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LIVING WATER

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GROWING UP TO HIM

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I desire, with the Lord's help, to say a few words about Christian growth. It is a normal thing for a Christian to want to grow. Some people might say, I'm saved and that is sufficient. But the Bible was written to encourage those who trusted in the Lord, that we might grow.

I am not speaking of salvation. We cannot add to our salvation, the Lord's work is complete. There is nothing we can add to that in any way at all. We are absolutely secure for time and eternity as having trusted in Him and His precious work. I speak about growth.

The Lord, when He told the parable of the sower, talked about growth. Plants grew up and bore fruit (see Matthew 13:8) and there are other references in the scriptures. Paul spoke much about growth; writing to the Ephesians he says, *"that we may grow up to him in all things"* (Ephesians 4:15). There is much written in the epistles so that we might grow as Christians. When Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, he said, *"I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God"*. He did that so that they would grow, so that they would have a greater appreciation of the things of God.

When I speak of growth I do not mean that we just know more of the Bible. It is a good thing to know the Bible but Peter writes of growing *"in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"*. What can I say about Jesus now that I could not say a year or two years ago? Has He become more precious to me? How do the experiences of life lead me to a greater appreciation of the Lord? Can I can speak with certainty about knowing Him as a Saviour and a Friend and as a wonderful

intercessor for us?

It is important that we grow. I trust that all will be concerned to think about it and to consider, 'What can I say about the Lord Jesus and what He means to me?' In what aspect of my life is there growth?' The verse just before where we read speaks about falling away and it is there as a warning. If I am not growing, I might be in danger of falling away.

So, Peter says, "*grow in grace*". Peter himself grew and you can see that in the scripture. When he started out he did not know very much at all. You see through the gospels that sometimes Peter said things that were wrong. At one point Peter was so wrong that the Lord had to say, "*Get thee behind me, Satan*" (*Matthew 16:23*). But when you read his second epistle you see the words of a father, the words of someone who loved the Lord Jesus and had grown in his appreciation as he looked back at the wonderful things he was privileged to see. He was privileged to see Jesus in His glory. He says we were, "*eyewitnesses of his majesty*". He looked back and that wonderful moment had grown in his mind. It had stayed with him for thirty years. So what can you or I say about the Lord Jesus Christ? Peter spoke from his own experience when he exhorted believers to "*grow in grace*".

Grace is a vast thought. I seek just to say a few words tonight about three aspects of it:

- First we should see the humility that should mark a Christian. We see an example of it with the apostle Paul. As he came to see what a terrible, shocking sinner he was he realised how much God had loved him and how far He has reached out in order to save him; as a result his appreciation grew;
- Then I seek just to say a few words about love and affection, being tender-hearted towards others; growing in our feelings towards those around us that we might show the love of Jesus to others as demonstrated in Acts 20;
- Then, in the last scripture we see the Queen of Sheba who had heard about Solomon but found that he was actually

greater and more wonderful than she had ever been led to believe. So her appreciation increased.

May our appreciation of the Lord Jesus – where He is, His glory and His Person – grow in our hearts so we might find that the half has not been told us. So we might be able to express our appreciation of Him to others – to Him first, then to others.

* * * * *

So I turn first of all to the epistle to Timothy. We can have various thoughts about the apostle Paul. We can think what a great preacher he was, what marvellous expositions he had of God's thoughts towards men and women, what wonderful revelations he had and how blessed it must have been to see the Lord in the glory. Yet with all that, Paul never lost the sense of what he had been before the Lord found him. He speaks about it to Timothy. It is not that we should glory in our sins but rather as we appreciate more of the holiness of God we realise what an enormous debt of sin we have incurred and how wonderfully God has reached out toward us.

Sometimes we see people who do grotesque and terrible things and we may say, 'How shocking!' Then we realise what is in our own heart. You look at the perfection of Jesus and you realise that if we are to grow as Christians we also need to grow in humility. Peter says at the end of his first epistle, *"and all of you bind on humility towards one another; for God sets himself against the proud, but to the humble gives grace"* (1 Peter 5:5). You cannot pretend to be humble but you can, as a believer, realise how holy God is and how worthless you are.

Recently in Warley we have been reading the book of Exodus. It contains a detailed account of the tabernacle system and it made me wonder why we are given this in such detail? Why is it so important? Well, I think it is to impress us with the holiness of God. So we have a greater sense of God's holiness, it makes us realise how great a sinner we each are and how awful sin must be in His sight. It makes you value the work of Jesus more. It makes you realise just how much God loves you that He has reached out to

save you and that will cause your soul to grow in appreciation of God's love. It helps us to fill out our place here as Christians that we might be able to lift our eyes towards heaven and worship and honour the God who has loved us so much and sent His Son for us.

Paul was a shocking man before he was brought to Christ. He was a blasphemer and a persecutor. Blasphemer: - one who dishonoured God's name, a man who took Christians and compelled them to blaspheme as well. He dishonoured God's name thinking he was doing the right thing but he was on wrong lines completely. Then he was an insolent and overbearing man. His relationship with God was wrong and his relationship with men and women was wrong as well. Everything was wrong.

So in writing to Timothy he says, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first"*. What a shocking man Saul was before the Lord Jesus found him. And he does not forget it. You find in the scripture the account of his conversion and then there are five other accounts, too, throughout scripture – three of them are in the Acts: the one in Acts 9 when we are told about the event and then Paul's own accounts of it are repeated twice. Then in the epistles he alludes to his conversion three times. What we read in Timothy is one of them. He tells us what he was like before and as he thought about it, it deepens his desire is to honour God and glorify His name.

Now we must each take it for ourselves. How do I think about my sins? Not in any way to glory in them or to be ground down in misery but to realise how holy God is and how far short I fall. Not a day can go past in my life when I do not sin. I might not do anything obviously wrong but how often we may have wrong thoughts or motives!

I believe that as a Christian grows the desire is that they might grow more like Jesus, that they might be given help not to sin and that they might be more sensitive about sin. I think when we are first saved we are just glad of relief that you are not facing God's judgment: at least, that is how I was. I was saved as a young child

God wants us to live our lives honouring Him

and I was so relieved that I was not going to face God's wrath. Then as we go on in the Christian way there are things that we thought were all right and then you realise that actually the Bible tells you they are not all right. It is not just what we do but what we think. As we grow as believers we see what is due to God and that God wants us to live our lives honouring Him that we might be a testimony in the world.

The world's culture is pervasive. Every day the world laughs at sin; it makes a joke of it so that we might think it is not quite so bad. I would desire that I should not laugh with the world, that I should see sin for what it is – utterly offensive to God. Paul realised that God had rescued him from what he was as a sinner and brought him into a new order of life altogether and he wanted to tell others. He writes, *"Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"*. Jesus did not come to save the righteous, He came to save sinners. And I am one of them. Praise be His name, He saved me! He saved most, if not all, in this company today, how wonderful that is.

Paul goes on to say, *"Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to the ages of ages. Amen"*. It is wonderful that in just a few verses he goes from speaking of what he was as a sinner, to glorifying God. That is the transformation brought about by the gospel.

Every time we take the Lord's Supper, when we come together to remember Him, the loaf and the cup help us to remember what He has done, the cost of it, and His wonderful love. It leads to our being wonderfully liberated to see Him and praise Him where He now is.

Then when we read the Bible it will tell us what God's standard is. I am not talking about the commandments, I am speaking of the New Testament where we find the apostles Paul, Peter, James and John all telling us about what is expected of a believer. You and I might feel challenged by that but the Lord speaks to us not

to grind us down and make us feel miserable and unworthy but to lift us up and to set us on our way and cause us to be concerned that we might serve and honour Him now.

The answer and the outcome of this is that we glorify God. I do think that if all down the ages believers had been more concerned about growing in humility and remembering their own unworthiness, they would have been preserved from much error and harm. There is always a tendency to start thinking something of ourselves. Think about the Lord Jesus. In Philippians it speaks of Him as making Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7). Not 'some' reputation, not a small reputation – no reputation! Think about that: the Son of God, the Lord of lords; the One who Hebrews tells us, *“made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2), “made himself of no reputation”*.

As we think about how far He has reached out to us it will give us a greater appreciation of His love and we will grow. As we appreciate His love more we will want to serve Him and to honour Him. May we be encouraged in that.

Now I turn to Acts. This is a very interesting scripture. Believers were gathered together on the first day of the week. I just encourage us all to ask ourselves, 'Why do we do things? Why do we break bread on the first day of the week?' Well, we find it in the Scriptures. It is important to base what we do on the Scriptures. Believers were gathered together here and Paul spoke. Now I have wondered why no one was worried about Eutychus. To be perched on the window ledge on the third floor of a building was not the most secure place to be. I would encourage us all to be concerned about the young. The world is a very, very dangerous place. There is violence, all those things; but there is also what is attractive. Eutychus was in a position of great danger: he was half in and half out, as it were.

I do not speak to those who are young lightly. When I was young I remember a brother speaking and being quite offended that he spoke about those who are young. I thought, 'Why are you having

The dangers are so great, the dangers of social media

a go at those who are young?’ But as I get older I realise the dangers are so great, the dangers of social media, for instance. The ability to communicate with others has blessings. You can speak to people in other parts of the world; you can communicate with your family and other Christians. Well, it is a blessing. But like most inventions of man these things also can be used for great evil. That is just an example where you can be drawn into things in a world of self-occupation, a world full of what other people are doing and so waste hours of your life. These things may draw us away when we are older too.

I would encourage you, especially if you are young, to be wholehearted about your Christianity. Do not have a dabble in the world, socialise with your friends, and then tidy yourself up for a Sunday. It will not do, you will be caught out. You will be tested and found wanting. Commit yourself to the Lord’s things. Commit yourself wholeheartedly and the Lord will honour it. He will bless it. He will reward you in yourself. He will give you joy that you will not find in the world. The world has pleasures. The Bible calls them, *“the temporary pleasure of sin” (Hebrews 11:25)*. I am not saying they are not pleasures. But they are temporary and they will leave a bad taste in your mouth.

Eutychus was in the window opening three floors up. I am not saying that Eutychus was a wrong person but he became overpowered by sleep and he fell out. Imagine the distress! The apostle Paul descended. He was not there in all his dignity. He descended. He was marked by compassion. Some translations speak about it as tender-heartedness.

You will find this sort of compassion in John’s, Paul’s and Peter’s writings. It is something you can grow in. It does not matter how old you are or how young you are. You can grow in affection for others. It is a feature of the Lord Jesus. The Lord was marked by compassion. He had compassion on the crowd (see Mark 8:2) and He felt for the individual. Yet it was more than just feelings, He

acted on them. It is not enough just to feel sorry about a situation, the Lord acted on it. He did not just feel sorry for the crowd, He made sure they were fed. He did not just feel sorry for the leper: He healed him (see Mark 1:44). Now, we cannot do the things that Jesus did but we can act. It is no good saying, 'Oh, it is so sad, someone has fallen into trouble' – Paul descended. Paul acted in the way the Saviour would have acted.

I would just encourage us to act in that way, to grow in compassion and affection for others. It is a wonderful feature of the Christian to think beyond ourselves. Paul enfolded Eutychus. How affectionate that was. He did not have some pronouncement or wonderful words. He enfolded him and said, *“Be not troubled, for his life is in him”*. Look for life, do not glory in the failure of others but look for life.

We read of Jesus, that: *“smoking flax shall he not quench”*. Even with the smallest amount of smoke there is some heat, there is some love for the Lord there. He will not quench it. The *“bruised reed shall he not break”* (Matthew 12:20, quoting Isaiah 42:3). Think of the bruised reed, probably a reference to an instrument like a pipe. If it is bruised it will make an uncertain noise. *“A bruised reed shall he not break”*, He will not throw it away, He will restore it to life and vitality.

Paul said, *“Be not troubled, for his life is in him. And having gone up, and having broken the bread, and eaten, and having long spoken until daybreak, so he went away”*. A situation arises and we wonder how to act. Perhaps we get afraid that what we do will be misconstrued. Seek the Lord's help. Have the right desire. If you have the desire you might stumble a few times but you will soon learn and you will be helped to be a blessing to others. It is a feature of growing in grace. The Bible tells us, *“they brought away the boy alive, and were no little comforted”*. Imagine the feeling of that boy's parents. I speak as a father – imagine their feelings.

I can say that I have seen others act in this way. I have experienced others acting in this way towards me. It is a wonderful blessing.

It is a wonderful thing to feel the warmth of the love of Jesus as expressed through others. So let us encourage each other to act in this way. It does not matter how old you are. An elderly sister has been a great encouragement to me recently. She is of good age and it would not be possible for her to literally embrace someone lying on the ground but she can in her heart and in her praise to God. I seek to encourage all to be marked by growth in our feelings towards others and not be hard.

The world is a hard, unfeeling place. People get discarded. People get used to death and destruction; they get callous about lives. Each life that is lost in the world in disasters is precious in the sight of God. God gave life. Let us care about the Lord's people and have a desire to bring in life and encouragement that we might sustain what is here for Him. And then let us rejoice when it can be said, *"they brought away the boy alive"*. How wonderful it is when God's work comes to light and we can rejoice in it. Then let us not forget to be thankful when we see life amongst us and life amongst the Lord's people. It is not something to be taken for granted.

I just wanted to say a few words about the Queen of Sheba. The Lord says that she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon (see Mathew 12:42). To the people that the Lord spoke to it must have seemed an incomprehensible distance that she travelled to see Solomon. Some writers think that she came from Yemen, over 1000 miles away. I have been a number of times to the Middle East on business. I go outside and go 100 yards and am so glad to get back into air-conditioned space.

The Queen of Sheba travelled over 1000 miles to see Solomon. Then she brought some enormous gifts with her. It seems she brought over 4 tons of gold. Imagine camels carrying that through miles of hot, dusty desert. It cannot just have been to see his glory. She went because she had heard of his wisdom. She had heard of him and she desired to find out for herself. The question for us is: we have heard about the Lord Jesus, we hear wonderful things

about Him but how much do you or I desire to find out more about Him for ourselves? What are we prepared to do to find out more? When the Queen of Sheba got to Solomon she had a lot of difficult questions to ask. The Bible calls them “enigmas” and Solomon was able to answer them all. We often have difficult questions, things we would like the Lord to explain to us. We do not always understand what we pass through. I suppose every Christian has, many times in their life, said, ‘Why?’ Some answers, I am sure, wait until heaven. We are not going to get an answer now. We see only a little part of a big puzzle.

She came with questions and “*she spoke to him of all that was in her heart*”. That is a good thing as a Christian, to tell the Lord everything that is in your heart. If there is something you are holding back – maybe you have a bad conscience about it – do not be afraid, tell the Lord. We might not understand our situation but it is a great relief just to cast it before the Lord and know that He hears and that His wisdom is infinite.

Then what the queen saw was so beyond her expectations that the scripture says, “*there was no more spirit in her*”. One translation renders it, ‘Left her breathless’. It was beyond anything she had thought. She had made a long journey to Solomon but she was not in the least disappointed.

As Christians, we have heard about Jesus. You and I have heard others speak about His glory. Have you have found out something for yourself, something that is your own impression of Him and His glory? Lots of hymns express that kind of experience. The Queen of Sheba saw everything – not just the magnificence of things but how happy everyone was. There is nothing disorderly in the Lord’s things.

His wisdom is a wonderful thing. “*The half was not told me*” she says. I wonder if we can say that we have found the Lord in a new way even in the past year. That we have discovered things about Him which we knew as doctrine – because they are in the Bible – but we have found deep down in our heart that they are true and wonderful. I can say that for myself in a small way. Sometimes

through the circumstances of life we prove the Lord in a new way and find afresh the faithfulness of His unchanging love.

So at the end the Queen of Sheba gave Solomon what she had brought. We are not asked to give gold or silver or spices or anything of that sort. But we can give the Lord the affection of our heart. We can seek to serve Him and honour Him and to look for His return. Above all I long to see His face, the face of the One who has loved me, whom I cannot really see today. The scripture tells us, *“we see now through a dim window obscurely” (1 Corinthians 13:12)*. In this hall in Defford there is obscured glass. You can make out some things behind it but you cannot make out the detail of it. Well, the brilliance of the glory to come will be wonderful. As we wait for that time the question is do we find that, as King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba ‘of his bounty’, so the Lord Jesus satisfies our hearts in the present time. Are we growing in our appreciation and love for Him? Are we growing in our desire to serve Him and serve His people and be a blessing to those who do not know Him?

Then His coming for His own leads on to something else that I long to see – Christ exalted in the world which has rejected Him. I look forward, as Peter did, to the kingdom wherein dwells righteousness (see 2 Peter 3:13). All the disorder in the world in which we live and the effects of Satan’s activity, that is so manifest today, will be done away.

I have sought in a simple way to bring the grace of God before us that we might grow in grace, that it might shine out through us as we grow in our knowledge of the Saviour. I do not mean knowing about Jesus – lots of people know about Him, they can give you lots of facts and information – but to know Him for yourself. As we grow in our appreciation we find that He not only satisfies our heart but our desire is to honour Him more and in that God is glorified.

May we all be encouraged.

Simon Burr

An Address at Defford, 23 September 2017

Poetry Selection

PRAISE THE SAVIOUR

Holy Saviour! We adore Thee,
Seated on the Father's throne,
While the heavenly hosts before Thee
Gladly Thy great glory own –
Thou art worthy!
Who for sinners did atone.

Saviour! Though the world despised Thee,
Though Thou here wast crucified,
High the Father's glory raised Thee,
Lord of all creation wide –
Thou art worthy!
We now live, for Thou hast died.

Haste the day of Thy returning
With Thy glorious Church to reign;
Then shall end the days of mourning,
We shall sing with rapture then –
"Thou art worthy!"

* * * * *

Come Lord Jesus, come, Amen!

S. P. Tregelles (1813-1875)

Testimony Section

A SHORT NARRATIVE OF GOD'S MERCIFUL DEALINGS

*The "Short Narrative", of which a few extracts are given below,
was written by Robert Wauchope towards the end of his life and*

was intended for Andy Wauchope, his grand nephew, to show the change that had taken place in Robert's life as a result of his trusting in Christ in January 1819. Robert was Captain of one of the naval vessels on patrol at St. Helena to ensure that Napoleon could not escape from the island where he was held as a prisoner after the battle of Waterloo in 1815. Wauchope's spiritual change began in December 1818 when he was required to serve on a court-martial called to hear the case against Patrick Pounder, schoolmaster/chaplain on HMS Favourite. Here Admiral Wauchope, as he later became, takes up the story:-

"HMS Favourite (Captain Hercules Robinson) had a first lieutenant named Pearce, a very ungodly fellow. There was a very pious schoolmaster (Patrick Pounder) on board. He had established meetings for prayer and the reading of the Bible among the men. Several of them had become deeply impressed. One boy especially, who had become delirious for a time, and was confined to his hammock, cried out in his delirium several times that he saw the Saviour before him. The first-lieutenant had ordered Pounder to give up these meetings and to desist from reading with the men, which he would not do; so Pearce insisted upon a court-martial which was accordingly arranged for mid-December 1818.

"The first thing which struck me at this court-martial was the question put to Captain Robinson, 'Do you mean to say, as the schoolmaster does, that this boy was influenced by the Holy Spirit?' Robinson's answer was, 'I do believe that the Holy Spirit influences the heart of man; but I believe the boy in question to be labouring under brain-fever.' All that was said about the Holy Spirit created nothing in the court but ridicule and amusement. I, however, had been struck by this, and said that I thought there was something which I had seen about the Holy Spirit in the Prayer-book, which was also turned to ridicule."

For Wauchope, the surprising thing was that a well respected Captain, who had fought at Trafalgar and had been involved in various minor naval actions since, should believe in the Holy Spirit

at all. The "Narrative" continues:

"I was determined to find out if there was any Holy Spirit, by searching the New Testament... I began at the first chapter of Matthew and wherever the Holy Spirit was mentioned I placed a mark. I read and read on, no doubt under the influence of the Holy Spirit; and I was astonished the more I read, marking the verses over and over again, not only those where the Holy Spirit was mentioned, but those also which the Lord, the Spirit, opened my mental and spiritual eyes to understand; and by the time I got to the end of Revelation I was a true believer.

**Here was mercy,
unbounded mercy**

"Here was mercy – long-suffering, unbounded mercy – that such a wretch as I should have been plucked as a brand from the burning; and is it not right that I should leave a record of this mercy? Well may I say, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name" (Psalm 103:1)*... I now had discovered what sin was: taught by the Holy Spirit that the law of God was a spiritual law, extending not only to the outward act, but to the most secret thoughts; I was brought to see that faith in the blood of Christ alone could cleanse from sin. I had been a great swearer, but after this wondrous change I would no more have taken God's holy name in vain than I would have cut off my hand and this from my adoring reverence for that holy name."

Now that he was a Christian Wauchope found that there were difficulties in his relationship with Admiral Plampin who as Commander of the Cape of Good Hope Station had overall control of operations at St Helena.

"Now Admiral Plampin and I did not get on as well as we had done. He was a very immoral man, living openly with a kept mistress who always dined at his table and went by the name of "Mrs Plampin". It was a difficult thing to do but I told him that my views had become completely altered; that on reading the

Bible I had found that he was wrong, and that I could not any longer keep company with his mistress. He looked upon all that I could say in no other point of view but as a desire to insult him, which God knows was not the case..."

HMS Euridyce under the command of Robert Wauchope remained on duties at St Helena until 2nd October 1819. Robert noted:

"This was a remarkable time for St Helena: it appeared as if a breeze of the Holy Spirit was passing over the island; there had been many conversions on board HMS Favourite and on shore"

The "Narrative" concludes with an appeal:

"I would just leave this memorandum of my gratitude to Him for His wonderful loving-kindness towards me; and my next promotion, I trust, will be to glory; and, Andy, meet me there. And we shall meet there, if we trust in Jesus, and Jesus alone, who is *"the way, the truth and the life"* (John 14:6). *"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). And Jesus Himself declares, *"No man cometh to the Father but by me"* (John 14:6)".

Robert Wauchope (1788 – 1862)

A voice from the past

THE MORAL GLORY OF THE LORD

I see four points in Christ:

- I see manhood beautified and adorned here on earth, so that God should be glorified in man;
- I see God glorified in man in the putting away of sin;
- I see in the resurrection man accepted; and
- In the exaltation of Christ, I see man glorified.

Christ is in heaven, the glorified Man and that Man is to be the glory and delight of the Christian. If that is the case, then I am strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and in some little

degree I learn how to maintain the truth that God has been pleased to give us. The only possible way to do that is by your own soul being in the blessed reality of it, and the very essence of it is that Christ should be the glory of your heart, the Man in whom you delight, your glory. Then the result will be that every blessed quality that came out in Him as Man will be reproduced in the Christian down here, because Christ is the Man of the Christian's heart.

F. E. Raven (1837 – 1903)

A Word for Today

THE WAITING OF GOD

"And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him." Isaiah 30:18.

"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Proverbs 29:1.

"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half-dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him., and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take

care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” Luke 10:30-35.

I want to present God to you tonight as a God who is waiting; truly a wonderful attitude for the Almighty to take up! In fact, the more you think of it, the more is such an attitude difficult for us to understand. I do not know of anything more calculated to touch our hearts than the patience of God. How patient He is! One thinks at the outset of this world when sin came in and all the confusion and misery that followed in its trail; how God waited for 1,600 years before bringing in the judgment of the flood. And then all that followed from the flood to the coming in of Jesus. And then, more than all, the period that has followed since Jesus came and was cast out of this world and crucified. We might well have thought that God Himself, coming into His own creation—for remember Jesus is God—and approaching us in such a wonderfully blessed and attractive way as Jesus did, and then being cast out of His own creation—I repeat, one might well have thought that God would have stepped in with immediate judgment, and swept the whole scene. But He has not, and for nearly two thousand years He has waited. That does not mean that He is going to wait for ever, but He is pre-eminently a God of patience. Scripture speaks of Him as *“the God of patience” (Romans 15:5)*. Why does He wait? This verse in Isaiah supplies the answer *“that he may be gracious unto you.”*

We would hardly have expected the crucifixion of Jesus to be met by any other answer than judgment, but the truth of the matter is that God waits that He may show grace. What an amazing attitude for the Almighty to take up! Dear friend, how long has God waited for you? You say, ‘I did not know He was waiting for me’. Oh, but He is. Why is He waiting? That He may be gracious to reveal Himself as a Saviour, and a Saviour who loves you incomparably. He is waiting! It is His waiting love that I wish to present to you tonight – love that has waited for a guilty world for nigh on 2,000 years, and now waits on you. You may be twenty, thirty, forty or fifty years old. You may be more; and can it be that you have not opened your heart to the Lord Jesus yet? Oh, dear friend, Jesus

is waiting for you. He is presented in the address to Laodicea, at the end of Revelation 3, as One who stands outside the door of professing Christendom and knocks. Who is it knocking? Jesus. Think of the majesty of the One who stands without! The glory and dignity of His Person! And yet One who is prepared to assume a position, may I say, of a Suppliant. One who is standing tonight at the door of your heart and knocking. If I knock, the object of my knocking is to gain an entrance. That is what Jesus wants to do—to gain an entrance into your heart, to bear away all its sorrow and all the misgivings that may have arisen there (and it is well they should arise), to bear them all away and fill that barren heart with the very joy of heaven. This is not sentiment; it is a blessed reality, and there are those in this hall tonight who can bear testimony to it, and, I say it humbly, I am amongst them. The very countenance of God is, as it were, shining upon you in all its blessedness; yet you have not granted Him the entrance He seeks, and still He waits! How long are you going to keep Him waiting? If the king of the realm were to knock at your door, you would not be long before you opened it, feeling the honour he had done you and his grace in knocking, and even more so in waiting! Yet the One who is knocking and waiting at your heart's door tonight is the King of kings blessedly desirous that your weary heart might find its rest where rest alone is to be found and that is in God Himself.

Now I want to take up this parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate the point of waiting. The narrative is a parable but the object of a parable is to convey a certain truth to us, that we may enquire about it and understand it. The meaning of a parable is not always apparent on the surface, but God is anxious and desirous of unfolding the truth to all who enquire. That is why the Lord spoke in parables, so as to bring to light the enquirers. The mere casual hearer, who had no particular interest or exercise of soul about things, passed on and did not heed, but the exercised came to Jesus to enquire. I wonder whether you are one of those who are concerned about things? I trust you are. Here is a parable full of the deepest meaning. *“And Jesus answering said”*— it comes from His own mouth— *“a certain man went down from Jerusalem*

What is it to repent?

to Jericho." A Jew would understand this. Jerusalem was the centre of all the interests and blessing of God, and Jericho was the city of the curse (see Joshua 6:26). Jericho, in that way becomes a picture of this world and what it is under; under the curse of a broken law; of having rejected its God; of having crucified Jesus; under the curse of rising apostasy, in turning away from the grace that would follow it. Here is a man who has turned his back on all that God is interested in and he has turned his face toward that which God has cursed, and he journeys on. Might we liken him to a man who heedless of all God's entreaties, with his face set towards the world, his interests, his life and his friends all there, pursues a course regardless of God, and moves on towards his doom? Thousands are doing it, many of us here tonight have done it, but have been arrested on that downward course.

I want to put it to you simply. If this world has cast out Jesus and crucified Him, has put Him to open shame and refused Him; that cannot go on for ever, otherwise God would not be God. There must be a day of reckoning. I will give you a scripture, *"God ... now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead"* (Acts 17:30, 31). This is the Person who is going to judge the world—Jesus; the very One the world has crucified! That very Person is going to judge the world. The day, moreover, is fixed. I cannot give you the date, for Scripture does not tell us, but it says the day is appointed. That means it is no movable date; it is a fixed date, and we are moving on towards it and every day brings us nearer to it. I want you to consider your own position tonight. I put it to you simply and affectionately. You are in the world, and that world is moving on to the day of judgment. Am I wise in refusing to face that? I am a fool if I do not! *"God ... now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."*

What is it to repent? It means to change your mind and leave what you have been going on with. That is what repentance is. That is

to say, hitherto you have found your life and your interests in this world, a world that has crucified Jesus, and as much refuses Him tonight as ever. You may not be prepared to admit that, but you can put it to the test for yourself by speaking about the glories of Jesus to the first dozen people you meet when you go out of this hall. See what kind of a reception you get. The Name that stands pre-eminent in heaven—the only Name—is the Name on earth that it is bad form to mention in every form of society! That must be reserved for special occasions in special buildings! How monstrous! There is something wrong somewhere. Dear friend, I must take stock of my position. Is it to be this world or Christ? You may say, I have a lot of questions to raise. It is well to raise every question you can think of in this matter, and for the same reason that it must be a wonderful thing for a man hopelessly in debt to bring out all the accounts standing against him, when he knows he has a friend who is going to meet them all. There is a satisfaction in bringing to light all my sins if I know someone is prepared to meet the guilt of them for me, because it magnifies the grace and goodness of the One who is going to come in as my Saviour. So I would encourage you to raise every question you can, and you will find that the God with whom you raise your questions is the God who thought of them all before you were born, and has met them to His own satisfaction and now He waits to bless you and claim you as His own, so that no one can point the finger or say that He has done it unrighteously.

I want to come to this point, because it involves the most fundamental issue, and that issue is my sins. If I have to reckon with God, dear friends, let us seek grace before Him to be honest with ourselves, because everything depends on mental honesty. If I think of meeting God, the first impression or feeling that arises in my mind is that I am afraid of Him. Why? Because I know I am not fit to face Him. Far be it from me that I should accuse anyone here of being a gross sinner. You have probably not been such a sinner as I have been, but that is not the point. I am not facing man. If I were to stand before the courts of this world I am not aware of anything that could be brought against me in the eyes of the law. But that is not the bar at which I must stand. I am in the

presence of a God who knows me, and can read my thoughts afar off, and who has seen every deed, open and hidden. Men can only take account of what they see, but God sees all and He sees not only what is done, but the motives that lie behind, and I am conscious, if I am honest, that I am not fit to go into the presence of an all-seeing God. I admit it is a terrible experience to feel that I am going into the presence of a God who knows my thoughts afar off, and moreover who has recorded my life in all its detail in the books of heaven. You remember the scripture *"and the books were opened: ... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"* (Revelation 20:12). But there is such a blessed answer to this. Who am I to raise this question with you if I cannot tell you at the same time that God has brought this matter up and settled it for ever to His own eternal satisfaction and in accordance with all the majesty of His throne. The devil is never going to be able to point a finger at God or to challenge Him. Just look at the thief on the cross! A man who had lived a life of outrage against God and man and, according to his own confession as he comes to his end, he says *"we receive the due reward of our deeds"* (Luke 23:41). That is his own pronouncement. He was taken that same day into the paradise of God! Does that comfort you? It comforts me. *"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"* (v.23), says Jesus to him. 'Oh,' you say, 'how can it be that a thief is found in the paradise of God without a stain on him?' It is because the Saviour who hung beside him had borne all his sins instead of him. All the just judgment that should have been meted out to that thief as the fruit of his sinful life, every bit of that judgment, I say, fell upon the head of Jesus instead. He hung there in his stead.

It is a wonderful story indeed. Jesus came out from God and accomplished redemption's great work so that God might have the right to claim the sinner, even the chief of sinners (see 1 Timothy 1:15), God can, moreover, do it justly for it says *"that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,"* (Romans 3:26). He can justify a sinner. You cannot justify a sinner! Nor can I. You can only condemn a sinner: but *"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him*

Only God can justify a sinner

might be saved" (John 3:17). Only God can justify a sinner.

I return now to the narrative. Here is a man who as we might say is a thorough worldling with no thought of God, nor of the interests of God. He had but one thought and that was himself and his own pleasure, and he journeys on towards the city of the curse. Do you think God did not feel that? Do you think God does not feel it that men and women refuse to pay attention to Him? What do you think He wants to give you? He wants to bestow upon you for time and eternity all the blessing that is in His heart. If someone were to offer you a fortune you would be quick enough in going to get it. God offers you eternal wealth and He is offering it without money and without price, and yet men are turning on their heels at the very sound of His name! Do you think God does not feel that? Oh, dear friends, we little know what it meant to God to give Jesus and to deliver Him up for us all. God feels it intensely as He sees man pursuing his course of self-will. What does He do? Does He cut him off? No, He waits! 'What,' you say, 'is God going to wait on a man like that?' Yes, and look at him in the story! The man falls on really bad times, in fact he is given up. In the parable, he falls into the hands of thieves who strip him and wound him and leave him in a half-dead state. You say, 'Well, that is the end, and he deserved it!' No, dear friends, it is not the end, it is just the opportunity for God to come in to help him. It is wonderful to present God as a waiting God! If I may use the illustration, He waited until the man was wounded, stripped, naked and half dead, because He knew he would never turn to Him before.

"A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was." This is Jesus! He comes just where the man is, and just when he needed Him. He could not move, for he was in a half-dead state. Do you realise, dear friend, how helpless you are? Take one matter only—what can you do to wash away your sins? You see Scripture says, *"God requireth that which is past" (Ecclesiastes 3:15)*, so that if you lived a spotless and blameless life from now to the day of your death you could not remove one single sin that is past, nor

can I. You say 'Then I am lost.' Yes, dear friends, you are! Just like this man, robbed, wounded and half dead. You say 'Can anything be done?' No, not on my side! Here am I, moving along the stream of time, in my sins, and time is quickly passing, and soon I shall meet God. What can I do? Nothing but supplicate Him for mercy. That is what Job said. He said that even if he could argue with God he would not do so, for if God were to ask him questions he could not answer one in a thousand! (See Job 9:3). He realised that the only thing to do was to supplicate God. That is a right attitude of heart. But, dear friend, you need not supplicate Him as your Judge tonight, you can turn to Him as your Saviour, a very different matter! This is indeed good news, is it not? It is the glad tidings of the blessed God! That is why we are here tonight, not to tell you that you are the same as we are, sinners; because if we are honest, that is obvious. We are here to tell you that we know a Saviour and we want you to know Him too. We know God and are rejoicing in Him, and we want you to know Him and, more than this, God wants you to know Him.

Do you think He does not see the weariness of your heart? Do you think He has not observed the prickings of your conscience as to the past, when you have realised you are not right with Him? He has noticed it all. God cannot bear distance. He has come out to breach it, so that He and the sinner may be found together, and that He may embrace the sinner in His eternal arms. Oh dear friend, to this end 'the Samaritan' journeys. Where from? From heaven. Where to? The cross of Calvary. Why? To deal with the question of my sins so that God may righteously embrace me, sinner as I am. The Samaritan must have gone down on his knees to serve this man who was lying on the roadside half dead for he, "*bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine*". The Lord Jesus came down to the sinner's estate, stooping to where the sinner was in order to bind up, with all the tenderness of divine love, the wounds that sin had made.

Then he sets him on his own beast and brings him to the inn, and put him in the charge of the innkeeper, to be taken care of. You are not taken to heaven yet. No, but He is going to come again.

You will notice he takes out two pence and gives them to the innkeeper and says, *"When I come again"*. He is coming again. Jesus has brought us to *"an inn"*, that is the place where care is known; the place where there is warmth and where there is love and something for our souls to feed upon. The water of life is there, the bread of heaven is there, the Holy Spirit is there, and those who love Jesus are there. Fancy being brought out of a cold heartless, callous world into a circle of Christians, where you are loved and cared for, and where your soul will be fed! And what are the inmates of this inn doing? They are waiting – waiting for what? For the return of the Good Samaritan. You say, 'Is that your position?' Yes, indeed it is. In the meantime what am I doing? I am finding my friends amongst those who love Him and I have found it the most wonderful company in the world. I am conscious that I am loved, although unworthy of it, and I am conscious that there is satisfaction of heart to be found there. And what you find is that it is a circle where there is spiritual warmth. The world is a cold lonely place; they want you if you have something to give them, but not otherwise. They will have you in their social circles if they can use you, but if that is accomplished they want you no more. This circle is a heavenly circle, dear friends.

Will you not come near? There is love awaiting you there. It is not only that God loves you and Jesus loves you, but the people of God love you too. Everything that concerns you calls out all the sympathies of the family of God, and you will never be alone if you have those who love Jesus as your friends and companions. This is a fellowship; I tell you, it is a fellowship of heaven on earth. You say, 'I would like to touch it.' Well, you can, for it is all for you. Jesus wants you to know Him personally, and then to know His own, and that is why He is knocking at the door of your heart tonight. You can speak to Him as simply as you would to me, and you can tell Him everything as One who knows you through and through and yet loves you. You can tell Him about your sins and your qualms of conscience. You can tell Him the fear of death that you have, and how that you are not prepared to meet God. You can tell Him all these things and He will tell you that He came into this world to take you up just as you are. Every question you can

raise Jesus has met at Calvary's cross, and He waits to embrace you and make you His own.

The most affecting touch in this parable is that whilst He brings him to the inn, He says to the innkeeper, *"Take care of him"*. It is like persons, after they are converted, being brought into a place where they are spiritually cared for. They are, so to speak, put into the arms of believers to be 'taken care of', for we take care of one another for the Lord's sake. May the Lord help us in this matter!

Then He says, *"Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee"*, as if to say 'Do not forget he belongs to Me!' You belong to Him if you have trusted Him, and He is coming again to take you out of the confusion of this world, in which we are, into His own conditions of glory. *"In my Father's house there are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14; 2, 3). That is the love of Jesus! Dear friend, He is waiting. Don't you think you have kept Him waiting far too long? He would plead with you again tonight, for *"He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and without remedy"*. You do not want that and God does not either. He wants you tonight that you may get this matter settled before you lay your head on your pillow. God grant it may be so, for Christ's sake.

H. P. Wells. (1888 – 1952)

*A preaching of the gospel, Southport, 20 February 1938.
Scripture references are taken from the Authorised (King James) Version as used in the original.*

In the next issue D.V. continuing this series: 'The Abundance of Grace' by F. E. Raven