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## ***Living Water***

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## Recent Ministry

# ADORNING THE TEACHING OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR – PART 4

### Introduction

Paul writing to Titus, exhorts believers to *“adorn the teaching... of our Saviour God in all things”* (Titus 2:10). God is looking for the expression of divine teaching in the lives and conduct of men and women just like ourselves. Paul, writing to the Corinthian believers, says, *“Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men”* (2 Corinthians 3:2). That is, there was something about the work of God in those saints that was an adornment.

### ADORNMENT SEEN IN THE CHRISTIAN COMPANY IN ANTIOCH

**“Then they who had been scattered abroad through the tribulation that took place on the occasion of Stephen, passed through the country... speaking the word to no one but to Jews alone. But there were certain of them, Cyprians and Cyrenians, who entering into Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, announcing the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus. And the Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. And the report concerning them reached the assembly which was in Jerusalem and they sent out Barnabas to go through as far as Antioch: who having arrived and seeing the grace of God, rejoiced, and exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide with the Lord... And he went away to Tarsus to seek out Saul. And having found him, he brought him to Antioch. And...for a whole year they were gathered together in the assembly and taught a large crowd: and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:19-26).**

In Acts 11 we read of some believers in Antioch, who had just come to faith in Christ. Luke’s account in Acts is quite detailed; there were believers scattered after the martyrdom of Stephen

but this was the means whereby the gospel spread out and reached Antioch. Then we are told of those that preached in Antioch: *"And the Lord's hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."* Barnabas comes from Jerusalem and seeing the work of God that is going on goes to Tarsus to get Saul and for a whole year this company of believers is taught. What a scope of teaching would have been covered in that year but at the end of it, what does it say? Not that they were exceptionally well-taught persons but that they *"were first called Christians in Antioch"*. Christ was expressed. What greater adornment could there be than that in a person's life and it is only expressed because the teaching has been taken on practically.

Teaching brought them practically under the authority of the Lord, so that they would order their lives and testimony in a way that pleased Him. The outcome is that they expressed Christ. You cannot adorn the doctrine unless you learn from Christ what that adornment is. We read in Matthew that Jesus said, *"It is sufficient for the disciple that he should become as his teacher, and the bondman as his lord"* (Matthew 10:25). These disciples in Antioch had learned something in Christ and were formed by it so that they were called Christians. They must have seen it, too, expressed in Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus. This would have been a public testimony. They did not call themselves Christians, but were given the name by others. There was something of Christ with them initially (see verse 23). When Barnabas arrives he sees that the grace of God is active in them. There is something very precious in a soul that has just come to Christ, with an appreciation of what He has done and a longing to learn more of Him. But this shows that God wants formation to take place with us all so that there is a real expression of Christ in our lives. Barnabas discerns how they are and encourages them; he *"exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide with the Lord"*. Therefore they are ideal ground, you might say, to take on divine teaching and as taking it on to

bring it into expression in their lives.

The Spirit of God is shortly going to move in Antioch. In Acts 13 we read, "*Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*". The Spirit of God is in this work that is developing in the hearts and lives of these persons. Growth would take place. For a whole year, in all the different circumstances of the year, all would be used by God through Barnabas and Saul to bring about, not only knowledge of the teaching but the expression of it, and that is more important. The apostle Peter expresses it: "*that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light*" (1 Peter 2:9). That is what "*called Christians*" means.

Alex Mowat

*Based on a Bible reading at Chester, 24th March 2012.*

*This concludes this series.*

## **DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

**Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints.  
(Psalm 116:15)**

**...to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the  
fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death...  
(Philippians 3:10)**

There are two matters mentioned in these scriptures. The first is death and the next is resurrection. Death, in the sight of the Lord, in relation to His saints, is very precious.

The Lord has taken account of our brother in his long years of illness and weakness and called him out of it to Himself. Yet death remains, in its solemnity. The course here is finished for our brother: he is safe, his soul resting in enjoyment of the presence of Christ, his body here to be buried, but in the light of another day, a day that the Lord Himself has brought to pass in going into death Himself and coming out of it. God exerted "*the might of his strength*" in raising Christ from among

the dead and set Him at His right hand (Ephesians 1:19, 20). It is the testimony that death has been overthrown by His power. It is a solemn prospect for unbelievers. I trust that if there are any unbelievers here today they will take account of what the Lord has done in relation to our beloved brother, who was a Christian; he had put his faith in Christ, and served Him here, according to his measure. The Lord has come in and his death is precious in His sight.

That is very affecting to us: He takes account of our being here today. Thanks has been given to those who have come here but think of the Lord taking account of this occasion and what it means to Him! He would enter into the feelings of those who sorrow. It says of Him in John 11 that He walked with Mary to the tomb. He went with her. He had said to His disciples, "*Lazarus, our friend, is fallen asleep*". What a wonderful testimony to the feelings of the Lord Jesus, feelings that surpass our feelings. He has divine compassion that He would bring in to minister to those who sorrow on this occasion. He knows the depth of sorrow that is involved because He has been that way. He has been the way of suffering as we read in Philippians. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. How many there are who have fallen asleep through Jesus.

We wait for the moment of resurrection. I do not believe that our brother's body will be in the grave for long. The assembling shout is imminent. There will be myriads whom He has called to Himself that will be rallied at that assembling shout. What a victory that will be when myriads will come out of the tombs, and we the living who remain all "*caught up together... to meet the Lord in the air*" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

What a triumph that will be. It will not be seen on the earth, it will be seen in heaven. The angels will see the completion of the work of God in believers coming together in all its perfection for the first time.

Now, in Philippians 3, Paul says "*to know him*" and that is just what I wish to draw attention to. If there are any here who do not know the Lord what a moment it is to have to do with Him. It is a solemn moment. We cannot repent after death. The time for repenting is now. The time to get matters clear with the Lord is now because "*now is the well-accepted time; behold now the day of salvation*" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

This solemn occasion — a very precious occasion but a solemn one — is a wonderful moment for each one to make sure that our links with the Lord are right; He can take account of each one: "*to know him*". He is a wonderful Person to know. Saul came to know Him on the Damascus road, as we know, and he served Him thereafter.

Our brother's service has finished. He laboured according to his measure, according to his limitations physically. Paul said he had laboured more than all, "*but not I, but the grace of God which was in me*" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Well, let us have this hope before us: "*the power of his resurrection*". I love that expression; Paul lived in relation to that wonderful moment when the power of resurrection would be seen.

It will be seen, too, in relation to the unbelieving dead. No one will escape. John 5 tells us that all who are in the tombs will hear the voice of the Son of God. What a solemn moment. Let us make sure that we are among that company that will meet the Lord in the air.

Well, may our brethren be comforted and consoled at this time and all have their eyes fixed upon Christ, the One who has the power of resurrection, who would come in to comfort our hearts and to stabilise us in the path in the little time that remains.

David Bond,

*Word at a burial, 3 July 2012*



## CONTINUANCE

**I testify before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge living and dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, proclaim the word; be urgent in season and out of season, convict, rebuke, encourage, with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time shall be when they will not bear sound teaching; but according to their own lusts will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear; and they will turn away their ear from the truth, and will have turned aside to fables. But thou, be sober in all things, bear evils, do the work of an evangelist, fill up the full measure of thy ministry. For I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come. I have combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render to me in that day; but not only to me, but also to all who love his appearing.**

**(2 Timothy 4:1-8)**

I have two thoughts in my mind in reading these scriptures. One is that the time of release is come for our dear brother — the time of his release has come. The apostle Paul was writing to Timothy towards the end of his life and he was looking forward to the time of his release. For our dear brother Gavin, that release has come. He is in the presence of his Lord and Saviour!

But we remain, and my desire for our dear sister and her family and for the local brethren here is that there should be a word of encouragement in relation to the departure of our brother. The apostle Paul is not only writing of his own departure and the blessing and comfort it will be to him to be with the Lord, but he is writing to those who remain, those of us who are left behind at the moment. As we have been reminded, the Lord's coming is very near and our brother has gone on before, just a little while it may be.

An exhortation by Paul is given to Timothy so that when Paul is gone things should continue. Gavin's release has come, but we

are left here and what is to happen? My beloved brethren, I believe that in these closing days of the church's history on earth, we need spiritual energy for the testimony of Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul says, "*be urgent in season and out of season*". We are to be urgent in relation to the gospel and urgent in relation to the matters that belong to the Lord here.

The apostle Paul could say, "*I have combated the good combat, ... I have kept the faith*". We can take account of these precious features in the life of our brother. He did indeed combat the good combat like all those who know and love the Lord. There is a conflict going on and our dear brother combated the good combat and he kept the faith.

Then "*the crown of righteousness is laid up for me*" — and I am very thankful for that part of the expression that follows, "*but also to all who love his appearing*". The crown of righteousness is not only laid up for the great apostle and others but for all those who love His appearing. Every one who belongs to the Lord Jesus can put themselves into that category. We love His appearing. We are looking for that wonderful appearing of our Lord and Saviour. We shall meet Him in the air. We shall see Him and we shall be like Him. What a wonderful hope that is!

These things are to give us spiritual energy so that we may finish the race, that we may go on together. May the local brethren as well as the family be encouraged to go forward in spiritual energy and in faith, at this time.

There is much that has come in to the church that is not according to the mind of God and the apostle Paul runs over some of it here. Many things may have to be fought for! Many things may have to be resisted. Many things may have to be stood for. We need spiritual energy and faith to do it.

Our dear brother has kept the faith! May each one of us be encouraged to do the same thing, for His name's sake.

Marcus Chapman

*Word at a burial, 3 July 2012*

## THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF THE LORD

**When I said, My foot slippeth, thy loving-kindness, O Jehovah, held me up. In the multitude of my anxious thoughts within me thy comforts have delighted my soul. (Psalm 94:18-19)**

Coming to an occasion like this, you realise that you could not do without the loving-kindness of Jehovah, of the Lord. The world can offer its condolences but there is nothing like the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Many in this hall today have known the loving-kindness of the Lord longer than I have known it myself, but it is at times like these when sorrows come in (and our dear brother Gavin has been no stranger to sorrow), that the loving-kindness of the Lord becomes so precious to our hearts that you realise it is absolutely indispensable. Whilst many here today who have known the gospel have surely heard that the knowledge of the loving-kindness of the Lord is what is needed for their soul salvation, so also today the knowledge of the loving-kindness of the Lord is what is needed to comfort our hearts. For when sorrow and loving-kindness meet, what we find is comfort.

The Psalmist who wrote this Psalm was obviously passing through deep waters; they were troubled times for him. For in that second verse that I read he speaks about the multitude of his anxious thoughts within him. Who of us does not know something about that? Think of the troubles that boil up in our hearts and the confusion of thoughts and we just wonder what the outcome will be. But those are the very circumstances where the loving-kindness of the Lord draws near.

What does he speak of here? He says, "*thy comforts have delighted my soul*". "*Thy comforts*", it is more than one! They are the comforts of the Lord. They come in, in the very situation that causes us distress, to make us realise that He can be everything to us in the situation we are in. I just want to speak, very briefly, about three of the comforts that the Lord would provide at a time like this.

One of them is in that very well-known Psalm 23. You will remember that he says there, *"though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil"*. And why? Because, *"thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me"* (v.4). *"Thou art with me"*; how precious are those words. He has promised that He will never leave us. *"I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee"*. That is what He has said (Hebrews 13:5). And that, I believe, is the way in which the Lord would provide His word to us just at the present moment and say, 'I am not going to leave you, I am going to be with you'.

Each one of us is here today because we are sorrowing the loss of a brother whom we loved. But oh, that we might know the Lord drawing near. He says, 'I will be with you. I will be near to you in the circumstances where you are'.

Another comfort that has come home to me very specially — and it was actually confirmed in that last hymn that we sang together — is that, do you know there is a Man on high who is interceding for us before the throne of grace? Surely that is wonderful! To think that the One who was here and who drew near to persons in need and who prayed for them to His Father, has ascended up on high at God's right hand - for that is where He is — and there He intercedes for us before God. Moreover, if you turn to the book of Hebrews you find that He sympathises with our infirmities (see Hebrews 4:15). Is it not wonderful that the very One who feels things, and knows exactly how we feel the sorrows of the way, is the One who bears us up before His Father in the throne above? How very precious to know that these comforts are available to us today.

The last comfort that I want to speak of, (and the list is by no means exhaustive), is the comfort of knowing that He is coming again soon. It is not going to be long. It has already been suggested that our brother's body may not be long in the grave ere the Lord comes. What a triumph it will be when He comes with archangel's voice and trump of God and every one who has trusted in Christ will be called forth to be eternally with

Him. Paul, when he writes to the Thessalonians, says, “*So encourage one another with these words*” (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

Dear believer, it will not be long and we shall be assembled together. The dead in Christ shall rise first and then we the living who remain shall be caught up to be for ever with the Lord. What a triumph of divine grace that we should be assembled there in those courts above by the One who told His disciples when He was here, ‘I go to prepare you a place. Were it not so, I had told you’ (see John 14:3, 2).

These things comfort my heart in the midst of sorrow. I would that they might comfort the hearts of each one of us. And if it should be that there is anyone here to whom these things are not real to your soul, I would say, just come to Christ and you can know what it is for these joys, these comforts, to be comforts to you in your hour of need. And what is more they can give you an assurance and a hope that nothing else can.

May God bless the word for His name's sake.

Keith Wickens

*Word at a burial, 3 July 2012*

## Poetry Selection

### **THE WRITING ON THE CROSS**

*“Jesus” was written broadly on the cross,*

*The proof of glory and the sign of shame;*

*Disclosing in the Saviour’s deepest loss,*

*The deathless lustre of His holy Name.*

*“Jesus” – what volumes centre in that word!*

*Earth trembles: every heart in heaven is stirred.*

*“They watched Him there” – What went ye forth to see,  
Ye who reviled the lowly Nazarene?  
Yea, purposed in His garb arrayed to be,  
When He on earth no longer should be seen.  
O wolves! O bulls of Bashan! Dogs! – all dumb,  
Say, will ye mock the King when He shall come?  
The priests and presbyters beguiled the crowd  
To claim Barabbas – Jesus to destroy;  
And mid the uproar, savage voices loud  
Demanded murder with tumultuous joy.  
‘What hath he done?’ the Roman Governor cried;  
They dared to say, ‘Let Him be crucified!’  
O day of days! The Lamb of God is slain;  
O sight of sights! He bows His smitten head.  
O woe of woes! His agony of pain;  
O marvel, He the Lord of life among the dead!  
O love untold, in Jesus’ name made known:  
O Fulness, found in Jesus Christ alone!  
Behold, ye saints, your banner! Written o’er  
With that same word engraven on the cross.  
The Lord is risen, He lives for evermore;  
Tis yours awhile to share His earthly loss.  
Display those crimson folds, that fair device,  
The cross, the crown, the name of Jesus Christ!*

*Hannah K Burlingham*

## Testimony Section

### IN THE STEPS OF GEORGE WISHART

George Wishart, preacher and martyr, was born at Pitarrow, Forfarshire, Scotland in 1513. He grew up in disturbing times when there was a power struggle going on after King James IV was killed at the battle of Flodden. Two men came to rule Scotland — the Earl of Arran, who became ‘Governor’, and David Beaton, Cardinal Archbishop of St Andrews. Arran’s religion varied according to whatever he thought would increase his influence, while Beaton was unwavering in upholding the power of the Church of Rome.

It is not certain when Wishart began to trust in Christ. It may have been when he was in Germany as part of his education, but some ascribe it to his reading of the Greek New Testament. Either way, in 1538 he distributed Greek New Testaments to his students at Montrose Academy, turning Greek lessons into an opportunity for the gospel. When as a result he was summoned by the local Bishop, Wishart fled to Cambridge where he was invited by Hugh Latimer to preach in Bristol.

On 15th May 1539 Wishart preached his first sermon at St Nicholas, Bristol. He boldly challenged Roman doctrines and preached salvation through Christ alone. He was soon accused of heresy. In July he appeared before a Church Commission and was condemned and made to confess his ‘error’. After this humiliation Wishart fled to the Continent.

From 1539 to 1542 in Zurich and Geneva he learned a great deal from Heinrich Bullinger (successor in Zurich to Zwingli, who had been killed in battle in 1531) and from John Calvin in Geneva. Bullinger’s ministry was characterised by careful study of the Scriptures and a deep sense of the love of God. Wishart also saw at first hand the disastrous effects of Zwingli’s resort to force; it was a lesson that lasted the rest of his life. In

Geneva Wishart translated into English the 1536 Swiss "Confession of Faith" and had this printed when he returned briefly to Cambridge in 1542.

There is a description of Wishart about this time by Emery Tylney. Wishart was 'A man of tall stature, black haired, long bearded, comely of personage, courteous, lowly, glad to teach, desirous to learn, well travelled. He was a man modest, temperate, fearing God, hating covetousness.'

At the end of July 1543 Wishart was back at Pitarrow and spent the next eighteen months studying the scriptures and thinking of what he had learned on the Continent. By late spring 1545 Wishart took a house near the church in Montrose and commenced expounding the scriptures to large numbers.

Invited to preach in Dundee, he systematically went through the epistle to the Romans drawing on what he had learned from Bullinger. On one occasion a Magistrate commanded him to stop preaching heresy. Wishart responded telling those present that he had preached among them the word of salvation but that now he must leave.

Invited to preach in Ayr he was barred from the church. Some of Wishart's followers wanted to force their way in but he dissuaded them and preached at the market cross instead. This experience made Wishart realise that he found greater liberty outside than in a church. Moving on to Galston and Mauchline again the churches were barred to him and he preached in a meadow, saying, 'Christ Jesus is as potent in the fields as in the Kirk. He Himself oftener preached on the mountain, in the desert and at the seaside than in the temple. God sends by me the word of peace and the blood of no man must be shed this day for the preaching of it.' Laurence Rankin, Laird of Sheill, a thoroughly godless man, was converted at Mauchline. The change in his life and his public confession of faith influenced many.



Bubonic plague broke out in Dundee in August 1545 and Wishart was asked to return. Because of the plague he preached outside standing on the Cow gate. Here one day a priest tried to stab him. Wishart seized him, pinning his arms to his side. Some in the crowd wanted to kill the priest but Wishart begged for the attacker to be allowed to escape. 'He who touches him will trouble me' he said.

While at Dundee he received news that a church Synod was planned for January 1546 and a suggestion that Wishart should attend accompanied by a group of Protestant supporters. Wishart welcomed this proposal and as soon as the plague ended in Dundee he went back home to Pitarrow.

Late in November Wishart set out for Edinburgh for the Synod, taking a roundabout route in order to avoid attack. Near Edinburgh he was expecting to meet influential protestant supporters but to his dismay they had not arrived. On 11th December he preached fearlessly at Leith and the following week at Inveresk. Here two Friars from the chapel of Loretto at Musselburgh stood outside. Wishart invited them to come in to 'hear the word of truth, which according to whether you receive it, will prove to be a way of life or death'. The Friars ignored the appeal and continued to linger at the door and attempt to distract from the sermon.

During this time Wishart was staying with Hugh Douglas at Longniddry Castle, now demolished. Here he met John Knox who was tutor to Douglas' sons. Wishart also preached at Longniddry and at nearby Tranent. Meanwhile on 13th January, Cardinal Beaton opened the church Synod in Edinburgh but immediately adjourned it until April, by which time he promised that he would have silenced 'that heretic Wishart who was troubling the church'.

On 14th January Wishart preached at Haddington but attendance was small since the local landowner, the Earl of

Bothwell, had forbidden any of his tenants to attend. Preaching the next day at Haddington the hearers were very few. Shortly before the sermon Wishart received a letter from the protestant Earls of Cassilis and Glencairn stating that they would not be coming to Edinburgh or attending the Synod. This was a great blow. For half an hour Wishart paced to and fro in the church, his thoughts in turmoil. Knox, knowing how Wishart liked to spend the time before the sermon quietly praying and studying the Scriptures, came and took the letter away from him and begged him not to allow it to distract him from the sermon. Eventually he went into the pulpit and commenced his sermon with the words: 'Lord, how long shall it be that Thy healing word shall be despised and men shall not regard their own salvation'. Sadly much of the sermon reflected the fatigue of his spirit. Afterwards he said a feeling farewell to those present, including Knox who wanted to continue with him but Wishart dissuaded him with the weary words, 'one is sufficient for a sacrifice'.

Leaving Haddington he set out in the fading light of the short winter day with Sir John Cockburn to walk the six miles to Ormiston House (now ruined). After supper Wishart discoursed on the death of the Lord's servants and they concluded by singing a metrical version of Psalm 51, commencing 'Have mercy on me now good Lord, after Thy great mercie'. About midnight the house was surrounded by troops commanded by the Earl of Bothwell and Wishart meekly agreed to go with him as a prisoner. He was subsequently imprisoned in Hailes castle and confined to a dungeon. This was a pit with a vent so angled that it would let in air but no light.

Today in the grounds of the castle there is a memorial seat to Thomas Dewar Bell. Part of the inscription reads:

*'If there's another world, he lives in bliss  
If there is none, he made the best of this'*

Such empty hopelessness is a vivid contrast to the steadfast faith of Wishart.

Bothwell had given undertakings that he would not hand Wishart over to Cardinal Beaton, but did just that, taking him to Edinburgh Castle. Beaton however wanted the prisoner under his personal control so he was soon taken to the Cardinal's castle at St Andrews. Here he was held for a month in the Bottle Dungeon, a foul and dreadful pit far worse than that at Hailes castle. Governor Arran refused to give authority for a trial and required that proceedings be stopped until he could be present. Beaton arrogantly ignored him and the tribunal for heresy was convened on 28th February 1546 in St Andrew's Cathedral.

Even today, in the ruins of the Cathedral, it is possible to get a sense of the worldly splendour with which the trial was conducted. There in the presence of Cardinal Beaton and the Archbishops and Bishops of Scotland stood the lonely figure of Wishart. It was a far cry from the vision Wishart had when he left Pitarrow the previous November. Yet for all his loneliness, he had the greatest support possible, for Christ promised His own that when they are called before kings and authorities, they are not the speakers but the Holy Spirit.

John Lauder opened for the prosecution, addressing the prisoner with the words 'renegade, traitor and thief'. He then read the seventeen charges, demanding an immediate answer to each. A couple of these charges show the character of the interrogation:

Lauder: 'Thou hast denied the Sacrament of Confession, affirming that men ought to confess sin to God, and not to a priest.'

Wishart: 'I teach, my Lord, that priestly confession has no warrant, but that confession to God is blessed. In the 51st Psalm David makes confession to God saying, "*Against*

*thee, thee only, have I sinned"* (Psalm 51:4). When James writes, *"Confess your offences to one another"* (James 5:16), he counsels us against being high minded, and so to acknowledge our sinfulness before all.'

Lauder: 'Thou hast taught that God dwells not in churches made with men's hands and that it is vain to consecrate costly edifices to His praise'

Wishart: 'God is present everywhere. *"Behold," said Solomon, "the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built"* (2 Chronicles 6:18). ...Yet God is pleased to honour places specially dedicated to His worship: *"For where two or three"* said the Saviour, *"are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). God is certainly present where He is truly worshipped.'

The Tribunal was set on condemning him and continually interrupted his defence with cries of 'heresy' and 'blasphemy'. The sentence was duly announced and the next day Wishart was burned outside the castle walls watched by the Cardinal and his supporters. A mark in the road identifies the spot, but his real memorial was in the hearts of those that through his devoted preaching had come to know Jesus Christ as their own Saviour and Lord.

**A Voice from the Past**  
*From "Living Water" No 16*

**EXTRACTS FROM THE TEACHING OF EDWARD  
DENNETT**

- “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”. Untold sorrows characterise the human race, and this invitation is not confined to those who are laden with sin. Jesus addresses any one who is bowed down with any possible sorrow, any possible bereavement. Whatever the burden upon you, the Lord speaks to you.
- The perfection of the Christian life is absolute trust in God. All roads lead to this, and the one who reaches it in any measure will never be confounded.
- The fear of God can lift the feeblest and humblest above the fear of man.
- Sympathy is the rarest of all ministries, as it is also the sweetest: it makes no show to the world but it makes its mark.
- In praying for the sick I once heard a believer use this expression: ‘May those who are too weak to pray be able to lean’.
- *“Who hath despised the day of small things?”* We are slow to learn that the importance of any service depends upon God’s estimate of it...that the meanest service...is worthy of all our devotedness and zeal if the mind and heart of God are upon it, and if He has put it into our hand.
- We cannot have power with men if we have not power with God. The greatest mistake that any of us can make is to seek to have power before men without having been in the presence of God.
- We are as dependent upon God when we speak to one soul as when we preach to a thousand. I have learnt this by experience; I have gone to see a sick person in great self-confidence and found I had nothing to say. And then the Lord taught me that I must wait upon Him for the message for a single soul as much as when I was going

to preach. May we ever remember this that there may be no trace of self-confidence remaining in the heart.

- The wonder is that the Lord condescends to use anything which He gives one to say, seeing that we so often adulterate it with our own thoughts.
- It is so gracious of Him to give us any encouragement in our service, but I am convinced that the fruit of our labours which we have not seen will be far more abundant than that which we are permitted to know of, and hence it is that we have to scatter the seed in faith.
- Bear in mind that we must not expect the consciousness of power. It is on this point that so many stumble. They want to feel power, and failing to do so they conclude that they are in a wrong condition of soul for its exercise. No mistake could be greater. On the other hand the Lord has to break down His servants...in order to reduce them to the sense of their own utter impotence that they may learn the lesson that His strength is made perfect in weakness.
- Unconscious testimony is always the most powerful. I often think that at the judgment seat of Christ we shall find a word spoken casually, a little sentence dropped, has been more used than all our preaching and lectures.
- Nothing can justify a lack of tenderness in the presentation of the truth
- If you feel, 'I can do this or that service', you are not the vessel God can use.
- The Lord always sought to deepen exercises of soul, as He did in the case of the Syrophenician woman, refusing to grant her request until she was in a state to receive it. We seek to shorten them, as, for example, when we press souls to an immediate decision for Christ, without considering whether they have been brought to that point by the work of the Holy Ghost.
- When there are few gathered together at a meeting, remember there may be really as much blessing as with larger numbers. God will bring together those whom He purposes to bless, and if we remember

this it will keep our eyes up to Him, and that is the one condition of blessing.

- A preacher has never to be anxious about results; that is God's concern. He has only to be anxious about three things:
  1. the state of his own soul,
  2. being in communion with the mind of God as to those to whom he is speaking; and
  3. fidelity in delivering the message.
- Intellectual conviction is always powerless; it occupies itself with the truth, and never leads to Christ Himself.
- There are seasons when many believers feel as if they could not get into the presence, or obtain the ear of God...Surely it would prove an antidote to Satan's temptations at such periods to remember, that if we cannot pray ourselves, Christ never ceases to bear us up in His prevailing intercession...It would soon dispel our gloom and coldness of heart, because it would lead us to look away from ourselves and to expect all from Him and from His continual ministry for us in the presence of God.
- Christ Himself is to be our great example of faith, of a life of dependence upon God. If the holiest man that ever lived were to fill our vision it would only hinder us and not help us.
- Christ is everything. He is everything to the heart of God, and He desires to be everything to the hearts of His people. That it may be so with you is the highest blessedness I can desire for you.

Edward Dennett (1831 – 1914)

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***If there is an article (or part of an article) from a back number of Living Water that you would like to see reprinted, I would be very glad to hear from you. Ed.***

## A word for Today

### **“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?” (Psalm 22:1)**

This psalm evidently contains two parts; one of humiliation (from verse 1 to 21); and one of rejoicing (from verse 22 to the end). Both portions are of the very deepest interest to the believer. The Psalm gives most of the inward experiences and feelings of the blessed Lord.

The head of the first section of the psalm might then, I think, in outline be:

- ‘Utterly forsaken of God, I cry to Him; whom, though forsaken, I vindicate;
- God was faithful to Israel who in faith drew near to Him – but I am forsaken as having degraded myself to a point lower down than man (*“I am a worm and no man”*).
- Mocked by man and scorned, though a true witness for God,
- surrounded by terrors and cruelty,
- full within of weakness,
- surrounded by the wicked, crucified,
- My Person and circumstances put to shame.’

Satan in the temptations had tried Him as Son of God and as Son of man, but could find no dross of lust in Him. All was in perfect obedience to God and to the bondman position that He had taken. Man — good and bad man — had tried Him, but all was perfect. Now at the end of His course here below, Satan, man and God all try Him: He is perfectly subject unto God, even unto death, the death of the cross. But more than perfect subjection comes out: forsaken of God He does not forsake God: this is more than any mere creature could do. No mere creature has springs thus within itself, so that cut off from supplies from on high, it can still serve in subjection. Forsaken of God, a mere creature must collapse in ruin.



If thus perfectly subject, if thus divinely glorious in power, for whose sins was He thus smitten? Not for His own, that is clear. He was perfect as Man and was Son of God too; He had no sins of His own, He was by nature apart from sin. For whose sin and sins was He then afflicted and bruised? Faith knows the answer.

I pray that the various kinds of sufferings of the Lord, as here presented, may be noticed. They all meet together in the Psalm, as they did in the Lord's experience on the cross. Yet they are distinct from each other. Let us look at them in order.

### **1 The sorrow of the forsaking**

*"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou far from my salvation, from the words of my groaning? My God, I cry by day, and thou answerest not; and by night, and there is no rest for me" (v. 1 & 2)*

This forsaking by God — was there anything like it for sorrow? What was like it in the whole of the life of the Lord? It presents Him in a quite distinct place and position. He had of His own accord taken the cup of wrath due to others. He was the Just One in the place of the many unjust. He was bearing all the waves and billows of God's wrath against sin. Man had in the garden of Eden refused to be subject to God, had set God aside and has set Satan as director in place of God. The Lord, the seed of the woman, who alone knew no sin, was made sin for us, took upon Himself the consequences of this first root-sin of Adam, and all its ramifications. He was treated as though He had been the person that had alone done any or all the evil, and He experienced the consequences of being forsaken. *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

Sin in man is always godlessness, the denial of God in His place as supreme. Who could take the place and the consequences of the man who had done this? Let a mere creature be treated according to its deserts and withering in the darkness and blackness of despair would be the prelude to the lake prepared for the devil and his angels. Yet all the consequences upon the

wicked give no adequate measure of what the result of such an insult to God is. But the beloved Son, He in whom God was always well pleased, He was competent to take up the question of insulted Deity; He, God manifest in flesh; He the blessed Son of man, took up the question in His own Person, of His own voluntary accord – took it up too, not in independent will of His own, but as the servant of His God and Father. Never really, was His conduct more perfect, more according to His Father's good pleasure, than when He took this cup of wrath due alone to others, when He yielded Himself; *"Him who knew not sin" was "made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21)* yet the sin that He had taken up made Him taste what it was to be forsaken.

We must remember, too, that with Him there was no exaggeration of language, as there is with mere man. He presents facts and no human language could ever express what He felt when He said, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*. My sin and sins being borne by the Lord meant that the light of God's approbation was shut out from Him. He was God manifest in flesh and therefore could have no sin, could see no corruption, but with our sins laid upon Him, the spotless perfect victim - there could be no enjoyment by Him of expressed complacency and approbation from on high. My sins shut it out.

The bullock of the sin offering (see Leviticus 16:27-28), was thrust out of the camp, and seemed to mark everything unclean, though the blood might go inside and go before and upon the mercy seat, where God dwelt between the cherubim. Sin is a breaking off from God and its judgment is God's breaking off from it. What sin is in its real character I only learn from the Lord forsaken by God, upon the cross.

I could wish there was now-a-days a little more appreciation of God's estimate of sin: it would deepen the soul and tend to set it more decidedly in its proper position as against Satan, the world, and the flesh, and for God and God alone.

It is impossible for me to measure what the Lord endured – it is

a depth that knows no sounding — when He bore the wrath due to my sins in His own body on the tree; when He cried out, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”*

That sort of sorrow is altogether of its own kind. No one as yet ever tasted it save the Lord. And He took the full, whole portion as at the hand of His God and Father. It is restated again, later in the psalm: *“Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help”* (v. 11) and *“But thou, Jehovah, be not far from me...”* (v 19) Was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow!

## **2. The sorrow of the contrast between the way that the faithful had been delivered in the past and the fact that there was no deliverance for the Lord**

*“Our fathers confided in thee: they confided, and thou didst deliver them... but I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and the despised of the people”* (vv.4-6)

What a contrast there is between the shelter that the believing line of witnesses had ever from God (in whom they, in their measure, trusted) and the way that all God’s billows and waves rolled over Christ, as the One who for God’s sake (that He might be free, without any compromise of His holiness, to justify the sinner) and who for man’s sake too, has thus gone down into the depths, below man’s level, *“that through death he might annul him who had the might of death, that is the devil, and might set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage”* (Hebrews 2:14 – 15). All that He might rifle the grave and bring away with Him the key of Hades and death; as He said to John: *“Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of Hades”* ( Revelation 1:17).

That He might break the power of Satan, set aside the power of the world, draw the souls of poor sinners to God, He became *“a worm, and no man”*. What thorough humbling of Himself – obedient unto death, the death of the cross!

### **3. The sorrow of the reproaches of the wicked**

*"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and the despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying: Commit to Jehovah – let him rescue him; let him deliver him, because he delighteth in him!" (vv 6 – 8)*

Wicked men round about Him were against Him, though He was bearing their judgment before God. And His perfect self as a Man could take notice of all the little things from man as much as the great things from God! Reproach of man; contempt of the people; the laugh; the scorn; the pouted lip; the taunting repartee – He saw, He felt it all. It was not God's wrath against sin; but it was rather part of the sin against which God's wrath came; the grand expression of it – to which the wrath was obviously due. In the wrath, He was all alone, and none with Him: in the taste of the sins then swelling like a flood against Him, a Mary, a John, holy women, a Joseph, a centurion, a Nicodemus might have their portion and drink it with Him. The wrath was His and His alone to bear.

### **4. The sorrow of the contrast between past nearness and present distance**

*"But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me trust upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help" (v 8 – 11).*

This contrast may form part of the experience of a man of God. Job, Jeremiah and others might share it in measure – but who shined under it in the way that Jesus did? In mere men it showed all too often their love of ease and their self will. Job was irritated and cursed the day he was born; Jeremiah sunk through faintheartedness into like sin. Timothy was faint hearted. In contrast, the Lord's light only shone out the more brightly.

## 5. The sorrow of weakness and helplessness

*"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is become like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my palate: and thou hast laid me in the dust of death" (v 14 &15).*

On the cross the Lord had a sense of weakness and helplessness and He felt weakness as none other. One who is weak or naturally helpless does not feel weakness in the same way as He who was the perfection of strength and power- He is the One who upholds all things by the word of His power, yet on the cross He felt utter weakness. There are points marked out in the psalm which none but He could fully know. Expressions like, *"I am poured out like water... my heart is...like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels... thou hast laid me in the dust of death"* seem to me language which as to its fullness was suited only to Him, the Mighty One of God, when on the cross. He was *"crucified in weakness" (2 Corinthians 13:4).*

## 6. The sorrow of crucifixion

*"For dogs have encompassed me; and assembly of evil-doers have surrounded me: they pierced my hands and my feet" (v. 16).*

To the Lord, as an Israelite, the Messiah and the King of Israel, the perfect Israelite, the cross, a Gentile death and a cruel one, must have been far more sorrowful than to the two thieves. They, of course, felt the pain of the kind of death and of death itself in a bodily way; but beside feeling much more acutely than they did, His mind, His heart, His zeal for God, His love for Israel, His pity for sinners and for Gentiles all gave their part to His weight of suffering. His mother, His disciples and others at the cross all enlarged its dimension too.

There was, too, for Him the legal curse of God's righteous judgment; as it is written *"Cursed is everyone hanged upon a tree" (Galatians 3:13).* But this curse of the law was not the

same thing as the wrath, when He cried out, *“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* He only of the three that were crucified together, could, or did bear that wrath and the agony of that wrath and the agony of the cross of wood was infinitely less than the sufferings consequent upon the wrath of God.

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Anyone who takes in by faith the words of John: *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believes on him may not perish but have life eternal”* (John 3:14 – 15) is doubtless saved. If he has studied the accounts of the crucifixion in the Gospels his own soul as cleaving to and loving the Lord, will learn lessons about:

- what man — good and bad — is;
- what the religious world, even that of God’s setting up in Israel, is;
- what high priests and elders are, when they are but mere men;
- what civil government (in Herod and Pontius Pilate and suchlike) really is; and
- who the prince of this world is.

While the conscience, heart and mind may be thus enlarged and formed as to things down here, he will not find, save in the cry, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* that which touches on the settlement of the question of sin before God; nor even so does the lesson go far enough, without light from the Acts and the epistles to give settlement to his own soul. For the forsaking is but one side of the subject. It shows the side of rejection and judgment of sin by God, but not at all the side of how He can curse the sin and bless the sinner. The counsel and plan of God came not out in the scene as enacted on earth but in the results seen in heaven and announced thence by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

For man to know the divine certainty and eternal necessity of sin — his own sin — being cursed by God is a lesson, and a great one to learn; and it is taught on Calvary, there where Satan was allowed to have his own way, and to lead man to show out his hatred towards God in the crucifixion of Christ, and where God gave the penal consequences to His Son to bear. Our helplessness as to our sins and as to self is taught then and there. But it was from heaven after the resurrection and ascension that such truth came as: *“Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in him”* (2 Corinthians 5|:21).

God’s counsel and plan and grace by the cross come out in such passages (in the Acts, Epistles and the Revelation) as these: *“And it shall be that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazaraean, a man borne witness to by God to you by works of power and wonders and signs which God wrought by him...him given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by the hand of lawless men have crucified and slain. Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death, inasmuch that it was not possible that he should be held by its power...This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof all we are witnesses, having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which ye behold and hear....Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*

*“And having heard it they were pricked in heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, What shall we do, brethren? And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptised each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...”* (Acts 3:22-42).

Without such additional light the conscience would not get peace. I note, too, that crucified together with Him, buried together with Him, raised up together with Him and made to sit together

in heavenly places in Him (see Colossians 2:12 & Ephesians 2:6-7), clearly is not merely the cross of Calvary and the curse born by Him in His forsaking but is the doctrine of God and heaven about faith in an ascended Lord, and is entered into through the gift of the Holy Spirit who is the seal and earnest of the inheritance.

Until the soul can say, 'He who knew no sin was made sin for me, and forsaken for me, that I might become the righteousness of God in Him'; the soul cannot have conscious intelligent peace with God. It does not see how the sin was cursed, though the sinner was saved. God's character was thus revealed. For the soul to be at peace in itself it must know God aright and so be able to share His peace with Him, His who rests in the Son of His love. When this peace is known then it is seen that the truth, holiness, justice and equity of God is as much for the believing sinner, as is His compassion, mercy and grace.

It is a subject of the deepest and most solemn kind that the One who, as the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, should lose down here the consciousness of the complacency of God, and that too, at the very time when He was doing the most arduous and difficult part of the work that was given to Him to do down here; so that instead of God's nearness to Himself, it was God's distance and being afar off in forsaking that He tasted when He bare our sins. Yet in all He would say, 'Though forsaken, I do not forsake', and, 'Treated as made sin, I vindicate Him that has done so'.

In all He stands supreme, the centre of heaven's adoration and the centre of ours.

G. V. Wigram (1805–1879)

*Extracted from an address at Woolwich, 1863.*