

128

Living Water

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

If you know of any one who might be interested in receiving this magazine, please pass their name and address to the Stone Publishing Trust. Copies of the next few issues will be sent to them free of charge.

The Trust's postal address is changing: urgent mail may be sent to 1, Mallard Way, Wallington SM6 9LZ, UK. We hope to publish a new address in the next issue.

Quotations from the Bible in 'Living Water' are normally from the Darby translation or from the Authorised (King James) Version.

The permission of the Editor should be obtained before reproducing material contained in this magazine. It is the policy of the Trustees to encourage the use of articles for the work of the Lord wherever this is possible so long as it does not infringe the rights of others.

Articles are sometimes shortened or otherwise amended and for this the Editor takes full responsibility.

Cover Picture: Two streams meet, Val d'Ultimo, Italy - J.E.Casavecchia

Editor: Mark Lemon

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

LIVING WATER 128

(March - April 2015)

Recent Ministry

| | | |
|--|-------------|---|
| A FIRM FOUNDATION | Alex. Mowat | 1 |
| THE BRIDE'S DRESS | George West | 4 |
| THE BLESSING OF THE LORD <i>Three words at a marriage, Portknockie</i> | Mike Bond | 7 |
| THE LOVE OF JESUS <i>An address at Aberdeen, 1st June 2013</i> | Brian Parr | 9 |

Poetry Selection

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----|
| PRAISE SONG TO THE SAVIOUR | J. Revell | 14 |
| HE OFFERED HIMSELF SPOTLESS TO GOD | H. Heath-Coleman | 15 |

Testimony Section

| | | |
|--|-------|----|
| SHOW ME THE STRAIGHT WAY <i>Continuing the series of testimonies written by those who have come to Christ but were previously Muslims</i> | Farid | 16 |
|--|-------|----|

A voice from the past

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----|
| THE LORD WAITS TO BE GRACIOUS | Alexander Pulleng | 19 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----|

From "Living Water" No 28

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----|
| THE QUESTIONS OF A RICH MAN | Eddie Holland | 23 |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----|

A word for today

| | | |
|--|-------------|----|
| I WILL GUIDE THEE WITH MY EYE <i>The second of two articles on God's guidance</i> | J. N. Darby | 25 |
|--|-------------|----|

Recent Ministry

A FIRM FOUNDATION

“Because it is contained in the scripture: Behold I lay in Zion a corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame. To you therefore who believe is the preciousness; but to the disobedient, the stone which the builders cast away as worthless, this is become head of the corner” (1Peter 2:6-7)

“Through wisdom is a house built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge are the chambers filled with all precious and pleasant substance.” (Proverbs 24:3-4)

The building of a Christian household is of great interest to God, because the centrepiece of such a household must be the Lord Jesus Christ. Any household which has Christ as its centre will experience the blessing of God. Just as a physical building requires a firm foundation, so the believer’s household needs to be established on a sure foundation and that foundation is Christ Himself.

Peter in his letter gives us a pattern to follow. He tells us that God has a building — a building not of stone and lime and that sort of material — but a building of persons, those who have come to the Lord Jesus, trusting Him as their own Saviour and Lord. God’s building is proceeding at the present time and believers in the Lord Jesus are being built together in view of the pleasure of God. Peter draws on the prophet Isaiah, who says, *“Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation” (Isaiah 28:16)*. On that sure foundation God is proceeding with His building.

To E___ and L___ here today who are setting out on a new life together and setting up a Christian household, and to others here who are planning to set up similar Christian households, I would say this: that if God is building on such a sure foundation as Jesus Christ the corner-stone, the Christian household must have the same foundation.

The Lord Jesus is the stone that the builders of this world

rejected. They cast Him aside as worthless. They looked at Him, they heard Him, they saw the miracles that He wrought, they examined Him from every aspect. Finally they said, 'This Person does not fit into our world, away with Him!' So the world system then, and the world system of today, is not built on a sure foundation. It is built on a crumbling foundation which has generated all the problems that face men and women of our day.

But the "*stone which the builders cast away as worthless*" has been made by God to be the chief corner-stone of His building; and He is calling on persons to come and have part in what He is building. What an opportunity for E__ and L__ as they set out on their lives together. They have already in their individual lives seen the true worth of the Lord Jesus. Now they have the opportunity to establish their household on the basis of Jesus Christ as the corner-stone. If it is established on Him as the corner-stone, that household will be blessed of God.

I trust I am speaking to persons here who appreciate the worthiness of Christ. But if not, the invitation is given to you to come to the Lord Jesus, to put your trust in Him and, for yourself, prove the worth and excellence of this glorious Person who died on Calvary's cross but who was raised and has been seated at God's own right hand. He is Jesus Christ the corner-stone.

That is the foundation, but life is very practical and real. I need hardly say to E__ and L__ of the days ahead that every one of them will not be like this day. Yet the One who is the corner-stone is the One who is able to help you along each day. In having Him as the corner-stone God has in mind that the whole household is characterised by the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The features that shone out in the Lord Jesus as Man here – the grace, humility, lowliness, dependence, obedience and so many more are in measure, to be seen in those of us who have Christian households. Of course, these features were seen in perfection only in the Lord Jesus Christ. But if He is the foundation stone the intention is that the whole household should be a reflection of Him.

So in the days ahead L___ and E___, you will have times of joy; you will also have difficult days, times when difficult decisions have to be made and days, too, of sadness and sorrow. But there is not one of those days that the Lord Jesus is not equal for. Lean on Him and seek His presence, you will find that He will give you the wisdom, the understanding, the knowledge to face all those days and come out of them with an enhanced appreciation of Himself.

The proverb I read speaks of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. They are all available to us in our Lord Jesus Christ who is not only the corner-stone but the One who has been *"made to us wisdom from God"* (1 Corinthians 1:30). Difficulties and problems will arise in the household. How are they going to be answered? Christ is the One who will give you good counsel. One of His names is *"Counsellor"* (Isaiah 9:6). He is able to draw near and give the counsel and wisdom that is needed for each situation.

Then there will be days when you say, 'Why is this happening?' Why? He is the One who is able to *"give you understanding in all things"* (2 Timothy 2:7). Solomon of old never asked for wealth and riches and honour. What he did ask for was an understanding heart, a heart that hears (see 2 Chronicles 1:7-12). As you lean on the Lord Jesus you will find the wisdom and understanding to face each day as it comes along.

As Christ becomes known in this way the Christian household begins to be formed and some reflection of the features that were seen in the Lord Jesus Himself come into display. What a lovely word we read here, *"and by knowledge are the chambers filled with all precious and pleasant substance"*. It is fine to have a beautiful house with many nice material things. It is more blessed to have a household that carries in it the atmosphere of the Lord Jesus Christ, *"by knowledge"*: the knowledge of Christ. The apostle Paul, having discarded all his past, speaks of gaining *"the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Philippians 3:8). That means so much in the Christian household. There was one place in particular in which the Lord Jesus, when

He was here on earth found a place to rest. That was in that house in Bethany where each member of the family was loved by Him and where He was loved by each member of the family. The Lord Jesus found an atmosphere where He could rest and find His home. I think it would be true to say of that household that the chambers were filled with all precious and pleasant substance. Indeed in John 12 we read that while the Lord Jesus was in that house Mary took a flask of precious ointment and poured it out on His feet and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Every chamber filled with all precious and pleasant substance! Christ had the first place in that household and it was given to Him because of the way that Mary and Martha had learned Him in the matter of the death and resurrection of Lazarus.

L___ and E___ may you be encouraged, and may every household here be encouraged today, first of all to have Jesus Christ as the corner-stone. Then as having Him in that place, to have the house filled with the atmosphere of Christ. This knowledge that we have read of here can be acquired both from His word in the scriptures but also in frequenting the presence of God and finding that truly Christ is wisdom from God, and He is able to impart just what is needed for each day.

E___ and L___, I commend these things to you. May God bless you both and bless every Christian household here and may He add His blessing to this word.

Alex Mowat (Aberdeen)

THE BRIDE'S DRESS

"And I heard as the voice of a great crowd, and as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of strong thunders, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty has taken to himself kingly power. Let us rejoice and exult, and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (Revelation 19:6-8)

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2)

I want to say a little about the bride’s dress.

It is interesting that in Revelation 19 when the marriage of the Lamb is about to take place, the assembly (or the church) is referred to as the wife. Then 1000 years after the marriage she is referred to in Revelation 21 as a bride. So although we can learn from what is before us today, nevertheless in Scripture sometimes things are placed in a different order. The idea of a wife in Scripture involves responsibility. A bride has no responsibility. She is there for the glory and joy of her husband.

But in regard of this Scripture in Revelation 19, I would like to say a little about the bride’s dress. First of all the planning of this dress was before this earth’s foundation was laid. How long before we do not know, but that was when it was planned. Then what was planned is being worked out in this time period. If we continue with the analogy of a dressmaker, the plan would have been transferred to the material and its several parts cut out. Finally, all is to be joined together.

This bride’s dress is composed of the *“righteousnesses of the saints”*

All was planned in a past eternity but God is now working this out at the present time. The parts are being cut out at the present time prepared for this wonderful day when *“the marriage of the Lamb is come”*.

It is interesting that in Hebrews 11, that great chapter filled with the heroes of faith, we get many persons mentioned and everything said of them is positive; there is not one word of criticism. This bride’s dress is composed of the *“righteousnesses of the saints”*, that is, the righteous acts that persons have done for Christ during their lifetime. What mistakes we make, what we do wrong, does not come into this at all. God is able to look at it that way because of the work of Jesus. One of the interesting teachings in Scripture is the way that God can look down and

see a person unblameable on account of the finished work of Christ. God is able to look on His work as unblameable. There is none of us here who are without blame. This all comes back to the value of the blood of Christ. Something that will never, ever be devalued. But, as I said, this dress is composed of the righteousneses of the saints.

We can look over history. We see those who have committed their lives to the things of the Lord, some who have even been martyred. Those, we might say, have added greatly to this dress. But it is wonderful – and I commend this to our young brother and sister – it would be wonderful if in that great day of the marriage of the Lamb that something of yours would be added to this dress. It is not impossible; it is not that we have to do something extraordinary. Yet I think it is a great incentive to look forward to that glorious day and think that something that we have done in our life in the way of righteous acts done for Christ could be added to this wonderful dress. I look back on my life, I am pretty well at the end of it now, and see how much time I have wasted, but what a prospect this is to have part in the righteousneses of the saints. Something to be added to this wonderful dress!

1000 years later, after the Millennial reign of Christ, Revelation 21 shows us the bride adorned for her husband. But following on what has already been said, I commend this that, despite the day of weakness and smallness we are in, God's thoughts are going through and it is a wonderful incentive to give the first place in our life to the things of God, if we realise that in the end, in this glorious day what we have done may be added to this wonderful dress.

I commend this especially to our brother and sister, but also to everyone here. It is open to every believer to add something to this glorious dress that will please the heart of the Lord Jesus in day of the marriage of the Lamb.

George West (Gardenstown)

THE LORD'S BLESSING

“Jehovah bless thee and keep thee; Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace” (Numbers 6:24-26)

“So David would not bring the ark of Jehovah home unto himself into the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. And the ark of Jehovah remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months; and Jehovah blessed Obed-Edom and all his household” (2 Samuel 6:10-11)

“But I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas that...they have devoted themselves to the saints for service” (1 Corinthians 16:15)

These scriptures all speak of blessing:

- The blessing of our brother and sister in their lives together;
- The blessing of a household; and,
- The blessing of the Christian company in a place.

We are looking for a blessing today on this occasion, a blessing particularly for E___ and L___.

Marriage is a wonderful thought before God - marriage in the Lord. And, E___ and L___, you have taken this step today in faith – no doubt you have been before the Lord in relation to it, but may you have a great sense today and from here on of the Lord's blessing. May He bless you and may He keep you. He is the blesser and He is the keeper.

Who of us in our married histories and lives have not experienced something of the keeping of the Lord Jesus? How affecting it is to think that He has His eye upon us and He will have His eye upon the young couple here today. May His blessing follow upon you and may His face shine upon you - His face shining out upon you in your pathway together!

We have already spoken today that there may be difficult times ahead. Well, the Lord can light up the way for you and He will help you. You have committed your lives to Christ, trusting in Him as your own personal Lord and Saviour and what a great step that is;

so may you continue to seek His blessing to help you, and may He give you peace. It is a great thing to have a sense of the presence of the Lord and to know something of His peace in our households. May this be your experience.

Then I read about the house of Obed-Edom because they made a place for the ark. As you make a place for the Lord in your household He will bless you. It is a great thing for us as Christians, to make a place for the Lord. Practically, that involves seeking His guidance daily, reading His word, and household prayer. Make room for the Lord Jesus. In all the problems and difficulties of life that come up, He will make the way through for you. As you make way for Christ in your household what an effect it will have, and it will be for your blessing.

The third Scripture speaks of blessing for the locality where you are going to set up your house. The household of Stephanas in Corinth was one that the apostle Paul could commend – a place that he appreciated. They made their house available for the saints. They laid themselves out to help God’s people. May you be helped to do this in B ___ because you will be greatly needed there.

As we receive blessing as believers in Christ then we can be available for blessing for God’s people and may this be your portion. May you be helped, in your local gathering, that there may be a blessing for all the saints to refresh them. Entertain them in your home, look after them, care for them. Devote yourselves to the saints for service. It was something that was appreciated by the apostle Paul. There was another household he spoke of, that of Aquila and Priscilla. It says of them they were those who had staked their neck for him and saved his life (see Romans 16:3-4).

May you be helped and blessed in your pathway together and may all of us here have a fresh sense of the Lord’s blessing upon us as we continue in the pathway until the Lord comes. We have sung of that time when His church will be united to Him: what a time that will be. As we proceed in this occasion how great it is to have an impression of Christ and His assembly. Marriage is a figure of Christ and His church. May we be encouraged in this thought today, for His name’s sake.

Mike Bond (Worthing)

Three words at a Marriage, Portknockie, October 2014.

THE LOVE OF JESUS

Luke **22: 14-15 & 28, 31-34, 54-62**
John **13: 1, 3-5, 14, 15**
John **14: 1-3**
2 Corinthians **5: 14-15**

I want to speak about the love of Jesus. There is a hymn which says, *There is no love like the love of Jesus*, and that is true! The apostle John says in the Revelation, *"To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father: to him be the glory"* (Revelation 1:5, 6); beautiful words, speaking not about historical love, but an ever present love. The Lord Jesus never changes. His love is absolutely pure and holy and eternally unchanging. Those who know Him and love Him will rest eternally in His everlasting arms.

In the Song of Songs the word says, *"Many waters cannot quench love, Neither do the floods drown it"* (Song of Songs 8:7). In Luke 4, the people wondered at the words of grace which came out of His mouth but then, because He spoke of blessing that went outside the boundary of Israel, His hearers were ready to throw Him down the precipice. At every step He was opposed. The Pharisees and others were always trying to catch Him out, *"that they might find something of which to accuse him"* (Luke 6:7). These were the rising waters of opposition!

In Luke 9 we read that He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. Think then, as He went that way, of what Gethsemane meant to Him, as He went forward, (leaving Peter, James and John a stone's throw away) and fell on His face to the ground and prayed. It says, His *"sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the ground"* (Luke 22:44). It should move our hearts to think of what He suffered!

The disciples fell asleep, but Jesus was oppressed in His spirit, and knowing all that lay before Him, (not only the physical suffering, but the awfulness of bearing our sin), prayed saying, *"My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as thou wilt"* (Matthew 26:39). There was no other way. As the hymn says:-

If sinners ever were to know
The depths of love divine,
All Calvary's weakness and its woe,
Blest Saviour, must be Thine.

This is what makes us love Jesus: that He was prepared to pay the full cost of our redemption, and in these atoning sufferings, we see the flood waters rising, yet never quenching His great and eternal love, and in His love we see reflected the commitment of the Hebrew bondman who said, *"I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free"* (Exodus 21:5).

Jesus then woke the disciples, and said, *"he that delivers me up has drawn nigh,"* and Judas, one of His disciples, with whom He had held sweet intercourse, (see Psalm 55:14) was coming with the band, with sticks and swords. He kisses Jesus. What a callous betrayer he was! Then it says, *"all the disciples forsook him, and fled,"* (Matthew 26:56 KJV)., and the band seized Jesus and led Him away.

Peter *"followed afar off"*, that was not the kind of following that Peter had promised. He had boldly said, *"Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death,"* (Luke 22:33). but now we see him sitting around the fire in the High Priest's house and being challenged as to his identity. I think we are living in days when our identity as Christians is being tested. Will we stand up for Jesus? This is surely what is needed in our country today!

The Lord had previously spoken to Peter and had said, *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to have you, to sift you as wheat"*(Luke 22:31); that was true for all the disciples but then the Lord says to Peter himself, *"I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not"*. He then told him, *"thou, when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren"*. What an amazing thing! If I were to write a title over Luke 22, I would write 'The love that will not let me go'. How precious!

We have a High Priest, One who ever intercedes for us, as the hymn says:-

Wonderful and gracious service,
Love that bears us all the way

On Thine arm, until we enter
On that glorious, endless day!

So the Lord is really saying to Peter, 'I am going to bear you upon my arm and bring you through this trial. I am going to keep you and make you serviceable again'.

When we look at Peter's life we might think, did the Lord make a mistake in taking him up? No! He had said, "*I will make you a fisher of men*" and Peter's testing was part of the making process, and that is the same for us too, so that we might be more useful to Him.

I love to think of the priestly service of Christ, for the Bible says, "*he is ... always living to intercede*" (Hebrews 7:25). "*Always living*"`, there is never a time when He is not caring and interceding for us, to see us through. Where would we be if it were not for our Saviour serving us on high? What marvellous grace!

Peter denied the Lord in the High Priest's palace, but the Lord looked at Peter. It was not a look of condemnation, but how deep it went into Peter's heart. He remembered the word of the Lord and, "*going forth without, wept bitterly*". Well, Peter was not discarded, on the resurrection day it says, "*The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon*". He had his own special appearing, to show the grace and love of Jesus that would take up one who had failed, and fit him for service in the new dispensation.

The Lord does not challenge Peter immediately, but He feeds him, and all the disciples too, because they had all failed, and had all forsaken Him. Still, the Lord challenged Peter three times and on the third time Peter was grieved and he said, "*Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I am attached to thee.*" That is an important thing, not words only, but what is in my heart and what is in my life for Him. Then we see Peter, at Pentecost, standing up and boldly proclaiming the gospel. He is not afraid any more but standing up for Jesus and making his love known.

In John 13, we see more of the love of Jesus in serving His own. It is a love chapter; the first verse says, "*Jesus ... having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end*". It was just before the Passover and a very special time, and during supper the

question of washing their feet arose. Who had the love and the lowly grace to rise and wash the feet of that gathered company? Not John or Peter or Thomas. but the greatest of them all ! – the One who had come from highest glory and taken on Himself a bondman’s form –He rose from supper, girded Himself with a linen towel and with the water He washed the feet of the disciples.

The Lord did this as an example. He was exhorting them to love one another and showing them how to do it. He says, *“I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also”*. I just commend that to us that we may have the same kind of love that our Saviour had that day. The disciples would never forget such love and lowliness.

Then think of Him ascending into heaven. They watched Him go up, the One who had washed their feet and wiped them with the linen towel. He was truly the heavenly Man. They would think of how He had – *“loved his own who were in the world, and loved them to the end”*. He had loved them through all their failures and lack of faith, He had loved them through it all, and we know that He loves us just the same today.

In John 14, it is amazing that as the Lord approached the cross with all that was upon His spirit, He was not thinking about Himself but about His disciples. He says, *“Let not your heart be troubled”*. He knew their troubled hearts about what He had said to them about His going away, and now He comforts them. Even in His own hour of need He consoled the disciples with a promise, a promise of love.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you...and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again”. I remember a brother saying, that He did not just say, ‘I will come again’, but He said, *“I am coming”* as if it was ever on His heart that He was coming again.

Think how long ago He said that, and we are still waiting! But He is coming! He has promised and He never breaks a promise. Every promise of God, *“in him is the yea, and in him the amen”* (2 Corinthians 1:20). And so He said *“I will receive you to Myself”*. How very wonderful!

The apostle Paul was looking forward to the Lord Jesus coming,

and although He did not come in his lifetime, yet he still looked forward to it, and I am sure most of us when we first came to know the Lord Jesus, had that hope burning in our hearts... the hope of His coming! More years have gone by, but the word says, *"now is our salvation nearer than when we believed"* (Romans 13:11). I love to think that no Christians have ever been so near to the Lord's return than we are today. What a privilege!

Jesus may come at any moment. What for? To receive us to Himself, that where He is, we might be with Him, and that for ever! What a promise! I exhort us all to hold firm to this blessed hope.

I finish with a word from 2 Corinthians 5, *"the love of the Christ constrains us"* and I think it is true that far more valuable work is done through the influence of the love of Christ than by a sense of duty. It is His love that would compel us to do something worthwhile for Him.

It reminds me of a time in David's life, where the word says, *"David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem"* (1 Chronicles 11:17). And the three mighty men – (they were not told to go) – went because they loved David. They may well have come to him at the cave, in debt and with embittered spirit, but David had received them and made them captains. So, when they heard David's desire, it says, they *"broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, which is in the gate, and took it, and brought it to David"*.

There are all kinds of things in our lives that we need to break through, not out of a sense of duty, but to gratify the heart of the Lord Jesus. That action meant so much to David that he did not drink the water, but he poured it out to the Lord!

I commend these thoughts to us, that the love of Christ might be the central influence in our life, and that we might live for Him. I remember a brother saying, "What you do, do for the Lord". That was good advice, to do all things for the Lord Jesus and to let His love be what constrains us. Amen.

Brian Parr

An address at Aberdeen 1st June 2013

Poetry Selection

PRAISE SONG TO THE SAVIOUR

Hark the solemn strains uprising!
Sweetly swells the note of praise,
From the chamber where the Saviour
Leads His own the note to raise.
On the night of His rejection
All is darkness, deepening gloom,
As the Son of man goes onward
To the cross, to death and tomb.

Hark the gentle strains uprising:
Softly swells the note of praise;
All His anguish we remember
As to Him the voice we raise.
All our guilt was laid upon Him –
On God's own beloved Son;
All the waves and billows pouring
O'er His head, He cried, 'Tis done!'

Hark the gladsome song uprising;
Louder swells the note of praise;
Lord we hail Thee as the Victor
While to Thee the note we raise.
Thou whom man cast out, rejected,
Sittest crowned upon God's throne;
Yea, Amen! Thou, Lord, art worthy!
This we gladly, fully own.

Hark the mighty song uprising!
Loudly swells the note of praise!
Heaven and earth shall soon adore Thee,
All to Thee their voices raise.
Thou hast loved us, Thou hast washed us
In Thy blood from every stain;
Raise we then the joyful chorus –
Worthy is the Lamb once slain!

J. Revell (1852 – 1900)

HE OFFERED HIMSELF SPOTLESS TO GOD

Jesus, Lord, Thou blest Redeemer,
Life of all who come to Thee,
Light of all the Gentile nations,
Israel's glory yet to be;
In the darkness
Thou wast there on Calvary's tree.
Sinless, Thou, made sin for judgment –
God's unmingled wrath was there –
All our sins, too, laid upon Thee,
In Thy body, Thou didst bear.
“It is finished”
Loudly did Thy voice declare.
Even unto death obedient
To Thy God and Father's will;
Shed Thy blood for our redemption
And for wider blessing still;
For Thy dying
All God's counsels did fulfil.

Death was powerless, Lord, to hold Thee,
Though Thou in its dust wast laid;
Thou didst burst its brazen portals,
Through its bars a way hast made.
Might and glory
In Thy rising were displayed.

H. Heath-Coleman

SHOW ME THE STRAIGHT WAY

I was born into a Muslim family and every week-end we used to go to the Islamic school in the mosque. There we learned how to say our prayers five times a day in Arabic. Sometimes they would record how many of the 35 prayers we had done in the week. At times we would do the prayers at high speed just to get to the goal of 35 prayers for the week.

I continued going to the mosque until I became a teenager. I always maintained a belief in God. I always maintained a belief that there was an eternal power. This was the God, Allah as we say in Islam and I always held to the roots I was brought up in. Things changed for me when I was about 18 years old. I graduated from high school, I went to college and I just started to wake up. Here I was, a young man, wondering what should I do with my life, what should I study and what kind of work should I take up? I started delving into history, philosophy, different religions, politics. I got interested, like many young people do, in all those things.

It so happened that through the providence of God I got hold of a Bible. Now, here I was, a young man who was raised a Muslim, who had been taught all my life that Islam is the one true religion, starting to consider what the Bible and even other religions had to say. There were times when I wondered, 'What was the right way?' Christians said they had the right way and the Jews, they think they have it. I began to think that perhaps nobody has the right way; maybe nobody has the truth!

I continued to read the Bible and I can say one interesting thing. As I was reading the Bible I kept remembering a prayer that Muslims always pray and say over and over again in their daily prayers—‘show us the straight way’. In the reciting of the daily prayers it is something we often pray without thinking about it but at this time in my life I was searching for the way to God; I was searching for the truth, so I continued, even in reading the Bible, to pray this prayer; ‘Allah, show me the straight way’.

As I continued to read the Bible I began to see something that I never knew before – I began to discover Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Bible. The Islamic religion taught us how to live our lives; other religions that I had started to look into also had systems of laws and rules and do’s and don’ts. But it was only Jesus, as described in the Bible, who said, ‘I can give you a new heart’; and I read in the Gospel of John: ‘If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed’

At the same time I came to realise that there was a deep self-centredness in me; for example, I was playing in one of the university soccer teams and I noticed that every person on the team wanted to be the person that scored the goal. There was self-centredness and it was in me as much as anybody. My fellow classmates came from different parts of the country and even some from around the world. Every one was concerned about getting a good job, making a lot of money and being successful. I said, what is this? Every one is so self-centred. But I saw it in myself too. I began to despair because I saw my self-centredness as sinfulness and I could not escape it.

For a period of several months I read and studied the Bible, comparing it with the Islamic beliefs I had and continuing to repeat the prayer which contains the words, ‘Show me the straight way’. God was revealing to me the way. Jesus, Himself, in the gospel, said, *“I am the way”* and God was slowly revealing to me that Jesus is the One that could save me from my self-centredness, from my sinfulness. I knew that I was self-centred and I was a sinful person and only Jesus Christ was able to save me and give me a new heart. I said, ‘Lord, I am going to give my life to You’.

The Bible was the key in my conversion

At the time that I was wrestling with these decisions I thought maybe I should go in politics because if the world is a miserable place—even a young man can understand that—and maybe I can help change this world. But when Jesus Christ became the Lord of my life my prayer became, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do, how can I serve You, Lord?’ I considered it a privilege and a blessing. In our Islamic religion much of what we do is dictated to us; when to pray, how to pray, how to wash, how to obtain a better blessing by fasting, by giving alms. But in the Christian faith Jesus Christ is able to direct us through His word and we are not slaves but we are free people who can now serve Him freely.

Yes, there are rules and standards; we do have instruction from the word of God. But it is not something to be done out of fear that if I do not succeed in this practice I will have guilt and shame. There is freedom. It is wonderful happiness to be a Christian. It is a sense of liberation. I am always so thankful to the Lord Jesus Christ that He saved me, that He called me, that He took me to be His disciple.

The Bible was the key in my conversion. I believe if Muslims would read the Bible many of them would become Christians even though they have been taught in Islam that the Bible is not the real word of God. Many Muslims, if they would read it, would understand that it is a piercing true word of God. I am praying for Muslim people. Those who were Muslims and have become Christians, have a tremendous empathy with Muslims. I am praying for Muslims to begin to seek God and to have the courage to consider what they must do.

As Muslims oftentimes we hide behind the excuse, ‘I was born a Muslim, I was raised a Muslim, I cannot leave the Islamic religion’. But I believe in the day of judgment that excuse will not be satisfactory. We are sinners who have to meet a holy God. So I am praying that Muslims will take up the courage even to risk their reputation, their livelihood, their family, whatever it may be, to gain Jesus Christ. It is a big cost, but many, many

Muslims are now having the opportunity to hear the true Christian gospel and many are, in fact, responding to it. I thank God for those brothers and sisters in Christ and I pray for other Muslims: friends, family, loved ones, that they too will hear this glorious message of Jesus Christ and respond to it; that they would discover the grace of God. It is not a salvation that we earn by our own good works or strive towards by our own dealings. It is through grace that God has given us through Jesus Christ the way, the truth and the life.

Farid.

A voice from the past

THE LORD WAITS TO BE GRACIOUS

“And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him” Isaiah 30:18.

The 30th chapter of Isaiah is a warning to the people of Judah not to form an alliance with Egypt: *“Woe to the rebellious children...That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked of my mouth, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh” (vvs1&2)*. The two great powers of Isaiah’s day were Assyria and Egypt and they watched each other, each being anxious that the other should not gain power over the other.

When Tiglath Pileser II became king of Assyria he set out on a process of conquest of the surrounding nations, subduing them and sending their people to other parts of his empire. Within Judah there was a strong party pressing for an alliance with Egypt as a balance to the power of Assyria but this was resisted by Isaiah who claimed: *“For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose” (vvs7)*. Isaiah maintained that the only thing for Judah to do was to return to the Lord (see v. 15). However, this message was not heeded, so God’s message was: *“therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you”*.

As it transpired, the Assyrian host under Sennacherib by-passed Judah, defeated Egypt, then turned to besiege the cities of Israel. While Sennacherib himself besieged Lachish, Rabshakeh was

sent to Jerusalem with a great army. Rabshekeh, in a blasphemous message addressed to the people, sought to destroy the confidence of the defenders. He tells the Jews not to listen to Hezekiah and pointed out that the gods of other lands had not been able to deliver their peoples from the might of Assyria, and draws the conclusion that the Lord will not be able to deliver the people of Jerusalem.

Hezekiah spread the whole matter before the Lord and received a message from Isaiah: *"Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria*

**He waits to be gracious.
The delay is part of
life's discipline.**

have blasphemed me. Behold I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land" (Isaiah 37:6-7). Thus, returning to the Lord, resting in full confidence in Him, Hezekiah and the people were delivered. The Lord who waited that they should learn this lesson was indeed then very gracious at the voice of their cry. The angel of the Lord smote 185,000 of the flower of Assyrian army in the night.

Sennacherib returned home and Assyrian records bear out the account in that they only refer to the capture of Lachish and make no reference to Jerusalem. Later Sennacherib was slain by two of his own sons.

The above account is the context of the words *"the Lord waits that he might be gracious"*. However, they embody a truth of general application. The Lord often waits. He does not answer our petitions at once. We may get impatient, fretful, restless, and vexatious at the delay which appears to us to be so purposeless. We know that God could bring in deliverance or achieve the desired object for us but for some unexplained purpose He refrains from doing so. The delay is not due to indifference, or negligence. Behind all lies a beneficent purpose. He waits to be gracious. The delay is part of life's discipline. He chastens those He loves. We are precious indeed to Him. The delays are by no means denials.

Paul says: *"Now I know in part, but then shall I fully know even as also I am fully known"* (1 Corinthians 13:12). Looking back over life's history we may sometimes come to understand, at least in part, the reasons why God *"waited to be gracious"*. His delays never thwart His purpose but polish His instrument.

In the waiting time we come to an end of our own resources.

We discover our limitations. While we felt we could do something ourselves we were permitted to try. Whatever it may seem at the time, it is a gracious thing which God does when He destroys all self assertiveness and pride in our capabilities.

The stilling of the storm on lake Galilee is an illustration of this (see Mark 4:35-41 & Luke 8:22-25). When the Lord announced His desire to pass over to the other side *"they set off from the shore. And as they sailed he fell asleep"* (Luke 8:22-23). Caught by a sudden squall of wind they soon came to an end of their puny resources. The Master lay asleep, apparently oblivious to their difficulties and their danger. They wake Him up in their great extremity and He *"rebuked the wind and the raging of the water...and there was a great calm"* (v.24). He waited, allowing them to get into great extremity only that they might get to know Him and His power in a way that they had not understood previously. Thus they exclaim, *"Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him"* Mark 4:41).

Similarly in the other lake scene we read that the Lord *"Compelled his disciples to go on board ship and go on before to the other side"* (Mark 6:45), while He went to a mountain apart to pray. The wind was contrary and they laboured in rowing. They must have wondered at the Lord's absence during that dreadful night. He waited and only came to them in the fourth watch. He waited to be gracious for it enabled them to say, *"Truly thou art God's Son"* (Matthew 14:33).

In the waiting time we often cease to want the objects on which we have set our hearts.

We come to discern that God has good reason for withholding and are thankful. Sometimes things have been denied to us that a greater thing might be given. The sisters at Bethany earnestly desired that the Lord would hasten to them at all speed as they

sent the moving message, *“Him whom thou lovest is sick”* (John 11:3). The scripture says quite specifically that the Lord loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus yet the Lord deliberately abode where He was until Lazarus had died, was buried and corruption had set in. The sisters were persuaded that if only the Lord had come in time their brother would not have died, but He waited only to be gracious. Without the Lord waiting in that way they would never have understood Him as the *“resurrection and the life”*, nor would they have heard Him say, *“He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet he shall live”* (John 11:25.). Further, what a great blessing those words have been to a multitude of believers since that day! He waited to be gracious. The discipline of delay leads to the formation of Christian character.

It is thus that lessons of faith, patience and humility are best learned. The forty years in the desert in the school of God must have seemed a long, wearisome time to Moses before he was ready to become the leader of the Exodus. But what a man he became – meek above all the men that were on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3).

Abraham waited twenty-five long years between the promise of an heir and the birth of Isaac. True, there was one lapse wherein he failed to wait but he *“believed in God and it was counted to him for righteousness”* (Genesis 15:6). The long delay must have been very mysterious to Abraham, but what heights of faith he reached culminating in the offering up of that heir. He became the friend of God and the father of all them that believe.

David was anointed king of Israel as quite a young man, but he had to wait until mature manhood before he ascended the throne of Israel. On two occasions he had Saul at his mercy, but despite the urging of his followers he refused to slay the Lord’s anointed. He preferred to wait God’s way and time for enthronement. Strange indeed were the experiences through which he passed during the years the Lord waited. What great lessons he learned; lessons which fitted him to be a man after God’s own heart, the sweet singer of Israel, so that through the many psalms that he wrote, mostly during the period of waiting, a great blessing has

been given to the people of God for all time.

How beautifully Isaiah concludes the verse read at the beginning with the words, *"blessed are all they that wait for him"*. The Lord waits but we must also wait for Him! We must not emulate impetuous Saul who would not wait for the arrival of Samuel and presumed to usurp functions which were not his with disastrous results.

Isaiah tells of another blessing which falls to those who wait patiently for the Lord. He says that God acts for him that waits for Him (see Isaiah 64:4). So amidst the silence and gloom that may envelop life's pathway let us dare to believe that God is working out His purposes and is preparing us for the fuller appreciation of those heavenly joys and blessings which He has prepared for those that love Him (see 1 Corinthians 2:9). *"All things work together for good to those that love God"*(Romans 8:28) In the afflictions common to so many lives He is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). When the waiting period is over it will indeed seem light affliction in comparison with the weight of glory which has become ours. He is ever working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight (Hebrews 13:21). Blessed indeed are all those who wait for Him.

Alexander Pulleng (1897 – 1986)

From "Living Water" No 28

THE QUESTIONS OF A RICH MAN

"...how can man be just with God?" (Job 9:2)

"Who can bring a clean man out of the unclean?" (Job 14:4)

Job lived about 1500BC. He was a wealthy man; the first few verses of the book of Job in the Bible give us some idea of his possessions. It says that he had 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 asses and many servants. He was a rich man and we find that he asks a number of questions, the kind of questions people ask today. Have you ever wondered how you can be just before God?

Job was in great trouble when he asked that question. He had lost his family and property and wished that he had never been born. But we are told that even in his extremity he did not curse God! No! He asks: “...*how can man be just with God?*”

The gospel provides the answer to that question. It is fine to be able to say to those who are troubled in their minds about that question that God can forgive sinners, and point them to the finished work of Jesus.

God has the same way of salvation for everyone and it is centred in Jesus. It is beyond us to save ourselves. First of all, the Holy Spirit begins to work and in our consciences we become aware that we have to meet God. God was working with Job and that is what caused him to ask such questions.

Job's next question is: “*Who can bring a clean man out of the unclean?*” Social workers would like to have that one answered. An immense amount of money and effort is spent trying to improve people by altering their circumstances. Without a thought of God or the Saviour, they try to bring a clean person out of an unclean. Who can take a person in their sins and, by improvement socially or financially, change the heart of that person and make them clean? Job was an intelligent man and he provides the answer: - “*Not one!*” The only answer is Christ – He alone can save, can change hearts and make them clean. The key to salvation is Christ.

Eventually Job comes to the end of his questions and self-righteous pleadings. It says: “*The words of Job are ended*” (*Job 31:40*), and at that point God brings in His word through a man called Elihu. Job's three friends, men who did not know God, had told him that all his sufferings were due to his wrongdoing, but Elihu tells him something different. He says, ‘God is working in your heart’. Today God would speak to you in Christ, to draw attention to His finished work on the cross.

Paul writes to Timothy and says there is “*One God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom...*” (*1 Timothy 2:5-6*). Do you realise that Jesus gave Himself a ransom? Every now and again in the news we hear of a ransom demand of some sort, but there is no ransom price like that

which Jesus had to pay for you. Oh that you might see that the ransom has been paid and that you can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Pray to Him. Ask Him to come into your life and to cleanse you.

Job 33 speaks of a man who says *"I have sinned"* (v.27). That is the proof of conversion. You come to see that you are a sinner for whom Jesus died and that He has paid the penalty for your sins. Conversion means that you are turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Could there be a greater contrast? Conviction came into Job's soul. He says to God, *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:5-6). That is conversion!

What happened to Job after that? Well, God blessed him. He will bless you too, if you will in simple faith open your heart to Christ

Eddie Holland

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

A word for today

I WILL GUIDE THEE WITH MINE EYE

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come unto thee" (Psalm 32:8-9)

Now we are often like the horse or the mule, every one of us – and this because our souls have not been ploughed up. Where there is anything in which the will of man is at work, the Lord deals with us, as with the horse or the mule, holding us in. When every part of the heart is in contact with Himself, He guides us with His "eye". *"The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, the whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take*

heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light” (Luke 11:34-36).

When there is anything wherein the eye is not single, as long as this is the case, there is not free intercourse in heart and affections with God; and the consequence is, our will not being subdued, we are not led simply of God. When the heart is in a right state, the whole body is “*full of light*”, and there is the quick perception of the will of God. He just teaches us by His “*eye*” all He wishes, and produces in us quickness of understanding in His fear (see Isaiah 11:3)¹ This is our portion as having the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, ‘quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord’, hearts without any object save the will and glory of God. And that is just what Christ was: “*Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea thy law is within my heart*” (Psalm 40:7-8, Hebrews 10:7). Where there is this, it may be bitter and painful as to the circumstances of the path, but there is in it the joy of obedience as obedience. There is always joy, and the consequence – God guiding us by His “*eye*”.

Before anything can be done, if we have not got this certainty, before we enter upon any particular service, we should seek to get it, judging our own hearts as to what may be hindering. Suppose I set about doing some thing, and meet with difficulties, I shall begin to be uncertain as to whether it is God’s mind or not; and hence there will be feebleness and discouragement. But on the other hand, if acting in the intelligence of God’s mind in communion, I shall be “*more than conqueror*”, what ever may meet me on the way (see Romans 8:37). And note here: not only does the power of faith, in the path of faith, remove mountains; but the Lord deals morally, and will not let me find out His way, unless there be in me the spirit of obedience.

¹ “And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears”

"If any man will do his will", says the Lord, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself"(John 7:17). This is precisely the obedience of faith. The heart must be in the condition of obedience as Christ's heart was, "Lo, I come... to do thy will, O my God". The apostle Paul speaks to the Colossians of being "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9). Here is the quickness of understanding in the fear of the Lord - the condition of a man's own soul - though the spirit of his mind will necessarily be shown in outward acts, when that will is set before him; as Paul goes on to say, "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful unto every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

May our hearts be led to desire to know and do God's will?

Here then is the blessed joyful state of being guided by God's "eye". *"I have meat to eat"* says our Lord to the disciples, *"that ye know not of"* (John 4:32). And what was that meat? *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work"* (John 4:34).

The Lord guides, or rather controls, us in another way by providential circumstances, so that we may not go wrong, even though we are those who have no understanding.. We ought to be thankful that He does so.. But it is only as the horse or mule. Where your will is subject to Mine, He says, *"I will guide thee with mine eye"* – but, if you are not subject, I must keep you in with *"bit and bridle"*. This is, evidently, a very different thing.

May our hearts be led to desire to know and do God's will. It will then be not so much a question of what that will is, but of knowing and doing God's will. Then we shall have the certain and blessed knowledge of being guided by His "eye". There is in all this the government of God with those *"whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile"*(Psalm 32:1-2)

– and who feel they are sure to go wrong if not guided by Himself. There is guidance with knowledge, and there is also guidance without knowledge. The former is our blessed privilege; but it may be the latter is needed to humble us. In Christ there was everything exactly according to God. In a certain sense He had no character. When I look at Him, what do I see? A constant never-failing life—manifestation of obedience. He goes up to Bethany just when He is to go up, regardless of the fears of the disciples; He abides two days still in the same place where He is, after He has heard that Lazarus is sick (See John 11:6-9). He has nothing but to do all, to accomplish all, for the glory of God. One man is tender and soft; in another firmness and decision predominate. There is great diversity of character among men. You do not see that in Christ at all; there is no unevenness; every faculty of His humanity obeyed, and was the instrument of the impulse the divine will gave to it.

For us divine life has to be guided in a vessel that has constantly to be kept down. Thus even for Paul the command not to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:7) was not guidance by the Holy Spirit of the highest sort. It was blessed guidance, yet not the highest character of guidance an apostle knew. It was more like the government of the horse or the mule, not the intelligence of God's mind in communion.

A great range of the guidance of the Spirit is just what we get in Colossians 1:9-11, to those in communion with God. There we find the individual to be *"filled with the knowledge of his will"*. The Holy Spirit guides into the knowledge of the divine will, and there is no occasion even to pray about it. If I have spiritual understanding about a matter, it may be the result of a great deal of previous prayer, and not necessarily of the things having been prayed about at the time. One has often had to pray about a thing, because we are not in communion. I may have my mind exercised about that today, honestly, truly, graciously exercised, which, five years hence, it might be, I should not have a doubt about. When God is using us, if we are free from ourselves, He may put it into our hearts to go here, or to go there; then God is

positively guiding us. But this assumes a person to be diligently walking with God; it assumes death to self. If we are walking humbly, God will guide us.

I may be in a certain place and have one say to me, 'Will you not go to ...' (naming some other place)? Now, if I have not the mind of God, as to my going or otherwise, I shall have to pray for guidance; but this, of course, assumes that I am not walking in the knowledge of God's mind. I may have motives pulling me one way or the other, and clouding my spiritual judgment. When the disciples, in John, 11, speak of the Jews having of late sought to stone the Lord, and ask "*Goest thou thither again?*" the Lord replies "*Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him*" (John 11:8-10). This is just an application of the fact, that, if walking in the night, I must be on the look-out for stones, lest I stumble over them. So Paul prays for the Philippians, that their "*love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment; That ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ*" (Philippians 1:9-10) – without a single stumble all the way along.

Many speak of providence as a guide. Providence does sometimes control, but it never, properly speaking, guides us; it guides things. If I am going to a place to preach, and I find when I get to the railway station that the train has gone, God has ordered things about me (and I may have to be thankful for the over-ruling); but it is not God's guiding me; for I should really have gone, had the train not left before I got to the station; my will was to go. All we get of this guidance of providence is very blessed; but it is not guidance by the Spirit of God, not guidance by the "eye", but rather by the "bit" of God. Though providence overrules, it does not, properly speaking, guide.

J N Darby