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Living Water

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Recent Ministry

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA OF GALILEE

And on the third day a marriage took place in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also, and his disciples, were invited to the marriage. And wine being deficient, the mother of Jesus says to him, They have no wine. Jesus says to her, What have I to do with thee, woman? mine hour has not yet come. His mother says to the servants, Whatever he may say to you, do. Now there were standing there six stone water-vessels, according to the purification of the Jews, holding two or three measures each. Jesus says to them, Fill the water-vessels with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he says to them, Draw out now, and carry it to the feast-master. And they carried it. But when the feast-master had tasted the water which had been made wine (and knew not whence it was, but the servants knew who drew the water), the feast-master calls the bridegroom, and says to him, Every man sets on first the good wine, and when men have well drunk, then the inferior; thou hast kept the good wine till now. This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him. John 2:1-11

I want to use this Scripture to speak to you tonight. It is a well-known Scripture but an interesting one. It has often puzzled me as to why this particular sign was done, why this was the first one that Jesus did; it says, *"This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory"*. Why was it that Jesus did this particular sign? John tells us that the Lord did many signs, only some of which he recorded, but that the signs he did record are, *"written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name"* (John 20:31).

So, why, of all the signs which Jesus did, was this the first one? John obviously thought it was very important and he recorded it for us in his gospel. Jesus said that He came to do the will of the Father, came to do God's will (see John 6:38). He was not diverted

from that at any time. And yet, why did He do this miracle in Cana of Galilee? A small village in Galilee, we do not know how large it was, exactly, but it was not one of the more prominent ones, 10 or 15 miles from Capernaum. Jesus was there and there was this wedding.

Weddings in those days, as they do now, attract a lot of interest and people; guests are very pleased to be at a wedding. I understand that at these small villages they would often be quite big weddings; there could be 200 or 300 present and usually it would go on for several days.

Jesus was there. *"And the mother of Jesus was there"*, it says; presumably she had some link to the wedding because she seems to have been involved in identifying this shortage of wine.

But it still puzzled me a great deal as to why the Lord would do a miracle like this. We often associate wine with excess, people doing stupid things. The Lord nevertheless did this miracle and, like all His miracles and His parables, it was intended to teach us something. Perhaps, like many of them, the disciples at the time did not appreciate exactly what it was that the Lord was saying but when He was raised from amongst the dead a lot of these things became more obvious to them. Perhaps if we look at them we will see why it was that the Lord did this particular miracle.

Jesus and His disciples were invited to the marriage. Well, we know of six of His disciples at this point; whether there were any more I do not know. They were witnesses to the fact of what Jesus did here.

So the mother of Jesus came to Him and said, *"They have no wine"*. It is a very poor state of things in a marriage celebration to find that the main drink, intended to last through the whole occasion had run out. It was five months after the grape harvest; here they were and they had run out of wine. What a poor state of things and so the mother of Jesus says to Him, *"They have no wine"*.

You might think that the way Jesus answered her was, perhaps, a bit off-putting, *"What have I to do with thee, woman? mine hour has not yet come"*. He did not say, mother, as perhaps we might have expected; He said, woman, as if to point out that

there is a distance between Him and the things of this world; Jesus had not come to meet the needs of men's daily lives. He had come to do something much greater.

He came to satisfy your and my greatest need. That is why Jesus had come, to do the will of Him that had sent Him. That was to meet your and my greatest need: the need for forgiveness of sins, the need to be put right with God, the need to be assured of God's love towards us. That is what Jesus came to do and if you trace His pathway here recorded for us in the gospels it explains all the wonderful things that Jesus did, the many miracles and other signs, the many things He said. But always He was looking forward to when He would go to the cross.

He went to the cross and He suffered there on my account and your account, that our sins might be forgiven and that we might have peace with God, that we might be set right, that our relationship with God might be put right, that we might be reconciled to Him. That is what Jesus came for and that is what He accomplished for us if we accept Him as Saviour.

And so, I think, He pointed out to Mary that just to arrange details like this at this wedding was not what He had come for. He had come for some far greater thing and He was not going to do anything which did not contribute towards that work.

Mary knew who to turn to when there was a problem or a difficulty and I can tell you that when there is a problem or a difficulty the best thing you can do is to turn to Jesus. Why did Mary come to Jesus and think that perhaps He would be able to help? It says that this was the beginning of signs; clearly the Lord had not done it before. Yet Mary would have remembered how, in that stable, the shepherds had come and given their message and she would remember the message that she had from the angel; she would remember their trip down to Egypt to escape Herod's putting to death all the babies in Bethlehem; she would remember how they went up to the temple when the Lord was twelve years old and how He had been left behind and they had found Him in the temple. And she would remember all the other things that had happened in those thirty years leading up to when the Lord's public service

started that we have read of here. She would remember the promises, what Simeon said, *“Lord ... mine eyes have seen thy salvation,... a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32)*. And she would have seen how different the Lord Jesus was from His brothers and sisters.

Here was One whom you could rely upon. He was wise. He knew just what was needed. He was compassionate and loving. So she turned to Jesus. She knew that if He said something then the answer was to do it and so she says to the servants, *“Whatever he may say to you, do”*.

There were these big stone water vessels there, six of them. I understand they held something like 25 gallons each so it would be a total of about 150 gallons, quite a lot. They were told to go and fill them with water and they were obedient to the word. Just as Mary had said, *“Whatever He may say to you, do”*, they had done it.

They had not brought their own ideas. They had not thought, ‘Well, we have a bit of inferior wine, we will put that in and try and improve it or perhaps we should go to another village and try and get some more wine and then dilute it’. No. They did what Jesus said.

That is the answer for us too, just to do what Jesus says: *“Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)*. Jesus has the answer, dear friends. He has proved His love in that He went to the cross for you and for me. No one could divert Him, He went that way of Himself. Men took Him, they led Him outside Jerusalem and nailed Him to a cross. Jesus could have come away from there at any time; He could have called for 12 legions of angels but He did not; He went the way of the cross and He provided a means of salvation.

“Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). Jesus has the answer and if you listen to what He has to say then that is the way of blessing. These servants did what Jesus said, in obedience. They did not bring their own ideas. Perhaps you think that you have some good works, that you have done some good things in your life: there is nothing to be added to

what Jesus has done. He has done it all.

The Lord Jesus went to the cross. He was the One that suffered and bore that judgment. There is nothing to be added to that. He bore it that you might go free, that you might have your sins forgiven and have peace with God.

So they were obedient and they filled the water vessels to the brim. There is a wonderful provision that has been made for us. The gospel goes out to whosoever will. Forgiveness is available to every one of us if we accept Jesus as our Saviour, come to Him in repentance and own Him as Lord, come under the shelter of His precious blood. May each one of us answer to that call, the appeal of love.

Then they were told to draw it out. You come to the gospel preaching and you can hear the message, what is said rightly about what Jesus has done, the blessing that is available. But if you just go away again without heeding the word or accepting it for yourself then you are like one who has not drawn out of the water vessel. You need to draw on the blessing that is available. It is freely offered to you. There is nothing to be added to it, nothing extra to be done. It is for you to freely accept. But you have to accept it, dear friend. Each and every one of us has to turn to Jesus for ourselves and ask Him to bless us, forgive us and come into our lives. He wants you to know the joy of having your sins forgiven and having peace with God.

What joy to know that you belong to Jesus, to know that no one can take you out of His hand. If you belong to Him you are secure. That is how you can have perfect peace because no one can snatch us out of the hand of Jesus.

They took the wine to the feast master who did not know where it had come from. He identified that it was of the very best. What they had had before was nothing to equal it. Whatever life you may have had before, what Jesus is offering you is far, far better. Whatever you have found in this life, Jesus has something far better.

He said to His disciples, *"In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a*

place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be” (John 14:2,3). The best is the last. Even if we are getting old in years, if life is coming to its end here—we do not know when any one might be taken—I can tell you that the best is still to come.

**we have no
merits of
our own**

While you can enjoy forgiveness and peace and joy now there is a wonderful prospect to those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. To be for ever with the Lord, with Him in the glory! It says that He manifested His glory in this sign. It is to bring out to us the blessing that is ours. O the greatness of the One who has loved us and given Himself for us, the One who wants to bring us into blessing. But why did this take place in Cana of Galilee, an insignificant village? Why did it not take place in Jerusalem, Capernaum, Nazareth, one of these more prominent places? It took place in Cana of Galilee, the place where Nathaniel came from, I do not know if that is why there was this connection here but it was the place remembered by the disciples and by John as the place where the Lord changed the water into wine.

The things of this world are unimportant. Jesus came to those who were insignificant, those who were lowly, who were poor, who had nothing to offer. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”* and so on (Matthew 5:3-6).

Jesus came to save those who were sinners, those who had nothing to commend them, those who were at a distance from God, not those who thought that they were all right. Jesus spoke about one, a Pharisee who said, *“God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men”*. But there was another man who, *“would not lift up even his eyes to heaven”* and he said, *“O God, have compassion on me, the sinner”* (Luke 18:11-13). That is what we need to realise, that we have no merits of our own, can do nothing to help ourselves, but that God has provided a remedy in Jesus.

He is able to provide for us. He is able to provide for your greatest need, He is able to provide for all your other needs, too. But you must first to come to Him in repentance and put your faith and trust in Him to receive the blessing. Turn to Jesus. Do as He says. Accept the blessing that is freely available, the very best that has been prepared for you. He could not have done any more than to lay down His life for you that you might go free, that I might go free.

I am sure that there are many other things that could be said about this passage but these are just a few things which speak to me as to why Jesus did this particular miracle and how He displayed His glory that you and I might look back and wonder at the things that Jesus did and know, too, that He is now in the glory having come out of the grave triumphant, having dealt with sin and sins, and having overcome the power of Satan that we might go free, that we might be reconciled to God and might have peace and joy in believing.

The very best is saved until last and that is prepared for those who trust Him, dear friends, and I would that every one might be looking for that moment when Jesus comes again to take us to be for ever with Himself. That is the wonderful promise, the good wine. There is nothing like it. Accept the invitation today for His name's sake. Amen.

Bill Trim

A preaching of the gospel, London, September 2013.

PERSONS MADE SUITABLE FOR THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

I seek the Lord's help to speak about the Lord's touch, the Lord's look, and the Lord's message and how as served by the Lord in this way we become suited to His presence.

The Lord's Touch

Touching the Leper – Matthew 8:1-3

I have read of a leper, of blind persons and of one who was deaf and could not speak rightly. As we see our own history we see

something of ourselves in these persons. Apart from the work of Christ, we are lepers, we are blind and we are deaf to the Lord's word - that is how we are according to nature. We need a touch from Him if we are to be suited to His presence. What is really affecting is that the Lord is ready to touch each of these cases. He does not speak only, He touches them.

In the first case it was a very significant touch. Leprosy is a disease that is contagious: you cannot touch a leper. But the Lord could touch the leper. He was not affected by anything of that kind: He was pure and perfect in His Person but also He was full of grace. Think of the Lord, looking at these people in that way, in all their sin and their resistance against Him. I would be resisting the Lord were it not for the touch of His grace. If it was not for the touch of His hand the leprosy of sin would not have been taken away from me, as it has from all those who believe on Him.

It is a mighty touch that we read of here. He had come down from the mountain where, very often, He went to be alone in prayer. Think for a moment of what must have been on the Lord's heart as coming down from the intimate communion with His Father into a scene of rejection and difficulty. Yet He was there, the Creator, the powerful One who could operate everything in an instant but He gently goes touching these people one by one, meeting their need individually.

Now, this is the first thing that we need. It is the gospel that brings us the news of the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us. He has gone to the cross for us. He died for us; His blood was shed in order that our sins might be removed. It is through that, that the touch of the Lord can affect each one of us.

Leprosy is symbolical of sin in ourselves; sin is there, it is in our nature. The Lord brings in a delivering touch and the immediate consequence is that the leprosy left the man. In each of the three cases we read of the touch of the Lord brings immediate healing.

Well, this leper came to Him and he did Him homage and he said

to Him, *“Lord, if thou wilt, thou art able to cleanse me”*. It is very affecting because this man knew that the Lord had the power to cleanse him but he was not quite sure about the will of the Lord to cleanse him. But the Lord immediately clears the way. He answers in a way that is unique to Him: *“I will”*. None of us could have answered, I will, because we have no power of ourselves; any power that we have must come from the Lord, but He could decide of His own accord: He said *“I will”* and He did it straightaway. It is a remarkable picture of the power with which the Lord could remove what was a hindrance to the blessing. In the Law in the Old Testament there was a whole lot of processes associated with the cleansing of a leper, but here the Lord does everything in an instant and it was His will applied to this man.

So this is the start of our pathway as believers. We come to Christ full of sins and the Lord removes them from us. Of course, that requires on our side the acknowledgement of our state. This man knew he was a leper. That is why he went to the Lord and asked for His help. The Lord has been to the cross and there He has met every claim of God in relation to the sinner, so He is able to meet the need of each of us. His power is extended to all those that are willing to believe on Him.

The Lord’s Touch

Touching the blind man – Matthew 20:29-34

Now in the second passage that we read we have another healing as the Lord went out from Jericho. Jericho was a place of curse. When the city was destroyed Joshua announced a curse, saying that the man who rebuilt it would lose his eldest son when he laid the foundation and his youngest son when he completed the gates, and this proved to be so when Hiel did rebuild the city (see Joshua 6:26 and 1 Kings 16:34). Then when Elisha came there after the translation of Elijah the poor state of those living there came to light in the way they distrusted God (see 2 Kings 2:15-18).

Now the Lord was coming out of that city and He is full of grace. He finds two blind men sitting by the wayside. These men were not in their leprosy but they could not see. Well, I have thought

of each one of us as in this case. When we start on the Christian pathway perhaps we do not always see what is in view and what is the full extent of God's work and what He has done through the Lord Jesus. We need our eyes opened.

The opening of the eyes is another touch of the Lord. It is a great intervention. They were asking for His mercy. People were objecting to them doing that because they thought the Lord was being disturbed. But the Lord Jesus stops in His way. Imagine the Lord coming out of Jericho and stopping there to meet the requirements of two blind men. Now, His grace was available to them as well. He asks them what they want done. Imagine the Lord asking that of each of us. What do we want from our Lord? Have you ever had to ask Him what you desire that He should do for you? It is such an affecting indication of grace, the Lord looking to us to express our desire. That brings the responsible side with us into view. We have to do with a Lord who is full of grace but He is also a holy Lord, He is a righteous Lord and He wants us to be aware of what our need is. One need is to be relieved of our leprosy; the other need is to have our eyes opened to see the Lord. He is the first Person that these blind men at Jericho saw; He opened their eyes at that moment and they saw Him!

Now, some of us might find it difficult to think of looking on the Lord because He has gone back to heaven; He is not available physically here. But if you go to the Lord and ask Him to open your eyes you will find that the Lord will give you a precious impression of Himself – an impression to be cherished in our hearts once we receive it.

So the Lord at once touched their eyes and again immediately their eyes had sight restored to them and they followed Him. So, when we are converted, we perhaps have a clear impression that our sins are forgiven but then another matter is to follow the Lord. To follow the Lord we have to see Him. Seeing Him and seeing the way is very much a similar thought for the Christian because the Lord said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"*(John 14:6).

So I think that you can see what I mean by “blind”. You can be blind without being physically blind. You can be deaf without being physically deaf. It is a state of soul - a state in which we can be because of our inability before the Lord. But the wonder is that the Lord has come here to perform a work that would enable us to understand what He has done and be filled with impressions of Himself. It is not something that comes to us through natural intelligence or study. It comes through contact with our Lord and the Lord can operate in order to work out things in our own history, in our own selves, so that we may look unto Him and hear Him and be able to speak of it. This is the wonder of His touch affecting each one in their own circumstances.

The Lord does not leave these men who were once blind in their circumstances. He removes the blindness in order that they may be free to enter into the blessing that is before them. The miracles of the Lord are recorded for our instruction so that we may see that what the Lord has done is available for us as well.

The Lord’s Touch

Touching a deaf man – Mark 7:32-35

In the third passage that we read, in Mark’s gospel, the situation is a bit different because here is a deaf man who could not speak right. This man was a very good picture of Israel. The Jews could not hear the Lord’s word and they could not speak right; they could not answer to Him. But let us look to ourselves. Have we an ear for the Lord’s word? Are we able to address Him in the right way that He may be appreciative of our words? These things do not belong to us naturally; we need His touch again.

He touches the ears and the tongue of this man. Immediately the answer comes because divine power is displayed and that touch brought all the power that came from Him in order that the situation could be completely changed. And so, this man could hear the Lord’s word and he could speak rightly. I think that he would have thanked the Lord for what He had done for him and have become a worshipper. That would be the right way of

The touch of the Lord's grace changed each of these persons!

speaking to the Lord: becoming a worshipper.

Now I think that these examples are really good for each of us to consider: -

- Paul (or Saul as he was then) could not see for three days. He had his eyes opened and he saw something of Christ in Ananias and he was set for service from that point onwards.
- Then there is Mary at the feet of the Lord. She was listening to the Lord's words (Luke 10:39). She was a person who was not deaf; she was able to listen to the Lord and be acknowledged by the Lord as one who had, "*chosen the good part*".
- Then there is Thomas, a person who was not able to worship the first time the Lord came. The second time he worshipped the Lord. He was able to look, listen to the Lord and then to speak to Him in a worshipful way.

The touch of the Lord's grace changed each of these persons! What changes can be performed in our souls. I am just speaking in a practical way on account of personal experience. You feel all the smallness of the measure, all the hindrances that come in due to our weakness but the Lord's touch opens the way for us to become worshippers. That was the aim of the Lord. He wanted those who would worship the Father in spirit and truth and that is what He desires now in leading His own in the power of His grace

The Lord's Look ***Luke 22:60-61***

In Luke we read of the Lord looking at Peter when he failed. There is a great contrast here. The Lord must have been oppressed with all the unrighteousness surrounding Him but just, at the right moment, He turned to look at His disciple. It was not a rebuking look; it was a look in view of recovery. And in fact He was sure that would happen, because the Lord says, "*Simon,*

Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to have you, ... but I have besought for thee" (Luke 22:31, 32). He had prayed for Peter and He has prayed for us too.

Some have to go through difficulties and trials more than others. But the Lord's prayer is there in order that we may be kept for Himself. Our eyes may have been opened, our ears opened and our tongue loosed by the service of the Lord. It was so in Peter's case but we still need the Lord's intervention. What grace is expressed in the look of the Lord to His disciple. What effect it brought out immediately. You see the divine power there again. Peter went out at that moment and wept because he understood what had happened in his pathway.

It affected him because he was really attached to the Lord but he could not cope in the situation into which he had come. There are times when we see the Lord's suffering and we understand that what He has done for us is something that only He could do. There is nothing we can do ourselves. It is all accomplished by Him.

The Lord's look is to recover us to communion with His Person. Once this communion is established He would carry on in soul experience, the experience that is needed in our pathway. As we are in the Christian pathway we are persons who have had our leprosy, blindness and deafness taken away by the Lord so that we are suitable to Him and we are set in the Christian company in order that we may be operative in it, that we might be useful servants in that way and experience the power that comes from Him. We see it worked out with Peter. When we read his epistles it is quite evident that he had a history of his own with the Lord and he had been completely recovered to be a faithful member in the gathering of those that were for the Lord Jesus Himself.

The Lord's Message

John 20:16-17

In the last passage we have a message from the Lord which is conveyed through a disciple who was devoted to Him. She was there to seek for her Lord. The righteous desire in her heart was

The Lord is able to view us as His brethren because of what He has done.

soon satisfied. She could not exactly recognise the Lord straightaway but the Lord calls her. So be aware of the Lord's call. Particularly I commend it with affection

to the young ones. You will remember that the Lord called Samuel three times and the third time, with a bit of help from Eli, Samuel answered. Now, if the Lord calls us as He called Mary He wants us to recognise Him, recognise Him as a Man in a new condition in which no other man had been in before. The Lord has accomplished all through His death so we might know what life beyond death is in Himself.

Notice how again the result is immediate. Mary turns around and submits herself to the Lord by saying, 'My Teacher'. It is a wonderful touch of the Lord that affects us and prepares us as true disciples. The preparation of Mary was very fine because the first job that was given to her was to bring the message to the disciples. It is a real blessing for this woman who was there looking for the Lord Jesus. She not only saw Him in His risen state but she was given a message to carry to His disciples.

What was the message? The message declared that the disciples were now in a condition that was similar to the Lord, He says, "*my brethren*". We do not have the right to call ourselves brethren of the Lord: it is the Lord, Himself, who calls us His brethren.

Think of that message. The disciples were blind persons that had been healed, deaf persons that had been made to hear and dumb persons that had been made to speak. They were all able to receive the message. The brethren here were the particular company but it goes beyond the actual company that the Lord sent the message to – it comes right down to our own day. The Lord is able to view us as His brethren because of what He has done.

His message has come to us who have been freed from all that would hinder so that we may be in that relation with Him. He

was amongst His own and they could know their link with Him. Do we each feel the link with the Lord, in such a way? Do we feel that the Lord has called us, "my brethren"? Do we feel that the Lord is sending this message in order that we may really be linked to Him in His Person in His new state, beyond death, in the power of resurrection? It is a wonderful comfort, particularly for those who have to face death.

There is a time coming when the Lord will come and will receive us to Himself and we will be transported into the Father's house where there is a place prepared for us, in order that that communion that is established now through spiritual experience in our souls might be carried on for ever according to God's purpose. Only the Lord could express such a message. .

Think of the disciples receiving such a message, "*I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God*". It is a wonderful distinction the Lord makes. He wanted them to understand that the God that He had revealed was also their Father. He had always spoken of the Father as His own Father but now He speaks of their Father and He introduces them in that relationship in which they can receive Him amongst them in that situation.

I trust that we may be really encouraged together thinking of this way the Lord is acting to prepare persons suitable to Himself and able to be with Him. The Lord's work in our souls is ever preparing us for this moment of blessing. We cannot encompass it at all with our understanding; it is far beyond our reach. But the Lord Jesus gives glimpses and this message was sent to the disciples and it is sent to us as well; it is sent to us as His brethren.

May the Lord bless us together for His name's sake. Amen.

Piero Casavecchia

Address at Croydon, 10th of August 2013

ONE WHO WILL NEVER LEAVE US

“...for he has said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5)

‘The past is settled, the future is assured, the present is the problem!’ Those were the words of our brother.

The past was settled; he knew God could not bring any charge against him because he had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and His blood had cleansed him from every sin; therefore he knew that God could bring no charge against him (see Romans 8:1).

The future was assured – he knew that the Saviour, Jesus, in whom he trusted, had secured the future, a future of eternal peace and holy joy. He knew that the Lord Jesus had prepared a place for him in the Father’s house (see John 14:2). He saw something of the glory of the eternal day, when the glory of Jesus will fill the heavens and the earth, and he looked forward to it.

Yet our brother could say: ‘The present is the problem’, and I think that many of us could understand what he meant. In this mortal body we suffer from many things, from disease, from accidents and the ageing process. Some know what it is to be rarely out of pain. There are the frustrations of not being physically able to do what we would like to do. There are cares and times of loneliness. There are sorrows that we carry, personal sorrows and church sorrows and as we grow older they increase and the burden becomes heavier. But we have One who is always with us; we are never alone. This is not only a promise; it is a fact. Our brother proved it to be so and every one of us is to prove the fact that: *“I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee”*.

Jesus has broken the power of death; His tomb is empty. He is a glorious living Man available to each one of us. His invitation is, *“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)*. That is more

than a promise; that is a glorious fact. I can witness to that. Others in this room can witness to it as well. There is a Man who can enter into our sorrows. He could weep with Mary at the tomb of Lazarus. He can bring comfort and strength to our souls as no other can. I am speaking of Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, and I trust that everyone here today knows Him as their Lord, Saviour and Friend.

Roger Pons

Word given at the burial of Stephen Knappett, Maidstone, July 1997.

This article is reprinted from "Living Water" No 25 .

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

Poetry Selection

WAITING FOR CHRIST

Thou, Lord from heaven wilt come,
Our Deliverer, God's own Son
For Thy bride to take her home
To the glory Thou hast won.
Oh Beloved, till shadows flee
Longing hearts wait earnestly.

Thou hast left us; gone on high
On Thy Father's throne to wait;
We 'neath dark and stormy sky
Toil through floods which ne'er abate.
Oh Beloved, sustained by Thee,
Longing hearts wait patiently.

Thou art faithful, and Thy love
Ne'er will fail Thy purchased Bride;
In Thy Father's house above,
With Thyself shall we abide.
Oh Beloved, thus cheered by Thee,
Longing hearts wait patiently.

This, Thy precious promise, Lord:
"I come quickly" us inspires,
Sweet as honey is that word
Telling of Thy heart's desires.
Oh Beloved, we wait for Thee,
Longing each Thy face to see.

Lord, towards Thee we turn our gaze,
Soon from heaven Thou'lt be revealed;
Then shall beam Thy glorious rays,
Never more to be concealed.
Oh Beloved, that longed for hour
Of Thy manifested power!

Daniel Otsing (1850 – 1937)

This hymn is believed to have been written in 1918 when Daniel Otsing was living in St Petersburg. In 1936 he was banished to South East Russia, near to the Chinese border, and was taken to be with the Lord the following year.

Testimony Section

FROM NOMINAL BELIEF TO TRUE FAITH

As a seven year old growing up in the suburbs of South Korea, I only ever had a few brief, disjointed encounters with Christianity. The summary of what I knew about Christ and His followers so far was:

- Christians were friendly people who gave out cookies to everyone at the local school playground on Sundays.
- They were keen to invite everyone to church to share the good news about a Man called Jesus, who was the Son of God, and died for everyone so that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.

Having had no prior knowledge of Jesus, or of God, and being seven, I was sadly more interested in the free cookies than this good news. These brief encounters remained brief, and I soon became occupied with other childhood distractions.

In the same year that I first met Christians in Korea, a number of things changed in my life. My family moved to Northern Ireland as my father was offered a job there. I soon started attending a local primary school and began to learn English. As I began to settle in this new life, I made friends with one of the boys in my class and it turned out that he lived quite close to where I lived. He and his family also went to church and they invited me to come along. Not long after, I took up their invitation and began attending church on Sundays.

The people I was with at church also talked about Jesus, similar to the Christians I had met back in Korea. They shared the same story of how God came to rescue everyone from their rebellion against Him (or 'sin') and the penalty of death as a result by sending His own Son Jesus to live a perfect, sinless life and then to die in our place to rise up again after overcoming death so that whoever believes in Him and turns away from their rebellion can have forgiveness and life from God. They also spoke of the grave consequences of not believing in Jesus and trusting Him, which were that we remained guilty of our rebellion and faced the wrath of God in death.

I heard this same message many times since beginning to attend

church but it never struck me at the time to be of much significance, I didn't think too much about death and naively decided that I would believe when I was old and death was nearer. As I entered my adolescent years, church soon became a chore on Sundays and I became uninterested and disengaged with church activities. Christianity made a re-appearance in my life during high school, when I became friends with a few people who turned out to be Christians. They too, like the family I had met in Primary school, soon invited me to come to these Christian events, and desperately wanting to fit in, I would say yes and go along. I did enjoy these events and somewhere along the lines of attending Christian Union and going to talks and church youth clubs, I convinced myself that I believed in Jesus and even considered myself a Christian.

I realise now that this was a false belief, I believed that the person Jesus existed and He died for the sake of my sins, but in reality He remained a distant, historical figure, rather than One with whom I had a personal relationship and who was Lord of my life. I had a belief that I am sure was similar to what many had in the days of Noah. People would have seen the ark being built and believed that it existed, but it was only those who truly believed in the ark and went into it that were saved when the flood came.

When the final year of high school approached, my very own flood came and shook the lukewarm, unsteady relationship I had with Christianity. I had wanted to study medicine at university, and over the years worked hard to make a decent application profile. However, one by one, the rejected applications came back without explanation, and as my friends got their offers to pursue their studies after high school, I suddenly felt very uncertain about the future and a sense of despair began to creep in. After that summer, with no placements, I was forced to take a year out to decide what to do with my life.

It was a truly dark year for me, but revealed the true state of my heart at that time. It was a year where I often thought about the purposelessness and hopelessness of life with no God. I realised I had only believed in things during high school because it was convenient and I wanted to fit in with my crowd of friends. Such superficial and brittle belief did not hold when the neat life plan I had laid out was thrown off course and I was left unsure of what I was supposed to do or where to go. Amidst this chaos, I signed

up to study a course at a college in Belfast for the year whilst I re-applied to see if I would be able to study medicine the year after. Every morning during the week when I got off the bus in Belfast to go to college, there was this elderly gentleman who was handing out leaflets about Jesus and His message for the world. Rain or shine, he would be out there with a warm, enthusiastic smile on his face handing out these leaflets to passers-by. I at this point was done with Christianity so made every effort to avoid him each morning, despite his passionate efforts to share the good news.

The year in limbo went by, and near the end of the school year before summer, I was deeply unhappy with life. I had indulged in what the world advertised so fervently for people my age to indulge in, to live for myself and to just have a good time partying because these were the best years of your life. I had tried to fill the sense of emptiness in my heart with the things that the world offered but it lead to more misery than joy. The emptiness and hopelessness remained, no matter how much I tried to distract myself or numb it out altogether.

And at the end of my course, I got the bus into Belfast one last time to go to college. The same elderly man was still there by the bus stop, giving out leaflets about Jesus just as ever joyfully. Unlike all the other days I had spent this year avoiding him, that day I wanted to know why he was doing this, and what exactly was the message that this leaflet contained which drove this retired gentleman to come out every morning to try to share it with everyone.

It was a homemade leaflet, plain, although you could see there was some effort made to try and make it somewhat aesthetically pleasing. I expected the same old Christian message, 'repent or burn in hell!' or, 'judgement awaits you!'. But the message began with Jesus' words in the gospel of Matthew: *'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'* (Matthew 11:28)

As I read this first line, I had stopped walking in the middle of city centre. I felt peace and a sense of rest like I had not felt before. The turmoil of uncertainty and deep seated discontentment with life was at ease. There was definitely something more to this message, for I could not have possibly felt peace from just reading a line of text written on a homemade leaflet on a random weekday

morning. There was truth to this message.

That summer, with encouragement from my Christian friends, I read the Bible with my eyes opened for the first time and came to realise that I was a sinner, truly and desperately in need of the grace of God, and Jesus was the only one that could deliver me from my helpless state. I have not looked back since, and I am eternally grateful for the ways that God has worked in my life even when I was lost.

I cannot recommend Him strongly enough, and hope that you too, may find true rest in Him.

I leave you with a verse from the book of Hebrews: *'...Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'* (Hebrews 3:15)

If you also find yourself lost and can hear the good news of Jesus calling out to you, do not harden your heart, and do not numb out that yearning for the truth. Believe in Him, and rejoice!

May the love, joy and peace of Jesus be upon you.

In Christ,

Sehyeon Kim. (Belfast)

A voice from the past

DELIVERANCE – INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

Romans 7:24-25

2 Corinthians 1:8-11

Introduction

God's deliverance is a very great need of the present time, and it is presented to us in these scriptures in two aspects – inward and outward. The first is the more important, because, if we have it, it will wonderfully fortify us during the time we may have to wait for outward deliverance.

Inward Deliverance

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:24-25).

In Romans 7:24 we see one in captivity to a power of evil within, which he refers to as the law of sin in his members. He is brought to hopeless despair, so that he cries, *"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of this body of death?"* When that point is reached, deliverance is very near. It is quite possible that we may think that we have reached that point when we have not, but, when we do, deliverance is there for us through infinite grace. That is, God fills the vision of the soul, and a person whose vision is filled with God is in deliverance and exclaims, *"I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"*.

I would stress those words, *"through Jesus Christ our Lord"*; the power of inward deliverance comes through Him. God directs us to a Person outside of ourselves; He directs us to the Person seen in the gospels, *"Jesus Christ our Lord"*.

The gospels show us His power to bring about deliverance to everyone who came into contact with Him. There are about forty distinct examples in the gospels of persons who experienced the delivering power of the Lord Jesus, as well as the large number who are mentioned in a general way. I believe they were all intended to illustrate different forms of the power of sin in our members. I ought to be able to say which of the cases in the gospels represents my case, or perhaps, two or more would have to be combined to make up the full picture of the deliverance which I need.

But even if they all combined in one case, it would not be too much for Jesus Christ our Lord to meet. When He was here He healed every disease and every infirmity, and in doing so, He illustrated His ability to meet every form in which the law of sin can work in our members. In every case it was the power that was in Him that effected healing. It was no question of what they could do for themselves; they came into contact with Him, and by the power that was in Him they got deliverance from whatever condition they were in. Whatever moral disease or infirmity I may be subject to, there is adequate power in Jesus Christ our Lord to meet it. Therefore there must be lack of earnestness on my part if I go on in captivity to the law of sin. As we avail ourselves of the power that is in Him we pass into a new kind of life altogether.

Christianity, in the true sense, is Christ glorified in those He has delivered. *"I am glorified in them"* (John 17:10). As the healed

persons of the gospels took their places in the church, as no doubt many of them did, what a wonderful testimony they would be to what Christ had done! They were living examples of what Christ could do! A believer said to me, 'I cannot make my self different from what I am'. I replied, 'It is not a question of what you can make yourself, but of what Christ can make you'. He would have us here completely delivered from the law of sin by the power which is in Himself; and that not once for all, but as looking to Him continuously as the One by whom God's delivering power sets us free. The power that is in Him abides to be drawn upon as it is needed.

It is evident that, if we are delivered through the power and grace which comes through Jesus Christ our Lord, it is in view of a life in liberty of an entirely new character. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is like a new breath of life, and that law sets free from the law of sin and death. Before we got that new breath of life we were living for ourselves, living in view of the world and what it had to offer, but as having that new breath of life we live now in relation to God, and to Christ, and to the brethren in Christ. As living in those holy relations we are free from the law of sin and of death. Our companions now are those who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit. Our life-links now are with those who are joint-heirs with Christ, which involves sharing with Him a glorious portion soon, but at the present time sharing in suffering.

The effect of inward deliverance is that we are set free to occupy an entirely new place as amongst the children of God. Our affections are at liberty though circumstantially it is a time of suffering; for we are assured that none of the sufferings or pressures can separate us from the love of Christ. No circumstances could be more severe than those of the faithful servants of God who were cast into the burning fiery furnace at the orders of Nebuchadnezzar. But they were "loose" there; they had the company of a divine Person who had loosed them. No doubt they had the consciousness that they were loved by Him.

Eternal Deliverance

"For we do not wish you to be ignorant brethren, as to our tribulation which happened to us in Asia, that we were excessively

pressed beyond our power, so as to despair even of living. But we ourselves had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead: who has delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we confide that he will also yet deliver: ye also labouring together by supplication for us” (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).

If inwardly delivered so that Christ is magnified in us, we find ourselves in a scene of contrariety where all kinds of pressures come upon the people of God. Paul says *“we were excessively pressed beyond our power, so as to despair even of living”* He speaks quite simply about it, masking no attempt to hide the fact that he felt the pressure intensely. It is a mark of spiritual shallowness not to feel the pressures that come upon us.. Paul did not affect to be above feeling the pressure, but he met it by taking the ground that he had the sentence of death in himself. He was already, as to his own mind, as good as dead, and if that were so, everything hung on *“God who raises the dead”*.

The greatest pressure of all is death; it may be even, *“so great a death”*. But Paul’s trust was not in himself – the sentence of death was there – but in God who raises the dead. If we were actually dead no one could do anything for us but God, and if we *“are excessively pressed beyond our power, so as to despair even of living”*, the only One to whom we can look is God; He raises the dead. God is not baffled even if Christians are killed, for He raises the dead; He holds the master key.

But if believers are to remain here in testimony they must, of necessity, be delivered from the power that would kill them. So Paul speaks beautifully of God *“who has delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we confide that he will also yet deliver”*. He had the sense in his soul that deliverance would be provided so long as necessary. So long as God wishes to retain us here for His pleasure He will deliver us. If we are in any way a comfort to others, God may retain us here, as He did Paul. *“I know that I shall remain and abide along with you all, for your progress and joy in faith” (Philippians 1:25)*. Not one of us will die or be killed until our work is done. A servant of the Lord said long ago: ‘Man is

immortal until his work is done'.† We can be thankful for the truth enshrined in those words. If we are of some little service it may be God's pleasure to keep us here, however much Satan would like to kill us off. So myriads of angels are busy preserving the lives of many believers today. There will be outward deliverance so long as it is needed for the continuance of the service of the testimony.

**Man is immortal until
his work is done**

The time will come when our little bit of service here will be finished. The day came when Paul had to say, *"the time of my release is come"* (2 Timothy 4:6). He did not want to stay then. He was like Simeon, who said, *"Lord, now thou lettest thy bondman go"* (Luke 2:29). As long as believers have a place to fill here their outward deliverance is absolutely certain. Our hearts need to be fortified by the knowledge of such things. That Christ might be magnified in us, whether by life or by death, is the chief thing. The inward deliverance by which this can be brought about is really greater than any outward deliverance could be. But both are of God, and both are needed so long as we are to remain in the testimony here.

C. A Coates.

† J. C. Ryle: *Essay on "George Whitfield and his ministry"*

A word for today

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS

How unique He was as Man here from every moral standpoint! Truly Man, He was in moral contrast in every respect to every other man. He was truly human, though as Man He constantly exercised divine power – in stilling the storm – casting out the demon – feeding the thousands with provisions – above all in raising the dead; but He was here as a Man - and what a Man!

He was the moral contrast in truth to the whole human family, though coming into it as born of a woman. Such a Man is beyond our conceptions. He was perfect according to God in every respect – in His innermost thoughts, motives and desires – in His affections

and feelings God-ward and man-ward – as well as in every word He uttered and every action He performed.

In Him was no sin (1 John 3:5).

He knew no sin (2 Corinthians

5:21). These two simple statements distinguish Him from every man that ever lived on earth since Adam's fall. That evil spring from which proceeds all the moral degradation into which this world has sunk was not in Him. This can be said of no other, and it is the great secret; everything is involved with it. Sin is lawlessness – independence of God – and it was not in Him. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. There was no lust or pride with Him or in Him; hence He was morally and entirely separated from the world, which is made up of these things.

Satan's efforts against Him were futile. Nothing could move Him from the path of God's will, which He loved. His "*meat*" was to do God's will (John 4:34); it was His delight – it was no hardship.

Self, as we speak of, had no place with Him. He is altogether beyond our thought and in complete contrast to the children of men, though truly and blessedly Man. He was here as a Man entirely according to God, not innocent, like Adam before his fall, but righteous and holy. Obedience was His pleasure, and evil was abhorrent to Him.

There was never any echo or faintest response to things around, which appeal so powerfully to the pride or vanity or selfishness or lust, which are in every child of Adam in greater or lesser degree. He was unique indeed - a Man truly of a new order – not "*out of earth, made of dust*", but "*out of heaven*" (see 1 Corinthians 15:47). He was the bread of God come down out of heaven (John 6:33).

The bread He gives is His flesh – wondrous word, offensive because it is unintelligible to proud man in his carnal religion. What a theme, what an object for our hearts is that wondrous Man who delights the heart of God!

In Him we see Man for ever before God according to His eternal

**Sin is lawlessness –
independence of God –
and it was not in Him.**

purpose. He is the same eternally. He is no longer in flesh and blood and suffering – nor ever can be again – but there is and can be no change in Himself, though He be now in glory at God’s right hand to God’s own great delight.

God sets Him forth and calls upon all men to bow to Him and to own Him. He is God’s gospel to men; the righteousness of God, the power of God, the salvation of God, are all set forth in Him risen from the dead and gone up on high.

How do we who have owned Him as Saviour and Lord, stand in relation to Him? We are united to Him – we are of Him – we have died with Him to sin and to the world, and live beyond death in His life – quickened with Him. His own word sets forth what we are, for He says to Saul of Tarsus, *“Why persecutest thou me?”* and *“I am Jesus whom thou persecutes”* (Acts 9:4-5)

Christ is in heaven, our life is hid with Him in God (see Colossians 3:3), but we are still on earth where He once was – and the divine thought is that He should be formed in us in His moral features so that God should be able to take pleasure in us, seeing Christ in us morally, the Man who was in every respect well pleasing to Him and whose Spirit is now in those that are His.

This moral transformation is produced in us by the Holy Spirit who presents Christ to us as an object of contemplation and food for our heart. He attracts us to Christ so that we delight in Him more and more and desire to be like Him and practically freed from all that is in ourselves of the old order, all that is of the flesh.

The Spirit occupies us with Christ where He now is, and so we are changed from glory to glory (see 2 Corinthians 3:18), but He also feeds our souls with the manna – which speaks of what He was as Man for God, and for man too, though rejected of men. Indeed there is nothing which so endears Him to our hearts and attracts us powerfully to Him as the contemplation of Him in all His wondrous pathway and service here on earth. Inasmuch as His pathway is now ours and we are left here to reflect morally something of Himself, it is of prime importance and necessity that we should consider Him from this standpoint.

What a living picture of perfection we have in Isaiah 53! What a dark background of human alienation from God and cold indifference and contempt for God's Servant, but what moral beauty and perfection in the Servant! The joy was before Him and He accepted all the sorrow and abasement even to death on account of it. His visage and form were more marred than any of the sons of men but He will shortly startle many nations. Kings shall be silent before Him when they shall see and consider what had not been told them about God's Servant and King.

Then we have the story of His service for God and His treatment by men. He endured the latter because the former made it inevitable. Israel will see and own it all by and by; and we do already through grace. He grew up before God as a tender sapling, the only living thing in the dry ground, but in men's eyes He had no form or comeliness – no beauty according to their thought of beauty. He was despised and rejected of men, who thought of Him as stricken of God and afflicted, as though He were a sinful man. He endured it all and in a day to come Israel will own that it was all for them. We know already that it was for us too – that all our sins and their judgment have been borne by Him, and that He carried in His spirit all our grief and sorrows, so that He might be able to succour and sympathise as our great High Priest. Surely our hearts go out to Him in adoring, divinely given affection! What kind of spirit and character mark us as we journey on where He has walked? Of course, in His atoning sufferings of which Isaiah 53 largely speaks, He was alone, but in patience and lowliness under pressure and cruel persecution He is our pattern. Surely it is fruit for the Father to see something of this in His children.

A. S. Loughnan
Croydon 1915

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