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Living Water

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Editor: Mark Lemon

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Recent Ministry

LEARNING FROM JACOB'S HISTORY – PART 2

(Continued from issue 102)

Landmark 3 — God of the house of God (Genesis 35:1-7, 9-16)

In chapter 35 Jacob gets the call to return to Bethel. We read, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto the God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. And Jacob said to his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you and cleanse yourselves and change your garments". Jacob realises that there are some things that are not suitable for God's house. We read in Timothy that we are to know "how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). Each one of us is to know how to conduct ourselves in God's house. We need to remember that we are never out of that house. It is not a stone and lime building but composed of persons.

Then there is to be a thorough cleansing of garments which would suggest care in the associations of life. In God's house we have to disassociate ourselves with what the world is going on with. There is an interesting reference at the end of 2 Corinthians 6: "come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty". That is a commitment that God gives. The apostle goes on, "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear". Holiness becomes God's house for ever. Holiness is to mark us as in God's house.

Jacob was told to make an altar and God's service is to be carried on in accordance with a right standard. God's service is very wide; it is not just a matter of praise but involves testimony

and a godly way of life. There is a scripture in Psalm 24 that bears on this, "Who shall ascend into the mount of Jehovah? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath blameless hands and a pure heart". Blameless hands and a pure heart go together. The Lord says, "This people honour me with the lips, but their heart is far away from me" (Matthew 15:8). Our hearts are to be moved and our hands clean, so there is a need for purification. Everything that is out of keeping with the house of God is to be set aside.

Well, we read, "And they journeyed; and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob". God was with him; He was overseeing them in their journeying and helping them. "And Jacob came to... Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el; because there God had appeared to him..." El-beth-el means God of the house of God. The first landmark in chapter 28 had resulted in Jacob thinking of God in relation to himself but now he is more elevated in his thoughts - it is God in relation to the house of God. Jacob is making progress in his soul. He is a pattern for us.

**We are all sons
of God by faith
of Jesus Christ**

God reveals Himself to Jacob at Bethel: "God said to him, I am the Almighty God". That is how God was known to the patriarchs. To Israel God was known as Jehovah; to us in this wonderful dispensation, God is known as Father. If there was power and blessing available to Jacob, it is available to us in a far greater way, for we know God in the wonderful relationship that has been made known to us by Christ. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John 20:17). We are all sons of God by faith of Jesus Christ.

God blessed Jacob, then, "God went up from him in the place where he had talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the

place where he had talked with him... and poured on it a drink-offering and poured oil on it. And Jacob called the name of the place where God had talked with him, Beth-el". There is not only oil poured on the pillar but a drink offering, suggesting the joy that was in Jacob's heart due to his relations with God. It is a very great landmark in his history and becomes so in ours as we know the joy of reconciliation and the reality of God's presence.

Landmark 4 – The worshipper (Hebrews 11:21).

Finally, I read in Hebrews. In the great chapter of faith, Jacob is singled out as a worshipper. This is really the completion of God's work in him.

Genesis 48 needs to be read in conjunction with this, for there we see Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph. Jacob had remarkable intelligence and understanding as he finished his course. In blessing Ephraim and Manasseh he "guided his hands intelligently". He goes over his history too, speaking of the "Angel that redeemed me from all evil..." He goes back to that point when the Angel appeared to him and he is able to trace God's ways with him from there, right through to the end. He can speak of the "God that shepherded me all my life long".

Have we, in our day, not known God shepherding us up until this point? Will He not continue to shepherd us? Surely He will shepherd us right until the Lord comes or we are taken to be with Him.

Jacob finishes with worship. Something was established in his soul through all the ways of God with him and through his own knowledge of God. May there be something established in our souls that does not come from our mind but comes from our heart. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). May worship flow to God.

May the Lord bless the word to us, for His name's sake.

Gordon Sinclair

An address at St Anne's, 15 May 2010

REALITY IN THE GLAD TIDINGS

“And Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man before his master, and honourable, for by him Jehovah had given deliverance to Syria; and he was a mighty man of valour, but a leper. And the Syrians had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman’s wife. And she said to her mistress, Oh, would that my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy” (2 Kings 5:1 – 3)

Here we have the story of Naaman’s little maid. She might have been about 12 years old. The marauding bands of the Syrians had come and snatched her from her home, her parents, her friends and her country and took her to Syria. There she was to be a slave. Imagine if you were suddenly taken away from your parents, your friends, your home and your land, into a country where you did not know the language or how to behave, and were put to work day after day. You would have thought she would be sullen, miserable and resentful. I do not think she was.

She had been taken to the household of this great man, Naaman, through whom God had given Syria deliverance. He was an honourable man and I do not think he would have treated her dishonourably. I do not think that Naaman was that sort of man. Yet Naaman had a very black future. So has every sinner who does not repent and believe in Jesus. Naaman was a leper. Underneath those medals, underneath the success, was hidden the first sign of leprosy. You know what happens to a leper. When the leprosy broke out and became contagious, he would have been sent away from home, probably into a commune, may be into a hermit existence, to die in pain and loneliness away from his loved ones, never to be near them again. That was Naaman’s future. If you do not believe in the Lord Jesus you will be alone, away from God’s presence for ever. That is the future.

This little maid must have heard of his leprosy in the house but she knew about Elisha, a prophet in Israel. She must have known

**That is what
witness is
about**

how Elisha had smitten the river Jordan with Elijah's garment and had gone across on dry land (2 Kings 2:14) and how a little lad had been raised from the dead by him (2 Kings 4:32-37). She knew the prophet could raise the dead or drive back the power of death in Jordan; he had brought deliverance to King Jehoshaphat, when that king faced defeat until Elisha came onto the scene and God turned matters around and the battle was won (see 2 Kings 3). She knew that he could bring prosperity into conditions of utter poverty as when the sons of the widow were going to be taken away and sold to pay the widow's debt (2Kings 4:1-7). She knew Elisha - but we know Christ. It is wonderful to know that the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, can meet and resolve any need, any problem, any sorrow or grief, anything at all!

The captive maid knew about Elisha but instead of keeping it to herself she said to her mistress, "Oh, would that my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria!" She was real with the glad tidings. That is what witness is about; having every cause to be unhappy and sorrowful she was happy and bright and able to say, 'Would that God would bless this man'. Are we like that? As we go about our lives are we marked by a spirit of blessing - the spirit of the gospel? The compassions of God and the light of His testimony were found in this little maid in a very dark country. She was real and true.

You know the rest of the story, how Naaman went eventually to the prophet Elisha and got healing through washing in the river Jordan. I sometimes wonder how he treated that little maid when he came back. Think of the blessing of being forgiven and healed. It changes your outlook on everything. You have a new taste, a new outlook, a new hope; you behave differently, you are changed - there is a new creation. I think perhaps he would have taken her home to Israel.

Phil Robinson

Extracted from an address at Chester, 27 March 2010

WHAT IS DUE TO GOD

“Because what is known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them, - for from the world’s creation the invisible things of him are perceived , being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both his eternal power and divinity, - so as to render them inexcusable.

**“Because, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but fell into folly in their thoughts, and their heart without understanding was darkened...”
Romans 1: 19 – 21.**

**“But what says it? The word is near thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved”
Romans 10:8 – 9.**

These two passages in Romans tell us what is due to God. What sort of response is there in your heart to God tonight?

Romans 1 speaks of God as the Creator and we see there that what is due to God is ‘thanks’. There is a witness to God in creation. What power, what wisdom, and what glory we see in it! In our modern world we are in many ways closeted from the true nature of creation. A few generations ago people would have had a much better understanding of the seasons, of plants and such things, than is common today. In the North-East of Scotland, where I come from, many people still make their living from fishing and the knowledge of the sea that many of the older fishermen had was far greater than those of today. Technology has taken over. Many of those older fishermen were God-fearing – they knew the power of God, they saw His way in the sea and they knew the uncertainty of life and how they lived on the edge of eternity. They knew what it was to have to

do with God as Creator. As we look at creation we see the perfection, beauty, diversity and power of it. God would witness to us by these things of which everyone can take account. People who ignore this witness, as Romans tells us, are without excuse.

We read here, "Because, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful". That is the start of the downward slope. They knew about God and they were not thankful. Surely we would wonder at that: there is great simplicity in returning thanks to God, but Romans tells us that people neither glorified God, nor were they thankful. By the end of the chapter we see the dreadful end of that course:– "being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice... insolent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things... faithless... unmerciful..." That describes us, by nature, as away from God. One great banner can be written over the human race – 'Sinners'. I have no inclination to find out how many sins anyone here may have committed, but one sin is enough to set us under the banner of "sinner". Now, the great truth of the gospel is that the God who created you knew what you are as a sinner. He knew and He loved you, dear friend and He sent His Son to die for you.

That brings me to my second scripture. What does God ask for in the gospel? In Romans 10 God is looking for obedience – the obedience of faith – faith that takes God at His word. In the New Testament we find exactly what God did: God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son to be our Saviour. Think of what it meant to God to send His Son to bear our sins.

Jesus came to this world in obedience. He came in love to His God and Father, but He came in obedience: He did the will of His God and Father. Whatever God said, Jesus carried it out perfectly. He was perfect in the sight of a holy God. God could look down from heaven upon Him and say, "This is my beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17). And in looking at Jesus there is a sense

that God looked at no one else – He was totally satisfied with Jesus in all that He did. God was completely satisfied with Jesus when in perfect obedience He offered Himself spotless to God as the perfect sacrifice at Calvary. What did it cost Jesus to go to the cross? We get some indication of it in the garden of Gethsemane. His disciples, who were with Him in the garden, should have been some support to Him but they did not shine very brightly! He asked them to watch with Him but they fell asleep; later Judas betrayed Him and Peter denied Him. Then in the garden, too, we see something of the intense pressure that came upon His spirit as He contemplated being made sin and being forsaken and bearing God's holy wrath. He fell upon His face, His sweat becoming as great drops of blood. We read that being in conflict He prayed more intently and what a prayer it was: "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). If we were to be forgiven a great and terrible price had to be paid on our behalf. He shrank from being made sin and being forsaken of God yet in love and obedience He went on to the cross. What a Saviour He is.

Jesus knew the complete heart of God, the complete glory of God in a past eternity, yet the same One as Man here knew what it was to be completely rejected by His people, completely disowned by His friends and completely left alone by His God and Father. The One who knew complete communion, complete intimacy, with His Father knew what it was to be totally alone; hence His cry, "Eli, Eli lama sabachthani? That is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). What a powerful cry came from the heart of Jesus. Think of what it cost Jesus to go to the cross. We will never, even in glory, fully understand it.

God fully understood it. It was part of His plan from a past eternity. We get a foreshadowing of it in the slaying of the Passover lamb. God said: "when I see the blood, I will pass over

you” (Exodus 12:13). Jesus shed His blood – His life was truly laid down. A soldier pierced His side with the spear and “immediately there came out blood and water” (John 19:34). Yes, God was fully satisfied with Jesus’ sacrifice and He has shown this in raising Him from the dead. Just as the Israelite could rely on the blood of the Passover lamb, so those who trust in Jesus can rely totally on the finished work of Jesus.

Jesus was taken by loving hands from the cross and laid in a new tomb. Mary of Magdala and the other Mary came to the sepulchre on the first day of the week and lo, He was not there, He was risen. Yes, Jesus is no longer on the cross, He is no

**“The word is
near thee”**

longer in the tomb. He is risen; the victory has been won, completely won by Jesus! How great He is and how great all He has done!

The Person and work of Christ is presented to you so that you might believe. In the first chapter of Romans we have what we see in creation, what we are able to understand, to apprehend, as to the witness of God. Now, the gospel is presented so that you might receive it by faith. I could take you, physically, to Jerusalem. It is greatly changed since the days when the Lord Jesus was there, but I could take you to a place where it is thought that Jesus may have been crucified and to the tomb where possibly He was put but what is that? By faith I can see Him where He now is, at the right hand of God. From that exalted place, because of the sacrifice that He made, He is offering forgiveness and peace to all who will trust in Him. One day every knee will have to bow to Jesus but there is great blessing in doing so now.

The question tonight is, ‘What about now?’ We read: “The word is near thee”. One evening there was a young man outside a hall in Portknockie where the gospel was about to begin. He was invited to come in but he hesitated and someone showed him this scripture and got him to read it, “The word is near

thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach". Eventually he was challenged, 'Do you want to come in or not?' The reply was 'No, I'll leave it', and he wandered away. How solemn, when the gospel is so close: "In your mouth and in your heart". It is there for your obedience – the obedience of faith. Accept Jesus now.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved." Believe. That is God's cry tonight! Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved! Do not say, I will see about it another time. The day is soon coming when Jesus will come into the air and He will shout with one shout and all those who have trusted in Him will hear that one shout. The dead in Christ will be raised and, together with the living who believe, all will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The gospel as we know it will cease.

The time for accepting Jesus as your Saviour is now. I cannot guarantee you another opportunity. The gospel has gone out in this Hall for over 100 years but I cannot guarantee you another 100 years. I cannot guarantee you another 100 minutes. Realise what you are as a sinner. Come to Jesus and say, 'Yes, I am a sinner and I need forgiveness'. He will say. "Thy faith has saved thee, go in peace".

Faith or 'believing' is completely trusting, to have complete confidence in the object of our faith. How wonderful that we can have complete confidence in Jesus! He came, He died, and He lives. He lives for all eternity. He can be your Saviour. He is mine. May you accept Him as your Saviour now for His name's sake. Amen.

Brian Mair,

A preaching of the gospel, Defford, 4 July 2010.

Poetry Selection

BUT THIS I KNOW

*I cannot tell why He whom angels worship,
Should set His love upon the sons of men,
Or why, as Shepherd, He should seek the wanderers,
To bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that He was born of Mary,
When Bethlehem's manger was His only home,
And that He lived in Nazareth and laboured,
And so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.*

*I cannot tell how silently He suffered,
As with His peace He graced this world of tears
Or how through great reproach His heart was broken,
The crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, He heals the broken hearted,
And stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
And lifts the burden from the heavy laden,
For yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is here.*

*I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
When at His bidding every storm is stilled,
Or who can say how great the jubilation
When hearts of all with knowledge of God are filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
And myriad, myriad joyful voices sing,
And earth to heaven and heaven to earth will answer:
At last the Saviour, Saviour of the world is king!*

W. Y. Fullerton (1857 – 1932)

COME LORD JESUS

*Lord Jesus, Saviour, 'tis for Thee we're waiting,
Our hearts indeed now long for Thy return,
The Spirit's voice with all Thy saints is blending
To Thee the cry, 'E'en so Lord Jesus come'.*

*How soon that glorious morrow may be dawning,
The watchman cries, 'The night is nearly passed'
While through the darkest hour of night is gleaming
The Morning Star. Oh, saints, lift up your hearts!*

*May we increasingly be found confiding,
In Thee, our hope, and ever sure repose.
The church's cares and burdens ever casting
On Thee her Head and refuge from all foes.*

David Bass

Testimony Section

GOD WAS PURPOSED TO SAVE ME

I want to tell you how God saved me. We are all sinners and cannot save ourselves, but God is willing and able to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In telling my story I do not want to draw attention to myself but to the Person of Christ. He is to be the focal point. He came from heaven to offer Himself to God as the perfect sacrifice at Calvary so that we can be saved.

I was born in Lewisham, South East London, in September 1976. I had one brother and four sisters. My parents were Christians and assiduously attended Christian services and I went with them. The Bible was in the home but I do not remember it being much read or explained in the family. However, I had a good upbringing and my parents loved their children and cared for them. I thank God for my parents.

When I was seven I nearly drowned. We had gone down the River Thames in a hired boat with another family who were all deaf and dumb. I fell into the water. I could not swim and the water was 3.5 metres deep. I was struggling and helpless. The deaf and dumb man reached over the side and pulled me out of the water. My mother taught me to say, "Thank you for saving me" in sign language, so I could thank the deaf and dumb man. I little thought that a good number of years later I would be saying, "Thank You for saving me" to another Man! Yet looking back on my life, that experience on the river showed that God did intend to preserve me and He really did want to save me eternally, so that I would be able to praise Him.

God is interested in every one of us, however young or old you are. He wants to secure your soul. He did not create you to be lost. Sin has come in and separated us from God. He wants to save you. He desires that all should be saved.

As I grew up I became a rebellious teenager. I was a really filthy young man who had no time for God and wanted my own way in life. I went to High School and then on to college. Three times I was suspended by the college and finally they expelled me. My parents split up about this time and this really unsettled me. Eventually my mother said, "Clive, if you are going to carry on like this, you really will have to leave the home."

I thought that it would be wonderful to be free but I was cut off by my family and I soon got into the wrong crowd, and fell into all kinds of sin. I thought I could be in control but it did not turn out that way. The tragedy was that we all thought we were having a good time but it was a delusion. All that was happening was that I was coming more and more under the control of the devil. He is the god of this world and he despises you and wants to see to it that you finish in destruction.

As you read this you may be thinking, 'I am not into criminal things'. Be thankful if you are not! Yet the devil will try to get you any way he can; he will use your interest in sport, or books, or fitness, or career, so that you have no time for God.

My life of sin went on; I was a thief and then one day I got caught and appeared in Court. Looking back, I thank God for that intervention in my life. I was given a Conditional Discharge, which meant that if I was convicted of a further offence in the next twelve months I could be sent to prison. I decided to turn over a new leaf and in 1997 I flew to Israel with a friend and lived there for ten months.

I knew the stories of the Gospels and while I was in Israel I went to the Sea of Galilee, the mountains of Tiberius and to Jerusalem but it was all a historical thing. In Jerusalem I went to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and lit a candle. I was ever so pleased with myself! I had done my bit! But I was still as guilty and helpless as ever. We cannot be saved by our own efforts; we need to trust in Christ.

When I got back to England I started my own window cleaning business. It went well and I was in a good relationship, living with my girl friend. One day the Holy Spirit spoke to my conscience and told me I was 'living in sin'. That is God's view of living together before marriage. I just brushed the thought aside; after all everyone I knew was doing the same thing.

In 1999 my girl friend and I spent eighteen months touring Australia and New Zealand. It was a brilliant time for me – I thought I had everything. On the plane home I told my girl friend who was scared of flying, 'Don't worry. If the plane goes down, at least it will be quick!' What a fool I was! I would have had to meet my Creator in my sins. If you do not trust in Christ as your Saviour, you will have to meet your Creator in your sins.

When we got back to London my relationship with my girl friend failed. I was devastated and railed against God for allowing it to happen to me. How patient God is. He could have removed me in a moment but He wanted to save me.

I was soon back in my old sinful ways. One day I was so drunk that I nearly killed myself taking a short cut across a railway line. I realised that I just had to change. I thought that the best way to do this was to go back to Australia. Coming to Melbourne

**that night I prayed
sincerely for the
first time**

did not make a difference for I took all my sinful baggage with me. We can move where we like but we do not free ourselves from our sins.

While in Melbourne I started working for a Christian called Mr Sollberger.

He was not afraid to speak about the Lord Jesus. One day we were talking about someone else at work and Mr Sollberger said, 'That man is living in sin because he is living with a woman and he is not married'. I was not living with a girl friend at that time, but the Holy Spirit used those words to convict me of the sin which marked my whole life, the drunkenness, the swearing and foul language – yes, I was living in sin.

I had a deep conviction of sin and that night I prayed sincerely for the first time. I had asked for my sins to be forgiven before but carried on in them. That night I asked God to open my eyes, my ears, and my heart. I got up in the morning still with a real conviction of sin, and prayed the same thing. Then I went to work.

I was working at the house of a lady and during the morning she gave me a cup of coffee. As we were drinking the coffee together she said, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?"

"Yes", I replied, "I believe in Jesus Christ, He came to this earth. I know the story". She went on without my asking her and said, "I was brought up in a very strict home in Southern France. When I was twenty-one I rebelled against it – I left home and my family disowned me. I came to Australia to get away from it all but I fell into the world". To cut a long story short, she had ended up in hospital where a Christian lady told her about the love of God and about Jesus and she was saved!

She did not know what I had prayed that morning, or that I had left home and had been rejected by my family and had come to Australia and had fallen into the world. I knew at that moment that there was a God and that He had answered my prayer. I went out to my lorry fighting my pride but with a lump in my throat.

A week or so later my boss invited me to come to a gospel meeting. I went and it was as though the speaker and I were the only people there. He asked, 'Isn't it time you came to Christ? Isn't it time you left the world behind? Isn't it time you took the Christ of God into your heart and life? He died at Calvary to set you free. He can give you a new life, new aspirations, new desires and set you on a new pathway to eternal life.'

I did not wait for the cup of tea at the end of the meeting. I knew I needed to get right with God. I got out of the hall and drove my van a few streets away and then I pulled over. I was almost twenty-six but I wept and wept, pleading with God to save me. I confessed my sinful condition, the wickedness of my life and the darkness of everything I had been involved in. You may not have been involved in such things but you have the capacity and ability to do so. I just put them into practice! You can cry out to God and He will save you. I cried that night, "Lord save me" and He did!

When I got home I remember lying on the bed and breathing a great sigh – my sins were gone! I had peace with God. I did not then know the verse: "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid...and thy sleep shall be sweet" (Proverbs 3:24). That is how it was for me. I was saved. I had peace.

Clive Barber

Based on a testimony given in Cooroy, Queensland, Australia, February, 2008.

A Voice from the Past

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BEING WITH CHRIST

Part 2 – Paul's desire to depart

"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23)

I am afraid that in our desire to give prominence to the precious truth of the Lord's coming, we sometimes give the impression that it is a very inferior kind of thing to look for departing to be with Christ. It is therefore well that we should be reminded in

this epistle of highest Christian experience that Paul had a “desire to depart”. The Holy Spirit knew that in the actual history of the church millions of believers would “fall asleep” and it was important that the attitude of the Christian in view of this possibility should have a place in this epistle. Otherwise it might be supposed – as was actually the case in Thessalonica – that to “fall asleep” was to sustain some loss, and that those alive at the time of the rapture would have some advantage over those who departed before.

To be “with Christ” is “far better” than to remain here. The sweetest thought in connection with the rapture is that, “So shall we be ever with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). That is the heart’s own portion, and it is a very precious fact that the infinitely blessed prospect of being in the Lord’s company is connected with the departure of the Christian as well as with the coming of the Lord (see Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 5:8, and Philippians 1:23). The Christian’s heart longs for the company of the glorious One “who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (1 Thessalonians 5:10).

Therefore if we think of ourselves as part of the church we look for the coming of the Lord; if we think of ourselves as individuals we “have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ”. Nor is this a small thing, for where this desire really exists it bears witness that the heart is not seeking its portion here – it has done with the earth. The separating word has entered the soul – “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted” (Micah 2:10). The mind is set on things above, not on things of earth. The links with heaven are stronger than the links with earth, and the soul’s desire is there, not here.

I am afraid, beloved friends, that sometimes we look upon death as a melancholy termination of our course upon the earth. There is, I fear, but little of this leaping forward with the heart to be “with Christ”. Paul does not speak of ‘resignation’ or ‘submission’; he expresses a desire that burned with fervour in his soul. The earth was for him the poor polluted scene of man’s sins and Satan’s power, and he longed to be away from it “with Christ”.

The only thing that detained his heart here was the church. Christ's treasures – the members of His body – were here, and for their "furtherance and joy of faith" he was willing to remain. The Christian, as such, has no object upon this earth but the interests of Christ.

C. A. Coates

GOD'S GLAD TIDINGS

Everyone who hears the gospel has a door opened to them to escape from the wrath to come. In the Day of Judgment men shall know all the past. Forgetful hearers of the gospel shall then with gnashing of teeth remember how they once neglected so great salvation (see Hebrews 2:3). Their worm will never die, their fire never be quenched (Mark 9:44).

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We can do well to remember that God is as true to His forewarnings of wrath and curse, as He is to His promises of grace. We take the latter for our peculiar comfort, but should also solemnly meditate on the former for our ripe and full acquaintance with God.

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God justifies the sinner who believes. When God pardons, He justifies. Man may pardon; he cannot blot out. God alone can justify; and He justifies by Christ, who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

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The salvation of God delivers a person, not only from the guilt, but from the dominion of sin, and brings them into fellowship with God. This salvation is preached to "every creature" under heaven; and it leaves without excuse everyone who does not receive it.

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As deeds and thoughts of wicked men do now appear to the all-seeing eye of God, so will He re-present them to their memory and conscience at the great day: the offender will be the chief witness against himself.

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The best testimony that Stephen bore was his last: not when he was preaching and working miracles, but when he pleaded for his persecutors, for then he most resembled the Lord Jesus in patience, forgiveness and love.

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Unbelief is in man's sight no sin at all – but in God's sight it is of all sins the greatest.

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The forgiveness of God is like the God who grants it – everlasting, all-comprehensive; immeasurable ... there is no possibility of condemnation. The bond that was against me is now nailed up, as it were, in the court of justice for the protection of the debtor. I now owe everything to the love of God; I owe my whole self. Let Christ dwell in my heart, to guide every glance of my eye, every thought of the mind.

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The love of God is not purchased for us by the blood of Christ. That love springs up out of God's own heart and nature. Self-moved, He sent His Son.

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The children of God enter heaven, not by sufferance, but by right and title: the justice of God demands it, because Christ has died and is risen.

Robert C. Chapman (1803 – 1902)

Extracts from "Choice Thoughts"

Reprint

MEEKNESS AND LOWLINESS

Do we value meekness and lowliness as moral features that should characterise us? The Lord said, "I am meek and lowly in heart". They characterised Him in all His life of testimony and administration here. Yet along with it there

was dignity, authority and power; but dignity without pride, authority without arrogance, power without assumption.

Lowliness is connected with service, meekness is connected with suffering. An outstanding example of lowliness is seen when the Lord washed the disciples' feet although He was the greatest among them. The outstanding examples of meekness were, first at Gethsemane, when He received the cup from the Father's hand, and then in receiving such ill-treatment from the hands of men when before Pilate and Herod. How Jesus shone there in the glory of meekness! What moral majesty was there! What moral power, for meekness is not weakness! What moral perfection was displayed for the Lord bore all without a sign of resentment, no gesture of retaliation, no threatening look or haughty bearing. Had there been any He would not have been the Lamb without spot and without blemish; He could not have offered Himself without spot to God for a propitiation; nor could Peter have referred to Him as our example, saying, "when reviled, reviled not again; and when suffering, threatened not". How short we come of our Lord and Teacher! Meekness is the supreme test. If we fail in meekness it proves that we have not been truly lowly, and that the leaven of pride has been working, hidden and perhaps unsuspected by us.

We need to keep at the feet of the One who was meek and lowly in heart and to learn from Him.

*Low at thy feet, Lord Jesus,
This is the place for me;
Here I have learned deep lessons,
Truth that has set me free,*

*Free from myself, Lord Jesus,
Free from my wayward will;
But for Thy love constraining,
I had been wayward still.*

Lowliness is the spirit in which we give a word. Meekness is the spirit in which we receive a word. Lowliness means that I do not exalt myself. Meekness means that I do not defend myself. Meekness makes me bold in the conflict in the face of the enemy. Lowliness is to mark me among friends in peace and restfulness. Meekness is needed when men speak ill of you. Lowliness is needed when men speak well of you. Meekness shines when you are abased. Lowliness shines when you are promoted. Paul received the thorn for the flesh in meekness. It was given to preserve him in lowliness. In meekness we do not rebel under God's chastening hand, nor retaliate when suffering under men's hands, but continue to serve both God and men in lowliness, the spirit of Christ.

The exercise of these two moral excellencies is a lifelong matter. We are anything but meek and lowly naturally, and it is the service of the Holy Spirit to form us in the moral beauties of Christ that we might be pleasurable to God in a scene so opposite in character to the blessed Man in whom God's soul delighted.

May we have an increasing desire to submit to the delicate service of the Holy Spirit. He would garnish us, as He did the heavens, with the glory and beauty of Christ.

W. H. Priestley.

This article was selected for reprinting from "Living Water" No 3 by Peter Wallach

In the next issue, God willing, there will be a reprint from "Living Water" No 4 selected by Eileen Whiley.

A word for Today

THE GAIN OF LEARNING OF CHRIST

Matthew 11:16 - 30

Now the point I am coming to is this – in the presence of the Father and the Son we have another order of man. The first order of man has been tested in every variety of way in which God could approach man – law, prophets, John the Baptist, Christ, and even by the presence and testimony of the Holy Spirit – but man has failed; he does not respond to any testimony of God at all. Thus man’s case is hopeless. God cannot touch him except in sovereign grace. Without God’s sovereign work, in which man is born again, man’s case would be hopeless. It is of all importance to accept this. But then by this fact you have a man of another order morally before God, and that must be the case if the first man is not to be touched by any testimony of God. All must begin with a divine work in his soul, as we find in John 3: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. Then in verse 5 you get a subsequent statement: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”. But first you have to see that he cannot accept any testimony addressed to him by God. But in the presence of the Father you get a man of another order, and if you want to know what the character of it is, you get it here in the person of Christ Himself, for in the subsequent passage He speaks of Himself very evidently as Man. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls.” One may venture to speak of the Lord as presenting Himself there as in the place of Man in the presence of the Father, and the character brought before us is “meek and lowly in heart”. I think that there could be nothing more remarkable than the Son describing Himself in that way. That is, what a man is in the

presence of the Father's love, that characterises him down here; but you never find that in man after the flesh. It was said of Moses that he was the meekest man upon earth, but you must remember that this was after and the effect of a long course of divine discipline, and it was, I doubt not, in view of the One who here says. "I am meek and lowly in heart". If you find a man in the presence of the Father, I do not doubt he will be thus characterised. It is, I judge, in contrast to man in his assumption and self-confidence and pride...

**Christ ... is
approachable**

Then we have the admonition, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart". You are to be subdued to Christ; Christ is now the starting point morally. Every subject of grace has to take his character from Christ, and we can approach Christ from the very fact that He is meek and lowly in heart; He is approachable. That is the idea which the passage presents to me. You can venture to approach one who is meek and lowly in heart, and He is the Man in the presence of the Father's love.

Now, in being brought to Christ, and learning of Him, you get wonderful instruction which you can derive only from Christ. We all seek to help, and to point out the lines to one another, and to direct attention of each other to the things of God. We can in this sense be sign posts to others, but each one of us has himself to learn of Christ. You cannot be impressed too much with the importance of that. Christ is the Teacher, He instructs us, and leads our hearts into the knowledge of the love of God. I think we learn every true lesson from Christ. Our hearts get instructed in divine love, and the love of God is the true source of our moral being. There is never a breath of real life in man except in response to the love of God. There may be an antecedent work in the soul, but until the love of God is apprehended, until we have learnt that "God who is rich in mercy,

for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ", we can hardly be said to be conscious of living. God began, of His love, and the first breath of spiritual life was our response to that love. And the great expression of that love is beyond all controversy in the death of Christ. God so loved us that He gave His Son for us. Every one of us has the spring of his moral being in the love of God. "Rooted and founded in love." Two great effects are produced in us by the love of God. One is holiness, and I think that is the point where man is naturally wholly unfitted for God. The holiness of God is unbearable to the natural man, though he has but little idea of it.

The love of God is a holy love, and must be so, for God is holy; and the natural man cannot enter into the thought of holiness. It is really foreign to him. You can understand this. The fact is that we never reach holiness except by love, and as we drink into the love of God we appreciate holiness, and thus holiness is promoted. It is in this sense that holiness is progressive in the Christian.

Another great effect produced by the love of God is growth in intelligence. We come to the clear knowledge of the Son of God. The spring of intelligence is love. Thus the apostle speaks of it in Ephesians 3: "Rooted and founded in love", that ye "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge". And so in Colossians, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the clear knowledge of the mystery of God... in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge". There is evidently great gain in that in which Christ can instruct us, that is, the knowledge of the love of God; and indeed, Christ went to the cross to bring us that love. It was to maintain God's glory and righteousness that He died; but with all that there was the

We learn from a Person

purpose that in it might be expressed to us the perfect love of God. It is there Christ instructs us, and there is the secret and spring of the true moral being of the Christian. I am thoroughly convinced that as we advance in the knowledge of God, as our hearts are in the sunshine of His love, so holiness is promoted in us, and we grow in divinely given intelligence. Holiness and knowledge are thus promoted in the Christian by learning of Christ.

I am sure that your experience must be the same as mine. I have studied Scripture for a long time, and as much as most, but I have not grown that way into the love of God. I had not the capability. Many study Scripture beyond their capability. We learn from a Person. Scripture tells you what you are to learn, but the things presented in Scripture are learned from a living Person. He encourages us to learn of Him – to sit at His feet and hear His word. I could not express too strongly the thought that we do not learn of one another. We are privileged to suggest to one another, but I do not think that we really learn of one another. The force of the Scripture is, that all originates, and must originate, in the sovereign will of the Father. The Father begins by revealing to babes, drawing to the Son, and the Son takes up the same line and reveals the Father. To that end He encourages us to come unto Himself to learn of Him.

F. E. Raven (1838 – 1902)

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