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Living Water

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By A. A. Elliott

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

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Recent Ministry

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS – CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 opens with a description of our state as in the flesh. This applies to both Jews and Gentiles. Although the Jew was in an outward relationship with God, the nature that marked the Jew was no different from the Gentile under paganism. We are not given here the dreadful detail of Romans chapter 3 but all are shown by nature to be children of wrath. Jew and Gentile had the same evil desires. In outward privilege the Israelites were the people of God; by nature they were no different from others.

There is a moral atmosphere in the world marked by disobedience and the fulfilling of the desires of the flesh and the mind, and the absolute rejection of any restriction placed on man by God.

Nothing but the riches of divine mercy could meet the need

Against such a background, the chapter brings out the greatness of God's ways with us. Nothing but the riches of divine mercy could meet the need and such mercy came from God, who, as we read here, is "rich in mercy". The apostle

shows that while mercy may be great in our eyes, the motivation on God's side was His "great love wherewith he loved us". It is a response to our need in line with God's own nature. As another has said, love is God's nature, His motive and His end.

Jesus went into death for us so that God might be glorified in regard of all that we were and all that we had done. God's mighty power raised Him from the dead and that same power is towards us who believe, so that we are brought to sit in the heavenlies in Christ.

God has:

- Quickened us with the Christ,
- Raised us up together, and
- Made us sit down together (vv 5&6)

Then God is going to display in the coming ages the riches of His grace towards us in Christ. The hymn expresses it:

'Eternal ages shall declare
The riches of His grace,
To those who with Thy Son shall share
A Son's eternal place.'

Jew and Gentile are to be brought into such a place of privilege. So the glad tidings of peace have been preached to both those who were afar off (i.e. the Gentiles) and those who were nigh (i.e. the Jews). The company in Ephesus, to whom Paul was writing, was probably composed of both Jews and Gentiles. There were believers there who had turned from the worship of Diana and other forms of idolatry – magic arts and the like (see Acts 19:19). Then there were converted Jews who had to learn that a new order of things had been introduced. The outward forms under the law did nothing to bring souls into direct relationship with God and into the enjoyment of His love. What God has done, as we see later in the chapter, is to bring us to a place where we have access to the Father.

We see here that God takes up both Jew and Gentile to form one new man by a new creation in Christ. Note too that we have been created in Christ for good works. Now if God has created us for this, those works must in their nature take character from Him who has created us according to His own thoughts. It is not a person doing certain things in order to please God or to be able to draw near to Him. We have God's favour and we have access on an entirely different basis. Rather it is God who takes us up and creates us anew for works in accord with that new creation.

**we have been
created in Christ
for good works**

So now we find that Jew and Gentile have been reconciled in one body to God. The body conveys the idea of a being that acts according to the direction of the Head and which is able to reflect the mind of the Head. That is a practical challenge. The expression

“the body” applies to believers alive at the present time, those who are actively able to express Christ down here as coming under the direction of the Head. The body therefore is to be a true representation of Christ. We are to act as under the direction of the Head as He would have acted. This is not only in relation to other Christians but towards others as well. This has been a challenge to Christians all down the ages.

We read here that the enmity between Jew and Gentile has been slain and we have been reconciled in one body. We see some examples of this in the early church. There was a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews recorded in Acts 6 and we see how it was met in the grace of Christ. There were other difficulties too, between Jew and Gentile. In Acts 15 we read of a matter that caused great difficulty and distress but a conclusion was reached that seemed good to “the apostles, the elders and the whole assembly”.

Verse 18 gives us one of the great objectives of the preaching of the glad tidings of peace; it is that through Christ we should have access by one Spirit to the Father. What a privilege – not only the right to approach but freedom of access. It is a most wonderful thing that we not only know God as our Father, “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”, but we have direct access to Him. It was one of the first things that the Lord spoke of as out of death: - “to my Father and your Father, and to my God and to your God” (John 20:17). This is an open door. How often do we avail ourselves of it?

There is a building spoken of here, so we become “fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner stone” (vv19&20). There were those we read of in the Acts who were relying on the foundation of the apostles and New Testament prophets. They persevered “in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and prayers” (Acts 2:42).

The apostles had what was distinctive from the Lord

We are in peril if we venture away from the foundation. The apostles had what was distinctive from the Lord Himself. John, for instance, speaks of it very simply: “that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”

(1 John 1:3). John writes as having known Christ personally. He could say, “That which we contemplated and which our hands handled concerning the word of life”. John is not drawing from others – Jesus Christ is the Corner Stone.

It is noticeable in the chapter that there is a privilege side and a testimony aspect. The line of privilege is that we have access to the Father. The line of testimony is to be found in the habitation of God by the Spirit.

The house of God was formed by the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. This is the side of our responsibility here on earth. God dwells with His people in grace and blessing in His house and God is known through His house. Every believer is responsible to be true to the character of that habitation. Each believer is built in. We are not in the house at one time and out of it at another. We may feel that we meet our responsibility more effectively at one time than at another, but we are still in the house. At Hardwick Old Hall in Derbyshire many of the stones are marked with the sign of the particular mason who shaped them, because the masons were paid according to the number of stones they prepared. In this building every stone is marked as God’s workmanship. We read, “Ye are built together” – that is God’s work.

Based on a Bible reading in Bromley, Kent, May 2008.

Poetry Selection

THE POEMS OF JOSEPH ADDISON

Joseph Addison wrote various poems and hymns that were published as part of his articles in "The Spectator", a magazine that he edited for several years. The poems particularly present Addison's personal trust in the Lord in various circumstances.

1. The first to appear in The Spectator was suggested by the 23rd Psalm. The poem was published on Saturday July 26, 1712.

The Lord my pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a shepherd's care:
His presence shall my wants supply,
And guard me with a watchful eye;
My noon-day walks He shall attend,
And all my midnight hours defend.

Though in the paths of death I tread,
With gloomy horrors over-spread,
My steadfast heart shall fear no ill,
For Thou, O Lord, art with me still;
Thy friendly crook shall give me aid,
And guide me through the dreadful shade.

2. The following concluded an article on "Gratitude" in The Spectator for Saturday August 9, 1712. (This hymn was also in the 1881 Little Flock hymnbook and many others.)

When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise

Unnumbered comforts to my soul,
Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived
From whom those comforts flowed.

Ten thousand, thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart
To taste those gifts with joy.

Through every period of my life,
Thy goodness I'll pursue;
The desert past, in glory bright
The glorious theme renews.

Through all eternity to Thee,
A joyful song I'll raise
But oh! eternity's too short
To utter all Thy praise.

3. This poem appeared in *The Spectator* for Saturday 23rd August 1712 and seems to have been suggested by the words in the Psalm:- "The heavens declare the glory of God"

The spacious Firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim:
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does its Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth:
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets, in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though, in solemn silence, all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though nor real voice or sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing, as they shine,
'The hand that made us is divine'.

4. Finally, here is a poem published on Saturday September 20, 1712. Addison wrote that it was an "ode made by a gentleman upon the conclusion of his travels". It related to his own experiences when travelling in Europe but particularly a very severe storm at sea that he encountered when coming home during which even the ship's captain was afraid. It concluded an article on the power of the sea.

How are Thy servants blest, O Lord!
How sure is their defence!
Eternal wisdom is their guide
Their help Omnipotence.

In foreign realms and lands remote
Supported by Thy care,
Through burning climes I passed unhurt,
And breathed in tainted air.

Think, O my soul, devoutly think,
How with affrighted eyes
Thou saw'st the wide extended deep
In all its horrors rise.

Confusion dwelt on every face
And fear in every heart;
When waves and waves, and gulfs and gulfs
Overcame the Captain's art.

Yet then from all my griefs, O Lord,
Thy mercy set me free,
While in the confidence of prayer
My soul took hold on Thee.

For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave,
I knew Thou wert not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save:

The storm was laid, the winds retired,
Obedient to Thy will;
The sea that roared at Thy command,
At Thy command was still.

In midst of dangers, fears, and death,
Thy goodness I'll adore,
And praise thee for Thy mercies past;
And humbly hope for more.

Testimony Section

LIFE STORY

I was brought up in a family steeped in occult practices. As I grew up I got more and more involved in astrology.

I read fortunes, including tarot card and palm reading and I used the psychic powers I had to participate as a medium in séances. I thought that I knew God. I believed myself to be a very spiritual person and was seeking power to help other people. Unfortunately the result of my occult involvement left me suffering from depression. I had a very deep emptiness and unhappiness in my life.

Then someone told me about Jesus. Nobody had told me before that Jesus was the only way to reach God. I immediately experienced a deep sense of sin in my life, but Jesus showed me His love. He cleansed me and I knew that I was forgiven. Jesus came and filled all the empty places and I was emotionally healed and delivered. My whole family came to the Lord. I now know that God is my heavenly Father and that I have the power of His Holy Spirit working in my life. I am proof of the power of God. I owe Him everything

Debbie Menelaws

The story of Debbie Menelaws is reproduced from "No Ordinary Man" (copyright 1998, 2001 and 2005) with the permission of its publishers; Agape, Deo Gloria Trust and There is Hope. The magazine is an introduction to the life of Jesus seen through the lives of those who have met Him.

FROM JUDAISM TO CHRIST

This narrative has been written with reluctance and with no wish to occupy the minds of those who read it with myself, except as an instance of the mercy and goodness of God in taking up a poor undeserving sinner.

I was born at Denaburg, Russia, in 1864, and was brought up in the town of Riga. My parents were orthodox Jews, and my father was anxious that I should become a Rabbi. At fifteen therefore I was sent to be trained as a Rabbi. Reading Exodus 12 with my Rabbi, I remember being greatly impressed with the words, "When I see the blood I will pass over you". I had a naturally reasoning mind and commenced arguing with my Rabbi: if God Jehovah does not pass over unless He sees the blood, we must be still in our sins. Where is the lamb? Where is the blood? Later on, when we came to that verse in Ezekiel, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," I was very troubled. I knew I had sinned. My Rabbi only said that I ought to accept his teaching without so much arguing. When a funeral passed us, I remember saying to my Rabbi, 'Where has the soul of that man gone?' 'To Gun Aden' (that is, Heaven), he replied. Well, I thought, if that man was a sinner how could God receive him into His presence? Because God has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Again and again I pondered over that passage in Exodus 12: "When I see the blood I will pass over you". The children of Israel had a lamb, and if there had been no lamb the destroying angel would have come in and the first-born must have died; it was when the angel saw the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the door-posts that he passed over.

In the course of my studies I had read about God calling Abraham to go out from his country and I had the feeling that God was calling me to leave my country and my parents; but where was I to go and how could it be done? I knew my parents would not give their consent to such a thing. Having contrived to get some money from my uncle, I started for the German border, my aim being to get to London. However after two days I was robbed of every thing I possessed. Still I pressed on and came to the border to cross into Germany. Having no passport, it was necessary to steal

across. There was a canal about six feet wide at the border and the only thing for me to do was to cross it. I hid in a cornfield until about midnight then I took off my boots and slipped into the water up to my neck. I could not swim so I had to struggle over and in the process lost my boots!

I had never heard the name of Jesus, neither did I know that there was a New Testament

I got safely across but I was without money, food, or boots, and knew not where to turn. At last I started to walk. I walked about 500 miles without boots, living chiefly on fruit, apples, plums and the like that I managed to pick up. On reaching Bremerhaven, near Hamburg, I found a ship's captain who was willing to employ me in return for a passage to London. I was put to peeling potatoes, scrubbing floors, coal-heaving, and other hard work in return for my food and passage. After four weeks we reached London, and I was landed at the Minories one Sunday morning, "without God and without hope in the world".

I managed to make a precarious living for a few weeks, selling paper in the street. I was still greatly troubled about my sins. Over and over again that verse came to me, "When I see the blood I will pass over you". One day in my wanderings I came across a building described as a 'Hebrew Christian Mission carried on by the Presbyterians'. Underneath was written in Hebrew, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world". That text greatly struck me. Where is that Lamb? Would He take my sins away? I had never come across such a verse in the Old Testament. I had never heard the name of Jesus, neither did I know that there was a New Testament in existence.

While I stood there a German lady said 'Do you understand that text?' 'No', I replied, 'It is not in my Bible'. I told her my story, and said how much I would like to see the book where that text was. She then showed me a German Bible, and took me to her house, where she gave me refreshment and befriended me. The following week this lady was taken ill and died. Her family took no interest in

me, and I therefore lost a real friend. This lady left me her Bible; it is still in my possession and has been a great comfort to me. I used to read it in secret in my lodging for fear of my Jewish friends seeing it.

Months went by in the same way. My father had me taught the watch making trade as well as being trained for a Rabbi, but no one would employ me because I had neither references nor tools. I got so weary of this precarious living that I became ill. One of my Jewish friends suggested that I went to the Jewish Mission in Aldersgate Street. He said, 'They will talk to you about Jesus, but you need not take any notice; they will give you medicine and examine you'.

I took his advice and went to that Mission. First of all I had to meet the Jewish missionary, but felt so enraged at hearing the name of Jesus mentioned that I went off without seeing the doctor. The following day, feeling more ill than ever, I decided to go back to the Mission. I took some small stones to throw at the missionary if he mentioned the name "Jesus", but when he spoke of the precious death of Jesus I was quite subdued and the stones remained in my pocket.

I was then taken in to see the doctor. I told him I was feeling very ill. 'You need not tell me you are ill', he said; 'I can see that, but you have soul trouble as well as being weak in body; you are distracted and perplexed'. He proposed to send me to a convalescent home where I could have a complete rest. He told me they took a great interest in God's ancient people, because the Saviour whom they loved was a Jew according to the flesh, and He had said that the gospel was to be preached everywhere, but first to the Jews, and so out of love to the Lord they were trying to win souls from the Jewish belief.

All this was like a foreign language to me. He gave me a card directing me to the convalescent home in Highgate. The matron there was a great lover of the Jews, and she had a fervent desire to win precious souls for Christ from that nation. I was taken in and introduced to the other patients. Every day a Jewish missionary came to speak to the inmates. There was often a great deal of

disputing, and I was more argumentative than any of the others. I was very zealous in my religion and used to keep phylacteries in my pocket and put them on when no one was watching me. I remember saying to the missionary, 'How could God have a Son, and how could a son be born in an unnatural way?' He pointed me to Isaiah 7:7: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel". That seemed to remove some of my doubts, but I was very rebellious still. First thing in the morning the matron used to have a prayer, and as soon as the name of Jesus was mentioned in the prayer the inmates used to jeer and I joined in very loudly. At last I could no longer stand being in that place where I heard the name of Jesus so often, so I walked out.

I went on with my precarious living for about a month, but again I became ill. I went back to the Mission and asked to see the doctor. They recognised me at once. The doctor said, 'God is unmistakably working with you, and He will have His own way'. He gave me another card for the convalescent home. The matron said that she was thankful to have me back; 'I feel the Lord is working mightily with you, but the devil wants to get you'.

**I got very enraged.
How could Jesus
make himself equal
with God**

After some days John 17 was read to us, where the Lord, addressing the Father, says, "that they may behold my glory". I got very enraged. How could Jesus make himself equal with God, and how could he call God "Father?" God the Father is absolutely unknown in the Jewish religion. I was so angry that I

was insolent to the matron and left the home again feeling it was impossible to stay there.

After a time I succeeded in getting employment at a watch making business that was run by Jews, but once more I became ill. I began to realise that God was speaking to me. The people at the Mission had been so kind; I felt there must be something in it. I felt sure God had been bringing me down through illness, and my ingratitude only proved that I was a sinner. I summoned up courage and again went to see the doctor at the Mission. He said, 'My dear

young man, you are a very hard case, but I am more and more convinced that the Lord will have the victory, but it is a fearful thing to fight against God'. He was careful not to mention the name of Jesus just then.

I went back to the convalescent home and apologised to the matron. When the matron saw me she said she felt sure the hand of God was upon me in bringing me back and not letting me alone. There and then she asked me to kneel down (I could not help doing it), and she prayed earnestly for my salvation. The missionary took a great interest in me and again he tried to convince me that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. That night I was more troubled than ever about my sins; I felt my health had gone, and if I died where should I go? If I accepted Christ as my Saviour, what about my nation, and my father and mother would disinherit me. I could not sleep, and at about 2 a.m. I got out of bed and took hold of my Bible. I turned to the Psalms, thinking I might find comfort. As I opened the Book my eyes fell upon that verse in Psalm 27, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up". I was very touched with that verse, but my sins came before me in such a galling way that there and then I knelt down and gave my heart to the Saviour. I slept quite peacefully until the morning.

After breakfast the next morning, I stood up and said, 'Jesus Christ is my Saviour'; though I realised later that I only trusted Him as the Messiah. The Jewish inmates cursed me loudly. I was asked to stay another month at the home, which I gladly did. They nursed me as tenderly as my parents would have done, and I was soon restored to health.

After a month at the convalescent home I went back to my situation. I was a changed man; I could not join in any of the joking, and when offered a cigarette, I would not take it. 'What is the matter?' they said, 'Have you been ill?' 'Yes', I said, 'but I am well now; I have found a new joy in my soul'. They asked if I had come in for some money or had good news as to my parents. 'No', I said, 'I have found the Messiah — He is my Saviour'. I told them I had been troubled for years about my sins, ever since I came across that scripture, "When I see the blood I will pass over you". The

men were wild with rage, and three or four of them got up and threw me with great force into the street and my tools after me.

Not knowing what to do, I went back to the convalescent home and they kept me there for about three weeks. The matron contacted a firm of watchmakers in Redhill to see if they had a vacancy for a converted Jew. They offered to employ me, so I left the home for Redhill.

I worked under a foreman who was a committed Christian. After my work was finished on the Saturday he invited me to his house the next day. He took me with him to the Baptist Chapel, and I continued to go there. While attending that chapel I got in touch with some Christians who met together to "break bread" in the name of the Lord, and they took a great interest in me.

The question now came up as to my baptism. The Jews' Mission never accepts a convert as genuine until he has been baptised. Baptism is the greatest test for a Jew, as so many of them profess to be converted, but refuse baptism. Arrangements were made for me to be baptised at the Redhill Baptist Chapel. The place was crowded to see a Jew baptised.

At times I felt very isolated and lonely when among Gentiles, although there were many Christians who showed a loving spirit. One evening I was feeling particularly lonely and went out for a walk. I noticed a Wesleyan Chapel lighted up brilliantly and I heard some very hearty singing. I went in and saw some people praying. Suddenly I heard a young lady pray for the Jewish people—that the scales might be taken from their eyes, and that they might turn from darkness to light. To my surprise the following Sunday my landlady invited that very same lady to tea with her. We were introduced and eventually we were engaged.

In the meantime my uncle had got hold of my address and wrote telling me that my parents had gone to the U.S.A. I was so anxious that they should accept Christ that I told my friends in Redhill that I would like to go to the U.S.A. and meet my parents with the hope that I might be used to their conversion. My friends felt it was of the Lord and I was sent off to the U.S.A.

However, on my arrival there I found it was all a hoax and that it had only been done to try and draw me away from the influence of the missionaries in London.

Once in the U.S.A, I got in touch with the Young Men's Christian Association, and they got work for me at Elgan (Illinois) about forty miles from Chicago. While there I again got into touch with Christians who met together to "break bread" in the same way as those I was with at Redhill.

One night at their Hall the preacher took up the subject of the atoning sufferings of Christ; I saw myself there and then as the sinner and Christ as the bearer of my sins; I cried aloud before the

I cried aloud ... 'The Lord Jesus has saved my soul!'

whole company, 'The Lord Jesus has saved my soul!' The company were very much surprised because I had been meeting with them for some time and they all believed that I was a Christian. The fact was that up to that time I had only received Christ as my Messiah and had not seen Him as the sin-bearer, and for the first time in my life I saw the Blessed Lord hanging upon the cross and appealing to His God: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" I was so touched that a Divine Person should have to cry to God in that way; I knew He was there for me; I felt my sins rolled away; and from that moment I knew I was a real Christian.

When my parents found that I was irrecoverable from the position I had taken, my dear mother wrote me a long bitter letter, in which she said the time had come when I should be entirely expelled from their minds; that they had held a funeral for me, a coffin with my name and date of death inscribed on it having been buried; and that I should be deprived of the very substantial legacy which otherwise would have come to me. As one who loved his parents, I cannot express my sorrow at receiving such a letter from my aged mother. But the Lord comforted and supported me in a wonderful way, and He has said, "He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me".

S. Reiner.

A Voice from the Past

THE LAST APPEAL OF CHRIST

“And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17)

This is the last word of Christ, and a lovely word it is. How often has one been affected by that appeal; how many converted by it! It is a most blessed appeal – to take of the very best thing that even Christ Himself can give. He died in order to be able to communicate the gift of living water to man, and His last appeal to man is to take it freely.

The simple impression that I desire to convey is the wonderful way that Christ takes account of the present state of things. If it is the last phase of the church’s history on earth, He presents Himself to it in the most extraordinarily gracious way; this comes out in His word to Laodicea, and in His word here.

Ought He not to engage the affections of His people’s hearts? Ought anything to come in between our hearts and Him? He is the One to be the honoured guest in the hearts of His saints, to dwell there. Think of Christ at this moment! He stands at the door and knocks; it is His last attitude. May every heart be touched by these appeals of Christ, that He may be the supreme delight of our hearts and that we may not care to have any adornment but Christ.

F. E. Raven

PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS

1 Timothy 2:1-2

We have to keep in mind that Ephesians and the first epistle to Timothy are to be read together. 1 Timothy is a complementary instruction to the epistle to the Ephesians. Ephesians in chapter 2 brings out the great truth of God’s habitation in the Spirit subsisting here on earth and then chapter 3 shows us the service that proceeds in the house. The epistle ends with all prayer and

supplications at all seasons with all perseverance for all saints in chapter 6. Now that is one side and that, no doubt, takes precedence; that is the great matter that God has on hand, what He is doing in the saints. But then, co-related to that, we have the instruction written to Timothy at Ephesus as to the testimonial aspect of the house of God, and in that connection he says, "I exhort, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all in dignity..." (1 Timothy 2:1-2). That is, that there is nothing more important from the testimonial angle than the kind of prayer in 1 Timothy 2. If prayer of that kind is not heard in the prayer meeting we fail to represent God in His house.

This is put before conduct in God's house which is dealt with in the next chapter; but the first and foremost thing in testimony is that anyone approaching God in His house should hear supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, for all men, for kings and all in dignity; and if they do not hear that, God is not rightly represented in His house, which is a most solemn matter.

Gerald Cowell

"The Times of the Nations" 1957

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

He begins at the weakest point — a babe, as presented to the shepherds, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. He who made man has Himself become a Man. He does not begin at maturity like Adam; He begins at the lowest point of infancy. The Creator, who gave man all the attributes and qualities which God desired for man, is now a Man Himself, to encounter all the trials and difficulties which would affect a man in the weakness of humanity.

A person contains much more than any amount of things can contain. There is a great variety about a person. And there is endless variety in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we knew Him better, and studied Him more, we should be constantly making fresh discoveries of His worth every day.

The Lord Jesus Christ — He, as man, glorified God. Glory can be displayed! Hence the apostle (Paul) says in the next chapter that which could not have been said before — mark the expression: “The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (Corinthians 4:6). But glory is the expression of the Father’s satisfaction according to all His attributes; and that could never have come out till now and now it rests on the glorified Man.

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“Behold a greater than Solomon is here”. We have here two types of the Lord Jesus Christ – Jonah and Solomon, and they set forth the greatness of His grace. Jonah represents His suffering and Solomon represents His glory (see Luke 11:31-32).

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It was a new thing for Satan to find himself mastered by a Man. A Man who has walked down here on earth and cleared a way through it. He made a path for Himself through this world, and thus a path for me to follow Him. I am connected with a Man who gives me power to walk superior to the ills of time.

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It is an unequalled moment in our souls when the Lord Jesus, the Sun of the never-ending day, is the light of our hearts, and the set-off for the evening shades of our own life. The circle of His radiance, in its diameter reaches down to the utmost line of our fading life, and up to the excellent glory; so that, once within this circle, there is darkness nowhere; death is abolished (2 Timothy 1:10).

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So Christ, blessed be His name, loses none of His grace by sharing it with millions. The world gives, and loses what it gives. He shares, and ever retains His fullness to share still on for ever. We are not mere spectators or guests, great as that would be. We are participators, members of His body, assimilated to the image of the glory, as we behold His unveiled face in glory.

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In the Lord’s private life on earth, from infancy to thirty years, He was the delight of God; then He went into public life, and it culminated in the mount of transfiguration, where the glory not merely saluted Him, as at His birth, but invited Him. As Peter says, we were “eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

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(Deuteronomy 8:3) When the Lord was led into the wilderness, this is the first scripture He quotes in answer to the Devil. He was the dependent Man. Though He had power and the means to relieve Himself He would have nothing but God, and was in the wilderness perfectly dependent on Him. If you study His life you will find that He never did anything for Himself. He never altered a single circumstance in His own favour.

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He walks upon water; He is supreme, not simply superior. To be superior implies that He is in the circumstances; to be supreme implies He is above them. The Lord is educating His disciples for the new structure, the assembly (church).

J. B. Stoney (1814 – 1897)

The above is a chapter from "Encouraging Words", a book of extracts from the ministry of J.B. Stoney, selected by Gavin Simpson and arranged into 61 subject headings

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A Word for Today

SIMON PETER: HIS LIFE AND ITS LESSONS

Part 1:

The need for the authority of the Word and for the Divine Presence

The close of Matthew chapter 14 presents a scene in the life of Peter that provides a fine illustration of his own words, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

The Lord having fed the multitude, and sent His disciples across the sea, retired into a mountain, to be alone in prayer. In this we have a striking foreshadowing of the present time. Jesus has gone on high. Israel is for the present set aside, but not forgotten.

Days of trouble will come—rough seas and stormy skies will fall to the lot of the remnant; but their Messiah will return, and deliver them out of all their troubles. He will bring them to their desired haven, and all will be peace and joy for the Israel of God. All this is fully unfolded on the page of prophecy, and is of the deepest interest to every lover of God and His Word; but for the present we can merely dwell upon the inspired record concerning Simon Peter, and seek to learn the lesson which that record so forcibly teaches.

“And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples...to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”

This brief passage presents to our view in a very forcible way some of the leading features of Simon Peter's character. His zeal, his energy, his real devotedness of heart, no one can for a moment call in question; but these very qualities—beautiful as they surely are—led him not infrequently into a position of such prominence as to render his weak points all the more conspicuous. A man of less zeal, less energy, would have remained on board the ship, and thus avoided Peter's failure and breakdown. Perhaps, too, men of cooler temperament would condemn as unwarrantable rashness Peter's act in leaving the ship, or pronounce it a piece

of forwardness which justly deserved a humiliating rebuff.

All this may be so; but the zeal, energy and devotedness of this beloved servant of Christ have far more powerful charms for the heart than the cool, calculating, self-considering spirit

which, in order to avoid the shame and humiliation of a defeat, refuses to take a bold and decided step for Christ. True it is that Peter in the interesting scene now before us completely broke down. But why did he? Was it because he left the ship? No; but because he ceased to look in simple faith to Jesus. Here lay the root of his failure. Had he only kept his eye on the Master, he could have walked on the water though ever so rough.

Faith can walk on rough water as easily as on smooth. Nature cannot walk on either. It is not a question of the state of the water, but the state of the heart. Circumstances have nothing to do with faith, except, indeed, that when difficult and trying, they develop its power and brightness. There was no reason whatever, in the judgment of faith, why Peter should have failed in his walk on the water. Faith looks not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen". It lifts the heart above the winds and waves of this rough world, and keeps it in perfect peace, to the praise of Him who is the giver of faith, as of "every good and perfect gift".

Now Peter utterly failed in faith on the occasion now before us. He, as we, alas! so often do, took his eye off the Lord and fixed it on his surroundings, and as a consequence he immediately began to sink. It must ever be so. We cannot get on for a single moment save as we have the living God as a covering for our eyes. The grand motto for the life of faith is, "Looking off unto Jesus". It is this alone that enables us to "run the race set before us", be the way rough or smooth. When Peter came down out of the ship, it was either Christ or drowning. He might well say at such a moment, 'Lord, to whom shall I go?' Where could he

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turn? When on board the ship, he had its timbers between him and death, but when on the water he had nothing but Jesus.

Was Jesus not enough? Yes, surely, if only Peter could have trusted Him. This is the point. All things are possible to him that believeth. Storms are hushed into a perfect calm; rough seas become like glass, lofty mountains are levelled, when faith brings the power of God to bear. The greater the difficulties, the brighter are the triumphs of faith. It is in the furnace that the real preciousness of faith is displayed. Faith has to do with God, and not with men or things. If we cease to lean on God, we have nothing but a wild, watery waste around us, where human resources must hopelessly fail.

Simon Peter proved all this when he came down out of the ship to walk on the water; and every child of God and every servant of Christ must prove it in his measure, for Peter's history is full of great practical lessons for us all. If we want to walk above the circumstances of the scene through which we are passing—if we would rise superior to its influences—if we would be able to give an answer, clear, distinct, and decided, to the scepticism, the rationalism and infidelity of the day in which we live—then, assuredly, we must keep the eye of faith firmly fixed on “the Author and completer of faith”. It is not by logical skill or intellectual power we shall ever meet the arguments of opposers, but by an abiding sense, a living and soul-satisfying apprehension, of the all-sufficiency of Christ—Himself—His work—His Word—to meet our every need, our every exigency.

It may be that some feel disposed to condemn Peter for leaving the ship, thinking that there was no need for such a step. Why not abide with his brethren on board the vessel? Was it not possible to be quite as devoted to Christ in the ship as on the water? And, further, did not the sequel prove that it would have been far better, and safer, and wiser, for Peter to remain where he was, than to venture forth on a course, which he was not able to pursue? To all this I reply that Peter was evidently governed by an earnest desire to be nearer to his Lord and this was right. He saw Jesus walking on the water, and longed to be with Him. Then, further, he had the direct authority of the Lord for leaving

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the ship. Truly without this it would have been a fatal mistake to leave the boat; but the moment that word "Come" fell on his ear he had a divine warrant for going forth upon the water—yea, to have remained would

have been to miss great blessing.

Thus it is in every case. We must have authority before we can act in anything. Without this, the greater our zeal, energy, and apparent devotedness, the more fatal will be our mistake, and the more mischief we shall do to ourselves, to others, and to the cause of Christ. It is of the very greatest importance in every case, but especially where there is a measure of zeal, earnestness, and energy, that there should be sober subjection to the authority of the Word. If there be not this, there is no calculating the amount of mischief which may be done. If our devotedness flow not in the channel of simple obedience, if it rushes over the embankments formed by the Word of God, the consequences must be most disastrous.

Then there is another thing which stands next in importance to the authority of the divine Word, and that is the abiding realization of the divine presence. These two things must never be separated if we want to walk on the water. We may be quite clear and settled in our own minds, having distinct authority for any given line of action; but if we have not with equal distinctness the sense of the Lord's presence with us—if our eyes are not continually on the living God—we shall most assuredly break down.

This is very serious, and demands the gravest consideration. It was precisely here that Peter failed. He did not fail in obedience, but in dependence. He acted on the word of Jesus in leaving the ship, but he failed to lean on the arm of Jesus in walking on the water; hence his terror and confusion. Mere authority is not enough; we want power. To act without authority is wrong. To act without power is impossible. The authority for starting is the Word. The power to proceed is the divine presence. The combination of the two must ever yield a successful career. It

matters not in the smallest degree what the difficulties are if we have the stable authority of Holy Scripture for our course, and the blessed support of the presence of God in pursuing it. When God speaks, we must obey; but in order to do so, we must lean on His arm.

“Have not I commanded you?” “Lo, I am with you.” Here are the two things so absolutely essential to every child of God and every servant of Christ. Without these, we can do nothing; with them, we can do all things. If we have not a “Thus saith the Lord”, or an “It is written”, we cannot enter upon a path of devotedness; and if we have not His realized presence, we cannot pursue it. It is quite possible to be right in setting out and yet to fail in going on.

It was so in the case of Simon Peter, and it has been so in the case of thousands since. It is one thing to make a good start, and another thing to make good progress. It is one thing to leave the ship, and another thing to walk on the water. Peter did the former, but he failed in the latter. This beloved servant of Christ broke down in his course; but where did he find himself? In the arms of a loving Saviour. “Lord, save me!” How touching! How deeply affecting! He casts himself upon a well-known love—a love that was yet to meet him in far more humiliating circumstances. Nor was he disappointed. Ah, no! Blessed be God, no poor failing creature can ever appeal to that love in vain.

“Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” Exquisite grace! If Peter failed to reach his Lord, his Lord did not fail to reach him. If Peter failed in faith, Jesus could not fail in grace. Impossible. The grace of our Lord Jesus is exceeding abundant. He takes occasion from our very failures to display His rich and precious love. Oh, how blessed to have to do with such a tender, patient, loving Lord! Who would not trust Him and praise Him, love Him and serve Him?

Charles H. Mackintosh