



## *Living Water*

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From 1867 to 1885 J. B. Stoney edited the Christian magazine "Voice to the Faithful". For the whole of this period he contributed at least one article to every issue of the magazine under the general title of "Thoughts for this day" in which he dealt with various important issues. Much of what he had to say has a voice, and a warning, to us in our day and the next few issues will contain a selection from those articles by Mr Stoney.

The "Word of Christ and His presence" appeared in "A Voice to the Faithful" in March 1873.

## **SMAL BEGINNINGS—BUT GREAT RESULTS FOR GOD**

**“And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall he come forth unto me who is to be Ruler in Israel: whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity.”**

**Micah 5:2**

This scripture speaks of the small circumstances into which the Lord of glory came—yet what results are brought forth to God because of it. It would encourage all of us to see what God can bring out of small circumstances for His glory. We may ourselves be in small conditions but let us see what God can do in circumstance of smallness.

Let us look at the picture given by Micah. The power of the Roman Empire was well established at this point. The gospel of Luke tells us that Christ was born during the reign of the first of the Roman Emperors—Caesar Augustus (23BC – AD14) “In those days... a decree went out from Caesar Augustus” (Luke 2:1). The days of the Roman republic had gone and now the Roman empire had emerged and supreme power was vested in one man, Caesar Augustus. At such a time the Lord of glory came in to the smallest conditions of all. Roman power was being established in the known world—in those days my Saviour was born.

Who was He? The mighty God—the One “whose goings forth were from of old, from the days of eternity”. What is Caesar Augustus compared with that? In those days, this emperor, no doubt wishing to see the extent of his empire, the population of it, issued a decree that all were to register in his census. No one could disobey that command. The decree came to those in far away Nazareth and two individuals there, Joseph and Mary—insignificant in their condition as far as earthly things were concerned—had to go to Bethlehem to register in the census. Hence, “And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall he come forth unto me who is to be Ruler in Israel”. Christ came into the smallest, the lowliest possible conditions. Caesar Augustus seemed so powerful, so significant in the world, Joseph and Mary so insignificant.

Now Micah prophesied this wonderful event six hundred and fifty years before. Tell me, in the light of Micah chapter 5, who was the insignificant

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person? Who was the significant person? The insignificant person was Caesar Augustus. The significant persons were Joseph and Mary. Through Mary the Lord of glory was born. He was not born in a palace or even an inn. He came into the lowliest circumstances of all—a manger at Bethlehem. Let our hearts be affected—I know we have gone over this many a time—but let us be affected by the utter poverty and humiliation and humbleness of the conditions into which God came in Jesus in order to tell out the story of His heart of love.

I look back in the history of Bethlehem and there are events that strike you. The first one I recall is when Rachel, Jacob's wife, died on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. Jacob erects a pillar over her grave. Some hundreds of years later, I see a widow woman returning from the fields of Moab accompanied by her daughter in law and the whole city of Bethlehem moved about them at the time of the barley harvest. A little time later I see Samuel going to make a sacrifice at Bethlehem and there anointing David to be king of Israel. All these are very important events in Scripture but what are they compared with this event? This is the greatest of them all—God manifest in flesh!

Micah prophesied this event six hundred and fifty years before it actually happened but the story goes back much further than that. The story goes back into the divine eternal counsels, when God designed the plan that would secure man's blessing and involved that God Himself would be manifested in flesh, not in kingly form, but in the form of a babe in Bethlehem's manger. We sometimes sing:

‘Thus cradled in a manger,  
We see Thee, Jesus, there,  
A houseless, homeless Stranger,  
Our sorrows all to share.  
O love, all thought surpassing!  
That Thou should with us be,  
Nor yet in triumph passing,  
But human infancy!’

Now see what came out of it. God has brought triumph and glory to Himself as well as blessing to the whole world. God is going to populate

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His world with men who will yield praise to Him for all eternity, and their praise will concern the blessed One of Bethlehem's manger.

The expression here: "out of thee shall he come forth unto me who is to be Ruler in Israel", no doubt is a reference to the day to come, when the Christ comes to reign over the whole world—it is the same One who was found in the lowly conditions of Bethlehem's manger. Human intellect cannot take it in.

Let our hearts be stirred in affection for Him. May we deepen in appreciation of the way that love's story has reached us. It has reached us by way of the manger and then the cross. Paul, in the second chapter of the epistle to the Philippians speaks of Christ, "taking his place in the likeness of men". If you had seen king David you would have recognised who he was. If you had seen king Solomon with his pomp and glory you would have recognised him. Yet this blessed One, who was greater than all, was here simply in the likeness of men. From a human standpoint He was undistinguished but from the divine standpoint He was distinguished in every way. So much so, that at one point, the heavens open and God's delight is declared on Him.

Out of the small beginning at Bethlehem God is going to secure a whole world of blessing for Himself. Think of the outgoings of the gospel, bringing blessing to myriads throughout the world. What a "going forth" it was that God should enter into manhood at Bethlehem's manger!

Where did that going forth start? It started in the days of eternity. Marvellous! Peter in referring to the blood of Christ takes us right back to before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). Is it not lovely that the plan of redemption was no reaction to man's fall? The plan of redemption was designed in a past eternity in the counsels of God but the accomplishment of it involved the lowly circumstances of Bethlehem's manger and then the even greater stoop at the cross.

Let us not be discouraged by small conditions but let us see what God can bring for His own glory out of insignificant, humble and weak conditions.

*Alex Mowat*

*Extract from an address at Defford 6<sup>th</sup> May 2006*

## GLORIOUS THINGS

**“And as he said these things, all who were opposed to him were ashamed; and all the crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.”**  
**Luke 13:17**

It says here, in Luke’s Gospel where we read, “the crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things which were being done by him”. I wonder, if you and I had been there, whether we would have rejoiced. John records in his gospel: “many other things which Jesus did, ...if they were written one by one, ...not even the world itself would contain the books written” (John 21:25). Glorious things! Then we, as believers, are in our histories, like glorious things written down in the divine records.

Think of the glorious things that have been done by Jesus. In one sense, there is no subject like it—the glorious things done by our blessed Saviour.

We read, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse shows the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1). As we look up at the creation and its detail we see a glory there but the glory of God in creation has been marred. In the present time it is spoiled by men and women and their works and all that this has brought with it—the pollution that we see today.

Now in contrast to that we have the glorious things done by Jesus and nothing can mar the glory of the new creation. As we sometimes sing:

‘The new creation’s stainless joy,  
Gleams through the present gloom;  
That world of bliss, without alloy,  
The saints’ eternal home.’

Glorious things have been done by a glorious Person. Let us for a moment think of the glory of the Person Himself. It is a wonderful thing to take account of who He is—“God over all, blessed for ever”. He is the great “I Am”—He spoke of Himself thus. J. N. Darby, in one of his comments on John’s gospel chapter 8 says, ‘Oh, Jesus! Jesus! Thou art “I AM,” Thou art “I AM”’<sup>1</sup>. It is a wonderful thing to think of the glory of the

1. “Notes and Comments – volume 7” J. N. Darby, page 135

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One who was there when the crowds rejoiced. He was “God ... manifest in ... flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16).

John writes, “(and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a father), full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The blessedness of that had never been seen before. He was a glorious, perfect Man here, and glorious things were done by a glorious Person. Let us ever remember the glory of the Person. “The law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). There He was, in all that perfect harmony, grace and truth having their very existence and subsistence there in the Person of Jesus. He came to do the will of God and to accomplish it for God’s glory eternally. Wonderful object for worship—Jesus!

Then think of the glory of what He has done. Consider for a moment what He accomplished at the cross. If we have trusted in Christ that is something we should ever treasure in our hearts. Let us never forget what it cost our Saviour to go to that cross to meet the claims of a holy and righteous God that we might come into the blessing that flows as a result of what He has accomplished. Glorious Saviour! It is wonderful to take account of what Jesus did. Divine righteousness and divine holiness were maintained in their fulness at the cross. Every right of God was maintained perfectly. He cried, “It is finished”. Oh the glory of those words from His very lips. Who else could meet the holy and righteous claims of God’s throne? Who else could meet the need of ruined creatures? Only Jesus! What a glorious work He has done.

Let us rejoice in it. Luke tells us here of those who rejoiced in the glorious things He did. At this point in the gospel the greatest things were still to be accomplished—He was still to go to the cross. Oh, the preciousness of appreciating these things now, as we look back, look back to the shedding of His precious blood. God values the blood of Christ. As believers in Jesus our histories are gone righteously for ever, removed in the power of the blood of Jesus. These are wonderful things that Jesus has done. He has been in the grave and He has come forth triumphant. Sin, death, the power of Satan, they are all conquered. Now that Man who suffered at



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Calvary is at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour, a wonderful testimony to the power of God and to the power of the One who is our Saviour.

These glorious things are to lay hold of us now to strengthen us in the vital character of Christianity today. How needful it is to realise that the bedrock of our blessing has been secured by One who has done glorious things. We are going to celebrate that glorious One and what He has done both now and throughout the eternal day.

When our Lord was here on earth, if you had asked persons whom He met what would they have said? Suppose you had asked the woman of John 4, what would she have said? I think she would have said ‘He has done something glorious for me’—”Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?” (John 4:29) If you had met the man in John chapter 9 he would have said ‘He did something glorious’—“One thing I know, that being blind before, now I see” (John 9:25).

Paul loves to tell you of the things Jesus did for him. Peter too would love to tell of glorious things. Then it comes home to us; what can you and I say as the precious glory of Christ comes on to our view? The glory of Christianity is this, that glorious things have been done by Jesus and will yet be done by Jesus but it is a wonderful truth too, that glorious things are being done today—blessed be His name.

*Eric McPhail*

*Extract from an address at Wolverhampton, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2006*

### GRACE

**“For the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared, teaching us that, having denied impiety and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in the present course of things, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works”**

**Titus 2:11-14**

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The grace of God appeared when Jesus was here.

John could say, “Grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”. That word “subsists,” means that it came into expression. Grace always existed in the blessed God but when Jesus came into Manhood it came into living expression. It subsists still in that blessed One.

Now grace carries with it salvation for all men. That is what Jesus brought when He came in. The shepherds saw that. The message to them was, “To-day a Saviour ... who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). The shepherds say, ‘We must go and see this’. What did they see? A blessed babe. Oh, the potential in that babe. Simeon could take the babe into his arms and say, “mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples”. Salvation for all nations, that is what Jesus came to establish. Wonderful! The Lord Jesus said to Zacchaeus as He came into his house, “To-day, salvation is come to this house”.

So grace teaches us, as it tells us in this passage, that there is a line of things that does not belong to grace at all, but there is another line which does, living “soberly, and justly, and piously in the present course of things”. This means making way for God in our lives, making way for the One who has shone out towards us in grace, giving Him His rightful place in our lives.

We are to be, “awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour”. Another scene is in view and that is what our lives are moving on towards. We wait to see Christ in His rightful place. It will be wonderful to see the glory of Jesus when He is publicly vindicated and His glory shines. The whole universe will take account of it—God revealing the Man of His choice, the One who is spoken of here as “our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”. He never ceased to be God even though He became a blessed Man that He might be our Saviour, so that He might redeem persons to Himself and “purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works”.

It is lovely to think of what the Lord has for Himself, a people that He can take pleasure in, those in whom there is an answer to all that has shone

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out in Him. The Lord finds that very precious. It refers to the Church—that which belongs particularly to Christ and goes into eternity. It is wonderful to realise that we can have part in it now.

**“But the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered for a little while, himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen ground: to him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen.” 1 Peter 5:10-11.**

Peter knew something about God’s grace. He was a man who, like me, made his mistakes yet God’s love for him did not change. What a wonderful comfort that is. Peter might very well have felt that he was not qualified to go on in company with the Lord but He has taken us up for blessing and will never let us go. Peter learned the lessons the Lord had for him to learn.

In chapter five of his first epistle Peter makes three references to grace. First he says, to the humble He gives grace (v.5). I suppose that was something that Peter had to learn. It is something I have had to learn, and still do. In the gospels we read that Peter said to the Lord, “Thou shalt never wash my feet”. It sounded very humble but I think that really it was rather pride on Peter’s part. The Lord puts him right: “Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with me” (John 13:8). Oh, the preciousness of having part with Him. Peter got the gain of that. He saw that grace and pride do not go along together. Humility and grace do.

The next reference is, “the God of all grace” (v.10). That must have been very precious to Peter. The Lord might very well have discarded Peter because he fell heavily but I always feel very comforted by that passage in Jeremiah 18 when Jeremiah was sent to see the potter at work. The vessel the potter was working on was marred but he did not cast the clay away. It says, “he made it again another vessel” out of that same clay according to his pleasure (Jeremiah 18:4). I think Peter would have understood that. Even though he had failed—his vessel had been marred, and maybe more than once, yet he was still in the hands of the blessed Potter who was making the vessel according to His pleasure. I feel that way myself too, how often I have failed the Lord. Yet the Lord has never failed me. The

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Lord has not discarded any one of us. The Lord wants us. His work is going on to completion.

Then we get “the true grace of God in which ye stand” (v.12). It is wonderful to have a standing like that. It is God’s matter. My standing is entirely in God’s grace. It is what God has done. He has given me a standing in His grace, a standing in Christ. Nothing can ever affect that. My state, what I may get involved in, does not affect my standing in God’s grace. Peter was, no doubt, greatly comforted by that and so am I.

Peter finishes his second epistle with grace, too. He says, “Grow in grace”. We are to be enlarged in our knowledge of grace, to prove God’s grace and learn it increasingly. What supplies of grace there are! It is John who speaks about “grace upon grace”. The resources are limitless. We need never feel that we are overtaxing God as far as that is concerned. We all need grace; we will need grace to the end. Call upon God for it; it is available, we will never exhaust it.

*George Greeves*

*Extract from an address at Peterhead, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2006.*

### **SALVATION’S MESSAGE**

Salvation’s message, ringing so clear is calling sinners,  
Its word to hear;

God’s voice is calling to small and great,  
‘Come to the Saviour, ere it’s too late’.

Sinner now hasten, God’s word believe, come to the Saviour,  
New life receive;

Your sin He’ll pardon, and set you free,  
Jesus is longing your Lord to be.

Christ the dear Saviour, offers His love, and He will give you,  
Grace from above;

He died on Calvary, sin to atone, do not reject Him,  
Make Him your own.

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Gladness in sorrow, peace in great strife, calmness in death  
And joy in this life;  
A home in heaven where all is bliss, all this He'll give you,  
If you'll be His.

*William Skooglund*

### **CHRIST ENTHRONED IN MAJESTY**

Lord enthroned in heavenly splendour,  
First-begotten from the dead,  
Thou alone, our strong defender,  
Liftest up Thy people's head,  
Alleluia!  
Jesu, true and living bread.

Paschal Lamb, Thine offering, finished  
Once for all when Thou wast slain,  
In its fullness undiminished  
Shall for evermore remain,  
Alleluia!  
Cleansing souls from every stain

Great High Priest of our confession,  
Through the veil Thou wentest in,  
By Thy mighty intercession  
Grace and peace for us to win;  
Alleluia!  
Only sacrifice for sin.

Life-imparting heav'nly Manna,  
Stricken Rock with streaming side,  
Heaven and earth with loud hosanna  
Worship Thee, the Lamb who died,  
Alleluia!  
Risen, ascended, glorified!

*Hugh Bourne*

## **ON THE WAY TO HELL I MET THE KING OF KINGS**

I was born on 24th December 1970 into a poor Muslim family in the Copper belt province of Zambia. Due to lack of income I did not get far at school and at the age of 10 both my parents were killed in a road accident. This left the family in a hopeless situation. It was fortunate that my elder brother had a house so my three sisters and I moved in with him.

When I was 16 I took a mechanic's course and was employed in the mines for nearly five years. I lost this job when the mines were privatised, poverty once more overwhelmed me and I got involved in crime. I am now serving a prison sentence of 15 years for aggravated burglary. I was an alcoholic, an adulterer, a thief and a liar. I was addicted to gambling. It is amazing that in spite of all I did, God protected me from being gunned down or from contracting something like HIV.

But a strange thing happened to me on my way to hell—I met the King of Kings, the only begotten Son of God. Through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, I am no longer the person I was. He changed everything about my speech, my character, my thoughts, my actions, my mind, my heart and me. It was a miracle of God, through the blood of Jesus. The change in me is a living testimony to the truth of Jesus Christ because I could no more change my desires than I could change from a man into a bird. Jesus saved me from the moment that I recognised Him as Lord and Saviour and accepted Him into my heart.

*O.F.M.*

*Zambia*

*The name of the writer has been withheld for his safety.*

## **I KNOW GOD IS ALWAYS WITH ME**

I was brought up in a loving family with parents who taught me about Jesus and taught me to pray. During my A-level studies I went through a time of deep depression with a fear of hell and a deep sense of my own sinfulness. I felt cut off from God. In desperation I called out to the Lord

## A Voice from the Past

to deliver and help me and I experienced a real peace and felt happier in a very special way.

After my parents died, I trained as a nurse and attended services at Chester City Mission and there I heard the gospel more clearly than I had ever heard it before—clearly communicating that Jesus, the sinless Son of God, willingly gave up His life to die on the cross and to bear the sins of all those who believe on Him, taking God’s judgment that was due to us, shedding His blood, dying and rising again, so that all who come to Him with faith, in true repentance, know God’s forgiveness, peace and have assurance of heaven. At one particular service the preacher asked us not to leave without being sure about salvation, so I stayed behind and the preacher prayed with me, and I asked Jesus into my heart, acknowledging that I was a sinner.

I have never regretted giving my life to Jesus and receiving Him as my Saviour and although my life has been far from easy, I know that He has always been with me in both good and bad times. I trust Him absolutely and have a sure and certain hope of heaven.

Everyone who comes to know Jesus in true faith, acknowledging that they are a sinner and receiving Him as Lord and Saviour, will have the same assurance of heaven and eternity.

*Ruth Lewis*  
*Chester*

### **HIDING**

<b>Genesis</b>	<b>3:8</b>
<b>2 Kings</b>	<b>7:8-9</b>
<b>Luke</b>	<b>8:46-48</b>
<b>Revelation</b>	<b>6:15-17</b>

The link in these Scriptures is the matter of hiding. In Genesis chapter 3 we read that man and his wife went and hid themselves—they tried to hide from God and their responsibility to God. In seeking to do that they are attempting the impossible. I hope there is no one here who is attempting

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to hide from God. In fact, I hope that someone here tonight is going to have a touch that they can identify in their soul history as a moment when they had to do with a Saviour God. I would to God that this occasion might be, for someone, that very special time when they have their first, real link with God as made known in the Person of Jesus.

The devil, the god and prince of this world, is seeing to it that people should be blinded and kept away from God and he does it in many artful ways. I well remember, when I was at work, which is a good few years ago now, my colleagues in the drawing office lived, to them, happy lives; they had plenty to do, plenty of hobbies, a great deal to interest them, but it was all used under the hand of the devil so that they might hide themselves from having to do with God. That is the point that I want to make very particularly tonight.

In addition to Adam and Eve in the garden, I want to speak of those lepers we read of in the book of the Kings and what they found but, sad to say, they went and hid it.

Then the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment, she touched it freely; but then, just like some of us it may be, she tried to hide herself.

Finally, to give a word of warning as to Revelation 6, a chapter that relates to that period of time between what we speak of as the rapture, the coming of Jesus privately, and the beginning of the millennium. Those will be days of unparalleled awfulness, such as have never been seen before. A time when people, however great they are will run into the very dens and caves of the earth to hide from the face of Him who sits upon the Throne. Try as they might, they will not be able to hide.

You cannot hide from God. I want you to meet God tonight.

Let me tell you of something that happened in the harbour at Valetta in Malta. It was a lovely, Sunday afternoon and a minesweeper was there in the harbour and two thirds of the crew had gone into Valetta on shore leave. One third was on the boat. A message came from London that the minesweeper was to set sail immediately. The captain sent out the Marines into Valetta to round up those who were on shore leave. In the meantime



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he ordered the engines to be started and immediately it was realised that something was wrong.

The boat carried four diving teams. A diving team consisted of the diver himself, and three others who were responsible helping him to get into the diving gear and for the air supply. There was one diving team on board. That diver himself was one of the most wicked men you could ever possibly think of—an awful, blasphemous man. He was in his bunk sound asleep. They woke him up! With oaths and curses he came onto the deck. His dressers dressed him, they manned the pump and they lowered him over the side. Quickly, he found out what was wrong; a piece of rope had got itself caught around one of the propellers. He cut the rope away.

But in the sunshine, glinting through the sea, on the bottom of the harbour bed he saw a piece of white paper. Being curious as to what it might be he gave a tug on his line and was lowered to the bottom of Valetta harbour. He picked up the piece of paper and turned it over. It was a torn-off front-page of an old almanac. On the top of it, in big letters, was just these words—‘Thou God seest me.’

He gave a tug on his rope and up he was brought. The men who were there waiting on him to take him out of his gear and to dismantle the machinery expected a torrent of oaths, but he remained silent as they took the diving gear off of him. He went there and then into his cabin, he knelt as he had never knelt before in his life and he gave his heart to the Lord. He was secured on the bottom of the Mediterranean!

It would be wonderful if someone here tonight were secured in Sydenham. You remember there was an American astronaut who was converted as he circled the moon. What does Psalm 139 say: “If I ascend up into the heavens thou art there” (Psalm 139:8)? You cannot hide from God. My concern is that there might be someone here tonight who has a real touch as to the presence of God.

Now, the circumstances in Genesis chapter 3 were wonderful. There was never a garden like this before because God had planted it. It must have been magnificent in its appearance. There was this garden and man and

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his wife placed in the most favourable of circumstances. Yet they listened to the voice of the tempter and they fell. Their sin was the sin of disobedience; first through the woman and then through the man.

God came down in the cool of the day and called to them. Do you think God did not know where they were? Man and his wife tried to hide themselves. If you have been trying to hide yourself from the God who wants to bless you, you are attempting the impossible. He wants to secure you tonight, in the preaching. There are issues at stake of life and death and the eternity that is to come. All those issues can be solved tonight through personal trust in Jesus.

There comes a time when matters have to be faced and I speak to you tonight with the desire that you might know what it is to have a personal touch with Jesus. God comes down and He says to Adam and his wife, 'Where are you?' Then we are told that they went and hid themselves from the presence of God in the midst of the trees of the garden. I love to think of those magnificent trees, planted by the hand of God, trees that were given for fruit and sustenance, and Adam and his wife went and hid amongst what had been provided by the providential hand of God.

Is there someone here settling down in favourable circumstances provided in the providential mercy of God and forgetting all about God? Favourable circumstances are something to give thanks for but the devil has been highly successful in these days in filling up people's lives with so much pleasure, so much of other activities of life that they just do not find time to think of God. Even in the most favourable of circumstances that God had Himself provided man and his wife hid themselves. God said, 'Where are you' not because He did not know, but to bring home to them a true sense of where they were. They knew what had gone wrong. There they were, totally exposed. "All things" says my Bible, "are naked and laid bare to his eyes, with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

It is no good you trying to hide, you are wasting your time. You might hide in circumstantial mercies. You might hide in a thousand and one other ways. But God knows you are there and He has allowed you to be in this very room here in Sydenham tonight to this end: that you might be

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blessed; He would like to meet you. He wants to meet you in the Person of Jesus.

Can I tell you then that the blessed Saviour has thought about you. He left the heights of glory and came into this very world that He had created; He as man here was unloved and unwanted. He came into this very world to demonstrate His love for you personally. He trod a lovely pathway, ever under the eye of His God, trod it all the way to Calvary. There, crucified and uplifted at Calvary, He became a spectacle to the world gathered around Him; the world was representatively gathered there. You know the story of the way He was crucified. You remember how those cruel nails were put into His hands and His feet, a crown of thorns rammed on to His head. Can we even conceive of the agony that came upon Him? He who was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) allowed Himself to be treated thus. What must He have felt?

He was taunted and reviled, as the writer says, “I hid not my face from shame and spitting” “I gave my back to smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair” (Isaiah 50:6). Can you think of any greater humiliation? Why did He suffer thus? Why did He not take Himself down from the cross, which He could have done? Because you here in Sydenham tonight as yet are not saved, that is why. He wants the whole bearing of His love for you to draw your heart out of your hiding place and for you to have a little personal touch with Him now, a Saviour who has loved you to this extent, that He has suffered at the hands of men untold agony. Then that is not all. That, by itself, wonderful as it is, was not the divine design. There was something greater.

The scene is blotted out in darkness and all that God is against sin was heaped upon my Saviour’s head. Why did He allow it? Why did He do it? He did it all for you. You see, there is a tendency in preachings like this to be far too general. We must be specific. Do not shrug the robe of self-righteousness around you and say you do not need the gospel. That is nonsense. You do need the gospel. You need a Saviour. You have no hope in life without a Saviour. Oh, you say, ‘I have many years to go’. I do not know that you have. We were hearing only in the last few days of

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a very sad case of a young sister, known to some, who was grievously injured on a road just outside Glasgow. She is suffering in a grave way and there are to be further amputations. Who can say what the outcome may be?

When my Saviour was here He spoke of two local disasters. Lives were lost in both but He says to those to whom He was speaking, ‘Do you think you are any better?’ “No, I say to you, but if ye repent not, ye shall all perish in like manner” (Luke 13:2, 4). Are you prepared to repent? I have had people say to me, ‘Well it is very unfair of God. Why should God punish me because Adam took an apple?’ That is nonsense. You are not punished because Adam sinned. You have to take up the matter of your own sin, things that you have done, the fruit of a corrupt nature. You could not help being born into this world with a corrupt nature; of course you could not, and God does not hold you guilty for it.

What then have I to deal with? What then have I to confess? You have to confess the fruit of that corrupt nature, the sins that you have committed. I find people get hot under the collar at times when you talk to them about being sinners but my Bible says, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). You do not like being called a sinner? Put the verse the other way round. Put “come short of the glory of God” first. The glory of God has been seen in one blessed Man who has been into death on your behalf, a blessed Man who has taken up the whole sin question, who has glorified God in all that God gave Him to do, whose precious blood has been shed after His spirit was yielded up in mighty triumph. That is God’s standard. That is the glory of God. Could you reach that? You say, ‘No, I must confess that I could not’. Then you need a Saviour!

There are no two ways about it, let us not beat about the bush; if you have not yielded your heart to Christ then you need a Saviour. One of old could say, ‘There is but a step between me and death’. Very true! If the call came tonight would you be ready to go? The Spirit of God would appeal to someone, ‘Come out of your hiding place’. Come to know a Man who will be a real hiding place for you. Come to know a blessed

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Saviour—no matter what life holds for you, no matter how long or how short your time may be—there is a blessed Saviour who shed His precious blood for you. He will cleanse you from your sins, give you peace with God, guide you through life; He will never let you go. That is the Saviour we present to you. What a glorious Saviour. No wonder the hymn writer says, ‘Hallelujah, what a Saviour’.

I commend Him to you. He is my Saviour: is He the Saviour of everybody here today?

I pass on now to the second book of Kings chapter 7. A very serious circumstance has arisen. Samaria is in the grip of a terrible famine. The glorious news of divine grace and deliverance comes through the prophet Elisha: “Thus saith Jehovah: To-morrow about this time shall the measure of fine flour be at a shekel, and two measures of barley at a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.” Now, I am not going into the detail of that, this is neither the time nor the place for it. But, just to say this, cannot you think of the astonishment that would be on the face of the hearers to hear that in the place where they were suffering under the most grievous famine, living on stuff that they would never normally think of eating to sustain life, that there is going to be an abundance of food. There was a man listening to the prophet, who leant on the arm of the king; do you know what he said? He said, ‘I do not believe you’. I hope there is no one here going to say a thing like that tonight.

Now, let us remind ourselves of the situation. There is a terrible famine. Samaria is surrounded by the hordes of Syrians who are the enemies of God’s people. Now bear in mind this, young friends, that at every preaching these hordes of Syrians come and they will try and stop you getting the blessing. They are the myriads of the ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’ and the ‘maybes’ that come into our minds under the hand of the devil when the word of God comes to us and forces us to a point of decision.

Here are these four lepers. It says that they went and they looked and the army of the Syrians had gone. How did they go? Well, they heard a noise. Just a noise and they all fled and left everything behind. So those lepers went into the Syrian camp and “they ... ate and drank, and carried

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thence silver and gold, and garments, and went and hid it”. How sad that is, “they went and hid it”. That is just a little word for us all. If you are to be secured for Christ tonight, you are going to be secured as a living witness for Him here in this area in which you live. You are the depository of untold blessing. Think of what the believer in Jesus is brought into. We are to feed on the “bread of God” (see John 6) and to drink of the well of water, the water of life, freely (see John 4). Whether you understand it or not, as a believer, you have been the recipient of the glory of divine grace as you have yielded your heart to Christ.

We read in 2 Kings 7 that they “carried thence silver”. That speaks of the mighty work of redemption carried out at Calvary. “I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it”. The mighty work of redemption covers even our bodies. We were at a burial a few days ago and we witnessed a beloved sister’s body being lowered into the grave—her temporary resting place! My Bible speaks of the redemption of the body. All is well if we only accept Christ as Saviour tonight. All is well, even to the redemption of the body.

He is a wonderful Saviour, dear friends; there is none to be compared to 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” It is not ‘You can be saved if you like?’ Never! “By which we must be saved”(Acts 4:12). That is the burden of the preaching tonight.

So it says, they “carried thence silver and gold”. Now, what is the gold? Gold is the feature of divine righteousness. Gold is the glory of the work of God. And I would like to say this, may be someone here is coming out of their hiding place and yielding their heart to Christ—the gold of the work of God is begun in you. The Spirit will see to it that it is completed unto Jesus Christ’s day. They carried the gold. Then, they spoil everything, they go and hide it.

Are you going to the office tomorrow? I am going about my little odd jobs tomorrow and all the glory of what Christ has done is deposited in my heart. There are others who need it too. Am I too much of a coward to pass on that which I have got? Oh, I have been like that many a time.

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I say it to my shame. These lepers came into the most wonderful blessing, yet they hid it! Fellow believers, may we be concerned to spread the knowledge of the Saviour. We have been brought into a sphere of untold blessing. My Saviour at Calvary has dealt with the foe, won the victory. He would bring us into the light of victory.

I read from Luke 8 as a little bit of a warning. We read of a woman there who had an issue of blood for twelve years. She had tried everything to get rid of it. She heard about Jesus and she came to Him. She freely touched the hem of His garment and immediately, it says, her flux of blood stopped. Then what happens? She receives the blessing and she goes and hides herself. Have you been like that? Anybody here like that? Hiding in the crowds? Do not forget these crowds of doubts and fears that can assail us. This woman goes and hides. My Saviour says, “Who has touched me”. “But all denying, Peter and those with him said, Master, the crowds close thee in and press upon thee, and sayest thou, Who has touched me? And Jesus said, Someone has touched me, for I have known that power has gone out from me. And the woman, seeing that she was not hid...”. Is there someone here tonight who has received the blessing, and you have got your own impression of the amazing cost that that blessing has been to my Saviour, yet you have never given thanks? When was it last you got on your knees and thanked Him for dying for you? Oh, you say, it was rather a long time ago. You have been hiding, haven't you?

Now it says of this woman, “seeing that she was not hid, came trembling and falling down before him”. That was an act of worship. She “declared before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was immediately healed. And he said to her, Be of good courage, daughter; thy faith has healed thee”. What does that mean? Well, she is brought immediately into the divine family. And so will you be. At the very spot where you meet my Saviour on the road that leads to hell, as you open your heart and bring Him in you will be at once embraced in the divine family.

“Daughter; thy faith has healed thee”. We do not sufficiently realise what

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takes place on the road that leads to eternal destruction that our self-will has taken us on, when we are brought to a halt and we accept Christ as Saviour. We read elsewhere, “how shall he not also with him grant us all things?” (Romans 8:32). As coming to Christ we get peace, joy, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of sonship.

Finally, one word as to the passage read in Revelation. What we read of here is the most terrible day the world will ever know. My Saviour tells us that. When will it be? Well, if my Saviour came tonight, as He may do,—this would be approximately three and a half years away. Bear in mind that there will be those left behind when Jesus comes to take up to Himself the totality of God’s work on the earth. Those that have died in Christ will be raised and we will all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. Those that are left behind will go into this period of which we have been speaking. There will be no hope: they will have rejected the gospel. That is why they are left behind when Jesus comes.

There will be no hope for any of them. “It is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Here is a time of interim judgment—terrible, terrible judgment.

On this day people will run into the caves and in the rocks of the mountains and say “have us hidden from the face of him that sits upon the throne”, from the glory of a blessed Man who sits on the throne: triumphant, glorious Victor. My Saviour thank God. Is He your Saviour? These persons will face the horror of a time of unprecedented judgment, to be followed by a time of final judgment. You need not ever see this day if you only accept Christ as Saviour. May you do so for His name’s sake.

*Ron Gregory*

*A preaching of the gospel, Sydenham, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1992,*

### **THE WORD OF CHRIST AND HIS PRESENCE**

As man is immeasurably below God in mind and intelligence, he cannot know His will, or indeed anything about Him, save as God is pleased to reveal it. Hence if God would make Himself known, or communicate His



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pleasure, His word is the first thing. There is no knowing either His pleasure or His counsel but by the word.

At first, in the Garden of Eden, the word of God defined the course of action for man that was well pleasing to God, and Satan's successful effort was to divert man from it. When man has deviated from the word of God, he must sink to the level of his own mind about everything, and is without any safeguard against Satan. The word is the revelation of God's mind. It is to me what a map is in a country in which I am a stranger; the more it is adhered to, the more is its value known, and when I am deprived of it, I am exposed to every form of craftiness. It is simple that the word is the first thing; and whatever is the most important truth communicated, that is the one that Satan most insidiously and assiduously opposes. I have no map, no guide for anything, no safeguard or power against the devil, but as I maintain the word.

But besides the word, there is the presence of the Lord. The word is the revelation of His mind; without it I am in complete ignorance; but having received the word as His, and being in conscience ruled by it, there is added His presence. When Adam had disobeyed the word of God, he was afraid, and hid himself from the presence of the Lord. To be in full enjoyment of the presence of the Lord is the highest favour that He can confer on us. The acme of everything is when the father says to the prodigal, "Let us eat, and be merry".

Now in the Old Testament we constantly find the words, "The Lord said" so and so, that is, He communicated His mind, uttered His word, when He did not appear; but whenever He appears, it is with marked and peculiar blessing to the one concerned. The first one of whom this is recorded is Abram, in Genesis 12: 7. "The Lord appeared unto Abram", and it is added, "and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him"; and without question, this and other appearances of the Lord to him—that of Melchisedec, in chapter 14, the visit of the three men in chapter 18, etc.—made an impression on Abraham which no communication, however great, could do. The communication is divine light given, but the presence forms one in heart in keeping with itself.

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Everyone knows the difference between the counsel of his friend and his personal presence.

I need not multiply examples. The appearance of the Lord in the burning bush imparts to Moses the personal presence which was to support him in his work, as the appearance of the Captain of the Lord's host in Joshua 5, was to encourage and uphold Joshua. The word sets forth the line of action, but the presence assures the heart of power direct from the Lord, to sustain one in the path prescribed by the word, so that we can understand the solicitude which Moses felt for the presence of the Lord when he said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence".

The New Testament opens with the Word being made flesh and dwelling among us. We have the Word in personal presence. The nature and effect of it have been known on earth. The apostles knew it; while He was with them, they lacked nothing. When, therefore, He was leaving the world and going to the Father, He set forth in the figure of washing their feet how He would apply the word to separate them from whatever would distance them from Himself. He would so act on them that they would be detached from the defiling influence here. But this was not all the provision He had made for them during His absence. Their hearts were not to be troubled. By faith they were to follow Him where He would prepare a place, and as they loved Him they would keep His words, all that reminded them of Him while on earth. And besides, He would come to them, He would manifest Himself to them and He would dwell in their hearts by faith. By the word He would separate them from the defilement of the world, so that they could have part with Him; but by faith, they would follow Him to heaven and besides, He would not leave them orphans, He would come to them.

In the account of our Lord's interview with the two disciples going to Emmaus, in Luke 24, we get the different effects of the word and the presence. First, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Never was there an exposition equal to this, and no subject could be so interesting. The effect of it was that their hearts burned within them while He opened unto them the Scriptures; and saints are

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often content with this. He instructed them in order to prepare them for the manifestation of Himself. Now when He was known to them in breaking of bread, they rose up at the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem; an energy was acquired which the greatest instruction had not imparted, and they were actually in the same path with Himself, for as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them. There will always be an effort of the enemy to divert us from the word; but there must be care also that the word is not rested in merely in its own most blessed light and communication, but that it carries us to its Author.

This we see in Hebrews 4: 12-16. There the word is shown to be the great agent of blessing, “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart ... all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”. The word carries us to God, but not only this, for now the presence of the Lord in sympathy is actually known to our hearts; vv. 15, 16. We are scrutinised by the word, kept in the true path; then we find the Lord in company with us in it, because the path which the word enjoins on us is the one which had been observed by Himself and as soon as we are in the path, then do we enjoy His sympathy, supporting and sustaining us in all the difficulties on either side.

Where the word only is known, there may be true divine joy, the joy of intelligence, which the communication of His mind must impart, but at best it is the conscience only which is enlightened; there is no happy model before one of the manner and habits which the word would produce. One is like a mechanic who, though well instructed in pulleys and every mechanical force, has never seen any of them in use. Now this accounts for the feeble and imperfect ways of many well taught in the word. No one can have the ways or manners of one very superior to himself except by being in the company of such a one. The word or the teaching is the guide to my conscience, but it is as I learn Jesus personally that I am really able, not only to quiet my conscience, but to go far beyond it. It is quite a different thing to point out to a child what to do by giving him

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clear rules about it, and to show him how it is to be done. There is often the rigid dictum, clear and comprehensive, but lacking the grace of life which is conveyed by a living example.

The Lord in John 17, when speaking of sanctification, says, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”. This is the light and counsel by which they are to be set according to God. As the washing of the feet frees us from the defilement in the world, so does sanctification lead us into the path suitable to God. The word is the light for this path, but were it only the word, there would not be a known standard of sanctification or a defined measure of it. But when He adds, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (or ‘in truth’, that is, characteristically), we find that the Lord Himself, who is the living expression of the word, is the standard and measure of sanctification.

While the word prescribes the path for me, yet it is only as I am kept in spiritual association with Him that I have the tastes and ways of a person separated unto God from all that is here, and then I understand the unique and holy course I am to observe here. I am sanctified in truth, I am characterised by it. It not only guides me, but I am a guide myself, because of its controlling power on me. I have not only received light, but my body is luminous. As the moon reflects the light of the absent sun, because attracted by it, and with nothing between them, so do I, by association in spirit with the Lord where He is, set forth the same character of separateness unto God as His; so that I have not only a direction as to what I ought to be, but I have a Model whose spirit and ways I imbibe as I am in association with Him.

The Lord keep our hearts more intently watching for Him until we see Him and are for ever like Him.

*J. B. Stoney*

*From “A Voice to the Faithful”*

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