

Living Water

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*By all accounts Roland Edwards was a
gifted preacher.*

*This is a re-print of a gospel word given in
Australia in 1893.*

Recent Ministry

PSALM 23: A MEDITATION - 1

"Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters.

"He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 23:1-3.

Psalm 23 is a psalm of experience. David is thinking about his own experience as a shepherd but also about God's shepherd-care over him personally. Each one of us who knows God could say something about this Psalm. It is one of the best known parts of the Bible.

David had this impression of the Lord as his shepherd. *"The Lord is my shepherd"*. The word often rendered 'Lord' is actually 'Jehovah'. 'Jehovah' is a name of relationship, in particular with Israel. Now, God wants a relationship with us because He loves us. He created us but He loves us and He sent Jesus into the world, *"to seek and to save that which is lost"* (Luke 19:10); that we might be brought into a relationship with Him. John, in his gospel, speaks of eternal life; he says, *"This is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"* (John 17:3). God wants us to know Him. We also read in John: *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"* and *"I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine"* (John 10:14 & 27). God wants us to come into a close relationship with Him.

There are probably eight instances in the Old Testament where the name "Jehovah" is put in a compound way. We find several of them in this psalm: *"Jehovah my Shepherd"*, is Jehovah-Raah', then Jehovah-Jireh is 'Jehovah will provide' (Genesis 22:14), we have that here: *"I shall not want"*. Then Jehovah-Tsidkenu – 'Jehovah our righteousness' (Jeremiah 23:6) and

Jehovah-Shalom – ‘Jehovah of peace’ (Judges 6:24); we have that celebrated in these first three verses. Later in the psalm we have Jehovah-Rophi – ‘Jehovah that heals’ (Exodus 15:26). David draws on these compound names of Jehovah as he writes this

Psalm. He is thinking about Jehovah in relationship with man and more particularly Jehovah in the relationship which David himself enjoyed with Him.

So he says, *“Jehovah is my shepherd”*. Why do we need a shepherd? Well, we need One to care for us. Sheep need someone to care for them: David says, *“I shall not want”*. God has provided for us, practically in many ways. There are places in the world where things are very limited but we have been blessed so richly, materially. But I trust you have realised that there are deeper needs than material ones. Our spiritual needs are far deeper. If you went to a dying man and you said, I will give you 1 million pounds, it would be meaningless to him. What good would 1 million pounds be to a man who has only days to live?

When I started my present job I had a boss who was a Christian. Shortly after I started working for him he had to retire; he was dying of cancer. He was a man who loved cricket; every test match he could tell you the name of each one of the team. I went to see him at his home and we talked about Christian things. He spoke about some tapes he had been listening to about the Lord. We prayed together and spoke about the scriptures. Then I said something to him about the test match that was going on. He smiled at me gently and he said, ‘Peter, that does not really matter now’. I felt gently rebuked. Cricket was something that had preoccupied him in the past but now he was occupied with better things, heavenly things. It was an encouragement to me, too, to know that he was occupied with his Saviour. That is how the Lord Jesus would have us occupied.

**Why do we
need a
shepherd?**

He not only meets our natural needs, He meets our spiritual needs. He would occupy us with Himself and with His glories.

How often I have needed to be restored

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures". This is not feeding: sheep do not lie down to feed. When the feeding is finished, then they lie down. In the Song of Songs the bride says, *"Tell me, thou whom my soul loveth, Where thou feedest thy flock, Where thou makest it to rest at noon"* (Song of Songs 1:7). The Lord would have us to come into peaceful conditions. It is a precious thing to be able to feed on the Lord Jesus, but it is precious, too, to meditate on Him. I am challenged about it: I should make more time just to stop and think about what the Lord has given me in terms of thoughts of Himself, and to make them my own.

Then we read, *"He leadeth me beside still waters"*. When waters are shallow they can be turbulent, rocks are near to the surface, the waters run noisily; sheep do not like that. They need still waters, not stagnant, but still waters that run deep. God would have us to know something of His deep things. We are told, *"the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:10). Sometimes we might think things are too deep for us; how little of the Bible I understand. But I would encourage all of us to look into the scriptures and seek the help of the Holy Spirit to understand them. We have been reading Ephesians locally and Paul prays for the Ephesians that they might come into the knowledge of the great things of God. God wants us to be occupied with His things, to feed on Christ and to grow up to Him.

David next refers to a very practical matter, the need of restoration. How often I have needed to be restored. God restores us from sins, He restores us from infirmities. I was thinking of Peter. Peter failed, did he not? The Lord said to him,

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to have you", that "you" related to all the disciples, "to sift you as wheat". It is interesting; sifting wheat gets rid of the chaff and leaves the wheat. In Satan's demand, the Lord recognised that, ultimately, it would bring a blessing. It would get rid of the dross and leave what was true. So He says to him, "but I have besought for thee" - that was an individual word to Peter - "I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not". Then He goes on to say, "and thou, when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren" (Luke 22:31, 32). When thou art restored! The Lord knew that Peter would be restored. The Lord could see the potential that Peter had; "Jesus looking at him said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (which interpreted is stone)" (John 1:42). And so He says to Peter, "and thou, when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren".

In resurrection the Lord said to Peter: *"Feed my lambs...Shepherd my sheep... Feed my sheep"* (see John 21:15 - 17). We see Peter taking up that charge in the Acts. Peter is restored, and he confirms his brethren. Peter is giving a lead and encouraging others to step up as well. We see that in the Acts: it is not just about Peter, it is about John, it is about the other apostles standing together for the Lord.

Then there are infirmities. J. B. Stoney says that there are three main causes of infirmity: circumstances, ill health, and sorrow. Those types of things come into our lives and they cause us to be cast down. The Lord is there to restore us. We see an example in the Old Testament in Job. Job was a righteous man but he was severely tested as to his circumstances. There was a time when he was greatly blessed, then his circumstances were changed drastically. He lost his health. From being a healthy man, he was a man who sat there in the ashes and scratched himself with a broken pot. He was itching with those scabs and was in desperation. His wife said to him, *"curse God and die"* (Job 2:9). She was not a help to him, either. Then there

was bereavement: his family which he loved was taken from him. And yet, at the end of Job it records, *"Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning"* (Job 42:12). God had a purpose for Job. God restored Job. Job had a fuller blessing at the end than at the beginning. *"He restoreth my soul"*. It is the present tense, it is not something just in the past, it is a service that the Lord does for us day by day as we have that need.

David continues, *"He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake"*. The shepherd, in the East, goes in front; he leads out the sheep and the sheep follow him. David speaks here about being led in paths of righteousness. I trust that it is the desire of all our hearts that our pathway might be right. Sometimes, perhaps, the way to go is not clear to us. This scripture may give the impression of the path as something that is distinct, a bit like a pavement. If you are walking along a pavement, you can generally say that you can see where it is leading. But I think that here, David is thinking more of a sheep track. If you have ever walked across a moor and have seen a sheep track, you will have realised that you cannot always see where it has come from or necessarily where it is going - it meanders one way, then another. But David knew that his Shepherd would lead him in a path of righteousness. He could not see where the path would take him but he knew that the Lord had gone before and that the Lord would lead him in that way. I trust that is an encouragement to us. Perhaps the way ahead looks indistinct. We can look back and see the Lord's hand in blessing on our pathway and in the way that He has directed. But then perhaps when we look to the future there is uncertainty and fear. Well, *"he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake"*. Those last words are important. It is for His name's sake. He does not do it because I deserve it or have earned it. I deserve nothing - it is all for His name's sake. It is His committal to us.

Well, that is a challenge to me. Is my path one that would glorify my Lord? He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. May there be that about our pathways that commends the Saviour that we love and may there be in our lives a testimony to others that the Lord *"is my shepherd"*

Peter Wallach

Extracted from an address at Aberdeen 27th June 2015
To be continued DV

THREE VISIONS OF THE CHURCH - Part 1

Paul's vision – "Why persecutest thou me?"

Acts 9:1-6

Introduction

I would like to speak this evening about three visions of the church. First of all we should be clear what I mean by the church. I will not be talking about any particular building such as the cathedral in Chester. Nor will I speak about denominations like the Anglican Church or Catholic Church. I want to speak about the church, or the assembly, composed of persons as set out in these visions seen by three different men and described in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament the prophet Ezekiel received a vision about a future temple (*Ezekiel 40 onwards*). He was to make known this vision to the captives in Babylon so that it might have a moral effect upon them. (*Ezekiel 43:10*) They were then to measure the pattern so that they could compare what was happening with the pattern that God was showing to Ezekiel. So I want to speak about three New Testament visions of the church so that we too can consider God's pattern.

The apostle Paul had his vision at the beginning of his Christian life. Jesus Christ said to him, 'Why do you persecute Me?' - Not just persecute His disciples or the Way but 'Me'. The apostle Peter had his vision during his time of public service. He saw a

vessel like a sheet let down from heaven with many unclean creatures in it. The apostle John, towards the end of his life, was on the Isle of Patmos, banished because of his love for Jesus. There he received a vision of the church as the bride, the Lamb's wife, the holy city and he saw the church in her future glory.

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Paul's vision

The apostle Paul hated Christians and was trying to obliterate the name of Jesus. Scripture speaks about his persecution of disciples of Jesus, of *"any who were of the way"*. People were beginning to recognise that the Christian way of life was different from traditional Judaism. This living Way centred upon a living Person who is at the right hand of God.

Paul was bent on persecuting believers when Jesus spoke to him from heaven. Later Paul described the experience as *"the heavenly vision"*. He says, *"I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"* (Acts 26:19). Jesus spoke to him about Himself and He says, why do you persecute Me? Me! Not just my people, not just the disciples, not just those who were of the Way, but Me. Jesus regarded believers on earth as His body, as part of Himself.

Now, Jesus has an actual body. He was actually here on earth. People saw Him, touched Him and spoke with Him. After He died and rose again His disciples ate and drank with Him. Then He actually went to heaven. There is a real Man in heaven with a real body and one day, if you are a believer in Jesus, you will see Him face to face and you will be with Him and like Him for ever.

But Jesus also regards His people here on earth as His body. It is a very precious and intimate concept. Believers are not only persons who adhere to and practise certain doctrines but are Himself on earth. I believe that when Jesus spoke to him and

said, 'Why do you persecute Me?' it coloured the whole of Paul's ministry and his way of life from that day onwards.

Saul of Tarsus submitted to the authority of Christ. He was changed completely from his wicked ways of trying to destroy every vestige of Christianity. Jesus told him to go into the city of Damascus where Ananias, a disciple of Jesus, came to him. The Lord spoke to Ananias and Ananias spoke to Saul and cared for Saul. Through this experience Saul learned something from the very start of his Christian life, about the working of the body.

Saul then was *"with the disciples who were in Damascus certain days"* (Acts 9:19). He shared with them, he mingled with them. Paul also had his own distinct service. He went into the synagogue and *"he preached Jesus that he is the Son of God"* (Acts 9:20). There the disciples continued to look after him. When a persecution arose and he was likely to be killed they took him and they *"let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket"* so that he escaped persecution. That illustrates the body working: *"if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be glorified, all the members rejoice with it"* (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Just like a natural body, in the Christian body there are different members and every member does not have the same function. We are all different. If you are a believer in Jesus you are a member of the body of Christ. You do not have the same function as me and I do not have the same function as you but we are all part of this one body.

When Paul came to Jerusalem after he escaped from Damascus Christians there were unsure about him, knowing his terrible history as a persecutor of lovers of Jesus. Barnabas commended him to the apostles and he then formed part of the company in Jerusalem. Scripture speaks about him there, *"he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem"*. He took his place among the believers there as a member of the body of Christ but had his own distinct service in Jerusalem, where he was able to

debate with the Hellenists. Throughout Paul's writing and activities "*one body in Christ*" was a very distinct part of his service.

The body is intended to reflect Christ

In several of Paul's letters there are references to believers as the body of Christ. For example in Romans after setting out systematically the truth of the Christian gospel, Paul speaks about laying our bodies on the altar as a living sacrifice to God. And then he adds, "*as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; thus we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members one of the other*" (Romans 12:4, 5). Believers throughout the world constitute one body in Christ.

When he writes to the Corinthians there is a whole chapter on the teaching of the body of Christ. He shows the importance of each member to God. No member should belittle itself saying, for example, "because I am not an eye I am not of the body". Nor should one member say to another member 'I have no need of you'.

The body is intended to reflect Christ. Paul says in that passage in Corinthians, "*ye are Christ's body*" (1 Corinthians 12:27). God intends that in this world there might be a reflection of Christ, a continuance of Christ in His people. People cannot see Jesus today, He is not physically here. But what they can see are features of Jesus coming into evidence in those who constitute the body of Christ.

In Acts we see various ways in which the body of Christ was working in practice. For example in Acts when there was famine and hardship in Jerusalem, well-off Christians in Antioch provided funds that Paul and Barnabas took to Jerusalem. Later on Paul taught Gentile Christians to provide for the poor in Jerusalem. (2 Corinthians 8 and 9). Paul took funds from Philippi and hopefully Corinth to provide for those in Jerusalem. The

body functioning was not just a theory, it worked out in practice. We find too that to maintain practical fellowship letters of commendation were used when Christians travelled from one place to another. When Phoebe left Cenchrea, to go to Rome she carried a letter of commendation (*Romans 16:1*) , in her case the Epistle to the Romans. In it she was commended by Paul from the church in one place to the church in another place. The body was a practical reality: one body in Christ.

When Paul writes to the local church of God in Corinth, he refers several times to the universality of the body of Christ. He addresses his letter to them with those who in *every place* call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 1:2*). He says too “*according as I teach everywhere in every assembly*” (*1 Corinthians 4:17*) and, “*we have no such custom, nor the assemblies of God*” (*1 Corinthians 11:16*) and “*God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints*” (*1 Corinthians 14:33*). Although Paul was writing to a local church he was also emphasising the catholicity, or oneness, of the body of Christ.

Despite outward failings of believers it is still true today that there is one body in Christ that is to reflect the Man in the glory. It is a right thing to be a good catholic, not a Roman Catholic, and for each of us to recognise our part in the one body.

Ken Hollands

Extract from an address at Chester, March 2015.

In the next issue DV: Peter’s vision of the church

Poetry Selection

Reprinted from “Living Water No 34

A VESSEL FOR CHRIST

A tiny vessel, Lord to Thee I bring,
A heart that sought from every earthly spring
To gain its longing, but was empty still;
I bring it now to Thee, to take and fill.

Thy grace that measured once the distance deep
Of Calvary's woe, to seek and save Thy sheep,
Has touched this heart, and made it long for Thee
Thyself its treasure and its all to be.

Thy glory now at God's right hand above,
Supreme of all in that blest scene of love,
In sonship tells this heart its wondrous place
In Thee accepted in the Father's grace.

Thy fulness, Lord, of light and love divine,
No thought can grasp, nor human mind define;
The whole vast scene of glory will display
That fullness in a quickly coming day.

When all things filled by Thee are wholly blest,
And God's deep love eternally shall rest
In that which ever speaks to Him of Thee,
Thy greatness, Lord, the universe shall see.

But ere that day of bliss and joy supreme,
When Thou shalt be of every tongue the theme,
Let this small vessel prove Thy gracious power
To fill and satisfy it every hour.

Thy beauties, Lord, Thy holy precious worth,
Surpassing far the fairest joys of earth,
Shall then absorb its true and constant love,
Thyself its object in those scenes above.

And filled with Thee, and formed through grace divine
By all that fills it, hold it, Lord, as Thine;
To be, in joy and peace that knows no fear,
The happy vessel of Thy pleasure here.

C. A. Coates (1862-1945)

Written in 1878 at the time of his conversion.

This article is re printed from "Living Water" No34.

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

Testimony Section

A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE



Stones that Preach	Stones that Teach		
<p style="text-align: center;">Joseph Hart Died 1768</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>I was by free and sovereign grace and Spirit of God raised up from the depths of sin and delivered from the bonds of mere profession & self righteousness & led to rest entirely for salvation in the finished atonement & perfect obedience of Christ</p> </td><td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><i>Though I am a stranger to others and a wonder to myself yet I know Him (Christ) or rather am known of Him.</i></p> <p><i>Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.</i></p> <p>O bring no price! God's grace is free to Paul, to Magdalene, to me.</p> </td></tr> </table>	<p>I was by free and sovereign grace and Spirit of God raised up from the depths of sin and delivered from the bonds of mere profession & self righteousness & led to rest entirely for salvation in the finished atonement & perfect obedience of Christ</p>	<p><i>Though I am a stranger to others and a wonder to myself yet I know Him (Christ) or rather am known of Him.</i></p> <p><i>Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.</i></p> <p>O bring no price! God's grace is free to Paul, to Magdalene, to me.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">John William Trotter 7th January 1858</p> <p>As Jesus died and rose again Victorious from the dead, So His disciples rise and reign With their triumphant Head.</p> <p><i>Verse taken from a tablet on the North wall of Clifton Street Burial Ground, Belfast.</i></p> <p><i>(The tablet has since been removed.)</i></p>
<p>I was by free and sovereign grace and Spirit of God raised up from the depths of sin and delivered from the bonds of mere profession & self righteousness & led to rest entirely for salvation in the finished atonement & perfect obedience of Christ</p>	<p><i>Though I am a stranger to others and a wonder to myself yet I know Him (Christ) or rather am known of Him.</i></p> <p><i>Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.</i></p> <p>O bring no price! God's grace is free to Paul, to Magdalene, to me.</p>		

Bunhill Fields Cemetery, London

Stones that Preach	Stones that Teach
<p style="text-align: center;">Emily Whitely 13th May 1841 (Aged 22) Christ Jesus all my guilt foresaw And shed His precious blood To satisfy the holy law And make my peace with God READER: What think ye of Christ? <i>Tregony Churchyard, Cornwall</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Miss Mary Hillum 1759 - 1864 Of Church Street, Stoke Newington, who died in the 105th year of her age. She died in the same house in which she was born, scarcely ever slept out of the house the whole of her life, never travelled either by omnibus or railway and was never more than 15 miles from home. She was in early life brought to the Lord, and was a consistent, sympathising, and generous Christian. To the close of her life she possessed her faculties and loved to talk about Jesus, her Saviour and friend. <i>Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington, London.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Samuel Cosely Died 30th September 1844 (Aged 23)</p> <p>My race was short and quickly run When Jesus called my spirit home A mortal blow has placed me here Till Christ shall on the clouds appear</p> <p>All you who come my tomb to see Prepare yourself to follow me Repent in time, make no delay For I in haste was called away.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>English Cemetery, Quebec</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mr William Povey 18th August 1864 (Aged 31) “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” Hail glorious gospel, heavenly light! whereby We live with comfort and with comfort die, And view beyond this gloomy scene, the tomb, A life of endless happiness to come.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington, London</i></p>

Stones that Preach	Stones that Teach
<p>Thomas Toye Born at Clonekilty 6th October 1801 and died at Belfast on 15th May 1870</p> <p>He left this for his own epitaph:</p> <p>A sinner saved by grace <i>Clifton Street Burial Ground, Belfast.</i></p>	<p>William John Pearce Died 1906</p> <p>How peacefully the Christian falls asleep How tranquilly he sinks to his repose Sorrow vanquished, labour ended, Jordan passed. <i>St Georges Churchyard, Portland, Dorset</i></p>
<p>James Baldwin Died 1884</p> <p>He was an industrious and inoffensive man and served Lady Glode and Mr James Glode Stapleton 20 years as a wood reeve. Mr Stapleton erected this stone to mark worth and diligence in humble life "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he was dead yet shall he live and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" Reader: believeth thou this? <i>All Saints Churchyard, Orpington, Kent</i></p>	<p>Claudina Davies 11th December 1906 (Aged 81)</p> <p>God is the treasure of my soul The source of lasting joy, A joy which want shall not impair Nor death itself destroy.</p> <p><i>Studland Churchyard, Dorset.</i></p>
<p>Elizabeth Sharp Died 4th December 1914</p> <p>A monument of grace, A sinner saved by blood. That stream of love I trace Up to the Fountain, God. And in His wondrous mercy see Eternal thoughts of love to me.</p> <p><i>Bounds Cross Cemetery, Biddenden, Kent</i></p>	<p>Hanmer Cecil Hanbury 15th June 1994</p> <p>Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord</p> <p><i>Turvey Churchyard, Bedfordshire.</i></p>

A voice from the past

LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

Could it be said of us that our lamps are burning? It is a great thing to look to our lamps; we might very well all arise and trim our lamps, and see what the source of the supply is. The source of supply is in the apprehension of the power in us of the grace of God, and the grace of God lies in His mind in regard to man. We want to be here in sobriety, in righteousness and piety.

- Sobriety is that a man has got a true measure of himself. A man who has an inflated idea of himself is not sober, but like a drunken man.
- Righteousness is fidelity in every relationship in which God has been pleased to place man – to Himself, to Christ, to fellow-Christians, and to every other relationship.
- Piety is confidence in God, that can trust Him in regard to all that is necessary down here in this world, so that I do not make provision for the flesh, but realise what it is to go on from day to day in confidence that God will never leave me or forsake me.

It is in these qualities that life according to God comes out, and then there is light, in the way of testimony to man, in the people of God down here.

F. E. Raven

(Manchester 1902)

A word for today

Introductory note:

In 1893, Roland Edwards (1857 – 1943) left Australia where he had been preaching, and went to Bridgetown, Barbados where he again started to preach using both public halls and speaking in the street. He continued preaching and teaching through much of 1894 with great blessing from the Lord. Before Mr Edwards left Barbados to

return to London a special meeting for men was held in Bridgetown. Charles Joseph Corbin, a believer who traced his own spiritual awakening to the visit of G. V. Wigram to Barbados in 1876, was present and recorded that the hall was packed and that he had never heard such a gospel before. Big, strong men broke down in tears and called to God for mercy.

Recently my attention was drawn to a booklet containing of some of Roland Edwards' gospel preachings in Australia, shortly before he went to Barbados and I am pleased to have the opportunity to republish his word on Justification given in Australia in 1893. Ed.

JUSTIFICATION

"How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?" Job 25:4-6.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". John 3:16.

"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him". Romans 5:9.

My subject tonight is "justification". The question that Bildad the Shuhite asked in Job 25 has often been asked since his day. There may be some here tonight who will say that they are pure in their own eyes; answering to the generation described in the Proverbs: *"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes" (Proverbs 30:12).* They are certainly not pure in the sight of the living God. Of course, if we have to measure ourselves by one another you may stand a better chance than I; but God's standard is not a sinful man, but His own glory. Our Lord Himself has said, *"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:20).*

I often hear people talk about their works, disregarding the fact that there is nothing that they could possibly do that would ever fit them

for God's glory. Then there are others who tell us that every man has a germ of good in him. To all such I answer, 'Neither human works nor human effort of any kind will avail before God to justify a sinner in His sight'. It is, no doubt, possible to turn drunkards and profligates into good and respectable members of society, but when it comes to the question of fitness for the light of God's presence, Christ and Christ alone avails.

A lady once said that she desired to get peace with God, but that she could not, that she attended evangelistic meetings, but all to no purpose. I asked her if she had ever said, 'I abhor myself?' She replied, 'No, I am not as bad as that'. On being told that she was nothing but a sinful creature in God's sight, she went off, like Naaman, in a rage. Certainly it was very unlikely that, loaded with such good thoughts of herself, she would get the relief she professed to want.

What God does is to bring the sinner to the confession of his true state before Him; and then to answer the cravings of the conscience by proclaiming the peace that Jesus has made at the Cross. This answer of God is indeed peace. Peace is a real thing. One man says he quarrels not with his neighbour. Well, this is peace with his neighbour. Others are on good terms with themselves. This is peace with self—and I pray God to disturb this peace. Others have been justified by God on the principle of faith, and they have the real peace. This is peace with God. Have you got it?

Now, I want to prove from Scripture the utter ruin of man and woman in their state of guilt before God; and to this end to examine a few Old and New Testament witnesses. Let us call Job up for examination. We question him :—

Ques.—You are Job, of the land of Uz?

Ans..—Yes.

Ques.—Were you an upright man?

Ans.—Yes.

Ques..—Is it true that you *"delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him;"* also that *"you caused the widow's heart to sing for joy;"* also, that *"you*

were eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and a father to the poor"? (Job 29:12-13 & 15)

Ans.—Yes, all these things were true of me.

Ques.—Did you one day get into the presence of the living God? And, at the sight of what He was in His majesty, what did you exclaim?

Ans.— I found myself in His presence, and I said, *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:5-6).

Isaiah the prophet shall be called next.

Ques.—Isaiah, *"in the year that King Uzziah died"* you saw *"the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple"* and you heard the seraphim cry, *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory"* (Isaiah 6:1-3). What effect had this vision upon you?

Ans.—I felt my own unfitness for such holiness as that, and I exclaimed, *"Woe is me! for I am undone"* (Isaiah 6:5).

Now for the New Testament evidence. Let us call Peter, the great apostle of the Jews.

Ques.—Peter, at the miraculous draught of fish caught on Lake Gennesaret, did you fall down at Jesus' knees, and say, *"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord?"* (Luke 5:8).

Ans.—Yes, I did, for I felt my own unfitness for the holy company of the Son of God.

Now call Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles—

Ques.— What was your character before men previous to your conversion?

Ans.—As touching the righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless.

Ques.—After your conversion, did you say that you were chief of sinners?

Ans. —Yes, I wrote by the Spirit **do you dare say**
these words, *“This is a faithful before God that*
saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world
to save sinners: of whom I am you are not so bad?
chief”(1 Timothy 1:15).

This completes the chain of evidence. Let me recapitulate it—

Job... “I abhor myself”

Isaiah... “I am undone!”

Peter... “I am a sinful man!”

Paul... “I am the chief of sinners!”

How crushing it is! Now let me ask you, oh unsaved man, what have you to say about yourself? In view of such truthful and corroborative evidence as we have had, do you dare say before God that you are not so bad; or that there is some good in you; or that you are doing your best? I trust not; but that, rather, you will bow low before Him, and own that you are nothing but a guilty sinner. This is the sure way to His blessing. Oh, that repentance may be wrought in your soul tonight. God calls you to it. It is the result in your soul of your acceptance of God’s testimony to your ruined spiritual condition. He says you are lost and guilty. Oh, justify God in His judgment of you, and then, the moment you believe in Jesus, He will justify you.

You say, ‘I’m not a murderer, or a profligate, or a spendthrift!’ I don’t accuse you of any of those things; but though you are the most moral, the most outwardly respectable person in the city, yet, if unsaved, you are blacker than coal as you sit in this hall. What a wretched, loathsome sinner you are in God’s sight! You are just fit fuel for the everlasting burnings! Wake up, unsaved moralist; wake up, Christless, though respectable church-goer, to this tremendous reality: that you are speeding your way right down to hell, to be damned for ever! Oh, wake up, I say, and turn to the Saviour-God at this moment!

Now I desire to bring out clearly three points as to justification—

- The source of it.
- The ground of it.
- The subject and character of it.

The Source of Justification

God Himself is the source of blessing. Think of a river. How wide it is at its outflow into the ocean! Pass up its banks until you reach the hill district whence it flows, and there you will find, springing up on the mountain-side, the clear, sparkling water—you are at the fountain-head, the source of the river. Now look what a mighty outflow the river of God's blessing has into the sea of humanity, and then pass up the banks of time and discover its very source, springing up in the very heart of God. *"God is love,"* and the fruit of it we find in that lovely verse in John 3:—*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"*. Blessed discovery to make, that God loved us, and gave His Son for us! John 3:16 has been well called "the heart of the gospel"

Think of God's love for such a sinner as yourself. You saw in those witnesses who have just given us their evidence a true picture of your own dark state; but now I want you to see that God's own heart was set upon a world of sinners and rebels just like you. That heart of His He has told out in giving His only begotten Son. What wonderful news it is! Now believe it to-night.

See on the Cross of Calvary, in the dying of the Saviour crucified there and learn the wondrous love of God to you. As you gaze upon the blessed Son of God upon the cross, can you doubt the heart of God—the love that gave Him for you? Be assured, too, of this, that not only has God given His blessed Son for you, but that He finds His delight in your eternal blessing, in making you truly happy, in bringing you to Himself through the death of His Son to share the joys of the glory-home for ever. God's own heart is the source of our blessing.

But why should God have given His Son for us? There are two reasons:

- to give us a perfect expression of His love to us, and
- to meet His just judgment of sin.

It is plain that if God is holy He must judge sin. Supposing that in a court of justice a prisoner is convicted of the crime of wilful murder but that the judge, instead of passing sentence, tells the criminal: 'Despite the true verdict of the jury, in which I fully concur, the Court does not propose to sentence you, and you are therefore discharged,

from custody' What would happen? There would be an outcry and the judge would be dismissed from the Bench as incompetent! So is God less than man? Some people would like to make Him so, judging by what they say. They tell us that God is too merciful to judge sin. My friends, let me charge this upon you—that whilst there is now mercy for sinners, there never was, is, or shall be, mercy for sin. God has no mercy upon sin!

God's judgment of sin is eternal.

He is just and holy, and must judge it. Was there mercy for Christ in those hours of darkness at Calvary? None! What means His soul-agonising cry, "*My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?*" (*Matthew 22:46*). He was there made sin, and was the sin-bearer, and God, having no mercy to show to sin, in holiness turned away His countenance from Him who in wondrous grace was there made sin. There was no mercy for Jesus when made sin and came under God's judgment.

Let me remark, too, that God's judgment of sin is eternal. Those who deny this truth are ignorant both of the intensity of God's holiness, and of the true character of sin in His sight. We read in Hebrews 6:2 of "*eternal judgment*". Now, only the blessed Son of God could meet and sustain that judgment in His own person; and in love for men God gave Him to do this. If God had judged my sin on me, I must have been damned for ever! What sinful man is there who could face the full force of divine judgment and not be crushed beneath it? There is none. God's Son, who became Man, sinless and holy, could and did. He, in the glory of His Person, has on the Cross met the full flood-tide of divine judgment.

The Ground of Justification

What a storm was that at Calvary! Never one like it before or since, when the heavens grew black, and earth was mantled in darkness, and Jesus took that terrible cup of judgment from the Father's hands, and drained it, O fellow-believer, to the last dark drop for you and for me.

We reach here my second point, that the work of the Cross is the ground of justification, as we read in Romans 5: "*Justified by His blood*" (v.9). God has been so infinitely glorified by the death of Jesus;

His truth has been so vindicated; His holiness so maintained— that He has found in the blood a way to bestow in righteousness upon a poor guilty sinner.

I glory in the blood! Thank God that, through grace, I rest in its entire mighty efficacy. The atoning death of Jesus has satisfied and glorified God, and met my deepest need. It has opened up the way for God to open the glory to the guilty sinner. God must be consistent with Himself. How, then, can He be righteous, and yet bless a sinner? The Cross answers the question. He has judged sin on Jesus. The claims of His moral glory have been fully met by the precious Saviour and God is free in righteousness to bless. We can say with the poet:

On Jesus' cross this record's graved:
Let sin be judged, but sinners saved.

At the moment of the Saviour's death, God rent the veil of the temple from top to bottom, thus showing that He was free to come out to man to bless; and that, as blest, man could go in to Him. God can now freely and righteously come down to the "bottom," and place His everlasting arms around us, and have us in His own presence at the "top," happy and at home there. First He comes from top to bottom, and takes up from bottom to top!

What good news it is! And it is all *"through the blood"*. Have you yet met with God in this blessed way? There is, so to speak, a blood-sprinkled platform upon which a righteous God and a ruined sinner can meet. And, when they meet, the righteous God can righteously pour into that ruined sinner's ear the sweet story that all his guilt has been put away for ever at the Cross, and that he is justified in His sight. It is thus, as you meet God, that you will learn that the Lord Jesus died as your substitute on the Cross; that He bore your sins there; that He exhausted the divine judgment that was against you, and that He lives now in the glory as your representative in righteousness there.

Have you noticed that wonderful verse in Romans 3: *"To declare at this time His (God's) righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"* (Romans 3:26). God is just and the justifier. An aged bed-ridden woman in England said to a visitor, in reply to an enquiry as to her hope for eternity, "I am resting

in the justice of God". The visitor was astonished, and ventured to suggest that the woman should say "the mercy of God," instead of His justice. ' No, no !' said the aged saint; ' it is the justice of God I rest on, for has He not said He is just and the justifier of the believer?' She was right. God is just in justifying all who believe in Jesus. Oh, that all who have already believed in the Lord may rest in the justice of God!

Perhaps you say you do not understand it. Let me try to explain. Where is the Saviour tonight? He is on the Throne at God's right hand. Who set Him there? God placed Him in that glory, and crowned Him with glory and honour. It is God's answer to the Saviour's redemption work. The very God who bruised Him for us on the Cross is the God that raised Him from among the dead, and seated Him upon the Throne. Was it righteous on God's part to raise and enthrone Jesus? Yes, ten thousand times yes; it was perfectly just for God to do so. Yea, I go further, and say that it would have been unrighteousness not to have raised and glorified Him, who had, on the Cross, so fully and so perfectly glorified God about sin. The self-same hand of justice, that wounded Him for us at the cross, was the very hand that set Him on the Throne, and there wreathed His brow with the crown of glory, and adorned it with the laurels of victory.

Now mark what I am going to say. It is just as righteous for God, on the ground of the Cross, to justify the man that believes in Jesus, as it was righteous for Him to place the blessed Saviour in glory. Oh, receive this magnificent, this soul-emancipating truth.

Let me ask another question—Would God be just in consigning the unbeliever to an eternal hell? Yes, He would. Now, *"through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24)*, it is just as righteous for God to place the man that believes in His Son in heavenly glory for ever, as it would be for Him to shut the unconverted up in hell for ever. *"God is just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:26)*.

The subject and character of Justification

Now as to the justification itself. In Acts 13 we read: *"By Him (Jesus) all that believe are justified from all things"(v.39)*. Then in our text in Romans 5 we have: *"being now justified by His blood"*. We see from

these verses that the believer is exonerated from all charge of guilt—not a sin is laid to his charge; and thus that the righteous God righteously accounts him righteous in His sight. Fellow-believer, what a relief to the conscience to be able to say, “My sins are gone for ever, and I am clear of all charge of guilt!” Christ *“was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification”* (Romans 4:25). And then what a glorious thing to know that the righteous God righteously (that is, in perfect consistency with all that He is), reckons me righteous in His sight! Well may the heart exclaim, What hath God wrought!

I have often tried to get an illustration of this, but have failed. I’ll give you one by way of contrast. Suppose a man arrested for a criminal offence. He stands his trial. Evidence is called on his side which indisputably establishes his innocence. The judge, at the conclusion of the case, addresses him thus: “You are clearly proved innocent, and you leave the court without a stain upon your character”. That is, if you please, he is justified—but as an innocent man, for he never was guilty. God’s justification is not of the innocent, but of the guilty; and herein is the contrast. The guilty sinner who trusts the precious blood of Christ leaves the court without a stain upon his character. That is one side of it: he is clear from all charge of guilt. Then the other side is, God righteously reckons him righteous. Get well hold of this, my hearers, that if you believe in Jesus you are reckoned righteous in God’s sight. Yes, righteous before the holy God; and bear well in mind that the ground of it is not your doings, your repentance, your prayers, but the precious blood of Christ.

Then we read in Romans 3:28 that *“a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”*. This means that faith is the principle on which God justifies, and not works. The moment a sinner exercises simple faith in Jesus, that moment God justifies him. Remember, it is on the principle of faith, not works.

Some people have a great difficulty in what they call “reconciling” this verse in Romans 3 with James 2:24, where we read, *“Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”*. But I would say that the verses need no reconciliation with one another, for the simple reason that they have never been otherwise than on the best of terms. If you will read James 2 carefully you will

find that the Holy Spirit is writing of justification before men, not before God. Faith can only be seen by God. The fruit of it, good works, can be seen by our fellows; and this is what the Epistle of James means when it says, *"Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works"* (James 3:18). Now, in Romans the Apostle Paul treats of justification before God, not before men; and he brings in faith, and not works.

Both he and James take up Abraham. Paul says he was justified by faith; James tells us he was justified by works. The former was as before God, and the latter as before men. I may remark that Abraham's works, of which the Epistle of James speaks, took place several years after he had been justified by faith, as recorded in Genesis 15 and Romans 4.

Closing Words

Now, in closing, let me once more appeal to the unsaved who are present. My friends, will you come to God this very moment? Come, pleading the death of Jesus for you, and God will justify you on the spot. He will find His joy in thus blessing you. Will you receive Christ? Do you ask whether He will receive you? *"This Man receiveth sinners"* (Luke 15:2) was said of Him when on this earth, and it is true of Him to-day.

- Does that drunkard enquire if the Lord will receive him? The Saviour makes answer, *"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37).
- Does that pleasure-seeking worldling enquire? Jesus saith, *"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"*.
- Does that unconverted, though religious, man enquire? The Lord answers, *"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"*.

My friends, the Lord turns away none who come to Him. O then, come now, and you shall be forgiven, justified, and saved for ever.

Rowland Edwards