

**146**

# *LIVING WATER*

'Living Water' is published by the Stone Publishing Trust (Registered Charity 1034689)

Stone Publishing Trust  
33 The Floats,  
Riverhead  
SEVENOAKS  
TN13 2QT

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Cover Picture: Two streams meet, Val d'Ultimo, Italy - J.E.Casavecchia

Editor: Mark Lemon

Printed by Lakeside Printing,  
Unit 4A, Munday Industrial Estate, Morley Rd, Tonbridge, TN9 1RA, UK

# ***Living Water 146***

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## Recent Ministry

### JESUS CALLED AND HE WAS READY

*“For I know whom I have believed” 2 Timothy 1:12*

*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come”. Hebrews 13:8*

Last Friday the Queen visited Aberdeen Royal Infirmary to perform an opening ceremony and she was welcomed by many people who knew that she was coming. Earlier that day, indeed, very early, another royal visitor called at that hospital. There was no crowd there to welcome Him. He was there for one purpose: to call one of His subjects home to be with Himself. That royal visitor was the One whom the Bible describes as the King of kings and Lord of lords – the Lord Jesus Christ. And Willie was ready for the King’s call. Indeed, he was waiting for it. There was no struggle. Jesus called and he left this scene for ever and entered into the presence of his Saviour.

A little while before he passed away the words of one of his favourite verses were whispered into his ear:-

Face to face with Christ, my Saviour,  
Face to face—what will it be,  
When with rapture I behold Him,  
Jesus Christ who died for me?

Some of us have often heard him quoting those lines enthusiastically as he preached the gospel message. It appeared that he distinctly heard the words that were whispered to him and within moments he was *“absent from the body and present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8)*.

When did Willie come to know this Person and how did he come to know Him? It was when he was eleven years old, following the tragic death of one of his sisters, that along with his two older brothers, he came to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. Through the years his love for the Lord

Jesus grew and increased. The rock, the foundation in his life, was Christ. It could be truly said of him, *"I know whom I have believed"*.

Many different circumstances crossed his pathway during his ninety-two years, but his faith in the Lord Jesus never diminished. How wonderful in the midst of these times, which are full of doubt and uncertainty, to know the unchanging Christ and to know and prove the abiding character of His love. That was the brother who has gone from us.

When loved ones are taken the sorrow of parting is most keenly felt by those who are closest to them. What words of comfort can we provide today? Willie and Agnes had over twenty-five years of happy married life together. Now death has broken that bond and that is a sore break. What can we do to provide comfort? We can call on the divine promise, *"I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13:5). The One who said that never breaks His promise.

Willie loved his family. And that love was reciprocated. To them their father was the rock that they could go to at all times. He would be sure to welcome them and give them of his wise advice. He had only one desire for them: that in all things they would be prospering. And that was extended to his grandchildren as they came along and latterly to his great-grandchildren. But the greatest desire that he had for his own family and for all who came in touch with him was that they would come to personal faith in Christ; that they would come to the personal experience of knowing the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. That was his prayer, that each of them would be able to stand on this rock and say, *"I know whom I have believed"*.

What is it that the Christian believes, anyway? I just set it out, very simply and briefly; and would add that this is what Willie thought as well, and also every true believer on Christ. The Christian believes:

- that he is a sinner in God's sight but that God sent Jesus to be a Saviour, to meet the judgment of those sins. As he looks to the cross of Calvary he discovers that Jesus suffered and died at Calvary's cross and bore the judgment that was due to our sins.
- That as trusting in Jesus in His work at Calvary and in His shed blood, the believer is set entirely free from his sins and counted absolutely righteous before God.
- That the Lord Jesus in breaking the power of death, rising from the grave and living in heaven, gives the believer an outlook beyond this scene altogether. And lastly
- That the Lord Jesus who lives in heaven is coming again to take all who have trusted Him to be with Him for ever.

But you say, 'Willie is dead! What is the meaning of this?' At the Saviour's coming His voice will penetrate the grave and every person who has died trusting in the Saviour and His finished work will respond to the voice of Christ and will rise from the grave and together with those alive at that time who have faith in Him will be caught up, given glorious bodies, and be for ever with their Saviour and Lord.

These are the cardinal points of the Christian gospel and Willie's faith was centred on them. He did not believe in a religious fantasy, he believed in a Person. *"I know whom I have believed"*. Not only did he believe in Him but he loved to speak of Him and to preach about his Saviour. And what he preached about his Saviour he preached with energy and he preached from the heart.

Those of us who meet in this hall will miss his gathering with us; his contributions were so valuable. Just five days before the Lord took him, though he was very weak, he was here in this hall remembering his Lord and Saviour. He did not like to miss the Lord's Supper. What an example to us all.

Willie had quite an exceptional business career. Coming from Portknockie in his teenage years, serving initially as an apprentice in Henderson's the engineers, and through diligence, hard work, study and no little skill he eventually reached the top position in that company, whilst maintaining the high standards that he cherished.

Along the way he had several family sorrows: I make no excuse for mentioning them today. In 1941 he lost his father and a brother at sea, right at the mouth of Portknockie Harbour. The following year he lost his brother in a road accident in the city here; some years later his sister, Rita, died suddenly in Burghead. In 1988 his first wife, Netta, John and Elizabeth's mother, was taken from him after a brief illness. And only last year his last remaining sister, Vi, was taken as well. You might think that such a catalogue of distress would begin to challenge one's faith or even to cause someone to blame God, but it was not so. He accepted it all as in the ways of God. His faith remained firm in his Saviour God.

## **For Willie death had no sting**

Many call this type of occasion a celebration of a life. Well, maybe it is, but it is much more than that. Today we are confronted with death. For Willie death had no sting because he knew the One who held the keys of death in His hand (see Revelation 1:18). And so for those of us gathered here today, death confronts us all. One day, in the normal course of things, that will be our portion. The Bible says, "*it is appointed unto men once to die*" (Hebrews 9:27). That is what faces us; death is no respecter of persons. It comes knocking at the door of the young; it comes knocking at the door of the old. How wonderful that our brother was ready when it came knocking at his door.

How would it be with you if death came to your door? Do you

have a hope beyond death? Do you know the One who has been into death and has come out of it? He is available as Saviour for everyone who puts their faith in Him. Do not let this occasion, reminding us of the solemnity of death and, in one sense, the finality of what it means – do not let it pass without your acknowledging the need of having personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ - One who has been into death and has come out of it triumphantly. Scripture speaks of, *“our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings”* (2 Timothy 1:10).

Our brother Willie knew that Saviour and he loved to speak of Him. Now he is at rest. In the last few weeks, as he entered the valley of the shadow of death, he did not enter it alone. I quote from Psalm 23, *“The Lord is my shepherd...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me”*, (vv 1 & 4). Thou art with me! The Shepherd walked through that valley with him, and now he is in the presence of the One whom he loved. I quote these words again:-

Face to face with Christ, my Saviour,  
Face to face-what will it be,  
When with rapture I behold Him,  
Jesus Christ who died for me?

I commend these few simple words to those in sorrow today, as we all are, that from them they may have the comfort and sure knowledge that the one they loved is safely home in the presence of Christ.

May God add His blessing to the word. Amen.

Alex Mowat

*Word given at the burial of Willie Slater, Aberdeen, 6th October 2017*

# WHAT GOD HAS DONE TO MAKE YOU PERFECT IN HIS SIGHT

*Matthew 5:20*  
*Zechariah 3:1-5*

Let us start in Matthew and chapter 5. On this day, Jesus was sitting on a mountainside somewhere in northern Galilee probably just outside Capernaum. And He starts to teach - rather famously because these words are well known; this is often called the 'Sermon on the Mount'. He starts by saying there are some things that men and women do that are blessed. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit...Blessed they that mourn... Blessed the meek... Blessed they who hunger and thirst after righteousness... Blessed the merciful... Blessed the pure in heart for they shall see God"*. The disciples would have sat and listened and it would have sounded good. They not only heard the words that I have just read to you but they heard them in the original language and they heard them spoken for the first time - and they heard them spoken by the greatest teacher of all.

They listened - there is no record of any interruption here - they listened as He talked on and He taught them about other things until you get to verse 20 of Matthew 5, which I read to you, where Jesus said, *"unless your righteousness surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens"*. And I just wonder if at that point the disciples, as they sat there, started to worry.

It is very nice to hear Jesus say you are blessed if you do these things. It is suddenly a bit more difficult if you are listening and Jesus says to you that, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes' and Pharisees', you will not meet God's standard. But maybe they sat there and thought, 'Perhaps I could do it. The scribes and Pharisees, they are only men; perhaps my righteousness - perhaps the good things that I do in my life

before God, perhaps they could be better than the scribes and Pharisees'. I do not know what they thought but as they listened to what Jesus said next I should think they felt more and more uncomfortable. Because Jesus was talking on that mountainside about the kind of behaviour that God is looking to see in the lives of men and women, the kind of behaviour He has always looked to see and still looks to see in the lives of men and women. It must have seemed to them as He went on that He was making it harder and harder.

He said in verse 21, *"Ye have heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not kill... But I say unto you, that every one that is lightly angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment"*. And then, one of the most troubling verses in Scripture, in verse 27 He said, *"Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that every one who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"*.

He was saying: you may have been taught that the things that you say and the things that you do are what is important, but God looks into your heart and the standard that He requires is a standard of purity in your heart as well as in your life. And then He went on. He said, *"You have heard that it has been said, Eye for eye and tooth for tooth"*. Well, they had heard that, it is in the scripture in the Old Testament. *"But I say unto you, not to resist evil; but whoever shall strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other"*; whoever takes your body coat, give him your cloak as well; whoever compels you to go a mile with them, go voluntarily a second mile. Go beyond what is required of you. This is God's standard.

I wonder if those disciples felt like high jump competitors as they watched the bar they were required to jump over go up and up and up as Jesus spoke. Until He said something which lifted the bar beyond the heavens. It is as if a high jump competitor was standing there and looking at a bar in the

clouds, a standard that is utterly impossible to reach. Because Jesus says, here in verse 48 of Matthew 5, the standard that is required is *“Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”*. That is the standard that is required from men and women.

There are some people who think, ‘Well, God is a God of love and He is deeply understanding and He knows everything about you and me and He knows we cannot jump that high, so He will lower the bar for us. He will make the bar lower.’ He will look at us and He will say, ‘Well, their very best deeds were good, they are not amongst the worst of humanity’.... It is called your own righteousnesses and scripture condemns it. But some people think that they can come in their own righteousnesses, in the very best things they have done before God and God will understand that no human being can reach His standard, so He will lower it for them. But God cannot. He cannot, that is the reality. His standard is perfection. Our God is holy and utterly pure and He has not lowered His standards.

I want you to think about the story in John’s gospel chapter 4. Jesus was coming up from Judæa and He was on His way back to Galilee. He stopped by a well in a place called Sychar. He sat there, it seems, on His own. There was nobody to let down a vessel into the well to draw up water and He was thirsty. His disciples had gone shopping. We know that because scripture says so, *“his disciples had gone away into the city that they might buy provisions”*. I find that remarkable. Why did all twelve need to go? It does not say but I wonder if it was because He sent them. Why would He do that? So that He could sit there on His own and wait for this woman. Read these scriptures and try and think about the Person who was teaching. Think about what Jesus was doing.

Do you know what He was doing? He was being incredibly kind. He was going to have a conversation with this woman. You

can see in that conversation that there was a lot wrong in her life. She was living in fornication, she may have been an adulterer and He was going to talk to her about it – and in His incredible kindness He was going to do it one-to-one without His disciples listening.

He is kind. It's one of the fruits of the Spirit – kindness and you see it in perfection in Jesus. *"The kindness and love to man of our Saviour God"* the scripture says (*Titus 3:4*). What else do you see when you look at Him in these scriptures? I see mercy. I see a man who loved mercy. God loves mercy. Jesus talked to her, about her life and the things that she was doing, with a purpose, so that she might be clear as to how His Father saw them, how God saw them – a God that she perhaps did not even acknowledge. He did it so that she might judge it, that she might see it and understand it and judge it. He did not do it to condemn her.

He was on His way from Judæa, He was going up to Galilee. He stopped in Samaria, a place where the Jews were not particularly welcome and He talked to a woman about the fact that He was the Messiah. Why did He not tell the Jews? Why did He not tell them in Judæa? Why did He not tell them in Galilee? What was He doing sitting talking to her at Sychar in Samaria and telling her, this woman, that He was the Messiah? What was He doing? He was being incredibly wise. He had chosen that moment carefully: His Father had chosen it for Him. The timing was perfect, the moment was perfect, the woman was exactly the person that His Father wanted Him to tell. And in His wisdom He sat there and waited and spoke to her and told her. Jesus is incredibly kind. He is incredibly merciful: He loves mercy. He is incredibly wise. He is utterly perfect.

Now think about what He said in Matthew: *"be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"*. And they were not, and neither are we, not perfect. And yet God wanted them in heaven. And you know how He was going to do it. You know

because you have heard the gospel and some of you have preached the gospel. You have told other people about the gospel. You know how He was going to do it. But just look at that in Matthew: *"Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"* and they were not, but sitting there in front of them was Someone who was perfect.

I want you to think now about a few things that God has done to make you absolutely and completely perfect so that you can have no doubt at all that when the moment comes you will be received into heaven.

Long ago, Jacob was at Bethel and he was dreaming and he saw that vision of a ladder that went up to heaven and he saw angels going up and down it. When he awoke he said, 'This is a terrible place ... it is the gate of heaven'.

When you and I come to the gate of heaven we are absolutely perfect. And my question is just this, what has God done to make you perfect? Some things I am going to talk about briefly but one thing in particular, which is an absolute jewel in scripture, I want you to think about a lot.

The words of King David ring down the centuries as true. You can hear what he was meaning from his heart. These are words that I have prayed in one form or another from my heart and I am pretty sure that most of you will have prayed them as well. What is the first thing that God has done for you? When Nathan the prophet had gone to him, after he had sinned with Bathsheba, David said to Jehovah, *"Wash me fully from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"* (Psalm 51:2, 7). And you and I have been washed. You have heard about it time after time in the gospel. We have been washed.

What is whiter than snow? I do not know. It is the same expression that Isaiah uses, *"Come now, let us reason together,*

*saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).* There is something wonderfully pure about snow. I tried to think of something else in creation that I could have used if I had been writing these scriptures. I found that snow was the best thing I could think of to describe the purity that God gives you when He washes you.

In the New Testament you find that you are washed in the blood of Christ, *“To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood” (Revelation 1:5).* A curious expression, washed in the blood of Christ. You **are** washed in the blood of Christ if you have trusted Him. But, if you think about it, it has not physically touched you, and you have not physically seen it, have you? Even John, who stood at the foot of the cross, and saw the blood flow – even he, it was not as if the blood touched him. And yet you are washed in that blood.

You see, you have come to the Saviour like David did and you have said, one way or another, in your heart, Make me clean, wash me. And God has said, ‘This is what I have done. I have taken all your sins, every single one of them, I have examined every corner of your life: every thought you have ever thought. I have gone into the darkest bits that no one but you knows. I have gone to the bits that you yourself cannot remember. I have looked at it all and I have found every single stain and bit and anything that is to do with sin that is in you. I have looked to the future and I have seen every sin that will come on you in the future.

‘I have taken them all off you and I have put them on my Son. He is perfect, pure, lovely but I have given Him your sins. He has taken the judgment of them all and He has hung there on that cross until it was finished. And then He has died and that spear has gone into His side and the blood has flowed out and His lifeblood has gone’. And God says, in the scripture, ‘that blood is precious to Me’; it is the blood of God’s own Son.

You only have to think for a moment about the lifeblood of your

own child – how precious that would be to you – to start to understand how precious that blood is to God. Perfect, pure, blameless, lovely in life. The only life that God has taken delight in, and His own Son.

In the Old Testament the Israelites were told not to eat blood or drink blood – I suggest you do not either. He gives them a reason why, *“for the soul (or “life”) of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls” (Leviticus 17: 11)*. And now look at Christ. His life was in His blood and it was poured out upon that cross to make atonement for your soul.

But just think of this. You have accepted Him as your own Saviour, you are now completely clean. Jesus knows you so intimately because He has taken every single tiny fraction of a sin that is inside you and upon you – everything you have ever done or thought, He has taken it all and He has taken it upon Himself. I am not going to say anything more about it. He has done it. He has washed you and you are clean.

I read you that scripture in Zechariah. Zechariah has had a series of visions in the night. One of them is this. He saw in this vision, a man he would have known in real life. He saw Joshua the high priest, standing before the Angel of Jehovah and it says, *“Satan standing at his right hand to resist him”*. I think what it means is that Satan was standing there to accuse Joshua the high priest. And he had good grounds. There was plenty to accuse Joshua the high priest of.

Joshua was there as a picture of Israel themselves. There was plenty for Satan to accuse Israel of as well. But it does not matter if you take it as Joshua or as Israel, Satan had plenty to say. And God did not let him. You notice that? He did not get started.

God says, *“Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan! Yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee!”* and there is nothing Satan

can do, nothing. Jehovah says, *"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? And Joshua was standing there clothed with filthy garments, and Jehovah said, "Take away the filthy garments from off him". And then Jehovah said to Joshua, "See, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I clothe thee with festival-robos".* It is a little picture of what He has done for you and me.

He has washed you clean but He has not left you like that, He has done something else. He has clothed you. You are a brand plucked from the burning and you know it. But He has made you clean, you could not be cleaner, and then He has clothed you with something magnificent.

Zechariah looked and he saw festival robes –something from Jehovah– being put upon Joshua the high priest. And Zechariah cannot resist from joining in. He understands what God is doing and he says, let them put a pure turban upon his head as well. *"And they set the pure turban upon his head".* If it is the same turban that it talks of in Exodus for the high priest, then on that turban is a thin gold plate, on the forehead, and on that gold plate is written, *"Holiness to Jehovah" (Exodus 39:30).*

This is a picture of Joshua being clothed with magnificent, holy and pure clothes, something from God. And He has clothed you and me with magnificent, holy and pure clothes. Isaiah says this, writing about two hundred years before Zechariah, *"I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).* Garments of salvation, he called it, and the robe of righteousness.

Think back to what Jesus was talking about. He was talking about the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. The disciples' righteousness and yours and mine needed to surpass that. Their righteousness needed to be so pure and so perfect - they needed to be as perfect as their heavenly Father was perfect. And they could not be. But Jehovah has washed you

and made you clean and He has given you something.

In the New Testament Paul writes to the Romans and he says, *“For if by the offence of the one death reigned by the one, much rather shall those who receive the abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness, reign in life by the one Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17)*. The only thing I want you to note there is that Paul says this gift is free. He has given you the free gift of righteousness.

How do you get that gift? Paul says this when he wrote to the Philippians. Firstly he talked about the *“excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus”*. Paul was a man who knew that everything about Jesus was excellent. He is like a jewel that you can look at from any angle and at any time. And whichever way you look at Christ you will never find something that is not beautiful. He is lovely to God, He is lovely to the Christian soul.

But Paul goes on to say, *“that I may gain Christ; and that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness, which would be on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith, to know him, and the power of his resurrection...” (Philippians 3:8-10)*. The righteousness which is of God through faith. **you have not earned this gift ... it is by faith**

Scripture teaches that consistently, that this free gift that we get, it comes through faith. Why does it not come through something else? Why does He not give the free gift because you served Him? Because then it would be something to do with you. Why does He not give you the free gift because you have loved Him? Because then it would be something to do with you, you would have earned it. And you have not earned this gift. That is why it is by faith.

It was faith that took you to the Saviour in the first place. It

was faith. It was not anything else. Faith made you see one day who Jesus was. Faith made you see your need. That faith caused you to say, somehow, to the Saviour, 'I cannot save myself. I have no righteousness – that may not be the word you used, but that is what you meant – I have no goodness of myself. I have nothing in me that would ever allow me into heaven. There is nothing in me that will please God, nothing'. You may not have used those words but in essence that is what you meant when you came to the Saviour by faith.

And when He saw your faith He said, 'Have this free gift'. It is the righteousness that the scribes and the Pharisees could not earn. It is the righteousness that the disciples puzzled over when they listened to the Lord. 'Here, you have it, it is yours'. That is what He did. They are my words not His – they are not scripture – but in essence that is what He did. He **gave** you this free gift of righteousness and it is yours.

What did you pay for it? Absolutely nothing. What did you do to earn it? Absolutely nothing. But if you are standing at the gate of heaven you need to be right before God. And, at its simplest, that is what righteousness is, it is being right before God. And you cannot do it. But when you came in your need by faith He said, 'I will give it to you, I will give you this righteousness, this thing that men seek, I will give it to you'. And He did.

It is a gift that is not taken away, it is a gift that you have for ever. It is a gift that makes you perfect when the time comes for you physically to go into heaven. It is a gift that makes you perfect now. It is yours, you have it, you trusted in Christ.

This is a story I told the other day and I want to tell you again – I do not apologise. My neighbour came round to see me one afternoon towards the beginning of December. She is in her twenties and she is a Christian like you and me. And she came round and knocked on the door and she said, 'Tim, I want you to do something for me'. She said, 'I am going to talk to the

old lady over the road and I want to tell her about Jesus, but I do not know how to do it, so will you pray for me while I am over there?’ And off she went.

And after a while the doorbell rang and she was back. She came in, sat in the kitchen; we had a cup of tea. I said, ‘How did it go?’ She said, ‘We did not talk about Jesus, not at first. We talked about other things. We talked about the old lady, where she was brought up. And then she started talking about the school she went to: she went to a Catholic school. And she started talking about some nuns that she had met there and I felt able to tell her about Jesus.’ I said, ‘What did you say?’

She said, I told her how Jesus was perfect, absolutely perfect and how I was not. And I told her about that cross and how He had done something for me, there. How He had taken all my imperfections and all my sins. He had taken all of it and He had taken it upon Himself, all of it. And then God had done something else; He had taken all the beauty and the perfection that is Jesus and He had given it to me.

I said, ‘What did the old lady say?’ She said, ‘No one has ever told me that before.’

But that is the beauty of what God has done. What is this thing, this righteousness that He has given you? Well, scripture tells you, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, this righteousness, this free gift that He has given you, it has a name. You see, I used to think – and I was wrong – that what God had done, was that He had taken all the things that were wrong with me, all the sin and He had taken it off me and put it on His Son. Well, that bit is right, He has done that. And I thought that in return what He had done is that He had taken that perfect life of Jesus and given it to me.

But my Bible does not say that; it says that what He gave me as the gift of righteousness is quite close to that but really quite different. It is something much better than that, and it is here

in 1 Corinthians 1.. Paul says from verse 27, *“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world, that he may put to shame the strong things; and the ignoble things of the world, and the despised, has God chosen, and things that are not, that he may annul the things that are; so that no flesh should boast before God. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord”*.

Now, I know there is more in that verse than righteousness but it is just the righteousness bit that I want you to think about now. It says, *“Christ Jesus, who has been made to us... righteousness”*. Your righteousness, you see, is not the life of Christ, it is not the perfect things that He did. God did not somehow in exchange for your sins pick up that life and give it to you to make you perfect. Oh no. He did something else.

He took your sins and He put them on His Son. But what He gave you was Jesus Himself. Jesus Himself! It takes a bit of thinking about, that. He gave you Jesus. He is your righteousness. Christ is your righteousness. This may not help you but it is the way I thought about it for a while. You are all sitting next to somebody in this room. If God came in love to you and He said, ‘Here is how I am going to make you feel better. I am going to take all the very best things that the person sitting next to you has done in their life, and I am going to give them to you’ - it would not make you feel very good, would it? Imagine at the gate of heaven clothed with the best things that the person next to you has done. *“All our righteousnesses”*, the scripture says, *“are as filthy rags”*(*Isaiah 64:6*). And the word it uses there is a particularly horrible ‘filthy rag’. But what if He said to you, I will take the person next to you themselves and I will give them to you to be your righteousness. That does not make sense, does it? I cannot get my head around that. And

He has not said that.

But what if He said to you, I will give you Christ, Christ Himself to be your righteousness. You know, the odd thing is that although my mind struggles to understand it, it gives me a huge sense of peace. The Bible speaks about *"the peace of God which surpasses every understanding"* (Philippians 4:7). I have thought about that, that little verse about peace, as I thought about the fact that God had given me Christ to be my righteousness.

Think about some of the language of scripture. It says that you and I as believers are *"in Christ"*. And it says that Christ is in us. I do not really understand that very well either and probably nor do you. But imagine this: if you come to stand at the gate of heaven and you are washed utterly clean; you are made absolutely pure of sin, and God has given you this free gift of righteousness, you are right before God, He has given it to you. And this free gift, when you look at it, is Christ Himself. You stand there at the gate of heaven in Christ and Christ in you. Does that give you peace? Does that reassure you? You are in Christ.

It is not even that He just does not see your sins, it is not even that: He does not see them. But He has done something marvellously more than you could ask or think, He has put you in Christ and you stand at the gate of heaven in Christ.

Scripture does not say much about Christ's righteousness. But He was righteous. He is *"Jesus Christ the Righteous"* (1 John 2:1) and His life was perfect and He is utterly beautiful and you are hid in Him. He is in you and you are in Him, as far as God is concerned, now. You are utterly perfect in the sight of God. Perfect in the work of Christ.

But there is still a problem, which is this. If you stand at the gates of heaven and you are washed utterly clean, no trace of sin upon you and you are clothed in the most magnificent

clothes that any person could ever have dreamed of – there is still a problem. There is a person still in the middle of the clothes, the person that was washed clean. That person is still the same. That person might be washed clean but it is somebody that has sinned and is capable of sin. It is somebody in the past who has loved sin, it's you, and it will not do. So God has thought of that as well.

This is 2 Corinthians 5, Paul is writing to the Christians in Corinth and he says, *“So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and given to us the ministry of that reconciliation”* (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). Paul says, *“if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation”*. Hard though it is to understand, that is what God has done.

Not just washed you clean, not just clothed you magnificently with righteousness in Christ, but He has taken the old you that scripture says was dead in trespasses and sins and He has made a new creation in Christ Jesus.

There is something in you now; it is still you but it is new. It is still you and it is new and it is going on for eternity and it is utterly perfect. Sometimes in your life that new you inside, that new creation in you, it fights with what the scripture calls the flesh. It fights with all the natural desires and all the temptations that are there. It fights, and Paul describes it to you at length. And a lot of the scripture is about your life here and it is written to help you in that battle between how God wants you to be in your life here and how your natural instincts and desires still are in the things that tempt you.

But that fight is the evidence that God has a new creation; He has made you new. And as you stand there before the gate of heaven you are washed utterly clean, you are clothed in something spectacularly beautiful, you are in Christ and you are a new creation. God's work is very complete. He did not just

wash you in the cross and resurrection of Christ, He did far more than wash you from your sins. He did not leave you there empty and at a loss. He has filled you with something which is utterly beautiful, Christ, and He has made you new.

What else could God do to make this work complete? Well there is something very obvious when you think about it: this body of mine, that body of yours, it is humiliating. At times it lets you down. As you get older you will find that out more and more. Your body does things to you that you just wish it would not and you cannot stop it – it is a body of humiliation. You do not want to go to heaven with a body like that, not when every other bit of you has been made new: and you will not. The scripture says that when the time comes He is going to change it. *“Behold I tell you a mystery”*, Paul says to the Corinthians, *“We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). He says this to the Philippians; he says we are waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, *“who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”* (Philippians 3:20). He will transform it.

God’s work is so complete – washed and clean, given the right standing before God, a beautiful right standing in Christ. Made new inside, a new creation and awaiting a body which will be like Christ’s, transformed. Marvellous, is it not? There are some other things that God has done which I am not going to talk to you about. He has adopted you as a son. You are a child of God because you have received Christ and He has adopted you as His son. You are so welcome into heaven, you are so perfect. You do not feel it I know, but you are so perfect in the eyes of God because of the work of His Son.

I have one more thing I want you to consider. The scripture also says this: because of His completeness, God has not only

washed you, He has not only made you completely clean without a trace of sin, He has not only clothed you with magnificent righteousness, He has not only made you a new creation, He is not only going to give you a new body, He has not only adopted you as His son, He has done something else which I would never, ever have thought of, to make the work complete. I marvel at what God has done. It is in second Corinthians chapter 5:20.

*"We are ambassadors therefore for Christ, God as it were beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ".* And then he says this, it is a little summary really, of what we have been talking about this evening. He says, *"Be reconciled to God. Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him"*. It is that first bit that bothers me, *"Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us"*. It is quite distinct and different from, *"who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree"*.

It says He was made sin for us. Made sin. I do not know how that can be. You see, when you think about your sins, they are all words or thoughts or actions, things that you did. They are not things that you can pick up. How do you put your arms around them, how do you get them? Well, somehow God did because He took all of them and put them on Christ. But here He was made sin, the root cause of all the sins that you did and everyone else has done, somehow God has – I do not know how but He has done it – He has made Christ that, the scripture says.

He was made sin, sin itself, and He has dealt with it completely. You are perfect in Him. The work is complete. We will praise Him for eternity because of it.

Tim Pons

*Extracted from an address at Worthing, 28 January 2017*

## Poetry Selection

### COME LET US SING THE MATCHLESS WORTH

Come let us sing the matchless worth,  
And sweetly sound the glories forth  
Which in the Saviour shine;  
To God and Christ our praises bring,  
The song with which high heaven will ring,  
Praises for grace divine.

How rich the precious blood He shed,  
To free us from the guilt so dread  
Of sin against our God!  
How perfect is that righteousness,  
In which unspotted beauteous dress  
His saints have ever stood!

How rich the character He bears,  
And all the form of love He wears,  
Exalted on the throne!  
In songs of sweet untiring praise  
We e'er would sing His perfect ways,  
And make His glories known.

And soon the happy day shall come,  
When we shall reach our destined home,  
And see Him face to face;  
Then with our Saviour, Lord and Friend,  
The one unbroken day we'll spend  
In singing still His grace.

**Samuel Medley (1738 – 1799)**

## Testimony Section

### **DISCOVERING THE WONDERFUL FACT THAT GOD LOVED ME**

I was born into an Orthodox Christian family in Romania. I was taught that God loved Jesus Christ but I was never told that God loved me too. In the back of my mind I wished that God loved me. By the time I was a teenager I had started doubting the existence of God and the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God; despite this I was attending church regularly. I had to be honest with myself and recognise that, in spite of the fact that I was religious and was fulfilling some religious traditions, I was not the person I should have been. Sometimes I was even less kind than people who were not religious at all. I also was aware of the fact that my religion was half-hearted and was collapsing. One night I heard a beautiful song and it made me think that if such beauty exists in creation then the Creator must be truly wonderful. I felt that failing to know this wonderful Creator would be the greatest loss in my life. That night, willing and wanting to know who God really was, I knelt down and prayed this prayer in all sincerity: 'God, if you exist, please make me understand, and if Jesus Christ is Your Son, please reveal this to me'.

During my teenage years I had a physics teacher who was a Christian and she would occasionally speak to us about God and about living a different life. Then God arranged things in such a way that during my mother's illness, this lady came to our home to pray with my mother and they became very close friends. She also invited me to her home and would speak to me from the Bible. At first I was listening only out of politeness; she invited me to go to church with her but I declined the invitation several times. Then after praying the prayer that I mentioned above, I realised that I must give God an opportunity and accepted her invitation.

I went one Sunday to the church that my teacher attended. I do not remember the message or any of the songs, I only remember that I had a deep sense of the presence of the Lord that I had never known before and I just felt that I was in the right place.

Everything began to change after that service. The next Sunday I went to the church again and again I felt the presence of the Lord. I submitted to His claims and accepted Him into my heart and life. The Lord cleansed my heart and changed my perspective on everything. It was as if God had just stepped into my life and gave meaning and purpose to everything.

I have been walking with the Lord for six years now and I am so happy and blessed. The Lord has never given up on me and I know He never will. Life with Jesus is so different from everything I knew before. It is peace, joy, guidance and the love and presence of God as Father. I now understand that He loved me all along. To Him be all the glory!

Anna Udrea

*I am grateful to Ian Dickson for providing this testimony. Ed.*

## **A Voice from the Past**

### **THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S GLAD TIDINGS**

The great truth of the gospel is that God needs man. There is no gospel in saying that man needs God, but to know and be able to say that God needs man is glad tidings indeed. God must have men to display upon them the *"exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:7). Man's state is God's opportunity to come out in the wealth of the grace of His heart, and pour Himself out in immeasurable blessing. He finds joy in doing it. The knowledge of that in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit is the 'new wine' (see Luke 5:37-38). We are told in Acts 13 that the disciples *"were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit"* (v52). Paul says that *"the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness,*

*and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17) – that is the new wine.*

Luke brings out in a very blessed and attractive way that God has lost what is of great value to Him and He must have it back.. God would make Himself known in His thoughts, His heart, and His disposition of grace. It was a necessity to God to make Himself known in grace, and man, a sinful creature, was needed in order that He might do so. People often ask, ‘Why did God allow sin to come in to the world?’ He did so because only in relation to a sinful creature could He disclose the marvellous depth, riches and fullness of His great grace and the love of His heart.

It needed the Son of God to come from Heaven to tell us that God needs man. In Luke 15 we have the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, the woman looking for a lost coin and the father looking for the return of the son – they are all pictures of God seeking man. Think of the light and blessedness of all this being available to everyone of us! It is noticeable that Luke’s gospel is addressed to one man, Theophilus. It is as much as to say that God is prepared to confer all that is disclosed in this gospel to one individual; it is open to every one of us to take this gospel of Luke in all its fullness as personally addressed to us by the blessed God, that we may know Him in grace. He makes no demand; He bestows everything; He confers on men everything that they need, and everything that will declare what He is in grace.

As to the pollution that belongs to man as sinful, God has met it through the efficacy of one sacrifice for sin that has completely and for ever removed it from before Him. Sin in the flesh has been condemned through the death of God’s Son; purgation and cleansing have been effected in all the value and power of the death of Christ. Believers are now in the light of that; it is what God Himself has brought in; we are perfected for ever in the value of the work of Christ. That is the character of the system we belong to: there is perfect revelation of God in grace, perfect

cleansing from sin, and also power conferred by the Holy Spirit. The old system served out death and condemnation, but the new system serves out righteousness and life. It is impossible to mix the two; one is a system of demand and the other a system of supply.

C. A. Coates  
1929

## **A Word for Today**

### **THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE FATHER'S LOVE.**

It would not perhaps be out of place to conclude these notes with a brief reference to what has been upon many minds in regard to the order and spiritual concerns, desires and exercises of a meeting of those gathered as forming part of the assembly of God here upon earth.

The general principles which guide these concerns and exercises are most clearly and simply stated in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. In the former of these chapters everything like ministerial domination is shut out by the great fact of our being one body, all the members of which are of equal necessity to the well-being of the whole, though there may be great differences of intelligence or gift. Thus the head cannot say to the feet, *"I have no need of you"*. The hands and the eyes are absolutely dependent one upon the other, and so throughout the whole body. In chapter 14 the great point is the edification of the assembly, where head and feet, hands and eyes, are in activity, under the control of Him who is the Pre-eminent One, guiding by the Spirit according to His own pleasure. There are very clearly defined principles on which all this is practically carried out.

Now in spite of the confusion and division among Christians at the present time, these divine principles of 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 can be, and are, acted upon by many who are seeking, without making any undue pretensions, to walk in a path of faithfulness to the Lord, and to follow righteousness, faith, love and peace

with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. The reader will have gathered from what has been before us in the earlier parts of these notes two points which it would be useful to recall just here:

1.—That in coming together as forming part of the assembly of God upon earth, it is taken for granted that we have some knowledge, at least, of what it is to be at home with God, that there is no longer any question of sin between Him and us, and that His love has cast out fear. It follows from this that the Spirit, if unhindered, would, on the occasion of the gathering of the assembly, naturally occupy us with praise and worship, and not with prayer or confession of our own weakness, and the like.

2.—That the Lord's Supper is introductory to the worship which is properly characteristic of the assembly, and would therefore naturally occupy the earlier part of a meeting. While avoiding any interference with the liberty of the Spirit, or laying down any rigid rules, we gather from what has been already stated that up to and including the breaking of bread the company of saints would naturally be occupied more with the Lord Himself, and the attractive and wonderful ways of His love, and the hymns and praises would be on that line. We begin from His death as an accomplished fact, and are in living touch with Himself in resurrection as part of His own company.

On the other hand, one can see plainly enough that as we are led on to realise that we are in company with Christ, our hearts would be directed into a channel which would be characterised more by praise and worship of the Father.

It must be carefully noted, however, that while we may expect to be led into rather a different order of exercise after the breaking of bread, yet the meeting should not be looked upon as dividing itself into two parts. We cannot make any distinct or definite break between the earlier and later exercises of a meeting, and

any attempt to do so would be disastrous. We cannot decide the exact moment, on any given occasion, when the current of the praise or worship should be changed. All will be regulated perfectly when there is real accord between the hearts of those who are gathered and the Lord Himself. The youngest and least instructed in the gathering will have a rich feast if his heart is only in touch with Him who, *"in the midst"*, is ready to conduct us without distraction into fresh and comforting thoughts of the Father's love.

It may be asked what definite Scripture there is to prove these things. A sufficient answer would be that no positive Scripture is required. It is only what would be naturally expected from the Lord taking His place as the Risen One in the midst of His own company. As a matter of fact, however, Scripture does give us indications which are distinct and unmistakable. In the chapter we were just referring to, 1 Corinthians 12, we have this remarkable expression: *"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way"* (verse 31).

That is, there is something more excellent even than the exercise of the *"gifts"*, and what is that? It is love. Chapter 13 gives us the characteristics and ways of it in the assembly; but love is really God's nature, and the manner in which it has been made known to us now is by the Son revealing God as Father. It is evident that divine love must be entered into and enjoyed before it can be manifested in its actings, and it can only be thus known in anything like its fulness in the assembly. Hence Paul quotes in Hebrews 2 that beautiful verse we have already referred to in Psalm 22 *"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church [assembly] will I sing praise unto thee"* (verses 11 and 12).

Now if our hearts are collectively led into the enjoyment of this—the Father's name, expressive of God's perfect love—in the

assembly, what would be more natural than that praise and worship should flow in that channel, and on that line after the breaking of bread? But again it must be said that no exact rule can be laid down. The Lord is there as Head, and if those who are gathered are only in true accord with Himself, they would find that, without any effort, they would be led on into that which would be suitable to the position He now takes as linking Himself up with His own company here. Thus the hymns, the praise, the worship, or the ministry (if there be any) would not be such as to bring us, or our needs, or our state (past or present), or even our benefits, into prominence, but would connect the hearts of the saints with the circle of the Father's love, and what is enjoyed there. *"All things that the Father hath are mine" (John 16:5).*

There is no limit here; all is boundless and eternal. These things are apprehended without difficulty—though perhaps not all at once—by the one who is really willing to go forward with purpose of heart for the Lord here. It is for this reason that Scripture is so earnest in its appeals to the saints not to hinder the Spirit. He is our only Guide here, and can only pursue His blessed work of leading us on, and forming us according to the truth which has been made known to us, when we are willing to part company with whatever has proved itself to be a hindrance. If we clear out the earth from the channel, and make it broad and deep, the living water will flow along with unhindered and steady course.

We might close these meditations fittingly by making an affectionate appeal to the reader to accept more heartily than ever the obligations attending upon the fellowship of Christ's death here, and to be more sensitive as to everything that would compromise that fellowship. It is grateful to the heart of Christ when those who are His are found firmly though gently refusing to be identified with anything which is not suited to His name.

Dr. Thomas Willey (1847 – 1940)

*This concludes this series.*

***Scripture references in this series are taken from the Authorised (King James) Version as given in the original publication.***