

Living Water

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LIVING WATER 129

(May – June 2015)

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In 1913 a collection of Edward Chater's hymns and poems was published with the title, "The Ways of God and His Praise". This book is long out of print and can be difficult to obtain. It is intended, therefore, if the Lord will, regularly to include a selection of these hymns in issues of this magazine.

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Recent Ministry

GROWTH

What have we learned from the way that the Lord has taken us? How much we have grown in our knowledge of the Lord and the knowledge of the truth? God, in His wisdom, orders our paths in different ways, but all so that we might learn from the things that we pass through. From the trials and the pressures of the way God teaches us what He can be to us.

We read in 2 Corinthians 10:12 of *“some... measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves”*. But it is not men, not even Christians, that our growth is to be measured against; we are to *grow up to Him* in all things (Ephesians 4:15)

So I want to consider growth as illustrated in:

- The boy Samuel
- The life of Jacob
- Growing up to salvation and growing in grace, and,
- The measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ

1 Samuel 2:18-21:

“The boy Samuel grew before Jehovah”

There are three references in scripture to Samuel’s growth: the first is after the little coat is brought to him year by year by his mother; the second is in verse 25 after a reference to the moral failure of Eli’s sons; the last is in chapter 3: 19, after Samuel receives that personal call from God. Samuel’s growth continued despite the failure that was all around him.

Without in any way trying to compare Samuel to the Lord Himself, it is remarkable in Isaiah 53 that it says of Jesus, *“He shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2)*. Verse 21 of 1 Samuel 2 says that the boy Samuel grew before the Lord; it does not say before Eli. It suggests the way in which Samuel was starting to respond to the things of God. He is placed in circumstances that were far beyond him in age and ability, but what he is doing is suitable to God. It is

the result of Hannah's prayerful care so that what is for God is secured even in a very dark day.

Hannah was sensitive as to Samuel's growth; the little coat she brought each year was just suitable for the moment. There were feelings with her in accordance with the heart of God. We need to hold the younger ones in our affections and be sensitive as to what they are able for and what is suited, so that they might grow in the knowledge of the Lord and be developed in their own personal link with Him.

Hannah was a mother in Israel. She anticipated Samuel's growth every year. There was real soul exercise behind the growth of that child which all Christian parents know something about. We should, each one, whether we have children growing up in our households or not, be carrying them before God so that younger ones might be preserved for the Lord. With Hannah there was an understanding of what was suited to the moment. It is so easy to present things that are completely over the heads of the young ones or even to talk down to them as though they know nothing. Each one of us should be in the presence of the Lord in regard to it so that younger ones are nurtured and strengthened to be here for Him, that they might stand on their own feet, and that they might know they are being carried in the affections of those who love the Lord.

There needs to be with each of us the sensitivity that Hannah had, an awareness of what is needful; we get that only in the presence of the Lord. She felt things and she prayed; she was earnest in relation to it. Then when she devotes Samuel to the house of God she does not just leave it there but she follows it up; we need to follow up too, so that the line of what is precious to God is preserved in the hearts of young ones and is developed.

When Hannah came up to sacrifice at the yearly feast, I suppose the Passover, she brought a coat reflecting what she believed Samuel's growth would be. For us it is a question of spiritual growth. Are we able to ascertain from our own links with the Lord how souls are getting on? It is in the presence of the Lord that we gain that assessment.

Samuel we are told was a boy girded with a linen ephod - a priestly garment. It is beautiful to see someone as young as Samuel clothed with that linen ephod. We need to be concerned that the younger ones grasp the things of God in their affections and carry them forward in the joy of their own personal link with the Lord Himself.

Thinking of Samuel's youth, it says in Hebrews 5:12-14 that there were some who were still having milk when they should be able for strong meat. It is not that we leave behind what the milk represents but that we go on to full growth: that is, that Christ Himself is represented in our lives. Speaking from my own experience, we tend to be very strong on certain aspects and very weak on others. The fine flour mingled with the oil which formed the oblation (see Leviticus 2:4-5) represents the perfections of Christ merged together in one. We need to take hold of something of that in our hearts.

It is very beautiful to see the way in which Samuel develops. In chapter 7 of 1 Samuel he is praying, interceding for the people. You can see the growth that has taken place: now we have a man who can intercede for the people according to God. In chapter 8 when the people appeal for a king it displeased Samuel and he prays to God again; he is a man who feels things according to God. There is power in what he has to say and what he does. We read that "*Jehovah ... let none of his words fall to the ground*" (1 Samuel 3:19).

In John 21 the Lord said to Peter, "*feed my lambs*" before He spoke about shepherding and feeding the sheep. Even at that time Peter had experienced the care of the Lord when He had provided what was needful in the fire and the fishes so that the disciples could dine after that night of fishing. The Lord wanted Peter to take the same kind of sensitive care of His people as Peter had seen in the Lord himself.

What is needed for growth is food. When the Lord raised the daughter of Jairus it says, "*he desired that something should be given her to eat*" (Mark 5:4). It is interesting that He instructed

others to give food, as though He would put the responsibility back on to us that there should be food available. Each one of us can only know that food supply if we are in touch with Christ as a living Man in heaven because He is the One who can bring in that heavenly food. As our souls are filled with that food so we have something to pass on.

This feature of growth is seen in perfection with the Lord Himself. Luke tells us that the child grew and it says that He *"grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was upon him"* (Luke 2:40). It is beautiful to see the moral perfections of Christ that came out at such an early age. In Samuel what really shone out was the qualities of a man who was going to be here for the glory of God. It is a picture for us from the Old Testament of Christ who Himself was here in moral excellence at every age and stage of His perfect pathway.

Genesis 48:8-16:

"...the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day"

Genesis 48 presents God's faithfulness in connection with Jacob's growth. We have often been reminded that when Jacob finishes his course, although it had

been a crooked one, he ends as a worshipper. Jacob learned the faithfulness of God in that, for he says, *"the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day"*. Samuel was a young man, but in Jacob we have an older man and see the way in which he can look back on his history with God and can take account of the way that God has been with him. Through all his departures and failures he can say that God had shepherded him all his life long. I think it is an evidence of spiritual growth that he comes to that. We may look back on many things in our own histories and say, with sorrow, that we would do things very differently if we had the opportunity again; but have we through it all learned the God who has shepherded us all our life long?

After all the disappointments that had affected Jacob in the

**Jacob finishes
his course as a
worshipper**

loss of Joseph for those years when he was in Egypt, here we really see the fruit of his sorrow. It is shown here in the way he blesses Ephraim and Manasseh. In putting Ephraim (which mean 'double fruitfulness') before Manasseh, the first-born, (whose name means 'causing to forget'.) Jacob shows his intelligence as to the mind of God. He had gained something by way of soul experience and he traces it to God.

This is a word of encouragement for those of us who are older. *"The eyes of Israel were heavy from age"*. Physically he was going downhill; he was about to depart this scene. The scripture says, *"if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day"* (2 Corinthians 4:16). His eyes were dim in relation to things here which in the past had meant so much to him, but his eye, bringing it forward into the New Testament language, was upon the Man in the glory. That is really the sight that he had. It completely eclipsed what had occupied his heart before and brought him into the enjoyment of that which was far better. *"By faith Jacob when dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped on the top of his staff"* (Hebrews 11:21). Are we characterised by blessing, are we worshippers? The *"top of his staff"* would remind us of his experiences through the days, day after day.

We are given a lot of Jacob's history and much of it not very positive. That, to me, is an encouragement. Whatever our way has been and however much time we have lost in the past, there is opportunity now to come into this worshipping and this blessing. We can be sure that the heart of God is toward us. The Spirit's power has been given. Why do we not avail ourselves of that power so that we are found more in the spirit of blessing and the spirit of worship as Jacob was?

1 Peter 2:1-5

"...desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation, if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good".

2 Peter 3:18:

“...but grow in grace”

In the first epistle of Peter, growing up to salvation is an evidence of life. There is a living order of things, *“that by it ye may grow up to salvation”*. We need to see how we can *“grow up to salvation”* in the present day. Then, Peter finishes his second epistle with another reference to growth: *“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)*.

Peter is speaking from practical experience. He speaks of the *“pure mental milk of the word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation, if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good”*. Each one who has come to know Christ as their personal Saviour has tasted that the Lord is good. . Even if we are just at the beginning of our Christian pathway we have tasted that the Lord is good. And when you taste that He is good it whets the appetite so that you want more.

Peter speaks here of living stones. We start to grow in the knowledge of the Lord as the centre of everything that is for the pleasure of God. There is a fitting together of these stones; we are brought, as living stones, into an order of things where we take character from Christ as the Living Stone. It is not a case of how much I know but how much I have been formed to be like Him, how much I have grown in my knowledge of Christ as Head. And is there a manifestation in my pathway of those precious features that shone out and were so delightful to God when Christ was here? That is what God is looking for at the present time.

We need the Spirit’s service in the present day to keep these things living and real to our souls. Oh that our hearts might be burning for Christ, like the two on the Emmaus road, because we have appreciated that the Lord is good and have tasted it for ourselves. Something of the fervency that marked the believers in the early days and that has marked godly persons in our day needs to mark us, so that this living order of things is in evidence. One of the types of ground of which the Lord spoke in the parable

**The words of Jesus
are the pure mental
milk of the word**

of the sower was where the word was choked by the *“cares of life, and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things”* (Mark 4:19). These are very real things that can trip any of us up, so there needs to be an earnest desire to go in for *“the pure mental milk of the word”* - that helps us to grow. It is pure, not cluttered with other things, a child’s simplicity, if you like. The Lord would have us, in that sense, to be babes in order that we might come into the joy and simplicity of that relationship with Himself. So often other things becloud the preciousness of what Christ can be to my heart. At the transfiguration, the Father’s word was, *“This is my beloved Son: hear him”* (Luke 9:35) – hear His words. The words of Jesus are the pure mental milk of the word; they are absolutely pure, undefiled truth. *“I am ... the truth”* (John 14:6). There is so much corruption around us, corruption of the word; we need to see the truth according as it is in Jesus (see *Ephesians 4:21*). The Lord says that He is, *“Altogether that which I also say to you”* (John 8:25). There was absolute consistency both in word and in Person that was truly according to God. That is unique in relation to Christ. But oh that there might be more consistency with us between what we see in Him and what we do, so that the glory of God might shine out in our lives too.

The woman in John 4 had tasted that the Lord is good. She said, *“Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?”* (John 4:29). She had a taste, and she told the men of the city and they came out and they wanted something of it as well. It shows how we can encourage one another to grow. She gave this message to the men of the city and they came to Him. That is where we all have to start, and where true spiritual growth starts to take place. Mary found it at the feet of Jesus. I think this would raise concern with us that if we are to be effective in testimony there must be this spiritual growth that results from personal links with Him.

Ephesians 4:13-16:

“Until we all arrive at...the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ”

In Ephesians 4 we have the exhortation to be no longer babes, but that we should *“all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ”*. Then there is the further exhortation in verse 15: *“holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head”*. These verses would give to us a picture of a living order of things working together under the influence of Christ as Head which results in much blessing. Then in verse 16 we have, ‘fitting together’ and ‘working together’ then the ‘building up in love’.

These are very precious thoughts that indicate that spiritual growth proceeds as under the influence of Christ in view of a working together that is to the glory of God. In verse 13 we read of being no longer tossed and carried about by every wind of doctrine. It would encourage us to have our eyes upon Christ as the centre because that would really set into proper perspective all these other things that cause us to become unstable, and would lead to our being established in Christ. That is the way in which true Christian fellowship can be known and enjoyed.

“Holding the truth in love” (v.15) often challenges me. It is not just reading a book and expounding on it - that is not what God has in mind, but rather that I have embraced the truth in my own affections and it has formed me to be more like Christ. It has affected me inwardly and there is spiritual growth for the glory of God as a result. Then others can see that you are in the enjoyment of something and it encourages them to partake of it as well. So the ‘working together’ proceeds and everyone has a part to play. I think it is beautiful to see the way in which what is for the glory of God is brought about through persons contributing what they have experienced of Him. There is a oneness because Christ is the Head. The opposite is *“men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them”*

(Acts 20:30). The truth of God that is spoken of here centres in Christ. We need always to be on our guard that Christ might have His rightful place.

My desire is that we might know something of what it is to grow up to Him in all things and that He might be the object and centre for our hearts, so that what results by way of growth is what can merge together for the glory of God.

Keith Wickens

Based on a Bible reading at Chester, 11 October 2014

Poetry Selection

CHRIST IS ALL

Christ is all, and none compareth,
Chiefest of ten thousand, He;
Christ who bore sin's judgment, suffered
Once for all on Calvary's tree.

Christ is all, oh! sing His praises!
Sing the praise of Him who died!
Join with loudest acclamation,
To extol "the Crucified".

Christ is all, the risen Saviour,
Now triumphant from the grave;
Death and hell are vanquished by Him,
Christ, omnipotent to save.

Christ is all, and now in glory,
Crowned and seated on the throne,
Theme of every saved one's story,
All the praise is His alone.

Christ is all; oh! Peerless Saviour!
Who would not Thy love declare,
Tell of Thee to all around us,
That Thy glory they might share?

Christ is all; then what else needeth
One who knows the Lord above?
Christ alone the heart's void filleth;
Christ the Son of God's own love.

Christ is all; oh! Name most precious!
Name as ointment now poured forth!
Name beyond our highest praises!
Who can tell His priceless worth.

E. H. Chater (1886)

GOD – CREATOR AND SAVIOUR

Worship, praise and adoration,
Unto Thee, O God, we bring;
Thy great Name extol for ever,
Thy loud praises joyous sing;
Lowly bow in Thy blest Presence,
God in whom we live and move,
Great Creator, mighty, holy,
God eternal, Light and Love.

All Thy works show forth Thy glory,
And the power of Thy hand,
Twas Thy wisdom spanned the heaven
And spread forth the sea and land.
All declare Thy might, Thy greatness,
Witness to Thy matchless skill
By Thy word called into being,
Kept by Thee and for Thy will.

In the wonders of creation,
Though so weak our finite gaze,
We perceive Thy power and Godhead,
And how wondrous all Thy ways:
Infinite, eternal, boundless,
Filled with awe, O God, to Thee
Now we cry with adoration –
Everlasting glory be!

Yet we see in Christ's redemption,
Wider, deeper glories still,
In accord with Thy blest purpose,
To fulfil Thy holy will;
Jesus, Thy beloved, dying,
Pouring out His precious blood,
For the ruined, lost and guilty,
Us, to bring to Thee, O God.

There we learn how Thou,
the Righteous,
For the glory of Thy Name,
Could'st from sin and ruin save us,
Death and everlasting shame;
In the glory where Thou dwellest,
Through the work that He has done
We shall praise for everlasting,
Jesus, Thine all-glorious Son.

Now by faith we raise our voices,
Triumphing in Thy great love,
Waiting here in His own patience,
Till we're called to Thee above;
Then in that bright heavenly glory,
Thee to worship evermore,
Our eternal God and Saviour,
Thy most glorious Name adore.

E. H. Chater (1889)

In 1913 a collection of the hymns of Edward Chater (1845 – 1915) was published with the title, "The Ways of God and His Praise". This book is long out of print and can be difficult to obtain. It is intended, therefore, if the Lord will, to include a selection of these hymns in future issues of this magazine.

WITH CHRIST

Not lost, but gone before, a precious soul
Washed from all sin in Jesus' cleansing blood;
In Christ accepted, pardoned, saved, and whole,
A child beloved, a chosen heir of God.

Saved from the wreck of Adam's guilty race,
A trophy of the cross of God's dear Son;
A monument of everlasting grace,
That He by death alone for us hath won.

Asleep through Jesus, blessèd, precious, rest,
With death behind, in peace Christ came to win;
For ever in His holy presence blest,
Beyond the reach of sorrow and of sin.

Present with Him whose love was known on earth,
The world, this desert waste, for ever past;
With Jesus, there to know His matchless worth,
While waiting still God's mighty trumpet blast.

With Him, the Christ, the Son of God's own love,
Waiting with joy the wondrous glory day;
When He, the Lord Himself, from heaven above,
Shall shout and all His loved ones call away.

That blessèd moment known alone to God,
When Christ shall see the travail of His soul;
When all His own, redeemed by precious blood,
Caught up to Him shall reach their longed for goal.

For ever, yea for ever with the Lord,
Jesus Himself in realms of glory light;
Before God's throne by all His saints adored,
When faith is past in everlasting sight.

E. H. Chater (1889)

Testimony Section

REACHING THE TRUTH BY SIMPLE REASONING

As a typical Muslim my relationship with Allah could be summarised like this: Allah was distant, he had given a series of instructions that I had to follow to the letter and if I did not I would be in trouble with him; he had sent me directions and commandments in the Koran which I had to do. There was no personal relationship; it was just trying not to get him mad at me by being a good religious Muslim.

I tried to fill the emptiness in my heart by science. Some people do it with poetry. There is emptiness in everybody's heart and people try to deal with it in different ways. Some try to fill the emptiness with religion but religion does not do it. Religion does not change

your heart, it just gives you things to do — to fill your life with religious duties. As a sincere Muslim I got to a point where I said, 'What am I doing? This is not really satisfying my soul but I have to do it because

**There is emptiness
in everybody's heart**

otherwise Allah will judge me and I will be in trouble.'

Well, for the years between age fourteen and twenty two I just focused on science. I had a goal to get my Ph.D. I felt that if I immersed myself in science and knowledge and qualifications then maybe the emptiness of my heart would go away. I found a good job while doing my Ph.D. and was paying my way so I had no financial trouble. I was getting the goals of my life yet still I felt my heart was empty. There was something missing in my life: something that money, work, and good qualifications did not really satisfy. I even questioned the existence of God. I felt that religion did not do much but wondered if maybe I had missed something in religion, maybe I should go back and study Islam one more time. Maybe there was a God. Maybe religion did relate to life and that what was missing in my life was God and religion.

So I went back to study Islam but this time I intended to study it with an open mind. I got a Koran and I said, 'Allah, I am sincere, I am intelligent—I felt I was intelligent—my heart is sincere and I

should be able to find you just by reading Koran, since this is the book you have written.’ I started reading Koran in a new way, in a very open-minded way searching sincerely for God. When I came to the end of the Koran I realised that I had learned a lot of what the Koran teaches about Allah but my heart was still empty. I told myself, ‘Well, get used to it, Hormoz, life is empty. Everybody goes through life empty, religious or not, it is just the same’. Yet something kept nagging at me, it was this: ‘ You think you are a good researcher? What kind of researcher are you? You just studied one book, one religion and you make your final decision. Researchers do not do that. You have to study several things before you reach a conclusion.’ So just out of my own pride and to prove that I had looked at Christianity and Judaism, I got a Bible. I wanted to be able to say, ‘Yes, I have studied them all, and God does not relate to life’.

So I got the Bible and I read some of the Old Testament and then jumped to the New Testament, to the book of Matthew. I was not expecting to find anything new in the Bible because I believed that the Koran was the most complete book and the Bible just a subset of it. But as I was reading the book of Matthew I encountered this Man called Jesus who was different from every other man. My first thought was, here is the prophet Jesus and he is just like Mohammed; they are just all the same, they all came to tell people to be good and to follow God. But Jesus did not fit the profile of a prophet that I had in mind. He let people worship Him and a prophet will never do that. Prophets say, ‘Do not worship me, worship God’. But He never did that. So I was struggling with Jesus. Is He really a prophet? Is He really Saviour of the world? What about Mohammed? What about Koran? I struggled for months.

Because I could not make a decision, I said, I am going to go and just sit in a church and see what they say. After a few weeks sitting in a church just listening, the pastor after a sermon invited anyone who had a question to come forward. I had lots of questions so I asked him:

- Is Mohammed the prophet of God?
- Is the Koran the word of God?
- What about my grandma? She is a very sincere Muslim, does

Christianity teach that she goes to hell?

He let me ask all my questions and each time he just said, 'What is your next question?' At the end he said, 'I do not know the answers to your questions, but I know one thing. Faith is very simple. Do you believe that you are a sinner?'

I said, 'Well, if the standard is the sermon on the mount, Jesus says if you look at a woman with the lustful eyes you have committed adultery in your heart, that is a high standard'. I remembered that the Bible says that if you are angry at someone you have killed him in your heart. That is a high standard. I may not have killed anybody, I may not have committed adultery, but in my heart according to God I have already committed murder and adultery. So I said, 'If that is the standard, we are all sinners'.

He next asked, 'Do you believe God loves you? I agreed that God did love me. It was logical. If God created me then there must be some love. As a student, if I did a project I get connected with that project and want to follow it up. If we are God's projects, it is understandable that God is interested in us and has some affection.

The pastor said, 'Do you believe you cannot reach God?' I replied, 'How can I reach God? I have sinned. I am an incomplete person in mind, and heart. I have been lustful and angry and the Bible says therefore I am an adulterer and a killer. How can I possibly reach God?'

Finally, he said, 'Well, do you believe God loved you so much that He came after you?' To me this made sense. If I love somebody and they can not do something for themselves, I will say, I love you, and step forward to help if I can. If God says He is love and He loves me yet I cannot do anything for myself to reach out to Him, it is logical. I was going just with logic. It is logical that He would step forward to help, otherwise He is not love. He cannot just sit back and let me struggle to reach Him. So I replied 'Yes'.

Then the pastor said, 'Well, that is what He did. He sent His Son to be the Saviour. These few things you believe, that is enough'. The moment he said 'that is enough' that is when I got saved. The Holy Spirit fell on me. Suddenly things just became so clear about God, the meaning of God's love, the practical meaning, what He did for me. How He came after me. How Jesus suffered on the

cross. How He took my sins away so that I can be brought to God.. Suddenly God was not 'out there' any more, God was in me. He was so personal. He suddenly came—the Holy Spirit came right at that moment. I felt so much peace and joy. I knew I had found something I had been looking for all my life. My heart was full of God's peace, joy and love. God is in me, that is what I have been looking for. I wanted God and now God is in me, living in me.

This has changed my life. Why should I keep it to myself? I am a shy person but I have to share this with my family and friends. At first they rejected me but gradually, one by one, they came to Christ also.

To a good Muslim I say, I really respect you, I know you are sincerely looking for God, you want to experience God but I want to tell you that God is looking for you! He loves you! God does not want to give you a religion that will not satisfy you. Religion is a burden in our lives. God has come near to us in Jesus to take away our burdens. He wants us to have a relationship with Himself. But what can we do to reach Him? We can never meet His standard, we are sinful. So what hope do we have? God says, I love you so much, I see you struggling, I see you trying to be good and I love you so much that I came for you. I came to take away your sins. I came to bear the punishment of sins. God wants us to trust in Him and accept His love, His tangible love.

Do you know what tangible love is? God's tangible love is expressed in Jesus Christ. He is the Word become flesh. God's love is expressed in Him. Expressed in Jesus bearing on the cross the judgment that was due to us for our sins. He died and rose again to be our Saviour. When you receive Jesus you receive God's love and salvation and your life will be changed. Put away your prejudice. I know you have been taught that Jesus is just a prophet.

When you study the Bible, you realise Jesus is not just a prophet, He is God manifest in flesh. He is the Saviour of the world. When you pray and ask Jesus to come into your life and heart, then instantly your life will be changed, the Spirit of God will come into your heart and you will be full of love and peace of God.

Hormoz

A voice from the past

THREE INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE JOHN

Mark 1: 19-20

John 13: 23-26

Revelation 1: 17-18

We have in these three passages three distinct incidents in the life of the apostle John.

In the first, the Lord's call is evident. James and John are attracted to Jesus; and feeling this attraction they abandon their nets and leave their father Zebedee in the boat.

In the second, John is leaning on Jesus' breast, and in the sense of His love, the beloved disciple has the consciousness of the Lord's affection.

In the third, the apostle falls as dead at the feet of Jesus, struck by His majesty. But the Lord lays His right hand upon him. Saying, *"Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and hades"*.

Let us now apply these grand truths to ourselves:-

- The beginning of our Christian path is attraction to Jesus. He calls us; we are attracted to His blessed Person, and thus we leave all to follow Him. In our case we leave all that is perishable in this world to follow the blessed Saviour.
- Secondly, we find out that He loves us. He makes us feel His love towards us. No doubt the full expression of His love to us is seen at the cross, but He would have us to feel His love now.
- To make an application of the third incident to our own case, we must think of death. If the Lord does not come we shall fall asleep, and so this passage may be taken figuratively. But He will raise us up with His mighty right hand. He is the resurrection and the life; He has annulled death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel. Death is conquered, and Jesus who holds the keys of death and hades will raise us in the day of resurrection

This third incident then, is a figure of the crowning joy and triumph of those who have been attracted to Jesus, and kept in the sense of His love. They shall be raised up and be glorified to be with Him for ever.

F. E. Raven (1838 – 1903)

Faye le Froid, France – 30th June 1902

LETTERS FROM A MOTHER TO HER SON AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Brillianna Harley (1598–1643) lived in dangerous times. During the English Civil War, her home, Brompton Bryan Castle, Herefordshire was besieged while her husband was away in London. These extracts are all taken from letters written to her son Edward while he was at Oxford University shortly before the Civil War began.

11 December 1638

Dear Ned, let nothing hinder you from performing your constant private duties of praying and reading. Experimentally, I may say that private prayer is one of the best means to keep the heart close to God. O it is a sweet thing to open our hearts to God as a Friend. If it had not been for that I had recourse to my God, sure I should have fainted before this.

14 June 1638

O that we could see the depth of that love of God in Christ to us; then sure, love would constrain us to serve the Lord with all our hearts most willingly. And this love of the Lord is not common to all. Others may partake of His mercy, as Ahab, who the Lord spared upon his humiliation; and they may partake of His power, as the king in Samaria did, when the Lord made plenty to flow in the city, after so great a famine. And all His creatures partake of His liberality in feeding them, and His most wise governing of the things here below; but none tastes His love but His chosen ones; and if we be loved of the Lord, what need we care what men of the world think of us? ... And my dear Ned, as this love of the Lord is His peculiar gift, only to His dear ones, let it be your chief care to get assurance of the love of God in Christ; and, since He has loved you, show your love to Him by hating what He hates, which is sin; and it was sin that crucified our Lord, that so loved us that He gave Himself

for us. My dear Ned, the eye which I put upon my own soul, I put you in mind of. Be constant in holy duties; let public and private go together. Let not the one shoulder out the other.

22 March 1639

My good Ned – The last week being not well, I could not enjoy the contentment of writing to you. You may remember that when you were at home, I was often enforced to keep my bed; it pleases God, it is so with me still, and when I have those indispositions, it makes me ill for some time afterwards. It is the hand of my gracious God, and though it be sharp, yet when I look at the will of God in it, it is sweetened to me: for to me, there is nothing that can sweeten any condition to us, in this life, but as we look at God in it, and see ourselves His servants in that condition in which we are. Therefore when I consider my own afflictions, they are not so bitter, when I look at the will of my God in it. He is pleased it should be so, and then should not I be pleased it should be so? And I hope the Lord will give me a heart still to wait upon my God; and I hope the Lord will look graciously upon me.

And my dearest, believe this from me, that there is no sweetness in any things of this life to be compared to the sweetness in the service of our God, and this I thank God, I can say, not only to agree with those that say so, but experimentally; I have had health and friends and company in variety, and there was a time, that what could I have said I wanted; yet in all that there was trouble, and that which gave me peace, was serving of my God, and not the service of the world. And I have had a time of sickness, and weakness, and the loss of friends, and as I may say the gliding away of all those things I took most comfort in, in this life. If I should now say (which I may boldly) that, in this condition, O how sweet did I find the love of my God, and the endeavour, to walk in His ways; it may be, some may say, that it must needs be so, because all other comforts failed me; but my dear Ned I must lay both my conditions together; my time of freedom from afflictions, and my time of afflictions; and in the one, I found a sweetness in the service of God, above the sweetness of the things in this life, and in trouble a sweetness in the service of God, which took away the bitterness of the affliction; and this I tell you, that you may believe how good the Lord is, and believe it as a tried truth, the

service of the Lord, is more sweet, more peaceable, more delightful, than the enjoying of all the fading pleasures of the world.

10 May 1639

Having been often not well, and confined to so solitary a place as my bed, I made choice of entertainment for myself, which might be easy and of some benefit to myself; in which I made choice to read the life of Luther written by Mr Calvin. I did the more willingly read it, because he (Luther) is generally branded with ambition, which caused him to do what he did... and some have taxed him of an intemperate life. These reasons made me desire to read his life, to see upon what ground these opinions were built; and finding much satisfaction to myself, how falsely these were raised, I put it into English and here enclosed have sent it to you; it is not all his life, for I put no more into English than was not in the book of Martyrs.

These things of note I find in it, firstly, what Luther acknowledges, he was instructed in the truth by an old man, who led him to the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ: and Erasmus, when his opinion was asked of Luther, said he was in the right. It is true the truth is much obscured with error; and then it pleased the Lord to raise up Luther as a trumpet to proclaim His truth, and as a standard bearer to hold out the ensign of His truth; which did but make those to appear of the Lord's side, who were so before. And it is apparent to me that no ambitious ends moved Luther; for in all the course of his life he never showed ambition: though he loved learning, yet, as far as I can observe, he never affected to be esteemed more learned than he was....

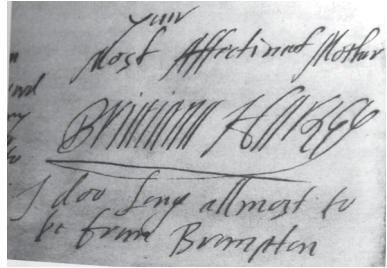
Another observation I find in Luther, that all his fasting and strictness, in the way of Popery, never gave him peace of conscience; for he had great fears until he had thoroughly learned the doctrine of justification by Christ alone; and so will it be with us all; no peace shall we have in our own righteousness. And one thing more that I must tell you, that I am not of their mind who think, if he had been of a milder temper it had been better; and so Erasmus says; but I think no other spirit could have served his turn. He was to cry aloud, like a trumpet; he was to have a Jonah spirit.

Thus my dear Ned, you may see how willingly I impart any thing to you in which I find any good.

1st November 1639

My dear Ned, keep always a watch over your precious soul; tie yourself to a daily self examination; think over the company you have been in, and what your discourse was, and how you found yourself affected in the discourses of religion; observe what knowledge you were able to express, and with what affection to it, and where you find yourself to come short, labour to repair that want; if it be in knowledge of any point, read something that may inform you in what you find you know not; if the fault be in affections, that you find a weariness in the discourses of religion, go to God, beg of Him new affections to love those things which by nature we cannot love.

Brillianna Harley. (1596 – 1643)



A word for today

Reprinted from “Living Water” No 59

EXHORTATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Psalm 37

This Psalm is full of exhortation and encouragement. It is unique among the Psalms in that it has no prayer and no praise, though both doubtless result from it. It is, of course, the language of the Jewish remnant[†] in a day yet to come. But there is a moral identity in every age between those who would be loyal and true to God. Thus we get here three men spoken about:

- The righteous man (v.16),
- The good, or gracious man (v.23),
- And the perfect man (v.37).

Yet, viewing them representatively, they are all one and the same man who displays these three distinct remnant features.

“The little that the righteous hath is better than the abundance of many wicked” (v.16). A righteous man who is only righteous does not

[†] Those Jews who come through the great tribulation — see Zechariah 8:12.

appeal to us very much. No fault can be found in his conduct, for he is the Pharisee all over. If he owes a hundred pounds and a penny he will pay the penny as well as the hundred. If he is owed it, he will exact the same. He is a man we may respect and fear but we find him hard to love.

**The perfect man
is not perfect in
himself.**

It is the good man – the man of grace - we love. “*Scarcely for a righteous man will one die*”, says Paul, “*yet peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die*” (Romans 5:7). The Lord has a special care over the good man, even as the good man cares for others. “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way*” (v.23). A good man dispenses to the poor, has a kind word to and for everybody and is charitable and lenient in his judgment, even to his enemies. Yet his goodness must be combined with righteousness; otherwise his very affections, or emotions, may lead him off the path of uprightness.

When we get righteousness and grace (or goodness) together in a man, I think we get “*the perfect man*”. “*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace*” (v.37). The perfect man is not perfect in himself, only one Man was that, but perfect in the object before his heart. He can say, “*I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*” (Philippians 3:8). The apostle says, “*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded*” (Philippians 3:15). David is described by God as “*a man after my own heart*” (1 Samuel 13:14), yet he sinned grievously, but David never made an idol; God was always supreme in his affections. God looks at our hearts and estimates what comes out by what He finds there. Spiritual perfection, or maturity, is not reached intellectually but in the affections. The aim of all true ministry is that we should be “*made perfect in love*” (1 John 4:18). The perfect man is among John’s fathers in the family of God; his heart is full of Christ and he wants and lives nothing else besides Christ (see 1 John 2:13 & 14).

As I said, this Psalm is full of exhortation and encouragement. The remnant often speak to one another in accents of counsel and comfort and so can we! The first word of exhortation is a

warning against fretting. It is thrice repeated, for we are very liable to fret. How prone we are to fret! How much there is to fret about! How foolish it is to fret! A fretful spirit is a fainting and faithless one. When we fret we writhe and we wriggle under that which we cannot alter. Instead of being subject, we sometimes become savage!

We may fret because things in the world are so wrong. So the first exhortation is: "*Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity*" (v. 1). How many of those who love the Lord are fretfully trying to better the world system which put Him to death, instead of recognising that by that very act it has proved itself to be incorrigible. The world is a crucified system for faith and for God; it has been judged and ended in the death of Christ (see Galatians 6:14 and Hebrews 9:26).

The world kingdoms will yet be Christ's and the kingdom of heaven, though "in mystery", is still here and loyal subjects are still in it. It is a kingdom where the king has been cast out but received up into heaven. Someone has said that the very preaching of the kingdom – the rights of Christ – is symptomatic of the rebellious state of the world. But the King is coming to set things right and thus in patience and not in fretfulness we can possess our souls (see Psalm 2). When John entered heaven he beheld a throne, unmoved and unmovable, and that gave him rest, as it gives us rest (Revelation 4:1-2, Psalm 11:3-4). Nothing can shake the throne of God's earthly government. Oh! Ye who are fretting about the wars, turmoil and miseries abroad, reach up to that throne and rest in "*Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*" (Ephesians 1:7-12).

Yet, again, we may fret because things seem all wrong in the church. Hence the word: "*Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass*" (v. 7). This man, the Antichrist, is in principle in evidence everywhere in that which now bears the name of Christ. The anti-Christian spirit is rampant and everything spells disruption and disorder. Well-meant endeavours are made, methods and means are employed by clerics and divines and sincere souls to bring chaos into order and unity! But the rightly instructed believer knows that, "*Evil men and seducers will wax*

worse and worse” (2 Timothy 3:13). We cannot set things right in the “great house” (2 Timothy 2:20), but we can set ourselves right by setting ourselves apart from its evils and pursuing “righteousness, faith, love and peace” (2 Timothy 2:20). Fretfulness will not help, but faithfulness does!

Yet again, the Spirit of Christ in the remnant warns us against fretting ourselves about ourselves: “Fret not thyself: it would be only to do evil” (v.8 Darby trans.). We may fret ourselves because our local company is not getting on well, or because we see so little result from gospel work, or because in our souls we are not prospering. Beloved, “it would be only to do evil”. We feel we must do something to better matters, and what we do makes things worse because it is done in a wrong spirit. We fail to judge ourselves as utterly good for nothing and thus we become more and more self-centred and unhappy. Instead of fretting about ourselves, let us look to God to lift us above ourselves, that we may find in Him our rest, our resource and our reward. Thus we see that in order to be perfectly happy we must be irretrievably disappointed three times:

with the world,
with the church,
and most of all, with ourselves.

Then we can look up to God and sing as we never sang before:

No good in creatures can be found,
All, all is found in Thee:
We must have all things and abound
Through Thy sufficiency.

J.Ryland

Now we come to what is positive. How simple, how needful, is this fourfold exhortation combined with encouragement to:

“Trust” (v.3)
“Delight” (v.4)
“Commit” (v.5)
“Rest” (v.7)

Why does it say, “Trust in the Lord”, and immediately add, “and do good”? It is not because we sometimes hesitate to do good because we know that doing it entails suffering? Never mind

the consequences! *“Do good”*, and leave the results with God. The path of obedience is the path of blessing. The land of promise, the inheritance, is worth suffering for. *“So shalt thou dwell in the land and shalt feed on faithfulness”* (v.3 Darby trans.). Faithfulness ever provided abundant food and what it gives satisfies. Then we turn from what is given to the blessed Giver.

Next it is, *“Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart”* (v.4) The soul advances in its acquaintance with the Lord and finds its chief joy in Him. How comes it about that many of the desires of our heart are not satisfied? Depend upon it: if we delight in Him, His desires will be ours. Consequently we shall be delighted with all He does. There you have the clue. Whatever the Lord does to, for, with, by or in us pleases us. We feel He cannot act wrongly. We have not a desire, apart from His desire.

What about the future consequences of faithfulness to Him? The answer is *“Commit thy way unto the Lord”* Count upon Him to smooth out every difficulty. *“Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass”* (v.5). *“He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day”* v.6). Is anyone suffering from being misrepresented and misunderstood? Do not fret because of obloquy and, above all things, refrain from taking up the cudgels to vindicate your character. Care for the character of the Lord and He will care for yours. He can manage matters for you better than you can. What good can arise from hunting down that which defames you? You will never catch it. Someone has said ‘A false report can run round the world before the truth has time to put its boots on’. Yet truth will prevail at last.

“Cease from anger and forsake wrath” (v.8). Why does that come in just here? Alas! we may nurse our grievances and brood over our wrongs, supposed or real, and thus becomes vindictive! *“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him”* (v.7). Whenever we have to wait thus it is because He waits: *“therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you”* (Isaiah 30: 18), says the prophet. We may not be in a fit state to receive what He has for us, which is often much better than we ask or expect. He has the blessing in hand, but we must wait for Him to bestow in His own time. A dear Christian, greatly tried, once said to me, ‘I have just gone

into my room, and knelt down, and looked up, and said nothing and my soul had been filled with the rest of God.' Oh! This blessed stillness of spirit! 'Be silent to the Lord and let Him mould thee', that is how some have translated verse 7. How sweet it is to be quiescent, to be moulded in the secrecy and silence of the sanctuary.

'Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand:
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there.'

Now we reach the climax of it all. "*A little while*" (v.10). The Jewish remnant will look for deliverance by the destruction of the wicked, but we look towards heaven, to the Lord Himself, to take us out of this ungodly world. "*Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*" (Hebrews 10:37). That is the promise! But, says some weary one, 'Why has He delayed two thousand years?' "*One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*" (2 Peter 3:8). So according to the reckoning of God it is only like the day before yesterday that Jesus said, "*behold, I come quickly*" (Revelation 22:12).

On the winding river of time we can only see a little bit ahead. But there is One on the mountain-top who sees where the river rises and where it empties itself into the ocean of eternity. Everything is as present under His eye. "*A little while*"! How brief it appears from the standpoint of eternity. Soon we shall view all in the never-ending bliss of His presence above. Then exhortation and encouragement will cease because they are no longer needed. We shall no longer need to '*trust Him for all that's to come*', as we often sing now; yet we shall never cease singing '*We'll praise Him for all that is past*'.

S. J. B. Carter (1858 – 1938)

This article was selected for re-printing by Kerstin Soukoreff

If there is an article from a previous issue of "Living Water" that you would like to see reprinted, I would be glad to hear from you. Ed.