

Living Water

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by month for the "Voice to the Faithful". This article
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Editor's Note

As the magazine reaches its 15th year, I would like particularly to thank the following:

- All who have sent recordings and other material for consideration; again, these contributions are absolutely essential for the continuance of the magazine.
- Those who take the time to translate parts, or the entire magazine into various foreign languages; this has expanded the readership enormously.
- Tim Knappett of Croydon, for his tireless work in transcription, page layout and other services that have kept this magazine going through the years.

Of course the real labour behind the magazine is that of those who serve in ministering to the people of God. Looking back over the years I give thanks to God that in His grace He has seen to it that there has been a flow of godly and relevant material available for publication. Please pray that, in whatever time is left till the coming of the Lord, this flow of ministry will continue.

Recent Ministry

THE CHRISTIAN WALK

Psalm 1.

“Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the wicked...”

In the way of life there are only two pathways to be on, a way that is pleasing to the Lord and a way that is not pleasing to Him. My desire is that we should all be on the pathway that is pleasing to the Lord.

In Psalm 1 there is a progression on the downward path. First, there is walking “in the counsel of the wicked”, then there is standing “in the way of sinners” and finally, there is “sitting in the seat of scorners”. The decline begins with walking in a wrong direction and we may find we get pulled in to what is not right.

So the next stage is that we are standing in what is wrong—that is more fixed. Then, having got on that slippery slope, we are found “sitting” with the scorners. That is the worst position of all. The history of Lot, in the Old Testament, provides an example. He had a choice of which way to go and he cast his eyes towards Sodom; we next find that he is pitching his tent towards Sodom; eventually we find that he is actually sitting in the gate of Sodom.

Walking, standing, sitting. If you are on a way that is not pleasing to the Lord it is a way that leads to disaster, but God in His grace would speak to us while we are on that journey to pull us up and say: “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21). Maybe the Lord is saying that to us tonight. It has been well said that there is no stationary position on the christian pathway. You are either going forward or you are going back. I hope that each one of us here is going forward with the Lord.

Well, that is just a background.

Genesis 5:21-24

Enoch, who walked with God.

What a picture Enoch is to us of someone who is walking with the Lord. Enoch was on the line on God’s promise. After Cain

killed Abel, the line of God’s promise comes through Seth and Enoch is of that line. We read, “Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methuselah three hundred years”. There was a relationship formed with God. We are not told much about it in Scripture but from the epistle to the Hebrews we know it was a walk of faith. We read, “Enoch was translated” because “he had pleased God”. Then it adds, “But without faith it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 11:5-6). I hope that each one of us here tonight has faith in the Lord, faith in God. Enoch walked with

Enoch speaks to us of the believer in this age who is looking forward to the coming of the Lord

God for 300 years.

As I have been considering this subject of 'walking' I have noticed three features that are to mark it. They are, 'consistency', 'conformity' and 'communion'. Enoch in his three hundred year walk with God speaks to me of consistency.

Enoch also speaks to us of the believer in this age who is looking forward to the coming of the Lord to take all His saints to be with Him. The only other part of the Bible that refers to Enoch is Jude (v.14) where it speaks of the Lord coming again amidst His holy myriads. Enoch lived in the days before the flood brought divine judgment to this scene, and we, too, are living in the last days. Judgment is surely coming on this world. Before the time for judgment the Lord Jesus is going to take His church to be with Himself. Are we each ordering our walk in the light of that great event? Enoch is a model for us as christians for he walked in an evil world but his heart was filled with a heavenly vision.

The great model for our walk here is the Lord Jesus Himself.

Then Enoch saw the Lord coming with His holy myriads. Do we have a vision of the Lord, though rejected here, coming in glory? The last this world saw of Jesus was on the cross but He is coming with holy myriads. Do we each have that hope of seeing Jesus take up His rights, coming to the earth, amidst His holy myriads? There is a crown laid up for all those who love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). It is the portion of those who walk — not by sight, because if we walk by sight then everything looks hopeless, but if we walk by faith, what a glorious prospect is before us! The Lord is coming, firstly, to take us out of this scene to Himself. Then, secondly, He is coming back with us that He may take up His rights on this earth.

I just leave that thought with you. Enoch walked with God. I believe that Enoch had a wonderful relationship with God. He

walked with God for 300 years and, “he was not for God took him”. How simple and beautiful the relationship he had with God. As Christians, we are to have a relationship with God like that.

John 1:35

“Looking at Jesus as he walked”

The great model for our walk here is the Lord Jesus Himself. He really corresponds to the other man that Psalm 1 speaks of. There is a man who was walking in a wrong way, but the Psalm also speaks of one who “is as a tree planted by brooks of water...which giveth its fruit in its season and whose leaf fadeth not”. That is how the Lord Jesus was as here on earth. He drew all His resource from His Father. He drew nothing from this world. What a Person the Lord Jesus was. It could truly be said of Him “And all that he doeth prospereth” (Psalm 1:3). When we come to the New Testament we read, “He does all things well” (Mark 7:37). What a model He is for us.

The passage we read in John’s gospel was early on in the ministry of Jesus. “Again, on the morrow, there stood John and two of his disciples”. What were they doing? They were taking account of the walk of Jesus. “Looking at Jesus as he walked”. There was something about that blessed Man that was different from any other man. How important it is to take account of Jesus as He walked! Those disciples of John saw, by His very demeanour, by the way He walked, that here was a Man in communion with heaven, One who drew everything from above.

As believers we need to have Him as a model. I am reminded of the scripture that says, “Hereby we know that we are in him. He that says he abides in him ought, even as he walked, himself also so to walk” (1 John 2:5-6). It is no good just talking about these things; we need to walk the walk. Let us seek to walk like Jesus. He has left us a model that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21).

Paul said, "Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul had not seen the Lord Jesus on earth, but he had seen His disciples. Paul had met the followers of the Lord and he probably could see from their demeanour, the way they acted, that they had seen the Lord. I wonder if you and I demonstrate that we are walking with the Lord? Let us contemplate Him more. We need to make time in this busy world for contemplation of the Lord Jesus in all His glorious ways amongst men. What a Person He was as He walked through this world.

Ephesians 4:1-3 Walking worthy of the calling wherewith we have been called

I spoke earlier of the three features that are to mark the walk of the believer — "consistency", "conformity" and "communion". In Ephesians we get conformity – conformity with our calling by God. What does it say here? "I ... exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called". The calling is

Someone has said of Ephesians that the first three chapters show us all the heavenly wealth we have in Christ ... the last three chapters show us our practical walk in Christ

what God has done in sovereign mercy and grace in taking us up. What a position we have been brought into, taken from the dunghill, put amongst princes (1 Samuel 2:8 KJV). What a heavenly calling, what a holy calling it is. So if we have been called to such a position then we need to walk in conformity to that. These are very practical things.

Someone has said of Ephesians that the first three chapters show us all the heavenly wealth we have in Christ – “taken into favour in the beloved”, “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”. Then the last three chapters show us our practical walk in Christ. All that we have of heavenly wealth is to lead us to walk aright in this world. As it says in the Scripture, “as he is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). So although we follow in His steps, in a sense, we only have the power to walk because we walk in the light of that heavenly and glorified Man. As He is, so ought we to walk.

That is a challenge to me as much as anybody in this room. Am I walking worthily of my calling? Do we represent Christ to our local brethren; do we represent Christ to the world? Do we represent Christ to other believers? We are representing the King. What a high calling.

It talks in one of the other epistles about the high calling of God in Christ. It makes nothing of us, but how dignified it is; what an exalted position we have as believers. We have been clothed with the best robe; we are sons: we have such a high calling. We ought to reflect that in our practical walk day by day.

This great calling is not to inflate us. It makes nothing of us but everything of the Lord Jesus. We do not read here:—‘I exhort you to walk that ye may be high minded, or that you might be holier than everybody else’, but rather, “I ... exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling ... with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love”. It is how much we are like Christ. He was lowly, He was meek. How He bore with His disciples. What patience there was with the Lord yet He was able to correct them but it was all in the spirit of grace and love. Love lay behind everything that the Lord did. We need to walk worthily of our calling but with this spirit that we may be kept humble, that we might reflect the grace and love of

our Lord Jesus Christ.

The scripture goes on "...using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" Then "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism". These are wonderful things, dear brethren. They have been revealed to us by grace alone. As we are wholeheartedly in them and work them out we are found walking worthily of our calling. May each one of us walk worthily of the calling wherewith we have been called.

1 John 1:6-7

Walking in the light

We each have our individual walk with the Lord but the Lord's people are to walk together. We have been set together. It is good and it is pleasant for the Lord's people to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1). John writes: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie". That is very challenging, but the challenge is to walk in the light as He is in the light. If we do that we have fellowship with one another.

It is difficult to have a conversation with someone if they are two steps ahead

We can only have fellowship as we are walking in the light, that light which has been revealed through sovereign grace and we have the privilege of walking together. We are walking with God first. If our walk with the Lord is not right then our walk together cannot be right. We need first to walk with the Lord, keep in step with Him. It is difficult to have a conversation with someone if they are two steps ahead. Have you ever tried it? We need to be in communion with the Lord and in communion with one another. We read in Amos, "Shall two walk together except they be agreed" (Amos 3:3)? We need to walk with Him and then we

have fellowship. If my relationship with the Lord Jesus is living and right then I will be in step with my brother and my sister. We have fellowship with Him.

Why then does it go on to say, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin"? Why does John bring that in here? He is talking of wonderful things and then suddenly this comes in. Well, the Lord knows what we are like, how we fail and fall into sin. If there is something that comes in to mar my relationship with the Lord, thank God there is a remedy: the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. If there is something that comes in to mar our fellowship between my brother and myself, thank God there is a remedy: the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanses us from all sin.

Let us know what it is, dear brethren, for us to walk in the light as He is in the light. He was ever in the light. How He walked, day-by-day, pleasing to the Father! His communion with the Father shone out in His walk. Then we are to be like that. May the love of Jesus and His light shine out in us as we walk with Him together. Let us walk in the light as He is in the light and have fellowship with one another.

If we are feeling out of step with the Lord tonight, if we are feeling out of step with our brethren, claim the cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus and we will find that there is healing, there is pardon and there is grace and we can be brought back into practical fellowship.

Let us be consistent, let us be conformed and let us enjoy the communion with God, with the Lord and with one another. May it be so for His name's sake.

Philip White

An address at Aberdeen, 31st March 2007.

Poetry Selection

JESUS, CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOUR

O the brightness of the glory
 Shining in the Saviour's face!
Telling all the blessed story
 Of the ways of God in grace:
Lowly, hated, and rejected,
 In the world He came to save;
By the glory of the Father
 Raised triumphant from the grave.

There we see Him crowned with glory,
 Glory in His unveiled face,
And in peace and rest before Him,
 In that glory, learn of grace:
For it shineth in the visage
 Of the One who for us died,
Bore our sins and all their judgment –
 Jesus Christ the crucified.

Janetta Trench (1843 – 1925)

Now unto the King eternal, immortal,
invisible, the only wise God, be honour
and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

TRUE WORSHIP

Father, we bless Thy name,
With joy Thy love proclaim,
Our songs we raise.
Thy wisdom, grace, and might,
Thy counsels infinite,
Thy ways so true and right,
Transcend all praise.

Jesus! The Father's Son,
Thy love our hearts hath won;
On Thee we gaze!
All fullness dwells in Thee!
Thy death hath set us free;
The love of God we see –
Theme of our praise.

Father, we praise Thy name,
Made known by Him who came
To do Thy will.
Thy joy it is to bless;
Show forth Thy righteousness,
Make known Thy blessedness,
Thy love fulfil.

For this He came to die,
That Thou might'st have us nigh,
As near as He!
Father, Thy name we bless,
Draw near in holiness;
Our joy in Thee express,
We worship Thee.

Edward Rubie (1846 – 1942)

A HYMN TO THE FATHER

Our blessed God, Thy boundless love
Has drawn our hearts to Thee;
Thou hast Thy glory and Thy joy
In sons brought home to Thee.

We thank Thee for redeeming love,
Expressed in Christ the Son,
For Thou didst send Him here to die,
By Him Thy will was done.

We, reconciled through Him to Thee,
Can call Thee Father now;
Our hearts now filled with deepest joy
In praise before Thee bow.

Rich and unfathomed is Thy love,
Fully by Him revealed;
The many sons, through Him Thy Son,
In Him, Thy love has sealed.

With hearts now filled with joy and praise,
Before Thee without fear;
We now show forth His worthiness,
Whose death has brought us near.

Holy and without blame in love,
Father, we worship Thee;
Through Him, Thy well-beloved Son,
All praise and glory be.

R. Casselli (20th April 1935)

Testimony Section

TURNED BY THE POWER OF GOD

My father was a churchgoer but he did not know God personally through the Lord Jesus Christ. He had no idea that he was a sinner and that he needed to be saved. I had little option but to go to Sunday school since my grandfather was a churchwarden and Sunday School Superintendent, but I did not respond at all to what I heard there. As I got into my teens I had even less interest. After my confirmation communion I stopped going to church.

I left school at fifteen and became a butcher. By the time I was nineteen I was into relief management. I needed money, for by this time I had developed a drink problem. I would go down to the local bar and be there drinking and hoping that someone would come in so I might get a card game and win a bit more money to spend on drink. I felt that life was meaningless. I started to steal and got dismissed from my job because of it. The only way I could then find work was to join the Army.

I joined the Ordnance Corps but after three years I applied for a transfer to the Pay Corps. When I was interviewed I said, 'Sir, I have something to say. I was sacked from my work for stealing'. The interviewer looked at the papers and replied, 'Well, you have a clear record for three years. Come aboard'. I still had no idea at this stage of my life of my need of the Lord. I was enjoying my work in the Pay Corps. Drink at this point was still somewhat under control. I did well on my training course and I was offered a choice of posting, to Berlin or to Cyprus. I chose Cyprus.

I had two weeks embarkation leave and went home. I had been home for five days when my Mum, who had seemed disorientated, died. My Mum's death did not make me think of my own death, or of God, or hell, or eternity. Because my brother and Dad had taken Mum's death so badly they had taken a great toll on me emotionally as well. I had not grieved. Then, once I was out in Cyprus I started to grieve. A lady, who worked for the WRVS who was a Christian, said to me, 'I am not allowed to mix my Christianity with my job,

but you are in such a mess, I really have got to do something for you'. She wanted to introduce me to a Christian family. I was horrified and said, 'Oh no, I have been through all that and I really am not interested'. Then a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers, who was a zealous Christian, started to talk to me one day. I remember him saying, 'David, you are a sinner. God is holy and you need to turn to Him in faith and repentance'.

I replied, 'If there is a God, I have not done anything that bad'. I do not want to describe the things I was into at that time but it was a life of drunkenness and evil. This Lance Corporal persisted with me. One day he told me that all the Christians were going to meet at the beach and people would be able to get to know each other, and then they would have a time of fellowship and might sing some hymns. He asked me if I would join them. I was very reluctant but eventually he got me to say I would go. I tried to get out of it on the day but my friend insisted that I went to the beach.

I found, to my surprise, that these people actually enjoyed themselves. They played some games, then had some food and then they all sat round and started to sing. They were singing things that I had never heard before and they were joyous. The WRVS woman was there and she introduced me to the husband of the Christian family that she had spoken to me about. I discovered that they had a weekly Bible study on a Monday night. I started

It was not exactly my turning to God; it was my being turned by God

going to the Bible study and quite enjoyed it. Eventually they got me to go to church but I was not saved. I would be in church on Sunday, at the Bible study on Monday and totally drunk on Tuesday.

As anyone who knows the history of Cyprus will remember in July 1974 the Turks invaded and the Army bases were put on a war footing. I was working almost 24 hours a day but as soon as I got some time I just got drunk. At that time I had Q fever, which is worse than double pneumonia. I was desperately ill and in hospital for a month. During

the first week I thought I was going to die. During that time I started to think about life and about God. To be honest I did not want God in my life. I knew that God was holy and that if He was to be in my life I had to change and I did not want to do that. I did not want a life of purity. By January 1975 I really wanted to get away from God, so I started to read the Bible! This may sound odd, but I believed that if I read the Bible carefully I would find that it was full of contradictions and therefore would not be a book to be trusted.

I had stopped going to church or meeting with Christians. I was going into town a lot and getting into really bad company. During this time I was still reading the Bible. In September 1975 I received a letter from my Father. In it he said, 'I am so lonely and empty. Can you tell me what life is all about?' I replied that I had no idea what life was about. At the end of quite a long letter I said that I was going to go to church on Sunday. I went to church but I came out exactly as I went in. The man in the pulpit did not know God personally.

On Mondays I used to leave work about 1.30pm and go and open up the bar but this Monday I did not. Instead I went to my room and started to read the Bible. I read, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (1 Colossians 1:13). God spoke to me in that verse. I had at that moment a new life. My drink problem was gone. I lost the desire altogether. It was not exactly my turning to God; it was my being turned by God. All I knew was that Jesus had saved me. I did not fully understand who Jesus was at that point. I did not really know what had happened to me. All I knew was that God had come into my life.

I did not want to go to the bar any longer. I never had cravings for a drink. God was so gracious because I do not think that I would have had the strength to cope with a struggle. I have just been reading a book on Christian freedom by a Puritan called Richard Sibbes. In it he writes that if you do not have to fight against a particular sin that is the best liberty you can have – if the Son sets you free, then you are free indeed!

At this point, because of what had happened through the Turkish invasion, a lot of troops had gone back to the mainland. In fact there was only one Christian left and he rather looked after me. Then a few weeks after my conversion he was posted elsewhere and God flew in another Christian from the mainland. Having arrived, he came straight into the mess and said, 'Are there any Christians here?' One chap called out that there was one, me. I was a tender plant and God really looked after me.

The next thing that happened was that I had a posting to Northern Ireland. My reaction on getting there was that I needed to find fellowship with Christians. I went to the local missionary outreach to the battalion. They told me that they had been working with this battalion for eighteen months and as far as they could tell there was not a single Christian amongst the 750 men.

God filled me with so much joy that I could not keep quiet. I was in the Pay Corps and if you are in the Pay Corps everyone knows you. So I had a lot of people to talk to but, more than that, God was filling me with His grace, love, peace and joy. There was a couple that had been working with the battalion and I used to spend as much time as I could with them. Being in Northern Ireland in 1976 meant that you had an awful lot of duties but I still tried to get to a Bible study and to a prayer meeting when I could. After a while this couple suggested to me that I should resign from the army and join them in their work. I prayed about this and I was not quite sure what God wanted me to do. I went to my Paymaster who was an atheist and explained the situation to him. He told me that if I put in for a discharge it would take me six months to get out. The battalion was about to be sent to Cyprus and I wondered what the Lord wanted me to do.

I put in for my discharge and I told the Lord that if I got the discharge when I was still in Northern Ireland I would take it that it was His will that I should stay there. If the battalion went to Cyprus before the discharge came through, then I would remain with the battalion. My discharge came through in six weeks, in late June 1976. I went to the Pay Office and the Paymaster asked me, 'When are you going to leave us, David?'

**All I really knew
was that Jesus
Christ had saved
me**

I said, 'I am leaving on Monday!' His response was that he could not let me go. To his surprise I said, "Fine with me". He could not understand it, but I had been reading the Bible that morning and God had spoken to me through a verse in Jeremiah and assured me that He had everything under control. I told the Paymaster about

the way that God had spoken to me and he said, 'Well, you can contest my decision with the Commanding Officer if you want to.' I said, 'There is no need. God has everything under control'. He could not understand it. I actually left the army two weeks later and stayed in Northern Ireland.

I knew very little at this time. All I really knew was that Jesus Christ had saved me. It was only later that I learnt that as Jesus Christ had died on the cross I had died with him and that I have been raised with Him and that I now had a new life and a new power because of what He has done.

The Bible teaches that God has set His love upon us in eternity past. It means that God so loved that He would send His Son to live that perfect life that we could never do, die on the cross that we might be forgiven, rise again from the dead and that by the power of the Holy Spirit He would come into our lives and give us a new heart. Salvation is of the Lord; it is not from us.

When I think of what I was, living a life of drunkenness, wickedness, thieving, lying and debauchery, it is amazing that God has set His love upon me in eternity past. He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world. He would regenerate me, take away the heart of stone that was degenerate and desperately wicked and give me a heart of flesh and write His laws in my heart and turn me round. That is incredible; yet it is what happened to me.

Charles Spurgeon, that great nineteenth century preacher, said that he was so glad that God loved him before he was born because there was nothing about him after he was born to make God choose

him! There is nothing in us. The Bible says, "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God". Whether you have been a 99% sinner or a 1% sinner, there is no difference. Whether you have been chaste and pure in your own eyes you still need Christ to cleanse you; you still need lifting from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ".

The text that God used to speak to me was one that spoke of what He had done: "delivered us from the power of darkness" and "translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son". "Translation" means to "carry over". We are all born under Satan's dominion, in his kingdom and we need to be taken out of that kingdom and brought into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is God's work. It is what happens, as we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

David Wylde

This article is based on a series of interviews between David Wylde and Derrick French.

A Voice from the Past

A NEW VIEW OF MARTHA

Martha of Bethany shone, in that she received Jesus into her house. He had previously said, "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head", but Martha opened her door to the homeless, despised and rejected One. What an honour was hers!

Notwithstanding her undue anxiety, which the Lord adjusted, He will, in the coming day, express His deep appreciation of her love and welcome into her home, when, in the world His hands had made, He had none. What a comfort this was to the Lord, that Martha loved Him well enough to put her house and all that she had at His disposal and make it available for His comfort.

It was a great act, involving the consecration of her home to His service.

F. S. Marsh
1940

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

Part 1

Introduction

With the Lord's help I want to search the Scriptures to see what sort of person a christian is and what privileges the christian has.

The word 'christian' occurs only three times in the Bible:—

- It was a name given to the disciples of the Lord Jesus, not by themselves, but by others. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26),
- King Agrippa says to Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28)
- Then the Holy Spirit uses it through the apostle Peter, when he says: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed" (1 Peter 4: 16).

These three occurrences of the word seem to indicate that it refers to a believer in his public position in the world rather than to him as in the enjoyment of his high calling in Christ Jesus and of his privileges attaching to that position.

I want to speak of a believer viewed as the recipient of manifold blessings from God. It may not be possible to get a true and complete idea of those blessings by scrutinizing one of our fellow-christians, but we may get God's thoughts from His word, and in this way learn the true position and the privileges of a christian, while at the same time we shall be able to see these features worked out practically and livingly in actual people.

In the first place, it is clear that there is a great difference between a christian of the present day and the people of God who lived in Old Testament times; not realizing this has given rise to much confusion of thought. Many believers read the Psalms and think that they describe the proper experiences of a christian. Now, it is true that believers of all ages have a great deal in common, as is evidenced by the way in which the Holy Spirit draws our

attention in Hebrews 11 to the great cloud of Old Testament witnesses, but there are also characteristic features which distinguish believers of the various dispensations from each other. Unless we apprehend this we shall get into confusion. Reference to a few points will make clear how necessary it is to acknowledge the distinction:

- In the Old Testament God was not fully revealed; in the New we get God fully declared by the only-begotten Son who dwells in His bosom; John 1: 18.
- The work of atonement has now been fully accomplished.
- The Holy Spirit has been given to indwell believers.
- The church or assembly of God, composed of living persons, has been formed, commencing its existence on the day of Pentecost, after the resurrection and glorification of Christ.

A CHRISTIAN IS BORN AGAIN

The new birth is the commencement of the work of God in the soul; without this there is nothing in a man in which God can find His pleasure. Man has gone completely astray from God; he is root and branch bad, "There is none righteous, no not one". This makes the new birth absolutely essential. Something entirely new must be begun in a person, and this has been so in all ages. The result of the new birth is that the person has new desires and new wishes.

A CHRISTIAN IS A FORGIVEN PERSON

Believers of the Old Testament knew something of forgiveness, but they never had the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins in the full way in which the christian possesses it. If a Jew sinned he had to bring an offering to the priest to make atonement for him, but every sin involved a fresh offering, and for the nation as a whole the Day of Atonement, with its attendant offerings, was repeated every year. Today the position is entirely different, for Christ "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat

down on the right hand of God. ... For by one offering he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:12-14). On the cross Christ said, "It is finished", and as the result of His death and resurrection He could instruct His disciples to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name among all nations (Luke 24: 47).

For the same reason God can now say, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more", in accordance with the prophecy of the Old Testament. This was not possible under the Old Covenant, but is one of the first principles of the New Covenant (See Hebrews 8:12).

The apostle John confirms this when he says to the "little children," i.e., to all believers: "Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

It is the indisputable heritage of every christian that in Christ "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7).

A CHRISTIAN IS A JUSTIFIED PERSON

The doctrine of justification by faith was never fully known in the Old Testament, although the principle was definitely brought to light in Abraham and David, as is explained in Romans 4. Justification could never be brought to pass through the law. The law could condemn a person if they were guilty, but the law could not acquit a person who was guilty, and much less could it justify the guilty, but now God can justify the ungodly (Romans 4:5). This He does on the principle of faith, not on the ground of works of righteousness. The believer is set free from every charge which could be brought against him, not because we are worthy of it, but because all that we have done has been atoned for by Christ, and because all that we are by nature has been condemned in the cross of Christ. All the claims of a righteous and holy God have been met in the death of Christ, and the christian is free because Christ is risen from the dead. Christ was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.

A CHRISTIAN HAS PEACE WITH GOD

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). The christian can now look upon God, not as a judge before whom they tremble, but as a justifier, who has set them free from all that was against them. A christian knows that their sins will never be brought to remembrance against them, so that they no longer fear judgment. In the death of Christ God condemned sin in the flesh, that evil principle which marks us naturally, and now the one who appreciates this realizes that there is no condemnation for them. They are no longer looked at as in the flesh, but as in Christ Jesus, and in the Spirit, and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1)

This peace can never be disturbed; it is not made by the believer, but by Christ

When the christian thinks of eternity, they look at the future with calmness and peace; every question between the soul and God is settled as far as guilt and sin are concerned. Everything depends upon Christ and His work; everything is on the ground of grace, and grace

alone. Sometimes a believer thinks that it indicates a state of humility to be constantly in doubt and uncertainty. This would truly be a suitable attitude to adopt if God had not spoken so clearly in His word, but if He bestows a blessing upon us, is it humility to doubt God? Certainly not. The Scriptures make it clear that as christians we can know that our sins are forgiven and that we are justified, and for this reason we have peace with God.

This peace can never be disturbed; it is not made by the believer, but by Christ (Colossians 1:20); it does not depend upon a work in the believer but upon a work outside of them, although it is true that the peace cannot be enjoyed without a work within. This peace is for the conscience, and has nothing to do with our

circumstances. If we wish to enjoy peace with reference to our circumstances, the way is indicated in Philippians 4: 6-7, where we are encouraged to pray and give thanks, the result being that the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. This peace can be disturbed by the neglect of prayer and thanksgiving, but peace with God, which we have through our Lord Jesus Christ, can never be disturbed.

A.A. Elliott
To be continued.

A Word for Today

THE FIRST INTIMATION OF HIS COMING

In 1 Thessalonians 4 we get the doctrine of the coming of the Lord brought before us. The epistle to the Philippians gives us the power of communion with the life of Christ in the service of the apostle down here. We get two glimpses in Philippians 3 that tell us how the heart of Paul, as fully led by the Spirit of God, was in connection with the hope of His coming. First, "I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing—forgetting the things behind ... I pursue, looking towards the goal". Secondly, we look for the Saviour. His heart was set on that personal meeting of the Lord at the end of his course. It was not so much a question of glory with him, but that which would satisfy his heart, the presence of Christ.

He was loved by Christ, he was brought into service by Christ, and he was one to whom the Person of Christ was so dear that he had got Christ for his prize; but his feet were still treading this world where he found thorns and briars, sand and flints enough to make his poor body weary; and not only so, but labouring in the house of God he had sorrow upon sorrow. So in Philippians we get the coming of the Lord in connection with His coming as Saviour.

In 1 Thessalonians we get a different aspect of the coming of the Lord (chapter 4: 15, etc.), where Paul was writing to those

who were comparatively in ignorance. We get a remarkable expression: "This we say to you in the word of the Lord". There is something emphatic in this statement; it indicates the display of the Lord's power—His energy.

The last bit of the road is all about the blessed Lord; it is a most precious display of two great glories which are found in Him. It is not, as we get in Philippians, a man running up an arduous path, getting rid of every weight, one burden after another, that would impede his course; and then, after this arduous run up the hill of difficulty, reaching the goal and winning the prize. If I am toiling, labouring, discovering, this year more than last, what the conflict and difficulty is, still running up the arduous course of service, I know I shall meet Him at the last as my Saviour. Now in Thessalonians, He comes out as "the resurrection and the life"—"the Lord Himself." The Holy Spirit always presents Him first in the picture, then tells me what He does. It is Himself, the Lord, who shall descend. His dwelling-place was heaven; He gave the earth to the children of men. The heaven has He reserved for Himself; but He came forth.

He comes again the second time from heaven; and what is heard first of all? A voice. Will it not be a well-known voice? You and I have never heard the Lord speak, but somehow or other it will sound as a well-known voice, the voice of Him whom absent we love; "whom having not seen ye love". None can direct or take the lead in that scene but Himself. "The voice of the archangel", mark the order. We should not like the trump, the archangel's sound, before we hear His voice. (The word translated "shout" is used for any loud sound in connection with regulating things.) His voice is the same as agonised in the garden, and which said, 'Father, Thy will be done'.

The voice of the archangel tells that when the Lord Jesus rises up, all heaven is concerned in it. Heaven gives its approval, and then we get "the trump of God". God sets His seal on it. It will be a thrilling sight and sound! What a scene it will be when Christ leaves the throne a second time to take us home to His

Father's house! Where do we date from? Before the foundation of the world that love was set upon us; the same love has been waiting for and on us ever since. It has followed us every step of our way in all the entanglements of the domestic circle. Such blessed love!

What sort of love was it that could take such a cup of wrath as He did into His hand? What sort of love is it that will leave the throne a second time to receive me to Himself? It is not the glory, but Himself; not the attendant circumstances, but the thing is, the One who thus loves me. When we discover how feebly

we know His love, we prefer saying, He loves me, rather than saying to another, I love Him, though I can tell the world this. I would rather tell Christ I love Him than tell you. How

**"For ever with the Lord!"
Amen; so let it be;
life from the dead is in that word,
'tis immortality**

unspeakably brightly His love burns! It is not merely that the One who loves me comes, but He comes as the servant of that love—as "the resurrection". He speaks the word; the dead in Him rise first. Stephen, Paul and others will start up—all the sleeping ones. Some we have loved on earth more than anything will come forth. What a majestic display of His love and His power it will be to the poor weak ones whose bodies are gone to dust! How it will tell out the truth of His words, "I am the resurrection"! Almighty power will be put forth. The very graves become the scene of glory when He comes back. He searches out the dust of those who are sleeping. He who was the meek and lowly Man of sorrows will speak the word! Let Mine arise! (Though we would not put a word in His mouth for that day.) He will speak some word and all will come out from the tomb. He is the Life too. Some will be alive and remain. Paul does not look for a long interval; he says, "We, the living who remain". He

gave us eternal life, and He will so fill up the earthen vessel with eternal life that mortality will be entirely excluded. Nothing unfit for the glory will remain in it. "Caught up"; it is a strong word—snatched up.

Some say, 'Tell me about the intermediate state'. It is something peculiar connected with communion. It is told in a few words, but it will speak volumes to you if you know Christ well. "Absent from the body . . . present with the Lord". If you do not know Him well, it may be repeated again and again to you, but it will be nothing to you. "Present with the Lord". It is the test for service. If you know the beauty of Him, and what it is to have His heart hovering over you in the wilderness, "present with the Lord" will be a great volume to you. If you do not know much about Christ's heart and communion with Him, it will be little to you. The throne, the sceptre, the golden city, are not spoken of; the grand thing is His presence. He is the resurrection and the life; will there be any question of His being the resurrection and the life, when He is surrounded by myriads raised and changed?

"So encourage one another with these words." Is it not a comfort to you, the fact that there is rest at the end of the journey? Or if torn by violence here, is it no comfort that there will be no more troublous scenes there, but forever with the Lord? He comes in answer to the longing desire of those whose hearts say, "Come, Lord Jesus." Do you find yourselves saying such words as, 'I wait, Lord?' Are you putting your soul into this position? Is your own heart so in the secret of His presence that He is able to say of you, 'That is one who is in the position of waiting for Me?' Who is in this practical position of soul? Are you putting yourself in this position, and saying, 'I am a weak one, but, Lord, I wait for Thee'? This is the comfort of heart that will keep us through troublous circumstances.

J. B. Stoney

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