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Living Water

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Recent Ministry

PERSONS IN RELATION TO THE CROSS OF JESUS

Luke 23:33-37,

Mark 15:39,

John 19:25

There are many events in history which have changed the course of nations and the lives of individuals but what I want to speak about today has a greater impact on every individual than all the other events in history combined. Two thousand years ago a Man was crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem. That “event” has not just affected millions of people, but it is an “event” that affects every individual in the world. Pilate asked the Jews, *“What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”* They answered, *“Let him be crucified”* (Matthew 27:22). Everybody is called to answer the question that Pilate asked. Where do you stand tonight in relation to the cross of Jesus? What does it mean to you?

In the Rocky Mountains there is what is called the Great Divide (or Continental Divide). When rain falls the water that falls on the western side eventually flows down into the Pacific and that on the eastern side flows to the Atlantic. The rain that falls on one side ends up thousands of miles from that which falls on the other side of the Divide. The cross of Christ is like that Divide. Your eternal destiny depends on where you stand in relation to the cross of Jesus — whether you have trusted in the work of redemption that Jesus accomplished there, or not. The gospel relates to matters of eternity. That is why it is so important.

The crucifixion of Jesus was no ordinary “event”. There had been many, many persons crucified under the Roman rule in Palestine – it was a common form of execution, yet there was never a crucifixion like that of Jesus. Why? Because the Person who was crucified was no ordinary Man. He is the One by whom the worlds were made. He made the very hill on which the cross was placed, the wood for the cross, the iron for the nails. He is

the Son of God. That is why I do not like to call the crucifixion of Jesus an event. It was the most magnificent moment in the history of the universe when the Son of God Himself came into this world and went to Calvary's cross.

Why did He do this? Because you and I were lost, helpless sinners and could do nothing to save ourselves. The only way for the sinner to be saved and for God's holy righteousness to be maintained was for One who knew no sin to take the penalty of our sins and bear the judgment that was due to us. That is just what Jesus did on the cross at Calvary 2000 years ago.

Tonight you have to answer as to what the cross means to you. Let us make it very, very personal. Does the place where the Saviour died mean anything to you?

The scriptures we read speak of three classes of people who were at the cross:

- Those who hated Jesus and sneered at Him together with others who were indifferent
- A Centurion who said "Truly this man was Son of God"
- Those who loved the Lord Jesus and were prepared to stand at the cross

Which category are you in?

Those who hated or were indifferent to Jesus

"And the people stood beholding, and the rulers also with them sneered, saying, He has saved others; let him save himself if this is the Christ, the chosen one of God. And the soldiers also made game of him..." (Luke 23:35-36).

There were those who hated Him. It says, "...the rulers also with them sneered, saying, He has saved others; let him save himself if this is the Christ". I suppose they did not even realise the impossibility of what they were saying. If Jesus had saved Himself, He could not save them. He came to take the sinner's place. He could have saved Himself but then there would have been no way of salvation for you and me.

The enemies of Jesus sneered at Him. Why did they hate Him? Jesus said, *"They hated me without a cause"* (John 15:25). Here was a Man who *"who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil"* (Acts 10:38 KJV). We read in the gospels that in certain places where Jesus went people brought to Him all those that were ill and lunatics and paralytics and those possessed by demons and He healed them all (see Matthew 4:24 and 14:35-36). What a Person! There had never been anybody on earth like Him. Yet they hated Him and only wanted to crucify Him.

Many of the Jews thought that they were good enough. They were Abraham's children (see John 8:39), they had God's law and they thought that they could earn their way into God's favour. This will not do. *"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). We cannot meet God's standard, we have fallen far, far short of it. When people saw Jesus they saw absolute perfection in Him. It showed up how far short they came. Instead of humbling them it caused them to hate Him.

There were others standing at the cross. We read, *"the people stood beholding"*. Elsewhere it refers to the passers-by, those who were just curious, looking on, indifferent. Where are you, tonight? Perhaps Jesus and His cross mean nothing to you? The prophet says, *"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow"* (Lamentations 1:12). Look at Jesus, suffering at Calvary, enduring God's wrath so that you and I might be saved. You may not be a hater of Christ, or even particularly opposed, perhaps you just feel indifferent about Him and what He has done. Well, the Bible says, *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"* (Hebrews 2:3). God would not have you indifferent to His gospel tonight. It is *"so great salvation"*. Think of the cost it has been to God. He *"has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all..."* (Romans 8:32). God did that so that all — from the best to the very worst of us might be saved. Do not be indifferent. Come in faith to Christ, owning that you are a sinner and need

Him as your own Saviour.

A Centurion who recognised Christ as the Son of God

“And the centurion who stood by over against him, when he saw that he had expired having thus cried out, said, Truly this man was Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

The next category I read of is represented by the centurion at the cross. He was not indifferent. I suppose he had been at the scene right from the beginning. He had probably been at many crucifixions but he could see that this one was different. The centurion would have been there as they nailed Jesus to the cross. Normally I suppose persons would curse and resist as that took place. There was nothing like that about Jesus; *“he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth”* (Isaiah 53:7). The centurion would have heard the Lord pray, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34). Then he would have seen Him as He was hanging there and persons came and insulted Jesus. Again there would have been no angry response. When He was reviled, He reviled not again and when suffering, threatened not (see 1 Peter 2:23).

The centurion had seen that darkness come down upon the scene. It was the middle of the day, it was not night-time, but there was darkness over the whole land for three hours. Think how solemn it was, those three hours. It was then that the Saviour endured the wrath of God, bearing the sins of all those who trust in Him. Think of what a concentration of suffering it was — the holy, righteous judgment of God against sin and sins all compressed into those three hours and borne by Jesus. No wonder God clothed that scene in darkness; no man could intrude upon that holy, incredible scene. At the end of those three hours the fire of God’s judgment was exhausted and Jesus cried, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30).

Where we read in Mark’s gospel we are told that *“Jesus, having*

uttered a loud cry, expired" (Mark 15:37). Jesus gave up His life. None of us can do that. The Lord Jesus did. He said, *"I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself"* (John 10:17-18). Jesus gave up everything. What an effect this had upon the centurion. *"When he saw that he had expired having thus cried out"*, he said, *"Truly this man was Son of God"* (Mark 15:39).

The centurion would still have been there when the soldiers came to break His legs. They came to Jesus and as He was already dead they did not break His legs but one, frustrated in his designs, took a spear and thrust it into the side of Jesus: *"and immediately there came out blood and water"* (John 19:34). It is the blood that washes away all my sins (see Revelation 1:5).

Have you been to the cross of Calvary like the centurion? When you see what Jesus has done for you what effect does it have upon you? This man was converted: *"Truly this man was Son of God"*. My earnest desire is that if you have never been to the cross before, that today you might go there as the centurion did and be converted.

What does it mean? It means that you come in repentance towards God, accept that you are a sinner, put your trust in what Jesus did on the cross. The message is simple. What we could not do for ourselves, Jesus has done for us. All that is required is for us to put our trust in Him and in His precious finished work. May you do so tonight if you have never done so before.

Those who loved the Lord Jesus and were prepared to stand by the cross

"And by the cross of Jesus stood his mother, and the sister of his mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala"
(John 19:25)

Finally, there is another group that stood around the cross. Think of what it meant to stand by the cross of someone who was crucified. The crowd hated Him, the passers-by sneered at Him

and the soldiers made game of Him. Jesus was alone upon that cross. What did it mean for these women to stand by that cross and show their allegiance to the One who was hanging there? They really loved Him and they were prepared, in this moment when everything was against Him, to stand by His cross and be true to Him.

What a challenge that is to my heart and to the heart of every believer in Jesus. The world has no time for Jesus, it has cast Him out. They say, "*When will he die, and his name perish?*" (Psalm 41:5). That is the world today. It has no room for Jesus. If we love Him, can we stand true to Him in a world that hates Him? Does He not deserve the full love and affection of our hearts? Does He not deserve our loyalty? Indeed, He claims it. Oh, that we might be encouraged to be true to Him.

Then, another side of this is that when we come into contact with persons, we might be the only person who has ever spoken to them of the Saviour. That might be my privilege, that might be your privilege, to be the one person who speaks to them of the Lord Jesus. Let us seek help to be true and faithful to Him, the One who has saved us and given everything for us. We have not long left to be true to Him.

Jesus is cast out in this world today but soon He is going to reign supreme. I love to think of this. The One whom the world last saw upon that cross at Calvary in ignominy and shame and suffering, is coming soon to take up His rights on this earth and to reign supreme from sea to sea and shore to shore (see Psalm 72:8). When He has His public vindication, then He will reward every bit of faithfulness of His own here.

What an encouragement for us to be true to Him. He is coming soon. We are in the light of it. May we be encouraged to serve Him and be true to Him, for His name's sake. Amen.

Chris Bond

(A preaching of the gospel, Sevenoaks, September 2011)

From “Living Water” No 9

LOVE – THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

Romans 5: 8,

John 14: 23,

2 Corinthians 12: 15

The main motivating principle in Christianity is love. My concern tonight is to lay some well known verses before each of us as a challenge as to whether in our lives the main motivating principle is love. The *“fruit of the Spirit is love...”* (Galatians 5:22). Paul implies that if it is absent, then our Christianity may not have started. He says, *“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal”*. Then more, *“If I have prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing”*. Then again, *“And if I dole out all my goods in food, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but have not love, I profit nothing”* (1 Corinthians 13:1-4). It is clear, in Paul’s mind, that this great matter of love must be the prime motivating principle in the life of every believer in the Lord Jesus. That immediately brings a challenge home to every Christian – is love the main motive in my life?

When God gave the law of old it did not really touch man’s affections – ‘thou shalt’ and ‘thou shalt not’ – it did not really bring forth love in man. In fact embodied in the law was the commandment to love, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God...and thy neighbour as thyself”* (Luke 10:27). That is still a big test today as when the law was given. Dr. Wolston tells us how he was called out one night to see someone in a hotel near his home who had been taken ill. When he came out of the hotel he saw that a house up the road was on fire and he thought it was his own. He set off running up the road but someone who knew him and realised what was the matter called out, ‘It’s

not your house, it is your neighbour's'. He stopped running! That is a very simple illustration that has an echo in the life of every one of us. Who of us loves his neighbour as himself? So if the law did not promote love in man's heart, what was going to do so? What was going to produce this motivating principle in the lives of men and women and boys and girls? "*Love is of God*" (1 John 4:7), and so if there was to be any begetting of love there must be the full demonstration of love by none less than God Himself. So the story of God's love made known in Jesus unfolds. What a story it is – a love that has come near to rebel sinners and brought us near to God Himself! Thus God has shown that every movement He has made towards us has been motivated by divine love. In Jesus He has demonstrated the fulness of His heart of love.

"But God commends his love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us" *Romans 5:8.*

I read these words first. Through this verse I learn that there was nothing in me to merit His love. It was not when there was some improvement that God loved us but when we were still sinners. He drew near to us in the fulness of His love in the Person of the Lord Jesus, with the intention that if He demonstrated that love governed all His movements, so this same motive might govern us too. This finds us out; we know that often our motives are impure in some things we undertake. There was never an impure motive in the heart of God or in the heart of the Lord Jesus as He came to make the wonderful love of God known.

We read in John 4 of Jesus drawing near in weariness to Sychar's well and sitting down there. What drew Him to that well? It was not His weariness. Let us allow the Spirit of God to draw the veil of His weariness aside and what do I discover? I discover a God who truly is a God of love. "*God is love*". It was not the Lord's weariness that brought Him to the well; it

was His love for a poor sinner. He would speak to her about matters concerning eternity, that she too might be prompted by love and draw others to Him. So I find Him weary by the well, speaking to a woman. He is not angry or upbraiding. When she does not understand He says, "*Go call thy husband*". He says it kindly, I am sure; He says it in love and in saying it He shows her herself. He had to show her herself in order that then He might show her Himself. When He showed her herself she knew she was a sinner. Then He showed her that He Himself was love. O the wonder of divine love! In all that He did here His motive was always to display the love of God.

So in your experience and mine how has He showed Himself? Is it not as a Saviour motivated only by love? It is a love not motivated by anything in ourselves – "*We being still sinners, Christ has died for us*".

We see Jesus entering Jericho and speaking to Zaccheus and bringing salvation to his house, revealing to him His heart of love. I could never fully speak on the subject of love, but in some little measure tonight I want to show you how love was demonstrated in the movements of Jesus when here.

God commends His love. God commended His love in Jesus when here and in many cases it drew out opposition but He still commends His love today. So it says, "*We being still sinners, Christ has died for us*". While I see wonderful perfection in the life of Jesus, if I am to learn the love of God I must learn it in the death of Jesus. O dear friend, have you accepted by faith that Christ died for you? Paul says, "*in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me*" (Galatians 2:20). Christ died for us, and there, at the cross of Christ, I witness the pouring out of perfect love, a love that could only be divine. Human love must fall back when I see love so amazing, so divine. Well might Isaac Watts say in his hymn that it demands my soul, my life, my all.

I see God's righteousness at the Cross, condemning sin, but through it all I find that most beautiful mingling of love and righteousness. No one can say that God's love has shone out unrighteously or unjustly. On the basis of the death of Christ, God's love has shone out to you and me and to every sinner in this world on a perfectly righteous basis. The whole question of sin has been met since God's righteous judgment was poured out on the head of Jesus. When I come to the cross of Christ I discover that God is a God of love and that love is shining out on such as me. "*He has taken us into favour in the Beloved*" (Ephesians 1:6). What does that mean? He has taken us into His favour, in to the shining of the fulness of divine love. So if I have to learn love, if I have to learn its activities, if I have to learn it as a motivating principle in my life, I have to learn it in the One in whom it has been most perfectly expressed, in Christ Himself, and that in death. Christ has died for us. What a statement! Five words! Well might the universe, in a sense, stand still as a witness to the fact that none less than God Himself in the form of a Man was required to manifest the fulness of the heart of God.

If I look at the tabernacle of old, I see all the details and dimensions given for what was to be a dwelling place for God but it could never tell out the heart of God. I look at the temple, the details again given and all the dimensions, but it could never tell out the heart of God. Only when I see Jesus, the suffering One, do I discover that the heart of God has been told out and told out for me. It passes telling, it passes praises; how great is the love of God. It is all to be discovered in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, I read that verse in Romans simply to show the motive of God's movement towards me in love was not due to anything in me but it was in the heart of God Himself. Oh what depths there are in that mighty, powerful sovereign love that chose us for blessing.

“Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.” *John 14:23.*

Now in John’s gospel we come to the words of our Lord Jesus Himself: *“If anyone love **me**”*. I want tonight to emphasise these words to everyone here. *“If anyone love me”*. Who is speaking? The blessed Master Himself. You say that He is speaking to His disciples, to the eleven in fact, because one had gone out, but He says, *“If anyone love me”*. He does not say ‘If anyone has special talents, or special gifts, special ability, or great material resource, or if anyone has no material resource’. He says, *“If anyone love me”*. O dear brother, dear sister, is love for Christ the main influence in your life? The law was given as a standard for man to attain to, as a rule by which they might walk; all it did was to show the sinfulness of man, the failing character of man; when we come to Christianity the great ruling principle is love for Christ. I hope the warmth of that love is in every heart here. *“If anyone love me”*, says Jesus. This One, Christ who has died for us, this is the One. *“If anyone love me”*. Jesus had washed their feet in the previous chapter. He had taken a hand-basin with water and a linen towel, and in the humility of bondman love, He had stooped down to their feet and washed them. How often has He washed my feet. How often, I would say, He has washed your feet! Let me put this to you again – *“if anyone love me”* – do you love Him? I believe that every day of our lives these words need to come before us. In what way today will love for Christ motivate me? In what way today will my movements be governed by love for Christ? In His days on earth every day was motivated by divine love. There were no grey days with the Lord Jesus. How many of our days are grey days; let us brighten them up with the shining of love for Christ. He is ready to shine into our hearts; let our love for Him so shine that we keep His word.

He says here, *“If anyone love me, he will keep my word”*. Have you kept His word? O how blessed His word is! As you go through the gospels think of the words He spoke to His own – He says at one point to them that the heavens and earth are going to pass away but His words are never going to pass away(see Mark 13:31). There is nothing so valuable as the words of the Lord Jesus. Have I kept His word? Have you kept His word? The motivation for keeping His word is love for Him. It is not to be ruled by some regulation; it is not to be governed by some creed; it is love for a Person and what a wonderful Person! A Person who has died for us at Calvary’s cross and suffered so much. A Person of whom we sing in the hymn:

*Thy beauties Lord, Thy holy precious worth,
Surpassing far the deepest joys of earth,
Attract our hearts – our joy Thy constant love...*

Oh to have greater love in my heart for such a Person! *“If anyone love me, he will keep my word”*. Think of His word about feet-washing. He told His own that He had done it as an example to them. So He has left that word amongst His own, about feet-washing. Have you kept His word about feet washing? Many times my feet have been washed by some dear Christian. It is not literal; it means that I get refreshed by a word about Christ, a word which may come to me when I am feeling down, then after hearing something of Him I am encouraged, cleansed and refreshed. Maybe you were in the prayer meeting and when something was said you found your feet being washed. That is how it works.

Well, we are to let love be the ruling principle in our lives. The Lord says, *“But he that loves me shall be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21). What disclosures are open to the lover of Christ! *“And my Father will love him”* (v.23). I think it is beautiful that this blessed Person who in every way portrayed the features of the Father could speak on behalf of the Father and say, ‘In this

way you will be loved by My Father. My Father will love you'. Think of the Father's love embracing you. "*We will come to him*" (v.23), He and His Father will make their abode with him. What do we know about this, in these individual conditions? It is "*If anyone*"; what experience have I of my love drawing out not only the love of Christ but His presence and the presence of the Father? You may say, 'It is just a theory'. Well, it was not a theory to John. The writer of this gospel had rested in the bosom of Jesus but by the time he wrote the gospel had been on the isle of Patmos, probably having laboured in the salt mines, and had probably felt deserted by all his Christian friends. Yet even in those conditions, I think John is saying in his gospel, 'Look, what I am saying works, because I have proved it for myself; if love is the motivation in your life and you use it to keep His word you will discover that the presence of God Himself is vouchsafed to you' What a reward! Do you want anything better? I believe that is what is available to the Christian in these last and difficult days.

Now I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls, if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved"

2 Corinthians 12:15.

Finally, just a word on the last verse we read. Paul says: "*Now I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls, if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved*". This is love in service. How often have we done things, activities that in themselves are good, but how often when we examine our motives we find that our motivation was something other than love for Christ. Paul is writing to the Corinthians; they had said many harsh things about him but Paul would say, 'Look, I am not really concerned how you treat me. I seek not yours but you. Your soul prosperity is what I seek. I am prepared, despite what your reaction is, gladly to spend and be utterly spent for your souls'. Where did he learn love like that? I

think that he had learnt it at the Master's feet. He had learnt the spirit of service from the Master Himself. Maybe he had learnt something of it from Stephen. Paul was at the stoning of Stephen and he saw selfless service portrayed in the first martyr. He heard the prayer of Stephen, "*Lay not this sin to their charge*" (Acts 7:60), and I think that something began to work in Saul's soul that eventually bore fruit in service towards the people of God. "*I shall most gladly spend*" and he had so much to spend.

Ah, yes, Paul – look at him earlier in the chapter; he brings out his experience in the heavens; for fourteen years he had kept that precious privilege of being caught up to the third heaven a secret (see 2 Corinthians 12:2-4). What he had seen there, what resources he had! How well he spent them! Look at the previous chapter; balance chapter 12 with chapter 11; look at these verses, "*five times I have received forty stripes save one*". Three times he had been scourged, once stoned, three times shipwrecked, a night and a day passed in the deep. There had been perils of rivers, perils of robbers, perils from his own race, perils from the nations, perils on the sea, perils from false brethren (see 2 Corinthians 11:24-27). What motivated him? Love! He was not perfect; I do not mean to convey that, but largely in Paul's life and service the motivating principle was love. "*I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved*". If you have a desire to serve, dear brother, dear sister, may God bless you in it, but may you be in it as loving the people of God. Start by loving the people of God and you will find that soul prosperity will come that way.

There are many activities, evangelical activities, shepherding activities, feet-washing activities; take them on but take them on in the spirit that we have in this verse here, not looking for a return except the return that will be yours in that day when the Lord comes and His reward is with Him. For the present,

be like Paul, “*if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved*”. Truly he was like his Master. Let us walk in the steps of such a Master, who demonstrated God’s love in its fulness and perfection.

May God bless the word

Alex Mowat (An address at Aberdeen, October 1994)

This article was selected for reprinting from “Living Water” No. 10 by George Greeves.

God willing in issue No. 111 there will be a reprint from “Living Water” No 11 selected by Isobel Read.

Poetry Selection

THE FAITHFUL FEW

*Dear Lord, amid the throng that pressed
Around Thee on the accursèd tree,
Some loyal, loving hearts were there,
Some pitying eyes that wept for Thee.*

*Like them may we rejoice to own
Our dying Lord, though crowned with thorn;
Like Thee, Thy blessèd self, endure
The cross, with all its joy or scorn.*

*Thy cross, Thy lonely path below,
Show what Thy brethren all should be –
Pilgrims on earth, disowned by those
Who see no beauty, Lord, in Thee.*

Sir Edward Denny (1796 – 1889)

SWEET FEAST OF LOVE DIVINE

*Sweet Feast of love divine!
Tis grace that makes us free
To feed upon this bread and wine,
In memory, Lord, of Thee.*

*Here every welcome guest
Waits, Lord, from Thee to learn
The secrets of Thy Father's heart,
And all Thy grace discern.*

*Here conscience ends its strife,
And faith delights to prove
The sweetness of the bread of life,
The fulness of Thy love.*

*The blood that flowed for sin
In symbol here we see,
And feel the blessed pledge within,
That we are loved of Thee.*

*Oh! If this glimpse of love
Is so divinely sweet,
What will it be, O Lord, above
Thy gladdening smile to meet!*

*To see Thee face to face,
Thy perfect likeness wear,
And all Thy ways of wondrous grace
Through endless years declare.*

Sir Edward Denny (1796 – 1889)

Testimony Section

A LAST LETTER HOME

Background

Henry Bowers was born in Greenock, Scotland on 29th July 1883. He was brought up in a godly home and was strongly influenced by his mother, since his father was away at sea and died when Henry was three. In due time he joined the training ship HMS Worcester, then served his apprenticeship aboard a windjammer sailing to and from Australia. It was a hard life, and what he saw of the world during those voyages made him question his Christian upbringing. One night, miles out at sea and full of doubts, he had an experience that he could never quite explain, but it turned him from a doubter into a devout believer.

Some years later when Bowers was in the Royal Indian Marine Service he suffered another attack of doubt, brought on by reading Charles Darwin's "Descent of Man", but faith won through and it remained right to the end.

Bowers was pleased to be selected by Captain Robert Falcon Scott to join the British Polar Expedition in 1910 and on the 1st November 1911 he was one of those who left the base camp near McMurdo Sound to begin the 830 mile trek to the South Pole. When there was just over 160 miles to go, Scott selected the team that would complete the journey to the Pole. In addition to Scott, these were: Henry Bowers, Edgar Evans, Lawrence Oates and Edward Wilson. This party reached the Pole on 17th January 1912. The return journey was to be terrible. Edgar Evans collapsed and died on 17th February; a month later the badly frost-bitten Lawrence Oates could march no longer and in order not to be a burden to his comrades left the tent in a blizzard and was not seen again.

Scott, Wilson and Bowers pressed on but on the 20th March they had to take shelter in their tent from a blizzard. They were desperately short of food and heating oil but were only 11 miles from a Depot where supplies were available. While it seems to have been intended that Wilson and Bowers would go on to the Depot and bring back supplies, they were never able to set out. From that tent Bowers wrote his last letter home.

***Date uncertain, about March 22nd 1912
Blizzard Camp 11' South of 1 Ton Depot***

My own Dearest Mother

As this may possibly be my last letter to you – I am sorry it is such a short scribble. I have written little since we left the Pole but it has not been for want of thinking of you and the dear girls. We have had a terrible journey back. Seaman Evans died on the glacier and Oates left us the other day. We have had terribly low temperatures on the Barrier (*the Ross Ice Shelf*) and that, and our sick companions have delayed us till too late in the season which has made us

very short of fuel and we are now out of food as well. Each depot has been a harder struggle to reach but I am still strong and hope to reach this one with Doctor Wilson and get the food and fuel necessary for our lives. God alone knows what will be the outcome of the 22 miles march we have to make but my trust is still in Him and in the abounding Grace of my Lord and Saviour whom you brought me up to trust in and who has been my stay through life. In His keeping I leave you and am only glad that I am permitted to struggle on to the end. When Man's extremity is reached God's help may put things right. Although the end will be painless enough for myself I should so like to come through for your dear sake. It is splendid to pass however with such companions as I have and as all five of us have mothers and wives you will not be alone. There will be no shame however and you will know that I have struggled to the end. Much and dearest love to your dear self and May and Edie.

Oh how I do feel for you when you hear all, you will know that for me the end was peaceful as it is only sleep in the cold. Your ever loving son to the end of this life and the next when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

H. R. Bowers

A Voice from the Past

THE CROSS

It is only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that the perfections of God are fully manifested; and of that cross we can have no true understanding save by the holy scriptures and by the Holy Spirit of God.

Would we be filled with love towards Christ? Let us consider Christ's love toward us in His death on the cross

Christ twice passed angels by. He sank far below them in His humiliation; He rose far above them in His exaltation.

In the cross of Christ the holiness of God is perfectly revealed. There is no testimony to God's hatred of sin like the cross of Christ.

God forsook Christ on the cross but He was infinitely well pleased with Christ and His death of atonement. God accepted the work of His beloved Son, and in token of that acceptance, raised Him from the dead.

Robert C. Chapman (1803 – 1902)

Extracts from "Choice Thoughts" – This concludes this series

THE MORAL GREATNESS OF CHRIST SEEN IN GETHSEMANE AND AT THE CROSS

The Garden of Gethsemane

"Then he says to them, My soul is very sorrowful even unto death; remain here and watch with me. And going forward a little he fell upon his face, praying and saying, My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as thou wilt.

"Again going away a second time he prayed saying, My Father, if this cannot pass from me unless I drink it, thy will be done. And coming he found them again sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And leaving them, he went away again and prayed the third time, saying the same thing" Matthew 26:38-39 & 42-44.

Now I pass on to Gethsemane. What a blessed privilege to see the Lord in these circumstances! What a divine favour to watch in the garden! One records the words spoken by the Lord to His disciples, words that indicated how He longed for comforters, for men who could sustain, if only for a brief moment the place of watchers. *"Ye have not been able to watch one hour with me?"* (v.40) No thought of sharing! Only watching, and that only for one hour. That was the limit. Yet they fell asleep.

I suggest that now in the day of the Spirit's presence and support it is open to us to watch one hour, to enter into something of the meaning of that scene. One hour seems to be the measure of

possible apprehension. But oh how we should come from that spot with the sense of the moral greatness of Christ in our souls. Blessed indeed to meditate on the moral glory of the One who could measure and weigh in the presence of God all the suffering that was involved for Him, in order to lay the righteous foundation and basis for the accomplishment of the will of God! It was necessary for that, that the judgement of a holy God in dealing with the question of sin should be borne, and the penalty of death endured. Then God was not only free to meet man's need, but to give effect to all that He would bring to pass according to His purpose and for His own pleasure. The Lord in Gethsemane measured all that in anticipation.

In secular history many a person has done things under a sudden impulse and with little apprehension of the consequences. How often one hears the words, 'If I had known what was involved, I would not have undertaken it'. Well, the Lord Jesus knew. He weighed and measured it in the presence of God. He did not go into this path of suffering and death under a sudden and unconsidered impulse. He went into it as knowing perfectly all that was involved, as knowing all things that would come upon Him.

What comeliness there is in His words! *"Not as I will, but as thou wilt"*. Scripture is so beautiful in its exactness. He would not take the cup of suffering and death as of His own will, for He was here in dependant manhood, but only as activated by the will of God. It is not that Scripture would suggest that His will was contrary to the will of God, but He was in manhood. It was comely that a man should give place to the will of God, should accept that will as the controlling element in His every movement on earth. How His soul shrank from that moment; how suitable to His condition is the shrinking from all that death involved!

"Not as I will". What those words were to God! Oh the moral greatness of Jesus; how it stands out in a setting like this, the perfection of His manhood, of His subjection, of His obedience, of His service to God! It stands out as a delight for our souls. He is equal to it all in moral greatness.

The Cross

"But about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46

Now I turn to the cross; and from that cross we hear those words, perhaps the most notable words that have been heard upon this earth. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Many a cry has been heard in man's sad history but never a cry like this. Jehovah was His God. There had never been a moment in His history on earth from beginning to end, when Jehovah had not been His God. Jehovah had been His God from His mother's belly, and now at this moment of all moments He still says, "My God". Have you meditated upon this thought, that throughout the thirty-three and a half years of His blessed history on earth, there had never been a thought outside of the will of God? Have you thought what a day in the life of Jesus must have been for God? Scripture says, "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8). Think of all those days of the life of Jesus, everyone of them as a thousand years of delight to God; and yet from those lips that had served God with unwearying devotion, that had ever spoken truth, there comes the most terrible cry that had ever been uttered in God's universe, "*Why hast thou forsaken me?*"

Do you know why? It will take eternity to answer that question. It will be a source of wonder and adoration to every one of us when time has ceased to be. But the point I wish to emphasise is just this, He was equal to that situation. Terrible as it was, unfathomable as it is to the creature in all its blessed meaning and fulness, yet we know He sustained it. He sustained it alone.

I should like to add a word to guard what I have said. We know that the Lord Jesus became Man in view of dying, for only by His death could a righteous basis be laid for God to come out in grace to man, and for the effectuation of His purpose, but while He suffered and died as man, yet the work He accomplished in glorifying God in respect of sin could only be effected by One who was a divine Person, for only a divine Person could bear the

judgment due to sin, and come out of it unconsumed. Only such a One could settle the question of sin as meeting God's holy nature.

How often we weaken the meaning of the cross! How often we weaken the thought of His absolute forsaking by God, by bringing in other features of the truth! If we desire to get the beauty of the suggestions of God's word, and particularly as to the cross, we must take these suggestions in their setting, in their own import and emphasis and gather the precious gain of it into our hearts. He was forsaken there, absolutely forsaken. There was not in His holy soul one ray of comfort, of support, or consolation. He was forsaken of God: and yet He sustained the cross. Oh the glory of Jesus! The moral glory and preciousness of the One whom we are privileged to call Saviour and Lord!

If there is one in this company who has never yet called Him Saviour and Lord, I ask you, is He not worthy that you should do so? Is there another such as He in all God's universe? Is there any strength like unto His strength? Who else could be equal to this moment, this moment around which everything for God and for man centred? Can there be such another? No: there could not be. He is alone in His greatness, and I say again, is He not worthy that you should call Him Saviour and Lord? You may call Him Saviour in the privacy of your own soul, but you must call Him Lord publicly in the confession of His name. To call Him Lord is to get the gain of His authority, for He has been given a place of authority that is in keeping with the place of weakness which He took. Are you going to heaven one day, having never confessed on earth, in the scene where Christ was rejected, the blessed name of Jesus as Lord?

I like to think that in confessing the name of Jesus I can carry in my soul the sense that He is worthy. He has gloriously maintained every place in which God put Him, every place in which men put Him, every place into which His obedience led Him, and every place that His love took Him into, for He loved the church and gave Himself for it (see Ephesians 5:25). He was equal to that: and He is equal to the place in heaven at the right hand of God.

You recall the words, *"Lift up your heads O ye gates: and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors and the King of glory shall come in"* (Psalm 24:7). He went from the earth where He had worn the garments of humility, where His face had been spit upon, where He had been rejected and cast out as worthless. He sustained that position of reproach in meekness and lowliness: *"when he was reviled, he reviled not again"* (1 Peter 2:23). And then He goes to heaven, into the scene of glory, and He adorns that place. He is the joy of heaven.

I do not wish to add more. It is only on my mind to give an impression of the greatness of Christ. I should like you to gather an impression of His true greatness for He is great enough to fill your heart and mine. You do not need to turn to any other source for He can fill your mind, your heart, your soul, your life. If you have not yet committed yourself to Him I would encourage you to do so now without any reservations. God loves wholehearted, unreserved committal to Christ. May this great grace be given to you from this moment to be for Him alone.

A. E. Myles

This concludes this series

A word for Today

"HE LED THEM BY THE SKILFULNESS OF HIS HANDS" (Psalm 78:2)

Joshua 3: 1-4,

Ezekiel 44:1-4,

Psalm 32: 7-9,

Luke 24: 50-53

I want to speak about Christ leading by the skilfulness of His hands. As we read in Joshua, we need to *"know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore"*. Circumstances of the way at the present time are without precedent. How easy it would be if we could look back and just get a signpost as to the way in which we should go. But the Christian way is by faith. We have a link by the Spirit with a Man

in the glory, and we cannot do without Him.

Each of these four scriptures speaks of divine leading:

- Firstly, of One leading because every eye was to be on the ark of the covenant, borne by the priests in the midst of the Jordan.
- Then Ezekiel is led back to the gate that looks toward the east, the gate from which the waters flow.
- In Psalm 32, we learn about the One who is counselling us with His eye upon us, and instructing us in the way in which we should go.
- Finally, in Luke, the Lord leads His disciples out as far as Bethany.

The Ark of the Covenant

“...When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then remove from your place, and go after it; yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Ye shall not come near it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore”

In the book of Joshua, the ark stands firm in the midst of the Jordan so that the people might go over into the land of Israel and enjoy what God has in His heart for their blessing. It speaks to us of the way that Christ has been into death for us so that we may come to know the love of God. God brings us into eternal blessing on the basis of what Christ has done. But we must never forget the greatness and distinctiveness of who He is, that this, the One who went into the depths, into the Jordan, is Himself the Lord of glory, and never ceases to be so.

We see Him there upon the cross submitting to men's hatred, despised and rejected of men. But even those who crucified Him had to declare, “Truly this man was Son of God” (Matthew 27:54). Truly He was! And there we see Him, God's beloved Son, and He, by His great sacrifice, has made a way through for us. The only way that the children of Israel could go over the Jordan was

that there should be 2000 cubits between them and the ark – they would have a full and clear view of the ark in the midst of the Jordan. The ark of the covenant goes through, and that speaks to us of all the fulness of God's heart that has been made known in Christ, and His power that has broken the power of death.

I would ask the question of every one here today - Is your heart filled with the sight of the ark of the covenant, with the One who has expressed the fulness of God's grace? He shows the way by which we must go, faith's eye upon Him, for we have not been this way before.

Let us therefore go forward as those who would seek, by the Spirit, to go in for the blessings. Our eyes should not be diverted onto the waters of the Jordan that have been rolled back, but rather upon the goal, and we should make sure that Christ in all His distinctiveness remains before us. He is leading us on, so that we may go over the Jordan on dry ground, and come into the good of the blessings that God has in mind for us all.

Ezekiel at the East Gate

“And he brought me back toward the outer gate of the sanctuary that looked toward the east; and it was shut. And Jehovah said unto me, This gate shall be shut... for Jehovah, the God of Israel hath entered in by it... And he brought me the way of the north gate before the house; and I beheld, and lo, the glory of Jehovah filled the house of Jehovah: and I fell upon my face”

Now a few words as to the prophet Ezekiel: In chapter 10:19 we have his first visit to the east gate, when we find that the glory of Jehovah is taken away from the people. Ezekiel is a man who knows how to enter with God into the sorrows of the testimony, for the glory of Jehovah departed in Ezekiel 10 because of the unfaithfulness of the people.

But in Ezekiel 11 we read, *“although I have scattered them ... I will even gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where ye are scattered”* (vv.16 &17). Ezekiel would have entered into that, or he could not have written it. He knew

the heart of a God who felt the departure and failure with Israel, and he had longings that were according to God. And when Ezekiel is again at the east gate in chapter 43, we see there the glory of Jehovah entering in. By faith and by the Spirit we can know something of a sight of the glory today.

I read from chapter 44 because the gate towards the east is now shut, and Ezekiel tells us why. It is shut because Jehovah the God of Israel has entered in, which speaks of the reverence that is needed in the presence of God. The One who laid down His life on Calvary's cross is the One who is the mighty God. He came here for us. We must never lose the sense of who He is, the reverence that is due to Him, because unless there is due reverence we cannot come into the blessings of the sanctuary that flow out beside the gate that looks towards the east. They issue out from under the threshold of the house, which also faces towards the east. It brings before us the glory of what is soon to come (see Ezekiel 47:1&2).

Where we read in chapter 44, Ezekiel is brought by the way of the north gate; God is teaching him by the skilfulness of His hands. The north gate speaks of the pressures of the way, the exposure to the bitter wind, the sorrows that come in, and Ezekiel had known these. Each one of us knows something of these things in our own soul experience. But in the skilfulness of His hands God takes us there so that we might learn what His love can be.

Then Ezekiel is led to the "*waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through*" (Ezekiel 47:5), so that he might be brought into the blessings that proceed from the sanctuary, from the very heart of God. Well, is there a dwelling place in my heart and yours for Him, and do we have an appreciation of the One who Himself is the minister of the sanctuary, who is so great and glorious that it calls forth our praise and our worship as it will do throughout eternity?

Ezekiel's prophecy is very full but I just suggest these thoughts to you that the greatness of the One who is presented, and the

reverence that is due, might just touch our affections and draw our hearts to Him.

Counselling in the way we should go

“I will instruct thee and teach thee the way in which thou shalt go; I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee”

What do we know of this kind of counsel? Direction and guidance for the believer in a difficult day — how do we get it? Isaiah heard a voice behind him saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21), and yet when difficulties arise we sometimes become uncertain of the way! What I covet is to be so in the consciousness of His heart of love for me that I should know His mind for me. And that because I would be sensitive to His heart toward me, then I should be hearkening to His counsel and it would guide me in the way of His will.

It is very precious to realise that you are not alone; there is One who has His eye upon you, One who is able to lead you even in circumstances that are too much for you; circumstances when you do not know what to do and you turn to Him, and you find He was there all the while. He was leading you, perhaps even allowing you to come into those very circumstances in order that you might more fully appreciate the skilfulness of the hand that was leading you, causing you to know the blessings of just trusting in this blessed, glorious One.

Peter knew something about the counsel of His eye at the time when he denied the Lord. Perhaps it is rather a negative illustration of this scripture but what it presents to us is a man who loved the Lord but who had failed in circumstances that became too much for him. But did it need a long exposition from the Lord to bring him round? No, it was just a look and Peter repented.

With His eye upon us, the way in which we can receive the counsel of His eye is to be near enough to Him to know it. That was where Peter was. But you say, ‘He got into wrong company, he denied the Lord’. Yes, so he did, but he was not that far from the Lord that he could not see the Lord look at him. He knew the

heart of love that lay behind it. He knew the grace that would meet the situation. He would remember those words, *"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"* (Luke 22:32 KJV).

Our faith is often tested in the present day, but there is One who is looking upon each of us in grace. His desire is that we should be sensitive to His heart of love, and to His will and to His thoughts for us.

If we are not, then we can be thankful for His providence in that He orders our way. We can be thankful for the bit and bridle, in that He hedges us in, He steers us this way and that way and we can give thanks to God for that. But how much better to be responsive to His heart of love! He is guiding us and leading us with the skilfulness of His hands, and the purpose of the ways through which He leads us is to bring us into the blessings that He has in His heart of love.

The Lord leading to Bethany

"And he led them out as far as Bethany, and having lifted up his hands, he blessed them. And...as he was blessing them, he was separated from them and was carried up into heaven"

When I come to the last scripture in Luke's gospel the Lord is leading still. This is just at the point before He is to be taken up from them. He is here on resurrection ground. The 40 days when He was amongst His own were about to end.

If, right at the end of the Lord's pathway here the Lord was leading His own, we can be assured that His leading continues. The Holy Spirit has been given, and "He shall guide you into all the truth (John 16:13). There is no divergence whatsoever between the will of the Spirit and the will of the Father and the will of the Lord. The Holy Spirit's service is to bring that will home to our hearts to lead us and to guide us in the Christian way.

The Lord was leading them to Bethany, the place where He could be at home, where He had the first place (see John 12:1-3). We are told in the epistle to the Colossians that He will *"have the*

first place in all things" (Colossians 1:18), but then we need to ask ourselves the question, Has He got that first place with me? Whether He has or not, He is worthy of that place. If He is leading us, and leading to Bethany, can we provide those very conditions where He can be at home, where He is appreciated, where our affections can be drawn out in response to Him?

But if He is leading us out to Bethany, He is leading us there because it is also the place from which He ascended. And as He leads us today by the skilfulness of His hands it is that we might behold Him in His glory, that we might see that the One who is ascended, and is at God's right hand, has been exalted because the Father delighted in all that He is and all that has been done. That is the view that faith has today.

The Lord is leading on today. The question for each one of us is, Are we leadable? Are we going to carry on in the way of our own will, just the way we were? Or are we going to be responsive to His leading? We cannot do without His leading in the present day.

We cannot do without the Holy Spirit's service; it is absolutely essential for us. We need that living spring in our hearts to be led in the way of His will, so that our pathway is not just determined by boundaries or rules, but rather that we have Christ in glory before us.

The Holy Spirit loves to make much of Christ to our hearts and that is just what He would do in the present day. He loves to exalt Christ in our affections so that He might have His rightful place. And as He does so, we will become responsive to His leading. Let us know what it is to be livingly in touch with that blessed, glorious One, so that our pathway here may be for His will, and may be a joy to the One who has brought us to Himself.

Keith Wickens

(An address at Preston, 9 April 2011)