

109

Living Water

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Editor's Note

Since No. 101, each issue of "Living Water" has contained a reprint from a back number. These reprints were made since there were a number of articles in the early magazines that had largely been forgotten but were relevant to today's readership. God willing further reprints will be published during 2012. So as not to limit the space available for current and other ministry, where longer articles are reprinted the number of pages in the magazine will be increased from 25 to 29. Suggestions for articles for reprinting will be very welcome from readers. Ed.

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Recent Ministry

THE SHOOT — FRESHNESS AND LIFE

In nature, the seed that is planted is apparently dead. In due time the dormant seed 'wakens' and the root then grows. Once the root of a plant emerges from the seed, it is not automatic that the shoot follows. It takes a special enzyme in the cell structure of the root to promote the growth of cells that are to produce the shoot. As Jesus said in Mark, you cast the seed upon the earth, *"and the seed should sprout and grow, he does not know how. ...first the blade, then an ear, then full corn in the ear"* (Mark 4:27). The shoot is the first evidence that the root is alive. Everything in natural and spiritual growth is by divine handiwork. Growth is dependent entirely upon God. What a beautiful thing growth is. There is the root, then the green shoot, then the blossom. That is still not full growth; the blossom has finally to give way to the fruit. That is growth: the root, the shoot, and then fruit. It is a wonderful process.

The freshness and wonder of a stock of the root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-2, 4 & 9)

Isaiah chapter 11 is speaking about a shoot out of the stock of Jesse. He is speaking of the royal line of David. The Messiah was to come from David's line. There is a long root there. Matthew in his gospel traces Joseph's line (the root) through David down to Christ. Luke traces the line backwards to God, which in fact gives us Mary's line because she was also of the tribe of Judah. All through that long root there were miracles — think of Abraham and the miracle of the birth of Isaac. Then we find Rahab a harlot brought into the line, a miracle of faith; Tamar, Ruth the Moabitess and Bathsheba all come into the line, showing how God can turn grievous failure into blessing. So it goes on right through the captivity and into the 400 years silence between Malachi and the beginning of the New Testament. The line is kept by divine appointment right through to Mary and Joseph and Christ

The background to the passage in Isaiah is very interesting. The

Assyrian is coming down onto Jerusalem wanting to wipe it off the map. Does that sound familiar? The mighty Assyrian army approached in all its power with the intention of destroying Jerusalem. Against that background the prophet brings forward a wonderful vision of what was going to come forth, *“Out of the stock of Jesse”, “a branch out of his roots”*. What a wonderful branch Christ is! Isaiah sees One by whom every foe will be overcome and He will bring in peace, joy and glory.

I want to look at the seven wonderful features of Jesus (the Shoot and the Branch) as given in verse 2 of Isaiah:

“The Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him” — How glorious Christ is, a blessed Man on whom the Spirit of God could rest with absolute complacency. Every feature of that Man was in perfect accord with what the Divine will desired to find. The scene at the river Jordan showed the Spirit descending as a dove and resting upon Jesus marking Him out as the Son of God.

“...the spirit of wisdom and understanding” — what wisdom was seen in Jesus. He says, *“I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the world’s foundation” (Matthew 13:35)*. If you want to know things that transpired before the foundation of the world, Jesus can tell you. John 17 makes that apparent where He says, *“thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (v.24)*.

Consider His wisdom when He confronted the Galilean fishermen. *“Let down your nets... Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net” (Luke 5:4-5)*. What happened? The fish from the lake filled it. He could say to Peter, ‘You can go to the sea and cast one line and the first fish that comes up will have a stater in its mouth’ (see Matthew 17:27). He is the Creator. He knew every fish and everything about it. Ponder the detail and beauty of the whole creation. When He was here as Man, He *“upholds all things by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3)*. What wisdom there is in Jesus.

There is nothing He does not understand either. That

understanding is tempered with divine sympathy. He went to the city of Nain and they were bringing out a bier. On it was one who was the only son of his mother and she was a widow. He saw her weeping; He fully understood the heart and sorrow of a widow (see Luke 7). He understands us, our problems and fears completely; yet He loves us too.

“...the spirit of **counsel** and **might**” — He can give sound counsel. He says that to the church in Laodicea. I wonder if you have ever prayed to the Lord Jesus that He would give you counsel: how to move out of the predicament which you are in? Laodicea was a very wealthy place; they thought they had need of nothing. Somebody once said that it was doubtful if they even had a prayer meeting in Laodicea because they had nothing to ask for! They had grown rich and were in need of nothing. The Lord’s assessment was quite different. He tells them that they were poor and blind and wretched and naked.

He told Laodicea, *“I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire” (Revelation 3:18)*. Think of the grace of Christ in that! Then He adds, *“If anyone hear my voice”* — to those who listen to His counsel — *“I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me.”* I love that word to Laodicea—Christ will end the days of the church’s sojourn on earth by supping with those who hear His voice. The end of the day will be marked by the presence of Jesus. How He loves His church! He looks for us to be fresh, green, drawing from the root of confidence in Him and from the root of His grace and love.

Then note, it is not only counsel but might as well. He has the unassailable power in all things to give effect to His counsel. Jesus never lost a battle and He never will. Think of the awfulness of the cross: the greatest battle that has ever been fought in time and eternity and who won? No one defeated Christ. He rose victorious for ever. Is it not wonderful? Let it fill our hearts. This is the green Shoot and Branch that has come out of the root of David.

Finally “...the spirit of **knowledge** and of **the fear of Jehovah**” (v.2). We have seen the knowledge there is in Him but then

there is the fear of Jehovah — how He delighted to do always the things that were pleasing to the Father.

Those are seven things — what perfection there is in Jesus!

Isaiah looks on to the millennium when the earth will be restored to what it was at the beginning. When creation was made, all was perfect and beautiful. There will be no shooting stars then, no meteors going to hit the earth, none of that. The earth will be at peace. The cat will not catch the mouse. The cruelty in creation, and it is cruel, will have gone. It will be quite safe for a babe to play on the hole of the viper. And the earth is going to be *“filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14)*. I suppose the seas are far greater than the land in the globe and Isaiah said the glory of the Lord is going to be greater than the waters covering the sea. The glory of Christ is going to fill the whole earth.

Then we read that, *“His resting place shall be glory”* (v.10). It almost looks on to the eternal day, this wonderful scripture. And this is the green shoot out of the root of David. Just let our souls be filled with Christ.

In Luke’s gospel Simeon says, *“...mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples” (Luke 1:30-31)*. We see the true shoot had actually sprung from the root of Jesse. Jesus, the Son of God, King on David’s throne, to reign over the house of Jacob and a never-ending kingdom— He who was the root and the offspring of David. How precious the freshness and blossoming of this wonderful line that Isaiah saw.

The true features of the church springing up

(1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 & 9-10)

The Thessalonians were a young church, a new assembly, and in it we see the true features of the church coming to light. Paul only spent a short time there, perhaps as little as three weeks, but the shoot is beginning to appear — the freshness and moral excellence of saints who had trusted in Christ and whose roots had gone down into the grace, mercy and love of God.

We should not do things as the world does them

The evidence of the shoots that had begun to appear is seen in the commendatory things that Paul can say about them after so short a time. I want to draw attention particularly to three of them: the work of faith; the labour of love; and the enduring constancy of hope.

We live in a day when things are very difficult but the work of faith and the labour of love and the enduring constancy of hope are to continue.

The work of faith is spoken of in the Epistle of James (see James 2:21-26). He brings forward what Rahab did in hiding the Israelite spies, as a work of faith. Rahab believed that the Israelites were going to take the land and possess it and that Jericho was coming down. Now Jericho represents this evil world—the way it operates and does things. The whole world system is coming down. Christ is going to come in and He is going to reign, establish His kingdom and set everything right. As Christians, we are to live by faith in the light of that. So the works we do should be in accord with that vision of faith. That is what Rahab did. She took the spies, she hid them and she enabled them to escape and then they were instrumental in bringing the children of Israel in. What a work of faith hers was!

We should not do things as the world does them—five year plans and all that kind of thing—they are not works of faith. Christians are to do things because we believe that God is going to take the whole scene over and Christ is going to reign here supreme. So a Christian is to give his time and resources to that which is progressing and supporting the works of faith.

Abraham had works of faith because he offered up his son. He believed what God had said and he did what God said. That is the obedience of faith. What he did was folly naturally speaking. He had waited until he was 100 to have the child that was to be the heir, then God said, 'Now, put him to death'. Abraham believed God. Think of how he went right to the very edge. Abraham had taken the knife to slay that boy, trusting God absolutely. Just

think about the reality of what faith is. The work of faith trusts God implicitly and acts accordingly.

Now, what about the labour of love? All your work, whatever you do, should be motivated by your love for Christ. Paul laboured night and day in ordinary work so as not to be a charge on the saints. He also worked night and day with tears amongst the Ephesian believers to help them in the things of God (see Acts 20:31). That was the labour of love practically and spiritually.

Think of the Lord Jesus in His incessant labours of love. John tells us that He was wearied with the way that He had come. He sat just as He was at the fountain. What a labour of love to secure one person (see John 4). How far would you or I go to secure one person?

Paul speaks about Epaphroditus. What a wonderful example he is of a man who laboured in love. He drew near, Paul said, even to death *“that he might fill up what lacked in your ministration toward me”* (Philippians 2:30). Paul was not being selfish in saying that. He had looked at that brother who had almost died in serving. What a labour of love!

Let us just think about these labours of love. Much of such service is in secret and the day to come will declare it. It is not now the time of display but that day is coming. Then the labours of love will come fully to light.

There is *“the enduring constancy of hope”* too. It is wonderful to meet a believer who lives in the joy of Christ’s coming. Maybe He is coming today. How do we think about that? Do we live with the enduring constancy of hope that we are going to be with Christ? Constantly hoping *“with perfect steadfastness in the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:13).

Paul said of the Thessalonians that they had turned to God from idols, to worship the living God and to wait for His Son from the heavens. They were a young assembly but they were full of life. They are the shoots, the green shoots and blossom that come from a root that is drawing from the love of Christ and the mercy of God

and the Holy Spirit. The root keeps the soul in freshness and life. That marked the Thessalonian church—may we be like it.

The freshness of forgiveness

(Philemon v.22)

It is an interesting story that is recorded in Philemon. It looks as though Onesimus, who was Philemon's slave, had stolen something, very likely from Philemon himself, and then run away to Rome. In Rome he seems to have committed some other offence and ended up in that same prison as the apostle Paul. God, in His wonderful grace, was following Onesimus every step of that long journey. Paul preached the gospel to him and this young man was saved. Is it not wonderful? The grace of God which carried with it salvation for all men has appeared. It is for all!

Onesimus is saved and Paul is going to send him back home. Remember that in the Roman empire a slave was totally under the control of his master and if he offended could be put to death by his master. That was the threat hanging over Onesimus. Paul says, 'I am going to write this letter with my own hand'. Remember that Paul was nearly blind and that he did not write most of his letters. I think he wrote this one because it was so important that Philemon should understand that in the relationships between believers everything was to be according to the root of mercy, grace and kindness and in accord with what Jesus would do. Philemon had become a believer through the service of the apostle Paul and Paul was looking for the fresh shoots of life to appear in these practical relationships.

So Onesimus is sent back with this letter. That was the only thing he had — Paul's letter. He comes back to Philemon. Can you imagine this in your local Christian company? Do you have difficulties with someone? You cannot forgive them? Something happened in the past and you will never forget it? When God forgives, He puts the sins out of mind: thy "*sins and ... lawlessnesses I will never remember any more*" (Hebrews 10:17). Is that not wonderful? If you come to Christ you can get your sins forgiven and God will never remember them ever.

Onesimus comes, just with this letter, and with the knowledge of his guilt, that he had sinned. And Paul said, 'Philemon, I am counting upon you to show Onesimus the mercy of God'. Can we treat each other like that? The shoot is there — the freshness of forgiveness, of peace, of love, and of mercy because we are drawing from the root of the knowledge of forgiveness and that we are loved.

The root of grace will never dry up. You can draw from it and you can find it in your own heart: grace is sufficient for every contingency. The grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient for every situation. So Paul said to Philemon, 'I am counting on you to do it and if you think he owes you anything, put it to my account'. *"Receive him... not any longer as a bondsman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother"*. I wonder if I am in my local company like that—in the company as someone willing to meet the liability? Do you know the most valuable thing we have in any Christian company is a brother? The concept of the brethren of Christ is going to last for ever. It is a wonderful relationship — that of a brother. The Lord said, *"by this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine that ye have love amongst yourselves"* (John 13:35).

Paul said to the Corinthians, *"love ... endures all things" and "hopes all things"*. *"Love never fails"* (1 Corinthians 13:7, 8). What a root to draw from—a root of love that never fails. We can always count on the love of Jesus—*"having loved his own who were in the world"* we are told in John, He *"loved them to the end"* (John 13:1). That is the way that Saviour is.

May we be helped, all of us. These are practical things where we are tested. We can enjoy, and do enjoy and worship our precious Saviour and Lord in all His glory but that is to have a practical answer down here. A shoot out of the root is to be fruitful and the local company is to be a fruitful area, full of fruit for the pleasure of God. May we be helped and blessed for His name's sake.

Phil Robinson

An address in London, 23 May 2010.

Poetry Selection

NEW YEAR HYMN

*What marks the dawning of the year,
From any other morn?
No festive garb doth nature wear
Because a year is born;
The sky is not more full of light,
The air more full of song,
And I, to whose awakened eyes,
So fair this morn appears,
How know I where tomorrow lies;
God grants not life by years!*

*Father, today upon my head
Thy hand in blessing lay.
Give us this day our daily bread,
Renew our hearts today.
Our Lord and Saviour, all we ask
Is that, through Thee forgiven,
To us each day our daily task,
Our daily strength be given.
That when at last Thy morning come
And floods its light abroad,
We, glad within Thy heavenly home,
May keep the Day of God.*

Elizabeth Rundle Charles (1828 – 1896)

NEW YEAR DEDICATION

*To Thee, O Lord, my life I owe,
By Thee another year is given;
May I, in service here below,
More surely urge my way to heaven.*

*Forgive my slow and sluggish pace,
The many faults of bygone years,
My loitering in the heavenly race,
My worldly wishes, coward fears.*

*To Thee I yield myself anew,
And humbly, gladly call Thee mine;
Help me to render homage true,
As not my own but wholly Thine.*

*May service new be New Year joy,
Fresh consecration, deeper love,
New works of faith, fresh powers employ,
By grace imparted from above.*

*In closer intercourse with Thee
May I a joy increasing find,
The things of heaven more clearly see,
And leave the things that are behind.*

*And if this year we greet as New
Should prove to be on earth my last,
May all my days, though fleet and few,
In serving God and men be passed.*

Newman Hall (1816 – 1902)

Testimony Section

A RUSSIAN CALENDAR

The extracts below are all taken from a Russian calendar which is intended to remind Russians of the gospel message month by month. Because it is a calendar, the choice of some of the Bible quotations relate to events in the month. For instance, in February Russians have a holiday celebrating the circumcision of the Lord, so the quotation is about the meeting with Simeon in the temple. The messages, translated from the Russian, are simple and intended for unbelievers. Please pray that the distribution of the calendar will lead many to trust in the Lord Jesus for themselves. There is not room for the whole calendar so the entries for five months are set out here.

JANUARY 2012

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger (Luke.2:8-12).

This can mean great joy also for you!

Look at your acts, thoughts and words. They are far from perfection and deserve God's condemnation. In the Bible it says: *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). This is not just physical death, but eternal perdition. Yet God loves you and sent His Son into the world for your salvation. In order to receive this salvation you need to repent and trust in Christ as your own Saviour. Call out to Jesus through prayer. Tell Him that you are conscious of being a fallen sinner in need of salvation. Believe that He came into the world to save you, died for your sins and rose for your justification. Ask Him to come into your heart and life and be your Lord and Saviour.

MARCH 2012

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him (Isaiah 53:2).

The Lord Jesus as Man here on earth was not marked by pride, self-importance and the outward trappings of greatness, but by humility and , as He said Himself, He did not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many. Yet Christ is the way, the truth and the life! You can find the way, the truth and the life in Him.

Put your trust in the Saviour! Let Christ be formed in you. Learn His meekness, humility, kindness, forgiveness, mercy, and love.

JULY 2012

The scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and... They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground...

So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard [it], being convicted ... went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing there. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:3 - 11).

With what a great determination these respectable people were ready to kill a sinful woman! This is a story from our daily life. Someone has offended us, or deceived us or not been fair with us and we are angry and ready to stone the guilty!

But what is God's reaction to such situation? He draws our attention to ourselves, to our sins. Before throwing a stone let us remember our own deeds and words. Before God we are all absolutely guilty and deserved death, as this sinful woman: *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (Romans 3:10-12).

The Lord Jesus knows our sinful histories but He is not condemning us. If we feel our guilt let us seek His forgiveness and find peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

OCTOBER 2012

And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying...

There cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard [it], he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat (Luke 8:41-55).

We are very worried when our loved ones are ill, but the death comes and we are all helpless. All is finished—*"trouble not the Master"*. Then people laughed at the words of the Lord Jesus when He said the girl was just sleeping for they knew for sure that she was dead! But the Lord Jesus Christ is the Conqueror of

death!

By the resurrection of this girl the Lord shows us that He has power to raise people from the dead. So why is it that today believers are not raised from the dead? It is not the time yet! But it soon will be, for we read in the Bible: *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not go before them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1Thessalonians 4:14 – 16).*

Over the believers in Jesus Christ, death has no power!

DECEMBER 2012

“And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put [it] on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on [his] feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill [it]; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry” (Luke 15:21-24).

This story Jesus told is really about all of us. After Adam and Eve’s fall all people are born with the same sinful nature. A distance came between man and God, a distance that cannot be removed by good works or religious achievements. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can meet our need because He paid the great price on the cross of Calvary.

If we want to be reconciled to God we need to repent and put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance means that you realize that your life is going on far from God, that you are a sinner and need forgiveness. There is forgiveness for you if you will trust in Christ.

Hurry to the Lord for His forgiveness! Hurry to the Lord for His salvation! Don’t go into another year without the Saviour!

A Voice from the Past

DAILY WALK 2

The circumstances of every hour provide us with opportunities to approach the throne of grace; and we ought, in the secret of our hearts, to be communing with God our Father all the day long, hearing His voice, asking His guidance, or making confession, if in any of these things we fail. As we advance in acquaintance with God and with ourselves, we shall have more and more of the spirit of little children, distrusting ourselves and putting all our trust in Him.

Do you dread to grieve the heart of Christ as much as you once dreaded wrath and condemnation?

The ways of Christ in the days of His flesh are the true pattern for His people.

The wearing of clothes is a special mark of our fall and shame. How unseemly then is pride of dress! Does a convict glory in the convict's coat?

If we examine the troubles of God's children, we shall find that too many of them arise from unbelieving fears concerning the future. Let me but remember that Christ, at the right hand of God, counts all my troubles as His own; and then away with my fears concerning the morrow.

God holds us accountable for what we have, not for what we have not. If I have only ten minutes to read the Bible, do I employ those ten minutes according to my accountability?

Angels have no envy because they have no pride. Is God glorified? Then angels are happy. Let the glory of God be our delight, our meat, our drink. Love envies not. If one member be honoured, says love, that is my honour, my joy.

Obedience to Christ brings upon us opposition from Satan, the world, the flesh in ourselves, and the unbelief, ignorance, and lack of the mind of Christ in some of His people. To meet all these rightly, let it be our business even in the smallest matters

to please Christ, that we may have His power and His truth for our strength and guidance. He trod this path before us, and has also given His Holy Spirit to lead us and to comfort us through the journey.

Robert C. Chapman (1803 – 1902)

Extracts from “Choice Thoughts”

God willing, a final selection of extracts should appear in issue No 110

THE MORAL GREATNESS OF CHRIST SEEN IN THE TEMPTATIONS

But Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness forty days, tempted of the devil.; and in those days he did not eat anything, and when they were finished he hungered. And the devil said to him, if thou be Son of God, speak to this stone, that it become bread. And Jesus answered unto him saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. (Luke 4:1-4)

We should all give time to meditate on the Lord Jesus in the temptations, because in it we see so distinctly His moral greatness shining out in perfect Manhood. It was a time when, under testing, He would prove as dependant Man – Man according to God – that though the prince of this world (the devil) came he found nothing in Him. The devil was successful against every other man; there was nothing for him now but complete defeat.

Observe the condition here – the Lord had been forty days without food, tempted of the devil. Think of the weakness and weariness of humanity which, though holy and perfect, the Lord must have felt. As it is written, *“when they were finished, he hungered”*. What I would emphasise is this, that the Lord Jesus in perfect manhood and at the weakest point met Satan at his strongest, for Satan comes with all the experience of one who, over a long history, had never yet known defeat.

What a marvellous triumph it was on the part of the Lord! There

on the one hand was the quietness and confidence of the blessed Man who lived by every word of God, who took nothing except as given Him by God. On the other hand was the effrontery of the devil , one who had usurped his power and position – for they were not given to him – and who was prepared to give that power if he could be recognised as an object of worship.

It is wonderful to think of the eye of God looking down on that scene, finding delight and pleasure in every movement of mind and heart in the Lord Jesus. How gloriously He maintained the situation! In Him we see man according to God, so it was no question of merely overcoming or reaching victory by a last great effort, but in all the perfection of holy manhood, in the calmness and the confidence of His trust in God, and by the scriptures – that by which man was to live – He regulated His answers in reply to Satan, as each temptation was brought to bear upon His holy soul.

The temptations were all from without. Within He was holy; there was no strife or conflict within. Yet He does not go outside of what is proper to a man. One feels that many a Christian has weakened his apprehension of the glory of the Man Christ Jesus, by allowing the thought that this blessed Person not only had unlimited power, but used Godhead power with which to defeat Satan. He was God the Son, but He was here in manhood, dependant manhood, and perfect as in the thought of God. So He must meet Satan as man, if there was to be any hope for men, for the captives bound.

He did meet, gloriously meet, all Satan's power. Every presentation of it was met – whether as regards His need of food, or the offer of political power, or religious power. He met all by what was written and what was right for a dependant man to do. This is the great lesson for our hearts, that where men are governed only by divine light, they secure divine support in every situation. The Lord emerges as the victor. He overcame the strong man (the devil), and from that moment he is free to claim the spoils. In the place where Satan had been supreme, a stronger than he had come upon him and the spoils were His. As it is

written, *“When a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour... and divideth his spoils” (Luke 11:22).*

A. E. Myles

In the next issue, God willing: The Moral Greatness of Christ seen in Gethsemane and at the cross.

PRACTICAL HELP IN THE CHRISTIAN WAY

- Make time to read your Bible every day; and meditate on what you read.
- Be much in prayer about every detail of your life. Nothing is too small to pray about. If you do not pray about small things, they will soon become big things, and then you will need to.
- Never lose an opportunity of speaking a word for the Lord. Time is short.
- Seek to shine for Jesus in your life as well as speaking for Him
- Do not be afraid of Satan; he is a defeated foe; but he can harm you if you are not near the Lord
- Your conduct cannot interfere with your eternal security, but it can greatly hinder your joy.

W. J. White

THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLING IN THE BELIEVER

We are set up here in the power of the Holy Spirit so that in every practical circumstance of our life we may count upon God and give Him pleasure.

It would do our souls a deal of spiritual good if we realised the power of God in the everyday circumstances of our life. I know that there is not a great deal of quiet in our ordinary occupations. I know that from the time you begin the day until the end there is not much time for relaxation, but I commend this consideration to you: there is nothing in the pressure of business that need ever rob your soul of the sense of the Spirit of God overshadowing the whole situation for you. The Spirit of God is with us, not

only when we have a few minutes' relaxation and time to consider the fact, but He is with us as a Divine Person, and that He is with us is an unchangeable fact, and that covers the whole of our practical life here. May the Lord help us to consider this.
J. B. Catterall

THE PERFECTIONS OF CHRIST

"The Lord Jesus in the night in which he was delivered up, took bread, and having given thanks broke it...and said, this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24) and founded the memorial of Himself and His accomplished sacrifice. Thus side by side, we behold His perfect goodness and man's full evil, but the full exhibition of what man was could not hinder the full manifestation of what Christ was. Nay, just as the light of the sun when shining on a dark thundercloud seems all the more bright and intense, so the love, grace, and goodness of Christ are magnified by the unmitigated evil which, on man's part, brought Him to the cross.

Edward Dennett

A word for Today

From "Living Water" No 9

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCES

Exodus 13: 21-22,

15: 22-27,

16: 13-15,

17: 8-15

Luke 22: 35-51

Introduction

I want to speak as simply as I can, about being a Christian and the kind of experiences that a Christian has. These passages in the book of Exodus are a good place, even though they are in the

Old Testament, to look for the kind of experiences that a Christian may have. They tell us about four things that ought to be of interest to us:

- Light
- Thirst and its remedy
- Hunger and its remedy
- Conflict

Light

“And Jehovah went before their face by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; so that they could go day and night...”

(Exodus 13:21–22)

Taking these Scriptures just in the order that they come in the book of Exodus, the first one is the story of how God made Himself available to His people by way of light. It says that, *“Jehovah went before their face by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; so that they could go day and night.”* That is, He intended that they should make progress all the time.

When you come a bit later you find that they were not always on the move. Indeed, they were not to move until God gave them the signal, by raising the cloud and setting out before them. So it was important not to go ahead of the cloud, but when the cloud did move, they needed to be ready!

So, if God was minded that they should move day and night, then they needed to be able to move, day and night and be ready to do so. You and I need to be ready to move when God directs us. We have to be ready to go, as this scripture says, by day and by night.

It sometimes seems as if most of the journey is by night! We are in a very dark world. The Christian will not find light there. As we go through this world you and I need the light that only God can give us. You may have noticed something rather striking about the hymn we sang. It begins by saying how God is light, and then immediately refers to the Lord Jesus Christ:

*Our God is light: and though we go
Across a trackless wild,
Jesus, Thy footsteps ever show
The path for every child.*

That is where you and I find light – in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has come into the world to illuminate you so that you might not walk in darkness but might have the light of life.

That is just how God was to His people as they embarked on this wilderness journey. Light is available for you and me. I love to think, as I go through the world – there are many problems there, many problems for the believer to face, the way is not easy – that there is no moral issue to which God does not have an answer. He will give it to you if you earnestly seek His face about it. God does not leave you struggling in a moral pit or mire from which there is no extracting of yourself.

If you are a believer you have the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ that, *“he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”* (John 8:12). If you are struggling with a moral problem now – and there are believers going through just that sort of struggle – take it to the Lord Jesus and get it resolved. It does not have to stay unresolved. It may expose you. It may call for repentance on your part. It may call for a change in your way of life. But you do not have to go on in darkness; there is no need for that for the Lord Jesus Christ is your light.

Thirst and its remedy

“...and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and they found no water. And they came to Marah, and they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter...And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried to Jehovah; and Jehovah showed him wood, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters became sweet...” (Exodus 15:22 – 27).

The next experience the children of Israel had was to go three

days in the wilderness and find no water. From what little I know, three days without water is a very long time; it is difficult and dangerous not to have water for three days. Perhaps that is why it comes here as a test before the lack of food becomes a test. Man cannot go so long without water.

The believer cannot go long without refreshment. That is what water is for, a source of refreshment. That is what these people needed. But what they came to were these bitter waters and they speak of the disappointments of life. Once you have embarked with high hopes on the path of a Christian, desiring to follow the Lord – and it is right that you should do so – you nevertheless find that life is not all easy. You find there is a bitterness to things as you face what is in yourself that is a disappointment, and you begin to face the antagonism of the world and the things that are attractive in the world. These are different ways in which you find you have encountered some bitterness.

This is presented here as one of the first experiences that they had, but I think that we may get further on into life than this and still encounter some bitterness and not have the remedy. At least I can think of no other reason why we do sometimes meet believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who seem embittered in some way.

The only remedy is the one that was here. The people cried out, and Moses cried out, and God brought a remedy. *“Jehovah showed him wood, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters became sweet”* That is a pointer to the Lord Jesus Christ as the remedy for the bitterness of life. Just the Lord Jesus personally. Mr Darby, when he speaks about this passage, speaks about the cross, the wood of the cross. Well, it is very appealing, to think of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who came into this world as light, being prepared to suffer for you and for me so that we should not find life bitter any more.

If you are finding life bitter, God does not offer you any remedy in your circumstances; He does not promise that things will get better. What He does promise is a remedy for you in your soul,

something to comfort you personally; just as it is always obvious if someone is bitter, it is also obvious if they have found comfort. It is a great remedy for your spirit to remember that the Lord Jesus has been the way that you and I have to go, and to know that He loves us and cares about us, and that God has not changed, that God is faithful and that He will bring the remedy to you just where you are in your soul now.

That just causes me to ask you, 'How are you getting on?' You do not have to answer me, but, how are you getting on? You may have been on the road a long time and thank God if you have been. And thank God if you have not turned out of the way. But it may be things are not too bright, that you are a little discouraged. It can be with younger people too. It would be very foolish to say that we had never been discouraged and wanted to turn back.

This is experience that Christians have, of finding that the going is hard and testing and that we do need help. And help comes from the Lord Jesus Christ personally. That is why He came into the world. He came here to save sinners, but He also came here to pass through the experiences that you and I have and become sympathetic with us. He has become our High Priest and He has taken that place as having suffered for us, having died for us, and having borne all our burdens and we can always turn back to Him in our troubles.

It is a great sorrow if we ever turn away from Him, but just turn back to Him in the midst of your sorrow and burden and find that He is unchanging, He is faithful and He loves us as much as He ever did. He loves us in our bright days and He loves us in our bad days and His desire is that every day, however painful and troublesome, should be bright for Him.

Hunger and its remedy

"...And when the dew that lay round the camp was gone up, behold, on the face of the wilderness there was something fine, granular, fine as hoar frost on the ground. And the children of Israel saw it, and said to one another, What is it? ...and Moses

said to them, **This is the bread which Jehovah has given you to eat” (Exodus 16:13 – 15).**

Now the next chapter is about food. Once again it comes as a solution to the people’s complaining and bitterness. They wished they had died in Egypt and that is very low ground to get on to. But God provides a remedy for them: the manna.

It was a miraculous supply. Nature had nothing to do with it. It came to light just instantly. *“In the morning dew lay round the camp. And when the dew that lay round it was gone up, behold on the face of the wilderness there was something fine, granular, fine as hoar frost, on the ground. And the children of Israel saw it, and said to one another, What is it|?”* And Moses said to them *“This is the bread which Jehovah has given you to eat”.* We know what the Lord Jesus thought about this because chapter six of John’s gospel is about very little else. It is about the Lord Jesus coming into the world, to be, He says, *“the bread of life”*, to satisfy your hunger.

Food in the world of nature is for energy and maintenance and growth and so is food for the Christian. You and I need energy; we need to be maintained and we need to grow. There comes a stage in natural things where we do not expect to grow any more but as believers in the Lord Jesus, you and I ought to be growing in our souls all the time. All the time we are here in the world is the time for growing and here is the food that will make you grow.

Now, just as I put to you the question whether you have had this kind of experience of bitterness and finding the remedy for it, so I would ask you whether you have had the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ as food for your soul. I am not wanting to speak in riddles, I am just seeking to convey to you what is in the scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ is food for your soul in the same way as you need food for your body. Otherwise you will not grow; you are in danger of drifting downwards and becoming withered.

The Lord Jesus is satisfaction for your heart and for your being and you will begin to come out like Him, become like the Lord,

take on features of Him. As Mr Darby says in another of his hymns, 'In this Thy nature grow'. How do you think it came about that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26)? Do you think it was because they talked a lot and spoke about this man, the Lord Jesus Christ? Or do you think it was because people saw that they were like Him, and that they were different from other people and that there was a change coming about in their lives which was obvious to other people in Antioch? I think that is why they were called Christians.

When Paul was on trial and Agrippa says to him, *"In a little thou persuadest me to become a Christian"* (Acts 26:28), do you think that Agrippa had just noticed the kind of doctrine that a Christian would put out? Or was it that in Paul's testimony, Agrippa, however far from God he may have been in his soul, saw someone who was different from himself, someone who had a link with the Man of whom he spoke, someone whose life had been changed through his link with the Lord? And as Agrippa spoke, perhaps somewhat disparagingly, *"In a little thou persuadest me to become a Christian"*, he knew what a Christian was, and he knew that it was a different sort of man from what he himself was; he knew it was a man like Paul, who had been changed by the gospel and by his link with the Lord.

Conflict

"And Amalek came and fought with Israel... And Moses said to Joshua, Chose us men, and go out, fight with Amalek... And Joshua did as Moses had said to him, to fight with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass when Moses raised his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. And Moses hands were heavy... and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on this side, and one on that side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua broke the power of Amalek..." (Exodus 17:8 – 15).

"Pray that ye enter not into temptation... And being in conflict, he prayed more intently" (Luke 22:35 – 51).

Now, I want to say a word about what scripture calls conflict. The children of Israel were not going to get through the desert without encountering enemies. Amalek came into view, and Moses spoke to a younger man of whom we have not heard previously. Moses says to Joshua, *“Choose us men, and go out, fight with Amalek”*. It was not a question of running away.

In London, we have been reading in the book of Judges where Gideon got an army together of something over thirty thousand people. God said that it was too many, and the first way to thin the numbers was to eliminate those who had no stomach for the fight. Could you say, from memory, how many that eliminated? It was just over two-thirds, who went when the test was, ‘go back if you are afraid for the fight’.

It is not a question of running away. Here is a battle that is to be fought. It is an interesting story. Moses went to the top of the hill; as he raised his hands, Israel did the best in the battle. If he put down his hands, Amalek began to prevail. There came a moment when Moses could not hold up his hands any more. The battle would begin to go Amalek’s way – very dangerous. Moses needed to be sustained, and he was sustained, and the battle went the right way and Amalek was dealt with and God says, *“Write this for a memorial in the book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua”*. Joshua might have said, ‘I would never forget such a battle’. Well, God says, *“Rehearse it in the ears of Joshua”*. Remember what the point of the battle was. God said, *“I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens”*.

Christians are engaged in conflict as they go through life. Indeed if you and I are not engaged in any conflict there is something badly wrong, because the world has its view of the Lord Jesus Christ and it has its own view of Christians. There are plenty of places where Christians are imprisoned and ill-treated or even murdered for being Christians. Through mercy it is not quite like that in this country, though it is sometimes not far below the surface. If you and I are not encountering any conflict there is something wrong.

I wanted to speak about the spirit in which conflict has to be taken up. That is why I read those verses in Luke. As always, the Lord Jesus Christ is the great example to us. In reading these verses beforehand they had a fresh appeal to me. We come to the night in which the Lord Jesus was delivered up and He is speaking to His disciples. He says, 'When you were sent out with nothing, did you lack anything?' They said 'No'; they did not lack; they got through wonderfully, mercifully, day by day. But He says, 'Now we have come to a time for a change. You are going to be on your own responsibility.' *"But now he that has a purse let him take it, in like manner also a scrip, and he that has none let him sell his garment and buy a sword"* He gives the reason for this; observe this carefully. He says, *"that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned with the lawless: for also the things concerning me have an end."* A terrible comment on the world, that the Son of God, the only Man that was holy and harmless and undefiled, was reckoned with the lawless.

Who was He reckoned with? He was reckoned with you and me. He was reckoned with us, with what we were in our nature and heart. That is where He was reckoned

"The things concerning me have an end." All His history, all that wonderful and beautiful life of service was all coming to an end. It was not going to be completed without the will of God being completed in Him. What was the disciples' answer to that? *"Here are two swords"*. The Lord Jesus just leaves it there, He says, *"It is enough"*. You and I might think it very strange that the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ could produce two swords. We might wonder where they produced them from but the Lord just left it.

Then He went out according to His custom to the Mount of Olives and the disciples also followed Him. You will notice in this gospel they all, apart from Judas, had the opportunity to follow Him. He went to *"the place"* – an interesting phrase. I suppose it conveys that it was exactly the right place. No different place, no chance place—He was at the right place. When they were

there the Lord gave them a word. *“Pray”*. He said nothing about swords.

“Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw”, which I take it was near enough to be seen, *“and having knelt down he prayed”* He asks for the cup, the burden that lay upon Him, He asks for it to be removed, but immediately, before the end of the same sentence, He says, *“but then, not my will, but thine be done”*. This is what the hymn describes as Divine perfection in a Man.

“An angel appeared to Him from heaven strengthening him. And being in conflict he prayed more intently.” I need hardly say that you and I are not called upon to rise to the conflict that the Lord went through in these verses, but I have often sought to take heed of this verse of scripture. If you are in conflict or if ever you find yourself in conflict, I commend to you, dear fellow Christian, to take heed to this verse: *“Being in conflict he prayed more intently”*.

The pressure grew. *“And his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth”*. It must have been an amazing sight, a very holy sight, unique in the history of time. *“And rising up from his prayer, coming to the disciples, he found them sleeping from grief”*. That was a very gracious way of putting it. The Lord says to them, *“Why sleep ye? Rise up and pray that ye enter not into temptation”*. The word that they needed has not changed. Before He went a stone’s throw away He had said, *“Pray that ye enter not into temptation”*. The word had not changed. What you and I need in conflict has not changed. We need to be in prayer – in dependence.

While He was still speaking, this crowd comes, and Judas, with his shameful approach, to kiss the Lord. *“And they who were around him”* – these same disciples – *“seeing what was going to follow...”* They discerned accurately enough what was going to follow, that if they did nothing, this crowd was going to take hold of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and was going to have its way with Him. And now they said, *“Lord, shall we smite with the sword?”* They had got these two swords and they

**We ask the Lord
what to do and
then decide for
ourselves**

thought that was what they needed. Why not take one of them? Without waiting for an answer one of them smote the bondman of the high priest and took off his right ear. Well, that is a sad thing: to ask the Lord what to do and then to do what you think of doing

without ever waiting for an answer. A solemn thing, but how often we do it. We ask the Lord what to do and then decide for ourselves without waiting for His answer. And of course the result is disaster. This man did completely the wrong thing. The mistake went right back to when they took these swords in the first place. They had not understood the Lord; they had mistaken Him and so they had to learn the lesson the hard way.

It could have been that the bondman of the high priest had to learn a lesson the hard way too. It was a great shame for him that he was there. But is he now going to have to suffer for someone else's mistake? Have an obstacle put in the way of his ever hearing the word of the Lord? No, the Lord says, *"Suffer thus far; and having touched his ear, he healed him"*.

Dear friends and fellow-Christians, there is a conflict and for it we need light, we need refreshment and we need food. But we also need our spirits to be right. The only way to get your spirit right – to get anything right – is to give heed to the Lord Jesus Christ and wait upon His word. May we be ready to do so for His name's sake.

David Burr

An address at Leamington, 11th June, 1994.

(Note: For this reprint the address has been shortened from the original.)

This article was selected for reprinting from "Living Water" No 9 by Phil Coldrick.

God willing, in issue No 110 there will be a reprint from "Living Water" No 10 selected by George Greeves

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 very glad of suggestions from readers. Ed.