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Living Water

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As some readers know, for several years a native Burmese
Christian, Ai Za Len, has translated "Living Water" into both
Burmese and Chin, circulating 4,000 copies in each language
within Burma. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ was
brought to Burma by Adoniram Judson and July 2013 marks
the 200th anniversary of his arrival in Rangoon (now
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Good News from Heaven, a booklet containing four recent
gospel preachings is circulated as a Supplement with this issue.

Recent Ministry

THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD

“Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord”

(2 Timothy 1:8)

I would like to say something about *“the testimony of our Lord”*. When I became a believer in the Lord Jesus I wanted to tell somebody that I trusted the Saviour. I expect that is the case with most of us, that we wanted to tell somebody that we were enlisted in the ranks of those who are to carry the testimony of the Lord. It is a wonderful privilege. The Lord is rejected and cast out here but the One who went to the cross is now in glory. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Those of us who believe in Him are called to bear testimony to Him day by day in faithfulness to our Saviour. The testimony of our Lord has a bearing upon every detail of our lives and every relationship in which we find ourselves. We know that Timothy, to whom this epistle is written, had a grandmother and a mother who were both marked by *“unfeigned faith”*. What a change it would have made in that house when they were converted. Timothy would have seen in them a testimony to the Lord and what His grace can do.

It is a word to those of us who are parents or grandparents. It is important for us to convey to our children and grandchildren a testimony of the Lord. The Lord honours that. He honoured it in Timothy’s case, and faith was continued in Timothy. I suggest that in every relationship, every position in which believers find themselves, they are to fill out their responsibilities in a way that honours the Lord. So we do not expect a Christian to break the law, or do underhand things. Simple righteousness, in a world where people often seek to get away with as much as possible, is part of the testimony of our Lord.

John, in his gospel, identifies incidents in the life of our Lord Jesus here that help us to understand what the testimony of the Lord is.

The woman at Sychar's well (John 4:7-42)

There is something about this account in John 4 that fills you with adoration and praise; that the Lord should meet such a one and transform her into what she became — a woman who could carry the testimony of the Lord — is wonderful. Here was a woman who had a reputation as a sinner — she was known for what she was — yet the Lord in His grace goes out of His way to draw near to her and meet her need. What grace marked our Saviour!

They could see she was changed; that is the testimony of our Lord

That is what He has done with all of us and He wrought in this woman's soul so that she became a remarkable testimony to the Lord. She says, *"Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?"* (v. 39)? We can feel the power of those words as we read them. She had had five husbands and the man that she was now living with was not her husband. She had sought satisfaction in this life and she had not found it. But now she found Christ, a Man who told her all things she had ever done and He surpassed everyone and everything she had ever known. She had found One of whom she could say, *"is not he the Christ?"*

It is a wonderful day when we each meet this glorious Person and have our souls filled with a sense of the glory of who He is, One who has come to meet our need as sinners and has met it gloriously, One who loves us so much that He gave Himself for us.

So, this woman leaves her water pot and goes into the city and becomes a remarkable testimony to the Lord. *"Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?"* She went to the men of the city and they listened to her. They must have seen something in this woman that made them say to themselves, 'Something has happened to her. She is different from what she was'. They could see she was changed; that is the testimony of our Lord.

So they said, 'We will see for ourselves.' *"They went out of the city and came to Him"* (v. 29). The testimony of this woman

brought them to the Lord and *“many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him because of the word of the woman who bore witness, He told me all things that I had ever done. When therefore the Samaritans came to him they asked him to abide with them, and he abode there two days. And more a great deal believed on account of his word; and they said to the woman, It is no longer on account of thy saying that we believe, for we have heard him ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world”*(v. 39-42).

They came to Him themselves. The testimony that we carry of the Saviour is not to draw people to ourselves - that would be a poor thing - but it is that others might come to know Jesus for themselves and have a living, personal relationship with Him. Such was the result of the testimony of this woman who was a sinner.

A Man Born Blind (John 9:1-18 & 24-38)

In chapter 9 there is another illustration in this man who was born blind. The question was asked, *“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifested in him”* (vs. 2 & 3). I like to think of this man as a testimony because of the effect of the works of God in his own soul. He made progress in his soul. The Lord in His grace opened his eyes that he should see. In that very thing there was a testimony to the works of God but then the man himself became a testimony to the works of God.

In our lives here we are to be a testimony to the works of God. To me, this suggests that we are to grow in the things of God; we are to make progress in our souls. We are to come to a greater knowledge of the Lord, to understand His purposes, to understand what He has secured for us and become committed to Him. I think we need to be exercised that we do make such progress. There are lots of things that hinder progress in our souls: the attractions of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the cares of life are all things that sap spiritual growth and energy.

This man did make progress. First of all he says of Christ, *“a man called Jesus”* (v. 11), then later it is, *“He is a prophet”* (v. 17),

then he says, *"If this man were not of God he would be able to do nothing"* (v.33). We can see that the work of God is growing in this man's soul. He has to stand against some opposition. To be faithful to Christ we may have to do that too. In the world in which we live, where the things of our Lord Jesus are being given up around us, there is a need for faithful witness. This man stood his ground. He says, *"If this man were not of God he would be able to do nothing. They answered and said to him, Thou hast been wholly born in sins, and thou teachest us? And they cast him out"* (vs.33 & 34).

If you are cast out in faithfulness to Christ, the Lord will find you: that is what He did here: *"Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said to him, Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God?"* (v.35) That is further progress; he does Him homage and he becomes committed to the Son of God.

So I say again, that we need to be concerned to be making progress in our souls, to make way for the Spirit of God so that we grow in our appreciation of Christ. This man is a demonstration of the progress of the work of God in the soul and the testimony of the Lord that results from it.

Simon Peter - Failure and Following (John 18:25-27, John 21:18-23)

Peter was a great lover of the Lord. He made many mistakes but he got the gain of those mistakes. The Lord had told him earlier that he would deny Him three times. But the Lord said, *"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"* (Luke 22:32). That is comforting. Peter failed the Lord, but the Lord had prayed for him that his faith would not fail and his faith did not fail and he was restored. We can count on the Lord in that way. We may be ashamed of the Lord and His testimony, as Peter was in this incident in John 18, but the Lord does not give us up. He is interested in us and provides the grace and recovers us to Himself. We see that in Peter. In chapter 21 the Lord speaks to Peter directly as to his failure but it was in view of his full recovery.

**the Lord does
not give us up**

In John 21 Peter asks the Lord about John. Jesus replies, *"If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me"*(v.22). What Peter was to be concerned about was that he personally was following the Lord. *"Follow thou me"* is a word to us all. It is only as closely following Christ that the testimony of our Lord can be rightly maintained.

The Lord knew what He had in mind for John. He became a remarkable man in the Lord's service and later we find him in Patmos, *"for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus"* (Revelation 1:9). John was to have a great part in that testimony too, but we each need to look to ourselves and follow the Lord.

Mary of Magdala (John 20:1 & 11-18)

There is something about Mary of Magdala that is very special. *"And on the first day of the week Mary of Magdala comes in early morn to the tomb"* (v.1). She had been standing by the cross of Jesus, she was there amongst others, but here we have her on the first day of the week. Very early in the morning she goes to the tomb and finds the stone rolled away. Peter comes and John comes and they go back home; Mary waits alone by the tomb. There is something touching about that. She had great love for the Lord. He had cast seven demons out of her and here she is, at early morn at the tomb, and there she remains. What an important part love for the Lord plays in the maintenance of the testimony of our Lord. He had a special place in Mary's heart.

"Mary stood at the tomb weeping without. As therefore she wept, she stooped down into the tomb, and beholds two angels ... they say to her, Woman, why dost thou weep?" (vs 11-13) What affection she demonstrates standing there, by herself at the tomb, weeping. *"She says to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. Having said these things she turned backward and beholds Jesus standing there, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus says to her, Woman, why dost thou weep? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing that it was the gardener, says to him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away"* (v. 13-15). Her soul was attached to Christ. So it should be with us. We owe

everything to Him.

Mary of Magdala owed everything to Him. If she did not have Jesus, she had nothing. *“Jesus says to her, Mary. She, turning round, says to him in Hebrew, Rabboni, which means Teacher”* (v.16). She was satisfied now; she had found Him. What is interesting about Mary of Magdala is that she gets this wonderful message: *“go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”* (v.17). That is a remarkable revelation, *“to my Father and your Father”*. God had been known as the Almighty and all the names that belonged to Him but here was the revelation of God as Father and that message was given to Mary of Magdala who in her love for the Lord remained at the tomb looking for Him. She was to bring this message to the disciples.

The Lord appreciates those who love Him and the Lord reveals Himself to such, *“my Father and your Father ... my God and your God”*. Through the death of Christ and His rising again we have been brought into the knowledge of God as our Father. We have our place with Him before the Father. This is what was given to Mary of Magdala. So we have here the testimony of one who was a lover of the Lord and what is revealed to her by the Lord Himself.

There are many others throughout John’s gospel I could have spoken about. John gives us many examples; they come out on nearly every page of his gospel, individuals who were called to have their part in the testimony of our Lord. Now we are called to that same testimony. That is our privilege, to have part in the testimony of our glorious Saviour during the time of His absence. There will be no need for a testimony when we are with Him: the time of the testimony is now,

May we each be encouraged to take up our part in the testimony of our Lord in the time of His reproach, for His glory, for His name’s sake.

Charlie Watson

An address at Warley, 31st March 2012.

From "Living Water No 18

COURAGE

I want to speak of the pathway of Christian witness. All the scriptures I want to refer to are set against the background of the devil's attack.

"Be of good courage, child; thy sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:1-2)

I read from the ninth chapter of Matthew to indicate the start of the life of Christian witness. I am concerned that we might, each and all of us, review, in the calm of this meeting, our spiritual beginnings, because I have an impression that greater depth in the understanding of our link with the Lord will help us to be a little more pliable in the manner in which we administer the grace of forgiveness ourselves.

I would like to speak to the young people here, just for a moment or two. I want to commend to them this word: "*Be of good courage, child; thy sins are forgiven*". Why does the Lord say that? Because, I think, that the path of Christian witness, in so far as the paralytic is concerned, is just beginning, and he needs, as we all need, to be of good courage.

Now I would like to ask all here as to what experience they have had in relation to that time when, in our great sorrow, we came in the spirit of repentance to the Saviour who loved us so much that He followed us even though we were on the road to eternal punishment? On that road, in grace beyond all compare, He drew near to us in wondrous love. We found ourselves in deep distress, we confessed our sins at His blessed feet and have known something of the way that He freely forgave us. That is the reason why we have sung two hymns together:

*O Lord, what burdens Thou didst bear!
Our load was laid on Thee;*

and

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll.*

They both bear on our individual relations with the Lord as to the forgiveness of our sins.

Now, if you share with me that experience of coming to the Saviour in the spirit of repentance and having the burden of your sins taken away, I would like to ask you if you know what was behind that tremendous intervention?

Do you remember the word: *“the way thou walkest in is ruin before me”* (Numbers 22:32). We were each on the road that led to hell. We were arrested in our course by the Spirit of God and we appreciated the grace of a Saviour who loved us so much that He took all our sins upon Himself. What a Saviour He is! But more than this, He cleared our every liability: our past sins, our present sins and our future sins; they are all gone. No wonder we say, ‘Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul’. But at what a cost! I think of those blessed footsteps that led my Saviour all the way to Calvary. I see that great burden of sin put upon Him, *“Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). What a Saviour! And do you realise that at the time you gave your heart to Jesus the whole matter was ratified in heaven? Perhaps you had not thought much about heaven’s eye being upon you when you came to the Saviour. Well it was! There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over repenting sinners. Thank God for everyone here who has yielded his or her heart to Christ. Take courage from that, young people. Maybe things are cloudy and misty, and I can understand that, for we live in a very difficult age. But the Spirit of God would give you to understand that when we placed our trust in that wondrous Saviour all was well. We are brought into the divine family; we understand something of the glory of the gift of the Spirit; we are clothed with divine righteousness, wondrously blessed for time and eternity. No wonder we say at times, ‘Hallelujah! What a Saviour’.

**We were each
on the road
that led to hell**

Now, what about the dark background to the healing of the paralytic about which we read? Some said of the Lord, “*He blasphemes*”. How awful to say that of Jesus! A point I want to stress is that Christian witness is against a background of the work of the devil. I firmly and soberly believe that the closer we come to the rapture the more the devil is out to rob God. That is a point I think we need quietly to ponder.

“*Thy sins are forgiven*”. Think of what those words meant to the Lord. I think of my Saviour’s blessed footsteps all the way to Calvary. At every step His burden became greater until finally at Calvary He dealt with the whole sin question. In the Saviour’s gracious service, you were in mind for blessing. No matter what happens in the world, all is well because you have given your heart to Jesus. He has taken you by the hand and He will never let you go.

He wants your witness now. He wants you to testify. Have you done that? In my early teens I used to worry my parents. They did not know whether I loved the Lord or not, and for a time, neither did I. Until one day the inroads of death, through a sad tragedy, hit me and I said to myself, ‘Surely not! One day have I got to die?’ It led me to the One who has been into death and broken its power. That is the Saviour who loves you. That is the Saviour who says as you are about to embark from tonight on this course of Christian witness, “*Take courage*”.

There is another thing which ought to be said about the man in Matthew chapter nine. He was willing to be lowered by the four men into the presence of Jesus. Not only is there the gift of the Spirit to help us to understand the mighty resources that are in Christ personally, but there is the love of the brethren. It says of Paul that he saw the brethren and thanked God and took courage (see Acts 28:15). May we all take courage from tonight.

May we all work together in relation to the gospel. Many years ago I spent a considerable amount of time in stretcher-bearing

in very difficult country. If you have a stretcher between the four of you, and you do not work together, you can soon tip the patient off! It is a question of our working together to encourage one another, and particularly those who are younger, that we may all find our feet in this way of Christian witness until the day that Jesus comes.

“Take courage; it is I” (Matthew 14:23-29)

In chapter 14 we read: *“But in the fourth watch of the night he (Jesus) went off to them, walking on the sea”*. The fourth watch – that is between three and six o'clock in the morning. It is just as dawn is beginning to break. The light of another day is already dawning. We are soon going to see the blessed Saviour and we are going to fall at His feet with one loud ‘Hallelujah’. What a Saviour He is.

But you see there is a dark background here yet again; you have the winds and the waves that are blown up by the devil. Job knew something about the One *“Who... treadeth the high waves of the sea” (Job 9:8)*. No matter what the state of the water is, no matter what the storm, Christ is superior to it all. He comes in the fourth watch of the night after a busy day. He had seen a crowd and had compassion on them; He healed their infirm; He fed the thousands and dismissed the crowds in His grace. He goes up the mountain and He prays for them. Now I am fully aware that there is a dispensational setting to this section and I am not thinking so much of that. I am thinking of the invitation that comes to you tonight from a Saviour who is superior to any and every circumstance and He is saying to you: *“Take courage, it is I”*.

**Are you going
to commit your
life to Him?**

Are you going to commit your life to Him? Peter says, *“Lord, if it be thou, command me to come to thee”*. Are you going to place your life in His hands? Are you going to be a witness for Him at school, at home, at work...? is He not worthy of your witness?

He says later on, *“I have been born for this, and for this have I come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth”* (John 18:37). What it cost Him to be a witness! What a witness He was!

Peter says, *“Lord, if it be thou, command me to come to thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. And Peter having descended from the ship, walked upon the waters to go to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand...”* You may wonder however you are going to get on if you are in full unreserved committal to Christ. You are going to prosper in this witness! How many today, thank God, over vast areas of the world are witnessing their love for Christ and souls are being secured for Christ. The witness is growing every day. May it grow from this little time here together tonight. May someone for the first time step into the path of Christian witness, confessing Jesus as Lord, and proving the practical salvation that comes thereby.

Peter got his eye off the Lord and looked at the storm and began to sink. You may well begin to sink; I have often felt like this. What can we do? *“Lord, save me”* is the cry. And the word to those in the boat? *“Be of good courage: it is I”* (Mark 6:50).

They were in the midst of the sea of Galilee, which is seven miles across, and the Saviour comes walking on the sea in those early hours of the morning. What a day it had been. Go through Matthew chapter 14 at your leisure. What unremitting service there was, what mighty healing power and then going on to the mountain to pray. It speaks of how He is on high in glory tonight, a Prince and a Saviour, and He is praying for us. He prays for someone here to be given the strength of faith to move now in relation to good solid Christian witness based on the knowledge that our sins are all forgiven.

May I ask, ‘Are there any secret disciples here?’ What has your witness been like last week? What has mine been like? I

believe that the Spirit of God is making an appeal to us. No one has ever loved us as Christ has loved us. The might of that work in the forgiveness of our every liability I believe is the solid basis upon which committal in relation to Christian witness must be made.

“Peter having descended from the ship, walked upon the waters to go to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught hold of him, and says to him, O thou of little faith”. He takes the sinking Peter by the hand. Are you going to let Him take you by the hand?

“Be of good courage, I have overcome the world” (John 16:32-33).

I read from chapter 16 of John’s gospel to say a brief word about the opposition. We read, *“Behold, the hour is coming, and has come, that ye shall be scattered, each to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. These things I have spoken to you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world”*. I go in mind back to the scene of the temptation. I think of the devil leading my Saviour to a very high mountain and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. My Saviour would have none of it. He falls back on the Scripture, Matthew 4: 8, 9, and 10. Later He says, *“The ruler of this world comes, and in me he has nothing (John 14:30)*. Again we are told that His dying is to redeem us *“out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father (Galatians 1:4)*. Separation from the world is a fiat of divine love. We do not want to become monastic but we need to be separate.

Bur *“be of good courage”* He says, *“I have overcome the world”*. I remember a beloved brother giving an address at Wanstead some years ago. Speaking of the need to have deliverance from the world he referred to Joshua and the walking around

Jericho. He said, 'Young people, understand this, the only way to overcome the world is to keep out of it!' That is what they did in Joshua's day; they kept out of it. The moment of triumph came and the wall fell down flat. Rahab was saved as we know. But I commend it to you, that the only way to overcome the world is to keep out of it. That is good advice.

One thing that has hindered a lively, vibrant confession of the name of the Saviour is the sad history that attaches to us. But we have got to get over that! It is no good keeping on about it. We have had the days of sorrow. In some ways they continue still. But we must not be overawed by sorrow. We must enquire, Why the sorrow? Learn the reasons that we are where we are. The Spirit of God, I believe, would encourage us.

Surely you will commit, or recommit, yourself to Him tonight? Unreservedly confess His blessed name and know what it is to understand that all power has been given to Him in heaven and upon earth. What a Saviour! Let us go forth in the light of that power. Let there be increasing power with our spiritual witness. There is nothing like a good, vibrant witness attached to our localities to keep and preserve the young. It is very much needed just now.

"Be strong and courageous" (Deuteronomy 31:7-8)

We are told that Joshua as a young man "*departed not from within the tent*" of meeting (Exodus 33:11). In the second book of Kings we read of another young man (Elisha) who was with Elijah the prophet. The devil was after Elisha and tried hard to get him. Eventually the Syrians besieged the city of Dothan where Elisha was. In the morning Elisha's servant went out and found the whole city surrounded. 'Alas!' he cried, 'what ever are we going to do?' What did Elisha do? He prayed for the young man's eyes to be opened so that he might see. What did he see? "*Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha (2 Kings 6:17)*". What did Elisha say? "*Fear not, for they that are with us are more than*

they that are with them". All the resources of heaven were with Elisha. Christian companies get small at times. People get a bit discouraged. Nevertheless we are all to take courage and we are to understand that what has been secured for God is going through in His grace until the end.

Now this exhortation to "*be strong and courageous*" is addressed to Joshua. He is about to take the people into the Promised Land. What is the "land" for us? The land is the sphere into which Jesus has gone. In other words, the land is Christ glorified. The Saviour who has loved me is now crowned with the highest glory and He is there on my behalf. What a glorious, precious Saviour He is!

Joshua was a man well qualified to take the people into the land because he had been there himself. From the valley of Eshcol he knew something of the fruits of the land (see Numbers 13). He wants others to come into it. God says to him: "*Be strong and courageous, fear them not*". Joshua represents a spiritual lead. Those of us who are older ought to be more concerned to give a spiritual lead in relation to the glory of the land. So the word to him is: "*Be strong and courageous, for thou must go with this people into the land which Jehovah hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And Jehovah, he it is that goeth before thee: he will be with thee; he will not leave thee, nor forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed*". What more could you ask? What a promise! Oh, to be unreservedly committed to the One who will see us right the way through.

***"...be of good courage, for there shall be no loss at all of life"
(Acts 27:22-26)***

In Acts 27 we find a picture of the breakdown of the church publicly. How sad. And yet, we are still to be witnesses of what has been set up at the beginning in all its glorious power. There is a need constantly to look back at Pentecost and see the church there as one glorious whole, and to take our cue from it.

The going had been hard for Paul on the boat; the storms had been violent. Our path has not been an easy road, has it? Many have been the disappointments that I have had, and I expect you have had. The word here is, *“I exhort you to be of good courage”*, and then again, *“Wherefore be of good courage, men, for I believe God”*. Do we all believe Him? Believe Him in this sense that we are unreservedly prepared to commit our lives to God and to be here for His pleasure and for His praise? Those of us who are older sorrow many a time at the legacy we are leaving behind us due to our own unfaithfulness. We have had to deal with this; we have had to present ourselves before the Lord humbled as to it. But we need to go back to the ancient paths and not depart from them. Maintain a witness to the line of truth that has come to us; maintain a witness that is patterned after Christ’s own glorious committal. *“Be of good courage”* was the word to Paul and through Paul to those on the boat. Soon all will get safe to land. It will not be long, brethren, before we are all there.

May the Spirit of God help us then to understand that in these dark and difficult days there is to be a witness that represents the heart and love of God Himself. A witness in us all – in one sense a corporate witness in relation to the setting up of things in our localities to which the Lord can be pleased and will be pleased to add. We need additions.

I want you to look with me as we close at the second epistle to the Corinthians chapter 1: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassions, and God of all encouragement; who encourages us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to encourage those who are in any tribulation whatever, through the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged of God”* (v.3). I think that must be our prayer towards the close of our time together.

We all need encouraging. We want the encouragement of this time together to be diffused amongst us. God is the *“God of all*

encouragement". I love that reference. Paul says in that great resurrection chapter, "So encourage one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18). What is that great line of encouragement? That at any minute now we will see our Saviour face to face!

What will it be like when on the cloud we see that blessed Saviour of ours? We have been honoured to be a little witness for Him while here and we shall see Him there in all His glory. What will the praise be like? It will be so vast that I do not think that the church family will be able to contain it; it will flow out throughout the universe! We, with one loud Hallelujah, will fall down at His blessed feet.

May the Spirit of God then encourage us and may we each and all be richly blessed. But let us understand this, that I believe the basis of our spiritual life is this great transaction that we had when, in all our need, we proved the gracious forgiving spirit of a wonderful forgiving Saviour, when we confessed our sins, were relieved of every liability before God and brought into the sunshine of His presence by One who will never leave us or forsake us. I believe then that this word that we have just read in 2 Corinthians 1 is a suited end to our time together: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassions, and God of all encouragement*". May our hearts all together well up to bless Him, for His name's sake.

Ron Gregory

An address at Croydon, 11th May 1996.

This article was selected for reprinting from "Living Water" No 18 by Louisa Painter.

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.

Poetry Selection

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE LORD

*Blest Lord, enthroned on high
We see Thee glorified –
In Thee by grace brought nigh,
Who for our sins hast died –
Remembering Thee, we give Thee praise,
To Thee our grateful hearts we raise.*

*We think of that dark hour
When judgment broke on Thee,
When man, by Satan's power,
Expressed his enmity;
When God's right hand in judgment fell
Upon the Son He loved so well.*

*We hear Thee, Saviour, say,
'This do, remember Me';
Till shines that cloudless day,
We do remember Thee –
Look back on all Thy sorrow here,
And wait Thy coming, now so near.*

George W. Fraser 1840 – 1896

Testimony Section

ADONIRAM JUDSON – A MAN WITH A MISSION FOR BURMA

On the 13th July 1813 Adoniram Judson and his wife Anne sailed into Rangoon. It had been an incredible journey. They left Salem, Massachusetts in February 1812 and had first gone to Calcutta, but they were ordered out of India by the East India Company who were opposed to missionaries. Accordingly they set off for Burma, calling at Mauritius on the way. During the journey their first child, born on board ship, died.

Judson had been brought up in a Christian household but at university he became an atheist through his friendship with Jacob Eames. Telling his father that he did not need the ‘shallow comfort of religion to keep him strong’, he left home for New York. A few weeks later, fleeing from his dissolute companions in New York, he put up at a country inn. The man in the next room was desperately ill and all night Adoniram heard cries and footsteps. Despite himself, Judson began to think, ‘What will happen if the man dies?’ ‘Is he prepared?’ ‘Is he a Christian?’ He tried to put these thoughts out of his mind by remembering what Jacob Eames would say about them. Imagine his shock therefore when making enquiry in the morning about the man in the next room he discovered not only that he had died but that it was his friend Jacob Eames! Thoroughly shaken, because he had a sense that through Eames’ death God was warning him, Judson returned home and entered a theological college. He was still not a Christian but as he studied the scriptures gradually his doubts disappeared and on 2nd December 1808 he committed himself to Christ.

After his conversion, he read two books: “The Star in the East” about the gospel in India and a more secular book about Burma, “Embassy to Ava”. These books made him decide to commit himself to Christian service in the east, specially leaning towards Burma. It was a bold choice since Burma was not a welcoming

country to foreigners. He was so convinced of this call that he turned down the offer of a teaching post at his old university and an even more prestigious offer of a Boston church. One of the early Burmese converts said of Judson that he was drawn to Burma, "not by trade but to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal God".

Arriving in Rangoon in July 1813, the Judsons had no knowledge of Burmese and learning was difficult since there was no defined grammar nor any teachers who knew English. Judson set about gaining a vocabulary by the painfully slow process of pointing to objects and listening to the Burmese word for that object. It was just as well that he had a natural gift for languages – when he was twelve he had mastered Greek. It took him three years to learn enough to write his own Burmese grammar and in 1816 he wrote his first Burmese tract, "A view of the Christian religion"; following this with a translation of Matthew's gospel. The difficulties were enormous. Burma was (and is) predominately Buddhist and Buddhists believe that each person passes through many cycles of life in different bodies – as a dog, or cat or even as an insect. Consequently, the language contained very few religious words. Judson wrote, "they have no idea of a God who is eternal – without beginning or end".

He began to preach in Rangoon using a traditional Burmese Zayat. A zayat was a place where teachers taught their pupils, where travellers might rest, or where people might just come together to talk. Judson sat cross-legged, as was normal for a teacher in Burma, facing the road and reading the scriptures out loud to passers-by. This certainly attracted attention and there were several enquiries. It also meant that it was easy for government spies to check out what was going on.

On 17th June 1819 Maung Nau, the first person to turn from Buddhism to Christ, was baptised. He wrote an interesting letter to Judson saying, 'I believe that the divine Son, Jesus Christ, suffered death in the place of men, to atone for their sins. Like a heavy laden man, I feel my sins are very many.' He continued

that he deserved punishment for his sins but that he was taking refuge in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other conversions followed and a year later there were ten Christians gathered in Rangoon. Judson wrote in his diary: 'It seems almost too much to believe that God has begun to manifest His grace to the Burmans'. Opposition arose almost at once with threats from senior Buddhists and from the government. An appeal made by Judson to the King, to be allowed to preach, was brushed aside. A Bible presented to him was dismissed with the words, 'In regard to your sacred books his Majesty has no use for them – take them away!'

In 1820 a medical doctor joined Judson in Rangoon. His skill with removal of cataracts soon brought him to the attention of the king and he was summoned to Ava, the capital, in 1822. Judson went with him to act as interpreter. They were well received and it was during this visit that the king invited Judson to preach in the royal palace. However he had not spoken for long before the king interrupted him by asking what he thought of Buddha! Judson was, however, given permission to set up a mission in Ava. Sadly, before this could happen, the Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826) broke out. This had been provoked by a series of raids by both sides around the Indian border.

Judson was wrongly suspected of being in the pay of the British government. In fact the money coming to him from England and the USA were donations in support of his Christian work. He was arrested and his house was ransacked. If it had not been for the quick thinking of his wife, years of work on the Burmese Bible could have been destroyed. The translation was saved but Judson had to spend the next twenty-one months in horrifying conditions in a Burmese prison.

Eventually he was released and got back to Rangoon in March 1826, only to find that most of the Christians he had left there had fled. With the four Christians that remained he went to Amherst, near Moulmein – at that time part of British territory. Leaving his family in Amherst he went back to Ava as translator

for a commercial treaty. While he was away his wife, Anne, died, lonely and exhausted. She was thirty-seven. Something of her deep loneliness and also her submission are shown in what were almost her last words: 'The teacher is long in coming and the new missionaries are long in coming. I must die alone and leave my little one. But as it is the will of God, I rest in His will.'

In November Judson in Ava received a note which told him bluntly, 'Mrs Judson is no more'. The news almost overwhelmed him. He reacted by digging a grave for himself near where Anne was buried and destroying some of his translations of Burmese literature. Eventually he recovered and built another zayat at Moulmein and began to preach. Gradually interest began to grow. Then news began to filter through of a work of God going on in Rangoon through a native preacher. Judson felt that he must go back to Rangoon and during the great Buddhist festival of Shive Dagon in February 1831 some 16,000 tracts were distributed. Many approached the mission with questions such as, 'How can we escape from eternal punishment' and also asking for 'writings that tell of Jesus Christ'.

Alongside his preaching, Judson worked tirelessly on his translation of the Bible. He worked from the original manuscripts and he was extremely meticulous, going over his work again and again to ensure that the meaning was properly conveyed. The work took him twenty-three years but when it was completed in October 1840 it gave the Burmese people a Bible that stood the test of time. Judson wrote at the end of his task, 'May He make His own inspired word, now complete in the Burman tongue, the grand instrument of filling all Burma with songs of praise to our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen'

In his latter years he suffered from a tubercular infection in the throat which meant that it was often painful for him to speak and at times his voice was just above a whisper. He turned his energies to the production of an English/Burmese dictionary, something which, like the Burmese Bible, proved to be an immense help to those who followed him in seeking to spread the gospel

in Burma. In 1849 the English/Burmese part was done and a start was made on the Burmese/English pages, but for Judson time was running out.

In February 1850 he was seriously ill and the doctors thought that the only hope was for him to get away from the intense heat of Burma and go for a sea voyage. He died on 12th April 1850 and was buried at sea.

Two quotations give us something of the character of the man and his commitment despite all kinds of setbacks and the smallness of the outward results during his lifetime:

- Once, when asked what the future held for the Christian faith in Burma, he replied, 'The future is as bright as the promises of God.'
- Shortly before he embarked on his last voyage he said, 'When Christ calls me home, I shall go with the gladness of a boy bounding out of school, I feel so strong in Christ'.

A voice from the past

THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

"He retaineth not his anger for ever" Micah 7:18

"He (Edom) kept his wrath for ever" Amos 1:11

These two passages of Scripture stand out in striking contrast. The former discloses the heart and attitude of God; the latter refers to Edom and describes what marks our own hearts by nature as away from God.

We would do well to consider, as having through grace been brought to a knowledge of God, how far we are marked by those features which are of God. The features described in these two passages become a constant test to us, whether in the sphere of natural relationships (for Jacob and Esau were brothers), or in our daily business setting, or, even more testing still, in the sphere of Christian fellowship where we are set together as brethren in the Lord. We would all admit that through lack of watchfulness and dependence on the Lord, we often offend one another, and

this, if not quickly judged, causes feelings to arise which soon develop into roots of bitterness, resulting in many being defiled thereby (see Hebrews 12:15). How we need to watch lest we lack the grace of God!

Perhaps we may say that there is just cause for our anger. In one sense this may be said of Esau, for Jacob had acted very badly towards him, as well as deceiving his father, Isaac. But the test is whether anger is to be retained for ever. Rebecca thought that it would be abated (see Genesis 27:44-45), but in spite of Esau's later attitude towards his brother, events prove that the spirit of hatred remained and was developed in his descendants, as Amos states.

In contrast to this, how striking the passage in Micah, where the prophet exclaims: *"Who is a God like unto thee, that forgiveth iniquity?...He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in loving-kindness"*. As we bring this to bear on ourselves, knowing God in this touching way, in His dealings with us in grace on the basis of the death of Christ, how fitting it is that we should be marked by the same spirit in our relations with and towards one another, and be watchful against retaining a grievance or feeling! Rather may we ponder over the beautiful exhortations given by the Apostle Paul in Colossians and Ephesians, where he enjoins his brethren to forbear with one another, and to forgive one another if any should have a complaint against any. But what is the standard of such forgiveness? He says, *"Even as the Christ has forgiven you, so do ye"* (Colossians 3:12-14). Then in his epistle to the Ephesians he writes, *"And be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you"* (Ephesians 4:32). Note the high standard here also. How touching is such an appeal! May these thoughts help us, so that we may be here more truly representative of God in a scene where hatred abounds and where the features of Edom are seen on every hand! May we be therefore *"imitators of God, as beloved children"* (Ephesians 5:1).

G. H. Williams
Tunbridge Wells 1944

A word for today

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

John **1:1-3, 14, 19-37**

John **3:25-31**

John **21:19-23**

Revelation **22:20**

I wish to speak:

- of the Person of Christ,
- of John the Baptist's witness, and,
- of the disciple whom Jesus loved – the one who spoke the words we read last, *"Amen; come, Lord Jesus"*.

The Person of Christ

When reading the gospel of John, whatever part we are reading we should never lose sight of the first three verses, which assert in unequivocal terms the deity of Christ. As we proceed in the gospel, we find Him in a subject position, speaking in the perfection of Manhood displayed in Him as Man; but while we delight in all that is expressed in Him in this way, we must never leave out of our minds those first three verses. The Person we are contemplating in perfect Manhood, in perfect obedience, is there described—*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things received being through Him"*. These are amazing statements. He never began to be; He always was; and all things began to be through Him, and without Him not one thing began to be which exists. This is a sobering thought for all of us, because each one of us here began to be through Him. If we think of this, can we do other than worship Him? These verses state in a most emphatic way that He is the great I AM, the self-existent One. All else owes its existence to Him.

Similarly, in reading the book of Revelation, in whatever way the Lord may be presented, we must never overlook one of His final assertions in the book. He says, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega,*

the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 22:13). The One who said this is the One who said, "*Behold, I come quickly*" (Revelation 22:12). If we hold this truth in our hearts and minds, we shall be preserved worshipfully in relation to the Person of Christ. It will not detract from the reality of His Manhood, because, if such a Person is found in figure as a Man, He must be absolutely perfect in the condition into which He came; He could not be other than absolutely perfect in any position or relationship He might be pleased to enter into. Thus, if the Word became flesh, as He has done; and if He became dead, as He did become; and if He is now living to the ages of ages, as He is; we see in Him Manhood in absolute perfection, without a flaw in any way, and we delight in Him as Man, because all our blessing depends upon His having become flesh, His having become dead, and His living again to the ages of ages. But, while we delight in every feature and every glory which attaches to Him in Manhood, if we remember who He is we shall be preserved from ever bringing Him down in our minds to our level. We shall be preserved from taking advantage of the condition into which He has been pleased to come, (and I do not refer only to His condition when here in humiliation, but also to His glorified condition) to deprive Him of the honour and glory due to Him in Deity. If we fail to give Him the homage which is due to Him in His Person, we shall surely make shipwreck. ·

And so, if we consider the way He is presented to us: "*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us*" (and we have to contemplate His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father), we see sonship in Him in perfection and uniqueness. He is the Son, and He is referred to as, "*the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father*". He has been pleased to raise us up, as it were, to the level of association with Him, but never to the level of equality with Him. Impossible! We are brought into the relation of sons, but never to be on equality with Him. He is the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father. He says at the close of the gospel, "*I ascend*". Who else could say that? "*I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God*

and your God". Marvellous thing that He should say, 'Go to my brethren'. He is pleased to acknowledge us as His brethren. Through divine grace we are men of His order, born of God, born of the Spirit. So He says, 'Go to my brethren'; but let us not bring Him down to our level. He is the Firstborn; He is the One who can say, *"I ascend to my Father"* (that is unique to Himself) *"and your Father, and to my God"* (that is unique to Himself) *"and your God."* If we think of Him as singing praises in the midst of the church, let us not, in our minds, bring Him in any way down to our level. If He is singing praises in the midst of the church, He is doing so as the One who is Head of the church, and Head over all things to it. Even the persons who are types (or illustrations in the Old Testament) like David and Solomon, had their own distinction. It was David who said in the first instance, *"I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee"* (Psalm 22:22). But was there equality between David and the people? Not at all! David was outstanding in kingship, in headship, and in directing the whole service as in the midst of the assembly of Israel; and so was Solomon. Think of Solomon the king! There was no comparison, even in the type, between the king and the assembly of Israel; and we must keep this in our minds and hearts, dear brethren. The Lord is pleased to say, *"I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"* (Hebrews 2:12); but He is not on our level. He is far greater than David, far greater than Solomon; we cannot measure His greatness.

Scripture is careful in referring to His manhood and we need to be careful not to, in any way, limit Him to Manhood. Scripture speaks freely of His Manhood, for Jesus is truly Man. He Himself says, *"but now ye seek to kill me, a man who has spoken the truth to you"* (John 8:40). Scripture also speaks of the Man, Christ Jesus; and yet the Spirit of God guards the truth of His Person with care. The Lord Jesus delights to call Himself the Son of Man, as we know, but in the description in the first chapter of Revelation it says, *"one like the Son of man"*. And so in Ezekiel,

"a likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it" (chapter 1:26), that is, upon the throne. I am not wanting to weaken the truth of the Manhood of Christ at all, but would emphasise that we need care not to bring Him down to a mere human level. Though we are men of His order, through grace, we shall never be more than men. The Lord Jesus is unique because of who He is. We shall never be more than men, the most blessed of men, glorified men, the nearest to Him of all creatures. But let us not take advantage of that nearness to belittle the unique glory which is His or in any way to speak in unseemly familiarity to Him, or about Him.

In Philippians 2 it says, *"Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God"* (it does not say He left that form) *"thought it not robbery to be equal with God"*(Philippians 2:5-6 KJV). So we find in the gospel of John that He made statements which implied equality with God. It was not robbery to do so. In fact He says to His enemies, *"Before Abraham was, I am"* (John 8:58). The passage in Philippians 2 goes on: *"but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; And being found in fashion as a man..."* That is the language which the Spirit of God uses in a passage which guards the truth of His Person. It does not say He became a man, but *"being found in fashion as a man."* We are free to speak of Him as Man because He is the true Man; but, in a passage which is stressing His Person, it says this because His Person never changes. The condition changed; He was here in flesh in humiliation, in a servant's form; He is now in glorious Manhood in another condition but His Person is unchanged all the way through, and that is what we have to hold in our minds and hearts. *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come"* (Hebrews 13:8). I am only telling you what you know but I am reminding you of it to stress that He is unique. However highly we are raised up by God, and ennobled, we are still men, and only men. He is the Man Christ Jesus. But who is He? He is the great I AM. Thank God He has taken His place in the likeness of men in humiliation here, and now as Man in glory!

We can never thank God enough for this; but let us render to Him at all times the honours which are His.

The witness of John

Now I go on to speak of the witness of John. Where we read he is not called 'the Baptist' because this gospel is not stressing his service, but the person. John is brought forward as a sample minister. He becomes an example for us of the features of a true minister of Christ. The Word had become flesh. What was required in a minister of such a One? It is set out in John, a man sent from God. That is the first requirement in the minister—that he should be sent from God. "*The Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" If a man is sent from God, he will have an understanding—in so far as the creature is able—of the greatness of the Person to whom he is bearing witness.

So John, when they come to him, makes nothing of himself at all and that is the point for us in these days. This is not the time to make anything of men, as men. We are reaching the end of the dispensation; John's gospel was written

for the end, and the great thing is to make everything of Christ; that is the point for the moment, so that He may shine in all His radiance before the hearts of the saints. Let no one get in the way to prevent the shining of Christ undimmed upon the saints—"*his countenance as the sun shines in its power*" (Revelation 1:16).

When the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask John who he was, he could have said quite truly, 'I am a man sent from God'; but he did not do that and confessed simply, "*I am not the Christ*". How definite he was about it! There was no hesitation, not a little bit of reserve which would claim just a little recognition, just a little flattery, a little place! Nothing of that kind at all! He stated clearly "*I am not the Christ...*" As if to say, 'Do not look at me; I am only here to point you to Someone else'. "*And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he*

John is brought forward as a sample minister

says, *I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. They said therefore to him, Who art thou?*" The answer literally is, *"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness"*. That is all he was—just a voice. The voice would not get in the way of the glory of Christ's shining; it is persons who get in the way. John was just a voice; and the Lord would help us to be like that — just to be voices to point to Christ, so that there might be nothing to obscure His shining.

So John says, *"I baptise with water. In the midst of you stands, whom ye do not know, he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to unloose."* It was the slave's duty to unloose the sandal and here is a man who said that he was not even worthy to be a slave to the Person to whom he was bearing witness. If we have an appreciation of who Jesus is, that will be the language of our hearts—we are not even worthy to be His slaves! Think of who the Person is! *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh"*. John would have counted it the greatest honour to be allowed to stoop down and unloose the Lord's sandal. That is the spirit in which we are called upon to take up our witness. This is the witness of John; are we going to be like him? We are more favoured than he. We know the Lord better than he did; are we, ourselves, going to obtrude into the picture? Or are we taking the view that we are not even worthy to be His slaves? Thank God, the Lord will accept us as His slaves! But we could not say that we are worthy of it! If we think of the Lord as the great Warrior, coming forth riding upon a white horse, and *"upon his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords"* (*Revelation 19:16*), who would not count it an honour to unloose the thong of His sandal? What a mercy it is that we are allowed to be His slaves! What an honour!

So John's witness goes on. He says, *"Behold the Lamb of God"*. He knows how to present the Person effectively, in a way which would be most calculated to reach the heart and meet the need. *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*

Who else could do that? Who else could do it but the One who is the I AM become flesh for this great sacrificial work? John says, *“He it is of whom I said, A man comes after me who takes a place before me, because he was before me” (John 1:30)*. It says, *“He is before all, and all things subsist together by him. And he is the head of the body, the assembly” (Colossians 1:17-18)*. Who would not worship Him?

Then, *“John bore witness, saying, I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it abode upon Him. And I knew him not; but he who sent me to baptise with water, he said to me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him, he it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.”* Now we have another title; John’s witness is that He is the Son of God, and that He baptises with the Holy Spirit. The Son brings in life for men; but as for Himself, the Spirit descends as a dove and abides upon Him, indicating the Spirit’s delight in this blessed Person. I love to think of what it means to the Father and to the Spirit that the Word has become flesh, and that Jesus is now a glorified Man. I delight to think of what it means to the Father to have One who, in Manhood, is the Son of His love, the delight of His heart, the image of the invisible God, the glorious Centre of God’s universe! And then what it meant to the Spirit, whose affections were so drawn out that He descended and abode upon Him! And then what it still means to the Spirit!

What a witness this was on the part of John! It was a witness to the greatness of the Person and to men coming into the greatest possible blessing through Him; the sin of the world was to be taken away, and men to be baptised with the Holy Spirit!

Then, in chapter 3:28, John says, *“Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but, that I am sent before him. He that has the bride is the bridegroom”*. He brings out another great title—‘the Bridegroom’. How wonderful that a divine Person should, in Manhood, be the Bridegroom! How attractive to our hearts! How did John know about the bride and the Bridegroom? He was let into the secret: he was the friend of the Bridegroom.

John, I suppose, knew about the bride and the Bridegroom before any other human being. He says, *"He that has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices in heart because of the voice of the bridegroom: this my joy then is fulfilled."* His whole heart's satisfaction lay in the fact that the Bridegroom had come, and that He would have the bride. He, the friend of the Bridegroom, had heard His voice; and he says, *"He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all."*

That is the word for us, dear brethren—*"He must increase"*; that is the word for the present. The Lord is about to come, and the Spirit's concern is surely to cause His glory to shine in its radiance before us, and that nothing should obstruct the shining. *"He must increase, but I must decrease."* It is a question of the Christ shining directly into, and capturing, every heart, in view of the rapture, in view of the appearing, in view of the Bridegroom having the bride. Are we going to distract attention from the Bridegroom? John did not do so. Think of obtruding ourselves between the bride and the Bridegroom, and thus robbing the Bridegroom of His portion! Who could think of such a thing? It would be abhorrent to John. How much more so should it be to us, who form part of the bride! We should not only emulate John, but go beyond him in self-effacement, in our concern that the Bridegroom should have the bride without any obstruction or distraction whatever. We want every eye to be fixed on Him, and every heart. *"He must increase."* Let Him increase, dear brethren, until He comes, and fills us for all eternity.

John – the disciple whom Jesus loved

Now, I pass on to the other John, the disciple that Jesus loved. In the book of the Revelation John is spoken of as the bondman, as it says at the beginning of the book, *"he signified it, sending by his angel, to his bondman John."* What a favour it would be if the Lord could speak of anyone of us like that! John wanted no other place; he never calls himself an apostle. I am not suggesting that either Peter or Paul called themselves apostles for any selfish

reason; they certainly did not; they both called themselves bondmen, and put the word bondman in front of apostle when using both; but John never speaks of apostleship; he is just, *"His bondman John"*. And because he was Christ's bondman, he was, in a peculiar way, His friend. The John we have spoken about already was the friend of the Bridegroom; but the John we are speaking about now was, in a special way, the friend of Christ. That is what is implied in what is said in the passage we have read. *"Peter turning round sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned at supper on his breast, and said, Lord, who is it that delivers thee up?"* In chapter 13 it is also said that John was in the bosom of Jesus. That is the place of friendship. Friendship with Divine Persons is a wonderful thing; it is altogether on a different level from friendship as commonly spoken of. Friendship, in the divine sense, means a bosom friend; the secrets of the bosom are confided to such. How is it that the Lord can confide secrets to persons? It is because they are truly bondmen! He can trust His bondmen; He makes them His friends.

So here it says, *"The disciple whom Jesus loved."* That is how John refers to himself. Jesus loved all the disciples, but this one knew His love in a surpassing way. As a matter of time, this was written after the Revelation. John is the bondman in Revelation, but in writing the gospel he says, *"the disciple whom Jesus loved."* He is referred to thus four times. Three times he uses the basic word for love as here, 'the settled disposition'; but on one occasion he uses the love of friendship—"the disciple to whom Jesus was attached". The remarkable thing is that, at the end, Peter turns round and sees this one following. What a remarkable thing! John had been following all the way, and Peter looks round and sees him following. It was so evident that he was following, that Peter took account of it. Here was one who was following. The Lord Jesus had said to Peter, 'Follow me', and Peter looks round and sees someone doing just that. John was setting an example. So Peter says to the Lord, *"Lord, and what of this man? Jesus says to him, If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me"*. Those are the last words of the Lord

recorded in this gospel. That would be the Lord's command to each one of us here—*"Follow thou me"*. Who could think of disobeying a command like this when we think of who He is! Think of those first three verses of the gospel again, and who it is that is saying, *"Follow thou me"*.

Do not look at other people; do not be concerned with what others do; *"Follow thou me"*. But John was already doing so, and the Lord said, *"If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee?"* Now John is the one who abides till the Lord comes—not personally, of course. John has gone to be with the Lord. He abides in his ministry, but that is not the only point here. The main point is that persons of this character of following are going to abide until the Lord comes; and the question is, 'Are we in this matter?' There are going to be persons until the Lord comes who are like John; there will be such until the end. The point for you and me is, are we of this character—persons who assume no official position or place, but love to be His bondmen? Persons who are conscious of His love, disciples whom Jesus loves, follow all the way.

That kind of person will be here when the Lord comes; and the word to each one of us at a time like this is—'Am I going to be among those who are marked by such features?' So, at the end of Revelation, when the Lord speaks His last word, *"He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly"*, there is the bondman, the one who tarries till He comes. He is there and says, *"Amen; come, Lord Jesus"*. That is the language of the heart of every bondman. May it be ours, for His name's sake!

Gerald Cowell

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