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Living Water

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Recent Ministry

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY?

Introduction

In thinking about this occasion, my feeling has been that all here have been on the Christian way for some years and there is a question which I venture to share with us all: 'What we have learned along the way since we first, through grace, became committed to our Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour?'

We are left here for various reasons which have to do with God's ways and plans for His people. I suppose we would all have to say that, in some respects at least, life may not have turned out as we would have expected or even as we might have hoped. I just draw attention to these scriptures that we might take stock as to what God would use our histories to teach us and what we are to learn along the way. I would say immediately that I do not claim to speak as one who has learnt by any means all of the lessons that I have needed to learn.

Deuteronomy 8:1-6

I thought first, therefore, of the book of Deuteronomy in which Moses reviews God's ways with His people over the 40 years in the wilderness and prepares them to enter into the land. We do know, of course, from the latter part of the book and from later scriptures that they did not, entirely, heed his words; some of them did not heed them at all. But here is the word for those who are entering the land, and the challenge as to what God has had in mind in this journey through the desert.

Christians have often been glad to turn to the Old Testament, and the story of the wilderness in particular, because it has so much in common with our own experiences. Indeed, we can sometimes look into these wilderness journeys and see how many of the experiences that God's people had have an echo in our own souls. There may also be experiences that would be good for us to have that we have not, perhaps, had as fully as we might have done.

So here in Deuteronomy chapter 8 we have a review of what God

had in mind in taking them this long way through the desert. We know, the scripture tells us, that there was a much shorter way: it was in the government of God that as a consequence of the people's sin that they did not reach the land by that way. But here the 40 years are taken up as something that God intended to be of value for their soul experience and they were not to forget it.

**what is to
govern us as
we go through
this world?**

The first thing was that it was to humble them so that they would not have any further ground for confidence in themselves. That is a lesson which we do well to learn.

The second thing was to prove them. It is interesting that it is put in the singular. Moses addresses all the people but he addresses them as one, "to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart." We might say that God would know what was in their heart anyway, but they did not know and their own hearts had to be exposed to themselves in the presence of God so that they would know what God knew about them and would learn from it.

"To know what was in thy heart". What was the purpose of that? "to know ... whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or not". From time to time we come up against such questions quite acutely as to what is to govern us as we go through this world. Many a believer encounters very real persecution for the Lord's sake. Many are brought right up against the question, what are they going to do in a crisis. But whatever it may be that comes up in our lives that is of a testing character we do well to reflect that God has in mind as to whether we would keep His commandments or not.

So it adds, "he humbled thee". They were made to feel how inadequate they were. They suffered hunger, and it says He fed them with the manna, a resource that they had not looked for. They did not understand; they asked: 'What is it?' The lesson they were to learn from that is an interesting one. The manna did meet their material needs: but the lesson they were to learn was not just that God could supply their physical needs but that, "man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that goeth out of the mouth

of Jehovah doth man live". So it is a poor thing if all that we learn from God's ways with us is how He provides for us materially.

We know, of course, that when the Lord was tempted by Satan to meet His physical needs by miraculous power, this was His reply and it shows—we have no record of the Lord accepting food until the period of testing was over—that He knew what it was to live by everything that went out of the mouth of God. It impresses me that although the manna met a material need the lesson that was to be learnt was that it was not material resources alone that would get them through but everything that God had to say and provide for them.

As to their clothing not growing old, J. N. Darby's hymn tells us:

*Though thy way be long and dreary,
Eagle strength He'll still renew;
Garments fresh, and foot unwearied
Tell how God hath brought thee through.*

It reminds us of one who had that soul experience and could say with confidence that his resources had not become fatigued or worn out. It is a very wonderful thing that although the journey was so long, and allowed of God governmentally, none the less God stood by them all the way with this evidence of His resource to see them through.

Matthew 11:25-30

Now I come to the New Testament and to say something first about Matthew's Gospel. One reason for doing so is that what we have in Matthew 11 comes at a time when the Lord, we might say, would have been entitled to feel disappointment at the results of His ministry. I use that word carefully because the Lord as knowing all things knew how His ministry would be received and would have no cause for surprise about it. But it is a great sorrow for us as reading the word that His ministry and His service had so little effect.

Yet it was at that time—"At that time, Jesus answering..." It is an answer to the conditions that He encountered. He turns to the Father. He claims full authority for the Father despite the ignorance

and refusal of places where He had ministered. He says that He is thankful He is dealing with souls in their simplicity, not in their self-assurance or worldly wisdom; “thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes”. This is a very familiar Scripture, but let us take note that the Lord Jesus said that it was a happy thing that God had sovereignly chosen to reveal His mind to babes, those who were not cluttered up with their own thoughts or human reasoning but were ready to receive what God would have to say to them. He says that it is no mistake and no accident, “thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight”.

Then He moves into these verses that we have so often dwelt upon, “All things have been delivered to me by my Father”; that is the counterpart of what we have in John’s gospel: “the Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand” (John 3:35). What follows is something which we may not find it easy to understand. “No one knows the Son but the Father”. That would always cause us to pause if we are privileged to speak of the Person of Christ, that we would do so with reverence, remembering that there was a distance to be maintained between the people and the Ark of God. This helps us to be reverent and not analytic but just to contemplate the Person. Then we read, “Nor does any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him”. It is the Lord’s own privilege to do that: if we have any knowledge of God as Father it is a response to what the Lord Jesus has been pleased to do. We come to the Lord as Saviour and we are thankful to do so. We should remain thankful, but He has also in mind to make the Father known to us.

And now these verses which are indeed well known, but may they come freshly home to us. “Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest”. The One who is speaking is One who had devoted Himself to the work of God, had faced these outward disappointments and who still says, Come to Me and you will find that I will give you rest. This is something that we do not earn, something that we have no claim upon, but which is a generous gift from the Lord, to give us rest.

I have to ask myself, whether over what are now many years of life I have actually received this rest and proved it for myself. How

am I to prove it? “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me”. This is one of the purposes of what we call the learning time when we should learn from the Lord as subject to Him. And what is He? “I am meek and lowly in heart”.

If we want to know the contrast between the Spirit of Christ and the spirit that is in the world, here it is, “I am meek and lowly in heart”. That is how the Lord Jesus was when He was here: it is something for us always to remember because it is not the spirit of the world. That spirit of the world is to rise up, get as high as you can and not always be too particular about how that is achieved. “I am meek and lowly in heart”: in heart—not just behaving that way but “in heart”, “and ye shall find rest to your souls”. First it is a gift from the Lord’s side, and then there is what I find from my side, “Ye shall find rest to your souls”.

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” It is a very compassionate word; I desire to prove more of it for myself and, I trust, in simplicity. There have been many trials and we do well not to make light of them. The trials of the testimony of the Lord have been very real and some who have stood most faithfully have as a result suffered the most. That really has to be between their souls and the Lord. But we all do well to ask ourselves, ‘What have I learnt?’ Have we learnt something of the faithfulness of God and the love of Christ sufficient to sustain us on the way?

Ephesians 4:20-24

I have just two more thoughts, the first in relation to Ephesians where, as we have often noticed, the high calling of God is set before us in the first three chapters and then, from chapter 4 onwards there is largely the working out, while still here in this world, of what we have learnt of God’s purposes that is meant to have results in our lives down here.

The earlier part of the fourth chapter is given over to how the work of God is proceeding in the church of God so that there might be a fuller, and finally a full response to what has come out from out from God’s side: “until we all arrive at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”. It is what is completely suitable to Him.

But in the latter part of the chapter the apostle touches on conditions as they were in Ephesus and as they might be in London or in Philadelphia or indeed anywhere where man is found. He speaks of the conditions that mark the world and of which we know something. But he says that

**the truth
is not ...
in the air**

is not what is to mark the saints: "But ye have not thus learnt the Christ". Not learning doctrine, though doctrine is vital in its place as keeping our thoughts orderly and consistent with the truth: the great thing is to learn the Christ.

"If ye have heard him". So far as I know the Ephesians had never heard the Lord in His ministry. They were strangers to the covenant of promise. What had reached them was the ministry of the apostles and, no doubt, some record of the words of the Lord. They were to have heard Him and "been instructed in him according as the truth is in Jesus". It is very appealing that the truth is not, as it were, in the air or abstract. It finds its expression in the Lord Jesus Himself.

And now he calls attention to how that applies to those who have got to live in Ephesus or wherever it might be. He says there is a need to have done with what scripture calls the old man and to make way for the new. This is the same line of ministry as we find in the epistle to the Colossians chapter 3. But it is somewhat differently put, although always to the same purpose. He says, 'This is the truth that you have heard, that you have put off the old man. It does not belong to the Christian. It is corrupt. It does not suit the Christian at all'. The spirit of our minds is to be renewed so that we approach things in an entirely new way; "your having put on the new man" which is God's own creation and, "which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness".

In the epistle to the Colossians the same principles are there but much more, I think, laying it on those in Colosse to do what was needed. They needed to be in the condition where they had put off the old man and to be in a state where they had put on the new. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, speaks of the same matter but from the point of view that if we have learnt the truth as it is in Jesus we will find that the old man is unsuitable and that it is due

to the renewing of our minds that we are suited to appreciate the things of God.

It is very encouraging to see that the new man is created in truthful righteousness and holiness. The new man, of course, does

correspond to the Lord Jesus Christ though we should remember that what was of the old man, away from God, never attached to Him at all. It is much more, I believe, a matter for us to be brought into conformity to Him as what He always was. But as He has passed through death for us we find we only get free of the old man as we take the death of the Lord to ourselves.

**as to me I have learnt
in those circumstances
in which I am, to be
satisfied in myself**

Philippians 4:9-13

Just a word, then, as to Philippians. Paul had a great affection for those in Philippi where the work of God in Europe first came to light: where, in the face of opposition from without, a real work of God showed itself in people like Lydia and the jailer and their households. A work of God began, he says, from the first day until now. There was good and steady progress. If one or two things came in, as they are bound to do, Paul had a gracious way of dealing with them.

Now, he says, "What ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these things do". He had the authority both as an apostle and as a man who was a truly devoted servant of the Lord to call attention to himself as one from whom they might learn. And he says, "and the God of peace shall be with you".

Now, he writes from prison. He writes in very trying circumstances but he says, "Not that I speak as regards privation". I expect the apostle did know something about privation but he says, "as to me I have learnt in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied in myself". This is something for us to consider as a refined work in the soul of one who can then be presented to us as a model; but he still says he had learnt.

If he had been put in these circumstances the day after he was

converted he might not have been able to speak in this way, even though he had some very searching experiences in Damascus. But still, he says, I have learnt. That is, I think, he has come to something along the way: "I have learnt in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied in myself". He has learnt to find a resource which lies outside of himself and yet which can be enjoyed within. He says, "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound". He was a man who can approach every circumstance in a balanced spirit. "In everything and in all things". "In everything" I suppose is an overall view; "in all things" comes down to the detail. "I am initiated both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer privation".

Then comes this very powerful word which I commend to all our hearts as being in scripture, something which one of the Lord's people did arrive at and from which we might take heart for ourselves: "I have strength for all things in him that gives me power". It strikes me as an amazing thing for any one to say. He did not claim power as being his own: he says it was "in him that gives me power".

Well, my simple desire is that as conducting a little stocktaking in my own heart we might each be encouraged to do the same for ourselves and find that God's work is proceeding there and will continue, I trust, for the rest of the time that we are here, for the Lord's sake.

David Burr

An address at Ambler, Philadelphia, February 2011.

THE SECRET OF REJOICING

"Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known of all men. The Lord is near..."

(Philippians 4:4-5).

"But I would have you know, brethren, that the circumstances in which I am have turned out rather to the furtherance of the glad tidings"

(Philippians 1:12).

It is not easy, is it, this rejoicing of which Paul speaks? We come

together today with sadness in our hearts, that one whom we have known and loved we shall see no more. Many who are here today will look back on conversations with our brother which left us all feeling that

**it is possible ... for us
to rejoice even when
things go wrong.**

we had no grounds to complain about anything again. And in those conversations what was so evident was the spirit of someone who knew how to rejoice and had the secret of it in his heart. It is not easy to rejoice, not when things go wrong, nor when circumstances are against us. We can perhaps gladly take up the words of the apostle when things are going our way and we can rejoice in the blessings that God gives to us. But our brother, for 70 years of his life, suffered considerable pain and discomfort. Yet he had the secret in his heart of how to rejoice.

It challenges me whether I have that secret too. The Lord has left our brother amongst us for many a year and perhaps we have wondered why he suffered in the way that he did. Why did he have to endure for so long? Naturally speaking it is quite incredible, that with his disability, he should live to the age of 86. Yet the Lord left him here for a purpose, so that we might know something of the secret of his rejoicing, and to see that it is possible, if the love of God is really in our hearts, for us to rejoice even when things go wrong.

When the apostle Paul wrote these words to the Philippians things were not too bright for him either. He was in bonds; he was in prison through no fault of his own. Yet he could say, "Rejoice in the Lord". And then he says, "Always". That is the word that catches us out. We can rejoice when things are good but Paul from prison says, 'rejoice always' and that is what we saw in our brother - an example of one who could rejoice even in suffering. He had the secret of that joy in his heart and I hope everyone here has it in their heart too. It is a joy which is to be found as trusting in Christ.

We read here, "Let your gentleness be known of all men" (v.5). What a gracious spirit our brother displayed. Where had he learned that spirit unless he had learnt it from the Lord Jesus Himself?

What he displayed was the spirit of the One he loved: the One who had died for him; the One who had given Himself for him. That was the spirit that we saw. Now is that the spirit that people see in us?

There is no other way in which that spirit can be displayed, except that we have the knowledge of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, just as our brother had. He was able to display that gentleness because he knew something of the gentleness and love and grace that had been shown to him when the Lord Jesus, the One who had every right to take His place in glory, chose rather to suffer and to die upon Calvary's cross to wash our sins away.

Our brother had the secret in his heart of something very precious and real to his soul and which he treasured. Many are the conversations that we have had together in relation to the Lord. Some of us had the privilege of having Bible readings with our brother quite regularly, and chapter four of Philippians was the last Bible reading that we had. It came home to me on that occasion, 'How could a man who had suffered so much read Philippians four verse four?' Yet he did: it is an example to us of someone to whom these things were absolutely real and sure.

The assurance in his heart was that the Lord was near. Not only that the coming of the Lord was near - as indeed it is - but that the Lord was near to him, and because of that he had something that nothing could take away. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Then too, nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8: 35 & 39), not even death!

So now even though we sorrow at the loss of one whom many of us loved very much, yet we can rejoice because we know that he is with the Lord. He trusted the Lord and His precious work for the forgiveness of his sins. Our brother had come to Christ in true repentance for his sins to be completely washed away. Therefore he had the absolute assurance of the home that was reserved for him in heaven. Jesus said, "I go to prepare you a place...were it not so, I had told you" (John 14:2). That assurance was our brother's assurance and it could be the assurance of everyone here today as well.

That is why I read the verse in chapter 1. Paul, of course, here was speaking about the circumstances in which he was, that he was in prison. How strange that might seem, that Paul, who was so able in presenting the message of God's gospel, should have his service curtailed by imprisonment so that he was unable to preach in the way he had before. But I thought of our brother in connection with this, that the example that he has shown to us has been in view of the "furtherance of the glad tidings", because what we have seen in him is the grace of God.

I would that each one of us might know something more of the gospel of God's grace and of the furtherance of the glad tidings as we reflect upon the life of our brother, and upon the spirit that he demonstrated whatever the circumstances were. I trust that it might cause us to think, if we never have before, that he had something in his heart which was beyond what was natural. He had a link with a Saviour God that enabled him to overcome, and I am sure that our brother would have loved that everyone else in this building today should have that same link with the Saviour God.

May these things encourage us, that at a time when we are all sorrowing, we might know the secret of how to rejoice.

Keith Wickens

Word at the burial of Roy Piper, Minster, 9th February 2011

From "Living Water" No 6

THE SEEKING SAVIOUR

"For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" Luke 19:10.

Those who believe on the Lord Jesus should be freshly touched by these precious words, "The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost". Thank God He came to seek me, thank God He came to seek you and that He went to the cross to save us, to save us from eternal loss, save us from an eternity of misery and to save us now from the present evil world by His power.

Let us think about the seeking Saviour; He who is the I AM, who was loved before the foundation of the world and “who did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on equality with God”(Philippians 2:6), stooped into this world. It says in Isaiah 35:4 “He will come himself and save you”. God came Himself in the Person of Jesus to save us and Jesus was in this world as the seeking Saviour. There were thirty years when He was personally in the enjoyment of communion with His God and Father, but as anointed of God at the commencement of His public service, He stepped out seeking those who were lost. It is wonderful to think of Jesus seeking us! There are many references in the Bible to people seeking God but here we have this precious reference to Jesus seeking us. It is a wonderful thing that the Son of God should seek me. He loved me, He gave Himself for me. Everybody who believes in Jesus can, like the apostle Paul, say these words: “the Son of God who has loved me and given himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). He sought me and He found me; thank God He has found many others.

Three illustrations from Luke’s gospel show the Lord as the seeking Saviour. One day Jesus went across the sea of Gennesaret and a man met Him out of the tombs, a person that nobody could bind or subdue (see Luke 8). Jesus went there specially to seek him. Once He had found that man and shown him mercy He went away back to the other side. Think of the effort that Jesus expended to secure one soul! Every soul in this world is precious to Christ. He took the time and the trouble to confront that man in all his terrible state to win his heart. He did win his heart and we know that He got a good convert because the man was found sitting clothed and sensible at the feet of Jesus. He was then able to be left as a trustworthy person to spread the fame of Jesus in that country. The man initially had no interest in Jesus but Jesus went to seek him.

Then in the parable in Luke 15 Jesus tells about a shepherd who has ninety-nine sheep which were safe but went after the one that was lost until He found it. What expenditure by the shepherd to gain that one sheep. Every person is precious to

Christ. The scripture says, “And having found it, he lays it on his own shoulders, rejoicing”. How the Lord rejoices when one soul gets saved, when one soul accepts Him as their own Saviour. Thank God if you are carried by Jesus. It is a wonderful thing to be carried by the great Shepherd, carried through this life until one day you are forever in His presence. What a favour to know His grace and His love and His support even now.

Jesus also told of a coin that a woman had lost. She lit the lamp and sought diligently until she found it. Believers may be out of circulation! When Jesus rose from the dead there were two disciples who were downcast and disappointed, who were going away from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Jesus draws alongside them and asks them about their problem. He, the Son of man who came to seek and to save that which was lost, listens to them.

I lay emphasis on the seeking Saviour because that is the character of the Saviour I know. He goes after people, He loves them, He cares for them and He is prepared to spend time with them in order to win them and to secure them as vessels for the praise of God. At the end of Luke’s gospel there is a company of people praising and blessing God. That is what God seeks. The result of the seeking of Jesus is that persons are found praising and blessing God.

Ken Hollands

Extract from an address at Chipping Campden, 4th June 1994

This article was selected for reprinting from “Living Water” No 6 by Joel Asare Kyeremateng in Ghana. Joel selected this article, together with others, to translate into the Ghanaian dialect of Twi. They were then published under the title “Nkwa Nuso” which is Twi for “Living Water”.

In the next issue, God willing, there will be a reprint from “Living Water” No 7 selected by George Laing.

If there is something in an early issue of “Living Water” that you would like to see reprinted please let me know. I would be glad of suggestions from readers.

Ed.

Poetry Selection

THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

*Christ is my Rock, from Him my honey floweth;
He is my Fountain, whence my fresh springs rise,
He is my guide in paths that no man knoweth,
He is my shield, whence every arrow flies.*

*He is my Shepherd, in His arms He bears me,
He is my King, I own His gentle sway,
My Advocate, upon His breast He wears me,
My Judge, who took the judgment far away.*

*He is my refuge when the storms awaken,
He is my Keeper, when the snare is nigh;
My Captain in the fight my place hath taken,
And is my fortress from the enemy.*

*He is my mighty Counsellor, He heareth
The plaints I bring, He guides my feet below;
He is my great Physician, and endeareth,
With His soft touch of love, the wounds of woe.*

*He is my Strength, when to the fight He calls me,
He is my Peace, the peace none else can give;
He is my Righteousness, whate'er befalls me,
He is my Life, in Him alone I live.*

*He is my Priest, whose office faileth never,
He is my Ransom, all my debt is paid;
He is my Sacrifice, once made, for ever,
The Lamb of God on whom my sin was laid!*

*He is my Sun, o'er all the mountains streaming
In His eternal splendour; and afar
My soul looks, longing for the first ray beaming,
To herald Him, I wait the Morning Star!*

*He is my strong Deliverer, my Salvation,
My Hiding Place – I'm safe beneath His wings;
He is my everlasting habitation,
Where my rejoicing soul her anthem sings.*

*Reveal Him, O Thou Comforter, beloved!
When shadows on the mountain pathway fall;
In earth's contentions, keep my soul unmoved,
And show me Christ my Lord is all in all!*

Anna Shipton

THE RIGHTFUL KING

*Lord, rule Thy kingdom in my heart,
Let every impulse lowly bow,
Bid Thou the alien hence depart,
And though the rebel will should start
Rule Thou!*

*Guide Thou, and so my pathway make
That I no other guide may know:
Thou canst not leave, Thou'lt not forsake,
Till glory on my spirit break,
Guide Thou!*

*Rule, guide, and bless, Thou Holy One,
I own Thy sweet dominion now;
No seraph-song around Thy throne
Sounds sweeter than, "Thy will be done".
Bless Thou!*

*Reign Thou, my King, my Christ, my Lord,
All meaner lords I disallow,
Thou, by Thy ransomed host adored,
Eternal One, Incarnate Word,
Reign Thou!*

Anna Shipton

Testimony Section

400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

When the King James, or Authorised, version of the Bible was first printed it contained a Preface written by Miles Smith—one of the team of translators. It was a long document, nearly 12,500 words. While the Authorised version is much praised today, the translators certainly expected criticism and much of the Preface is devoted to dealing with this. However, it also provides an insight to the way they approached their task and the real dependence on God which coloured their work. Some highlights are given below.

THE TRANSLATORS TO THE READER

After paying tribute to King James for initiating the work of translation, the preface turns to the praise of the Holy Scriptures and the need for them to be translated:

But now what piety [is there] without truth? what truth (what saving truth) without the word of God? what word of God (whereof we may be sure) without the Scripture? The Scriptures we are commanded to search (Isaiah 8.20). They are commended who searched and studied them (Acts 17:11 and 8:28-29). They are reprov'd that were unskilful in them, or slow to believe them (Matthew 22:29; Luke. 24:25). They can make us wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). If we be ignorant, they will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us.

Augustine of Hippo's comment on the value of the Scriptures is given:

"Whatsoever is in the Scriptures, believe me is high and divine; there is verily truth, and a doctrine most fit for the refreshing and renewing of men's minds, and truly so tempered, that every one may draw from thence that which is sufficient for him, if he come to draw with a devout and pious mind, as true religion requireth." *(Further similar quotations are given from Jerome,*

Cyril of Alexandria, Tertullian, Basil, Justin Martyr and others).

The preface continues:

The Scriptures then being acknowledged to be so full and so perfect, how can we excuse ourselves of negligence, if we do not study them?... It is a fountain of most pure water ... the original thereof being from heaven, not from earth; the author being God, not man; the inditer, the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the penmen, such as were endued with a principal portion of God's Spirit; the form, God's word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of truth, the word of salvation; the effects - light of understanding, stableness of persuasion, repentance from dead works. Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night.

But how shall men meditate in that which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept close in an unknown tongue? As it is written, *Except I know the power of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian to me* (1 Corinthians 14†).

Having dealt with the ancient translations, Miles Smith turned to the need for a translation into English. Many still opposed this idea and he felt the need to justify it at length. He quotes various examples of translations that had gone before, including the translation of parts of the Scriptures into Arabic by John of Seville in 717 AD, into Anglo Saxon by Bede and to reports of the gospels being available in Ethiopian. The preface therefore concludes:

So that to have the Scriptures in the mother tongue is not a quaint conceit lately taken up, either by the Lord Cromwell in England, but hath been thought upon, and put in practice of old, even from the first times of the conversion of any nation; no doubt because it was esteemed most profitable to cause faith to grow in men's hearts the sooner, and to make them to be able to say with the words of the Psalm, *As we have heard, so we have seen.*

†The quotation is from the Geneva Bible, which, rather surprisingly, Miles Smith used for all the quotations given in the preface to the King James Version.

The preface pays tribute to those such as Tyndale who had laboured to produce English translations of the Scriptures:

We, are far from condemning any of the labours of those that travailed before us in this work, either in this land or beyond sea, either in King Henry's time, or King Edward's or Queen Elizabeth's, we acknowledge them to have been raised up of God, for the building and furnishing of His Church, and that they deserve to be had of us and of posterity in everlasting remembrance. Therefore blessed be they, and most honoured be their name, that helped forward that for the saving of souls. Now what can be better than to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue which they understand? Yet for all that, as nothing is begun and perfected at the same time, and the later thoughts are thought to be the wiser: so we, building upon their foundation that went before us, and being helped by their labours, do endeavour to make that better which they left so good.

The preface had earlier commented on the defects of the Septuagint as a translation but goes on to make the point that the writers of the New Testament took their quotations from that Greek translation:

The translation of the Seventy dissenteth from the original in many places, neither doth it come near it for gravity or majesty; yet which of the Apostles did condemn it? Nay, they used it, which they would not have done if it had been unworthy the appellation and name of the word of God.

Turning to the way in which the translators had approached their task, the preface states:

But it is high time to show in brief what we proposed to ourselves, and what course we held, in this our perusal and survey of the Bible. Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one; [*a translation that could not be rejected on grounds of error in the text*] that hath been our endeavour, that our mark. To that purpose there were many persons chosen (for

the work) that sought the truth rather than their own praise... They trusted in Him that hath the key of David, opening, and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord, the Father of our Lord: *O let Thy Scriptures be my pure delight, let me not be deceived in them, neither let me deceive by them.* In this confidence and with this devotion, did they assemble together [to undertake the work]. If you ask what they had before them, truly it was the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Greek of the New. These tongues, therefore, we set before us to translate, being the tongues wherein God was pleased to speak to His Church by His Prophets and Apostles.

The translators drew heavily on the work of those who had gone before, especially Tyndale's translation of the New Testament. They also consulted translations already made into Spanish, French, Italian and Dutch. Their work was also subject to the most careful revision and review. The preface also comments on what some have seen as a defect in the King James version that the same Greek or Hebrew word is translated using different English synonyms. For instance: "journeying" and "travelling", "pain" and "ache", and "joy" and "gladness" are used interchangeably. Finally the preface records:

It remaineth that we commend thee to God, and to the Spirit of His grace, which is able to build further than we can ask or think. He removeth the scales from our eyes, the veil from our hearts, opening our wits that we may understand His Word, enlarging our hearts, yea, correcting our affections, that we may love it above gold and silver, yea, that we may love it to the end. It is a blessed thing when God speaketh unto us, to hearken; when He setteth His Word before us, to read it; when He stretcheth out His hand and calleth, to answer, Here am I; here we are to do Thy will, O God. The Lord work a care and conscience in us to know Him and serve Him, that we may be acknowledged of Him at the appearing of our Lord Jesus *Christ*, to whom with the Holy Ghost, be all praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

Miles Smith (1611)

A NEW LIFE

Life for me began in a prison cell on 22nd November 1962. Earlier in the day, when in the visiting room of the prison, meeting my wife I had realised that she was very seriously ill. My immediate reaction was to try to escape and help her to sort out her problems. Later, back in my cell, as I thought this over I felt that I wanted a smoke. Having no cigarette papers, I ripped a page out of the cell Bible to roll a cigarette with. As I tore out the page these words caught my eye, "If you shall ask anything in my name I will do it".

Here, I suddenly realised was the only way that I could help my wife. In that lonely cell I got on my knees and asked Jesus Christ to help me. My cell at once felt overcrowded — the Saviour had come to me. I prayed just as God helped me. First, I prayed for my sins to go. I confessed all to God and asked for His forgiveness. Immediately I knew I was forgiven. I wanted to open my eyes and look at my Saviour — the sense of His presence was so real to me but I was so ashamed that Someone could care so much for me that I could not move an eyelid.

This was followed by a prayer for God's help, then by prayer for my wife. I learned the following day that by that time my wife was in hospital and only a miracle had saved her life.

Within a week several incidents proved to me that just as I had completely given my life to Christ, so He had given me a completely new life.

Before I finished my sentence I was able to tell some six hundred fellow-prisoners and others how the Lord Jesus had changed my life.

After my release it took my friends some time to realise that I was a changed man. My days of dishonesty are over, drinking has been no problem, my wife has given her life to Christ and so has my son.

Maybe your life has been worse than mine, or maybe much more honest and happy. Yet, either way, the only answer is to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.

Stan Gibbons

A Voice from the Past

PRAYER

We must not look on that only as prayer to which our lips give utterance: the wish of the believing heart is counted prayer by God; it is the smoke of the incense which ascends in silence before Him.

* * * * *

Samson was never so strong as when, through his own folly brought low and put to shame, he said, "Strengthen me, I pray thee, O God, only this once".

* * * * *

It is a high place that is given to the prayers of the saints in 1 Timothy 2:1 & 2. If Christians only knew how their prayers for kings and governors are heard in heaven, they would not be meddlers with this world's politics.

* * * * *

God honours the spirit of intercession.

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Much prayer for the ungodly is a sign of a thriving soul. Christ prayed for His enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Paul prayed for the Jews; his "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). God's precepts are the rule for our prayers. He would have us pray for all men (1 Timothy 2:1).

* * * * *

It is not by our much outward work that the value of our service will be judged in the day of the Lord. Many of the church's best helpers are intercessors confined to their beds.

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If the ear of sinners be shut to our words, let our mouth be opened at the Mercy-seat on their behalf.

Robert C. Chapman (1803 – 1902)

Extracts from "Choice Sayings".

God willing, a further selection of extracts should appear in issue No 107.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

We should not take the whole world in exchange for this knowledge that we know that Christ is Christ, that He is our only Saviour, our High Priest, our Lord and King. This I did not know so long as I lived a friar in the monasteries. Now should it even arise that we should lose our lives for the sake of the truth, yet Christ liveth, and if He liveth, then we shall live also; for His promise standeth fast, and will forever remain firm against the gates of hell. Now Christ whom we preach is God; therefore the whole world in comparison with this Christ is nothing at all.

All the wise of the world do scoff and scorn us Christians that we with such fervency do take Christ's cause in hand, but at last their scoffing and scorning will fall into their own bosoms.

The chief thing is that we learn to know Christ aright: therefore sayeth the apostle Peter, 'Grow up in the knowledge of Jesus Christ'; namely that He is the most merciful, the most just and wise. If I might leave behind me only this lesson, which with great diligence I have driven and taught; namely that people should beware of speculations and instead would take hold on Christ only, in the most plain and simple manner; then I should think myself happy that I had accomplished much.

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

A word for Today

HOLY GROUND

A word to Moses:

"...put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground"
(Exodus 3:5).

A word to Joshua:

"Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy"
(Joshua 5:15).

I refer to these Scriptures as indicating the need for self-judgment in relation to the service of God, and particularly in a day like the

present, marked by lightness and superficiality. Though we are brought into the greatest nearness and favour that it is possible for us to know (having His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 4:6) and being able to cry, "Abba Father") we are exhorted to seek grace "Whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear" ever remembering that "our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28 & 29).

These two men, Moses and Joshua, were not novices, they were matured men of God; but before entering upon their greatest services, they needed to be reminded that, as in the presence of God, they stood upon holy ground. God would reveal Himself to them in new and most attractive characters, which were to colour all their future activities, but accompanying these disclosures was the forcible reminder that all must be of Himself and that the flesh has no standing in His presence, however distinguished His servants may be. This clearly has a definite bearing upon us, and particularly as taking up any service to God, in whatever form it may be our privilege to do so

Moses and Joshua were not novices

Moses was impressed by what he saw in Horeb, the mount of God: the bush burned with fire but was not consumed. He had seen great sights in Egypt in the house of Pharaoh but here was something that indicated the presence of God, though in lowly and insignificant circumstances. He said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight", and in so doing, he became an object of interest to God Himself.

We may be sure that God discerns every feature of interest in His things in any one of His own. Even the feeblest believer who turns aside from his own activities to pray or to seek light from the Bible attracts His notice. The burning bush indicated the interest God had in His people, in spite of their outward weakness and oppressed condition. In the light of the New Testament we may read much into it: the truth of the Incarnation, and now the fact that God is dwelling here in the midst of His redeemed people by the Spirit.

God spoke powerfully but affectionately to Moses calling him twice by name and then saying "Draw not nigh hither...for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground". He was to learn that nothing of nature could stand

there before God, and only as in self-judgment could he receive the wonderful disclosures that followed, and be able to undertake the great service to which he was called. Moses never forgot his lesson, as the sequel shows. His devoted care for God's people, his unsparing faithfulness with them and his intercessions with God on their behalf all testify to the reality of his sense of the true character of God and his personal self-judgment.

This was not for him a harsh and bitter matter, for the outstanding impression that remained was of "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" (Deuteronomy 33:16). So will it be with us if we follow in his steps, accepting the principle of self-judgment in the light of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the full declaration of God in Him.

Joshua, too, had to learn the same lesson. He, too, like Moses, had spent forty years in the school of God, though in different circumstances, for he had companied with Moses, sharing his experiences and learning something of his spirit. He had been commissioned of God to succeed Moses as leader of Israel, and now the conquest of Canaan lay before him. At this juncture God appears to him in this military guise: "he lifted up his eyes and looked and behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand" — a very different revelation from that given to Moses, but entirely suited to the changed conditions.

In both cases God was revealing Himself in accord with the actual conditions of His people and with what He was about to do; first in redeeming and delivering grace, and now in power. Joshua is alert to see, and he draws near with the natural enquiry: "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" The answer comes: "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come". God could not be

God was revealing Himself in accord with the actual conditions of His people

with them on any merely natural or party principle; to secure His presence and support there must be self-judgment and the recognition of His holy character. Joshua is rightly affected, accepting the rebuke, as his actions indicate, for he “fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said... What saith my lord unto his servant?” The answer is given: “Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy”. The principle of self-judgment must ever accompany faith, and leads to the Holy Spirit’s liberty and marks all true service for God.

“And Joshua did so”. The lesson so learned was not forgotten, and, as with Moses, the revelation became the secret of his power and steadfastness. At the close of his life he warns the people against lightly taking up service to God: “Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God... (Joshua 24:19), meaning that this was impossible for them in their natural state as in the flesh with all its pride and self seeking. But he had already unhesitatingly committed himself in the words: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15), thus expressing the feature of spiritual courage that had marked him throughout his service.

The recognition of this principle would lead to reverence and sobriety in our movements and expressions, whether approaching God in prayer and praise, or in speaking on His behalf to others. In the former case we are expressly told in Ecclesiastes that as “God is in heaven, and thou upon earth” our words should be few (see Ecclesiastes 5:1 & 2). This is not set aside in Christianity, as we see in many examples given in the New Testament, though blended with the most perfect liberty of approach, for He who is in heaven is our Father and we are His sons. The apostle Paul ever maintained this in his ministry as he said: “we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

May we be truly found in the joy of it.

Walter Brown

An address at Colwyn Bay, 1942