

Living Water

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Recent Ministry

THREE AWAKENINGS

Tonight I want to speak about three awakenings:

- the awakening of the sinner's conscience;
- the awakening of the sword of justice against sin at the cross; and,
- the awakening of one who has trusted in the Lord Jesus to see the Saviour face to face in glory.

THE AWAKENING OF THE SINNER'S CONSCIENCE

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

"And they heard the voice of Jehovah Elohim, walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And Man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim, in the midst of the trees of the garden. And Jehovah Elohim called to Man, and said to him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I feared, because I am naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou art naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat? And Man said, The woman, whom thou hast given to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:7-12).

It was a tragic day that we have read of in Genesis 3. Tragedy had come into the world. Earlier days – the days of chapter 1 when God was creating this world – you could write over each of them, 'It was good' and when God completed all of creation He looked on it and said that it *"was very good"*. You could not write that over this chapter.

**What happened
in Genesis 3?
Sin happened!**

What happened in Genesis 3? Sin happened! Sin was brought into this world. The Bible tells us, *"by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death"* (Romans 5:12). What a tragedy! What

had been created for God's pleasure was marred by the incoming of sin, and that by the very creature that God had formed and breathed into so that *"Man became a living soul"* (Genesis 2:7). Satan laid his trap well and the man and the woman fell into it.

Immediately they committed a sin something happened that had never happened before; conscience was awakened. As soon as a conflict between good and evil came in to their lives, conscience in both of them was awakened. They discovered that they had disobeyed God and therefore they were sinners before God.

Conscience is one of the ways that God uses to speak to His creature. Of course, in the Bible, the first method He uses for speaking is the very creation around us. It was there, around Adam and Eve; it was a voice to them, yet it was a silent voice and now today, that testimony - God speaking through creation - is still borne to man. I will tell you something else; there are quite a number of persons who once professed to be atheists, who have been brought to their knees, in recognising God speaking to them through creation and by that means brought to know Christ. That is one of His ways in speaking to His creature.

But He also speaks to you and me through our conscience. I cannot describe conscience; it is like a little voice inside you. You say or do something wrong and that little voice says, 'That was wrong'. You try to silence it, but still it persists. It may be God speaking to you through conscience. Finally, you may cover it up and decide it is not worth listening to. The greatest way that God has of speaking to man is in the Person of the Son by virtue of His finished work at Calvary's cross. We will come to that.

Here, in Genesis 3, we see conscience is awakened. Adam and Eve discover they are sinners. What will they do? Well, they do exactly what you and I would do. They think, 'How can we cover this up?' So we have man's first invention - an apron of fig leaves. What a paltry way to try and cover up sin. Yet that is what the man and woman do. All around us today the same thing happens. Rather than face up to the reality of our guilt we will do anything to hide our sin but no covering that we can invent will do in the presence of God.

Jesus is the hiding place for you

They hear the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they say, 'Quick, we had better hide!' Conscience is still working. They know, now, that what they have done makes

them unfit for the presence of God but there is no hiding-place. In Psalm 139 the psalmist finds there is nowhere he can hide from God. He says *"If I ascend up into the heavens thou art there; or if I make my bed in Sheol, behold thou art there...if I say, Surely darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night; Even darkness hideth not from thee, and the night shineth as the day..."* (Psalm 139:8-12) Wherever you go God's eye is upon you.

God comes into the garden and says, *"Adam, where art thou?"* A question to be asked of every one of us here tonight, Where are you? I do not know where you are as regards God. You know. Have you had a transaction with the Lord Jesus as to your sins to clear your sins for ever before God? That transaction can be made in the light of the finished work at Calvary and nothing else.

We read, *"Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I feared, because I am naked; and I hid myself"*. Then God says to him, *"Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?"* Now, remember, they have covered themselves with fig leaves, an inadequate covering for sin. They have hidden themselves in an inadequate hiding place. And now man really touches the low point. He says, 'It was not me' but pointing at Eve, 'It was her'. He says, *"The woman, whom thou hast given to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate"*.

Friend, you are responsible for your own sins. You must have a personal transaction with Christ to clear those sins away. You cannot blame Adam, you cannot blame Eve. You and I are blameworthy before God but in the gospel and through Christ, God has made the provision whereby that blame can be removed and you can be blameless before God because the work of Christ is the covering for your sins. The hiding place in Jesus is the hiding place for you.

Adam blames the woman and the story goes on until ultimately

God drove them out of the garden. But before that expulsion, God announced the blessing which He had in mind. The hymn puts it beautifully:-

Soon as the reign of sin began,
The light of mercy dawned on man,
When God announced the blessed news,
The woman's Seed thy head shall bruise.

Long before that day when sin came into the world, God was looking ahead to Christ who would bear the whole matter of sin, would defeat Satan and provide a way of blessing and forgiveness for even the vilest sinner.

There is another thing that God does before He drives man out of the garden; He gives them a suitable covering. He makes coats of skin: the product of death, pointing to the clothing of righteousness that would be founded on the death of Christ. God clothes them and then He drives them out of the garden. The cherubim with the flame of the flashing sword guarded the way to the tree of life. There was no way man could get back by his own efforts. Man was outside the garden in his sin and God was in His own habitation – the *“high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy” (Isaiah 57:15)*.

Man, who had known what it was to be in relationship with God and to converse with Him, was now at a huge distance from God. ‘Sin’ is a little word, but it brings a great big distance from God. How is that distance going to be met? What can man do to meet it? Can he do anything? The simple answer is that man can do nothing to remove that distance, nothing at all.

If you and I fell out and distance came in as the result we might, after a while, begin to think of a way to reconcile our difference. I would compromise a bit and you would compromise a bit and meet on common ground. God could not do that. If man was to be reconciled to God it must be according to the righteousness and holiness of God. So man is totally out of court; he can do nothing because he is a sinner. He is without strength; he is found guilty before God. If you read Romans chapter 3, you will see a sorry portrait of yourself and every other person in this world before

God and finally it is summed up:- *“There is not a righteous man, not even one” (v. 10) and “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (v.23).*

Something had to happen if man was to be reconciled to God. We could do nothing. God took the first step to effect a way of removing that awful distance between Himself and the sinner:- *“when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Galatians 4:4).* In that blessed One, God has secured the way whereby the distance that sin had brought in between God and His creature could be dealt with. That really opens up the story of His love in sending His own Son into this world.

He sent His Son because He loved this world, the world of people. He *“so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him may not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).* He sent Him for our blessing. What a story is the story of God’s heart in the gospel in sending His only begotten Son.

THE AWAKENING OF THE SWORD OF JUSTICE AGAINST SIN AT THE CROSS

“And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thy hands? And he will say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Awake, O sword against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered...” (Zechariah 13:6-7).

We know the story of the gospel, how Jesus was here in public service, *“doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38 KJV).* He was undoing the works of the devil on every hand. To one man He said, *“thy sins are forgiven thee” (Luke 5:20).* He said that in the light of the great sacrifice that He was about to make in going to Calvary’s cross to meet the whole question of sin and sins.

So as we look at the pathway of Jesus we see that there was not a flaw in it, not a single imperfection. Everything was so perfect, so different from you and me. He went on to give Himself a spotless

offering to God. *"Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). God had planned the work of redemption away back in eternity. Before sin came in He knew that sin would come in and He knew how it would be met.

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow". The verse prior to that says, *"And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thy hands? And he will say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends"*. Ah, the wounds that Jesus bore, not only the nail wounds but the wounds that He bore as a consequence of the mocking and the scoffing thrown at Him during the course of His public service here. *"He came to his own, and his own received him not"* (John 1:11) In the house of His friends, one of those who was so close to Him, sold Him for 30 pieces of silver. Life assurance companies seek to put a value on people's lives. What value would we place on the One who was none less than the Son of God? What value would they place? I'll tell you the value – 30 pieces of silver - the price of a slave (see Exodus 21:32)! Oh, friend, what is your valuation of Him? What do you think of Him? Would you sell Him as He was sold here? William Blanel expressed it in a poem:

It may not be for silver: it may not be for gold;
But still by tens of thousands is this precious Saviour sold. –
Sold for a godless friendship, sold for a selfish aim,
Sold for a fleeting trifle, sold for an empty name!
Sold in the mart of science! sold in the seat of power!
Sold at the shrine of fortune! sold in pleasure's bower!
Sold, where the awful bargain none but God's eye can see:
Ponder, my soul, the question, 'Shall He be sold by thee?'

What is your response going to be to the presentation of the Lord Jesus tonight?

So we read here: *"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd"*. We saw, in Genesis 3, the cherubim with the flaming sword; later on in Israel's history, in David's time, there is an angel hovering over the city of Jerusalem with the sword of justice about to destroy

the city but that sword was not used. The sword of justice had long been held in its scabbard but at Calvary that sword was removed from its sheath and it was used against the sinless One: *"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd"*.

Who was this Person? *"the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts"*. The One who in Himself was God – this is the wonder of the story of divine love that God Himself came near to His creature in the Person of His Son and on this blessed One, as Man, the sword of justice fell.

Ponder the scene at Calvary's cross. Ponder especially those three hours of darkness. What led up to it was solemn as we see Him humiliated, beaten, misjudged and condemned in Pilate's judgment hall. Then we see Him led out to be crucified, submitting to it all. We see Him laid on that cross, He who could have called on His Father for legions of angels. He had the might to create the worlds, yet He submitted Himself to these nails being put into His hands and feet and raised on the cross. And then, more solemn than all, we see those three hours of darkness when that blessed One, who for every moment of His life was in such perfect communion with His God, was forsaken of His God. Why? Because of sin. Because of me as a sinner.

I should have faced God's judgment as a sinner; you should have faced that judgment. But I can point to my Saviour tonight as He was on Calvary's cross and say, He took my place there. I should have been there but He hung there for me.

Friend, can you say He hung there for you? You need to have this personal transaction with the Saviour. Confess that you are a sinner before Him and discover that He and He alone was the One who could bear your sins at Calvary's tree. Oh, how solemn those three hours were. He, the sinless One, suffering for sin. Oh the horror of it. This was One who *"knew not sin"* (1 Corinthians 5:21). This was One who *"did no sin"* (1 Peter 2:22). This was One who was intrinsically precious and holy, *"in him sin is not"* (1 John 3:5). Sin means so little to you and me because we are sinners, but to Him – there was nothing in Him that sin could touch at all, yet He was made sin during those three hours.

During those three solemn hours God meted out His unsparing judgment on Jesus, judgment, you might say, that had been stored up generation after generation. His judgment against sin had been stored up for centuries, for thousands of years, but at the cross of Christ that judgment was poured out on the head of my blessed Saviour.

When God acts in judgment it is not indiscriminate. When men go to war you do not know what the borders of war are going to be. Will it escalate? Will it go further? God went to war at the cross as far as sin was concerned but it was not indiscriminate, it was absolutely focussed. For three hours, in the forsaking of Jesus, God poured out His holy wrath on that blessed head. Then at the end of the three hours the finish of the forsaking is proclaimed by the Saviour's own words, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). I think that would have been the headlines in heaven, *"It is finished"*. And because that work was finished, because God's judgment was fully expended, He could now come near in grace and mercy to such as you and me and on the basis of that offering, He offers us a free and full forgiveness.

Are you going to stretch out the hand of faith tonight and say, I want that for myself? It is available to you tonight; it may not be available tomorrow. The day of grace has long run; its closing point may be tonight, I do not know. Do not let the opportunity pass but fall in with God's offer in the glad tidings. Open your heart and trust in the Lord Jesus and accept Him as your own personal Saviour.

What a price has been paid and the witness to the cost is in His shed blood. When He was dead the soldier *"pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water"* (John 19:34). That blood is the witness that God's righteousness has been fully met and it is the witness to you and me that provision has been made for the washing away of every one of our sins.

You and I had nothing to do with paying the price but if we want the blessing, if we want forgiveness of sins, if we want to be justified before God, we must in faith simply trust God's word and accept the Lord Jesus as our personal Saviour and Lord.

As trusting in Him we not only have forgiveness but we are brought into a new standing before God, because the Saviour is not now on the cross. He went into death, death that was a challenge to every man and had kept every man in its thrall: He went into that domain of death and has come out of death, a mighty triumphant Saviour. On that basis, out of death, not only can you be forgiven but you can be justified before God. No court of this land can justify you if you have done wrong. You have done wrong before God, I have done wrong before God and yet I find myself in a risen Christ fully justified before God. And not only that but *"having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand..."* (Romans 5:1-2). We are brought into a favour that will last through all eternity.

Oh, the wonderful blessing of the gospel. Come into it tonight by believing on Jesus. As believing on Him we have the prospect of seeing Him one day and that is the prospect that shines in the person who has become a believer on and a lover of the Lord Jesus.

THE AWAKENING OF ONE WHO HAS TRUSTED IN THE LORD JESUS TO SEE THE SAVIOUR FACE TO FACE IN GLORY.

"...for the Lord himself, with an assembling shout...shall descend from heaven; and 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 4:15-18)

The scripture I have read in Thessalonians is just the prelude to the wonderful joy of the Saviour whom we have not seen yet. Nobody in this Hall has ever seen Him. Peter speaks of it to those he wrote, *"whom, having not seen, ye love"* (1 Peter 1:8). None of us has seen Him. This scripture is just the immediate prelude to the believer, the lover of Christ, opening his eyes and seeing the Saviour face to face in glory. It will be a wonderful moment.

Another one, loved of the Lord Jesus, and known to many of us here, was taken last night: more will have been taken today

somewhere in the world. Some will have been taken peacefully: others will have been taken violently. They have joined this great company, *“the dead in Christ”*. How many there are.

Every one who has died will face resurrection. There are two resurrections: the first one is the raising of the dead in Christ, those who have trusted in Christ. The second is the raising of those who have refused the gospel; they are raised for judgment, to be judged in their sins. Solemn matter that!

But those we read of here in Thessalonians are those who believe and are awakened to see the Saviour. One dying woman who had already lost her husband and her child through death was being comforted on her own deathbed by those around her who said, ‘You will soon see your loved ones where you are going’. ‘Ah’, she said, ‘Jesus first, Jesus first’. Her outlook was to see her Saviour.

And so, the Lord Jesus is soon going to come. When He comes the day of grace is over. There will be no more preaching of the grace of God. The last opportunity to fall in with God’s overtures of grace will be gone for ever.

When our Lord was on earth one of His friends called Lazarus died and He said to His disciples, *“Lazarus, our friend, is fallen asleep, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep” (John 11:11)*. This scripture in Thessalonians tells us of the moment when He is going to wake all who have trusted in Him from the sleep of death.

Death will have to yield. The Lord Jesus is out of death as the forerunner of myriads coming out of death to be made like Him for ever. What a triumphant answer to the suffering of Christ that the myriads who have trusted in Him will be raised from death to surround Him in glory, and that eternally.

So there is a triumph about this awakening. Some have been long dead and some have been recently dead. But at His call: *“the assembling shout, with archangel’s voice and with trump of God”*, every saved one will hear that. The Roman army marched on three trumps. The first trump was just a general alert. The second

trump was, 'Get ready for marching'. The last trump was the order to march - this is the last trump.

The dead in Christ will rise, *"Where, O death, is thy sting? where, O death, thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55)*. Gone and gone for ever. *"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"*.

It is a wonderful prospect. Is it your prospect? Is it what awaits you? If you were to be taken by the sleep of death tonight, how would it be with you? Oh, be ready for this moment. He is coming, He could be on His way tonight, I do not know. That is in the Father's timing. But I can tell you with certainty that He is coming and the joy will be that we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air and thus we shall be always with the Lord.

We will be with the One who has died for us, the One who lives for us, the One who is coming for us soon. We are going to be with Him and with Him for ever. There is another wonderful thing about that moment when we see Him: it says, when we see Him *"we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2)*. That is a wonderful assurance because, I will tell you something, when we are like Him we will look better than we have ever looked before!

God bless the word for His name's sake.

Alexander Mowat,

A gospel preaching, Portknockie, 17 August 2014

SAFELY TRUSTING IN THE SAVIOUR

**"... for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to him."
(2 Timothy 1:12)**

These are the words of the apostle Paul and just like the apostle Paul, Joyce had put her faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. I do not know how long ago she did that. We can read about the time that Paul put his faith and trust in the Lord Jesus in the book of the

Acts. It tells us there that a great light shone round about him. Where did that light come from? It came from heaven where Jesus is: the One who died and who has risen again. He has broken the power of death and is alive, living in heaven. He is there for us - for every one who puts their faith and trust in Him.

So I felt encouraged to read this Scripture because it speaks of something the apostle knew and was certain of and it is something that our sister knew too, very, very definitely. She knew the One in whom she had put her trust and she knew that He was able to keep until that day the deposit that she had entrusted to Him. I remember a time when she was very low in the hospital. She told the doctors and nurses very readily that she trusted in Jesus and was not afraid to die. Oh, that every one here might not be afraid to die. What does death mean for you? What does it mean for me? For Joyce it meant that she would be with her Saviour, the One that she loved and the One who is coming again and will take us to be with Himself.

That is the Saviour that we have in the heavens. He knows our sorrow in the home going of our sister; He knows, too, the sufferings that she passed through in her lifetime. Yet at the end of her days she was persuaded of the reliability of the One in whom she had trusted.

Paul, when he wrote these words to Timothy that we have read, was coming near to the end of his days and he was able to write:, *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to him"*. May each one of us here have trusted ourselves to the Saviour. What a wonderful Saviour He is, One who has been here, has borne our sins and paid the penalty for us that we might go free.

Oh, that we might be trusting in Him, that we might have the assurance in our hearts of an eternal portion which will be ours as with Him in the glory.

David Gentry

Word at a burial at Honiton, April 2015.

Poetry Selection

JESUS, THE LORD, MY SHEPHERD

Jesus, the Lord, my Shepherd is,
No want shall e'er be mine,
In pastures green which satisfy
He maketh me recline.

By waters still He leadeth me,
Blest object of His care,
In rest and peace a portion rich
He gives me now to share.

My soul He doth invigorate,
My heart He doth awake,
In paths of righteousness He leads
His sheep for His Name's sake.

Though death its dread dark shadow
As through its vale I tread, casts,
No evil causes me to fear,
By such a Shepherd led.

'Thou art with me' blest Shepherd true.
Enough! The heart has peace;
Thy rod, Thy staff, they comfort me,
And from all fear release.

In presence of mine enemies
A table Thou dost spread,
And with that oil, by Thee prepared
Thou dost anoint my head.

The fatness of Thy house is mine,
My soul is satisfied;
Within me dwells Thy Spirit, sent
From Thee, the Glorified!

My cup filled full, O Lord, by Thee
With blessing overflows,
Fruit of that work which Thou hast
Thy love Thou dost disclose. wrought;

Goodness doth surely follow me
And mercy day by day,
As I pursue my pilgrim life
Along the narrow way.

And in Thy house, most blessed Lord,
For ever I shall dwell,
My lips delighting by the way
Of Thy great love to tell.

Thou Shepherd true, Thy Name be praised,
No love is like to Thine;
Faithful to death, and faithful now
Till I with Thee shall shine.

E. H. Chater 1907

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.

Testimony Section

THE LORD IS WONDERFUL

At the end of May I was invited to speak at a Christian youth group. They had decided to go to a local lake for picnic and stay overnight in tents. They intended to go fishing and have some games and invited me to speak at the evening bonfire. Since it was quite near my home I was going to go home after the bonfire. I spoke about Joshua as an example for young people to be faithful, strong, committed and fervent for the Lord. They took an interest in this exciting subject and with some of them I had personal talk till 2 a.m. I decided to stay in a tent overnight!

In the morning I got up and thought to myself that it would be good to remind them after breakfast of what we had been speaking about the night before and warn them that time is short, life is short and to encourage them to take seriously what I had read to them from the Bible. I also wanted to share the testimony of young brother of 26 years old, whom I met recently. Two years ago he accidentally touched a high voltage wire and was badly injured. He survived but it changed his spiritual life entirely. I wanted to get these young people thinking.

However, it was not in the young people's plan to have more talk and they all took their breakfast away and hurried off to go fishing, swimming and the like. I decided to take some photographs of the birds around the lake.





One young man of sixteen swam to the middle of the lake. Others did not pay much attention to this but then we heard a scream from one of the boys fishing. "Look, he is drowning!" he shouted. I turned to him and asked: "Are you playing foolish joke?!" I really don't like it when teenagers try to start a panic.

"No. just look at him!" he responded. The boy in the middle of the lake was screaming some words which, although I did not understand them, made me realize that I needed to act at once. I dropped my Bible and camera and jumped in the water. I was swimming with all my strength and could see two others had started out from the shore as well.

As I swam I was watching the boy struggling in the water. I tried to swim faster but could not do it. My breath was irregular and I could see the boy going down under the water but I realized I had not any strength to dive. But...praise the Lord! He gave him strength to push his body up again or it would be better to say

the Lord's hand pulled him up! I reached him and grabbed his waist to hold his head above the water. I must say he was a good boy and said, "Thank you!" He stopped struggling, perhaps because he had no strength left!. Two seconds later the other two swimmers reached us.

We got him to the shore but I had no strength left to pull him up the beach so I shouted to others to come and help. Soon we were ashore. The saved lad was sick! I was breathing like a hunting dog! By this time the whole party had gathered round. We prayed and I knelt down to thank the Lord for His mercy.

**the Lord's hand
pulled him up**

When I got up from my knees I said, "Listen, this morning I had intended to give you all a message that life is short, but I had no opportunity to share it. Now the Lord has gathered you and you will hear it." I shared what was in my heart about the need for



early commitment to Christ and how necessary it was to trust in Him today. Then we took a final picture with the boy who had been saved from drowning. A young man came to me for personal talk and prayer.

The Lord controlled every moment!

He wanted to dedicate his life to

Christ and serve Him with his whole heart. We had a talk and prayed together and he truly committed himself to the Lord.

How wonderful the ways of the Lord are:

- When I was 9 years old a swimming pool was built in my town and my parents took me there. I started to swim and liked it very much. Until this day I enjoyed swimming, but today the young Christian responsible for arranging the youth group grabbed me and said: "I am a hopeless swimmer; it was great that you were here!"
- I wanted to drive home after speaking the night before, but the Lord kept me until the next day.
- In the morning I wanted to put on my jeans which I usually wear, but decided to wear light sports trousers. In jeans I would not have been able to swim so quickly.
- I had wanted to speak after breakfast about the urgency of coming to Christ but the Lord delayed my message until a time when it would have maximum meaning to every one in the group.

The Lord controlled every moment! He kept the boy afloat until I could reach him. He timed the message so that it would speak to every one who heard it. Isn't He wonderful!

Sergey Sidorenko

May 2015



GOD INTERVENED!

My family like so many in this country (Canada), professed no religion at all. I found a copy of Darwin's "Origin of Species" and read it avidly and was completely deceived by it. Even though I had heard the gospel I thought I knew everything and Darwin wholly reinforced this delusion. We had one little Bible in the house and I got my father's permission to burn it in the furnace. You can see how far I was from the truth.

I joined the youth group of the Socialist political party. Many of the members were either atheists or agnostics. I went to the library and got the books by Marx, Hegel, Lenin and others and was well on the way to becoming a Communist – but God intervened.

In my High School we used double desks and I was sitting next to a lad called Jim who came from a Christian home. He and I were both different from the rest of the class. We spent a good deal of time together and I often went to his home. His mother was a Christian – although her husband had left her – and I knew that she and Jim's older sister both prayed for me; they also spoke to me regularly about the gospel but I was not at all receptive.

Then one night as I was walking home from their house I had a strange experience. It was not quite like that of Saul on the Damascus road but I had an overwhelming feeling that I cannot quite explain. It caused me to run the rest of the distance home. When I got there I went to my room immediately and fell on my knees and confessed that there was indeed a Creator God. Subsequently speaking with Jim's family it was simple to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as my Saviour.

Later I wrote the poem "Surpassing Love". It is a record of my reflections on that wonderful experience. Everyone who comes to Christ comes via a slightly different path but all are led by the Spirit of God.

He looked on me, not once but twice;
And though my heart was cold as ice
And hated Him – He loved me!

'Twas not because of what I'd done,
For works and merit I had none,
But even then – He loved me!

In fact, I'd cursed and used His Name
In vain, without a pang of shame;
But grace divine – He loved me!

I cared not that He died alone.
My heart was hard as flint, as stone.
Unsought! Unknown! – He loved me!

I swore I'd never bow my knee.
"There is no God above for me!"
I cried; but still – He loved me!

I fought and fought. "I won't believe!"
How infidelity did cleave!
"I won't believe!" – He loved me!

Through blasphemy and sin and pride,
I sought from Him myself to hide.
He came to save – He loved me!

And then one night, I could not fight
Him any more, but just implore,
"Forgive me Lord!" – He loved me!

'Twas then I found, though I had failed
To even care why He was nailed
Upon the cross – He loved me!

Yes! Jesus as my Lord I owned.
I once was lost, but now am found,
A sinner saved – He loves me!

I've failed Him oft. I cannot boast,
Except in Him who saves the lost
At such a cost – He loves me!

And I love Him, though feebly here.
O how the thought my soul does cheer;
Eternally – He'll love me!

But better still – He gave His all
His Bride to win, her heart enthrall.
He loves His saints – He loves them all!

Gordon Rainbow

THE TESTIMONY OF A CONVERTED MUSLIM

I was really glad to get this letter from John, in Nigeria recently. Here is his testimony to the saving grace of Christ [Ed.]

I am a former Muslim. Last year someone gave me your Biblical booklet to read. I was touched and realised that I was a lost sinner. I was in darkness. I needed to become a Christian in order to be saved. Then I prayed and right now I am converted and committed to a church where the Bible is preached. I can now see the true light which is in Jesus, the Saviour of the world. I have received Him as my only Saviour and Lord. My life has been changed and the Lord is so good to me. He has put a smile on my face.

I did not keep this testimony to myself but passed it on to other Muslim friends and my brothers and sisters telling them about the goodness and saving grace of God. Through mercy many of them have turned to Christ. Praise the Lord!

John

A voice from the past

Reprinted from "Living Water" No 31

MARRIAGE IN THE LORD

Ephesians 5:25-32

I want first of all to draw attention to how we may each stand in relation to our own wives, or wives in relation to their own husbands. This is a matter which is most necessary in these days when things in the world and even amongst Christians have fallen away from the divine thought. I have no doubt that God has caused the ideas of male and female to permeate the whole of creation and, in lesser degree to what is in the human race, it comes into the lower creation. What happens among the lower creatures is a present rebuke to the way that men and women are abandoning the original thoughts of God.

A believer who earns his living by line fishing in the sea told me that on one occasion when he had his long line out, fishing for big fish, pulling it in he found great resistance and had to call the help of another in the boat.. As they got the line further in they saw the cause of the trouble, a large female ray had been hooked and the male ray had fastened itself to the body and was thrashing the sea with its tail and body to hinder his mate being pulled in.. Such was the attachment, even amongst fish, which amazed me. With a struggle they pulled them in and even in pulling over the gunwale the male would not let go; as these two large creatures fell into the boat the believer thought of the lamentation of David for Saul and Jonathon, *“Even in death they were not divided”*. I say an answer to God’s thought like that amongst the lower creation is a rebuke to men and women and amongst Christians who give up this sacred matter of loving their own wives and wives being subject to their own husbands.

I call attention to this, dear young people, you who are in their courting days or nearing them; read this scripture in Ephesians 5, ponder it and get the divine idea into your souls so that your links with the companion you want to make your own may be on the level of the purity, sanctity and faithfulness of that which marks the links of Christ and His church.

Maybe some here may not have heard very much about the assembly, the church. But if you have the Spirit you are a member of Christ’s body; believers are said to be members of nothing else, not of a denomination, nor of brethren, or any other company of persons; we are, as having the Holy Spirit, members of Christ’s body. Because of that we are loved personally by Christ. I feel sometimes that the truth of what is collective has been carried beyond its limits and what is personal has been overshadowed.

Our personal links with Christ as members of His body are going to abide for ever. He will love perfectly every member of His body and He will love those members as set together, as

**His service is in view
of presenting the
church to Himself**

being His church.. Let us therefore be concerned about this, that we are members of His body. We are of His flesh and of His bones. We are so near, we are so like Christ, that we belong to this great mystery which is to be a present and abiding satisfaction of His love.

I call attention to just one other point and that is that His service is in view of presenting the church to Himself. That is to say, that in that day when all is complete He would admire the church as being that which corresponds to Himself. That is what is said in this scripture. We speak often, and rightly so, of being united to Christ; in the epistle to the Corinthians we read, *“he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17)*. That is personal, not collective and we are united to Him in that position. In this setting in Ephesians, where it is a question of the satisfaction of His love, it is not a matter of our being united to Him but of Him being united to His church. That is how it is put here; God said this at the beginning, *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be united to his wife” (Genesis 2:24)*

That is the way it is put and it is for this reason, because the church is of His flesh and of His bones. Because we are members of His body, all that we have we have from Christ. The beauty of the assembly is derived from Him, her substantiality as a creature vessel and the loveliness and beauty and attractiveness, are all from Christ. Because the church is so suited to Christ He is united to it, He is joined to it.

The word “joined” or “united” in the original means ‘glued to’. It is a cabinet maker’s term. In these days when do-it-yourself is so popular, many wonder why they cannot make a glued joint. It is because the two pieces do not exactly correspond. To be united, things must be of similar character and exactly correspond. I find in breaking up old furniture that the parent material will give before the joint gives and that is the whole idea of Christ being united to His church. Nothing is ever going to separate it. Think of the wonder of it; but what are we doing in the light of it in the present time?

Let me give you a simple illustration. On the past evening I travelled up from Plymouth to London on the train; sitting opposite me was a young woman who was quite nicely dressed, yet without trying to be humorous, what one would call a ‘plain Jane’. She was travelling to London with the usual accompaniments, something to read and so forth. On the way she read her book, looked out of the window and then went off to sleep. When we got near to Reading she woke up and looked at her watch and the girl was totally transformed. The first thing was for her to shake herself and open up her handbag and look at herself in her mirror. She immediately got up and went away and when she came back her disturbed hair had all been rearrange; she had washed herself and made herself look presentable. She sat down and she was concerned about herself, about the crumpling of her dress and was smoothing it out. After we had left Reading she was not interested in her book; that was folded up and put away; she was not interested in the scenery around. She was sitting bolt upright and occasionally her hand would go down to the ring on her left hand and she would look at it and smile. As she looked up her eyes would light up and she would smile, not because I was sitting opposite but

because she was going to meet somebody. There was somebody she was expecting to meet when she got to the end of the journey. When we got near to Paddington Station I offered to get her case down from the rack. I lifted it down and it was very light. I said, 'I thought it would have been heavy'. "Oh no", she said, 'I am travelling light, I do not want to be weighed down'. She made her way up to the front coach of the train, so she could get out quickly, because there was somebody meeting her.

Well, what are we doing at this moment? It is time we looked to see whether we are presentable to Christ; it is time we took our stand and shook ourselves out of sleep. Our salvation is nearer than when we believed; it is time we thought of what Christ will find when He comes. Let us not be besmirched by the journey and that with which we are associated; may we be entirely for Christ and eager to meet Him. May we be travelling light. Perhaps we are weighed down by unnecessary things when we ought to be eager to meet our coming Saviour. Forgive me for being practical but Christianity is not much use if it is not practical. I thought of that young woman again today when some were singing a little chorus in the home:

'Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will go strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace'

May it be true of us.

J. O. T. Darton

Word at a marriage meeting, Yeovil, September 1970

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If there is an article from a past issue of "Living Water" which you would like to see reprinted please contact the editor.

A word for today

PIETY – A FEATURE OF MANHOOD ACCORDING TO GOD

Psalm 1:1 – 3;

I have in mind to say a word as to manhood in a spiritual sense, including, of course, both brothers and sisters, in relation to piety. It is clear that God takes pleasure in men, and that itself gives cause for thanksgiving on our part, but He desires full growth, He desires manhood. When we are first brought to the Lord and receive the glad tidings, we commence as babes in Christ, that is normal at that point, but it ought not to remain so for long. God has nothing less in mind than that we should develop into men in Christ. You remember that the apostle in writing to the Corinthians, spoke to them reproachfully and said he had to write to them as babes in Christ. That was a serious matter, for he had laboured among them and exemplified the truth among them for eighteen months, yet when he wrote to them some little time after, he had to say that they were babes in Christ.

God has in mind that we should grow and develop in manhood. We see in Ephesians 4 that what is in mind in the ministry which the Lord gives from heaven in the power of the Holy Spirit operating in the gifts, is that we should arrive at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. God has nothing less in mind than that, and if He comes out with His thoughts of blessing towards men, He has ability in the Holy Spirit to bring about a perfect answer to those thoughts in manhood. So we are to apprehend in Christ the great standard of manhood according to God. We are to come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. The Son of God is to stand out before our hearts as the great ideal that God has before Him of manhood, perfectly responding to Himself and to all that He desires, and the contrary character of the scene in which we are for the moment in God's ways, is all intended in His wisdom to develop us in features of manhood. But the secret of the development is that God Himself is before us and is brought

in in a practical way in our consciences and exercises into the circumstances of our life here.

**wherever he was
the eye of God
was upon him**

You may remember that in the history of Jacob, as Laban and Jacob were about to part, never again to meet so far as we know, they came to a point which they called Mizpah, meaning "watch-tower," and Laban takes the initiative; he calls upon Jacob as before God, the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, to bear in mind that when they are parted from one another and no one is with them, God would be witness between them; that is to say, he set Jacob in his own consciousness in the sense that even when Jacob was separated from everybody else, notwithstanding that, the eye of God was upon him. That is a very salutary matter, and it is very remarkable, that God should use someone like Laban to bring that to bear upon Jacob. Jacob was the one that God had in mind for development spiritually. Jacob was on the way to the house of God, to Bethel, which is a further thought, and greatly helps in the promotion of practical piety with us, but to begin with he came to this point, Mizpah, in which he was to remember that wherever he was the eye of God was upon him. Later on in the history when Samuel judged Israel, Mizpah was one of the places that he visited yearly in his circuit among the people. If matters came up for judgment when Samuel was at Mizpah he would say to them, 'Have you forgotten that God has His eye upon you?' All that is brought to bear upon believers to help us in the moral exercises that result in the development of true manhood, and God uses the contrary conditions of this present world to further this process of development that He has in mind for us.

After Jacob left Mizpah he came two or three chapters afterwards to Bethel, the house of God. That was the point that God had in mind to bring him to just then. When he comes to that point and is according to God and can present a drink offering there, then the first stage of Jacob's spiritual history has reached its climax. The thought of Bethel, of course, is that we are the house of

God, not simply that God's eye is upon us but that God Himself is dwelling in His people. He is always there, He is present. Not simply His eye upon us as it were from a distance, but He is there with us, dwelling in us as a matter of great nearness, and that is something that will greatly help us. The Spirit has taken up His abode in us, not simply collectively in the assembly but in us each individually so we are always near to God and God is always near to us, and He is near to us in love, but as never surrendering the holiness which befits His presence.

So this psalm says, *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, and standeth not in the way of sinners, and sitteth not in the seat of scorers."* Notice the word 'not,' the great emphasis, you might say, that the Spirit of God would place upon the 'nots.' It is a question of a man going through an evil world in which he is in contact with wicked and sinners and scorers, but the attitude of his soul is 'not.' He maintains the spirit of separation. He may have to have dealings with such men in the course of his business, but the attitude of his mind is that he will not walk in the counsel of the wicked and he will not stand in the way of sinners and he will not sit in the seat of scorers, because God has said that such an one is blessed. The writer of Psalm 119, said, *"thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee"* (v. 11). How important and practical that is!

Another important principle from the practical standpoint is that as we go forth every day, we go forth as armed, as it says in the epistle of Peter, *"Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh, do ye also arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin"* (1 Peter 4:1), that is to say, in the light of the sufferings of Christ you arm yourself with this purpose of heart that you are not going to allow the flesh to have dominion over you. There may be all the influences around that would tend to draw in that direction, but you arm yourself with that mind, in the light of the sufferings of Christ, that it is well for us to suffer in the way of the disallowance of the flesh, and thus to preserve our liberty, and at the same time develop in

what is pleasing to God. So one has often thought as a practical matter, that if Peter had had this word hidden in his heart he would never have warmed himself at the fire with those who were hostile to Christ, and if he had not done that he would not have been overcome, he might not have gone to the length of denying his Lord three times. But, alas, he did not have this word in Psalm 1 hidden in his heart. Hence the value of reading the Scriptures, so that they are there in our hearts; they are there as something hidden that the Spirit of God has furnished in His faithfulness to us and can bring out as occasion requires.

The more we acquaint ourselves with the Scriptures, the more substance we have in our souls; even though we may not understand them at the time, the Spirit of God can draw upon and use them in a preservative and sanctifying way as well as an edifying way. So such an one as this, who is deliberately minded to be separate, is blessed. God says it—he is blessed.

Then there is not only what is negative, but what is positive. It says, *“but his delight is in Jehovah’s law, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”* It is a daily matter, not something that is taken up spasmodically and then left, but *“in his law doth he meditate day and night and he is as a tree planted by brooks of water, which giveth its fruit in its season.”* He is constantly fresh, a tree planted by brooks of water.

It is remarkable how constantly there are allusions in the Scripture to the Holy Spirit of God and the way that we can draw upon the wealth there is and the faithfulness there is in the Spirit of God, sometimes spoken of as a river, here spoken of as brooks, but something as to which there are roots that draw from it: *“he is as a tree planted by brooks of water.”* You may be sure that if a tree is planted by brooks of water the roots of the tree will go down into the brooks of water, and so *“he is as a tree planted by brooks of water which giveth its fruit in its season and whose leaf fadeth not; and all that he doeth prospereth.”* What a commendation that is of such a path as this. The Spirit of God says, all that such a one does prospers. It is the secret of spiritual prosperity; we get other features of prosperity mentioned in the

Scriptures. We are told in the book of Daniel that *"this Daniel prospered."* We get that at the end of Daniel 6, so it leads us back in our minds to see what kind of a man Daniel was, the kind of man that prospered.

Then you get in Psalm 122 that the one that loves Jerusalem prospers, the one who prays for the peace of Jerusalem, *"they shall prosper that love thee."* That encourages us to have the whole church, or assembly, in our minds and the prosperity of the church, and to be looking out on the whole position to see what is affecting believers adversely and to be praying in relation to it and seeing what can be done in regard to it. They who *"pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee."*

Well, this matter of practical piety in the circumstances of life is one of great importance. We read in the epistle to Timothy that *"confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh"*. That is a wonderful thing to contemplate that God Himself in the Person of Jesus has entered, sin apart, into the ordinary circumstances of human life in which His people are, and moved in them in a way that expressed complete dependence on God, entering in as a babe. You could not have a greater expression of dependence than that and the Spirit of Christ through the psalmist says, *"I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly"* (Psalm 22:10). He entered into the circumstances of human life and glorified God in that practical piety which is proper to man, He Himself setting it out in perfection at every point. So we read in Hebrews 5 that He was heard on account of His piety. Think of God taking account of that, the pleasure He had in one Man on this earth who in every circumstance of human life moved through it as bringing God into His life and glorifying Him in the dependence and obedience that are proper to man.

Alfred. J. Gardiner

Extracted from an address. London, July 1953.