

**120**

## ***Living Water***

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# ***Living Water 120***

***(November-December 2013)***

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## Recent Ministry

# THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

### Psalm 23

David wrote this beautiful psalm as a result of his own personal relationship with God as his shepherd. For us today the Lord Jesus is our shepherd and we are His sheep – so dearly bought and so greatly loved. The Lord Jesus said in John 10, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ...and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father”*. What blessed intimacy! He also says, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”*. This psalm speaks of the care of the Lord for those who follow Him through the wilderness of this world. There may be difficulties and sorrows on our way but we have a wonderful Shepherd that has gone before and marked out the path for us. We can count, surely, on His shepherd care.

In Isaiah 40 we read: *“He will feed his flock like a shepherd: he will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom; he will gently lead those that give suck”*(v.40). Think of the tenderness of Jesus. He carries the lambs; He carries you, in His bosom, the place of His love and affection. How great He is, our Shepherd.

The three Psalms here set out the wonderful character of the Shepherd:

- Psalm 22 presents the *“great shepherd”* who has been into death and come out of it triumphantly - *“But the God of peace, who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep...”* (Hebrews 13:20).
- Psalm 23 give us the *“good shepherd”* who leads His own so faithfully at the present time – *“I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are*

*mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father..." (John 10:14-15)*

- Psalm 24 presents the *"chief shepherd"*, looking on to the Millennial day – *"when the chief shepherd is manifested"* (1 Peter 5:4)

What a wonderful blessing it is to know the Lord Jesus as our Shepherd!

*"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want"*. As He is my Shepherd I rejoice in Him and I adore in wonder at the greatness of who He is. He cares for me: *"I shall not want"* for I have a Shepherd who provides all that I need for the pilgrim journey. *"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures"*. He provides a restful scene. It is also a scene of abundance. He feeds me with touches of His love; He makes me lie down in the green pastures that speak of His love. To lie down is complete rest and I am satisfied. He alone can satisfy our souls. A hungry sheep will not lie down in the midst of plenty but once well fed it will lie contentedly. The Lord Jesus would have us to lie down at rest with Himself.

**Our Shepherd knows  
the journey's length**

Then, *"he leadeth me beside still waters"*. Shallow rivers are usually the ones that make most noise, but still waters are quiet and deep. The Lord Jesus gives us to know the deep things of God in peace with Himself. There *"He restoreth my soul"*. There is a journey in view. He restores in view of the paths of righteousness. As my Advocate He brings restoration to my soul if I sin (see 1 John 2:1). But as presented in Psalm 23, restoration is more the thought that He brings back my strength for the journey. An alternative translation is 'revives'; He 'energises', as we might say today. He gives strength for the journey and this is what He provides, I believe, in the green pastures and the still waters. It is Himself.

Our Shepherd knows the journey's length. He knows that I grow weary: my soul needs rest; it needs to be refreshed and restored. My body needs rest, so does my soul. The Lord said, *'Come to me, I will give you rest for your souls'* (Matthew 11:28-29). In Mark's gospel we read that the disciples were sent out in service, two by two. When they came back He said to them, *"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a little"* (Mark 6:31). He had in view, no doubt, the rest for their bodies but I believe they were given rest for their souls as well.

So He leads me *"in paths of righteousness for his name's sake"*. He leads in *"the way everlasting"* (Psalm 139:24) for He is the Way and He is the Life. He leads in right paths *"for His name's sake"*. How wonderful that is. The glory of His name is involved, so He will never leave me nor forsake me (see Hebrews 13:5). What a Shepherd!

This psalm speaks of what is individual and the Lord's desire is that we might know it individually. Yet, as knowing His leading I am led to others. The Scripture speaks of *"where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). So the path leads to blessing, not only individually but with others. Miss Harding's hymn expresses it very well:-

*Thine is the love, Lord, that draws us together,  
Guiding our steps, from the wilderness ways;*

Our Shepherd has fullest blessing in mind for us. We can be confident in the path in which He leads for we have His company. How precious that is since the path may be one of suffering and sorrow. The psalm goes on:- *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil"*. Death has cast a great shadow on this world but the Lord Jesus has been into the reality of death. He has broken its power and He has *"brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings"* (2 Timothy 1:10). He is the *"living one"* who has the *"keys of death and hades"* (Revelation 1:18). So I *"fear no evil"* even in the valley of the shadow of death. It is a place full of sorrow

and troubles but the Lord has robbed it of its terror for those who believe in Him. Many have passed through this valley but what assurance there is that the believer in Jesus does not see death. The Lord Jesus said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If any one shall keep my word, he shall never see death”* (John 8:51). The believer passing from this life does not see death; he sees Jesus.

For us who are left it is still the valley of the shadow: we feel the sorrows but we have His support through that valley, *“thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me”*. We can be victorious even through sorrow, and how real it is. It was real to Jesus; He wept at the grave of Lazarus. We truly know the sorrow of bereavement and the solemnity of death but have comfort in the One who has been into death for us. *“Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me”*. The Lord’s protection and support is sufficient for us.

Then He prepares a feast for us. So I can say, *“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over”*. You will notice that it says “thou” and “me”, “thou” and “me”. It speaks of communion: we feast on His love. We have an example in Acts 16 with Paul and Silas. They had been beaten very badly and put into prison and yet they were praying and *“praising God with singing”*. The Lord Jesus had provided a feast in the presence of their enemies.

*“Thou hast anointed my head with oil”*. How important that is. John, in his epistle, speaks of the unction (or anointing as it could be rendered) that we have from the holy one (see 1 John 2:20). Then in verse 27 John writes: *“the unction which ye have received from him abides in you”*. What wondrous love that we should have the gift of the Spirit, that God’s love should be shed in our hearts so that our hearts are not only full but there is a flow out back to God.

It was the custom in the East that an important guest would be anointed with fragrant oil on coming in to the house. The Lord

had to say to the Pharisee who had invited Him, *"My head with oil thou didst not anoint"* (Luke 7:46). What favour is expressed towards us in being given the gift of the Holy Spirit that our joy might be full and overflowing.

The thought of the cup running over leads to worship and praise. It leads to what is collective because if my cup is running over it is not contained; it is flowing out and I must find others who have the same knowledge of the Shepherd, who love Him and are known as His. How precious it is then to gather to the One who has loved us.

So we have the experience of the Shepherd all the way through, whatever the difficulties, pressures and sorrows. The more I know of this wonderful Shepherd the more I know and appreciate Him and He becomes everything to me. Knowing His tender care and all that it involves, I am not to doubt, but with the psalmist to say, *"Surely, goodness and loving-kindness"* or mercy, *"shall follow me all the days of my life"*. I have tasted that the Lord is good. I know all things work together for good. I have such a Shepherd and His goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life. The more we know Him the more we love Him. The more we know Him the more we love one another and desire to be together to sing His praises. How worthy He is of this.

How precious it is to take our journey in the paths of life following such a Shepherd, One who loves us, knows all about us, knows our weakness and weariness but One who restores our souls and refreshes us with Himself. How glorious He is.

May we grow in appreciation of Him day by day and soon we shall dwell with Him and these heavenly anthems we shall raise together. It is wonderful, then, to say, *"the Lord is my shepherd"*.

May the Lord bless the word.

George Laing

*Aberdeen, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2013*



## THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

**“And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment of artistic work, like the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined byssus shalt thou make it. Square shall it be, doubled; a span the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones—four rows of stones: [one] row, a sardoin, a topaz, and an emerald—the first row; and the second row, a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a diamond; and the third row, an opal, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row, a chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; enclosed in gold shall they be in their settings.**

**And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart, when he goes in to the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually. And thou shalt put into the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, that they may be upon Aaron’s heart when he goeth in before Jehovah; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before Jehovah continually.”**

**Exodus 28:15-21, 29, 30**

In suggesting this scripture I desire to draw attention to the priestly service of the Lord for His own at the present time.

We can look back at His work on the cross, what He accomplished for God there and as a result the blessing that has come to each one of us; what a work it was. We can also look at His entering into death and coming out of it triumphant having broken its power. That is in the past. Then we can look forward to His coming again, the hope of our hearts, and beyond that, to the setting up of His kingdom publicly. What an answer that will be to Calvary’s shame! Yet, what is the occupation of the Lord Jesus at the present time?

I have read in Exodus so we might consider the priestly service of the Lord Jesus in heaven. Aaron, as the high priest of old, sets out a picture of it for us. Not only has the Lord Jesus died for us but He lives for us in heaven. Without His intercessory

service on high, how would any of us prosper in the pathway here?

I was not thinking so much about the detail of this scripture but particularly focussing on the stones on the *“breastplate of judgment”* that the priest carried. Those stones carried the names of the tribes and the thought carries through for us that our names are on the breast and heart of Christ and He will provide His support and succour to us just as it is required. He knows our circumstances; He knows when poor health overtakes us or when bereavement comes to our door. He is able, as having each of us on His breast, to draw near and give sympathy and succour, not only that we may be helped through the trying circumstances but that we may be ready and able to be used by Him in His priestly service Godward.

We read here that these names are *“on his heart ... for a memorial before Jehovah continually”*. It is not that God needs a reminder, but just think of what is on the heart of Christ, in the presence of God—your name, my name! So that we should be encouraged as we walk in the path of testimony here knowing the support that is available for us on high.

We need to draw also on the epistle to the Hebrews to show us what the Lord is as Priest. He was not a priest when He was here on earth, for He was of the tribe of Judah but all the moral qualities of His priesthood were in Him as Man here. Now He lives on high and one of the offices that He fills is that of priesthood. It relates to service Godward and service to us. As filling this office as the Priest on high, He would draw near to us in our need, our infirmities, and our weaknesses. He is not drawing near as far as the matter of sins is concerned; that is settled for ever. But He draws near to help us and to sympathise in the pathway in which we are. So at the end of chapter 4 of Hebrews we read: *“Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help” (Hebrews 4:16)*. Mercy and grace are presented separately there: both are needed.

I wonder if we sufficiently think of what our Saviour is doing for us on high. Do I go through a day and reflect at all on the

**He is *"always living to intercede"*, it is as though that is the only thing occupying Him.**

way that He is serving on high in view of each of us being able to walk here in testimony for Himself?

Hebrews speaks about Christ being able to *"save completely"*. I like that. It starts with: *"He is able to help those that are being tempted"* (Hebrews 2:18), then He is *"able to sympathise with our infirmities"* (Hebrews 4:15), then later we read *"he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God"* (Hebrews 7:25). What a Person He is! And He is there in heaven on our behalf. He bore my sins on Calvary's cross, He went into death and He has come out of it triumphant; now He loves me so much that He is serving on my behalf in glory. It is striking that in the passage in Hebrews chapter 7 it goes on to say that He is *"always living to intercede"*, it is as though that is the only thing occupying Him. The hymn puts it well:-

Wonderful and gracious service,  
Love that bears us all the way  
On Thine arm, until we enter  
On that glorious, endless day!

That is the idea of *"always living to intercede"*. There is not one tear shed, or one sigh unknown to Him.

John, the disciple, was familiar with the breast of Jesus. He would know the warmth of the affection that was there. He also knew the assessment of things from the divine viewpoint. I think, if we transfer that as seeing ourselves on the breastplate of Christ on high, it would give us to feel the import of His service on high on a day to day basis. It is essential in a time of crisis, as it was in John 13, that we know the breast of Jesus by way of support.

We should be comforted, through an appreciation of the Lord's present priestly service, in relation to what scripture calls, "*the present course of things*" (Titus 2:12). The world goes on its way and we all need to be assured that the Lord has not forgotten His people in the course of things here. We live in comparatively comfortable circumstances but there are many believers facing suffering and persecution. His service is towards them in view of their witness being strengthened, in view of them being strengthened physically in the rigours of the suffering and persecution that they face. His service on high is for every believer in Himself and He is concerned that they are maintained and kept in the testimony to the day of presentation.

It is important for us all to be assured that the eye of the Lord is upon all His people and that things are not out of hand. They appear to get out of hand; there is much in the world to cause alarm and distress but the believer needs to have "*full assurance of faith*" (Hebrews 10:22). There is the "*full assurance of hope*" (Hebrews 6:11), too. We all get discouraged but the Lord Jesus is interceding for us. He is living there in the power of an "*indissoluble life*" (Hebrews 7:16). The priesthood of old changed, the priest died, somebody else continued. But in Christ we have One who is "*always living to intercede*". His priestly service continues.

Sometimes the question arises in our minds as to why the Lord does not intervene to stop certain things. Why does He not stop someone getting ill or stop persecution? But we need to see that what overrules everything is God's will. There are lessons to be learned; there is growth to be developed through the difficulties that He allows. We may find it irksome at the time but there is to be a result. The Lord did not promise the disciples an easy time. His prayer for them in John 17 shows that He anticipated them coming into very real difficulties. But, in those circumstances, whatever they were, they would prove His help and support and the help of the Father. It would build us up in our spiritual development. We learn that we cannot

meet things on our own. We need the help of Another and He is *"always living"* — I like that expression—He is *"always living"*. You think of Him; on the one hand it says, *"in that he lives, he lives to God"* (Romans 6:10). What delight God has in Him. But think of His life lived in view of serving us down here.

One of the greatest features of manhood is dependence. We have to learn, as Christians, that we cannot do anything without praying for help. It is in that dependent spirit that the priesthood of Christ is so important. In some ways it is seen in what the Lord says to Simon Peter, *"I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not"* (Luke 22:32). The beseeching of Christ is in view of our overcoming in the trials and difficulties of the way and is intended to bring us to a greater knowledge and appreciation of Himself and what He can do for us.

The Old Testament gives two pictures or patterns of the priesthood of Christ, that of Aaron and that of Melchisedek — both are important. Melchisedek comes into Scripture before Aaron. We are told about him in Genesis 14, then there is a reference to him in Psalm 110 and then the Epistle to the Hebrews brings it fully to light in the Lord Himself. In the old order the priesthood was transferred from one priest to another. But in Christ it is continuous. There is no transfer of it. He is not going to die: He lives on high. Christ holds the priesthood unchangeable according to the order of Melchisedek.

Then, where we read, we have Aaron's priesthood and that speaks of Christ's priestly service as well. So, let us be encouraged as we consider these stones on the *"breastplate of judgment"*, They show that each of us is precious to Christ, each of us means something to Him and each of us cost Him something. He is serving in view of our being kept and maintained. It is one thing for Him to save us from our sins but He would remind us too that He is going to maintain us.

The names are, *"engraved as a seal: every one according to his name"*, they are not going to come off. They are there to stay!

That is just so wonderful. Persons make a name for themselves in the world and these names live for a moment and then they fade. These names on the breastplate will never fade because they are there, sealed, and enclosed in gold. It would remind us of the Lord's word in John 10: *"neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"* (John 10:28 KJV).

This is a breastplate of judgment – not judgment in a judicial sense but in the sense of assessment and discernment. That may be why you get the reference to Urim and Thummim here. Those words mean "Lights" and "Perfections". God's estimate of things and the Lord's estimate of things is according to His own light and perfection. Our discernment often comes well short of that but the Lord's judgment is perfect and we may have to wait to get that. John in the bosom of Christ was referred to earlier and I think if we see ourselves on the breastplate of Christ as in this chapter we will look out on things here and have the Lord's assessment of them.

All twelve stones are equally prominent on the breastplate. It is an aspect of the Lord's service that He does not have any preference toward one or another; everyone is held in equal affection. We are all different from one another but we are all loved by Him. We read in John, *"having loved his own who were in the world, (He) loved them to the end"* (John 13:1). That love extends right to the end.

Alex Mowat

*Extract from a Bible Reading, London, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013*

## **GOD'S STANDARD OF MARRIAGE**

**Genesis 2: 18, 21-24**

**Ephesians 5: 22-33**

**Hebrews 13: 4-6**

I want to speak about God's standard of marriage. Marriage is being assailed on every hand and it is good for us as here today to witness T\_\_ and S\_\_ being united together, to see God's standard in relation to marriage.

In the passage read in Genesis God said "it is not good for man to be alone." It is wonderful that God Himself instituted marriage. He set it on for our blessing. When people disregard God and interfere with it, it brings in confusion. So it is good for us to be reminded of what was from the beginning when marriage was first introduced.

**The love that the Lord Jesus had for His church led Him to go into death**

God could see that man needed a helpmate and He provided Adam with Eve. It is remarkable, what God did here. He "*caused a deep sleep to fall upon Man*", and Eve, the woman, was built, taken out of man. This was God's handiwork, and it was for the blessing of His creature. In this passage of Scripture, we see the first type, or picture of Christ and the church since the deep sleep of Adam speaks to us of the death of Christ. The assembly (or church) has been taken out of Christ- it is the result of his death - and it is for His pleasure and glory. The woman was taken out of the man and it was for the blessing of man. So when the woman was brought to the man he could say, "*This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: this shall be called Woman, because this was taken out of a man*", and it says, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife*". T\_\_ has today set up a new household. He has left his father and his mother and he is to be united to his wife, "*and they shall become one flesh*". This is what God has in mind.

I read in Ephesians because there we have God's standard for Christian marriage. The standard is depicted for us as the love that the Lord Jesus has shown for His church. What a standard it is! The love that the Lord Jesus had for His church led Him to go into death. He has given everything that He might have His church, His bride for Himself. Think of the depths and the greatness of the love of Jesus, how far that love has gone that He might secure the assembly for Himself. He has given everything for it. What a standard we have before us.

The apostle Paul says here: *“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for a husband is head of the wife”*. This is God’s standard. It may be assailed, it may be refused, but this is God’s standard. It says, *“for a husband is head of the wife, as also the Christ is head of the assembly”*. So the wife is to subject herself to the husband. It is what the Lord desires as pleasing to Him.

Then Paul goes on to speak to husbands: *“Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly”*. What a standard! Who of us can say that we love up to that standard? That is God’s standard written in His word. T\_\_\_ has taken up this relationship and this is the standard of love that should be before him, the love that Christ had for His church, the love of devotion and care. And for S\_\_\_ it says that she is to be subject to her husband in everything. That is a test for all wives, I am sure, but it is what the Scripture says. Just as the love that Christ has displayed for His church is a challenge to the husband, so it is a challenge for the wife to be subject to her husband. But I would commend it as God’s way of blessing.

God desires to bless you, to bless husbands and wives and this is the standard that He has set before each one of us, and we need to review how we stand today. What can those of us who are husbands say about our love for our wives and what can those who are wives say about being subject to their husbands? God would bring His standard before us and may that standard be acceptable in our hearts.

At the end of the passage read it says, *“Because of this”*, and it goes right back to the beginning, back to Genesis, *“a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly”*. Soon He will have His bride for Himself eternally.

I trust that every one knows what it is to belong to the Lord Jesus. He has given Himself for His church but He has died for us individually too. Each of us needs to come into a relationship



with the Lord Jesus. Can we each say for ourselves that He is our Saviour; that we know that He has died to save us from our sins? Each of us needs a Saviour and the Lord Jesus has died for us and we each need to accept Him personally as our Saviour. May each of us see where we stand before God and realise that the love of Christ is sufficient for us all.

Finally I read in Hebrews and here we have again the standard of Christian marriage. *"Let marriage be held every way in honour"*. What a testimony it is in these days, when marriage is held in honour. May we all have this before us as a testimony to those around us, a testimony to the world we are passing through as Christians devoted to the Lord Jesus, that our marriages are held in honour in every way.

There are a few practical points in this scripture which we do well to take account of. *"Let your conversation be without love of money, satisfied with your present circumstances"*. It is a great thing in marriage, in life, to know what it is to be satisfied, to be content. As we have already mentioned to T\_\_ and S\_\_ today, as they commit themselves to the Lord, that He will see them through. He will watch over them in the exigencies of life. Problems may come your way but with the Lord before you, the Lord as the centre of your marriage, He will see you through. As the writer of the Hebrews quotes here, *"I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee"*.

May you commit your lives and your hearts to Christ today and know what it is to have Him as the object of your marriage and to know what it is in every matter to turn to the Lord.

I commend this to us, that we may we keep to God's standard for His name's sake.

Mike Bond,

*Word at a marriage, Worthing, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2013.*

## Poetry Selection

### LIGHT IS SOWN FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

**“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart” Psalm 97:11.**

*Soon to spring up and lighten  
The pilgrim’s chequered way,  
Lighting the darkest places,  
Gilding the brightest day;  
Many a rugged pathway  
And many a desert bare,  
But never a spot where faith may not  
See gleams of God’s light so fair;  
For “Light is sown for the righteous”  
And gladness everywhere.*

*Springing behind the troubles  
Hidden beneath the woes  
Sympathy, light and comfort  
Only the weeper knows;  
Often a sunny morning  
After a night of grief,  
Often the flowers of fair spring hours  
Follow the withered leaf,  
Light is sown for the mourners  
And darkness must be brief.*

*“Father of lights”, He sows it  
Over the dark sad land:  
“Children of light”, we reap it,  
Fruit of His heart and hand  
Sown long before to await us,  
It shines on our passage through,  
To show His way through each cloudy  
day  
Through the valleys of darkness too,  
Where light is sown for the chastened,  
And gladness springs anew.*

*Ever the contrite find it  
Sown at the guilty place;  
Even the shameful failure  
Opens the depths of grace;  
Ever is human blackness  
Foil for His blessed white,  
Exhaustless grace finds the sin-stained  
place  
Soil for its own great light,  
For light is sown for the erring,  
Stars in the darkest night.*

*Radiant the eyes that see it  
Brightening earth's cloudy day,  
Willing the hearts that follow,  
Drawn by each blessed ray,  
To where the beams that meet us  
Daily along the road  
Shine from His face who lights the place  
Where we shall dwell with God.  
Where light is sown for the righteous  
And gladness everywhere.*

Ora Rowan (1837-1882)

## **Testimony Section**

### **MY TESTIMONY**

**“But God commendeth his love towards us, whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).**

**“Why despises thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Romans 2:4).**

**“The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27).**

It says on the Agenda that there is to be a testimony. Well, if I am a testimony to anything it is to the goodness and mercy of God. When I look back over my life, I think of the goodness and mercy of God that led me to repentance.

When I was a few months old, the village where I was born was bombed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The bomb landed just a few yards from the house that I was in and it was partially destroyed, but God in His mercy preserved me. I was in the upstairs room in a cot and my folk thought I had died but I was covered in plasterboard in the cot.

As I grew up, just like any other young lad, I did things I should

not have done. I once showed my family where I had fallen over a forty foot cliff and survived without a scratch. I have been overboard as a fisherman. Surely if I am a testimony to anything it is to the goodness of God.

In one vessel I was in, with a number of other lads in our late teens, we were nearly shipwrecked. There was another lad with me on the boat; we were about the same age and used to go to gospel services together, though he had never accepted Christ as his Saviour. God used that near shipwreck to bring him to Christ. A large wave of water – what fishermen call a lump of water – swept him from one end of the boat to the other. When we carried him aft he was lying there bleeding, and we said to him, ‘David, if you had been washed overboard, where would you have been?’

He said, ‘When I saw that sea coming down, I turned to the Lord’.

In my own life I can remember how God spoke to me. It is a principle with God: *“He speaks once, yea twice and man perceives him not” (Job 33:14)*. God is infinitely fair. I can look back on my life and remember times when God spoke to me. I remember distinctly in one preaching, the man who was speaking referred to that Scripture where an invitation is given to a supper and all those invited make excuses (see Luke 14:18). One said that he had married a wife and could not come, and another that he had bought land and must go to see it. There were three invitations and they were all turned down, and I remember thinking, ‘God has spoken twice, will He speak to me again?’ But I still went on my own way, thinking that I was as good as anyone else.

I read a story recently about a pilot who took off from an airport in the USA and as he was flying he ran into a storm. He had not checked his navigational instruments before he set off and he crashed into a mountain and was killed. When they looked in the cockpit he had written two words: ‘Off course’. That is what you are as a sinner before God. That is what I was as a sinner. Even though I was brought up in a household where my mum and dad preached to me, and I went to gospel services, I knew I

had not committed myself to Christ. I had not received my passport to glory. You need a UK Passport if you are going to leave the country. When you put your faith in Christ, when you have your sins washed away in His precious blood, you have a passport to glory. My UK Passport runs for ten years and then I have to renew it, but when you put your faith in Jesus you are eternally secure. That is the appeal in the gospel tonight.

That is part of my testimony and I can remember as though it was yesterday, having been away on a fishing trip. I was walking down the road from the Square and as I went into one of the shops a Christian lady said, 'Did you know that so and so has been saved?' She was speaking of one of my friends from the boat. He had not been to sea that week and in the week he had been off he was saved. It went right home to me. It was an arrow from God – His convicting power, His grace, His long-suffering; He spoke to me and I knew that I had to make a commitment to Christ – I knew. That night I fought it off; I turned my back, but I knew that God was speaking to me once, yea twice and if I did not accept that invitation, would God give me another one? He is infinitely fair and later that night I settled the question. I remember I said to my Mother, 'I have given my heart to Jesus'. I felt the load lifted from me – because sin is a load – what a load it is!

We are all sinners. That is what the Scriptures say: *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"*, but God commends His love towards us. He commends it since Jesus has died for us but the Saviour we present is a living Saviour. It is not a dead Christ – it is a living Christ! He has been into death but He lives. He is in glory and He lives and that is the Person I commend to you tonight. God commends His love – the God who is your refuge.

I forgot to mention earlier, when I was speaking about what happened when our house was bombed, in that room where I was as a little baby there was a text on the wall - and that is why I read that verse in Deuteronomy, *"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"*. That text hung on the

bedroom wall and it remained there; it never came down. The plasterboard and everything else came down but that text remained – *“The eternal God is thy refuge”*. That is the God I present to you

**It is a grand thing  
to be a Christian**

tonight – the God who saved me from my sins and who can save you because the blood of Jesus is able to meet the need of every sinner. I remember the night when my load of sin, my sins were taken away; they were washed away in the precious blood of Jesus. I commend Him to you; He is worthy of your trust.

I remember being in Aberdeen in a hotel for lunch; there was a man there, a minister of the gospel. Willie Still was his name; he has gone to be with his Master now but he was sitting at a table and I went across to him and said, ‘I would like to thank you for the many articles you contribute to the Press and Journal’ (a local newspaper). I said ‘I am a Christian and I admire the way you speak the truth in those articles’. He said, ‘How did you know me?’ I told him I had read his book and seen his photograph in the book. He was eighty years old and it was not long after we met that the Lord took him, but he laid his hand on my arm and said, ‘It is a grand thing to be a Christian’. That is what I would like to commend to you. I would like to tell you that it is a grand thing to be a Christian, to be a lover of the Lord Jesus. It is not that we are without faults and failings. We will never be perfect here, but the work of God is perfect, the work of Jesus is perfect.

You have nothing to do but accept it in faith because it is a completed work. When Jesus went to the cross, when He died, when He shed His precious blood, He completed an eternal redemption and God accepted the completed work of Jesus. The God of creation, God in whose hand our breath is, in whom we live and move and have our being, He accepted that finished work and every sinner who trusts in Jesus is accepted before God. Dear friends, God is satisfied with the work of Jesus. If you are a sinner in your sins tonight, then I would say to you, you can reach out your hand and put your faith in the precious blood of Jesus – He hears the weakest cry. There is no one too bad for

God, no matter how many sins you have. If we were to write all our sins up and down this wall perhaps this room would not contain them, but the glory of the gospel is that Jesus can save the vilest sinner.

Many of us were fishermen and one of the most vital things in a fishing boat is the anchor; Jesus is my anchor and I would like to ask each one of you tonight if you have an anchor for your soul. He will keep you secure for time and eternity.

William Mair

*A testimony given at Aberchirder, Scotland, 2005*

*Our brother was taken to be with the Lord on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2009*

*This is an edited extract from "A Fisherman's Last Voyage" by Graham Mair. Published by Chapter Two, Fountain House, Conduit Mews, London SE18 7AP, and reproduced here with permission.*

## **A LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER**

*In July the British Parliament, to its shame, passed a Bill setting aside the Biblical concept of marriage. While the Bill was being considered by the House of Commons I wrote to the Prime Minister to express my concern. Ed.*

*"The Eagles", Headcorn Road, Staplehurst, TN12 0BU*

*Tel: 01580 892843 E-mail: mlemonspt@tiscali.co.uk*

25<sup>th</sup> May 2013

The Rt. Hon. David Cameron, M.P., Prime Minister

Dear Mr Cameron,

Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill

You have shown a great deal of personal commitment in your campaign to change the law on marriage but I believe you are misguided to go ahead with this.

First, marriage was instituted by God at the beginning as a relationship between a man and a woman. We see this not only in Genesis but in what our Lord said: *"he that made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife:*

*and they twain shall be one flesh*" (Matthew 19:4 & 5). The seriousness of seeking to redefine marriage to include gay relationships is not only that it departs from God's intention for human beings from the beginning, but marriage is symbolical of the relationship between Christ and His church. Paul when writing to the Ephesians about marriage goes on to say: *"but I speak concerning Christ and the church"* (Ephesians 5:32). Also, it is no accident that when the apostle John writes about Christ and the church he uses the imagery of *"the bride, the Lamb's wife"* (Revelation 21:9).

Secondly, your authority as Prime Minister comes from God. Paul, in establishing the principle of Christian obedience to authorities, states, *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."* (Romans 13:1). Even Pilate was reminded by our Lord that his authority as Roman Governor came from God. [*"Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above"* (John 19:11)]. Pilate spectacularly misused his God-given power in condemning Christ to death. Your authority also comes from God and you are responsible to Him as to how you use it. I find it very sad that you are using your authority to promote something that is so contrary to God.

Through a little voluntary work that I do, I have some contact with Christians living in African countries within the Commonwealth. They often seem to look to the UK as setting a standard in Christian matters. This Bill, which sets aside the Christian and Biblical concept of marriage, betrays that trust and makes me feel ashamed.

In view of the above you will not be surprised when I appeal to you not to go ahead with this legislation. Even after the recent Parliamentary votes, I, along with many other Christians, am praying that this Bill might be frustrated. At the same time we will continue to pray for you and your government in general – praying *"for kings and for all that are in authority"* (1 Timothy 2:2) recognising that your authority is from God.

Yours sincerely,



## A voice from the past

### THE FIGHT OF FAITH

**“Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God” Psalm 42:11**

**“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”**

**Romans 8:18**

Believers, we are assured, may be in great distress; but though much perplexed and often discouraged they are secretly held up by faith, and become conquerors. If God had commanded us to pray and hope only until a certain time, and His help had failed to come within that time, we might justly despond. But since He requires us to hope even to the end, or the last moment of life, this should keep us from impatience and despair; for though He should tarry even to the end, believers will certainly find Him then to be faithful to His promise. He may try our faith and patience to the uttermost, but He cannot break His own word. Dear Lord, whatever load Thou art pleased to lay upon me, enable me to wait, in faith and prayer, till the joyful hour of deliverance come.

*And can my vile ungrateful heart      Let Thy enlivening, healing voice,  
Still harbour black distrust and fear?      The kind assurance of Thy love,  
O bid these heavy clouds depart,      Relieve my heart, revive my joys  
Bright Sun of Righteousness, appear.      And all my sins and fears remove.*

Carl Heinrich von Bogatsky (1690-1774)

### From “Living Water” No 20

### THE DIVINE IDEAL OF MARRIAGE

**1 Corinthians 7:32-34**

**Ephesians 5:22-30**

**Proverbs 31:10-12, 23, 28-29**

It is evident that the divine ideal of marriage is not presented in 1 Corinthians 7. We can understand that it could not be on

account of the carnal state of the company to which the apostle was writing. We are however privileged to have the judgement of a spiritual man – the apostle – as to the way that marriage is looked at naturally. Naturally the husband seeks to please the wife and the wife seeks to please her husband, but the apostle shows us that if we are on that line it will lead to worldliness and destroy spirituality. We do well to take note of the danger.

My thought at this time is to call attention to the great contrast when we have the divine ideal of marriage before us. For that we must turn to Ephesians and Proverbs. Ephesians 5 gives the ideal husband, that is Christ, and Proverbs 31 gives us in a figurative way the ideal wife, that is the church. We find that instead of marriage being a disadvantage and full of peril that leads to worldliness and not giving the Lord His rights, if it is taken up spiritually the husband and wife become mutually the greatest advantage to one another. They do not seek to please one another, but seek the true spiritual advantage of one another. There is an immense difference between the two ideas.

In Ephesians 5 we get nothing about the activities of the wife; the chapter is full of the activities of Christ as the Head. In His service of love He does everything for the advantage of His wife. That is the model for every Christian husband. Christ seeks to do everything for the spiritual advantage of that company which He loves and for which He gave Himself.

When we turn to the model wife in Proverbs 31 we find that her activities are for the advantage of her husband. She is not on the low level of merely pleasing him, but on the high level of seeking his advantage in every possible way.

In Ephesians the service of Christ to the church requires subjection, not exactly to authority but to the service of love. As the church is subject to the service of Christ's love she takes on the qualities of the woman of worth in Proverbs. She is passive in Ephesians, but the subject woman of Ephesians 5 becomes the active wife of Proverbs 31. She ministers to the

spiritual advantage of her husband. That is the ideal marriage. We must realise the different level of 1 Corinthians 7 and come to the platform of that of which Christ and the church are models. Christ is everything for the church and the church is everything for Christ. In the working out of it everything that contributes to the advantage of the other is sought. Whatever Christ does it is for the advantage of the church and whatever the church does it is for the advantage of Christ. Think of the gain to Christ in having such a wife as the church, one who cares for and seeks His interests in every way! That is the model our beloved brother and sister should pursue – the husband seeking to express the love of Christ to his wife and she brought into subjection to that love. Each believing husband should be set that his wife should have the features of the church, and each believing wife should receive impressions and become active for the advantage of her husband.

I would press this on our brother and sister that it should be the keynote of their life to minister to the spiritual advantage of one another. Then all would work out happily, “*the heart of her husband confideth in her...She doeth him good and not evil all the days of her life... Her husband is known in the gates*” (Proverbs 31:11-23). Every believing wife should be filled with the holy desire that her husband should be known in the church in spiritual worth. Then instead of marriage being a draw-back and leading to the Lord not having His place, all the activities of the husband and wife would work together so that there would be great advantage and gain. The husband and wife would be better off in their relationship than out of it. May the Lord put our beloved brother and sister on this lofty platform! We should covet and cherish the divine ideal in these relationships. May the Lord help us!

C. A. Coates (1862-1945)

*Word given at a marriage.*

*This article is reprinted from “Living Water” No 20.*

*God willing, in issue No 121 there will be a reprint from "Living Water No 21 selected by Keith Wickens.*

***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

### DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD

Christians who in their daily life are called upon to have much contact with those who are not believers often feel the danger of adopting the outlook and modes of thought of the world and society at large, to the loss of that which is distinctively Christian.

In the world around us numbers of persons would hardly pretend to be in any living sense of the word Christians, that is, disciples of Christ, professing obedience to Him and recognising His interests. Unless we cherish our calling as Christians we very easily adopt the world's standards and values. In so doing we give up our birthright; we forget that we belong to a *"holy nation"* (*Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9*).

Our valuation of many things will largely depend on how we think of ourselves and our calling. If we think of ourselves just as ordinary men, *"men of the world, which have their portion in this life"* (*Psalms 27:14*), we shall naturally adopt the world's thoughts, and there is an end of it, so far as concerns anything of Christ in our lives. God only will know whether we are really His: we shall hardly know ourselves.

It may be answered that we should not think of ourselves at all. But this would be going too far. It is most true, and of great practical importance, that we should be free of ourselves, free from any pharisaic spirit, free from any unhealthy self-consciousness, that we should have God before us and not ourselves: but it is also true that if God has called us to be His sons, if we are, in the opening words of some of the epistles, *"saints by calling"* (*see 1 Corinthians 1:2*), we have no right to

ignore this calling. It would be no true humility for the sons of a king to be unmindful of their royal birth.

The first question, therefore, is whether we frankly take account of ourselves – and by ourselves I mean all believers - as “saints” - the called of God. Of course the world will not think of us in this way but if the Christian is true to his calling he will be such that the world’s categories will not cover him; there will be something about him that the world will not understand: it will indeed misunderstand him, for it will put him into one of its own categories, which at best can only cover what is ‘natural’ in him, not what is spiritual.. If we accept the world’s categories we shall prove thereby that we have descended to the level of the world’s thoughts and lost the enjoyment of our birthright.

We are indeed often too ready to accept these categories, like Peter when asked by the collectors of the tribute money for the temple service, “*Doth not your Master pay tribute*” (Matthew 17:24)? Anxious to remove a possible stigma and to show that his Master would do what they thought proper, he answered at once with an unintelligent ‘Yes’. But when he came into the house Jesus invited him to view the question from a higher standpoint, that of the freedom of the “sons”. True the collectors of the tribute would not have understood this; but the point was that Peter should understand it (see Matthew 17:24 – 27).

Scripture records an occasion when even Paul seems to have yielded something in this respect when he relieved his position for the time being by calling out, “*I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*” (Acts 23:6). He accepted for a moment the categories of the religious world, classifying himself as a Pharisee as against the Sadducees though no such classification could really explain him or justly define his position as “*a servant of Christ Jesus...separated unto the gospel of God*” (Romans 1:1). Fewness of words becomes us in speaking of such an incident in the life of the great apostle but it is worth pondering.

“*Lo the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations*” (Numbers 23:9), is a prophecy of wide-ranging application. It is not merely a question of outward separation

but in establishing a people on earth God has given them something to maintain, something to represent, a testimony to render, which falls outside the natural thoughts of men, because it is essentially greater and higher - it is spiritual, and of God.

To hold this position in our own souls is a duty, not to ourselves, but to God, who has called us. But it needs some vigour of faith and nearness to God. It was when Israel lacked these things that they longed for a king; they wanted to be like other people, to be *"reckoned among the nations"*. They failed to recognise the quality of uniqueness in God's elect.

The Corinthians were largely walking as ordinary men, thinking of things, judging of things, in a merely human and not a spiritual way, that is, apart from the Spirit of God. The lack of spiritual understanding was accompanied, as it always will be, by a moral standard unworthy of a Christian. *"Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Corinthians 3:5)*. It looks as if Paul had foreseen the danger, for in first going to preach to them he had *"determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2)*; the cross is the starting-point of all wholesome lessons and of all right judgments (see 1 Corinthians 2 & 3).

He goes on to warn them against worldly judgment: *"now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but a Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with the spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13)*.

How it jars upon us when we hear spiritual things – the things of God and of Christ, of the glad tidings and the church – spoken of and assessed on a merely 'natural' footing. Nehemiah tells us of some of the people who spoke, *"half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak the Jews language"* – the language, the mode of thought and the speech of the true Jews, of the Israel of God (See Nehemiah 13:34). Ashdod was a city of the

Philistines, those people who were outwardly in the land of promise, but were not truly of it.

These 'natural' judgments are never far away from us, and in spiritual things they are always wrong, because they leave out of account the most essential element - the mind and will of God. Our Lord Himself was judged in this way; witness the unbelieving advice given to Him by his brethren to go up to the feast. *"If thou do these things, show thyself to the world"* (John 7:4). They could not take in the possibility of His being moved by an entirely different set of motives from those which governed their own actions. Along such a way of worldly unbelief we shall find no light or understanding.

It is not that spiritual things are not, in a high sense of the word, natural; they are in accord with their own nature, they are not artificial and they are living; but they are beyond the order and range of men's natural thoughts as uninstructed by the Spirit of God. The question is not one of intellect, but of moral estimation, standards of value, modes of thought, and motive.

Nor is it only our own motives, but also the attributing of motive to others. The Corinthians, unspiritual themselves, could not understand the motives which weighed with Paul in deciding at what time it would be wise to visit them again; they lightly judged him to be moved by considerations merely human, worldly, opportunist (see 2 Corinthians 1 & 2). If we are unspiritual ourselves we shall be unable to discern a spiritual motive in others. *"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things (1 Corinthians 2:15).*

This way of regarding other things and other persons was closely connected with the failure of the Corinthians rightly to regard themselves and other saints of God. Therefore Paul, while he upbraids them for their unworthy moral conduct and their unspiritual modes of thought, does not hesitate to remind them with equal energy of their high calling. *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the*

## **We belong to a great city; Jerusalem above**

*temple of God is holy, which temple are ye.” (1 Corinthians 3:17). A consciousness of this truth would give us a*

right view-point in our estimation of other things. Without it we shall show a certain lack of spiritual refinement, a bluntness of sensibility. Our speech will betray it.

We belong to a great city; Jerusalem above is our mother. By contrast with the law the great feature of this city is that it is free; let us cherish our freedom (Galatians 4:26). But when it is seen coming down out of heaven from God, a city of pure gold, one of its glories is its *“wall great and high”*; not to cut off interchange – for the gates of the city shall never be shut – but something which defines and encloses it and marks its strength and character, something which is built on moral foundations *“garnished with all manner of precious stones” (Revelation 21:19). “Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces” (Psalm 48:13). “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Psalm 87:3).*

But the saints are, or will be, that city; and we want to cherish and grow into its glorious features now, while we wait for its manifestation. We want to be *“vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21).*

It is a high calling. We are not merely left in the world, we are sent into it in some sense to represent God. *“As my Father has sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).* And if we justly think of ourselves in relation to this calling it will greatly affect our spiritual valuations, our moral estimates, both of things in the church and of things in the world. Our standard of value will be the *“shekel of the sanctuary” (Exodus 30:13);* and neither the mind nor the speech of Ashdod will be ours.

J. B. Crosland (1875 – 1935)