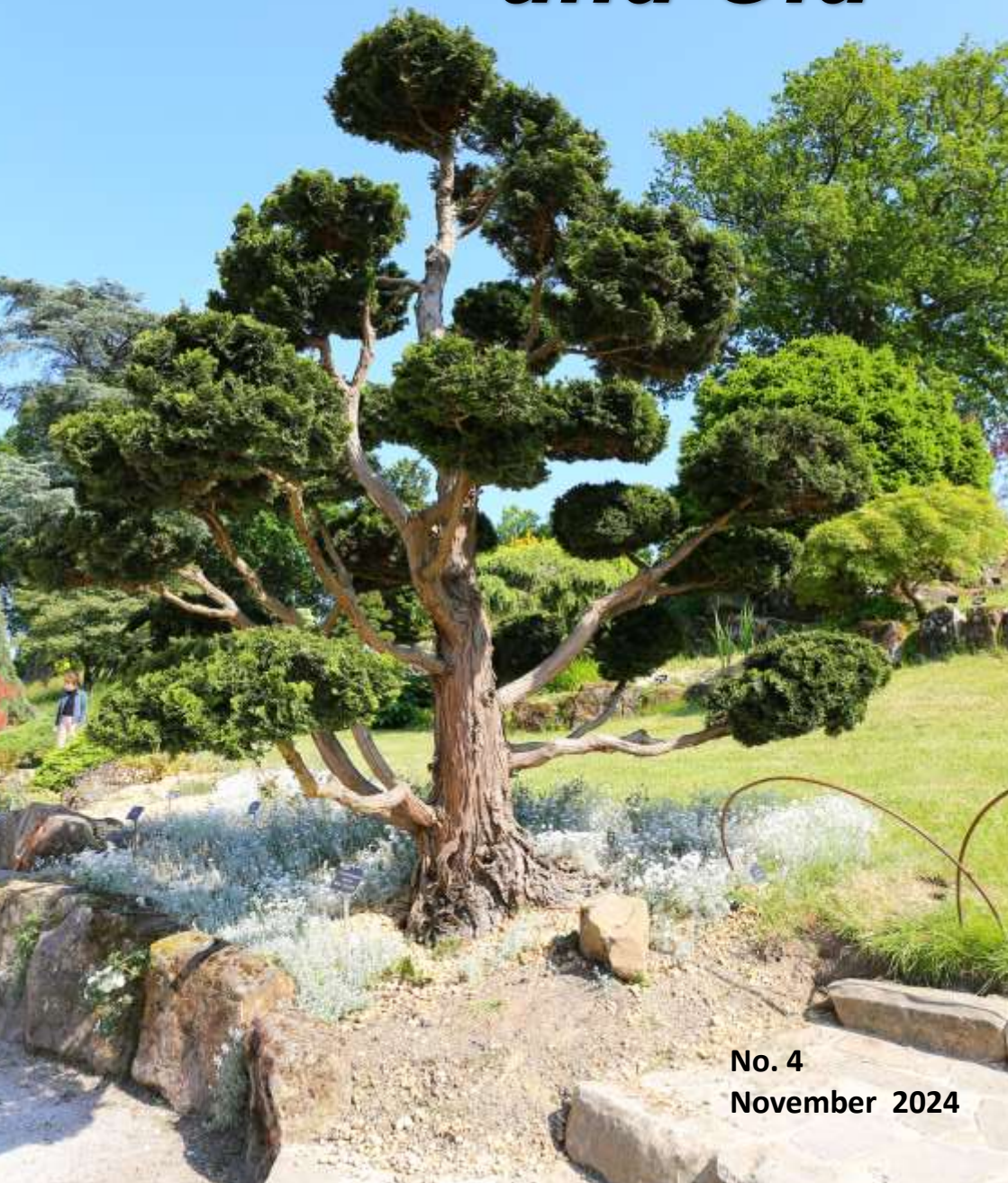


Things New and Old



**No. 4
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Things New and Old

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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

This is now our fourth issue of the magazine and we are still feeling our way with content and layout. Please do let us know if you like the current format or indeed if there are any changes you would like to see implemented. You can contact the editors by email at TNO@stonepublishingtrust.org.uk with any feedback you have.

As before we include a gospel message and this one highlights the lengths to which Jesus has gone and will go for each one of us. There is a recent word of encouragement which shows how much God uses the experiences we pass through in life to mould us into the way He wants us to be. It is wonderful to think of our heavenly Father doing this for all His children. We learn that it is because He loves us so much (see Hebrews 12:6,7).

This issue sees the introduction of a question and answer section which we might include from time to time. We had an interesting enquiry about the resurrection of the Old Testament saints prompted by one of the earlier published articles and felt it was worth sharing with all our readers. As well as our answer we have included an extract from an article on “The Heavenly Calling and the Church” written over 150 years ago which may provide some further insight into the similarities and differences between the Old and New Testament saints. One question will often raise even more questions and so we do trust our readers will be free to send them in.

We have also included some articles on prophecy that address questions many have in regard to the present state of the world and what lies ahead.

We pray that God will use the contents of this magazine for your blessing and desire that above all Jesus will become indispensable to you in your daily life. He has said “*without me ye can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

Phil

A GOSPEL MESSAGE

“He made as though he would go farther”

READ: Luke 24:13- 17; 28-33

There is a particular expression in this passage that I would like to speak about—*“He made as though he would go farther”*.

Two followers of Jesus were going away from Jerusalem. They knew He had died and had heard the story that He had been raised, but it was not a story that they could really understand. They were disappointed and confused, unable to understand the circumstances that had unfolded. They were going back home, unsure of what the future held, but in a beautiful way *“Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them”*.

I'd like to say that whatever journey you or I might be on, whether it's away from God or whether it's seeking to go towards God, Jesus is willing to come alongside and go with you on that journey.

When these two came to their destination it says, *“he made as though he would go farther”*. I want to leave you with some impression of the lengths to which the Lord Jesus is willing to go for each one of us.

It seems that during this conversation neither of them had actually asked this stranger where He was going, but He was ready to go as far as was necessary. I want to speak about the Lord Jesus being ready and willing to go farther for anyone of us.

The hymn (shown in the Poetry section) says:

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed:
Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed thro'
‘Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

There are many Christians who can tell of how far they had wandered and how far the Lord Jesus went to find them as lost sheep.

How far has He been?

But how far has He been? The Lord Jesus came into this world. That was a remarkable journey! Jesus is the mighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, eternal in His being, far above the whole created sphere. The psalmist says at one point in wonder, *“Who is like unto Jehovah our God... who humbleth himself to look on the heavens and on the earth”* (Psalm 113:5,6)

I wonder what the psalmist would have said if you had told him that God would not only look upon His creation but, in the person of Jesus, come into His creation and take on human flesh.

If He was to come into the world then, surely, He had every right to come in as its greatest person. He could have swept Caesar Augustus off the scene and assumed the place of greatness as the head of the whole race of humanity.

One day He'll actually come here as the King of kings and Lord of lords, but He could have come like that then.

Emmanuel

But He didn't come that way! He came into all the outwardly helpless circumstances of a baby. Think of Him, Emmanuel, God with us, the Word became flesh utterly dependent on others to care for Him.

And He went further. You might say that if He comes in as a baby, He surely has every right to be born into the very best circumstances; surely there was something a little better than a manger and a stable? Yet that was how that Baby, God Incarnate, came into the world—via Bethlehem's manger. And He went further; He lived here for thirty years.

His whole life on earth was somewhere around thirty-three years. It was not a long life, even for the life expectancy of that day. Scripture speaks about Him being cut off in the midst of His days (Psalm 102:24). Now, you'd think if God came into this scene, then He would spend every moment of every hour of every year in visible, active service in this world. Yet He lived for 90% of His life in

obscurity. He lived in an unremarkable place in Israel. His supposed father was a carpenter; He became a carpenter Himself, a trade of no great distinction in Israel. He lived for thirty years, largely unnoticed.

Public Service

Then there was three years of His public service. He came into contact with the sorrows and the diseases of humanity and knew the despair of the human heart and condition. He drew near to humanity not just in words of power, but with a heart of compassion and feeling. Such is the interest of the Saviour that He was willing to step into a marriage to provide wine when it had run out. The Lord Jesus cared enough to intervene in a special day for a couple getting married.

Equally, He stepped into the very heart of families' grief in death; in His compassion He drew near to them. He felt their sorrows, He felt their burdens and wept with them. Was that not far enough for God to go? He had come close to His creation, He had come into His creation; He had sympathetically felt for His creation.

Gethsemane

Jesus' life had left a perfect model. Could He not leave and say, 'Now follow my example?' But He went further. He went to Gethsemane. He knelt before His Father and faced what it would mean before a Holy God to be made sin for us. His sweat became as great drops of blood. Matthew's gospel tells us that in Gethsemane He left eight of His disciples and takes Peter, James and John a little further with Him, and then it says, *"And going forward a little..."*. He went further, where no other man could ever go.

The Cross

And then He went further—to the cross. He died as the sacrifice for sin. He endured all that the cross meant. It was the scene of man's hatred, of man's reviling, of man's betrayal. It was the scene of man's weakness when they all forsook Him and fled. Everything there brought out the awfulness of the character of the man's heart! The Lord Jesus endured the pain, the suffering, the humiliation and

the ignominy that was heaped upon Him as He hung there on the cross.

And He went further. Not only did He endure intense physical suffering and rejection of men; He endured the forsaking of God. The lengths to which He was prepared to go, and had to go, involved the three hours of darkness. That place, hidden from the eyes of men, was when He endured the wrath of God for our sins and, as the sin-bearer, was forsaken by God. How those words *“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”* reflect the distance Jesus was willing to go to be our Saviour.

It’s worth stopping there for a moment. Look at the journey! What human logic could ever rationalise how the mighty God, Creator of the heavens and earth, should be found in the person of Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, at that dark scene of Calvary.

How can you get your head round the way that God has taken to reach you and me in His love? I think it’s an astonishing journey.

Jesus rose again

The Lord Jesus went to the cross and died—but He went further. He went into the grave. He was buried. He was raised again and now He is a living Saviour. The One who has died is now alive and He is the One in whom you can put your faith and then you can say that He bore your sins in His body on the tree.

The Pearl Diver

I now want to tell two stories to illustrate the impact that God’s love and the cross has had on two people. The first is about a missionary who went overseas and lived in a little village in India where he told the story of Jesus. He lived there for quite some time, and in the course of his life there, he grew very close to one particular man in the village, who was a pearl diver.

Now these pearl divers did not have any equipment. They just learned to hold their breath, dive into the water, go down quite deep, pick up an oyster and bring it back up to the surface in the hope that there would be a pearl within it.

This pearl diver became very close to this missionary, but he could never accept the gospel. He'd been brought up with the idea deeply implanted in his mind that he had to earn his salvation. His religion said he must earn his way to heaven. He must do something to earn the favour and blessing of God. He could not accept that salvation came as a gift from God. The missionary had tried and tried to explain the gospel to him, but he would not change his view.

One day, the Indian diver said, 'I'm getting near the end of my life. I'm going on a pilgrimage. I'm going to go to Delhi and I'm going to go there on my knees to show my devotion and try and earn the favour of God.' And the missionary said 'Please don't do that. You'll never survive such a journey at your age, and you don't need to do it'. But the man could not be persuaded.

A few days before he went he came to the missionary's house with a box and he said, 'As I may never see you again and you've been a very good friend to me, I want to give you this gift as an expression of my love for you.' When the missionary opened the box he saw the largest and most beautiful pearl he'd ever seen.

The missionary said, 'I can't take this! This is worth a lot of money.', but the diver replied, 'No, I want you to have it as an expression of my love. I want you to have it as a gift'. The missionary said, 'No, I can't take it, I'll pay for it. Tell me what it's worth and I will pay you for it.'

The diver's eyes filled with tears, and he said: 'You don't understand. No money will pay for this gift. I had a son who was a pearl diver. He was the best pearl diver down the coast and one day he dived so deep and for so long he died in the water. And when they brought his body up, clenched in his hand was an oyster. When the oyster was opened, this pearl was inside. No money can pay for this. It means far more than money to me. The only way you can receive it is as a gift from me because it cost me the life of my son.'

The missionary took those old, leathered hands and said, 'My friend, don't you see that's just what God is offering you? No money

can pay for the gift of salvation, that cost God the life of His Son'. I don't think the man ever went on his pilgrimage!

No money can pay for the gift of eternal life! It cost God His Son. It can only be received as a free gift from God.

The Olympic Diver

The second story is about a very different sort of diver. He was practising to take part in the diving competition in the Olympics. He had a Christian background. He'd been brought up in the environment of knowing the Gospel, but he had turned his back on it. In some ways it was even worse. He didn't say he didn't believe in God. He said he didn't care whether God existed or not. God was irrelevant to him. He knew what he wanted to do with his life, and God was not part of that. He put every energy into being the best diver he could be.

While he was away on a training camp, he woke up very early one morning whilst it was still dark before the official training started. He could not sleep, and he thought he would get a bit more diving practice in. He left his room and went down to the swimming pool and went inside. It was a bright night, and the moonlight was streaming through the swimming pool roof. He could see enough without putting the lights on so he climbed up to the very top diving board, turned backwards on the board and stretched out his arms. The moon was shining through him on to the wall. As he looked up at the wall, he saw the shape of a cross and immediately felt that God was speaking to him.

He quickly realised that the moonlight shining on him was projecting the shadow of a cross on to the wall. You might have thought he would conclude that the shadow was not a divine message at all. But he didn't! In that moment he came to the realisation that, just as he had caused the shadow of the cross on the wall, so he had equally caused the cross of Calvary.

His sins had caused the necessity for the cross and he realised that, on the cross, Jesus had died for his sins. He knelt there and then on

that diving board, with the tears streaming down his face, and he asked for God's forgiveness and thanked the Lord Jesus for suffering and dying on that cross for him.

As he knelt there and prayed, the lights came on and he heard the sound of running water. A maintenance man had arrived to get the pool ready for the day's training. He looked down and saw that they had emptied the pool overnight for maintenance and the man had come to fill it up. In horror he realised that had he dived off the board, as he had intended to, he would be lying at the bottom of that swimming pool dead or very severely injured. The cross had saved him, both from natural death or injury, but also saved him from an eternal hell.

Your journey

I want to go back to the story we read in Luke's Gospel because it is at the point of the resurrection that these two come and find Jesus afresh. They went on this journey and Jesus in His grace went with them and was willing to go further.

I don't know where you are on your journey. Maybe you're going away, maybe you've given up on God, maybe things in your life haven't worked out as you thought they would or should. Maybe you think God has been unfair in the things that have come into your life. Whatever journey you're on, believer or unbeliever, the Lord Jesus is ready to go as far as it takes to reach you, to turn you back. He'll go as far as it takes.

Jesus talked to these two people, possibly for seven miles or just over two hours' journey. Whatever their concerns, fears, uncertainties, doubts, disappointments were, He was willing to talk. Maybe you say, 'well, I'm angry at God.' Well, tell Him why you feel like that. God says in Isaiah: *"Come now, let us reason together"*. What right have you or I to reason with God? None whatever; but it is God who offers to do it. If you've got a problem, Jesus would say, 'Let's talk about it—for as long as you need to.'

Think about the woman of John's Gospel, chapter 4. How long did

the conversation last at the well? We might read that Scripture in a couple of minutes, but I think that conversation lasted much longer. She said, *“he told me all things I had ever done”*. I think that that conversation possibly went much further than what’s recorded in the Scripture. He had time to answer question after question, whether it was religious or moral or cultural. Whatever it was He sat there patiently talking with her.

Consultation with Jesus

I want you to realise you have the opportunity to sit down with the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and He's got as much time for you as you need. I don't know how many people would have had a one-to-one conversation with the Queen during her reign that would have lasted more than a few minutes. If you took away her family and those who worked for her, how many of her subjects would have got to sit down with the Queen and she say: 'Well, you've got as long as you like; just talk to me.'

But that is what Jesus would say. His Name is Counsellor, the One who has all wisdom and every answer. You can talk with Him as long as you want. Have you ever known a time when you sat in the presence of the Lord Jesus and He ended the conversation? I have never had the experience of the Lord Jesus saying, 'I need to go now'. What a privilege to know that He will go as far and as long as you need to go until you've got the answer you need.

Maybe you are bitter about things that have come into life and that you've struggled to understand, or feel are unfair. Let me take you gently back to the cross again. See the Son of God, God's beloved Son dying in such circumstances of horrific shame and pain and suffering.

God planned that. It wasn't an accident. It wasn't just because of the hatred of men that it happened. It doesn't take away man's responsibility, but it was necessary as part of His great plan for our redemption.

So, with our circumstances; they are part of God's plan. We might

not understand at the time because we can't see the bigger picture but, not only can we implicitly trust God in those circumstances, we can also be assured that He will go through them with us, and be ready to go further.

These two that we have read of thought they had reached their destination when they reached their home. But when the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to them, they walked all the way back again.

What made them go back? They hadn't got to the journey's end yet. He was going to go further. He was going to ascend into glory, sit at the right hand of the Father and the Holy Spirit was going to come. And they were going to be part of the exciting story of the Acts and the spread of the Gospel through the earth. There was a whole new chapter in their history to be written.

And we haven't reached the journey's end yet. The Lord is going further, and He wants us to go with Him until that time when He'll call us home.

Paul Burton
Warrenpoint, June 2020

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase,
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His power has no boundary known unto men,
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again

Annie Johnson Flint

RECENT MINISTRY

Notes of an Address on Christian Experience

Introduction

I recently visited an older brother whom I respect and love very much, and who has been unable to get out much. He said to me, 'What am I meant to learn from the circumstances through which I'm passing? What is the Lord's work going to achieve in me through the experience that I am passing through?' That's what I wanted to speak about this afternoon, because it relates to the reality of our Christian experience.

And so I turn to seven people in the Scriptures that I want us to consider. Three of them are in the Old Testament and four in the New. Each of the Scriptures that I'm going to read are things that these people have said that must have come out of their personal experience in walking with God. No one could have taught them the right things to say nor could they have read the words somewhere and simply repeated them. What I'd like us to recognise from each of these people is that God was teaching them something through their lives from which we too can learn. Reading the scriptures won't necessarily make us learn these experiences but, if the Lord leaves us here a little longer, each of us may look back and say, 'I learnt from these persons of faith and I know now what it means'.

We will look at each of these people chronologically.

Jacob

"And he blessed Joseph, and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day." (Genesis 48:15)

Now, how was Jacob able to say that? Jacob started his life as rather a conniving schemer. He did his best to get things he thought would advance himself in life. He contrived with his mother a scheme to deprive his brother of his blessing, so that he might get it. Unfortunately he had to leave his parents' house and flee because his brother was angry with him. On that journey he met God who spoke

to him in a dream. God said that He would be with Jacob and He would bless his offspring. Jacob then *“vowed a vow, saying If God be with me...and I come again to my father’s house in peace—then...of all that thou will give me I will without fail give the tenth to thee”* (Genesis 28:20-22).

He then met his uncle, who was even more of a schemer than Jacob and tricked him into marrying the wrong wife and then insisted he worked for another seven years for the wife he wanted. Eventually the Lord spoke to him and told him to leave and he went back into the land of Canaan. But then he had to face up to some of the results of his own actions. After much exercise with God, he eventually met Esau, who, to all intents and purposes, was happy to see him. Then he journeyed on and had some difficult experiences. His sons murdered a considerable number of people at one time. He went to Bethel and finally fulfilled his vow by building an altar to God. But his trials didn't stop there; sometime later he lost his favourite son (Joseph) who as far as he knew had been murdered by some wild beast.

Later on a famine came, and his other sons went down into Egypt where they got arrested and one of them was kept in prison. The others came back and said they'd have to take his other favourite son down into Egypt. Jacob seemed to be losing everything that was valuable to him but then finally he gets that wonderful news that Joseph was still alive and wanted him to come to Egypt. At this point, we start to see something very different in Jacob. He doesn't say, 'Yes, I'm up. I'm off. I'll go.' He journeys through the land and gets to Beersheba, and it's almost as if he's wanting some confirmation from God. You might have said he didn't look for that before but this time he wants some confirmation from God and God says, *“I will go down with thee to Egypt, and I will also certainly bring thee up; and Joseph shall put his hand on thine eyes.”* (Genesis 46:4). He goes down to Egypt and he gets about another 20 years to live in Egypt enjoying all the blessings that Joseph could give him. At the end of his life he says to Joseph, *“the God that shepherded me all my life long.”* He couldn't say that without some intense personal experience of what it meant to have God as a Shepherd leading him.

Moses

The next person I have in mind is Moses and I want to read in Deuteronomy 31: 7,8.

“And Moses called to Joshua, and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for thou must go with this people into the land which Jehovah hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And Jehovah, he it is that goeth before thee: he will be with thee; he will not leave thee, nor forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed.”

Moses was an old man. He had a tremendous amount of experience with God. At the end of his life, he reminds the children of Israel of all the law and what God had done for them, as well as their future blessings and all the curses if they disobeyed God. Then he turns to Joshua and he says to him very personally in front of all Israel; he says to Joshua that Jehovah *“will be with thee; he will not leave thee, nor forsake thee”*.

If you know anything about other modern European languages, you know there are two ways of saying ‘you’. There's a very familiar way of saying it which you use when you talk to someone that you know very well, usually family members or close friends or spouses. And in English, the equivalent word is ‘thee’ or ‘thou’. And the other form of ‘you’ is one you use when you're talking to lots of people, very formal and polite, and the English word for that is ‘you’. We have lost the familiar one from the English language, but if you have a Bible in front of you that has ‘thee’ and ‘thou’, you will see there is something really quite amazing happening here. In front of all Israel, Moses doesn't turn to all Israel and say ‘God will be with you and he will not forsake you’. He turns to Joshua and he says, ‘God will be with thee’, a personal promise.

Now, Moses had had that experience before, because standing on the mount after Israel had sinned and made a golden calf, he had interceded for the children of Israel. God had then said, *“And now go, lead the people whither I had told thee: behold my Angel shall go before thee”* (see Exodus 32:34). Moses later says to God, *“If indeed I*

have found grace in thine eyes, make me now to know thy way...and consider that this nation is thy people" (see Exodus 33:13). And God said to Moses, *"I will do this thing also that thou hast said; for thou hast found grace in mine eyes and I know thee by name"* (Exodus 33:17). He didn't say because 'you have found grace in mine eyes', referring to all Israel. The children of Israel were blessed with God's presence because Moses had found grace in God's sight. Moses was the link between God and the children of Israel, and it's actually no different for us today. Because Jesus has found grace in God's sight we have been accepted in God's presence. So Moses knew that personally, and he could say to Joshua that God *"will never leave thee nor forsake thee"* as he leads these people into the land. And he knew that divine support from his experience. Think of all the experiences Moses went through; he stood before Pharaoh when he didn't feel able to do it; he stood before the children of Israel, and they moaned and groaned against him. He cast himself before God and it says he was the meekest man of all the earth. But he was the man of whom it says that God spoke with him as a man speaks to his friend. He knew personally what it meant that God would never forsake him nor leave him.

David

"And David said to Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall, I pray thee, into the hand of Jehovah, for his mercies are very great; but let me not fall into the hand of man." (1 Chronicles 21:13)

David had sent out Joab to number the people and find out how many military men he had. It was something God had told him not to do. God spoke through the prophet Gad to allow David to choose one of three punishments. But what does David reply? He doesn't choose one; he casts himself on God and he says these wonderful words. *"His mercies are very great."* How did David know that? Had somebody told him that God's mercies were great? I think if you look back through all of David's life, you'll see that he learned God's mercies. You will see that he'd taken somebody else's wife, and then he'd contrived a clever scheme to ensure that the husband was murdered

by the enemy in such a way that no implication would come back on himself. But God knew. And when God spoke to him through the prophet Nathan, David pronounces his own judgement. He says, *"The man that has done this thing is worthy of death."* Then Nathan says, 'You're the man!' (see 2 Samuel 12). But David had to go through some sorrow after that because an innocent child died. The child that was born would not live. David understood, I think, that God should have allowed the child to live and kill David. But in His mercy, to enable David to live, an innocent child had to die.

How similar to us! Jesus, who never sinned, had to die for us. His mercies are great. Do you know that? David knew that His mercies are great. He'd sinned against God before and he had cast himself upon God, and he says, 'His mercies are great; I will leave myself in His hands.' And that was answered. The plague came, but it was stayed after one day instead of three.

Mary

"His mother says to the servants, Whatever he may say to you, do." (John 2:5)

I wonder what experiences Mary had gone through to be able to say those words to the worried servants at the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee.

What were the experiences behind those words? I don't know. None of us know, but there were experiences that Luke has recorded for us in his Gospel, before and after the birth of the Lord Jesus. He writes, *"Mary kept all these things in her mind, pondering them in her heart"* (Luke 2:19)

We are not told much about the Lord's life in His first thirty years, but we have recorded an important incident when he was twelve years old. Mary and Joseph went through a very deep experience when the boy Jesus had remained behind at Jerusalem when they had been there for the feast of the Passover. They had searched for Him in distress for three days. His mother then questioned Him about His conduct and had received an important answer. *"Why is it*

that ye have sought me? Did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" What an experience! Luke again tells us that *"his mother kept all these things in her heart"* (see Luke 2:41-51)

While at that wedding feast when wine was deficient she first tells Jesus about it. Then she says to the servants *"Whatever he may say to you, do."* This might have seemed crazy to them, but they then heeded the words of Jesus when He said, *"Fill the water vessels with water."* But her statement to them was based on her experiences with the Lord Jesus Himself that enabled her to tell the servants to obey Him. And sure enough, they go and take the water and they take it to the feast master and it's made into wine—better than anything that they had before!

John

"Peter, turning round, sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned at supper on his breast, and said, Lord, who is it that delivers thee up? Peter, seeing him, says to Jesus, Lord, and what of this man?" (John 21: 20,21)

I understand the Gospel of John was probably the last book written in the Bible. And I get the impression that perhaps some of the elders of Ephesus came and asked him to write it because they realised that he was nearing the end of his life and they wanted some of his impressions of the life of the Lord Jesus. As he writes his divinely inspired gospel, he records so many of the words of the Lord Jesus and eight of His miracles. Interestingly, all the way through the gospel, notice that he refers to himself as the 'disciple whom Jesus loved'. Now, how did he know that? Because he'd walked with Jesus, and that walk didn't just stop when the Lord went above in glory. He'd walked with Jesus. He loved Jesus. He'd seen Him as He taught during those three years that he'd been with Him and known Him after He rose again. And he says that he was the 'disciple that Jesus loved'. He had an impression that Jesus loved him. Do you know that if you walk with Jesus, you'll learn that too, that Jesus loves you? After one of the gospel preachings a few weeks back in Belfast we sang, 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.' You know,

I'd say the ones who were singing it most keenly were the older ones. Jesus loves you. Have you experienced that love as you've walked through your life and known that He loves you?

Paul

"Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6,7)

Now, was this quotation just some teaching that Paul had heard? No. Paul had had an absolutely incredible life with the Lord but accompanied with many trials. If you go into the second book of the Corinthians, he lists all the things he'd passed through, beatings and shipwrecks and all the rest of it, all for the sake of spreading the gospel and telling people about the Lord. He says as it were, 'Commit everything to God and thank Him for all the things that you've got.' And do you know what he says? *"The peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus."* Now he could, if he'd just been told that, say, 'the peace of God will guard your hearts'. But he adds, 'which surpasses every understanding' as if to say, 'I can't understand it, but it's there. I've experienced that peace.' Paul is writing that from his own experience. He had committed things to God in thankfulness. Elsewhere, he says, *"I know how both to be abased and I know how to abound."* He's basically saying, 'I know what it means to be in poverty; and I know what it means to have too much.' Both these things produce challenges, but he says he had a peace that 'surpasses every understanding.' Have you known that? I've known that, and I'm sure many in this room have known that. You've committed something to God and suddenly you get a sense of peace that your burden has been left with Him and He's looking after it.

Peter

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that

he may exalt you in the due time; having cast all your care upon him, for he cares about you.” (1 Peter 5:6,7)

And there's Peter. Think of all his life and the number of times that he spoke out when he shouldn't have done and the Lord had to reprimand him as a result. He knew what it meant for the Lord to say, *“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens”* (Matthew 16:17). He knew what it meant to know the Lord very shortly afterwards saying to him, *“Get away behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me, for thy mind is not on the things that are of God.”* He'd been through the ups and downs of his relationship with the Lord.

Later on Simon Peter said, *“Lord with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death”* then only a few short hours later he was saying, *“I do not know Him.”* Then afterwards when the Lord had been raised from amongst the dead, His disciples said, *“The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon”* (Luke 24:34). I don't know what the Lord said in that little interview with Peter, but he had an impression that the Lord cared for him. The Lord had said to Simon, *“I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not”* (Luke 22:32). The Lord cared. It didn't mean he wasn't going to go through the tough experience. It doesn't mean we don't go through hard times. But He cares and so Peter writes his words. He could have said, ‘He may exalt you in the due time, having cast all your care upon him’ And he could have put a full stop, but he goes on, *“for he cares about you.”* And, you know, I think Peter writes that from his own experience.

These seven people have learned that God is a shepherd; that He doesn't forsake us; that He shows mercy; that He is sufficient for every need; that we are loved by Him; that He is the God of peace and is the One who cares.

I can show you all these examples; when you read the Bible you might think that if God was writing there would be only lots of words from God telling us what He thinks of us and what He wants us to do. But I think it's marvellous, that the Bible is taken up with people's real -life experiences with God and they are put there so that we might

know that God is a caring God. And, as I walk through my life, eventually I will experience that for myself. And I would say yes, I agree to that. He's cared for me in this circumstance and that one and that one.

Paul says, 'You have the peace that surpasses every understanding.' And after a while you've tried committing something to God that you're really concerned about, and then you say, 'Yes, I know that because God gave me that peace and it surpassed every understanding for all the circumstances I was in.' Then maybe you'll get to the point Mary reached and you will say, 'If God says something or the Lord says something, I'm going to do it His way because it's going to be best—I did it my way before and didn't work.' Or maybe you will say, 'I followed the Lord and the results were amazing.'

You can't learn Christ and have that relationship just by reading about those experiences. But you will learn them for yourself if you walk with Him. It's interesting to see how many times in the Bible it says that a person walked with God. Enoch, right at the beginning, walked with God and he was not, for God took him. I've heard the story said of a little girl who said about Enoch that God said, 'We're having such a lovely conversation why don't you come up here and we'll carry on.' You know, it's a very simple way of putting it; sometimes children have the best way of putting things.

We've got to walk with God and so tonight, if you haven't done so already, I'd ask you to grab the hand of Jesus who reaches out and wants you to walk with Him. Maybe it's for the first time. You've never trusted Him before and you say, 'Yes, Lord, I'll walk with You for the rest of my life because I realise that You love me.' Maybe you have fallen away a bit and you want to get back and you want to know Him better. He's reaching out that hand; He says, 'Come and walk with Me. We'll go on together.'

In 1 John the young men have grown in experience too, but when John gets to the fathers it says the same thing twice. *"Because ye have known him that is from the beginning"*. I wonder why he does

that? Because I think, if you know the One that's from the beginning that's what eternal life is. Jesus says in John 17, *"And this is the eternal life that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* And so, God wants you to reach the point where you know Christ as the One who is from the beginning. He wants you to walk with Him and to know Him.

Sometimes I feel guilty because the older brothers and sisters have given me advice and I've been a bit like Rehoboam and listened to the younger ones instead and followed their advice and it hasn't worked out well. I have then realised that the older ones who walked with God for longer had experience behind them and the wisdom that they gave was learned in the presence of God. So, a word to us younger ones, don't dismiss the advice you are given from the older ones who have been walking with God for longer.

How much have you learned of walking with God? If you haven't learned much, put your hand out and walk with the Lord Jesus and one day you'll be able to agree with all the things that these people I mentioned said and say, 'Yes, He shepherded me all the way through my life. Yes, He's never forsaken me, He cared for me, He gave me peace and I've done things the way He wants them done and I'll continue doing that because I trust Him.'

And so, dear brother and sister in Christ, may we be more aligned in our relationship with the Lord. My simple desire tonight is to do what Barnabas did. It says he *"exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide with the Lord"* (Acts 11:23). I think God would want us to know that tonight: to abide in Him and to walk with Him. I don't know how much longer I have left; I'm convinced that the Lord is going to come in my lifetime. So we may not have much longer to walk with Him. But you can walk with Him in whatever time He gives us. May you find that in your own experience, for His namesake.

David Greeves

Worthing, October 2023

PROPHECY SECTION

The editors consider that the following two extracts from old ministry should help believers in their understanding of two questions often raised about the present and the future:

1. Why does God not intervene immediately when terrible atrocities happen?
2. What does the Bible teach about the advance of lawlessness in the world?

The Mystery of God

The "strong angel" comes down to claim everything for God, and to swear *"by him that lives to the ages of ages ... that there should be no longer delay; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound the trumpet, the mystery of God also shall be completed"*. It is a prophetic vision giving assurance of divine triumph for the comfort of saints in view of the darkest days of all.

"The mystery of God" is, I believe, that for thousands of years He has not taken His great power here. He has allowed evil and lawless men to continue their course, and to gratify their lusts and ambitions. People have even questioned whether there is a God when they have seen what they judged to be great evils allowed to go on unchecked! God has been going on in long suffering—in view of His purposes of grace and blessing for men—but He has ever given testimony by His prophets that He would come in to deal with all evil presently. It has been "the glad tidings" all through the ages from Enoch's day (Jude 14) that God will eventually have His way; He will publicly set aside evil and establish good. "Mystery" in Scripture does not mean something inexplicable, but something known only to the initiated. There has been, in men's account, a long delay in bringing to light publicly the principles of God's government, but when the "strong angel" speaks there is to be "no longer delay". God does not bring in

judgment until man's iniquity is full. He said to Abram—"*The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*" (Genesis 15:16). God will wait until the sin of man comes to a head in open defiance of Him by the beast and the antichrist, and then He will judge it all and take to Him His great power and reign.

The taste of what God is going to bring in is sweet to the one who eats it, but it entails much bitter exercise, for it involves the discovery and judgment in himself of all the principles of evil which work in the flesh. There is not an evil in the world which renders it the subject of divine judgment of which the root and germ does not exist in the flesh of God's people, and it is a moral necessity that they should discern and judge it there. They judge themselves, and therefore they are not judged; the divine end is reached with them morally.

Revived Roman Empire

The first beast rises out of the sea—an unsettled and unordered state of things; it will be such conditions that will give opportunity for the revival by Satanic power of the Roman Empire. At present the powers that be are ordained of God. Consequent upon the failure of Israel, God ordained that earthly government should be found in four successive Gentile empires—the Babylonish, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, and the Roman—as made known prophetically in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image (Daniel 2). The unity of the Roman Empire has long been broken up, and men might doubt that it would ever be found in existence again. But it will come up out of the abyss, and have its power from the dragon, so that when it appears no allegiance or respect will be due to it from the saints.

It has "seven heads"—a terrible kind of perfection, for it has "upon its heads names of blasphemy". Its perfection of deliberative capacity to carry out its designs is characterized by blasphemy. Its executive power is set forth in its ten horns. It has a certain resemblance to previous empires (compare Daniel 7); I suppose it will gather up and combine in itself the evil features that were seen in them. It appears

as having had a deadly wound which had been healed. The Roman Empire has had a deadly wound; it would hardly be thought possible that its imperial supremacy could ever be restored. The spread of democratic principles would seem to have put a revival of imperialism out of the question. But I believe that the forces which work in the direction of anarchy will give occasion to the return of imperialism. When everything is unsettled and in confusion the whole earth will be ready to welcome the advent of a power that appears to be strong enough to bring chaos into order, and which appears able to exercise a control that brings about unity and efficiency. And—what is infinitely sadder to think of—an apostate world will be ready to do homage to a power that blasphemes God and persecutes His saints.

The extraordinary way in which the Roman Empire will appear again will make the whole earth wonder. They will do homage to it, and to the dragon who gives it authority. The only ones who will not do homage to this blasphemous imperial power will be God's elect, those whose names have *"been written from the founding of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb"*.

C A Coates

Outline of The Revelation Pages 123-125 and 143-144

Note from the Editors: The previous section was included to answer some common questions that Christians have in these last days. We also get some quite specific questions from time to time that relate to previous items we have published in Things New and Old. The Question and Answer section that follows is our first one and we trust it will encourage our readers will send in any questions they have.

Question and Answer Section

In the March 2024 issue, the Back to the Greek article made mention of the rapture of the saints. One of our readers asked the following question.

Q: Why are the Old Testament saints not mentioned in that gathering together to the Lord?

A: The author of that article who is now with the Lord was comparing two occurrences of the noun which means our "gathering together unto Him". The first in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and the second in Hebrews 10:25. It is clear that in both those cases the people that the apostle had in mind are believers who know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and are members of the body of Christ, which we refer to as the Church, the Assembly or Bride of Christ. The Old Testament saints have no part in the Church which began at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended to indwell believers. In the article the author refers to the rapture described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and lists who will be raised. He does mention the thief on the cross as being in that group but did not mention that the Old Testament saints might also be raised at that point.

Scripture does not tell us with any certainty but there are a number of verses that hint at the saints of the Old Testament being with the Church in glory. For example, Hebrews 11:39-40 indicates that the saints mentioned in that faith chapter *"did not receive the promise, God having foreseen some better thing for us, that they should not be made perfect without us."* Another reference is in Revelation chapter 4 and 5 where the scene in heaven (after the rapture) is revealed to the apostle John. He sees 24 elders and these could be indicative of 12 elders associated with OT saints (12 tribes) and 12 elders associated with the NT saints (12 apostles) in the same way that the holy city has 12 tribes and 12 apostles represented in the building (Revelation 21:12-14). Another reference is the description of the supper of the marriage of the Lamb (Christ and the church) in Revelation 19:9 which indicate that others are called to that supper; these others could include the OT saints.

MINISTRY FROM THE PAST

Extracts from “The Heavenly Calling and the Church”

Old Testament times

The heavenly calling has been known from the beginning. The earth having been, in every age, a scene of Divine disappointment, (to speak after the way of men,) and the elect being therefore strangers and sufferers in it, the heavens have been disclosed to them as their place of rest and inheritance. Abraham desired a heavenly country. Enoch had been already translated there. Moses lost the land of promise, but got the Pisgah of God. David confessed that he and all his fathers had been strangers with God in the earth. Elijah among the Prophets in the latter days of the Old Testament, as Enoch among the Patriarchs in its earlier days, was taken to heaven. And thus, the heavenly calling was had in constant remembrance, and kept in view. And all the elect, in these Old Testament times, whether Patriarchal, Mosaic, or Prophetic, have, I doubt not, a part in the heavenly places. The Lord calls them all "children of resurrection"—and by that He teaches us that they will be called to their inheritance by resurrection from the dead, when they will not, as He further teaches, marry and give in marriage, as though they were children of the earth.

In the Divine reasoning of the Epistle to the Galatians, they are alluded to, and considered as standing in sonship and heirship, with the elect now gathering. In the Hebrews, they are considered as perfected and sharers of the heavenly calling, with us of this day. But the Epistle to the Ephesians never takes them up to associate them with the saints now gathering in the body of Christ.

These distinctions are very significant, and they lead us to the conclusion that the Old Testament saints enjoy the heavenly calling, or heavenly places as their home and their inheritance, though kept apart from the Church, the body of Christ, and the Bride of Christ. I may say this concerning them.

New Testament times

But leaving these times of the Old Testament, times of Patriarchs and Prophets, and having entered the New, we reach in due season the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost is then on earth, upon the glorification of the Son of Man in heaven; and we find Him doing a work of "exceeding riches of grace," and which is to be to "the praise of the glory of God" in the ages to come. He is baptizing the election now gathering, into one body; a body of which Christ is the Head; a body which is also called "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." And the whole, Head and body together, is called by an eminent, wondrous title, Christ." (1 Cor. 12:12)—All this is peculiar indeed.

Of course this election, thus forming the body or fulness of Christ, will, with the Old Testament saints, have their place and inheritance in heaven. But while they thus share the heavenly calling with their Old Testament brethren, those brethren will not be in the body of Christ with them. When the Kingdom in its glorious form comes to be displayed, when "the world to come" is reached, Old Testament saints will have "a name" there, and be, as it were, principalities and powers in heavenly places; but the election now gathering, and baptized into one body, will then be "the fulness" of Him who sits above those principalities and powers and names, of Him who "filleth all in all."

I am suggesting and submitting my judgment on these truths.

Post-Rapture Saints of God

And then—as I would go on to say—when all these have been translated to meet the Lord in the air—when Old and New Testament saints together, as alike "children of the resurrection," have taken their place in the heavens, as thus ordained to be theirs from the beginning—then the action of the Apocalypse, from Revelation 4, begins. In the course of that action, some saints of God will die as martyrs; and such also will be taken to heaven, and there occupy their places as certain dignities and thrones, "a noble army," or "a

goodly fellowship," as we may say; but they will not be a part of the body of Christ with the election now gathering.

Those saints of God who survive the great judicial process of the Book of the Apocalypse, will form the seed or firstfruits of the earthly people. Their calling is not heavenly. They have no part in the heavenly places. They begin to fill and furnish the millennial earth; and to them as a firstfruits will be gathered a harvest, till the face of the whole earth be fruitful — Jerusalem, the land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the nations all the world over, constituting a scene of power and of government, and a sanctuary for the service of the God of heaven and earth, who will then be displaying His Kingdom glories.

And this Kingdom is the subject of notice in the scriptures of the Old Testament, together with the judgments which introduce it, and the glories which give it its character. But the calling out of a body for Him who is the Head of that Kingdom, is not the subject of those scriptures. It is called, in an eminent sense, "the mystery," and is declared to have been "hid in God from the foundation of the world," and only now revealed to the prophets of the New Testament, Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles being made the great vessel and depositary of it, its special witness and publisher.

The Church's Blessing

But further. The characteristic of the Church's blessing is this—that they are in Christ. Earlier saints, as we have seen, will be heavenly in their destiny; but the Church's calling is heavenly, in and with Christ.

The word "in" abounds there in a remarkable manner—and it is always in "Christ." In the course of the wondrous disclosures there made, we learn that having been quickened together with Him, we are now seated in heavenly places in Him.

Being thus ascended, we are also taught that, there on high, we are blest with all blessings in Him. And again—we are accepted in Him, the Beloved—made the objects of personal love, as well as blessed with all spiritual blessings. And again—in Him God has

abounded towards us in all wisdom and knowledge, making known to us His thoughts and good pleasure touching ages to come; giving us the place of friends.

Thus is it with us now.—But this same scripture looks forward and backward, and shows us the interest we had "in Christ" before the world was, and what we are to have "in Him" when the world has run its course. Ere the world was, we learn that we were "chosen" in Him, and "predestinated" unto the adoption of children. And when the world shall be over, and dispensations have finished the display of themselves, and closed their wondrous story, we learn that we shall be "heirs" in Him and with Him of that great new system, "the world to come," in which all things shall be gathered together under Him as their Head.

God's Purpose

This is a great theme indeed—our eternal portion in Christ, our standing in Him, with the counsels that purposed it ere the world was, the high condition and prerogatives in which it now puts us, and the portion which it will convey to us in the ages to come. And all this excellent estate is ours, simply because we now believe or trust in Him.

But that which had been thus "chosen in Christ" from before the foundation of the world, was "hid in God" till revealed by the Spirit of New Testament prophets. And the revelation of it completed the Word of God. (Col. 1:25.) It was the closing, crowning disclosure, made specially through St. Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles. The Church is called into the highest place of dignity, and the revelation of it is in the last, the latest place in the communications of God. Yes. The Church has been revealed the last. The Gentile Apostleship has brought it forth. Though chosen in Christ before the world, and hid in God for ages and from ages, it now stands revealed, the crown of all His purposes, as it is the last of all His communications.

Is This Strange?

I ask, Is this strange? Must this be a surprise, or are we prepared for it? Has Scripture, has God Himself in His Word, prepared us for such a thing as this, such a method as this?

I believe He has. We get other like things, things kindred with this, in Scripture.

The Woman was the last creature revealed or brought out in the work of creation. Adam was at home, in his estate, and in his dominions, ere he got the Woman. All the provisions of the Garden were his. He had been crowned the lord of all he surveyed. He had named all cattle, beasts of the field, and fowl of the air. He was in his dominions, as well as at home, and in his estate. But the Woman was not yet. She comes forth the last—but the crown of his joy and the perfection of his condition. (Gen. 2)

Jerusalem

So with Jerusalem in Canaan, as with the Woman in Eden.

The land itself had been subdued and divided. The sword of Joshua and the lot of Eleazer had done this, centuries before. But Jerusalem was still a stronghold of the Jebusite. It was still the possession of the Gentile. The Judges had ruled in their several day, and Saul had reigned. But Jerusalem was as nothing all that time, unvalued, unrevealed. At the last, David reduced it to the hands of Israel; and he beautified it and furnished it. It became the throne and the sanctuary, the great centre of attraction, the object of note in all Scripture, whose beauty and dignity is an exhaustless theme. The Spirit in Scripture celebrates it again and again; Israel, in the days of their nation, had their delights there, keeping feast-days and holy-days in her; and our scriptural thoughts are still full of her. She is the gem, the pearl, the queen, the object, in the land and in the story of Israel. —The last again is the chiefest. The Jerusalem of Canaan is as the Woman of Eden.

The Golden City

And so again with the Golden City of Rev. 21.

The judgments which were to clear the inheritance and to take out of the kingdom all that offended, have been executed. The victory of the white-horsed Rider and His army has been won. The reign of the thousand years has been set. (Rev. 19, Rev. 20) But as yet the Bride has remained unrevealed. But now at the last, in the very close of the Book, as we take leave of the unspeakably precious oracles of God, it is the Woman we see, the Woman again of Genesis 2, the Jerusalem again of the land of Israel—only, it is the heavenly Woman, and not the Eden-Woman, the heavenly and not the earthly Jerusalem. She now, the Lamb's Wife, stands revealed, the chiefest in Divine workmanship, the latest in Divine revelation.

Is there not, then, I ask again, kindredness in all these things? May we not be prepared to find that excellent thing which was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, to remain hid in God for ages, and brought out only as the revelation of all secrets was about to be completed, and the Word of God to be filled up?

Surely there has been a rich and wondrous unfolding of the secrets of the bosom! Home secrets are made known, as well as kingdom glories. We are to stand by and see the way of God again.

J G Bellett (1795-1864)

BACK TO THE GREEK

Striving together

1. **sunathleo (συναθλέω)** striving/labouring/contending together.

I was reading the epistle to the Philippians recently and noticed an expression used by Paul to describe his desire for them to work together and be of one mind *“that ye stand firm in one spirit, with one soul, labouring together in the same conflict with the faith of the glad tidings”* (Phil 1:27). Paul was concerned that this united effort was in danger of being lost. He gives an example of it later on in chapter 4 when he mentions the two sisters Euodias and Syntyche whom he was exhorting to *“be of the same mind in the Lord”*. Then he reminds them that they had *“contended along with me in the glad tidings”*. (Phil 4:2,3)

The phrases “labouring together” and “contended along with me” in these verses are derived from the same Greek verb and it is not found anywhere else other than in this epistle to the Philippians. The Greek word is made up of two parts—the first part ‘sun’ gives the meaning of together with; the second part ‘athleo’ is a verb from which our English word athletics is derived. It conveys the sense of striving with determination to achieve a goal. By considering the original Greek word we see that Paul was impressing upon the believers in Philippi how important it was for them to work together and have the faith of the glad tidings at the core of their activities. This was to be no ordinary work but the type where one’s energy and drive is as focussed as an athlete would be in the Olympics.

This Olympic theme runs through the epistle—we find in Phil 3:14 a reference to the prize: *“I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.”* The word for prize is used for the crown or garland obtained by winning in the games.

Paul also uses the verb ‘athleo’ in 2 Tim 2:5 where he encourages Timothy—*“And if also any one contend in the games, he is not crowned unless he contend lawfully”*. There is no doubt that Paul

deliberately uses this word to impress upon us the effort and determination that he is wanting believers to use in their work for the Lord and the need for righteousness to be maintained.

Another example of the way Paul uses the concept of an athlete is found in 1 Corinthians 9:24 *“Know ye not that they who run in the race-course run all, but one receives the prize? Thus run in order that ye may obtain.”*

2. sunagonizomai (συναγωνίζομαι) strive together.

There is another expression which Paul uses when exhorting Christians to strive together and this is found in Romans 15:30 *“But I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in prayers for me to God”*. The Greek word in this instance is only found once in the New Testament and is from the verb sunagonizomai (συναγωνίζομαι). The second part of this word is where we get our English word agonize from and this helps us to see that the striving in this case is with much soul exercise, prayer and perhaps even grief over the circumstances that Paul was in. Some examples of the use of the word agonizomai are found elsewhere in Scripture and it helps us to appreciate this other aspect of striving and the pain and struggle often associated with it.

“Strive earnestly in the good conflict of faith.” (1 Timothy 6:12)

“Epaphras...always combating earnestly for you in prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” (Colossians 4:12)

May we be encouraged to work together with one another using this athletic determination and energy. May we also remember it is not in our own strength but in that which comes from prayer and overcoming in His name and in the love of the Spirit.

Phil Coldrick

THE NINETY AND NINE

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold –
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?"
But the Shepherd made answer: "This of Mine
Has wandered away from Me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find My sheep."

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed thro'
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry –
So sick and helpless and ready to die.

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
That mark out the mountain's track?"
"They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back."
"Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?"
"They are pierced tonight by many a thorn."

And all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gate of heaven,
"Rejoice! I have found My sheep!"
And the angels echoed around the throne,
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!"

Elizabeth C. D. Clephane (1830-1869)