

139

Living Water

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Recent Ministry

WHAT GOD SEES AND WHAT GOD LOOKS FOR

Genesis 1:31-2:3; 6:1-8

Exodus 12:3-7, 12, 13

Philippians 2:12-21

I wish to say something about what God sees:

- In Genesis chapters 1 & 2 we have what God saw in His creation;
- In Genesis chapter 6 we have what God saw in man: *“that the thoughts of his heart [were] only evil continually”* (v.5);
- In Exodus 12 God says *“when I see the blood”*; then finally,
- In Philippians we find what God looks for in believers in the Lord Jesus.

A man was handed a gospel tract recently and when he received it he said, ‘Has anyone any time for God any more?’ He said ‘I try to go to church but there is so much else to do. I do not think many people are interested these days’. What a reflection that is on society. We read in the epistle to the Romans, *“each of us shall give an account concerning himself to God”* (Romans 14:12). When you are called to account what are you going to say? Each of us must give an account, there is no exclusion. It is a sobering thing to think about.

Some people say, ‘Is there a God and, if there is, does He care?’ People do not wish to have God in their lives, we are told about that in Romans: *“they did not think good to have God in their knowledge”*. That is a sobering thought, but the way the verse goes on is even more alarming; *“God gave them up”* (Romans 1:28). It is one thing for you to give God up but if God gives you up that is a serious matter.

Now, in the Scriptures we have read, it says in Genesis 1 that God saw that everything that He had made was very good, but in chapter 6 we read that He repented that He had made man.

What had come in to bring in such a change in God's attitude? Genesis 1 tells us that, "*God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good*" (Genesis 1:31). God's creation was perfect. Everything was to His delight, and He was perfectly satisfied so He could rest on the seventh day.

If we look around at creation today we can see that it is not perfect because of the incoming of sin. Although the creation has been marred you can still take account of it; at this time of year, as we head into winter, everything is dying off or dead, but when we come into the spring an amazing transformation takes place as everything comes to life again. And this happens every year, as it has for thousands of years, as the scriptures say "*seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.*" (Genesis 8:22). This is what God said after the flood. How great He is in His creatorial power, but the top stone of His creation was man, and man was given to have authority over everything and put in a place of responsibility. "*God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the heavens...*" (Genesis 1:28). God "*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*" (Genesis 2:7). That is the difference between us (man) and the rest of creation. We are not the same as animals, we are distinctive in that God has breathed into man the breath of life. Each of us is a creature of God, and the fact that we are here is not an accident; it is what God has planned. This brings us into a place of responsibility to God Himself.

So in chapter 6 the situation is very different from what we have in Genesis chapter 1. What a statement it is, "*My Spirit shall not always plead with Man*" (v.3). Let us take account of this scripture today. Think of God taking account of what is proceeding in the world at this present time. You might ask "Is God interested?" Of course He is; He is a God who knows the end from the beginning and He is working out His plans and counsels.

You have to acknowledge that you are a sinner before God

Those in power think they are achieving wonderful things but all they are actually doing is achieving God's end. He is moving everything according to His own timetable and men are His instruments, although they do not consult God as to what they do. In man's arrogance and pride man thinks he is able to do great things, but God is looking on, taking account of all that is proceeding.

In Genesis 6 we read: *"Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great" — we are surrounded with it on every hand — "and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually"*. That is the natural inclination of the human mind as away from God.

We are no different, although we may look a very nice and respectable congregation; I trust that we are all saved by grace and have a personal knowledge of Jesus as Saviour but I do not know your heart. God alone knows where you truly stand. You do not become a Christian because you study the Bible for so many years or because you have said your prayers or because you have been to Christian services. That is not how you become a Christian.

You have to acknowledge that you are a sinner before God. What marked those people whom God saw in Genesis 6 was sin, and sin marks the whole human race. Sin came in between what is recorded in Genesis chapter 1 and what we read about in chapter 6; *"by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus death passed upon all men" (Romans 5:12)*. Have you ever thought of the awfulness of sin, and death has come upon us as a consequence of sin? If Adam had reached out and touched the tree of life everything would have been lost for God. What a terrible thought to have persons living for ever as sinners. Judgment came in! Death was the penalty for Adam

and Eve's sin of disobedience against God.

The devil was very crafty. I expect each of us know how easily he deceives our own hearts. Speaking to Eve the serpent says *"Is it even so, that God has said..." (Genesis 3:1)*. Satan was trying to put some doubt into her heart. 'No', he says, 'You will not die. You will become like God, knowing the difference between good and evil'. So Eve was deceived; she took of the fruit and gave to her husband, and they both ate.

I have often wondered about that; Adam did not ask where the fruit had come from. We read, *"she took of its fruit, and ate, and gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6)*. There was failure with Eve but Adam also failed in his responsibility.

They both ate and became conscious of their state before God – that they were naked, so they hid themselves. You have probably had the same experience. You fall into sin and you do not feel very comfortable and then you think about God and His presence and try to hide from Him. Many people today have decided they do not want God in their lives; they know that they are not suitable for God's presence, so they lose themselves in their own lives of pleasure without any thought of God. But this is all going to come to an end; the pleasures of sin are for a season (see Hebrews 11:25).

God is appealing to man in grace today

The world that we are in at the present time is ripe for judgment, and it is a scene of judgment that we read of in Genesis chapter 6. God was giving notice of His intention to bring judgment upon the earth, and it is true that God is going to bring judgment on this world, so God is appealing to man in grace today.

It says in our scripture that God *"repented that he had made man" (v.6)*. What a thing that must have been for God, to repent about the top stone of His creation. He *"repented that he had*

made man" and *"it grieved him in his heart"* (v.6). Think of the feelings of God in relation to His creature. But there was something here for God because it says, *"But Noah found favour in the eyes of Jehovah"* (v.8). Noah walked with God.

In Noah we really have an Old Testament type (or picture) of Christ. There is one Man who has brought delight to God and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One that the gospel is about. That is the good news, God's glad tidings, concerning His Son (Romans 1:1-3). You may think that what has been said so far has been a bit miserable, but the glad tidings is about Jesus. It is about the fact that God has sent His Son as Saviour into this world. Judgment is coming, but there is One who has borne the judgment that is due to us.

God does not desire the death of a sinner. I wonder at that. Think of how wicked our hearts are – think of how wicked some people's lives are! Yet God has *"no pleasure in the death of the wicked"*, but desires *"that all should come to repentance"* (Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9). God is working in the glad tidings to bring you to the point where you repent and find Jesus as your Saviour.

This brings me to the scripture in Exodus 12: *"When I see the blood, I will pass over..."*. In Exodus it was the blood of a lamb without blemish that had to be put on the doorpost and the lintel of the house if those in the house were to escape the destroying angel. It looked on to the blood of Jesus that was shed at Calvary. When Jesus was here on earth He was absolutely delightful to God in every way. He was the Man of God's heart, the Man of God's choice — the sent One of God.

Was that an afterthought? No, it was always in God's plans and purposes. We cannot trace God's counsels; we cannot understand them but He was not taken by surprise by what happened between Genesis 1 and 6. It did not catch God out: it brings to light His wonderful ways and desire to bring in

salvation for us. God had a desire to be close to His creature, and to have communion with him. God is a God of love; that is His

Jesus knew what sin meant to God

nature and He wants us to know His heart. I do not think that Adam and Eve knew God's love but it has been expressed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who made the love of God known at Calvary. The cross is the focal point of the gospel, the focal point of history you might say, because all that took place in Old Testament times looked forward to the cross and everything now looks back to that momentous time when Jesus suffered on the cross, when He who knew not sin was made sin for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus knew what sin meant to God; He was God in Himself and He knew how offensive it was. Sin is never forgiven; sin is judged but sins are forgiven. There is a distinction. One could say, *"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). And Jesus knew what He was going to have to suffer so that God could come out in forgiveness and blessing towards you and me.

God is holy and He cannot have sin in His presence. He is holy but He wants you in His presence because He loves you and yet you cannot come into God's presence with the slightest trace of sin upon you. How are you going to remove that stain of sin? You are born in sin. But God sent His Son so that He might take away that terrible matter and come out in blessing towards His creature. So the Lord Jesus is the One who *"bore our sins in His body on the tree"* (1 Peter 2:24). What a wonderful sacrifice was made by Jesus at Calvary when He shed His own blood so that we might be forgiven.

Where we read in Exodus records the time when the people of Israel were in Egypt and were slaves to the Egyptians. God desired to deliver them from Egypt and the bondage that they had come under, and proposed to move in judgment against

those who oppressed Israel. So God tells the people of Israel to take a lamb, a lamb that speaks to us of Jesus.

Think about this lamb; it was to live in the household for four days and at the end of those days they were to kill that lamb. Think of what it would have meant. The thought of a lamb is very precious, it is not a sheep but a lamb. When the new lambs are born in the spring everybody is attracted to them but the lamb that the people of Israel were to take was one that was a year old, and they were to take this lamb and kill it. Then they were to take the blood and put it on the lintel and doorposts of their houses as a sign, because God was going to send the destroying angel through Egypt and the only way of being saved from God's judgment was to have the blood of the lamb on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the house. The blood painted on the lintel and door posts was the only means of salvation, but it took faith. All they had was God's word and they believed and obeyed it, and that is like the gospel, you have to believe God's word. It is an act of faith.

How can we be saved from the wrath to come? The only answer is to trust in the precious blood of Jesus, the blood that was shed on the cross two thousand years ago. People may ridicule it and say, 'How can something that happened so long ago have any bearing today?' But it has an immense bearing. Before Jesus came into the world there was the great sacrificial system set out in the Old Testament but none of those sacrifices took away sins, (See Hebrews 10 v 11-12) but they looked on to the time when Jesus would offer Himself spotless to God. The only sacrifice that caused delight to God was the sacrifice of His Son on the cross when He gave up His life and shed His blood.

It was the Lord Jesus' own act: it was not just the result of a man piercing His side. It was an act of blessing: He gave His precious blood. The blood can remove your sins from the sight of God if you have faith in Jesus. The Israelites had to have faith in God's word and do what God said, and so do we.

The judgment came on Egypt. The destroying angel went through Egypt and the eldest son in every household came

Everything in this world is temporary

under the penalty of death. What sorrow filled Egypt that night as the terrible judgment came even into Pharaoh's house. Every strata of society was affected by it, and this was the means by which the people of Israel were delivered from the bondage they had been under.

God said, *"when I see the blood, I will pass over you"*. Are you sheltering under the finished work of Jesus? Have you put your faith in Jesus as your own Saviour? Have you confessed your sins to God? Peter could say on that day of Pentecost, *"And salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)*. No one else can save you; Jesus has died for your sins, no one else has. Do not fall under the lie of the devil that you can earn your salvation or merit it in some way. The only way is through faith in the Lord Jesus and in what He has done at Calvary. He is a wonderful Saviour – Salvation through Jesus is available today. Anyone alive today anywhere may call upon Jesus and know what it is to be saved. What good news it is! There is eternal salvation on offer in the gospel today.

Everything in this world is temporary; it passes and your life is passing, how sobering that is. People worry about what the future holds, but as a believer in Jesus you do not have to worry, *"both if we should live then, and if we should die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8)*. What a precious promise that is. If we have trusted in Christ we are secure in Him for time and eternity. He will never let us down; He has promised, *"I will not leave thee neither will I forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5)*. What a comfort it is to our hearts that the work of Jesus has secured us for eternity.

All it takes is for you to exercise faith, repent towards God and

ask Christ to be your Saviour and take shelter under His precious blood. The price God demanded has been paid by Jesus. He went into death; Jesus gave up His life: men did not take His life from Him, He gave it up, *"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit"* (Luke 23:46). He uttered a loud cry: He went out in victory, completing the work of redemption to God's eternal satisfaction.

We can have confidence in what Jesus has done. It is very sobering that Jesus went into the domain of death, but the wonder of it is that He has come out of death. He is risen and ascended, and alive today, available for all who call upon Him.

He has defeated him who had the might of death, that is the devil (see Hebrews 2:14), having annulled the power that the devil had. The devil can not take the life of a Christian; the believer is in the hands of the Lord, so let us each of us put our faith and trust in Him.

Finally, just a word on Philippians, to see what God looks for in a Christian. God is looking for something from our lives. As believers in Jesus we are to be: *"harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among who ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life..."* (Philippians 2:15-16).

Christians have always found themselves as living in the *"midst of a crooked and perverted generation"* – a world that is away from God. So how is the believer to be? Are we to hide? No! We are to be *"as lights in the world"*. People might not listen to what we say but they watch what we do, and they are the first to tell us if we do not do what they expect of a Christian. I remember when I was young, at a friend's house that I did something wrong and my friend's mother turned to me and said, 'I am really surprised; I never expected that of *you*'. I felt so ashamed; I did not realise that I was being watched. People *do* take account of our lives as Christians and they might not listen

to you but by your Christ-like ways you might be the means of someone's conversion.

We need encouragement today as believers. We feel our smallness and limitations and we see a very public turning away from the things of God in this land. God would encourage and help us that we may be here for Him as lights. None of us can claim much but we can all be a small bright light in this dark world.

Where I finished reading it says: *"For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ" (v.21)*. Yes, it is a sad day but this is a challenge to all believers. What am I seeking? Is it my own interests, or is it the *"things of Jesus Christ"*? I know what it is to seek my own things but the challenge comes to us. Let us be seeking the things of Jesus Christ for they are eternal and lasting.

May God speak to your heart. If you have not yet come to the Saviour, may you turn to Jesus, and find what a glorious Saviour He is. If you have already trusted in Him, may you be here for Him — a bright light in this dark world because the Lord is coming very soon. If we look around at the present time we can see that things will soon come to a close, as the world cannot continue in its present state.

So let us find rest in the love of Jesus, trusting in His finished work and find eternal satisfaction in our hearts. There is no one like Jesus: come to Him afresh, He is available. He says, *"if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me"*(John 12:32), a spectacle in this world but to the believer how precious that is. May our hearts be burning for Him until He comes for His name's sake.

Mike Bond

A gospel preaching, Sevenoaks, 6th December 2015

FAITH – PART 2

Editor's note: This article has been divided into two. Four Scriptures were read and the part of the Bible reading dealing with Hebrews 11:1-6 and Romans 5:1-2 was printed in the last issue.

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..

1 Peter 1:3-9

I call attention to these verses as bearing upon being sustained by faith, going beyond the day when we are first converted: Peter speaks about being kept guarded by the power of God through faith. And he moves on from there to speak about the trials that may come in the Christian's way or in the way of whole companies of saints. He speaks of the proving of your faith. He says that it is a very precious thing, much more precious than of gold which perishes.

Peter is writing to souls who are troubled, who are scattered. In a certain sense it is a counterpart to the epistle to the Hebrews, in the sense that they were scattered saints of the dispersion and they had evidently passed through and were still passing through a good deal of trouble through persecution. Peter writes in his fatherly, shepherd spirit and he speaks about what God has done, His great mercy, begetting us again to a living hope:- *"An incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance"*. This is not an inheritance to be enjoyed exactly now, but one that we wait for, *"Reserved in the heavens for*

you, who are kept guarded by the power of God through faith". That suggests that faith is used of God as a sustaining power through the demands and trials of life here. It is very interesting that Paul when writing to the Galatians, having dismissed the whole idea of being justified by works of law, says, *"in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God"* (Galatians 2:20). He was not talking about whether he had ever been saved; it was how he led his life from day-to-day, trusting in the Lord Jesus — the faith of the Son of God. The persecutions and trials that are spoken of here really bring out the reality of our faith.

God has given to each a measure of faith and we do well to keep within our measure because Peter found himself in a crisis once. He wanted to go to the Lord and when he looked at the waves it all went wrong (Matthew 13:40). So we do well to keep within the bounds of such faith as God has so far given us. The disciples asked the Lord to give them more faith (Luke 17:5). He did not directly answer except to say, 'What are you doing with the faith you have?' So faith needs to be exercised. So often in scripture we read of those who walked by faith. When we use the term 'walk' it is a step-by-step process. That is what Paul had in mind when he refers to *"the steps in faith ... of our father Abraham"* (Romans 4:12). He took one step and then another. Once or twice, of course, Abraham went sadly wrong but he got recalled to the path of faith.

Faith and the power of the Holy Spirit work together. We are told in Romans 8 how the Spirit joins its help to our weakness (v.26). That would encourage us to call on the help of the Spirit, as being conscious how frail we are. Faith is tested in a great variety of ways. First of all, of course, and most foundationally, am I secure before God in my soul? Without that I have not

Faith and the power of the Holy Spirit work together

got a rock to stand on. But then I embark upon life and there are my circumstances: Christian fellowship, work, marriage etc, and then difficulties come in along the way — can I take another step? What am I to look for? God has given me the scriptures telling me where right and wrong are to be identified. What am I going to cleave to? I need the help of the Spirit to pursue what actually in my heart I may know God would have me to do.

This does not diminish our responsibility. It is not faith just to sit down and wait for things to happen. Faith is to be exercised and leads to action. Then I need also to know when to leave things to God. We do try to do for ourselves — up to a point that is right. But it is better when you find God has done something for you.

The book of Daniel shows faith in activity. Chapter 6 says that, *“when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime”* (Daniel 6:10). Daniel’s faith shines in the very first chapter. But to begin with he had some companions; by chapter 6 he is on his own and he has to make a decision. Is he going to stand for what he believes or is he going to listen to the king? He makes up his mind and he just went on. He did not actually do anything abnormal; he just did what he had always done. He stood by what he believed and God saw fit to support him. God has His own way with individuals. He preserved Daniel. He did not see fit to preserve James in the Acts (Acts 12:2). He did not see fit to preserve Abel (Genesis 4:8). That we have to leave to God. It is a great thing to act in the knowledge and fear of God and look for the reward.

The Lord prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail (see Luke 22:32). Then Paul, writing to the Corinthians, speaks about us not being *“tempted above what ye are able to bear”* (1

Corinthians 10:13). These are important scriptures. There have been some whose faith was tested in what to me would have been an extremity but thankfully we can say they were brought through. Those are scriptures to which we rightly cling when things do seem too difficult: we count on the faithfulness of God.

James is on the same line when he says, *"ask in faith, nothing doubting"* (*James 1:6*). It was a wonderful work that had been wrought in James's soul because he was one of the Lord's brethren who at one time did not *"believe on him"* (*John 7:6*). But when he comes to write he speaks about *"our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of glory"* (*James 2:1*) acknowledging Him to be unique, One with whom he had had the privilege of contact. He had observed faith in the Lord Himself according to that remarkable expression in Hebrews 12: *"... Jesus the leader and completer of faith: who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame"*. Which is to say that faith played a part in the Lord committing Himself to the will of God. Now James would say, How is faith going actually to work out? He is fully on the side of faith but he wants to see it expressed in our works. It shows we must keep close to the person of Christ. There is no other way.

Hebrews 2:5-10

In Hebrews chapter 2 we do not find the word faith expressly mentioned but it will be obvious that we do not now see the Lord with our human eyesight. It may be good for us to remind ourselves that we have a current link with the Lord Jesus in glory. It is not as He was here, though He is one and the same Man, but He is now crowned with glory and honour. Something which is to be remembered and to encourage our hearts is that we are linked with One in glory. One of the hymn writers says:-

*By faith we see
Jesus with highest glory crowned...*

Hebrews 2 is a good place to have our eyes lifted above this weary world to the place where the Lord Jesus now is. The day for His public glory will come and believers meet in the faith of that. If we break bread we *"announce the death of the Lord, until he come"* (1 Corinthians 10:6). It is good that believers should, if they righteously can, find a basis for breaking bread: the Lord would have us to do that if we rightly can. But, remember that it is a call to remember the Lord in His death and it is until He come. When He comes there will be no more need of it because He will be there. But in the meantime, what do we see? Well, we do not see the world put right yet: the writer of the epistle did not hesitate to say, *"we see not yet all things subjected to him"*. So, was there anything for the believer to see or had the Hebrews just got to go stumbling on? No! He says, now *"we see Jesus, who was made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour"*. That is a good sight. The Lord is not here; the *"cloud received Him out of their sight"*. So, what am I to do? Am I to stumble along down here or am I to move in the faith and assurance that He is in glory? He has been *"received up" "where He was before"*; the gates have been lifted up for the *"King of glory"* to come in (Acts 1:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; John 6:62; Psalm 24:7), and we belong to that Man! Now, that does several things for us. One is that it lifts our hearts. Another should be to impart a certain dignity to us. It would prepare us to have part in the service of God, I recognise that. But, we are subjects of the King of kings. He is glorious in His majesty. Where the Lord is seated, at the right hand of God, is a testimony of His absolute and total victory. Faith lays hold of that in spite of the circumstances which surround us at the present time and that causes us by faith to acknowledge His rights and claims.

Faith and the acknowledgement of the Lord as crowned with glory and honour are meant to have a very definite effect on

our lives. We read, *“it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things”* – that is God Himself – *“bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings”*. Am I convicted that it was becoming for God to take His beloved Son this way? This is what God has done and the apostle says it became Him; it was suited to God’s nature and heart that the One who is the Leader of our salvation should have suffered for His place. That gives colour to the verses that follow and why it was that the Lord came into the conditions in which man was to set us free from the bondage of death. As we are going along through life we perhaps lose sight of death a bit. And then comes a time when in the natural course of things, if we are left here, death is nearer than it was. And we have to examine ourselves as to whether we have been set free from this fear. To men at large it is a very real fear. What sets me free? Well, the Lord has annulled him who had the might of death. That brings us straight up against the fact that it is Satan that has that might. The Lord has annulled *“him that had the might of death, that is, the devil”* that He might set souls free. That is meant to bring the Hebrew saints into liberty to whom death was a very near reality. Some hymns remind us that our calling is a heavenly one and that the actuality of death is something which the believer can look at and face. We are all tested about that, I am sure. It is a great privilege to be with a saint who is near to death and see them there without fear.

David Burr

Based on a Bible Reading in London, 4th June 2016.

Poetry Selection

ANOTHER YEAR

*Another year is dawning,
Dear Master let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with Thee.*

*Another year of leaning
Upon Thy loving breast,
Of ever deepening trustfulness,
Of quiet, happy rest.*

*Another year of mercies
Of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness
In the shining of Thy face.*

*Another year of progress,
Another year of praise;
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days.*

*Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier things above.*

*Another year is dawning,
Dear Master let it be,
On earth, or else in heaven,
Another year for Thee.*

Frances Ridley Havergal

Testimony Section

CONVERTED BEFORE A COURT CONDEMNED ME

First of all, I want to tell you a little bit about myself before I became a Christian. I was brought up a Roman Catholic and went to a Roman Catholic school but I never heard the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and I never heard that Christ had died for me personally. I left school as soon as I could and started work. I drifted away from the church and started getting into all sorts of things, eventually ending up in the Juvenile Court and with my life getting into a bit of a mess.

When I was eighteen I joined the forces and spent some time abroad, but there was an emptiness in my life and nothing that I did seemed to alter it. I kept wondering what life was all about and I even thought of committing suicide. I had had enough. I had tried everything and everything had failed.

Friday 16th April 1956 is fixed in my memory; it was the day I

was to attend Court to face three charges each of which could involve a longish sentence. You can imagine the state I was in. As I was going down our front steps I met David Coombes. As usual he carried a Bible under his arm. From time to time he called at our house and when he came in the front door, I went out the back! I thought he was really very odd. Today he asked me, "Paddy, are you going down to the Court today; if so, I would like to go with you?" I was less than impressed, so I said, "Well, you can if you wish". The Court hearing was not until later and I was in no hurry to go.

David said, "Look, I will come with you but I want to tell you about something else." He proceeded to tell me the story that I had never heard in my life before. He told me that God loved me and that Jesus had died on the cross for me so that I might know that love. Somehow the Holy Spirit took over and began to convict me of what I was. I saw that I was a sinner but when David spoke of John 3:16 – that wonderful verse – the Holy Spirit brought me to the conviction that there was only one way for me to go and that was to trust in Christ. I remember kneeling down and giving my heart and life to the Lord right there and then.

One of the jobs I did was delivering coal and if you have humped a hundred weight sack of coal to the top floor in a block of flats, when you put it down, you feel as if you are rising! When I got up from my knees the whole burden of my sin had gone. It was taken away by the Lord Jesus Christ. I felt as though I was walking on air!

When, later that day, I went down to the Court, I really felt that it did not matter what happened. If they sent me down for ten years, it would not affect the eternal work of God's grace that had been wrought in my heart. As it happened, God moved in a remarkable way in that Court. I gave my first testimony there, telling simply what had happened to me that morning and what God had done for me. I was out an hour later with a small fine!

Over the next few weeks and months David Coombes looked after me and brought me on. I do not know what would have happened if he had not done that. I thank God for David. I stand here today in God's grace because of him. For twenty eight years we remained in close contact.

David worked for the Leeds City mission and just over fourteen months ago the Lord called me to work full time for the Mission too. When I told David that was what I intended to do you could almost hear him dancing at the other end of the telephone – he was so overwhelmed and delighted. He said that he had been praying for it for a long time.

God has been wonderful to me over the years. It has not always been easy, in fact at times it has very difficult. but I thank God that He has given me a fine wife and a lovely family and He has given me work which I love, seeking men for Christ just as David did! It seems almost like following in his footsteps some years later. I only hope and pray that God will give me grace to follow closely what has gone before.

My prayer is, and I know that David's prayer would be, that this occasion this afternoon, this time would be a time of rejoicing and that it might be the time when someone here who does not yet know the Lord Jesus would find Him as their own Saviour. My friend, find out about the Lord Jesus. He can change you and transform you by His mighty power. He will come into your life, He will cleanse you from your sin and will give you a new life, greater than anything you have ever dreamed of.

Open your heart to Him. To know Christ is to know life. May God bless you.

Paddy Flynn

Testimony given at the burial of David Coombes, Leeds, 25th May 1984.

I would like to thank Brian Parr for making this testimony available for publication in Living Water. Ed.

A voice from the past

ANNA

“And there was a prophetess, Anna daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was far advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and herself a widow up to eighty-four years; who did not depart from the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers; and she coming up the same hour gave praise to the Lord, and spoke of him to all who waited for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36-38).

How truly and how vividly does Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, depict Israel’s increasing departure from God, in their impious arguments and their boastful pride. They dare to argue every point of the gentle patient reasoning of the Lord through His prophet and then boldly state in defiance of His claims, *“It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we keep his charge...?” (Malachi 3:14)*. To such depths had God’s favoured people sunk when the Christ appeared amongst them. It is no marvel then that they had no eyes to recognise Him.

Yet the prophet Malachi, even in the time of failure in which he wrote, adds: *“Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another; and Jehovah observed it, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure, saith Jehovah of hosts, in the day that I prepare” (Malachi 3:16-17)*.

What a contrast! The nation had gone irrevocably its own way and God could no longer find any pleasure in it, or secure any response of affection from it; but hidden away in all this sad declension He had His eye on a tiny remnant who still – though in much feebleness – feared the Lord and thought upon His Name. He still held their hearts’ allegiance and formed the subject of their thoughts; and this wonderful divine link bound them together in common interest and love, so that they spoke often to one another.

In Luke 2 we are introduced to one of such a company, the aged Anna, a widow and a prophetess. She evidently felt the misery and

declension of the nation, for she, *"did not depart from the temple"* but fasted and prayed night and day. She realised the value of intercession, and her widowed heart cried mightily to God for a people like herself, widowed, for their Maker was no longer their Husband.

But her energies did not stop there. Her name means 'grace', and her heart had been captivated by the grace of God, so that she learned His mind and will, and looked forward with great longing to His promised redemption. Others there were to whom this, too, was a great object in their lives, and to these Anna exercised her gift as a prophetess; for she kept them steadfast and cheered by her edifying, comforting words, for she *"spoke of him to all who waited for redemption in Jerusalem"*

It was not by chance that she came in at the moment that Simeon had the Christ of God, as a tiny baby, in his arms, and she heartily joined in the thanks-giving to God, recognising that the long-looked-for Redeemer had come at last – they had not waited for Him in vain.

Let us apply this to our times. We are near to the return of the Saviour to complete the work of redemption. There is one sense in which believers are already redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, but there is another sense in which we wait for redemption, the redemption of the body. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (see Ephesians 4:30). That moment is still to come when the Saviour will translate His people to glory and then restore order according to God to this chaotic world. Many are showing daily how far they are from God and the knowledge of His ways, and what an awful harvest they reap by going their own way!

In the midst of this scene of confusion the wonderful revelation of God's grace has been accepted by those who believe and their hearts' affections are set on the abiding things in God's world to come. These are waiting for the return of their Lord, but are subjected to the trials, anxieties, and sorrows so common in this scene.

How needful today are the services of devoted persons like Anna to intercede for all — for those who never pray themselves, and by speaking of Him to encourage and comfort the tired children of God. She served God in this way, and so may we. Let us seek grace for it,

dear fellow believers; and believe me, the blessing of Anna's tribe will be enjoyed by us.

We shall know what it is:

- to be guided by the Holy Spirit (the *"foot dipped in oil"*),
- to have daily strength,
- to experience divine help,
- to know the eternal God as a refuge, and
- to feel His arms of love as our support (See Deuteronomy 33:24-27).

What do we need more for our pathway here until we see our Saviour's face?

Lena Hayne

From the "Women of Scripture" (1928), being reprints of articles in the magazine "Sunbeams for the Home" edited by Mr. J. Vinal.

A word for today

"THE LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOUR SPIRIT"

2 Timothy 1:8-10

4:19-22

I would like to say a little about the apostle Paul's prayer for Timothy: *"The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit"* (2 Timothy 4:22). This epistle is encouraging to us all in that it sets before us *"the testimony of our Lord"* (2 Timothy 1:8) as that which is intended to be our constant interest wherever we may be. The epistle has not a local setting, and it contains no reference to local concerns as such, but it presents the testimony of our Lord as that which should command us at all times and in every place.

Now it is noticeable that the testimony is presented in this letter in a setting of suffering:-

- In the first chapter Paul writes, *"Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but suffer*

evil along with the glad tidings, according to the power of God" (v.8).

- In the second chapter we read, *"Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (v.3).*
- He says in chapter 3, *"All indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (v.12).*
- Then, in the fourth chapter we get, *"But thou be sober in all things, bear evils..." (v.5).*

These exhortations show that suffering in one form or another is to be recognised as a characteristic feature of the testimony, and Paul refers many times in the epistle to the particular sufferings and evils which he himself endured, as committed to the glad tidings.

But the sufferings connected with the glad tidings are to be endured *"according to the power of God; who has saved us, and has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings" (2 Timothy 1:8-10).*

Now this testimony, which should command the allegiance of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, is carried on in this world in suffering, for the ceaseless effort of the devil is to weaken, and if possible extinguish, all true testimony to Christ. There is therefore continual conflict, and the battleground on which many of the conflicts of the testimony are waged is in the spirits of believers. Hence Paul's closing prayer, *"The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (2 Timothy 4:22).*

If we take account of the different matters Paul refers to we cannot but feel the pressures that must have been upon his spirit. In the first chapter he says: *"Thou knowest this, that all who are in Asia, of whom is Phygellus and Hermogenes, have turned away from me" (v.15).* In the second chapter he speaks of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who as to the truth had gone astray, and were

overthrowing the faith of some (see v.18). Paul would feel all these things with spiritual sensibilities. He says elsewhere, *“Who is stumbled and I burn not?” (2 Corinthians 11:29)*. Then being in prison and thus unable in an active way to take part in the conflict would be a further pressure on him. Yet it is evident from the epistle that Paul’s spirit was preserved superior to all that tested him and that he was thus evidencing that despite the efforts of Satan he was maintained in the power of the life that was in Christ Jesus. The secret of the apostle’s power was that the Lord Jesus Christ was with his spirit and therefore his prayer for Timothy was that he should know the same power.

Timothy was encouraged to *“take his share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3)*. He was to be always available to the One whom he served and he was to recognise that there were ‘rules’ to be observed for the conflicts of the testimony were to be waged in a way that was morally consistent with the One who was the subject of it. This tests our spirits. An example of this is seen at the end of the chapter and at the same time an illustration of one of the ‘rules’. We read *“A bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle toward all... in meekness setting right those who oppose, if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance” (2 Timothy 2:24, 25)*. Any spirit, other than of meekness and gentleness and of forbearance that would wait in the hope that God might grant repentance, is out of keeping with the holy calling, but in the actual matter of meeting opposition, and maintaining the truth in the presence of it, what the bondman of the Lord Jesus needs is that the Lord Jesus Christ should be with his spirit.

The title, Lord Jesus Christ, draws our attention to the One who was known here in such meekness and lowliness, in perfect grace toward men, yet absolute faithfulness to God, marked out as God’s chosen One and known now as Lord, faithful and powerful to support all that is of Himself here, and held as Lord in the living affections of His bondmen here.

In the last chapter Paul refers to further efforts to overcome his spirit:-

- *“Demas has forsaken me” (v. 10)*
- *“Alexander the smith did many evil things against me” (v. 14)*
- *“At my first defence no man stood with me, but all deserted me” (v. 16)*

But Paul’s own spirit was preserved and the *“proclamation was fully made”* in a power evidenced in a spirit that rose superior to the suffering. Of those that deserted him he says, *“May it not be imputed to them”*. Of Alexander the smith there is a sober recognition that the testimony of our Lord will prevail, and that opposition to it will meet its own reward.

In all these things Paul shines very much in the spirit of the Lord Himself in the closing hours of His testimony here and shows that the secret of his power was that the Lord was with him. *“The Lord stood with me and gave me power” (2 Timothy 4:17)*.

But the very sufferings and concerns of the testimony bring out a mutual sympathy among those who have part in them so the apostle sends by Timothy and conveys to him, salutations to and from others whom he names (see Chapter 4:19-21) as having the confidence and affection of himself and Timothy. He also informs him as to Erastus and Trophimus. When the testimony of the Lord is held in the affections the movements and concerns of other believers become of great interest and their affections and sympathy are valued as affording great support.

But if the conflicts of the testimony are to be sustained, what the bondman of the Lord needs is that the Lord Jesus Christ should be with his spirit, hence Paul closes the letter with the words: *“The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you.”*

Alfred Gardiner

An address at Streatham, 13th June 1926.