

124

Living Water

'Living Water' is published by the Stone Publishing Trust (Registered Charity 1034689)

'The Eagles', Headcorn Road, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BU

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TONBRIDGE, Kent, TN12 0BR

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Picture: Scotney Castle, Kent. David E Mutton

Printed by Lakeside Printing,
Unit 4A, Munday Industrial Estate, Morley Rd, Tonbridge, TN9 1RA, UK

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(July – August 2014)

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Recent Ministry

THE LIFE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS

2 Timothy	1: 1-2 & 10
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Luke	24: 17 & 25-35
1 Thessalonians	1: 1-10

Introduction

The thought before me is the *“life that is in Christ Jesus”* spoken of in the first verse of 2 Timothy chapter 1. Then in verse 10 we have *“our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings”* This shows us how we are brought into this life – it is through the glad tidings. Then the other Scriptures read show what the life that is in Christ Jesus actually consists of:

- In Romans 5 we have different features of life; we are *“saved in the power of his life” (V.10)* and *“reign in life by the one Jesus Christ” (V.17)*, then there is *“justification of life” (V.18)*.
- In Romans 6 we are exhorted to *“walk in newness of life” (V.4)*.
- In Luke 24 we see conditions of life brought to pass where previously there had been disappointment and discouragement
- In Thessalonians we have a company of Christians marked by life and the features proper to it.

The life that is in Christ Jesus

My thought is the *“life which is in Christ Jesus”* as relating to where He now is in glory and the need for us to be in contact with Him. Salvation in the *“power of His life”* goes beyond salvation from the ‘wages of sin’ but speaks of the certainty that as having been reconciled to God by Christ’s work we are kept by His living power. It is salvation through keeping in contact with Christ where He now is in view of being maintained in life. We live in a day of apostasy and we need to be maintained and

marked by the life that is in Christ Jesus. There is much that is contrary to Christ in the world that has rejected Him, but believers are still here and have to go through this world confronted day by day with that which is contrary to the life of Christ and need to be kept in *"the life that is in Christ Jesus"*.

It has been remarked that a dead fish just floats with the stream whereas a living fish has got fins and scales and can move against the current in the river. That is how a Christian is to be, able to move against the streams of this world. There are many currents which flow in this world, with the different religions and cults that there are today and all this has a bearing upon us. We need to be marked by the vigour and energy of life according to God in view of being maintained here in testimony, pleasing to the One who has shed His precious blood to redeem us.

He is a blessed Man in the glory; but His heart is occupied with His own here below and we need to have daily contact with Him if we are to be preserved. The promise of life that we have in Timothy is a very encouraging feature; it says the *"promise of life, the life which is in Christ Jesus"*; that is where it is to be found and in no other. He is the one source of life for us. He was that when He was here in this world; *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."* (John 1:4), but now in glory He is the source of life for us now. The promise of life has been brought in with a view to our being maintained and sustained here. Joseph, in the Old Testament, provides a picture of it. He was the "Sustainer of life" and the people of Egypt had to go to Joseph if they were to live, so we need to keep near to Christ as the One who is able to sustain us in life in this dark world.

This life is in contrast to the death and darkness that are in the world. The gospel reaches us when we are *"dead in trespasses and sins"* but it is brought in to take us out of that sphere. In that way life and incorruptibility have been brought to light. Then we need to be maintained in it. We know the Lord as One out of death. We are brought into a new relationship with Him. Mary at the tomb had in mind the previous relationship but she had to be

brought on to new ground in relation to the Lord in resurrection. He introduced a whole new relationship of life expressed in the words, *"My Father and your Father, my God and your God"* (John 20:17).

The epistle to the Romans shows us how the new life operates in the believer.

Saved in the power of His life.

Romans is a very basic book. Paul's own desires in relation to the Roman believers are set out in chapter 1, then chapters 2 and 3 bring out the character of man in the flesh, whether as religious or corrupt. Romans 3 also brings in the righteousness of God. Then when we come to Romans 5 we have the love of God. How important it is that we should understand that the One whom we have come to know as a Saviour God is One who loves us and has bought us at infinite cost to Himself. So we read in Romans 5: *"For if, being enemies" (V.10)*. Think of what we were as in our sins, enemies of God, but now reconciled to God through the death of His son.

Reconciliation means that I am retained for God's pleasure, justified, exonerated from my sins through the work of Christ and then brought into a relationship with the blessed God again. It is as in that relationship we are to be saved in the *"power of His life"*. It is through daily contact with the blessed Man who is in God's presence now. Paul is writing in conscious experience of life. He had previously written to the Galatians, *"I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me; but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God"* (Galatians 2:20). He goes on to speak about the Son of God who *"loved me and gave himself for me"*. It is the depth of appreciation he had for the Lord Jesus, the One in whose life he himself lived.

The Old Testament gives us an illustration. Every morning and every evening a lamb was offered up (see Exodus 29:39). For us in the Christian dispensation it speaks of the way that each day should begin with an appreciation of Christ and end with an

Life is in the Person and our relationship with Him

appreciation of Christ. The offering of the evening lamb is to be equivalent to the morning lamb. That is a test to us, whether we can go through the day maintained in the energy and the vigour of life that is to be found in Christ. We

need affection for Christ and nearness to Christ so that we may be maintained in vitality for Christ. Being *“saved in the power of his life”*, is a very present matter. We are preserved as the life of Christ is in our hearts and affections.

The Lord had to say to some when here, *“Ye search the scriptures, for ye think that in them ye have life eternal, and they it is which bear witness concerning me; and ye will not come to me that ye might have life”* (John 5:39-40). Life is in the Person and our relationship with Him. There is no substitute for that. We need to read the Scriptures; they are profitable and are blessed to read but unless we have that living link with Christ we do not have life.

Reigning in life and Justification of life

The next consideration is *“reigning in life”* by the one Jesus Christ. We see an example of it in the woman of John 4. Her history was a disgrace and is described. Coming in contact with the Lord Jesus, having her history gone over in His presence and having remarkable things said too in that section of scripture, she goes back to the men of the city and is able to testify to them. She is really reigning in *“life by the one Jesus Christ”*. What a change had taken place! In the very place in which we have sinned greatly we can be found reigning in life as a consequence of living contact with the Lord Jesus. Her testimony was powerful causing the men of the city to go out to Christ and to come to an appreciation of Him for themselves. Really it leads on to *“justification of life”*. Justification of life has been linked with the epistle of James where we read, *“faith without works is dead”*. So that woman went back superior to her circumstance, justified in the way in which she was able to communicate what she received from Christ.

The thought of reigning in life is very encouraging for all of us; as coming in contact with Christ we are able to be found here in superiority to the circumstances of the world in which we are, and to move through here in full vigour and power, power that comes really from the Holy Spirit.

Early in the Acts we read that persons took account of the disciples that they had been with Jesus (see Acts 4:13). There was evidence in them of the fact that they had been in His company. They were unlettered and uninstructed men in the world's estimation but they were reigning in life! When Moses came down the mountain having been with God, it says of him that his face was shining (see Exodus 34:29). He had been in the divine presence. If we have been in the divine presence, the presence of Christ, something of it will show.

Then there is a secret side to it as well. In Colossians we read, *"your life is hid with the Christ in God"* (Colossians 3:3). The world does not understand the life that is to be seen in the believer. We are drawing from a Man in heaven. He has all the resources needed. So even in isolation, as the apostle John seems to have been on Patmos, the believer is to be full of life.

In Philippians we read: *"among whom ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life"* (Philippians 2:15-16). It was the testimony which could be taken account of. Really it was the extension of what Christ was when He was here. He could say: *"I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12). Well, He is no longer here but believers are here. Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi provide an example. They were in complete superiority to their circumstances. They were reigning in life, praising God with singing!

Walking in newness of life

In Romans 6 we read: *"Are you ignorant that we, as many as have been baptised unto Christ Jesus, have been baptised unto his death? We have been buried therefore with him by baptism unto death, in order that, even as Christ has been raised up from*

among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life". If there is to be newness of life according to Christ then as believers we must understand what it is to be *"buried with him by baptism unto death"*. It means that what Christ came into actually we have to come to in mind. He is cast out of this world, so I am cast out.

The Lord Himself set the pattern, *"in that he has died, he has died to sin once for all; but in that he lives, he lives to God"* (Romans 6:10). Sin has been condemned in Christ, set aside completely, in order that we might be free and able to walk in 'newness of life'. In God's sight the believer has died with Christ; as Paul put it to the Colossians: *"For ye have died and your life is hid with the Christ in God."* (Colossians 3:3). It follows, therefore, that if our minds are set on the things above where the Christ is we will be found walking in newness of life.

The account of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 provides a practical illustration. Through Philip's preaching it must have come home to him that if the Lord Jesus went by the way of death there was no other course for him but to be baptised and go out of sight. He says to Philip, *"Behold water; what hinders my being baptised?"* (Acts 8:36). Then as coming out of the waters of baptism with Philip he went on his way rejoicing. He was walking in *"newness of life"*.

Conditions of life restored

Now in Luke 24 we see how contact with Christ can raise us up if we get down in our spirits. It is a beautiful example of the Lord working to revive these two who had become despondent and bring them into life. The Lord knew the situation. It is lovely that it says *"He drew nigh and went with them"*. That is something that the Lord loves to do for each one of us. He draws nigh in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Sometimes we need the reminder and encouragement that Jesus is living. Their life had been bound up in Jesus. We see that in Mary too at the tomb. Her life was bound up with Him but death had come in. She had really had her whole purpose of life lost,

The Thessalonians are a kind of model company

but how wonderful it was when she got the word and when she realised that she had met the Saviour Himself. It is the same

for these two going to Emmaus. The Lord would use the scriptures to bring His word home to us in view of our encouragement and blessing. It was a most wonderful opening up of the Old Testament that the Lord gave those two on the way to Emmaus and it caused their hearts to burn.

It is interesting that their 'walk through scripture' as the Lord unfolded the Old Testament to them made their hearts burn but it was in the breaking of the bread that their eyes were opened and they recognised Him. Immediately they were brought into life. That is the effect of spending time in the presence of the Lord. It was evening, the day was declining but there was life clearly shown in these two. They *"rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem"*. What life was in them! They were ready, although the day was declining and evening was come, to return to Jerusalem. It shows what a touch from Christ can do! It can change us completely in our thoughts, our desires and our attitude. Of course, having had this wonderful communication from Christ, the only place to put it is amongst the people of God. They found that they could contribute to the wealth of the circle of those that belonged to Christ. What they bring is something of Christ Himself – how He was made known to them. Can we each bring something like that into the company? They were living in the light of Christ risen and find their place with others who can say, *"the Lord is indeed risen"*.

The Thessalonians – a company marked by life

The Thessalonians were young in the faith but it was a local assembly which was marked by life in a practical way. They are a kind of model company. Paul was able to give thanks for them. He speaks to them in a way he speaks to no other company when he says of them *"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you at our prayers, remembering*

unceasingly your work of faith, and labour of love, and enduring constancy of hope". Those were the features of life found with them.

In Acts 17 we can see how on three Sabbaths Paul went into the synagogue and preached there. The testimony was rendered and persons believed the gospel. Then those that loved the Lord were persecuted in Thessalonica. The charge was that they were *"saying that there was another king, Jesus"*. So there was and so it is! There is Another who has authority over us.

This is one of the first epistles that Paul wrote and in it he uses language that he does not use in any other epistle. For instance he writes of them as, *"the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"*. What a way to open this epistle! You might say they were adequately protected in that way and they were held in relation to both God the Father and in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, it's a company which is marked by life! There's nothing like a fresh convert to see life. We all know that in our early days when we came to know the Lord and we were enthused in relation to Him. And that enthusiasm, if I can use a common expression, is not to diminish with us, it is to be maintained. These Thessalonians had *"turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God"*. They had been in idolatry and had been delivered from it.

Paul commends them in three ways:

- The *"work of faith"* - the Lord was a man of faith, He was dependant, He trusted in God (that was even a charge that they taunted Him with at the cross) and He acted for God. Those are the marks of the work of faith.
- The *"labour of love"* is really found amongst the people of God, brotherly love, and love, which is the *"bond of perfectness"*. We know that we are from different backgrounds and sometimes we test one another, but a 'labour of love' would mean that we are engaged and suited to promote love in one another and to be found bound together in the *"bundle of the living"*.

- The *"constancy of hope"* is the outlook we are to have as a believer. I think of Daniel Otsing and his constancy of hope in relation to the coming of the Lord; so he wrote that beautiful hymn:

O, Lord with our ears and hearts open
Awaiting Thy shout would we be
The summons that calls us to heaven
For ever to be Lord with Thee.

That 'constancy of hope' is to be kept as held in the affection of the lovers of the Lord Jesus.

These are the features of life that were to be found with the Thessalonians and it is striking that in the 2nd epistle we read: *"because your faith increases exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all towards one another abounds "* (2 Thessalonians 1:3). There was what exceeded and what abounded. What a vein of life amongst them was preserved and maintained, so the apostle could draw attention to it in writing to them a second time!

Life in the Christian company and worship are intimately connected. If our life in Christ wanes we may still go on with the outward forms of worship but it is only in life that our hearts will be affected and we will worship in spirit and truth. Sadly, God had to say to some in the Old Testament: *"This people honour me with the lips, but their heart is far away from me"* (Isaiah 29:13). God is seeking our affections, not just our minds and the ability to put it out in a mental way, but *"Out of the abundance of the heart"* the mouth is to speak (see Luke 6:46). It is what comes from our hearts that God appreciates.

* * * * *

Well that was my concern that we might find the *"life which is in Christ Jesus"* and be superior to our circumstances. It is contact with Christ that restores us and maintains us that we might be *"reigning in life"*. Then we are encouraged when we see it worked out practically in the company of believers like the Thessalonians

so that we might emulate that and be found with these three features marking us in our local companies.

Gordon Sinclair

Based on a Bible reading, Belfast, October 2013.

THE REST OF OUR TIME

“Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh, do ye also arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin, no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh to men’s lusts, but to God’s will. For the time past is sufficient for us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, walking in lasciviousness, lusts, wine-drinking, revels, drinkings, and unhallowed idolatries. Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same sink of corruption, speaking injuriously of you;” - 1 Peter 4:1-4.

“Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing – forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13, 14

I particularly had in mind the expression in verse 2 of chapter 4 of 1 Peter, *“the rest of his time”*. We have spoken already tonight of the matter of death. Some here have lost loved ones very recently and there is nothing like death to bring the reality of matters before us. None of us know how long we have left here, but we all have the rest of our time and the consideration for all of us would be, ‘How are we going to spend the rest of our time?’ Is it going to be living in self pleasing, doing our own will, and pursuing our own aims in life, or is it going to be doing God’s will as spoken of here in 1 Peter?

What a challenge this is to us. When death comes in, whatever we have pursued materially in this life is at an end; it is all finished at death. On the other hand whatever we have pursued

How are we going to spend the rest of our time?

in the way of spiritual things and whatever we have learned of our Lord Jesus and of the place that He fills — that is what goes through and that is what will be our eternal portion.

What a need there is for us to study and be occupied with God's word. It is vital that we apply our minds to the Scriptures and to do so when we are young. Reading the Scriptures increases our knowledge of God Himself and our understanding of the truth. There are of course parts of Scripture that we may find very difficult to understand but the more we read and pray about them, the more we call upon the Holy Spirit to help us, then the more understanding and light we get as to them and that leads to growth in our souls. The Holy Spirit, who is the earnest of our inheritance, will help us to reach into the great things of God. Nothing can be understood in the things of God apart from the Holy Spirit's service to us.

I would seek to give a word of encouragement and exhortation as to the rest of our time, recognising that I need such a word as much as anybody. It may not be very long, we do not know. Of course, we are to be looking for the Lord's return - what a hope we have - but if we are called home to be with the Lord by way of death, we know that we enter into His presence. What a comfort it is to know that those who love the Lord Jesus pass immediately into the presence of the Lord. Think of what the Lord Jesus has entered into for us that He might deliver us from this present evil world to give us a real living hope, a hope which lies beyond this world. This world is going on to destruction; it is full of confusion and evil.

So the apostle Peter here is encouraging believers, exhorting them to be of the same attitude of mind as the Lord Jesus Christ. *"Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh"*. The Lord Jesus came here to do the will of God which He did to perfection, but that will involved the greatest suffering possible, for it meant His going into death that He might deliver God's people for Himself. So it is a challenge to us. How are we going to live the rest of our time? Peter speaks about the time past. That was sufficient *"to have wrought the will of the Gentiles"*. What is the will of the

Gentiles?—the things that Peter goes over in the verses we read. How distasteful they are to the Christian, but that is what the natural man, the flesh in us, lusts after. So we have to deal with these things, and overcome the flesh with the help of the Holy Spirit.

People in the world do not understand the Christian; they cannot understand how Christians find their life outside of *“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life”*. They do not understand the life of the Christian, because it is a life hidden with the Christ in God. We have something far more precious than the world and its pursuits could ever give us, so let us have done with the worldly things that occupied us in the past.

The passage in Philippians would be an encouragement to us. Paul says that he does not, *“count to have got possession myself”*. Think of all that Paul had given up, things that he could count filth, because of his knowledge of Christ as his Lord and Saviour. He lost everything here and he counted it as dung: it meant nothing to him, *“on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”*.

So he says here, *“I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing—forgetting the things behind”*. One of the things that marked Israel in the wilderness journey from Egypt to the land of promise was that they continually hankered after the things they had left in Egypt. They remembered all the delicacies of Egypt but they forgot the hard labour and the oppression that they went through, all the suffering they endured. Their minds wandered back to Egypt and we very easily, even as believers, let our minds wander back to the former days, but the apostle Paul says here *“forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before”*.

What lies before us? I have spoken about the rest of our time, and if it is only in relation to this scene, how feeble it is, but in stretching out to the things before we think of eternity, when we shall be in the presence of the Lord. What an occupation for our hearts and minds!

I believe the Lord’s supper and the service of praise and worship

which flows from it is a real encouragement to lift our souls above things here, as it connects us with our eternal portion to have our part and place in the service of God.

So Paul says, *"I pursue, looking towards the goal"*. There is an object in view, which the believer has, and for the apostle it was *"looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus"*. What a place that is: *"in Christ Jesus"*. What a blessed portion it is for us.

So let us think about the rest of our time. Is it going to be spent here for ourselves, self pleasing? That is a miserable occupation. May it be that the rest of our time is spent walking in relation to God's will. What a reward there will be. There may be suffering now, we might suffer loss and Peter speaks about suffering and loss, but the eternal gain is such a reward. May we be encouraged to pursue these things at the present time.

Mike Bond,

Worthing, 6th February 2014

Poetry Selection

CHRIST IS THE SAVIOUR OF SINNERS

Christ is the Saviour of sinners,
Christ is the Saviour for me;
Long I was chained in sin's darkness,
Now by His grace I am free.

Now I can say I am pardoned,
Happy and justified, free,
Saved by my blessed Redeemer –
This is the Saviour for me.

Just as I was He received me,
Seeking from judgment to flee;
Now there is no condemnation –
This is the Saviour for me.

Loved with a love that's unchanging,
Blessed with all blessings so free;
How shall I tell out His praises!
This is the Saviour for me.

Soon shall the glory be dawning,
Then, when His face I shall see,
Sing, O my soul, in thy gladness,
This is the Saviour for me!

Chorus:
Saviour of sinners,
Saviour of sinners like me,
Giving Himself as a ransom –
This is the Saviour for me.

Heyman Wreford (1851 – 1935)

PRAISE TO THE LORD

Praise the Lord for He is glorious!
Never shall His promise fail;
God hath made His saints victorious;
Sin and death shall not prevail!
Praise the God of our salvation;
Hosts on high, His power proclaim;
Heaven and earth and all creation,
Praise and magnify His name!

Foundling Hospital Collection 1796

From "Living Water No 24

OUR HOPE

It may be ere another day,
His shout will call us hence away,
And we shall see the Lord;
That face once marred all bright will be,
The travail of His soul He'll see,
By all His own adored.

Then His own image we shall bear,
As we surround Him in the air,
The trophies of His love;
The love that brought Him down to die,
Love that must have us all on high
With Him to dwell above.

For Him we would in patience wait,
With ear attuned at wisdom's gate
To hear His well-known voice;
Speaking of love beyond all thought,
The Father's love to us now brought,
Where He and we rejoice.

But soon His joy will know no bound,
That voice of holy song will sound
Through heaven and earth abroad,
The universe of bliss will come
And righteousness shall find its home,
Where dwells the living God.

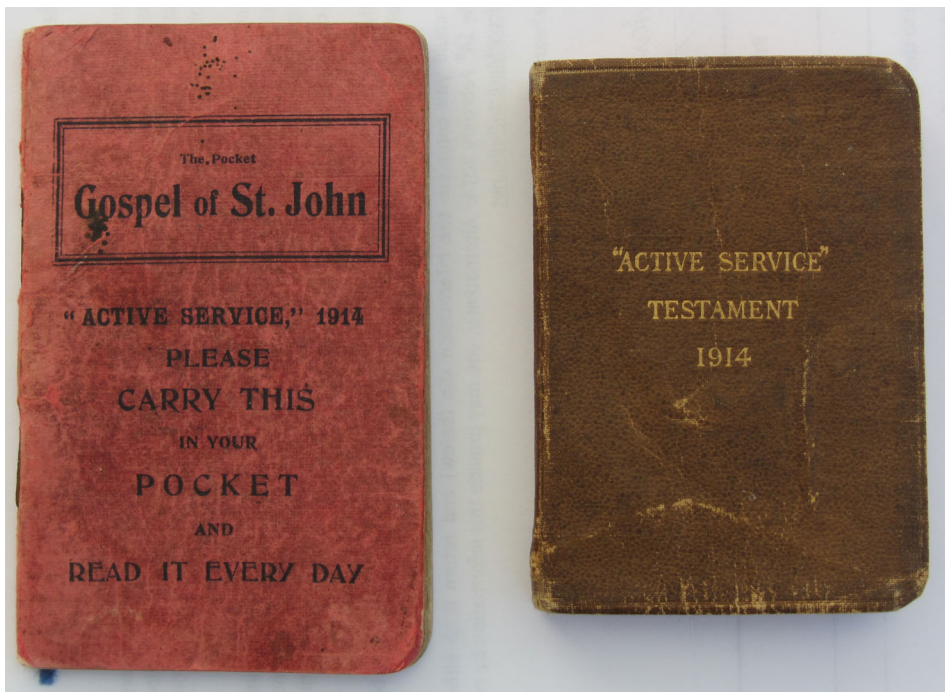
Joseph Pellatt (1843 – 1913)
October 1907

God willing, in issue No 125 there will be a reprint from Living Water No 25 selected by Sarah Clarke

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.

Testimony Section

"ACTIVE SERVICE BOOKLETS" FROM THE GREAT WAR



In all the publicity surrounding the 100th anniversary of the commencement of the 1st World War little seems to have been written about the Active Service booklets that were given to the soldiers and sailors.

The Scripture Gift Mission, together with the Naval and Military Bible Society, produced millions of copies of the Gospel of John and also of the complete New Testament for distribution. The

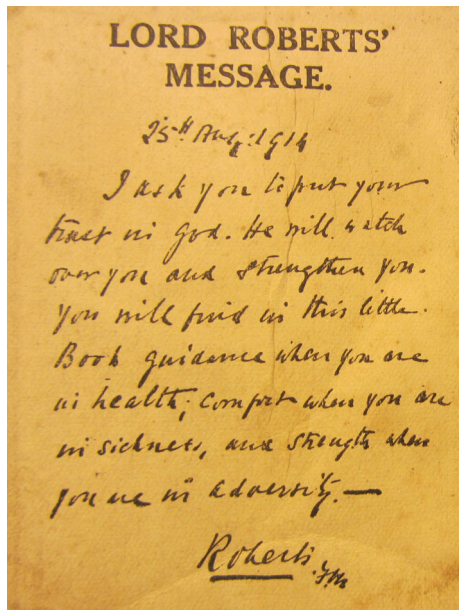
books were small in size so that they would fit into the top pocket of a uniform. Throughout the war there were various editions and there are some variations in what was included in the front and back pages, but all of the books issued to soldiers carried a facsimile hand-written message from Lord Roberts, a retired Commander in Chief of the British army; it read:

25th Aug 1914

I ask you to put your trust in God. He will watch over you and strengthen you. You will find in this little Book guidance when you are in health. comfort when you are in sickness, and strength when you are in adversity—

Roberts

FM



The books issued to sailors contained a message from Admiral Jellicoe, Commander of the British Grand Fleet.

In many of the Testaments Lord Roberts' message was followed by that reprinted on page 18 opposite.

In some of the booklets these passages were printed in bold in the body of the text along with number of other passages such as:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him John 3:36, and

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name. John 20:31.

THE WAY TO LIFE

I am a sinner

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: - Isaiah 53:6

Beyond self-help

By grace ye are saved through faith: and this not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast – Ephesians 2:8-9

But Jesus can save me

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us – Romans 5:8

He is the bearer of my sin

The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all - Isaiah 53:6

Because God loved me

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life – John 3:16

Jesus is my Saviour

But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name – John 1:12

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved – Acts 16:31

I acknowledge Him as my Lord

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth is confession made unto salvation – Romans 10:9-10

And trust Him to keep me

But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil – 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Hymns were printed at the back of many of the Gospel books, the most common being:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Sun of my soul, my Saviour dear O God our help in ages past, All hail the power of Jesu's name Jesus, lover of my soul· Abide with me	When I survey the wondrous cross Just as I am without one plea Jesus the very thought of Thee Eternal Father, strong to save Fight the good fight Onward Christian soldiers
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Finally, printed on the inside of the back cover was the "Decision Card" . Again this varied between the various editions

<p>DECISION CARD</p> <p>Being convinced that I am a sinner, and believing that Christ died for me, I now accept Him as my personal Saviour, and with His help I intend to confess Him before men</p> <p>"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name". John 1:12.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Name _____</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Address _____</p> <p>If you desire any further spiritual guidance please apply to the Secretary, Scripture Gift Mission, 15 Strand, London WC</p>
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Large numbers of soldiers signed these cards and many also followed this up by writing to the Scripture Gift Mission (SGM), or to the people who had given out the books. One wrote to the SGM: 'I have signed the Decision Form at the end of the Gospel of John that was given to me at the station. I have accepted Christ as my Saviour. I wish you would pray for me in the hour of trial'.

The books were given out by churches, the London City Mission, nursing organisations and very many individuals. The Mayor of one town in Cheshire personally gave a copy to every recruit from his town as he swore them in. One man who visited an

army camp in Hampshire where men were training prior to going to France said that 20 men signed the card in one day bringing the number known to him who had signed at the camp to 163. Another distributor recorded that 70 men signed in one day.

Heyman Wreford (known to some readers of this magazine as the author of *Christ is the Saviour of Sinners* – included in the poetry section of this issue) gave away a number of the Active Service Testaments. Two of the Testaments given out by him – both with signed “Decisions” – are held in the Imperial War Museum’s collection in London. Dr Wreford affixed a personal message on the inside front cover of each book. This message and the decision of William J Barnon are reproduced below:

<p style="text-align: right;">The Firs Denmark Road Exeter England</p> <p>Dear Friend, If you want to go to heaven this book will show you the way. If you want your sins forgiven, it will tell you of the precious blood of Jesus that cleanseth from all sin.</p> <p><u>If I can help you to Christ, or help you on you way to heaven, do write to me.</u></p> <p><u>“SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES”</u></p> <p><u>Read:- John iii.16 John iii.36 Acts ii.21 Eph.ii.8&9 Acts xvi.31</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">HEYMAN WREFORD</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DECISION CARD</p> <p>Being convinced that I am a sinner, and believing that Christ died for me, I now accept Him as my personal Saviour, and with His help I intend to confess Him before men</p> <p>“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name”. John 1:12.</p> <p>Date 30/11/17 Liege Bty</p> <p>Name Gr. W. Barnon</p> <p>Address 11, Thomas St Grangetown Cardiff</p> <p>If you desire any further spiritual guidance please apply to the Secretary, Scripture Gift Mission, 15 Strand, London WC</p>
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The “Decision date” is interesting; it coincides with the ending of the battle of Passchendaele.

Another Testament in the Museum's collection where the Decision form has been signed, this time by H. Britton, has a note in the front, presumably from his wife, which reads:

*To the one
in need of this
Testament
From
Heather*

As part of the commemoration of the Great War, the Scripture Gift Mission – now known as Lifewords – has produced a facsimile edition of the Gospel of John as issued to the troops. God used the horrors of the Great War, and there were horrors aplenty, to make many aware of their need of Christ and to trust in Him. Let us pray that the issue of the commemorative edition will not just be regarded as another souvenir but will result in many seeing that they are sinners and accepting Christ as a personal Saviour and confessing Him before others.

Ed.

AN EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO MISS DAWES

Greetings in Christ, Miss Dawes,

I was most interested to hear that your mother never read to you from the Old Testament when you were a girl and this leads me to tell you a little story. I am now essentially retired but I have been a practising surveyor and a question arose which took me to Romsey in company with a solicitor to deal with a boundary dispute. Coming home the solicitor asked me to stop in Romsey town while he went to a shop for a birthday present that he had forgotten about.

I parked the car and the solicitor went off to the shops. To my right was a small Morris Minor and I could see that the elderly man sitting in it was reading the New Testament. So I lowered

my window and tapped on his window, he lowered it, and I said to him, *“Understandest thou what thou readest?”* (Acts 8:30). He beckoned to me at once to join him in his car and I sat beside him. He exclaimed to me, ‘Isn’t God good?’

I nodded and said, ‘Yes, it says in the Bible, *“Thou art good, and doest good”*’ (Psalm 119:68). I then said, ‘When did you discover that God was good’.

He replied, ‘When I was a boy of 18’.

‘Coo’, I said, ‘That is a long way back, what happened?’

He said, ‘It was during the Great War. I was enlisted and was drafted to a howitzer battery together with another young chap named Jim. We were both eighteen and we became great buddies. One day we were getting a real pounding, the Germans were firing heavily, shells were falling all round. The gunners could not leave the guns so they asked Jim and me to go back and get some food and bring it up on a stretcher.’

‘Well, Jim and I went back and got some food and strapped it on a stretcher and began to make our way back to the battery. Every 10 yards or so we had to fall on our faces because of the shells bursting around us. We nearly got back to the guns but suddenly everything went black. I remember no more until I was in a hospital packed with casualties on stretchers. I could see my form under the blanket on the stretcher and I said to a hospital orderly who happened to be passing, ‘Have I got any legs?’ and he told me that I had both my legs and arms but I was damaged inside and would be sent back to England. Then I asked, ‘Where is Jim?’ to which he replied, ‘Who is Jim?’ I told him that Jim was my pal. The Orderly looked at the label on my stretcher and said, ‘It seems you are the only one they picked up, son’. That meant that Jim was blown to pieces and he was only 6 feet away from me on the other end of the stretcher. God gave me another chance, I did not know the Saviour and He spared my life and gave me another chance!’

‘What did you do?’

‘I called to Him, there and then’.

‘What, from that stretcher?’

‘Yes.’

Just to test him, I said, ‘Did you not send for a Padre?’

He looked at me, his eyes glowing and shining and said, ‘Sir, you do not need a Padre, you just call upon Him and He hears you’. He said, ‘Somewhere in my New Testament it says, *“Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Acts 2:21). I called upon Him and I was conscious that I was heard and I was saved that day.’

It was very wonderful and so I said, ‘You are reading the New Testament.’ He nodded, so I said, ‘Do you ever read the Old Testament?’

‘No’, he said, ‘I read the New, I like reading about Jesus’.

I said, ‘I can understand that. Do you read the gospel of John?’

‘Yes’, he replied, ‘It is my favourite gospel’.

‘Then’, I said, ‘Tell me this, the Lord says to certain persons, in John’s account, Ye, *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me”* (John 5:39). What was He talking about when He said, ‘Ye search the Scriptures?’

He looked at me, his eyes opened wider. ‘Were the gospels written then?’ he asked. I told him that neither the gospels nor the epistles were written at that time and the scriptures that the Lord was speaking about was the Old Testament, that part of the Bible which he never read! My companion was quite surprised and asked for an example of where the Old Testament spoke of Jesus, so I told him about the Tabernacle.

I said, ‘In the holiest of all there was an ark of wood, imperishable wood, overlaid within and without with pure gold and the lid was of pure gold, that was the mercy seat. If you read Romans, the Epistle to the Romans in your New Testament, it speaks in one translation of, *“Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood”* (Romans 3:24, 25). That was the lid of that chest. The wood is the humanity of Jesus. The gold—overlaid with gold—His divinity. That ark was a safe

repository for the two tables of stone which were written with the finger of God. Yes, the Lord Jesus could say prophetically, *“thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8).*’ The dear man was overjoyed to hear this. Then the solicitor returned and tapped on the window. I said, ‘I must go now. Goodbye, God bless you’.

When I got back into my own car the solicitor said to me, ‘Who was that you were talking to? Was he a friend of yours?’ Had you known him long?’

I said, ‘Well about ten minutes’.

The solicitor looked surprised and said, ‘Well, you were as thick as thieves when I got back. What made you speak to him?’

I said, ‘I saw he was reading the New Testament and so I joined him.’

‘Ah, yes’, said the solicitor, ‘They tell me in the city that you are very keen on the Bible.’ And that led to a most interesting conversation all the way home from Romsey to the house where the solicitor lived in Gosport. But that is another tale altogether.

I thought, Miss Dawes, you would like to hear that story.

Archie Wade

Extract from a letter to Miss Dawes, undated.

I would like to thank Mr Arthur Hamilton of Gloucester for making this letter available.

A voice from the past

THE MERCY OF GOD

“Keeping mercy for thousands”- Exodus 34:7

Keeping mercy! – never expended – never worn out! Always in hand – always ready for poor sinners, even for thousands! Yes, even for thousands and millions of transgressors who come to the Fountain of mercy by Jesus Christ. Oh, that precious blood which can meet the need of the whole world – even your sins.

Poor sinner, is it your desire to get rid of your besetting sin? Would you be holy if you could? Would you willingly give up your destructive sin to be made a child of God? There is nothing to

prevent your being so, nothing but your own will; for He who keeps mercy for thousands, has mercy in store for you – if you are but willing to accept it upon the terms proposed by the Lord Himself, *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God and he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7)*

Whatever may have been your sins, or however great their number, here is pardon – freely offered to the humble penitent by our gracious God, who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, for He delighteth in mercy.

Your old companions may despise you, and you may hate your own self, but God hates only sin, not the sinner. God despises your sin, but yearns after your soul, like an affectionate Father – crying out: *“Turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?” (Ezekiel 33:11)*

It is not the will of God that any should perish but it is His will that every one who believeth in Christ may have everlasting life (John 4:39-40). It is the earnest desire of God to save you, sinful as you are.

Oh, turn to God, and He will turn to you, not with an angry frown but with a smile of love and mercy – which He keeps *“for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin”*. *“Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?” (Ezekiel 33:11).*

John Vine Hall (1774-1860)

Extracted from “The Sinner’s Friend”. This concludes these extracts.

A word for today

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

“And Moses said to the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them); and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, and that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth

over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard of the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” - Numbers 14:13 – 19.

This is one of the great prayers of the Bible. This is perhaps the most remarkable of the prayers of Moses for which he is so honourably commended in the 99th Psalm. The prayers in the Bible are a singularly instructive study. It is most useful to seek them out and read them one by one, beginning with Abraham’s prayer for Sodom in Genesis 18 and going on to the prayers of the book of the Revelation. One matter that will strike you in such a study is that so large a proportion of the great prayers of the Bible are intercessions. While all true prayer is welcome in heaven, – a special welcome awaits the prayers we offer, not for ourselves, but for others. It is plain that in this kind of prayer Moses excelled. He had occasion again and again to plead for the people, that God’s wrath might be turned away from them and he never failed to rise to these occasions. One of the most striking occasions is before us in the text.

The scene was Kadesh-Barnea, on the northern edge of the great wilderness, and on the southernmost border of Canaan. After having encamped for twelve months in the wilderness of Sinai, where they received the law, the congregation marched north through the desert. In a few weeks they reached the border of the Land of Promise. They saw the land, but they did not enter

it. *“They could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19).* First, they would not trust God’s word regarding the land but would send spies to see it and bring a report. When the spies returned, they would hear only those of them who brought a bad report; then, they proposed to reject Moses, choose a captain of their own choice and return to Egypt. In every view you can take of it, this was a most perverse rebellion. The Lord’s words were sharp and threatening: *“I will smite them... and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they” (Numbers 14:12).*

This was not the first time that Moses had heard such words, for this was not the first instance of perverse

The remarkable points in the prayer are not the favours requested but the arguments by which the prayer is supported

unbelief by the congregation. When the Israelites were still in the wilderness, and while the thunders of the law were still ringing in their ears, they took occasion of the absence of Moses to break into idolatry. You remember how Moses acted on that occasion – how he pleaded with the Lord for the people – how he would take no denial, refusing to separate his fortunes from those of his brethren, and going so far as to beg that if the people were to be destroyed, the Lord would blot him also out of His Book. You will notice how that prayer prevailed. The Lord not only pardoned the people’s sins but rewarded the faith of Moses by granting him a clearer revelation of His name and glory than man had seen before (See Exodus 32:11-13)..

Now turning to the prayer itself, *“Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now”.* What Moses pleads for is that the Lord would forgive the people, revoke the sentence and fulfil the promise He had made to them. The remarkable points in the prayer are not the favours requested but the arguments by which the prayer is supported. Let us weigh them carefully.

Firstly, Moses urges the glory of God's name: *"And Moses said to the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them); and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, and that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard of the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness"*.

In effect Moses says 'Will it not have a great effect on the nations if our march to Canaan is marked with success? Will the heathen not see that the God of Israel is the Most High, that His promise is sure, and the people is blest who put their trust in Him? If, on the contrary, we perish miserably in the wilderness, will not the heathen exult over us and blaspheme Thy great name? Have pity therefore on Thy great name' (compare Ezekiel 20:13-14). You see the scope of the argument from the name of the Lord. It is as appropriate to us in our times as ever it was to ancient believers. When the Lord taught His disciples to pray, the petition which comes first is *"Hallowed be thy name"* and that reminds you and me of the place which the glory of God's name should have in all our thoughts and desires. Even in the seeking of other things, we should seek them in connection with this supreme end – the glory of God's name.

I might illustrate this from any of the great benefits which are daily sought of God, for example, deliverance from temptation. I do not say that it is wrong to seek this for the peace and comfort of our own hearts. An Old Testament saint did so in the prayer, *"O that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me"* (1Chronicles 4:10); and I am sure that the prayer of Jabez was a good prayer. Nevertheless, it is better to say, 'Lord, keep me from evil that I may not by deed or word bring dishonour on Thy holy name – that I may not give occasion to unbelievers to

reproach the Christian's hope, or cause the weak in faith to stumble.'

I might speak to the same effect about other matters. It is well to say, 'Lord, grant me growth in knowledge and

holiness, that my joy may be full'; but it is better to say, 'Lord, help me to be wiser and holier that I may commend the Lord Jesus Christ to all who see me'. This argument from the glory of His name, when it is urged sincerely, imparts a high tone to our supplications and has great power with God.

Secondly, Moses next pleads the Lord's promise: "*And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation*". The reference here is quite unmistakably to the great declaration of the name of the Lord in Exodus 34:6-7, when the people, having set up the golden calf, were condemned to be destroyed, and Moses, standing in the breach, cried to the Lord for mercy. You will remember that the Lord not only granted the mercy that was sought, but made Moses' intercession the occasion for showing him His glory and declaring to him His great name, "*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and will by no means clear the guilty*". The scene was one that Moses could never forget. How it must have been brought to his mind at this point when for the second time he hears the people condemned to perish for their rebellion. He finds in it encouragement to plead again with God for the people. He, as it were, reminds God that it is His prerogative and glory to forgive and to be merciful. Moses reminds God of the way that He had spoken to him, of the things that marked out His glory. Blessed be God, He had declared His name

**Moses ... as it were,
reminds God that it is His
prerogative and glory to
forgive and to be merciful**

to Moses and He has given us a yet greater and fuller declaration of Himself in Christ.

The more firmly we grasp God's name – the gospel of His grace – the more likely we are to be able to pray as Moses prayed. More particularly, Moses prayer teaches us to plead God's promises when we pray. These are the best arguments before God. There is great force in the reasoning in the Epistle to the Hebrews: *"He hath said... so that we may boldly say"* (Hebrews 13:5). What the Lord has promised to give in answer to prayer, we may ask without fear.

Thirdly, Moses pleads the Lord's former mercies. *"Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."* Moses remembers the miracles wrought in Egypt for the deliverance of Israel, the passage of the Red Sea, the twelve-month sojourn in Horeb, and he remembers the mercies of the journey from Sinai to Kadesh. These show what the Lord can do. Moses pleads all this as an argument why the Lord, having brought the Israelites thus far, should not forsake them now.

I draw attention to this because you will find the same remembrance of past mercies running through all the greater prayers of the Bible. Indeed this is one characteristic which distinguishes the prayers of the Bible from the prayers that you find in other devotional books. Those of the Bible contain so much narrative. You will have observed this in the Psalms. A large proportion of these call to remembrance events in the past history of Israel; certain of the longest are historical from beginning to end – historical, be it observed, without ceasing to be really prayers. The same feature is found in many of the other prayers scattered through the books of the Bible. The explanation is not far to seek. God's works in relation to His people, next to His word, are a revelation of His mind and the devout commemoration of them is fitted to strengthen faith and encourage prayer.

The bearing of this on ourselves is important. Take careful note of God's dealings with you and with others. Recollect and plead

them, especially in intercessions for the people of God. The history of God's people has been marked by great deliverances and blessings and we are to keep His great acts in mind and gather encouragement from them to hope in God. When dangers befall, let us cast ourselves on God. Remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High we will confide in Him and when the tempests and dangers have done their work in humbling us and stirring us up to seek God with greater devotion of heart, they will be stilled and the sun will shine forth again.

I would not have referred to the intercession of Moses for unbelieving Israel as a subject for meditation today if I had not believed that there is in it a message from God for us. I assume that I am addressing a company of praying people. I assume that everyone here was careful this morning to enter the secret chamber and speak with God, alone in prayer; and that your secret chamber will see you on your knees again before you sleep. I assume that in your families also you will have called on God's name this morning.

Let me ask then, whether you remember others in your prayers? It is an astonishing privilege and favour that the Lord invites us to pray for others. I would press this question. Do you make intercession for your friends, your brethren, your neighbours? Do you habitually think over their condition, and spread it before the Lord in secret? I know very well how peculiarly apt we are to avoid this kind of prayer. Yet on the other hand, is there not great weight due to the circumstance noted at the beginning that such a large proportion of the Bible prayers – prayers that come to us with the seal of God's approbation – belong to the intercessory class? Some close observers of the Lord's ways have recorded it as their experience that their intercessory prayers have been answered more distinctly than their prayers for themselves.

It is even more important that the whole church should not be forgotten in the prayers of Christian people. I admit that the position of Moses differed from ours in that he was specially the leader and prophet of the chosen people and therefore had a

special responsibility in relation to their needs, but all are exhorted to *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee”* (Psalm 122:6)..

There are two great errors into which men fall in this matter. There are some who though they are professed Christians do not concern themselves about the prosperity of the church at all; they are not grieved for her afflictions and divisions, and take no interest in her fruitfulness. That is surely a great error; and yet how common it is! How often the pettiest piece of this world’s business awakens more serious and lively interest than the weightiest business or trial of the church of God.

There is another evil, not quite so common perhaps, but just about as mischievous. I refer to the prayer-less zeal which passes with some for Christian public spirit. These are men who take a great and even consuming interest in church affairs. They think much about such matters, take a prominent part in furthering them, and will even open their purses and give freely for their advancement. They are exceedingly zealous; but their zeal is after all, only a party zeal. There is no breadth of godliness, no spiritual life in it. They do not labour fervently in prayer to God for the church. Of these two evils I do not know which is the greater – which is the more mischievous in its effects, or the more dangerous to the persons concerned. Let it be our endeavour to shun them both.

On the one hand, open your heart to take an interest in the cause of Christ’s truth and Christ’s church – an interest like that which Christ Himself took, as it is said of Him, *“The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up”* (Psalm 69:9 & John 2:17). On the other hand, let ours be a prayerful zeal – a zeal which will constrain us, like Moses, to plead with the Lord for mercy and a blessing on His people. There is something fatally wrong with that interest in the things of the Lord which does not habitually express itself in importunate intercession and which does not nourish its fires in secret communion with the Saviour.

William Binnie (1823 – 1886)