

**149**

# ***LIVING WATER***

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# ***Living Water 149***

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## Recent Ministry

### WALKING WORTHY OF THE CALLING

*Ephesians 1:1-23*

*1 Peter 2:1-10*

*Ephesians 4:1-8*

In Ephesians 4, where we read, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to “*walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called, with all lowliness and meekness...*” (v.1-2). If we are to do this we need to understand what the calling is. I trust that the Spirit will help us into a greater understanding of that through these Scriptures we have read. Paul sets out in the first few chapters of Ephesians the height of the calling and this is particularly in the first chapter. There is hardly a break in the chapter and he uses superlative language to describe the height of the calling that the people of God have been brought into. He does so from the side of divine purpose. The believers in Ephesians are viewed as having sat down in heavenly places. In the second and third chapter Paul continues the same theme, then from chapter four onwards he sets out the practical answer that there is to be in our lives. We need to be concerned that there is an answer.

What Paul outlines in chapter 1 is true of every believer. Whether we understand it or not does not alter the fact that it is true of us that we have been called from above, called from the glory and we are called to the glory. We are called into the most wonderful blessing that divine love could devise. One of the first things mentioned in chapter 1 is what is due to God by way of praise, “*the praise of the glory of his grace*” (v.6) and then later on it is “*the praise of his glory*” (v.12). Our blessing is not an end in itself. We are taken up for the pleasure of God and in view that He might have an answer. He desired, in making man, that He would be able to commune with him and that He would have a response from him.

Paul's appreciation was vast. Before this epistle was written he spoke to the Ephesian elders of the whole counsel of God (see Acts 20:27). He had it in his heart and his desire was that the saints would come into it. We need to be concerned in relation to that. It has been well said that you will not give up anything of this world until you understand the glory of what is in heaven. That is why Paul almost always begins his letters by speaking highly of the believers that he is writing to. They are addressed here as "...the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus who are at Ephesus" (Ephesians 1:1). Later in the epistle Paul has certain corrective things to say to them but he begins by addressing them according to the dignity of their calling by God.

We might wonder what some of the things spoken of mean. What, for instance, is it *"to sit down in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus"* (Chapter 2:6)? We are not in heaven yet but as we are

**the Holy Spirit would bring something of the joy of heaven into our hearts**

occupied with Christ and rejoice in Him, so the Holy Spirit would bring something of the joy of heaven into our hearts – something of the wonder of the heavenly calling. That is the place of believers from the divine viewpoint. They have been taken up, redeemed, secured in the blood of Christ and brought into the place of fullest blessing. The fulness of the purpose of God is to be enjoyed now. We are challenged as to how fully we understand that but that is the view of the saints in Ephesians. The blessings are *"in Christ"* – it is *"the heavenlies in Christ"*. There is no blessing outside of Him. Everything has been secured in His precious, finished work. Everything for the pleasure of God eternally, whether it is earthly or heavenly, is secured on that precious work.

There is a difference between a spiritual blessing and a material blessing. In the Old Testament, Israel's blessings were material and while, as Christians, we are thankful for the material things that our heavenly Father provides, our blessings are spiritual. Our calling is heavenly: *"our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens"* (Philippians 3:20). So we should not be looking for something on earth. The enjoyment of these blessings is found as we enter into what fellowship with the Father and the Son is in reality. The Father desires to express His appreciation and His value of the glory and greatness of His Son and He wants to share these things with us. He has brought us into a place where we can enjoy and share these things. The prime thought is sonship so adoption is the first thing, *"marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ"* (v.5). A parent can give all the blessings to an adopted child that he has, but he cannot give him his character. But God does do that through adoption: we shall all be like Christ. We read elsewhere, *"But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts"* (Galatians 4:6). We need the service of the Holy Spirit to understand the blessing of adoption. Adoption and sonship are the same word. There is no lack there. The Lord takes it up in John 17, *"the glory which thou hast given me I have given them"*. That is the glory of sonship. We need the Spirit's help, not only to enjoy it, but to have the assurance of it. There is nothing material about it; it is entirely spiritual and it involves a relationship with the Father. That was one of the things that the Lord taught His disciples—how the Father loved them and cared for them. It brings in a real sense of dignity, that we are sons. Then the question arises, 'Do we walk as sons?'

One of the wonders of the divine calling is what we read here that we were chosen *"in him before the world's foundation"* (v.4). That goes right back to what was in the heart of God before the creation of the world. It shows that we are part of

a vast plan. It should bow our hearts in thanks to the blessed God who has brought us into it.

The Holy Spirit is the key to understanding the blessing and the enjoyment of it. One of the things that Satan has been so successful at with the people of God is... 'You are going to heaven when you die – even he could not deny that – but that is in the future— so do not bother any more thinking about that but just go in for things here'. That is not what God intended. That is why the apostle brings out the glory of what is yet to come in the world to come, heading up all things in the Christ. That is an incentive to enter in to what the inheritance is. We should enjoy millennial things now. In the millennium Christ will have His rightful place. He will reign without a rival; He should reign in our hearts now without a rival.

It is important, in relation to the calling, to know what we are being called from and what we are called to. The apostle said that when we were still without God, we were without hope (Ephesians 2:12). We have been called in grace but we are called to this experience and enjoyment which we are talking about. It is interesting that in the next chapter Paul says, "*wherefore remember*". He has set out the blessing but reminds us of what we were. We were far away and without Christ but through the blood we have been brought back. That would keep us in humility and in a spirit of thankfulness. But we are not just called out, we are called to something else; we are called to something that is much greater. We are actually called out of the world. Our salvation is to deliver us from a present evil world (see Galatians 1:4).

All three divine Persons are intent on our having and enjoying this blessing. We have been speaking about what the Spirit does; we have been speaking about what is in Christ: then the second half of chapter 1 is all about what God our Father has

done in the greatness of His power. The greatest display of God's power was the resurrection of Christ. He wrought in the might of His strength in raising Christ from the dead (See v.20). That same power is available to the believer. That anticipates that there will be opposition to the believer going in for this. It is illustrated for us in the book of Joshua. When the children of Israel crossed the Jordan they were probably thinking, 'Well, we have made it'. Then they found Jericho standing athwart the progress into the land. If anybody sets himself for going in for these things Satan sets himself against him. I think this is where the power that God used in the raising of Christ comes in on the believer's behalf. That is why Paul prays for them: *"for this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... in order that he may give you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened in power by his Spirit..."* (Ephesians 3:14-16). Perhaps that should be more of our prayers too. Paul is anxious that what he is enjoying others will come into as well and he realises the barriers that are in their way so he continues in prayer, *"... would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him, being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know what is the hope of his calling"*.

The church is a company of called out persons. We are called out individually but we are brought into that vast company. He speaks of it at the end of chapter 2, *"built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit"*. That is the church. That is what God is dwelling in now. The Spirit is working so that the church might be presented, *"having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things"* (Ephesians 5:27). The church is the *"fulness of him who fills all in all"*. She is completely adequate to take her place. What a triumph for divine Persons that this is secured in a creature vessel. She will never have part in deity; she is a creature vessel.



**We should think more about thanksgiving and praise to God.**

These blessings start with the election of God and it is for His own glory that He might have a response in the assembly in Christ Jesus and everything has been brought about, a whole universe, so that God should have praise from those secured by Him.

We should think more about the side of thanksgiving and praise to God. God called out one nation on earth to praise His name and to show His glory and, of course, they failed but God never gives up any of His thoughts. All is secured in Christ and the church.



Peter sets out more the practical side. He is writing to the Jews of the dispersion. God set out certain things in the Old Testament, such as the tabernacle and the offerings, physically in Israel so that we might learn the reality of spiritual things from them. Peter goes over how God’s thoughts in relation to Israel have been carried forward in the church at this present time. And so the blessings that Israel and the remnant will come into are opened up to the church now.

It begins with an appreciation of the One who has been rejected here. We live in a world in which Christ is still rejected but He is precious to each one of us. The understanding of that is so important if we are to fill out our part here in testimony. Peter goes on to speak of what we are, *“a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation ... that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you”* (v.9). Well, can we do that? What appreciation do we have of our God as revealed in Christ?

Peter reminds them of the dignity of what they are, a holy priesthood and a kingly priesthood. The holy priesthood would relate more to the worship of God. The kingly priesthood

relates more to their place in the world and how we belong to a kingdom that is not yet seen on earth. It is in our hearts as believers. We belong to that kingdom. We should move in the dignity of that kingdom. The kingly priesthood relates to what we are as having come to Christ and it is to govern our actions. There is a striking illustration in the history of Gideon. Gideon asked Zebah and Zalmunna, *“What sort of men were they that ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the sons of a king”* (Judges 8:18). Now it is recorded of Gideon that he was the poorest in his father’s house; his family was the poorest in Benjamin (see Judges 6:15) but that was the impression of these men that he was the son of a king. That is a challenge to my heart; what would they say about me? What is to be seen in my walk as a believer that would correspond with what Peter tells us, that we have been called so that we *“might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light”* (1 Peter 2:9).

Then Peter also brings in the concept of *“Living stones”*. That is what takes character from Christ. He is the Living Stone, He has been into death, He is the stone rejected by men, rejected by His people but made by God to be head of the corner. The cornerstone is not the foundation exactly: Christ is the foundation but He is also the cornerstone. The cornerstone gives form and character to the whole building. We read of Christ that He is a living stone, with God chosen and precious (see 1 Peter 2:4). That is Christ, the anointed Man, the One who fulfilled all God’s pleasure and God’s will here on earth. But then, we are living stones, we are brought in on the same line. We are to be reflective of Him.

Stone is naturally dead but we become living stones. The setting of it is that we are made like Christ but there is something there that can be taken account of that is stable

but it takes character from Christ and it is living. We were dead, *"dead in your offences and sins"* (Ephesians 2:1). But through the operations of divine grace we, like them, have been brought back. The living character of the stones comes from the fact that they are connected together and there is a supply that flows through them all. They are not dead, isolated stones, they are living stones that are attached. The idea of coming to the living stone is that we become attached to that living stone and become one with it.

The stones are built together so that there is a house for God's dwelling. That is a great triumph that there is what God can dwell in now. It will be seen millennially and eternally. God will dwell eternally. But there is in the church now *"a habitation of God in the Spirit"*, and believers form part of that.

Peter could speak of the glory of Christ; the glory that was seen on the Mount, the Godhead glory that he personally witnessed on the Mount. No wonder he could speak of the wonderful light. It comes in in Matthew 16 when Peter says, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"*. That was light to his soul and the Father had communicated that to him. If we are going to set forth the excellencies of Him that has called us we need to depend upon the Spirit's service to be occupied with Christ where He is.

We read in Corinthians about being ambassadors for Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador represents his own country in a foreign one. Now, we are to be ambassadors for Christ, representing Him in this world—a world that has become a foreign country to us because Christ is rejected. It is a great challenge. Peter tells us of persons who *"think it strange that ye run not with them to the same sink of corruption"* (1 Peter 4:4). A believer was once asked why he did not do certain things that are common by way of entertainment in the world. The reply was, 'My eyes have seen

**Our walk is to be  
“with all lowliness  
and meekness”**

the king in His beauty, the land that is afar off’ (see Isaiah 33:17). He had seen something better and that is what should be true of us. It is both a responsibility and a privilege. Moses counted, *“the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt”* (Hebrews 11:26). He must have been in a wonderful position in Egypt yet it all meant nothing to him. Moses is a good example to us. He was brought up in a very privileged position but he chose rather to *“suffer affliction along with the people of God”* (Hebrews 11:25). He really had the purpose of God in his heart. After crossing the Red Sea, Moses’ song takes the people right forward to a millennial day when Israel will be planted in the land and enjoy God’s favour. The response of the people’s song, led by Miriam, was limited to the salvation that had been brought about at the Red Sea but Moses had the full purpose of God in his heart (see Exodus 15).



Ephesians 4 begins with Paul saying, *“I, the prisoner in the Lord”*. He would just remind them that he had suffered the loss of everything because of his faithfulness to Christ. But, as he tells the Philippians, that was no loss to him, indeed it was a great gain. But he exhorts the brethren to walk worthy of the calling. He takes up various sides of the walk in chapters 4, 5, & 6: Walking in unity, in love, in light, and in wisdom. These things are all to mark the Christian walk. Like Peter, Paul is concerned that there should be a practical answer in the life of the believer to the height of the calling.

Our walk is to be *“with all lowliness and meekness”* (v.2). That is a challenge to us. There is nothing to be proud of in the calling that we have—we should be marked by meekness and lowliness. This meekness is to flow from a conscious sense

that God has called me—me of all persons—and He gave me the ability to hear and answer that call. There was nothing in me that warranted God calling me. Then one test of our meekness and lowliness is how we bear with one another.

We need to keep right views as to the church, what the church is in the mind of God. John was taken up to a great and high mountain to view it, to see it from the divine side. Whatever failure has come in – and we have to recognise that failure has come in, and we have had our full part in the failure – but still from the divine side there is no breakdown connected to it. The unity of the body cannot be broken but the history of the church shows that maintaining the unity of the Spirit in our walk together is something that tests and challenges us.

It is a fact that very often we are tested on these practical things; it is where the dignity of our calling should override all these things. That is the standard. It would help us to deal with one another in testing conditions. We are not just a membership or a club; this is the calling that God has called us all into.

Paul says *“Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit” (Chapter 4:3)*. It is a matter of real application of ourselves because we understand that the Spirit is the uniting power. It is not natural to us but as understanding the truth of the body then we are to act in relation to that. The oneness of the saints was a great testimony in the beginning of the dispensation. That is why Satan has been so active to destroy it. The Lord Himself said, *“By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves” (John 13:35)*.

The apostle Paul had already warned the Ephesian elders as to what would come in to test them. And when we look at Revelation, the word to the seven assemblies, Ephesus was the one where departure started. So there was need for diligence. It reminds us that we can have the height of the

truth but if we do not have Christ livingly before us we have nothing. Christ is the true centre of unity. When the rapture occurs He is going to fill the hearts and souls of every believer and we will be totally united to Him.

It is good if unity is seen practically in our local companies but we need to use diligence to bring it about and to keep it. If we do not agree on things we should be able to arrive at what is the truth. If we are subject to Christ and to the Holy Spirit, we will arrive at the right position. It is a question that troubles many: 'If there is one body, why are there so many differences among Christians and so many different groups of believers?' We cannot just answer that it is due to failure on the part of others for we have all failed. It is true that some believers are not prepared for the pathway of separation, we have to accept that and see that we are prepared for it. The full blessings that are opened up to us, according to the Corinthian epistle, are opened up to those who walk a path separate from the world. It is separation to Christ. It is not a set of teachings or a mere sect, it is Christ. It is not a position, it is to a Person. It is an exercise as to whether that is worked out now. If Christ had His rightful place in our local meetings there would be no difficulty. It is the promotion of self that brings in the problem. The order of man that was dealt with at Calvary's cross rears his head.

It is wonderful, all the truth and grace is in one Person and, *"...each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ" (chapter 4:7)*. We can draw on that never-ending resource. *"Grace upon grace"*, suggests to me that there is no lack of supply.

May we be helped to appreciate the greatness of our calling and walk in the good of it.

David McIntyre

Based on a Bible reading, Worthing, November 2017

## Poetry Selection

### BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Beholding Thee, Lord Jesus,  
In all that glory bright,  
We prove the power that frees us,  
And sets us in the light.  
Redemption's work completed –  
We seated in Thee there;  
The powers of hell defeated,  
Thy triumphs we now share.  
Beholding Thee, Lord Jesus,  
We learn that wondrous love  
Which with delight now sees us  
Complete in Thee above;  
The love of God outshining  
From Thy most blessed face,  
That love alone defining  
The nearness of our place.  
Lord Jesus, still beholding,  
We seek Thy home on high,  
The Spirit here unfolding  
Things hid from mortal eye;  
And soon, with Thee for ever,  
We'll find our blest employ,  
Where naught the heart can sever  
From Thee, its spring of joy.

George W. Fraser (1840-1896)

## Testimony Section

### VOICES FROM THE EDGE OF ETERNITY

#### Messages from a death bed

*This soul in flames, I offer, Christ, to Thee.*

Jerome of Prague 1416 (Christian martyr burned at the stake)

*God has brought to my mind again that speech of Paul: 'If God be for us, who can be against us'*

Phillip Melanchthon 1560 (Reformer and friend of Martin Luther)

*I shall be free from all sin and all the temptations and anxieties that attend it, and this being past, I shall dwell... with men made perfect, dwell where my eyes shall see my Master and Saviour, Jesus.*

George Herbert 1633 (Poet and hymn writer)

*O sweet Saviour of the world, let Thy last words upon the cross be my last words in the world:—Into Thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit; and what I cannot utter with my mouth, accept from my heart and soul.*

Francis Quarles 1644 (Poet)

*My dear son, fare thee well; I must leave thee. Get an interest in Christ, and love Him; nothing else will stand thee in stead like an interest in Him.*

Daniel Axtell 1660

*We shall there desire nothing that we have not, except more tongues to sing more praises to Him.*

Robert Boyle 1691 (Scientist, discoverer of Boyle's law – a chemical law related to the pressure and elasticity of gases)

*A life spent in the service of God, and in communion with Him, is the most comfortable life that anyone can lead in this present world.*

Matthew Henry 1714 (Bible commentator)



*My dear Johannes (his son-in-law) I am going home to our Saviour. I am fully resigned to the will of my Lord, and He is satisfied with me; for He has pardoned me. If He has no further use for me here, I am quite ready to go to Him, for there is nothing in the way.*

Count Zinzendorf 1760 (Founder of the Moravian Mission)

*Sickness is no affliction, pain no curse, death no dissolution, the sky is clear, there is no cloud:— ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly’*

Agustus Toplady 1778 (Author of ‘Rock of Ages’)

*I have no hope but that which inspired the dying malefactor. And now my work is done, and I have nothing to do but to go to my Father.*

Selina, Countess of Huntingdon 1791

*What I was as an artist seemed to me of some importance while I lived; but what I really was as a believer in Christ Jesus is the only thing of importance to me now.*

John Bacon 1799 (Sculptor. He left instructions that these words were to be inscribed on his memorial tablet.)

*I do not know what my medical friends think of me, but they need not fear to tell me their opinion. I have not left it to this hour to make my peace with God. When I was a young man I knew God; but I departed from Him, and He has brought me back to Himself again.*

Dr. William Knighton 1836 (Keeper of the Privy Purse to king George IV.)

*I feel that I have nothing to plead, nothing to bring forward on my own behalf. Free, undeserved grace is my only hope; to that I look, and in that I rest in the full assurance of faith.*

Sir Jahleel Brenton 1844 (Rear Admiral)

*As I may not be able to express myself distinctly by and by, I wish now to state that I am in perfect peace, resting alone on the blood of Christ, the precious blood of the Son of God, which cleanseth from all sin. I find this amply sufficient to enter the presence of God with. Oh the precious, precious blood of Christ!*

I am nothing and I have been nothing,  
There is nothing that I can do;  
But the Man among the three –  
The Man of Calvary,  
That is the Man for me.

William Trotter 1865

*Tell the others I am going home a little sooner than I thought. Tell them not to talk about the servant but to talk about the Saviour.*

F. B. Meyer 1929 (Preacher)

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

## **THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST**

Everything truly great and glorious is seen in Christ, joined with a lowliness which made Him the servant of all. God has taken us in hand so that we may get, through our affections being engaged with Christ, an entirely new thought of greatness. The will of man always works along the line of masking something of himself, or pleasing himself, but *“the Christ did not please himself” (Romans 15:3)*.

Gabriel said of Him to Mary, *“He shall be great”* but it was the greatness of One who was to lie in a manger, and not to have where to lay His head. If we are truly great it will put us in the lowliest place here.

When the disciples wanted to learn who was the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens, Jesus called a little child to Him and said, *“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens” (Matthew 18:1-4).*

When Peter and those who were with Him on the holy mount fully woke up they saw His glory, but it was the glory that shone in a praying Man, who received all from God the Father in absolute dependence, and took no glory from Satan or from men. He is the One who says, *“Come to me... learn from me... for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:28-30).*

If I am truly a little child in the arms of Jesus, I shall not readily take offence, and when offended I shall be very ready to forgive.

All the excellent bearing, distinction and humility of Jesus were devoted to the will and glory of God in death, but God has approved them all in resurrection. There was nothing morally in Christ which could remain in death or be held there. Every moral feature that was seen in Him has come out of death to appear and be perpetuated in those that believe as having the Spirit of Christ. Then too, it will appear in a healed and purified Israel in a future day and will give character to the moral universe, purifying it from every taint of creature will.

C. A. Coates (1862 – 1945)

## **A Word for Today**

(In this issue we begin a new series)

### **INTRODUCTION TO THIS SERIES**

When I was in my late teens I liked reading the preachings that were documented in a monthly periodical entitled "The Word Proclaimed". They contained teaching about various aspects of the gospel that helped me in my understanding. It is still important for believers young and old to come to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus and set out in the Bible. As in natural things we do not learn the scope of the gospel at once but step by step. There is no substitute for personal reading of the Bible, especially the Epistle to the Romans, but we learn too from the teaching of others that is based on the Holy Scriptures. The editor has selected several such preachings from archived material of "The Word Proclaimed" and I commend them to the readers of this magazine.

Kenneth Hollands

New Year 2018

### **THE GREAT PROCLAMATION**

***"Then he opened their understanding to understand the scriptures, and said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from among the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you; but do you remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high.***

***"And he led them out as far as Bethany, and having lifted up his hands, he blessed them. And it came to pass as he was blessing them, he was separated from them and was carried***

***up into heaven. And they having done him homage, returned to Jerusalem with great joy..." Luke 24:45-52***

***"And he said to them, Go into all the world, and preach the glad tidings to all creation. He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that disbelieves shall be condemned" Mark 16:16-17***

***"And Jesus coming up spoke to them, saying, All power has been given to me in heaven and upon earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age."Matthew 28:18-20***

The words we have read are in each case the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, words which He spoke after He had suffered. He had been crucified, had died, had been buried and had risen from among the dead the third day. As the mighty Victor over death, He spoke these words, and I read them in this order because I believe it is the order in which they ought to be presented to you.

In Luke He refers to the great proclamation. He is not saying who should proclaim it, but is referring to the proclamation itself. He says, *"and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all the nations beginning at Jerusalem"*. What a marvellous proclamation from the very throne of God! Referring to it Paul says he was *"appointed a herald and apostle... a teacher of the nations in faith and truth"* (1 Timothy 2:7). This proclamation, which began at Jerusalem. has reached out to us here in Croydon tonight. Repentance and remission of sins are preached in Christ's name to the British nation, as to all nations. Its message continues. Nothing is said here as to the penalty for refusing

it; it is just the great proclamation, from the very heart of God, announcing repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name. It comes to you; the very words of Christ are falling upon your ears. Why should anyone here fail to avail themselves of this great amnesty proclaimed from the very throne of God? There is no reason why you should remain with a single sin upon you! God is prepared to clear you of every charge for time and for eternity, so that you may stand before Him without spot. Who would be foolish enough to ignore a proclamation like this? We read sometimes of national governments proclaiming an amnesty. How foolish any political prisoner would be who ignored such an act of grace on the part of an earthly government. But think of the throne of God! We have all offended; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And now this glorious proclamation of forgiveness goes out to all the nations.

How is it that such a message proceeds from the throne of God? It could only come in Christ's name! And how is it that such a message can reach us in His name? He Himself explains, *"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from among the dead the third day"*.

I wish to speak to you for a few moments about the sufferings of the Christ. In speaking about the Christ, as coming of Israel according to flesh, Paul immediately says: *"Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen"* (Romans 9:5). The Christ was none other than God manifest in flesh. He is the Rock of Ages and yet cleft for me. From the earliest chapters of the Bible reference is made to the coming of Christ and His sufferings. Had He returned into glory without suffering there would be no place in glory for you and me. Peter speaks of the sufferings of the Christ and the glories after these (see 1 Peter 1:11). The sufferings of Christ are such that no mortal tongue can speak adequately of them. He suffered at the hands of

man in a most dreadful way. He was scourged. As to this the Psalmist says, *“the ploughers ploughed upon my back, they made long their furrows”* (Psalm 129:3). The Roman scourging always penetrated to the bone. Think of the cruelty of Pilate scourging the Lord Jesus! He had to admit that He was a righteous Man; yet when he had scourged Him it says, *“he delivered him up to be crucified”* (Matthew 27:26). Who can think of the Lord Jesus being scourged without being deeply affected. Then He was crowned with thorns. Jerusalem’s thorns were very long. Think of Jesus crowned with such thorns and then beaten on the head with a reed; and, after this clothed with a purple robe, mocked and spat upon, then taken out to Golgotha, nailed to a cross and lifted up between two malefactors. Men had done their very worst. You may say, why was such suffering necessary at the hands of men? Why did such a One allow Himself to suffer? It was essential that our wicked hearts should be fully exposed and the only way the wicked heart of man—and that is my heart and yours—could be fully exposed was in presence of an Object perfectly good. In the presence of perfect goodness the vileness of man was fully seen. Christ is the test of every man; the most amiable man, if he is unrepentant and unconverted, hates Christ. You may educate man and make him as amiable as possible, but test him with perfection in Christ and you will find that he hates Christ; he does not even want to be in the company of lovers of Christ, he does not want to hear about Christ. That is the state of man's heart. It was the state of my heart: none of us is exempt from this. And it was necessary that sin, operating in men, should be exposed in all its awfulness before it was judged. It was essential, therefore, that Christ should accept suffering at the hands of man so that sin might be fully exposed; and then, when sin was fully exposed in the greatest of all crimes—the

crucifixion—it was then that the blessed Saviour took the whole burden of guilt upon Himself. What amazing love, what overwhelming grace!

When judgment had to fall, when it could no longer be delayed, then the Lord Jesus *“gave Himself a ransom for all”* (1 Timothy 2:6) The prophet Zechariah speaks of some of His sufferings. He says, *“And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thy hands? And he will say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends”*. The fact that He was wounded thus merits the unsparing judgment of God on those who perpetrated the crime. But what does the next verse of the prophet say?

**The Lord had perfect feelings, He loathed sin.** *“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts”* (Zechariah 13:6 & 7). When

the sword had to awake and judgment had to fall, the wonderful thing is that the very One against whom we had sinned and upon whom we had given vent to all that our evil hearts could devise, took the whole burden upon Himself. He came for that purpose. Therein we see the matchless grace and love of our God; that when we had done our worst and judgment must fall because of the way we treated the Lord Jesus, then Jesus bore the consequences that we might go free. When the sword had to awake, instead of awaking against us and sweeping away the human race in judgment, the sword awoke against Him. *“Awake O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts”*. I want you to have some impression, feeble though our impressions must be, of what the sufferings were that He endured then when He took our place before God.

Scripture gives types (or illustrations) to help us to understand



the sufferings of Christ. The book of Numbers in the Old Testament, gives a picture of dreadful burning in Chapter 19. It says in verse 5, *“And one shall burn the heifer before his eyes; its skin and its flesh, and its blood, with its dung shall he burn. And the priest shall take cedar-wood, hyssop and scarlet and cast them into the midst of the burning heifer. And a clean man shall gather the ashes of the heifer, and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the assembly of the children of Israel for a water of separation; it is a purification for sin”*. The Spirit of God thus portrays in picture in the Old Testament that which should help us to understand the sufferings of Christ at the hand of God when He took our place. Think of the burning of the heifer! The hymn expresses something of it:

O day of greatest sorrow,  
Day of unfathomed grief!  
When Thou didst taste the horror  
Of wrath without relief.

The Lord Jesus bore the all-consuming judgment of God. What a burning it was! God’s judgment will be expressed eternally in a lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death; but Jesus bore and exhausted divine judgment upon the cross. It was the most awful burning. His sufferings were greater than the sum of all the sufferings of the lost. Lost souls have had no right feelings about sin, no desires after God whatsoever. The Lord had perfect feelings, He loathed sin. We may express disgust at some sins; but some of the things highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God. He hates pride of every kind including religious pride and hypocrisy. Jesus loathed sin, yet He was made sin for us. Think of that burning and think of what went into it, the cedar-wood, the hyssop and the scarlet! All that we might have prided ourselves in: the cedar-wood, reflecting the

greatness and pride of man; the hyssop – the mock humility of man, for no unrepentant man is really humble; and the scarlet, the glory of man; all have gone in the burning. God hates them all. Your fancied greatness, your fancied glory, your mock humility will not do for God; they have all gone in the burning, they have all been judged by God: *“Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21)*. What place can you take, then, what place can I take? There is only one place to take in the light of the sufferings of Christ, and what is that? To repent in dust and ashes! No cedar-wood is left there, it is all burnt up; no hyssop, no mock humility left now, I am facing the plain truth; no scarlet now, just dust and ashes. That is the way to appear before God. That is what repentance means. Repentance and remission of sins are preached in Christ's name. God grants you the opportunity at this very hour of going down before Him in dust and ashes, and the moment you do that you will be one of the happiest persons on earth. The moment you do that your heart will be filled with divine joy.

Job was a man who had a high opinion of himself and he was never happy. He said, *“I was not in safety, neither had I quietness, neither was I at rest, and trouble came” (Job 3:26)*. Outwardly prosperous, he was never happy at heart. But the time came when he said, *“I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6)*, and from that time he was a truly happy man. Oh, what happiness it is to be rid of all that cedar-wood and hyssop and scarlet and to come down to realities. What am I? A sinner under the judgment of God! *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27)*. *“For dust thou art: and unto dust thou shalt return” (Genesis 3:19)*. By no effort of mine could I prolong my life, and nor could you. All have sinned and death has passed upon all men because all have sinned. We are just

dust. But, on the other hand, I have shown you from Scripture where the ashes come from. Christ has taken our place and borne the judgment. If there were only dust, there would be no hope for us. But we can repent in dust – the acknowledgement of what we are – and in ashes – the acknowledgement of what Christ has done. What a basis for repentance! The ashes bear witness to a finished work; the burning is over, the judgment has been borne and those ashes are the basis for purification from sin. It says, *“if the blood of goats and bulls and a heifer’s ashes sprinkling the defiled, sanctifies for the purity of the flesh, how much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship the living God?”* (Hebrews 9:13-14). Oh, the efficacy of the blood of the Christ to purge your conscience for time and eternity! So I beg you to get down to realities in the presence of this great proclamation, and to put yourself in the place of repentance in dust and ashes before God.

The great father of the faithful, Abraham, went a step further. In speaking to God he said, *“I, who am dust and ashes”* (Genesis 18: 27). What a happy man Abraham was and on what close terms with God! In his happiness he spoke like that. He had a happy time of communion with God in that very chapter. You cannot be happy while you are keeping up false pretences. But get down to realities with God and you come into the gain of this great proclamation, repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name on the basis of His infinite sufferings. I would beg of you, if you will not listen to me for the sake of your own soul, do listen to me for the sake of Christ, because of all that He has suffered for you.

Do let His sufferings appeal to you. *“Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring*

*us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).* Do you realise what Christ has suffered for you? Do you know that He is waiting upon you at this very moment, yearning over you? He is the Rock of Ages and He longs to be a refuge and a shelter for you. Put yourself in the place where you can get the full benefit of all that He is. Repent in dust and ashes and you will have Him for righteousness, and through Him you will have access into the full favour of God. Not only so, but God will give you power, so that the very power of sin over you will be broken. *"Do ye remain in the city",* He says, *"till ye be clothed with power from on high".* God clothes the repentant believer with power from on high. The Holy Spirit is pleased to come upon, and take up His abode in, a repentant, believing person. Such a one is clear of the whole sin question before God and the proof of it is that God's Spirit dwells in him and gives him power. What follows that is joy. Why should not you share in the joy? The world cannot offer you joy. It gives a bit of passing merriment, and the next day your heart is emptier than ever. That is not what God gives. *"They ... returned to Jerusalem with great joy".* If you repent in dust and ashes you will be amongst those who have great joy. They were *"continually in the temple, praising and blessing God".*

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Now I want to say a word about Mark 16:15, 16. This brings in a solemn challenge which is not in Luke. He said to them, *"Go into all the world, and preach the glad tidings to all the creation".* Who was speaking? The One by whom all things were created. All things were created by Him and for Him, and He had come into His creation to suffer so that glad tidings might go out to all His creation. He loves the creation. The love of God is expressed in this verse. You do not read of glad tidings in the newspaper, no such thing. The world has no glad tidings to offer you. Everyone has a sense of

impending doom and they are quite right. But God sends out the glad tidings. And then the word is, and this is the solemn part of it, *"He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that disbelieves shall be condemned"*.

Now there is the issue put very straight before you. There is no equivocation at all, there is no middle course: *"He that believes and is baptised shall be saved and he that disbelieves shall be condemned"*. Which side of the line are you? Are you a believer or an unbeliever? This scripture is as clear as it can possibly be.

What are we going to do about this? It is a very serious matter, there is nothing more serious, and we all ought to face it now. You trifle with it at your peril. If you had a message from an earthly ruler, you would not trifle with it. You would know that there were penalties attached to delay. Here is the message from God. *"He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that disbelieves shall be condemned"*. Who can alter that? No one. It is the King of the Ages speaking, the One from whose face, before long, earth and heaven will flee away and no place will be found for them, when the dead will stand before God (see Revelation 20:11 & 12). No human argument can alter this edict, and it is at your peril that you postpone a decision even for one hour. I beg of you, each one here, to come to a decision at this moment, for the message comes to you, *"He that believes and is baptised shall be saved"*. Do you believe? Have you been baptised? *"He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that disbelieves shall be condemned"*.

You may reject this message which is so clear and to the point. You go out of this hall; before you have crossed the street something may happen and you may have passed out of this life. Your doom is sealed. *"He that disbelieves shall be condemned"*. What does that mean? There is a lake that burns

with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Make no mistake, do not trifle, because if the Lord Jesus, in order to save your soul, has borne the horror of wrath without relief — that awful burning — do not think **you** will escape if you neglect so great salvation. In truth there is no escape, for there is no efficacious sacrifice for sins other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be deluded by anything that men may say to you. Human philosophy and human arguments will help you nothing in that day. These are the words of Him who said, *"The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall in no wise pass away"* (Mark 13:31). You cannot get round these words and I beg you to give heed to them and make your decision now. The gospel is preached for the obedience of faith and I beg you to obey the gospel. Repent and believe in the gospel, put your trust in Christ, the Rock of Ages.

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Now I pass on for a moment to the gospel of Matthew where the Lord Jesus says, *"All power has been given to me in heaven and upon earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son. and of the Holy Spirit"*. He says nothing here about repentance or forgiveness of sins nor of being saved or lost. He is speaking of the positive blessing of those who believe, those who are prepared to be made into disciples. If you are a repentant man or woman, and have put your faith in Christ, you have obeyed the gospel, and you will be delighted to become a disciple. The baptising in Mark is in view of disassociating yourself from the world. In accepting baptism you leave the world which has cast Him out, just as the children of Israel left Egypt. But Matthew tells us **what we are brought into**, and I can assure you, if you believe the gospel, and become a disciple, what you will lose through

turning your back on this world, is not in any way to be compared with what you will gain. There is no comparison whatever. You will be brought into something infinitely superior to anything you will ever have to give up. And so the word is here, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”*.

**For the rest of  
your life, ... you  
have a heavenly  
Father,**

Have you ever heard a name of such blessedness? This Name has been called by someone who knew God well, ‘the unfolded fulness of the Godhead’. It is the way God has been pleased to manifest Himself to us, His creatures, in this present dispensation. He was not known like this in the past but is now known in this most blessed way. It is the Christians’ privilege to know God in this most glorious Name of *“the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”*, and to be baptised to that Name. I am going to live in it, I am going to explore it, all the rest of my time here on earth and through eternity. I am going to live in the blessedness of the Father’s love and grace and glory; to live in the contemplation of the greatness and glory of the Son, my blessed Saviour; to live in the power and grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. What a portion this is! You will not enjoy it if you go on with worldly pleasures; what has the Father to do with those, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit? But that is not the normal thing for a Christian to do. You turn your back on the world which crucified your Saviour and you come into this utmost blessedness.

For the rest of your life, day by day, you have a heavenly Father, you live in His love; you have the Lord Jesus, the Son, your Saviour, your Lord, your King, your Great High Priest, your Shepherd, and you have the Blessed Spirit dwelling in

you and going along with you all the way. Who could think of a God of such grace as that?

Then He says, *“Teaching them”*. If you become a disciple like this, you set out on a path of great and glorious surprises and ever fresh unfoldings. Through God's grace I have been in this path for forty-two years and I am still having great and glorious surprises, as fresh vistas of the greatness and glory of my God shine before my soul. This teaching is still going on. *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you”*. It involves obedience to the teaching, but as we are simple and obedient, these glorious vistas of truth are continually opening up before us, so that, week by week, we get a more blessed foretaste of what eternity will be, in the knowledge of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

May God grant that no one may leave this room unrepentant and unbelieving, which would be at your peril. This may be your last opportunity of escape from that lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Let no human arguments or philosophies modify what I am saying. What I am saying is the truth, the truth as God has given it. So I beg of you to give heed to my words; and to be encouraged and allured by the blessedness of all that you will be brought into in the knowledge of our God, to surrender to the Saviour's call tonight.

Gerald Cowell (1898 – 1963)

A preaching of the gospel, Croydon, 31 March 1957.

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In the next issue D.V. continuing this series *“The way of blessing and the way of ruin”* by A. J. Gardiner.