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## ***Living Water***

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# ***Living Water* — Issue No 101**

**September – October 2010**

## **Recent Ministry**

- BIBLE CHAINS Ken Hollands 1  
Part 2– The fruitfulness chain and the love chain  
Extracted from an address at Bromley, May 2009.
- THE GAIN OF GIVING CHRIST HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE 8  
Charlie Watson  
Ambler, Pennsylvania, USA, October 2009

## **Reprint**

- WHAT STOPS YOU FROM COMING TO CHRIST? Tim Pons 11  
Issue No 101 of this magazine provides the opportunity to commence a new series based on selected reprints from early issues. This article is reprinted from “Living Water” No 1, first published 17 years ago, and was selected by Eric and Mabel McPhail

## **Poetry Selection**

- THE KING OF GLORY J. N. Darby 18  
HIS ABIDING PRESENCE Hannah P. Smith 18

## **Testimony Section**

- MARTYRS OF THE MARIAN PERSECUTION — 19  
BRIGHT CANDLE OF FAITH  
The story of Hugh Latimer, martyred 16<sup>th</sup> October 1555  
Continuing the short series on those martyred 455 years ago

## **A voice from the past**

- PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER G. V. Wigram 21  
ON PRAYER Hugh Latimer 22  
From a sermon preached before the Duchess of Suffolk in 1552

## **A word for today**

- THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE TESTIMONY 22  
Alfred Gardiner

## Recent Ministry

### BIBLE CHAINS – PART 2

#### The Fruitfulness Chain and the Love Chain

##### Introduction

I would like to occupy you this afternoon with the fruitfulness chain and the love chain. I am using the word “chain” as people do today when referring to, say, the “food chain” where it refers to the process from seeds being planted to the food that we finally eat, or to the “supply chain” where goods progress from raw materials to manufactured goods.

##### The Fruitfulness Chain

###### (2 Peter 1:5 – 8)

I call this Scripture in Peter the fruitfulness chain. I must admit that I have often just glided over these verses; but they are important verses of scripture.

The apostle Peter is writing to persons who, like himself, “have received like precious faith” (v. 1). Peter had faith, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We read about the ups and downs in his life of faith, too; oftentimes he fell but he rose up again. Every other person who has come to Jesus has received like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the earlier verses Peter says that God in “his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness”. God has provided in the scriptures all things that we need to know to please Him in our life of faith. God also has “called us by glory and virtue” and “given to us the greatest and precious promises”.

What tremendous promises we have! We are here in flesh and blood, awaiting the time when Jesus will come again. The best times are ahead but we now have precious promises and through them we become partakers of the divine nature. We are in this world as well-furnished Christians. We have the Father who loves us, the Saviour who has died for us, and the Holy Spirit of God within us. How well-furnished is every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there are things that we have to do while living in a world which is marked by lust and corruption. One of the apostles wrote

about the “present evil world” (Galatians 1:4). If he were alive today he would say exactly the same. Are we not living in a world that is marked by corruption through lust that becomes more blatant as time goes on?

**often believers have completely unscriptural ideas about various things**

Then he says, “for this very reason also, using therewith all diligence” and at the end of the

passage he speaks of being “neither idle nor unfruitful”. God has taken us up and He wants each one of us to be fruitful. He wants us to grow, to progress in the Christian life and not be just static or go back. Alas, we can slide back, be backsliders. He wants us to go on and yield more and more for His glory.

So Peter says, “in your faith have also virtue”. Virtue is a rather difficult word to understand. It conveys there is something excellent about your faith. To me it means that there is some clear demonstration of faith in a person’s life. In other words, there are works of faith to demonstrate that a person’s profession of faith is real. (James 2:18-26). For example, Jesus cleansed ten lepers (see Luke 17). We do not know what happened to the nine but we know that one of them came back and gave glory to God. I think he had virtue in his faith. There was something excellent that he did towards God. Similarly, with the demoniac from whom Jesus cast evil spirits, he then sat at the feet of Jesus and obeyed His command. I think his faith also had virtue (see Mark 5).

Then it adds, “in virtue knowledge”. God also wants us to have knowledge. It is possible to be a real believer in the Lord Jesus Christ but very unintelligent in God’s things. God wants us to have knowledge. We have the Bible and the Holy Spirit to guide us to understand the truth of the Bible. We do not become intelligent all at once but God wants us to understand what the scripture says.

Alas, often believers have completely unscriptural ideas about various things. Where do we get knowledge? We get the knowledge from the Bible. That is why we have it. We do not acquire knowledge all at once. We keep learning things. I am still learning things. In fact, when I think I know a scripture, I often realise when a problem arises that I do not know it very well at all.

Paul says, “we know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12). Well, that is

true but we want to keep learning. This is the learning time. This is the time we should become clearer and clearer about things. When questions come up amongst God's people let us search the scriptures. Let us find out what the Bible actually says so that we get the truth in its setting and get understanding.

God does not only want us to be bright believers, He wants us to be intelligent believers. Let us be like that man, the demoniac, who sat at the feet of Jesus. Jesus gave him instruction what he was to do. Mary, in the gospel, sat at the feet of Jesus and she listened to His word (Luke 10:39). We want to have that attitude as we read the scriptures. I would encourage everyone here to read the Holy Scriptures.

I remember reading some time ago about a Christian who read the New Testament every month. I felt rebuked as I read that since I certainly do not read the New Testament every month. I found it hard even to try and read the New Testament in a month. I am not trying to impose any burden on my brothers and sisters in Christ because I would be a hypocrite if I did that, But I consider that in the day in which we live there is a great lack of scriptural knowledge, compared even with earlier years. And I would encourage everyone here to keep reading the scriptures diligently so that we might not only have faith in Christ and be bright in Christ but that we might get our thoughts adjusted by the Holy Scriptures.

I know people who have been saved from being Jehovah's Witnesses by reading the scriptures. There are books, commentaries and other ways to help us understand the teaching of scripture and I am not despising them at all. In fact, make best use of them, make use of everything you can to learn the scriptures. Let us learn too the settings of scripture, learn the scope of the truth in scripture. We require, in our faith, to have virtue and in virtue, knowledge.

And then it says, "in knowledge temperance" or self control. God does not want us only to have head knowledge. He wants the knowledge that we gain to have a practical effect in our lives. If what we read in the Bible does not have a subduing effect upon us, does not make us more like Jesus, then we have lost the point of it. The knowledge of God is not like the knowledge of mathematics or geography that you can swot up to pass exams. The knowledge that comes from God has a moral effect, has a subduing effect. And so

Peter says, "in your knowledge temperance". Knowing God should have a subduing, mellowing effect upon the lives of all of us and show that we are under divine control.

Then Peter adds something else, "in temperance endurance". Endurance means we keep going. We are not just persons who believe today and then 'do what we like' tomorrow. Endurance is hard. Endurance is a test. When I was a youngster people said to me, 'Continuance is the proof of reality'. The proof that someone is real is going on with God. So that it is self control, temperance, and endurance. Sometimes people are roller coaster Christians, one day bright, great for the Lord and the next day, away down in the depths, acting like unbelievers.

When I look back over my life I think of people that I knew when I was young. One of the things that marked them was their endurance. I do not think they were perfect but you could rely on them. You could rely on them to come to the meetings, for example. They would always be there, unless they had some good reason for not being there. You could always rely upon them to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread, to be at the Bible reading, to be at the prayer meeting. You could rely upon such people to have part in the testimony of our Lord. God wants us also to have endurance.

And so it says, "in endurance godliness". In other words, it is not just a stoical endurance, conveying the thought of 'grin and bear it'. Through endurance we are to learn God better in the many trials and tribulations of life. We want to turn to God in all the issues of life.

Although I spoke earlier on about the danger of getting bogged down with problems it is also true that God wants to help us in all the whole of our life. It may be a problem at school or at work or any kind of difficulty. We need to turn to God in all our problems, day by day.

The very problems of life can yield wealth for God. David prepared many things for God; some things were out of his affection and others out of his affliction. There was far, far more secured out of his affliction than he gained out of his affection. Oftentimes it is when something has gone wrong or some problem has arisen that we learn something fresh about God and His love that would never have been learnt otherwise.

Then Peter adds, "in godliness brotherly love". You can be a godly

Christian and isolate yourself from everyone else. That is why he says, “in godliness brotherly love”. I have met a number of Christians who do not seem the slightest bit interested in anybody else. They are interested in their own particular service. Let us go on with the service that God has given us to do but not forget that we have other brothers and sisters in Christ. So it says to godliness add brotherly love. That is a wonderful feature, the love of a brother. A great deal of the New Testament is taken up with developing brotherly love. Paul’s great mission revolved round the truth of “one body in Christ” (Romans 12:5) and much of his detailed teaching is in connection with believers working out things together with mutual affection and respect one for the other.

**I commend this chain  
to every one of us**

At the end of this chain it says “in brotherly love, love”. “Love” is greater and wider than brotherly love. I think that would involve love for God and love for man. Peter was rebuked face to face by Paul when he did something he should not have done. I think Paul added love for God and for the truth of God to brotherly love when he rebuked him face to face. Thank God the brotherly link stood the strain.

I think too the nearer we are to God and the more we understand His love, the more we shall desire the blessing of others and be consistent with the character of this dispensation: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal” (John 3:16). Let us add love to brotherly love.

I commend this chain to every one of us. It is a very practical chain and should affect us all. The apostle says, “these things existing and abounding in you make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful as regards the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”. I do not want to be idle; I do not want to be unfruitful. Surely if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you should have the same desire. We all want to be producing fruit for the Lord while we wait for Him to come again.

## **The Love Chain**

### **(Ephesians 5:25 – 27)**

In chapter 5 of Ephesians Paul tells husbands and wives how they should act towards one another but primarily he is thinking of Christ



and the church. We might call it Christ's love chain. It starts off in the past, it encompasses the present and it goes on to the future.

Paul tells us that Christ loved the church, "and has delivered himself up for it". He loved the church. That goes back into purpose.

No doubt Jesus saw in people like Peter and the other disciples who continued with Him in His temptations something that He loved. To the Canaanitish woman He said "O woman thy faith is great". Regarding a centurion He said "Not even in Israel have I found so great faith" (Luke 7:9). Christ saw something in these persons that was precious to His own heart.

Christ loved the church, and delivered Himself up for it. You can look at the death of Christ and say that He died for my sins. Thank God He did but He also died to secure the church for Himself, for His own eternal satisfaction, to secure a companion who can share with Him in His administration of the world to come.

Christ loved the church, and delivered Himself up for it. That involved what happened on the cross at Calvary. He delivered Himself. He did not send someone else. He sends others to preach but He delivered Himself up for the church. Elsewhere Paul says, "... the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own" (Acts 20:28).  
49. How precious the church is to Christ.

Then it says, "in order that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word". That is Christ's present service. It began, of course, before any of us here were born because this view of the church includes all believers from the time of Pentecost right through to the rapture of the church.

Christ loved the church: there are different ways to look at the "church" in the Bible. I know that today when some people talk about the church they mean a physical building. Others talk about the church and they mean a denomination like Methodist or Anglican. But the Bible speaks of the church in three ways. The Bible talks about the local church that comprises all believers in a place. Then it refers to the church consisting of all believers who are alive on the earth who form the body of Christ. Then there is the widest thought where the church includes all the saints, every believer from Pentecost right through to the rapture.

The Lord Jesus is currently sanctifying His church, setting it apart

for His holy purposes. Notice too how He is doing it: "Purifying it by the washing of water by the word". It shows the importance of the word. It is a gentle, constant, detailed service - "Purifying it by the washing of water by the word".

There is great value in reading the word, individually, in our households and as together. Jesus uses the word to purify the church and He is doing that now. We should recognise that He is doing it to each of us. Let us yield ourselves to Him and to His service of love so that we might become more pleasing to Him.

But then this service is in view of a tremendous event in the future, "that *he* might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless". His service of love is to purify us so that we might become more holy, we might be more blameless, and we might be kept for Him. Then one day this love chain will be finished when He presents the church to Himself glorious.

In the Old Testament we read about Eve. Adam had found no helpmate his like (Genesis 2:20) but then God built the rib taken out of the side of Adam into a woman and brought her to Adam. God presented the woman to Man but Jesus is going to present the church to Himself, glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any of such things. So just as Adam could say, "This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23), so the Lord Jesus will have a bride, a church that is exactly the way that He wants it, His like, His counterpart. Let us think about what is for the heart of Christ: what relates to the past and His death, what relates to the present, what He is doing and what He is going to do in the future.

Notice that He is going to present the church to Himself glorious. Everything that is untoward, everything that is not according to the mind of God will be all gone and He will have a glorious church that will be His companion to be with Him for all eternity. I call this Christ's love chain.

May we appreciate what the church is to Christ and seek to be more pleasing to Him as we wait for His coming again.

Ken Hollands

Concluding an address at Bromley, May 2009

# THE GAIN OF GIVING CHRIST HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE

**Revelation 3: 14 & 21**

**John 14: 21 – 23**

Both of these scriptures tell us something about the reward of giving Christ His rightful place in our hearts. I think it is right to say that we do not come to Jesus just for the reward. We come to Him because of what we see in Him - the attractiveness there is in Jesus. You will remember that we read in John's gospel that John the Baptist pointed Jesus out and he says, in one place, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:35) and in another verse he says, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (v. 29). Well, we love Jesus because of what we see in Him and we love Him because of what He has done. There is a wonderful attractiveness about Jesus. Every time we hear His name it should call forth a response in our hearts.

In the Revelation the Lord Jesus is addressing the assemblies, or churches, and the words we read are addressed to the church in Laodicea. I like the way He presents Himself to Laodicea. He says, "These things says the Amen". It brings us back to what we have in the earlier part of the book: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, he who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). He is the "Amen". You have to remember, when we use the name of Jesus, who we are speaking about. Many people have no respect for the name of Jesus and use it as an expletive. You do not hear the name of Mohammed or Allah or Buddha taken in vain - it is the name of Jesus that is despised and slighted. The greatest name that there is in heaven or on earth is taken in vain by people who have no thought or respect for Him.

The lover of Jesus has an appreciation of who this glorious Person is. He is "the Amen", "He who is, and who was, and who is to come". We have to do with One who is glorious, One who is the beginning and who is going to be there forever. He came into manhood; the name of Jesus implies His manhood, and as Man He was "the faithful and true witness". Every step of the pathway of Jesus here in this world was perfect, giving delight to the Father. He was the "Faithful and true witness". He was faithful even to the

laying down of His life on Calvary's cross.

Why did He do it? He did it in faithfulness to God, but He did it also for us, that He might be our Saviour. It has often been said that Jesus could have gone back to glory at any time during His pathway here. He was perfectly suited to the glory at every step of His journey. He was perfectly suited to the place from which He came and He had a perfect right to go back. Yet in His faithfulness and in His love He went to the cross, there to bear our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). What a Saviour!

He is "the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God". Everything that is going to be for the pleasure of God eternally will be centred in Christ. The Man who has gone into death is the Man who has come out of death. He is risen and glorified, at the right hand of God. Peter in that early preaching says, "this Jesus, whom ye have crucified", God has made "both Lord and Christ" (see Acts 2:36). Peter put the responsibility for what they did on the whole house of Israel, but he tells them as well that God has made Jesus "Lord and Christ".

Well, that is the way the Lord presents Himself to the believers in Laodicea and I think the purpose of it was to attract their souls to Him. He is able to meet every need. He was willing to meet the needs of those in Laodicea. He will meet our need. If we give Him His place, He will be with us to support and help us.

Then we read of the future reward. "He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne". That is a marvellous promise. We can hardly take it in, that the pathway of faithfulness to Christ, the pathway of love and devotion to Him will have such a reward. We do not deserve the reward. We did not deserve blessing in the first place but this is what Jesus has promised to the overcomer.

Well now, in John's gospel we have a present reward: "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me". There is not much value talking about loving the Saviour if we disobey His commandments. The proof of our love for Him is that we obey Him. We are tested every day by that, I think.

Then the Lord adds, "He that loves me shall be loved by my Father".

That tells us something about what the Father thinks of the Son. "He that loves me" (that is, Jesus) him will the Father love. The Father has such an appreciation of Jesus and of what He has done, that He rejoices in everyone who has trusted in Jesus and He loves them because they love His beloved Son. May we know and sense the Father's love for us day by day. Then we read, "He that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him". Well, what a blessing it is to have some manifestation of Jesus, some sense of His presence, support and guidance. These are wonderful blessings that we come into.

**The proof of our  
love for Him is  
that we obey Him**

"Judas, not the Iscariot," asks, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?" I suppose that Judas was thinking of a public manifestation - that time is coming, we can be sure of that. Then the One who is rejected here and was crucified and cast out is going to be glorified and exalted and admired in all who believe. What a day that will be! Then the One whom we have come to love, He whose name is blasphemed and taken in vain, will be exalted. Great though the public manifestation will be, the Lord was not speaking of that. He says to Judas, "If any one love me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him". Could anything be more precious than that? I cannot say too much about it, but that is the present reward and I think, in simplicity, I and many others have proved the blessing of the Lord's presence and the Father's presence and Their support and guidance.

That is what we need in the world we are in - to have the blessing of knowing the presence of the Father, of the Son. The Father and the Son come to those who love the Saviour and keep His word. In a day of confusion that is what we need.

I often think that the believer in Jesus should be the happiest person on earth. Believers face burdens and problems in this world but we each have the resource of being able to rely on the Lord, trusting in Him, restful in the enjoyment of His love and knowing that everything is in His hands. Everything will be secured according to the divine

plan, to the glory of God and to the exaltation of Christ.

What a glory Jesus is going to enter into, what a place is going to be His! What wonderful grace that we should have our part with Him. That day is coming; it is beyond what we can say, it is beyond what we can take in, that we, saved by His grace, should have a part with Him. This world is running its course, it will not be long until the Saviour comes and then we will be with Him. What a day that will be for us, what a day for Him! He then will have His church with Him forever for the display of His glory and to be His joy and His delight for all eternity.

The day is coming! May our hearts be cheered by occupation with Him and the blessings that we have through believing in Him, for His name's sake.

Charlie Watson

Ambler, Pennsylvania, USA, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

## **WHAT STOPS YOU FROM COMING TO CHRIST?**

### **Luke 6:12-18.**

I would like you to think for a little while tonight about some of these men. What we have just read actually happened. These men were picked out by Jesus to be His twelve apostles. They kept in His company for three years and during that time they saw the most incredible things happen and heard the most amazing words spoken. The Bible tells us of a light shining in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2). These men lived with that light, with One that was greater than all the prophets that had ever lived. Here was a Man who spoke God's word with authority and taught with power, so that all who heard Him were amazed. Here was a Man clearly sent from God. These twelve men we read about were chosen to be with Him for three years and to hear what He had to say.

Think about Peter. One day Andrew, Peter's brother, had come to him and said, 'Come with me - I have found the man who is the Messiah'. Think of how that must have sounded to Peter. He was going about his daily routine and his brother walked up to him and said, 'Come with me - I have found the Messiah, I have found the man that the whole nation of Israel has been looking for!'. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. Then on another day Peter was on the shore and Jesus came and spoke

to him and got into his boat and taught there. Simon had been fishing and had been unable to catch any fish at all, yet when Jesus spoke the word he let down the net and caught more fish than he had ever imagined. There were so many fish that the net broke and they had to get their friends to help them to get the fish into the boats. When Peter saw it he fell at Jesus' knees. He recognised that here was a Man who had God's power and spoke God's word. He fell down before Jesus and felt utterly worthless.

Peter was an ordinary fisherman; he had no expectations other than to fish and keep his family for the rest of his life but he was called by the Son of God to be with Him and to live with Him for three years. What he saw in those years so changed his life and so changed him inside that he carried on following Jesus for the rest of his life.

Peter saw his mother-in-law healed from a fever by Jesus. Maybe he had seen others healed before he heard the words of the Lord when He called him, "I will make you fishers of men". Think of what Peter experienced in those three years when he companied with Jesus. They were years such as no-one else had ever had before. All the twelve apostles saw wonderful things and I just want you to get this into your soul that the things the disciples saw were the testimony of God's love to humanity. They saw a Man whose delight it was in every moment of His life to please God. How different from you or me! Jesus loved God and honoured and obeyed Him in everything. His whole being was absorbed in doing the will of His God and Father. If you are a Christian, remember what you are like in your highest moments of praise, when your soul lifts itself to God in the power of the Spirit. Think of what you are like then, the amazing character of that experience for those few fleeting seconds when it is your soul's delight to praise God wholeheartedly, when your soul is absorbed with God and no other and you truly worship. Well, in Jesus, God had a Man here on this earth who led every day of His life, and every minute of every day, absorbed with pleasing God. There has never been a Man like Jesus before and there will never be any one like Him since but the disciples had the experience for three years of living with Him and it changed their lives.

I wonder at all the works of healing that they saw. Think of the distress there was in Israel at that time, the diseases and the unclean spirits

which possessed people; think of all those people who had no hope but who came to Jesus and He healed them. How the disciples must have wondered as they saw the relief that Jesus brought to so many. They saw the hope that Jesus brought. Day after day they saw miracle upon miracle. They saw the power of God in Jesus Christ. He was consumed with love for His God and Father, yet His heart was going out in love for every minute of every day towards the men, women and children all around Him.

I do not know if you have ever met in your life any people that were particularly marked by love, love to you and to those around them. Well, great though such a thing may be, it is nothing compared to the love of Jesus. The disciples saw something very different from the spite and the jealousy, the selfishness and the pride that mark you and me and mark everyone else in this world. They saw, in contrast, a Man who loved, and loved, and loved, and gave, and gave, and gave, until He gave everything that He had, even His own life. For three years the apostles lived with a Man who was different from everyone else and they loved Him.

How they must have loved Him. They had left their families, their house, their jobs; they had left all they were brought up with. How they must have been attracted to Jesus. There must have been something about Him that appealed to their hearts when He called them and said, "Come, follow me", and they followed Him. Peter had no doubt whatever that this was God's Man, that Jesus was truly the Son of God. The disciples had countless experiences that spoke to their hearts and demonstrated that Jesus was the Son of God, that everything He said and did was perfectly in keeping with God Himself.

Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured on the mountain. They had there an experience outside of everyday life. They saw Jesus shining with the shining of heaven. They saw Him speaking with Moses and Elias, and they saw Him alone and they heard God speaking to them drawing their attention to Jesus as His only begotten Son. Peter kept that experience and years later he spoke of being an eye-witness of the majesty of the Lord Jesus.

John was another disciple. He was also called by Jesus. John was in the boat when Peter was called by the Lord. He saw the huge catch of fishes,



that early sign; John saw the thousands healed. He saw the relief that Jesus brought to so many. John saw the love and the hope and the light that Jesus brought to people's lives. John saw the lives that were changed and he was captivated by the Son of God. Like Peter, he lived in company with Jesus day by day for three years and he loved Him.

John grew to know the love of Jesus in such a way that he had a particular understanding in his heart of how much Jesus loved him. When John refers to himself in the gospel that he wrote he calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved". John knew, perhaps more than the others, how much Jesus loved him.

John followed Jesus day by day and he was there all along the pathway. He was there at the mount of transfiguration and he saw the glory. He was there in the journey up to Jerusalem. He was there when they came into Jerusalem and the crowds cheered their Messiah. He was there in the upper room when Jesus spoke those wonderful words recorded for us in John's gospel, words that speak of divine love as perhaps no other words in the Bible do.

John was there at the cross. Think of how he must have felt; he must have felt bewildered because although Jesus had told the disciples time and time again that He would die, they could not bring themselves to believe it. Yet, John was there when Jesus was crucified. He was there on that hillside when Jesus suffered. He saw the blood and the water flow from the side of Christ. John was there when it happened. When you hear the gospel message that goes out that if you will trust in Jesus and His wonderful work at Calvary you are cleansed from your sins, washed completely through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, when you hear that, friend, remember that John was there. They are not just words to John. He stood there and he saw the soldier pierce the side of Jesus with a spear. He saw the blood and the water flow, the blood that cleansed you from your sins for evermore in God's sight, if only you will believe. That precious, precious blood has made atonement for you. That blood cleanses anyone who will come in faith to Christ.

John is a witness; he says, 'I know these things are true; I am an eye-witness'. John, like Peter, spent the rest of his life preaching about Jesus and His wonderful work, a work which changed history for millions who have believed. Because that blood was shed, God has said that your

sins are washed away if you will believe. John was there. John knew about the trial and the scourging of Jesus; he knew Pilate's verdict had been "I find no fault in him whatever"; John was there when they nailed Jesus to the cross and hung Him there to die. He must have been there when the darkness came and it was dark for three hours, and in that time God's judgment was put upon Jesus for your sin, if you will believe. When John says that the blood is sufficient to cleanse you from your sins he is talking of something that he had seen and knew for himself.

John's life was so changed by Jesus that he finished it, as far as we know, in the salt mine on the isle of Patmos, dying for his faith, dying there because Jesus had changed his life. He had seen something in Jesus which was so different from anything else that he had seen or heard before. He came to know God through Jesus Christ.

There is another man in the scripture we read at the beginning – Judas. He also saw the miracles, he saw the healing, he saw the people who came to Jesus in suffering and distress and went away shouting for joy. He saw the lepers cleansed; he saw all the women and children who had no hope at all, who came to Jesus and who were healed; he saw them healed and go away rejoicing. Judas saw men praise God for what Jesus had done. He lived in Jesus' company for three years, just as did James and John and Peter and the others of the apostles. He saw the love that flowed from Jesus Christ. He saw the light from God, he saw the life, and he saw the love. He saw the love for God that was displayed in Jesus. He saw a life of holiness, and pureness, and meekness and humility. Judas saw a life the like of which he could never have conceived, a life so very different from his own. He lived for three years in the company of a Man who was prepared to die for him, to die for his sins. He saw the same Man that James and John and Peter saw and he saw the same love. At the end of those three years he was given a choice – thirty pieces of silver or the life of Jesus, and he chose the silver!

Friend, this is the message I have got on my heart. Tonight God is speaking to you as you sit in your seat. God is appealing to you to open your heart to Jesus Christ. What is it, friend, that is keeping you from Jesus tonight? What is it that is worth more to you than Jesus? What was the worth of those thirty pieces of silver to Judas? Whatever could he do with thirty pieces of silver? But he chose them rather than Jesus

Christ.

I know it was in God's ordering that Jesus came here, and that He went to the cross, that He came here to die for your sins and mine, and that without that dying and bearing my sins I would have no hope. I know that! Yet Judas still had a choice and he chose the thirty pieces of silver. Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter stood up to preach with a heart that was full of what Jesus had done for him. He had a wonder in his heart as knowing that his sins were gone – gone forever. What power and what joy there must have been in that preaching! But by the time Peter stood there Judas was dead! Friend, you do not know how long your life will be – it could end tonight! And, tonight, I am asking you, 'What is it that is keeping you from God? What is it that is keeping you from inviting Jesus into your heart?'

Is it your ambition? Is it money? Is it your hopes for this life? Is it your lust? Is it your pride? What is it, friend? Because whatever it is that is keeping you from Jesus it is worth nothing at all, compared to the peace and joy and happiness of coming to know Him.

Judas had lived in Jesus' company; he had lived with the Son of God. He had lived with One who loved him and he must have known it. Friend, tonight God is pleading with you, He may have pleaded with you before, but He is pleading tonight. Jesus loves you! He loved you enough to die for you. He loved you enough to go to the cross for you, and He wants you to know it and understand in your heart. He went there because God is a holy God and with your sins upon you, you have got no hope at all because God cannot have sin in His presence.

Jesus went to the cross, friend, that you might be cleansed from your sins, that they might be put away for ever if only you will let Jesus into your heart. My sins are gone because I have done that. They are gone because Jesus has suffered for them. He has already borne the judgment; He has paid my penalty because He loves me! Jesus knew that I had no hope as I was in my sins, yet He loved me, and He gave everything to save me. I have never met anyone in this world who has even begun to love me as Jesus loves me.

Friend, tonight Jesus loves you! Tonight, will you come to Him? You may find it hard to believe. You may not be sure what you are being asked to

believe; yet if you feel the need of Jesus in your heart, call out to Him! You can do that tonight because Jesus lives!

When Peter preached in those days after the resurrection he was not preaching about someone he had known and who had died and was gone. He had seen Jesus risen from the dead. He had seen Him and spoken to Him and he had such joy in his heart he must have been shouting for joy. Peter must have been bursting to tell everyone that Jesus lives! Peter knew Jesus as risen from the dead and living for evermore. Peter was longing to tell everyone about Jesus and what He could do for their souls.

Peter preached and thousands believed in Jesus and they wanted to tell others too. So for hundreds of years, from person to person, God's word has gone forth, for generation after generation have found for themselves that it is true, that Jesus lives and that His blood cleanses from all sin.

I am standing here tonight, friend, because I have found that it is true, that the blood of Jesus has cleansed me from my sins and that Jesus certainly lives. When I pray I am not speaking to the air. When I pray it is to a Man who lives, to the Son of God who loved me and died for me and now He lives for me. Friend, what about you? Do you have that rock-solid certainty in your heart that you are forgiven, that your sins are gone? I don't mind how many Christian services you may have attended or anything like that; all I want to know is whether, in your heart, you know for certain that your sins have gone and that Jesus lives. Do you know it in your heart?

You see, Jesus does love you; and He really lives. If you call out to Him in the emptiness and need of your heart, He will not only hear you, He will give you the most certain assurance that He loves you, and He lives, and He will cleanse you from your sins. All you have to do, friend, is to call out to Him. Tell Him that you are a sinner and you want to be saved, and He will save you! That is God's promise, not mine!

Tim Pons. A preaching of the gospel at Warley, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1993

This article was selected for re-printing from Living Water No 1 by Eric and Mabel McPhail.

In the next issue, God willing, there will be a reprint from "Living Water" No 2, selected by Gavin Simpson.

## Poetry Selection

### THE KING OF GLORY

*Jesus, Thou King of Glory,  
We soon shall dwell with Thee,  
And sing Thy love's bright story,  
When we Thy glory see.*

*E'en now our souls would enter  
Thy presence, Lord on high,  
That all our love might centre  
In Thee who cam'st to die.*

*At God's right hand in glory  
Thou art, Thy work complete,  
Till perfected the story  
That gives us, too, our seat.*

J. N. Darby

### HIS ABIDING PRESENCE

*When I feel the cold, I can say, 'He sends it',  
And His wind blows blessing, I surely know;  
For I have never a want but that He attends it;  
And my heart beats warm, though the winds may blow.  
The soft sweet summer was warm and glowing,  
Bright were the blossoms on every bough;  
I trusted Him when the roses were glowing,  
I trust Him now.*

*Small were my faith should it weakly falter,  
Now that the roses have ceased to glow;  
Frail were the trust if it now should alter,  
Doubting His love when the storm clouds grow.*

*If I trust Him once, I must trust Him ever,  
And His way is best, though I stand or fall,  
Through winds or storm, He will leave me never,  
For He sends all.*

*Hannah Pearsall Smith*

## **Testimony Section**

### **BRIGHT CANDLE OF FAITH**

“Be of good courage Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace in England that shall never be put out”. These ‘last words’ of Hugh Latimer, addressed to Nicolas Ridley who was to suffer with him at the stake, have gone down in history.

Latimer began his life as an ardent Roman Catholic. His oration on obtaining his degree at Cambridge University was directed against protestant doctrines and the reformers. Another man at Cambridge set his heart on winning Latimer for Christ and prayerfully considered how this could be done. That man was Thomas Bilney.

Bilney’s own conversion had been remarkable. He had been ardent in following the rites of the church. He sought peace with God through fasting, pilgrimage, and the payment of money but he had found no peace in any of these things. Through reading the New Testament in Latin, Bilney came to peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The words, “Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...” (1 Timothy 1:15) came to him as a revelation. Immediately he sought to spread the good news, not only in the University but in the low lanes and prisons of the city.

His approach to Latimer was unique. After one of Latimer’s fiercest denunciations of protestant doctrine, Bilney asked Latimer to ‘Hear my confession’. Latimer agreed, and Bilney told him simply the story of his own conversion. He told him of the anguish he had felt in his soul, his fruitless efforts to remove it through pilgrimages, buying of pardons, offering of candles and through fasting. He then spoke of the peace he now knew through believing in the Lamb of God

who had taken away his sin. He told Latimer of the Spirit of adoption that he had received and the happiness he had in calling God his Father. Latimer was turned. The Holy Spirit was working in his heart and he trusted in Christ. Speaking years later, Latimer said: "Master Bilney, that suffered death for God's word's sake, the same Bilney was the instrument whereby God called me to knowledge." The change was immediate. Latimer joined with a group of Protestants at the University who met at the White Horse Inn. The inn was demolished some years ago but a plaque marks the spot. Those meeting at the White Horse included Thomas Arthur, Robert Barnes, Thomas Bilney, Edward Crone, John Frith, George Joyce, John Lambert, William Paget, John Rogers, Nicholas Shaxton, Richard Smith, George Stafford and Richard Thrixtell. Many of these were going to play an important part in the reformation in England and five of them – Barnes, Bilney, Frith, Lambert and Rogers – were going to gain a martyr's crown before Latimer.

Hugh Latimer not only joined in the discussions at the White Horse Inn but he began to preach boldly the truth of the gospel; seeing Christ as the true sin-bearer and the only One through whom salvation can be obtained. He exhorted his hearers to 'believe in Jesus'. He joined with Bilney in his work in the mean streets and prisons. He tells of visiting a woman who had been condemned to death. 'In the process of time she tasted that the Lord is gracious. She had such a saviour and such a sweetness of feeling that she thought it long to the day of execution. She was with Christ already, as concerning faith, longing to depart and to be with Him. The word of God had so wrought in her.'

When in 1536 King Henry VIII began the closure of the monasteries, or 'religious houses' as they were called, Latimer took the opportunity to speak about the true Christian household: 'look at that man and woman living together piously, tranquilly in the fear of God, keeping His word and active in the duties of their calling, they form a religious house, one that is truly acceptable to God.'

Latimer served as Bishop of Worcester for four years. He resigned when the Act of Six Articles became law. This reflected one of the King's changes of policy and re-established many Roman Catholic doctrines and set a penalty of death for anyone that denied some of

them. Because of his objection to this change Latimer was placed under house arrest and later sent to the Tower of London.

After King Henry's death, Latimer declined the offer of a return to being a Bishop and devoted himself to preaching as the opportunity arose. He often spoke at St. Paul's Cross, a point outside St Paul's Cathedral in London, where announcements were often made. By such means he influenced many.

Early on in the persecution under Queen Mary Latimer was arrested and condemned as a heretic. He was burned at Oxford in October 1555 but the candle which he truly lit was that of his own clear certainty of the truth of the gospel which shone brightly in his sermons and would continue to illuminate the hearts and minds of men and women and turn them to Christ.

On the day that Latimer was burned together with Ridley, three others far less well known but just as steadfast suffered for their faith. On 16<sup>th</sup> October 1555 William Wolsey and Thomas Pygot were burned at Ely while William Dighel was burned at Banbury. Let us honour their faithfulness.

## **A Voice from the Past**

### **PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER**

There never was any petition really presented to the Lord without a gracious answer.

When the Lord prayed at Gethsemane the cup was not removed, but there was a gracious answer — "There appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him". The Lord had said, "Father, if thou be willing, let this cup pass from me" [He felt it fully] "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done".

When the Lord prayed He put in, "Not my will". Paul did not put that in; Paul said, 'Take away this thorn, take it away — take it away' but the Lord's will was that Paul should have that thorn and the gracious answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength is made perfect in weakness". Paul was strengthened from heaven.

In praying for the Lord's people, His concerns, plans and the like, if the Lord does not grant our petitions, He will at least say, as He did



to David, "It was well it was in thy heart to pray unto me". The time for granting the full answer may not have come, yet He will say "It was well".

G. V. Wigram (1805 – 1879)

## **ON PRAYER**

**"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:9)**

This is a very good prayer, if anybody should say no more at one time than that; for as we see our need, so we shall pray. When we see God's name to be dishonoured, blasphemed and ill-spoken of, then a man, a faithful man, should say, "Father...hallowed be thy name". When we see the devil reign and all the world follow his kingdom, then we may say, Father, "thy kingdom come". When we see that the world followeth her own desires and lusts, and not God's will and His commandments, and it grieveth us to see this, then we should say, Father, "thy will be done". When we lack necessaries for the maintenance of this life, everything is dear, and then we may say, Father, "give us this day our daily bread".

Therefore as we see cause, so we should pray. For it is better to say one of these short prayers with a good faith, than a very long prayer without faith.

Hugh Latimer (1491 – 1555) Extracted from a sermon in 1552

## **A word for Today**

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE TESTIMONY**

It is important to recognize the Spirit of God as entering into the testimony of God and giving character to it, and also as taking on the care of believers from a spiritual standpoint. He is here in charge of divine interests, and the more conscious we are of His presence and of who He is, the more invulnerable we shall be and the more restful as committed to the truth of God. It is obvious that God can never be taken by surprise, nor does He ever find Himself at a loss; and therefore the presence of the Holy Spirit with the saints ensures that the testimony will continue according to God without anything being surrendered or overthrown.

Elisha's history illustrates this. Elijah was one who had been outstandingly faithful to God in testimony here, maintaining His rights

**the testimony here is  
to take character from  
the One whom God has  
taken up into heaven**

in a time of the greatest departure in Israel, and the day came for him to be taken up to heaven. God gave him the great distinction of being in a remarkable way a type of Christ—the Man who has been taken up to heaven. Elisha knew that he himself was to continue here in testimony

for God in the absence of Elijah, and Elijah asked him what he should do for him before he was taken away from him; Elisha said, “let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (2 Kings 2:9). He felt that if he was to be here in the absence of the one who had been so faithful, he would need a double portion of his spirit.

If we think of Christ, and what He was as the faithful and true Witness, how perfectly He maintained the truth as to God, surrendering nothing, but carrying it through in perfection to the end, we may feel how utterly unequal we are to having the truth of God entrusted to us. Yet in the power of the Spirit of God we can be equal to it for the Spirit of God in the believer is capable of maintaining every feature of the truth of God here in testimony. Elijah said, “if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so” (2 Kings 2:10). Elijah would thus impress Elisha with the fact that at all costs he must keep his eye upon the one who was being taken up into heaven.

Now that is the position which comes before us in the first chapter of the Acts, where the testimony was about to commence after Christ had gone on high. The two men in white clothing standing by the disciples said to them, “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld him going into heaven” (Acts 1:11). They saw Him being taken up into heaven, and would get an impression of One who was in every way suited to that realm. The dispensation commenced with Jesus being taken up into heaven, and it is to close with His coming again in the same way.

This is something for us to bear in mind, that the testimony here is to take character from the One whom God has taken up into heaven. John says that the fathers had “known him that is from the beginning” (1 John 2:12). Christ was before them and they knew Him; that was everything to them, and Christ is thus to give character to the

testimony right through until He comes. We are tested by this as to whether we are marked by impatience, and grow weary, or whether we are carrying through the testimony of God in the Spirit of grace that marks the dispensation, untarnished to the end. Now the power for that is in the Spirit. We do not now see Jesus, but the position is to be filled out in the power of the Spirit which has come down from Jesus. If we are to be here in the testimony of God, it must be entirely in the Spirit of Christ.

Hebrews 4 shows that the Spirit of God will take account of conditions among the saints and will speak in relation to them; this is something to which we should pay attention—the Spirit of God speaking. He may speak privately in an individual, or He may speak to us through believers in the church, as He did in Antioch. He also spoke to Paul through the disciples at Tyre (see Acts 13:12 and 21:4). What comes to light in Hebrews is that the Spirit speaks: “Wherefore, even as says the Holy Spirit. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7 – 8).

If anyone is beginning to get away from the Lord, neglecting the reading of the Scriptures, and becoming careless and formal as to prayer, the Spirit sees that and feels it. The Spirit has first-hand knowledge of what is going on in the saints individually as well as when they are together. Sin is very deceitful, and its hardening effect is quickly seen; hence the Spirit’s gracious appeal—“harden not your hearts.”

In Acts 20 we have the Spirit presented in a double way. Paul said that the Holy Spirit testified in every city that bonds and tribulations awaited him. It is a very comforting and assuring thing that One who has divine and perfect knowledge of all that is to arise in opposition to the testimony should be at liberty to warn us of it. We read in Timothy that “the Spirit speaks expressly” (1Timothy 4:1). We should be impressed with the fact that the Spirit of God is here in charge of the testimony in the saints: “he abides with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). He is in the saints that the truth of God in testimony in the world should go through, whatever develops in opposition to it. Paul is conscious of that. He says, “the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and tribulations await me. But I make no account of my life as dear to myself, so that I finish my course, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify

the glad tidings of the grace of God" (Acts 20:23 – 24). This is an important matter to bear in mind—that we are to finish our course, which means that every feature of the testimony is to find its place before the assembly is taken to be with Christ.

It is a great thing to keep ourselves in the sense of grace, and that the heart should be established with grace. We have to do with the God of all grace, and the character of His grace towards us is set out in Christ where He is—we are "taken into favour in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). Nothing alters that! It is a great thing to keep the full standard of grace before our hearts. The apostle was concerned that he should minister to the end the gospel of the grace of God. He also says, "Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own" (Acts 20:28). That is, the Holy Spirit is in charge of the position. He is speaking now to those who are elders and on whom the responsibility rests of caring for the flock.

In whatever way Satan seeks to overcome the people of God, the great thing is to be alert and to resist him. David, in the Old Testament, proved his fitness to be set over God's inheritance by the way in which he cared for his father's flock. The ability to keep ourselves from the snares of the devil lies in the Holy Spirit whom we have received. If we allow things that are grieving to the Holy Spirit, we are opening the way for the devil to gain a hold over our souls.

The Spirit of God operates through those who are available and who, through experience with God and the influence of the love of Christ, are prepared to care for the saints, shepherding "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own". This is a most touching expression, showing what great value God attaches to His assembly; He was prepared to pay that great price, the blood of His own Son, in order that He might have the church as a vessel to serve Him acceptably. It is composed of persons who are regarded here as sheep needing to be cared for, fed and shepherded, calling for the exercise of self-sacrificing love.

May the Lord help us to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit more fully, that we may become more available to Him.

Alfred Gardiner