

89

Living Water

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Recent Ministry

THREE RACES

Introduction

Our life here is often spoken of as a journey but I think the Christian pathway is more of a race. There is something in common with such events as the Olympic games, but in some ways our race differs and I want to speak first of some of those differences.

In a swimming race the pool is divided into lanes and on either end of those lanes there is someone sitting on a chair; when the swimmer approaches the end they stand up and go to the edge and watch them. I understand that a swimmer has to touch the end and is allowed only one stroke under water. The persons at the end of each lane come forward and watch to see that each swimmer obeys the rules. If the rules are kept, they signal to the umpire that all is well but if a swimmer has broken those rules and taken two strokes under water he or she is out of the race. There is no other chance.

I can tell you, beloved friends, that in our race we have a far more gracious Umpire than they have. Because if one failure had put us out of the Christian race then we had all been out. Yet the wonderful grace of God is that whatever mistakes we have made He is ready to come in and help us. John's epistle would help us in that. There is a verse that is often quoted in the preaching of the gospel: "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). It is used in the gospel, but the real interpretation of it is that it is addressed to believers and tells us that if something unholy has come in to our lives, the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to meet it. So, as I said, we have a very gracious Umpire. If we have made mistakes and fallen out of the race there is the opportunity now to get back into it. Peter, who had many failures, reminds us that we each have the rest of our time (1 Peter 4:2).

There is another very big difference in the Christian race: usually in a race if you are faster than others you win. In some kinds of races it is possible to hinder others so that a person can be first. We have sometimes seen that kind of spirit come into Christianity and we are sorry and apologise for it. But I would like to tell you, what happened here once when I was still fishing. There are some here today who

were there and will remember it.

We were fishing for prawns about 70 miles off Fraserburgh one October and a very, very bad forecast came over the air. From then on, the boats, one by one, pulled up their gear, fastened everything, prepared for a storm and from then on, it was a race for Fraserburgh harbour. But it was not a race to be first; if we could help or assist or encourage any one who was behind it was done. That is the kind of race that the Christian is on. Paul says, "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13) and God's mind is that we all arrive. Sadly on that October day one boat did not get home. Four men from Whitehills never made the harbour. In the Christian race let us pray for and endeavour to help one another all we can to continue in the race. With that in mind I want to speak about three races.

The Marathon

"Let us...run with endurance the race that lies before us, looking steadfastly on Jesus..." (Hebrews 12:1-4).

The first race to speak of is the marathon, a test of endurance. The marathon commemorates the feat of a Greek soldier in 490 BC who ran the 25 miles from Marathon to Athens to bring the news of the Greek victory over the Persians and having given the news collapsed and died. The marathon is a race of endurance. (1)

If Christianity was a sprint I think we would all get on with it. But it is not a sprint, it is really a test of endurance. So here we read, "Let us also therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race that lies before us". Laying aside every weight, and sin: I believe that includes that which is legitimate and what is not. A weight is some thing that is legitimate in our lives but never the less hinders us in the race. Sin is what is wrong and also hinders us. God has provided for this. We are exhorted to lay aside all such things and run, "looking steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith". He is the One who has run the race perfectly and is now seated at

**Looking
steadfastly
on Jesus**

1. The official length of the Olympic Marathon is 26 miles 385 yards. This was adopted as standard in 1925 and is based on the distance run in 1908 when the race began in Windsor and ended in front of the Royal Box at Wembley Stadium.

God's right hand in heavenly glory. Our eye is to be on Him. He is our object.

He "endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". Then it says, "Consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself, that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds". This letter to the Hebrews was written to those who were getting weary. They were finding the course difficult and feeling that they could not go on much longer. It may be the attitude of many at the present time.

We may think we have a lot of difficulties, things that we cannot endure. That is why, I think, this chapter follows chapter 11, because if you and I think we have difficulties, just go back over chapter 11 and you will find at least one who has similar difficulties but a thousand times worse. Think of what they had to bear. Abraham left one of the most prosperous cities in the world at that time, at the call of God and went out, not knowing where he went. Then we can trace that line of faith and suffering all the way down. Think of what Joseph bore and how well he bore it. How forgiving he was when his brethren came to him in Egypt. They could not understand the forgiveness of Joseph. After the death of their father, seventeen years later, Joseph's brethren thought that Joseph would now take vengeance as to what they had done. Joseph felt that lack of understanding and trust and he wept (see Genesis 50:17). Yes, Joseph had difficulties. Moses had difficulties. Then, we find others whose names are not mentioned. They were "stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, died by the death of the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, evil treated, (of whom the world was not worthy,) wandering in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caverns of the earth". That is the cloud of witnesses that surround us. So if we feel that things are difficult, it is nothing to what they went through.

So, as I said, this is a test of endurance. In a marathon just to accomplish it is a feat in itself. So it is with us. Our desire is that we may finish the race that is before us.

The Hurdling Race

"Issachar is a bony ass, Crouching down between two hurdles"

(Genesis 49:14-15).

In Genesis we find the hurdles race. "Issachar is a bony ass". In the law of Moses an ass had to be redeemed with a lamb and if it was not

so redeemed its neck had to be broken (see Exodus 13:13). So I think that in that sense it represents a believer who is redeemed. Bones really speak of divine principles; if they are held in a cold and callous way, it is simply like a person whose bones are sticking out and needing flesh to cover them.

So I would suggest that Issachar here is a redeemed person, one well aware of divine principles; he has jumped one hurdle and he is not going to jump any more. He is "Crouching down between two hurdles". There are many believers at the present time like that, overwhelmed by the difficulties. Issachar is between two hurdles and he is not prepared to go any further. "And he saw the rest that it was good, And the land that it was pleasant". Everything is good. He is secure in the promise of heaven but he is not going to jump any more hurdles. It is a sad position. Now while Jacob leaves it like that in the passage we read, we can be thankful that the Spirit of God does not. Issachar is helped by one more spiritual than he is – Zebulun. And he is taken out of this slough of despond that he is in. The next time we hear of him he is with Zebulun and inviting people to the mountains (Deuteronomy 33:18-19). As I said at the outset, we have a very, very gracious Umpire. God takes account of us. He knows the kind of persons that we are, knows what we have to face and is prepared to take us up. When Deborah writes her song Issachar is one who gets full marks, "the princes in Issachar were with Deborah; ... They were sent into the valley at his feet". Issachar was obedient.

So although Jacob leaves Issachar in this slough of despond, the Spirit of God does not. There are a great many difficulties and disappointments at the present time. We feel it. We are meant to feel it. But let us remember the glorious end; Issachar would invite us to the mountains. Let us get our eyes on the height of God's thoughts for us.

Remember what John says as to the glorious hope before us, "What we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him" (1 John 3:3, 2). It is a wonderful outlook. We have failures at the present time but when we see Him in that glorious day we will be like Him; there will be no more failure.

**There are many
believers at the
present time ...
overwhelmed by
the difficulties**

If we are feeling that there are obstacles before us that we cannot surmount – sometimes we do feel like that – the Spirit of God would encourage us at the present time to go on in the glorious hope that we are going to meet Jesus in the air.

The relay

“Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude v 3)
“...the time of my release is come...” (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

In the relay there are four runners, and the first one takes a baton. The Christian’s baton is “the faith once delivered to the saints”. The Lord gave it to the apostles, and nothing has been added to it since. Paul tells Timothy to hand it on to faithful men (2 Timothy 2:1) and it has been handed down ever since.

In a relay the first runner takes the baton and he runs round the track. As they approach the second runner they also begin to run until the runner with the baton catches them up and for a short while they are running together and the baton is passed from one to another, then number one slows up and falls out of the race. This is repeated with the third and fourth runners; each passes the baton on to the next one in the race. And this has happened all down the Christian testimony. The baton, as one might put it, has been passed from one to the other. I think I got a surprise when I realised that I was left running with the baton. We can look round this hall in Portknockie here, and think of those who are now with the Lord. We remember when we accepted Jesus as Saviour and committed ourselves and perhaps falteringly, we began to take some small part in the things of the Lord – started to run in this race – then we found we were running alongside those who were in Christ before us. Then, one by one, the Lord has called them home and we are left now in this race holding the baton, “the faith once delivered to the saints”.

Sadly in the present day many seem to have dropped out because they saw themselves being left with the baton. I say that not in any way unkindly but there is a responsibility on us to see that this faith once delivered to the saints is carried on and carried forward. It is left to our day.

Jude apparently had been intending to write, “of our common salvation”, but then the Spirit of God had pressed upon him the need of the day and it says he had “been obliged to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints”.

There is no doubt that at the present time the Christian pathway is getting more difficult. Nevertheless, there is a glorious goal and I believe God would encourage us at the present time to take our responsibilities. One of the things that marks this day, and I am not speaking just of this company here tonight, but of Christianity as a whole, is that often persons do not want to take up responsibility. Yet we are in the race we are running with others, we are not alone. The relay is run in conjunction with others but I believe that God would have us to take our responsibility at the present time.

In 2 Timothy, Paul is writing as one coming to the end of his life. He had been, as far as I understand, four years in captivity up to the end of the Acts. In Caesarea and in Rome he had been kept there in prison. He had, I believe, been released. Then, two years later, recaptured and taken again to Rome, and left here knowing that his time was very short. He was very soon to be taken out and slain with the sword. He is seeking to encourage Timothy and also the Spirit of God through this letter would encourage us, despite the day, to continue in the things of God. He says, "But thou, be sober in all things, bear evils, do the work of an evangelist, fill up the full measure of thy ministry".

Then he says, "For I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come". It is wonderful, really, to my mind that Paul is able to look forward to his death – beheaded by a sword – and speak of it as his release. Sometimes, as we get older and suffer from pain and severe limitation we may look on it as a release but here Paul speaks of martyrdom as a release. The "time of my release is come" and then he continues, "I have combated the good combat". He is not speaking of how well he has fought; the point he is making is that the combat he has been engaged in is 'the good fight'.

I believe it is the only good war that has ever been on this earth. We hear of wars, of illegal wars and all the rest of it, wars between countries and wars between men. But Paul here has been engaged; he has fought the "good fight". "I have finished the race". Paul does not say here whether he finished first or last. That was not his concern. Indeed, the only time he speaks of being first was what he was as a sinner. He claims first place in that as being the worst sinner that ever walked on this earth. And he gives a reason for it – he said he had persecuted the church of God.

We do not know much about Paul's life in that way. We know that he

was a hard man. He forced persons to blaspheme. When Stephen was stoned it says he gave his vote. He watched over the clothes of those who stoned him. In doing so I think he would be enabled to watch Stephen in a way that he would not had he actually been throwing the stones. He had seen Stephen and it left a mark in his conscience that he could not get over.

It is only as a sinner that Paul claims a first

Jesus speaks to him and says, "it is hard for thee to kick against goads" (Acts 26:14). Goads are that which keep an animal in its place and Paul's conscience was pricking him as he remembered Stephen; he never forgot the way that Stephen died. He had heard Stephen's words, "lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60) and it affected him. When Jesus spoke to him he says, "Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:5). I believe Paul learned a lot from those words. He realised the value Jesus placed on His own down here and that value has never decreased. The Lord still values His own here.

It is only as a sinner that Paul claims a first. Here he claims only to have finished the race. He does not say how well he has finished it; that is left in the hands of the Judge, One far more able to assess than he was. Then he knew that the crown of righteousness was laid up for him and for all those who love His appearing: "Henceforth" he says, "the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render to me in that day; but not only to me, but also to all who love his appearing".

He can look back over his life; he had failed at times but he was a wonderful servant of God and he loved the appearing. It is a wonderful thing to love His appearing – to have in our hearts as we pass through this world where the Lord is despised, hated, dishonoured, and blasphemed, that there is a time coming when Jesus is coming back and every eye shall see Him (see Revelation 1:7).

So this crown is laid up, not only for Paul, but for all who love His appearing. At the present day, when a person does some great feat, or holds himself well in any battle, at the end of the day he is given a medal. In the day when these scriptures were written, in Roman times, when a victor came back they were given a crown and that is why the Scripture speaks of the crown of righteousness. I do not think it means

we are going to get something on our heads. It means that we will realise the appreciation that the Lord Jesus has of those who continue this race right to the end.

We are in a difficult day; I am not going to underestimate the obstacles or the endurance that we need to run this race, but I believe that the rewards at the end of the day will be worth it all. How wonderful it would be to hear the Lord say, 'Well done'. I am not saying I deserve it, I do not think that but think how wonderful it will be. It is worth any crown on your head, any crown of gold just to hear Jesus say, 'Well done', and it is within our range.

The Lord Jesus takes account of the difficulties of the race, takes account of where we are, what we have to bear; God knows all that. Then not only has Jesus died and borne our sins so all that has gone and gone for ever, but at the present time He is in glory, taking account of His own down here, interceding for saints according to God.

Think of the example of it; the Lord said to His disciples that "Satan has demanded to have you" (he had demanded for them all) "to sift you as wheat". But the Lord knew what was in Peter and He says, "I have besought for thee", Peter, "that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32). Think of what it had meant to Peter that Jesus interceded for him. I believe it will not be until the judgement seat that we will know how much we owe to the Lord Jesus' intercessory service so that we might be sustained in the pathway down here. The Lord is also in glory as our high priest, taking account of all our different weaknesses, sorrows and fears. He is there in His priestly grace to be with us and to serve us.

So we are at the present time in a race and the goal is before us – Jesus is before us. We are to keep our eye on Him. At the end of John's gospel Peter is told by the Lord to follow Him and immediately he does what we do; he looks round and sees someone following and he says, 'What of him?' The Lord says, "what is that to thee? Follow thou me" (John 21:22). Whatever others do the Lord's desire for every one of us, is that we may go fully in for the things of the Lord and be able to carry the testimony as long as we are here.

May the Lord help us in it, for His name's sake.

George West

An Address at Portknockie, 17th May 2008.

Poetry Selection

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

The Lord is my Shepherd,
In love He'll provide;
Through His rich provision
My needs are supplied.

In quietness I'll trust Him,
On Him will depend
And render thanksgiving.
He loves to the end.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters”

The Lord is my peace,
The stay of my heart;
In mercy He leadeth,
With Him is my part.

Amongst the green pastures
I lie down and rest;
By waters of quietness
My soul is refreshed.

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”

He is my righteousness,
He knoweth the way;
My Lord I will follow,
His strength for each day.

My soul He restoreth,
My Lord I'll confess.
His name is most precious,
His name I will bless.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”

The Lord is my Banner,
In grace He will guide,
Protect me from evil;
He walks by my side.

In grace He sustaineth,
My soul He sets free;
By His rod and His staff,
He comforteth me.

**"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou
anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over"**

Prepared is the table,
His joy to draw near;
To have me beside Him,
At home without fear.
I greatly rejoice,
His presence to bless;
And now I will praise Him,
In love, I'm at rest.

My head He anointeth,
My cup runneth o'er;
With the glory before me,
I'll praise and adore.
He is my Beloved,
His love faileth not;
To give Him His portion
Is my happy lot.

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will
dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."**

His goodness and mercy,
I'll prove to the end.
The Lord is my Saviour,
My Shepherd and Friend.

Beholding His glory
I rest in His love;
Then I shall be with Him
Forever above!

R. Casselli (22nd July 1923)

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

How many saints have gone before,
Now entered into rest;
Their sufferings here for ever o'er,
Where they had once confessed

That they were pilgrims, strangers too,
As ever on they trod.
They kept the heavenly land in view,
And lived by faith in God.

What battles sore on earth they fought,
With strength by God supplied.
By Him what righteousness they wrought,
By faith in Him they died.

Well may we those dear saints admire,
From their example learn.
Then strong in faith, with hearts on fire,
Await our Lord's return.

Stanley Eastwood

THE GARDEN

A garden contemplation suits,
And may instruction yield,
Sweeter than all the flowers and fruits
With which the spot is filled.

Eden was Adam's dwelling place,
While blessed with innocence;
But sin o'erwhelmed him with disgrace,
And drove the rebel thence.

The Garden of Gethsemane,
The Second Adam saw,
Oppressed with woe, to set us free
From sure and certain fate

His church as a fair garden stands,
Which walls of love enclose;
Each tree is planted by His hand
And by His blessing grows.

Believing hearts are gardens too,
For grace has sown its seeds;
Where once, by nature, nothing grew
But thorns and worthless weeds.

Such themes to those who Jesus love,
May constant joys afford;
And make the barren desert prove
The garden of the Lord.

John Newton

Testimony Section

RELIGION IS NOT ENOUGH

Dear Reader,

I would like to share my story with you to try and show you the difference between following a religion and having true life and hope. It is important that we make sure what we believe and where we are going after we die. We need to think carefully about what the truth is, rather than just automatically accepting what our families or religious leaders tells us.

Therefore please be patient and think carefully as you read this leaflet. You may feel angry as I explain how I stopped following Islam, but please do not make a judgment until you have read the whole of this leaflet. I am concerned for your soul and where you are going after you die. I want you to know the certain hope of going to heaven that I now have.

At first I was going to keep it to myself, as I knew that a Muslim would probably not listen, thinking of me as a traitor or a fool. But I decided that I had to share the truth with others regardless of what they might think, because all need to hear it.

Racial tension

I was born in Birmingham but my family was from South Asia. (I always thought that to be Asian is to be Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim. To be anything else is to be following Western ideas.) Nearly everyone at my school was Muslim but there was always tension between the Bengalis and the Pakistanis. Even though both groups were Muslim with love, peace and harmony on the surface, deep down there was hatred against language, culture, appearance and the like.

People who were non-Muslim, Jewish or white were mocked on a regular basis. Dear reader, would God, who made all humans, want the people following Him to go round causing racial tension? Things may be changing over the years, but this was certainly the way things were during my time at school.

No questioning allowed.

I was brought up to be a Muslim by family, friends, the teaching of the local mosques and by the Asian community. I had to accept Islam without questioning. I was always taught that leaving the faith would result in going to hell, along with all non-Muslims. Dear reader, is it right that people should be told what to believe and to have to accept it without question? Should we not decide for ourselves what we believe, without fear of what others think or say?

**I had to accept Islam
without questioning**

I followed this religion because that was our normal way of life and the thing that I was expected to do. I was dissatisfied and longed for something more. I thought that doing good or becoming more zealous for Islam would help. Yet although doing these things looked good outwardly, on the inside, in my heart, it made no difference.

Something Different about Christians

Over many years my family received practical help from a Christian lady, who was friendly and loving even though she was of a different cultural background to us. Over a period of time I made other Christian friends, and I noticed that there was something different about them. They seemed to have a deep sense of peace and love in their hearts, which I did not understand, but longed to have for myself. These friends shared the good news of the Bible with me many times, but I deliberately switched off and did not take in the message. Some friends invited me to go to a church group, even though they knew that I was a Muslim. At the end of the meeting someone would share the Bible's message about Jesus, but again I did not listen.

Is it Western to be a Christian?

At one of the meetings an Asian man, who had been a Hindu, spoke about how he became a Christian. He explained that following a religion did not satisfy the longings of his soul. He had even read the Koran, but that did not help. Only when he came to know Jesus Christ was his soul satisfied.

Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (See John 4:13).

I was surprised to hear this Asian man talking about becoming a Christian. I was brought up thinking that only white people were Christians. This made me start thinking whether I was taught correctly. I also began thinking about whether the Bible had really been changed or corrupted, as I had been taught and as is accepted by Muslims without question.

Love and Concern

Soon afterwards I met another Christian who showed me love and concern. Over time he told me what he believed. Straightaway I sensed that he was trying to convert me to his religion and so I switched off again and started to put up barriers in my mind to what he was saying. I also started to spend less time with him.

I should just say at this point that I was taught by my family and the Muslim community that Christians were immoral. I was told that everything that you see in the media was typical of Christians. Yet when I met true Christian believers, I found that they were actually nice people who sought to live good moral lives. In fact the Bible condemns wicked behaviour in the book of Romans, which speaks about God's wrath against evil things.

Thinking carefully

I kept on thinking about the Christians I had met and what they believed. My mind was not at rest as I was searching for the truth. I needed to find out more, so I went back to my Christian friend and started to attend his church. As I listened to the preaching over several months it felt as though the preacher was picking on me when he talked about sin. However, what was really happening was that the preacher was preaching from the Bible, which talks about what is wrong with all humans – our sinful hearts.

I found that the Bible speaks with great authority and understanding about mankind and sin. The Bible shows that sin is not just obvious wicked deeds, but included everything, great or small, that we do wrong. The Bible explains that the reason that we sin is because

something has gone wrong in our hearts. We are dead in transgressions and sins (See Ephesians 2:1).

The Bible is clear that God is holy and pure and hates all wrongdoing. To not punish a crime means He has let us get away with it. Therefore it is right that every wrongdoing is punished. But God loves us and wants to spare us from His wrath. This was the problem: God wants to spare us, but He must punish our wrongdoing. What is the solution?

A Genuine Solution

The Bible offers a genuine solution for us. Jesus came into the world and led a sinless life. He then let Himself be put to death on a cross, receiving the punishment from God that we deserved. This means that God has punished our sin, but can also spare us the punishment. After three days Jesus was raised from the dead, which showed that He had the victory over sin and death.

**The Bible offers a
genuine solution for us**

As I learned these things I realised that my heart was not right with God, and therefore I was heading for God's punishment after I die. Yet, I knew that I had been told about God's solution, which is available for everyone. I knew that I needed to receive it for myself. After talking with a friend and thinking about these things, I went to my house and prayed that God would come into my life and forgive me for my sins through Jesus' death on the cross. After I prayed I felt something of God's presence come into my heart, which satisfied the longings in my soul, and I had the sense of assurance that God had accepted me and forgiven me. Since then I have continued to have that sense of assurance that I am right with God. Through believing in Jesus I have become a true Christian.

Dear friend, it is not enough just to follow a religion, because it does not deal with the problem of our hearts. Jesus' death on the cross and His bearing of the judgment from God that was due to us is the only genuine solution for us, but to get the good of it we need to accept it for ourselves by trusting in Jesus. God has changed my life, and is changing many other people's lives through faith in Jesus.

What is your state before God?

Everybody needs Jesus

Whatever background we come from, we all need Jesus' death on the cross. We all need to trust in Him. I would encourage you to read the Bible to find out for yourself what it says about our sinful hearts and God's solution through Jesus' death on the cross.

M. C. Akik

A leaflet circulating in Birmingham

THREATENED BY THE MAU MAU

The Mau Mau was a very militant nationalist movement in Kenya in the early 1950s that had its base amongst the Kikuyu people. They laid great emphasis on ritual oaths as a way of promoting unity in the independence movement and clashed fiercely with Christians who refused to take such oaths. Many Christian believers were killed but one who, though persecuted, survived gives the account below, translated from the Bantu.

I am a witness of Jesus, the only Son of God, who is my Saviour. Jesus found and saved me on 10th July 1945. During this time of trouble with the Mau Mau, I had been much pestered by the oath-administrators to take their oath. It now happened that at the beginning of October 1953 I was making tea in the morning after I had returned to my home from the place where I sleep during the night (hiding from Mau Mau). A gang found me and began to trouble the entire house. We were told that we must all go to the oath taking, and I refused. Then I went and shut the house door. I laid my heart before the Lord Jesus. I prayed Him to save me if He wanted me to witness for Him, or to forgive that gang if they killed me.

The gang had gone to get an axe from the other side of the valley, and when they returned they burst the door open with it and took me out to beat me till they were tired of it and then they tied my hands and my neck. They dragged me along and through the stream and then they tied me to a tree. After a bit they took turns to carry me to the oath taking. They told me I had no faults to cause my death, except:

- *That I had refused to let my girls take part in the initiation ceremony*
- *I had troubled their hearts when I preached in the market, and*
- *That I had informed on them when they had oath taking.*

I was told that I should be done in after the oath taking. I said that I would rather die than take that oath and on the way I kept praying in my heart.

On the way one of them fetched a spade to dig my grave, then one saw some soldiers on the other side of the valley, so we were told to hide. I was asked again if I was ready to take the oath. I said 'No', because the oath I had already drunk at the Lord's Table meant that I could not take their ritual oath. They told me to lie down and one of them put a knife to my throat. One man said: 'You say your Lamb of God saves you – let's see if He will save you now!' Then they saw the soldiers again and were afraid and told me to lie down again.

I was able to slip away and find a path and the Lord helped me. Did He not hear the words of the young man who mocked?

I want to say that the journey to heaven is not easy. Even if I am given protection by the government, those gang men or others may overtake me; but it will prove to be a great festival for me, or like my wedding day, when I go to meet Jesus, who bought me out of Satan's bondage with His own blood. Anyhow I shall never pray to those vain things of earth; because our home is in heaven, where there is no fear in the heart.

Ezekiel Njuwe (Kagaarii)

There is another account of a woman, Rahabu Ng'Endo, who refused to take the oath telling the Mau Mau, 'I have taken the Lord's Supper; how can I return to drink your goat's blood'. So they hoisted her up by the neck, slowly strangling her, three times and each time they let her down. One of the men said: 'You can go on till she dies; that woman will not give in, best let her go'. They did, and she stumbled home and for two months could not work while her swollen neck gradually subsided.

Paul said of old: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus". A humble Kikuyu follower of His can say so too!

Extracted from the "Kikuyu Martyrs" by E. M. Wiseman

A Voice from the Past

"I WILL MAKE YOU"

This world makes much of the person who has climbed to the top — self-made, as people speak — but there are no 'self-made persons' in God's world. The very spirit that forces itself upwards, often at the expense of others, is of Satan himself and is repugnant to God. But God is to have His world, and it is to be inhabited by persons who are not after the order of Adam, but of the order of Christ. They are not self-made, but made by Christ and by His blessed Spirit. Thus David, when delivered out of the hand of all his enemies, traces all to the God who had delivered him, saying: "Thy condescending gentleness hath made me great". It was not David's fight for power and glory; it was what God had done for him in delivering grace, for God had made him great.

The forming of men is thus the handiwork of divine Persons. God takes us up and He makes us what we are to be according to His sovereignty. Simon Peter and Andrew his brother are seen by the Lord at the sea of Galilee, casting a net and He says to them: "Come after me, and I will make you become fishers of men". What simple words, but how much they imply! Out of such unlikely material — two simple Galilean fishermen, uneducated, "unlettered and uninstructed men" — the blessed Lord undertook to make fishers of men. That which He undertakes, He blessedly fulfils, and Peter and Andrew are made. Many a lesson they passed through in the making process; but with divine skilfulness, the Lord in untiring activity was making them, until the day when Peter stood up with the eleven, a finished product as a "fisher of men", with a haul of three thousand souls.

The Lord would make us to be His servants, and to be truly serviceable to Him. Let us place ourselves unreservedly in His hands and in the hands of the Holy Spirit, that we might be formed and made for the service of God!

The service of God is both toward God and towards humanity. If Peter was to be a fisher of men, he would serve persons in securing them for God. We are also being made for service Godward, which is beautifully developed in the book of Revelation, when the Lamb comes forward — the One alone worthy to do so — to receive the seven-sealed book from the hand of God. A new song is then sung which is suited to the occasion:

**The service of God is
both toward God and
towards humanity**

"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open its seals; because thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10).

Precious it is to see that Christ has not only died for our sins and redeemed us to God, but would put us into the service of the God to whom He has redeemed us, making us suited for that service, yea, making us kings and priests to God.

If we would trace the details of that making process we shall find them in the gospels. In Matthew we are made kings, and in Luke, priests. Matthew presents the Lord in His kingly character, and as formed by Him we learn to come out with Him in administration. All the details of that book, even as to two agreeing on the earth concerning any matter, and the Lord in the midst of two or three gathered unto His name, would so form us that we are made unto His God, kings.

Then in Luke, we ponder the beauties of the perfect Man, holy, harmless, undefiled, constantly in prayer. At His baptism, the night before choosing His apostles, on the holy mount, in Gethsemane, on the cross, we behold Him ever in prayer, in priestly character. We view that One in prayer and learn to say, "Lord, teach us to pray..." We develop thus in priestly character and sensibilities. We learn to carry the saints of God upon our hearts and to intercede for them, and are made unto our God, priests.

If we pursue this subject to its climax, we are bound to think of the church, which is to be the bride of Christ for all eternity. It is made, and God Himself makes it. God said at the beginning, "It is not good that Man should be alone; I will make him a helpmate, his like". Who can speak of the love and skill that enters into that making? The God who called worlds into being with a word, "He spake, and it was done" — for by the word of God were the heavens made — did not create Adam's helpmate by a word of command, but made her by building, as it says, "Lord God built the rib... into a woman" (Genesis 2: 22). How much greater is the church, the bride of Christ, made by God, builded and brought to Christ!

Christopher Menzies
Cape Town.

A Word for Today

PRESERVATION AND PATIENCE IN THE PRESENCE OF APOSTASY

Three incidents in Samaria

Introduction

We are surrounded today, not only by the original opposition to the truth, but what bears upon our spirits most searchingly is the character of the apostasy that has come in. You may come in contact, for instance, with a person who in a way professes the name of the Lord, but when you begin to enquire you find that under an external profession of the name of the Lord, is the most solemn apostasy. We are surrounded by the most solemn apostasy in the degradation from the truth. One element of apostasy that marks the present time and touches the spirit of a lover of Christ

most keenly is the way in which the truth as to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has been degraded. In the presence of such departure from the original truth, we feel the need of special provision and care, and there is the most gracious and special consideration from the Lord Jesus who understands perfectly what it means to our hearts to stand connected with the testimony.

John 4:1-14, 35-42 The Woman of Samaria

I read from the 4th of John with no intention of going into the details of the chapter, but to call attention to the grace of Jesus. If ever there was a gospel preaching we get it in the 4th of John. We get there the tender feelings and yearnings of the Lord. One often feels in reading the 4th of John how shallow and small is one's yearnings after the needy. No scripture sets before us more touchingly the Person of the Lord in the graciousness of His movements from the Divine point of view.

We see from the opening of this chapter that there was schism and pride on the part of the Jews in Judea. They had said that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John. The effect of the testimony to the very end will be, that disciples are made.

We see the spirit of Christ in the chapter: His yearning grace, compassion and deep and tender interest in the souls of men, and we see the interest of the blessed Lord Himself in one soul upon whom He put the whole value of His mission for the moment—one soul secured for the glory of God and for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

I do not know how far we have considered it, but the Lord was in the presence of most solemn apostasy when He was in Samaria. What was Samaria? You will remember the origin of it. It came into being through rebellion against God. The Lord was in the presence of the most solemn complications as the result of apostasy. You have only to listen to this poor woman to get a sense of how far away a religious soul may be—forms,

ceremonies, creeds, traditions, they are all there, but the blessed living God far away from her soul. The Lord says to her "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews".

As the Lord looked upon that woman and He made the simple request "Give me to drink", light broke into her heart. We see the spirit that marked the Lord, His attitude of deep compassion and direct personal interest that brought light into her soul, and I would ask myself the question, 'How far am I marked by religion instead of being marked by Christ?' There is much difference.

The impression conveyed to the heart of the woman was this—Jew as He was and appeared to her to be, there never had been one in that favoured position and place who had ever appealed to her heart as He had done, and it raised this great inquiry in her mind—"How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans".

**How far am I
marked by religion
instead of being
marked by Christ?**

In moving about in various ways in this world, we are in the presence not only of original need, but also of that great and solemn complexity, the effects of apostasy. We may give an impression of correctness, but it makes little or no appeal. What will make an appeal in the presence of the darkness that surrounds us at this time is the expression of grace, personal interest and consideration as of Christ Himself. How is it with us? We are left in this scene to have dealings in the power of the grace of Christ with those with whom we come in contact. May God help us never to shirk it. The Jew not only shirked it, but he had become proud, self-centred and aloof from the need of those to whom God intended he should carry light. The Lord was the vessel of Divine compassion; He came to have dealings with men; He came

to comfort the broken-hearted, to bring light, to bring comfort to the sorrowing, to bring life out of death, peace and forgiveness, and the knowledge of God. His present grace shines out in this beautiful chapter of John—"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water".

How is it with us? You may say to me that no one of us can do that; but everyone who loves this blessed Person can bring Him into evidence and convey an impression of Himself. We cannot do the thing, but we can turn souls to the One who can. Christ has not changed; He will never change. We change often; we are affected by changes, and so far as changes affect us we may bear in mind that there is grace, wisdom and consideration of our Lord to preserve and support us in the midst of these changes. He would keep us near Himself so that whatever changes may take place we may not change in our consideration for Christ, and our thoughts for the needy. If we change God would have us change for the better.

Acts 8:2-20 – Philip in Samaria

Now in Acts 8 we come again to Samaria. Stephen was gone; but we see Philip coming down to a city of the Samaritans, and he preaches Christ; Christ personally—Christ as He was here; Christ in what He did, Christ where He is—he preached Christ. Ah, that preaching was in correspondence to Christ. The Lord went away, and you see the testimony travelling. Christ "must needs go through Samaria", and Philip must needs go to Samaria. The power and love that govern the testimony are above. Philip went at the Lord's bidding and he preached Christ. He goes in the power of the testimony into the land of Samaria, and he meets with the same apostasy.

When Philip came into Samaria his preaching had power; they believed on the Lord and were baptized. But another influence was there, one who was called "great". Yes, what a solemn statement! I have tasted a little of it. I remember just after my

conversion something arose at school that I could not do because I belonged to Christ. When I went to the Principal about it he said, `You are the last one I dreamed of who would turn out so narrow minded'. All my pride rose up and I was going to say, `Excuse me, Sir, it is you who are narrow minded'. But something made me stop. It was not my own wisdom; the Lord shut my mouth; He knew far better than I that the pride that rebelled against reproach for Christ's sake might turn me astray.

We are in the presence of things called great; they surround us. We meet with them in circles of friendship, business and natural relationships. They said of Simon Magus, "This man is the great power of God". What was he? A denier of God, of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost. Notice what Peter says—so solemn and yet so closely matching the Lord's own words, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money". Yes, that is like the 4th of John. The gift of God is free to souls, and will be to the very end.

How far have we carried an impression of Christ and the goodness of God, and the blessing of having received the Holy Ghost? How far are we carrying it? You may say, `If people were looking for blessing it would not test us so much'. Did you and I get blessed because we were looking for it? I was obliged to turn to God at the very moment I had most tenaciously made up my mind that I would not be converted. When was I blessed? When my back was stiffest, my face hardest and my neck most unbending. That dear woman in the 4th of John said all she could to justify herself, but she was broken down and blessed.

Luke 9:51-56 – James and John in Samaria

When the Lord sent messengers to Samaria to make ready for Him (Luke 9:52), He was on His way to Jerusalem, and the Samaritans would not receive Him because His face was towards Jerusalem. When James and John saw this they said, "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" It was two well-known

disciples that asked that question; otherwise we might have said, 'The brethren who made that suggestion were uninstructed'. The Lord rebuked them, (and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are".) In this same chapter we read that one of His disciples said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us". Was it one of the uninstructed ones who said that? No! It was John himself!

May the Lord grant that we may understand better what spirit we are of in the presence of coldness as to the Lord; that we may be preserved in patience in the presence of apostasy and departure; and that we may bring in an impression of Christ that will create interest and awaken sensibilities that may lie underneath the ruin and rubbish that man has laid. In an apparently dark soul there may be some work of God that He would bring to light.

May we covet to be kept in conformity to Christ and preserved in spirit like Himself; for, blessed be God, "He giveth more grace."

J. B. Catterall

An address at Springfield, Illinois, USA

What is a Christian?

By A. A. Elliott

A reprint of 3 articles printed in recent issues of this magazine

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