

# ***Things New and Old***



**July 2024**

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## EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

This issue continues our desire to present a teaching gospel preaching as well as instruction from the Bible. We trust all our readers have found refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This recording of a preaching is followed by notes of a conversational Bible reading about the struggles that believers experience in their lives. This study was not about exalted truths but as an attendee at that meeting I felt the theme touches very real aspects that we find in the “ebbs and flows” of soul experience. Samuel Rutherford once wrote, “Your rock is Christ, and it is not the rock that ebbs and flows, but your sea”.

As before, we have selected an example of how someone has found rest in Christ, the Rock of our salvation, despite experiencing the storms of life in an area of war.

An older article on brotherly relations is sobering, since so often believers have failed in “using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace”. Yet we should also be encouraged that “a brother is born for adversity”. We believers today can prove the benefit of enjoying an inheritance among the sanctified while we await the return of our Saviour.

The article regarding the two Greek words for love is particularly relevant in this context.

The poem selected, written by an evangelical Christian about his Saviour, should help us to keep “looking unto Jesus” while we wait for and seek to work for Him.

As we read, let us heed the injunction: “do not lightly esteem prophecies; but prove all things, hold fast the right”. May God bless all our readers!

Ken

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

### **A Place of Refuge**

**Read: Psalms 46:1; Isaiah 28:14-16; Hebrews 6:17-20**

#### **Safe Rooms**

I'm sorry if some of the scriptures I've read might seem a little bit difficult to understand, but I think the message I have tonight is straightforward. I want to tell you about a place of refuge. I think we've been shocked by the atrocities going on in Israel that started a couple of weeks ago, but something we heard about, or I heard about, was the use of safe rooms. People went to try and hide in safe rooms. Elsewhere during wars and outbreaks of violence, people in other countries try to seek refuge in air raid shelters or other safe places. People have safe rooms in this country, too. I'm told there are rich people that have houses with safe rooms and if there's danger, they go and shut themselves in a safe room. As we perhaps read in the news, people in Israel tried to hide themselves in safe rooms. Some were protected, but some weren't. Some weren't safe, even though it was a safe room. Sadly, many families lost their lives. I was thinking about that and that's why I've read these scriptures.

#### **Refuge in a Person**

When the Bible speaks about refuge, it isn't in a place, but it's in a person. You can see that from the Psalm I read, *"God is our refuge"*. It doesn't say that heaven is our refuge or church is our refuge, or believers are our refuge. God is our refuge, and as I looked at the Bible, it struck me how, almost invariably, it spoke about refuge being in a person, not in a place, but in a person. God is our refuge. I remember, just before lockdown, that I had an opportunity to tour one of the Liverpool tunnels, the Kingsway Tunnel, which was one of the first tunnels, I think, built under a river. They took us down to the tunnel and they were explaining it was built more than 100 years ago.

But times change and after a very disastrous fire in a long tunnel in Switzerland, tunnels were required to have refuges built and they are now all along the Kingsway Tunnel. There are places of refuge where drivers, if something should happen, can get out of their cars and get into a place of refuge.

But as I say, I've come not to tell you about a place of refuge, but a Person where you can find refuge. *"God is our refuge and strength, a help in distresses, very readily found."* So that's two things I'd like you to take away from this scripture; that God is a help in distresses and that He's very readily found.

## **Places of Refuge**

Sometimes we can't find a place of refuge. I suppose that's what the word refugee means. We hear that there's a refugee crisis. There are people looking for a place of refuge and they can't always find one. From looking through the Psalms, there seem to be three different meanings to the word refuge. They all have a fairly similar sense. One of the meanings is a place of escape. Another meaning is a high fortress or a high tower. I live in Chester, not far from the Welsh border. There are lots of castles in Wales and they are built high up, aren't they? Generally, a castle is built on a high place, a place of refuge. Then the other sense is a place of shelter. Often the psalmist speaks about finding refuge under the shadow of God's wings and we can understand that as a place of shelter. So there are different suggestions but they all give us that sense of protection and safety in refuge. God is our refuge, and He is very readily found.

## **God Our Refuge**

Why is it that God is very readily found? You might think, I've never seen God. I don't know where to find God. I can't see Him. He is a Spirit. I can't touch Him. Why is it that God is very readily found? He's very readily found because He has come to find us and He's come to find us through the Lord Jesus. Jesus said that He had come

to seek and to save that which is lost. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to reveal the Father. God was His Father. Jesus came to reveal the Father, to make Him known to us and make us realise that God isn't that far off. But God has come close to us that He might be very readily found and we find that God isn't distant, but He's Someone who loves us. He's loved us enough to send His Son into the world. That well-known scripture says, *"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). God loves us. God is very readily found, and He's a help in distresses.

God can help at any time, but it's generally when we're in distress that we look for help, isn't it? When things are going well, we're often quite happy to get on with our lives. But when things go wrong, we often look around for help. And, if you're not in the time of trouble, my friend, then without being flippant about it, you're probably about to come into a time of trouble. Our lives are full of trouble. One of Job's friends said *"For man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards"* (Job 5:7). From my life, I know that life can be full of trouble. It can be full of distresses. A scripture was quoted this afternoon, wasn't it? *"Grief according to God works repentance"* (2 Corinthians 7:10) and God allows distresses to come into our lives, that we might find Him and find Him as a refuge.

## **Refuge in Lies**

So in Isaiah, and you might wonder about this scripture, but very simply Isaiah was speaking; he was a prophet and he was speaking to those that lived in the Kingdom of Judah. He was saying to them, 'You've made your refuge in lies'. That's a striking thing, isn't it? *"For ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol have we made an agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves"*.

Sadly, we live in a world that's full of lies and full of falsehood;

there are people and systems of things that will tell you that you're going to be alright. You may remember that the Kingdom of Israel was divided into the northern Kingdom which was Israel, and the southern Kingdom which was Judah, and the northern Kingdom, by this time, had already gone into captivity. The people had disobeyed God, and the Assyrians had come, and they'd taken the people away. They'd conquered and pillaged, and all the rest of it. Judah was disregarding this; Judah was carrying on just as Israel had. However, it wasn't Assyrians that were going to come to conquer them. It was the Babylonians, the Chaldeans.

Isaiah was warning them; he says, 'look around and see what's happened to Israel. Repent, otherwise, things will come upon you'. The people were hiding behind lies and behind falsehood and they just didn't want to believe that trouble was coming but, my friends, trouble is coming upon this world. We know that. The time will come when judgment will come upon this world. The gospel is preached that we might be delivered out of that, that we might have a place of refuge. So although these people had made lies their refuge, and they had hid themselves under falsehood, what does God say? *"Therefore, thus sayeth the Lord Jehovah: Behold I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that trusteth shall not make haste (or he that trusteth shall not hasten with fear)."*

## **The Cornerstone**

Think of what God is saying. He's laid a foundation. He's speaking about the Lord Jesus when He speaks about this cornerstone. You can look at Psalm 118 and it tells us that there's a cornerstone that God has laid. I love what it says here; it says *"a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone"*. You know something, we often ask, have you tried it? Speaking for myself and probably for you, if we're going to buy something, we like to read reviews, don't we? And what's a review? A review is by someone who has tried it. They've bought the garment you're interested in, they've tried it on and they tell you



whether it's a good fit or a bad fit, whether it's good value for money or bad value for money. If you plan to stay in a hotel or go on holiday somewhere, you can read a review. Someone's tried it. Well, this is perhaps a bit different, but this is a tried stone. It's a stone that has been tried, tried by God and it's been proved to be a sure foundation.

The things of this world are passing. What God has established will stand both for time and eternity, and the Lord Jesus is this stone. This tried stone, this precious cornerstone, is a sure foundation. We need foundations, don't we? We live in a world where everything is changing, but for the believer, for the Christian, we find that the scripture doesn't change. God says, *"I...change not."* He's a God that doesn't change. *"Jesus Christ [is] the Same, yesterday, today, and to the ages [to come]"* (Hebrews 13 v 8). God doesn't change; the things that God establishes don't change. We have a sure foundation, and if we trust in that salvation, on that foundation, we shall not hasten with fear. God will save.

Trouble is coming. We might be fearful. We might be fearful about the things that we see around us in the world. And it's not that once we believe we don't have problems and troubles; it's not that when we believe everything is fine. Some people preach what's called a prosperity gospel. If you believe in Jesus, you'll be healthy, you'll be wealthy and probably wise as well, but that's not what the Bible says. The Bible doesn't promise us health or wealth, but it does promise us a hope, a hope in the Lord Jesus, a hope that is sure and certain. The joy for the Christian is not that we're delivered out of troubles, but we have Someone who is with us through those troubles. The Lord leads us and is with us every step of our way. Once we have our faith and our trust in Him, He is a sure foundation. *"He that trusteth shall not make haste"*. I wish I could speak with more experience of these things. You know, I do often fear, even though I shouldn't fear because my faith and my trust is in the Lord Jesus. I can tell you that troubles have come upon me, and I can assure you that Jesus has been with me through those troubles, and I'm sure if you asked all

the other believers in this hall here tonight, they would say the same thing, that the Lord Jesus is a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation.

## **Fleeing for Refuge**

And then I read in Hebrews because this is the only reference to refuge in the New Testament. Plenty of references in the Old Testament! That's not why I read it. I read it because I love how this scripture speaks, *"we might have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us"*. It's a place of refuge. And we can have strong encouragement who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. What this scripture is saying is that God has promised, in fact, God has given us a double certainty of things--He's promised and He's intervened by an oath. Two unchangeable things. God's word is sure. God has promised and there's a hope set before us and that hope again isn't a place - it's in a Person. It speaks of Jesus, who has entered as Forerunner for us, meaning that Jesus has gone on before. Jesus is the theme of the gospel. As I've said, He's the One that has loved us enough to die for us. He's the One that has gone to Calvary. He's gone into the grave as we read this afternoon. He's come out of the grave, He's risen from among the dead, and He's ascended into heaven, where He now is. He's entered as Forerunner for us, but because He has gone that way, those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on that hope have the assurance that Jesus has gone before. He's there for us. I think when the writer here was speaking about fleeing for refuge, he had in mind the cities of refuge mentioned in the Old Testament. You may know that when the children of Israel went through the wilderness into the promised land, as it was for them, there were so-called cities of refuge. There were six cities that were designated cities of refuge and those that were potentially guilty of death could flee to a city of refuge.

You may remember that the land had the River Jordan running down the middle of it, and there were three cities on the east and

three cities on the west. They were clearly signposted and clearly known, so that those that needed to could flee for refuge to those cities. There was an opportunity for them to live.

## **Anchor of the Soul**

So, I think the writer here is thinking about that because he's writing to Hebrews. He's writing to those that knew about these things from the past and he's saying, 'I'm not telling you now about a place of refuge, but I'm telling you about a Person, Someone that's gone on before, Someone who is our Forerunner', who we have as anchor of the soul, both secure and firm. Anchor of the soul! Where is your soul anchored? Have you thought about your soul as you think about your body? When we get up in the morning, we wash and we have breakfast and we look after our bodies. But what about your soul? How often do you think about your soul? The Bible tells me that we have a never dying soul. In that sense, whatever we do with our bodies is not important, and we should look after our bodies, but what about our souls? Where will your soul spend eternity? Do you have an anchor for your soul, both secure and firm within the veil? That's where Jesus is, and that's what he's saying; he says that if your faith and trust is in the Lord Jesus, it's like you're a ship, but your anchor is secure in the Lord Jesus. So we know that if a ship's anchor is secure, then that ship is safe. It's when the anchor drags the ship can come into peril but when that ship is safely anchored it's safe. If our anchor is both secure and firm, where Jesus is, then we can have the peace and joy of knowing that our sins are forgiven.

But what does the Scripture say? Repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ! One of my favourite scriptures, if we're allowed to have favourite scriptures, is *"if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10: 9). Now that Scripture is a great comfort to me, and I hope it's a comfort to each one of us here. Because you can ask yourself, 'Have I confessed with my mouth Jesus as Lord? Have I believed in my heart

that God has raised Him from among the dead?’ If you can say yes, the Scripture says *“Thou shalt be saved”*, no doubt about it at all. The gospel is preached that we might have certainty about these things. God doesn't want us to doubt. He doesn't want us to be misled by falsehood and lies as we saw from Isaiah. But God wants us to be sure too, that if our faith and trust is in the Lord Jesus, then we can have the peace of knowing that our sins are forgiven for time and for eternity and as the writer here says, *“anchor of the soul, both secure and firm”*.

### **A strong Encouragement**

I'd like everyone here tonight to leave us knowing that their sins are forgiven, that their soul is secure with the Lord Jesus. How wonderful that we might have a strong encouragement who have fled for refuge. Those that fled were being pursued and knew that they needed a place of refuge; they went as soon as possible to a city of refuge. There aren't cities of refuge today but the Lord Jesus is available to us, God is available to us through Him. God is our refuge. *“God is our refuge and strength, a help in distresses, very readily found.”* I hope, in the few words that I've said this evening, that you realise that God is very readily found through the Lord Jesus. Jesus has come to save us, to bless us. If you believe, you're given the gift of the Holy Spirit; that's a wonderful thing. You have the Lord Jesus as High Priest interceding for you in heaven. You're given the Holy Spirit as the Lord Jesus said, another Comforter, another Comforter of the same kind, to be with you and me here on earth. So that, as we live our Christian lives, we might have the help that we need, to know the promises that God has made are real for us. Well, may we have our faith and trust in Him, for His namesake.

Peter Wallach

Gospel Preaching, Lytham St Annes, October 2023

## RECENT MINISTRY

### Notes of a Bible Reading on Believers' Struggles

#### Introduction

What I have in my heart, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, is to ponder three struggles that believers face in their pathway on earth, commencing with what is more external and going on to what is more internal. The term "struggle" is in Ephesians 6, verse 12. I suggest Scriptures for each struggle and how to overcome in that struggle.

#### The First Struggle – Injustice and Righteousness

**Read: John 19:4-11; Romans 1:16-18; 2 Corinthians 5:21**

The first struggle is with injustice and righteousness. We struggle as believers with the way the world is going: it's not right that this or that is happening.

The worst case of injustice that ever took place in this world was the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Every time I struggle with things that I don't think are right, I find great encouragement to consider what our Lord Jesus endured.

He suffered during an unjust court case. We purposely read the words that Pilate said, "*I find in him no fault whatever.*" yet then he said, 'Do you know that I have authority to crucify you?' This was the worst case of injustice. I find it amazing that the Lord did not step into that court and say, 'This is wrong, this is the way we're going to do it'. So as believers, we're not going to change the course of this world. Does accepting injustice or unrighteousness means that I agree with it? No! Yet I must look for God to resolve the injustices of the world.

What then are we going to do? Now, the answer that I find in Scripture is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the answer is found in Romans 1. Verse 18 says that men hold the truth in unrighteousness.

The Italian translation brings it to me in a much more practical way. It says that through unrighteousness men suffocate truth. That means that men will hide truth with unrighteousness. So wherever there is injustice, truth is hidden, and that's quite understandable.

But what does God do? God reveals His righteousness. How does He do it? It says in verse 17 of Romans 1, *“for righteousness of God is revealed therein, on the principle of faith, to faith”*.

How does that become real to us? The answer is faith. How? That's why I read that verse in Second Corinthians. In the worst ever unjust court case there comes to light real righteousness. Scripture says, *“Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we (believers) might become God's righteousness in him”*, that is in Christ.

I would say that it is not wrong to pray for things to be put right. It's a positive approach and a correct thing. But we have to see that in the worst case of injustice, God's righteousness shone in what Christ did for us; that is really overcoming the struggle of unrighteousness. And the first struggle that we have is not to be overcome by what we cannot do, but see what God has done for us.

We therefore must put on the armour of God. It's God's armour, it's not mine. And then regarding faith, Scripture speaks of the shield. A shield has no military value in attacking, but we can hide behind it, and it protects us. And sometimes all we can do is to hover behind it. A shield has value in defence. When we realise that the Lord is the One who has carried out the work and has won the victory, we can use that shield of faith to defend ourselves.

## Other Examples

Stephen the martyr would be an example of overcoming in this struggle. While being unjustly martyred on earth, he saw Christ in the heavens. He too was marked by the same spirit as the Lord Himself when he said, *“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”*. Stephen could not say these words in his own strength but by the help of Christ Jesus. So that is why that verse in Corinthians says, *“Him who knew*

*not sin he has made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in him*". Stephen, there, displayed morally God's righteousness in Christ at that moment. His martyrdom would suggest that God's righteousness comes into effect in front of the unrighteousness of the world.

Isaiah 53 speaks about the Lord Jesus, *"He was oppressed, He was afflicted but he opened not his mouth"*. I think it takes faith to understand that as faced with the unrighteousness of this world, we should take it to God in prayer and let God carry out His work. Christ is the perfect example, and we should follow in His steps. Christ didn't change the injustice of this world then, yet He overcame the world.

Recently when I have thought how to respond to an injustice, the word came to me, 'This is not your battle. This is the Lord's battle'. When we realise that we're fighting with demonic power, we have no power to do that except through Christ. We then *"more than conquer through Him that has loved us"* (Romans 8:37).

In Psalm 73 when the psalmist considered the prosperity of the wicked, he was in absolute despair and depressed over the way they apparently prospered unlike God's people who were suffering. And then he went into the sanctuaries of God and understood their end. Later he says to God, *"Whom have I in the heavens ... beside thee."* We've seen the folly in our own country and in America of Christians trying to Christianise society. In our personal lives, we should act as salt and light and be witnesses here but it is not our job like King Canute to try to hold the waves back.

Unbelievers often worry that justice won't be completed before a criminal dies. But as believers we know that everything will be set right before the great white throne. We know justice will be fulfilled. We too have done wrong and that is why Christ suffered, *"the just for the unjust"* so that He could set us free from bondage.

The Lord suffered something much deeper than the injustice of men. There was God's judgement on sin. We can only touch the

surface of what our Saviour actually suffered so that we become God's righteousness in Him. We are not as believers God's righteousness, full stop. We are God's righteousness *in Christ*.

We sometimes say that the Lord Jesus faced a struggle in the garden of Gethsemane saying, *"Let this cup pass from me but not as I will but as thou wilt"*. We have no power to face what the Lord faced. The Lord had to go alone. He completed the work in His power and uniqueness. He gave up His own will so that He could accomplish the will of the Father. So Peter, in his letter, writing about Christ the One who is a model for us, says, *"but if, doing good and suffering, ye shall bear it, this is acceptable with God"* (1 Peter 2:20). He then adds, *"who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously"*.

I think that's what we can do. But that is sometimes easier said than done! There is a verse that says we should leave vengeance to God Himself. God knows what He is doing. There is also a Scripture that says, *"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it! This also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him"* (Ezekiel 21:27). The Lord will put everything right, but He may have to overturn quite a lot in our lives until that happens.

## **The Second Struggle: The Bitterness of our Soul**

**Read: 1 Samuel 1:6-18; Job 10:1; 42:1-5; John 20:11-16**

The second struggle is the bitterness of our soul. This is a personal matter and that's why I said that we're going from struggling with what is external, to what is internal.

Sometimes, we get overcome by situations and, little by little, they would just pull us down. Our souls can become bitter, and we are exhausted by the situation. So, the passages that apply are Hannah in 1 Samuel; then Job as seen from the two passages in Job where he actually speaks himself in "the bitterness of my soul"; and then Mary at the tomb in John 20 gives us the real answer.

We cannot pretend or expect that the believer is always on a high.



We can't even suggest that believers should always be joyful. Yes, Scripture says rejoice. But that doesn't mean, dear brother or sister, that we will not struggle nor feel bitter,

Has it ever happened, dear brother or sister, that you are in a difficult situation because of a trouble that you have, an illness that you have, and you feel that you cannot cope? Why has it happened to me? Why am I suffering? One example would suggest Job suffered because God allowed it. Why ever does God allow suffering in our lives? Why? Why is God Himself doing this? Mary suffered because the One in whom she had put all her trust was gone. There are other examples. Leah suffered in a family situation because her husband didn't love her.

What is the answer that Scripture gives to us on how to overcome the bitterness of soul? It is the opening of our eyes and ears to see and to hear the Lord's presence in our life.

You will have noticed in Job 42, Job says. *"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear."* Most of us, brothers and sisters, have heard of Christ many times. I can't even count the number of meetings I've been to, and I'm just young. I had heard of Christ, yes, but could I say like Job *"now mine eye seeth thee"*? That was the opened eye to see the Lord's presence with Job in the midst of trouble.

Hannah did not confront her adversary. Instead, she spoke to God about her trouble and long before her situation was resolved, her countenance completely changed and she was happy to eat. Being in God's presence had changed her! Sometimes when we confront somebody in trouble, we may make matters worse, yet in His presence God helps us to see His point of view.

So the challenge is: are we going to leave room for Christ to act in our lives when we are struggling through the bitterness of our soul? We shouldn't just say, 'Oh things must be set right'. I think the believer should think, 'Am I looking for Christ's presence with me in my life?' Christ has promised to be with us throughout our lives down here. It is true because Christ has said it Himself and He is the

truth.

God gave permission for Job to be tested and He carried out His perfect work in Job's heart. Job was an upright man, but he had to see God with his own eyes.

### **Further Examples of this Struggle**

Another example of this kind of suffering was with Paul who was given a thorn for his flesh. The Lord helped him in this struggle. *“And he said to me, My grace suffices thee; for my power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may dwell upon me.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul had to allow Christ to work in him so that he could carry out His work.

There's a reference in Hebrews 12 to the possibility of a root of bitterness springing up and causing trouble and many being defiled by it. Bitterness in me can adversely affect others. But the antidote, as that chapter shows, is our eyes being kept fixed on Jesus.

We cannot say that believers will not suffer bitterness, but we can say one thing; if we're struggling through bitterness, we should turn our eyes and our ears to Jesus. I find Mary a beautiful example. Her eyes were turned to the Man, but she didn't immediately recognise that it was Christ. But when her ears heard Christ calling her “Mary” her heart rejoiced.

In Exodus, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they came to the waters of Marah which means bitterness. There they murmured against Jehovah. We too can start questioning our faith. What's the answer? Bring the person of Christ into the situation. (See Exodus 15:22-26)

Hannah was misunderstood by the priest who should have helped her with her struggle, but she got her peace in the presence of God. Job's friends didn't really help him, but he found peace in the presence of the Lord. I feel that bitterness of soul cannot be shared (Proverbs 14:10). It's a personal experience. We can speak about it,

but we will only come out of such a situation if we look to the Lord. We read of Job's experiences hundreds of years later, but at that moment, his friends couldn't help him.

In the case of Naomi and Ruth. Naomi wanted to be called Mara. She was bitter of soul. The only reason Ruth wasn't affected by it was that she had the desire that Naomi's God might be her God. Although Naomi said that everyone should call her Mara, yet in the rest of the book of Ruth she's always called Naomi. We can call ourselves bitter, but how God sees us is completely different. In the 2nd Epistle to Corinthians and chapter 1, God is described as *"the Father of compassions, and God of all encouragement: who encourages us in all our tribulation"*.

Another example is the two on the road to Emmaus who were downcast and going away. There we see the grace of the Lord Jesus in the manner that He went with them. I think we have to see the present service of Jesus and the way that He is sympathetic with us and how He helps us in respect of these situations. So the Lord's grace is essential because He accompanies us in the struggle. Christ's love is always the same, but we need His grace to be with us as we are struggling through the problems of life.

Another example is the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were cast into the burning fiery furnace, where they proved God's presence with them, and were preserved.

### **The Third Struggle: The Lusts of the Flesh**

**Read: James 1:14-15; Romans 12:1-2; 13:14**

The third struggle is with our *own* lusts. You might be amazed by this! James 1 comes with a very hard truth. It says that *"every one is tempted, drawn away, and enticed"*. Up to here we can say, 'Yes, yes, this is true.' Then it says *"by his own lust"*.

Although we might be believers in Christ, we still have to struggle with our own lusts. These are not only illegal things, there are plenty

of legal things that our mind or our heart or our body want that are lusts of the flesh.

How then can we respond to this? The answer is in Romans chapter 12 and chapter 13 where we commit ourselves as believers to find and to live God's will in our lives. What the apostle points out to the Romans is that we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ. We have spoken of Christ as the perfect example; now we are to put Him on. What does that mean? I would link it to Romans 12: we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

So what role does our mind have in the pathway of faith? It is to be renewed; we are to have the mind of Christ so that we might not fulfil the lust of our flesh. But it also says to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Now that one thing is not something that we do easily!

In Genesis 3 the serpent said something and Eve saw that the fruit on the tree was good. But all of the time the goodness of God was there in the garden. Everything was available and yet there was something that she wanted more. I'm wondering if that is the problem of our lust? We lose sight of Christ and we lose sight of God. And then I no longer want to converse in the garden with Him and I hide myself from Him and do my own thing. The answer in Scripture is: *"Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh, do ye also arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin, no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh to men's lusts, but to God's will."* (1 Peter 4:1-2)

So yes, the struggle is ours but we are to seek Christ Himself. We are to put Him on. That suggests, dear brothers and sisters, that we could live without putting on Christ. It is possible that we could live down here and not know anything of Christ's presence and action in our souls.

### **Satan's way—Foothold to Stranglehold**

In dealing with this whole struggle, I see the threshold is in what

I'm watching and what I'm hearing. Satan then gets a foothold, but he's not content to stop there. Beginning with the threshold, then he gains a foothold, and he wants a stronghold. What I see and what I hear gets into my mind, and that becomes Satan's stronghold. But he's not content to stop there. He wants my heart as a stranglehold.

Isn't that why the apostle says "*but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*"? Satan will capture all our mind when we have a desire, an earnest desire to do something wrong. We will start thinking about that all the time. So it is important that we renew our minds and be involved with Christ in our lives.

We, and especially children growing up, should learn to flee. We really need to flee from evil lusts and not give them any place. That's our salvation! We may think the shield of faith is no use in the attack, but it is of great use in the defence: fleeing is a very important task for the believer when temptation comes. Now the renewing of our mind wouldn't be possible unless the Holy Spirit helps us. Scripture says that those that are led by the Holy Spirit are sons of God. That just suggests that we need the help of the Spirit to renew our minds and be willing to live for God's will.

Scripture speaks of the fruit of the Spirit. What the Spirit is seeking to form in each one of us is the character of Christ. The things that tempt us (because we're still in the flesh) would have less and less of a place if we're in the presence of the Lord. The whole point is that we must accept and realise that our flesh is weak. But if we understand that, then we must let Christ work in us through the Spirit and those fruits will appear.

One of the fruits is self-control and we all know we suffer from a lack of self-control - we can't naturally control ourselves especially when it comes to things that we want. But God in His mercy has sent the Spirit to renew our minds and give us that self-control.

There is great power in verse 1 of Romans 12. It says "*to present your bodies a living sacrifice*". That is why we're still here. Our challenge is to present our bodies, our current bodies, as a living

sacrifice for God.

It starts with me accepting what's in myself. If I have pride, that is not acceptable to God. I must begin by recognising that I am nothing and it's only then that God can work with me. If we're going to be changed, we need to recognise that in our flesh good does not dwell.

That's exactly why James refers to our lust. It's something that comes from within. Once you reach that point, there's tremendous liberty. You are released from trying to make yourself better to God and you have absolute dependence upon the Lord. So we are released from the bondage of sin into the liberty of sonship in God's presence. We're not going from bondage to bondage. We go from bondage and slavery to sin, to freedom and liberty in God's presence.

### **Learning from the Lord**

We can learn from the Lord when He was tempted in the wilderness, while not suggesting any of us could meet temptation with the strength that the Lord Jesus did. But He combated each temptation with Scripture, and we, too, have God's word. The Scriptures are very powerful! Yet if we don't have the help of the Spirit, we will not be able to use it at the right moment. That brings us back to the armour of God where the only attack weapon there is the sword of the Spirit which is God's word.

In the book of Job God was telling him that he didn't have the perspective to understand, but he needed to trust. But then as we look at the Lord—we can see that He can also say 'I've been through it; whatever you're going through, I've encountered it and I've overcome it'. That helps to explain to us why Christ came in flesh and blood so that He can in every way be sympathetic to us and help us through the struggles (Hebrews 2:18). Whether the test is sent from God or comes from our innate lusts, it's going to exercise our heart and what it must bring out is growth and the victory that Christ will carry out in our bodies for His glory.

On one occasion Peter was tested, and the Lord says to Peter, “get

*thee behind me, Satan*” and then on another test, the Lord says, *“when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren”* - a positive result was secured in Peter.

We're to understand that the pathway of faith is a challenging one and that's why I mentioned that verse in Timothy where Paul says to Timothy, *“Strive earnestly in the good conflict of faith, lay hold of eternal life to which thou hast been called”*. So we're going to struggle. But, there is a result for us and for Christ.

The instruction here is to present our bodies a living sacrifice acceptable to God, yet I am liable to lust and to hold anger in my heart towards my brother. I start by realising what Christ has done so that I could be delivered from the bondage of sin. What counts is our commitment as believers to walk worthily of our calling. That means that I engage and commit myself entirely to doing what's right according to Scripture. And the answer to that in that passage is the renewing of our mind and in being not conformed to this world.

We need to go through the depths of experience, like Peter who went out and wept bitterly and Paul who exclaimed in Romans 7, *“O wretched man that I am!”* Many believers know in their own lives points where it has been essential to go through some depth of soul bitterness and crying out to God for help and finding afresh this presence of the Lord. It is comforting that Romans 8 begins, *“There is therefore no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus”*.

We must never think that a second struggle is not going to happen. We must go through struggles so that we learn from the experience like David in Psalm 51, *“restore unto me the joy of thy salvation”*.

## **Conclusion**

God allows these struggles so that we learn ourselves, and especially that we learn God .

Vittorio Casavecchia

Bible Reading Notes, Belfast, 22 April 2023

## TESTIMONY SECTION

My story is a story of God's faithfulness in the midst of suffering and trial. It is story of God's joy in the midst of constant emotional pain, God's unending hope in the midst of ongoing tears and sorrow, God's deep love in the midst of fear and death.

I grew up in a beautiful loving family south of Kyiv during the Communist regime where Christians were persecuted severely. God blessed me and my nine siblings with godly, amazing and honourable parents—I had a very happy childhood. From just two godly people came a clan of about 150 who all have personal relationships with Jesus. That is a miracle in itself! My maternal great grandfather was an evangelist in the 1920s taking the Word of God throughout Ukraine. My paternal grandparents owned houses and land that were confiscated by the Communists. Yet they gained spiritual wealth which is far greater than anything that the world has to offer.

Even though I heard the stories from my parents and grandparents about the first and second world wars, I never could have imagined that I would be a witness to a wicked war in my generation. I had people warning me that this could happen, but I did not listen to them. To be honest I laughed at their warning, never believing that anything like this could happen to my nation. The sound of the first explosion and the war announcements literally paralyzed me. Many evacuated immediately, but my stubborn brother with his seven children refused to leave his house and land until four days later his children got sick from the explosions nearby. Thankfully, my brother was legally allowed to leave because he has more than three children. Twelve people in two vans were slowly driving through the packed roads where we saw tanks going in the opposite directions. I always promised my brother's children a trip to a foreign country if they learnt English, and it was becoming reality in totally different circumstances. Instead of a glorious vacation, I had constantly to hug them in order to calm their fearful souls. We sang "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so" and others during our way. Singing calmed their souls.



During our travels, I asked friends all over the world to pray for us and God answered them in marvellous ways. We drove 20 hours through the broken and barricaded roads without any signs until we reached the Romanian border. It was surreal to see cars and vans in 14km queues, 4km lines of people on foot carrying bags and crying kids, and handicapped individuals in wheelchairs. I felt it was like in the movies of Jews escaping Nazi's. It was painful to see so many Ukrainian babushkas and mothers fleeing without their husbands and children without their fathers. I felt it was like a real exodus of my nation, just as Moses led. I was crying in my soul, yet, I had to keep strong in Jesus for myself, for my family and especially the children. It took us just two days to go through the border. We had to rely on Proverbs 3:5 all the time: *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths"* (ESV). He made our path straight through angels and friends in Romania, Hungary, Austria until we finally reached Frankfurt, Germany. My sister Vera with her husband's family took us in. They opened their arms to receive Ukrainian refugees in their beautiful home. It was a miracle for God to provide my brother with a large house suitable for his family.

Being in a foreign country feels like we are strangers in a strange land. We are weary from the lack of language skills. 'How long, oh Lord, will this last?' I ask. Local and Ukrainian refugee churches become special places for spiritual recharging and encouragement. God allowed me to take Ukrainian children and adults to the revival camps in Austria. I also take cancer patients to the hospitals. Many of my dreams and desires have been put on hold and some have even been shattered for a season. It has not been easy for me to be here. Yet, it is a blessing to serve even with a smile, or a hug, or encouragement wherever you see a hurting person.

Strength is perfected in weakness. *"When I am weak, I am strong."* (2 Corinthians 12:10, ESV). I pray for revivals in our families, communities and nations. Blessings to all from my heart to yours.

Tatiana (Tanya) Gumenyuk

# MINISTRY FROM THE PAST

## Brotherly Relations

Read: I John 3: 11-16; 1 Kings 20: 31-34; Acts 3: 1-6.

### Introduction

In bringing these scriptures forward, I have in mind the exceeding value of brotherly relations, not only as affording testimony before men, but as affording delight to the heart of Christ. We may well understand that this precious relationship stands in jeopardy every hour, for we have to face one, who, not only began by dividing and separating brethren, but who continues and is abroad to-day, yet one, thank God! of whom it shall presently be said, "*The accuser of our brethren has been cast out.*" (Revelation 12:10).

### Cain and Abel

His operations began early in relation to the first brothers. Indeed, it is a solemn consideration that the enemy's activities are such, that the first time you have brethren on earth, he not only succeeds in dividing them, but makes of one a murderer, for it is recorded of Cain that he slew his brother. Then, further, he disclaimed any right of control or guardianship, saying to God, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (Genesis 4:9). You may say that these were natural brothers. So they were, but notwithstanding, one is entitled to draw an analogy, as John does, between the relations of two natural brothers, Cain and Abel, and our relationships as brethren, indicating thus, the serious possibilities of one's own heart being on the line of separating the brethren. We know how the Lord views this matter. It is said that one of the seven things which the Lord hates is "*he that soweth discords among brethren*" (Proverbs 6:19).

There is not any suggestion of a conflict between Cain and Abel, but it is said that Cain slew his brother. He slew him in the field. The first prophet to suffer because of divine claims died in a field. The last of the righteous prophets, to whom the Lord Jesus refers, suffered

not in the field, nor in the public places, but in the very precincts of the house of God. Zacharias suffered between the temple and the altar, as if to shew, that with the lapse of time the thing had crept in amongst the people, who stand outwardly in relation to God and His blessed name. This is a serious warning as to our activities in the house of God or its precincts.

It is said of Abel that *"he being dead yet speaketh"* (Hebrews 11:4). There was no will with Abel; he was concerned about acceptance, and being in the light and joy of it, he willingly surrenders before this spirit of hatred. Thus we are indebted to this first prophet for light as to how a brother may conduct himself in the most difficult and trying circumstances. But if the accuser of the brethren was active with the first brothers, he becomes increasingly active as he sees a called and separated saint, whom God has sovereignly called from his country, and kindred, and father's house, and he would again draw near.

## **Abraham and Lot**

In Genesis 13 it is said that Abraham rose up to go to Bethel. He was intent upon going to the place where he had built an altar at the first. The enemy, doubtless seeing that this movement would ultimately be for the glory of God, once again brings in disruption and strife: Alas, that there should be strife on the way up to the house of God! It was not now between two brothers personally, but in the wider sphere of their households, as if the enemy would get in wheresoever he could. There was strife between Lot's herdsmen and Abraham's. If the shepherds are at strife, what shall become of the lambs of the flock? What shall become of the young who have been entrusted to us by the blessed Lord Himself?

Abraham rises in the dignity of a called saint, and says to Lot his brother, *"Let there be no contention between me and thee, between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren."* (Genesis 13: 8). Beloved, the precious recognition that we are brethren, that we cannot afford to be at strife, should solve every difficulty and put an

end to every complex problem amongst the saints of God to-day. Abraham refuses to strive in the dignity that was his, and says to Lot, *"Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if to the left, then I will take the right; and if to the right, then I will take the left."* He left God to choose for him. Then God says to Abraham, *"Lift up now thine eyes"*, as if to say, Lot has lifted up his eyes and chosen, now, Abraham, lift up your eyes. He did well by waiting and manifesting the unjealous spirit of a brother.

Lot was no easy brother; he was not a spiritual man; but he knew what was right, and the true and proper course to adopt. Later on, we find he had unleavened bread in his house, and when the heavenly visitors came to Sodom, he gave them unleavened cakes. Would that instead of sitting in the gate of Sodom as a magistrate and vexing his righteous soul there, he had eaten the unleavened bread himself. But Abraham regards Lot as his brother, and as the enemy comes against him, though it is said they took Abraham's brother's son, his nephew, Abraham rises above the natural relationship and pursues after his brother Lot and recovers his brother.

## **Moses**

I would speak, too, of Moses and the spirit that marked him as he endeavoured to go in amongst the brethren. It is said that on one occasion he saw two Hebrew men quarrelling. Mark the word, two Hebrew men. It is not said that he saw two brethren quarrelling, but two Hebrew men. Some may quarrel as men, but as brethren it is most distasteful. Stephen speaking of Moses' intervention says that *"he...compelled them to peace"* (Acts 7:26). That is authority, 'He compelled them to peace.' One would plead for the recognition of authority, for it is a step in the right direction. He compelled them by this word, *"Ye are brethren,"* as if to say it was unthinkable that brethren should quarrel, that there should be any strife. Should we give place in our hearts to the activities of the accuser of the brethren, he will act on our sentiments, on our human feelings, in order that he may bring about disruption. But Moses compelled them

to peace.

Now he had something greater in store for these men than quarrelling. He went out and looked upon his brethren and saw their burdens. He saw a poor and afflicted people, and he came into fellowship with them. In Acts it is said that it came into his heart to "*look upon his brethren, the sons of Israel*" (Acts 7:23); and he appropriates them as such. Moses came into fellowship in relation to those two things; a company of poor and afflicted people, but as recognising in them the "*sons of Israel*" he saw all the dignity that belonged to their parentage, through one who as a prince had wrestled with God and had prevailed. He saw them as the sons of Israel and compelled them to peace. Would that we had that power; that as in holy intimacy with our Lord Jesus Christ on such occasions when the flesh manifests itself, we might have power to compel to peace!

John says in his epistle (1 John 3:16) that "*we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives*". It is no matter of choice or whether I am minded to do it; it is a thing that is obligatory upon me. I ought to do it. John says, "*See what love the Father has given to us*" We are ever ready to speak of that side, the objective side, and to say, "*See what love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God.*" (1John 3:1). But now John says, Let us have that put into practice; let us practise the love that has been shewn us, so he adds, "*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.*" (1 John 3: 14).

## **Unholy Relationships**

In referring to 1 Kings 20 we see an entirely different character of things. Ahab was an unspiritual man, one who wrought wickedly, and yet was a man whom God allowed to have two successive victories over the Syrians. He twice defeated the proud Syrians. After the first defeat the Syrians say, 'He is the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys'. But, beloved, He is the God of both, and He will defeat

the enemy if we are marked by dependence, whether on the hills or in the valleys. Presently the enemy sees from his vantage point an opportunity of bringing in amongst Israel an exceedingly disruptive element in Ben-hadad, one who would have put in bondage the people of God, who had said to Ahab, *"Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, the goodliest, are mine"*. This proud Syrian would bring them into bondage with all that they had, but Jehovah comes in, for He will not allow His people to continue in bondage.

After his second defeat, Ben-hadad hears the voice of his servants, and they say, *"the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings"*. God forbid that we should be merciful on that line. But he sends his servants, and Ahab says of Ben-Hadad, *"He is my brother"*. Ahab claims relationship with this proud Syrian who would bring his people into bondage, and says, *"He is my brother"*! One of the most sorrowful things amongst the people of God to-day is the allowance of associations with the world which are destructive of fellowship. Ahab says, *"He is my brother,"* and he makes a covenant with him and sends him away.

But the time came when Syria once again fought with Israel. The very link which you form with this world, however friendly it may appear to be, is enmity against God, and will prove your undoing. Thus it was with Ahab. When Ben-Hadad comes again the third time, he gives instructions that there is to be no fighting with small or great, but with the king of Israel only. The very link formed at the expense of the fellowship, the very link that would disturb brotherly relationships, is now exposed in its true character. The roots may be secret, but friendships formed with a world wherein our Lord was crucified will come in and disrupt the fellowship, and hinder the people of God from being in holy, happy liberty.

I would appeal to anyone who is forming unholy relationships; consider your ways, for they will bring disaster in relation to fellowship. It is destructive of the dignity of the precious relation of brethren.

## Peter and John

I refer now to Peter and John in Acts 3. It is said of them that they went up into the temple at the ninth hour, being the hour of prayer. They went up together, and they cannot be regarded as men of like temperament. They were diverse naturally; one probably a loveable, contemplative man, the other certainly at one time an impulsive man. But there is no self-assertion on the part of Peter here, no desire to be prominent. He with John had at one time prepared the passover. Now they are moving together at the hour of prayer. They both have the Holy Spirit; He had descended upon them with "*parted tongues as of fire*" , and every element of leaven, so to speak, had been dealt with. There is nothing left but what they have in common. Outwardly they are in poverty, and yet they are full. They are rich in all that makes true wealth, for they are brethren dwelling together in unity, and they move out together.

It was the ninth hour, a very significant hour. We have to begin with the ninth hour—the hour at which our Lord died. At that hour the veil of the temple was rent in the midst, and a way was made through, so that we have access into the very presence of God. How are we to move as having the Holy Spirit save in the dignity and blessedness of this relationship as brethren? So these two are moving together—one in heart, mind and soul.

At the gate of the temple they see a lame man. The temple with its architectural beauty could do nothing for him. But Peter looking at him says, "*Look on us*". There you have the idea of representation. Two men without silver or gold moving together who can say, "*Look on us*". That is representation. The lame man sees what is better than silver and gold, something so attractive that he clings to both of these brethren. He is not a party-man; he does not hold to John at the expense of Peter, nor to Peter at the expense of John, but he clings to both of them. He goes to the trial with them, and would probably have gone to prison with them, and the world can say nothing against healing of that kind, for "*beholding the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to reply.*" Men cannot refute

the testimony of brethren who love one another, and these disciples had love one to another.

Though Peter said, *"Silver and gold have I none,"* yet he had something. *"Such as I have,"* he says, *"give I thee."* Would that we paid attention, beloved, to what we have; it may be small in our sight, but it is much, thank God! in spite of a day of brokenness. We have much for men; we have much for the saints of God; we have much for the poor and the faint-hearted. Peter here knew it and says, *"Such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."*

### Challenge to Us

It is a solemn thing that John presses upon the saints: *"No murderer has eternal life abiding in him."* John is not governed by sentiment; he would not put sentiment for grace. *"If any one say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"* (1 John 4:20) These are deep soundings which belong to John's ministry, and I must challenge my heart. If I have failed in the past, there is still open to me what Peter calls *"the rest of his time."* I can take deep soundings in John's ministry and see how divine love has affected me. Of what value is it to speak of divine love if I have not love for the brethren? How can I stand up amongst the people of God unless I have love? If I pray it must be with the spirit, and I cannot pray with the spirit and have feelings in my heart against a brother. If I sing, I am to sing with the spirit, and I cannot sing with others if I have feelings against a brother or sister.

It behoves us all in these last few moments here to take deep soundings, and to see if each one of us can say practically, *"We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren."*

J. H. Trevvett

An address given in the early 1900's.



## BACK TO THE GREEK

In the previous Back to the Greek articles individual words have been looked at that only occur once or twice in the Greek New Testament. In this article I want to look at another aspect in which the knowledge of the Greek word can be helpful. This is when there are two or more Greek words which are translated into the same English word and knowing this can help us better understand the passage of Scripture.

### **To Love – phileo (φιλέω) and agapao (ἀγαπάω)**

The example I want to give is the verb to love and the passage of Scripture is John chapter 11 which deals with the sickness of Lazareth, his death and then how he was brought back to life by Jesus four days after he had died. The verb is used three times in that chapter; the first is when the two sisters, Martha and Mary, send word to Jesus saying, *“Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick”* (John 11:3). The Greek word used for love in that instance is from phileo.

In verse 5 the apostle John makes the following observation: *“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”* Here he uses a different Greek word for love based on agapao. Some Bible translations will have a note to indicate that the word in the original language is different in these two verses and may also give you some indication of the difference in meaning. In the Darby translation you will find it is noted and the reader is referred to John 21:15 where a fuller explanation is given for the meaning of each of these Greek verbs.

Phileo signifies the love of friendship and implies tender affection and has been translated as “have affection for” or “am attached to” and involves the emotions. Agapao from its use in the New Testament (NT) is understood to speak of a higher love that comes from a settled disposition such as the love of God towards man as expressed in John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son...”* It is an unselfish love and does not require any attractive features or worthiness in the person who is being loved but

comes from the very nature of God Himself.

In the passage we are considering, the sisters are in a very distressed state because their brother is sick and they appeal to the love of affection which they knew the Lord had for Lazarus. But John when writing this account inserts the statement we have in verse 5 and changes the verb showing to us that he understood there was more to the love of Jesus than simple affection for Lazarus. In fact, John groups all three of them together naming Martha first, mentioning her sister and then naming Lazarus; all three are loved in a way which at the time they probably never understood. It was divine love which had loved them from before the foundation of the world, and which was going to reveal something of the glory of God in what was about to happen. Naturally speaking a wait of 2 days would not seem consistent with love in action and so John tells us of the character of the Lord's love for them before he tells us that the Lord then waited 2 days before making His move.

I find this very comforting because we all face trials and often these are health related. It is a great comfort to the Christian to know that Jesus loves us in a way which has no bearing on whether we are worthy of that love or not. Things may not seem to be going well for us but Jesus loves us just the same. Jesus plainly tells His disciples that Lazarus had died; He knew what He was going to do. The next reference to love is in verse 36 and it follows the shortest verse in the English Bible that simply states that *"Jesus wept."* The Jews seeing this said, *"Behold how he loved him."* Here the word is from *phileo* and this shows that the Jews observed the emotional side and the strength of affection the Lord had for Lazarus. [In passing, I just note that the Greek word for wept is only used this one time in the NT and is not the same word used for Mary and the Jews weeping in verse 33. The word used of Jesus means the actual shedding of tears and implies silent crying. The word used for Mary and the Jews is the more common word describing a loud expression of grief. When Jesus saw them weeping like this he was *"deeply moved in spirit and troubled"* .]

What follows is well known to us and results in Lazarus being raised from among the dead and restored to his sisters. How those three must have grown in their appreciation and understanding of the love of the Lord Jesus! Indeed, Mary in the very next chapter expresses her deep affection for the Lord and anointed His feet with a very costly ointment, filling the house with its odour. It is suggestive of the benefit that all get when we express our appreciation of the Lord Jesus. In chapter 13 John begins with the phrase: *“Jesus...having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end.”* This is another case where agapao is used and is a beautiful example of the power of the Lord’s love which is set towards His own and never fails.

There are times when we may feel we have let the Lord down as Peter did after he had denied Him but that does not affect the Lord’s love for us. The trials and struggles we pass through are to bring us closer to the Lord and develop a love in us which is of the same “agape” character. Peter, so soon after his denial of the Lord, could not bring himself to use agapao in his answer to the Lord’s probing questions but rather affirmed his attachment to Jesus and his love for Him as the Object of his affection above all else (see John 21:15-17 and note which Greek words are used by the Lord and Peter). By the time Peter writes his epistles he has no hesitation in using agapao both for our love for the Lord (1 Peter 1:8) and for our love to one another (1 Peter 1:22).

If you look at all the references in the Scriptures to how we are to love one another you find that agapao is used all the time. Some Christians speak of this as agape love. It is a salutary reminder to us that the character of our love for all believers is not to reflect our natural feelings towards them nor is it to be reserved for only those with whom we may have some affinity.

The Lord Jesus also has a warning for us in these last days and in Matthew 24:12 He says, *“the love (agape) of the most shall grow cold”*. May we be ever watchful that we do not fall into this snare of allowing our expression of God’s love to diminish in the last days.

Phil Coldrick

## THE MAN IN THE GLORY

### "The Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5)

I wake in the morning with thoughts of His love  
Who is living for me in the glory above,  
Ev'ry minute expecting He'll call me away,  
And that keeps me bright all the rest of the day!

But the moments speed forward, and on comes the noon  
Yet still I am singing "He'll come very soon"  
And thus I am watching from morning till night  
And pluming my wings to be ready for flight!

There's a *Man in the glory* I know very well.  
I have known Him for years, and His goodness can tell:  
One day in His mercy He knocked at my door,  
And, seeking admission, knocked many times o'er;

But when I went to Him, and stood face to face,  
And listened awhile to His story of grace,  
How He suffered for sinners, and put away sin,  
I heartily, thankfully, welcomed Him in.

I have known Him so long that I'm able to say,  
The very worst sinner He'll not turn away.  
The question of sin I adoringly see,  
The *Man in the glory* has settled for me!

And as to my footsteps whatever the scene,  
The *Man in the glory* is keeping me clean;  
And therefore I'm singing from morning till night  
The *Man in the glory* is all my delight.

George Cutting.