

**121**

## ***Living Water***

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# ***Living Water 121***

(January – February 2014)

## **Recent Ministry**

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES	David Burr	1
CHRIST, RULER OF BOTH DEAD AND LIVING	Mark Lemon	4
PERFECT IN HIM	Keith Wickens	5
<i>Three words at a burial, September 2013.</i>		
A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART		7
<i>Based on a Bible reading in Bromley, July 2013.</i>		

## **Poetry Selection**

THE STEADFASTNESS OF THE LORD	Ora Rowan	13
AT HIS FEET	Ora Rowan	14

## **Testimony Section**

GOD SPOKE TO ME!	Helen Roseveare	15
------------------	-----------------	----

## **A voice from the past**

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT	Alfred J. Gardiner	17
-----------------------	--------------------	----

## ***From "Living Water" No 21***

THE DANGER OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS	A. P. C. Lawrence	18
<i>An extract from an address at Coatbridge, January 1958</i>		
<i>Continuing the series of reprints from the early issues of the magazine. This article was selected by Keith Wickens</i>		

## **A word for today**

PERSONS IN THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD AS SEEN IN PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY	W. S. Desai	22
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## Recent Ministry

### THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

**“All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar off and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on earth...but now they seek a better, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he has prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:13-16)**

**“Let us also therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race that lies before us, looking steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith: who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).**

Where we read in Hebrews 11, the apostle has immediately in mind those that he brings forward as examples from what we know as the Old Testament. But bearing in mind that we are to have regard to the cloud of witnesses that surrounds us I venture to draw on these verses to see what example they have to offer us and the measure in which they were also true of our dear sister J— now with the Lord.

It says of these Old Testament saints that they died in faith; and so did J—. We know that the past years were years of great frailty, but the One to whom she committed herself, as we have heard, so early in life is One who cared for her to the end and has now, in His own time, taken her to be with Himself. While we all feel the loss I think we would all surely say that we are thankful to the Lord that she is now with Him, past all distress, past all discomfort, past everything that can go with extreme old age: she is now where I am sure she has long wished to be— with her Lord and Saviour.

It was a mark of these Old Testament saints that they recognised that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth; they did

not have a permanent home here. That is a good mark of a Christian today, to recognise that this world is not our home; there is a better home that lies ahead. It is a place to which, in the goodness of God, believers in the Lord Jesus belong. We could speak of it, as the apostle did here, as *"their country"*, the place where we belong.

The next verse (v.15) tells us of how they might have looked back and be sorry for what they have given up. Well, it is a pity if we look back and say that we like this world better than the one which is to come. Every true Christian goes forward in hope of better things: the bright hope of being with the Lord.

But I was struck, as thinking about these verses, with what it says at the end, that *"God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God"* - a remarkable expression, that, as to God being ashamed of any one. There are those in the Bible who did speak of God as their God: most of all, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke of *"My God"* at a time of great suffering for Him. He said, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* But then, the apostle Paul, he also spoke of *"my God"*. He said, *"But my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19).

If I speak of God as my God, if any of us do, I wonder whether we could be quite sure that God would not be ashamed of us, that He would just recognise us as truly belonging to Him, truly belonging to His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We can say that for sure about our dear sister J—. Many of us who have known her for at least some years would say with assurance that she belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ, that God would not be ashamed of her, to be named as 'her God', with a place prepared for her. These Old Testament saints had something to look forward to, but the Christian has most of all to look forward to, the place where the believer really belongs.

I read into the next chapter because there is a word of appeal to those of us that are left behind. *"Let us"*, that is for those of us that are still here. We have all these witnesses that tell us about the real hope that lies before those who belong to the Lord Jesus

Christ, and there are some things for us to do; firstly, to lay aside every weight *“and sin which so easily entangles us”*.

But there is something else for us to do, to *“run with endurance the race that lies before us”* and keep our eye looking firmly, *“looking steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith”*. He is a great example of what faith is: dependence upon God at all times. I for one would have to speak of often coming short in that but I would like to heed, and encourage all of us here to heed, the word, *“looking steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith”*.

Then it tells us something else about Him. Our brother who spoke earlier in the occasion, spoke of joy. There is a reference here to the Lord Jesus, *“in view of the joy lying before him”*. He is the great man of joy now. He has secured, *“the fruit of the travail of his soul”* and dear J— is among that fruit. Many of us here are thankful to be in that same company and many more yet, some that we know and many more that as yet we do not know who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was joy lying before Him and what did He do on that account? He endured the cross. We have sung of that already today. Why did He endure the cross? Well, He endured it for my sins and yes, indeed, the sins of dear J—. It is not for us to speculate about any sins on her part. All we know is that, *“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)*. J—, and we all, have to be counted among that number. But I can say, thankfully, that my recollections and those of many here, of dear J— would be very happy ones. The hospitality of their household in the days when they were able for it was something which we much appreciated.

The Lord has reached the right hand of the throne of God but there will come a time when He will rise up from that throne and come to take all who belong to Him to be with Himself. J—, as of course Scripture tells us, is already enjoying something because she is, *“absent from the body and present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8)*.

But there is something else to look forward to – the body of glory like to the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. I say that on the

authority of Scripture (Philippians 3:21). When we think of those who have died in great frailty and weakness, and it is a very real thing, I think we are glad to look forward to that body of glory which will be like the Lord Jesus Christ. Then to be past frailty and past weakness but enjoying blessing in His presence.

May we be touched and encouraged at this time for His name's sake.

David Burr

*Word at a burial, September 2013*

## **CHRIST, RULER OF BOTH DEAD AND LIVING**

**"For both if we should live, it is to the Lord we live; and if we should die, it is to the Lord we die: both if we should live then, and if we should die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ has died and lived again, that he might rule over both dead and living" (Romans 14:8-9)**

In reading this Scripture I was not proposing to expound it but just to draw comfort from these rather wonderful words that truly applied to our sister — that she knew what it was in life to belong to the Lord. She had trusted in Him and she found great joy and comfort in that. As our brother has reminded us, towards the end of her life she had a lot of difficulties, ill-health and weakness, yet still, she was the Lord's. Now she is with Him, she is still the Lord's and our hymn that we have just sung\* reminds us that in a certain sense she is more alive now in relation to Him than she has ever been.

That is the hope that we all have that as being with the Lord we will be freed from the limitations of the flesh and our bodies and so forth and we will be able to be occupied with Him, wholly and fully.

Then we read here, *"For to this end Christ has died and lived*

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\*Asleep through Jesus: yes! to be  
From every earthly hindrance free,  
While, in the consciousness of love,  
The spirit lives with Christ above.

*again*". It is to bring home to us the joy that the Lord has in taking a saint to be with Himself, taking one who has trusted in Him; He rejoices to have them in His presence. One day we shall all be in His presence and we shall join together—those that have preceded us through death and those that are caught up to be with the Lord—all of us will join together in a great song of rejoicing and praise and blessing. And all the glory will be Christ's. What joy He will have in having that whole vast company of His own, our sister among them, many others too that we have known and loved and counted on as examples to us, too, that whole company together occupied in praising our blessed Lord Jesus. He, who, as it says here, *"has died and lived again, that he might rule over both dead and living"*. That shows us the value that He puts upon each one of His own. Paul expressed it as: *"the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

Our sister is with Christ, He rejoices to have her there, she rejoices to be with Him and one day we will all be together able to be fully occupied with the glory of that blessed One who entered into death to secure us for Himself.

Mark Lemon

*Word at a burial, September 2013*

## PERFECT IN HIM

**"Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).**

**"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).**

It is a wonderful prospect! Here we are today at the burial of one whom we have known and loved, one who is very dear to family here, and the sorrow that surrounds an occasion like this can never be denied. Links that have been known and enjoyed will never be known and enjoyed that way again. But the prospect for every one who trusts in Christ is that we shall see Him and we shall be like Him. We know that dear J— suffered considerably in her body in her latter years of weakness and frailty but to



think that in a day to come she is going to have a body of glory and all the weakness that has marked her will be forever passed away! Indeed, God will have wiped away every tear, and she will live in the presence of the One who makes all things new.

I read from this Scripture in the epistle of John because often persons may ask, 'What is our body of glory going to be like? What is it that will characterise us that is so different from what characterises our mortal bodies now?' Well, this Scripture tells us that we are not going to be told that. That has not yet been manifested to us. But what we do know is that we shall be like Him.

What a prospect that is for the believer. And, in a sense, what else matters? If we are like Him then why do we need to know exactly what the body of glory will be like? If we are like the One who has died for us and given Himself for us that is all that matters to those that really trust in Him.

Then too it says, "*we shall see him as he is.*" We see Jesus now by faith, but what will it be when we gaze upon Him face to face? What will it be when faith gives place to actuality and the One who has died for us on Calvary's cross is the One whom we see face to face!

When we come to the Psalm it says, "*As for me...*" Well, I would say that to every one here. 'As for me'. Where do you stand? Do you have this prospect? The Psalmist says, "*I will behold thy face in righteousness*". Our righteousnesses are as "*filthy rags*" (*Isaiah 64:6*), and there is not one righteous, no not one (see Romans 3:10). But those who trust in Christ have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ and therefore we have peace with God (see Romans 5:1). That is the peace that J— knew. She was not clothed in her own righteousness but in the righteousness of the One who died to redeem her to God.

We read here, "*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" No further anxiety in regard to health. No further concerns as to what the future will be but, "*I shall be satisfied*". That is, the heart is fully occupied with Christ and finds in Him eternal satisfaction.

I would commend these two verses to each of us, but especially to our dear brother who is going to feel the loss so much. Let our hearts be satisfied in Christ knowing that He has done all things well (Mark 7:37), and carry in our hearts' affections this assurance that when I awake I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness. That will be J—'s privilege, that will be the privilege of every one who trusts in Him. May it be increasingly real to our souls, for His name's sake.

Keith Wickens,

*Word at a burial, September 2013*

## **A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART**

### **1 Samuel 16**

#### **Overview**

This chapter introduces David as a man after God's own heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14). Many of the qualities we see in David speak to us of Christ, who was truly the man after God's own heart; yet at the same time they are the features that should mark the Christian.

Although David is anointed in this chapter he does not become king at once as Saul did. Instead there is a long period of testing which must have been very trying at times but that period of trial led to the development of the features that were according to God.

The chapter also gives us some of the very sad history of Saul. In contrast with David, Saul is a godless man and at the end of the chapter we find he is troubled by an evil spirit. His final end is turning to a spirit of Python and enquiring of the witch of Endor.

Still, Saul's trouble with the evil spirit is used of God to bring David into the house of Saul. It was a serious position for David. If Saul had known the true facts he would not have wanted David anywhere near him. On the other hand to be promoted in the house of an ungodly man carries great temptations for a servant of God. The positive outcome is that Jonathan becomes David's friend and later takes a stand for him in the house of Saul. That is very much the position of every true Christian who takes a stand for Christ in this world.

## Features of the man after God's heart as seen in David

As we go on with the history of David we find some very blessed features marking him. In this chapter we see:

**David repented and had the assurance of forgiveness**

- Patience – although anointed king he waits God's time for its fulfilment and does nothing to overthrow Saul.
- Lowliness – after his anointing it seems that he returned to his service of looking after his father's sheep; there is no self importance in that (see 1 Samuel 17:20).
- Grace – his readiness to serve Saul is an evidence of the grace of God; the same feature shines in many of his dealings with Saul.

As we read further in David's history we see in addition:

- Dependence – it is evident from the words of Ahimelech the priest, *"Was it today that I began to enquire of God for him?"* (1 Samuel 22:15), that David often sought the mind of God.
- Real experience with God – David knows and trusts God. It shows particularly when he tells Saul of his deliverance from a lion and a bear (see 1 Samuel 17:34-36).
- Acceptance of God's will – when David faced the greatest disappointment of his life in not being allowed to build the temple, he does not react petulantly but continues to do what he can to support the project that would be undertaken by Solomon.

These features and many more show the spiritual depth there was in David.

## David's failures

David, like all who serve God, apart from the Lord Jesus Himself, had his failures yet even these show how a godly man reacts in such circumstances. It is a happy thing that we have Psalms 32 and 51 which show plainly that David repented and had the blessing of repentance and the assurance of forgiveness. The Holy Spirit has preserved that record so that we might have comfort and guidance when we may also fall into sin.

Then David's failures led to something for God. At the end of Psalm 51 we read: *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit..."*

then he says, *“Then shalt thou have sacrifices of righteousness, burnt offering and whole burnt offering”*. When we ourselves are conscious of wrong-doing and repent, it often leads to a deeper appreciation of the work of Christ and the patience and love of God which leads to praise.

We do not find David going on a long course of waywardness and rebellion against God. He is marked by self-judgment and gets right.

David’s grace and dependence, and his recovery after failure show the true characteristics of a man of God. In our day we may not be apostles or prophets but we can be men of God. David’s history is written for our instruction.

### **Features of Saul**

Saul’s failures are given to us at length in the early chapters of Samuel so that we might learn by contrast. Right at the beginning of this chapter we see something of the jealousy and viciousness there was with Saul when Samuel says *“If Saul hear it, he will kill me”* (v.2). As the history unfolds we see the same spirit manifested repeatedly.

Sadly, there is no evidence with Saul that represents a converted man at all. There is no real dependence on God; in fact, in dealing with the Amalekites he tries to achieve God’s will by human, natural means and fails completely. The New Testament speaks of *“natural men, not having the Spirit”* (Jude 19). The divine verdict on Saul is that he has turned away from God (see 1 Samuel 15:10-24). When his sin is pointed out to him there is no true repentance. *“I have sinned; honour me now”* (1 Samuel 15:30) only shows remorse for the consequences of sin, not a turning from it.

The history of David and Saul helps us to understand the teaching of the New Testament references to the first man and the second, and the old man and the new.

### **The first man and the second, the old man and the new**

Paul writing to the Corinthians says: *“The first man Adam became a living soul: the last Adam a quickening spirit...the first man out of the earth, made of dust; the second man, out of heaven. Such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones. And as we have*

*borne the image of one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly one" (1 Corinthians 15:45-49).*

From this we see that it was always part of the divine plan that the first man Adam was to be superseded by the

second man out of heaven – who is our Lord Jesus Christ. The first man, good as he was as created by God, could never rise to the fulness of God's thoughts because he was made of dust. Indeed the apostle continues to say, *"flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom" (1 Corinthians 15:50).*

**our hearts answer  
to the spirit of the  
old man**

Then Adam sinned and after that it is easier to speak of him as the *"old man"*. In the sight of God the old man was finished for ever in the death of Christ: *"God having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).* At the cross Christ *"was made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21).* He was the perfect offering taking all the burden on Himself. In His death and burial we see the first man put away for ever and in His resurrection we see the second man – the man out of heaven – established before God for ever. Therefore *"our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin" (Romans 6:6).*

Then as a practical matter as believers we are exhorted to: *"put off the old man with his deeds, and...put on the new" (Colossians 3:9-10).* In Ephesians there is a similar exhortation: *"having put off... the old man which corrupts itself according to the deceitful lusts; and being renewed in the spirit of your mind; and your having put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).* The new man stands in contrast to the old man which represents the corrupt state by nature of the children of the first man Adam.

As Christians we find that the spirit of the old man (what we sometimes call 'the flesh') seeks to reassert itself and therefore we need to be in continual watchfulness before the Lord. So we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and be sure that we have put on the new man, which is really Christ formed in us: He is to control what I do. We need to have *"learnt the Christ... according as the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:22).*

We often find that our hearts answer to the spirit of the old man.

We see something of this at the beginning of the chapter when Samuel is sent to anoint one of Jesse's sons. As soon as Samuel sees Eliab, a man somewhat akin to Saul, Samuel thought, 'Surely this was the man to be king'. *"But Jehovah said to Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him; for it is not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh upon the heart"* (v.7). Eliab was rejected by God just as much as Saul was but even a godly man like Samuel could be misled.

God did not tell Samuel, 'Go and anoint David'. Samuel had to see each of Jesse's sons and judge for himself the features of the flesh, or the old man, seen in them. So as we find the features of the old man – pride, self importance, despising of the work of God – in our own hearts we need with the help of the holy Spirit to judge them and set them aside, remembering that *"flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom"* (1 Corinthians 15:50).

Seven of Jesse's sons came before Samuel, *"And Samuel said to Jesse, Jehovah has not chosen these"* (v.10). David, the youngest, is brought in from attending to the sheep and as soon as he arrives God says: *"arise, anoint him; for this is he"* (v.12).

### **The anointing and the Holy Spirit as the mark of the new man.**

Anointing in Scripture is the public recognition of the place which God is minded to give to someone. We see it distinctively with the Lord in Manhood. Peter says, *"Jesus who was of Nazareth: how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power"* (Acts 10:38).

In our chapter, David is anointed in the midst of his brethren. It was an area where he was bound to be challenged. All his brothers must have been eyeing him up and were probably very discontented about David being distinguished in that way. We see what Eliab thought of David in the next chapter. He says: *"I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart"* (1 Samuel 17:28). However David was going to show convincingly that despite the doubts of his brethren he was worthy of the choice God had made. Later his brethren come round and come to him in the cave of Adullam (see 1 Samuel 22:1).

In the Christian dispensation, anointing is a picture of the way that the Holy Spirit has come to mark out the believer in Jesus.

The apostle Paul writes, *"Now he that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who also has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts"* (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

The presence of the Holy Spirit of God in a believer is an immense blessing. The Lord says of the Holy Spirit, 'He shall be with you for ever' (see John 14:16). The Spirit *"bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"* (Romans 8:16). It is to bring home to us the greatness of the family into which we have been brought through trusting in Christ. Then the indwelling of the Holy Spirit means that there is no room for an evil spirit to take control of a believer. It is a moral impossibility

Then John tells us in his first epistle, *"greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). It is an encouragement to us as believers that the Holy Spirit is greater and has greater power than any evil spirit. That is important, for there are many evil spirits around in the world today.

At the same time we need to be active in making room for the Holy Spirit in our lives and service. We do that by prayer and by our recognition of the need to be dependent. One of David's most interesting prayers is, *"Make me to know...how frail I am"* (Psalm 39:4). That way of dependence marks David out as a man after God's own heart and it also makes way for the immeasurable power of the Spirit of God. Then, too, we have the exhortation not to grieve or to quench the Spirit (see Ephesians 4:20 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19). This means we have to seek continually to judge the features of the 'old man' which are in all our hearts.

Saul stands in contrast to all this; there was an evil spirit from God that troubled him. We may find that expression difficult to understand but the book of Job may cast light upon it. We read, *"There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan also came among them to present himself before Jehovah"*. As a result Satan was allowed certain scope in relation to Job. Then we read: *"Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah"* (see Job 2:1-7). Something of that kind must have happened in respect of Saul. It is very terrible; it leads in the end to Saul consulting the witch of En-dor.



Saul's motives were wrong and they lead him astray and eventually there is no remedy.

God looks upon the heart. He sees the motives that govern us. Then, too, when God looks at the heart He is taking account of His own work. God brings the extent of His work to light in His own time. One of Saul's servants here expands on the worth of David, describing him as "*skilled in playing, and he is a valiant man and a man of war, skilled in speech and of good presence and Jehovah is with him*" (v. 18). All through the history of the testimony, God has delighted to bring His work to light. Persons have been drawn out of obscurity to fill out a place for the glory of God's name. In this chapter we see that with David.

*Based on a Bible reading at Bromley, Kent, July 2013.*

## Poetry Selection

### **THE STEADFASTNESS OF THE LORD**

*Sometimes I think I would like to be  
Shut in from the world afar,  
Where taint of sin could not reach to me,  
Nor tones of its strife could jar.*

*Sometimes I think that were others right  
Were others but pure and true,  
My soul would ever be strong and bright  
My steps would be firmer too.*

*Sometimes I think, oh, for a busy lot,  
With never an idle day;  
But this quiet waiting by all forgot,  
Is surely the hardest way!*

*Sometimes I think, were I always near  
To those who were sweet and kind,  
To aid in weakness and dry each tear,  
How easy the path I'd find.*

*From thoughts like these which are vain to  
Nor more than an idle dream [me  
I wake to find I am still with Thee;  
On Thee, O Lord, I lean.*

*I'm linked to Thee here by the Spirit given,  
The fruit of Thy smiting here,  
To lead my heart to the Christ in heaven  
Before I am with Thee there.*

*Then keep me Lord in the secret joy  
Of all that is mine in Thee;  
That sense of lack, or of sin's alloy,  
May cease in my heart to be.*

*Ora Rowan (1837-1882)*



## **AT HIS FEET**

*It is coming, it is coming, sure and bright, through His grace,  
That day when faith and hope shall turn to sight in that place,  
Where we'll tread the golden street  
And at last fit praise repeat,  
While we cast crowns at His feet  
Face to face.*

*The face where Mary's sorrow drew forth tears, we shall see;  
At the feet that journeyed for us all those years we shall be.  
Feet that never rested yet,  
Face that ever steadfast set,  
Till He paid our dreadful debt  
On the tree.*

*Now tis finished, He's in glory and we wait where He's been  
Till His own hand leads us through the heavenly gate of that scene.  
Every step through desert sands,  
He has trod and understands,  
Tis on strong and tender hands  
That we lean.*

*Oh, the grace that made His head once bow death to meet,  
Ne'er forgets us in the glory where He now has His seat;  
Tis the love that made Him die,  
Sought us, found us, keeps us nigh,  
Will be rapture by and by  
At His feet.*

*Ora Rowan (1837-1882)*

## Testimony Section

### GOD SPOKE TO ME!

As a school-girl the Bible came out once a week in the Religious Education class, when one of the teachers made us read a given passage and then droned on about it for thirty minutes – during which time, sitting in the back row, I got on with my maths prep! I loved maths – it was my best subject – and I felt that dry old stories of long ago days were a bore. I had to listen just enough to pass the end of term test. The rest I ignored.

Then up at university as a first year medical student, I was lonely and fearful. I had no friends: I was not in the top ten and found the studies hard: and I knew that my father expected me to do well – I was scared to fail him. A girl invited me to her room one evening and offered friendship. She showed me round the town, where to get a cheap lunch and to buy second hand books.

Next I went with her to a Bible study group – and for the first time in my life, I heard several people of my own age group discussing the Bible with obvious interest. I started to read with them. I began to become interested. I went to a house party in the Christmas holidays. I sat, fascinated through daily Bible studies led by people who obviously believed what they were saying. For the first time I heard – really heard with my mind and heart, not just my ears – that I was a sinner (Romans 3:23), that I deserved death, God’s judgment for all my wrong-doing (Romans 6:23), but that God so loved me that He had sent His own beloved Son to die on the cross at Calvary, in my place (John 3:16). I could quote so many other verses!

Suddenly alive to my need for forgiveness, and love, and of a God who really cared, the last night of that house party, almost in desperation, I threw myself on my bed, in tears and called out to God (if there was a God): ‘Please make Yourself known to me!’

Looking up through my tears, I read a text from the Bible painted on the wall above my bed: “Be still and know that I am...” (Psalm 46:10). However the last word of the text had been washed out by rain through a leak in the roof! I was almost overwhelmed –

God had spoken to me! All the verses learned during the week suddenly fell into place and made sense – God loved me so much that He had sent His Son to die for me. It was true!

**I fell in love with  
the living word  
of the living God**

That evening I committed myself to the Lord Jesus as my Lord and my Saviour. Through studying the Bible, I fell in love with the living word of the living God. Since then, daily Bible reading has been my spiritual food all through the sixty-five years of my Christian life.

From the start I was encouraged to learn a verse by heart every week and through the years that habit has paid wonderful dividends. When my back was to the wall during the civil war in the 1960s, in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, terrified in the midst of hideous wickedness and cruelty, a phrase from a verse came – almost unbidden – into my mind: *“he was led as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7)* –and with the words an amazing sense of peace. He, the Son of God was *“led to the slaughter”* of Calvary for me, and He did not resist, or refuse, so that I might be saved. Now He was inviting me to go through whatever might lie ahead, so that He could fulfil His purposes for those around me. Maybe God might not have given me that phrase, in the midst of such circumstances, had I not previously committed it to memory – but certainly it would have been hard to remind me of it if I had never put it into my mind in the first place! What a wonderful and caring God He is! How powerful His written word is at all times.

I cannot recommend too highly or too strongly the daily reading, learning and meditating in, feeding on and memorising of the Scriptures, the living word of the Bible. For me they are the essential life-blood of Christian living. *“For me to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21)*, and He is the living Word.

Helen Roseveare

*Reprinted from “What the Bible means to me”, published by Christian Focus Publications, 2011 and used with permission.*

## A voice from the past

### SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

#### 1 Corinthians 2:12-16

In the verses read, Paul, writing by the Spirit, lays it down, that, *"We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"* (v. 12). Then he adds that the things he has spoken are communicated by the words which the Holy Spirit teaches. Then we are told that the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned. Hence it means that we are entirely shut up to the Holy Spirit, not only to communicate spiritual things, but to discern that what is communicated is spiritual. This is a most important matter.

By way of illustration we have in Acts 15 the matter as to whether the Gentiles should be circumcised or not. After much discussion, Peter stands up and recounts how he discerned the Spirit's movements. That is what he recounts. He does not refer to the Scriptures, but what he discerned to be the blessed movements of the Spirit. Then Paul and Barnabas tell of how God had wrought through them among the Gentiles. Then James stands up and refers to the Scriptures, quoting from the prophet Amos, and in the power of the Holy Spirit he applies the passage as conclusively establishing that God was bringing the Gentiles into the church, and in liberty, so that they should not need to be circumcised. If you had looked at the passage from Amos, from which he read, and had seen its setting there, you would have said, had you been unspiritual, that it had no reference at all to the Gentiles being brought into the church and that it referred to the world to come. But James was speaking by the Spirit of God. Scripture is so wonderfully capable of being taken up by the Spirit of God as needed, but it requires spirituality to recognise that it is the voice of the Spirit.

Spirituality was there and the matter was settled, so that they say in their letter, *"For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and*

to us" (Acts 15:28). The Spirit had spoken and that settled the matter. It is only as we are spiritual that we shall discern what is the voice of the Holy Spirit. That is of particular importance in applying and interpreting the Old Testament scriptures. Paul tells us that *"all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (2 Timothy 3:16). Instruction can thus rightly be based upon it, but for the interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures and the communication of the mind of God through them, spirituality is essential, and on our part spirituality is equally essential in order to discern that what is presented is of the Spirit of God.

Alfred J. Gardiner

*Extracted from an address, London, March 1949*

## From "Living Water" No 21

### THE DANGER OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

**"...let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not his own qualities, but each those of others also. For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..." (Philippians 2:3-5).**

The Lord Jesus spoke in Luke 18 of some *"who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and made nothing of all the rest of men"* (Luke 18:9). Now that spirit is distasteful to God but it is the kind of spirit that Satan would foster in our hearts. What underlies it is self exaltation. If I make nothing of somebody else it is in order that I may make something of myself. It is surprising how early in our lives this matter comes to light – making much of myself at the expense of someone else, and it is destructive of church (or assembly) features and assembly function.

Self-righteousness flows from the fact that I have not accepted that what I am naturally has been fully exposed and judged

**Satan would cultivate features that build up the flesh**

in the death of Christ. What allows it to lurk in our hearts and minds, and come to the surface so often, is that we really have not the right appreciation of the

death of Christ, and elements are allowed to remain in our hearts that the devil can use and work upon. The Spirit of God would cultivate features that correspond to Christ, but Satan would cultivate features that build up the flesh, and particularly pride, which was the leading cause, according to Scripture, of his downfall.

These are practical everyday matters. They even come out in rivalry as to our local gatherings; persons take pride in certain features that may be found in their localities, and it will mean making *“nothing of all the rest of men”*; it will mean despising something somewhere else upon which Christ places value. A kind of self-righteousness shows itself even in regard to the blessedness of light into which we have been brought. Knowledge of divine Persons should make us the most humble-minded people on earth, without any pretension whatever. It should bring us right down to the level of the lowness of mind which the apostle is presenting to the Philippians.

Philippians is the practical working out of the glory and height of the truth as it is presented in Ephesians, and what this calls for is lowness of mind. So let us be on our guard lest in any sense we make nothing of other believers. God’s work is sovereign and it is to be recognised in persons according to their measure of light. Many such, whom I know personally, are standing true to the light they have and the Lord is pleased with them as faithful in the places where they are. Do not let us allow self-righteousness and high thoughts to make nothing of these persons. Do they mean nothing to God? Does the brother for whom Christ died mean nothing to me? It is an exceedingly testing matter. I am speaking to my own heart and I am speaking to the brethren, for we may take up

a kind of self-righteous attitude in order to belittle someone else.

Flowing out of this comes the matter of tale bearing – busybodies in other people’s matters. Out of it, too, comes the habit of saying things that are indefinite; persons are led into believing certain things that are actually never said. Things left unsaid but hinted at are often far more damaging than things that are said outright. All this, I believe, flows from self-righteousness, pride and high-mindedness. We may not mean it; we may not even have taken the time to analyse it. We may have been proceeding on these lines without knowing that we are doing it. At such a juncture the Lord Jesus spoke a parable *“to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and made nothing of all the rest of men”*, and He brought out in that parable that the man who went down to his house justified was the man whose mind was lowly in relation to his own position before God.

The way to get adjustment on these matters is to get in secret into the presence of God and then we shall realise what we really are. We cannot presume to be anything more than we are in the presence of God. There is no question there of keeping up face, for all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes with whom we have to do. The lowliness of mind that is suitable to such a position is what will go away justified, that is, have the consciousness of divine approval.

The Lord Jesus adds: *“everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and everyone that humbles himself shall be exalted”*(Luke 18:14). To spiritual company like the Philippians the apostle says, *“let nothing be done in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves”*, showing the dangers we are prone to. It is not a word only to persons who are prominent; it is a word to everyone. Let us start as young as we possibly can to be developed in that kind of outlook – regarding others as more excellent than ourselves. What a safeguard against self-righteousness!

As we see God's work in one another, how excellent it is! According to Romans 12 we are not to have high thoughts above what we should think; we have to learn to think so as to be wise, to think soberly, because God has dealt to each a measure of faith (see V3). Each of us is to have a sober estimate of what we have from God, but Philippians teaches us that we are not to be calling attention to this but to be bringing forward the excellence of every other person but ourselves. Paul writes: *"regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also. For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"*. It was the lowly mind that was found in Christ Jesus that is emphasised. Let that mind be found amongst us, a mind to go down, a mind corresponding to what was seen in Jesus.

In Acts 10 Peter saw the sheet out of heaven: it was filled with wild beasts and creeping things, despicable things, and a voice says, *"Rise, Peter, slay and eat"*. Peter answers, *"In no wise, Lord"* (Acts 10:14). Have we a right outlook on the church, that vessel that is heavenly in origin and heavenly in destiny? If we had, we should not call things that God has cleansed common or unclean. Self-righteousness would thus describe them and would harbour feelings that the devil can use. So let us, from this moment on, seek power by the Spirit to judge its roots in our hearts so that we may be found in our localities making full room for the mind that was in Christ Jesus, thereby shining in testimony and responding to God

A. P. C. Lawrence

*Extracted from an address at Coatbridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1958.*

*This article was selected for reprinting from "Living Water" No 21 by Keith Wickens.*

*God willing, in issue No 122 there will be a reprint from "Living Water" No 22 selected by Graham Boyes.*

***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

### PERSONS IN THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD AS SEEN IN PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

These are the last days and as Scripture tells us, difficult or perilous times, but it has pleased the Lord in His wisdom to place us here in such times. He has a purpose in view. It is the Lord's desire to form us according to the divine thought and the Holy Spirit is here for that purpose.

In chapter three of 2 Timothy there is a picture of the world around us: *"Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud...disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, false accusers... lovers of pleasures"* (2 Timothy 3:1-4). In chapter 4 there is another picture, namely, of those who profess to belong to the Lord Jesus, yet of whom it is said that a time would come *"when they will not endure sound doctrine"* (2 Timothy 4:3). Yet however difficult the times may be there is a provision for the people of God. There is guidance and there is also preservation available. The Spirit of God in this epistle tells us of what is available in Christ Jesus – grace and life. The Lord Jesus was once down here; now He is in glory; that is not a theory or a mere doctrine. All that was in God's mind is preserved in Him and is available in Him and through Him.

I wish to speak of what the Lord desires to preserve in his people while we are still here in this world. It is open to us to hearken to His voice of love, and the Spirit speaks ever of Him.

#### **2 Timothy speaks of real persons: Timothy, Mark, Luke, and others.**

It is not a question of how much knowledge they possessed, but what they were. There was substance there, something for the divine pleasure. They belonged to the Lord Jesus, and they had come under the influence of that wondrous Person, the ascended One, the glorious living Head.

The Spirit has left a record of what was formed in these persons and there should be formation with us also. Each of them had received the impress of the Person of Christ. Such impressions are available to us also. It is the Lord's desire that that character of person should continue here until the Lord's assembling shout is heard to meet Him in the air. It is the divine thought that the testimony should be maintained until the end. In the second epistle to Timothy we see persons carrying forward something of Christ by way of testimony in an evil day.

## Timothy

One is impressed by the way that Paul addresses Timothy; *“my beloved child”*(2 Timothy 1:2), child in the faith. That is the moral position for us, a moral continuation of what was seen in Paul. The Lord looks for young believers to develop into men of God, to be here for God in this evil day, these difficult times of unfaithfulness and departure. Timothy is called a man of God: *“O man of God flee these things, and follow righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight...”* (1 Timothy 6:11-12). He is told not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. He is warned against being carried away by human knowledge. *“Have an outline of sound words”* (2 Timothy 1:13). Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from a child. There are those here who have been brought up in like manner. What is in view is the man of God. It is open to you and me to be men of God.

In the history of Israel we often find that, when times were dangerous and difficult, men of God were raised up to meet the situation. The Spirit of God has the provision to meet the need of each one of us: *“grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord”* (2 Timothy 1:2).

This is the positive touch with which the Lord would impress us. Timothy is asked to preach the word, also to *“reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine”* (2 Timothy 4:2). He is not to compromise with evil, nor with those who violate divine principles. He is not to move away either from grace, mercy, and peace. The Lord will maintain these features to the end; let us earnestly desire them.

## Onesiphorus

Paul prays that the household of Onesiphorus might find mercy from the Lord (see 2 Timothy 1:16). We need mercy every day for ourselves and for our households, so that God’s thoughts in regard of the households of believers might be maintained in our family life. The Lord desires to preserve this until the end. The households of His people are of special interest to Him and are under His all-seeing eye. Onesiphorus often refreshed Paul. That is the kind of householder that the Lord is looking for in these difficult times. All around us proper thoughts as to the household are being given up but the Lord desires to preserve the households of His own. Onesiphorus was a hospitable man. Paul and others found refreshment there, refreshment not for the body only, but above

all for the spirit and the soul.

Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's chain. Paul was despised in the world but when he was in prison Onesiphorus diligently sought him out (see 2 Timothy 1:16). Are we ashamed to confess the Lord at school or in the office, at business or wherever the Lord has placed us? Do we invite those with whom we have to do to hear the gospel? Do our acquaintances know that we belong to God and that Jesus is our Lord?

### **Luke**

Next, the Spirit of God draws attention to what He has to say about Luke. Luke was not an apostle, but the Lord used him greatly. He wrote one of the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. What a faithful man he was! Paul would write at a time of great stress, *"Luke alone is with me"* (2 Timothy 4:11).

Then what an impression of grace we get from Luke. His gospel speaks of grace – the compassions of God coming to light. Luke does not seek any prominence for himself but Paul speaks of him as *"the beloved physician"* (Colossians 4:14). Luke carried out his work in such a way as to draw out the affection of believers. My activities are to be under the Lord's control; as such I am to be the Lord's servant.

### **Mark**

At one time Mark moved on natural lines but now he is recovered. He is profitable. He can minister to others; he is a servant of God. He received this impression from the great Servant of God – the Lord Jesus Himself. See how Mark speaks of Christ in His service. Mark's gospel is full of words like 'straightway', 'immediately', 'at once'. There was no hesitation with the Lord in doing the will of God. Mark had learnt that the arm of the flesh was to have no place in the path of a servant of the Lord.. Now he is free of that and is available for the Lord's service. Paul says, *"take Mark and bring him with thee"* (2 Timothy 4:11). What a company it would be: Paul, Timothy, Luke, Mark!

### **Tychicus**

In Colossians chapter 4 Tychicus is described as *"a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant of the Lord"* (Colossians 4:7). He is beloved of the saints because he is faithful but as a faithful minister he would serve without fear of favour to man. He reminds me of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22. The messenger of Ahab

warned him to speak that which would be pleasing to Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel did not want prophetic ministry because the acceptance of it would mean humbling oneself, adjustment, and blessing. They wanted to go on in their own fleshly way. The faithful servant speaks the truth even though he may be hated for it, as Ahab hated Micaiah. He will suffer in love as Paul did though the Corinthians spoke evilly of him. Then Tychicus is a *“fellow servant of the Lord”*. He can be trusted. Paul was able to send him to those in Ephesus as well as to the Colossians.

### **Priscilla and Aquila**

Priscilla and Aquila are to be saluted (see 2 Timothy 4:19). Theirs is a household moving in oneness in regard to the testimony. When they were in Ephesus, they took Apollos to them and expounded to him the *“way of the Lord more exactly”* (Acts 18:26). They are vessels of testimony, a household for the Lord. They are mentioned six times in the scriptures and three times Aquila is put first and three times Priscilla is put first, which is intended to convey what a united household theirs was. The Lord would have these features continue among His people, as found in persons.

### **A list of brethren**

Finally in the epistle we have a number of names of different brethren who send greetings. They stretch out their hands in fellowship and affectionate greetings in the Lord. What a company it is! Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brethren. Do we greet the brethren with love in our heart?

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The Spirit closes the epistle: *“The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit”* (2 Timothy 4:22). It was Paul’s desire that these impressions of the Lord might be made good in Timothy in his spirit. This is meant for us also: *“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”* It is as we come under the sense of this that we will be formed, and develop affections according to God.

May the Lord grant it!

W S Desai,  
Lahore, 1944.