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Living Water

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Recent Ministry

A HOUSE FOR GOD TO DWELL IN

2 Samuel 7

In this chapter which speaks of David's desire to build a house for God and the provision that he makes for the house to be built by Solomon, David is at the height of his spiritual stature and he is moved to worship. Much of the chapter is intended to teach us about God's house today. When David says that what has been revealed to him is *"for a great while to come"* (v. 19), it shows that it looks on to our day, and maybe, even beyond it into eternity, but certainly it refers to our day when we know that God's house is a *"spiritual house"* made up of *"living stones"* as Peter puts it, or *"a holy temple in the Lord"* as Paul puts it (1 Peter 2:5, Ephesians 2:21). It is the same thing, looked at from different aspects but Christ is the centre of everything.

The first section brings out the wonderful grace of God in that He takes full account of and appreciates what was in David's heart even though it was not God's mind for David to build the house. It is encouraging for us to see that God is pleased to take account of what is in our hearts. In 2 Chronicles we read that God said to David: *"...it was in thy heart to build a house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thy heart"* (2 Chronicles 6:7).

The fact that he was not allowed to build the house was a hard lesson for David as it is, sometimes, for us to accept that things that are right in themselves are not for us to do, or indeed, that it is not God's time for it. There must be many saints down the history of the church who have had right desires and right thoughts but they have had to leave them with God to bring out at the right moment. Even the Lord had to wait the Father's time. Several times we read, *"his hour had not yet come"* (John 7:30). The disciples, too, had a problem with this. After the resurrection they say, *"Lord, is it at this time that thou restorest the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:6). That was quite right in its way but it was not the time for it.

Christians all down the ages have looked out for the coming of the Lord. The fact that it did not happen in their life time did not mean that they were wrong to expect the Lord's coming; indeed that hope has a very real practical effect on the life of the believer.

humility on our part is necessary for worship

In 2 Samuel 7 the things of God were in a sense in disarray. The ark was in a tent in Jerusalem and the tent of meeting was at either Shiloh, or at the high place at Gibeon. It was not truly according to the mind of God. It waited for Solomon to set things right. But David's spiritual apprehension here comes over very clearly and it leads him to worship.

David learns a great lesson in this chapter. He has to accept being set aside and to learn his own nothingness. He says "*Who am I, Lord Jehovah, and what is my house*" (v. 18). He takes a very humble line; humility on our part is necessary for worship. As we realise that God has blessed us, not because of anything that we are but in accord with everything that He is in divine grace, we are led to worship too.

Solomon was to be brought into a most blessed relationship with God: "*I will be his father, and he shall be my son*" (v. 14). The Spirit of God is surely looking on to the One of whom it could be said that He is Son over God's house, whose house are we (see Hebrews 3:6). In Old Testament times all was physical. There were physical offerings, the burning of incense and such things, which do not properly enter into worship today. Worship is from hearts led by Christ.

In Chronicles it says that David is not allowed to build the temple because "*Thou hast shed much blood on the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest*" (1 Chronicles 22:8, 9). When you look at the history of David, he could not help but be a man of war. There were battles to fight and there were enemies to meet. In the next chapter we find that he has to deal with the Philistines again. That was something allowed in the ways of God. In a certain sense, because of all his

wars, David misses out here but he does not resent it at all. His attitude at the end of the chapter shows how much he benefited from the word that came from God through Nathan. David says, *"Who am I?"* It is as if to say, 'I am not standing in the way of anything that God would do'. He accepts the word of God about Solomon and he is ready for displacement. There is no jealousy with David. He has what is for God in his heart. We have to remember that largely the temple was built of what David had provided.

When Solomon is mentioned, in one sense he is a type (or picture) of Christ – the One who is Son over God's house (see Hebrews 3:6) yet in another sense, because it speaks of committing iniquity, Solomon is typical of the believer in his responsibility before God. *"I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the sons of men"* (v. 14). Solomon is given to build a house but as having built a house he is held responsible in relation to it. So there is a picture also of our position as sons of God in a world of evil, trial, temptation and difficulty. We are brought into the most wonderful privilege. *"As many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God"* (John 1:12). But then God looks to us to walk worthily of the calling wherewith we have been called. Like Solomon we sometimes commit iniquity and there is Fatherly discipline towards us and Fatherly care as well. The hymn puts it well:

*A Holy Father's constant care
Keeps watch with an unwearying eye,
To see what fruits His children bear –
Fruits that will suit their calling high...*

*O wondrous love! That ne'er forgets
The objects of its tender care;
May chasten still, while sin besets,
To warn and guard them where they are...*

(J. N. Darby – 1879)

David's initial concern was for the ark, *"we heard of it at Ephratah ... Arise, Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength."* (Psalm 132:6, 8). That was a right concern and his desire to provide a suitable place for the ark was really a continuation of his initial thoughts. However he was not allowed to follow it through but he made provision so that it could be done by Solomon. In New Testament language he becomes a *"joint of supply"* (Ephesians 4:16). That should be an encouragement to all of us.

It is really quite striking with David that he comes to rejoice in God's view of him. He says, *"Who am I, Lord Jehovah, and what is my house"*. But then he turns to God and says, *"thou art great, Jehovah Elohim; for there is none like thee, ... thou hast established to thyself thy people Israel"*, and the same character of things is brought out when David blessed God at the end of first Chronicles, *"Thine, Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the splendour, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is thine: ... But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer willingly after this manner?"* David had to bear some very heavy burdens because of his failures in responsibility, but here he reaches great spiritual heights as a worshipper. David had a sense of his own nothingness and worthlessness but God had put worth upon him and He has done that for us, giving us a standing before Him in all the worth of Christ.

In Corinthians we find an exhortation to *"let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup"* (1 Corinthians 11:28). That "proving" – looking at ourselves in the light of the perfection of Christ – brings home to us individually that we are nothing much. Why has God reached out towards us? It is pure grace on His part! *"Let a man prove himself"* is intended to humble us and show us the greatness of God, the greatness of His mercy, His love, and His purpose in that He has reached out to us at all. That results in our hearts being full of the worth of Christ and thinking nothing of ourselves at all. In that way our spirits are prepared for worship. Paul says that he is *"less than the least of*

all saints" (Ephesians 3:8). Such a spirit gives God His proper place.

The temple that Solomon built was marvellous and glorious, covered with gold, a wonder of the ancient world, but that house was destroyed. What we come into cannot be destroyed. Believers are the house, Christ is the cornerstone; nothing can destroy that. That is what this chapter 7 of 2 Samuel prefigures and David shows us the spirit of it.

Perhaps we can just explore a little what worship really is. We might associate it in our minds with music or singing or saying certain things but actually worship is the outgoing of the heart to God as thinking nothing of ourselves and being occupied with Him. The Lord's words in John 4 help us: *"But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers. God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24)*. *"Seeks such"* is striking: it is persons like that woman whose life was in such a mess but who had been changed by contact with Christ that become worshippers. We all come in on that basis.

We see an illustration of it in King David who at the end of 1st Chronicles takes such a lowly place in relation to God. He says: *"who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer willingly after this manner? for all is of thee, and of that which is from thy hand have we given thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14)*. That is the spirit of true worship. We can only bring to God what we have been given of God. It is important to see that lest we bring anything of the wrong order of man.

When the heart is moved to worship it often leads to a specific act of praise or homage in word or song. As Christians, all that we do is to be done as unto the Lord, including our ordinary work (see Colossians 3:22) and we are exhorted to do all things, even the most mundane, to the glory of God (see 1 Corinthians 10:31). However, that is not exactly worship. The Lord sets the pattern. His life was one of total service, always doing what pleased the

Father, but then He specifically says, *"I praise thee Father"* (Luke 10:21).

Worship springs from the heart and can arise at any time. We do not need to be in a special place or even to be with others to worship. A believer may be overwhelmed by the way

God has come in for him or her, even in some very practical matters and give God thanks and praise, realising that only God could have done it. He has done it in His love for us and because He looks after us. In our chapter God reminds David of His goodness: He reminds him of how he was taken by God from being a shepherd to be *"prince over my people"* (v.8). Then God reminds David how He had preserved him and *"cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a great name"* (v.9). Then God promises to establish David's house and kingdom for ever (v.16). All this speaks of the goodness of God and the real sense of that goodness leads David to worship. It is striking that when David is convicted of sin in 2 Samuel 12, it is again the goodness of God in what He had given him that is spoken of and it leads to David's repentance. The goodness of God leads to repentance and the goodness of God leads to worship.

Paul's doxologies in Romans illustrate the way that many different kinds of things can lead the soul to worship. In the first chapter, where Paul is recording the dreadful plight into which mankind has fallen he writes that man *"...served the creature more than him who had created it"*, then immediately adds *"who is blessed for ever. Amen."* (Romans 1:25). Despite the dark background of degradation, mention of God as Creator leads to an expression of praise.

In 2 Samuel 7 we read, *"king David went in and sat before Jehovah"* (v.18). There is something special about that. He is not going in to make an appeal as Hezekiah did where he spread a letter before God (see 2 Kings 19:14). He is going in to sit in God's presence rather as you might want to be in the presence of a member of your family or a very good friend. He goes in

**We do not need to
be in a special place
or even to be with
others to worship**

because he rejoices in the presence of God and God rejoices in having David in His presence.

The Lord becoming Man is the true fulfilment of the prophecy that the house of David would be established for ever. As far as the kingdom was concerned the house of David was not established for ever because of their failure in responsibility. It is beautiful to see that God's thoughts go through unaffected by our failures. All through the Old Testament and even in the New we find people that failed in the line of responsibility and yet God's thoughts go through and He secures His great end. The basis of it all is what Christ has done. It is to make Him very great in our hearts and to bring forth this answer of worship which you get from David here.

David did fail in his responsibility and later he has to say, *"Although my house be not so before God"* (2 Samuel 23:5). There is only one Man whose house is established for ever and that is Christ. He is Son over God's house and that is one of the greatest thoughts in relation to Him. We are constituted sons and brought into the house of God but Christ is Son over that house. Of Moses we read: *"Moses indeed was faithful in all his house, as a ministering servant..."* (Hebrews 3:5). Christ is no servant. He is the One who sets the pattern for everything in the house. He is Son over the house (see Hebrews 3:6) and everything in that house must take character from Him. He is to have *"the first place in all things"* (Colossians 1:18). There can be no failure in that respect, all is to be maintained for God's glory for ever.

Yet it is very important to remember that God is not selfish. That is the difference in the character of the love of God. Our love tends to be very self-centred but God's love has no selfishness in it. Although He looks for everything for His own pleasure – that is quite right because of who He is – yet what He establishes for His own pleasure involves immense blessing for those that are His. We can at times be troubled by the fact that God does everything for His own glory but we have to see that what God does for Himself actually involves a realm of blessing that makes everything wonderful for all who belong to Him. Because *"God is*

love" (1 John 4:16) everything He does must serve His purposes of love.

When God says or does something it has to be right because He is God. Once we come to that everything falls into place in our thinking. It is illustrated in a very practical way in David's acceptance of God's word that he was not to build the house. He does not sulk or give up but sets himself to do all he can to make provision for the house that Solomon was to build.

Based on a Bible reading at Bromley – 30th December 2014

Poetry Selection

THE EXALTED MAN

In the brightest spot in glory,
See Him, God's beloved Son,
Christ, the Man of His blest counsel,
Crowned and seated on the throne.

All the heavenly hosts adore Him,
And the glory of His name
Fills the wide expanse of heaven –
His is everlasting fame.

Christ, the Lamb, the Man of sorrows,
Made God's will His whole delight,
Bore the cross, the shame despising,
Fought and won the faithful fight.

Now above He waits in patience,
And when we His face behold,
He will to our hearts enraptured
His heart's deepest love unfold.

'Tis His love that daily weaneth
From this ruined scene below;
'Tis His love that daily cheereth
Mid earth's sorrow, grief and woe.

Soon the bright unclouded morning
On His favoured saints shall dawn,
And the dreary night of mourning
Be for ever past and gone.

E. H. Chater 1892

A HYMN OF WORSHIP

Father and God, we worship Thee,
And magnify Thy Name,
In Thine own Son Thy glory see,
Now crowned on high with fame.

'Twas Thy great love sent Him below,
Thy purpose to fulfil;
On earth He suffered shame and woe,
Delighting in Thy will.

On Calvary He was crucified,
By Thee, O God, made sin;
He drank the bitter cup, and died,
That we might glory win.

He lives triumphant on the throne,
And wears upon His brow
The Victor's crown – His worth we own,
Before His glory bow.

And we a song to Him the Son,
Now in Thy presence raise,
To Jesus, Thy beloved One,
Whose Name transcends all praise.

Worthy is He, and He alone,
We worship and adore,
His peerless worth before Thee own,
Both now and evermore.

E. H. Chater 1897

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. This is the second series of poems.

Testimony Section

GOD WAS LOOKING FOR ME!

My parents were Muslims so I grew up a Muslim. My father was a devout Muslim and he took us to the mosque every Friday. He demanded that we do the five prayers and we did, we enjoyed it; there was a sense of security in it. We never thought about who Allah was or what sort of relationship there was between Allah and us. All we knew about Allah was what we read in the Koran. I always considered myself as somebody who liked Allah. I enjoyed reading the Koran and the books that were written, the Hadiths of Mohammed and so on but I had questions that it seemed nobody has the answers for.

When I went to college I met some students who were Christians. Of course I thought that I had all the knowledge that I needed to have about Jesus because the Koran specifically speaks of Jesus. So I believed that those people who were talking about Jesus being the Son of God and the Lamb of God were misled. That is how the Koran speaks about them – misled.

Then one day two men called on me and they were giving out little booklets about Jesus and the salvation of Jesus and all that Christian stuff. So I decided to correct them. I decided to take them on in a conversation. One of them agreed to meet up with me later that night. I did not think that he was going to be there but when I went to the place where we had agreed to meet at 7.00 pm.; there he was waiting for me.

I noticed how genuine many Christians were in what they believe

We sat down and talked. We developed a friendship. One of the reasons I decided to look into Christianity (other than what the Koran says about Christianity) was the Christian people I met, in

particular that person who I met that day and with whom I became a friend. I noticed how genuine many Christians were in what they believe about their God and that they wanted to share that knowledge with me.

They spoke to me about praying to God, talking to God and God being present when you talk to Him, which is almost blasphemy according to the teaching of Islam. I tried it and was amazed at the result. I asked God for something and told Him that if He grant me this prayer I would believe in Jesus. In the back of my mind I thought, He will never do that because He does not exist any way, this Christian God. To my amazement, the next day that exact thing that I asked for was granted to me. That was the first blow that broke the fence that was built up by Islam. I did not keep my promise to believe in Jesus because I thought it was too easy, yet God never let up; from that day on He kept on seeking me. I think He was seeking me before then. It is an extraordinary thing that the God of the universe who created the whole earth and the heavens will care for a little one like me to a point where He would specifically listen to me and answer my prayers.

Months passed by and I was seeing more Christians. Many Christians were asking me to take in Jesus as my Saviour which I did not exactly understand what that meant. Most of my friends were Christians or the people that I was attracted to were Christians. Again I decided to put God to the test so I prayed with a friend of mine that Jesus would come into my life. I said, 'God, I will surrender my life to You' and since that day that God put this peace in my heart that I had never experienced before. There was peace between God and me and the rest of life's issues fell in place. .

God was kind to me during this time, even when I went against Him! He gave me the time that I needed to understand what He wants from me. I thought that it was really amazing that the God of

the universe would care so much about me. I was beginning to understand what it meant to have the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. That is not something which the Koran speaks of but to have the Holy Spirit in your heart is a most wonderful thing. I trusted God for His promises and He always fulfilled His promises. He is always faithful. As a Christian I came to know God in His love and in His blessing, characteristics of God that Islam does not offer.

I am in God's hands. I hope that what He gave me, this life that He gave me; I hope I can be a good steward of it. I think it is important that if you have a lamp you are not going to put it under a cover; you are going to take it and put it on top of the mountain. My sister asked me, 'Why do you want to tell people about your new faith, what is the big deal about your new faith?' It is a big deal; it is the truth, that is why I want to tell people about it.

It was not easy to come to faith in Christ. I was a very stubborn Muslim who would not let go because I always thought that Islam was the truth and when it became evident that it is otherwise I was devastated because I have always thought that I had the truth. You can imagine for yourself what it is like – living a life that you think is in truth but it turns out that it is not... God offers truth, God offers salvation. I pray that God will direct me in a way that will open some kind of avenue for me that I can go and witness to Muslims.

I invite my Muslim friends to pray to God and ask God to show them direction just like He did for me.

Majed

JOHN HUSS – A TIME LINE

"Very evil were the times in which God called upon Huss to stand forward as a champion of truth and righteousness... A man of singular courage and unselfishness was found to speak out for God, without fearing or caring what man could do unto him." A. H. Wratislaw "John Huss" (S.P.C.K.) 1882

1369	Huss born in Southern Bohemia (modern day Czechoslovakia)
September 1393	Took the Degree of Bachelor of Arts at the University of Prague, followed by Master of Arts in 1396.

1402	Ordained and appointed to preach at the Bethlehem Chapel, Prague where he was required to preach in the Bohemian language. (Around this time he came into contact with the writings of Wycliffe, who has been described as the ‘morning star of the Reformation’. Huss began to teach that a priest had no power to forgive sins nor could forgiveness be purchased with money but only by faith in Jesus Christ.)
1 April 1403	Appointed Rector of Prague University
1405/06	Appointed Chaplain to Queen Sophia (wife of Wenceslas IV)
14 November 1406	Gregory XII appointed Pope (There were two other rival Popes at this time (Alexander V and John XXIII))
1408	Wycliffe denounced as a heretic. Archbishop Zbynek of Prague required all books by Wycliffe to be surrendered. Huss objected to this and was banned from preaching.
16 July 1409	Ceremonial burning of Wycliffe’s books in the courtyard of the Archbishop’s palace.
May 1412	The Papal Commissioner Wenceslas Tiem, arrived in Prague on behalf of John XXIII, selling indulgences, offering forgiveness of sins, to all who would contribute money or would fight against Ladislav, king of Naples. As would happen about 100 years later with Martin Luther, the sale of indulgences was a major turning point and Huss preached boldly against the evil of such things, and the folly of offering forgiveness of sins on the basis of killing or maiming other people.
August 1412	The Papal documents excommunicating Huss and condemning him “to everlasting damnation” reached Prague. Anyone who communicated with him was to be excommunicated, and no church services were allowed wherever he lived.

October 1412	Huss left Prague and went to live in the tower of Kozi which was owned by his friend John the Elder of Austi. Here he continued to write and to preach in the open fields where many came to hear him.
December 1412	John Huss returned to Prague and preached at the Bethlehem Chapel
February 1413	Wenceslas attempts to mediate between reformers and anti-reformation parties without success. Huss took no part in this and left Prague for Kozi, later living at Krakovetz.
31 May 1413	Rome taken by the King of Naples Subsequently, Sigismund, King of Germany & Hungary proposes that a Church Council should be held at Constance, Germany by Pope John XXIII. Sigismund asked Huss to attend and offered a safe-conduct covering his journey to Constance and also guaranteeing him a "free and safe public hearing in the Council, in such manner indeed that if he were unwilling to submit to the judgement of the Council, he was to have a free and safe journey back to his own country". Subsequent events showed that Sigismund had no intention of honouring this promise.
11 October 1414	Huss sets out for Constance, arriving on 3 November. On 28 November he was arrested and on 6 th December incarcerated in a dungeon in the Dominican Convent. He was held in prison until his trial for heresy commenced.
5-8 June 1415	During a long and biased trial dominated by false witnesses and where any attempt of his to explain what he had written or to refute charges made was rejected he and his books were condemned to be burned.
6 July 1415	Huss was burned at the stake, praying "O Lord Jesus Christ, I am willing, patiently and humbly, to endure this dreadful, shameful, and cruel death for the sake of Thy gospel and the preaching of Thy word."

End-piece – Extract from John Huss' Exposition of the Creed

All Christians ought to believe what God hath commanded to be believed. Even though every man may not know all that ought to be believed, yet he ought to be ready when the truth is shown to him out of the Holy Scriptures, to receive it gladly, and should he hold anything contrary to Scripture, to forsake it immediately. And it is good for any man not to hold anything rashly: but when he comes to know God's truth to hold it firmly even unto death; for the truth will make him free; for the Lord Jesus said, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*" Therefore, faithful Christian! seek the truth, hearken to the truth, learn the truth, hold the truth, defend the truth, even unto death; for the truth will make thee free from sin, from the devil, from the death of the soul, and finally from everlasting death, which is everlasting separation from the favour of God and from all the bliss of salvation which bliss he will obtain who believeth in God and in Jesus Christ who is truly God and truly Man.

A voice from the past

THE LOVE OF GOD

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us,... that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins" 1 John 4:7-10.

In verse 7 of 1 John 4 we get the character of God. God is love; and this is the family feature of the children of God – "*every one that loves is born of God*". The righteousness and holiness of God are shown elsewhere, but here we are shown the character of God in His own sphere. How sweet the thought, as the contrast with all that man is, that God is love. As rain on the thirsty ground, the soul draws in the thought that "*God is love.*" There

you have a balm to sooth the soul under all circumstances; and not only that but the mind is drawn into certain scenes where it finds that that love has been displayed. God, in His own glory, thought of poor sinners. His was the thought to send His Son to die that we might live through Him.

When I say, “*God is love*”, what do I mean by it?

Who and what were those for whom He was sent? They were poor things, dead in trespasses and sins. Nothing but particles of dust driven around by Satan, going into the vortex of destruction. God could say: ‘They may be dead in sins, they may be but dust in Satan’s hand, but I will send my Son to give them life.’ Ah! Throughout eternity we shall find nothing so to rejoice in as God’s thought of sending this Son of His love to give life to dead sinners, Christ given to us as eternal life, in all the death in which He found us. I should have been lost for eternity, if God had not interfered to give me life in His Son, and a nature capable of enjoying it all in the glory.

When I say, “*God is love*”, what do I mean by it? Just this, that God sent His only-begotten Son that we might have life in Him. We still carry about the old nature; but, blessed be God, many a time as Satan has caught me, he has never destroyed me; there is the propitiation – I am inside, sheltered by the blood, and forgiven.

What should I do if I had to carry the burden of last week’s failure, or even the burden of only yesterday’s failure! It would be like phosphorous eating into the tenderest part of my body; but I have got One who is able to restore my soul, One who does so continuously and entirely.

You are finding out how different you are from Christ, but He is the propitiation all the way till you see Him and are like Him. Love in you is very different from love in God, acting in His own eternity, showing love by giving His Son to give you life, and power, and love. Love in God comes out with this thought of separating us from all that we are into His own blessedness.

G. V. Wigram (1805 – 1879)

PERFECT GOODNESS DISPLAYED IN CHRIST

The whole heart of Christ, as well as that of God, was revealed by His death; for there was nothing in us to draw out His affection, to move Him to take our place, and to redeem us with His precious blood.

“In the same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread and gave thanks”, and founded the memorial of His accomplished sacrifice. Thus side by side we behold His perfect goodness and man’s perfect evil, but the full exhibition of what man was could not hinder the manifestation of what Christ was. No, just as the light of the sun when shining on a dark thundercloud seems all the more bright and intense, so the love, grace and goodness of Christ are magnified by the unmitigated evil, which, on man’s part, brought Him to the cross.

Edward Dennett (1831 – 1914)

A word for today

FOUR WAKE-UP CALLS

I want to speak about trumpets. The trumpet mentioned in Exodus is the shofar, a trumpet that is normally made out of ram’s horn. The shofar is not a particularly musical instrument – it is more in the nature of a loud wake-up call.

Exodus 19: 16-19 - A wake-up call about the majesty and holiness of God

Exodus 19 is the first time that the shofar is mentioned in the Bible. You might ask, ‘Why should I read about Sinai?’ In the book of Hebrews we read that we have not come to mount Sinai, we have not come to, *“trumpet’s sound, and voice of words”* but we have come to 8 different things, *“to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, ... and to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better than Abel”* (Hebrews 12:18). Although clearly showing that we Christians have come to better things it adds

"let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. For also our God is a consuming fire" Hebrews 12:28, 29). So I have read this passage in Exodus because I believe one of the signal weaknesses today is a lack of the fear of God. Unless I have the fear of God I will not make spiritual progress.

one of the signal weaknesses today is a lack of the fear of God

The children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt, delivered from its slavery. They had journeyed for three months in the wilderness and had come to the foot of Mount Sinai where God proposed to make a covenant with them. And they said, *"All that Jehovah has spoken will we do!" (Exodus 19:8).*

At Mount Sinai they were impressed with the awesomeness of God. They were at the foot of that mountain frightened and trembling. They see the thunder and the lightning and they hear the long, drawn-out sound of the trumpet exceeding loud, and they are rightly impressed with the majesty and holiness of God. God gives Moses the Ten Commandments and the children of Israel feel the need of a mediator. In fact, they say to Moses, *"Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:18).* They were impressed with the majesty, the holiness, the remoteness and the distance there was between themselves and God.

This tremendous distance between man and God came in as a result of sin. Let us never forget what happened in the Garden of Eden! After man's sin of disobedience, Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden and the flame of the flashing sword was put between them and Paradise. Therefore they were in a hopeless position until there was an intervention by God Himself. We all need a sense of man's hopelessness apart from the work of Christ.

Oftentimes, particularly when we have been brought up in Christian homes, there can be shallowness in connection with receiving the gospel message, a lack of understanding that as

wretched sinners we only deserve the lake of fire. We need to realise that we are dealing with a holy God who hates sin. The God who hated sin in the Old Testament is still the God who hates sin today!

Reverential fear of God should underpin anything that we do, our activities together, our relations when we are not with any other believers, when we are by ourselves. Let us never forget, *“The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10)*. Let us always remember the majesty and holiness and awesomeness of God. But, thank God, there is a Mediator. To some extent Moses filled out the role of mediator in the Old Testament. He went to God, God spoke to him and he brought the message back to the people and explained things to them. We have a much better Mediator now!

Leviticus 25:8-10 – A wake-up call about the grace of God that has come into effect through the work of the Lord Jesus.

Now I want to speak about the grace of God because we have this lovely passage in Leviticus about the year of Jubilee. One of the commands given at Sinai was keeping the Sabbath every week on a Saturday. That was the day of rest that God set apart for His earthly people.

God also instructed Moses about the year of Jubilee that His earthly people were to keep when they reached the Promised Land. For six years they were to sow in the land, prune their vines and look after their crops and reap their fields. Then the seventh year was to be a Sabbath, when they were to let the land rest. At the end of forty-nine years — seven times seven — there was to be this wonderful special year, the year of Jubilee. I am not aware that they ever kept it, but I do know that one of the reasons the Jews went into captivity for 70 years was to ensure that the land had its Sabbaths. (2 Chronicles 36:21)

However I want to refer to this scripture as in relation to the Christian message, the gospel of the grace of God. The Scripture says, *“cause the loud sound of the trumpet to go forth in the*

seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the day of atonement shall ye cause the trumpet to go forth throughout your land” (Leviticus 25:9). The shofar was to be blown on the day of atonement in the fiftieth year.

Peter ... blew the trumpet

For us the day of atonement is the day the Lord Jesus accomplished our salvation, alone upon the cross. Jesus did what no one else could do. It is striking that when Jesus was on the cross Scripture speaks of the two cries He uttered. At the ninth hour He cried out, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Mark 15:34).* Jesus was forsaken on the cross at Calvary to work out my atonement and your atonement; my salvation and your salvation. The second cry was when He delivered up His spirit. No one took Jesus’ life from Him. He said, *“I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again. I have received this commandment of my Father.”(John 10:17, 18).* The wonderful thing is that Jesus completed that work He was given to do. He could say, *“it is finished” (John 19:30).* The work of Jesus on the cross is completely finished and provides a basis for setting people free for time and for eternity.

The sound of the trumpet was to go out on the seventh month on the tenth of the month every fifty years, on the *“day of atonement shall ye cause the trumpet to go forth throughout your land”.* This loud sound would herald the year of jubilee.

After Jesus died and rose again a marvellous thing happened at Pentecost; the Holy Spirit came and indwelt those who believed. They then were able to speak with tongues so that people of different languages could hear them speak in their own language. Fifty days after Jesus was raised from the dead, people were saying, ‘What is this all about?’

Then, Peter stood up with the eleven — he blew the trumpet: *“God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).* Was that not a clear note from the

trumpet? It convicted many people; they were *"pricked in heart"*. Peter told them what to do, *"Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (verse thirty-eight)*. He wanted these people who had gathered in Jerusalem from all the parts of the Roman Empire for the feast of Pentecost to come into the blessings that had been promised to Israel.

In Peter's second preaching he says, *"To you first God, having raised up his servant, has sent him, blessing you in turning each one of you from your wickedness" (Acts 3:26)*. The trumpet was again blown, the trump of Jubilee announcing the death, the resurrection, the ascension to glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and that forgiveness of sins was being offered through repentance and faith in Christ.

So it says, *"a year of jubilee shall it be unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family" (Leviticus 25:10)*. God desired this liberty and enjoyment of family life for them. Peter brings the spirit of the jubilee forward when he says, *"For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God may call" (Acts 2:39)*. God wanted them to come into the good of what had been promised them in the Old Testament about the Messiah who would come to be their Saviour.

Thank God the message has spread out. It spread out from Jerusalem. It spread out throughout the Roman Empire in the days of the apostles. It has come to us here as it has done in the entire world. This trumpet note is still being sounded. We sing of the year of Jubilee. In a sense we are living in that year now. We are in the day of the grace of God. We are in a marvellous time when God is sending out this message of His wondrous love and grace, telling what has been secured by the Lord Jesus alone upon the cross.

It is wonderful to be freshly affected by it. The hymn puts it:

*Message of Jesus, message of love,
Telling of welcome to that bright home above!*

God wants us to come into this blessing. It is not just for us as individuals; He wants us to enjoy an inheritance among them that are sanctified, an inheritance that is centred on Jesus (see Acts 26:18). He wants us to enjoy family relationships among the people of God. These are things that God has in mind for us through the gospel.

It might be a simple note that is sounded by the trumpet, a blast to arouse people about the fact that they are lost and they need a Saviour. Yet it is also a note to tell about the riches that are available in the Lord Jesus Christ for God's people to enjoy individually and together.

Well, we are in this wonderful time. Do not let us forget it. During the year of Jubilee people had to change. If an Israelite had become a slave he was to be released. If persons had lost their land during the previous years, perhaps through neglect, through becoming poor, they were to go back and enjoy their portion of the land again. It must have been a wonderful time that God had in mind.

God wants believers to come into the good of their possessions in Jesus even today.

I feel sad when I meet some of the Lord's people who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour but are so entangled with other things that they do not enjoy the wonderful inheritance that is available for them in Christ. God wants us to enjoy these precious things that are set out in the Bible: faith and hope and love. These are important ingredients of Christianity and God wants us to enjoy them individually and in our links with one another.

Well, that is the time we are in, the year of Jubilee and there is the idea of returning. That implies that people have got away. Some would have got away from their possessions during the previous fifty years and they were now able to return. God wants us to return. He loves people to return to Him. The prophets often speak of God wanting the people to return to Him, return to the blessings that were available through Him after they had gone astray, (*see 2 Chronicles 30:6, 9; Jeremiah 24:7; 35:15*).

I wonder if I am speaking to anybody here today who has gone astray from God, wandered away from the precious things of God. God wants us all to return and enjoy the wonderful inheritance that is available through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Every one of us can be a herald for Jesus. You do not need to be a good Bible teacher, or a prophet or an apostle to be a herald for Jesus. Paul describes himself as a herald as well as a preacher and a teacher. The scattered believers blew the trumpet (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21). Let us blow the trumpet and be a herald for the Lord Jesus too!

Hosea 8:1 A wake-up call in respect of God's word and God's standard

Alas, God's people often departed from God when they reached their Promised Land. They became idolaters and they disobeyed God time and time and time again. God used prophets such as Hosea to recall them to God – a very difficult commission. They sought to recall the people to the Ten Commandments that God had given at the time of Sinai.

Hosea says, for example, *"they have transgressed my covenant, and rebelled against my law"*. That was very serious. God gave Israel the law. He did not give it to the Gentiles. He gave them a law and they rebelled against it. God told them to put Him first, to have no other gods before Him. And yet so often they went after the gods of the peoples whose lands were around about them. Some deliberately went to other lands and adopted their gods.

God was very angry with His people. At the same time He was very patient with them and He sent prophets who themselves had to suffer. Jesus told a parable about a man who owned a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. He later sent servants to collect fruit from the vineyard, *"And the husbandmen took his bondmen, and beat one, killed another, and stoned another"* (Matthew 21:35). The children of Israel did all these things to the prophets that God had sent to recall to them to God. So

Hosea was told to, *"Set the trumpet to thy mouth"*.

Christianity, thank God, came to these lands and many were converted. Everyone would accept, I think, that there has been a great turning away publicly from God in the time in which we live. Many of us have known, in our lifetime, how things have deteriorated. We are near the end of the Christian era and then the day of the wrath of God will come on this world. I have been asking myself the question: what should I say for God today in an unmistakable way if I, like Hosea, set the trumpet to my mouth?

I already said that in the early days of Christianity people like Peter and Paul and others stated a message from God without ambiguity. They stated the message of the glad tidings of the grace of God very clearly and they also alerted those who were converted of current dangers. They also gave warnings in their epistles about various things that would come in after their departure. Now we have reached the 21st century and I wonder what God would have us to say if we put a trumpet to our mouths today. Here are a few "trumpet calls" for your consideration that I will set out from the Scriptures.

1 There is only one way to God and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ

The first is what Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me"* (John 14:6). Now, is that not plain enough? Perfectly plain! It was said by Jesus and repeated, of course, by His apostles like Peter who said, shortly after the day of Pentecost, *"salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). I believe that is an important trumpet note that should be sounded out from every Christian and from every Christian company today, that there is only one way to God and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In one of the places I visit I see half a dozen posters all along a wall highlighting various religions. There is a picture of a rabbi

**the Bible ... is
the written
word of God.**

with his robes. There is a picture of people going into the Ganges. There is a picture of Mecca and all the pilgrims gathered there. Many people treat different religions as if they are all in a level playing field. That is not of God. We Christians need to sound out, unmistakably, that all religions are not all much the same – but that *“God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5)*. That message needs to be proclaimed in our lives and in our speaking: there is one way to God and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ and through Him alone.

2 *“Every Scripture is divinely inspired”*

The second is, *“every scripture is divinely inspired” (2 Timothy 3:16)*. Nowadays the Scriptures are largely set aside. They are treated in many quarters as merely the works of man and not the words of God but every scripture is *“divinely inspired”*. I may not understand all the Scriptures and I do not claim to understand all the Scriptures. But I do believe that it is true what the apostle Paul said that *“every scripture is divinely inspired”*.

We should treat the Bible with respect – it is the written word of God. The apostle Peter refers to the words of our beloved brother Paul and classifies what Paul says as Scripture along with other Scriptures (see 2 Peter 3:15, 16). When Paul says that *“every scripture is divinely inspired”* he was thinking primarily of the Old Testament but Peter shows that it applies to both the Old and the New Testaments. *“Every scripture is divinely inspired”*.

The Scriptures are unique; they are God’s standard for testing everything. What I say, or any other person or organisation says, needs to be tested by the Scriptures. So that our faith is not built upon what someone else has said, man’s word, but what God has said. That is so important. Any development that has come in since – for example what the Roman Catholics have added to the Bible as tradition - is not of God. The final authority is set out in the Scriptures.

There is a distinction between the Bible and every other book in the world. It is God's word and it is most important that we Christians who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ recognise the importance, authority and the standard that is set out in the Holy Scriptures. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand it and apply it and to make it good in our souls and we can learn from what others have ministered from God's word but the standard of everything is set out in the Bible

There is no new truth. There has been no new truth since the days of the apostles. It was given to Paul to complete the word of God (*Colossians 1:25*). All truth is expressed personally in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's testimony, He is the Truth. The Truth is in Jesus (*Ephesians 4:21*).

Then, *"Every word of God is pure"* (*Proverbs 30:5*). Let us hold to that statement and let us tell it unambiguously in our contacts with others, in our gatherings and in our homes that the Scriptures are unique. I think today believers need to sound the trumpet clear and plain: *"every scripture is divinely inspired"*!

3 "Let marriage be held every way in honour, and the bed be undefiled"

I want to refer to marriage. *"Let marriage be held every way in honour, and the bed be undefiled"* (*Hebrews 13:4*). Before I came here I had occasion to be speaking with some people who, like me, are professing Christians. We were talking about things that we were going to do at the weekend. They asked me what I was going to do, so I said I was coming here to speak. They asked what I was going to speak about so I told them that God willing I was going to speak about faith and hope and love, which we had in the Bible reading this afternoon. Then a woman said to me, 'We are going to be having a discussion in our church about gay marriage, whether it is right or wrong and whether we should allow it in our church'. I said to her, 'If you go by the word of God you would not need any discussion, you would solve it in thirty seconds!'

How important it is that believers stand by the word of God in

relation to what God says about marriage. It is to be *“held every way in honour”*. In our lives, in our conduct, in our speaking, in what we sound out there should be no ambiguity that marriage is, in the sight of God, the union of one man with one woman to the exclusion of everyone else. That is set out in the Bible. I would not go out into the street and preach about marriage; I would speak about Jesus who is the Saviour available for all kinds of sinners. But I think that in our day opportunities can arise when in response to an enquiry we should be prepared to say what the Bible says. Not what I say or what someone else says or what the company of Christians I meet with says but what says the Scripture? One of the things stated in the Bible from beginning to end is what marriage is according to God and we should stand by it.

4 The public position of man and woman

I now want to read one verse in relation the position of man and woman in the public ordering of God. It is in first Corinthians, chapter 11: *“But I wish you to know that the Christ is the head of every man, but woman’s head is the man, and the Christ’s head God”*. In our individual links with the Lord there is no difference between a man and a woman. A man can come to faith in Christ. A woman can come to faith in Christ. We are all one in Christ Jesus. I am just as much a priest as a woman who belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ is a priest.

But outwardly there is a difference and the scripture maintains this difference (*see also 1 Corinthians 14:34-38; 1 Timothy 2:11, 12*). Largely, even amongst Christians, the distinctive place of man and woman in the public ordering of God is disregarded. Let the scriptures speak for themselves to our hearts and consciences. I believe there is a responsibility on every one of us who believe in the authority of the Bible, who believe it is divinely inspired, to stand for this feature of the truth today in practice as well as in word. I believe that should be a ‘trumpet call’ to maintain what scripture says about the relative role of man and woman in the public ordering of God.

5 “Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him”

One final suggestion for the trumpet to be put to the mouth is in Matthew: *“Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him”* (Matthew 25:6). So far as we

Christians are concerned there is no public sign to be looked for regarding the second coming of Jesus— Jesus can come at any time. But I believe there has been a call, not just in my lifetime but before my lifetime – *“Behold, the bridegroom”* – that draws attention to the return of Jesus and alerts us to prepare for going *“forth to meet Him”*.

We were speaking about love this afternoon and I believe that call: *“Behold, the bridegroom”*, draws attention to Jesus as the great lover of the church. I think as time went on after that cry went out, particularly in the nineteenth century, there has been great departure from “first love” by many of us who would recognise that the call *“Behold, the bridegroom”* was of God. I think this trumpet call needs to be sounded out again. This call does not draw attention to you or me or to any company of Christians I may meet with: it draws attention to Jesus in His distinctive glory and to His name as a gathering point for God’s people. *“Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet Him”*. That leads me to my last scripture.

Zechariah 9:14, 15 — A wake-up call in relation to the coming of the Lord

This scripture does not refer to the church; it refers to a remnant of God’s earthly people and to a time when terrible pressure will come upon these godly Jews. The only reason I read it is because of this lovely expression about a coming day: - *“the Lord Jehovah will blow the trumpet”*.

Now, we have been speaking about prophets blowing the trumpet, we have been speaking about the possibility of us blowing the trumpet for Jesus and for what the Bible teaches and for Christian

there is no public sign to be looked for regarding the second coming of Jesus

practices. But this passage says the Lord Jehovah will blow the trumpet and He is going to come in defence of those who love Him in that day.

It struck me that there is a parallel with that trumpet call in the scripture in 1 Thessalonians 4 that speaks of the Lord descending from heaven, *“with an assembling shout, with archangel’s voice and with trump of God”*. It is quite possible that in writing that verse Paul was remembering the references to the trumpet in the Old Testament.

What a call this *“assembling shout”* will be. It is going to awaken people who have been dead in Christ for hundreds of years and they are going to arise. *“The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).*

That glorious event is not going to depend upon you or your faithfulness. It is not going to depend upon my faithfulness or my ability to call attention to anything that is not right according to God. It depends entirely on the Lord Jesus. It is His call. He is not entrusting it to angels or to those who have been good Christians in the past. He is going to come Himself with an assembling shout, with archangel’s voice and with trump of God.

Let us be ready for that call. Let us be ready for Him. In the meantime let us seek to be faithful to Him in the time of His absence and heed His wake up calls.

May the Lord help us for His name’s sake. Amen.

Ken Hollands

An address at Defford, Worcestershire, October 2014.