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LIVING WATER

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As may now be generally known, the editor of "Living Water", Mark Lemon, died on 16 June 2019 following a period of illness. He was buried at Sevenoaks, England, on 4 July, and is himself now forever with the Lord. He had been the sole editor of the magazine from the outset, and its contents have reflected his concern for the Gospel and for ministry which the Lord has given over many years. He had prepared beforehand sufficient material for this and for one further edition of "Living Water", which will be published God willing in November this year. After prayerful consideration the remaining trustees of the Stone Publishing Trust have concluded that "Living Water" represented Mark's distinctive service to the Lord and His people, and should then cease publication.

The trustees again record their deep sorrow in the loss of their colleague Mark and their much appreciation of his service.

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

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Recent Ministry

"FOR GOD SO LOVED..."

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal" John 3:16

Most of us will know this passage off by heart. It is one that you will sometimes see on the back bumper of a car and it is probably one of the most well-known passages in the whole Bible. It is a verse that contains so much truth and so much depth that even though we know it well, we need to break it up a bit if we are to understand it.

To begin with we have, **"for God"**. God is the greatest source. It is *"God's glad tidings concerning his Son" (Romans 1:1)* that we preach. It is a good place to start: when you are talking about the gospel start with God; God's glad tidings. It is God Himself who is interested in you tonight.

We read in Genesis 1 how God, by a few words, brought into existence this very creation. He breathed life into us and it is that same God who is interested in you and your soul, tonight. In Isaiah 6 we read that Isaiah was brought before the throne and saw the glory that surrounded the Lord so that Isaiah could not stand before Him. Such was the majesty and power that was evident. Yet it is that same God that is interested in you tonight.

Next we come to **"so loved"**. This is the greatest love. God's love is towards you tonight. *"For God so loved"*. God has the greatest love in the entire universe. There is no love like God's love. There is no love that even comes close to God's love. Our hearts, the Bible says, are desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9, KJV). Yet despite all of our sin and all of our wrongdoings, God's heart is towards us tonight. *"For God so loved"*. We have a strange view of God, sometimes. Perhaps we think that He sent the Lord Jesus Christ to somehow appease His anger towards

us but that is not the idea at all. God is for us, God loves us. It says so clearly in this verse that *"God so loved"*.

Then we get, *"God so loved **the world**"*. The world – that is the greatest extent of the invitation. It could not be extended any wider than it has been. The Bible says that, *"all have sinned" (Romans 5:12)*. Every one of us, every person in this hall, has sinned. That means that we are liable to come under God's judgment because God is a holy God who cannot look upon sin. Yet, despite us all having sinned, God's remedy is there for all of us as well.

We have all sinned and yet God's love is towards all. He has extended His invitation of love so that it encompasses the entire world. There is nobody that is outside the bounds of God's love; nobody has done so much wrong in their life that they cannot be included in God's glad tidings of grace tonight. It is a very easy thing to think that God cannot save you because you have done so much wrong in your life. But the Bible is full of people...; just turn to the New Testament, think of the apostle Paul, someone who to all intents and purposes tried to wipe out the Christian faith and yet God saved him. God is able to save you tonight, dear friend, no matter what you have done in your life; He is able to save you and His wonderful love and grace is expressed in the giving of His Son.

"That he gave". God gave the greatest sacrifice. It is a remarkable thing to think that God wants to include you in His thoughts and in His blessings. Yet, as I said earlier, God is holy and righteous and He cannot just overlook the sins that you and I have committed. God cannot turn a blind eye to everything that we have said and thought. The Bible tells us that an account is being kept (see Revelation 20:12), every idle word, every thought, everything that we have ever done. God cannot just turn a blind eye to that. Yet He wants to bless us and that is why we come to *"that he gave"*, this the greatest sacrifice.

God had to send His only Son as a sacrifice for sin, because, without the shedding of blood, the Bible says, there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22). We cannot enter into God's blessing, we cannot even come near to God unless there is a righteous basis for God to come out towards us, and that basis has been provided by the Lord Jesus Christ. You can read about it in each one of the Gospels – that great moment when the Lord Jesus Christ hung on the cross and, in those three hours of darkness, when the people around could not see what was going on, God poured out everything that He had against sin on His beloved Son. Jesus bore the judgment that was due to us so that God could come out towards us in blessing.

God wants you to come into His blessing tonight. He wants you to enjoy everything that He has in store for us, and yet, as I said, He cannot turn a blind eye; it has to be done on a righteous basis and that righteous basis included the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, a sacrifice for us.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave “His only begotten Son”. This is the greatest gift, His only Son. He could not have given anything greater. There was nothing more that God could give: “he gave his only-begotten Son”. When you read these words you cannot help but think of the tremendous love that God has for you; that He loves you so much that He would give His only Son to die in your place. What a God it is. What a message we have tonight to preach, that this God has given the greatest gift of all. “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable free gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15). There was no greater gift than the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How perfect the Lord Jesus was! The Lord Jesus had to be perfect in order to be a sacrifice acceptable to God. God is holy and righteous and nothing short of perfection can satisfy God's heart. That is why we cannot even begin to think of entering into heaven by our own efforts. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ was perfect in every way. The epistle to the Ephesians

says that it was a *“sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Ephesians 5:2)*, What delight God had in that sacrifice when the Lord Jesus was on that cross, the perfect offering for our sins.

Because of that God is able to move out towards us tonight in blessing. In some of the gospel accounts it talks about the veil of the temple being rent from the top to the bottom. Beforehand, in the old Jewish system, only the high priest could enter into the holy of holies. It was a very closed-off affair. But in Christianity it is completely new. God is able to come out towards us because of that perfect sinless sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ; *“he gave his only-begotten Son”*.

Now we come to the key to our blessing, *“that whosoever believes on him”*. The gospel is a very individual matter. Christianity is not something that you are born into. It is not that your parents can make you a Christian. We have just had a baby and I would do anything in my power to make sure that she became a Christian but it is not in my power, it is not in my hands. I am sure that your parents tonight would do anything they possibly could to make sure that your name is written down in the book of life (Revelation 20:12) but they cannot do anything about it; it is God’s work and it is an individual matter that you have to come to.

You have to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour. It is not something that you are just born into or is hereditary; it is something that you come into on an individual matter. *“Whosoever believes on him”*. Dear friend, you need to make that transaction in your heart, tonight. It is a matter entirely between you and God. God is speaking to you tonight and it is your responsibility to make sure that you respond.

All the love and grace of God surely requires a response from you. *“Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21)*. That is the response that God looks

for from you. Maybe I do not speak about repentance enough in the gospel: it is a vital part of the gospel. It is more than just saying, 'Sorry', for all the things that you have done; it is a complete turn around. And then it is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, faith in what He has done and faith in the Person, faith such that you can say that He was on that cross and He shed His blood for me.

"Whosoever believes on him may not perish". This is the greatest deliverance. There is a warning in the gospel. There is a very solemn side to the gospel because, dear friend, you might walk out of this hall tonight and this might be the last time you hear a gospel message. If you have never put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ then the Bible is very clear about what happens. The Bible says that those people who were not found in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

There is an eternal destiny for both believers and unbelievers. There are only two places that you go when you die. One is into the most beautiful and amazing and awesome place if you have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, a place where you will for ever praise and worship God; where you will know the Lord Jesus Christ; you will see Him and you will be like Him. You will rejoice eternally. What a great hope the Christian has.

Yet *"whosoever believes on him may not perish"* means that those people who have not accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, those people who decided that the gospel was not for them and that actually they would rather just get on with life, will come under God's judgment.. That is the last and final word that you have in the gospel: the Bible is very clear about where you are going to spend eternity. Hell will be the place where unbelievers go and where they realise in that terrible moment that they need God more than at any other time and yet it is too late. There is a solemn warning in the gospel, an urgency to the message. I do not want to scare people into

believing because it is so much greater to see the attractiveness of the Saviour and the attractiveness of the hope that the Christian has than to try and scare people into accepting the gospel but there is a real warning for those who reject Christ.

Finally, our verse says, **"but have life eternal"**. This is the greatest promise. What a wonderful thing it is to have eternal life. God has promised that and it is all on the basis of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is something that we can enjoy right from the moment that we are saved. You come into this life instantly. It is a tremendous thing.

This greatest promise carries with it God's personal guarantee. You often hear people giving their word. People's word today is not maybe as honest and reliable as it should be but God has said quite clearly here that anyone that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ will have eternal life. There is no going back on it; God cannot go back on His word. That is an impossibility when it comes to God.

And so, if you put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ tonight you have, not my guarantee, but God's guarantee that one day you will be with Him in heaven. It is a tremendous thing. There are so many things in Christianity that just burst forth with tremendous life. You can often get caught up with what you might have to give up if you become a Christian and there are things perhaps that you might have to give up; it might take a bit of time. But there are so much greater things to go in for. There is so much that God wants to give you tonight.

One of the things, as I mentioned earlier, is a great hope. As a Christian we have this wonderful hope that one day we shall see our Saviour face to face. We know, those of us who have believed, that one day He is coming back to collect all those that have trusted upon Him. One day, if you are saved, you are going to hear that great assembling shout and you are going to see your Saviour for the first time face to face. What a hope

that is for the believer. What a thing to look forward to. And, dear friend, that is just one of the many, many things that God offers you in the gospel.

This is a verse that you have read perhaps many, many times before: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal”*. I pray that if you do not yet believe, you will today put your faith and trust in Him. There is no greater event in your life than the moment you are saved! I pray that nobody may go out of this hall tonight without Christ in their heart and the assurance of God’s personal guarantee of eternal salvation. Dear friend, do not go out of this hall without making that, and this verse, your own, for His name’s sake.

Tim Noble

A preaching of the gospel in Sevenoaks, 20 June 2016

Poetry Selection

THE SANDS OF TIME

This hymn by Anne Ross Cousin (1824–1906) is based on what are said to be the last words of Samuel Rutherford – “Glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land” – together with her detailed study of the 365 published letters of Rutherford (1600–1661). Mrs Cousin did not just take phrases from the letters but sought to draw out their meaning. For instance, the very first line of the hymn is taken from two letters where Rutherford uses the figure of an hour glass to stress the value of a soul and the urgency of salvation:

Truly ye have need to make all haste, for the inch of your day that remaineth will quickly slip away; our glass runneth. The tide bideth no man. Beware of a delay in the matter of your salvation. Woe, woe to them for evermore, that lose that prize.

Letter written from Aberdeen to Margaret Ballantine and dated 1637

Similarly, the well-known lines:

“With mercy and with judgment my web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow were lusted with His love”.

were suggested to Mrs Cousin by part of a letter written in 1637 to Lady Boyd, a widow:

It should be enough to me, if I were wise, that Christ will have joy and sorrow half and half in the life of the saints and that each of them should have a share of our days... but if sorrow be the greedier half of our days here, I know that joy's day shall dawn, and do more than recompense all our sad hours.



Sometimes Mrs Cousin's hymn is called "The Last Words of Samuel Rutherford" and certainly it is written from the perspective of one coming to the end of life here and eagerly looking to the glory. This is a reflection of the spirit of many of his letters. Rutherford's letter to Lady Boyd, quoted above continues:

*When we are over the water,
Christ shall cry 'down death,
and down sin, and down
sorrow; and up glory, up life, up
joy for evermore!*

The hymn has nineteen verses but not all of them are reprinted here.

THE SANDS OF TIME

*The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for, the fair sweet morn awakes;
Dark, dark has been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in the heav'nly land.

*Oh! Christ He is the Fountain, the deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted, more deep I'll drink above:
There to an ocean fulness, His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in the heav'nly land.

E'en Anwoth¹ was not heaven, e'en preaching was not Christ;
And in my sea-beat prison² my Lord and I held tryst:
And aye my murkiest storm cloud was by a rainbow spanned
Caught from the glory dwelling in the heav'nly land.

But flowers need night's cool darkness, the moonlight and the dew;
So Christ, from one who loved it, His shining oft withdrew;
And then for cause of absence, my troubled soul I scanned –
But glory, shadeless, shineth in the heav'nly land.

The little birds of Anwoth, I used to count them blest –
Now beside happier altars I go to build my nest.
O'er these there broods no silence, no graves around them stand,
For glory, deathless, dwelleth in the heav'nly land

Fair Anwoth by the Solway, to me thou still art dear!
E'en from the verge of heaven I drop for thee a tear.
Oh! If one soul from Anwoth meet me at God's right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens in the heav'nly land.³

I have wrestled on towards heaven – 'gainst storm and wind and tide –
Now like a weary traveller that leaneth on his guide,
Amid the shades of evening, while sinks life's lingering sand,
I hail the glory dawning from the heav'nly land.

Deep waters crossed life's pathway, the hedge of thorns was sharp:
Now these all lie behind me – Oh, for a well-tuned harp!
To join in 'Hallelujah' with that triumphant band
Who sing, where glory dwelleth in the heav'nly land.

*With mercy and with judgment my web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow were lusted with His love.

I'll bless the hand that guided, I'll bless the heart that planned
When throned where glory dwelleth in the heav'nly land
Soon shall the cup of glory wash down earth's bitterest woes,
Soon shall the desert briar break into Eden's rose;
The curse shall change to blessing – the name on earth that's banned⁴
Be graven on the white stone in the heav'nly land.

*Oh! I am my beloved's and my Beloved's mine!
He brings me 'neath His banner into His "house of wine"⁵
I stand upon His merit, I know no other stand
Not e'en where glory dwelleth in the heav'nly land.

I shall sleep sound in Jesus, then with His likeness rise
To live and to adore Him, to see Him with new eyes.
'Tween me and resurrection, but paradise doth stand,
Then – then the glory dwelling, in the heav'nly land!

*The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze on glory, but on my King of Grace;
Not on the crown He giveth, but on His piercé hand;
The Lamb is all the glory of the heav'nly land!

I have borne scorn and hatred, I have borne wrong and shame,⁶
Earth's proud ones have reproached me for Christ's most blessed name.
Where God His seal set fairest, they've stamped their foulest brand;
But judgment shines like noonday in the heav'nly land.

They've summoned me before them, but there I may not come –
My Lord says, "Come up hither", My Lord says "Welcome home".
My kingly King, at His great throne, my presence doth command;
Where glory, glory dwelleth, in the heav'nly land.

*Indicates verses included in the 1881 "Little Flock Hymn Book"
edited by J. N. Darby.

Anne Ross Cousin (1856)

1. Anwoth, a village in South West Scotland, was the parish where Rutherford served for many years and he was deeply committed to the

spiritual welfare of the people there. He was also committed to preaching and the government's ban on him doing this was a very severe test.

2. A reference to Rutherford's being forced to leave Anwoth and live in Aberdeen, where he was not allowed to preach

3. A rather unique way of showing Rutherford's real love for the people of Anwoth where he ministered so long.

4. A reference to the "new name... which no one knows but he that receives it" (Revelation 2:17).

5. See Song of Songs 2:4.

6. The poem changes here to refer to the summons Rutherford received to answer a charge of treason due to his refusal to accept the religious changes which King Charles II was seeking to impose. Replying to the summons, Rutherford said: "I have a summons already from a superior Judge and judicatory, and I behove to answer my first summons and, e'er your day arrive I shall be where few kings and great folks come".

Now for a final comment on Samuel Rutherford from Marion M'Naught, to whom many of his letters were sent. She wrote: 'I go to Anwoth so often because, though other ministers show me the majesty of God and the plague of my own heart, Mr Samuel does both those things, but he also shows me as no other minister ever does the loveliness of Christ'.[†]

[†] Alexander Whyte, Samuel Rutherford and some of his Correspondents (1894) P.27

Testimony Section

THE BLACK EVANGELIST OF THE NORTH

Hatashil-Masha-Kathish (later to be known as Salim Wilson) was a Dinka tribesman living in South Sudan. In 1876, when he was still quite young, his father was killed while trying to protect his son from capture by Arab raiders. These raiders stole Hatashil and sold him as a slave. His master changed his name to Salim and was extremely cruel to him.

Around 1879/80 Salim was freed by troops under command of

General Charles Gordon. In the ways of God, two missionaries, Charles Wilson and Dr R. W. Felkin, on their way back to England, befriended him. As a result in 1881 Salim was living in England, employed as a servant in Charles Wilson's house in Pavenham, Berkshire.

During the journey from North Sudan to England Salim saw that the two missionaries prayed every night, speaking to God as "Father". He found this strange. While the Dinkas believed in a God as the Creator of all things, they had no concept of a relationship with Him. Another thing that Salim found puzzling was, 'Where was Heaven?' For a time he concluded that it was the place where English people went when they died. So strong was this idea to him that when Salim heard someone ask where he was going, he wanted to reply, 'To England and to Heaven'!

Once settled in Pavenham, Charles Wilson's mother took Salim to Nottingham and this marked the real beginning of his Christian experience. He found many kind believers in Nottingham, who taught him to read the Bible, read to him, taught him hymns and generally explained the way of God more exactly. Salim traced his conversion to his time in Nottingham. In his brief 'Life-Story', published in 1901 with the title "Jehovah Nissi" – The Lord my banner – he described what happened.

'IN MY CASE, CONVERSION WAS A GRADUAL AWAKENING – THE BREAKING IN OF SPIRITUAL LIGHT, LITTLE BY LITTLE. I GOT ON FAIRLY WELL WITH MY READING, BUT WHAT I READ IN THE BIBLE I DID NOT UNDERSTAND. LIKE THE ETHIOPIAN MENTIONED IN THE ACTS, I NEEDED THE TEACHING OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. THE PRAYERS OF FRIENDS WERE CONTINUALLY RISING TO GOD THAT THIS MIGHT BE GIVEN ME. THESE PRAYERS WERE GRADUALLY ANSWERED, FOR THE IGNORANCE THAT OVERSHADOWED MY SOUL YIELDED AT LAST TO THE FORCE OF TRUTH. I SAW WHAT A SINNER I WAS, AND TRIED TO MAKE MYSELF BETTER. I ASKED GOD TO MAKE ME BETTER; BUT IT WAS MORE THAN 'BETTERNESS' I NEEDED. THERE WERE ALL MY PAST SINS TO BE BLOTTED OUT: FOR I SOON FOUND THAT I LACKED THE POWER TO KEEP THE GOOD RESOLUTIONS I WAS CONSTANTLY MAKING. I WANTED A NEW

HEART. IT IS A GOOD SIGN THAT THE HOLY GHOST IS WORKING IN THE SOUL WHEN THE SINNER BEGINS TO PRAY AND READ THE BIBLE. I BEGAN TO LOVE MY BIBLE BEFORE I UNDERSTOOD ITS TRUTHS. THEN IN HIS OWN GOOD TIME, GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE LIGHT," AND "THERE WAS LIGHT", THE LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST REVEALING HIMSELF TO MY SOUL IN RESPONSE TO MY FAITH IN HIM. THUS I WAS FILLED WITH JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING. THE BIBLE BECAME A NEW BOOK, AND I BEGAN TO READ IT WITH NEW EYES; INDEED ALL THINGS BECAME NEW.'

Two verses of the Bible were particularly important to Salim:
"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

And:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

'IT WAS BY THE FIRST OF THESE TWO VERSES THAT I WAS ABLE TO SEE GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION CLEARLY. MY FATHER HAD DIED FOR ME TRYING TO SAVE ME FROM SLAVERY. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR ME HE MIGHT HAVE ESCAPED. TO TRY TO DELIVER ME FROM SLAVERY HE BRAVED A CRUEL DEATH AND PERISHED BEFORE MY EYES. THUS I SAW THAT CHRIST HAD DIED FOR ME – TO DELIVER ME FROM ETERNAL DEATH AND TO RESCUE ME FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN.

'I HAD NOT THE PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM IN INFANCY, BUT WHAT IS BAPTISM WITHOUT FAITH IN CHRIST? BAPTISED OR UNBAPTISED EVERY UNBELIEVER IS ALREADY CONDEMNED AND THE WRATH OF GOD IS ABIDING UPON HIM; WHILE ALL TRUE BELIEVERS ARE IN ACTUAL POSSESSION OF ETERNAL LIFE. A CRY WENT UP FROM MY HEART TO HEAVEN, AND WITH THE ANSWER GIVEN BY GOD CAME THE ASSURANCE OF CLEANSING BY CHRIST AND THE POSSESSION OF ETERNAL LIFE. OH IT IS GLORIOUS, THAT 16TH VERSE OF THE THIRD CHAPTER OF JOHN.'

Following this, Hatashil was baptised in Nottingham on 28 August 1882 and took the name of Salim Charles Wilson. This

combined the name he had as a slave with the name of one of the men who had befriended him and brought him to England. In 1883 he accompanied Charles Wilson to Palestine. During a stop off at Jaffa (the Biblical Joppa) Salim met General Gordon. Gordon asked him, 'Why are you a Christian, why would not Mohamedism satisfy you?' In reply Salim said, 'The religion of the Lord Jesus is one of love. He laid down His life for sinners but the Mohamed's religion makes those who believe in it take away men's lives'. Gordon expressed himself satisfied but added, 'Hold fast by the religion of the Lord Jesus, and you shall have everything that shall be good for you'. Salim never saw General Gordon again. He and Charles Wilson went up to Jerusalem; Gordon went to Cairo and then to Khartoum where he was killed on the steps of the Governor's Palace on 26 January 1884.

On returning from Palestine, Salim enrolled at Cliff College on the outskirts of Sheffield. This was a recently established Missionary training college. His aim was to return to preach to the Dinka people in Sudan, but it was not to be. Instead he lived in various places in the North of England, preaching at various meetings and chapels and became known as the "Black Evangelist of the North".

In 1911 he moved to Scunthorpe as part of the Bethel Free Mission and from here he helped the British & Foreign Bible Society (now the Bible Society) with their Dinka version of Luke's Gospel. He also built a couple of houses in Frodingham Road, Scunthorpe. One, he used for the small general store by which he made his living. He called it Kathish – a reminder of his Dinka name. The other house he called "Gordon" in honour of the man whom he always thought of highly because of his commitment to freeing slaves. It is understood that both properties are still there and the names in the brickwork can still be seen.

Very little is known of his life after this. He was taken to be with the Lord on 26 January 1946.

A WORD FROM GHANA

“If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed.
If you look within, you’ll be depressed.
But if you look at Christ, you’ll be at rest.”

Joel Kyeremateng

A voice from the past

MEN AS TREES WALKING

Our Lord on one occasion performed a miracle in two parts. The scene was in Bethsaida; its record is found in Mark 8:22-26. A blind man was brought to Him and the Lord led him out of the village and spat upon his eyes: then putting His hands upon him, He enquired if he saw anything. The man replied: ‘I see men as tree walking’. The Lord touched him a second time, after which he looked up and saw all things clearly. He was then told to go to his home.

The line pursued by the Lord on this occasion was very singular, and its lessons are also unusual. The partial sight of this man represented the spiritual condition of the disciples while the Saviour was with them. They but dimly perceived the true purpose of His gracious mission. They believed that He was the long expected Messiah, who would sit upon David’s throne: but that He must also suffer and be made an offering for sin had no place in their thoughts. They clearly understood that such passages as Psalm 72 with its kingdom glories referred to Him but it never dawned upon them that Isaiah 53 with its message of suffering and shame must also find its fulfilment in Him. His post-resurrection conversation on the way to Emmaus cleared away many of the difficulties of those to whom it was addressed. *“Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory” (Luke 24:26)*. His visit to Jerusalem later the same day dispelled the perplexities of others. *“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the*

Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations (Luke 24:45-47). Henceforward these men were mighty witnesses to a crucified Saviour, while looking and waiting to His return from heaven as a glorious king.

Many true hearted believers today are as imperfect in their spiritual vision as the disciples of long ago. So to speak they see *"men as trees walking"*. Very few things are clear to them. Here are some examples:-

- Many fear that though they are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus they may ultimately find themselves rejected, failing to understand that there is no condemnation for those whom divine grace has identified with Christ (see Romans 8:1).
- Others are apprehensive that the gift of the Holy Spirit will be taken away from them, not perceiving that this great gift is due to the Saviour's blood and cleansing, which makes it secure for ever (see John 14:16).
- Some think that every time a believer sins he needs a fresh cleansing in the atoning blood, their faith not having grasped that the Christian is judicially clean for ever, needing nothing for daily failures but the water of the word of God (see Romans 5:9).
- Many are fearful concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus lest they should be left behind, not having learned that our translation to glory is the fruit of sovereign grace alone, which can never fail (see John 14:1-3).

Oh that all these would go aside with the Saviour and get another touch from His blessed hand, as the poor man of Bethsaida did. They would then see spiritual things in God's own light, and their joy would be full.

W. W. Fereday

A Word for Today

THE SEVEN BEATITUDES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Introduction

Most people with a Christian background have heard of the beatitudes listed in Matthew chapter 5. Jesus began this teaching usually referred to as 'The Sermon on the Mount' with several statements often called the Beatitudes including: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed they that mourn... Blessed the meek..." (Matthew 5:3-6)*. They describe the blessing that flows out for people who fulfil the conditions that He set out there.

But there are also beatitudes in Revelation, seven of them. Revelation is full of sevens. If you study the book you will find there are seven Spirits mentioned in the first chapter (v.4) – a reference to the Holy Spirit in the fulness of His power. Then we have seven golden lamps and seven angels of the seven assemblies (v.20). Then later in the book we find seven seals that are to be opened, seven trumpets, seven bowls of the wrath of God and others. These sevens in Revelation speak of the fulness or the completion of things. But I want to refer to those seven passages where the word *"Blessed"* is used.

Some Christians think that you should not read the book of Revelation; they say it is too difficult, too confusing! I have met believers who try and keep younger ones from reading the book. But the book is part of the divinely inspired word of God. We learn from the very first verse that it is a revelation that God gave to Jesus to pass on through John to His bondmen, those who are bondmen - or slaves - of Jesus Christ. If we have come under the authority of Christ we will want to hear everything that He says. He has many things to say in the book of Revelation. I do not intend to go into all its detail but I want to point out its beatitudes.

1. A blessing in reading the book

*“Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show to his bondmen what must shortly take place; and he signified it, sending by his angel, to his bondman John, who testified the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, all things that he saw. **Blessed is he that reads and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things written in it; for the time is near.***

John to the seven assemblies which are in Asia...” (Revelation 1:1-5).

In the first place I would encourage us all to read Revelation because we are told, right at the beginning *“Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things written in it; for the time is near”*.

Think about being in one of the seven churches to which John wrote. Probably many there then could not read and write so someone would need to read the book aloud to them. Well, there is a blessing attached to the one who reads. And then there is a blessing attached to those who hear and those who keep the words written in it. So it is important for us. It is a great blessing to be able to read the Scriptures in our own language. Then there is a blessing attached to hearing the words. Remember, they are not man’s words, they are the words of Jesus Christ. Then we need to keep them. Paul writing to Timothy says: *“keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted” (2 Timothy 1:14)*. We need to learn to keep things by the help of the Spirit of God.

Let us remember, too, that John wrote while a prisoner on the island of Patmos, where he was an exile because he loved the Lord Jesus and had spread the good news about Him. As he writes about God, and the Spirit of God and about Jesus, he bursts into a doxology and says, *“To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (v.5)*.

I would encourage us all to read this book. Believers have searched out this book. There is some good teaching on it which is supported by Scripture. I have benefited from C A Coates "Outline of Revelation". I would encourage all of us here to get to know Revelation a little better.

In the opening verses John tells us: *"the time is near"*. The early disciples lived in the anticipation that Jesus would return soon. They did not know when He would come. I do not know when He is going to come but we are certainly a lot nearer to the time of His coming again than when John wrote the Revelation. God intended that believers would be ready for the coming of Jesus and be waiting for His return. That state of mind will then influence us in our everyday life and in our service.

2. Blessing in death

***"And I heard a voice out of the heaven saying, Write, Blessed the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them."* (Revelation 14:13).**

Here is a blessing attached to the dead. I have no doubt that the setting of the Scripture would particularly allude to the dreadful time still to come upon this world after the church has been taken to be with Christ and the beast has arisen. The beast represents the head of a world power that will force people to have a mark on their forehead or hand and no one will be able to buy or sell unless they have that mark. It will be a terrible time, when to stand up for Jesus or for the word of God will almost certainly incur martyrdom.

There are people in this world today who are suffering for the sake of Jesus, in some instances suffering torture and death. The writer to the Hebrews said *"Remember prisoners as bound with them. (Hebrews 13:3)*. J. N. Darby said long ago, that our feet should be in the narrow path but our heart should be as wide as possible. It is right to be interested in and support God's people who are suffering wherever they are in this world.

Now it says here, *“Blessed the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth”*. There is a blessing attached to dying in the Lord. When Jesus died there were two thieves beside Him who also died. One of the thieves repented and confessed Jesus as Lord and sought blessing from Him. Jesus’ reply was, ‘Today you will be with me in Paradise’ (see Luke 23:43). Paradise for a wicked man, who had lived a wicked life! Yes, Jesus opened the door to paradise for him. I think of millions of people that have died in the Lord down through the centuries. And there is a blessing attached to them having died in the Lord.

Last time I was here there was a sister who was sitting in this room who is now with Christ: she died in the Lord. I am not saying that she fitted exactly into this category mentioned in Revelation but she died in the Lord and there is a great blessing attached to that.

We all have to face the article of death. Some believers will not die, there will be those who will be alive when Jesus comes and they will be caught up to be with Him and they will not die physically. But many have died and perhaps some more of us will die before Jesus comes. Just remember this, there is a blessing attached to having died in the Lord.

Even the apostle Paul when in prison in Rome did not know what to desire, whether to depart and be with Christ or whether to stay and serve others. However he knew that to be with Christ was very much better (see Philippians 1:23). Let us remember that if any of us or any of our friends in Christ is called to go home to be with the Lord there is a blessing attached to falling asleep in Jesus.

3. Blessing through watching

*“(Behold, I come as a thief. **Blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments, that he may not walk naked, and that they may not see his shame)**” (Revelation 16:15).*

In chapter 16 we have a reference to the wrath of God. The

chapter begins by saying, *"I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go and pour out the seven bowls of the fury of God upon the earth"*. We live in the time of the grace of God. It is a marvellous time to be in, when, *"the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared"* (Titus 2:11) and is available to everyone no matter who they are, whether the world considers they have lived dreadful lives or they have supposedly been good living people. Let us not misrepresent the dispensation we are in. It is sad sometimes to hear Christian people wanting vengeance on people who have mistreated them. At the present time God wants everybody to be saved. He is *"long-suffering towards all, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).

But there is a time coming for the fury of God to come upon this earth and it may be coming sooner than we think. If you go through these passages in Revelation; the seals being opened, the trumpets being sounded, the bowls being poured out, all is very systematic and methodical. God is *"slow to anger"* (Exodus 34:6), judgment is God's *"strange work"* (Isaiah 28:21). But God hates sin and His fury against evil on the earth is shown by the seven bowls of His fury that will be poured out on the earth as stated in verse 1. John also states that when Christ returns to reign He *"treads the wine-press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty"* (Revelation 19:15).

Now in the passage starting at verse 12 of chapter 16, John is told about the sixth angel pouring out his bowl on the earth and the world war that follows. The unclean spirits *"go out to the kings of the whole habitable world to gather them together to the war of that great day of God the Almighty"* (v14). Then John breaks off in the middle of what he is saying to give his readers this message from the Lord: *"Behold, I come as a thief..."*. John then finishes what he is saying, *"And he gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon"*.

I am thinking about this part of Revelation being read in all these seven assemblies. Supposing you had been in the assembly in Laodicea or Philadelphia and you are hearing about all these bowls: one, two, three, four, five, six and in the middle of the sixth John stops. He has a word to those He was writing to in these seven churches **and to us**. Jesus says, *“Behold, I come as a thief”*.

When the Lord was on earth He spoke of coming as a thief (see Luke 12:39-40). There the Lord was telling his disciples to watch and keep watching! Be alert! And here He says again, in Revelation, *“Behold, I come as a thief”*. We do not expect a thief to come and burgle our home. A burglary would take us unawares. The Lord says, *“Behold, I come as a thief”*.

Then He adds, *“Blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments”*. That is a good word for me and everyone here. I should watch what I am up to, watch my conduct, watch that I do not get myself defiled. I am obligated to keep myself unspotted from this world. (see James 1:27). I am a Christian. I belong to the Saviour. He has washed me from my sins; He does not expect me to go on sinning. I have to watch and keep my garments, but also watch for Jesus coming. The scripture adds *“that he may not walk naked”*. I think that refers to evil conduct of professing Christians when it is publicly exposed. Alas, such acts have happened and brought reproach upon the name of Jesus! These are solemn things. *“Blessed is he that watches”* – that is a word to me – *“and keeps his garments, that he may not walk naked, and that they may not see his shame”*. The hearers of this book would have been challenged! May we all also take heed to that word at the present time.

4. Blessed are those invited to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb

“And I heard as the voice of a great crowd... saying... Let us rejoice and exult, and give him glory; for the marriage of the

Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. And he says to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb. And he says to me, These are the true words of God. And I fell before his feet to do him homage. And he says to me, See thou do it not. I am thy fellow-bondman, and the fellow-bondman of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Do homage to God. For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.” (Revelation 19:6-10).

Chapter 19 gives us another blessing. *“Blessed are they who are called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb”*. Most people like receiving an invitation to a wedding and then being there as guests. There are those who are going to have an invitation to this special occasion, the supper of the marriage of the Lamb. I will not get an invitation. Why? Because, like all other believers in Christ today, I form part of Christ’s bride.

Before this blessing is mentioned it says: *“the Lord our God the Almighty has taken to himself kingly power”*. When we think about some of the rulers that rule or have ruled in this world we know there have been some dreadful reigns. Think of the millions that Hitler and others have killed. There have been dreadful despots. Rulers have varied but there is a time coming when *“the Lord our God the Almighty”* will take *“to Himself kingly power”*. Christ will come and will reign with integrity. He will reign with an absolute rule. He will shepherd all the nations with an iron rod (see Revelation 12:5) and there will be a time of ongoing peace and prosperity that this world has never known before.

But, it says here, *“Let us rejoice and exult, and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready”*. We are in the time of the wife of Christ making herself ready. That is what the Spirit of God is working towards. If you belong to Jesus the Spirit of God wants to work in your

heart, mind and conscience so that you might be ready for Christ. There is a day coming when He is going to *“present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things”* (Ephesians 5:27). The emphasis here is on the wife having made herself ready. Reading the Bible, Christian ministry, prayer and having fellowship with one another should help us to make ourselves ready, ready for our heavenly Bridegroom, ready for Christ!

One day He is going to come and present the Church to Himself. Christ is going to have a glorious bride. The passage speaks about her beautiful clothes of *“fine linen, bright and pure”*. Many sad things have happened in church history. Most of us would admit many sad things have happened in most of our own lives, things that should not have happened. But think of Christ going to present to Himself a radiant bride with lovely clothes with no spot, no wrinkle or any of such things. Wonderful!

Now the clothes are described: *“The fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints”*. The expression indicates the detail of what is worked out in the lives of believers. It would include if you stand up for Jesus in the world where He is rejected, if you are faithful to Him in something little, you say “no” in relation to some evil practice that someone is trying to pull you into, you say “no” to telling lies, to stealing. “Righteousnesses” are practical acts that go on in the lives of believers.

There is such a thing as being clothed with the righteousness that is of God in Christ. We receive that blessing through faith. But the Spirit of God would work out practical righteousness in our lives, day by day, so that we might be pleasing to Christ as we wait for Him to come again.

So it says, *“Blessed are they who are called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb”*. You say, ‘Who is going to be called?’ Well, I know one person who will be there: John the Baptist because he was a friend of the bridegroom (see John 3:29). I

am sure Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be there and many others. When He was here Jesus spoke of those who would sit down with Gentiles in the kingdom of God. Yet some of those people who thought they could trace their ancestry all the way back to Abraham would be cast out (see Luke 13:28-30).

John was obviously so impressed with what he heard that he *"fell before his feet"*, that is before the angel who was talking with him, *"to do him homage"* but the angel tells him not to do it. The angel who was passing on this message to John was a messenger from God, he was not to be worshipped. Do not worship any man or woman in this world: worship Christ! It is right to accept help from others who bring the message about Jesus. I value people whom I have known who brought the word of God to me. In fact, we are told to remember those *"who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation"* – their way of life, – *"imitate their faith"* (Hebrews 13:7). But do not worship them and do not worship anybody else here on earth. Christ alone is the only Man to be worshipped. John was corrected: he is told to *"do homage to God"*.

Then John writes a very interesting thing, *"For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus"*. The spirit of prophecy is not about events. Some try to work out which event is going to happen next and whether certain public events point to a feature of His coming. But do not let us forget that Jesus is the centre of divine prophecy.

5. The blessing of the first resurrection

***"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years"* (Revelation 20:6).**

Is there going to be more than one resurrection? Yes, there is! I remember saying at a funeral once *"that there is to be a resurrection both of just and unjust"* (Acts 24:15) and this

seemed to be a surprise to some who attended. I of course was only quoting John chapter five because Jesus says, *“Wonder not at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall go forth; those that have practised good, to resurrection of life, and those that have done evil, to resurrection of judgment”* (John 5:28, 29). There will be two resurrections and it is the first resurrection that is spoken about here.

Jesus also spoke about people doing good things for Him that will be recompensed in the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14). There will be two resurrections. There will be a resurrection after the millennium that is described in this chapter (Revelation 20:11-15) when those who have died in their sins, who have died without Christ, will stand before the great white throne and be judged - solemn thing, indeed!

But there is a great blessedness spoken of here: *“Blessed and holy he who has part in the first resurrection”*. Then it tells us, *“over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of the Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”*. It is a great privilege to have part in the first resurrection.

6. Blessing in keeping the words of the book

“And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” (Revelation 22:7)

I go on to chapter 22 where there is a further reference in verse 7 to a blessing. In chapter 21 Jesus gave through His apostle John brief yet precious details about the eternal state. (Ch 21:1-8). He then said that he saw *“the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God”* (Ch. 21:9-22:5), and provided details about its role in administration in the world to come – then He says, *“behold, I come quickly”*. Just remember that. That is the way we should be thinking. Jesus will come quickly. Let us be alert and watching out for Him.

He then adds, *"Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book"*. It is a repetition of what He said in chapter 1. Having gone through all the detail of the prophecy the Lord Jesus emphasises its immanence and re-states *"I come quickly"*. He then says, *"Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book"*. Just remember that. Jesus is coming again and there is a blessing, a favour attached to keeping the words of the prophecy of this book. God is no man's debtor. If you keep the words of the prophecy of the book God will bless that to you.

7. Blessing in washing one's robes

"Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and that they should go in by the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

I come to the final blessing in chapter 22. John has been describing the holy city. He has been describing the river, the water of life that flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the city, and the tree of life which is in the river, and of the street of the city, and now he says, *"Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and that they should go in by the gates into the city"*. That is a good word for us.

The tree of life, as most of us know, was prohibited to mankind in Genesis 3. Before then, Adam and Eve were able to eat of all the trees in the garden, including the tree of life, but banned from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But once they had disobeyed God they were expelled from the garden of Eden and barred from the tree of life.

But the wonder of grace is that through the death of Jesus, the tree of life has been opened up to us. We sometimes sing:

Lord, in Thee we taste the sweetness of the tree of life above.

In the promise to the overcomer in Ephesus in Revelation 2 Jesus says this, *"To him that overcomes, I will give to him to eat of*

the tree of life which is in the paradise of God" (v. 7). I think it is important, when we read Scripture, to realise there are some things that are fixed, that are done for us and cannot be changed. Other benefits depend on our moral state. For example, in John's gospel Jesus says no one can pluck His sheep out of His hand or out of the hand of His Father (see John 10:28, 29). Once you are a sheep of Christ you are always a sheep of Christ, you then always belong to Him, nothing can change it. Our eternal blessing does not depend on you or your state, it depends on Christ and His finished work.

But there are other things that do depend on our state. It says here, *"Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life"*. In other words I have to pay attention to myself if I want to enjoy the wonderful fresh fruits that Christ provides. I have to make sure that in my walk and my ways, in my associations, that I am fit for enjoying the tree of life. Otherwise I will miss the joy of God's salvation, the joy of deriving from Christ.

So it says, *"Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life"*. I think of that scripture in relation to the Lord's supper. Paul says, *"let a man examine himself, and so let him eat"* (1 Corinthians 11:28 KJV). I remember years ago when talking about the Lord's supper to some believers I asked them 'How often do you celebrate the Lord's supper?' and they told me they did so once a year. I was rather shocked although I know the Bible does not say precisely how often believers should celebrate the Lord's supper. When I asked them why it was so infrequent a brother said to me, 'The problem is there are so many people that do not live holy lives and therefore they do not feel like partaking of the Lord's supper'. In a sense they were quite right according to 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. But Paul also says, *"let a man prove himself, and thus eat"*. He does not say 'prove himself and not eat'.

Then the Lord adds the expression, *“and that they should go in by the gates into the city”*. If you read chapter 21 you will find that the holy city has 12 gates and each gate is said to be one pearl. The number 12 represents administrative completeness. So there are a number of gates and it says here that those who wash their robes establish their right to go in by the gates into the city.

Some years ago I had a very interesting illustration that helped me to understand this scripture a little better and its bearing on believers today. When I was in Africa I went to a village so that I could speak to people about Jesus. But before I was allowed into the village I had to stop and sit down just inside the village — it was really like being at a city gate. The village elders then came along and they wanted to know why I was there, what I was doing and only when they were satisfied was I allowed in into the village. They wanted to be sure that I was not a trouble maker. It illustrates this Scripture so well. *“Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and that they should go in by the gates into the city”*.

These are a few thoughts on these interesting Beatitudes of Revelation. May the Lord bless us all for His name’s sake.

Ken Hollands

An address at Defford, 21 April 2018

In the Annual Report of the Trust for 2018 the list of publications includes “Good News from Heaven”, Volume 1 (free) and Volume 2 (priced at £4). The trustees have decided to make the second volume available free also.