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Living Water

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Correction: In the last issue the location of the address by David Burr was given as “Ambler, Philadelphia”. This should have read: “Ambler, Pennsylvania”

Recent Ministry

THE WEDDING FEAST – GOD’S INVITATION

Matthew 22:1-14

The last time I was in Glasgow we came for a wedding and tonight I want to speak about a wonderful wedding invitation that God has given. I do not know of anyone in this room who, if they were invited to a wedding, would say, ‘No’. Yet in Matthew where we read, the Lord Jesus tells a story about a wedding where all those who were invited said ‘No’. Tonight, in the gospel, God is sending out a wonderful invitation and He has the very best in mind for you.

God knows you; I think it is important to remember that. We live in a world where we can seem to be just a number. We have a National Insurance number, a tax number, and so on. In many things we are just reduced to a big number. God is not like that — He loves you and knows you by name. He knew you from before you were born. He knows you are sitting here now, and, if you remember nothing else tonight, remember that God loves you.

The gospel is about God’s wonderful and infinite love towards each one of us. We read that God “so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” to be our Saviour. God so loved the world, that is not just the creation, but He loved the people in the world. He loved them so much; His longings were so great that He sent His only Son to die for us.

This story that Jesus told begins by speaking about those who were invited. Look through the whole Scripture and it speaks of God’s pleading with Israel. All through the time of the judges and the kings God was pleading with His people. We read in Isaiah “Come now, let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18). God sent His prophets and they were often terribly treated and killed. Then God sent John the Baptist. What happened to him? He was taken and beheaded. Think of God appealing to His people for so long.

Finally, He sent His Son. Think about the Lord Jesus coming to His own people and being rejected. I do not want to be sentimental about it, but I do not know anyone who has not had the feeling at some time of being rejected and not wanted. It is a pretty bad

feeling. Now the life of Jesus was one of continual rejection. He was rejected and disowned by those He came to save. At the last, they cried, "away with him". The world did not want Him. Even His family, at some point, said He was mad. Think of the rejection of Jesus, and tonight, in Paisley, Glasgow, Birmingham, or wherever, people are still rejecting Christ. But, praise His name, there are some who answer to His call and find it is a wonderful thing to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember the moment in 1975 when I heard the Lord's call. I went outside after the gospel meeting — I cannot tell you anything of what the preacher had said — but I went outside and said to a friend of mine, 'The Lord saved me tonight'. He replied, 'I do not know why you have been quiet about it. You need to tell other people'. That is what I have sought to do over the years, to tell people what the Lord Jesus has done for me, because I know it is true. He saved me, saved me for His glory, saved me from my sins.

I did not understand much then, for I was only eight. As you go on as a Christian, you realise how much you have been saved from. You have a greater appreciation of God's holiness and the fact that you are a terrible sinner. You appreciate the cleansing of the blood of Jesus more as you get older, as you realise how much He has done for you.

Well, coming back to this wedding feast, we are told of those invited, "they would not come". You think of God appealing to people, for He does not force Himself on anyone. He is the almighty God who created the worlds and put the stars in their settings, yet He is appealing tonight. Please! "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). Crimson is the colour of blood; it reminds us of the dying of Jesus. Do you know who the first persons to hear the gospel were? The Lord told His disciples that they were to begin announcing forgiveness at Jerusalem; the very people who had crucified the Lord of glory were the first to hear the gospel.

God's grace is beyond me. It is easy to understand law; "This do and thou shalt live". But God's grace is wonderful. He invites all kinds of people to come into His blessing. Think of Moses, a man

with blood on his hands. He killed a man when he thought no one would see him (see Exodus 2:12). Think of King David. He stole someone else's wife and in trying to cover it up committed murder (see 2 Samuel 12:9). Think of the apostle Paul – he was a persecutor of Christians and when they were put to death he gave his vote (see Acts 26:10).

The Bible is written by people like that. God has gathered in people with guilty lives, but who have asked God for forgiveness, and whom God has blessed. It is not to glory in failure and sin but to glory in grace. God has reached out and gathered all kinds of people in. Are you ready today to answer to God's invitation?

Where we read, the invitation to the wedding feast goes out but those invited "made light of it" (v.5). Think of those who made light of the Lord Jesus when He was here. Think of those who, when Paul preached in Athens, dismissed it with the words: "What would this chatterer say?" (Acts 17:18) There were clever men in Athens and they dismissed the gospel as idle chatter.

It is the same today. There are people with all kinds of ideas and they seek to set Christianity aside. The thoughts of men do not set aside God's purpose and God's thoughts, because they are eternal. All the clever philosophies of the present day will pass. The words of the Lord Jesus remain.

Well, those invited to the wedding "went, one to his own land, and another to his commerce". They went away to other things, they put things off. When I was young I sat in the gospel and put things off – I thought of other things. Do not put off responding to God's entreaty. Do not say, 'I will wait to another time, I will feel better about it then', or, 'I will wait until I am older or I am near death'. Augustine said that there is only one deathbed conversion in the Bible, so that no one should despair, but only one, so that no one should presume. Do not presume upon God's grace.

Let me tell you a little story. A few months ago a man telephoned me to ask if the company I work for would help him in restoring a boat. It was a rather special boat; it was the one in which Donald Campbell in 1967 made an attempt on the world water speed record. He went down Coniston water in the Lake District, at over 300 mph. During the return trip he was recorded at speeds of over

His last words on the boat's radio were: 'I've gone'

320 mph (510 km/ph) but his boat came out of the water and he was killed.

The man leading the boat restoration project came to see me and he brought

a lot of the parts of the boat with him. As I looked at those parts I thought, 'The last time these were used a man was alive and he went from time into eternity in just a second'. His last words on the boat's radio were: 'I've gone'. There was no time to change anything. Things were fixed for all eternity at that moment. We have been given, through God's grace, a little time; let us take advantage of it. God is sending out the message — let us answer to it.

What is His message to us? It is about His Son the Lord Jesus Christ who came here and showed God's love and grace to all those He met — to the outcast, to sinners, to whoever needed Him. If you are wondering what God's grace is: well, grace has perhaps many explanations, but one is the unmerited favour of God. Surely we would all desire to feel the unmerited favour of God, the sunshine of God's love upon us. It is freely available to us, but it was not costless. It cost the life of the Lord Jesus. It meant the shedding of His precious blood and His agonies on the cross. He went that way because He loves us: He loved you, He loved me. The apostle Paul said, 'The Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me' (see Galatians 2:20). The gospel is very personal and it requires a personal response — the response of faith as claiming Christ as our own personal Saviour.

When all those originally invited had turned the wedding invitation down the King sends His bondmen out into the highways and byways to invite as many as can be found, both evil and good, to the wedding feast. Tonight the invitation comes to us!

There is a story about Mr. G. W. Fraser. He went to a gospel hall and it was full. Being a young man he climbed up a pipe and heard the gospel through the window and he came to the Lord. Later, remembering his experience of the full hall, he wrote the hymn:

*Come! hear the gospel sound,
"Yet there is room".*

The last line of the hymn says,
*God's house is filling fast,
"Yet there is room!"
Some guest will be the last,
"Yet there is room!"*

Tonight there is still room. One day the wedding feast will be fully furnished with guests and the door will be closed.

I was thinking earlier today about Noah's ark and how once Noah and his family were in the ark, God shut them in and the door could not be opened. Someone told me once that they saw some pictures of Noah's ark drawn by children and one child had drawn a picture of the ark with people clinging to the outside. They were trying to save their lives but the door was closed. How solemn it is that one day the door will be closed. Noah and his family were safe but for those outside, it was judgment. Dear friend, make sure you are safe, trusting in the finished work of Jesus. Apart from Him there is only God's wrath and judgment before us.

Nothing can cleanse us from our sins but the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this account, there was a man there who did not have a wedding garment on. Now, to us in Western society, when we go to a wedding we choose the clothes we wear but I was speaking to an Afghan man and he said, 'When you go to a wedding in Afghanistan, the clothes are provided'.

I understand that it is still the same in parts of the Middle East, that the wedding garment is provided.

God has provided the "wedding garment" in the Person of His beloved Son. Do not try and please God in your own strength. Do not say, 'I have done all these works for charity', or think that you can earn God's favour in other ways. Nothing can cleanse us from our sins but the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear friend, you have to come to the end of yourself. Look at the cross, see Jesus crucified in the place of a skull: man's ideas all empty. Look at Him lifted up to die and say, 'He died for me'.

People in the world today have got all kinds of excuses for their

behaviour. They get caught and they blame it on their circumstances, or something that happened to them as a child and all kinds of other things. Dear friend, in the presence of God, you will not be able to plead anything other than the finished work of Christ. If you cannot plead Christ you will have nothing to say. The man without the wedding garment was speechless but all who have trusted in Christ will stand in God's presence as blessed forever in Him.

I am not going to say anything more really, except that I would encourage those who have trusted in Christ to speak about your Saviour. We live in a dark world that is going on to destruction. The whole world lies in the wicked one. Take advantage of the time. Even if you feel that you cannot say much you can say something of what Jesus means to you — that He died for you, lives for you, that He is in the glory and that He is coming for you. One of the biggest witnesses is being absolutely sure of your salvation. You do not need to say a lot; people will take account of the way you are. Your faith will shine out in your life. If God's love has shone into us it will shine out and other people will be able to take account of it. If you have trusted in the work of Jesus it will fill your life and He will bring love into your life. He wants us to know true joy and peace in believing.

Sometimes Christians become discouraged. Their joy is all in the past and the sorrows and even bitterness that have come into their lives have overwhelmed them. I do not know the histories of all who are here but God knows absolutely everything. If you are not feeling as bright as you once did, come into the joy of knowing something of the wedding feast, where everything has been prepared by God Himself.

If you look through the windows of this hall you do not see things very clearly because the windows are frosted glass. We can only make out the rough outline of the blessing yet to come. The apostle Paul says, "we see now through a dim window obscurely", "but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). The best of what we enjoy now will be exceeded vastly by what is in heaven. John writes, "what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as

he is" (1 John 3:2). That is my hope. Maybe I am not always bright in it but it is my hope. May it be your hope.

May you have that sense of being invited to the wedding feast. God wants you there. He has done everything that you might be there, that you might be clothed appropriately. If you have trusted in the work of Jesus you will be clothed in the most wonderful garment. You will be there with all those others who have been secured and set together. What a wonderful happy prospect the Christian has. May it light up your life now.

Simon Burr

A preaching of the gospel, Paisley, 13 June 2010

Poetry Selection

THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY

*O Jesus! We adore Thee,
Of all things Lord and heir.
The ages bow before Thee,
All space proclaims Thy care.
The worlds sprang into being,
And at Thy will exist;
Almighty and all-seeing,
In Thee all things consist.*

*Yet Thou, for our salvation,
Didst flesh and blood partake;
And dying, work redemption,
Slain for the sinner's sake.
Now we adore Thee, seated
At God's right hand above;
We praise Thy work completed,
Enthroned, triumphant love!*

COMPLETE IN HIM

*Complete in Him! Blest words of peace!
From slavish fear they give release,
And bid my anxious doubtings cease,
Complete in Him!*

*With Christ, no other priest I need,
No sacrifice, He once did bleed,
Now ever lives to intercede,
Complete in Him!*

*Who shall condemn? 'Tis Christ that died,
He pleadeth at the Father's side,
No good for me can be denied,
Complete in Him!*

*Complete in Him, all things are mine!
Thou, Lord, art mine and I am Thine,
My store is infinite – divine,
Complete in Him!*

*And if my voice shall fail in death,
I still will trust what Jesus saith,
And whisper with my fleeting breath,
Complete in Him!*

I KNOW HIM

*I know whom I have trusted,
My Lord, Redeemer, Friend;
I know that He is able
To keep me to the end.*

*I know Him strong and faithful,
My Guide all through the way;
I know Him, true and tender
In sorrow's darkest day.*

*By silent soul communion,
By music of His voice,
By His indwelling Spirit,
I know Him, and rejoice.*

*I know Him – I have proved Him –
My ever present Friend;
The love that never failed me
Will keep me to the end.*

*I know whom I have trusted,
My hope in Him is sure;
Unchanging, mighty Saviour,
His love will aye endure*

All of the above poems are by Newman Hall (1816 – 1902)

Testimony Section

THE STORY OF THE MAN FROM GADARA

A Modern Equivalent

Some of us only come to the feet of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, when all our strength and our human resources reached the last door and there was nothing left. That is when we turned to God! On the other hand, it is always God who draws near to man, it is God who seeks him and cares for him. This bows my heart in adoration for such love. It says that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him (see 2 Chronicles 6:18), yet He seeks after each one of us. For myself, I will never forget that blessed moment when the Saviour manifested Himself to me, the One who rose from the dead. It is true, Christ lives! Just as for the Hebrew people one day their history changed (see Exodus 12:2), for me it was as the apostle Paul says, "So if anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away, behold all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

If any of the accounts in the gospels mirror my situation before I was converted, it is the story of the man from Gadara: "***There met him out of the tombs a man possessed of an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs***" (Mark 5:2-3).

My downward path began when I was fifteen as an innocent experimenting with alcohol and drugs with my friends. Curiosity gets the better of you and in a short time my life took a tremendous turn. Alcohol and rock music stimulated me, but only for short periods and I needed more and more! Only three short years passed and at seventeen the street was my home. The sepulchres were my refuge, where day by day I saw where young men and women enjoyed the poison of drugs. Looking back now I can understand those verses in John 10:10 — the thief comes to rob and to plunder, to take away your innocence and your values and he kills you physically and spiritually and destroys your family.

I began to play the guitar in a well known night club in Buenos Aires. My goal was to become famous, whatever the cost. I kept

the worst of company. My friends were no longer the boys of my neighbourhood but musician and artists, business men and people from the government. Things were not easy in those years, as the Military were in power and several times I was put in jail. Today I can see the hand of God in His love and grace, keeping me so that I was not killed or joined the ranks of the “disappeared” as happened to so many during the years of the Military government.

I was called up during the Military Regime, and so as to not go to the parade I pretended to be ill. I was put in the infirmary, where I came in contact with two soldiers who were confined as prisoners because they were caught taking drugs while on sentry service. At that time I was abstaining from drugs, but these two soldiers showed me the ditch near by where they had hidden their supply. Even here I could not escape the temptation! Yet God’s hand of mercy was on this poor sinner for:

- God has a plan and a very definite purpose for each one of us
- God is always in control and is always working out His plan
- God controls and uses persons, even the devil, in the execution of His plans

Looking back, I am profoundly thankful for these points.

I was going out with a girl called Martha. I heard her play in a concert and immediately fell in love with her. Soon after, Martha began to tire of the empty life we lived and began to seek God. God put a faithful sister to work in the workshop where Martha worked who explained to her the way of salvation. Soon Martha went to her church. The change that came over her was so great that I thought that she was another person! I told her that they had brain-washed her. She refused to take part in any more drugs sessions with me and I saw in her the power of God working to deliver her from addiction. One day she told me that she could not continue going out with me and she wanted to leave me. She wanted to dedicate her life to the Lord’s service. The Christians who were helping her told her that she should not marry in an unequal yoke as the Bible says in Corinthians, and

that I was not the man for her. I was very angry and jealous of the Lord for taking her away from me! I persuaded her to marry me. Most of our friends thought our marriage would not last, but in God's mercy, it has stood the test of time.

Soon after we were married Martha became pregnant and our first son was born. I still continued with my reckless life, but nothing turned out as I wished it. Slowly I felt less and less inclined to go to the places where Satan reigned. But, blessed words – Jesus came ***“that through death he might annul him who had the might of death, that is the devil; and might set free all those through fear of death ... were subject to bondage”*** (Hebrews 2:14-15). Thanks be to God for Martha's prayers, for the prayers of others and for the power of prayer and of faith. Martha prayed for me for nine years and at last the time drew near for God to answer those prayers. I began to feel empty inside, nothing satisfied me; I felt completely alone, hoping that someone would help me. I felt death with its terrors surround me. But Someone is coming near... His presence inspires peace...

One day I went to collect my wife from a Christian meeting. It was a Saturday afternoon, and the service was almost over, so I went in. I remember that the preacher was a young man called Daniel, and he suddenly asked ***me***, of all people! ***‘Do you know what sin is?’*** I was furious and full of hatred; I wanted to go right up to him and hit him – ***“What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”*** (Mark 5:7). There was a great silence, as all realised that it was a very direct question to me. I replied: ***‘I know nothing; I don't know what sin is!’*** (What a lie!) I left the hall, almost running, angrily dragging my wife and son after me. On the way home I began to feel bad. I felt broken and began to cry, and cried more and more. Martha was frightened and didn't understand what was happening. I was as a child that couldn't be comforted. I'll always remember that episode as it marked the moment when I started on my way to meet the Lord.

Later that night, my friends were surprised and worried as I was crying. Imagine my humiliation! The leader of an important Rock Band crying just like a child... I wasn't able to play in the show

that night; there were two forces striving within me. Suddenly I sought God, asking His forgiveness for my sins. That word of the young preacher in those humble surroundings had hit me hard and was working inside me. ***“For as the rain cometh down...from heaven and returneth not thither but watereth the earth and maketh it to bring forth and bud... so shall my word be ...it shall not return unto me void”*** (Isaiah 55:10-11).

The next Sunday I went with Martha to the service, and when I got in and saw all those faces, so pure and beautiful, it was like being in heaven itself. Someone came up to me and embraced me; I don't remember who, but in that embrace I felt the Lord's love. Also I remember the message – ‘God loves you, Rodolfo; He loves you so much that He gave His Son for you’. I heard it, but couldn't understand how God could love me, with all I have done. I felt so miserable and dirty and God is so pure and holy. I listened to the message and when the call was given, if someone wanted to receive Christ, I answered – There I was, at the feet of the Saviour, renouncing all and accepting in my heart Jesus as the Lord of my life! For my wife Martha it was a most wonderful moment, seeing her husband kneeling and praising the Lord Jesus. It was the answer to so many prayers of so many brethren who day and night had cried to God for me. There I was, sitting at His feet, clothed and in my right mind (see Mark 5:15).

That week I had several engagements to fulfil and I had to rehearse with the Band. As I went to the theatre I asked the Lord to help me; it was a decisive moment! But God is powerful and He would show me who He was! When one has been a slave for a long time it requires a very powerful Person to set us free. That is why, although science is good and helps, to get really free from spiritual infirmities it is not sufficient. But, ***“If the Son shall set you free ye shall be really free”*** (John 8:36).

When I reached the theatre the musicians were there waiting for me to play; the alcohol and drugs were there too, calling me, but in my hand I had my first Bible. I began to speak of Christ; I told them that I wanted to follow Him and was ready to leave all for Him. They began to laugh loudly, some didn't understand and

many thought I was mad. But as I spoke I could see their faces change – they were filled with hate! I turned and left and never again went to a rock concert. That day I read Isaiah 58:8: “***Then shalt thy light break forth as the dawn and thy health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of Jehovah shall be thy rear guard***”. The Lord said to me: Go to your home and your kindred and tell them how great things God has done for you, and had mercy on you (see Mark 5:19).

When I got home I told my wife the decision I had taken. The first thing I did was to ask the forgiveness of my wife and my children and then, with tears, of my mother and of all to whom I had done so much damage. Many got very cross with me, but I felt the need to ask their forgiveness and to speak to them of Him who had forgiven me. I began to preach in the very place and to the same people I had lived with, — in Gadara! There is so much need in those places, among the tombs, but the power of God is working there and transforming lives for His glory through the powerful gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus, by His cross, where peace and forgiveness is found by all if they will have it. God is the God of the living and gives us a life which is beyond the reach of death and which Satan cannot touch! (John 5:25-29).

Rodolfo Estrada

This article was translated from the Spanish by Robin Garvie of Buenos Aires

A Voice from the Past

FAITH

To be strong in faith two things are needful:-

- A very low esteem of ourselves, and
- A very high esteem of Christ.

Faith's expectation in the day of trouble is large showers of blessing.

A steadfast purpose to trust God, when He seems to unbelief to

be breaking promise, betokens a growth in faith. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15).

In trial of faith, let us take heed to our spirit that we trust God without stint. The soul's repose in Him is His delight; and He will honour it. The Lord sitteth as king upon the floods, and faith sits with Him.

We please God by trusting Him, trusting His love, His grace, His wisdom and trusting without limit; but it is only by little and little that we come to account our own wisdom folly, and God's wisdom to be the true wisdom – wisdom infinite; then we are able to yield ourselves unreservedly unto Him.

Faith labours and holds on, despite all appearances, and in the midst of all difficulties.

Unbelief begets all sorts of evils; faith prevents and cures them.

When we are especially strong in faith, we have especial need to watch against unbelief... Soon after Abraham had greatly trusted God, he through unbelief denied his wife. Moses, the meekest of men, spoke unadvisedly with his lips. David, the humble and forgiving man, was moved to proud wrath by the words of Nabal.

Robert C. Chapman (1803 – 1902)

Extracts from "Choice Thoughts"

God willing, a further selection of extracts should appear in issue No 108

THE CLUE TO LIFE'S MAZE

"There was a man whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil... Satan said, Doth Job fear God for naught?" Job 1:1 & 9

This marvellous book, one of the profoundest studies in the Bible, deals with the great problem of evil. At some time in our Christian

way we come back to study it, as a clue to life's maze, the expression of our hearts' outcry, and the solution to life's mystery in the will and love of God.

From first to last the questions are: 'Can God make a man love Him for Himself alone and apart from God's gifts?' and 'Why is evil permitted and what part does it have in the nurture of the soul of man?'. These questions are always with us. In fact, the book of Job may be said to be the compendium of the history of our race.

The first chapter teems with helpful lessons. The anxiety of parents for their children should expend itself in ceaseless intercession on their behalf. The great adversary of souls is always on the watch, considering our conduct, so as to accuse us before God, not only for overt sins, but for unworthy motives. We cannot forget our Lord's words to Peter: "Satan desired to have you... but I have prayed for you, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31). Christ never underestimated the power of Satan, the "prince of this world", but He is our great intercessor (Hebrews 4:14-16 & 7:25).

In circumstances of prosperity and happiness, we must never forget that it is God who plants a hedge about us, blesses our work and increases our substance. It is good to realise that whatever be the malign efforts of our foes, there is always the divine restraint, and we are not tempted beyond what we are able to bear. It is not enough to endure our griefs sullenly or stoically. It should be our aim, not only to hold on to our integrity, but to trust God... There is a clue to the mystery of human life, which comes to the man who differentiates between the real and the unreal, the seen and the unseen, the temporal and the eternal.

Meditation: My flesh and my heart fails: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

F. B. Meyer (1847 – 1929)

PLACES OF BLESSING

Blessing through communion with God

Exodus 25:21-22

In Exodus 25 God spoke of the mercy seat, so that man could be in the holiest in the presence of God and there in blessing. The secret of it all is found in God's word, "I will commune with thee". Communion is the secret of blessing.

May we attach an increasing importance to communion with God; in the sanctuary, the holiest of all, where the ark of God was enshrined, was typically the presence of Christ.. On the ark, in the holiest, was that slab of pure gold, called the 'mercy seat'. God has set Christ forth to be the mercy seat. It is where mercy and truth are met together (Psalm 85:10), where God can declare His righteousness and yet where His love is known. He can see the blood sprinkled upon it, for on the ground of the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ God can have man in His own presence, and we can commune with Him. It was before the mercy seat that God could righteously have man before Him: He said, "there will I meet with thee", and such are the conditions there according to God's pleasure that He adds, in wondrous grace, "and I will commune with thee". Would that we felt the importance of communion more and more! The lack of power and ability to meet a situation or rise to some opportunity of service and testimony may be traced to lack of communion. In the sanctuary God would commune with us and speak to us of Christ, where His thoughts are communicated by the Holy Spirit. Let us encourage one another to make time for communion! There is no place in the universe so blessed, so wonderful, or profound, as before the mercy seat, where God can speak to us , and where we have the holy favour and privilege of speaking to Him.

You will recall the occasion where the Lord Jesus sat at supper and the disciple whom Jesus loved was leaning on His bosom in holy intimacy. Peter, recognising that John was nearer to

the Lord in his spirit, beckoned to him that he should ask who it should be of whom Jesus spoke, and John was at liberty to say, "Lord, who is it?" We would desire to speak to Him freely, with reverence, but with confidence. We would commune with Him and ask Him questions. How tenderly and graciously the Lord would encourage this! He would have us ready to speak to Him of every difficulty that arises, but how He loves to communicate His thoughts to us! What a contrast this to Genesis 3, when the Lord God went into the garden to commune with His creature, man, but was unable to do so because of what had come in, and instead of being able to commune with him He had to drive him out of the garden!

What an incentive to communion too, was the attitude of Mary of Bethany! She knew the Lord well enough to sit at His feet and hear His word. She gave Him the opportunity of speaking to her; she did not pour out her troubles to Him at that moment, but she felt that this was the one place in the universe worth occupying. If we knew more of Mary's experience in Luke 10 we should know more of it as in John 12 where she anointed Him. These two incidents in the gospels illustrate the import and bearing for us on communion. There is now no reason for distance to be maintained. Even if we sin, God has made abundant provision for it. If a cloud has come in to produce a sense of distance, if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9). He will have His joy, and the saints will have their joy as this communion is maintained.

F. S. Marsh

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This article was selected for reprinting from "Living Water" No7 by George Laing.

In the next issue, God willing, there will be a reprint from "Living Water" No 8 selected by David Gentry.

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.

A word for today

THE CHRISTIAN'S ANCHOR

Hebrews 6: 18-20 2

Timothy 3: 14-17

2 Corinthians 1: 20-22

Revelation 22: 16

I would like to speak about the believer's anchor. The "anchor of the soul" is said to be "both secure and firm". How reassuring that our link with Christ is absolutely secure! Then I want to speak about the anchor that can be found in the word of God, the word that cannot fail. Next there is the anchor point in the promises of God, which are all verified in Christ. Then, lastly, but above all, to speak of the anchor to be found in the unchanging Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is an anchor? It is a weighty device which is lowered overboard from a ship to prevent it from drifting. The anchor cable to which it is attached must be very strong as it may have to withstand strong winds and high seas. How many a weary mariner has longed for a safe anchorage, where the anchor can be lowered and the ship can be secure! There have been occasions when a ship's anchor cable has broken, and, as a result, the ship has been driven ashore and wrecked. How wonderful to know that the believer's anchor cable will never break! In the face of the great storms of life, the anchor cable which links the believer with Christ remains secure and firm. That link is established when a person puts their faith in Christ and in His finished work.

In our lives we may vacillate and fail, but there is no wavering with Him, the One who suffered and died on Calvary's cross, rose again, and lives a Man in heaven. Down here we face the stresses and strains of life, but our hopes are in Christ where He is. The anchor of the soul should be a great stay and support to the believer. The apostle Paul faced many storms in his life, but he comes to a point in the Roman epistle where he says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" He then enumerates

What a safe anchorage Stephen had reached

seven things, “tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or danger, or sword”. He says “in all these things we more than conquer through him that has loved us”. He then goes on to say, “I am persuaded”. Then he lists ten things beginning with death, none of which “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”. (Romans 8:35-39)

Near the end of his life Paul, writing his last letter to Timothy, shows that the anchor cable is as strong as ever. What stormy waters Paul had come through – shipwrecks, imprisonments, beatings etc. Yet he can say, “I know whom I have believed” (2 Timothy 1:12). As he faced martyrdom, what assurance it would have brought to him to know that the One on whom he had believed had not changed at all. I think that Paul may often have reflected on Stephen’s martyrdom and his own part in it. He had consented to Stephen’s death, and those who stoned him laid their clothes at the feet of Paul. He would have seen it all: he would have seen Stephen being led out to be stoned; he would have seen him looking up to heaven where “he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”; he would have seen him praying and saying “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”, then kneeling down, and praying “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:55-60). Finally he would have seen Stephen fall asleep. What a safe anchorage Stephen had reached. Who would have thought at that martyrdom that very soon Saul of Tarsus, as Paul then was, would have that same anchor that Stephen trusted in? Ananias is told, “Behold, he is praying”; his anchor cable was secure and firm. That is the anchorage which every believer in Christ can enjoy, and it is an unchanging one.

The reference in Hebrews is drawn from the Old Testament, where the manslayer who has slain a man unintentionally could flee to one of the six cities of refuge. He was safe within the walls of that city, and he had to remain there until the death of

the high priest. How thankful we are that we haven't had to flee to a city, but to a blessed Person, who died once, but now lives never to die again. Our liberty is in Christ in glory!

Hebrews shows that Christ is in heaven on behalf of the believer down here. When the high priest of old went into the presence of God, he wore the breastplate of judgement, on which each of the twelve tribes was represented by a precious stone, each one of which was inscribed with a name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The name of each of the tribes was borne into the presence of God on the high priest's breastplate.

Far more wonderful for us is that the Man Christ Jesus who is there in heaven carries our names on His heart. When we opened our hearts to the Lord Jesus and accepted Him as Saviour, the name of Jesus was written on our hearts by the Spirit of the living God. But then our names are written on His heart! He knows all that faces us because He has travelled this way Himself, and He is in heaven now, living for the believer.

There is more! Not only is He our representative in heaven, He is our forerunner. The high priest of old was the people's representative when he entered God's presence, - he was never their forerunner. The fact that Jesus is there as our forerunner is the assurance that we are going to be there. The hymn puts it:

*He's gone within the veil,
For us that place has won,
In Him we stand a heav'nly band,
Where He Himself is gone.*

How secure the believer's position is!

God's Word as an Anchor Point

In the letter to Timothy Paul tells us about the last days being difficult times, in which men shall be "lovers of self, lovers of money" etc. He encourages Timothy to "abide in those things which thou hast learned, and of which thou hast been fully

persuaded". He then leads on to speak of the infallibility of the word of God. Let us as believers drop our anchor on the word of God, because it is sure and stable. The Psalmist says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119: 105). What do we need in a difficult day? We need a guiding light to show us the path in which we should walk. The word of God will direct us in that path.

I like the story of the old stone breaker, who was reading his bible during a break from his work. One passer-by scornfully asked how it was possible for him to understand the book he was reading. The old man looked at him and replied, 'Well, generally what you are saying would be true. It would be difficult for me to understand this book, but it so happens that I know the Author'. Each of us can know the Author, and gain some understanding of His word. How much value do we put on the word of God? The prophet Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jeremiah 15: 16).

Many here have had the privilege of being brought up in households where God's word is read, and where household prayer is made.

**Let us drop our anchor
on the word of God**

Timothy had that privilege – "that from a child thou hast known the sacred letters, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation". When all else crumbles and fails, this book is absolutely reliable. It is described as the living and abiding word of God. Men have tried to corrupt it, but it remains in its purity in our hands today. It is available to us because persons have suffered and died in this country so that the lamp of God's word would continue to shine.

When the Lord Jesus walked with these two on the way to Emmaus, He began from Moses and from all the prophets, and showed them the things concerning Himself. As they listened their hearts burned, and so may ours as we are in the presence of the inspired word of God. It is part of the Christian's equipment,

the abiding word of God. So whilst we have an anchor in Christ above, we also have an anchor in God's word. At one point Paul says, "What saith the scripture?" (Galatians 4: 30). If the Lord Himself could use the word of God, what a model it provides for us. Being tempted by Satan, He could simply say, "It is written". Surely it is right for us to rely on it and use it as well.

The Promises of God

How many divine promises there are in scripture! As we travel from the beginning of the Bible to the end, we see every promise of God verified in the blessed Person who is the yea and the amen. As you look back to that day of tragedy when sin first came into this world, on that very day we learn of a divine promise. God was looking forward to the incoming of Jesus who would meet sin's challenge, and uphold the rights of God. The hymn puts it:-

*Soon as the reign of sin began,
The light of mercy dawned on man,
When God announced the blessed news,
The woman's Seed thy head shall bruise.*

Think of the promises made to Abraham, and the blessing that would come to his seed. It looks forward to Christ. In John 8, when faced with the opposition of the Jews, Jesus says, "Abraham exulted in that he should see my day, and he saw and rejoiced" (John 8:56). The promises made to Abraham were to be fulfilled in Christ Himself.

Moving on to David and the promises made to him and his house, we find that all are pointing on to Christ. Indeed all the promises of God are centred in Him. We can put our anchor down on that. We sometimes sing:-

*Standing on the promises I cannot fall,
Listening every moment to the Spirit's call
Resting in my Saviour as my all in all,
Standing on the promises of God.*

What an anchor the believer has! There should be a chorus of glory to God from those who value and appreciate the promises.

Divine promises are never broken. We make promises, but circumstances change, and promises may be broken. Divine promises anticipate every circumstance that can possibly come up, and God stands by His promises.

The greatest promise made to His own by the Lord Jesus is recorded in John 14: "Let not your heart be troubled" and He goes on to say, "I am coming again, and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be" (vv 1, 3). The mockers say, "Where is the promise of his coming" (2 Peter 3:4), but there it is certain that He will keep His promise.

The passage we read goes on to say, "Now he that establishes us with you in Christ". (It could read, 'attaches firmly to' or 'connects firmly with'.) There is the anchor! "He that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who also has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts". This is a threefold reference to the functions of the Holy Spirit. The anointing leads us to think of the baptism of the Lord Jesus. We see a Man coming out of the Jordan, the heavens opened upon Him, and the Spirit descending upon Him. There was the anointing seen in perfection. The anointing signifies heaven's complete approval.

Divine promises are never broken.

Then, where we read it says: "who also has sealed us". It is another aspect of the Spirit's function. That seal has in mind the day of redemption. God puts His mark (His seal) on His property. The price for the property has been paid. "Ye are not your own for ye have been bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20). The price was the precious blood of Christ.

Then there is something more. In giving the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, He is saying to the believer, 'All the inheritance

that you are going to come into in the future, you can enjoy it now'. What a God we have to do with! As having the Spirit of God, as anointed, sealed, and given Him as the earnest, we are anchored in these great things of God.

The Anchor in Jesus

How beautiful that on the last page of scripture the Spirit of God has written the name of Jesus. "I Jesus" – what an anchor point! The man in John chapter 9 when asked how he had been healed, replied: "A man called Jesus". Every colour of the rainbow is in that name. Truly He is the One who wears the "coat of many colours". In the first page of the Bible we find the Creator in action, and when we come to the New Testament we find the words "by whom He made the worlds". Who is this? He is the One who bears the name of Jesus. He is the same One who has accomplished the work of redemption – "I Jesus". He is the One that Moses spoke of as, "God will raise up unto thee a prophet...like unto me" (Deuteronomy 18:15). I am so glad that on the last page of Scripture the Spirit of God wrote His name. He has many glories. Some are personal, some are official, others moral but the most endearing of all the names which He has is that of "Jesus".

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the root and offspring of David". When His opponents speak of Abraham as their father in John's gospel He says, "Before Abraham was, I am". He is the root of Abraham and the root of David. How great He is!

May we carry away an impression of this blessed One who died for us, but who now lives for us, and will fill eternity with His glory! May He fill our hearts now, and may our anchor be found secure and firm in Him and in Him alone.

May God bless the word.

Alex Mowat

An address at Warley, October 2010