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LIVING WATER

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Living Water 150

(November – December 2018)

Recent Ministry

THE BRIDE'S APPRECIATION OF CHRIST AS RECORDED IN THE SONG OF SONGS	David McIntyre	1
<i>Extracted from an address at Worthing, November 2017</i>		

Poetry Selection

A SOVEREIGN PROTECTOR I HAVE	Augustus Toplady	8
<i>Taken from the testimony of Stephen Clark to the Lord's care through the Great War</i>		

Testimony Section

DAVID WOOD AND THE LOSS OF THE "EVANGELINE"		9
---------------------------------------------	--	---

A voice from the past

THE APPROVAL OF THE LORD	C. A. Coates	11
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A word for today

THE WAY OF BLESSING AND THE WAY OF RUIN	A. J. Gardiner	12
<i>A preaching of the gospel at Buckie, Scotland, 20 September 1953. Continuing the series begun in issue No 149.</i>		

Recent Ministry

THE BRIDE'S APPRECIATION OF CHRIST AS RECORDED IN THE SONG OF SONGS

**"What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
Thou fairest among women?**

**What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
That thou dost so charge us?**

**"My beloved is white and ruddy,
The chiefest among ten thousand.**

His head is as the finest gold;

His locks are flowing, black as the raven;

**His eyes are like doves by the water- brooks ,
Washed with milk, fitly set;**

**His cheeks are as a bed of spices, raised beds of sweet plants;
His lips lilies, dropping liquid myrrh.**

His hands gold rings, set with the chrysolite;

His belly is bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires;

His legs, pillars of marble, set upon bases of fine gold:

His bearing as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars;

His mouth is most sweet:

Yea, he is altogether lovely.

**This is my beloved, yea, this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem."**

Song of Songs 5:9–16

We are often challenged as to what we can truly say about the Lord Jesus. What appreciation have we? What can we say about Him to God and what can we say about Him to others? I love this Scripture in the Song of Songs because there the feminine speaker was separated positionally from her beloved. He had come to enjoy her company but she was slow to respond to him and he went away. We cannot just presume the presence of Christ. He comes where He is loved, appreciated and responded to.

She felt this and sought him but she could not find him so she asks her companions to help her and they say, *"what is thy beloved more than another beloved?"* In effect they were saying 'Why should we help you?' As a result we have a beautiful description of the beloved intended by the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts of Christ. I do not want to go into great detail but just to identify some of the blessed features that she sees.

Some of the things that she says about him are things that she could not have known unless she was in communion with him. It is a great thing to be in communion with Christ. It is not simply that you know Him as your Saviour but also to enjoy a daily and personal walk with the Lord Jesus, to trust Him for everything and to be in the present enjoyment of His love. That is what it is to be in communion with Christ. In John's gospel after Lazarus was raised from the dead we read, *"where was the dead man Lazarus ... and Martha served"* (John 12:1, 3) but Mary was in communion with Christ and she shows it was so because she anointed His body for burial. Think of what it must have meant to the Lord that there was someone in that company who appreciated where He was going. His death was just a few days away and Mary had some appreciation of where He was going. That was precious to the Lord. It is of great importance to be in communion with the Lord.

Well, here in the Song of Songs it begins with, *"My beloved is white"*. The spotless character of Christ marks the whole of her description. It shows through in the milk and in the ivory and the lilies and the marble. Every way that I look at Christ, I find perfection. What moral excellence is found in Him. It was demonstrated right at the start of His public service when He was driven into the wilderness to meet Satan. He did not go, exactly, voluntarily: the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness there to be tested in the most severe way. And that testing brought out the moral perfection that was found in the Manhood of Christ. He would say later, *"The ruler of the world comes,*

and in me he has nothing" (John 14:30). Satan had no access to Christ. He has access to you and me. It has been well said that temptation comes along three avenues which John describes, *"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"* (1 John 2:16). These three things, and there were others too that the Lord was tested on, and it brought out the moral perfection found in Him. That was so important because if He was to go forward and meet my liability at Calvary's cross He had to be morally perfect – and He was. *"The holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God"* (Luke 1:35). The perfection of the Manhood of Christ is a wonderful study for us.

She then goes on to speak about the gold. *"His head is of the finest gold"*. The gold goes right through her description as well: the gold on the head, the gold on the hands and the gold in the bases. Think of the glory of the divinity of Christ. When it comes to the Ark of the covenant, the wood was overlaid with the gold. It touched it but it was never mixed. We must keep the thoughts of the divinity of Christ and the perfection of His Manhood separate. We cannot think of them in the same context. God did not die on Calvary's cross but the Man who died was God. The hymn puts it beautifully:

'We see the Godhead glory
Shine through that human veil,
And, willing, hear the story
Of love that's come to heal'

[J. N. Darby]

Another feature is: *"the chiefest among ten thousand"*. He is not to be compared with anyone else. We do not read 'He shall be the greatest', but *"He shall be great"* (Luke 1:32). That is said at the very beginning. He is beyond all praise of tongue or pen. He is not to be compared with anyone else.

"His head is as the finest gold; His locks are flowing; black as the raven". Think of the changelessness of Christ. We grow old,

we alter, we change. He changes not. This is not what John saw in Revelation: the *“hair white like white wool”* (Revelation 1:14). There it reminds us of the maturity of His judgment as He assesses the state of the seven churches. Here, in the Song, it is black as the raven, showing strength and vitality.

Think of what is communicated by the eyes

Next she speaks of *“His eyes are like doves by the water-brooks”*. Think of what is communicated by the eyes. If you are to get the message that the eyes convey then you must be close to the person. You can hear a voice

from a distance but for the message that is conveyed by the eyes you have to be close. These eyes conveyed love. The dove would signify fidelity and faithfulness. Christ loves us faithfully despite our failings.

Peter found it to be so. When asked whether he had been with the Lord, he replies, *“Woman, I do not know him”* (Luke 22:57). The Lord turned round and looked at Peter but He never said anything. Those eyes communicated to Peter that He loved him. The Lord knew him through and through. The Lord knew Peter would fail Him. He knew he would let Him down. He knows everything about us. He knows our failings but He knows if we love Him. The look of the Lord broke Peter down. Earlier Jesus had said, I have prayed for you, *“that thy faith fail not”* (Luke 22:32). The Lord knew how Peter would fail Him. When he realised what he had done, that he had claimed publicly that he never knew Jesus, it was enough to overwhelm him. He loved the Lord Jesus but he failed at that point. And we all fail Him. We have all let the Lord down. .

When was the last time you had an opportunity to proclaim your love for the Saviour and never did it? Let me take it to myself – I have let the Lord down many times but He has never stopped loving me. The constancy of the Lord’s love through everything is a very wonderful thing.

Then we read, *"His cheeks are as a bed of spices"*. The cheeks of Christ came within the range of unregenerate man. There was a man, an actor, who was asked to play the part of a Roman legionary in a film. In order to get into the part he enlisted in a school in Rome where you can go and learn how to be a Roman legionary. You can still do that apparently. He said he was shocked at the savagery of what they were taught. Now before Jesus was crucified we are told that *"they gathered against him the whole band"* (Matthew 27:27), over one hundred men, the whole band, set about my Saviour. *"He gave his cheeks to those who plucked off the hair"* (Isaiah 50:6).

The sufferings of Christ are calculated to affect us. Why did the Father allow it? It speaks of His love. The Lord Jesus came to demonstrate the heart of God towards lost and ruined man. You and I are included in that - every one of us. Think of the fragrance that ascended to the blessed God through the life, suffering, and the death of His Son. That life, surrendered as it was in death, was put under the most severe testing: *"who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously"* (1 Peter 2:23). As He was lifted up on that cross He could say, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34). That is my Saviour. The sufferings of Christ should soften our hearts.

Now we come to, *"His lips lilies, dropping liquid myrrh"*. Think of the grace of Christ. Think of the grace that was poured into His lips according to Psalm 45. Think of that grace pouring out as He moved among men. The myrrh would speak of healing balm available to all. Think of those who were healed through the words that came from these lips. What a challenge! Can we act in this way towards one another and bring in a touch of balm through an impression of Christ that would help someone on their way? We read, *"The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of the instructed, that I should know how to succour by*

a word him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed" (Isaiah 50:4). The Lord did that in His Manhood. He met that woman at Sychar's well, and by His words He brought new life to her (see John 4:4-30). Then, when He came to Nazareth they *"wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth" (Luke 4:22).*

Then, as He taught and encouraged His own what lessons we learn about how we are to be with one another. We are set together; it is not easy sometimes for we are different characters. But we have to get beyond those kind of things and act in grace towards one another. Martha charged the Lord with not caring, *"dost thou not care"* she says. But He says to her, *"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41).* Oh, the grace of Christ. *"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might be enriched" (2 Corinthians 8:9).* What enrichment that has come to us through this blessed Person.

It goes on, *"his hands gold rings"*. His hands were nailed to Calvary's cross. Those hands that were outstretched in blessing are the hands into which all government has been committed. Everything has been committed into the hands of Christ. What is in those hands? You and I, as believers in Jesus, are held in the hands of Christ. Think of being held there in the affections of Christ. What security that gives for none shall *"seize them out of my hand... and no one can seize them out of the hand of my Father's" (John 10:28-29).*

"His belly is bright ivory". Think of the compassions of Christ, expressed here in Manhood as He moved among men. Think of the suffering that He Himself went through. That is why He is able to enter into our circumstances. The Lord Jesus is the One who can comfort and sustain us in any circumstance whatever because He has been through every trial that we may be called

to face, only sin apart.

Hebrews tells us of One who is perfected to be the High Priest through the things that He suffered. The compassions of Christ are there. He is able to succour and support. The hymn puts it:

‘He knows what sorest trials mean
For He has felt the same’

Then she continues, *“his legs, pillars of marble”*. Think of the stability of that. Isaiah, speaking of Christ, tells, He *“shall be the stability of thy times” (Isaiah 33:6)*. In Solomon’s temple there were two pillars. One was called “Jachin”, meaning ‘he will establish’, and the other “Boaz”, meaning ‘In him is strength’. That is what we find in Christ, One that we can depend upon absolutely. There is a great deal of instability in the world. We are challenged when you think about it. The world is heading for judgment. The believer has nothing here. Things will get worse and worse, they will not get better and they are heading up. We are challenged in our own hearts when we think about it. Well, we find stability in Christ.

**Never were things
given with such
mockery and worn
with such dignity**

Then, *“His bearing as Lebanon”*. Think of the movements of Christ here. Think of the dignity with which He moved even at the point when He was given the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *“Jesus... went forth” (John 19:5)*.

Never were things given with such mockery and worn with such dignity. He was and is the King of kings. That will be seen publicly and every eye will see Him and every one will *“confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father’s glory” (Philippians 2:11)*. God will see to it that this One is owned. All things are secure, God’s plan is going through. Christ is coming to take up His reins in government. What a day that will be!

"His mouth is most sweet". This was an intimate touch that she had experienced with the Lord. This is what she knew because of her communion with him. *"... taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8)*. It is a great thing if you find that the Lord is sweet.

Finally, there is a summing up: *"Yea, he is altogether lovely"*. *"This is my beloved, yea, this is my friend"*. In her mind, in her heart, she is restored completely to her beloved. What is the answer from the daughters of Jerusalem? They are changed as a result of her description. *"Whither is thy beloved gone, Thou fairest among women? ... And we will seek him with thee"(Chapter 6:1)*. Can we help one another into this? Are we so enjoying the presence of Christ that we encourage one another into it? It would be a great thing if as a result we were all more attached to the Lord Jesus - that we find more of our joy and satisfaction in Him.

David McIntyre

Extracted from an Address, Worthing, November 2017

Poetry Selection

A SOVEREIGN PROTECTOR I HAVE

Stephen Clark was brought up in Mayfield in East Sussex. He joined the army in July 1916 and served in various places right through to the end, only getting back to England in the autumn of 1919. Later he wrote an account of his war service, published in 1932 under the title, *"God's mercy and goodness as manifested to Stephen Clark of Mayfield during the Great War"*. He concluded his account by quoting two verses from Augustus Toplady's hymn as a kind of summary of the way the Lord had been with him through many dangers and difficulties.

<p>A Sovereign Protector I have, Unseen, yet for ever at hand; Unchangeably faithful to save, Almighty to rule and command; He smiles and my comforts abound; His grace as the dew shall descend; And walls of salvation surround The souls He delights to defend</p>	<p>Kind Author and ground of my hope, Thee, Thee for my God I avow; My glad Ebenezer set up And own Thou hast helped me till now. I muse on the years that are past, Wherein my defence Thou hast proved; Nor wilt Thou relinquish at last A sinner so signally loved.</p>
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Augustus Toplady (1740-1778)

Testimony Section

DAVID WOOD AND THE LOSS OF THE "EVANGELINE"

On a dark, cold night 125 years ago, David Wood, a fisherman living in Portknockie – a small village in N. E. Scotland – went to hear James McKendrick preach. What happened that night was quite remarkable. Looking back, after more than twenty-five years of preaching, McKendrick wrote: 'The Friday night of the second week in Portknockie stands out as the most memorable in all my career'.¹

It seems that a good number of hearers were converted and turned to the Lord; among them was David Wood, who stood up saying, 'Praise God, I am saved! There is no doubt about it – I feel it – I know it. I have been seeking salvation for years but I have got it tonight.' He then prayed, 'O God, save everybody here' and again, 'O Lord, save everybody here'. Then, jumping on a chair, he appealed to everyone to trust in Christ and be saved, repeating his prayer, 'Lord, save the people'. The result was immediate with many calling to God for salvation.²

1. "Seen & Heard", James McKendrick, Gospel Tract Publications, Glasgow 1988 P. 165.

2. Ibid P. 167/168.

David became a shining witness to the Lord who had saved him and when three years later he commissioned a fishing lugger from George Innes of Portknockie he called the boat 'Evangeline' since he wanted the crew, many of whom were converted about the same time as David himself, to bear the message of the gospel wherever they went.

For eight or nine years the boat plied its trade until there came another dark winter night in January 1905. The record reads bleakly: 'Vessel lost with all eight hands near Stronsay (Orkney) in S.E. gale on 16-17 January 1905'.¹ An Orkney man caught something of the tragedy of that night in verse:

*Past Burg Head like a feather she flew
Beyond will and skill of skipper and crew,
They had done their best, they had done their last,
For the breakers roared through the raging blast
And the billows swept over the groaning deck,
Leaving the lugger a crewless wreck,
To drift without mast or sail
Through the seething scud of that Orkney gale.*

Five of the bodies, including David Wood, were washed up on shore fairly quickly and two Portknockie steam drifters went to bring them back for burial. The body of seventeen year old George Findlay, who came from Cullen, was taken to that village while the others were buried in a joint burial in Portknockie Cemetery, where today, some of the stones bear silent witness to the tragedy.

The body of James Mair was recovered later and he also has a stone at Portknockie inscribed with the words:

'JESUS CALLED AND HE WAS READY' ²

1. "The Mighty Zulu", Joseph Reid, Buckie & District Fishing Heritage Centre 2012

2 "A Fisherman's last Voyage" Graham Mair, Chapter Two, London 2012 P. 79.



David Wood
(Owner & Skipper)
Aged 49

John Wood
(Master)
Aged 33

William Mair
Aged 32 ¹

The effect of the sinking of the 'Evangeline' on the small fishing community of Portknockie was severe and in the long list of those lost at sea maintained by the Buckie and District Fishing Heritage Centre it is movingly described as 'The Portknockie tragedy'.

Perhaps it is best to let James McKendrick have the last word. He wrote: 'Only a few years ago David Wood and all his Christian crew perished off the Orkney Islands. Caught in a terrific storm his boat, the 'Evangeline', foundered and all hands were drowned... Wherever that crew went they truly carried with them the Evangel of God.'²

A voice from the past

THE APPROVAL OF THE LORD

**"Wherefore also we are zealous... to be agreeable to him"
2 Corinthians 5:9**

The consciousness of being agreeable to the Lord is very much more to the true heart than activity or apparent usefulness in service. It matters little whether I am doing great things or small

1. Photographs kindly provided by Neil A Pirie
2. "Seen & Heard" p173

things, whether I am appreciated by those whom I seek to serve or otherwise, whether I am prominent or obscure, whether I see much result or little. The one paramount question is, 'Am I in the place, circumstances, service and condition of soul which are pleasing to the Lord, so that I have the consciousness of His approval?'

There is joy in service and in seeing the fruit of service, there is joy in receiving help and edification through ministry, but the greatest joy is to be near the Lord in the consciousness of ministering to Him, and that He has pleasure in us. It is the delight of His love to have us wholly for Himself, and through grace it becomes the delight of our love to be so.

This gives singleness of eye, and takes the heart off every object which the heart may have chosen for itself, and makes the will of the Lord the one thing which we care to consider. We are then practically in the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love, and He can not only acquaint us with His mind concerning us, but can bring us into all the blessedness of God's will in the full scope of His counsels and purposes. But it is as being in the consciousness of the Lord's approval that we are prepared to take in those wondrous and blessed communications.

C. A. Coates (1862 – 1945)

A Word for Today

THE WAY OF BLESSING AND THE WAY OF RUIN

"And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to Jehovah. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat. And Jehovah looked upon Abel, and on his offering; and upon Cain and his offering he did not look. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. And Jehovah said to Cain, Why art thou angry, and why is thy countenance fallen?. If thou doest well, will not thy countenance look up with confidence? And if thou

doest not well, sin lieth at the door; and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain spoke to Abel his brother, and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him.” Genesis 4:3-8.

“And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. And she said to Abraham, Cast out this handmaid and her son; for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with my son – Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight because of his son. And God said to Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad and because of thy handmaid: in all that Sarah hath said to thee hearken to her voice, for in Isaac shall a seed be called to thee.” Genesis 21:8-12.

“And the boys grew, and Esau became a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field; and Jacob was a homely man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because venison was to his taste; and Rebecca loved Jacob. And Jacob had cooked a dish; and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with the red – the red thing there, for I am faint. Therefore his name was called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me now thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am going to die and of what use can the birthright be to me? And Jacob said, Swear unto me now. And he swore unto him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and the dish of lentils; and he ate and drank, and rose up and went away. Thus Esau despised the birthright.” Genesis 25:27-34

You will notice that we have read of three pairs of brothers:

- Cain and Abel
- Ishmael and Isaac, and
- Esau and Jacob.

Each of these pairs of brothers had parents that had light from

God. Therefore their history becomes of great importance to most, if not all, of those present here, because most of us have had a similar advantage. We have been brought up in surroundings where the light of God is known; but in each case the two brothers stand in contrast, one taking one way, and the other another. Therefore their history is of solemn importance to everyone here, as to whether each one here is going to receive the light which God is giving, commit himself to it, and embrace it fully; or whether any are going to turn away from it, or substitute something else for it, or despise it.

All these incidents actually happened hundreds of years ago. In themselves you might say that the incidents do not appear to have been of great importance, but they were divinely ordered to set out certain important principles of truth, and they are ordered and placed on record that they might have a voice to you and me. Indeed in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, written many centuries after this first incident took place, we read of Abel that, *"he being dead yet speaketh"* (v.4), as though God would say that Abel has a voice to you. Also in the epistle of Jude (also written a great many years after the incidents) we read of *"the way of Cain"* and of some who go in it, and as to them the Scripture says *"Woe unto them"* (v.11). Hence obviously the history of Cain and Abel is one of great importance to us all, because if we embark on the way that Cain inaugurated we are heading for eternal woe. On the other hand if we would only pay attention to Abel, *"he being dead yet speaketh"* then we will come into the same blessing which Abel came into. Indeed I may say that we shall come into far greater blessing, because God in His sovereign wisdom has been pleased to institute different dispensations and a different character of blessing attaching to each, and we live in the day when the greatest conceivable blessing awaits those who turn to Christ.

Well now, before we can understand rightly the history of Cain and Abel we need to cast our minds back to the previous chapter of Genesis, well-known I do not doubt to all those that are at all

familiar with their Bibles. And I might say that God expects that we should familiarise ourselves with our Bibles. The Bible is a most important book, divinely inspired from cover to cover and containing the mind of God, His testimony concerning Christ, His word to our consciences, and His appeal to our hearts. It is a book that must not be neglected. Indeed no one can understand Hebrews chapter 11, to which I have already alluded, unless they are in fact familiar with the history of Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and Rahab. No one who has not read their Bible and become familiar with those histories can understand that important chapter of the scriptures. God anticipates that having been given His word we will at least familiarise ourselves with it. Therefore I would urge all here, and especially the young ones, that you make up your mind to make yourself familiar with the scripture, with the letter of it even. Acquaint yourself with all that there is in the Bible, every book of it, and read it over and over again, because there is a wealth of material there, that in due time the Holy Spirit can take up and open up to you, using it to communicate the mind of God to you. Now, as I have said, we need for a moment to look back on the third chapter of Genesis, where we have the divinely given account of the entrance of sin into the world. God had placed Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, in a garden surrounded by conditions that were in every way congenial. He had given them the utmost liberty, of all the trees of the garden they might freely eat. There was but one tree which He reserved, saying that they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now I know that the incident in Genesis 3 is often ridiculed among men and they speak cynically and sarcastically of it. They speak of man as having taken an apple and the absurdity of the serious consequences resulting from such a simple act, and all that kind of thing, but it will not do to treat the things of God like that!

In God requiring that Adam and Eve should abstain from eating of one tree, He was just laying down a most essential principle

that should govern the creature in relation to the Creator, and that is **obedience**. He was laying that down as an essential element that must govern the relations of the creature with his Creator, and in laying it down He did not make it difficult, He made it as easy and simple as possible. He surrounded man with everything that was calculated to minister to his comfort and affording satisfaction, and He said that there was only one thing that he must abstain from, and that was just one particular tree. You might say, 'Why was that necessary?' I would say it was necessary for this reason, that it was morally right that the conditions of obedience should be laid down as the basis of the creature's relations with God. And you know what sin is; sin is simply the rising up of the will of the creature against the will of the Creator, and that is what makes sin so serious.

It is morally treason, for the creature's will to assert itself in opposition to the will of the Creator. It is important to look at things like that, I am not being extreme. I am simply stating things as they are; everybody knows that in an ordinary, well ordered, civilised State, treason is the worst crime that can be committed, because if it is allowed to pass with impunity it imperils the whole situation. There is an end to all order, there is an end to all peace, and there is an end to everything that men value, if treason is allowed to pass lightly. Sin is lawlessness, it is the rising up of the will of the creature against the will of the Creator and that is what makes it so serious.

Well now, the commandment of God was disobeyed and it says *"the eyes of them both"* that is the man and the woman, *"were opened, and they knew that they were naked"* (Genesis 3:7). They became aware for the first time of what we speak of as conscience. They knew that they were naked; they knew that they had disobeyed, but what was more than that, they knew that their condition, as guilty in the sight of God, was all open and apparent to the eyes of Him with whom they had to do. Now what do they do? I am going over all these details because they are important leading up to the incident of Cain and Abel. What

our sincerity... will not stand the test of the light of God

did they do? They make themselves aprons of fig leaves. They did their very best to meet the situation that had arisen through their own disobedience. People often say in these days that if you do your best and are perfectly sincere, God cannot expect or require more than that. But let us examine it and see if it is so. The third chapter of Genesis will show whether it is so or not.

I think there could be no question about it, that Adam and Eve did their best when they make themselves aprons of fig leaves, and that they were perfectly sincere in their desire to cover their nakedness of which they were conscious, and to make themselves acceptable in the sight of the God with whom they had to do. But what then? It says *"they heard the voice of Jehovah Elohim, walking in the garden in the cool of the day"* (v.8). And what did they do? Did they come into the open and say 'Here we are, we have done our best, we are perfectly sincere'? Did they say that? They did not; they went and hid themselves behind the trees of the garden. So much for our best, so much for our sincerity; it will not stand the test of the light of God. The moment they were conscious that God was drawing near they showed that they had no confidence in their best or in their sincerity; they went and hid themselves behind the trees of the garden. Now how are they to be saved? Thank God that the truth is still this, that *"our Saviour God ... desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4). He has no pleasure in the loss of any. It gives Him no pleasure to judge the wicked, although the wicked must be judged.

But what did God do? He came out consistently with what He has since proved Himself to be – a Saviour God! It says, *"and Jehovah Elohim made Adam and his wife coats of skin, and clothed them"*. Now what a difference; leaves had not required death to produce them, aprons of fig leaves could be produced

apart from death; but when Jehovah Elohim made coats of skin, that meant that some animal had had to be slain, that death had to come in, that the righteousness which the covering speaks of with which God covers their need, was a righteousness that was procured on the ground of the death of a substitute. And therein lies the very basis of the gospel, that from that very moment God was looking forward to Christ. It says, *"Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"* (1 Timothy 1:15). As though to say everybody here in Buckie should pay attention to that. It is worthy of your acceptation. Another Scripture says *"For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all"* (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).

There can be no salvation apart from the death of a substitute, no salvation at all and God indicated that that was the way of salvation by providing Adam and Eve with coats of skin and clothing them. And notice that the Scripture says definitely that *"Jehovah Elohim made Adam and his wife coats of skin, and clothed them"*. That is, when God comes out from His side it is a question of both of them being clothed. God makes no difference, He is the Saviour of all men. That is His attitude, desiring that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. If some are not saved, it is not that there is any lack in God's provision; the lack is in that someone has not availed himself, in obedience of faith, of the provision that God has made. But so far as God's attitude to them was concerned, there was the whole race at that moment, in those two, in the man and his wife, all guilty before God, and all covered by the grace of God with coats of skin.

Now, just let us take it a stage further. I think I can imagine now, Adam and Eve coming out into the open and saying they are not now ashamed to come into the presence of God because they are clothed with that which He Himself has provided. And He will never find fault with that which He has provided; they had nothing to do with it. *"Not of works"*, the Scripture says, *"lest*

anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). Works are excluded, man's boasting is excluded. But what we **can** boast in, is the blessed God who has come out as a Saviour God through Jesus Christ our Lord, on the basis of the blood of Christ, as it says, *"the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).* That is the abiding value, in the sight of God, of the death of His beloved Son, and on the ground of that precious death God could provide a righteous covering for those guilty sinners and show that His mind towards the whole race was that of a Saviour God. That was the light for the moment.

There is not a shadow of doubt that Adam and Eve would have passed on their history to Cain and Abel. It is inconceivable that parents, who have had to do with God in grace, and have had their sins forgiven, and are made conscious that they have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ, should let their children grow up and not tell them something about it. Any parents, who desire the good of their children, would be **sure** to tell them of the Saviour they found in Jesus and of the God that *"does not desire that any should perish, but all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).*

Well now, Cain and Abel, what are they going to do? This is a word to the young people here who have not yet turned to the Lord. You know the truth in terms, you move among the people of God who know it, your parents, it may be, have told you about it. How have you responded? Cain was the elder son and it is a serious thing if the eldest of a family goes wrong. The eldest of a family should bear in mind that he or she has a certain responsibility, because the tendency will be for the younger ones to follow what the older one does. If the older one sets a good example, well and good, but if the older one sets a wrong example, he may influence for harm those who are younger. Thank God in this case the younger brother was not influenced strongly, but that was because he overcame. Cain moves first and he approaches God with an offering which had no reference whatever to the death of a victim, no reference to the death of

a substitute. There was no recognition in Cain's offering that he was a sinner deserving of death and judgment, and that he could only be saved through the death of One equal to bearing the penalty of death. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord. The ground was cursed and yet he **dared** to bring to God that which spoke of what had been cursed.

Now what is Abel going to do? This is a word for the younger ones in a family; if the eldest brother or sister goes wrong, and disregards the teaching of their parents and the truth of God, let not the younger do the same on any account. Abel knew the truth, as Cain knew the truth, and now Cain had moved and the question arises for Abel; am I going to do what my brother has done, or am I going to be regulated by the truth of God and adhere to the truth that I have learned from my parents? Abel, thank God, made up his mind that he would govern himself by the truth. He would go against Cain his brother, even although his action exposed his brother. He had no pleasure in exposing, but his action as governed by the truth, necessarily exposed his brother. He was the first overcomer in Scripture.

At the end of the book of Revelation it gives us a description of the day of eternity and the blessing of it and then it says, *"He that overcomes shall inherit these things"* (Revelation 21:7). That is to say, you have to go against the stream; and Cain set a stream in motion that is called *"the way of Cain"* and as to those who are in it, the Scripture says *"Woe unto them"* (Jude v.11). Now Abel says, I must go against the stream, I cannot afford to be carried away in a stream that is going to lead me away from God and to judgment, I must go against the stream. Abel was the first overcomer, and it says *"he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat"* (v.4). The firstlings of his flock! He brought that which had to be sacrificed, death had to come in and the firstlings of his flock showed that he was considering for God first, and that is an important principle. He brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat, that is to say, he would present something to God that was excellent, something which

as offered would rise up as a sweet savour to God.

If you mention the name of Jesus to God and mention the precious blood of Christ to God, you will speak to Him of something that is of great excellence in His sight. The excellence attaching to Christ and His sacrifice is not to be measured by your, or my, meagre understanding of it. It is to be measured by the value which God Himself places upon it, and that is seen in that He raised Him from the dead and highly exalted Him to His own right hand. Now Abel drew near to God with that, the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof, and it says, *"Jehovah looked upon Abel, and on his offering"*. That is a good thing to understand. If you draw near to God, confessing the name of the Lord Jesus, and placing your confidence in His blood, then I can say God will look upon you with favour, as well as upon your offering. *"Jehovah looked upon Abel, and on his offering; and upon Cain, and on his offering, he did not look"* (v.4 & 5). He simply disregarded it. It is a solemn thing to be disregarded by God.

Every one of us must have to do with God, sooner or later we must give an account of ourselves to God. Think of a human soul appearing before God, and God having to say to such a one 'I provided Christ my only begotten Son, I gave Him up for you, He has borne the judgment of sin, He has borne the penalty of death, it was all available to you, I sent down the Holy Spirit from heaven that testimony might be rendered to these things and you have heard it in the preaching and you have disregarded it'. Think of the condition of a soul to whom God has thus to speak! Sooner or later it will come to that, unless you embrace the glad tidings now. This is the acceptable time, the day of salvation. It is a day when grace is presented freely, and the fulness of the blessing too, for the obedience of faith.

I do not know that I need say more than that. Cain was exposed by Abel's action, Abel was accepted with God and as it says, *"he being dead yet speaketh"* (Hebrews 11:4), whereas Cain murdered his brother. The spirit of murder is still abroad in the

world, you have only to speak of Christ in public to find that out. I do not mean necessarily in the street preaching, because sometimes people will listen to a street preaching, but if you speak of Christ in a railway carriage or somewhere else, you may find a believer in Jesus who is glad to respond, but you will find some who will not appreciate it at all, who do not want to hear about Christ. Of course the law of the land will deter them from going to extremity and violence, but the spirit of murder is there. It started with Cain and it is still in the world. It showed itself when they cast out the Son of God, they crucified the Son of God, but I need not enlarge on that.

Now, in the next passage we have Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac represents a further feature of blessing for men which is announced in the gospel. Abel teaches us the ground of acceptance with God. The attitude of God towards men is one of grace, forgiveness, justification, based on the precious death of Christ and anyone who comes to God through Him receives acceptance in a most absolute way. God has Himself delivered up Jesus for our offences, and He has raised Him again for our justification. We see that God has done everything for us in Christ, and in the acceptance of that, we have peace towards God. But now there is another thing. The death of Christ is the ground on which God can righteously come out to us in blessing; but the Person of Christ, where He is as Man in the glory of God, is the expression of the measure of blessing, which God has in His heart for those who believe on Him. And what is that measure of blessing? No less than the joy and relationship of son, a son of God!

**Have you ever
thought that God
wants you before
Him as a son?**

Have you ever thought that God wants you before Him as a son? You could not possibly attain to it. You could not possibly merit it by works of your own, but God has been pleased sovereignly

to come out to men with this great thought that He has had in His heart from before the foundation of the world, that He wants men before Him in sonship. Now Isaac sets that forth, and he sets it forth for this reason that not only was he the beloved son of his father Abraham, but he was born outside the course of nature. Abraham was old and Sarah was old and they could not possibly bring forth a son by anything that was natural, or by their efforts, and then God gave them a son. That is to say, He brought this in as expressing a character of blessing, which He has in mind for men, that you cannot possibly merit or do anything to attain to. It is simply the gift of God. When you believe in Christ whom God has not only raised from the dead for your justification, but glorified in His presence, God will seal your faith with the gift of the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit will teach you to say *“Abba Father”* (Romans 8:15). The Holy Spirit will teach you that God is your Father, and that you are to stand before Him in the relationship of a son, and that is a wonderful thing.

We read in the fifteenth chapter of Luke of a son who left his father’s house, and went into the far country and wasted his substance with riotous living, and then there came a point when he said, *“I will rise up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no longer worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants”* (v.18-19). That is what he proposed to say and we read, *“and he rose up and went to his own father. But while he was yet a long way off”* – I believe the force of that is, that while he was yet in the far country, while he was yet at the point where he came to himself and arose saying I will arise and go to my father, *“his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck and covered him with kisses”* (v.20). That is how God receives and welcomes a repenting sinner! A sinner who says *“I will rise up and go to my father and I will say to him, I have sinned against heaven and before thee”*. That is what I was saying earlier, *“I have sinned against heaven”*, heaven is God’s throne, the young man was coming to a sense

of the heinousness of sin. He had sinned against the throne of God, and he was morally the traitor, morally guilty of treason. He had sinned against the throne, and not only so but he says *"I have sinned against heaven and before thee"*. Think of sinning against a God such as God is! The God *"who sends the rain from heaven and fruitful seasons filling our hearts with food and gladness"* (Acts 14:17). The God *"who gives all things richly to enjoy"* (1 Timothy 6:17), and we sin against a God like that! The God who has given *"his only begotten Son... that we might live through Him"* (1 John 4:9). The God who *"sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:10); think of sinning against a God like that! And now when He sees the least movement of repentance, and He sees him afar off, which means that He was on the lookout – how He would love to see it – He moves towards him in compassion.

There might be one soul here in this company that has not yet turned to Christ, and even if now there is a movement of heart in response to the preaching, a movement of heart towards Christ, God would see it with delight. He saw it and *"was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck, and covered him with kisses"*. And now the son says *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee: I am no longer worthy to be called thy son"*. And there he stops! Not a word about being a hired servant, no, and I will tell you why, because in the presence of God you will understand that you are not worthy to be even a hired servant! All that you deserve is hell fire. It is not a question of being a hired servant, you are not worthy of it! But there is another thing you will also discover in the presence of God, and that is He does not want hired servants, He wants **sons**. So the young man does not say a word about *"make me as one of thy hired servants"*, he stops short at *"I am no longer worthy to be called thy son"*. And what does the father say? Does he say, Well we will wipe out all the past, we will say nothing about it! It is perfectly true he had done that, and God does it too. For the believer in Jesus the position is that *"as far as the East is from*

the West so far has He put our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12); for the believer in Jesus the position is “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Ezekiel 36:31), God says. But no, there was not a word here about the sins; the father says, “Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it”, that is to say, God has the very best that love can devise. He has the very best for everyone that turns to Him through Christ.

You cannot have anything better than God’s best, I assure you as to that. You might have ten million pounds, you might have an important position in the world, you might have anything that the world thinks of value, and it is nothing to be compared with God’s best. *“Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it”,* and the best robe is nothing less than being found before God in Christ. The believer in Jesus is already *“taken into favour in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6)*, he has the Spirit of God’s Son in his heart (see Galatians 4:4), making him feel perfectly at home with God and soon he will be conformed to the image of Christ, so as to be actually before God in every way, like Christ His Beloved Son; and in the happiness and the joy that he himself is suited to in the presence of God, and that he himself is giving joy to the heart of God.

Well now, Ishmael mocked at all this. Isaac is the beloved son, and he sets forth that God has His best for men; something that you could not possibly attain to or merit, but God has given it sovereignly. Now Ishmael is just the son of a maid servant; that is to say he represented the hired servant idea and Ishmael mocked. As though to say, ‘Oh, but you must allow that we should do something’. No, it will not do, glory all belongs to God. You are never at home with God unless you are with Him on His own terms; if you try to merit something yourself by your own acts, or something of that sort, you spoil the whole position. And Ishmael mocked, but Sarah said *“Cast out this handmaid and her son; for the son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son”*.

Although Abraham was not up to it for the moment he obeys the word of God, and he cast out the maidservant and her son, so that Isaac should stand out unchallenged and unrivalled as an illustration of what God's thought is for men; and that is that they should come into the same favour and the same glory before Him in which His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is.

Now, just a word in closing on Esau and Jacob: and this is a word of special importance to the younger ones present in this company. You will notice that where we started reading, it says "*the boys **grew***"; the same thing applies, of course, in principle to girls too. God takes account of boys and girls and He watches their growth. Parents watch the growth of their children, not simply in feet and inches, but their growth as to how they are developing, as regards their outlook, their tastes and the direction which they are taking, and so on. Parents watch that, and God watches too – "*the boys grew*". I would ask any boys and girls who have not yet arrived at manhood and womanhood to remember this that God is watching you as you are growing. He is watching to see how you are going to respond to the teaching you have had from your parents and maybe your grandparents. Esau and Jacob had a godly father and mother, and a godly grandfather and grandmother, for Abraham had had a right influence over Jacob at least. It says in Hebrews that "*Abraham dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise*" (Hebrews 11:9).

Now these boys grew, and the question arises, What are they going to be? It says, "*Esau became a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field*", fond of sport, liking to get a name in sport. It might not be hunting nowadays, but to apply it today, it might be football or tennis, or whatever it might be, you would like to make a name, and to excel in it. You would like to become known in it, and that is what Esau was, he became a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field. The field in Scripture often speaks of the world. One of the parables of the Lord says "*the field is*

What is your outlook? Are you going in for the things of God? *the world” (Matthew 13:38). Are you going to be in the world? The world has cast out Christ the Son of God. The world is about to be judged. Scripture speaks of the day, “At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of his power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and those who do not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8). Are you going to be carried away in the current of a world that is going to end like that? You will be, if you are not careful! If that is your outlook and that is the way you intend to go, you are in danger of being carried into the current of a world that is going to end like that! Esau, it says, “became a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field”.*

Now, was Jacob going to follow his brother’s example? No, thank God for that! There was a good deal about Jacob, in this part of his life, that was not commendable, but God takes account of the general direction, the general outlook, the general desire. There may be a good deal about your conduct that is not quite all that it should be, and I am not saying anything about that, God will see to that in due time, but the great thing is, What is your outlook? Are you going in for the things of God? Are you going in for the things that your father and mother, and your grandfather and grandmother perhaps, have gone in for, or are you going to strike out on a course of your own and go in for the world?

Jacob says I am not going to be like Esau. Jacob was a homely man dwelling in tents, his father and mother dwelt in tents, they were pilgrims because God had called them by the gospel to find their portion in another world. And that is where we are, we are pilgrims in this world. We have the light of Christ in glory; *“the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus” (1 Peter 5:10)*, and for that reason we are not of the world and do not wish to be. And Jacob was content to be in the same

position, he was a homely man dwelling in tents.

Well now, there came a test; God saw that Esau had his mind in a certain direction, and He said, 'I will give you an opportunity. If you embrace it, well and good, If you do not embrace it, it will but confirm that you are in the wrong direction'. And so it says that Esau came from the field and was faint, and Jacob had cooked a dish. Esau said *"Feed me, I pray thee, with the red – the red thing there, for I am faint"*. And Jacob says *"Sell me now thy birthright"*. You may say, That was not a very brotherly thing to do! I dare say it was not, I am not commending it at all. But God had just allowed it in order that it should be a test to Esau. He said *"Sell me now thy birthright"*.

What was Esau's birthright? He was the eldest son, he was the direct heir of all the promises that God had given to Abraham and Isaac. It would have been a good birthright after all. If you are the elder son of a millionaire you expect to come into a pretty good inheritance, and Esau was in the direct line, as the eldest son, of all the promises that God had given to Abraham and Isaac. And now his brother says, *"Sell me now thy birthright"*. If he had appreciated the light that Abraham and Isaac had had, he would have said 'No, under no circumstances – I would rather die than surrender my birthright!' But he did not, he said, *"I am going to die"*; as much as to say, 'There is nothing beyond death'. That was really Esau's outlook, there is nothing beyond death and I may as well enjoy myself while I am alive. But that is **not** the truth, there **is** something beyond death, and the Lord Jesus Christ raised from among the dead is the witness to it. God has begun to operate in resurrection in Christ, and the gospel is preached in order that you, through faith in Christ, might have part in the world that lies beyond death.

Esau despised his birthright, just for a mess of pottage. That is how it is described in the New Testament – *"who for one meal sold his birthright"*. Think of that! Think of a young man or young woman saying, Well, I am not going to embrace the gospel yet, I am going to have my fling, but it is just a mess of pottage! And

God called Esau who did that a fornicator or profane person. He said, *"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one meal sold his birthright (Hebrews 12:16).* A person having Christian teaching who goes into the world is just like a fornicator; he enters into an unholy alliance with a thing which is hateful to God; and he is like a profane person because he treats the things of God with contempt, and that is what Esau did. The Spirit of God, in the epistle to the Hebrews, puts that interpretation on Esau's action, and this solemn word closes with this, *"Thus Esau despised the birthright"*.

Well now, God has placed these things on record in order that we might be warned. Remember this, if there are boys and girls here, that God is watching your growth, *"the boys grew"*; and He would warn you as to any deflection from the path in which your parents and those surrounding you are walking; He would warn you against it. On the other hand we present to you the attractiveness of Christ. I know no one more attractive than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He has come down from heaven, He has given Himself a ransom for me, and many here can say that, *"the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20). Think of your Creator God, in the Person of the Lord Jesus, charging Himself on the cross with all your sins; and putting them away by the sacrifice of Himself, and then rising from the dead and taking a place in glory in the Father's presence, and giving you to understand that through faith in Him you have a part with Him through all eternity.

May the Lord grant that none may despise these things, and may He bless His word for His Name's sake!

A. J. Gardiner

A preaching of the gospel, Buckie, N. E. Scotland, September 20th, 1953

In the next issue D.V. continuing this series 'The Waiting of God' by H. P. Wells