

126

Living Water

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Editor: Mark Lemon

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LIVING WATER 126

(November - December 2014)

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Honiton, 4th July 2014:*

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Recent Ministry

GOD OUR DWELLING-PLACE

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, and thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from eternity to eternity thou art God. Thou makest mortal man to return to dust, and sayest, Return children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight, are as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night...

“The days of our years are three score years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet their pride is labour and vanity...

“So teach us to number our days, that we may acquire a wise heart”

Psalm 90: 1 -12.

I refer to this Psalm because Moses is the author of it. I have often wondered when Moses wrote this: it could have been one of the earliest recorded parts of Scripture. He writes it as looking back, perhaps on his own life. We are told in the last chapter of Deuteronomy that Moses lived to be 120 years old, but he writes the Psalm as one who knew God; he knew God as a dwelling-place.

It is a wonderful thing to have something sure and certain in life. A lifetime passes so quickly. We read here that in God’s sight *“a thousand years... are as yesterday”*. What are a mere seventy or eighty years of a lifetime? It shows how important it is to have something secure and certain in our lives.

Interestingly, I have known four generations of the Hornzee family. In our early married days we lived in the same area as Mr Harold Hornzee and then, more recently, Mr Gerald Hornzee; I knew both to be believers on the Lord Jesus Christ and both had made God their dwelling-place. So, with family members present today, I believe that makes four generations. But God is before all the generations and He is after all the generations - *“from eternity to eternity thou art God.”* Years have no place in eternity. God is there. He has been there and He will be there, so it is a wonderful thing to have a living link with the God who has been revealed

and made known in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I, too, can say, 'He is my dwelling-place'

It is amazing to think of Jesus coming into this world, coming as a Man so as to declare God's heart. He came to make God's love known to us - to you and me just as we sit in this hall today. If that love was to be known Jesus had to bear the penalty due to us because of our sins and that is what He did at Calvary. His perfect finished work on the cross settles everything for those who trust in that glorious Person our Lord Jesus Christ. I sincerely trust that all here have a living link with that glorious Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has made known the God who is from and to eternity. Because we are finite beings, eternity is something our minds cannot grasp, but God is there. Now, Moses speaks of God as One who is a dwelling- place, One in whom rest has been found. Is that not wonderful? We can have that assurance today, the same God who is so glorious and infinite, is known so preciously in our Lord Jesus Christ. *"Thou hast been our dwelling-place"*.

Moses speaks about these years, threescore years and ten. Then he speaks about fourscore years. Our sister was in that category; others here are also in that category. Yet however long or short, the question is, 'Are you ready to go to meet this glorious Person, the Lord Jesus Christ? Is everything settled? Are you certain of the future? Are we all in the present enjoyment of things that belong to the future, like eternal life and the blessings of God's glorious presence eternally?' These are things that belong to believers on our Lord Jesus Christ, those that have believed in Him and as a result have life in His name. God has made Himself known and just as Moses said that God had become his dwelling-place, so I, too, can say, 'He is my dwelling-place'.

Moses continues to the verse where I finished, *"So teach us to number our days, that we may acquire a wise heart."* That is a sober question for every one of us here to think about, to number our days. We cannot number eternity but, in our lifetime here, our days are to be numbered. What they *have* been is now history, but it should be an exercise with all of us that, in whatever days

might be left to us, according to God's will, we might acquire a wise heart.

One of the most sobering things about attending a burial meeting is that if the Lord Jesus does not come and the natural course of things continues, each one of us here will be found in a coffin such as this one before us today. Are we ready to depart? Are we ready to meet God? Today, through the Lord Jesus Christ, God can become our *"dwelling-place"*; a sure *"dwelling-place"*. Elsewhere in the Psalms, God is spoken of as a *"high fortress"* (*Psalm 59:16 &17*). It is the same idea, something that is secure and certain for time and all eternity.

Malcolm Wallach

Word given at a burial, Honiton, 4th July 2014.

WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

"And behold there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and pious, awaiting the consolation of Israel...And it was divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he should see the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and as the parents brought in the child Jesus that they might do for him according to the custom of the law, he received him into his arms, and blessed God and said, Lord, now thou lettest thy bondman go, according to thy word, in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation... a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel" Luke 2:25-32

"But now once in the consummation of the ages he has been manifested for [the] putting away of sin by his sacrifice. And forasmuch as it is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment; thus the Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those that look for him the second time without sin for salvation." Hebrews 9:26-28

I thought of these verses in the gospel of Luke in connection with the death and home going of our sister whose body is with

us now. I read of a man called Simeon. I do not know that we hear of him anywhere else except in this chapter of Luke's gospel. He was a godly man and he was waiting for what God had promised to do for His earthly people.

'I can go now, I have nothing more to wait for'.

That was what he was waiting for. And there came this day when he went to the temple; the Spirit of God directed him to go there. As he went there he met a sight which was both unique and very wonderful. The parents brought in the child Jesus. It is a very wonderful thing that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, was once here as a baby. That is how He began His life on earth. He came down from glory and took the form of a man and He began as a little child.

Simeon had a wonderful, maybe unique, privilege: he received Him into his arms. A precious moment for Simeon, nothing like it had ever happened in his history. He had waited for this and now he was ready to go. He says, "*Lord, now thou lettest thy bondman go, according to thy word, in peace*". We know what the word had been – the Holy Spirit had told him that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's anointed. And here He was, the Lord's anointed, and yet found here as a baby whom Simeon took in his arms.

He says, 'I can go now, I have nothing more to wait for.' He had found the secret of peace. It is a very wonderful thing; we are surrounded here today by others who have found the secret of peace. Our sister, who is now with Christ, had found the secret of peace. It is not such a secret that nobody can find it. It is available for everyone to find but once you make it your own, it is your secret; you have found the secret of peace.

And how do you find that secret? Well, it is by just coming to know the One whom Simeon held in his arms, the One who was here, first of all as a little child. And Simeon said, 'I can go now, there is nothing now I need wait for'. He was not called upon to wait for another thirty or so years to see the full life of the Lord Jesus here. He was not called upon to see His death. He was not

called upon to see His resurrection, or His ascending up into heaven. But he says, I *“have seen thy salvation”*. He knew that everything could now come right.

It has not come right for this world. The world is still in very great trouble. But for the believer in the Lord Jesus things have come right. Our sister here – we know that her latter years have been difficult ones – but she was entitled to die in peace. A wonderful thing for us all, we are entitled to die in peace.

What does Simeon say? Was he thinking just about God’s earthly people? No, he did not put them first any more. He says, *“a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.”* I expect most, if not all of us here today, are Gentiles: as the Jews would say, we are of the nations. And that is what we are; the gospel has come out to us all and it has brought the nations to light and Christians from among the nations. Simeon was given a view of all that was to come.

I read those verses in the epistle to the Hebrews because you might ask me, ‘This is all very well but how does it come about?’ Well, the apostle who is writing this epistle has something to say about this. He says something has happened in the *“consummation of the ages”*; it is what time has been waiting for, what God allowed time to go on for, until the moment came when Jesus came into the world. The apostle did not dwell here on the life of good and kindness that Jesus led. What he says is that He *“has been manifested for the putting away of sin”* by His sacrifice.

I do not need to tell you any more about the sin of the world or the sins that are in the world or of all the sins that have come into my history and I expect into yours as well. The Lord Jesus has come to deal with that, *“by his sacrifice”*. Was God stepping in to judge and condemn the world? *“God has not sent his Son into the world that he may judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him” (John 3:17)*. That is the sure word of Scripture. It was by His sacrifice, by the giving up of Himself,

being made sin for us, dying, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God (see 1 Peter 3:18).

What sort of prospect does that open up? Well, it is the portion of men once to die. Oh yes, here before us is the witness of it. But the question is, What then? Judgment? Yes, there is judgment of all; *“we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of the Christ”* (2 Corinthians 5:10). For the believer, that is actually – though it might sound surprising – a time of much blessing because we will then see the meaning of things that we had not understood as we went through life here. The Lord Jesus will show us why He has taken us the way He has. He will show us what He could approve of and what He could not approve of. That is a blessing for the believer. What about the unbeliever? I do not want to say anything more about that except what Scripture says here, *“after this, judgment”*.

Now, for the believer, there is the wonderful prospect: *“that the Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those that look for him...”*. He came once, but we are looking forward to *“the second time”*. *“Christ ... shall appear to those that look for him the second time without sin...”*. There are no more questions to be raised: as the believer is taken up to be with the Lord Jesus at His coming it will be without sin, no questions more; it will be *“for salvation”*.

Well, by the grace of God we can be saved now and know we are saved and have peace with God. But this salvation is full and final: no more problems, no more difficulties of the way, no more mistakes. Our brother has spoken of going into eternity and that is how it will be. A very wonderful prospect, our sister has had that prospect but she does not need it now because she is already *“with the Lord”*, Scripture is plain about that (see 2 Corinthians 5:8). But for those of us that are left let us be looking for Him; that is the best prospect that we can have. May the Lord cheer all our hearts, for His name's sake.

David Burr

Word at a burial, Honiton, 4th July 2014.

***"LET EVERY THING THAT HATH BREATH PRAISE
THE LORD."***

Psalm 150:6 (KJV)

One of the last times that we saw our sister in the weeks before she was taken to be with the Lord, she said to us, 'When you hear that I am with the Lord I do not want you to be sad; I want you to say, "*Praise the Lord*".' She was waiting for that moment when she would be taken to be with her Saviour. That was what she was waiting for; it was the real hope she had. That was why she could say that when she was with Him we should say, 'Praise the Lord'.

Oh, that every one of us might have that assurance, might know even as we stand around this grave, in the presence of death, that for us death is not the end but it is the beginning. It is the beginning of eternity with the Lord Each one that has trusted in the Lord Jesus for forgiveness of sins has that assured hope.

Our sister Muriel will be spending eternity with her Saviour, the One that she loved, the One that she trusted, the One that cared for her and the One that has taken her to be with Himself. May every one of us have that assurance in our hearts and be able to stand around a grave on an occasion such as this and say, "*Praise the Lord*".

David Gentry

Word at the graveside, Honiton, 4th July 2014

Poetry Selection

AS FOR GOD HIS WAY IS PERFECT

Our God! Our hearts go forth to Thee
In thankfulness and praise,
For in the passing years we see
Perfection in Thy ways.

To Thee we cried, 'Oh, not this way',
Thy voice we heard, 'Be still,
I love thee, thou art wholly Mine,
Can'st thou accept My will?'
Subdued we passed through Baca's vale¹,
Thy love caused tears to cease,
"A well-spring" made, blessings abound,
Our souls find perfect peace.
Who but Thyself could thus have worked,
With such unerring skill;
To teach in love's own faithful way
The purpose of Thy will.
As Father, too, Thou hast endeared
Thyself, in all Thy power,
For as the Lord of heaven and earth
We've proved Thee every hour.
Our hearts are drawn afresh to Thee
As humbly we pursue,
The path which Thou in wisdom planned
Thy lovers should pass through.
Thou hast not left us here alone,
What grace! That Thou should'st give
The Comforter, with us to dwell,
The power by which we live!
With purpose fixed to run the race
Our eyes fixed, Lord on Thee,
Sustained in Thine own power and grace
Until Thy face we see.

Mary Coldrick

¹ "Passing through the valley of Baca (weeping), they make it a well-spring"

THE STARLESS NIGHT

“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord” (Psalm 31:24)

By a way I know not Thou dost guide,
Barren it seems and shadowed o'er;
Oh keep me close to Thy dear side,
I have not trod it heretofore.
Jesus! Though dark the way and rough,
If Thou dost share it – 'tis enough.

I would believe in Thee my Lord,
And trace Thy guiding hand of love,
Relying on Thy holy word
That I shall know it all above.
Now waiting for that heavenly light,
I bless thee for this starless night.

I see not; but Thine eye doth run
Still to and fro, my feet to guide:
And He who gave His Only Son
Will for His ransomed ones provide.
Jesus! Shall one Thou lov'st repine?
Thy will be done, O Lord – not mine!

Thou dost uphold me! Clear and bright
Thy promises, like stars, appear:
Thou giv'st me songs to cheer the night,
The mountain path way to endure.
Welcome the midnight as the day,
O Lord, it is Thy will – Thy way!

Anna Shipton (1815 – 1901)

THE ADVOCATE

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea;
A great High Priest, whose name is love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on His hands,
My name is graven on His heart;
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me hence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.

Because the sinless Saviour died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him, and pardon me.

Behold Him there – all glorious Lamb!
My perfect, spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable “I AM”,
The King of glory and of grace.

One with Himself, I cannot die;
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ, my Saviour and my God.

Charitie Lees Smith (1841 – 1923)

From "Living Water" No 26

MY SOUL THIRSTETH FOR GOD

I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasure there.

It was the sight of Thy blest cross,
First weaned my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross,
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

I want that grace that springs from Thee,
That quickens all things where it flows;
And makes a wretched thorn, like me,
Bloom as the myrtle, or the rose.

William Cowper (1731 – 1800)

This poem is reprinted from "Living Water" No 26 .

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

A DECK HAND MEETS THE MASTER

Taking the Gospel to Seafarers

Port Castries St. Lucia

I WAS BORN IN ST LUCIA, WEST INDIES, and brought up by a single parent. From my childhood my mother always brought me to the Roman Catholic church, and I learned early that God existed. Meanwhile my seaman father came home from time to time, and whenever I saw him, he intrigued me with his tales of experiences at sea. As I grew older, I wanted to follow in his footsteps and



become a seaman. So, at the age of fifteen I left school and went to work on a fruit ship, the MV Geest Haven, as a deck boy. I was the youngest crew member on board. This is when I began drinking and smoking, sinking deeper into destructive habits.

One Sunday morning in June 1975, in Cork, Ireland, a port missionary visited the ship and invited me to a gospel meeting, and afterwards he brought me to his house for tea. Then he opened the Bible and read John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."* As he explained the verse to me, I realised that even as a guilty sinner, God loves me and gave His Son, Jesus Christ, for me. Understanding this, I received Christ into my life as my personal Lord and Saviour.

My friend, the Bible says, *"All have sinned..."* (Romans 3:23). That includes you and me. The Bible also says, *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). This means no communication with God, but separation from Him and everything good for ever, in a place of punishment called Hell. You cannot save yourself from this death by your good works, or by church membership, or by trying to be a good person. The only way to be rescued from the penalty of your sins is by trusting in Jesus Christ. The Bible says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved"* (Acts 16:31). Jesus said, *"He who believes in me, even if he dies, yet shall he live"* (John 11:25). He paid the penalty for your sins by His death on the cross, then He conquered death and rose again. I urge you to ask God to forgive your sins and trust in Jesus Christ who died for you. Then read your Bible to know Him better, and find

fellowship with others in God's family who are serious about following Him.

John Honore (St Lucia)

John is still a seaman but he prints his own testimony, like the one above, and spends a lot of his spare time going on board ships like the cruise ship pictured to share the gospel with the crew. He writes: 'It is always a joy to share the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with the crew on board these ships, especially when some of the men and women walk up to me to ask me for a Bible or a tract and sometimes even ask for a tract or booklet for their room-mate. But there is a greater joy in Heaven when even one sinner repents'. *"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth"* (Luke 15 : 7).

Visiting a cruise ship at port Canaveral, Florida, he met a group of young people who had flown in from St. Lucia the night before to join the ship. They had never been to sea, so this would be a new experience for them; they were all very excited. John says 'I remembered the first day that I went sea; I had this same feeling of excitement. I gave each of them a New Testament; I trust that God will speak to them through his word'.

CHANGED BY WHAT HAPPENED ON 9/11

I am from a large family; my father had three wives and 18 children. We all grew up in a small Muslim community. By the age of 14, I, along with many of the family, had memorised the whole of the Koran. We were very happy; we believed in Allah, we prayed five times per day, kept Ramadan and did all the things the Imam said we should do as good Muslims.

When we had memorised the Koran my father took us to Mecca as a kind of graduation present. When you set off for Mecca you are really happy because you are about to see the holy land, see where the Prophet Muhammad lay and all the sites you can visit. To have been to Mecca marks you out as an elect Muslim. Islam has five pillars: to confess; to pray; to keep Ramadan; to give to

the poor, and if you can, to go to Mecca at least once in your lifetime. It can be quite expensive to go to Mecca and not everybody can do that. So to find out that you can go to Mecca and have twenty-one days, to the holy land, is a really emotional experience. When you come back home you feel really you are different because you have accomplished the Hajj.

Then came 9/11 and the destruction of the twin towers. I was watching TV with my room mate. We were both devoted Muslims and I was very passionate about what happened. I was shocked that Muslims did this thing. I went back to the Koran; did it really teach that we were to kill the unbeliever? I found that chapters 4, 5 and 9 say kill the unbelievers wherever you find them. It made me really think about the book. Why should the Koran say that the innocent should be killed? Why do we have to do that? What is this religion? Is that the best way to witness to people? I started to think and to pray because I really did not understand those chapters. There is no way we can take them out of the Koran, they are there.

Why should the Koran say that the innocent should be killed?

So I really prayed, thinking a lot about Islam. At that time God sent a Christian man into my life. He became a good friend and started talking about Islam and then Christianity. He witnessed to me about Christ. But I needed more than that. Before I believed anything, I needed to have the facts and the evidence. I decided, that he knows the Bible and I know the Koran, so can we agree just to check the evidence for both books. Checking the evidence for Christ and the Bible and then the evidence for Muhammad and the Koran was rather like comparing day with night. There are hundreds of evidences when you come to Christianity and for the Koran there are no evidences:-

- For a start, the first book about Christ (Matthew's gospel) was written less than 20 years after His death. The first book about Muhammad was not written until 250 years after his death.

- Then there are all the prophecies in the Bible which refer to Christ. Hundreds, even thousands of years before Christ came into the world it was predicted that He would come and die and be raised from the dead.
- Then, it is only the Bible that tells us of a God who loves His enemies — who hates sin but loves us and who wants everybody in the world to repent. The Koran states that Allah loves those that love him but that he hates his enemies.

I found the love of God in the life of Christ. When the truth became clear to me it was around midnight just before Easter. I went out of my apartment and looked up at sky, saw all those stars—so beautiful. I said, tonight I decide; tomorrow morning I will go to church and after the service give my life to Christ. I was so happy, I was free. I had the assurance that if I died I knew where I was going. There is nothing like that in Islam, which teaches that your good deeds and your bad deeds will be weighed one against another. But coming to Christ there is nothing I have to do, it is free and I know where I will go. I was so happy. I was saved.

My relationship with God, it is a personal relationship. I do not have to pass the requirements of the Imam. I can just talk to God wherever I am. I did not do anything to deserve this salvation: salvation is free. But I have this personal relationship with God, I can talk to Him through prayer.

I love to tell all my Muslim friends: ‘Trust God today, you do not have to go to any one to check the evidence about Christ or about Islam. Just open up your hearts — Christ loves you all. He came down here to die for us and the salvation is free. And, please, open up the door to your Christian friends, talk to them. Nobody can convert you from Islam to Christianity; that is the work of the Holy Spirit, but you can just give people a chance to tell you about Christ and what He has done. Christ loves you and Christ sends those people to your door. You never know, maybe God will talk to you through those people’.

Rahim

A voice from the past

FAITH AND RIDICULE

“And Sanballat...and Tobijah...and Geshem...heard it; and they mocked us and despised us, and said, What is this thing which ye do? Will ye rebel against the king? And I answered them, and said to them, The God of the heavens, he will prosper us, and we his servants will arise and build...” Nehemiah 2:19 – 20.

So “we built the wall...for the people had a mind to work” Nehemiah 4:6.

The rebuilding of the ruined walls of Jerusalem, as the record shows, was undoubtedly in troublesome times. Some of the petty rulers of the neighbourhood exulted in the low estate of the city, because it left room for the exercise of their authority, and they viewed these renewed activities with anger.. They plotted for the overthrow of the work, and had to be met by incessant watchfulness.

If you are endeavouring to do God’s work, to clear away the rubbish of sin, to rebuild the walls that are broken down, and to seek the welfare of God’s people, do not be surprised if your steps are beset with scorn and ridicule, by the secret or open malice of those like Sanballat and Tobijah. For some it is easier to face bitter opposition than to bear mockery and ridicule. If only these scornful and carping tongues were silenced, we could make more headway, but such persecution drives us back on God, makes Him a living fact of life, and opens the door to the saving health of His right hand. How good it is at such times to cease from man, and to remember the Lord who is the great and terrible One. Be quite sure that you are working to His plan, doing His work in His way; then go forward in His name, and He will make all the mountains give way.

The lesson for us all is the threefold aspect of the Christian life:-

- There is the up-look to God’s face – *“I prayed to the God of the heavens” (Nehemiah 2:4)*. We must never forget to pray, for more things are wrought by prayer than we realise.

- Second, there is our up-look against our foes and the foes of God – *“ Then we prayed to our God, and set a watch against them day and night” (Nehemiah 4:9)*. We must watch as well as pray.
- Lastly there is the down-look towards the work entrusted to us, at which we must labour with un-failing devotion, in fellowship with our Lord (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Let us each enquire: Am I inside the city amongst its builders, or outside amongst its detractors and foes?

F. B. Meyer (1847 – 1929)

WAITING

All of us at some time in our lives are obliged to wait for some event and to many the waiting time is often very irksome; but it is well for us to realise that no amount of fretting or worrying on our part will shorten the time of waiting by a single second; we should therefore seek to glorify God by being patient.

Patience is often spoken of in the Bible as being one of the virtues which should mark a Christian, and we know that it is only in the power of the Holy Spirit that it can be produced, even in a very small measure, in our lives; but we would desire to have it in an increasing way as we go on from day to day. Many of us can say with the Psalmist, *“I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me and heard my cry” (Psalm 40:1)*.

A gardener or farmer is an example of this thought of waiting in patience. We are told that he *“waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it” (James 5:7)*. He knows very well that his crops will not ripen more quickly, even if he wears himself out with anxiety; and so he has *“long patience”*. It is in fact true of us all that we *“have need of patience” (Hebrews 10:36)*.

There are many instances in the Bible of those for whom God intervened after patient waiting. Joseph, in his undeserved imprisonment, waited until God opened the prison doors and brought him out to be next in power to Pharaoh, and to become

the preserver both of his own people and of the Egyptians. Moses, too, waited patiently for forty years, during which time he was tending sheep in the desert – not at all the work for which his education in Egypt had fitted him – until God sent him to be His messenger to Pharaoh and the leader of His chosen people.

In Luke 2 we read of Simeon and Anna, who had been waiting for long years for the coming of the promised Messiah, and how they rejoiced when at last He came. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that *“the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience”* (2 Corinthians 12:12); and many other scriptures also emphasise this feature.

The one great thing above all others for which believers are waiting is the coming of the Lord Jesus for His church of which the apostle speaks as, *“waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 1:7). Here again the need for patience is stressed, as it is said, *“have patience therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord”* (James 5:7). In the time of waiting we are exhorted to be fully occupied. *“Occupy till I come”* (Luke 19:13) does not suggest idleness, and the Lord would have us serve Him in whatever way He has called us to do, until He come.

*“Let patience have her perfect work”¹ we pray,
Till all our waiting time on earth be o’er;
O, may we seek His help and strength each day,
And then ‘complete’, be with Him evermore!*

B. B. Dominey
Worthing (1948)

POWER FROM ON HIGH

There are many of the Lord’s people who have learnt something of their weakness, but who know nothing of the source of power as provided in the Holy Spirit; there are others who believe in the provision, but who have little skill in drawing upon it for use; there are others again who act even in the Christian life as if everything depended upon themselves.

¹ James 1:4

It must not be forgotten that power does not act independently of our spiritual condition. The Holy Spirit dwells within, so that our bodies are His temple. If we are careless, unwatchful, if we seek our pleasures in the world, rather than in Christ, let us not for one moment suppose that He will condescend to use us as vessels of his power... But, on the other hand, if the eye be single (and a single eye sees nothing but Christ) if He is the object of our lives, the Holy Spirit then ungrieved will sustain us in every position in which we are placed, and bring us victoriously out of every conflict through which we may pass.

Let us not rest until we know practically something of being channels for the manifestation of divine power even in this world.

Edward Dennett

A word for today

FOUR UNFAITHFUL PERSONS

Genesis 40: 12-15

1 Kings 20: 35-43

Luke 22: 28, 47-49

2 Timothy 4: 10-11

Introduction

These scriptures speak of four men who were unfaithful:

- The Chief Butler who was unfaithful in remembrance – he forgot Joseph
- Ahab, who was unfaithful in service – a service was entrusted to him and he failed to fulfil it
- Judas, who was unfaithful in affection - for he betrayed the Lord
- Demas was unfaithful in regard of testimony – for he forsook Paul, having loved the present world.

It might appear somewhat strange that, in seeking to arouse concern about faithfulness to Christ I have chosen passages that

speak of the exact opposite. The scriptures abound with examples of faithfulness but an impression of a feature that is of great value may often be secured by the consideration of the contrast. May we be helped to consider these unfaithful men not only as warnings, but that they may suggest the exceeding preciousness of devoted faithfulness. There never was a greater need than there is today for whole-hearted fidelity to God, to Christ and to our fellow believers.

It is not for nothing that the Spirit of God has put on record these and other cases of breakdown. It is well for us to recognise that but for the preserving mercy of our God every one of us would have broken down. In the power of human strength and human effort there never has been a yield for God, but in the power of the love of Christ there has been an answer for God in the lives of millions of His people.

We have, too, the undiminished power of the Holy Spirit of God on earth today. A divine Person can never lose His power. He may be grieved, and often is; conditions have arisen that hinder the manifestation of that power; but it remains, in all its divine character, available to all those who walk in the ungrieved power of the blessed Spirit. There is divine power to maintain all of us in true faithfulness to Christ. Let us not dismiss the idea as being a glorious impossibility. May the youngest believer take it to heart as desiring to be loyal to Jesus and true to Him in the power of His love.

Faithfulness in remembrance

I seek particular grace in calling attention to this. There are some who regard the Lord's supper as a form or sacrament for which they feel unworthy. I would speak to those who have actual practical difficulties in connection with this, for the Lord did not make any distinction in regard to His supper when He said, "*This do in remembrance of me*" (1 Corinthians 11:24). These words were uttered with the cross in view, but the Lord had us in mind when He said them.

Most know the story of Joseph; sold by his brethren, misjudged

and suffering wrongly he was imprisoned, but there he was used of God to befriend the chief butler. There came a moment when the butler was about to be delivered and the word was given to him by Joseph: *"Only bear a remembrance with thee of me"*.

Do you have in your soul and heart true love for Jesus?

Dear fellow-believer, do you have in your soul and heart true love for Jesus? Could you bear to see His name blotted out? If everybody in your town denied Him, would you do so? Do you bear in your soul an affectionate remembrance of Jesus? If so, the Lord will develop that, and a moment will come in your history when you will say: 'I cannot refrain any longer in carrying out His request'. But He will say, 'Have you considered that I am rejected and My people are rejected and that the world has no place for Me nor for them?' This will test your love for Christ but where there is simple, true hearted affection for Christ and a sobriety which has faced up to what it means to be on His side in a world that rejects Him there will be the desire to remember Him. Then there will be fidelity of remembrance – positively, definitely, and openly taking sides with Him – saying, 'Lord, I value this opportunity of letting it be known to the world, and to others who love Thee, that I am Thine'.

There came a moment in the history of the chief butler when he awakened to the fact that he had been unfaithful to his trust, and he said, *"I remember my faults this day"*. May the Lord awaken you today! It is a blessed privilege to have the honour of taking this step publicly. That is the fidelity of remembrance.

The Lord is working the entire world over and He is gathering to Himself, not to a religion or to a creed, but to Himself. He is gathering souls that love Him for His own sake and that love His people for His sake. Why do we love the brethren? We love them for their love for Christ. *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren"* (1 John 3:14). I am sorry for you if you do not love the brethren. We cannot walk with all our brethren, but we love them because they love Him.

Faithfulness in service

In 1 Kings 20 one of the prophets tells a simple story about a servant who failed to keep a prisoner who was entrusted to him. The story is told to King Ahab to bring home to him how he had failed to carry out the task that God had given to him. It illustrates for us simply the secret charge that the Lord may have entrusted to you. In the story, during a battle where thousands were fighting, there was one man – not a warrior, but a servant- and a person in authority came and told him to keep a prisoner for him. One specific definite task – he had nothing else to do – yet he had to say, *“As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone”*.

One of the features of the present day is that we are all so very busy. Life is strenuous; let us be careful therefore that we do not miss the one task that the Lord has entrusted to us. Let us see to it that in serving ourselves we do not leave out the Lord’s service. The man in the story was just an ordinary servant but he missed his way because he did not carry out the one task that was entrusted to him.

What a sad end to a life to have to admit that we have been too busy to spend our time in the Lord’s service, having been absorbed with everything else but that. God grant that none of us may finish life like that! The Lord has a task connected with His interests and service for you. Do not ask me to tell you what it is. I cannot do that. The Lord is your Master. He will tell you what your work is and He will give you the power to do it. Then He will reward you for doing it. What a Master we have!

Yet, be careful! We have to see to it that we give time in the organisation of our lives, for His service; so let Him have His place, *the* place in our hearts and lives, and then everything else will fit in. You will find there will be time for it somehow. It will involve sacrifice, but you would not think of saying, ‘I will serve as long as it does not cost me anything’. It will cost you something, but the Lord never sends out His servants at their own charges; He will see you through. Ahab, to whom this story had been told, went to his house sad and heavy. He was going into the grave a miserable, ruined man, for he had missed the one thing

that was entrusted to him.

Let us wait upon the Lord for direction as to what He would have us do and then instead of standing at the judgment seat of Christ and saying, 'I missed the one thing that would have made life worth living', the Lord will say, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant*" (*Matthew 25:21*).

Faithfulness in affection

Judas' unfaithfulness is very serious; it is the most fearful case of unfaithfulness in the history of time. He was a man who was a traitor to the Son of God – a man who could betray his Master with a kiss. The word "kiss" used here means in the original to 'kiss caressingly'. He pretended to love Christ devotedly. The Lord spoke to him in the gospel as "*My friend*" (*Matthew 26:50*). There was no unfaithfulness with the Lord. His love had never broken down. He had given Judas no reason for betraying Him. On the very night that Judas was about to sell Him to His enemies, the Lord gave him the place of honour – He handed him the sop. It is a sad picture! May it cause us to pray that the Lord will keep us loyal to Himself. It is very easy to take sides with the world; indeed it is difficult to know just where to stop, for business and social life are so intermingled. Many a person has been shipwrecked by the love of money. It only shows the depravity of the human heart if one man could sell the Saviour for money

Judas... is the most fearful case of unfaithfulness in the history of time.

On the other hand, loyalty is a wonderful matter. You look up to heaven by faith, and you see Christ; you look round in the world and you see His name defamed, and then you pray, 'Lord, I desire to be true to Thee, until Thou dost come'. It means going against the stream, but it is worth it. Jesus is the "*Lord of Glory*" (*James 2:1*) ; there is no one in the universe so deserving of our loyalty as Jesus. His name is the most precious in heaven or on earth; it has the greatest power of any – there is no name like the name of Jesus. May we be kept

loyal to it. It is so easy to go with the stream of evil, for the world has fearful power, and the subtlety of the Devil is terrible. Yet Christ is worthy of our fidelity, whatever the opposition may be.

Judas went to his own place (see Acts 1:25). The friends of Jesus are going to their own place, to be with Him for ever. So the Lord said to those that were loyal, *"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations"* (Luke 22:28). Oh, but did not all the disciples flee when Jesus was taken in the Garden of Gethsemane?. They did flee, but they came back. They were there on the evening of His resurrection day. They loved Him and they continued with Him. We have often failed, but we would like it to be recognised in heaven that in spite of our failings our hearts beat loyal to Jesus.

Faithfulness in testimony

Things are not going to get better outwardly. According to the scriptures they will get worse and worse, and those of us who have watched the course of events, for say twenty years, can see that the description of the last days as seen in Timothy has been fulfilled to the very letter; evil men and seducers have waxed worse and worse. Perilous times have come; men are lovers of their own selves and seekers after pleasure rather than lovers of God.. It is all true – every word of it!

Every Sunday you will see thousands of people heading off to places of pleasure and amusement and only a small handful thinking of the things of the Lord. We are in the last days, when the apostle tells us there will be persons who have *"a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"* and from whom Timothy is warned to *"turn away"* (2 Timothy 3:5).

Now Demas, though possibly a believer, forsook Paul. Not because there was anything wrong with Paul, but because Demas loved the present world. Is there a believer reading this who is secretly cherishing a determination to have his or her fling in the world? Many young believers have gone on outwardly in conformity to their parents' wishes until a moment has come when they have

given themselves wholly to the world and made shipwreck. Is not Christ more to us than the world can ever be?

The Lord would allure us to brighter things above: He would not force us to anything, but would allure us to Himself. If it were not for the power of the love of Christ each of us would have been out and out worldlings. If we have been kept at all it is only the Lord's love that has kept us. May the Lord grant that we may be kept near to Himself, so that in fidelity to the testimony of God we may live as far away from the world as possible.

The apostle looked round, and said, "*All have forsaken me*" The scripture does not say that Demas lost his soul, but he lost his life, and made shipwreck. But then Paul had Luke, for he says, "*only Luke is with me*"(2 Timothy 4:11). What a comfort the beloved physician must have been to Paul. Think of what a real comfort you can be to your brethren in Christ if you are as Luke was, faithful to the testimony.

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We cannot overestimate the value and importance of whole hearted fidelity in remembrance, in service, of affection and of testimony. May the Lord help us to be faithful, loyal and true to Him, until He comes, for His name's sake.

F. S. Marsh