers, your interests, your affections in that which shall yield you a hundred-fold in this life, manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

As a trustee I am bound to have regard to the fact that I must render an account, and would therefore pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom". Every day has its record. If we move in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ, we shall have regard to the fact that the Lord will shortly review the pathway of His people, not with the idea of pouring judgment upon them but to express publicly that which has met with His approval in their lives down here.

He would have us live in the light of the judgment-seat when everyone shall give an account. There is a day when our trusts shall be ‘wound up’, as we might say; when the last day of responsibility will have been reached, and we shall go to be with the Lord. We shall no longer tread the earth in testimony, in witness, and in responsibility to Him, but enter, in all the fulness of divine grace, into the joy of the Lord where there are no responsibilities or cares but all is joy and divine love. Let us remember this important question of giving account.

In view of this we should cultivate the habit of rendering an account to the Lord daily. It is difficult to keep accounts if they are not kept daily. We do not find long accounts in business are profitable, and we may apply that principle to our daily life. Young believers who have never tried it, begin now! Get into the presence of the Lord and give an account of how the day has been spent; to find how much or how little has been spent for Him and to have a deep concern about that which has been spent in vain. Remember a day spent in vain can never be recalled. There are many days we would all gladly recall; we should have spent them otherwise. The Lord would encourage us in rendering an account to Him. It shews a recognition of His rights over us, and He would greatly bless us in doing it.

We should be more true to our trust if we went continually to Him to get a sense of His approval. We should have an assurance of what was pleasing or displeasing to Him, and be encouraged to pursue a path for His pleasure and delight. We should get alone with the Lord and should recognise that our lives — the few days that are left to us — are His sacred trust, put into our hands by the Lord Himself. It would be so much more easy then to pursue a path which would be pleasing to the Lord. Many are living for themselves, many who should be yielding a hundred-fold are living lives which will only yield sorrow. The Lord would have us true to our trust. “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust”.

F. S. Marsh

In the next issue: “Service”