

**138**

# ***Living Water***

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***(November – December 2016)***

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*Based on a Bible reading in London*

*4<sup>th</sup> June 2016.*

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*Cyril Mead served in France, Macedonia and Palestine.*

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*John Taylor-Smith was Chaplain General to the British Army from 1902 to 1925. For many years he made a practice of annotating his Bible with notes and comments. Here is a selection taken from the pages of the New Testament.*

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## Recent Ministry

### FAITH

*Hebrews 11:1-6*

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*1 Peter 1:3-9*

*Hebrews 2:5-10*

The four scriptures read all call attention to faith, one of the foundational features of Christianity. It is not confined to the New Testament; there is a good deal about faith in the Old Testament but the kind of faith that the Lord looks for in believers today is spoken of in the New Testament. So it might be helpful to remind ourselves of the importance and the value that God in His Scriptures places upon faith. We might also enquire a little as to what we mean when we speak about faith because it is a word that can become hackneyed.

#### **Hebrews 11:1-6**

Hebrews 11 is a whole chapter about faith and a number of people in the Old Testament who, in different ways, exhibited faith and showed what it means practically. The chapter does not give you a definition of faith. Rather, it provides some illustrations of what faith is. One of the most fundamental ones, of course, is found in verse six. But the beginning of it is that it is the substantiating of things hoped for – that I have a genuine, sustaining conviction about what I believe. Then I am even invited by God to look out on a starry night to see that there is a world, which did not make itself, which was made by the word of God. Then we have these initial illustrations of men such as Abel and Enoch.

Next we read that without faith it is impossible to please God. It is important to remember that. Whatever good I might do, or however devoted I might seem to be or desire to be, without faith I cannot please God. We are given the reason: *“he that draws near to God must believe that he is”*. It is no good seeking

to approach God if we have no conviction that there is any one to draw near to. But the second half of the verse is a very comforting one, *"he is a rewarder of them who seek him out"*. That should encourage us all. Even any one who has not reached saving faith in Christ should be encouraged by the fact that there is a reward by way of God's dealings with us if we *"seek Him out"*. God will return our desire for Him and show His desire for us. It is a very wonderful thing that He should desire anyone to draw near to Him. And the reward? Well, it comes perhaps first in the knowledge of salvation, but it goes on from there into a greater knowledge of the love and heart and mind of God which, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, has a formative work in the heart of any one who draws near to God.

This whole chapter is taken up with men and women from the Old Testament, who did not have our advantages but trusted God according to the light that they had. We are called upon to do the same. I do not invent my faith for myself. Plenty of people are trying to do that but faith is presented in scripture as the gift of God and it is something which He gives to those upon whom He has set His heart. Our part is to respond to the light that He gives. It is not, exactly, a blind faith. We have to trust God when we do not see what He is doing, but it is not a blind faith in the sense that I have no knowledge of God. It is built upon the knowledge of God that He has given. Having proved Him at one step I trust Him for the next.

The next chapter starts with a great cloud of witnesses. The writer to the Hebrews could say that two thousand years ago. There have been a great many added to that cloud of witnesses since. There are many in our own day. We have plenty of evidence of believers whose faith is sorely tried at the present time as to whether God has forgotten them and left them in their distress. Well, the whole assurance of scripture is, No, He has not forgotten. They are being taken by a way that many

have gone before. We, ourselves, at the moment may not be tried in that way. There are other trials. But every one needs solid faith. We must *"believe that he is"*. It is important to earnestly seek after God

Scripture says, *"no one has seen God at any time"* (John 1:18). God dwells in light unapproachable. No one has seen God other than in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who spoke in the Old Testament had not seen the Lord and they had not, other than by means of an angel, seen God. But they had a conviction that the things that they saw were made by God and they had a remarkable conviction as to the nature of God. You will find running through the Old Testament the thought that God is holy and just. Now, those saints built upon that and it was a measure of light that God gave them. Those who sought out God were given assurance and conviction as to something of His nature; it is not the whole of it; we have to wait until Christ for that. But God graciously gave them conviction as to something of His nature. God did speak to some of them, to our knowledge, and that had results with them. God spoke to Abraham, *"and Abraham believed God"* – he believed what God said – *"and he reckoned it to him for righteousness"*. Then if we go all the way to the time of Habakkuk, he lived in very troubled times; but he says, *"the just shall live by his faith"* (Habakkuk 2:4). That is remarkable light given to a prophet. There was nothing to look at around, no hope, but nevertheless he knew the just shall live by his faith.

It is important to earnestly seek after God and it is a mark of the work of God that we should have any desire after Him. Sometimes that desire has very small beginnings but in seeking Him out it is a good thing to ask God to reveal Himself. There was even something of that with Hagar (see Genesis 16:13). She was in a very difficult time and God made Himself known

to her in her frailty and trouble. God has His own way of making Himself known and when He does we need to cling to what He tells us about Himself and look into that and build upon it.

Jeremiah writes, *“ye shall seek me and find me, for ye shall search for me with all your heart, and I will be found of you, saith Jehovah”*. The people were at a very low point in their souls, in captivity, but God led Jeremiah to hold out the promise of a new covenant, an established and lasting relationship with God Himself.

God invites us to look at creation and when we see the wonders of creation we realise that God is behind it. *“We apprehend that the worlds were made by the word of God”*. We might well ask ourselves, Why do the worlds exist? They were made by God but what did He have in mind? Well, first of all, so that Christ should personally be exalted which is the theme of Hebrews 2 and Psalm 8. Then in the church, the bride, the Lord will have satisfaction and a company where there is to be glory to God *“unto all generations of the age of ages” (Ephesians 3:21)*. That is the end purpose in mind. We cannot dwell on the old creation because although it is God’s handiwork it is spoiled. Scripture points us to a new creation which is one where God’s will prevails and where there is blessing.

## **Romans 5:1-2**

The scripture in Romans is one of several in that epistle which deal with the foundations of the way of salvation and places a great premium on faith, justification by faith. It was resisted down many centuries and is still resisted to this day but it is the very essence of the gospel. There are two things which Paul says to the Romans in chapter 5:

- First in verse one, *“having been justified on the principle of faith”*. That is, by believing God and His word and trusting in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ we are justified. Justification is important in scripture. The Lord took it up Himself in the

case of the Pharisee and the tax gatherer. The tax gatherer went down to his house justified rather than the other (see Luke 18:14). There was nothing good about him and he confessed it. But God took him up where he was in his soul and took account of his faith and repentance; *“God be merciful to me a sinner”*.

- Then the other thing is in verse two, *“by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand”*.

As I read these verses I wondered whether I sometimes read them without thinking about the words, *“by faith”*. The epistle to the Ephesians tells us that we are taken into favour in God’s beloved Son. We rest on that. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing. But what Paul says here is, ‘You do stand in favour but it is by faith that you enjoy it’. We need to trust God, not only for our salvation initially but for the enjoyment of His company.

**When the Lord was here. He glorified God on His own** Faith is what makes these things a reality for us. God has established us but to enter into it requires faith because we are not going to see these things with our eyes; we are not going to experience them by feel and touch. It is only by faith. This is not a blind faith that holds to doctrines where we really have no idea of what their foundation is. It is in answer to the light that God graciously gives and part of the light that He gives in regard of the gospel is for us to know that we are taken into His favour. That is why the Lord told, in the parable of the prodigal son, that the son was brought right into favour. He thought he would be doing very well if he could just be let in but he found that God had a lot more in mind.

Knowing something of this wonderful favour we can boast in hope, but it is the hope of the glory of God; it is not centred on ourselves. We look forward to God having His rights and the full outcome of what He had in mind in making man and granting



salvation. When the Lord was here He glorified God on His own, *"I have glorified thee on the earth"*(John 17:4). No one partook in giving glory to God in the way that the Lord did and none could glorify Him in death as the Lord did. But He graciously invites us to have part with Him. In Hebrews, in the second chapter the apostle leads very quickly on to, *"he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one"*. He is the Captain of the salvation of the very ones of whom He would say they are one with Him. It is wonderful but it is not beyond us to enter into. The apostle himself said, *"He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?"* (Romans 8:32). That would be a good basis for saying that if I can trust God for my salvation I can trust Him for His promises of divine favour. He has saved me not just to deliver me from hell but because He would desire our company. God has a desire to be known by men and to have a response from them and to have an answer to His love for them. *"If anyone love God, he is known of him"* (1 Corinthians 8:3).

It is important that we should love God, that we should not regard Christianity as a duty, something that God will use to save us but there is no real pleasure to be found in it. A Christian is meant to be happy. Of course there are tests and trials, but basically the Christian is meant to be happy in the knowledge that God loves us and wants our love for Him.

None of us, of course, can give faith to somebody else. All we can do is to speak of what I trust we enjoy ourselves, what the scripture says, and what others in scripture have enjoyed and wait on the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts because He is the One who sheds abroad the love of God (Romans 5:5).

Justification on the principle of faith is a most important principle. Prior to the Reformation there had been a complete rival to justification by faith, called justification by works, which was essentially that you needed to lead a good life and if it was

good enough you would be saved. Now, over against that, what those that were given light, then and now, learned was that there was nothing in the Bible about being justified by the good we thought we could do; it was all by trusting in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the wonderful thing for the believer is that if you trust the Lord Jesus and His work you are justified, you are counted righteous. It is not that because I have faith I turn into somebody who is always good; that is not what it means at all. There is a lot that has to be forgiven with each of us all the time. But because I have trusted God and His work, the work of Christ, God no longer holds my sins against me and has no need to because Christ has borne them all. It is the way that God has chosen because, if we think about good works, no one would ever get saved.

Jesus was raised again *“for our justification” (Romans 4:25)*, demonstrating that He has conquered death and not death that has conquered Him. He has borne our sins in His body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24) and God has raised Him up and *“given Him glory” (1 Peter 1:21)*. It is God who justifies. So that is a good ground of confidence. We could not be justified by anyone greater. One trouble with trying to be justified by works is that there is always something going into the other half of the balance, all the bad things I have done. We will never get to glory that way and God has no intention that we should. Because, if it was by works, then we would be pleased with ourselves. Paul says that, *“not on the principle of works, that no one might boast” (Ephesians 2:9)*.

We see a shadow of this in Cain and Abel. They were both of sinful stock. There was naturally nothing to choose between them, yet Abel had faith. Cain worked hard and he brought what he worked. He seemed not to have noticed that a curse had been put on the ground. If it could be done by hard work Cain was there. But it could not.

David Burr

*Based on a Bible Reading in London, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2016.*

*Editor's note: The article on Faith has been divided into two sections. The part covering 1 Peter 1:3-9 and Hebrews 2:5-10 will feature in our next issue DV.*

## Poetry Selection

### UNDER THY SHADOW

Under Thy shadow,  
Shepherd and King,  
Safe from all evil,  
Under Thy wing  
Strangers and pilgrims.  
Forward we move,  
Calm in Thy keeping,  
Strong in Thy love.  
Leaning upon Thee,  
Close to Thy side,  
In Thy communion  
We would abide.  
Closer still clinging,  
Saviour to Thee  
Daily our journey  
Upwards shall be.

Goodness and mercy  
Ever attend,  
Guidance and keeping  
On to the end;  
Solace in sorrow,  
Brightness in gloom,  
Light everlasting  
Over the tomb.  
Counsel and comfort  
Whate'er befall  
Thou wilt afford us  
Saviour in all.  
Glad let Thy presence  
Still with us dwell:  
Nothing shall harm us,  
All shall be well.

Faint yet pursuing,  
Upwards we rise;  
See the bright prospect,  
Yonder the prize!  
On to the haven,  
To the calm shore,  
In the fair city  
Safe evermore.

Horatius Bonar (1808 – 1889)  
July 1883

## Reprinted from Living Water No 38

### **YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN**

“Not your own” but His by right  
His peculiar treasure now,  
Fair and precious in His sight,  
Purchased jewels for His brow.  
He will keep what thus He bought,  
Cherish that which He did choose,  
Safely guard and never lose.

“Not your own” but His, the King,  
He the Lord of earth and sky,  
He to whom archangels bring  
Homage deep and praises high.  
What can royal birth bestow?  
Or the proudest titles show?  
Can such dignity be known  
As the glorious name, His own?

“Not your own”, To Him ye owe  
All your life and all your love;  
Live that ye His praise may show,  
Who is yet all praise above.  
Every day and every hour,  
Every gift and every power,  
Consecrate to Him alone,  
Who hath claimed you for His own.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836 – 1879)

## Testimony Section

### A TRUSTING SOLDIER'S PRAYER

When death sweeps o'er the battle field,  
I pray Thou wilt Thy servant shield,  
Or if sore wounded I should fall  
Thy grace will strengthen me through all.  
Oh Lord, to Thy servant give more grace  
That bravely he may danger face.  
But if to me the call should come,  
I'll have a hearty welcome home,  
Where war and turmoil all are past  
And peace and joy for ever last.  
Oh hear Thy servant's prayer and may  
He be prepared for that great day.  
Oh keep my loved ones, far away,  
Give them Thy blessing every day.  
And if it is Thy will for me  
May we one day united be.  
Hear my petitions, Oh dear Lord,  
Forever be Thy Name adored.

Cyril Mead

*Written on active service with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in Macedonia*

*This poem is reproduced from "Hear my Cry" (2014) published by The Bible Society in partnership with The Royal British Legion and is used with permission.*

### A SOLDIER'S TESTIMONY

Often the only evidence that the relatives might have that a soldier, killed in battle, had trusted in Christ before he died came from an inscription written in the fly-leaf of a Bible or New Testament. Just such a testimony was discovered in the New Testament found in the pocket of Arthur Stewart. He had left

home as a rather careless and godless young man but through God's grace a great change took place.

*Should I be among the number that  
Will probably fall in battle, will  
Someone please send this to my  
Father at the following address:*

*J. R. Stewart,  
Hortonville,  
Nova Scotia.*

*The enemy is in front of us and we  
May be called to fight at any time  
Although I have no desire to fight or  
To wilfully injure anyone.*

*But death has lost its terror for me  
Since by faith I saw that Christ died  
for my sins and rose again for my  
Justification.*

*Arthur D. Stewart*

### **A voice from the past**

## **NOTES FROM JOHN TAYLOR-SMITH'S BIBLE**

John Taylor-Smith (1860 – 1938) was Chaplain General to the British Army throughout the First World War. He was brought up in a Christian home and when he was eleven came to know the Lord as his personal Saviour. For much of his life he carefully annotated a Bible – underlining important passages and adding pithy notes in the margins. What follows is a selection of those notes set out according to the order of the books in the New Testament. (Living Water No 132 contains a selection from the books of the Old Testament.)

*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” Matthew 4:4*

If we want to be fat and flourishing we must feed much on God’s word. Many read, few feed. The Bible is silent to the careless, but to the digger rich.

*“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you” Matthew 6:33*

Not taken away, as some seem to think

*“Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea” Matthew 14:25*

He knows every billow! Christ prays while we toil. He will come sooner or later to rescue, for the promise is “never leave, nor forsake”

*“Send her away” Matthew 15:23*

What a contrast between Christ and His disciples. Christ never sent away a single applicant

*“Lord, are there few that be saved?” Luke 13:23*

Never mind the few or the many, mind your own business.

*“God be merciful to me a sinner” Luke 18:13*

When the spirit feels most, it can say least. There is one sentence of the publican to many of the Pharisee.

*“Today thou shalt be with me in paradise” Luke 23:43*

To Herod He had answered nothing. To Pilate’s question, “Whence art thou?” He made no reply; but to a penitent thief, “Today... with Me”

*“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness” John 1:23*

Wonderful humility, a voice heard but not seen.

*“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples” John 1:35*

Let us not be ashamed to point to Jesus in our conversation

*“Jesus therefore, being weary with his journey, sat thus on the well” John 4:6*

Weary, but not too weary to save souls. Jesus forgets His own need in thinking of this poor woman’s need.

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me John 10:27*

Christ’s sheep have two marks – the ear and the foot – they hear and follow.

*“So they ran both together and the other disciple outran Peter” John 20:4*

Love ever outruns zeal.

*“They went to an upper room, where abode Peter...and Thomas...” Acts 1:13*

Though Peter denied and Thomas doubted, yet they are here, forgiven and reinstated.

*“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” Acts 1:14*

The secret of a good work.

*“The same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers” Acts 12:6*

In the garden Peter slept because his faith was weak – in the prison he slept because his faith was strong.

*“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord” Acts 14:23*

The world says, “Take care of yourself”: Christians say, “The Lord be with you”

*“That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. Acts 17:27*

So near that all can touch. He came so low that His hands



reached the heads of little children. Philosophy makes slow progress in saving men. It has eyes to see man's misery, but no hands to lift him out.

*"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you" Philippians 1:3*

Mark Paul's gratitude for good men expressed in prayer.

*"Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ" Philippians 1:27*

The discrepancy between the creed of Christian men and their daily conduct is a terrible sin and a tremendous curse.

*"Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you" 1 Peter 5:7*

All the small cares with the large ones, small flies and pin scratches hurt more than big ones!

*"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" 2 Peter 2:9*

Praise the Lord He does it!

*"Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace" 2 Peter 3:14*

Only the diligent servant will be happy when the Lord comes.

*Grace be with you ,mercy, and peace, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love" 2 John 3*

As John draws near the evening of life the two things dearest to his heart are ever on his lips – truth and love.

*"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans which I also hate" Revelation 2:6*

Indifference to error may be deemed to be charity, but it is not so. God is jealous over us; we ought to be jealous for His glory.

John Taylor-Smith

## A word for today

### THE COMING OF THE LORD – PART 3

Luke 12:32-40.

THE subject of this chapter is simply, as pointed out in a previous article, the state of soul suitable to meet the Lord on His return; and we see in detail how the Lord sought to prepare His disciples, and to impart to them the state of soul which He requires. I want to go back over the points of the chapter, in order to connect them with what I have before me now:-

- In the first place the Lord Jesus sought to deliver His disciples from the fear of man, in order that there might be a bold confession of His name while they were passing through this scene.
- Then He sought to deliver them from anxiety as to the things of this life, that they might seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, that all needful things might be added to them.
- He also sought to establish them in grace, as we read in verse 32: *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"*; and He sought also to make them representatives of grace as they passed through this world. Thus He says to them, *"Sell what ye have, and give alms."*
- Then there is another point to which I call attention, as it connects itself with what is before me this evening. It is this. If we represent God in grace in this world, we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. It is a wonderful thing, if we are givers in this world, and thus represent God as a giver, we lay up treasure in heaven for ourselves. But remember, when we speak of treasure in heaven, that everything is centred in Christ, and, therefore, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. I understand, therefore, that Christ is our treasure, and so the way to be heavenly-minded is to have our hearts set upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

## The Challenge for those waiting for the Lord's return

Now I am sure every one here to-night realises that the dearest object we have upon earth is the one that commands our attention and affections. It is always true that where our treasure is, there our hearts will be. So the Lord tells us that if we have Him as our treasure, then our thoughts will be with Him. *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (v. 34). There is a distinct connection between that statement and what follows, which is the subject of this evening. The Lord immediately says, *"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning"* (v. 35). I may say at once that if you have your treasure upon earth you will not have your loins girded, or your lights burning; it is impossible. There is the absolute necessity of having your treasure in heaven if you would be found waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What I feel myself in regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is that it is too much of a doctrine, and too little practical as affecting us in our daily lives. We shall never wait for the Lord unless He possesses our hearts. Perhaps you will say to me, 'Every one of us has the Lord Jesus Christ in his heart.' Are you sure that the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the hearts of all His people? If He does, then nothing but Christ will come out from them. If He is in our hearts He must be expressed, and the only way to express Christ in passing through this world is to have Him enshrined in our affections. If He is not, He will never be expressed; and this, let me say, illustrates a principle of great importance: that is, we only express as much of Christ as we are like Him; we could not express more if we tried. It is only in the proportion as He is formed within us that He can be expressed by us. If we have only a little of Christ, we cannot express much of Him, and thus you will see the importance of pressing this, that the Lord Jesus can only come out of us in our daily

**We shall never wait for the Lord unless He possesses our hearts**

walk and conduct in proportion as we are like Him. A little of Christ—alas, how little some of us possess! We all know it; but then, beloved, we can only present Christ in proportion as we are like Him, and that is why He presses this scripture, *“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (v.34).

Now He tells us to let our loins be girded about and our lights burning, and then He says, *“And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding”* (v. 36). Let us look at this statement in detail. *“Let your loins be girded about.”* Now this is the first of only three references on the New Testament to the loins being girded. The others are: *“Having your loins girt about with truth”* (Ephesians 6:14); and, *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind”* (1 Peter 1:3). Now put these three together, and we get this, that it is inwardly we are to be girt; it is in the spiritual mind; and then our loins are to be girt about with the truth. What is the truth? The truth is the revelation of God in Christ Jesus and it is with this that we are to be girded. The Lord says plainly, *“Let your loins be girded about”*; that is, as I understand it, girt about with the truth in its application to us in the power of the Spirit, so that inwardly under the influence of the truth we may be girded about, so that we may be prepared for conflict or service, or whatever we are called to do. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we should understand this expression, *“Let your loins be girt about with truth.”*

Then there is another thing—*“And your lights burning”* (v.35). Does the light of every Christian shine out? Well now, the Apostle Paul speaks in Philippians in this wise, *“Among whom ye appear as lights in the world”* (Philippians 2:15). The word ‘appear’ here is really the same word as would apply to the rising of the sun or the moon. Every believer in like manner is to shine, but then, alas! we do not often shine, so the Lord Jesus says, *“And your lights burning.”* In the first place, we have to ascertain what the light is. As far as I understand Scripture, the light is always Christ in the New Testament. It is the only light in the

midst of the darkness, and so He speaks in this scripture of the lights burning; it is the light of Christ coming out in the daily life of the believer; there is no other light for men: *"The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4:6). That received into the heart should flow out of us in our ways and conduct.

I think everyone will see the necessity of this in regard to the Christian life, that the light should be burning; but why do our lights not burn? Well, you will find in the tabernacle that Aaron had to trim the lights so that they might shine without obstruction. We all know what it is to see a candle with a long wick, and the light dim in consequence. It needs to be trimmed in order that the light may shine clearly. Now, some of us Christians may have bad habits that obscure the light. Worldliness, hasty temper, evil associations, these and other things obscure the light. Therefore we have to judge ourselves. There must be self-judgment, in order that everything that is inconsistent with Christ may have no place with us. How many of us have been the cause of stumbling to our fellow-Christians because our lights have not shone clearly! If we were living and walking in the power of the Holy Ghost there would be a manifest testimony to the Lord Jesus shining out of every one of us. The light cannot be hid; we read of the Lord Himself that He could not be hid. Why not? Because of the light that shone so perfectly from Him. You have this statement in John 1, *"The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not"* (John 1:5). The darkness sought to put the light out, and so they crucified our blessed Lord and Saviour.

Now, 'What is the condition for the outshining of the light?' I know of only one; the Apostle Paul gives it to us in the statement about himself: *"Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus"* (2 Corinthians 4:10). Now what is the dying of Jesus? Simply, it is the application of the truth of the cross to what I am. What the apostle meant is this - that nothing of Paul might shine out but only Christ in all he said and did. Let me give you

a simple illustration. Suppose I am a witty man, and I meet you, and we have a conversation together. If not held by the power of the Spirit of God, I might be tempted to display my wit. That would not be Christ, but self; and hence, in order for the light to shine, there must be the application of death to all that I am, that only Christ may be displayed. This, I apprehend, is what the Lord means in this scripture, *"Your lights burning."*

Now, before I go further, let me just make one or two applications, because it is one thing to see the meaning of Scripture, but quite another thing to be in the power of it. May I ask you, and myself too, Are our loins girded and are our lights burning? Do you answer, 'I do not know?' We do know! I am sure of this, if you will allow me to say it, that where the light shines out of a Christian distinctly and clearly, the man of the world will hate it. It was so in the case of the blessed Lord; men could not bear the fierceness of the light, therefore, they sought to quench it by crucifying Him. Let us, then, bear in mind that if you and I would be ready to meet the Lord Jesus when He returns, there must be the girded loins and there must be the burning lights.

### **The attitude of those waiting for the Lord's return**

Now we come to the attitude that has to be maintained. You will see the attitude is this, *"And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately "* (v. 36). The figure, then, is this. The servants are in the hall, they have their hands upon the door, waiting for the first sign of their lord's return, and, on his first knock, they throw the door open in order to receive him. There are two things: they are waiting for their lord's return, and they are waiting for *him*. The two things go together. Now, do you and I desire the Lord to return? We sometimes sing a line of a hymn:

*Take Thy poor, waiting pilgrims home.*

Do we mean it? It means that while we are singing we are asking

Are we ready to see the Lord to take us home. Is that our desire? No, beloved, oftentimes it is not. Hence

what the Lord presses upon us

here is that we are to be in the condition suited to His return, and in the attitude of always expecting Him. If you remember, I asked last week how many of us really from day to day have thought of the Lord's return. How many have said from day to day the Lord may be here before the close of the day? Yet the attitude the Lord enjoins in this scripture amounts to that, always waiting, always expecting, and always longing that you may see Him face to face. I know how easy it is to swim down the stream of time, and to forget the possibility of a sudden change, that while we are passing along day by day, and while the course of business flows on, there may be a sudden catching away of the people of God, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be for ever with Him. The question, therefore, comes to each one of us, Are we ready to see the Lord face to face?

Let me give an illustration. Let us suppose how a loving wife whose husband has gone to Australia would act. She does not know when he will return, and let me say, in order to complete the illustration, that during his absence she has not ceased to love him, but she has gathered about her some few things he would not like on his return. She receives a letter to say he is coming back soon. What is her first thought? She looks round the house, and says, 'My husband would not like to see that.' She is a true wife, and so she puts it away, and not only does she do that, but she collects everything that will please him when he returns.

This illustration will have its application to us here to-night. Is the Lord returning? If He is, I want to get rid of everything that will not please Him, and that is the meaning, I apprehend, of the passage in 1 John 3: *"Every one that hath this hope in Him"* (that is, in Christ) *"purifies himself, even as He is pure"* (v.3). Now purifying oneself is this—getting rid of all that is unsuited

to Christ, and the acquisition of everything that is suited to Him. That is the only possible way of being ready to meet Him when He returns. Let us not pass by a scripture like this, but let it lay hold of our hearts in living power, when the Lord says, *"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."*

I was reading a little book lately; it was not according to the truth in all its aspects, but there was one thing in it which struck me very much. A rich merchant returned home to his family from his business in the evening. His wife noticed he was depressed and asked him what was the matter. He answered, "I have heard to-day that the Lord Jesus is likely to return very soon" and he began to mourn over the fact in that it was the end to all his plans. 'All my gain and profit will pass away if the Lord does really come.' And yet that man was a Christian! Well now, I want us to make the application to ourselves, so that we may not be occupied with anything whatsoever on which the Lord cannot smile when He returns. It shows us how practical the whole thing is, and that is the object of the chapter, to build us up in a state of suitability to meet the Lord. The Lord has that end in view through the whole chapter.

### **The recompense of waiting for the Lord**

Well, now let me pass to the other side: the Lord's recompense for those who are found in this way, watching and waiting. He says, *"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them"* (v. 37). The first thing is, *"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord shall find watching."* Now we all know what watching is. If you had a dear friend returning from a distance, and suppose you could see the way from the window, you would be watching and waiting there expecting him. Well, the Lord pronounces blessing upon those who are so



watching, and thus I ask myself, as I ask you here to-night, 'Are you really watching?'

In that very day  
our thoughts and  
imagination will  
all end

How many of us attend to the signs of the times, to political movements, and all that kind of thing, the confusion and agitations that go on around us, worldly schemes and plans. But of what value is all that? Why, it will all end for every child of God the moment the Lord comes. In that very day our thoughts and imaginations will all end, just as they end when we come to die. The blessing is reserved for those who are found watching. And so, beloved, the conclusion I press upon you is this, 'We must be watching if we would please the Lord'. I have sometimes said, and I quite believe it, that even domestic happiness is sometimes a great barrier for waiting for the Lord. Domestic happiness is a good thing; I would say that it is one of the flowers of the Garden of Eden! But still it may come between the soul and Christ; and thus the Lord strips some of us, and we wait, and are solitary while waiting, because He cannot trust us with too much affection in this world. He loves us so much, that He is jealous over us, and wants us for Himself. Do you ever read that expression in the Song of Songs, "*Jealousy is cruel as the grave*"? What is the meaning? I will tell you how it presents itself to me. When a body is committed to the ground the grave closes in over it and shuts out every other object; it possesses that body absolutely. Well, the Lord's jealousy is like that. Do you suppose the Lord could contemplate with indifference our hearts going after this thing, and that thing which are contrary to Himself? No; if He loves us, and He does love us, He wants our whole hearts. Nothing less than our whole hearts will ever satisfy Him. "*Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.*"

Now see the wonderful recompense! "*Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*" You will see there are two

things. *"He shall gird Himself"* as the servant. The Lord was the servant down here; you remember He said to His disciples, *"I am among you as He that serveth"* (Luke 22:27). The blessed Lord, entitled to everything, the One who created everything, and the One who died upon the cross, yet took the place of a servant amongst His disciples. Ah! what imperfect disciples they were. Christians sometimes say to me, 'It is impossible to love So-and-so, their conduct is so strange'. Well, was not the Lord surrounded by those whose conduct was very strange? Was there not Thomas who doubted and Peter who denied Him? Did the Lord cease to love them? Nay! He says, *"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you"*(John 15:9). The only way to love the people of God is to see them as God sees them, accepted in Christ, and then you can love them. The Lord will gird Himself, He will take the lowest place amongst His people. This is in the glory itself after He has come. *"He will gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat"*. You may say, 'What is the meaning of that?' Well, I will tell you the thought in the statement which satisfies my own heart. It is this. He will cause us to feast on what delights His own heart and which will delight yours and mine. Is not that wonderful? Sharing His own joys with His beloved people, and not only sharing His own joys but, coming forth to serve them, He will minister these delights to us Himself and He will take the lowest place, the servant of His people, and He will make them rejoice in the sense of His presence and the enjoyment of His love; and so they will not have a single object that He has not.

Then remember that we have often been taught that there is not a single future blessing which may not be in some measure enjoyed now. If we are going to feast with the Lord on His own delights by and by, may we not do so now? We sometimes sing: *His joys our deepest joys afford*. How feebly it is true of us, and yet it may be so. Thus you see in the glory itself the Lord Jesus will come, and will cause His people *'to sit down to*

*meat, and will come forth and serve them'*; and so it is that He holds out all this blessed prospect to encourage our hearts, and to keep them upon Himself in the place where He is.

Then the Lord says this: *"And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through"* (v. 39); then He adds, *"Be ye therefore ready also"* (that is, on the watch): *"for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not"* (v. 40). I do not go into the distinction between the public coming of Christ and His coming to receive His people. I speak to-night in a general way. Here it is the Son of Man coming, and that always applies to the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the prospect of which we live day by day, as the apostle says, *"those who love His appearing"* (2 Timothy 4:8). The point of this additional figure which the Lord uses is this, that we are always to be ready, *"Be ye therefore ready also"* It is not state of soul only; it is mainly that, but there are many things to be settled. I was dining one day with a lady in London, and I said to her at the table, 'Would you like the Lord Jesus to return to-day?' 'No', she said, 'I would not. I have many things to settle up first, I would rather He did not come to-day.' Well, the Lord says, *"Be ye ready"*, that is, everything settled up, and we as real pilgrims and strangers passing through this world with nothing to detain us because our hearts are upon Him where He is now. It all resolves itself into that.

I will just press these few last words upon us all. Does the Lord Jesus possess our hearts? If He does, then our hearts will be in the place where He is, and that will be the means of readiness for His return. All depends upon the state of soul, our state, so I cannot conceive of anything tending to greater edification than to sit down quietly in the presence of the Lord, and to put this question to oneself, 'Am I ready to meet Him? Would He find in me and round about me all that would delight His own heart?' If I can say, 'Yes, He would', then I am in the state which He

desires.

Let me just recapitulate the chapter. In the first place, He would deliver us from the fear of man. This is a snare to many of us. I have known many young Christians who have made shipwreck because of the fear of man round about them. Then He would deliver us from anxiety. The Lord says, 'You need not have a single care, God will take care of you'. So let us leave ourselves in His hands; He points to the birds and flowers in order to convince us that God does care for us. *"Ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31)*. God's care may always be trusted. *"I have been young, and now am old,"* says the Psalmist, *"yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25)*.

Then He wants to establish our hearts in grace. It is a wonderful thing! *"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)*. You cannot earn it, He will give it to you. So if our hearts are established in grace now, we can go out in grace, and we can give because God is a giver. Then, as I pointed out at the outset, when we represent God in grace we will lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, and then our hearts will be there, and that will lead to preparedness to meet the Lord—the loins will be girded, and the lights burning.

Well, I believe it is of all importance to have the Lord continually before our hearts. May He grant that our meditation to-night may lead many of us to judge ourselves as to anything that is not suitable to Him, and lead us at the same time to acquire everything that would please His eye and delight His heart. May He grant it to us for His name's sake.

Edward Dennett (1831 – 1914)

*To be continued DV*