

154

LIVING WATER

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

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

If you know of any one who might be interested in receiving this magazine, please pass their name and address to the Stone Publishing Trust. Copies of the next few issues will be sent to them free of charge.

Quotations from the Bible in 'Living Water' are normally from the Darby translation or from the Authorised (King James) Version.

The permission of the Editor should be obtained before reproducing material contained in this magazine. It is the policy of the Trustees to encourage the use of articles for the work of the Lord wherever this is possible so long as it does not infringe the rights of others.

Articles are sometimes shortened or otherwise amended and for this the Editor takes full responsibility.

Our Privacy Notice prepared under the General Data Protection Regulations may be viewed at: <http://www.stonepublishingtrust.org.uk/privacy.html>
Or please write to the Trust and a copy will be sent to you.

Cover Picture:
Helmken Falls, Wells Gray Provincial Park, BC, Canada - Tom Hawkins

Editor: Mark Lemon

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

Living Water 154

(July – August 2019)

Recent Ministry

WHATEVER, WHEREVER, WHENEVER, WHOSOEVER. <i>A preaching of the gospel, Lytham St Annes, 23 April 2017</i>	Tom Butcher	1
---	-------------	----------

Poetry Selection

THY NAME WE LOVE LORD JESUS	W. Yerbury	6
THE WAYS OF GOD IN GRACE	Janetta Trench	7

Testimony Section

WASHED AND MADE THOROUGHLY CLEAN	William Wade	7
-------------------------------------	--------------	----------

A voice from the past

“HE DOES ALL THINGS WELL”	Alec E Barnes	10
---------------------------	---------------	-----------

A word for today

FOUR ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE <i>An address at Hampton 2 March 2019.</i>	Kenneth Hollands	14
NOTICE OF TWO NEW BOOKS		25

Recent Ministry

WHATEVER – Isaiah 1: 18,

WHEREVER – Psalm 139: 7-12

WHENEVER – Psalm 121: 1-4

WHOSOEVER – John 3: 14-16

We have just sung in the hymn, ‘While we tell the wondrous story’¹. The story of Jesus is a wonderful story: it is not an Aesop’s fable, it is not like that, it is real, it is true, it is effective.

With these four scriptures we have whatever, wherever, whenever, and whosoever.

Where we started it is **whatever**. Yes, *“though your sins be red like crimson”*. Yes, so bad. *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”*. That is **whatever**. It says in Romans 3 and similarly in chapter 5; *“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)*. How do we measure up in relation to our lives, what we have done, what we have said, where we have been and who we are? I suppose, the older we are, the more we have done, the more we have said; we have done things and said things. But, you know, the answer to all the things in our lives is in the Lord Jesus — nowhere else. You can go to the doctors or the psychiatrist; you can go to all these places but the answer is to be found in Jesus.

He is able to answer everything. Read the story of Jesus; it is a wonderful story. Read the four Gospels and then read the

1. *While we tell the wondrous story
Of the Saviour’s cross and shame,
Sing we, Everlasting glory
Be to God and to the Lamb
Hallelujah!
Give ye glory to His name!*

continuation of the effect of His work throughout the New Testament.

It really began a long time ago; it says in Ephesians, *“chosen ... in him before the world’s foundation” (Ephesians 1:4)*. The gospel has not changed. God has not changed His feelings or His thoughts but He has brought them out in full expression in a blessed Man.

Now look at the scripture in Psalm 139 – that is **wherever**. We have had **whatever**; well, there is **wherever**. Wherever you are and wherever you live, wherever you might be tomorrow or today, wherever you have been in the past, the Lord knows all about it. Dear friend, every footstep is known by Him. Every thought, every feeling, every desire, wherever we might be, is all known to Him.

It says that Jesus knew someone’s thoughts before they were even spoken (see Luke 6:8). He knew where people were before He met them (see John 1:48) and He knows you and me, through and through: every thought, every feeling, every desire; Jesus knows all about us. Yes, and heaven wants to reach out to us tonight and draw us afresh in relation to that which is divine, the love of God which has come out in full expression to us in the Lord Jesus.

It has reached down through time and here we are today and the gospel remains the same: the love of God in expression in a Man, in Jesus. He set it out; think of those thirty years of His life that were in a sense hidden and yet I am sure that those in the village of Nazareth would have known His help. He was certainly a help to Mary and Joseph.

Then His work became public and immediately things began to happen. There began to be a change in the lives of people He came into contact with; people even were raised from the dead. He wants to make us alive, He wants to make us living.

Jesus is available to you in every moment of every day

We are “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (*Ephesians 2:1 KJV*); but He has taken them all on and He wants to bring life into all our lives, life in

relation to Himself and in relation to what belongs to heaven. In this wonderful day of grace which God has set on He is drawing people in relation to Himself through the blessed Man whose name is Jesus.

Heaven will be filled. It is not empty. Heaven has never been an empty place but think of people that God has secured in Christ; think of them filling heaven, filling the divine presence and Jesus leading the praise. That is a wonderful thing to be able to touch something in spirit even now, able to be responsive.

So there is **whatever**; that is your sins and the Lord Jesus has met every one, set you free and there is **wherever**, so that wherever you live – from Scotland or Ireland, Wiltshire, Blackburn or Preston, wherever you come from – the gospel is the same in every place in every language.

Whenever, it does not matter; there are twenty-four hours in the day and it says of God that He neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:4). He is available and Jesus is available to you in every moment of every day to trust in, to rest upon, to seek help from and to ask for guidance along the way. We need help, we need guidance and we need support. We need this because we do not know what a day may bring forth (see Proverbs 27:1). But He does; He knows about tomorrow.

He also knows about today: today is the well-accepted time; today is the day of salvation (see 2 Corinthians 6:2). People put things off. They say, ‘Tomorrow will do’. Well, dear friend, you cannot afford to put off the salvation of your soul. It needs to be done now: tomorrow may be too late. Think of the great

fire of Chicago. During a preaching the speaker said he would preach the coming week; during that week many, many people died in that fire and there was no preaching next week.

Dear friend, what a Saviour Jesus is. He is an all-the-way-home Saviour; yesterday, today and forever (see Hebrews 13:8). Every moment, every twenty-four hours Jesus wants to be with you, He wants to take your hand. He wants to have a little conversation with you and to help you. You might have a problem — tell Him about it. It is remarkable, the answers you get and the support you get. You can trust Him.

He is ever available. He wants you to know Him; that is the wonderful thing. *“Our Saviour God... desires that all men should be saved and come to [the] knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3, 4)* and He points men to Jesus. That is the only way of salvation. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).*

You have the **whatever**, you have the **wherever** and you have the **whenever**. The gospel is the same for all, there is not any difference. Now, finally, **whosoever**.

“Salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). That is the name of Jesus. That is what John 3 says; *“whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal”*. What a blessing it is, to know Him.

*The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know.*

What love shone in Jesus, what love He displayed when alone on Calvary. He was truly alone.

The work of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary stands, we might say, as a shelter. God desires that all men should be saved; He does not want to leave anyone out. His desire is that all should be saved and the work of the Lord Jesus and

His name and all His accomplishments are sufficient to meet the need before God for everyone who will come to Jesus.

Dear friend, it is a wonderful day, the day of grace, it really is. God continues to reach out. He reaches out to us in so many ways. When people could not get the Bibles in Russia they listened to the wireless because someone read the scriptures and people wrote it down. They got the word, they got the Scripture.

He has completed everything to God's satisfaction. He could say on the cross, *"it is finished"* (John 19:30); the work of redemption is complete. One day all those who have trusted Him will be with Him. What a complete answer to who He is and what He has done. Heaven will be filled, praise to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus and He is leading it. He has the first place in all things, the first place, the first seat in the Father's presence and the first place amongst His own, the chief place.

He came in amongst His own and after their surprise at seeing Him risen they rejoiced, having seen the Lord. Well, dear friends, let us rejoice as we pass along, as we see the Lord coming into our lives in places, in our very homes, in the way of life that we have been given. Just let Jesus in, let Him have sway. He will bring rejoicing into your life that you have never had before. So let us rejoice and glory in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Tom Butcher

A preaching of the gospel, Lytham St Annes, 23 April 2017

Poetry Selection

THY NAME WE LOVE LORD JESUS

Thy Name we love, Lord Jesus;
It tells God's love unbounded
To ruined man, ere time began
Or heaven and earth were founded.
Thine is a love eternal,
That found in us its pleasure,
That brought Thee low to bear our woe,
And make us Thine own treasure.

Thy Name we love, Lord Jesus;
It tells Thy birth so lowly,
Thy patience, grace, Thy gentleness,
Thy lonely path, so holy.

Thou wast the Man of sorrows,
Our grief, too, Thou didst bear it;
The bitter cup, Thou drankest up,
The thorny crown, didst wear it.

Thy Name we love, Lord Jesus;
God's Lamb, Thou wast ordained;
For us undone, Thou spotless One
Our judgment hast sustained.
We see Thee crowned with glory,
Above the heavens now seated,
The victory won, Thy work well done,
Our righteousness completed.

Thy Name we love, Lord Jesus,
And lowly bow before Thee;
In Thee we live, to Thee we give,
All blessing, worship, glory.
We sing aloud Thy praises,
Our hearts and voices blending,
Tis Thou alone we worthy own,
Thy beauty's all transcending.

W. Yerbury (Died 1868)

THE WAYS OF GOD IN GRACE

O the brightness of the glory
Shining in the Saviour's face!
Telling all the blessed story
Of the ways of God in grace:
Lowly, hated and rejected,
In the world He came to save;
By the glory of the Father
Raised triumphant from the grave.
Now we see Him crowned with glory,
Glory in His unveiled face,
And in peace and rest before Him,
In that glory learn of grace:
For it shineth in the visage
Of the One who for us died,
Bore our sins and all their judgment-
Jesus Christ, the crucified.

Janetta Trench (1843 – 1925)

Testimony Section

WASHED AND MADE THOROUGHLY CLEAN

“You are all sinners” The pastor of the little Elim Church was passionate as he preached. I had no problem with being called a sinner. By the time I was hearing these words from a converted bar manager, now a preacher, I was in a world of trouble. I had not long before been charged with assault and criminal damage, to go along with other similar criminal offences, mainly alcohol related. I had tried, but without success, to put glue sniffing behind me. The drinking was out of control too, and it was all catching up with me. I was involved with the National Front and on the fringes of paramilitary activity. I had no doubt that I was a sinner. What the preacher said next gave me something that would ultimately change my life for ever; ‘But I want you to know that God loves you’.

There were around six or seven of us there that night in the Jubilee hall in the centre of Greenisland housing estate. The church itself had only around ten or twelve as a congregation, so we almost doubled the attendance. We all sat along the back row and laughed our way through the choruses and notices, but when the preacher stood up to preach, we all fell silent. It was a bizarre situation. He was actually making sense out of life. It was when he began telling us that God loved us and that Jesus Christ His Son died for us in order that we might have eternal life that I began to think of where I would be in five or ten years' time. It did not look good. I was being offered a way out of the life I had come to live, but it was not an easy way; it was the way of surrendering my life completely into the hands of God and becoming a true Christian.

It was a folly of events that got us all into that hall in the first place. My friends and I were having a little bit of a party at my sister's house on the estate one Saturday night. It was around 9 or 10pm when the door was knocked. Standing there were two girls we knew from the estate. They asked if they could come in. We were not going to say 'No'! We did not expect what happened next, though. They began to talk about God, about Jesus Christ and being 'saved'. They had been saved and their lives were evidently different from what they used to be. Even though we were all sitting around drinking and making fun of those two girls they were not put off and kept telling us of the love of God. They eventually left and challenged us all to come to the evening service the next day at their little church. In order to get rid of them, we said we would. We did not plan bumping into them the next night just before the evening service, but that is exactly what happened. Using every kind of excuse, we said No, but they would not take no for an answer. We decided to go to disrupt the service, but had no idea that we were the ones who would be disrupted!

These girls spoke about heaven with such certainty that I wanted to go there

The pastor preached a straight gospel message to us all, but none of us responded. We tried to act hard

and unaffected after the meeting, but I had been convicted. The same thing happened the week after; Saturday night – drunk, Sunday night – at the meeting. The following Thursday a few of us had a chat with the two girls and the subject of heaven and hell arose. Again, I realised from what these girls told us and what the pastor had preached, I was heading for hell because I had never asked Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Saviour. These girls spoke about heaven with such certainty that I wanted to go there, but I knew that I needed to ‘get right with God’ as they put it. I decided that I would respond to the appeal on the following Sunday night. We all went again, and the pastor preached a simple gospel message that we could understand. After the message, he asked us all to bow our heads and close our eyes. He asked if there was anyone who would like to give their lives to Christ, and if so, could they raise their hands. My heart was beating like mad. What would my mates think? Could I keep up the Christian faith? What about my family? All of these questions seemed to disappear as I thought about a life in God. As I was getting ready to raise my hand, one of my friends raised his! I couldn’t believe it! I was next, then another two of my friends indicated the same. Four of us in one night! The pastor took each of us into a little room off the main hall and explained a little bit more to us of what salvation actually meant. He then led us line by line, in a prayer of repentance, as we did not know how to pray ourselves. The only way I can describe how I felt was that for the first time in my life I felt clean. It was like I had been washed from the inside. I knew God had done a work in my life.

A lot has happened since then. I have spent seven years in the Royal Irish Rangers Regiment. On a Bible study course I met Tulsì. Tulsì and I have been married for seven years and we have been working for SASRA (The Soldiers' & Airmen's Scripture Readers Association) for three years. As I go around the Barrack rooms, I am constantly reminded of the state I was in when God began to speak to me about salvation. This is the message I bring to soldiers; no matter what background or religious affiliation, Jesus Christ died for every one of them, He died for sinners. I am testimony to that.

William Wade

This account is taken from "Candles in the Darkness" Published by Christian Focus Publications 2000 and 2006 and used with permission.

A voice from the past

"HE DOES ALL THINGS WELL"

What things? All things – *"all things that Jesus began to do and to teach"* (Acts 1:1). How many are prepared to testify as to this! He does not need to speak for Himself. He does not refer the enquirer to His friends but to His enemies. Jesus said to Annas the high priest. *"I spoke openly to the world and in secret I have spoken nothing... Demand of those who have heard, what I have spoken to them... They know what I said.... If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil"* (John 18:20-23). And they could not shake His affirmation, *"I am altogether that which I say unto you"* (John 8:25). What He said and what He did were in perfect correspondence.

Yes, He hath done all things well. Ask His neighbours and contemporaries. Ask the doctors of the law in Jerusalem. They heard Him amazed. At twelve years of age *"they were astonished at his understanding and answers"* (Luke 2:47). And the hidden eighteen years from twelve to thirty are summed up

in the testimony: *“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).*

At His baptism a voice was heard from heaven *“Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight” (Luke 3:22).* Immediately after this He commenced His ministry, a ministry of little over three years in which the world that now is was shaken to its very foundations and the world that is to come was fashioned. The testimony of that time was: *“He taught in their synagogues being glorified of all” (Luke 4:15).*

Ask the man in the street, in all ages swift to detect a sham and to applaud merit: *“He does all things well; he makes both the deaf to hear and the speechless to speak” (Mark 7:37).*

Ask a spokesman from among His disciples, those who were in His company day and night; hard-headed fishermen and the like who would have swiftly detected any flaw in His character or inconsistency in His deeds. Said Simon Peter, *“He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).* Peter’s testimony was: *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16).* Another, Thomas, after a spell of doubt and disbelief, exclaimed *“My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).* It is to be noted that Christ, who was so zealous to safeguard all that was due to God alone did not rebuke His disciple for these words; they were indeed the truth.

This was not an isolated tribute to His deity. The woman whom the Lord spoke to at the well of Sychar, proclaimed to the men of the city, who probably shared the secrets of her guilty and immoral life: *“He told me all things that I had ever done: is not he the Christ” (John 4:29).*

But those in authority, both religious and secular, failed to acknowledge the glory of the Person who stood before them. Not only Annas but Pilate the governor, who was Caesar’s friend, was compelled to assess the true worth of the Man he

ultimately delivered to His enemies that they might crucify Him. What was Pilate's verdict? Pilate states without equivocation, having also the opinion of a fellow judge to assist him, *"I having examined him have found no fault in this man, no, nor yet Herod either"* (Luke 23:14). And in this judgment his own wife was insistent (See Matthew 27:19)). Nevertheless, Jesus was condemned and crucified.

But still the words rang through the guilty city and even from Calvary itself. At the cross the criminal who died beside Jesus declared, *"This man has done nothing amiss"* (Luke 23:41). Even the Centurion in charge of the execution confirmed that dying man's words, saying, *"in very deed this man was just"* (Luke 23:47).

One of the saddest yet most distinct testimonies to Jesus came from the man guilty of the most infamous crime of all time. Judas, the former disciple but eventually the betrayer of Jesus, confessed before he died by his own hand, *"I have betrayed innocent blood"* (Matthew 27:4).

Then renown among mortal men soon dies when they themselves die. But not so with Jesus. Ask Saul of Tarsus, who in his own words, *"beyond measure persecuted the church of God"* (Galatians 1:13) and hated even the mention of the name of Jesus. Ask that man, now entirely won for Christ and renamed Paul (so changed was he). He has left his verdict in imperishable words: *"At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory"* (Philippians 2:10-11). All are to bear witness to the moral excellence of the One who has been exalted and given a name above every name. All the heavenly beings, and not a few of the earthly and the infernal have acknowledged that supremacy already, for in the days of the ministry of the Son of man on earth, testimony was borne to Him by demons: *"I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God, Thou art the Christ, the Son*

of God" (Mark 1:24 & 3:11). And the crowd took up the enforced tribute, saying, "*What word is this, for with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they obey him*" (Mark 1:27).

And so down all the ensuing years tribute has been paid, willingly and unwillingly, to this glorious Person who "*has done all things well*" (Mark 7:37). Let us quote but two among those who were certainly not numbered amongst His followers. M. Pecaud, an avowed infidel, wrote: 'Christ's moral character rose beyond all comparison above that of any great man of antiquity. No one was ever so gentle, so humble, so kind as He'. Napoleon Bonaparte said: 'I know men and I will tell you, Jesus was no mere man. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love and still millions would die for Him. In all others but Christ how many are the imperfections'.

Yes, the tribute of praise swells from every land and in every circumstance. "*He hath done all things well*". At the stake, in royal courts and in gloomy dungeons, in cottages and mansions, in days past and in present days, in lands where freedom flourishes and in lands where it has been banished. So must it be until the day dawns which every lover of Jesus longs and waits for. Then myriads of the redeemed, a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb shall join in the universal tribute of adoration and praise: "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing*" (Revelation 5:12). This shall be the refrain but everyone will be able to contribute their own personal experience to this mighty symphony, when 'In concert with the heavens above, we crown Thee with our praise'.

Alec E. Barnes

A Word for Today

FOUR ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

2 Timothy 2:1-9, 15.

I want to draw your attention this evening to different expressions and metaphors that are used in Paul's second letter to Timothy to refer to Christians and the Christian life. First, the soldier; then the runner, thirdly, the farmer, husbandman or vine grower; and finally, the skilled workman. They all are mentioned in this passage in this last recorded letter of the apostle Paul. I would like to say a few words about the figures themselves and then how some of the features illustrated by them were seen in perfection in Jesus and how they ought to be seen in us.

Paul first refers to the soldier. He had encountered Roman soldiers many times and as he writes he was being held as a prisoner in Rome. These soldiers belonged to a very imposing army. In the book of Daniel, the great image seen by Nebuchadnezzar had legs of iron, an allusion to the strength of the Roman Empire. (Daniel 2:33, 40). That scripture speaks of the iron breaking in pieces and subduing everything. The Roman Empire was a very strong empire in its day and its soldiers themselves had to be tough. It was not an easy job to be a soldier in the Roman Empire. Soldiers were away from home for a long time and discipline was very severe. Paul here refers to the endurance of a soldier rather than his conquests or winning glory in battle and stresses the importance of avoiding entanglements to please him who had enlisted him.

Next, he refers to the athlete. Just as in our day, when the Olympic Games have been revived, Paul knew there was a tremendous spirit of competition to win prizes in the games of the Roman Empire. Paul mentions striving lawfully in these games because there were rules attached to them and participants, if they infringed these rules, would forfeit their prizes. We can relate to his comment since in our day there are

concerns about people taking steroids and other things that would disqualify them from gaining the prize.

Then he refers to the farmer, the husbandman. Then the life of a farmer was a tough life and a life-long process with no modern mechanical aids. There was the annual ploughing and planting; keeping the weeds away, guarding from wild animals and so on, before partaking of the harvest. These were figures well-known to Timothy and we can relate to them in our day too.

Finally he refers to the craftsman, *“cutting in a straight line the word of truth”*. It is difficult to cut in a straight line: if we are given a pair of scissors and instructed to cut a line across a piece of paper most of us would find it difficult to make a straight cut.

These figures refer to different aspects of the Christian life that, I think, we need to hold in balance. Some of these figures are the opposite of others. For example, the Old Testament speaks of taking our spears and swords and making them into ploughs and ploughshares (see Isaiah 2:4). Yet another scripture speaks of the opposite process, taking the ploughshares and beating them into swords (Joel 3:10). In farming there is a steady process that is going on day by day, week by week whereas a soldier may be fighting enemies using a lot of energy over a short time. Thus there is a balance in our Christian life: a believer should be both a soldier and a farmer.

Contending in the games would involve speed whereas working as a craftsman would involve care and precision and be time consuming to complete a good job. Paul probably had such personal experience because he made tents. I expect he had to cut out the cloth carefully before he sewed pieces together to make a tent.

I think there is a need of balance with us who are Christians. We see perfection and evenness in Jesus but there is the need of balance with us. It is striking that Paul speaks of all these

features before his instruction concerning being separate from evil in verses 19–21. When I was young I used to hear a tremendous amount of ministry about second Timothy 2. I still think it is right to refer to the latter part of second Timothy 2 as providing guidance for believers today. Let us remember that *“Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).*

So I refer first of all to the soldier: *“Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”*. When we think about the life of Jesus, the Bible does not say He was a soldier. He certainly did not take arms such as a sword or a spear. But one feature of His life was endurance. *“Consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself” (Hebrews 12:3).*

We read very little about Him until He was about 30 years of age. But once He was anointed by the Holy Spirit and the Father’s voice had declared His delight in Him, He began His public service. We then read about Jesus in conflict, first of all with the devil who tried to turn Him from the path of the will of God. But Jesus did not heed the tempter. He quoted scripture. He used the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, and Satan had to shut up and leave Him for a season (Luke 4:13). Then we read, too, about Jesus being attacked by the emissaries of the devil, the demons who tried to disrupt His ministry. Jesus had to rebuke them.

We read too about the opposition Jesus encountered from the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, people who knew the Old Testament well. They often tried to trip up Jesus. But think about Him in His endurance in His life of public service here. We too are told to *“run with endurance the race that lies before us” (Hebrews 12:1)* and our great model is in Jesus.

Think about Him going on to the cross: think about what He endured there at the hands of men, the shame and the scorn

and the spitting! He is indeed the one who endured contradiction from sinners against Himself.

So Paul says, *“Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”*. Paul refers to himself as a soldier in chapter 4 when he says, *“I have fought the good fight”*. He knew what it was to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ and he looked forward to the reward of his Master. Then he refers to other believers as fellow-soldiers, including Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25) and Archippus, who perhaps was in the family of Philemon in Colossae (*Philemon 1:2*).

I wonder if we have ever thought about our Christian life as being that of a soldier? We preach that people might be saved, that people might repent of their sins, that they might come to Jesus and know the joy of having their sins forgiven and of having a hope for eternity. But what about being a soldier? Are you a soldier? Am I a soldier? We read in Numbers that when men of Israel reached 20 years of age, except for those in the tribe of Levi, they were numbered that they might have part in the army. They were to be soldiers. They were to stand in defence of the testimony: stand in defence of the Ark and the tabernacle and all the precious things in it.

There are things to be stood for. It is not easy to be a Christian, to stand for the rights of Christ today. But Paul says, *“Take thy share in suffering”*, in other words, we are not only to believe in Christ but to endure the suffering for Him also. Paul says that in his letter to the Philippians, *“to you is given, as regards Christ, not only the believing on him but the suffering for him also”* (*Philippians 1:29*).

When the gospel first came to Philippi a business woman called Lydia took Paul into her house after she became a believer. I wonder if her business continued to prosper after she gave hospitality to Paul and his three companions who had come to spread the gospel. When Paul and Silas got out of gaol they returned to Lydia. By supporting these servants of God, she

would have been a good soldier of Jesus Christ. This service of a soldier applies to sisters as well as brothers. When Paul refers to Aquila and Priscilla he says about them, *“for my life staked their own neck” (Romans 16:4)*. The word ‘neck’ is singular. This man and his wife defended the interests of the Lord in this world. It was not easy then to be a Christian when believers were a very small persecuted minority in the Roman Empire. But these two people were good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Then Paul adds another statement: *“no one going as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of life, that he may please him who has enlisted him as a soldier”*. In the Roman army: these soldiers were away for months, perhaps years. Away from their family – they did not entangle themselves with the affairs of life. They were very focused in what they had to do. They were under orders from their commanders.

Many things can hinder us from being true to Christ, from being soldiers of Jesus Christ. There is an interesting illustration in the book of Judges. When Gideon was mobilising an army God brought in several tests for those enlisting. One of them was that those recruits had to go and drink from a spring. The people were thirsty so most of them knelt down by the water and drank with their heads down and obtained plenty of water. Others lapped like a dog, *“with their hand to their mouth”*. Only the ones that lapped were chosen by God to be in Gideon’s army (see Judges 7:4-7). There was nothing wrong with drinking the water. Most of us here have various interests in life – hobbies or other activities that might be perfectly legitimate. But I think the question for us whether young or old is: ‘are we going to be diverted from being soldiers of Jesus Christ and standing firm for His rights by other things that might occupy us?’ That is a constant challenge for us all.

Jesus Christ has enlisted you and me to be in His army. It is a wonderful privilege to be in the army of the Lord, to stand for Him and to please Him. If we are believers in Jesus, our daily question should be, ‘How can I please the Lord?’ How can I

there is such a thing as the commandments of God

please Him in the things I do at work, in my studies and in my relations with my neighbours, with my friends with my relatives and my fellow Christians. Paul then refers to those who contend in the games, *"he is not crowned unless he contend lawfully"*. I would encourage us in our activities to make sure we contend lawfully. I remember at one stage in my life someone saying in a Christian meeting, 'We do not want any more edicts'. I know what the person meant and I know why he said it. It is certainly not our job to make edicts for one another, it is not our job to have man-made rules. But there is such a thing as the commandments of God and believers in the Lord Jesus Christ should heed them. Each of us should learn from the scriptures what pleases the Lord and activities that do not please Him. A number of His commands are stated in John's gospel and in the first epistle to the Corinthians. Let us not ignore them!

We never read in the gospels about Jesus running. Jesus often did things for people immediately but I do not find any reference in the gospels to Jesus running. However He is described, in Hebrews, as our Forerunner. He has gone into heaven, He is at the right hand of God, He is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek and through Him we have an anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:20, 19).

Hebrews also speaks of our running and looking steadfastly on Jesus. We should be running in the race from earth to heaven, running towards Christ. I do not mean we run literally. In fact, Paul speaks of running in his letter to the Philippians when he himself was chained in prison. He speaks there of pursuing, going after *"the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14). He was a man who was running. He was not giving up the race. Later on in this letter to Timothy he says, *"I have finished the race"* (2 Timothy 4:7). He had been in the Christian race and he was conscious he was not going to

be in it much longer. He is encouraging Timothy not to give up, not to flag. He wanted to rekindle what was in Timothy and he says of himself as an example, *"I have finished the race"*.

Well, what about this race. Are you pursuing? What are you pursuing? It speaks in Ecclesiastes of pursuing the wind. Think of all the things that people go in for in this life: the sports; the entertainments; the money making – they are just like pursuing the wind. (Ecclesiastes 2:11). Reading parts of Ecclesiastes is rather depressing because it speaks about what is under the sun and says, *"all is vanity and pursuit of the wind"* (Ecclesiastes 1:17; 2:14; and more). If you are in the Christian race you are not pursuing the wind. You are running towards Christ. You have a wonderful hope before you, the hope of being with Christ. It is a great thing to be in that race.

Then endurance is important. We are told to, *"run with endurance the race that lies before us, looking steadfastly on Jesus"*. This would include cultivating our links with Him through prayer and study of the word, keeping in good company, Christian company. All these things are important, yet simple things to do and they are part of running in that race. It is also important to pursue what is good with others. *"So then let us pursue the things which tend to peace, and things whereby one shall build up another"* (Romans 14:19). I think that includes practical aspects of *keeping meetings going*. Today some people have had to clean the hall, arrange the seats and prepare the food. So let us pursue peace and things that encourage God's people to continue in this race, the Christian race.

Paul next refers to the farmer: *"the husbandman must labour before partaking of the fruits"*. Must labour! We are all sowing, everyone is sowing. Paul says in Galatians, *"Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap"* (Galatians 6:7). It is important, particularly when we are young, to remember that we reap what we sow. The Lord takes account of brothers and sisters that seek to follow

Him, even if they do not understand too much, even if they make many mistakes. God will bless your life if you seek to follow Jesus and support His interests.

The book of Proverbs has much to say about cultivation of the land – that would be the physical land of Israel and the Book contains several warnings about being a sluggard. A sluggard is a lazy person and does not bother cultivating his land, does not plough the field when it should be ploughed. The result is that instead of reaping a well-earned harvest for himself and others there would be nettles and thistles. (Proverbs 24:30-34). There is a need of we Christians working and labouring but it involves hard labour. In our personal lives it is important to cultivate what is right, to read the Bible and buy the truth. Someone earlier spoke about the importance of searching out things. Go in for the Lord's things wholeheartedly and there will be a product that comes in your own personal life.

Jesus, when He was here, often used the illustration of the farmer – the farmer going forth to sow, to sow seed. And then the product came. Jesus sowed when He was here on earth. He sowed things in the disciples that He chose. He said to Peter and Andrew, Come after me, I will make you fishers of men. These disciples became equipped for their later work. He corrected them and He helped them. Sometimes they quarrelled among themselves but Jesus carefully nourished them to achieve results for the glory of God.

Somebody once said that God has more to do in us than by us. Sometimes He uses discipline in our homes, in our health, in our circumstances so that we might produce fruit that will be for the glory of God. The Epistle to the Galatians refers to the nine aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, *“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control”* (Galatians 5:22, 23). And that is what God wants to produce in us. He gives us the Holy Spirit not only to link us with Christ in glory but to help us while here so that we might produce fruit in our lives that will be for the glory of God our Father and for

our happiness too.

So let us think about this, *“the husbandman must labour”*. It is true in Christian service - service to one another, service to God’s people and towards all. Sometimes people say, we do not see any result. Sometimes sowing or planting takes a while to come to harvest. I was hearing this week about someone who persuaded a prisoner to obtain a Bible and enrol on a Bible correspondence course. The prisoner’s wife had become a believer but he was not interested. After he came out of prison, he said, ‘I went in there with a heart of stone; I have come out with a heart of flesh’. God is able to do things through the service and lives of believers. Here was a believer who gave someone a Bible and a study book. She did not see any immediate result but did see a result of the end of the day. I would encourage everybody here to do some sowing, to scatter some seed. To do a little shepherding – seeking to encourage any of the Lord’s people who might be discouraged, perhaps visiting God’s people. I have often found when going to see ill believers in Jesus and wondering what I might say yet leaving them far more encouraged than when I arrived.

This farming process is ongoing with a view to what is for the praise of God. I would encourage everybody here to be concerned to do a little cultivation – and to keep at it. Not just doing it once and forgetting about it but keeping at it wherever you live, with whom you meet. Seek to cultivate what is of God in believers and seek to sow some seed to others in view of their blessing and for the glory of God.

Paul also refers to the skilled workman when he says, *“strive diligently to present thyself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line the word of truth”*. That is an interesting expression, *“the word of truth”*. The Bible is the word of truth.

I link the expression *“the word of truth”* with what Paul says to Timothy earlier in this chapter, *“The things thou hast heard of*

Now we are at the end of the Christian era *me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also".* These things that Timothy had heard from Paul would have been the

word of truth. Paul skilfully uses the Old Testament many times to show how these scriptures pointed on to Christ. Paul also was given a distinctive ministry from the Lord Himself that he had passed on to others in view of there being a result for God. Paul exhorts Timothy who was also a Christian teacher, to cut in a straight line the word of truth. He had preached with Paul in Corinth and elsewhere. (2 Corinthians 1:19).

Now we are at the end of the Christian era during which many human concepts have been introduced. There is great ignorance today about the Bible and what the Bible says even in the land in which we live. Many ideas people have about God and Jesus and what the Bible teaches they have gleaned from films and other media which are often woefully inaccurate. There is a great need, first of all, to get to know the scriptures. I would encourage us all to keep reading the scriptures. Whatever our means of study the main thing is that we **do** study the scriptures so that we might learn what the word of truth is.

And then there is the question of how we apply the Holy Scriptures – cutting in a straight line the word of truth. It is very easy to deviate from what is of God. Timothy would probably have heard Paul speak to the Ephesian elders, telling them what would happen after his departure, *"there will come in amongst you after my departure grievous wolves, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them"* (Acts 20:29, 30). In other words, teaching would be introduced to lure them from the Lord, and from the truth.

But there is God's standard. We have a wonderful standard in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The Spirit of God saw to it that, before the canon of the New Testament was

finished, Peter would refer in his second letter to our beloved brother Paul and that what he wrote was scripture. What Paul wrote is just as much part of the divinely inspired word of God as the Old Testament. So we have God's standard and we need to test things spoken and written by this standard. The Bible says, *"let one speak ... and let the others judge"* (1 Corinthians 14:27, 29). It is important to have discernment and to check up things as to whether they are accurate from the Holy Scriptures themselves.

Even the apostle Peter, after he was commissioned, deviated from the straight line and the apostle Paul had to rebuke him. If that happened with Peter it shows how easy it is for me to err from the truth. So let us be guarded. Let us recognise the tendency within our own hearts to err and seek God's help to speak the word of truth.

We see, of course, perfection in Jesus. He always cut in a straight line the word of truth. It is amazing to study the statements of Jesus Himself. For example, people asked Jesus, shall we *"give tribute to Caesar or not?"* Now, they were trying to test Him. If He had said, 'No', He would have got a black mark. If He had said, 'Yes', He would have had a black mark but Jesus answered them skilfully: He cut in a straight line the word of truth, He said, *"Pay therefore what is Caesar's to Caesar, and what is God's to God"* (Luke 20:22, 25).

It is good to finish by thinking about what Jesus said. He always cut in a straight line the word of truth whatever the circumstances. He knew when to be silent, He knew when to speak. Think of Jesus before the Sanhedrim; He kept quiet until He was adjured and then He made a wonderful statement about Himself and His coming glory (see Matthew 26:62-64). When He was before Pilate, Pilate tried to ask Him questions but he said very little and Pilate marvelled. Sometimes it is right to keep quiet but it is important when speaking to cut in a straight line the word of truth.

I commend these simple thoughts to you. These figures depict four aspects the Christian life and as we adhere to them we will become mature Christians and be here in a balanced way for the service of the Lord until He come. May the Lord help us all for His Name's sake.

Ken Hollands.

An address at Hampton, 2 March 2019

NOTICE OF TWO NEW BOOKS

The following books have recently been published:

1. Addresses and other Ministry by William Johnson (1850-1922)

This 400 page book consists of 65 articles, mainly addresses given by Mr Johnson which have been gathered from various sources. Many have not been generally available before.

2. Foundational Ministry by Edward Dennett (1831-1914)

This 300 page book brings into one volume six short books written by Mr Dennett:

- The Step I have taken †
- Recovered Truths
- Fundamental Truths
- Hindrances to Fellowship
- Twelve Letters to Young Believers †
- Simple Christian Truths

† Denotes titles that are readily available as individual booklets

Both books above are published by Mr Andrew Burr

They are available on a print on demand basis at a cost of £9.00 each + delivery.

Those wishing to obtain them should purchase direct from Amazon.