

Living Water

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Recent Ministry

PSALM 23: A MEDITATION – 3

“Surely, goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for the length of the days” Psalm 23:6

David would look back on his life: he would look back to days, I suppose, when he was a shepherd and he had delivered his father's sheep from the lion and the bear¹. He would say, 'Yes, God's goodness was there, I came to no harm, I delivered the sheep'. Perhaps he would think about some of the Psalms he wrote, such as Psalm 19: *“The heavens declare the glory of God”*. Think of David there, looking after the sheep and looking into the night sky. What an impression it would have given him of the greatness of God as well as His goodness. Consider when he was crowned king; he might think, 'Yes, God has seen me through into these blessings'. But then he would also look back, would he not, to the days when he was fleeing from Saul and felt like a partridge on the mountainside (1 Samuel 26:20), times when he was so desperate that he went down to the Philistines to seek refuge². He would look back to when he sinned in the matter of Urijah and Bathsheba³. He would look back to when he was tempted and he numbered the tribes⁴. He would look at all those things and he did not doubt at all. He says, “Surely”, or it could be rendered 'only', *“goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life.”*

Reflect on Jacob. Jacob could say to Pharaoh, *“Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life”*. But then, when it came to the end he could say *“the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day”* (Genesis 47:9, 48:15). It is a daily matter – all the days of my life.

1 See 1 Samuel 17

2 See 1 Samuel 27

3 See 2 Samuel 11

4 See 2 Samuel 24

David, looking back, might well have said, 'They were mixed days'. But David says, *"surely, goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life"*. Each day is precious and God has given us today. He has given us the days that we have had but He has given us today. We do not know how many more days we have. May the days that we have left be days that God would evaluate as worthwhile. We can give thanks that whatever comes into those days, like David, we should be able to say, *"Surely, goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life"*. May we have, above all, a sense of this *"surely"*. David had no doubt about it at all. He could look back and see the Lord's hand in Shepherd care over all his life. He could say, *"Surely, goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for the length of the days"*. We can enjoy the presence of the Lord every day. The Lord says to His own at the end of Matthew's gospel, *"...behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age"* (Matthew 28:20). It is the same idea. Every day the Lord is with us until we come to glory. David had this wonderful certainty. He had proved the care of the Shepherd.

There is also the most blessed prospect the Lord has given us – He has gone to prepare us a place – a place that we can enter into now by faith. In speaking to His own He says, *"...if I go and prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be"* (John 14:3). It is a Person that we are attracted to, this One whom we have proved as the Shepherd.

I trust that each one of us, too, can say from our hearts that we have proved the care of the Shepherd. May we be led 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 a testimony to others from our lives that *"Jehovah is my shepherd"*.

Peter Wallach

Extracted from an address at Aberdeen 27th June 2015.

This concludes the series.

THREE VISIONS OF THE CHURCH - PART 3

John's vision – The Holy City

Revelation 21:1-3 & 9-11

The third vision was given to the apostle John who was banished to the island of Patmos because he loved Jesus, because he was faithful to Jesus. He was there *"for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus"* (Revelation 1:9).

He became in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. First of all he sees Jesus in His judicial glory. He then has Christ's assessment of seven assemblies, seven local churches that were functioning in Asia Minor, present day Turkey, round about Ephesus. John receives God's view of their moral state.

In five out of the seven churches the Lord Jesus told them to repent. Now John was an old man when he was writing the book of the Revelation. He had seen how Christianity had spread commencing in Jerusalem. He knew how Christianity had spread out to the Gentiles as we read of in Acts chapter 10 and how it later spread out throughout the Roman Empire. He knew how people came to faith in Christ and how local churches (or assemblies) had been formed for the expression of Christ in their communities.

But he had also seen decline coming in, for example how the church in Ephesus had left its first love. John was instructed to write down Christ's assessment of all these different churches.

Later on John sees and records various judgments that would come on the earth culminating in Christ coming to judge the world. Finally he sees how everything will end as described at the end of Revelation. It is also a great help for us to see how things will end up.

Many believers today are concerned about the state of the church. It is almost impossible to have a conversation with any genuine Christians and not hear their

It is a great help for us to see how things will end up

concerns about things that are happening in today's churches. John wrote of Christ's view as to things that were happening in churches at that time. No doubt there are also prophetic references in the seven churches as to how things would unfold during the whole of the Christian era. But it is wonderful that he sees beyond the present time.

Paul writing to the Ephesians says that Christ will present the church to Himself glorious. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it –that is past. And then he says, *"in order that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word"* – that is His present service. But Scripture also speaks of the future – that He might present it to Himself glorious having no spot or wrinkle or any of such things (Ephesians 5:25-27). I sometimes wonder how that will happen but the Lord Jesus is going to bring it to pass. John saw a glorious church in Revelation 21.

Some of us here are getting on in life. What is before us? Glory is before us. There is no future for the Christian but glory. That is true on a personal basis but it is also true in relation to the church. There is no future for the church – formed of people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have had their sins forgiven, who have received the gift of the Spirit – there is no future for them but glory.

John receives two wonderful visions at the end of Revelation. One relates to what is eternal, the other relates to the church as having its part with Christ in the administration of the world to come, of the millennium. I just allude briefly to them both.

John sees a *"new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea exists no more"*. This present earth is not going to be here for ever, the present heaven is not going to be here for ever. God is going to have new heavens and a new earth in which dwells righteousness.

John sees the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God. Remember Peter's vision? He sees the sheet being taken up to heaven. John sees the holy city descending from heaven.

No other cities are holy. Chester is not a holy city and neither is my town a holy city. None of the cities of this world are holy cities: they are very un-holy cities. But his vision is of the holy city, the *"new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"*.

The Lamb's wife is a lovely title

The church is for Christ; it will be for His delight for ever and ever. - *"Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"*. In eternity there will be no more nations: there will be God and men. God will be near to men but He will dwell in the tabernacle, in the church. The church is going to have this function.

When John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of the heaven from God, he wrote, *"prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"*. It reminds us of Paul's statement regarding no spot, no wrinkle or any of such things; it will be a glorious church for the delight and pleasure of the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 5:27)

The Lord Jesus died for me, He died for you. He died for us first of all to relieve us of our sins but also that we might be for His pleasure, now and for ever. The aggregate of all believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit is the holy city, new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And then he is told to come and look at the bride, the Lamb's wife. *"Come here"*, one of the angels said, *"I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife"*. The Lamb's wife is a lovely title. When we think of Jesus as the Lamb of God, we think of His sufferings. That Man who suffered so much to settle my sins and your sins has a counterpart, His like, the Lamb's wife.

Even as I speak there are believers in different parts of the world suffering physically for Christ; some are in prison for Christ, and some have been tortured and killed for Christ. The Lamb's wife is the counterpart of the Lamb and will share with Christ in His administration. So when John is told to take account of the bride, the Lamb's wife, what he sees is a city.

The church is then perfect, it is beautiful. There will be no imperfections there. It is a huge edifice, a cube of around 1400 miles. But every feature will be for the pleasure of God. The city will have the glory of God.

The glory of God once dwelt in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:25) and once dwelt in the temple (2 Chronicles 5:14); the glory of God is going to be in the church when it comes down out of the heaven from God. The description of the city includes its walls, its gates and its source of light - the lamp thereof being the Lamb. There are wonderful details in the description of the holy city – well worth studying. John receives this wonderful vision towards the end of his life after he had seen a description of church failure.

To summarise, there are these three* visions: Paul had a heavenly vision. The one that he had persecuted was Jesus. The one he had persecuted was Christ's body since Jesus said, "*Why dost thou persecute me?*" That vision coloured his life and his ministry thereafter. Peter too had a vision of a sheet full of unclean creatures being let down and then taken up into heaven. It depicted people in their immoral, rough and ready state like these animals but God had cleansed them. It is wonderful to be cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus and appreciate others who are also cleansed. It is also important to look ahead and to know that we have part in this glorious entity that will be for the pleasure of God eternally and serviceable during the public reign of Christ.

May we be helped to look into these things for ourselves! May we understand the greatness of the church in the mind of God as the companion of Christ! These visions were given to these three men to help them at the different points in their lives. May they be a help to us too for His name's sake. Amen.

Ken Hollands

Extract from an address at Chester, March 2015

This concludes this series

**For Paul's vision see Living Water No. 134 and for Peter's vision see Living Water No. 135.*

FORMED ACCORDING TO THE POTTER

Jeremiah 18:1 – 6

This passage from Jeremiah reminds us that God has rights over each one of us. You may think that your life is your own and that you can do with it what you choose but remember that you have been bought with a price and you belong to Another. God has rights over you because He has paid the price in full in the precious blood of Jesus. You have been redeemed and you belong to Him. God has rights over you today and He is working with you, like the potter working with the clay, moulding it exactly the way he wants it to be. He shapes each of us to the way He wants us to be. He is shaping us for glory. The treasures that will be there as an evidence of His love in a day to come will be the result of the Potter's hands today. As He moulds each of us according to His will and shapes us by the ways through which He is pleased to pass us, it is in view that we might be trophies of His love in that quickly-coming day.

Of course, you may say, 'When I am passing through the trials of life, it is not easy to see that God is fashioning me for glory.' I know it is not. I speak very sympathetically to those who are passing through difficult trials in the present day. None of us here today is unmindful of the sorrows that are in this very locality but I would suggest that it is all part of God's wonderful plan. Through those very sorrows He is shaping every one of us in view of our being more pleasurable to Him, so that we might shine in the eternal day as trophies of His perfect love.

It is very significant that this scripture starts with a word from Jehovah: "*Arise and go down to the potter's house*". We need to arise and go down and see what the Potter is doing. At times we may feel that some persons have sorrow after sorrow, while others appear to go through life relatively unscathed. God's ways are

mysterious but God's ways are perfect. God is working all things according to His divine plan and the wonder of

There is a great need today of coming back to God's own word

it is that the believer can take account of what God is doing. We do not question what God is doing but we take account of it. This is the very thing that Jeremiah is instructed to do here: *"Go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words"*.

There is a great need today of coming back to God's own word. How many things there are today under the banner of Christianity that have no foundation whatever in God's word. Everything that relates to Christ personally, everything that relates to the Christian pathway, must have its foundation in God's word. *"And the vessel that he made was marred, as clay, in the hand of the potter; and he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make"*. Notice that, *"as seemed good to the potter to make"*. It may not have seemed particularly good to Jeremiah but it was good to the potter. It reminds me of Solomon in 1 Kings chapter 3. With all Solomon's wisdom and wealth, the thing he asks for of God is a wise and understanding heart (see v.12). The note (in the Darby Bible) to that passage explains that it is a heart that hears. I think that we need hearts that hear God's word, hearts that feel the same way as God feels about things – hearts that appreciate what is good to the potter.

What Jeremiah sees is that God is shaping things according to His own will. It reads, *"cannot I do with you as this potter?"* God can do it and will do it. I love to think of the hands of that potter; they would be actually in the clay itself as it revolved on the wheel. The potter would shape it according to the sensitivity of his own hands, with all the skill that he had. One moment the clay is a shapeless mass and the next moment it becomes an object of value,

a vessel to honour, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work.

Are you and I such today? God is fashioning each of us so that we might serve Him. He is working things out in your heart and life so that you might be serviceable. He is the perfect Potter. He knows exactly what He is doing and in His plans for you He is fitting you for glory. Be absolutely sure of it. He has rights over us but have we submitted to those rights? Have we submitted to Christ as our Lord? Have we based our Christianity upon His word? The word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah and he obeyed. May we each one be those who are prepared to be fashioned according to the hands of the Potter who in love is forming you and me so that we might be vessels for glory, serviceable to Him until He comes to take us to be with Himself.

There is a passage in the prophet Joel which speaks about the years that the locust hath eaten being restored. That is something that only God can do. As we look back on our lives we see years that were wasted, times when we were not committed to Christ in the way we should have been, when we did things that the Lord could not approve of. We all know that and we do not need to go over it, but the wonder is that, whilst you can never restore the years you have lost because you cannot turn the clock back, God can restore to you the years that the locust has eaten. We may look back on years that are wasted and think, 'What a failure I have been'. Whilst that may be true, faith can reach out to the fact that God can restore to you what you and I can never restore. He can give you the blessings that come from His own heart of love.

If you look a little earlier in chapter 2 of the book of Joel, we read, *"yet even now, saith Jehovah, turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your*

God” (Joel 2:12 & 13). Maybe we have rent our garments over things that have happened in the past but it is the heart that is to be rent before Him so that we might feel things in the way that He feels them.

He would have each one of us to be drawn into His very presence so that we might not be governed by the sentiments of what is human but rather that we might be governed by the precious love of God that is able to triumph over everything. Do not be discouraged if things look impossible; God can do what man cannot do and nothing is impossible to Him. But the responsibility of every believer is set out here, “*turn to me with all your heart... and rend your heart and not your garments*”. God is able to restore and in His love He would appeal to every one of us today to come into the enjoyment of that love that we might be caught up in the spirit of what God is doing today.

Let us go down to see what the Potter is doing. He is working with His hands, working in His love, in order that vessels might be fashioned for glory. Let us hear His words and embrace the spirit of God’s wonderful love for souls today so that there might be blessing. When the clouds seem dark around, may our eyes be on that shaft of sunlight that is coming through, like those verses in Joel, so that our faith might be held in relation to a world where Christ is the centre and where everything will soon be for His eternal glory.

Keith Wickens

Extracted for an Address at Chester, 21st March 1998

This article is reprinted from “Living Water” No 36

If there is an article from a past issue of “Living Water” which you would like to see reprinted I would be very glad to hear from you. Ed.

Poetry Selection

JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:9-27

Jerusalem the holy,
The city of our God,
Descending out of Heaven,
And bought with Jesus' blood,
Like to a stone most precious,
As crystal bright and clear,
'Tis seen in jasper glory,
O God, to Thee how dear!

The Lamb, the City's temple,
The City is the bride,
The walls are all of jasper,
The church now glorified.
The street itself is golden
In righteousness divine;
The saints in perfect favour
In all Christ's glory shine.

Nor sun nor moon it needeth,
The Lamb doth bear the light,
God's glory it doth lighten
With its effulgence bright.
Its gates of pearl are open,
And *there* there is no night:
The nations bring it glory,
And walk in heavenly light.

There, too, the crystal river,
Proceeding from the throne
They worship through the Spirit,
God and the Lamb alone.
And there beside the river
Is Christ, the Tree of Life,
Fresh fruits each month delighting
The Church, the bride, His wife.

The leaves, too, for the healing
Of nations upon earth;
Both Heaven and earth uniting
To sing the Saviour's worth.
His servants, on their foreheads
Bear Jesus' name alone;
They see His face and serve Him
Who sits upon the throne.

O, happy, blessed prospect,
When we shall hear His voice
When we shall rise to meet Him,
And all His saints rejoice!
When robed in white we'll gather
Around His glorious throne,
And all unite in praising
God and the Lamb, alone.

H. D'Arcy Champney (June 1884)

SAVED FOR GLORY

Saved by Thyself, Lord Jesus,
Saved from all sin and shame,
Saved, too, to share Thy glory,
Are all who trust Thy Name.
Safe in the rock of Ages
Fearlessly there they hide,
Safe from the storm of judgment,
Safe from the swelling tide.
Saved by Thyself, Lord Jesus,
Saved from the wrath to come
Saved for eternal glory
Saved for the Father's home.
Saved from o'erwhelming sorrow,
Saved from distracting care,
Saved from a world of evil,
Saved from all doubt and fear.

Saved by Thyself, Lord Jesus,
God's great High priest above;
Borne on Thy mighty shoulders,
Graved on Thy heart of love.
Watched by Thyself, our Shepherd,
Kept with the Father's care,
Safe in Those hands forever,
No one can perish there.
Saved for Thyself, Lord Jesus,
Saved to confess Thy Name,
Telling how Thou hast suffered,
Bearing the sin and shame;
Saved now to wait with patience,
Looking by faith afar,
Wait, till before the dawning
Rises the Morning Star.
H. D'Arcy Champney (1883)

REJOICE AND BE GLAD

Rejoice and be glad! The Redeemer had come!
Go look on His cradle, His cross and His tomb.
Sound His praise; tell the story
Of Him who was slain.
Sound His praise; tell with gladness,
He liveth again.

Rejoice and be glad! It is sunshine at last!
The clouds have departed; the shadows are past.
Rejoice and be glad! For the blood has been shed!
Redemption is finished; the price has been paid.
Rejoice and be glad! Now the pardon is free!
The Just for the unjust has died on the tree.
Rejoice and be glad! For the Lamb that was slain
O'er death is triumphant and liveth again.
Rejoice and be glad! For our king is on high!
He pleadeth for us on His throne in the sky,

Rejoice and be glad! For He cometh again,
He cometh in glory, the Lamb that was slain!
Sound His praises; tell the story
Of Him who was slain.
Sound His praises; tell with gladness,
He cometh again.
Horatius Bonar (1808 – 1889)

Testimony Section

THE TESTIMONY OF A RUSSIAN CALENDAR

For some years a Russian calendar intended to give Russians a simple gospel message every month has been produced. One Christian commenting on the 2015 calendar said, "*The calendar preaches every day in my workshop*", meaning that when customers came into his shop they were attracted by the colourful pictures and stayed to read the accompanying text and message.

This year 10,000 calendars were given out in the Caucasus and Krasnodar areas. The population is split between members of the Russian Orthodox Church and Muslims. Both groups have little knowledge of the gospel. Calendar distribution usually begins in the village shop and below is a direct report of distribution in the Krasnodar area:

"I went into a village shop and started to speak about the Lord Jesus. There were many different people there and all seemed thankful to listen but one lady, a Muslim, said, '*I respect Jesus, He was a great prophet, like the prophet Mohammed, we need to respect both of them for they were both great*'.

"I asked her, '*Did Mohammad pay the price of our sins?*' She started to say something but I repeated my question and she fell silent. Others in the shop were smiling and happily took the calendars."

In another village the story is similar:

"As we always do we go to the village shop, meeting and talking with people there. I started my talk like this: '*Hello! We come from a far distant*

area with an unusual calendar.’ This prompts questions like, ‘Why have you come here?’ and ‘what is so unusual about your calendar?’ I shared my testimony and the barriers between us are broken. Then I said, ‘Each page of the calendar speaks about the Saviour! The calendar points the way to a new life, to eternal life! We can enter into this wonderful life only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.’

“It was encouraging to see how during our talk people responded with faith and it was a joy to hear some say, *‘I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am forgiven, I will be in eternity with Him.’*”

Below are calendar pictures and translated captions for the present two months.

July 2016



“O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psalm 34:8)

We cannot judge the taste of many tropical fruits and drinks since we have never tried them. Exotic names do not cause us any sensation. When people hear the name of Jesus Christ and it does not cause them pleasant emotions, it is because they have not

“tasted” it. To “taste” is to trust in Jesus for ourselves, accepting Him as our personal Saviour, trusting Him in all situations, praying to Him and reading the Bible to know the ways of God. Such a person is called “*blessed*”! Such a person is happy, has hope and a blessed future.

Trust Jesus now, invite Him into your life to cleanse you from your sins and taste in your own experience the blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

August 2016



“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden” (Genesis 2:8)

When people want to describe something very lovely, such as a garden, they often describe it as a “paradise”. So this flower, Strelitzia, has a common name of “bird of paradise”.

We are sinners and deserve to be in hell, but Jesus Christ died for our sins and opened for us the gates of paradise. Next to the Saviour when He was crucified was a robber but he repented and trusted in Christ. Jesus said unto him, truly *“I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43).

Believe in Jesus Christ and you will belong to heaven!

Sergey Sidorenko

A voice from the past

HELP FOR ANXIOUS SOULS

Answers to three questions which sometimes cause real believers to doubt their salvation

My faith is not strong enough

Some people speak as though God only bestows salvation on those whose faith reaches a certain standard, the measure of it being that they are able to believe themselves to be saved. But this is making a saviour of your faith.

Someone once said to me, 'I have not faith enough to believe that I am justified'.

'If you had, you would not thereby be justified', I replied. 'That is not what God asks you to believe to be saved. God does not say that if you can only believe that you are justified, you are justified; but if you believe on Him whom I gave to die for you and who rose again you have the authority of my word for knowing that you are justified' (see Acts 13:38-39).

Great faith may bring great comfort to the one who has it, but it does not bring greater salvation than little faith. "*Go in peace*" was the Lord's word, both to her who came with a timid touch, and to her who came with a bold touch. (Compare Luke 8:48 and 7:50.). True faith, however feeble, lays hold upon Christ. It rests upon His precious blood for safety, and allows no other trust to intrude. It flies for shelter to Him who is the only door of refuge, and will accept no other offer, however plausible it may be.

The manslayer who reached the "*city of refuge*" in the land of Canaan was not secure because of the greatness or strength of his faith, but because he had reached the refuge which God Himself had provided. He might have entered the city in the greatest fear and trembling, or he might have been there without a shade of doubt or the faintest tinges of misgiving; but he had reached the refuge, and that was enough in God's account to secure his safety. (See Numbers 35:6 – 32)

Neither did his safety consist in believing that he was safe. He might have presumptuously believed this, stayed at home, and perished. This would not do; but having availed himself of God's provision, he was as secure as that provision could make him.

It is truly solemn to think of the devil's diligence in putting anything before the soul as an object of faith rather than Christ. But the blessed patient One speaks from on high, and still says, *"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"* (Isaiah 45:22).

I am afraid that my repentance has not been real and deep enough

The Holy Spirit of God does not occupy us with His work within us, but turns the eye to Christ and His finished work for us. It is true that unless there is a work of grace in us, we should never care to participate in the fruits of what the Saviour did for us on the cross. But peace rests, not upon our satisfaction in what we discover of the Spirit's work in our hearts, but upon God's satisfaction in Christ's work on the cross. If we could only get peace when we were satisfied that the inward work of grace was deep enough, not a single honest believer would ever have peace. The cry would always be 'Lord, deepen the work of grace in my soul.'

Repentance is the judgment of what we are, and what we have done in the light of what God is. It is the result of God's work of grace in us. Some hikers who fall into some dirty ditch in the darkness of midnight may get some idea of the state they are in when the moon appears from behind the clouds. Then as the light of morning gradually dawns there is a clearer and ever-increasing understanding of how filthy they are. So the sinner, by light from on high, is brought to repentance and the longer he walks with God and the nearer he comes to perfect day, the deeper sense he has of his own unworthiness. Never will he be able to say that his repentance is real enough, or the sense of his unworthiness deep enough. But this he can say, *'The further I go the more I discover that I am bad enough to need such a Saviour, and the more I wonder at the grace that could stoop to care for such a sinner!'*

I do not love God as I ought

Nearly half the difficulties of anxious souls result from confusing the on-going work of the Holy Spirit in us and the work of Christ finished on the cross.

They read that the *"fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. long-suffering...meekness, self-control"* (Galatians 5:22 – 23), and if they could but discover these fruits in themselves, they imagine there would be some just ground for considering themselves to be Christians. They think also that the presence of the Holy Spirit would make them feel very good, and when they feel the very opposite they are ready to take it for granted that there is no work of God in them. This is altogether a mistake

Listen: –

*He does not make my soul to say,
Thank God I feel so good;
But turns my eye another way,
To Jesus and His blood.*

Moses was not occupied with his own shining face, neither was Stephen with his, though others saw the reflected glory on both. The time when the fruits of the Spirit are most effectively produced in us will be when we are most engaged with what Christ is to us, and what He has done and is doing for us. It will be when our hearts are so taken up with Christ that we are neither thinking of good self nor bad self, but only of Him. It is in beholding His glory that we are *"changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

I have heard of a Christian woman who got so occupied with her own love for Christ that she came to the conclusion that she did not love Him at all! Another believer trying to help her but without success eventually wrote on a piece of paper, 'I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ' and asked her to sign it. She at once indignantly refused!

What caused her to suddenly change? The truth was that she both believed on Him, and loved Him, but she had been dwelling on rather

what she was toward Him than what He was in His own personal worth.

The measure of our love to Christ is the measure of our appreciation of His love for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:14 and 1 John 4:19).

George Cutting (1843 – 1934)

A word for today

THE COMING OF THE LORD – PART 1

Luke 12:1-35

There are two things I want to say before proceeding with what is indicated to us in these verses:

- The first is that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is vital to Christianity; if you eliminate the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from Christianity it is destroyed altogether in a certain way, because redemption is not completed until the Lord returns. There is a scripture for that in Romans 8:23. You will thus see that Christianity cannot be complete until the Lord returns, that is, as to the revelation and the truth of it. Moreover, if you leave out the truth of the coming of the Lord Jesus you miss a power for holiness that God has given to us (see 1 John 3:3).
- The second thing is that we cannot wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ unless we are in a right state of soul; and this chapter—parts of which I have read—reveals to us how the Lord would prepare His people to wait for His coming. You cannot wait because you believe the Lord is coming back, or because you try to wait, but you must be in that state of soul without which it is impossible to be found in the attitude of the expectation of His return.

There are some here to-night who will admit this very readily: - 'Yes, we do believe the Lord Jesus Christ is coming; but we also find day by day that we are not waiting.' Now let me put you a simple question: How many of you have said to-day in your hearts, 'The Lord Jesus Christ may be here before the day closes'? It just shows us that our knowledge goes far beyond our state and condition, and thus it

is that the Lord is concerned in this chapter to prepare us in our souls to wait for His return.

In the first place, He seeks to deliver us from the fear of man. Because if you are not delivered from the fear of man you will never be able to confess Christ, and, if you do not confess Christ day by day as you pass through this world, you will never be waiting for Him. Then you get the principle, which is continually found in the Scriptures—warning and encouragement intermingled.

In the first place, He says, *“Fear not those who kill the body and after this have no more that they can do”* (v.4); but then He goes on to say, *“I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him; which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell”* (v.5). He gives us warning — don’t forget that, then, that God is able not only to kill, but *“to cast into hell.”* But,

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then, in connection with that warning, He turns to the other side and gives a very sweet encouragement. You do not need to be afraid of man, he cannot touch you except by divine permission. *“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows”* (vv. 6, 7). Man may rage against us, but he cannot touch us; it is impossible without God’s permission. I have seen men out shooting, and I have seen them aim at birds, and I have said to myself, ‘You may be skilful shots, but you cannot hit one bird without divine permission.’ That is taught us here. ‘If that be so,’ says Christ, ‘remember that God is watching over you; you are dear to Him; the very hairs of your head are all numbered, and you are of more value than many sparrows.’

Then He gives a further blessed encouragement. *“If you confess me before men, I will confess you before the angels of God.”* I want to say a word about confessing Christ. Suppose you are going to town

to-morrow, and some one in the railway carriage should take out a Bible and read. You might say, 'I wouldn't make such a display in the presence of other people.' Why not? Suppose I were in the carriage tomorrow, and that I had a thought about the state of the souls of the people there, and I were to say to myself, 'I cannot speak to them, but I would like them to see that I am a Christian,' so I take out my Bible. Would you condemn me for that? No, do not condemn me! On the other hand, remember, if I do it to make people think I am a very devout person, it would be wrong; but if the motive of my heart is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and to magnify Him, then it is a blessed thing.

Well now, beloved, I think there are many ways of confessing Christ. I once said to a young Christian, 'Have you confessed Christ?' 'Yes, I have,' he said. 'Are you confessing Christ now?' I got no answer. You see it is a daily thing; it does not mean confessing that you belong to Christ once when you connect yourself with the people of God. It is much more than that, it should be the habit of our lives. I will explain what I mean. I was in a certain town when one very dear to me was suddenly taken ill; I had to send for a doctor, and he was not in the house two minutes before he let me know that he was a Christian. He owned the Lord; he did not say, 'I hope to be able to pull her through', but 'the Lord will bring her through, I hope.' What a difference! You see he owned the name of the Lord, and did it really, for I found afterwards that he was known as a real and devout Christian.

If you are not confessors of Christ, you won't want to see Him, and if you don't want to see Him, you won't be waiting for Him, and thus I attach the utmost importance to what the Lord teaches in the beginning of this chapter, namely, that we should be confessors of Him.

Then see the encouragement to do it. Here we are in all our weakness, and yet by the grace of God we are enabled to confess Christ. Well, if we confess Christ in that way, what is the encouragement? *"Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man*

also confess before the angels of God." Now imagine for one minute the time has come when the Lord will recompense His people, and down here in this world there has been a humble Christian who has been in the habit of confessing the name of the Lord Jesus, delighting to speak His name, then the Lord Jesus Christ will speak his name before the angels of God.

Now there is nothing an officer in the army so covets as to be mentioned in the dispatches. If he is mentioned, it leads to his promotion. How much greater the joy to the simple Christian, wherever he may be, or in whatever circumstances, or in a small circle unnoticed day by day, whose delight it is to mention the name of Christ. The Lord says if you do that, He will confess your name before the angels of God. What an immense honour to have one's name told out by the lips of the Lord Himself in the presence of all the angels! I want you, dear young people, especially to remember this, because there are many temptations to conceal that you are Christians. We all know the temptations, but the Lord brings in the blessed encouragement. Don't conceal that you belong to Him, let your heart be so full of Him that you will delight to speak of Him, and then He will by and by confess your name before the angels of God.

Now He turns to the other side, and it is very solemn. It does not apply to a Christian, because the statement is absolute: *"He that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God"*; but there may be many, a professing Christian who does that. It is a very solemn thing if a Christian does even once deny the Lord, but the Lord Jesus is not speaking of Christians in this verse. If you are not confessors of Christ you cannot love Him; love has waxed feeble when you don't confess His name; and if you are not confessors you will not be in a state to wait for His return.

Now just to connect this part of the chapter with what follows—and the connection is very beautiful—you will notice in verse 13 that one of the company said to the Lord, *"Speak to my brother, that he may divide the inheritance with me."* But the Lord said to him, *"Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?"* He had not then come for

If my thoughts are down in the dust, how can I be found waiting for Christ?

that purpose; and then He draws the lesson, *"Take heed, and beware of covetousness."* Then He brings in a parable in verse 16, and thus the foundation is laid on which the second

lesson is built up. The man in the parable has his abundant crops, but he has not sufficient room to garner them. He says, *"What shall I do? I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."* That is, all his thoughts were confined to the present moment. He wanted, as many of us have often wanted, not only abundance in this world, but also enough to last as long as we continue in this life. And that was all he cared for. I am sure many of us have known that temptation. So in the parable God says, *"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee";* and then the question is put, *"Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"* Then the lesson: *"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God."* I will not dwell upon that, but I want to call attention to one point in the next verse (22) which shows the connection. The Lord says to His disciples, *"Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat,"* etc. *"Therefore,"* the whole thing turns upon that word; it is the deduction which the Lord draws from the example He has given in the parable.

Now we come to the second lesson. The first is deliverance from the fear of man, the second is deliverance from anxiety, from anxious care, which oftentimes robs us of our peace. In the parable of the sower in the Gospel you get this, the seed that fell among thorns is choked by what? Cares, and the pleasures of this life. The cares are in the same category as the pleasures. The Lord thus proceeds to deliver His disciples from care, that they may be able in their hearts to maintain the attitude of waiting for Him. If my thoughts are down

in the dust, how can I be found waiting for Christ? He therefore comes in, and would deliver us from the cares of this world, from anxiety concerning what we may put on, or our daily food. He says, 'There is no need for that'; and He gives an example, firstly of the ravens, and, secondly, of the lilies of the field. They are not anxious about things, but the ravens are fed, and the lilies are clothed, and clothed in such a way, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of them. If we take that home, we shall understand how foolish it is to be anxious. The truth is, beloved, we are dependent upon God. He next gives the way of deliverance from anxiety. He says in verse 29, *"Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."* If we did but live in the sense of that! 'I am in want,' you say; well, the Father knoweth. There is not a single thing that can affect one of His people that does not affect the heart of God. A sentence which I read many years ago, and which has never passed from me is this: 'Whatever might be a care to you produces a care for you in the heart of God.' And so it does; do we not read in the Epistle of Peter, *"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you"*? *"Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."* He watches over us even to the smallest and most minute things that might trouble us. Will He forsake us? No, beloved! If you remember, the apostle Paul brings it out in the Epistle to the Hebrews; he says, *"Be content with such things as are present, for He has said I will never leave you nor forsake you,"* so that, as the apostle goes on to say, *"We may boldly say the Lord is my helper, and I shall not fear what man will do unto me."* So the Lord casts us upon the Father's knowledge and the Father's heart.

Then, He gives the reason why it is we do not enter into the comfort of this: it comes out in the next verse, *"But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you"* (v. 31). Now let me point out one beautiful thing. In verse 30 He says, *"All these things"* (eating and drinking and clothing) *"do the nations*

of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things"; then, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things" (about which He has been speaking) "shall be added unto you." But there is a condition annexed, and I will just call attention to it for one moment. It is all summed up in two lines of an old hymn—

*Make you **His** service your delight,
Your wants shall be His care.*

Seek ye the kingdom of God, that is, God's interests, and all these things shall be added unto you. So, beloved, there is no need that any one of us should be troubled by a single care; and we shall not be troubled if we only get into our hearts that God loves us, and cares for us, and is watching over us because He cares for us, and thus He will not allow one of His children to want if he seeks first the kingdom of God. The condition is put in this way because God needs to chasten us sometimes, and He does when we need drawing to Him and to His interests. If we make His objects our supreme end, then we shall want nothing as we pass through this world.

Thus the first two lessons of the chapter are deliverance from the fear of man, and deliverance from anxiety. 'How happy we should then be!' you say; yes, you would be very happy. The poorest Christian in the world would be able to say, 'I am poor, and I have nothing I can call my own, and yet I know I shall never want, because the Father knoweth that I need all these things.' How the Lord encourages our hearts; and He seeks to do this in order that we may be in a state of soul to wait for His return.

Edward Dennett (1831 – 1914)

Extracted from an address

A further article on this topic will appear in the next issue, God willing.