



# *Living Water*

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## Recent Ministry

### PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS – CHAPTER 6

#### The whole armour of God

Paul, while experiencing the rigours of imprisonment and limitation on his freedom, seeks to help those in Ephesus to meet the pressures that were on them. So here he is encouraging them to be “strong in the Lord” – able to withstand the wiles of Satan, the prince and god of this world. In this chapter therefore we find instruction as to how we are to be kept in victory by the power of the word of God, the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of faith.

Now in this part of the chapter the first exhortation is, “to be strong in the Lord”. We have to learn that strength is not in ourselves. The Lord has defeated Satan; He has bound the “strong man” and we can stand only in the light of that victory.

Elsewhere Paul says that when he was weak, then he was powerful (see 2 Corinthians 12:10). When he was weak he was not relying on himself at all but on the rock-like Person of Christ. He was “strong in the Lord”. The Lord spoke to Paul directly to say, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is perfected in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). There is evidently power on the Lord's part which is made available to us when we feel our own inadequacy.

It is instructive that Paul had such an experience because he also had a great revelation given to him. Sometimes when we have made a little progress in the Christian pathway we begin to think that we can do things in our own strength, but Paul had a thorn for the flesh and the Lord said to him, “my power is perfected in weakness”. Then, in another context, in Jude, we find the archangel Michael disputing with the devil over the body of Moses and even Michael “did not dare to bring a railing judgment against him, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude v.9). He did not attempt to rebuke Satan in his own power – that is a good example for us.

The strength of the Lord becomes available to us as we put on the armour of God. It is a divine provision and every believer is to be clothed with it. The original Greek means, ‘having done it’. The armour is always to be worn and as thus equipped we are to “stand” (v.13). In a battle, one of the parties is driven from the field. The armour is provided so that we are not driven back. The whole focus of these

verses is that we do not yield Christian ground. All is to be held in reliance on the power that God provides. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul says "...walking in flesh, we do not war according to flesh. For the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God to the overthrow of strongholds; overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:3 & 4).

Immense powers of evil are ranged against the church of God. Paul speaks in this chapter of "the universal lords of this darkness" and "spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies". The public history of the church shows very clearly what these dreadful powers of darkness can do. Scripture is full of warnings about things that may come in amongst Christians. Satan works at times through the violence of persecution but Paul is warning here about subtle and skilful attacks such as the distortion of the Scriptures. This kind

**God has provided the  
armour but we each  
need ... to put it on**

of attack can be seen in persons who appear to prove everything from Scripture, yet they are opposed to what is of God. They handle Scriptures with great skill but their object is to undermine the truth. The skill and subtlety is from the devil. They are "false apostles, deceitful workers", ministers of Satan, transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness (see 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

The power and subtlety of the enemy reinforces the need for the whole armour of God if we are to have the victory. There is no thought that we have only some of this armour, so Ephesians 6 goes on to describe each piece that is needed. God has provided the armour but we each need to be concerned to put it on.

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### **Loins girt about with truth (v.14)**

This is the first thing mentioned. We see the truth expressed perfectly in Jesus, for He is "the way, the truth and the life". We therefore need to learn it in Him. The Bible speaks of the truth as it is in Jesus.

The "loins" in Scripture speak of energy and strength. Our energies are to be governed by the truth of God not by our own wills or ideas. We see it perfectly in Christ. He could say: "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me..." (John 4:34). All His energies were to that end.

In Colossians we read, "As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and assured in the faith, even as ye have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. See that there be no one who shall lead you away as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit" (Colossians 2:6-8). As we have a valuation of the truth that is of God we will be guarded and our energies will be rightly directed in the things of the Lord. The unseen, yet real, things of God have their true force in our lives and the truth of divine things is made good in our souls by the work of the Holy Spirit..

Then, "having girt about your loins with truth" also involves our being self-judged for, as king David had to learn, there is to be "truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6).

### **The Breastplate of Righteousness (v.14)**

The breastplate guards the heart. Solomon said, "keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). The righteousness of God, which is presented so extensively in the epistle to the Romans, is a great guard to the heart. It does not emphasise what depends on us, but the absolute character of what God has done. An appreciation of that leads to righteousness on our part. Righteousness is to mark believers and makes a great distinction between them and others. Paul brings this out in the epistle to the Romans, where in contrast to the course of this world, he exhorts believers to put on the "armour of light" (Romans 13:12).

The breastplate also involves our each having a good conscience before God and therefore we will be able to go forward boldly in the things of the Lord. Even in ordinary things we sometimes see how a bad conscience makes a person hesitate. Paul appreciated the value of a good conscience and said that he exercised himself to have a conscience without rebuke.

### **Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Glad Tidings of Peace (v.15)**

In passing through the world there is to be something about the believer's walk that would commend the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Another has said: 'People should be favourably impressed toward the gospel by the walk of believers. It is to have a peaceful character that would commend the glad tidings of peace'. What a challenge this is.

The word "preparation" could be translated 'readiness' or 'willingness'.

If our walk commends the gospel, then we must be willing also to proclaim it. Peter exhorts us to be ready to give an “account of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

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It is interesting to see how Paul, in giving this instruction, is drawing on the normal battle dress of the Roman legions. Presumably he had plenty of opportunity for such observation during his captivity. The items of the armour that have been considered so far – the girdle, the breastplate and the shoes, were worn at all times by the soldiers. The next items given in the list were only put on when going into battle or expecting an attack.

**We are not to equip ourselves at the last minute**

Paul goes out of his way therefore to emphasise the need for believers engaged in the spiritual conflict to have the whole armour of God all the time; so we read here: “besides all these, having taken the shield of faith... the helmet of salvation... and the sword of the Spirit” (vs. 16-17). We are not to equip ourselves at the last minute; we are to be fully protected by this armour and standing.

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### **The Shield of Faith (v.16)**

This piece of defensive armour is needed above all the others. It is full, entire trust in God, with the certainty of His grace and favour assured in the heart. We are to trust in His love as well as His power. The Holy Spirit promotes this confidence with us.

Adam fell in the beginning because he chose to trust the devil rather than God. God has a moral answer to that, since the way of salvation and blessing is only through trusting God’s word. Faith means that I believe what cannot be proved, but I trust it because it is God’s word. Faith trusts God, against every other claim: “Let God be true and every man false” (Romans 3:4). That is the shield of faith. The devil has no answer to it.

The Lord prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail, that Peter might not lose his trust in God. It was necessary for Peter to lose his boastful trust in himself, but it was essential that he did not fail in faith.

## **The Helmet of Salvation (v.17)**

The helmet is for the head. Our minds are to be filled with the greatness of Christ and what He has accomplished. Paul himself never forgot the greatness of what the Lord had done for him: “the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Called before king Agrippa, Paul gives an account of his conversion; it had happened over twenty years before but it is fresh in his mind as though it were yesterday. The salvation and continuing deliverance of God is to be fresh in our minds. God is for us – we look to Him and not to ourselves.

## **The Sword of the Spirit (v.17)**

Finally, there is the sword, but it is not one such as Peter had in Gethsemane. This is God’s word used in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the wilderness, tempted of the devil, the Lord always answered with the word in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not our intelligence that we can rely upon but the Holy Spirit must be acting in us.

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We get a practical example of the use of the armour by Peter in Acts 2:

- His energies were focussed on the things of the Lord and the commission that he had been given.
- His bold confession of Christ showed that he had the breastplate of righteousness on. If anyone had challenged him as to his earlier denial of Christ he would have answered, ‘Yes, but I am not doing that now’. He had a good conscience before God.
- His bold confession showed that his feet were shod with the glad tidings of peace.
- He had the shield of faith; he had no doubt of his message: “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”.
- His mind was full of the grace of God.
- He had the sword of the Spirit; he was able to apply God’s word in the power of the Holy Spirit and as a result many of his hearers were “pricked in heart”

\*\*\*\*\*

Paul goes on to speak about prayer in verse 18, “prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; and for me...” It is as though Paul’s thoughts ran straight on to his need of prayer. He did not see himself as above the need of the prayers of others. It is a respectful reference on his part to the spiritual life of the church in Ephesus.



Paul's request here is that he might be able to "make known with boldness the mystery of the glad tidings". He was no doubt thinking of his appearing before the authorities in Rome. As to that he says, "the Lord stood with me, and gave me power, that through me the proclamation might be fully made, and all those of the nations should hear" (2 Timothy 4:17). Paul was proving the reality of being "strong in the Lord". The Christians who had been with him deserted him at that point, but for Paul, that only reinforced the strength and reliability of the Lord in whom he trusted.

Based on a Bible reading at Bromley, Kent, November 2008

## Poetry Selection

### A HYMN TO THE LORD

We adore Thee, Lord and Saviour,  
Thou in grace came from above;  
In Thyself we learn the story  
Of God's boundless, changeless love.

Death and judgment were upon us,  
Bound by sin and Satan's power;  
Thou hast wrought our blest salvation,  
When alone in that dark hour.

By Thy God, Thou wast forsaken,  
When upon the shameful tree;  
We adore Thee, blessed Saviour.  
Through Thy death we are set free.

Our deep joy to know Thee risen  
From the grave, victorious Thou,  
Peace and joy our blessed portion;  
We in adoration bow.

Lord, as glorious Man ascended,  
Thou the object of our praise;  
On the Father's throne now seated,  
Songs of victory now we raise.

When in glory we surround Thee,  
As the trophies of Thy grace;  
We shall sing Thy glorious victory,  
Gaze in triumph on Thy face.  
R. Casselli (4<sup>th</sup> August 1932)

## THE UPPER AND THE LOWER SPRINGS

“...the dayspring from on high has visited us..” (Luke 1:78)

God, in mercy, Thou hast sent  
The Dayspring from on high,  
Shone in upon the darkness here  
And brought Thy kingdom nigh.

In Christ, Thy healing power and grace  
Was manifest below,  
Sent to a lost, benighted race,  
The way of peace to show.

Blest intervention, grace divine,  
Thy sovereign love we see,  
In sending Thine own Son to die,  
From sin to set us free.

Now risen, we see Him glorified  
At Thy right hand above;  
The Dayspring of eternal joy,  
Of everlasting love.

And wondrous gift, Thy Spirit dwells  
Within our hearts today;  
The Wellspring of a living tide  
Which will not pass away.

The Dayspring lighting up our hearts,  
Shining from heaven above.  
The Wellspring here, we're doubly blest,  
The fruit, responsive love.  
Charles Deayton (February 1961)

## **"ABIDE IN ME"**

**John 15:4**

Christian, wouldst thou fruitful be?  
Jesus says, "Abide in Me";  
From Him all thy fruit is found –  
May it to God's praise abound.

Christian, wouldst thou happy be?  
Jesus says, "Abide in Me";  
He is thy exceeding joy,  
Bliss divine without alloy.

Christian, wouldst thou holy be?  
Jesus says, "Abide in Me";  
Sanctified in Him thou art –  
Sanctify Him in thy heart.

Christian, this thy motto be,  
Jesus says, "Abide in Me";  
Grace and strength from Him receive,  
As a branch in Jesus live.

Soon thou shalt thy Master see,  
Hear Him say, "Abide in Me",  
In the Father's house above,  
In the bosom of His love.

James G Deck

## Testimony Section

### JUST STOP LEANING ON THE DOOR

I was born into a Muslim family to parents who were very serious about teaching my brother and me to embrace Islam. I took that encouragement, so much so that by the time I was 18 I had already read the Koran through numerous times. As a result I had a pretty good understanding of Islam, of mankind's place in the great scheme of things, and of who Allah was as master of all creation. We were simply his servants and were to submit to him. I was taught that Allah was absolutely different from me and all other human beings, that there was no connection with us other than master and servant. While he knew me through and through I could not really know him. That was fine with me as I embraced my Islam and learned Islamic doctrine, theology and history in my studies. I took Islam very seriously because I wanted to preach to people I knew: to Christians, Jews, Muslims who were merely nominal believers, and to the atheists that I knew. I really believed in my heart that Islam was the truth, that God had revealed Himself perfectly in the Koran through His very words in Arabic to mankind. I believed that the Koran was the most perfect book ever written because God had written it himself through Muhammad and I wanted to reach people who did not believe it or who did not know it. I found myself engaging with many people of different religions but the most definite opposition came from Christians. They always gave me reasons for their belief. That annoyed me; I did not want people to give me good reasons for their beliefs, I wanted them to receive Islam. I began to study Christianity and to read the Bible, so that I would have ammunition to use against Christians and so I could show them how true Islam was. As I read the Bible I was struck with a verse in Luke 3:8; John the baptist is speaking and he says, "...and begin not to say in yourselves, We have Abraham for our father, for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham". Now, what that meant to me was that it is not important where you came from but whether what you believe and base your life on is true or not. Across the years John the baptist was speaking to me and telling me: 'You are so interested in telling Christians and others why they are wrong, but you have got to make sure you are right. Maybe it is you that is wrong'. So I got a little bit more of an open mind. Not that I was becoming a Christian, I had no intention of doing that but I

decided to do a comparative study of Christianity and Islam to see what were the evidences for Islam and the evidences for Christianity.

**the most definite  
opposition came  
from Christians**

Now, as I said, I had read the Koran numerous times but one verse, which I must have read many times before, jumped out at me and it meant something different to me this time. It says, 'let the people of the book' – meaning people of the gospel, Christians – 'judge by what God has revealed in it'. Now, what this means is that there must be a book that the people of the book follow. Now, if that command, in Muhammad's day, in the seventh century, was to be taken seriously it means that the book it referred to had to exist at that time and it had to exist intact. It could not be a corrupt version because Allah would never have guided people to a corrupt book for guidance. So now I had a dilemma. I had to find out whether the gospel that Christians claim is the gospel today is the same as the gospel that existed in Saudi Arabia in Muhammad's day. If it was, and the modern version is not a corrupt one as I had been taught, I had to make a tremendous decision to follow this book now; because the verse later in the Koran says that those who do not follow God's commands are transgressors. I did not want to be a transgressor; I wanted to follow God's commands in his book. I began to look at some of the evidences for the transmission of the gospel as we have it today, of the Bible, and see what existed in Saudi Arabia at the time when Muhammad spoke these words, and the Koran said these things. What was the evidence that the Bible existed at that time? Looking at the evidence I saw that there were various proofs to show that the Bible that was around in Muhammad's day is the same Bible we have today. In fact, the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments for sure existed as we have it today hundreds of years before the Koran was given to the Arabs in Saudi Arabia.

One day a good friend of mine who had become a Christian invited me to go to church. I had never been to a church before but I was curious, so I went. I sat in the service and I felt that the person speaking was speaking just to me. Now, there were probably 2000 people there but the Pastor seemed to be speaking directly to me, as though someone had told him I was there that day.

He spoke of how God is knocking at the door of your life because He wants to fill our lives with joy, peace and real hope. He will not force

Himself into your life but He will lean against the door and if you do not lean back He will fill your life. He asked a question at the end of the service, 'Has God been knocking on your door? Has He been leaning on your door and have you been leaning back? Are you getting tired of leaning, maybe it is time to stop?' I got really irritated at that, I did not want to hear that because it was too true. I left that service very upset. Now, I am not given to emotional outbursts at all, it is not me and for the first time I can ever remember I openly sobbed. I said out

**This was truth;  
Jesus did rise  
from the dead**

loud, 'I cannot do it, it is too heavy, I cannot hold it up any more'. I assumed it was this burden of trying to wed Islam and Christianity so that I can be comfortable in being on the fence. Really it was Jesus leaning on the door of my life and I was finding it increasingly hard to push back.

I decided to undertake a study of the Scriptures, to study the evidence fully, which I did over a course of months. I recall a time when I was sitting in my parents' den in their home and I had, quite literally, all the evidence for Islam stacked up on one side of the desk, books on Islam and my notes on them. On the other side of the desk I had all the books on Christianity and the resurrection of Jesus. That was the major point – either He rose from the dead or He did not. I had all that evidence roaring around me and I wondered, 'Why is it that I find this evidence for the resurrection so compelling? It is so convincing. Why will I not accept it, what is wrong with my heart, what is wrong with my mind?' As I thought like this, the answer to my questions walked by the door. My father walked by – he looked at me because he was so proud that I was studying and he was so approving because he thought I was studying to be a better Muslim and a better emissary for Islam. Then I realised what it was that prevented me from becoming a Christian; I could not break his heart. That was why I kept away from the evidence, kept away from Jesus so long because I could not break his heart and hurt my mother, or my brothers and all the rest of my family; I could not do it. At that moment I realised what the truth would cost me.

This was truth; Jesus did rise from the dead, but what did that mean for me? I did not know. Over the months the Holy Spirit worked in me so that I came to see that it was not just a fact of history that Jesus rose from the dead but that it means that we can have life too. The crucifixion means that you and I can have forgiveness of sins because

Jesus paid the price for us, bearing the judgment that was due to us. If we are prepared to accept Him, as He said, 'Because I live you also shall live'. I stopped pushing back on the door and invited Jesus to come into my life.

Since becoming a Christian, what really has changed my life has been my view of God. Before, I believed that He was almighty and that He was holy and all good but there was no relationship, there was no intimacy there, and every one longs for that sense of relationship – a real desire to know the Lord. I began to have a relationship closer to Him as I encountered Him in prayer. It was not ritualistic, it was not just a formulaic way in which to pray, it was more intimate like talking to someone who I certainly revered as God, as holy and true but also someone I could talk to and open up to about anything and I felt real response. It was not a voice, but I felt that because He had come to this earth to take on my sin and paid my penalty that I could speak freely to Him and that I could have a reception back of what I had spoken to Him. I had never felt that before but I now had this knowledge that God would not only guide but He would be there with me. He comforted me by saying, 'My Son suffered so much, why would I not walk with you?' And I felt that was a wonderful part, and still is a wonderful part of how I am in this new life in Christ. My entire outlook on life is coloured now by the fact that, because He lives, I also shall live. Come what may, I have a hope that is not, 'Maybe, if I am good enough I will get in', but because He is so good I will get in. That is why a Muslim should consider it – what more can you ask for than the assurance of eternal life? That is what we have as trusting in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Abdu

## **A Voice from the Past**

### **EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF MATELDA OF MAGDEBURG (1212-1277)**

#### **The Exchange**

If the world were mine and all its store  
And were it of crystal gold;  
Could I reign on its throne for evermore  
From the ancient days of old,

An Empress noble and fair as day,  
O gladly might it be,  
That I might cast it all away;  
Christ, only Christ for me.

For Christ, my Lord, my spirit longs,  
For Christ, my Saviour dear;  
The joy and sweetness of my songs  
The while I wander here –  
O Lord, my spirit fain would flee  
From this lonely desert away to Thee.

### **A Meditation**

I thank Thee, Lord of Glory and Son of God, that Thou didst choose me and call me out of the world. For this I will thank Thee eternally. Thy holy sorrow, all that Thou hast suffered for me, is beyond my understanding. Therefore all that I suffer I offer up to Thee, though how little is my suffering like to Thine! Keep me always in Thy love, that for ever I may praise Thee, Jesus, my most beloved.

O Thou beloved Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Son of God, one with the Father, think upon me. I thank Thee Lord for the grace of Thine atonement wherewith Thou hast touched the depths of my heart.

I pray, O my God, that in continual love I may receive and enjoy the gifts Thou givest. Fill me with the fullness of Thy love that pain and bitterness may be sweet to me, and that I may desire Thy will and not mine, and that the fire of my love may burn in me continually.

### **Prayer**

Prayer has marvellous power; it makes the bitter heart sweet, and the sorrowful heart glad, the foolish wise and the fearful bold, the sick strong, the blind to see and the cold to burn. It draws the great God down into the small heart, and it lifts the hungry soul up to God, the living Fountain. It brings together the loving God and the loving soul in a blessed meeting place and they speak together in love.

### **The end of the journey**

From my childhood onwards I was troubled with fear, dread, and constant sorrow of heart in thinking of my end. Now in my last days



God has given me peace but I still have great fear as to how my soul shall pass from my body.

O Lord, I pray, that when dawneth the last day  
These weary eyes shall see,  
Come as a father to his darling child,  
And take me home to Thee.

Lord I thank Thee that since Thou hast taken away the power of sight from mine eyes, Thou hast appointed other eyes to serve me. Lord, I thank Thee that since Thou hast taken the strength from my hands, Thou servest me with other hands. Lord, I thank Thee that since Thou hast taken away the strength of my heart, Thou servest me now by the hearts of strangers. Lord, I pray Thee reward them here on earth with Thy divine love, and grant to them to serve Thee faithfully until they reach a blessed end.

Matelda of Magdeburg

## THE COMFORTER

It is a wonderful thing that the Persons of the Godhead can be spoken of as coming in specially for the comfort and encouragement of believers. The original word used in the Scriptures for one who comforts and encourages means one who comes alongside to help.

The original Greek word (parakletos) is used in four connections:

*"And I will beg the Father and he will give you another **Comforter**" (John 14:16)*

*"But when the **Comforter** is come, whom I will send to you from the father" (John 15:26)*

*"...if I do not go away, the **Comforter** will not come to you" (John 16:7)*

*"If anyone sin we have a **patron** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1)*

From the above we can see that the actual title of Comforter is given to the Lord and to the Holy Spirit. We cannot look at the Lord's pathway here without realizing that He came down alongside of His creature to help him. The Samaritan is a most beautiful picture of it, as it says, "A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was" (Luke 10:33). The Lord could say, "He will give you another Comforter" (John 14:16), implying that He Himself had been this to the disciples. Not only was

He the Comforter to all whom He helped during His lowly pathway, but that blessed service has continued in resurrection, and it was He who, drawing nigh, went with the two downcast disciples on the way to Emmaus. Their hearts were made to burn within them as He opened the Scriptures to them and with what comfort they returned to the eleven, rejoicing not only in the fact of the resurrection, but in their wonderful contact with Him as risen from the dead! (See Luke 24)

The Lord Jesus is given this title by John in his first epistle: "we have a patron (Comforter) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous". The very One who had been here alongside of us, is still on our side, but now appearing in the presence of God for us. This brings out clearly the present position: a risen glorified Man in heaven, and God Himself, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, here on earth.

John speaks three times of the Holy Spirit as Comforter. In chapter 14, He is the gift of the Father, which suggests the intimate place the Holy Spirit has with us. The Lord says, "But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). This raises a question with us as to how far we really know the Person of the Holy Spirit in this intimate way. Then in the same chapter, He is said to be sent of the Father in the name of the Son, and His service is to teach us all things and to bring to our remembrance the words of the Lord Jesus. This is one of the most important services of the blessed Comforter.

The Lord next speaks of the Comforter in John 15, as being sent from the Father, so that witness may be borne to Christ. Faithfulness to Him in testimony brings reproach, and in this the Holy Spirit as the Comforter is taking His place alongside the saints. Finally, in chapter 16, the Lord Himself is said to send the Comforter as a direct consequence of His ascension. The presence of the Spirit on earth depends on a risen Man in heaven.

God's work on earth in convincing men of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, has been the special care of the Spirit; and, indeed, more has been wrought for God down here during the presence of the blessed Comforter and as a result of all that was compressed into the life of the Lord Jesus, than in any other period of man's history. We may well wonder at the divine wisdom in which God has moved from His own side in such a wonderfully intimate way to bring men, in spite of all the opposition, to participate in all His greatest thoughts of blessing.

J. Gaskin.

## THE CALLING

In addressing even an unspiritual people like the Corinthians the apostle laid emphasis on the calling. They, like those in Rome, were “*called* saints,” It is “to them that are called” that Christ becomes “God’s power and God’s wisdom”. He counsels the Corinthians to consider their calling and to see that it included “not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born” (1 Corinthians 1:2, 24, 26). The divine calling itself dignifies the saints. The calling is entirely from God’s side, and an understanding of this imparts stability to the soul.

God calls men by the gospel. Paul said to the Thessalonians, “He has called you by our glad tidings to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Whatever the instrument used, it is God who calls; it is not the preacher, but God. Paul also speaks of saints as “called of Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:6). It is very sweet to think that if I have an appreciation in my heart of Jesus Christ it is because I am one of His called ones. There has been a personal activity on His part in relation to me that has singled me out from amongst men to be for Him and for God. It was not the preacher—not the one who spoke to me about my soul—but Jesus Christ Himself. He has spoken in a direct and personal way to me, and the sense of that moves my affections.

**The calling is  
a divine one**

The effect of His call is that the Lord Jesus becomes a personal reality. The most wonderful preaching in the world could not of itself bring that about. The Lord may use the preaching but it is His own personal and powerful voice that makes Him a reality to the soul. A person called does not always come to light in a moment, but he has a secret in his heart that is powerful enough to break through every hindrance eventually. It has been known that a seed dropped into a crevice in a rock has had such power that even a huge rock has been rent by its growth. The call of Jesus Christ brings about in the soul something that must work its way out. We have examples in Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. They were called ones of Jesus Christ, and the effect was that they came into view eventually as having an appreciation of Him in spite of every natural hindrance.

The calling is a divine one, and all the experiences of the soul stand connected with it. The effect of the call is that Jesus Christ is known in the soul as God’s salvation. The greatest good has been brought in

by God for men by the “one man, Jesus Christ”. That Man “borne witness to by God ... by works of power and wonders and signs, which God wrought by him” (Acts 2:22), is now made Lord and Christ in heaven. The message of the glad tidings on the day of Pentecost was, “Repent, and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). How blessed to think of the saints as being “the called ones of Jesus Christ”! To such He has become a great and precious reality—One to whom there could not possibly be a rival, for none but He could deal with sin and death so as to be God’s salvation to the ends of the earth. He is the One in whom God has met the whole situation that has been brought about by sin and Satan’s power, and the One by whom the blessing of God for men has come in. Everyone who believes on Him thus, and knows Him, has been called by Jesus Christ.

That call separates one from all the schemes, devices and methods that men have for putting things right. Every sober person would admit that this is a world where there are many wrongs, and most would admit that they are wrong themselves, but the world is full of schemes to put everything right. When Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans there was much in the world, as there is now, which was thought to be of some value. There were moralists and philosophers, and an ancient religion that had been originally of God. But Paul stands out as a man separated from all these things, separated to God’s glad tidings. He has a theme, but it admits of no mixture. God’s glad tidings stands by itself, and cannot be linked up with any other plan for the supposed good of humanity.

As subjects of the divine call we realize that everything centres in that one Man. The one called of Jesus Christ may have to learn many things, but he is assured that everything hangs on Him. The apostles, in spite of much dullness and ignorance, had the sense that all depended on Him; they said, “To whom shall we go?” The saints—called such by God—have the conviction in their souls that His Son, Jesus Christ, is the one Man who can bring in everything on God’s part for men. He can deal with everything that men are under by reason of sin. It is proved because He can bring people out of death, and if He can do that He can do anything.

Paul says to the Corinthians, “Jesus Christ is in you”: also, “Prove yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you”. They could not deny it. One called of Jesus Christ cannot deny that Jesus Christ is in him. This is

not a thing that can be blown away by a gust of wind; the calling is a substantial, divine reality which all the power of Satan cannot set aside.

It is a call from heaven; nothing could be more effective than that. Every young believer should get a sense of the reality of it. If we have an appreciation of Jesus Christ, we have it as a result of His call which establishes a personal link with Him. The initial thing is the divine call.

C. A. Coates

## **A Word for Today**

### **DWELLING IN GOD AND GOD DWELLING IN US**

**Psalm 90**

**Isaiah 33:14-22**

**1 John 4:15-19**

#### **Introduction**

These Scriptures present a wonderful theme — we read in John's epistle, "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God", and again we have, in the next verse, "We have known and believed the love God has to us. God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him". What a privilege to know something of the blessed reality of dwelling in God and God dwelling in us! It suggests the greatest possible nearness and God would direct our hearts to see the blessedness of the possibility of coming into such a happy condition of things as this, that we may dwell in God, and not only that we might dwell in God complacently and happily, but that God Himself might be pleased to dwell in us. We find the thought expressed in the Old Testament as far back as Genesis: God had in mind to bring man into relationship with Himself. If God had to drive out man from Eden and guard the way to the tree of life God felt the distance and God begins to work immediately in order to meet all the moral questions which had brought in that distance, so that man might be brought near to Him.

As the history develops we have a record of men and women of faith; we see their activities, lives, and the achievements which marked them. Underlying all this is their link with God and I desire to encourage each one that we might understand the underlying state which enabled them to move in this way as persons of faith. God was their dwelling place, their home, and God Himself was able to be with them, was

able to find His dwelling place with His servants. What a wonderful thing to see those whose home is with God, and with whom God Himself can dwell complacently. What moral power there would be, in a world where everything was falling to pieces, in those who are dwelling with God, and He in us. May God help us into it.

We see it wonderfully set out in Christ. His path was one of perfection in a world of corruption and evil. What was the secret of it? That Jesus had an outlet (I am speaking of Him in His blessed Manhood here as presented to us in the Gospels) from this scene where everything was opposed to God. He would ever retire into the presence of the Father. We read that every one went to his own home but, "Jesus went to the Mount of Olives". What an outlet He had as He went to the Mount of Olives and retired in spirit from the scene of Satan's activities and power. His spirit would find rest and home in the presence of the Father in the Mount of Olives—a place of spiritual elevation, removed from the influences of the city, and the world. God would encourage us to follow the Lord Jesus into that place of spiritual rest, indeed we read in the Gospels that when they had sung a hymn *they* went to the Mount of Olives. The disciples knew what it was to retreat with Him into that scene where the Father's love is known, and where they were retired and far away in spirit, although actually present in the scene of Satan's power.

### **The Lord our dwelling place**

I read Psalm 90. Perhaps there is no Psalm so well known to us in the whole Psalter. We sometimes sing:

O God, our help in ages past  
Our hope for years to come;  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

How beautiful to think of all that God has been to us—'our eternal home'—do we know God in that way? Moses, who wrote Psalm 90, could speak of it with the greatest possible reality. Moses was a man of faith, and not only that, but a man who had the reward of faith. He knew what it was to retire into the presence of God; he was there 40 days and 40 nights in the very presence of God, and could speak like this as coming out of His presence. He says "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place throughout all generations" (v1). How wonderful to

think of God like that. It is the same God of whom we read in Genesis, the creator of all things, the One of whom Moses could say, "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God" who is stooping in His descending goodness into His creation to be the dwelling-place of His people!

Think of God coming near to us in such conditions as these, throughout all generations, taking account of the peculiar needs of each generation and being able to adapt Himself in grace and love to every need. He is our eternal home. What a blessed thing to know God in that way! Adam could say "I was afraid and I hid myself". He hid himself away from God, and yet God would have you to know Him in such a way that you can speak of Him as your hiding-place, and say "Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations".

In what follows in the Psalm we are brought to realise something of the way God has taken in order that this might be possible, and the moral journey we need to take. It is not a long journey, but one which becomes very short when faith is operative, but we have to face the great moral questions that have come into the world through sin. We find how Moses speaks about the holiness of God, and that is one great thing He would have us to learn. If God is to dwell in us, and we in Him – God who is love – we must see that His love is a holy love which cannot tolerate evil in its presence, a love which we know has acted from its own self in order to meet all that has come in through sin. It has acted sacrificially in the work of Christ, the great work of redemption. God has acted thus, but He would remind us that if we are to draw near, it must be in accord with His holiness.

**God ... is our  
eternal home**

Jacob had to learn that lesson early in his history. He knew God was with him, and was speaking with him, and that he was in the house of God and he had to say "How dreadful is this place!" (Genesis 28:17) Then we see how God deals with him so patiently in his life as He deals with us in the history of our souls, in discipline, so that we might be happy in His holy presence. So, after many years, Jacob comes back to Bethel – to the house of God – and this time he is happy to be there (see Genesis 35). He poured a drink offering upon the pillar as much as to say, 'Now it is a joyful thing to be here'. Jacob had learnt something of God in the interval. He had learnt what it was to judge

himself, all that he was in his corrupt history, and he had learnt what it was to have his name changed, and come into the light of God's thoughts about him. Now he is happy to be in the holy presence of God, and what a wonderful end he had, as he worshipped God, leaning on his staff: not only so, but he comes out as a blessing. He blessed Pharaoh and his sons. All this comes from a man who has known what it is to dwell in the presence of God.

So Moses, in Psalm 90, goes over the ground. I commend this wonderful Psalm to you — the prayer of Moses, the man of God. God would have all of us to be men of God, to stand for Him in an evil day, as knowing God and representing Him, and having experience of His presence. So he speaks about our short and evil days, for such they are by nature (vv 9 & 10). God would not have our days to be evil days. If we look upon them in their brevity, and take account of the judgment of God we have to recognize how short and evil they are apart from the knowledge of God, but God would have us to number our days (v12). God has given each one of our days as another opportunity to learn more about Him. God would have us to number our days with a view to Himself, so that we might, as it says, "acquire a wise heart". How good it is to number our days, not to speak of them as few and evil, not to be marked by a complaining spirit, repining because of circumstances, but to take account of each day as a fresh opportunity of proving the blessedness of the knowledge of God, and what He would be to us in them, that "we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (v14).

You notice how the Psalm contrasts the infinite and eternal character of God "from everlasting to everlasting", with the little life of mortal man, so short and filled with sorrow, and yet days do afford us an opportunity we shall never have again of acquiring the knowledge of God in the blessed way in which He condescends to come into this scene, to come into our lives, to draw near to us, in order that we might be able to say that He is our dwelling-place, and to dwell with us and we with Him.

Moses says, "Return, O Lord how long?" (v13) I believe that cry is going up from many hearts these days. Thank God, the believer can add something to that. The believer does not exactly cry "How long?" although the feeling is in the heart. The Christian says "Lord Jesus, come!" This cry is connected with a living Person. The cry of the Spirit is in our hearts so the "Spirit and the bride say come". "Even so,



come, Lord Jesus". That is the cry of the church and God would have each one of us to have our part in that as we await the full manifestation of the glory of God.

**Do you like to think of God in that way as a consuming fire?**

Then finally, we read in verse 16, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy majesty unto their sons". I believe God is answering that prayer. I believe He answered it in a most wonderful way in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Moses looked on to it, indeed, we find Moses himself privileged to be on the Mount of transfiguration, there in the light of the glory of Christ. God's work appeared and His glory appeared, and that gracious work of God is going on, what He brought in through the death and resurrection of Christ and what He is working out now. Is God not working today? Let our eyes be away from the hideous character of man's work, and let us have grace and faith to see what God is doing.

In 2 Corinthians the apostle Paul speaks of the work of God, "He that has wrought us for this very thing is God" (2 Corinthians 5:5). God is working out great thoughts in believers, things that will have their results in eternity, and now is the time to yield ourselves to the blessed activities of the Spirit of God. Moses says "let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it". That is to say, there is to be something wrought by those hands, hands that once had been occupied in the service of sin and Satan, but now there is to be something that God can delight in and establish. So that we not only dwell with Him but He dwells with us, and He is pleased to give us power and grace to act in accord with His own activities and work.

### **Dwelling with the consuming fire**

I refer briefly to the passage in Isaiah because again we have the challenge raised in regard of dwelling with God. You notice how it is presented here. It says, "Who among us shall dwell with the consuming fire" It also says, "The sinners in Zion are afraid". Let us consider the challenge of these verses. It is not enough to have made a certain profession. God is looking for reality, as to what we really have in faith, and in the power of the Spirit, and so the challenge is raised here, "Who among us shall dwell with the consuming fire?" Do you like to think of God in that way as a consuming fire? Scripture speaks

of Him in that way. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). That is the God we see in that wonderful scene at Calvary. We see nowhere else in the universe such a testimony to the consuming love of God, a love that will not tolerate sin in His universe, for the sinless One is made sin: He is forsaken of God upon the cross. There is not such a testimony in the whole of the history of eternity to the consuming holiness of God's love. Here we see the fullest testimony to God in His holiness, to God in His love. We have to go this solemn and searching way, my friends, if we are to reach the blessedness of dwelling with God and God dwelling with us. We have to face the consuming fire—the holiness of God.

So the answer to the question, "who will dwell with the consuming fire?" is given. It is "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly ..." and then various conditions are brought forward, all of which, you will notice, are in direct contrast to the prevailing unrighteous influences in the world. We see it all around us to day in the most blatant forms, things which are openly unrighteous and openly marked by oppression and corruption. These things appear for the moment to be prosperous, and God would have us to judge the whole thing in our own hearts. There is this side of things which is public in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life: – these things find their origin in the heart of man away from God - and God would have us face it.

It says in the Scripture, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord" (James 5:11). God would have us to be marked by patience as seeing the end of the Lord in the discipline. Job learnt what it was to judge himself: he says "I ... repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6) and repentance is to mark us as believers. It is to deepen in our souls, but alongside with it there is to be this great enlargement in the knowledge of God. He said "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5). Job comes into the holy presence of God. He is free and happy and able to intercede with God for those around him, and to come out as a blesser in an evil world.

The passage continues, "He that ... stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil". It is not that we are to be unreal and shirk the facing of the things that are happening around us, which are indeed forced upon us: but we are to find no delight in them, we are not to be feeding upon them, or finding our joy in these

things. Let us turn away in the choice of our heart's enjoyment from them, and then what compensation! "He shall dwell on high" with God, and then it says "the fortresses of the rocks shall be his high retreat". God takes account of us: not a hair of our head can perish apart from Him. These are certain things which are assured to us. Everything which belongs to the spiritual life, the life of faith, is absolutely certain and assured. There is an everlasting provision for God's people in His house. Then it says, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty". What a blessed object for us, to turn aside from looking upon evil, and have our eyes directed to the King in His beauty. In Hebrews 12 we are exhorted to "look steadfastly on Jesus" (v.1), then again "we see Jesus... crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:9). Do our eyes behold the King in His beauty?

Then it adds, "they shall behold the land that is very far off". I have no doubt this refers to the great moral distance between earth and heaven. It is not very far off to the believer who is in the Spirit. Think of Stephen: he looked into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. God would have us to penetrate that distance in the power of the Spirit that it may be nearer to us. Next we are encouraged to "Look upon Zion". Thank God, we are not only to look up into heaven and take account of what is there that can never be overthrown, but there is actually something here on earth in the midst of Satan's power that is impregnable. There is that which Christ is building, against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail, and God would have us to have our part in that, the true Zion, the church of God on earth today.

### **Dwelling in God and God dwelling in us**

Now the verses in 1 John link with this. How beautiful they are in their simplicity, and yet how profound they are in all their import, what it is to dwell in God and God to dwell in us. You notice what the secret is: in verse 16, it says, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us". We have known and believed it; can we say that truly from our hearts? It is a blessed thing to have the consciousness of the love of God in a scene like this. That love has been manifest in the death of Jesus. It has come to light in all its fullness. We sometimes sing of it—the mighty volume of the love of God that has come to light in the death of Jesus, which has come into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Then it says, "God is love". I do not think you could have

that statement in the Old Testament. We have suggestions of God's love and expressions of it, too, but I think that statement that "God is love" must necessarily be reserved until the Lord Jesus had been here and died. I would connect it with the 90th Psalm "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God". He had always been that, but it had not been revealed until the Son of God came into this scene, and went into death and suffered on the cross, and went back to God.

It is made an individual matter. John brings things home to the individual. You may be the only one in a town or village, and yet you may realise what it is to dwell in God and God in you. What a blessed possibility in such days as these! He says, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of Judgment". Such a one can face the everlasting burnings of the holy presence of God. Why? Not because of anything we are, not even because of moral conditions. We go back to the real basis and foundation of everything, for it says, "as he is, so are we in this world". Just meditate on that. As you lie upon your bed, let those words sink into your heart. As Christ is there in the very presence of God so are we, and in this world, the very world where we have sinned. What a wonderful place of nearness God has brought us into, we can actually be before Him, even while yet in this world, in the very blessed acceptance of the same character of love as Jesus is in His own presence in glory. John writes, "There is no fear in love" linking on with that verse "Herein is our love made perfect". All fear is to be banished from our hearts because, "fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love". And then he adds, "We love". How do we love? Why do we love? You see it all goes back to God. God is the Source and God is the blessed Centre, and God is the end of every thing. We love because "He first loved us". God is to be supreme, and if we are to dwell with God, and God is to dwell with us, He is to be surrounded eternally with those who have been brought to know Him in this way. May He encourage our hearts, for His name's sake.

Walter Brown

*An address at Stockport, March 1941*

Based on manuscript notes by Mr John Hemmings of Hampton  
(Now with the Lord)