

Things New and Old



November 2023

Things New and Old

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EDITORIAL

Since 2019 the Stone Publishing Trust has only published one regular magazine called “Youthful Days” that focuses on the need to accept the gospel message of salvation and seeks to encourage young believers to be followers of Jesus. For many years before it had also supported the publication of a bimonthly magazine entitled “Living Water”, edited by Mark Lemon who is now with Christ.

The Trust has occasionally published individual addresses or lectures both current and from earlier years that the trustees deemed would provide food for the household of faith. They wish to continue providing such written material while we await the return of our Lord Jesus from heaven. One possibility is to publish a mixture of new and old ministry on a regular basis. This publication is an initial attempt to put together such a booklet. Feedback after its distribution should enable the Trust to decide whether to make it an ongoing publication.

This magazine has been edited by two of the trustees, Kenneth Hollands and Philip Coldrick, who have selected a variety of written material that they consider provides words of grace seasoned with salt for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. In it you will find a gospel preaching, a word of exhortation from the past, a recent address given at a Christian meeting, two short articles from earlier years and an explanation of a Bible word.

Wherever possible, Scriptures quoted are identified and the Editors encourage readers to search their Bibles to verify statements made for themselves.

The Editors also welcome any suggestions for improvement and any questions that readers may raise.

May God bless all our readers!

Ken

A WORD FOR THE PROFESSOR, THE CONFESSOR AND THE REJECTOR

Amos 4:12. *“Prepare to meet thy God”. I'll read that again. “Prepare to meet thy God”*

John 14:1-3 *“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe on God, believe also on me. In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be”*

Revelation 20:11-15 *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is that of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged each according to their works: and death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire”*

I have a word tonight for the professor, a word for the confessor and a word for the rejector.

The Professor

And I start with the professor because I suppose most in this room of responsible age would claim that they were Christians. It is a general term that people use to indicate they are in the Christian sphere. You might take refuge under it as did those people of Israel who prided themselves in the fact that they were a special nation, as they were, of course, but they had fallen into idolatry, and God had brought in various acts of discipline upon them. You read in the

earlier verses in Amos 4 that there was famine, there was drought and locusts, all used of God to alert His people and arouse them from their indifference. That is my desire tonight to arouse you from your indifference and your complacency if you are resting in the fact that you think you are a Christian.

“Prepare to meet thy God” is a word that should come home to every heart and conscience here tonight. It is a very blessed thing to meet Him today and a very solemn thing to meet Him at the great white throne. He has no desire that that should be so. That is why this gospel preaching is arranged so that you may have to do with God on the most propitious of terms. You say, how can I meet Him? I think the Lord shows the way in His parable of Luke 15 how the sinner can meet the Saviour. Or rather, shall I say, how the Saviour has met the sinner, and then how the Father has welcomed His returning son, who comes on the ground of repentance, and how every provision was made that he might be happy and secure in the knowledge of the father's love. *“Father, I have sinned”*. He came to himself. We want you to come to yourself to realise that without Christ you are lost, lost eternally. There is no question of repenting after you are dead. The time to repent is now. *“Now is the well-accepted time; behold, now the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6:2). What a wonderful day it is!

You listen to the gospel from God's side. He has made every provision. You cannot bring anything. You might cover yourself with fig-leaves like Adam and Eve did. They made aprons and hid themselves. Did that hide them from God? When they came out into His presence they had to confess they were naked. He said, ‘Who told you?’ They came to the knowledge that they were naked before God. Aprons won't do. Hiding yourself in business, hiding yourself in the pleasures of this world will not hide you from God. Prepare to meet Him and meet Him tonight on the most blessed of terms, to put it simply. He has made provision that you may come into His presence and be free of your sinful state. He made provision for Adam too, looking on, of course, 4000 years to the coming in of His Beloved Son.

He made them coats of skin. What is it saying? It meant that death had to come in. And death has had to come in, dear friend, if you were to be blessed and that death had to be borne by Jesus, God's spotless, glorious Son, the One who came to effect the work of redemption, that the gospel might go free to whomsoever will. It meant that the whole burden of man's guilt and distance of sin had been borne by Him. What a wonderful story of divine love it is! God would love to bring you into the enjoyment of it. That younger son went away, a picture, of course, of the Gentile world just like we are, going away from God and careless of divine things altogether.

If you read in 2 Timothy 3 you will find a description of the present day, *"lovers of self, ... boastful, arrogant, ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety but denying the power of it"* (2 Timothy 3:2-5). That is the world in which we live, and God wants to rouse you out of it tonight to realise the immensity and the importance of having to do with Him in relation to the sin question, to have it removed once and for all. It will never come up again once the transaction is made; it is made forever. Wonderful thing the gospel is! *"Once in the consummation of the ages he has been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice"* (Hebrews 9:26). He has not had to repeat it because it has been done to God's eternal satisfaction. It was done by the blessed Man, who came here as a lowly Babe, born in Bethlehem's manger, moved here in tender grace to men. 'O'er all Thy grace abounding' as He moved here in man's world of sin and sorrow. He felt it all. He felt all the circumstances of daily life, death and illness and need, on every side. Think of the movements of the Lord Jesus, 30 years in secret with His God, and then coming out in 3½ years. How brief was the sunshine of God's love shedding its lustre upon this scene when Jesus was here. Just three years, but what it meant to the heart of God and what it meant to men, too. He went about doing good. He wants us to go about doing good as well, as Christians.

He knew all that were oppressed of the devil; think of the power of the Lord arresting the power of Satan. That man in Luke 8, completely

under the control and dominion of Satan. He had no clothes on, he went about in the tombs, what a picture of fallen humanity it was! And nobody could restrain him, they tried, they put things upon him. They could not restrain him at all. That is just what man does with the increasing complexity of laws all trying to curb man's lawlessness. And it remains just the same. What is the answer? The answer is the death of Jesus. If you are going to come under divine control and come into blessing, you must come to the cross, see where everything was resolved there for God's eternal satisfaction by upholding the righteousness of God's throne in meeting the needs of the deepest dyed sinner. What wonderful work at the cross! The more we think of it—and we should think of it more—Jesus went to the cross at the end of that life of holy perfection. As He anticipated what it was in the garden of Gethsemane, He fell on His face, He cried to His God, *“Father, save me from this hour. But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name”* (John 12:27, 28). Wonderful words!

And then He rose up and went forth at that moment to meet the whole unmitigated force of the enemy's power. Satan gathered his forces together to deflect the Lord from the path of God's will and was completely defeated. I think of the scorn and the mockery that preceded His time on the cross, the injustice, all that man's hatred could bring out: It brings out all the depth of your heart and mine. You may think it is not so. You may think, 'Oh, no, I am not so bad as that'. You see things exposed in their entirety at the cross, what man's heart was, and you see there, too, what God's heart was. But man's heart was desperately wicked. It is incurable, apart from divine works; it is incurable. Scripture tells us that. The heart of man is wicked. And there at the cross of Calvary, everything was met. They put him on the cross, they taunted Him. They mocked Him: 'He saved others, if He be the Christ let Him come down, and we will believe on Him'. The priests passed by wagging their heads. You think of the scorn that there was. Two malefactors cast their curses upon Him, until one repented at the last moment.

The hymn writer says:

No eye was found to pity,
No heart to bear Thy woe,
But shame, and scorn, and spitting;
None cared Thy Name to know.

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

That is the second three hours: no one could penetrate that scene. It is closed in the holy councils of God. Only God and His Christ know what death and agony our Lord suffered as He bore the sin of all that trust in Him and bore sin's weight to take sin away. Sin was judged. It was not forgiven. It was there to be removed from God's sight forever and it involved His precious, holy death. No wonder He could cry in agony, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Psalm 22:1). What it meant for Him after those holy and precious years of intimacy of unbroken communion to have that severed for those three hours and the whole force of God's wrath, all His holy judgment. And it was wrath, wrath unmitigated that fell upon the head of Jesus. And He bore it all that He might take it away and take it away forever and then He died.

Yes, Jesus died. That life was so precious, precious to Him, precious in the eye of God. But He had to die. His life could not save us. It is His death that has saved us. He went into death that He might take the judgment of death. *"God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh"* (Romans 8:3). It is there that sin is condemned. It is not forgiven; it is condemned and taken away forever because the man of flesh and blood can never be found pleasing to God. So that order of man has been removed. It has been said, 'the man that was under judgment has gone in judgment'.

Gone there, finished completely. And Jesus went into the grave and lay there. What a moment that was for heaven.

Then He comes out of the grave triumphant, at 3 days. He was delivered for my offences; how wonderful that the cross of Calvary met every need in my soul. Every sin has been taken away. How do I know? Because He has been raised for my justification (see Romans 4:25). It is a wonderful thing to find Jesus on the other side of death, a Man now free. Has He got death upon Him? Has He got sin upon Him? No, you could not think of it. *“Far be the thought”*, as the Scripture would say. He is raised there as a triumphant, glorious Man prepared to be a Saviour for the likes of you and me. Prepare to meet your God tonight. Why not meet a wonderful Saviour who would take all the burdens of your sins from that conscience of yours? You know you have done wrong and you need to confess it. Well, confess it to God. Don't confess it to me or anybody else. Confess it to God and get the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins!

Think of that—everything cleared out of the way and cleared forever. The righteousness of God is towards all: the work of Christ is so complete it could contain the whole universe. Oh, then, receive the message of the glad tidings. There is sufficiency in His death to meet the need of every guilty sinner. Oh, friend, what a Saviour we have to present, what a wonderful triumph He has made as coming out of death. Going up into glory, it says He was received up in glory. I think that is beautiful! Heaven was alert; heaven was not asleep. When Jesus came out of death heaven was aglow. Oh, that we were more aglow. I think of Jesus out of death, triumphant, going up into heaven, received up, every agency, every power in the heavens giving obeisance to Him. He went up through one heaven after another. How many are there? We do not know! (We have three mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:2). Some people speak about the 7th heaven but I do not know where they get it from. It says He has *“ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things”* (Ephesians 4:10). There is no man on earth who can fill all things. Think of Jesus being able to fill all things. There is going to be a world to come when He will fill all

things, fill all things to God's eternal satisfaction: He is the man who is glorifying God.

Now the point is, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to repent? Are you going to turn to God and say, 'Yes, I am a sinner but I accept what Jesus has done for me'? His precious blood has paid the price. He went into death; the blood is the witness that that life was finished. We were reminded this morning in the tokens of the Lord's supper that His life was finished. This cup, "*the new covenant in my blood*" - His life was finished. It was given up. And the testimony is that the blood was being poured out. That life was finished and you have your faith in that blood. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanses from every sin, not one remaining outside of the scope of His blood. It shows the immensity of the sacrifice, how much it means to God: He is looking at the blood. If you are not, if you are uncertain about it, He is looking at it. If you are uncertain about your salvation, He is not uncertain about it. You need to trust in what God says. Have faith in Him and faith in His word.

The Confessor

Well, now I speak about the word for the confessors. I thought that came into John 14. The Lord is not speaking now to unbelievers. He is speaking to those whom He loved. It says earlier in chapter 13, "*having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end*". And He tells them here what the end was going to be. He was going away. We can understand how sad they would feel. He had been with them all those 3½ years, looked after them, shepherded them, acknowledged them, borne with them, too, in their unbelief. Now He is going away. He says, "*Let not your heart be troubled*". 'I am going away and going away to the Father's house; I am going to prepare a place for you'. Not only just for the twelve, but for everyone that believes on Him. What a comfort that has been to so many of His beloved saints as they reached the end of their pathway here, to realise that He has gone there before and prepared a place. Someone said to the dear sister we are to bury Monday week, 'What a nice

room you have here in the nursing home' (where she was). 'Oh', she says, 'it is not like heaven'. She had an insight into what it is to be with the Lord. It was her hope at the end. Her closing moments was filled with her joy in the Lord and readiness to depart and be with Christ. Is that going to be your hope as well? Think of it. It is far better, Paul said. I suppose he had tasted what it was when he went up into the third heaven. You go right into the presence of the Lord there. When that happened, Paul heard things there that he couldn't utter. They were so wonderful. A spiritual sphere that's beyond creature apprehension cannot be understood down here, but we shall understand it when we get there.

The Lord says here, *"I go to prepare you a place"*. That is a comfort to everyone who believes in Him. Are you going to take that place? He says, *"I am coming again and shall receive you to myself"*. What a wonderful thing: the Lord comes to receive us to Himself. He is going to come for all His own. He is speaking here to those who have gone before. This assurance has been their portion. What will it mean when He comes for all of us? Think of the myriads that there will be. Have you ever thought of it? Enoch saw it, *"the Lord has come amidst his holy myriads"* he says (Jude 14). That is a prophecy over 6000 years old. Wonderful, how light from God came into the hearts of men of God. Would you like to be a man of God? Start early. You young ones, start with your links with the Lord. Be devoted to Him. He'll reward you. You say, It will be a bit difficult for me: certainly it will, it is no easy path. We do not present the gospel: 'get your forgiveness of sins and you are happy, sailing on to glory'. It's not like that at all. You will find that the enemy attacks you as we know only too well in our own experience and in the way that Scripture presents itself. So immediately you get tribulation, and you get trials and tests. But this works experience and *"experience, hope; and hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us"* (Romans 5:4).

What a wonderful avenue God takes, using all the things that come into daily life. The frustrations and the difficulties that each of us face,

and young people face increasingly today, the Lord will use them to form you after Himself and to help you through and make you confident in Himself to see you through. You trust in Him: He will reward you. He will stand by you. I can say that from experience. Many tests and many trials come along. But He will see you through to the end, and you have your part as a confessor. That means you have confessed Him as your Lord. No doubt you believe in Him. Many here may be secret believers, but why not confess Him? Say this, the Lord is my Saviour. I gave my heart to Him and now I belong to Him and I belong to Him for ever. What a wonderful friend He is!

He says, *“I am coming again and shall receive you to myself that where I am ye also may be.”* Where is He? Well, you say, He is gone into heaven, yes, but where is He? He is in the Father's house. He is the centre there of a scene of wonderful love and affection. We cannot estimate the immensity of the love. In chapter 17 He tells us *“the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them”* and *“thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”*. It is a scene of perfect love, nothing to interfere with it, and it is the sphere in which He wants every believer to find their part and joy. John 14 is a prospect. The Lord sets it before His own; He says, *“I am coming again and shall receive you to myself”*. You think the enemy can stand in the way? Do you think all Satan's contrivances will stop the Lord when He comes? He will come with the clouds and with great glory. Nothing will stop the Lord when He has the word from the Father to collect His own from the earth to be forever with Him. What an empty place the world will be! Myriads of persons disappearing in an instant. They will all be changed too. We are thankful for that, aren't we? We wouldn't like to be as we are - that is not a very bright prospect at all. Especially when you get older and you find your joints are not so mobile as they used to be. But think of being changed. How are we going to be changed? Changed like unto Him, we shall see Him as He is. And when we see Him, we shall be like Him. It is a wonderful thing to be all like Jesus. The hymn writer, Mr Darby, had it before him:

Like Jesus in that place
Of light and love supreme,
Once Man of sorrows, full of grace,
Heav'n's blest and endless theme.

Think of a place filled with persons like Jesus. Of course, if you are a worldly person, you would not like that at all. As Mr Darby said elsewhere, if a worldly person went to heaven, he would get down as quick as he could: there is nothing there to appeal to him. Where is your heart? Is your heart really set upon Christ in the place where He is? I urge you tonight to make that your destiny. Make that your hope, make that your life, to see that your life is bound up with His and you will find the wonderful prospect of seeing Him face to face when He comes in His glory at what we speak of as the Rapture.

The Rejector

Now I speak very solemnly. I trust it won't be the portion of any in this room. It is important that it should be raised in the preaching. There is another place prepared. It was not prepared for man. The Lord says in Matthew 25, that it was prepared for the devil and his angels, *"eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"*. Persons there were indifferent as to His claims as the Lord, indifferent as to His care of His people too. And the Lord says, 'Go from me. Go from me. I was sick and you never visited me. I was ill; you never accompanied me. Go from me, I do not know you'. He says that they will go into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And this is the reality of it described in Revelation 20. The Spirit of God puts it in the scriptures that it might be a warning. You will have to do with God. We started with, *"Prepare to meet thy God"*. And here you notice it is a great white throne. It's great. It is so enormous that heavens and Earth are put away from it and it is white because it is marked by spotless purity. No corrupting elements will enter into the justice department of God's throne.

It says, we shall all appear before the judgment seat of God (see

Romans 14:10). You can appear tonight as having the work of Christ as your righteousness. Wonderful thing that is. But these people have no righteousness, they have no clothes, they are set as they stand: he says, *“great and small”; “I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne”*. What a solemn position to be in. Nobody there to plead for them. What about you tonight? Well, sinner, you have Jesus to plead for you. Yes, you have a Saviour to call upon. Call upon the Lord while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6) and then you will not be found here. This is a desolate scene. There is nothing to rest on, nothing! No creature benefit to rest on at all. It is a barren scene and the throne is there and acting according to divine justice. And so it says, *“and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is that of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged each according to their works”*. No hiding place whatever! How solemn to think of standing there and then to find your part in the lake of fire that is eternal damnation, eternal distance from the presence of God.

Someone has said that the lake of fire is a necessity of God's love, but He does not want you to find yourself there. That is why you have the gospel preaching tonight. But do not take it for granted. Do not just sit in the preaching week after week with your heart unmoved as to the claims of Christ. Because it is essential and important. It is vital that you have your living link with this glorious Man who did everything that He might save you from this terrible destiny of those that are ungodly. God is going to judge the world of the ungodly. It tells us that in Peter's epistle; the fire is going to come down and consume the world, the whole scene going to be erupting in flames. You can see it easily transpiring, and all the forces of evil gathering up now. He is gathering up all in view of His judgment. Before that, of course, He will bring in His beloved Son to reign in righteousness for 1000 years. But what we are speaking of in Revelation 20 is after that when everything is brought into finality. Think of the 1000 years when Jesus will be here and reign in righteousness, and the world will

come under His beneficent sway. Where would you be then? Would you be with Him coming with the clouds, coming up to administrate with Him, or would you be found as an unbeliever still in judgment, still in death, awaiting the second call? The Lord speaks of the two resurrections, does He not? *“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). You cannot hide, you see. There is no middle course. Man likes to compromise. There is no compromise with God. There was never any compromise at the cross. There is not any compromise now. Make sure you are in the right place.

I was speaking to a neighbour some month or two ago. I think God may be working with him, but he is hiding his face and I think he does not want to discuss things too much. He said, ‘I like to just sit on the fence’. I said, ‘Well, make sure you come down on the right side’. You see, you cannot sit on the fence in divine things; you have to be either a believer or you're an unbeliever.

May you come to the knowledge of Christ as your Saviour, put your trust in Him, know the joy and peace of forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit, and find your part in the holy service of praise that is so delightful to His heart at the present time.

David Bond

A gospel message given at Worthing on 9th March 2014

THE REGIONS BEYOND

“...to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you” (2 Corinthians 10:16)

These words, while they set forth the large-heartedness of the apostle Paul, also provide a fine model to the evangelist in every age. The gospel is a traveller and the preacher of the gospel must be a traveller likewise. The divinely-qualified and divinely-sent evangelist will fix his eye upon “the world”. He will embrace the whole human

family. From house to house, from street to street, from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, from pole to pole. Such is the range of the “good news” and the publisher thereof. “The regions beyond” must ever be the grand gospel motto.

No sooner has the gospel lamp cast its cheering beams over a district, than the bearer of that lamp must think of the regions beyond. Thus the work goes on. Thus the mighty tide of grace rolls, in enlightening and saving power over a dark world which lies in the “region of the shadow of death.”

Christian reader, are you thinking of “the regions beyond you”? This expression may, in your case, mean the next house, the next street, the next village, the next city, or the next continent. The application is for your own heart to ponder: but are you thinking of “the regions beyond you”? I do not want you to abandon your present post at all; or, at least, not until you are fully persuaded that your work, at that post, is done. But, remember, the gospel plough should never stand still. “Onward” is the motto of every true evangelist. Let the shepherds abide by the flocks; but let the evangelists betake themselves hither and thither, to gather the sheep. Let them sound the gospel trump far and wide to gather together the elect of God. This is the design of the gospel. This should be the object of the evangelist, as he sighs over “the regions beyond”.

When Caesar beheld from the coast of Gaul, the white cliffs of Britain, he earnestly longed to carry his arms thither. The evangelist, on the other hand, whose heart beats in unison with the heart of Jesus, as he casts his eye over the map of the world, longs to carry the gospel of peace to “the regions beyond”.

It would, I believe, be a profitable question for many of us to put to ourselves as to how far are we discharging our holy responsibilities to “the regions beyond”? I believe the Christian who is not cultivating and manifesting an evangelistic spirit is in a truly deplorable condition. I believe, too, that a local company which is not cultivating and manifesting an evangelical spirit is in a dead state. One of the truest marks of spiritual growth and prosperity, whether in an

individual or in a church, is earnest anxiety after the conversion of souls. It is hard to believe that “the word of Christ” is “dwelling richly” in any one who is not making some effort to impart that word to his fellow sinners.

It does not matter what the amount of effort is; it may be to speak a few words to a friend, to give a tract, to write a note, to breath a prayer, but one thing is certain, that a healthy, vigorous Christian will be an evangelistic Christian — a teller of the good news — one whose sympathies, desires and energies are ever going forth towards “the regions beyond”. ‘I must preach the gospel to other cities also: for therefore am I sent’. Such was the language of the great Evangelist.

It is very doubtful whether many of the servants of Christ have not erred in allowing themselves, through one influence and another, to become too much localised — too much tied to one place. They have dropped into routine work — into a round of stated preaching in the same place, and in many cases, have paralysed themselves and paralysed their hearers also. I speak now not of the labours of the pastor, the elder, or the teacher, which must be carried on in the midst of those who are the proper subject of such labours. I refer more particularly to the evangelist. Such a one should never suffer himself to be localised. The world is his sphere — “the regions beyond”, his motto — to gather out God’s elect, his object — the current of the Spirit, his line of direction. If the reader should be one whom God has fitted and called to be an evangelist, let him remember these four things—the sphere, the motto, the object, and the line of direction, which all must adopt if they would prove fruitful labourers in the gospel field.

Finally, whether the reader be an evangelist or not, I would earnestly entreat all to examine for themselves how far they are seeking to further the gospel of Christ. We must not stand idle. Time is short! Eternity is rapidly posting on! The Master is most worthy! Souls are most precious! The season for the work will soon close! Let us then, in the name of the Lord, be up and doing. And when we have done what we can in the regions around, let us carry the precious

seed into “the regions beyond”.

Charles H. Mackintosh
1820-1896

It may interest our readers to know that C. H. Mackintosh edited a magazine called “Things New and Old” from 1858 to 1890. The above article was taken from Vol 2 page 75 and was written in 1859.

Note from the Editor

I came across a recent example of someone who was thinking about the “regions beyond” and provide it here as a current example to us.

Donald, an elderly Christian, liked to encourage people involved with outdoor gospel work. A few months ago, he was seriously ill and admitted to hospital where he developed sepsis. His family was told he had a few days to live. However, he recovered. While still in hospital he started telling hospital staff and others about his faith in the Lord Jesus and offering to give a Bible to any one who asked him.

One of the staff requested a Bible and he obtained a copy from a Bible supplier and donated it as he had promised. A few months later Donald received a letter from the Bible supplier saying that the recipient of the Bible had written to them to say she had now become a believer in the Lord Jesus.

“God has chosen the weak things of the world, that he may put to shame the strong things” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Ken

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1 John 2:13-15 *“I write to you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked [one] . I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked [one] . Love not the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;”*

Exodus 16:13-21 *“And it came to pass in the evening, that quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round the camp. And when the dew that lay [round it] was gone up, behold, on the face of the wilderness there was [something] fine, granular, fine as hoar-frost, on the ground. And the children of Israel saw [it] , and said one to another, What is it? for they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, This is the bread which Jehovah has given you to eat. This is the thing which Jehovah has commanded: Gather of it every man according to what he can eat, an omer a poll, [according to] the number of your persons: ye shall take every man for those that are in his tent. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some much, some little. And they measured with the omer: then he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little wanted nothing: they had gathered every man according to the measure of his eating. And Moses said to them, Let no man leave [any] of it until the morning. But they did not hearken to Moses; and some men left of it until the morning; then worms bred in it and it stank. And Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man as much as he could eat; and when the sun became hot, it melted.”*

Philippians 2:20-21 *“For I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on. For all seek their own things, not*

the things of Jesus Christ.”

Introduction

I want to say something with the Lord's help about spiritual growth. When it comes to the natural world growth is something that we would consider very normal. Children, in particular, are very obsessed with growing, growing taller and being grown up. When we had a season ticket to Marwell Zoo, the first thing that my children always wanted to do was run over to the giraffe enclosure where there is a large size picture of a giraffe and next to it a height chart. They wanted to measure themselves (even if we'd been quite recently) to see whether they had grown any taller in the months between our visits. Children are very, very obsessed with growing, being grown up and growing taller.

When it comes to our spiritual life, there should also be spiritual growth with us as believers on the Lord Jesus. From the moment that you are born anew to the moment you leave this earth, whether it is from the Lord coming to gather His people together or whether it is from passing through the veil of death, spiritual growth should be found in every believer. How important it is that every one of us is growing more like the Lord Jesus Christ!

The idea that we can improve ourselves is not in the Bible. There is no idea of “10 steps to be a better person” or personal improvement of any kind. When we talk about spiritual growth, it is by the Holy Spirit working in our lives to form us after Christ and to deepen our relationship with the Lord Jesus and with our God and Father. When we are called by God, we are placed into a position in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then the Bible says we are to have a manner of life in accordance with that blessing. Colossians says that we are to live a life worthy of the Lord Jesus and we are to grow in the knowledge of our God. All of us have a responsibility to grow and to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Stages of Growth

John in his first epistle presents 3 stages of spiritual growth or spiritual maturity. We have fathers, we have young men, and we have little children. We read John's first epistle recently in a Bible study in Worthing and I didn't realise quite how challenging a book it is. And one of the challenges is this: Am I as far along in my spiritual pathway, in my spiritual maturity, in my relationship with the Lord Jesus, as I'd like to think I am? I might think, as I've been a Christian for 20 years, that perhaps I've moved on from being a little child in the faith, even if I am not yet a father, maybe I could be considered a young man in the faith. Then I actually look at what John says, "*...young men, ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you and ye have overcome the wicked one.*" Does the word of God abide in me and have I overcome the wicked one? It is a real challenge to my heart.

I don't want to go through this passage verse by verse but just point out what an opportunity we have today to evaluate where we are in terms of our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Are we as far along as we like to think we are? Have we grown as much as we should have? Have we really given the Holy Spirit place in our lives through the experiences that we've gone through? That is the challenge that John raises here.

I think the main reason I and others perhaps haven't grown in the way that we should have, is because we value the things of this world far more than we value the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at what John says. "*Love not the world nor the things in the world*". Do you, dear believer, have a real heart and desire to see Christ formed in your life? Do you have an earnest longing to see the Lord Jesus Christ manifested in your life, to grow in your maturity and your relationship with Him? The key to spiritual growth is having a heart for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to speak later about two things which can help a Christian to grow in their faith - reading the Bible and praying - but these two things are worth nothing unless underlying them is a desire to seek after the things concerning the Lord Jesus. We must have a heart that

is genuinely seeking after Him. *“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* As you look at the Lord Jesus Christ, why would you not want to grow more like Him? You read about Him in the Gospels; you see the grace and the humbleness that characterises the Lord Jesus. He is without compare. He is altogether lovely. Why would we not want to grow more like Him?

One of my favourite little choruses is:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus;
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*

That's what growth needs. It needs a love towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and it needs a rejection and a separation from the things of this world. Dear believer, we have been placed into this most wonderful position of blessing as being found in Christ, and now it is our responsibility to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit to be more like Him. I want to challenge you tonight: is there something in your life that is holding you back? Is there something, a part of your life, perhaps, that you have not completely surrendered over to God? Hebrews 12:1 says, *“laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race that lies before us”*. Is there something in my heart, in your heart today that is stopping you from reaching that full maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Food for Growth

I read in Exodus because the expectation is that we do grow and in order to grow we need food. We need sustenance to help us to grow, and I think this passage in Exodus is a good picture of a Christian feeding on the Lord Jesus Christ. The context of these verses is that the children of Israel were travelling through a wilderness. We believers need to recognise that we too are travelling through a wilderness as we journey through this world down here. There is nothing this world can offer that can in any way substitute your need

to feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It cannot give you strength. It cannot give you sustenance for the way. The world is empty to a believer. The Israelites were travelling through a *“great and terrible wilderness”* (Deuteronomy 1:19). We need to recognise the world we are passing through down here. What are we drawing upon for our sustenance? What are we drawing upon for our strength? What are we drawing upon for our growth? Are we found rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ, the source of life itself, or do we find our roots desperately seeking for satisfaction because we've rooted ourselves too closely into the world down here? We must recognise we are going through a wilderness. And the world will try and offer us all sorts of things to keep us satisfied, but there is nothing here for a believer.

That doesn't mean we're left here to our own devices – in the same way that God provided for the children of Israel, God, too, has provided for the believer in his walk down here so that he can grow and find strength. It says, *“He has filled the hungry with good things”* (Luke 1:53). What is that good thing? Well, it is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is feeding on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Man who said, *“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:48). We can feed on Christ. We often throw these phrases around, don't we? We must understand what these phrases mean. Feeding on Christ, I would suggest, means that precious time that you can spend in His presence, sitting at His feet, reading the word of God, and praying to our God and Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's an old chorus, it says:

*Read your Bible, pray every day
And you'll grow, grow, grow!*

So it is those two things. In some ways, prayer and reading the Bible are almost two inseparable things. They go together. How important it is to spend time in the presence of God! Peter says that we are to *“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18). How else can we grow in grace unless we spend time in the presence of the One who personifies

grace itself? The One who personified obedience, the One who personified what it is to be humble. What a model we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who took Himself aside and prayed to His God and Father! If *He* did it how much more do we, as very imperfect creatures, need to find that time in the presence of God to speak, to converse, and to read in God's holy word?

There is a story, right at the beginning of Luke's gospel that tells of when Jesus was 12 years old; His parents left Jerusalem and, for a whole day, they didn't realise that He wasn't with them (see Luke 2:42-45). It's so important, dear believer, as a Christian, to be in the conscious enjoyment of being in the Lord's presence. It took them a day to realise that Jesus wasn't there. Would your day look any different if you didn't spend time in the morning praying or reading your Bible? We must find that time! Peter says that we should *"desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation, if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good"* (1 Peter 2:2-3). Peter here connects spiritual nourishment and growth with the reading of God's word.

Paul says in 1 Timothy "Give thyself to reading" (1 Timothy 4:13). In 2 Timothy he talks about the sacred letters that will make you wise unto salvation. Are we absorbed in God's word? There are many, many helpful books. There are many, many helpful commentaries but let us never stray too far from God's word. It is without substitute.

Daily

I just want to pick out a few things from Exodus 16. It says in verse 21, *"and they gathered it (that's the manna) every morning, every man as much as he could eat"*. Dear believer, I want to impress upon your heart (and my heart too) the importance of what it means to be daily found in the presence of God, daily, feeding on the Lord Jesus Christ. When it comes to normal food, we would expect to eat every day. We feed our bodies and, similarly, we must feed our souls. We must feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. We must find that time to be in

His presence. It is written *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”* (Luke 4:4). What a privilege it is that we have God's word readily available to us, but I know for myself, how our hearts can easily get complacent and fail to spend time in God's presence meditating over the words of Scripture. How quickly this happens!

In Numbers 21, it says of the Israelites that *“our soul loathes this light bread”* - they got bored of the manna. It is the same with us when it comes to spending time feeding on Christ and when it comes to prayerfully studying our Bibles. If you get up one morning and you miss that opportunity - you have a busy day - you will find that your appetite for reading the Scriptures is slightly less the next day and less the next day. Weeks might go by and eventually you'll find that the Bible is nothing more than a dry book, because your appetite for the Lord Jesus Christ and the things concerning Him have diminished by not finding that time to be in His presence on a daily basis.

When it was the Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee, every school in England was sent a little book about the story of the Queen and the history of all the things that she did. When it arrived at our school the children were very, very excited. A book had been sent from the Queen! The Queen had sent a book for everyone! For at least a week the children didn't want to read any other book other than this book that the Queen had sent - the Queen's Book. Why would we want to choose anything else? It was amazing! You know, dear believer, you are holding in your hand the King's Book. This is God's word to you and to me. Let us not grow complacent in finding that time, let us not grow complacent in reading the Scriptures and what God has said in His word.

I think the answer to that complacency that creeps in is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will lead you into all the truth. He is the One that makes it come alive. He is the One that makes it fresh. He delights to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ on the pages of Scripture. And you know the Holy Spirit delights to form the Lord Jesus Christ in your life as well. It says (verse 19) *“let no man leave any of it till the morning”*.

Look at the freshness that was there. It says prophetically of the Lord Jesus, *“morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed”* (Isaiah 50:4). The answer to the fresh needs of the day can be found by spending time daily in the presence of God and speaking to the Lord Jesus Christ, enjoying the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not go forward on old victories or old triumphs. Let us find out each day what the Spirit is saying to us when we open our Bibles and when we pray; let us feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only One that is able to sustain and strengthen our souls for this wilderness pathway. Open up the Gospels, see His movements of love and grace. Go back to the Old Testament, see the care and the detail and the love that God has put in there in the many prophecies that looked forward to the Lord Jesus Christ. Go and read the epistles. Look at how the teachings of the Lord Jesus were put in action in the early church. Read the Revelation - the secret of how this whole universe is going to be closed up and how God will see to it that His Man, the Lord Jesus Christ is rightly honoured. All the Bible speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ. When we read it, we are not reading it for academic purposes, we are not only reading it for doctrine, but we are also reading it because it is about a Person. The Spirit delights to shine a spotlight on the pages of Scripture so that you can see Christ in everything.

The next thing, verse 21 *“and they gathered it every morning, every man as much as he could eat and when the sun became hot it melted.”* There is a Psalm that says, *“Jehovah, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice; in the morning, will I address myself to thee, and will look up”* (Psalm 5:3). The Bible is full of instruction about spending that first moment of the day in the presence of God.

We read in 1 John, *“Young men, you have overcome the wicked one”*. There is somebody that is very interested in making sure that you make no progress at all in your faith. The wicked one, Satan wants to make sure that you can't find the time to spend in the Lord's presence feeding on Him. When you wake up in the morning, instead of reaching for your Bible, you might first notice a notification on your

mobile phone, or you may have a real desire to go and check the news or some other business might come up. It's very easy to lose that first moment of the day. It says in Exodus – when the sun became hot, the manna melted. Before you know it, the day will take over. And you will miss your opportunity for spending time in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Before you know it, you've not prayed, you've not read your Bible. You've not had that moment of meditation and enjoyment in the Lord's presence. The devil will do everything he can to make sure you do not get that time. Dear believer, he has lost the battle for your soul. The Lord Jesus has won your soul if you're a Christian. But the devil will do everything he can to make sure you make no progress and make sure that any potential you might have of growing in Christ is reduced down as far as possible.

You might be sitting here thinking that actually you find it quite easy. Perhaps it is your experience that you can wake up in the morning and you can read 2 chapters of Ezekiel and you can skip off to work singing all verses of The Man of Sorrows (Poem by J N Darby). But that's not my experience. Acts 2:42 says they persevered in the apostles' teaching and in prayers. It requires discipline, it requires habit- a good habit, a Spirit-filled habit- but a habit nonetheless to find that time every morning. We have to realise we are in a battle, dear believer. C H Spurgeon said that the devil doesn't care if you promise to read your Bible more or pray more or spend more time in the presence of the Lord Jesus as long as you promise you're going to start tomorrow.

Appetite for Growth

“This is the thing which Jehovah has commanded: Gather of it every man according to what he can eat, an omer a poll, according to the number of your persons: ye shall take every man for those that are in his tent” (verse 16). The last thing with the manna here was that they gathered it themselves. Now it seems from the text that the head of the household would go and gather what was needed for his

tent. And I think it is a very important thought in Scripture for those of us that are heads of our houses that we do take responsibility for making sure those in our houses are fed spiritually. We must read the Bible in our house. It must be a house characterised by God's word, by prayer, by knowing what it is to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus.

The principle that I wanted to bring out was that they gathered it for themselves. Moses didn't go out and gather all the manna and then give it out. They had to get it for themselves and that required exercise, it required action and it's the same for you, dear believer. You must get things straight for yourself when it comes to reading the Bible; you must get things straight in your soul for yourself. We talk a lot in the gospel about how you must come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour, and how right that is! Now you, dear believer, are responsible for making sure you have that time to feed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you must make sure you get things straight in your own soul. I would particularly encourage young people to ask any difficult questions they may have. Get things straight in your soul; challenge and test everything against the infallible word of God. My hope today is that you will go home and check what I've said this evening against God's word. It doesn't matter who's speaking or whose initials are on the front of the book you're reading. Come back to the word of God, the infallible word of God - the only authority that a Christian has to direct his pathway down here. We need to prayerfully meditate and study the Scripture carefully to gather these things for ourselves.

In 1 John 2, one of the things that characterise the young men is that the word of God abides in them. This is not just a memory game. This is about having the word of God abiding in you, knowing that when you read those verses, they're not just words on a page, but they have a practical reality in your life. We haven't just committed them to memory. We've committed them to heart. The Psalmist could say *"Thy word have I hid in my heart"* (Psalm 119:11). And that comes from feeding on Christ. The more we feed on Christ, the more

our lives down here should reflect Him and His character as we grow in our relationship and in our maturity with Him. You and I might have sat in these meetings for many years and listen with interest but how much has got into our souls?

Are we just surface-level Christians or do we have a desire to delve deeply into the word of God and to feed richly on the Lord Jesus Christ? How easy it is to have the confidence of sheltering under the blood and then settling down and going to sleep! The idea in Christianity is that we're constantly on the move. The New Testament is full of action words. We are to walk, we're to run, we're to stand, we're to flee, we're to grow. We're not to sit and go to sleep!

Some gathered much and some gathered little (verse 17). You know, there is absolutely no lack on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ; it comes down to desire on our part. How much do you want of Christ? How much time are you willing to sacrifice to be in His presence? It comes down to a desire and as we said at the start, a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we want to find ourselves deeply rooted in the Lord Jesus? You know, for a believer Christ should be everything. He is the life source. He is the model. He is the true vine. He is the bread of life. He is our aim and our object. Christianity is all about the Lord Jesus Christ and about spending time in His presence learning from Him, desiring and seeking after the things that He seeks after, and to have a heart that is on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Helping Others Grow

I've read finally in Philippians. *"I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on."* Christianity is wonderful because it is not something we do by ourselves. We are placed amongst others, and we should have a desire in our heart not just to see growth in our own lives, but to see growth in the lives of those that we gather together with and in all God's people. Paul says there was no one like-minded who would care with genuine feeling. Do we have a genuine care for those that we know and love? Do we have a

genuine desire to see them grow in their faith, to see them become more like the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we encouraging one another? Are we models?

Those of you that are fathers, are you models for the young men; those of you that might be young men, are you models for the little children? We have a responsibility to each other to encourage growth in one another. Do we care with genuine feeling? After this meeting, we will have lots of conversation. I'm sure we will ask all about jobs and schools and holidays and all sorts of things and that's not wrong. It's good to spend that time in fellowship, but do we genuinely know how one another are getting on? Do we genuinely know and care about the spiritual progress of those that we walk together with? Do we have that genuine feeling, that genuine affection for all those that the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased at the same cost as He purchased us?

Christianity is all about relationships; John talks in his epistle about love amongst the brethren, and perhaps more importantly about our relationship with God. He talks about the fathers, and they're like the full growth in Christ - the top stone of what it means to be a mature Christian. What does it say? *"Ye have known him that is from the beginning"*. They had a deep, experience-based love and knowledge of the Lord Jesus- not just knowing about Him but knowing the Person Himself through experience. It's very easy to recite passages of Scripture. It's very easy to look the part. It's very easy to sound the part, to "Amen" in all the right places but how is your relationship with God? How is your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? How is your heart tonight, dear believer?

We were talking at work about lockdown. Somebody said to me that it was like the world stood still. It was like the world was on pause and it felt a bit like that. Everything just sort of stopped. But in spiritual things, and when it comes to being a Christian, there's no such thing as standing still. You are either moving and growing more like Christ, or you are moving and growing more like the world. Are you slowly but surely being transformed and conformed into the

likeness of the Lord Jesus as you feed on Him? Or are you being conformed to the world and its standards? It is a challenge for my heart, probably more than anybody else in this room. But let us take what God has provided - the resource for the wilderness - so that we can find full growth as being in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

I want to finish with a little verse in Timothy. Paul writes to Timothy, and he says, *“give thyself to reading.”* And then he says, *“occupy thyself with these things, be wholly in them, so that thy progress may be manifest to all”* (1 Timothy 4:13,15). Let us go on to full growth. Let us feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us find in Him our rest and our repose. Let us find in Him the enjoyment of what it means to be in His presence. And let us go on and grow to full maturity because we have fed on the Lord Jesus Christ!

I've asked myself this question many times and I'll ask it again tonight. Dear believer, are you growing or are you going backwards? Let us all from this moment make a promise to ourselves to spend time in the presence of the Lord Jesus, feeding on Him and growing in Him - for His name's sake.

Tim Noble

An address given at Sevenoaks on 13th May 2023.

IF TWO OR THREE DESIRE ...

In the present time things viewed morally and spiritually are like things after an earthquake; all is out of order and disjointed. We cannot now turn round and view the Church as it once was – a body of heavenly-minded men keeping themselves unspotted from the world, manifesting the presence of Christ by their holy walk, shining as lights in the world's thick darkness. We must each one feel his own

individual weakness and failure.

The heart is very apt to take counsel of self, and droop under the circumstances around, but instead of being cast down, the question should come in, 'What is the spring, what is the source, of the sustaining strength on which we lean?' It is in Christ Himself and His power. If two or three desire now to meet in His name, and to walk unspotted in the midst of evil and failure, it is in the mighty power that never yet failed and never will, that they can do so. The church is loved and cherished by Him who is to present it to Himself. Nothing in earthen vessels can do this. Christ's own living power alone can sustain, nourish, and at the end present it to Himself without spot or wrinkle. How precious to be able to turn from our weakness and failure, and see this power up there in the living Person of that One who is "*the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,*" to see Him sustaining and nourishing me because I am bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh, risen with Him, one with Him.

G. V. Wigram
1805-1879

Extracted from "Gleanings Volume 2, Second Series".

BACK TO THE GREEK - FORBEARING

We can be very thankful that the Bible is available in so many languages but have you given any thought to the work that has gone into ensuring that you have a reliable translation of the original language of the Bible? We can thank God for Bible translators like Wycliffe and Darby who have laboured with others to make sure the English we read conveys the full thought that was in mind when the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the books of the Bible to select the words they used. The Greek language is particularly noted for having a wide range of words which express different shades of meaning whereas the English language can only do this by using more complex phrases. This is one of the challenges a translator will always have in

faithfully conveying the original meaning.

In my studies of the Bible I have come across Greek words in the New Testament (NT) that only occur once or twice. There are hundreds of Greek words that would fit into this category, but I am particularly interested in those words used to convey a thought that could easily be missed. Sometimes the translator points this out in the margin notes but there are many times when the reader is none the wiser unless they consult the original text. Now, I am no Greek scholar but thankfully there have been many reference works compiled to list the Greek words used in the NT together with their meanings and some even list all the Scriptures where that word is used [1].

One word I came across recently is found in 2 Timothy 2:24. The Greek word is *anexikakos* (ἀνεξίκακος) an adjective used at the end of the sentence. Here are three translations of that verse.

Authorized (King James) Version:

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,”

Darby Translation:

“And a bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all; apt to teach; forbearing;”

English Standard Version:

“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,”

I was interested in why Paul used this particular word which occurs nowhere else in the NT. For reference, the usual Greek word is *anechomai* (ἀνέχομαι) a verb used by Paul in Ephesians 4:2 and

[1]. See for example G.V.Wigram The Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament or Young’s Analytical Concordance of the Bible

Colossians 3:13 and several times by the gospel writers meaning forbearing or patiently enduring. The word he chose to use when writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24 is derived from this Greek word and combined with kakos meaning evil or what is bad, ill or wrong. (Note: this is a different word to the one translated iniquity used earlier in the chapter.) The word anexikakos does not appear frequently in Greek literature and so there are not many examples of its use to draw upon. The three examples above show how it has been variously translated and forbearing was chosen by Mr Darby as best representing the thought.

This second epistle to Timothy was written towards the end of Paul's life when he was in prison awaiting his death by execution (A.D. 67). There was tremendous persecution of Christians going on under the rule of Nero and I think Paul was aware that Timothy was in danger of being discouraged and even of being ashamed of the situation that existed. All in Asia had turned away from Paul (2 Timothy 1:15) and the epistle sets out Paul's desire for Timothy to carry on and continue faithful to the end. So, Paul uses this word to encourage Timothy that even in days when outwardly evil was increasing and becoming more tolerated, he was to patiently endure those who oppose and seek to help them. Paul continues in verse 25 *"in meekness setting right those who oppose, if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance to acknowledgment of the truth, and that they may awake up out of the snare of the devil, who are taken by him, for his will."*

In A.D. 2023 the world has not changed - the same evil exists, men like Nero are in power and Christians are persecuted. May this same spirit that Paul desired for Timothy fill our own hearts as we patiently wait for the Lord to return and may we learn to be rightly forbearing. We know that the world will increase in its evil in the last days, (see 2 Timothy 3 for a description) and so we need to discern those who may be caught up in the attitudes of the last days and recognise that God may be using us to bring to light His work in those we cross paths with.

As you study the Bible pray to the Holy Spirit that He will guide you to understand the depth of meaning to be found in God's word.

Phil Coldrick

CALVARY LOVE

If, when an answer I did not expect comes to a prayer which I believed I truly meant, I shrink back from it; if the burden my Lord asks me to bear be not the burden of my heart's choice, and I fret inwardly and do not welcome His will, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I wonder why something trying is allowed and press for prayer that it may be removed; if I cannot be trusted with any disappointment, and cannot go on in any peace under any mystery, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

Amy Carmichael

Extracted from "IF" Dohnavur Books (now out of print).

Note from the Editor:

Amy Beatrice Carmichael (1867 – 1951) was an Irish Christian missionary in India who opened an orphanage and founded a mission in Dohnavur. She served in India for 55 years and wrote 35 books about her work as a missionary.