

Living Water

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THREE VOICES

“Where art thou?”	Genesis	3: 10
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This world is full of voices clamouring for attention. I want to speak of three voices that are really important. The first is the voice of God asking a question — **“Where art thou?”** God would ask you that question tonight. Where are you in relation to God? God wants you to be in a living relationship with Himself.

In His wondrous power God brought the universe into being, the vastness of which is totally incomprehensible to our human minds and its beauty and variety are an endless source of wonder.

It was into the ideal setting of the garden of Eden that God placed man, created in His own likeness, a unique creation, a creature with whom God could communicate.

Alas, Satan, the arch enemy of God, and of all mankind, was out to spoil such a perfect scene. Adam and Eve were told that they could eat all the fruit of the garden except for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God’s holy commandment was disobeyed and the reign of sin began and the terrible result has been passed down to all humanity. The Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God!

Being conscious of their sin, Adam and Eve hid themselves when they heard the voice of God as He walked in the garden. His challenging question was, **“Where art thou?”**

Over these thousands of years, as world population increased, so did evil. In recent times, as knowledge has mushroomed so has evil of every description. Despite the great advance in science, medicine, communications and all forms of technology, the world today has more insurmountable problems than ever before — crime, pollution, and international tension to

name but a few. Why? Because man is away from God and is separated from the original conditions in which he had been placed.

The Old Testament gives us an account of the increase of evil. God pleaded with His people, Israel. He sent the prophets to recall His people to their link with Him. Sometimes they did obey but they soon fell back into their old ways. Sin was so deeply engrained in human nature that there seemed to be no hope, no hope that is, until the coming of the Saviour.

There are many symbols of salvation to be found in the Old Testament but perhaps one of the greatest took place in Egypt. In delivering the children of Israel from bondage, God said that He would slay all the firstborn in the land. The children of Israel were instructed to kill a lamb and sprinkle its blood upon the doorpost and the lintel of their houses in order to be spared from this judgment. That seems a strange thing to do but it was God's command and it looked forward to the sacrifice of Jesus. It was also the way that God was going to prove whether they had faith to trust in Him. God is offering forgiveness to you in the gospel today, if only you will trust in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a parable in the New Testament that speaks of all the years in which God was appealing to His people through the prophets. We read in Luke 20 that a man planted a vineyard; he set it up and prepared the buildings and equipment needed to carry through the work. Once the vineyard was established he went away to a foreign country, leaving it with what, he thought, were capable persons to manage it, harvest it and produce the wine. After the owner had been away for a time he sent one of his servants to collect the profits from the vineyard, but the workers beat the servant and sent him away empty handed, keeping the profits for themselves. The owner sent another servant and the same thing happened to him. The master must have been a very long-suffering man for he sent other servants, some of whom the workers in the vineyard actually killed. At the last he said to himself, 'I will send my son; they may not have thought much of the servants I sent before, but surely they will respect my son'. What happened? When the workers in the vineyard saw the son,

they said, ‘Ah, this is the heir; let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours.’

This parable in the New Testament is a picture of God in His love and goodness, sending His prophets to His people in order to bring them back to Himself. At last He said, ‘I will send My Son’ — “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). That is the simple gospel message! It is the message that has been preached for 2000 years and it is the message that will continue to be preached until the Lord comes.

It is the voice from the cross that I next want to draw attention to: “**It is finished**”. These were the words that the Saviour uttered as He hung upon the cross at Calvary, surrounded by a crowd of mockers who ridiculed Him. God had sent His Son. Jesus came to die and shed His precious blood to make atonement once for all for sins and the power of that blood, shed at Calvary, can wash away every sin that has ever been committed so that God can come out in blessing to all mankind. It is free. It costs you nothing at all. There is nothing to pay because the debt has been paid. Christ was made sin, and suffered God’s wrath against sin in His own body. God forsook Him because He was laying upon Jesus His whole judgment against sin. That sacrifice made by Jesus is sufficient to bring cleansing to all who trust in Him. “Salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

At the end of those three hours of darkness, when Jesus had borne the judgment that was due to us as sinners, He could say, “It is finished”. His work was now complete to God’s entire satisfaction and to our everlasting blessing. After three days He arose. What a Saviour! Yet many people are still indifferent to Him. What about you?

The last voice I want to speak of is the loud voice out of heaven, saying, “**Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men**” and also “**Behold, I make all things new**”. This scripture shows us what will happen at the end of this dispensation. In other words, God has accomplished His great

end. He has established an order of things where He can be in communion with His creature. This is all the result of the work of Christ. God can have pleasure in His creature because sin, which brought distance between God and man, has been removed in the death of Christ and all who trust in Him are brought into a living and eternal relationship with God. After the Lord has called all His own to be with Himself for ever God will dwell with men. That is something that God planned before time began

It is wonderful to be a christian and to have absolute certainty about the future. There is so much uncertainty in the world; information technology has nothing to guarantee the future of mankind in this nuclear age and people are fearful of what may be coming soon.

I hope everyone here has answered the first question — “**Where art thou?**” and realises that by nature they are away from God?

Then, just as importantly, do you accept the news from heaven showing the route into God’s favour that has been provided through the death and resurrection of Christ enabling you to look forward to a glorious future with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the gospel message.

G.M.H.

A preaching of the gospel, Musselburgh,, October, 2005

THE DIVINE ANSWER

Romans **11: 2 - 4**

Hebrews **13: 8**

2 Timothy **4: 11**

Revelation **22: 16 - 17, 20**

I would like to use these Scriptures to say something about the divine answer.

These verses that we have read, other than Romans 11, perhaps are not direct answers to questions, but I think they provide a divine answer for the encouragement of the hearts of God’s people in the present day.

The days are difficult; we are told that in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3). We have the clear statement that in the last days difficult times would be there. God has the divine answer for the difficult times and for all the apathy, doubts, sorrows, and pressures that are on mankind and on His people. There is such a thing as the divine answer. Oh, that it might reverberate in our hearts tonight so that all here have a fresh and glorious assurance that what is of God is not going to the wall. What people may say or do, the increasing character of infidelity, the introduction in this very land of so much that is false: all these things will in no sense or in any way bring Christianity to its last legs or anything like it. Let our hearts be assured of that tonight.

The passage we read in Romans 11 relates to an incident recorded in 1 Kings chapter 19 and if you read the account there you find that Elijah, prominent servant of God that he was and unwavering in his defence of the rights of God, was down at heart. He said he was left alone and those that he had testified to now sought his life. What a dark day it was, a day when Ahab and Jezebel were around, and it parallels in character much of what is found today. Yet what does it say? "What says the divine answer to him"? Oh, thank God there was a divine answer for Elijah and thank Him too there is a divine answer today.

God told him that there were 7000 persons that had not bowed the knee to Baal and this also is brought forward in Romans 11. Elijah clearly did not know it. You might ask, why did Elijah not know about it. Well, God knew about it and God knows what is going on today. What we learn from this scripture is that there was a divine answer that came in power to assure Elijah that, whatever he thought, God's reserves, God's maintenance of His testimony was in no sense on the way out. That is also surely a message for the present time.

Has God ever failed any one of us? Not a bit of it. To say that christianity is on the way out or is waning may be true in the public domain, for we are in a day of small things, a day of public breakdown. But to say that vital christianity is failing is really saying that the power of the Spirit of God is insufficient to maintain from Pentecost through to the rapture, a living, vibrant, vital testimony to Christ. In no way can any heart that is

true for Christ agree with that. How blessed to have that assurance in our hearts!

Did God have a divine answer to your need as a sinner? Indeed, when the reign of sin began did God not have His own answer? Think of the way that God came in and clothed Adam and Eve in coats of skin. Even more glorious still, He announced that the seed of the woman would come. He had in mind the incoming of Christ to meet the need of poor guilty sinners like you and me. You can write over the gospel message that it is the divine answer. God's remedy for ruined man is Christ. Then the divine remedy for hearts that are despondent, that think that there is no living testimony now to Christ, is to be found in the fact that the Spirit of God is the blessed custodian of the truth and He will never, blessed be His glorious name, let divine things go to the wall.

In Hebrews 13:8, there is something of a divine answer in that precious scripture that has assured and encouraged many hearts down through the years and should encourage us tonight: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come". The hymn-writer says:

‘Undimmed Thy radiancy appears,
Changeless through all the changing years’.

The unchanging glory and blessedness of the Man who sits at the right hand of God, would assure our hearts today. He is the One who is with His own all the days until the completion of the age (Matthew 28:20). The preciousness of Christ is to thrill our hearts. "Jesus Christ" speaks of the blessed Man who was here. He is now in glory; His condition has changed but the Person is the Same.

As you think of "yesterday", you think of Jesus coming into manhood, the One who came to do the will of God, taking up that wonderful expression: "Lo, I come to do O God, thy will" (Hebrews 10:7). In that body prepared, He was here to fulfil the will of God. Oh, what it cost Jesus to fulfil the will of God, throughout His pathway. In Gethsemane's garden, what pressure was on His spirit yet He says, "not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42). Think of all that it cost Him, on that cross,

to suffer the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. He endured the awful hatred that was against Him; He exhausted God's divine, unmitigated judgment, shed His precious blood, went into the grave and then came forth triumphant! That is what He has done "yesterday"!

Then as we think of Jesus Christ "today" let our hearts celebrate the glory of where He is. If there is one glorious assurance for our hearts that christianity will never break down, it is to consider the place where our Lord Jesus is just now. He is at the right hand of God — a glorious Man in heaven. How wondrous indeed that every purpose of God will be secured, for Christ is in glory and the Holy Spirit is here to witness to it. It is a blessed, triumphant assurance for all His own today. At the present time Jesus lives, a Man at the right hand of God, upholding everything for the pleasure and glory of the blessed God. Then, too, He serves His own that there might be a revival in affection for Himself worthy of this glorious One and all that He has done for us. When we think of what Christ has done for us, it should sober us, and cause us to love Him more and may we too have our minds more set on that place, "where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

Then, "tomorrow". Well, there is an unchanging character about the Lord Jesus, "to the ages to come"; but there is one thing that thrills our hearts; we are looking for Him to come. That hope is a hope today; and the assurance is of a bright tomorrow. Thank God for that.

These Hebrew saints needed encouragement to leave behind all that was Jewish, and go on to the greater and better character of vibrant christianity. At the end of the epistle we read, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come". He will never change and we are looking for His return that we might be with Him to the ages to come. Wonderful prospect! It is the antidote to any thought that christianity will be overthrown.

In regard of what is public and outward, sorrow, ruin, apathy all attach to it. Yet the Lord Jesus pleads with Laodicea, "I would thou wert cold or hot" (Revelation 3:15). He counsels them in that wonderful address and appeals, "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking". Think of that appeal of love, that those who were apathetic and indifferent might be

revived in affection for Him. What a Person He is; surely there is no one like Jesus. No one can stimulate our hearts as Jesus can. He is the One who will hold them eternally. Millions upon millions will be in eternity with Christ and the centre of the vast throng will be Christ Himself.

Well, would it not be of interest to each one here that the One who will hold our hearts as lovers and believers eternally would hold them for His pleasure and our enjoyment at the present time? What a challenge that is that there might be more room in our hearts for this glorious Person.

In 2 Timothy 4, we have Paul in the last of his writings looking at things in a dark day. He says that certain persons had forsaken him; they had loved the present age. Others had gone to certain places. Then he says, “Luke alone is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thyself, for he is serviceable to me for ministry”. I think that is a divine answer given through Paul for recovered persons in a dark day. It is surely a divine assurance in this present difficult time that persons who have been recovered — I trust each one here — are serviceable in the last days of the testimony’s history.

Is it of interest to us? It certainly was of interest to Paul. No doubt he had many sorrows as he looked abroad on his labours, on all that had crumbled as far as his labours in Asia were concerned. But here we read something about that young man Mark, who had been with Paul once and then had then gone off in independence on his own way; it says “he is serviceable to me”. Now, what one of us have not had our own ways and our own ideas and then perhaps in soul exercises before the Lord and as a result of the way He has taken us, have had to come back? We have gone our own way and it has been a pretty fruitless journey.

Now Mark is recovered, that is the point. That is the divine answer. He is recovered and serviceable to the great apostle Paul and to the testimony. God would give us that answer at the present time. Recovered persons who love Christ are serviceable for the testimony of our Lord and Master in the difficult days in which we are.

Is it not attractive to our hearts? Someone said to me that obstacles are

what you see in the way when you take your eye off the goal. How true it is. That is what Mark had done. He had taken his eye off the goal. As a recovered man, writing his gospel, his eye was certainly on the goal. It was filled with the glory of Christ. He begins his gospel, “Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God”. What an impression Mark had of the distinctive glory of the Son of God.

The Darby Translation has an interesting note to the word “rekindling” in 2 Timothy 1:6; it tells us that rekindling speaks of revival of energy. Do we not need our spiritual energies revived at the present time? The glory of Christ will revive them. It was the glory of Christ that revived Mark’s energies so that he could write in such a short, pithy, living way sixteen chapters of testimony as to the glory of the Son of God. The words “straightway” and “immediately”, characterise his gospel and suggest energy in activity. You can see how a recovered man was so useful. The word today is that recovered persons where ever they may be are useful to Christ if they have come to know Him as their Lord and Saviour. Every one is needed for the testimony of Christ with energies rekindled in view of the darkening state of things around.

What a day it was in Mark 16. Some wondered about the stone being rolled away for it is “very great” in Mark’s gospel but when they came to the tomb the stone, the great obstacle, was already gone! The vital character of christianity pervades Mark’s account and he then speaks of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God “confirming the word by the signs following upon it”.

No doubt Paul sorrowed in the Acts when Mark went off but through divine recovery there was now with Mark what was true and Paul appreciated it. Oh that this may be in all our hearts and in all our local places — revived energy and faithfulness for Christ, revived power in the measure that we have by the Holy Spirit of a greater testimony for Christ.

In Revelation 22 you get the encouragement of the Lord’s own words as well as the preciousness of this wonderful divine answer. He says, “I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star”. Oh, the

glory of Christ, the root and offspring of David. He is both the root and the offspring. There is what is divine and glorious about the blessed Lord Jesus Himself. He presents Himself in that way, “I”. These italicised “I”s are important in the chapter as He brings His preciousness before us. He is the bright and morning star — the glorious harbinger of another day. No doubt it is risen, and it is to be something bright in our hearts, affecting our lives.

Then you have a divine answer brought to light in those who love Christ. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come”. What a divine answer it is to the faithfulness of the love of Christ down through the centuries of testimony. There is this precious response, the Spirit and the bride in concert together saying, “Come”. As we see the awful character of public breakdown, and are affected too by the increasing fervency of love and affection found in the hearts of His own, is there not a greater appreciation with which we say, “Come”? The Spirit of God links on with that: “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”.

We read, “He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly”. How precious is the divine answer! Who is speaking? It is the Lord Himself. It is the assurance of the love of the One we have well known as Saviour and Lord, who has met the young ones newly secured in testimony and who has faithfully sustained older ones down through their passage of time in His testimony here. He is the One who has sustained all for His testimony down through the centuries and He is saying, “Yea, I come quickly”.

Then there is a response, “Amen; come, Lord Jesus”. That is the response, surely, from our hearts. “Yea, I come quickly” is a divine answer for our encouragement at the present time and, as He says it, there should be an increasing spiritual response to Christ, and with our hearts so affected then we can say, in unison with myriads and myriads of His own, longing for that time, “Amen; come, Lord Jesus”.

What a moment it will be! He is looking forward to it and His own are looking forward to it as well. What a divine answer it will be! The vast number of those who have fallen asleep through Jesus down through the

course of the testimony — the whereabouts of some not even known, but not one left out — each hear the mighty power of His summons and the living who remain (who are His) will be caught up together with them to be for ever with the Lord.

Myriads upon myriads will form that glorious response to Christ eternally, and as believers through grace, we will have our part in it. We will forever wonder at the glorious character of the divine answer as we think of what He will secure for Himself. As He has His bride, the church, for Himself, as He has response from Israel, as He has tribute from the nations, what an answer it will be for the One who was once the Man of sorrows. He will fill and hold our hearts in eternity.

May the response now from our hearts be, “Amen, come Lord Jesus”.

Eric McPhail

An address in Gardenstown, 17th April 2004

THE THIRTY YEARS

“And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age”

(Luke 3:23)

O restless, hasty heart,
Oft checked in bitter tears,
What lesson hast thou here to learn
From all those thirty years?

Behold the perfect Man,
God’s purpose full in view,
Thus waiting hidden and unknown,
With such a work to do!

He knowing well the plan
Hastes not to tread the road,
But waits in patience for the sign,
Dependent upon God.

Lesson of priceless worth,
Those thirty silent years!
Rebuke to nature's anxious zeal,
Its haste, its restless fears!

The peaceful quiet mind
That needs no checking rod;
The patient dignity of faith
That dares to wait on God!

No rash, unchastened zeal,
Pressing to do His will;
The heart that knows His guiding
Awaits it, and is still.

O wondrous thirty years,
Thus teach my restless heart,
If 'tis so blest to work for Him,
Blest too, the waiting part!

How sweet the quiet trust,
Those secret times with God!
Though friends around misunderstand,
Though Satan stalks abroad.

The heart in untouched calm
With Him waits patiently.
O lesson of those thirty years,
I thank my God for thee!

Ora Rowan

THE CONTRAST

The glory of the kingdom spread
Over the mountain's lofty head
Lighting the rocky steeps;
And Jesus' robes were glistening white,
His face, the sun in all its might
And Peter sleeps!

Tis night, and in Gethsemane
A prostrate form in agony
With bitter crying weeps;
The darkness deepens at His groan,
The darkest night this earth has known
And Peter sleeps!

He lies upon the dungeon floor;
The guard, quadrupled, round the door
Its midnight vigil keeps;
Two chains of iron bind him fast,
Tomorrow's morn shall be his last
And Peter sleeps!

Edward Bevir

FILLED

Fill our souls with feelings holy,
Pure affection, Lord, for Thee
And for all the saints who love Thee,
Joined in soul that we might be
Thus expressing unity of love for Thee.

Fill our hearts, Lord Jesus, fully
With the sunshine of Thy love,
So that we might be reflecting
Here, the light of heaven above
And that others may its warmth and blessing prove.

Fill our minds, O glorious Saviour,
With the knowledge of Thyself
And God's wondrous thoughts of blessing
Opening to us heaven's wealth,
By the Spirit giving to us life and health.

Thou the Christ, we'd have now dwelling
In our hearts by faith today,
That Thy love in all its power
Now might hold us by its sway
Till all rivals have forever passed away!

Strengthened by the Father's Spirit
Which He in His love did send
That we might be fully able
With all saints to apprehend
Love so wondrous, far too great to comprehend!

Thus we're blessed with every blessing
And our hearts are given to know
Thy great love, surpassing knowledge,
Filled to all God's fullness now,
And in worship we in adoration bow.

Charles Deayton

MY CHAINS FELL OFF

Hi. My name is Andy and I was born in Durham in 1971. Growing up there was not easy, especially when I went to school, because I was bullied a lot, and I hated it.

Then we moved to Rossett in North Wales, where in 1994 I met some people from the Rossett church. They seemed very happy people, so I went to some of their services and somehow imagined that I was a christian — but I wasn't. I was just a very muddled individual and in truth, my religion was drinking and drugs.

When I did go to the Rossett church, I smelt of drink and was nearly out of my mind and yet those people always made me welcome and showed me the love of Jesus. They gave me a Bible and I bought a crucifix and I thought that I had really made it — but I hadn't, because when I read the Bible it meant nothing to me. I might just as well have been reading the telephone directory!

In 1996 I fulfilled a childhood dream and joined the army, spending a fair bit of my time in Ballykelly in Northern Ireland, but even there I was heavily into drink, drugs and women. It was just a downward spiral. Then, very unexpectedly, my dad died and for six months my life seemed to be in a great black hole. I could not sleep and could not see the point of anything in my life.

About this time I met up with two christian nurses and a man called Jim Lawther who ran the SASRA café. Jim witnessed to me about Jesus, about my sinful life, and what Jesus could do for me. He invited me to the café where we had a good talk. He told me that his wife died of cancer and that he missed her very much but that he was not sad, because he knew that she had gone to be with Jesus.

As Jim continued to witness to me, I could feel an emptiness and spiritual hunger for the “something” that these people had got, but which I had not — it was Jesus! Jim asked me if I wanted to pray the ‘sinner’s prayer’ and I said that I did and there and then gave my life to Jesus. I just knew I was

saved and had real peace. I began sleeping better and was rejoicing in Jesus as my wonderful Saviour

I left the army in 2000 after four and a half years service. I still had some problems, but the Lord Jesus was very patient with me and now I can truly say that the drink, drugs, women and martial arts are gone and are no longer a problem to me.

I was baptised in 2001 and I can truly say that I love the Lord Jesus more and more and I want to tell others about Him, because I know that what He has done for me, He can do for them. So as you read this, give your life to Jesus and know the true happiness that comes from a living relationship with Him.

Jesus gave Himself for me ... and you (John 3:16)

Jesus is the only Truth and the only Way (John 14:6)

Jesus wants to come into your life (Revelation 3:20)

Andy McLaughlin
2006.

THE END — PART 3

THE END FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

So far in these articles I have dealt with individuals but I want now to come to the whole company of God, rich and poor, old and young. What a company — and Thessalonians presents to us the end for the people of God on earth. Do not think that it is the end of them! No. I do not know any scripture that appeals to my heart like that passage where Paul tells the Thessalonians that, “the Lord himself will descend”. The Lord is coming Himself for us. Is that not better than the beginning? He met you at the beginning. He was the means through which you were brought into the light of God. He will come Himself at the end, and if you are on the earth, actually here, He will change your body in a moment. If you are buried He will raise you in the twinkling of an eye, but it will be He Himself that does it.

I ask you as fellow-believers to view the end that God has in view in regard to things here. We shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, and so shall we be forever with the Lord. That is the end. Perhaps you hear of a lot of persons getting converted. Have you ever thought of what the end of that will be? The Supreme Administrator of the universe is going to have those people in His company forever, and He will not allow anyone else to take them there. He comes Himself. Paul says, "Comfort one another with these words".

E. J. McBride (1931)

In the next issue, God willing, "The end of Babylon"

A BIOGRAPHY IN EIGHT WORDS

The world's greatest biographies pale into insignificance when compared with the life-story of Jesus, which can be compressed into four acts, and summed up in eight words. Through heaven's eternal day its echo shall be the glad song of millions who owe their everlasting all to the incoming, dying, rising, and ascending Jesus.

Jesus Came!

Jesus came and a multitude of angels heralded His birth by praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Jesus came, and the God-fearing Simeon took the Holy Child in his arms and said: "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation".

Jesus came and with His advent there dawned upon the horizon of this God-hating world eternal hope, for it is written, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".

Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost". The mission of the Lord Jesus to this world was not to teach morality, nor to set a good example, as some would have us believe, but, blessed be His Name, His mission was to pardon and eternally save poor, lost, guilty sinners, and link them up with Himself for ever.

Jesus died!

Jesus died. The hard-hearted, mocking Jews railed upon Him, and in

vulgar taunt cried: "If He be the King of Israel let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him".

Jesus died but listen, before yielding up His Spirit to God, He prays. The grace of this prayer seems even to have softened the heart of the dying thief, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do".

Jesus died but where are the loved ones to whom Jesus had been everything? Where, in this moment of extreme anguish and sorrow, are those who professedly were His dearest friends? we read: "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled".

Jesus died and the very heavens went into deepest mourning. For three long hours a thick pall of darkness hung over this guilty world. "From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour".

Jesus died but midst hatred and scorn, betrayal and mockings, a greater sorrow than all befalls this "Man of Sorrows". Yes! ten thousand times greater. God forsook Him. God forsook Jesus, and therein lies the possibility of your soul ever being saved, of your heart for ever being made happy. And this is why. God is holy and cannot look upon sin; then, since at that moment Jesus was bearing the righteous judgment of God against sin, it became an absolute necessity for God to hide His face from Him during those awful hours. It was in order that you and I might in perfect righteousness be pardoned and everlastingly set free from the thralldom of sin. Do you believe in Him as your Saviour and Lord? The dying thief did. Do you? If not, why not?

Jesus Rose!

Jesus rose all-glorious fact! He burst the bonds of the tomb. He annulled the power of Satan. He robbed death of its sting, and triumphantly and victoriously, in spite of every foe. By the decree of Pilate a huge stone had been rolled to the mouth of His sepulchre, and sealed with the Roman seal. By his orders a band of Roman soldiers was set to guard the tomb night and day, lest the One who said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up", should actually carry out His word. With bitter hatred they watched to make sure that His disciples should not come and steal Him away. In spite of all their plans, in spite of all their wicked hatred, He arose. Hallelujah! Christ is risen! The grave had to loose Him. Death could not hold Him. Jesus rose!

Jesus Lives!

Jesus lives. He is the God-glorified, crown-decked, and heaven-honoured Son of man. The work is finished, Jesus is raised and has ascended into heaven, and God is glorified. To-day, as in the days of old, He is saying to you, reader, "Come unto Me ... and I will give you rest". Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Come now! Believe now! "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation " (2 Corinthians 6:2).

A. E. Mayo (Coventry)

THE LOVE OF GOD AS MADE KNOWN IN THE GOSPEL

Since the epistles are addressed directly to believers, their teaching as to divine love refers not only to its presentation objectively, but also to its being known in experience and enjoyed. Paul's epistle to the Romans was written to establish believers in the truth of the gospel of God. It is noticeable that he begins by demonstrating the responsibility and guilt of all men, whether Gentiles or Jews, in order that every mouth may be stopped, and the entire world be subject to the judgment of God.

Paul then develops the teaching of the gospel, prominence being given in the first place to righteousness as being its basis. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, there is free justification for all. God has set Him forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood, for the showing forth of His righteousness, so that He should be just in justifying the believer. The righteousness of God revealed in the gospel and seen in the death of Christ, instead of being against men, is in their favour. Jesus our Lord who was delivered to death for our offences has been raised by the power of God from among the dead for our justification. All of this is given in the first four chapters and the result as known in the experience of believers is seen in the beginning of chapter 5 where we read that we are justified by faith, have peace with God, access into divine favour and boast in hope of the glory of God.

In the development of the apostle's teaching thus far, God is known to believers in His righteousness, grace, and power. In verse 5 of chapter 5

we come to the source of the gospel as originating in the love of God, and this as known in experience, being shed abroad (or poured out) in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. This gives full assurance of hope, and enables us to endure steadfastly as we meet with tribulation in our pathway through this world.

In the verses that follow in Romans 5 emphasis is laid upon the death of Christ as the witness to our hearts of the love of God. In chapters 3 and 4 the death of Christ is seen in its effect as establishing God's righteousness and meeting the need of guilty men. Here the wonderful character of God's love is seen in relation to the condition of guilt and moral distance in which we were when Christ died for us. "We being still without strength, in due time Christ has died for the ungodly"; "God commends his love to us, in that we being still sinners, Christ has died for us"; and "Being enemies we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son".

God expressed His love when there was nothing lovable in us. If we ask for the reason, we are thrown back on God Himself. He is love and He loves us because of what He is. That the love of God might reach us in the depth of our need necessitated the death of His Son. Appreciation of His atoning sufferings and death, which were anticipated in the agony of Gethsemane, and fully realised when forsaken by God on the cross, has a profound moral effect upon us in the measure in which we are able to enter into their deep meaning, and the greatness of the cost to God and to Christ. The love that has been thus manifested remains unchanged, and the Holy Spirit makes it a present living reality in our hearts.

The result is that not only are believers established in the knowledge of justification and reconciliation, and the assurance of present and future salvation, but God being known in the depths of His love, we "are making our boast in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:11).

In the second part of the epistle (chapter 5:12 to the end of chapter 8) we have another side of the gospel presented, in relation to headship. In contrast to the Adam, who by disobedience brought in sin and death, attention is called to the one Man Jesus Christ, who is now the divinely appointed Head for all men. By His obedience unto death, He has brought

in righteousness and life as the free gift of grace towards all. The end in view is that instead of the reign of sin and death, grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord; chapter 5:21.

In chapters 6, 7 and 8 we see the present results of the recognition by believers of Christ as Head. In the realisation of identification with Him we are set free from bondage to sin, the law, and the flesh, in order that in liberty and newness of life, in the spirit of the new covenant, we may serve God in righteousness and holiness. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the power to live and fulfil righteousness. Being indwelt by the Spirit of God believers can be spoken of as having a new state, not “in flesh” but “in Spirit”, corresponding to the change of headship from Adam to Christ. The Spirit of God leads us in the path of the will of God. We have also received a Spirit of sonship whereby we cry “Abba Father”; also the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

In the latter part of chapter 8 there is a remarkable contrast between the purpose of God — that there is to be a company of sons all conformed to the image of God’s Son, that Christ might be the firstborn among many brethren — and our actual present condition of infirmity as passing through the wilderness, in mortal bodies part of a groaning creation, and liable to suffer from all kinds of pressure and painful circumstances. Having the firstfruits of the Spirit we can anticipate, with confident hope, the accomplishment of the purpose of God, knowing that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Here the apostle returns to the thought of divine love, but from a different point of view from that seen in chapter 5. There we have the greatness of our need and the condition of distance in which the love of God reached us when we were without strength, ungodly, sinners and enemies. Now, in chapter 8 believers are looked upon as loving God in response to His love known in the soul. This brings them to understanding of being God’s elect, foreknown, predestined to sonship, called, justified, glorified. Every accusing voice is silenced. It is God who justifies His elect. “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who has died, but rather has been also raised

up; who is also at the right hand of God; who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Here we see the present activities of the love of Christ in His position as risen and exalted, on behalf of believers for whom He died. No conditions of bodily infirmity, or suffering, tribulation or persecution, can separate us from His love. This is the power which has carried christians through persecution triumphantly, even when put to death for Christ's sake, being reckoned as sheep for the slaughter.

The apostle concludes his unfolding of the gospel in verses 38 and 39, by affirming his persuasion that no creature in the universe can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That which was accomplished by Christ's death, both for God and for the redeemed, subsists livingly in Him, and as risen and exalted there is now seen in Him, in a new condition of manhood, the full expression of God's purpose for believers, that they are destined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. The love of God is known and His purpose is secured and established for ever, in the One who is "the same, yesterday and to-day and for ever".

W. Fergusson

POWER, SERVICE, GRACE AND LIGHT AS SEEN IN CHRIST

PART 1 — POWER AND SERVICE

POWER

"But the crowds seeing it, were in fear, and glorified God who gave such power to men" Matthew 9:8

Matthew is a gospel that speaks much of the Lord Jesus in relation to His regal position. He comes into this world as the Son of David with legal title to the kingdom, and His coming in at once agitates the hostile world, and stirs up the murderous spirit which is there. We see Him in Matthew's gospel as the One who was the vessel of power here, anointed by heaven as Jehovah's King. The great thought underlying the Lord's movements in Matthew is that of power.

In Jesus' movements amongst men, dealing with every kind of disease, healing all that were oppressed by the devil, we see that which indicated the great power of God. The power of the world to come, when the Lord will reign publicly, was present in Him as Man here. He dealt with all kinds of cases, baffling cases, hopeless cases. He deals successfully, perfectly, with every case that is submitted to Him, demonstrating the great power that was present in Him, for He dealt with death itself, breaking its power. Even death had to give way before the power of Christ in a world of hostility dominated by the power of Satan.

As the people saw Him administering the bounty of God and the power of heaven it is understandable how they "glorified God who gave such power to men". Jesus was here exercising the power of God. He was not wielding that power in a destructive way, He was here representing all the power and authority of heaven, but in favour of men. And Jesus, as He moved from circumstance to circumstance in His walk through this scene, emphasised in every case He handled that He was dealing with things here morally, and bringing the power of the world to come to bear upon the situation.

At the end of this gospel He is seen as the great Vessel of power, all power being in His hands. The whole domain is under Him, and that power is to fill the whole universe publicly; that great power is at the disposal of everyone here. I would like the youngest believer to understand, that in making your choice to follow Christ, you are following the great Vessel of power, and His power is at your disposal in regard to any difficulty, or danger, which you may have to confront. You may be tested by things which you find in you, the power actuated by the devil touching the flesh in you. But there is a power far greater than that, and Christ, the Vessel of divine power, is available to you, so that you may not fall under the power of the devil, so that you may not fall under the power of the world. The world, with all its glitter and glamour, is constantly inviting you; it would take you along its paths, those paths of glory which lead but to the grave. But the Vessel of divine power would be near you ready to throw all that power into the fray, and it is greater than any hostile power you may meet here.

I would encourage the youngest believer, as going through a world where you are meeting the power of the devil in its various forms, to turn to Jesus the One in whom power is found. Jesus, in His passage through this scene, met the enemy in every form. He bound the strong man and spoiled his goods, and now as the great Vessel of power He is available for you. I would urge you to cling affectionately to Christ as the Vessel of power. He will see you through every difficulty and He can deal with every disability under which you labour. He can dispossess the enemy and heal all that are oppressed by the devil. Matthew would encourage our souls and attach us to this great Vessel, the Vessel of power.

SERVICE

“...and they were astonished above measure, saying, He does all things well; he makes both the deaf to hear, and the speechless to speak.”

Mark 7:37

Now we come to Mark's gospel which presents Jesus from another standpoint, and introduces Him almost abruptly, not like Matthew who would go to great pains to establish His legal right to the throne. Mark would bring Jesus in as the great Vessel of service, and would introduce Him in His service. It is not a question of going over His past and showing you the line along which He has come into this world. It is a question now of qualifications, and therefore the Servant is immediately ushered into His service.

Mark has great delight in retracing the service of Jesus here, for Mark would call attention to the way in which He served, the way in which He did things, taking account of the most minute detail in connection with the Lord's service, for the service was exacting. There were long, long days of service, in which He was oftentimes weary; you may even see Him sleeping with a pillow under His head after much service. But the days were very full days in the life of Jesus, as He served in the most unselfish manner. His service was rendered so freely, so ungrudgingly. No one who made a demand upon Him would be made to feel that he was breaking into His rest. No one would be reprimanded for making a claim upon Him, in the fulness and freeness of that service, day after day, as He made Himself available to humanity that He might serve them.

So the great Vessel of service is seen by Mark, who records the feelings of the people in regard to how He did things; as astonishment filled their hearts, they recorded this great fact that Jesus did all things well. He had done everything well; everything that He did, He did perfectly, and it could never be improved upon. Had it been required to render that great service again it could not be improved upon. That is how the great Vessel of service carried on day by day, and Mark would give us some beautiful touches in connection with the Lord's service.

Mark calls attention to the fact that Jesus takes a blind man by the hand, and leads him out of the crowd and puts His fingers, upon his eyes. What a touch, what a service, what an impression it must have conveyed to that blind man to feel the hand of Jesus, the fingers of Jesus upon his eyes! The Vessel of service come down from heaven, here amongst men, served all who put in their claim for service. He would serve in a most impartial way, and He would touch, as if identifying Himself voluntarily with what there was in the way of disability.

Then you remember the deaf man, how the Lord puts His fingers into the ears of that man; what an impression, what a feeling! How his heart must have been stirred with deep emotion to feel the fingers of Jesus touching his ears, opening them! What a wonderful service was that of the Lord Jesus! I wish to convey to those who are young that, when starting out in your career spiritually, Jesus the great Vessel of service would serve you. Whether it is a question of your eyes being opened, or your ears unstopped, Jesus would touch you sympathetically and feelingly, giving you to know the great depth of feeling that lies behind all His service that is available to you tonight.

Jesus as the Vessel of service is inviting you to make use of Him. He delights to serve, and is still serving. All this is being carried out at the present time, and He is working with heaven as His base for He has gone to the right hand of God.

J. Collie Smith

Australia, 1939

(In the next issue, God willing, "Grace and Light as seen in Christ")