NEEDED TRUTH

A Magazine for the Teaching of the Word of God

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If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31,32).

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Voices from the Past

Diligence

Solomon, who wrote of the ways of the sluggard, wrote also of the works of the diligent. He said: —
"The hand of the diligent maketh rich" (*Prov.*10:4). What is more to be desired in this world than an industrious, thrifty, hard working people, who are kindly in their ways withal? Such folks are a means of enrichment not merely to themselves, but to all who are affectable by them. In words following those quoted above Solomon gives an illustration of such diligence:— "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: But he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame".

What is true in things material is true in spiritual things. Men of the last generation were diligent students of the word of God. The result of that has been that they have left a goodly inheritance of spiritual things.

How did men reach the house of God, the place of the name? Only by diligent study of the word of God. They saw "the place" in the word of God, the pattern of the house, and they set out on the hard, arduous journey to reach it. Their diligence was the diligence of David when he said:—

"Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,
Nor go up into my bed;
I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Or slumber to mine eyelids;
Until I find out a place for the LORD,
A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob" (Ps.132:3-5). Such zeal and diligence were rewarded, for he passed on to Solomon and to Israel such a heritage of good as no king after him ever did. The hand of diligent David enriched God's people and his seed after him.

"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing:
But the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (*Prov.*13:4)
"He also that is slack in his work
Is brother to him that is a destroyer" (*Prov.*18:9). Spiritual things demand the greatest diligence, when we remember their eternal consequences and rewards. When diligence in worldly things will have been long forgotten in the rolling ages, the effect of diligence in the things of God will for ever remain.

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

Our main series of articles for 1986 is entitled "In the Shadow of Calvary". In previous years our contributors have drawn out spiritual lessons for today from some of the teaching of the Lord, of whom it was said, "Never man so spake". The Sermon on the Mount and other discourses of the Lord have already been examined. This year the events immediately prior to the cross, with particular emphasis again on the words of divine wisdom, will be presented to us.

In addition to the usual variety of supporting articles we hope, God willing, to publish a series on "Worship and Service" and some short character sketches from the New Testament.

In a further effort to improve presentation we are introducing experimentally a two-column layout. We trust this will make for easier reading.

As we face another year difficulties are bound to come into our lives, but Focus reminds us in this issue of some unexpected happenings in Scripture which will renew in our hearts the assurance that nothing is too hard for the Lord. We are invited to rest in faith on "God's ability to work in ways beyond our limited understanding or expectation".

Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all (2 Thess.3:16).

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In the Shadow of Calvary

(1) The Rejected King (Jn 12:1-19)

By Edwin Neely, of Brant ford, Ontario, Canada
(All scriptures quoted from the NASB.)

In a sense, the whole of eternity sits in the shadow of Calvary. Never was there, nor will there be, a more important event than the shedding of the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God. Calvary is the fulcrum of human history, prophesied in early Genesis; central to the whole of Scripture, even the future in Revelation; and to the theme of praise and worship in the present, both here and in heaven. Our series this year, however, confines itself to the events and teachings that transpired from the entrance of Christ into Bethany, Jn 12:1, to His final recorded supplication prior to Gethsemane, in Jn 17.

By the weekend of that entrance into Bethany, the sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy (Dan.9:25) had all but run their course, after which Messiah was to be cut off. 483 years previously, Artaxerxes' command to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh.2:6) had excited the builders from Babylon to return. Since Peter's declaration that no matter what men in general thought, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus had been showing His disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem and suffer, and be killed, and be raised up the third day (Matt.16:21). Then He left Galilee for the last time, not to return there until after His resurrection. Now, this final week brings the culmination of all that these other things led up to, the fulfilment of divine purpose in the incarnation. It is not our purpose to attempt a harmony of the Gospels for this final week, save to reflect that all the Scriptures are true, and if hard for us to place in time sequence, it is we, not they, who are at fault. We shall confine our thought to matters recorded in John, the which have particular import when viewed in relation to their proximity to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The scene at Bethany

There may be some fruitful comparison between the specific days that began the ministry of Christ that are mentioned in the first two chapters of John and the six days that are outlined here at the end of His ministry. Certainly He did some things in those early days which are repeated here: His baptism and its counterpart in His death; the cleansing of the temple; and His appearing at a special dinner. Indeed, there seems to be a development worthy of note in the meals that He is

recorded to have attended in this Gospel. At Cana He began as guest; in Jn 12:1 He is guest of honour; on the beach in Jn 21 He is the host. Our own lives would show growth if we allowed Him the same progress in them. As John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease".

This Bethany supper is the first-mentioned opportunity for us to see the reunited family together after the resurrection of Lazarus. One notices the great similarity between the activities of that lovely trio before and after that occasion. Martha served; Mary sat at His feet; Lazarus, His friend, sat at table with Him; all graphically depicting a truth that is elsewhere emphasized in Scripture; our position and service after resurrection will be related to that which we have developed in life (cf. Matt.19:27-30; Matt.25:21; Lk.19:24; 2 Tim.2:11). Often throughout their lives would those gathered at that meal remember their fellowship with the Master, and many a time, no doubt, would the sweetness of that remembrance lighten the burden of the moment.

More than once in His lifetime had the Lord been anointed with precious perfume, and each occasion recorded (perhaps there had been many more) is rich in its teaching. But this anointing by Mary takes on a special significance because of its timing. Mary loved her brother Lazarus, yet that precious spikenard had not been used on his body, so recently dead. It was the anticipation of the Lord's burial that caused the sweetness to flow. Mary seemed to have an insight into the matter beyond even that of His apostles — perhaps gained in her hours spent at the Lord's feet. But her action was more than anticipatory. Mary identified herself with both His death and burial, not only by anointing Him, but by wiping His feet with her hair. It may have been a most unconventional thing for a Jewish woman to loose her hair in the presence of men, but convention gave place to devotion, and the whole house was filled with the fragrance.

At Cana He began as guest; in John 12:1 He is guest of honour; on the beach in John 21 He is the host. Our own lives would show growth if we allowed Him the same progress in them.

There was to be no shortage of ointments and spices for His burial. Much of it, because it was brought too late, would never be used for the purpose. Yet a seeming surfeit of sweetness is no reason for not bringing the gift, a point underscored by the Lord's stout defence of Mary's action. His statement about the lasting nature of the matter, that it would be told wherever the gospel would be preached worldwide, shows the importance He placed upon it. Perhaps I would do well to remind myself of this at the remembrance and prayer meetings when I seem to have difficulty offering what I have stored up during the week.

Public Reaction

We are not told how many guests had been invited to this supper. Bethany by the meaning of its name was associated with food, and whether at the home of Mary and Martha, or at the home of Simon the Leper, Scripture refers to hospitality freely given. During that last week it is probable that all twelve disciples, plus any women that followed along to minister to the group, were cared for here. Bethany may well have been the place to which many of the disciples fled after the arrest in Gethsemane. In any case, a great multitude of the Jews, hearing that Jesus was there, came out of curiosity, not only to see Him, but to see Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead a short time before. Contrasted with this interest and the attention shown by those who had been with Him when Lazarus was raised and who were willing to testify to the reality of it all (v.17), were the chief priests, many of them Sadducees who did not believe in even the possibility of resurrection. The hatred of these latter was spurred on by the fact that the resurrection of Lazarus was turning many to follow Christ. Such is the power of resurrection life. Yet despicable as the official attitude was, it was superseded in heinous character by the greed of Judas. It was not that Jesus had no care for the poor, for when Judas left the Passover feast a few days later, some thought that he had been sent to give money to the poor from the communal purse. But recognizing, as indeed Mary also must have done, that poverty would continue to characterize not only the world around, but those who would be "with you" (see Deut.15:11), and that there would be limited time to give such devotion to the Master, Christ defended her action. When good is prompted, evil often presents itself, but Scripture so often used this to show the beauty of that which is precious to God. So the preciousness of Mary's action stands out in great contrast to the depravity of Judas' evil. Moreover what Judas began in his carping criticism, others took up, swelling his condemnation (Mk.14:4). Murmuring is so contagious!

The Presentation of the King

On the day following, the multitude from Bethany was met by the throng from Jerusalem coming to meet the One of whom they had heard. To these Jesus presented Himself as King:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zech.9:9).

The humility of the Saviour riding upon the back of the lowly donkey was matched by His tenderness in taking along the mother of that unbroken colt, and His unwillingness to show less than due care for the animals (Mk.11:3):

And immediately He will send it back here.

No loss accrues to those who give for the Master's use.

The hosannas of the day would be matched by the praises of the children on the following day. We are reminded that so very often the actions of the parents are reflected in their young. In this case the children fulfilled Scripture, Ps.8:2:

From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast established strength.

When the Lord reminded those who chided Him about this scripture, those who knew their Bibles must have smarted at the context of these verses that He had quoted to them. Perhaps these shouts of those who praised were part of the antiphonal recitation of Ps.118:25,26. Poignant indeed the context of these words also:

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone (v.22).

And

Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar (v. 27).

In spite of what has been called the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem, He did not come to be accepted as King. The fickle praises poured upon Him that day would soon clash with the cacophony of mob hatred. He must be rejected. And resulting from that rejection would come His own rejection of Israel. Key verses in John's gospel say this:

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name (Jn 1:11,12).

From the time of the praises of adults and children, there would arise discord in continuing strength until that dissonance carried the day. Yet arising out of the discord of the evil hearts of men comes a song of greater sweetness and strength, our own harmony of praise to the One who has through His rejection and death made Himself worthy to be our King:

Thou art my God, and I give thanks to Thee; Thou art my God, I extol Thee. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His loving-kindness is everlasting (Ps.118:28,29).

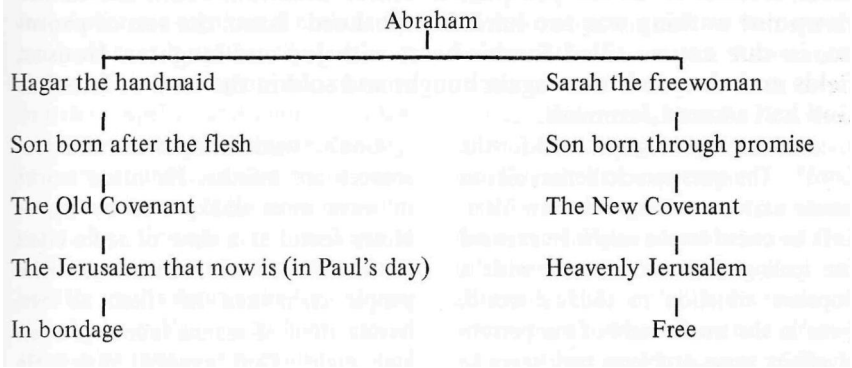
Ride on, ride on, in majesty; Hark! all the tribes "Hosanna" cry. O Saviour meek, pursue Thy road With palms and scattered garments strewed.

Ride on, ride on, in majesty; In lowly pomp ride on to die; Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain, Then take, O God, Thy power, and reign.

Question and Answer

In what sense is the heavenly Jerusalem "our mother" (Gal.4:26)?

"The Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother". This intriguing statement comes at the climax of a passage of typical teaching which spans the ages in a brilliant survey from Abraham to the present day. The argument of verses 22 to 26 of this chapter can be expressed as two parallel chains, one natural and the other spiritual. Supplying some details not stated but implied, the construction is something like this:



Thus in the allegory, Hagar the slave woman stands for the earthly Jerusalem in bondage to the Law, whereas Sarah the mother of the free stands for the heavenly Jerusalem, justifying the description *"our* mother" (note the correct emphasis).

It is helpful to compare this passage with another complex parallelism bearing on the same theme in Heb.12:18-24.

L.B.

FOCUS

Is there anything too hard for The Lord?

This question challenged Abraham and Sarah as God renewed His promise that Sarah would have a son despite her advanced age (Gen.18:14). The same question challenged Jeremiah when instructed to buy a field even though the Chaldean invasion of the land made the fall of Jerusalem inevitable (Jer.32:27). From a human standpoint there seemed to be no prospect in either situation. From the divine viewpoint nothing was too hard for the Lord. Isaac, the son of promise, in due course filled Sarah's heart with joy and laughter. Houses, fields and vineyards were again bought and sold in the land of Israel as God had assured Jeremiah.

Is there anything too hard for the Lord? The question challenges all our hearts as we enter another New Year. Left to ourselves we might be excused for feeling that we're faced with a hopeless situation in today's world. Even in the small world of our personal affairs some problems may seem to us impossible of solution. As for the colossal world problems with which all nations are struggling, how can they possibly be resolved?

A sense of depression may easily settle on the spirit, clouding our vision and stifling our enterprise in service for the Lord. But God's challenging question arouses us to see things differently. We know full well the truth of Jeremiah's response: *"Ah Lord GOD! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and by Thy stretched out arm; there is nothing too hard for Thee"(Jer.32:17).*

God's wisdom, power and resources are infinite. He often works in ways most unexpected by us, as Moses found at a time of acute crisis in Israel's desert wanderings. The people clamoured for flesh to eat, having tired of manna morning, noon and night. God assured Moses He would provide a month's supply of flesh, at which His astonished servant reminded Him that Israel's men of war alone numbered over half a million: "Shall flocks and herds be slain for them?...or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" he asked. The God of heaven and earth worked in a dimension Moses hadn't thought about. He by-passed flocks, herds and fish, but summoned hundreds of thousands of birds. These quails were driven by a wind towards the vast Israelite encampment, and were brought down all around the camp to about three feet

above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction. How Moses must have marvelled! Is there anything too hard for the Lord?

The boldness and surprise of divine strategy in modern times gives the believer ample assurance that God is still demonstrating there is nothing too hard for Him. A striking illustration of this is the harnessing of radio to transmit the gospel to vast numbers of listeners during the past quarter-century. In many countries it's an era of population explosion. Millions remain illiterate. Yet through radio messages in their native languages these people hear the good tidings. Take for example the Vishwa Vani gospel broadcasts from S'ri Lanka. Powerfully beamed from a 400,000 watt transmitter, these messages can be heard by more than 900 million people in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. There are over sixty programmes in eleven languages. In a land where the literacy rate is just over 30%,more than 23,000 letters were received during the first three weeks of operation! "I feel very deeply", said an Indian Christian leader, that Vishwa Vani is an important means of reaching our country. Even if we sent 1000 full-time workers to India we could not reach it as effectively as Vishwa Vani is doing today". Just one contemporary answer to the question, Is anything too hard for the Lord.

Shall we then endeavour to go forward into 1986 with this question ringing triumphantly in our hearts? May all our problems be seen in its light! Problems then become a means of developing our faith as we commit them to God in prayer. We measure them, not by human standards or resources, but over against God's ability to work in ways beyond our limited understanding or expectation.

How much a godless world owes to the prayerful attitude of believers who fulfil their responsibility to pray for all men! (1 Tim.2:1-3) In times of international stress or in face of disasters, Christian influence through prayer has tremendous potential. Ahab was an evil king who led his people into depths of idolatry. Elijah nevertheless pleaded for the people after their suffering through three-and-a-half years of devastating drought. Picture the man of God, bowed in prayer on Mount Carmel until there appeared a cloud the size of a man's hand. Soon the heaven grew black with clouds and there was a great rain. That spectacular experience illustrates divine response to prayer; "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working" (Jas.5:16).

Some *Names of God (Part 1)*

By J. Rodgers, of Toronto, Canada.

God is made known to us in the Scriptures through various names. In many instances the names are self-explanatory, and sometimes the context of the passage in which the particular name occurs imparts an understanding as to the reason for it, and the purpose of its usage. The manifestation of God through His various names does not detract from the important truth that God is One and His name One (see Zech.14:9).

We propose, in what follows, citing some of the names by which God is revealed, and show links which lead through Abraham to the New Testament revelation of God as "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ".

God (Elohim)

There are several words which are translated *God* in the Scriptures; Elohim is the most frequently used name, occurring approximately 2500 times in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word *Elohim* is the word used in Gen.1:1, "In the beginning God...", which presents to us the One who is the Eternal God, but also, since *Elohim* is a plural word, meaning more than two, it contains the truth which is constantly verified throughout the Scriptures, of God being triune (a three-in-one God) and this is consistent with New Testament revelation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God Almighty

In the early chapters of Gen.God is spoken of under several names, thus His works and words are made known. In Gen.17:1 we have the record of God revealing Himself to a man, saying "Walk before Me and be thou perfect". God, as a holy God, desired a reflection of His perfect and holy character in His creatures. This was sadly lacking in the early history of the human family. Nevertheless, from amidst the continuous ruin caused by sin, several men emerged who brought pleasure to God, men such as Abel, Seth, Enoch and Noah. However, God had a broader purpose in view than that, throughout succeeding generations, only individual saints should walk with Him. This purpose had its commencement in Abram with a view to its fuller fulfilment in Israel. Alas! Israel, as God's people, fell well below the standards of God's expressed desire, "Be ye holy; for I am holy". The prophets foretell of that being realized in the future; e.g. "In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, *Holy unto the LORD".* The pots in the house of the Lord will be holy but also every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy unto the Lord of hosts (see Zech.14:20,21). Their commercial, spiritual

and domestic life will be dedicated to the Lord. Then shall holiness, which becomes the house of God, adorn the people of God. Does this present a challenge to the people of God in this dispensation?

The end purposes of God were in view when He chose Abram, saying, "'Walk before Me and be thou perfect". Perfection is certainly not an element of human nature, but God speaks, and reveals Himself to Abram as God Almighty (El-Shaddai), the Nourisher, Provider, Strength-giver; the One who could impart the essentials to achieve the seemingly impossible perfection which God requested. Abram was ninety-nine years old, the vigour of youth had passed, more than half of his life had gone; from a natural viewpoint his usefulness, as well as his abilities had ceased. Only through the power of "God Almighty" could he accomplish the desire of God and grasp the related promises, so although "he considered his own body now as good as dead ...he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God" (Rom.4:19,20).

The God of Abraham

The word of the Lord to Abram in Gen.17, "Walk before Me", was a commandment with promise. Five times in this chapter the Lord says, "I will" — promises of God which were conditional upon Abram's compliance with His expressed will. God confirmed His covenant to Abram; changed his name to Abraham; established circumcision as the seal of the covenant between Him and Abraham and his seed after him; promised that he would be the father of many nations; and declared that *He would be a God unto him.* Thus is introduced a personal God-to-man relationship which was the basis for the title, which has since spanned the ages, "The God of Abraham" (Gen.26:24). The continuity of this individual relationship with God is manifest in such titles as, The God of Abraham, The God of Isaac, The God of Jacob, The God of Elijah, The God of Daniel, etc. The God of Israel When Jacob returned from Paddan-aram, upon the expiry of his service with Laban, he eventually arrived at the river Jabbok, on the border of Ammonite territory, gathered together his wives and family and sent them, together with all his possessions, over to the other side of the river (see Gen.32:21-24). As he was left alone Jacob came to one of the greatest of his lifetime experiences; such valuable experiences frequently occur when we are left alone with God. He wrestled with a man all night (till the break of day), then the man touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh and as he passed over Penuel the sun rose and Jacob halted upon his thigh. He bore the mark of that wrestling for the remainder of his life, in his lameness; but the sun rose, a new day dawned bringing with it a new dimension to his life, the foundation of which was embodied in his being re-named Israel. The contrasts

and comparisons of the subsequent usage of the names, Jacob (the man after the flesh) and Israel (the man after the Spirit) are a profitable study. The first personal application of his new name was in the erecting of an altar which he called El-Elohe-Israel, i.e. God, the God of Israel (Gen.33:20). This name, "The God of Israel" later reaches beyond the individual and is expanded to embrace a nation, in accord with the promise made to Abraham, to be a God to him and *to his seed after him* (Gen.17:7). The God of the House of God In obedience to the command of God (Gen.35:11) Jacob went up to Bethel and there built his second altar and called the name of the place El-Bethel or God of the house of God (see Gen.28:19; 35:15). The time which elapsed between the building of the two altars was approximately seven years; they appear to have been years of learning for Jacob. We too can learn from his experiences, for instance:

1. The worship of God must be at the God-given time and in the God-appointed place (cp. Deut.12:13,14).
2. The house of God was greater than Israel and is greater by far than any individual associated with the house.
3. The house of God, although necessarily inclusive of the altar was much more extensive than the altar. He named *the place* El-Bethel.

Worship as associated with the house of God is of prime importance; thus the spiritual house of this dispensation, although initially "built up a spiritual house ... to offer up spiritual sacrifices ..."(1 Pet.2:5),yet its responsibilities extend to additional servicers outlined in the remainder of the chapter.

As we have already seen, in the early history of man the knowledge of God was, in the main, as the God of creation (Gen.1) and the God of the human family (Acts 17:26,28). Through faith Abram obeyed God, left his country, kindred and home, to journey under the direction of God to a land which he knew not. Such obedience of faith was rewarded by the manifestation of God Almighty and ultimately the identification of God as the God of Abraham. As promised, God blessed Abraham's seed, His objective being to have a people separated unto Himself and thus be identified as the God of Israel.

God was not satisfied until Jacob's vision became a reality and He was revealed as "the God of the house of God". This, the summit of God's purposes, is reached in Israel complying with the divine request, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex.25:8). Its importance is obvious in that every aspect of Israel's life was regulated by the presence of God, represented in the Tabernacle which, together with the cloud by day and the fire by night (Ex.40:38), governed their camping, marching, trading (the shekel of the sanctuary was their trading currency) and their spiritual life. Only by a people to whom God had so fully revealed Himself could this high objective be reached.

The Believer's Blessings in Ephesians (Part 1)

By M. MacDonald, of Crossford, Scotland

OUR BLESSINGS IN CHRIST – EPH.1.

Eph.1:3 — Blessed in Christ

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ".

The apostle begins this second paragraph of chapter one at verse 3, and seems to require a very long sentence of nearly three hundred words to compass his thoughts. Surely here was a "ready writer" as the Divine Spirit unfolded some of Scripture's most profound truths!

Consider this beautiful phrase — "blessed with every spiritual blessing". Not a single blessing has been omitted! Every disciple in the Church of God in Ephesus was included. These spiritual blessings have been given, and surely we ought to strive to enter into their fulness! But it will take the vast extent of eternity's unending day for their full magnitude and extent to be realized.

It is all too easy for us to be taken up with material blessings, but the apostle directs out attention to these greater blessings which are of a spiritual nature, and they are in the heavenly places in Christ. Thus these blessings are untouched and untarnished by worldly things below. What a profitable exercise for the Christian to consider these heavenly places where we enjoy every spiritual blessing.

Finally, we are told that these spiritual blessings are IN CHRIST. Without the presence in the heavenly places of Calvary's Mighty Conqueror, we could never have been the recipients of "every spiritual blessing".

Eph.1:4 - Chosen in Christ

"Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love ".

The next profound truth presented to us is that we have been chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. The Divine Spirit, through His servants, uses sublimely simple language at times to express truths of greatest moment. Many of this world's thinkers, scientists and philosophers have spent their lives trying to unravel the mysteries of this world's origin and foundations. However, Christians gladly accept this creative miracle as the handiwork of their God, and praise Him for it. Now Paul brings a vast, far-reaching concept to our finite minds, and tells us that before this mighty work of creation was carried out, we were chosen in Christ. Our limited understanding demands

that we humbly accept the magnitude of such majestic concepts as the work of infinite Deity. The hymn writer J. Belton has put it this way:

Chosen in Christ - oh wondrous grace;
Assured by Him a heavenly place!
Ere worlds at Thy command were made,
Salvation's wondrous plan was laid.

Eph.1:11 — Made a **Heritage in Christ**

"In whom also we were made a heritage, having been fore-ordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will."

This verse brings before us the fact that in Christ we have been made a heritage. What a picture comes before our minds as we think of a heritage! It contains the thought of something of immense worth and value - something to be treasured and enjoyed. In Christ we have been made just such a thing. What a contrast — by nature, sinful and lost - by God's grace, a glorious heritage!

The question may properly be asked: "For whom is this heritage?" Dr. Marshall's literal Greek translation gives the rendering "In whom also we v/ere chosen as His inheritance". So not only are we made a heritage in Christ, but it is also for Christ. Again a hymn writer sums it up like this: —

Meet companion for the Master,
From Him, for Him made;
Glory of God's grace for ever,
There in me displayed!

Eph.1:13 — Sealed with the Spirit in Christ

"In whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, - in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise ".

We come now to the last of these four rich blessings in Eph.1, all of which are described as being "In Christ". This deals with the all-important fact of a once-for-all sealing with the Holy Spirit which every believer has. How many dear believers in Christ have striven to attain something which God freely gives us.

The apostle takes us through well-defined steps leading to this important event. Firstly, there is the necessity of hearing the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. Oh the need for those who have tasted the gracious-ness of the Lord, to tell His goodness to others! Following the hearing must come the believing — how essential, how important! With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. This one simple act of faith brings in its train such unprecedented blessings as our minds can scarce take in. Simultaneously as we believe, we experience this once-for-all sealing with the Spirit. It is said to be a sealing unto the day of redemption, thus indicating the impossibility of a child of God ever being lost. A threefold cord holds us safe: in the Father's hand, in the Son's hand (Jn 10:28,29) and sealed with the Spirit.

Fragrances

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C., Canada.

During the early morning hours of darkness, when the rest of the populace is asleep, skilful workers invade the rose gardens of an eastern European country and silently collect rose petals. The time for the plucking of these petals is carefully chosen for it is at these hours that the rose fragrance is at its peak. This is important to the task of preparing the world renowned attar of roses.

Christians who have known sorrow and suffering might appreciate this illustration, and draw comfort from God's purpose in so dealing with them. Sorrow, persecution and sickness, have caused some to speak of the forbidding clouds of darkness hanging over their lives; others describe their experience as feeling the pressure of the hand of God in their lives. The blessing for them and for us is to remember that a loving, all-wise God is endeavouring through it all to cause a fragrance to be emitted which will glorify and commend Christ.

It would not be fanciful for the Christian to think of himself as a rose. Some Bible teachers believe that "I am a rose of Sharon" (Songs 2:1) does not speak typically of the Lord Jesus as the Beloved, but rather of the disciple who is in communion with Him. If this is so, then one might see a little more clearly the divine link between the hours of darkness, distress, pain, rejection, and the fragrance of Christ being developed in our lives in a deep, strong way. Some of our choicest hymns and spiritual writings have come from those who have known the pressing, even the crushing of the divine Hand, resulting in words which seem to come from a pen dipped in divine fragrance. Frances Ridley Havergal was called home to glory in middle life, and her last years were no bed of roses. Yet from a weak, distressed, frail body came fragrant thoughts of Christ which still encourage and strengthen innumerable Christian lives. A lifelong handicap of blindness proved no restraint to Fanny Crosby, whose hymns bring joy, peace, and blessed assurance to countless souls. It was after the doctor had revealed to him that he had an incurable illness that Francis Henry Lyte wrote "Abide with me", a precious hymn of great solace to those undergoing the pressure of grief and stress. It seems that the only way the rose can yield its fragrant oil is by the crushing of the petals.

A town in England became noted for its perfume factory. Visitors were impressed during their noonday shopping by the pleasant fragrance which

permeated, not only the air, but also the business establishments. Did this come directly from the processing source? No, it came from the girls whose work was to handle the fragrance. Their clothes and skin appear to become impregnated so that their presence in the market-place creates an odour of a sweet smell. And it is worth remembering that there are Christians who live spiritual lives like this. A dear, aged friend said to me after her husband had died, "He was the most Christlike person I ever knew. All our married life he never once spoke an unkind word to me". They were together for over 60 years. Christlike is the keyword. It bespeaks fragrance.

Aaron and his sons, after they had been anointed with the holy anointing oil, give us a typical picture. Wherever they went this fragrance identified them as men associated with the house of God. The Tabernacle was also graced with this divine odour, for all its contents were anointed with the same oil, setting forth the truth of sanctification of the priestly family and God's house (Ex.30:22-33). Sanctification enriches our lives with the fragrance of Christ.

There was no life on earth as fragrant as that of the Son of God. His love, grace, mercy, kindness, were blended with all His other virtues, causing a glorious, incomparable fragrance to be emitted which delighted the heart of God, and emphasized His uniqueness to men. It is when we manifest those same divine virtues through the new man by the Spirit, that others will know us as disciples of Christ who are a holy and royal priesthood in association with God's house today. "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One ... but as his anointing teacheth you ...ye abide in Him"(l Jn 2:20,27).

"Christian" may have been a nickname given by unsaved people to the early disciples, but it also has the serious connotations of being like our Master - fragrant!

Voices from the Past

Divine Deliverance

Of Saul God said by Hosea, "I have given thee a king in Mine anger, and have taken him away in My wrath." Again He said by that prophet, "Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities?" Saul was a failure. He effected no deliverance for Israel and left Israel in a worse state than when he was made king. Israel was defeated by the Philistines, their glory slain upon their high places, and the men of Israel who were left on that fatal day were fleeing for their lives. Saul proved to be no saviour. Saul is a true type of the failure of the flesh. He was a king who filled the eyes of Israel naturally; he was great in height and bulk — head and shoulders above all the people, but "it is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (Jn 6:63).

When David appeared at the vale of Elah, when Israel sorely needed a champion to meet the challenge of Goliath, Saul measured his ability to enter the lists with Goliath in feet and inches. He said to David,

"Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth " (1 Sam.17:33). Saul had not yet learned that the flesh profiteth nothing. He knew nothing of this youth's hidden life, of his experience of God's help and deliverance in scenes where he was alone with God amidst manifold dangers. The paw of the lion and the bear were amongst the dangers that this youth had faced victoriously. He attributed his deliverances to the Lord.

"The LORD (Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel) that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD shall be with thee"(1 Sam.17:37).

It is this confidence in God which makes men of God, and apart from this personal trust men are as weak as water in the day of trouble. They look round for a seen thing to trust in, in the time of trial, rather than having the eye of faith set steadfastly on the living God. Such a spirit of trustfulness was ever in the Lord during His earthly days. In Ps.22, which depicts His sorrows and sufferings, He speaks through David and says:-

"But Thou art He that took Me out of the womb:
Thou didst make Me to trust when I was upon My mother's breasts " (verse 9).

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

Among the most solemn and affecting of the utterances of the Lord Jesus are those expressing the depth of His forebodings of divine judgement on Him as sin-bearer. With Calvary's shadow growing hourly darker and more menacing, we have such moving words as "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death" (Mk.14:34); and, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say ..." (Jn 12:27). Such words command our deeply reverential meditation.

We are reminded, however, by the Master's further words in Jn 12 that the dread occasion of His suffering divine judgement on our behalf is also "the judgement of this world". "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (Jn 12:31,32).

Our main series article this month deals with this profound passage in Jn 12. As the title of the article indicates, we are considering the final glimpses this world was to have of the Son of Man, as His footsteps approached the cross. Solemn indeed for a world in thrall to its prince of evil. Yet just as the grim pronouncement of judgement on the serpent and on Eve and Adam are illuminated by the promise of the Seed, so here shafts of divine light penetrate the gloom of Christ's suffering, and our thoughts are transported to Rev.5:9 ".. Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" — all men drawn to Him.

We embrace ever more closely such glowing truths and promises in a world whose confusion and lawlessness, as we are pointedly reminded in FOCUS, only grows apace in our own day. We take re-assurance — " ... *He shall* come to be glorified in His saints" (2 Thess.1:10).

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In the Shadow of Calvary

(2) Last Public Appearances (Jn 12:20-50)

By Trevor J. Sands of Barrow-in-Furness, U.K.

In our reading of the gospels, we can find certain incidents on the Lord's journey to the cross which must have brought great joy to His troubled pathway. May I suggest that the request of the Greeks to "see Jesus" was one of these. This chapter so clearly shows us the bitter hatred of the Jewish leaders and the shallow response of the multitude to the Lord's teaching and signs. Just as in His earliest days it was Gentile wise men who enquired for Israel's King so, at the close of His public ministry, Greeks asked to see Israel's Saviour. How beautifully the words concerning them in verse 20 — "those that went up to worship" — express a far deeper conviction than that possessed by the majority of Jews in Jerusalem that Passover week; who, one fears, had simply "come to the feast" (Jn 12:12).

Much speculation has taken place as to how the Lord's reply relates to this sincere Gentile request. An early legend suggested that the Greeks were a deputation offering Him political asylum out of His enemies' reach, but there is no evidence for such an explanation. Is it not more natural to think that the sight of worshipping Gentiles led on to the glorious prospect of a redeemed people gathered together from every nation as a kingdom and priests and thus to the cost to Him of such a "purchase unto God" (Rev.5:9,10). Let us look then, in a little more detail, at the Lord's teaching concerning His work of redemption.

1. **The Son of Man glorified** (verse **23)**

It is important to distinguish between the glory of the returning victorious One, ascended to the Father's right hand (see for example 1 Pet.1:21) and the glory of that dreadful "hour" of suffering. A careful reading of Heb.2:9 helps us to see beyond the thorn-crowned Man whom men cast out, to the Man crowned with glory and honour, casting out the prince of this world from his wrongful domain (verse 31). How little of God's purposes even the disciples understood will become clear in subsequent articles in this series. The magnificent divine promise of the glory to be brought to God's Name fell perhaps not surprisingly then on a deafened multitude (verse 28). Some mistook the voice of God for the voice of nature. Others mistook the Creator's voice for that of the created being. From its belief in uncontrolled evolutionary forces to its ridicule of Holy

Scripture, our own generation too is deaf to the voice of God in the glorious work of His Son.

2. The Grain of Wheat Dead (verse 24)

The second aspect of the Lord's redemptive work brought before us in this passage shows us clearly how the plan of creation and the plan of redemption were framed in the same Mind: both in perfect harmony, one beautifully foreshadowing the other. On the third day of creation (see Gen.1:11) God Himself ordained the method by which much of plant life should propagate and increase. As with all the divine ways, this was no arbitrary choice. Accustomed as we are to the created order of things, we may think it could not have been otherwise. Yet an Almighty Creator could have chosen any method He wished to multiply a species. But, even as the first grain of wheat fell into the ground, it was a picture of events still far in the future. The Word of God, as He made all things, knew even then, before man sinned, that He was THE grain of wheat who would fall into the ground and die. How wonderful in a future day to see the great "wheat-fields" which have come from that one precious grain — much more wonderful to be a small part of the "much fruit" of the work of Calvary.

3. The Son of Man lifted up from the Earth (verse 32)

In the incident of Jn 21 the shoal of 153 fish which had evaded the nets of experienced fishermen all the night were drawn by the Master's command to the shore that morning. The teaching of the Lord to the Jews in Jn 6 was, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him" (verse 44).

Again, how different from the world's view of a crucified Man as powerless and defeated. Even the most powerful and victorious of men **are** able to find salvation only as they are drawn by the crucified Saviour. How aptly the multitude's response (verse 34) illustrates the truth of 1 Cor.1:18 — "For the word of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness".

Having thought briefly of some facets of the Lord's redemptive work, it may be profitable now to consider the possible responses to His invitation and claims from the standpoint of His glorious title: "Light of the World".

1. **Believe on the Light** (verse 36)

Amidst all the difficult teachings of the Pharisees, the political subversion of the Zealots, the compromising philosophy of the Herodians and all else that Jerusalem's inhabitants and visitors were daily subjected to, the simplicity of the divine message was indeed "light shining in darkness". Down the centuries since, many have stumbled in the darkness rather than humble themselves to "believe on the light" and thus become "sons of light". To any readers of this magazine who are puzzled as to how to receive light in these dark days we would commend to you our Master's

words as the only way of salvation.

2. The Consequence of Light Rejected (verses 39**, 40)**

In Israel's time of slavery in Egypt, the Pharaoh of that day set himself up against Almighty God and refused to let God's people go and worship. He continually hardened his heart (e.g. Ex.8:32). Until one day his opportunity to believe God's word through Moses and Aaron was over and then "The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Ex.9:12). Similarly, in Jn 12 we see that those who had continually heard the words of grace from "a greater than Moses" eventually "could not believe". Their day of opportunity was over. As well as being a fearful warning to unsaved ones who like hard rocks beneath the sea continually let the gospel wash over them, this passage also has a solemn voice for the believer. God has

Once saved, we can never lose our eternal security, but what a loss of present happiness and eternal reward will be ours if we prefer our own dark pathways to the light of God's ways.

given much light in His Word for disciples, longing that they might be obedient to His revealed will. If, however, we are not willing to accept this light immediately — perhaps because of its cost to us in terms of changed lifestyle or breaking of old unscriptural associations — we cannot presume that God will always show us such light. Once saved, we can never lose our eternal security, but what a loss of present happiness and eternal reward will be ours if we prefer our own dark pathways to the light of God's ways.

3. The Hidden Light (verses 42,43)

It is easy to see in these verses the example of men who lit a lamp and hid it instead of putting it on a stand (see Matt.5:15). Rather than being smug or criticizing these men, as we read these verses, may God help us to examine our own lives. The consequences of letting their light shine would be severe; being "put out of the synagogue" was the end of all social respectability and much more to the Jew. With us, is it just that we "like to be liked" that prevents us making the remark which shows we have God's light within us? To hide our light is shown up in verse 43 for what it really is - not timidity, shyness or anything which sounds so excusable. The reality is we love the flickering fading glory of men more than the surpassing light of God's glory.

Conclusion (verses 44-50)

As we come to the end of Jn 12 we read the Lord's closing words to unbelieving Israel before He gives His precious teaching to His loved and His own.

How they should have been moved as His perfect obedience to His Father's will brought to mind their long national history of waywardness and unbelief. In beholding the Son they could behold the Father (v.45). In listening to the Son they could hear the Father (w.49,50). Only by believing on the

Son, could their much vaunted belief in the Father be shown to have any substance whatsoever (verse 44).

As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, surely the Son must have the pre-eminent place in our hearts and lives because of all that He has done for us.

Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Heb.12:1,2).

Some Names of God (Part 2)

By J. Rodgers, of Toronto, Canada.

The basic thoughts expressed regarding the knowledge of God and His progressive revelation in the Old Testament can be equally applied to this dispensation. Many people believe that there is a God and accept that "in Him we live and move and have our being", as Paul said to the Athenians. He also remarked that even certain of their own poets had said, "For we are also his offspring". This is what was earlier termed knowing God as the God of the human family.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

Faith in Christ brings us into a personal relationship with God as *our* God, and obedience to His word brings us into a community which is named, "a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet.2:9) - the people of God. As the people of God, forming the house of God, we know Him as the God of the house of God to whom worship is offered (see Heb.3:6; 1 Pet.2:5). To know Him as the God and Father of Him who is *over* the house takes us to the highest title by which God is named, and is the basis for many believing that the *highest of names* should be the manner of our approach in the *highest* of services — worship.

There are four occurrences of the name, or title, in the exact wording which appears in the heading of this section. The first is in Rom.15:6, "That with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". Unity in divine service is a necessity and at no time is this more important than in our Godward service. Thus the spiritual house (1 Pet.2) offers up spiritual sacrifices, not as individuals but as a holy priesthood.

Possibly one of the greatest needs in Christian experience is comfort. It is needed in bereavement, affliction, depression, or loneliness. The Psalmist embraces these in the words, "the valley of the shadow of death" and the

deepest of needs is ministered to from the *highest* authority, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us" (2 Cor.1:3).

In writing to the Ephesian saints the apostle Paul stated, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph.1:3). Only God can impart spiritual blessings and, as expected, they come in the fulness of God, unlimited — every blessing.

The apostle Peter completes the triple presentation of what flows from God to us in the words, "... the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ... begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet.1:3). Despite any uncertainties on our part this has been sealed by God the Father through the resurrection of Christ: "The Lord is risen indeed" was the expression of renewed hope in those who had lost hope and is the assurance for us of eternal security and "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away".

What we give to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is found in one verse, but three verses are employed to outline what He gives to us, a testimony to the fact that what we receive far outweighs what we give. Our willing response should be to glorify Him and we have the opportunity of doing so through worship.

Under the Old Covenant God legislated for various burnt offerings; the continual burnt offering (Num.28:3,4); every Sabbath (Num.28:9,10), every month (Num.28:11-15), the Feast of the Passover (Num.28:19-23), the Feast of Trumpets (Num.29:1,2), the Feast of Tabernacles (Num.29:12-38), at Pentecost (Lev.23:15,16), etc. These were all obligatory offerings but the individual spoken of in Lev.1 brought an oblation (a gift, present, a free-will offering) unto the Lord. We can mentally picture the man, his heart almost bursting with love and gratitude to the Lord, bringing his offering from the herd, or if poverty necessitated it, turtledoves or pigeons. His joy was in offering as he was able. What a wealth of delight that must have given to God! As the Lord's people we have the liberty and opportunity of giving to God and this should not be by commandment but be love-motivated "that we may, in some small degree, return Thy love again".

As we join to bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we do so in the spirit of the Psalmist,

Bless the Lord, 0 my soul;
And all that is within me,
bless His holy name.
(Ps.103.1)

Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD:
for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever (Ps.106:1).

FOCUS

The Mystery of Lawlessness

The rising tide of lawlessness, world-wide, threatens society in every country, causing deep concern to all who have responsibility for law and order.

In many nations there's special concern about the growing rate of juvenile crime, reflecting lack of parental control and the influence of TV or video programmes featuring violence and crime. Added to this is the loss of the restraint which used to derive from knowledge of the Bible, respect for God and a sense of accountability to Him. Ignorance of God and departure from the fear of the Lord, have had a profound affect on many modern nations. People grow up with no spiritual convictions, leaving them more prone to unrestrained evil. There results the dismal catalogue of social ills so common today — dishonesty, alcoholism, drug addiction, muggings, child abuse, murders and the like. Which nation today is exempt from these sad trends?

At all too frequent intervals the headlines are captured by dramatic acts of terrorism. Even super-powers find themselves in situations where their nationals are at the mercy of a few determined gunmen, and little can be done about it. Aircraft and even an ocean liner have been hi-jacked, individuals murdered and the lives of hostages threatened. Punitive actions tend to provoke even worse acts of lawless violence and terrorism.

Then we have increasingly seen episodes of violent rioting, so frequently reported from many different lands. Whatever the basic causes of this riot or that, the method of protest expresses an attitude of lawlessness which often results in injury or even death for innocent people. There's extensive loss through damage to property when buildings and cars are set on fire or shops are looted. When such mob violence breaks loose there seems to be mindless disregard for others. How relevant the words of Rom.3:14-17!

"Whose mouth is full of cursing
and bitterness,
Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways;
And the way of peace have they not known".

The lawless trends of our time remind us of the remarkable statement in 2 Thess.2:7 "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work". Sinister mystery! Through divine revelation in Scripture the fearful fact is revealed that there is a spirit of lawlessness pervading our world. That same spirit was expressed through Satan's challenge to the Most High when he declared: "I will ascend ... I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High" (Isa.14:13,14). Divine judgement followed: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O day star, son of the morning!" wrote Isaiah (Isa.14:12); and the Lord Jesus looked back on that dramatic crisis when He said: "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Lk.10:18).

The Devil has remained true to his fallen character since iniquity was found in him (Ezek.28:15). He has imbued fallen mankind with his own spirit of lawlessness. As we're reminded in Eph.2:2 "...aforetime ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience". There has been restraint on that spirit of lawlessness (2 Thess.2:7) but it will be expressed with growing intensity as the end-time approaches. The world is being conditioned by Satan today in preparation for the climax of lawlessness which his strategy has in view. Behind the news headlines, behind the crime-wave, the rioting or the international terrorism, Scripture reveals the mystery of lawlessness. It becomes to us a marked sign of the times.

What then will be the ultimate in lawlessness? The revelation of *the* lawless one, the man of sin, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or is worshipped (2 Thess.2:4).

Today's lawlessness casts its black shadow menacingly towards the time of the end!

The Implications of "the Decrees"

By J.L. Ferguson, of Barrhead, Scotland.

We refer to Acts 16:4. The implication of the decrees was that no church of God is wholly autonomous, that is, self-governing; and that what affects one church may affect all others.

The Greek word used for decree is *dogma,* "it primarily denoted an opinion or judgement ...hence an opinion expressed with authority, a doctrine, ordinance, decree" (Vine).

The decrees in Acts 16:4 arose out of the circumcision problem affecting the Gentile disciples in Antioch. Certain brethren came down from the Church of God in Jerusalem, and contrary to the mind of the apostles and elders there, taught in the Church of God in Antioch, "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

Now there were spiritually-minded leaders in the church in Antioch, as evidenced in Acts 13:1, men perfectly capable of handling the problem within their own assembly. They could have argued, as is done by so many beloved brethren today, that they were responsible for the conduct of the affairs of their own assembly, and no other assembly had the right to intrude.

But none knew better than .these leaders, and the assembly itself, that they did not stand alone in testimony. In Acts 14:27 Paul and Barnabas had already told them of the new assemblies which had been planted by them during their missionary journey, and of the extension in this way of the fellowship of churches into Gentile territory, of the growth of the kingdom of God, of the holy nation.

They rightly concluded that the teaching brought by these brethren from Jerusalem was rank heresy. But they foresaw that were they to judge the false teachers and prohibit their teaching in the church, the men were perfectly capable of creeping in privily elsewhere and other churches with whom they were in fellowship would be exposed to the same evil. They thought "imperially". They considered what steps should be taken to ensure that all the churches would be authoritatively advised how to deal uniformly with this problem.

So they decided to send to Jerusalem certain brethren, including Paul and Barnabas, to confer with the apostles and elders in the church there. It is suggested that first there was a private discussion between the brethren from Antioch and the leaders who were of repute in Jerusalem, as shown in Gal.2:2, but we do not pursue here the significance of this action. Then they were received of "the church and the apostles and the elders" (Acts 15:4).

This was the Church of God in

Jerusalem. It had grown to be a vast congregation, as the early chapters of Acts show (Acts 2:41; Acts 4:4,32; Acts 5:14; Acts 6:1,7). Few, if any, would contend that all this multitude of disciples could gather for assembly services in the one place. They must of necessity have met in many companies (as e.g. in Acts 4:23; Acts 12:17). Yet it remained one church, referred to e.g. in Acts 5:11 as "the whole church", and had one group of elders as we have noted in Acts 15:4.

We find it hard to understand in this connection why so many believers who are loosely associated with other similarly minded believers in other companies in the same town, regard each company as self-governing under the guidance of its own elders, and ignore the obvious scriptural requirement that all the companies should form one church in the city, under one united elderhood. What has happened to the New Testament pattern?

Today the Faith has been once for all delivered to the saints; delivered for safe custody; and for contention if necessary where its principles are being eroded.

After the welcome meeting by the church in Jerusalem, the apostles and elders gathered together to consider the principles involved in the Antioch problem and what the counsel of the Holy Spirit would be in the matter. In due course they came to one mind and agreed on a certain course of action which should be followed in the ever-growing number of Gentile churches. The details of this course of action were "the decrees". And when Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by two of the chief men among the brethren in Jerusalem, brought the letter to the church in Antioch, the disciples there "rejoiced for the consolation".

And now we come to the point which concerns us, that is, the implications of these decrees. After a brief spell, Paul and Silas set out on a tour of the Gentile churches, passing through Syria and Cilicia, then on into lower Galatia. "And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:4,5).

All this is detailed by orderly Luke as a true record of divinely authorized procedure in the early churches and his record has been preserved by God for all time and, in particular, for ours. Not only did all the companies of disciples who were obedient to the Faith in a city form one church of God there; but that one church was also under one united elderhood; moreover that one church was non-autonomous; and we see also that as the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ was being increasingly revealed, it was held in common sacred trust by *all* the churches of God for they were in one Fellowship, one Community.

Today the Faith has been once for

all delivered to the saints; delivered for safe custody; and for contention if necessary where its principles are being eroded. And we believe that one of these erosions has been the lack of perception of what was involved in "the implications of the decrees". This is a matter which calls for serious reflection by many beloved fellow-believers today.

He does so much for us

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C., Canada.

This is a fact concerning the Lord which we can never question, and it is brought out characteristically in the care of the shepherd for his sheep. A Canadian author, who had been a shepherd, tells how easily sheep can die if a shepherd is not alert. He must watch constantly for signs indicating danger.

The appearance of vultures is one of these signs. When the shepherd sees them hovering in an area he will investigate immediately, and find, invariably, a sheep "cast down", that is, on its back. If not rescued at once the sheep will die as it is unable to regain its feet from the position it is in. Predators know this and wait patiently for its demise. But a good shepherd is on the scene first, turns the sheep over, and gets it walking again. This is only one of the many requirements in the busy day of a shepherd. Foremost in the shepherd's mind is to meet the needs of the sheep. Whether we realize it or not, this is how the Lord deals with us,. too.

That there is no limit to what the Lord can do for us is a lesson we learn so slowly. We need constant reminding that He is our source, resource, and strength. David confessed, "For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chron.29:14). Paul instructed the Philippians, "And my God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:19). And a good shepherd, virtually, has to do everything for his flock, that is why they share an affectionate attachment. The Lord Jesus confirmed this by saying, "I am the good shepherd; I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me ... My sheep hear My voice ... and they follow Me" (Jn 10:14,27). He enlightens us further by revealing the negativeness of a hired man. "He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them" (v.12). Sheep need to be possessed, to have their needs met daily by one who cares. A good shepherd does not leave sheep

exposed to danger, but protects even to the sacrificing of his life (v.15).

David was a worthy shepherd and knew the demands of meeting every need of his sheep. In the matter of protection he did not run from the lion and the bear, but confronted and slew them (1 Sam.17:36). In Ps.23:1-6 he puts himself in the category of a sheep and shows how the Lord can meet his every need: v. 1, providing; v.2, leading; v.3, guiding; v.4, reassur-ing;v.5,protecting;and v.6, in blessing. The Lord desires to do the same for us in our daily lives, and we surely long for His leading, assuring, and protecting. All these provisions are available to us. One has described them for us in this way: "Green pastures beneath, still waters beside, a table before, goodness and mercy behind". That seems to cover everything.

In the opening verse of the Psalm David reveals the unchanging character of the Lord, and that He is the ever present One. "The LORD *is* my shep-herd," he says. "God *...is,"* says the writer to the Hebrews (Heb.11:6), and "faith *is* ..." (v.l). It is when we blend these precious truths together that our Christian lives become greatly enriched. "The Lord is," Cries the Psalmist, and when he follows with "my shepherd" he is indicating that a sheep needs an owner. It must not be left to roam aimlessly, unattended, unobserved. The Greek word for overseer, bishop, the spiritual shepherd, is *episkopos,* meaning to look, watch, oversee. Constant vigil is essential because of enemies in the air and on the ground. Incidentally, the phrase "cast down" is used three times in Ps.42, and it has tones of depression and distress. When saints experience this they need the spiritual care which restores the spirit and gets them walking again in the ways of the Lord.

Christians receive great comfort from David's words, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me ..." (v.4). If applied to the end of life's journey, it is reassuring to know that there can be no "shadow" without light. If He is with us, the true Light, then we lack nothing, and have nothing to fear. Even if the words "shadow of death" can be translated "deep darkness", it matters not, for He who conquered death is with us holding us securely by the hand. The lions' den and the fiery furnace held no fears for Daniel and his friends, because they knew Jehovah Shammah, "the Lord is there". So must we know Him as the provider, leader, guide, and protector in everything.

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go, The floods of distress shall not thee overflow; For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress".

The Believer's Blessings in Ephesians (Part 2)

By M. McDonald, of Crossford, Scotland.

Our Blessings in Christ Jesus — Eph.2

Verse 6 — Raised up with Christ Jesus and made to sit with Him

"God... raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus".

These remarkable statements stand in stark contrast to what the Ephesians were prior to their conversion. The Ephesians had been dead in their trespasses and sins they had walked according to the course of this world, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind. It is against such a back-cloth of degradation that we must consider this marvellous truth of being raised up in Christ Jesus and made to sit with Him in the heavenly places. This elevated position is perhaps one of the great truths that dawn upon the Christian subsequent to his conversion. It is a spiritual reality, and entering into it will enable spiritual growth and understanding to develop.

When did this seating with Him take place? It must have occurred when we were born again. It is not a matter of our coming and going from these heavenly places, but once seated there we cannot undo the divine work.

Eph.2:7 - God showing His grace toward us in Christ Jesus

"That... He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus".

In this verse the apostle brings before us the purpose that God has in our being raised and made to sit with Christ. This great purpose lies still in the future — in the ages to come.

What is it that God is going to show forth? It is His grace in kindness. What a precious word is grace! — God's unmerited goodness and favour is totally undeserved by us. Heavenly beings will marvel at the operation of God's grace on such poor, vile sinners as we are. God has demonstrated His marvellous grace in His kindness towards us. What a beautiful thing is the kindness of God! This kindness He has shown to us in the glorious person of Christ Jesus.

However, it is not simply God's grace. It would have been more than enough if it was only *His grace;* but it is the *riches of His grace.* Our God is not a poor God, but one who can give and give and give without any effect on the immensity of His boundless resources. Men may measure riches in material things, but our God looks to riches of a more lasting nature than this world's fast fading glories. The riches of God's grace will thrill the believer's soul when earthly things have long since passed away.

The apostle now adds an adjective

to the *riches of His grace* namely, *exceeding.* The Greek word is rendered also by *surpassing* or *cast beyond.* If our finite minds are unable to grapple with the immense revelation of the riches of God's grace in Christ then the *exceeding* riches of His grace must even further exceed our highest thoughts. We must humbly bow before God's supremacy and His majestic ways.

Eph.2:10 - Created in Christ Jesus for good works

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them ".

Salvation is not of good works: but one of God's eternal purposes in us is that we should fulfil His glorious expectations in us, in carrying out the good He has previously destined for us. A Christian who is not seen to be doing these good works from the heart is scarce worthy of that honourable name.

This poor world is crying out for the evidence of the workmanship of Christ. When He was here as the Carpenter of Nazareth, how men must have marvelled at the meticulous care He took in even the smallest of jobs! Now we know He is exalted on high; but still His workmanship can be in evidence, seen as a reflection in His disciples' lives. We are His workmanship. Am I a credit to the Masterworkman?

In this verse we are once again brought face to face with the foreknowledge of the Almighty. He has prepared good works for you and me to carry out. What happens if we fail in these things? We can rest assured our failure will not jeopardize the purposes of God. When king Saul proved to be a failure, God said, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who shall do all My will" (Acts 13:22). What will be true unfortunately will be the loss of reward in failing to do these good works. We are encouraged by the words of the One walking in the midst of the lampstands, "I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

Eph.2:13 - Made nigh in Christ Jesus

"But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ".

The world for centuries has known the great division between Jew and Gentile. When God called His people out of Egypt, and the Israel nation came into existence, it was God's intention that Israel should be the head of the nations; but the blessings given to Israel would be shared by all nations. That this has not come to pass must be due in part at least, to lack of faith on the part of Israel. The cross of Christ has changed everything! Almighty God, with holy displeasure, must have watched the hardening of attitudes between Jew and Gentile, the deepening of the cleavage between them over the centuries. Now from the Jewish nation — the seed of Abraham —

God had sent His Saviour. Isaiah foretold, hundreds of years prior to the fulfilment of his prophetic word, that it "was too light a thing" that Jehovah's servant "raise up the tribes of Jacob" and "restore the preserved of Israel", but He was going to be "for a light to the Gentiles" and also God's salvation "unto the end of the earth". What an all-encompassing statement this is! Who is excluded? No-one! Which nation does God ignore? None, all are precious in His sight.

How has this marvellous reconciliation been effected? It is in Christ Jesus, so that those of us who once were far off are brought nigh in His precious blood. The hymnwriter puts it beautifully in the words

So nigh, so very nigh to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the person of His Son
lam as near as He.

IN PRAYING ... (Matt.6:7)

Lord, teach me how to pray!
Not multiplying words in babbling, empty chatter,
But just, in simple earnest speech, to say
Those things that **really** *matter.*

Lord, teach me too, to be
Sincere in everything for which I pray;
To shun fine words and gilded orat'ry.
And mean just what I say.

Grant that I may, by grace,
A humble spirit manifest;
As child to Father may I learn my place.
And know **Thy** *will is always best.*

J. Belton

Voices from the Past

Liberality (1)

The great liberality and also the carefulness of the Lord are clearly seen in the feeding of the five thousand. When the whole multitude had been fed the Lord commanded His disciples, "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost. So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten" (Jn 6:12,13). He could quite easily have gone on breaking the five barley loaves and from His blessed hands the broken pieces could have been taken to fill the twelve carrying baskets of the disciples (in which, I understand, they carried their food). But this would have meant that the broken pieces left over, after the multitudes had been fed, would have been left lying about. The Lord could not bear either waste or loss. His giving was ever with great liberality, as witness how He gave wine in abundance at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. He gave six waterpots which held two or three firkins apiece, which at the lowest estimate would be twelve firkins. Mr. Newberry says that the firkin was about nine gallons, so that the six water pots would contain at the lowest estimate about one hundred and eight gallons of the best wine. This was a gift worthy of a king! There was such abundance in the feeding of the five thousand that it is said that they could have as much as they wished to eat. "Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would" (Jn 6:11). With the greatest liberality the Lord gave. The multitude had as much as they could consume, but at the same time nothing was left and lost. All the bits had to be gathered up. In this there was a real harvest for the disciples. They themselves would have easily consumed the five small barley loaves and the two small fishes at their evening meal, but now they have each a basketful of fragments. The law in nature is that of carefulness. Nothing is lost. He who is the Lord of nature, and who gave to it its law, gives to His disciples His law in grace.

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

It was to the disciple whom Jesus loved (Jn 13:23) that the most intimate and personal revelations concerning the Father and Son were made. John Zebedee's early acquaintance with such knowledge enabled him to include the words of John the Baptist at an early point in his gospel, "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand" (Jn 3:35). Here is the substance of the shadow cast in Genesis, "thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac" (Gen.22:5) "And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac" (Gen.25:5). In the homely setting of Jn 13:1-3 the same love was expressed to the uttermost for the Lord's own which were in the world. The Son, whom the Father "appointed Heir of all things" (Heb.1:2), now in His majestic Manhood rises, lays aside, takes, and girds. The One who now owns all things, humbles Himself to possess a mere towel and to use it as a visual aid to teach a lasting lesson to those whom He loved so much (Jn 15:9). That lesson is developed by our main contributor this month. We may conclude that when the Son framed the ages as Agent (Heb.1:2), the Father appointed Him Heir of all things that He framed, and all these things were delivered into the possession of the Son. "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father" (Matt.11:27). So when the Lord spake the parable in Matt.21:33-46 He used this fact to teach the chief priests and elders in the Temple the enormity of the crime they would shortly commit, "this is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and take His inheritance". How thankful we should be as those who love Him and form part of "all that which He (the Father) hath given Me"(Jn 6:39).

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Cover Picture: Lake Taho, California

In the Shadow of Calvary

(3) Object Lesson in Humility

By R. Armstrong, of London Ontario, Canada.

The Setting

"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and He took a towel, and girded Himself Then He poureth water into the bason, and began to wash the disciples 'feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded" (Jn 13:3-5).

There is no record, as they travelled in Israel for three years, that any of the disciples ever washed the feet of Christ, no doubt often travel-stained and weary. To a woman, deeply repentant of her sins, goes the honour of such an act. In the house of Simon the Pharisee she quietly stood behind Him, tears flowing, sufficient to bathe His feet, which she dried with her hair and kissed repeatedly (Lk.7:36-50).

A quote from "Bible Lands Customs" is helpful about feet washing. "After bowing, greeting, and kissing, the Eastern guest is offered water for washing his feet. A servant will assist the guest by pouring the water on his feet over a copper basin, rubbing the feet with his hands, and wiping them with a napkin". This was confirmed by the Lord's censure of Simon.

"Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath wetted My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet"(Lk.7:44-45).

Water was provided by the host and only when a menial servant was present were the feet washed by such a person. This explanation greatly enhances the Lord's selfless action on the betrayal night. He took the place of the servant to minister. Had He not taught the disciples earlier,

"whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister (Gk. diakonos, *servant)".*

"And whosoever would be first among you, shall be your servant (Gk. doulos, *bondservant)".*

Our Lord then added:

"Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, (diakonos), *and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt.20:28).*

The Action

In the Upper Room scenario that historic night, we see the astonished disciples with uncomprehending eyes watch their Lord and Master remove

His outer garment, wrap a towel around His body, pour water into a basin, then one by one tenderly wash their feet... until He came to Peter.

"Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" (Jn 13:6)

It was as much an assertion as a question, because Peter had already made up his mind. One marvels at the way the Lord handled Peter's interruption so gently.

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter" (Jn 13:7).

Peter, impulsive, self assertive, was not satisfied with Christ's reply and blurted out,

"Thou shalt never wash my *feet!" (v.8).*

The others listened in shocked silence. It was like a stinging rebuke to Christ. Peter, how could you *dare* say that to the Lord? However much we may wish to make allowance for Peter, that he must have felt so inferior to the Lord, it still comes across as Peter's will against the Lord's. The fact remains on the record that he talked back to the Sovereign Lord of the universe!

As we reconstruct the scene we feel a deep sense of worship before the Lord, for His amazing humility and patience with Peter in his blundering refusal. However, before condemning the fledgling apostle, can we not see a reflection of our own nature in moments of self-will, to win a point, or justify an action? The tragedy of this is that we may do it in the Name of the Lord. Is it not true that sometimes we walk a thin line between God's glory and our own glory? However strongly we may contend for God's will and glory, it should never violate the spirit of meekness and humility.

In the room that night, right under the shadow of Calvary, a contrary human will co-existed with divine humility of amazing dimensions. The break came when the Lord quietly told Peter,

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me"(Jn 13:8).

The Greek word for "part" is *meros,* meaning a section or allotment, a division or share. At that moment, it threatened to be all over for Peter, not his eternal life, but his future days of service for Christ. He was standing in the way of his apostleship. That did it. He may have suddenly remembered Moses, who in anger smote the rock in Kadesh instead of speaking to it, and was denied entrance into the promised land. For whatever reasons, which the Lord knew all too well, Peter quickly changed position and said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head". It was all or nothing. How *could* he have changed so quickly? Some might have said, "that man will never make it as an apostle of Christ, or of the church". Others, "he could never be commended for the work of the Lord", yet 50 days later he led the evangelism outreach in Jerusalem at Pentecost, when three thousand were saved, baptized and added to the first church of God in the new age of the Spirit. Amazing grace of God!

The Purpose

Going back to the Lord's words to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" shows that there was more to it than simply washing the disciples' feet. The Lord adopted a cultural custom to illustrate deeper spiritual truths. *Firstly,* the Lord said to Peter, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all" (meaning Judas). Two important Greek words occur here. The word "bathed" is *louo,* meaning to bathe the whole body. The word "wash" is *nipto,* meaning part bathing, the hands, feet or face. It was as though the Lord gave advance lessons on Paul's letter to Titus.

"Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit.3:5).

That answers to "he that is bathed", a once-for-all washing, which takes place at the new birth. Then the ancient Scripture writer asks the question,

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Ps.119:9).

This answers to the daily cleansing of the word on the walk of the disciple on his way to glory. This again is not the same as the cleansing referred to in 1 Jn 1:7, where it says, "the blood of Jesus His Son, cleanseth us from all sin".

Secondly, we read in Jn 13:12, *"So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and sat down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you "?* He then explained another vital principle .

"If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you" (vv. 14-15).

John's gospel deals in fundamental spiritual teaching as well as narrative. That he only of the four gospel writers records the washing of the disciples' feet, suggests it was as much a symbolic act as something He told *them* to do. It was not however, to be a church practice as some hold it to be. By doing it Himself He taught the disciples His own selfless humility. To actually see the humble self-effacing Christ wash their feet was far more effective than a thousand sermons on humility. They would never forget it. Prov.15:33 tells us that, *"The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour goeth humility".*

The disciples had to learn that spiritual principle deep in their hearts, as they set out to make disciples, plant churches, and feed the flock of God. *"The Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle ... in meekness correcting them that oppose ... " (2 Tim.2:24-25).*

Finally, the Lord's act of humility was predictive of His own redemptive work. Years later Paul wrote,

> *"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross " (Phil.2:5-8).*

Our Lord ... has left us His beautiful example of humility. Pride, the opposite of humility, is in our fallen nature, and only as we reckon it crucified with the flesh can we win the battle against pride. Pride can subtly masquerade as pseudo-humility. It's carnal, born of the flesh. God hates it.

We must remember that although the Lord stooped to wash the disciples' feet, signifying His great descent and humbling of Himself, He gave up none of His essential Deity. Stooping to that humble task He was still God "in the likeness of men". His obedience *unto* death did not mean that death has power over Him. "Unto" is said to be a translation of a word that means "up to the point of dying" (Wuest). That helps us to understand what the Lord meant when He said, "I lay down My life ... No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from My Father" (Jn 10:17-18). He was Sovereign Lord of life and death!

Humility was always in the character of our Lord as God the Son. He has left us His beautiful example of humility. Pride, the opposite to humility, is in our fallen nature, and only as we reckon it crucified with the flesh can we win the battle against pride. Pride can subtly masquerade in pseudo-humility. It's carnal, born of the flesh. God hates it.

"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD... Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"(Prov. 16:5,18).

Many a promising spiritual life has been ruined for God, and many a preacher's message robbed of its power through secret pride in the heart. Beware of pride, Satan's trap, and who of us has not felt its power. *"Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble"* (1 Pet.5:5).

The seasoned apostle who wrote that had come a long way since the night of the historic feet-washing. Blessed be the Lord!

Some of Peter's Companions

(1) Andrew

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada.

Most of us can think of persons who've influenced us for good in some way or another, perhaps by their example or by things they've said or done. And we thank God for them. Sweet influences in our lives. I'm sure there must have been many people for whom Peter would give thanks and probably no one more than his own brother Andrew.

So we begin with Andrew, because he was the one who first introduced Simon Peter to the Lord Jesus. Andrew seemed to have a particular aptitude for this. I think of him as a friendly sort of man, easily approachable. You may remember when the Lord Jesus fed the multitude it was Andrew who introduced the lad with five loaves and two fishes. I wonder, had he come up to Andrew offering his picnic lunch to the great Teacher? And later on, when those Greeks came to Philip, saying "Sir, we would see Jesus" (Jn 12:21), Philip didn't quite know how to handle the situation. So he went to find Andrew. He would know what to do! He's usually referred to in the Bible as Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Some might have resented always playing second fiddle to a better-known brother. But it didn't seem to bother Andrew. His brother became a great preacher, and on the day of Pentecost God used him to turn three thousand to Christ. But Andrew was the sort who led others to Christ one by one. Both kinds of workers are needed.

It was through Andrew's good work that Peter first met the Saviour. It says a very fine thing about him in Jn chapter 1, when he started to follow the Lord Jesus himself. "He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah". He brought him to Jesus. Isn't that lovely? He could have done his brother no greater service. He found him and brought him to Jesus. A few verses further on in the chapter we read of Philip doing the same for his friend Nathanael. He found him and encouraged him to come and meet the Lord Jesus.

Finding and *bringing.* I leave those two words with you today. George Dempster wrote a book which he called "Finding men for Christ". Who could *you* find and bring to Christ? Someone in your own family perhaps, who doesn't yet know Him in this personal way, or a neighbour or friend, or colleague at work? There are so many all around us, who are losing out because they do not know Him. They need us to find them and bring them to Him.

FOCUS

Israel Tempest-Tossed

At one period of his ministry the prophet Isaiah described the Israel nation as "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted" (Isa.54:11). That same description could well be applied today! For the modern State of Israel seems like a small vessel on a very rough sea, lashed by gales and with little prospect of relief.

Her problems are legion. There is the continuing nightmare of economic strain, with penalizing inflation and high taxation levels. The enormous burden of defence expenditure strangles the country's economy.

Internal divisions of opinion are deep and bitter. The Sephardim Jews who came to Israel from North Africa and the Middle East have on the whole been less prosperous than immigrants from Europe and America. The political views of these groups have tended to become polarized, leading to strong confrontations on many issues.

The vexed question of Palestinian claims to political and territorial rights stirs passionate strife. The Sephardim take a hard line on the subject, denouncing the more moderate view which would attempt negotiation and offer concessions. Further rapid development of Jewish settlements in the West Bank area has provoked Arab resentment and protest, and tough counter-measures have added to the country's internal tensions.

Under the stress of all these factors, the economic austerity, political divisiveness and the growing sense of insecurity, many Israelis are returning to their countries of origin. The rate of emigration from Israel is now causing deep concern.

Against this background we look again at the 54th chapter of Isaiah. The verse which speaks of Israel as "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted" is in the context of God's everlasting remembrance of His people: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall My covenant of peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on Thee" (verse 10). Isaiah witnessed Israel's backsliding and God's inevitable chastisement. Yet he was moved by the Holy Spirit to declare God's faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The nation's adversity was "for a small moment", but with great mercies God would gather them. "In overflowing wrath I hid My face from

thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, said the LORD thy Redeemer" (Isa.54:8).

God's faithfulness to covenant promise regarding Israel spans the centuries like a brilliant rainbow across dark storm-cloud. Judgement through Nebuchadnezzar and seventy years' captivity in Babylon were followed by the promised restoration to the land. Judgement through the Romans and centuries of dispersion have again been followed by restoration to nationhood. Sadly the darkness of unbelief regarding the Lord Jesus as their true Messiah still engulfs modem Israel. Divine chastisement continues as the nation wrestles in self-reliance with a daunting situation.

Yet the covenant promises remain. "As touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance" (Rom.11:28-29). For the sake of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David God will not change His purpose regarding the nation of Israel. They are "beloved for the fathers' sake". The nation will in due course emerge to millennial blessing under the Lord Jesus as Messiah: "In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression ... No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" (Isa.54:14,17).

Scripture warns of course that Israel's present troubles are but the prelude to *the* time of Jacob's trouble: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer.30:7). The Lord Jesus described that coming fearful ordeal as "great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt.24:21). "But", the prophetic word insists, "he shall be saved out of it".

What shall we say to these things? We see Israel's present experience as fulfilment of the prophetic scriptures that she would be restored to nationhood before the time of the end. Yet because the restored nation persists in unbelief regarding Christ, it remains under divine chastisement. Meantime the Middle East situation takes shape on lines predicted for the time of the end, with neighbouring countries sharing a common hostility to Israel. As modern history unfolds, the Lord's word to Jeremiah remains abidingly true:

"I WATCH OVER MY WORD
TO PERFORM IT"
(Jer.1:12)

Worship and Service (1)

In Relation to Individuals

By J.K.D. Johnston, of Musselburgh, Scotland.

There are several different Hebrew and Greek words that have been translated by the English word *worship* in our Bibles. Each conveys a different shade of meaning worthy of consideration in its context. The English word worship is itself an interesting word being derived from the Old English (or Anglo-Saxon) word *weorthscipe* (worthship) and denoting the worthiness of the person who is the object of the homage or worship.

Man has an inner consciousness of the Divine Being and a disposition to worship. This desire to worship is in greater or lesser measure common to all men, even the most primitive tribes have their objects of worship. This is a characteristic trait which distinguishes man from the brute creation. The capacity that man has for worship has been often alas, misdirected, for men have often worshipped things that are no gods. It has always been the purpose of the great Deceiver to turn men away from God and to prevent them from rendering to God the portion that is His due. Paul in his epistle to the Romans describes the retrogression of men in wilfully turning away from the one true God to worship the creature rather than the Creator (1:18-25). Taking as the objects of their worship the images of beasts and creeping things men became like those objects, bestial in their habits and way of life.

Idolatry has normally associated with it gross immorality, for idolatry is a practice that debases men, and the power behind it is demon power (1 Cor.10:19,20). In contrast to this the worship of God elevates men, for it promotes holiness in the lives of the worshippers and an increasing likeness to the One being worshipped.

A man may merit the respect or tribute of his fellows, but no man (save One) is worthy to be an object of the worship of angels and men.

When the Lord Jesus was here on earth He received the worship of men. When the Magi "came into the house and saw the young child with Mary His mother ... they fell down and worshipped Him" (Matt.2:11). In the days of His manhood the same homage was paid to Him by the leper (Matt.8:2), by Jairus (Matt.9:18), by the blind man whom He healed (Jn 9:38) and by the women who met Him after His resurrection (Matt.28:9), to mention but a few such recorded acts.

The Greek word *proskuneo,* which is translated worship in the instances

referred to, denotes an act of homage or reverence, usually rendered to God. An exception to this rule is found in Matt.18:26 in the parable of the king and the unmerciful servant. This parable is doubtless intended to illustrate principles of mercy and forgiveness that relate to God's dealing with us and which should also be seen in our relationships with one another; so it scarcely deviates from normal usage in this context. It is also used of the worship that men will wrongfully render to the Dragon, to the Beast and to his image (Rev.13:4,8,15). Such an act of homage was not accepted by Peter (Acts 10:25,26), nor by the angel (Rev.19:10; Rev.22:8,9) who gave John glimpses of glorious eternal vistas. The response of the angel was, "see thou do it not. I am a fellow-servant with thee ... worship God".

The first occurrence of the word "worship" (Heb. *shachah)* in the Scriptures is found in Gen.22:5, and the setting is most instructive. It is associated, among other things, with obedience, sacrifice, and a place chosen by God. Abraham's outlook on life was eloquently expressed by two things, his tent and his altar. The tent witnessed to his pilgrim character, he was a stranger in this world, he had in view something better than this world could offer (Heb.11:8-10). The altar showed him to be a worshipper of God. When he moved on there was nothing to show where he had been save the altars he left behind him. Isaac and Jacob, "the heirs with him of the same promise" displayed the same characteristics in their lives. These men were in the current of a developing divine purpose and were maintaining a bright witness to the one true God in a world enveloped in heathen darkness.

The scriptural record focusses mainly on the lives of men and women who are in the mainstream of God's purposes and little information is available on other individuals or family groups who may also have been worshippers of God. Abraham had a remarkable encounter with that enigmatic contemporary of his, Melchizedek, who was "priest of God most high" (Gen.14:18). Melchizedek is the first man to be presented to us as a priest serving God. There is no doubt that the service he rendered had divine approval. In the New Testament scriptures the greatness of this man and the nature of his priesthood, which is of a higher order than the Aaronic order, are the subjects of further discourse (Heb.7:1-17).

Idolatry has normally associated with it gross immorality, for idolatry is a practice that debases men, and the power behind it is demon power (1 Cor. 10:19,20). In contrast to this the worship of God elevates men, for it promotes holiness in the lives of the worshippers and an increasing likeness to the One being worshipped.

Before Abraham's time there were men of faith who feared God and who sought acceptance by Him through

sacrifices and offerings. They appreciated that divine forgiveness and acceptance could not be secured apart from the shedding of blood. Abel and Noah are examples of such men (Gen.4:4; Heb.11:4; Gen.8:20). At a later date also there were men such as Job and his companions, who feared God and sought acceptance through sacrifice (Job 1:1,5; Job 42:8,9).

Worship is fundamentally an attitude of the mind, but this will be reflected in many instances in a becoming attitude of the body also. This reverential attitude to God, which is the basis of true worship, is to be seen in the lives of men and women who are God-fearing. When Abraham's servant found that his prayer for guidance had been answered so swiftly and so completely he instinctively "bowed his head, and worshipped the LORD" (Gen.24:26).

To show how deep-rooted this attitude of mind is in an individual who truly reveres God the case of Job may be cited. Three calamities occurring in rapid succession had deprived him of possessions, servants, sons and daughters, yet he "fell down upon the ground and worshipped". The words Job uttered on that occasion have been a source of great comfort to many men and women of faith in times of sorrow. "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the LORD" (Job 1:21).

In these two instances the word translated "worship" is the Hebrew word *shachah* which means to bow oneself down.

Paul encountered persons who held God in reverence (Gk. *sebomai* — worshipped), Lydia and Titus Justus were two such persons (Acts 16:14; Acts 18:7). Associated with this reverential attitude of mind is the desire to offer service to God. The Lord Jesus, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13, linked together worship and service, and made it clear that such service or worship (Gk. *latreia)* should be offered only to God (Matt.4:10). Knowledge, however, is necessary if the outflow in service is to be acceptable to God. Paul thought that in persecuting the followers of Christ he was offering service to God (2 Tim.1:3; cf. Jn 16:2), but he later realized that he had been a tool in the hand of Satan. Sincerity and a good conscience are not enough, knowledge of the will of God is also necessary for acceptable service. Worship, therefore, also consists of doing the things that will be well-pleasing to God and acceptable to Him.

"The Lifter up of Mine Head"

By David Smith, of Ayr, U.K.

Family life, as bound together with the natural ties of parents and children, constitutes a divine arrangement which God has designed as a source of blessing and joy for mankind. Through the advent of the Christ into the family of Joseph and Mary, He has sanctified family life for all time. Having thus originated with God the family unit has always been a prime target of attack by the evil one.

The prevalent breakdown of family life in our day is but an evidence of the "grievous times" existing in the last days, when men will be "disobedient to parents", "without natural affection" and "implacable". Surely the agony and grief caused through family separations and broken homes can hardly be overstated. How significant it is that the ministry of the coming Elijah, before the great and terrible day of the Lord, commences at family level, for "he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal.4:6).

The Scriptures provide some of the saddest incidents of family contention and discord, beginning with Cain, the first man born into the world who, because his works were evil and his brother's righteous, slew his brother Abel. And we recall the strife that existed between Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and not least the saga of tragedy in David's household, which began when Tamar was humiliated by her brother Amnon, who in turn was subtly slain by Absalom as a first step in his iniquitous ambition to gain the throne for himself. Soon he was to steal the hearts of the people away from his father David.

The human heart has always been prone to contest for possession. Powerful forces are at work in our day to influence the hearts and minds of men, and to gain their interest and affection. Such pressure is keenly felt by all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and whose resolve is to follow and serve Him. By many ingenious ways the world and the adversary are poised to steal the hearts of God's people away from their true king, David's greater Son. The inducements offered are often promising and enticing, but the end result will be spiritual loss and disruption of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:3). Surely He whose grace has touched our hearts, and whose Spirit dwells in us, is fully deserving of all the love and devotion that we can ever yield to His glory. How appropriate to us all, the older and mature as well as the young, are the words of the wise king, "My son ... keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov.4:20).

Having lost the affection and loyalty of many of the people, David entered on one of the saddest epochs of his life, when with the few who remained faithful to him he was forced to flee from Jerusalem. Together they passed over the brook Kidron toward the way of the wilderness and "David went up by the ascent of the mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered" (2 Sam.15:30). It is not mere emotion that stirs our hearts as we read those solemn words. Knowing what David didn't know, and seeing it all in its true context, we bow before Him, the Lord's Anointed. For one dark night more than a thousand years later, He crossed the same Kidron, not only as the rejected king of Israel, but with a burdened soul, on His way to Calvary, there to take away the sin of the world and so reconcile us to God. It was however at this particular time that David wrote the moving words of Ps.3.

At which time of the day the great psalmist penned the deep meditation of his soul we may never know, whether in the morning as the sun cast its light on the mountain top, or in the darkness of the night as he lay encompassed by his faithful guardsmen keeping vigil. Intertwined with the burden of his heart and the sadness of his circumstances is a glowing faith that ascends far above the throne of Israel and above the top of the ascent of the mount of Olives, for a living faith takes men into the presence of the living God, and provides contact with heaven.

However many robust men guarded David in that dangerous situation, he saw beyond their circle, for he saw the Lord "a shield about me"; therefore he could lay him down and sleep (Ps.3:5). What a blessed experience when faith gives the vision, and in conditions dark and unyielding we each see the Lord "about me". The glory and the throne had been David's and his head had been drenched with anointing oil. He had borne the crown, not only his own but also that of his enemies as well (2 Sam.12:30). Now that head is covered and bowed to the ground, sadness and shame had displaced the crown and glory. As David's eyes gaze on the dry gravel beneath his feet and the once fearless warrior watches the earth absorb his tears, what impels him to say, "Thou, O LORD, art a shield about me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head" (Ps.3:3)? Surely a personal assurance that the God he has known and proved in the past is with him and will remain with him. The Lord will provide the necessary strength and solace equal to all his circumstances, bearing him forth to another day, a day of victory and revelation of the unfailing faithfulness of God. He had what it requires in a time of crisis and mounting trouble, a strong and positive faith to perceive the hand of God and to interpret the thoughts of love in His heart. It was just such a faith which enabled Moses in his day to endure "as seeing Him who is invisible".

It isn't always easy in times of personal difficulty to realize that God's purpose for each of His own extends far beyond "our light affliction, which is for the moment", to a height of permanent glory far above our circumstances. The proof of this being that He who went up to Calvary bleeding, with a crown of thorns on His head, who fulfilled all the shadows of the past, has ably procured all things for God. As the author of our salvation He stands at the head of a great multitude which He will assuredly bring to a destination of eternal blessing. And what a consolation to know that our times are in His hands, even now as we journey through this wilderness world.

Watch Those Words Please

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C.

He was a handsome young man, not yet 20 years old, the son of a doctor. His own vocation in life seemed undecided and so he had become a boat painter. It was incidental that he was part of my adult education class in communication skills, but an after-class discussion revealed that he was a new Christian. We shared thoughts on the Saviour's love for us and purpose in us, and he gladly accepted a copy of "Sunshine in the Valley". Then came from him the puzzling question. "You have talked about Calvary", he said. "Do you mean the Cross?" Answering in the affirmative quickly brought the realization of the trap which Christians sometimes fall into — the assumption that, because we know what we are saying, others also understand our words. What a fallacy this can be as my young friend proved. Surely, everyone has heard of Calvary, we reason. But have they?

Calvary, as most know, is not in the Bible text of the Revised Version, but in the margin. The verse says: "And when they came unto the place which is called The skull, there they crucified Him..." (Lk.23:33). The RV margin explains "The skull" thus: "According to the Latin, Calvary, which has the same meaning". Golgotha is the Hebrew word.

"The place called the skull" is how it is referred to in the New English Bible, Living New Testament, Gospels in Modern English, Wuest's Expanded Translation, Rotherham's and Darby's translations. The Knox version says: "The place which is named after the skull". This might account for some people today not being familiar with the word Calvary, unless they have been raised on the Authorised Version, or attended Sunday school.

Often when we preach, or testify in personal work, we lapse into the use of words such as redemption, bondage, footstool, doorpost and lintel, remission, baptism etc., assuming that the listener is following our train of thought. Yet, he or she might be too embarrassed to ask for an explanation. An architect who designed one of our halls confessed to not knowing what a baptistry is. His plans provided for a font.

There are three critical areas in communication. The first is within the person himself. The second is when we compete with noises, distractions and hindrances, and the message is not clearly received. The third applies to the use of words which are not easily understood. Another problem area is when we fail to get confirmation that we are understood. We can take things for granted, yet a question or two can provide us with the answer. How often the Lord used questions in His dissertations.

Perhaps we should view people as Philip did the Ethiopian eunuch. He asked a vital question, possibly in a kind, enquiring tone: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" After a negative, anxious answer, the evangelist sat alongside him and told him the good news of Jesus, Saviour and Lord. The message must have been clear and plain, and understood, for the eunuch was born again, and baptized in water as a disciple. Such is the power of the word, the evangel.

Paul wrote to some Christians: "unless ye utter by the tongue speech easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye will be speaking into the air" (1 Cor.14:9). The writer to the Hebrews refers to things hard of interpretation (5:11), while Peter speaks of the epistles of "our beloved brother Paul ... wherein are some things hard to be understood" (2 Pet.3:15,16). Knowing these things as Christians should make us aware of the need to speak simply, clearly, and understandingly to the unsaved and the newly born again.

Voices from the Past

Liberality (2)

The apostle Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians, highly commended the churches of Macedonia for their liberal giving towards the need of the saints in Jerusalem.

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality (2 Cor.8:1,2).

How often must these Macedonian Christians have practised the gathering up of the broken pieces that nothing be lost, so that they might contribute to the necessities of others! How they must have husbanded their meagre supplies, for the apostle, from a personal experience of their circumstances, speaks of their "deep poverty", so that others might share their store! This is what the grace of the Lord Jesus teaches those whom it reaches.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor.8:9).

What value the Lord puts upon the liberal gifts of His people! Most could easily spend all they have upon themselves, but by self-denial and carefulness they give out of their poverty to meet need in others. None of us has the faintest idea of how the Lord will reward such giving.

Paul continues in 2 Cor.9 the subject of the important matter of giving "with liberality" (Rom.12:8). He writes:

And He that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God (verses 10,11). But Paul cannot pull himself away from the matter of giving without making reference to God's gift of His Son, whence all the grace of giving springs.

Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift (2 Cor.9:15).

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

We do not know with any degree of certainty the season of the year when the Saviour was born in Bethlehem, but we know that it was at this time of the year, Passover time, that He died, was buried and rose again from the dead.

In the Passover Feast there are precious foreshadowings of "Christ our Passover" and in the outworking of the divine plan the death of the Saviour was to be synchronized with the Passover. The Lord gave intimation of this synchronism to His disciples (Matt.26:1,2) but the import of His words was not understood by them at the time He uttered them. The Jewish leaders would have arranged things differently (vv.4,5), but they found themselves taking action earlier than they had planned. The offer they received from Judas was a vital factor in their altered arrangements. The probable motives underlying the actions of Judas are examined by our contributor to this month's article in the series entitled "In The Shadow of Calvary".

The death and resurrection of Christ are key events in God's eternal purposes. The acceptance of them as actual historical events and a correct understanding of what was accomplished by them is fundamental to the gospel that we preach and to the outworking of God's purposes in our lives. Our regular feature, Focus, examines the different interpretations that are sometimes given to the meaning and purpose of these two events and then outlines the important implications of the truths associated with them.

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In the Shadow of Calvary

The Tragedy of Judas

By A.D. McCubbin, of Wembley, U.K.

Judas was an honourable name, being derived from Judah, who became head of the royal tribe in Israel. Subsequently it was the name of a great Jewish Leader, Judas Maccabeus, who in 165 B.C. routed the Seleucid army which had profaned the Temple in Jerusalem. Since Judas was a popular name in New Testament times a further designation was required, such as Judas the son of James (Acts 1:13).

One of the Twelve (Jn 6:71)

The present subject is Judas Iscariot, who was also called the son of Simon. The meaning of Iscariot is not certain, but it is generally considered to be "a man of Kerioth". Kerioth was a place in Judea, so Judas could be the only one of the twelve apostles who did not come from Galilee. Nothing is known about him before he was chosen by Jesus to be one of the apostles. What led Judas initially to become a follower of the Teacher from Galilee is not known. He could well have been impressed by the miracles, if not the teaching of Christ. When many other disciples turned away from following Him (Jn 6:66) Judas persisted, perhaps sharing a common hope among the Jews of a place of importance in the coming Messianic kingdom. There is no evidence that he was a Zealot or nationalist, or that Judas was not accepted by the other apostles. He could have kept himself rather separate, perhaps feeling somewhat superior to the Galileans. Subsequent events show that he could act in complete secrecy from the others. He had ability, as he was given the job of treasurer of the company, and left to dispense the funds.

In the list of the names of the Twelve the order varies slightly, but Judas is always placed last, with the infamous stigma of the one who betrayed the Lord (Matt.10:4). The choice of Judas was deliberate, for the Lord knew each one, including the one who would betray Him. This choice showed the amazing grace of Christ, that He could live for those years, with the knowledge of which one would turn against Him so treacherously. Despite this Judas was sent out with the rest of the apostles to preach the message of the kingdom, to heal the sick, cleanse those with leprosy, and drive out demons (Matt.10:7,8). Nothing particular is known about his activities during this period, except that he pilfered the money that was entrusted to his care (Jn 12:6).

At Bethany (Jn 12:1-8)

Shortly before the last Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where a supper was prepared for Him. During supper Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, took her treasured possession, a precious ointment, and used it all on the Lord's feet. Mary took the opportunity to express her love and devotion for Him, even to wiping His feet with her hair. Judas was incensed, and could only see the act as an extravagant waste. So he dared to criticize openly this lovely action, and having quickly assessed the value of the ointment, he complained that it could have been sold, and the money given to the poor, when in fact he would have been able to steal the money. Jesus only mildly rebuked Judas, declaring that the anointing was for His burial.

The Upper Room (Lk.22:12; Jn 13:18-30)

While the others were left pondering on the reference to His burial, Judas proceeded to add deceit to his covetousness. He went off straight away to the chief priests to offer to deliver Jesus into their hands (Matt.26:14-16). The rulers had already commanded that anyone who knew where Jesus was should disclose it, so they gladly accepted this offer and gave Judas thirty pieces of silver. This was a paltry sum, but perhaps Judas looked for more later. He may have had high hopes of becoming treasurer in the new kingdom of God, but he was now disillusioned and turned away to the power of Satan (Jn 13:2).

The location of the Upper Room was kept a secret, so that the Lord and His disciples would not be disturbed, for He had much to teach them even at that late hour. Not least they were to be warned of the coming betrayal, so that they would not be overwhelmed when it happened, but they would realize that even this was part of the divine plan. A touching illustration is taken from David's experience, which says "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me" (Ps.41:9). To eat bread signified a close friendship and loyalty, and to lift up the heel is to behave like a rebellious animal, who wounds his owner. This action was fully accepted by the Lord as part of the plan to redeem mankind, and He was ready to pay the price. He was going to die at the appointed time and place. They would understand all this in a future day, when they would be sent out as His witnesses.

As they proceeded with the passover meal, Jesus became troubled in His spirit, and He again referred to the traitor. Still no suspicion was aroused about Judas, for his deceitfulness was well covered from the other disciples. The usual arrangement for the meal has been described by Edersheim. A number of couches were placed in a U-shape round the table; the guests then reclined on the couches, lying on their left sides, and supporting themselves on their left elbows, so their right hand was free to take the

food. Jesus as the host would be in the centre of the chief couch, with the main places of honour on either side. We are told that "the disciple whom Jesus loved", who is generally considered to be John, was on the right side, so that he could rest on the breast of Jesus.

We cannot be certain of the placing of the rest of the apostles, for while Peter might be expected to have a place near the Lord, he must have been some distance away, as he needed to signal to John to find out what Jesus was saying. Judas, however, was near to Jesus, so that they could speak without others hearing, and they were able to dip in the bowl together. Maybe the Lord chose Judas to take the other honoured place, so that He could make one last loving appeal to stop Judas from taking the final step. The other disciples were perplexed at the further reference to the betrayal, obviously thinking that one of them would make some involuntary action. So they asked in turn "Is it I, Lord?", but when it came to Judas he could only say, "Is it I, Master?", which showed that he did not recognize Jesus as Lord (Matt.26:21-25). Jesus answered by an action, for it would be the one who dipped in the bowl with Him. Then the giving of the sop, probably a piece of meat, would be understood as a mark of honour. However, Satan had now entered Judas and was controlling his actions. No further appeal could succeed, so Jesus in sorrow said "What you are about to do, do quickly" (Jn 13:27 NIV), so far there was no indication that the betrayal was imminent. So Judas left to carry out the treachery, without the other disciples realizing what he was about to do.

John says that it was night when Judas went out; this was not just physical darkness, for it was the time of the full moon, but the time of spiritual darkness which comes to all those who turn their back on the Lord. John may have had this in mind when he later wrote "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:6,7).

The Garden of Gethsemane (Matt.26:36; Jn 18:1).

The rulers did not want to arrest and hold Jesus at the time of the feast for fear of a riot, and the inevitable reaction by the Roman army. However, when Judas arrived at the house of the high priest with the information that Jesus could be secretly arrested, their plans were altered, showing the divine overruling. How could the rulers persuade Pilate to hold a trial at the time of the feast, and how could they give evidence without defiling themselves, and when could the sentence be carried out? This would cause lengthy discussions, involving other members of the Sanhedrim. While these discussions were taking place

in the city, the Lord had time to finish His teaching, and go out to Gethsemane, where He could pray to His Father as the disciples slept.

It would be very late before the Jewish leaders completed their plans, and were ready to proceed with the armed guard to make the arrest. They may have gone by way of the Upper Room in case the Lord was still there, which could account for the mysterious incident of the young man who followed, and then fled naked to avoid arrest (Mk.14:51,52). When the arrest party arrived at the Garden they found Jesus not hiding away, but going out to meet them. John makes no reference to Judas giving the kiss of identification. The synoptic Gospels record that Judas kissed Him affectionately (Marshall), while again calling Jesus, Master; but was this action necessary, for Jesus must have been well known after His clashes in the Temple? Judas presumably returned with the arrest party, but there is no reference to his taking part in the trial, evidently he must have remained nearby to hear the sentence. This completely disillusioned man, overcome by remorse, tried to return the money, but there was no undoing the act of treachery, and therefore he despairingly took his own life. The Tragedy Some have felt that there was more in Judas' betrayal than avarice, for the reward was low. Perhaps he thought that Jesus could be made to show His power, for what limit was there for One who could even raise the dead? He could call down legions of angels to rout the Roman army, and then He could set up His Messianic kingdom. Whatever were the ultimate motives of Judas he became controlled by Satan to betray the Lord, and for this there was no forgiveness, and so Judas went to his own place (Jn 17:12; Acts 1:25). The tragedy of Judas was that he tried to use Jesus to better his own ends. The Master was going to conquer the power of evil, not by force, but by the way of the cross; and so "to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col.1:20).

This action (the betrayal) was fully accepted by the Lord as part of the plan to redeem mankind, and He was ready to pay the price. He was going to die at the appointed time and place.

Some of Peter's Companions

(2) James and John

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada.

There were two pairs of brothers who grew up together by the sea of Galilee, Peter and Andrew, and James and John. From boyhood days they'd lived by the sea in the fishing town of Capernaum. So it's not surprising that when school was over, fishermen they became. They loved the sea and everything about it. But one day another love came into their lives, stronger even than the call of the sea. They heard another call. It was the voice of the Son of God, saying "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mk.1:17). And it all happened on the very same day, as Jesus walked by the sea of Galilee. One by one they heard the call, faced its tremendous challenge, and decided there was only one way for them. And leaving home, and boats and nets, they rose up and followed Him.

But those early friendships forged around those well loved shores held good all through their lives. I'm sure Simon Peter would often thank God for the companionship of James and John. "Sons of thunder" they were called and maybe they were thundery friends at times. But I've no doubt that Peter could give as good as he got. And gradually their characters changed. Companying with the Son of God they grew to be like Him. John, for example, became known as the apostle of love.

One day these two brothers approached the Lord Jesus with a special request, that they might sit, one at his right hand and the other at his left, in His glory. The other ten apostles were indignant when they heard about it. But the Lord Jesus didn't reprove them. Rather, He asked them a very proving question. "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" "We are able" they said, (Matt.20:22), probably little realizing all that was involved in their answer.

But the day came when they did, and to their credit it must be said that both of them showed their very real love for their Master by giving their lives for Him. James was the first of the apostolic band to die a martyr's death. He died by the sword at the hand of cruel king Herod. And John was the last, for a long life of service lay ahead of him before eventually he also joined the martyr band.

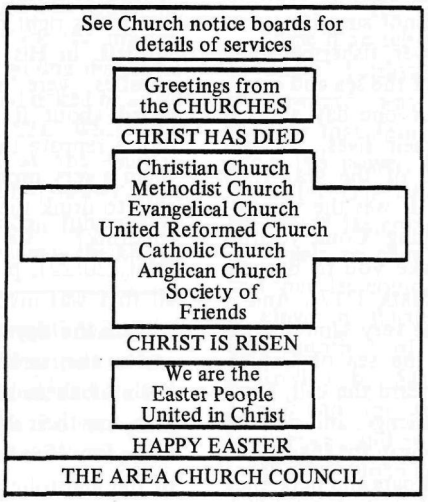
For years he and Simon Peter laboured together, encouraging one another in the work to which they pledged their lives that eventful day by Galilee's sea. And today it's just as though they were saying to each of our hearts.

I heard the call. Come, follow; that's all.
Earth's joys grew dim, my soul went after Him;
I rose and followed. That's all.
Will you not follow, if you hear His call?

FOCUS

Ecumenism at Easter

In a large residential area of a British city various denominations joined together to project an impression of unity in the local press at Easter time. A commanding advertisement took this form —



The message is bold and clear, stating two great facts which lie at the heart of the Christian gospel - that Christ has died and is risen. On this basis, "united in Christ", "the Easter people", they bear witness together to the "Easter message". Denominational distinction is by implication unimportant, for details of services can be seen on church notice boards. There is a general invitation from all these churches, leaving people to choose according to their background or preference.

How typical of today's ecumenical approach! It becomes increasingly fashionable to have a "broad-minded" outlook, seeking common ground on which to undertake some form of public witness together. In this case it was evidently possible to find a common denominator among all these groups in the two statements, "Christ has died" and "Christ is risen". On closer examination however this turns out to be only a facade of unity. For there are wide differences of understanding about the death and resurrec-

tion of the Lord Jesus from church to church.

"Christ has died". That sounds fine, but what different constructions are put on the statement! To some He died as an example of love and dedication to principle, not as an atoning sacrifice. To others He died as a sacrifice at Calvary but must be further sacrificed repeatedly in the recurring mass. To some faith in Christ and His atoning work assures eternal salvation. To others His death did not complete the work of salvation: human effort must be added to ensure our ultimate acceptance with God.

"Christ is risen". Again there are radical differences of interpretation of scriptural statements about the resurrection of Christ. Some reflect the views associated with Dr. Jenkins, Bishop of Durham, seeing the Lord's resurrection as nothing more than a spiritual experience. These ideas are shared not only by elements in the Anglican church, but also in "free church" circles where modern theology has taken root. Scripture states that "if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1 Cor.15:17,18). This statement is essentially dealing with the concept of physical resurrection. So churchmen who interpret the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as a mere "spiritual experience" are abandoning an essential of the gospel.

Many evangelical believers belong to churches which are included in the advertisement under discussion. Yet they continue to be linked in witness with this wide spectrum of churches with their often unscriptural views. Is it not time for reconsideration? What scriptural ground is there for believers to be featured in common witness with those whose essential message is so profoundly different from the pure gospel of Christ?

The ecumenical movement is surely not appropriate to believers who wish to serve the Lord Jesus along lines of scriptural principle! Scripture provides a divinely given pattern of association for spiritual service. It demands unity based on adherence to the truths of the faith. Those truths are not limited to the Deity and incarnation of the Son of God, His atoning sacrifice and physical resurrection. They embrace also baptism by immersion of those who receive the gospel, and addition to churches of God; those churches united world-wide to form the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The risen Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and He challenges our hearts to witness to the whole counsel of God in a day of ecumenical compromise.

Worship and Service (2)

In relation to Israel in the Wilderness

By J.K.D. Johnston, of Musselburgh, Scotland.

There is not only an individual aspect to worship but also a collective one. When God called Abram out from Ur of the Chaldees it was an important milestone in His dealings with men (Gen.12:1,2). There were far-reaching purposes in view to be worked out in association with the nation that would spring from him, Israel, his natural seed; and also with his spiritual seed (believers in Christ) (Gal.3:29). God kept His promise to Abraham and brought Israel out of the furnace of affliction in Egypt to be His people (Deut.4:20), and in so doing He fulfilled a cherished longing for a dwelling-place among men on earth.

Israel were redeemed in Egypt, separated from it and brought to Sinai where they entered into a covenant with God (Ex.19:3-8). It is to this covenant that the writer to the Hebrews refers when he reminds us that "even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service (Gk. *latreia),* and its sanctuary a sanctuary of this world" (Heb.9:1). That sanctuary was a portable structure constructed strictly to the pattern shown to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex.25:9). God made that tabernacle (Heb.— dwelling) His dwelling-place in the midst of His people, and from it He gave specific instructions relating to the collective worship and service He required from them (Lev.1:1).

From the days of Adam onwards men appreciated the need for sacrifice and offerings in their approach to God, and although these offerings were multi-purpose offerings they were all described as burnt offerings (See Job 1:5; Job 42:8). God's people Israel, however, were taught to exercise discrimination when bringing their offerings to the altar. There were offerings described as sweet-savour offerings, a group which included burnt offerings, peace offerings and meal offerings, and another group consisting of sin offerings, guilt offerings and trespass offerings. The latter group of offerings were necessary because of the sins and shortcomings of the worshippers. Israel were a redeemed, baptized and separated people, but they were still prone to sin. When an individual or the whole nation sinned, and became aware of that sin, the prescribed sin offering was brought to make atonement. Then, annually, on the day of atonement the sins of the people were dealt with year by year so that a holy God might continue to dwell among them. The worship of the people, as

expressed in association with their sweet-savour offerings, was acceptable to God, and valued by Him because their sins were covered by their sin offerings. Those sacrifices for sin could not, however, "as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect" (Heb.9:9), but they pointed forward to the once-for-all sacrifice that would have power to cleanse the conscience (Heb.9:14). "They were powerless and yet effectual, poor and yet making many rich, impotent and yet dispensing blessing, as it were bills of exchange of a national bank, which in themselves are only paper, and yet - in view of the day of their redemption - even *before* their due date of payment possess value as cash. Then Jesus Christ, by His sacrificial death on the cross, has met all those Old Testament 'bills of exchange' to their full value" (Sauer)[1]. The death of Christ was retrospective in its effects, procuring the redemption of the transgressions under the old covenant (Heb.9:15).

When God gave instructions for the making of the Tabernacle He also gave explicit commands for the inauguration of a priesthood to serve in it, to offer up to God gifts and sacrifices on behalf of the people. The sanctuary and the priesthood are inseparably linked together. Israel became a kingdom of priests (Ex.19:6), but service in the priesthood was restricted to male members of the family of Aaron. The priests, the sons of Aaron, served at the altar assisted by the Levites. Service within the sanctuary was confined to the priests, and only the high priest was permitted to pass through the veil into the most holy place and only on one day in the year. The way into the holies was not made manifest while the first Tabernacle was in existence (Heb.9:8).

The people came with their offerings to the Tabernacle in the centre of the encampment where there was a visible manifestation of the presence of God. They were only permitted to enter the gate and pass into the courtyard to the place where the altar stood, but the godly Israelite was conscious of the fact that he was drawing near to God his exceeding joy, and as he stood by the altar where the fire was consuming his offering he was reverently bowing before God in adoring worship. The value of the offering he brought would be related to his resources and also to the measure of his appreciation of God. There were limitations, however, imposed upon priests and people because there were imperfections associated with the sacrifices and the priesthood; the law made nothing perfect (Heb.7:19).

The realization of the great things that God has done for us and in particular an appreciation of the person and work of Christ will move us to render to God in worship the portion that is His due.

In all these things there is "a parable for the time now present" (Heb.9:9). Israel in their service for

were associated with things that were "copies of the things in the heavens" (Heb.9:23), and foreshadowings of "the good things to come" (Heb.9:11). There is profit, therefore, in studying the divinely-given account of the tabernacle and its service. The sacrifices and offerings, in particular, present us with delightful foreshadowings of the sacrifice of Christ and help us to appreciate more fully the value of that once-for-all sacrifice, its many facets, and the objectives achieved by it. We might fail to apprehend some of these if we did not have the illustration supplied in the type. Meditation on the types, therefore, will lead to an enrichment of the spiritual sacrifices we offer in our service.

Two of the things that God commanded His people Israel to keep were the weekly observance of the Sabbath day and the annual celebration of the Passover. The reason given in the law for keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest was that God rested on the seventh day from His work in creation (Ex.19:11). The Sabbath rest was given to Israel for their physical and spiritual well-being, so that they might rest from their labours and have opportunity to reflect on the greatness and goodness of God their creator. The keeping of the Passover reminded them of their deliverance from Egypt. God's work in creation and His work in redemption provided two very powerful reasons for His people to bow before Him in worship, and these reasons apply in our case also. The realization of the great things that God has done for us and in particular an appreciation of the person and work of Christ will move us to render to God in worship the portion that is His due.

God gave to Israel the privilege of serving Him collectively early in their wilderness experience. He was longing for the worship and service of a people who were uniquely His. It is sad to relate, however, that they failed to respond fully to the opportunity presented to them. That wilderness experience should have been a brief one, but it was lengthened out to forty years because of the unbelief of the generation that came out of Egypt. They were not permitted therefore to enter into the rest God had in store for His people in Canaan (Heb.3:17-19). God turned them back from its borders to traverse the desert until that generation died and the succeeding one had grown up and were ready to enter in.

1. The Dawn of World Redemption by Erich Sauer p. 136 (Mount Radford Reprints)

Misunderstandings (1)

By R. Darke, of Victoria, Canada.

Her name is said to mean favoured, gracious, merciful, but she wore an expression not at all in keeping with those virtues. Her eyes were closed, her lips moved, but no words were audible. She was in bitterness of soul, and she wept tears of anguish as she prayed to the Lord. This is the story of Hannah, the woman who longed for a son which had been denied her (1 Sam.1). Bitterness is the meaning of the Hebrew word *marah* (see Ex.15:24 RVM). Marah was the name given to the desert place where Israel met its first setback after crossing the Red Sea. Those waters were like gall as the Israelis stooped to drink, but a tree cast into the waters changed them to sweetness. The tree of Calvary, where sweet love was manifest in the precious sacrifice of Christ, is what can change to sweetness many of our bitter experiences.

Childless Hannah prayed silently as she vowed to give back to the Lord the son she longed for, and no razor would be used on his head as in the vow of the Nazirite. That was when she was misunderstood. Eli, the high priest, concluded she was drunk, and advised her to stop drinking wine in excess. What a sad situation develops when a person is a victim of false assumption! "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit" pleaded Hannah. "I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a wicked woman; for out of the abundance of my complaint and provocation have I spoken hitherto" (vv.15,16 RVM). The provocation plus criticism obviously came from Peninnah; but what a relief for Hannah, and any child of God who is a victim of misunderstanding, to pour our their burdens before the Lord. Its parallel is seen in the lament of Jeremiah to "pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord" (Lam. 2:19). 'Tis then the bitterness and grief are emptied, to be replaced by better things.

"Go in peace, said Eli, and the God of Israel grant thy petition" (v.17). Worship and happiness filled the vacuum joyously for Hannah, as it can for us. And when she received her longed-for son she cried: "For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of Him" (v.27).

Misunderstandings become bearable when the Lord is asked to handle the circumstances. David gives us this encouragement: "Trust in Him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us, Selah"(Ps.62:8).

In Weakness Made Strong

By G. Jarvie, of Glasgow, U.K.

"When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor.12:10).

A classic example of this is David in his fight with Goliath. There were many strong men in the camp of Israel, but they met a stronger than they in the giant from Gath, and so they were afraid of him. But David had learned that, in the service of God, weakness is an asset when it is linked with faith in God. His conflict with the lion and the bear had taught him that.

There is a helpful lesson in this for all the servants of Christ. When we are fluent in speech, then our ability can be a loss to us unless we are careful that we speak only the word that the Lord has given us in the secret place. In the service of God the flesh profits nothing, it is the Spirit that quickeneth. Fluency and organizing ability are powerful aids in the affairs of men, but in God's service they must be subservient to the power of the Spirit of God. "Apart from Me" the Master said, "ye can do nothing".

David refused Saul's armour and sword because he delighted in his own sling and a few stones. Paul took pleasure in weaknesses, difficulties and distresses for then the power of God was more abundantly available to him. And what a servant he was; what a missionary! From Jerusalem even to Illyricum (modern Albania) he had fully preached the gospel of Christ, and still he was looking for other fields. But the Lord had a service for him; to bear witness to kings and governors, and with the pen to write those prison letters which have nourished God's saints for two thousand years.

We also must learn of the power that is more abundant in our weakness, when it is linked with faith in God and humility of heart. The shepherd of Bethlehem and the tent-maker from Tarsus proved this. And so can we.

Grace Sufficient

Satan's messengers may buffet, lions' chains may frightful be, But Thy grace will be sufficient, precious promise this to me. So the storms that rage and try me only make me firmer stand, On the Rock of Ages resting, held by Thine almighty hand.

Ellen J. Bairnson

A Call for Musing and Worshipping Men

By Austin Jones, of Cardiff, U.K.

It was fitting that David should dedicate Ps.39 to Jeduthun for he set the example in musing or meditating to become an outstanding worshipper himself, and appointed Jeduthun, whose name means "one who gives praise" to the leadership of those who ministered in song before God and Israel (1 Chron.16:41). David was a true leader of men, leading men to the house of God (Ps.42:4) with the voice of joy and praise.

A musing man may well become a worshipping man and David, a man after God's own heart, was by tongue and life a testimony to this fact. He is on record as the author of a number of inspiring Psalms. Men meditated and spoke because within them the fire kindled, constraining them to worship the God of heaven. Was He not, as David said, "Enthroned upon the praises of Israel" (Ps.23:3 RVM)? Jeduthun and others with their hallelujahs made this enthronement possible. It was David who introduced the ministry of song in the service of God in his day. At the dedication of the House (Ps.30:11,12) was David a silent man? Surely not, for he gave full expression to his vocal powers: "Thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness: to the end that my glory (tongue) may sing praise to Thee and not be silent".

Satan is often only too successful in anchoring us to our seats when we gather to remember the Lord. Have we not every encouragement to stand up and bless the God of heaven as we discern (discriminate) in the emblems on the Lord's table the body and blood of the Lord Jesus? As we meditate on them and the lovely Person they portray, the fire kindles and we rise to give thanks. Someone has rightly said that the institution of the breaking of the bread in Lk.22:19-20 shines like a precious gem, and that gem is placed in its divine setting in 1 Cor.11:23-26. The Church of God in Corinth is there functioning as a holy priesthood, entering with boldness into the heavenly sanctuary by the blood of Jesus to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through the Son of God who is seen as Great Priest over the house of God. Unlike Esther of old who approached the king with fear and trepidation and the possibility of being rejected, we can approach by faith through the blood of Jesus, with no such uncertainty. Let us take full advantage of such a high and holy privilege; a musing person becoming a worshipping one!

How much we owe to men of God of a past day in the Fellowship who set forth guide-lines to help us in our worship at the breaking of bread

meeting. The ministry of such men comes to mind as we write. One said that there may be seen types and shadows in the Passover meal. These types and shadows could well impress our minds and heighten our worship as we rise and thank God for the lovely Person of His Son. "For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ" (1 Cor.5:7).

The late Mr. S.J. Hill suggested that four incidents on that first passover night in Egypt may well prefigure, in a limited way as shadows always do, the Person, life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ:

(1) The blood on lintel and door post reminding us of the sin offering.
(2) Roast lamb — the burnt offering.
(3) The sharing by all within — the Peace offering.
(4) Unleavened bread — The meal offering.

The Spirit of God may use these shadows of the Old Covenant to help us as we seek to speak of the loveliness of the Lord Jesus. Some weighty words by the late Dr. A.T. Doodson on this matter of worship could well weigh with us today: "the blood that cleansed us from our sins ... is ever a preliminary to the high and holy privilege of rendering sweet savour offerings" and, "if a holy priesthood forgets that its principal function before God is to keep before God the memorial of a sacrifice which ascends to God as a sweet savour offering it will enter upon a barren state of service. If it is more taken up with the remembrance of the blood shed at the doors of the houses than with the blood of Him who gave Himself as a sweet savour offering to God then that priesthood will have decried its privileges, and debased its office" (Bible Studies 1938, page 115 - Hayes Press). We recall it was the redeemed young men that Moses sent who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings and worshipped at Sinai and beheld God and did eat and drink (Ex.24:5,11). Will this be a voice to young and old today to rise up and bless the Lord? "Stand up and bless the Lord, ye people of His choice; stand up and bless the Lord your God, with heart and soul and voice".

Voices from the Past

The Heavenly Places

In the Epistle to the Ephesians we have *sitting* in the heavenly places contrasted with *walking* down here on earth. Such conceptions relative to the believer's place in the heavenlies and his responsibility to walk in a worthy manner on earth do not submit themselves to reason, nor can they be accepted otherwise than by faith.

In Eph.1:20 Christ is spoken of as having been raised from the dead, and made to sit at the right hand of God in heavenly places, and in Eph.2:5,6, believers, who were once dead in trespasses and sins, are said to have been quickened together with Christ and raised up with Him and made to sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Though nearly two millenniums have rolled by since the Lord was raised from the dead and made to sit at God's right hand, the words are as true today as at that long past time, that those who believe are quickened (or made alive) together with Christ. Time as we know it does not find a place here, it is entirely eliminated. We are sharers with Christ in the same quickening and uprising. In other words Christ is our life, as Paul wrote to the Colossians (Col.3:14), and based upon our being raised together with Christ we are to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. When we try to reason such matters out we feel our feet beginning to slip, for such things are beyond our reasoning powers, and it is well to abandon reason and rest our minds entirely on faith, which accepts and relies upon what the God of truth has said.

In contrast to our being seated with Christ in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, we have the matter of our walk alluded to again and again, especially in chapters 4 and 5 of Ephesians, though we have two references to walk in chapter 2. In verse 2 we are told how we once walked, and in verse 10 how we are to walk now. In the past we walked in trespasses and sins, which was according to the course (or age) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air; at that time we were dead, that is dead to God and heavenly things. But now having been created anew in Christ Jesus we are to walk in good works which God afore prepared. In the past we walked in sins, but now we are to walk in good works. In the past we could do no good, for there is none that doeth good, not so much as one, but now by a new creation we may do good and behave ourselves in a God-glorifying way.

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

Christians should be deeply thankful that, although the cross was already casting its grim shadow over the Upper Room, the Lord used the occasion of His last Passover to institute a new feast for both Jew and Gentile believers. Foreknowledge of awful treachery and of intense agony of soul shortly to be experienced might well have put from the mind of even the most courageous of men any feelings of care for others. But such was the depth of the Saviour's care for us that He turned His thoughts away from the cross to ensure that our present-day spiritual need would be met. What took place in the Upper Room on that dark night of betrayal is described for us in the article "This do in remembrance of Me".

These events are of great importance to all who would be true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet some ignore them entirely, while others build upon them such complex structures of ritual that what the Holy Spirit simply terms "the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42) becomes quite unrecognizable. We urge readers to consider carefully the clear teaching of Scripture on this subject as outlined by our contributor.

"Focus" this month draws attention to the variety of seductive inducements used by the Devil to persuade people to dabble in the occult. Some of these are seemingly innocent, but subtly entice the victim into a terrible snare. The Scriptures solemnly warn against seeking "unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards".

"Should not a people seek unto their God? ... To the law and to the testimony!" (Isa.8:19,20).

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In the Shadow of Calvary

(5) "This do in remembrance of Me"

By R. Hickling, of Nottingham, U.K.

A Darkening Shadow

In Matt.16 we read of events which took place in the area of Caesarea Philippi. The Lord asked His disciples, "Who say ye that I am?" Peter's assured and forthright answer was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt.16:16). The Gospel writer then tells us "from that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things ... and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (Matt.16:21). During the days of His flesh the hour of the cross was ever before the Lord (Matt.17:22,23; Matt.20:17-19), yet, as He warned His disciples about what lay ahead, and although they were "exceeding sorry" (Matt.17:23), they failed to grasp the full significance of what their Master had told them.

Time passed and the shadow of the cross grew more and more pronounced. As His hour approached the Lord was troubled in His soul (Jn 12:27), yet His prayer was that God's Name should be glorified (Jn 12:28). The fact that one of His disciples would betray Him lay heavily upon His spirit (Jn 13:21). His familiar friend was going to lift up his hand against Him. The Lord Jesus had spoken of His death both plainly and symbolically (Jn 3:14; Matt.16:21), and the time when He must leave His disciples was approaching rapidly. He spoke to His disciples about it when He said, "Yet a little while is the light among you" (Jn 12:35). It was a time of deep sadness.

The Upper Room

Then came the first day of unleavened bread. The disciples enquired of the Lord where they should prepare the feast and He gave clear instructions to Peter and John to follow a man bearing a pitcher of water. He would lead them to a house with a furnished Upper Room where they were to make ready.

Later, the Lord with the rest of the twelve followed. The city of Jerusalem would be thronged with pilgrims who had travelled there for the Passover and Jesus and His disciples would need to thread their way through the crowds. It was the custom of the Roman authority to draft more soldiers into the city on such occasions in case there should

be any uprising on the part of the Jews. As the Lord and His own made their way through the streets they may well have seen, here and there, evidences of the power of Gentile rule. So they came to the Upper Room.

The quiet of that chamber must have contrasted sharply with the noise outside. Not long before, the Jewish leaders had held their clandestine meeting with Judas Iscariot and the terrible bargain for Christ's betrayal had been struck (Matt.26:14-16). How keen they were to take this Man who had spoken against them so boldly! But they hpd feared the multitudes and this act must be done surreptitiously (Matt.21:45,46).

Elsewhere, outside that room, the busy world was going about its business. Away in far off Rome, great Caesar was wielding his imperial power, represented at that time in Judea by Pontius Pilate, who soon at great eternal cost and with dreadful significance would yield to the cry of the crowd and put the courting of his emperor's favour above all else (Jn 19:12-16). To many, very many, that little group gathered in that room meant nothing. Yet there, reclining with His own was the incarnate Son of God. Only a few hours, and the gloom of Gethsemane would become a reality, and then alone He would go to Calvary to become the great atoning Sacrifice. The types and shadows of a past day were all to be fulfilled in Him, God's promises were to be kept (Gen.3:15). The fulness of the time had come.

It was with particular desire that the Lord had wished to eat the Passover with His disciples (Lk.22:15), for it was to be, as He expressed it, "before I suffer". With Him at that feast was a remarkable company of men of different backgrounds and characters: Simon Peter was there, that impetuous but most likeable man. Soon he would deny his Lord, only quickly to repent and afterwards suffer much in His service. Andrew, who had brought Peter to Jesus, was present. Thomas was with them, he who afterwards was to have doubts which would be swept away when he saw the signs of the Calvary wounds in His Master's resurrected body. Then there was John, a young man so dearly loved by the Lord. The rest of the twelve were there. But they were not all clean (Jn 13:10,11) for amongst them, but only for a time, was the traitor who would soon receive the sop and go out to perform his dastardly deed which was to end for him in eternal night.

They were all different in so many respects yet one characteristic was common to them all; they were all mortal men. Their life with the Lord must have made a tremendous impact upon them, but being human they could easily forget. When He had gone would the memory of those days fade from their minds? And what of the multitudes who, over the centuries, were going to be reached by saving grace; how were they to remember Him whom they had never seen?

"This do..."

As they ate the Passover together, the Lord reached out and "took bread, and blessed and brake it and He gave to His disciples, and said, Take eat, this is My body. And He took a cup and gave thanks, and gave to them saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto the remission of sins" (Matt.26:26-28). As the disciples sat there watching and listening to the Lord they would perceive that this was something new, outside the scope of the Passover Feast, and something about which they were to learn more in the days to come, which in turn they would pass on to those who would become His disciples. It was not for the eleven alone; it was the institution of a service of remembrance to be observed by all believers who would be prepared to keep His word.

Mark, as well as Matthew, records the taking of the loaf and cup by the Lord Jesus on that night, and so does Luke who tells us also that the Lord said, *"This do* in remembrance of Me" (Lk.22:19). It was a clear, succinct command; it allowed for no alteration by man, there was no room to deviate. Years later, in his first letter to the saints in the Church of God in Corinth, the apostle Paul wrote about this night, telling them of how he had received his instruction from the Lord and bidding them to keep His word concerning the taking of the loaf and the cup. By so doing it would form a testimony to all who took notice, for they would be proclaiming the Lord's death. They would be looking back to the cross work, but not that only, for it was to be done "till He come". It was to point them forward also to the time when they would experience the full fruits of Christ's victory. Yet, joyous though such an ordinance was to be, it was not to be treated lightly, nor was there to be participation in it unless first there was self-examination before the Lord with confession of sin and cleansing (1 Cor.11:23-28).

''This do in remembrance of Me'' ... was a clear, succinct command; it allowed for no alteration by man, there was no room to deviate ... it would form a testimony to all who took notice, for they would be proclaiming the Lord's death ... but not that only, for it was to be done ''till He come''.

The words *"this do* in remembrance of Me" call for careful consideration. It was not simply a matter of "remember Me" but *"this do* in remembrance of Me". It is possible to remember the Lord at any time as one meditates in private on Him, but this was the institution of a corporate act of remembrance which was to be carried out by believers gathered together for this purpose according to the divine pattern. They were to do as the Lord had done by taking bread, giving thanks, breaking it and partaking of

it. The loaf was still bread and the wine still wine, but although simple ordinary substances they symbolize that which is divine and profound: *"Only bread and only wine, Yet to faith the solemn sign Of the heavenly and divine "* The loaf speaks of His body and the cup of His blood. As we take the symbols we remember how He took the body which had been prepared for Him (Heb.10:5-7) and in which He dwelt among men bringing blessing. Yet that body was marred more than that of any man and in it He bore our sins upon the tree. The cup reminds us of the precious blood which was shed to pay for our redemption (1 Pet.2:24; 1:18,19), and points to the forgiveness received by believing ones.

Keeping the Ordinance

In the Acts of the Apostles we read how the command of the Lord concerning the remembrance was obeyed by disciples gathered together in churches of God. From Acts 2:41,42, we learn those who received the word of life were baptized and added to those already together forming the Church of God in Jerusalem. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching, the Fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

This was true too of the disciples in Troas (Acts 20:7) and from this Scripture we find that the Remembrance was kept on the first day of the week. Closely associated with the breaking of the bread is the privilege, and indeed the responsibility, of those gathered together in churches of God to "enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus..." (Heb.10:19-22). This is holy priesthood service when, as the people of God in the spiritual house of God, those gathered in churches of God can offer up spiritual sacrifices of worship with bowed hearts to God (1 Pet.2:5).

Sadly, as time passed the simplicity of the ordinance and purity of Scriptural teaching concerning worship was lost and men substituted their own ideas, bringing in evil doctrines and ceremonies and ritual which had no scriptural authority. Yet, in God's mercy, in comparatively recent times the Holy Spirit has exercised the hearts of many believers to search the Scriptures and seek to return to truths taught in them. So today it is still the will of the Lord that disciples should be gathered in churches of God to keep the ordinance which He instituted in the shadow of Calvary and to do so "till He come".

Fully assured though we are that the new life which has been implanted in us will ultimately gain the victory, not less fully conscious are we that disasters and defeats are constantly occurring on our path to triumph. Our trophies are never won without troubles. *C.H. Spurgeon*

Question and Answer

Is Cremation Scriptural?

When Moses died the Lord "buried him in the valley in the land of Moab" (Deut.34:6). That divine example of burial was observed throughout Old and New Testament times by Jews and Christians alike, continuing unchanged almost to the present day, although of course many Christians have given up their lives in the flames of martyrdom. Cremation, as we know it today, was introduced into the United Kingdom about 100 years ago by an agnostic, Sir Henry Thompson. In the ancient world, the Greeks and Romans practised cremation, but it gradually gave place to burial in the Roman Empire when Christianity was embraced by the Emperors.

There are several occasions when bodies were burned in Old Testament times, but the circumstances were in every case abnormal and cannot be taken as precedents for today. The burning of bodies and bones was often a sign of judgement (e.g. Lev.10:1-7; 2 Kgs.23:16-20). But of king Asa it is said, "and they made a very great burning/or him", obviously a mark of respect. It was not cremation, for he was buried (2 Chron.16:14;see also 2 Chron.21:19).

Abraham paid a high price to be able to bury Sarah. Great care was taken and much labour was involved in the burials of Jacob and Joseph. Old Testament kings were usually given an honourable burial in "the sepulchres of the kings". "Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him". These examples demonstrate the high regard in which interment was held by God's people throughout history.

As for the Lord, "they made His grave with the wicked, but with the rich in His death" (Isa.53:9). His death, burial and resurrection are used by the apostle Paul as a basis for typical teaching about disciples' baptism (Rom.6). And he effectively illustrates the resurrection of the believer by the marvel of the apparently lifeless seed germinating after *burial in the ground* (1 Cor.15). It is clear that cremation did not come into the apostle's thinking.

Since cremation has now become almost the norm it would be wise for the Christian to give instructions that after death his body is to be laid to rest in the earth, after the consistent precedent of Scripture. Dignified burial is an act of faith and hope, with the joy of resurrection and re-union in prospect.

L.B.

FOCUS

Broken Cisterns of the Occult

"They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, they have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer.2:13).

This solemn complaint by God against His people in Jeremiah's time applies also to the millions in modern times who have turned from the true knowledge of God through Christ to seek spiritual satisfaction in the occult. We live in an era marked by an explosion of interest in the occult, which finds expression in many different forms.

Young people may easily be drawn into playing ouija, regarding it as a harmless but fascinating game. It was formerly known as the "spirit of the glass" until more sophisticated forms were commercially produced. Experience has shown that it leads on occasions to serious manifestations of the power of evil spirits, giving a subtle introduction to the lure of the occult. Knowing this, a Christian should avoid any contact with the game. Similarly with other practices regarded by many people as harmless pastimes - tarot, I Ching, crystal gazing, palmistry and the like. God's word warns against all forms of divination (Deut.18:10).

Some religious movements such as Satanism openly invite their adherents to yield their lives to Satan, using degrading and barbarous rituals, and openly blaspheming God and His Christ. The "Christian Spiritualist" movement assumes a Christian guise, often singing evangelical hymns at their services. Yet their teachings and practices are a complete denial of the true Christian faith. Measured by God's word they follow "doctrines of demons" and in practice they have communion with demons. The instructed believer will have no difficulty in identifying such movements as being of the evil one.

Perhaps less obviously associated with the occult are some of the mystic eastern movements which have made such marked impact in the western world over the past three decades. Yoga is a case in point. This has attracted a wide following because it purports to offer relief from the materialistic pressures of modern life, and a link with the so-called "life force of the universe".

There are different schools of yoga and many people are attracted in the first instance to "hatha yoga" which attaches great importance to physical techniques — various exercises and postures and breathing control. These contribute to a sense of relaxation

and well-being. But the physical techniques are subtly related to the philosophy of Hinduism and the occult concepts behind it.

What is this philosophy, and how is it linked with the occult? The basic idea is that the practice of yoga leads to the discovery of one's "real self, elevating the thoughts and giving assurance of greater capabilities. Our human nature is said to be good and worthy and is essentially one with the divine, "the universal spirit". So in complete contrast with Scriptural revelation, but based on Hindu religious concepts, it is a philosophy of self-redemption.

This becomes clearer when we consider forms of yoga which emphasize meditative techniques. Transcendental Meditation is one of these. It is promoted as a technique to increase personal effectiveness under the name "Science of Creative Intelligence". But the techniques cannot be learned without involvement in an initiatory ceremony of religious worship. This includes a direct invocation of Hindu gods. Then the practice of TM requires the use of personal mantras for two twenty-minute sessions each day, and the mantras are invocations of Hindu deities. From 1 Cor.10:19-20 the Christian recognizes that behind such gods are demons, providing a sinister link with the occult.

Besides asserting the innate goodness of our "real self", yoga encourages the opening of the human spirit to the "life force of the universe", for man is said to be one with the divine, the "universal spirit" or "Brahman". This idea leads all yogis to "believe in themselves as a god or as a part of the deity". The "gurus", who have advanced beyond most, are looked upon as personified deities and command immense respect or even worship.

Some Christians have been drawn into adapted forms of yoga, replacing the mantras with Christian words and prayers. They regard yoga as a neutral technique that can be used for Christian ends to develop greater Christian fulfilment. But to appreciate that yoga is ultimately rooted in the occult and involves the exaltation of the human ego should rather cause us to avoid any association with it. The believer will not wish to go through yoga disciplines to learn how to "empty the mind". He does not need to practise "suspending all the functions of his soul". His mind in quiet times is to be filled with Christ as revealed in Scripture, and his soul is to be alive and active in communing response to the matchless love of Christ.

Worship and Service (3)

In relation to Israel in the land

By J.K.D. Johnston, of Musselburgh, Scotland

God's rest for Israel in Canaan was to be associated with a particular place in that land, His resting place where He would cause His Name to dwell and the one centre for the collective service of His people. There were many idolatrous shrines and altars in Canaan when Israel entered it. These were to be destroyed and the practice of multiplying altars, even in association with the worship of God was not to be copied by Israel. There was to be one altar of burnt offering for all Israel situated at the place chosen by God (Deut.12:2-6; Deut.13,14).

The place chosen initially was Shiloh, but eventually David discerned that Mount Moriah in Jerusalem was the place God had chosen (1 Chron.22:1; 2 Chron.22:5). It had remained in the hands of the Jebusites while Israel had been in the land until the day that David took it. It was to that sacred place that God had directed Abraham in the circumstances related in Gen.22 and there too, we are persuaded, the Saviour came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It is evident that no other place on earth will ever supersede Zion in God's affection. "The LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my resting place for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps.132:13,14).

On that site revealed to David the house of God was built by Solomon strictly according to the pattern which was also revealed to David (1 Chron.28:19), and "the glory of the LORD filled the house" (1 Kgs.8:11). That house, to which God put His Name (1 Kgs.9:3) was to be the centre for the collective worship of Israel even as the tabernacle had been previously. The priests the sons of Aaron served in that temple as they had served in the tabernacle, but a new feature was inaugurated — the service of song. This was not an innovation devised by David on his own authority. Men are not permitted to introduce their own ideas into the service of the house of God in any age, everything must be according to the divinely-given pattern. It was fitting, however, that this new service of song should be initiated by David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, but he did it on divine authority (2 Chron.29:25). The service of song went on continually day and night in the temple in Jerusalem with the singers divided into 24 courses. The sweetness of the songs of Zion with their accompanying instrumental music were

renowned beyond the confines of Israel. The goodness of God and the enduring quality of His mercy were the predominant themes in those songs of thanksgiving and praise. The close association of the "song of the LORD" and the altar is also worthy of note (2 Chron.29:27).

One of God's commands to Israel was, "See that you present to Me at the appointed time the food for My offerings made by fire" (Num.28:2 NIV). Among the offerings specified were the two lambs that were offered daily, one in the morning, and one in the evening, for a continual burnt offering. This particular daily requirement provided a precious foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Golgotha. The Saviour was crucified at 9 o'clock in the morning when the lamb of the morning sacrifice was being offered, and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon when the Saviour cried "It is finished" the second lamb was being offered.

An essential part of the collective exercises of God's people was the keeping of the set feasts. God required all the males of Israel to appear before Him at the place of the Name three times in the year, to keep the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of first-fruits, and the feast of ingathering (Ex.23:14-17). Those who were domiciled in parts of the land distant from Jerusalem might have felt apprehensive about leaving their possessions and undertaking the long journey to the chosen centre, but God assured them that what they possessed would be safe during their absence. They would not suffer loss through obeying God's commandment, God is no man's debtor. It was also stipulated that none should appear before God empty (Ex.23:15). A sincere worshipper will also be a willing and joyous giver. This is well illustrated in the life of king David who in his love for God and for His house gave so willingly and so generously to God (1 Chron.29:14). In contrast to this the people in Malachi's day failed in both their worship and in their giving and were themselves the losers because of their shortcomings (Mal.1:7;3:8). The concepts of giving and worship are beautifully intertwined in the lovely opening words of Ps.29:

Give unto the LORD, O ye sons of the mighty,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength,
Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name,
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

A unique opportunity was given to Israel to engage in the service of God in David's day (Heb.4:7), and the impetus of that revival was maintained in the early days of Solomon's reign. The dedication of the temple in Jerusalem was a high-water mark in Israel's history. The record of Israel's participation in the service of God thereafter was a chequered one. There were prolonged periods of departure relieved by brief periods of revival under kings such as Hezekiah who did much to

resuscitate the service of God during his reign. Hezekiah understood the divine principle of worshipping before one altar, a requirement not understood by the Assyrians (2 Chron.32:12). His exhortation to all Israel and Judah was "Now be ye not stiffnecked as your fathers were; but yield yourselves to the Lord, and enter into His sanctuary, which He hath sanctified for ever, and serve the Lord your God, that His fierce anger may turn away from you" (2 Chron.30:8). Josiah also during his reign made Judah and all that remained in the land of Israel serve the Lord their God (2 Chron.34:33) but these periods of revival were rare occurrences and the prolonged and persistent disobedience of the people resulted in God forsaking His house and delivering Judah into the hands of the Chaldeans. The word of warning given to Solomon in the early part of his reign was thus fulfilled (1 Kgs.9:6-9).

Size and outward splendour are not the things He values. He puts a priceless value on the willing obedience of His people ... The worship that comes from adoring hearts is what He seeks.

For the seventy years of the captivity, therefore, there was no corporate worship and service. There could be no altar in Babylon for the exiles, no sacrifice and no song. The songs of Zion were for Zion alone (Ps.137:4).

At last the years of captivity came to an end. The Persian empire granted liberty to exercised ones among the captives to return to Zion and recommence the service of God according to the requirements of the Law of Moses. Many remained in Babylon, for there were many hardships and difficulties associated with returning to clear away the rubble left by the despoilers and to build again for God at Zion. The joy that filled the hearts of the godly Israelites when they contemplated returning is touchingly recorded in Ps.126:1,2:

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.

The remnant of Israel that returned from Babylon were not numerous, less than 50,000 in all. It was a "day of small things" and the house of God built by the remnant lacked the aesthetic appeal of Solomon's beautiful temple, but God said He would take pleasure in it (Hag.2:3; Hag.1:8). God could have provided abundant wealth for the construction of a magnificent building, but size and outward splendour are not the things He values. He puts a priceless value on the willing obedience of His people, and the offerings and songs of praise of the remnant were exceedingly precious to Him. We can only give to God because He has first of all given to us. The worship that comes from adoring hearts is what He seeks.

Some of Peter's Companions

(3)John Mark

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada

There was a young man in the Church of God in Jerusalem called John Mark. Peter refers to him at the close of his first epistle as Mark, my son, from which I conclude he'd had the privilege of leading him to Christ. He was therefore his son in the faith.

When Peter was released from prison, you remember, after Herod had threatened to take his life, the angel guided him to the open street and then left him. When it dawned on him that he was actually free, he decided to make for the home of Mary, John Mark's mother, and when he got there he found a Prayer Meeting in progress. So John Mark lived in a home where the Lord Jesus was loved and honoured. It's not surprising therefore that early in life he decided to give himself to the Lord's service. And when Barnabas and Paul went on one of their missionary journeys they took Mark with them. He was their helper in the work. Whether he found the going too hard for a young man, I don't know, but after a while he turned back and went home to Jerusalem This fact later became the subject of contention between Barnabas and Paul. When they were about to set out on another journey Barnabas wanted to give Mark another chance and take him with them, but Paul disagreed and so they parted company.

There are differing views as to who was right and it doesn't greatly matter. Suffice it to say that John Mark made good in the service of the Lord and this the apostle Paul acknowledged. In fact, at the end of his epistle to the Colossians he refers to Mark, among others, as a man who'd been a comfort to him, one of his fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. And in his last epistle he wrote to Timothy from the Roman prison and said "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is useful to me for ministering" (2 Tim.4:11).

We learn in our brief meditation that a person who temporarily turns back from some task is not necessarily disqualified from further service. Not at all. There's forgiveness with the Lord that He may be feared. Any one of us can seek His forgiveness and rise up again and follow. Peter did that himself, you remember. Before he denied the Lord Jesus He said to him, "when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren" (Lk.22:32). And he did, and so did John Mark, and so can you, if you've denied the Lord in one way or another. Get down on your knees and ask His forgiveness and then rise up and give yourself wholly to Him. And there'll be useful days ahead of you in His happy service.

"The Fellowship of His Sufferings"

(Phil.3:10)

By R. Hyland, of Rhyl, U.K.

In the early days of their experience the Hebrew Christians "endured a great conflict of sufferings" (Heb.10:32). Attacks against their persons and properties were joyfully accepted, so taken up were they with a better and abiding possession. Some time later however spiritual indifference largely replaced the zeal and fervour of "former days". They were drifting, unaware of the dangers facing them. No longer did they give the Lord the central place in their lives. Instead of enjoying the many blessings His death had brought, they were turning back to the deadness of the law. They were on course for spiritual shipwreck. A similar fate may well await us if we take our eyes off the Lord.

The Lord should be at the *centre* of our lives because He is the *source.* It would be quite easy for us to sit back and drift along knowing that the Lord is coming for us soon. More is expected of disciples of the Lord. Enjoyment of our eternal security (Jn 10:28,29) should lead to daily communion with Him. Abiding in the vine is something we are individually responsible for with the help of the Holy Spirit (Jn 15:1-12) then our love will flow to Him and to all who love Him.

News reaching the West from behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains reveal horrific experiences being endured by our brethren in Christ. In hospitals, labour camps and prisons many suffer for Him (Phil.1:29). Like the saints in Thessalonica many of them have "received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess.1:6). To many people affliction results in the crushing of the spirit but not to these beloved saints. The words of Peter, "the proof of your faith ... proved by fire, might be found ..." (1 Pet.1:6-8) must surely be applicable to their experience.

Sitting in the warm sunshine of my pleasant sun-lounge and looking out to the spring colours that bedeck the garden after the drabness of winter, I feel I cannot appreciate the sufferings of my brethren and sisters, which must surely be the "fellowship of His sufferings" about which Paul wrote so movingly in Phil.3:10. In the sovereign will of God the trial is theirs, the praying yours and mine (Heb.13:3). Tomorrow we too may be called upon to suffer for Him. They are praying for us! "I pray daily for all my friends in the West" (Igor or Urtson — due for release in 1987 after 20 years in prison). "Compassionate intercession for these persecuted fellow

members of the Body of Christ should be a daily burden with all those who love the Lord" *(Torchlight, Needed Truth, 1970 p.137)*.

If the spiritual contentment of those early Hebrew Christians in adversity was receding, how we wonder did they respond to the call "cast not away" (Heb.10:35)? The promise is held out to them and to us, "for yet a very little while He that cometh *shall* come" (v.37). Let us hold fast. May God grant to us a deeper appreciation of the Place to which in His mercy we have been brought, and also an awareness of His eternal purposes in the Church which is His Body — which Church is being built perhaps more in the East than the West.

Misunderstandings (2)

By R. Darke, of Victoria, Canada

Humble, saintly Moses, divinely appointed leader of Israel, was not only the victim of murmurings but also of rebellion. These happenings, among other things, certainly had a wearing affect on the man of God, so much so that the Lord told him to appoint 70 elders to share with him the burden of the work with Israel (Num.11:16). From earliest days Moses was misunderstood. His life seems to have been divided into three periods of forty years each. Forty years in Egypt learning to be something; forty years in the wilderness learning that he was nothing; and forty years with the people learning that God is everything.

It was at the end of the first period when he was a well educated prince in Egypt's palace that his heart's affection led him to visit his downtrodden, persecuted brethren (Acts 7:23). This was when he saw an Israelite unjustly attacked by an Egyptian; he intervened, killed the offender and buried him in the sand (Ex.2:11,12). He "supposed that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them salvation", Stephen tells us (Acts 7:25). But they misunderstood his motive, and the next day he was scorned, rebuked and accused when he attempted to act as peacemaker between two Israelis. Their attitude forced him to leave Egypt in a hurry. Moses must have been very confused by the turn of events. He had refused the plaudits, trappings, pleasures and gaiety of Egypt's royalty and society. He chose rather a Christ-like life, living as though Messiah was his example, instead of devoting his time accumulating wealth and property (Heb.11:24-29).

Faith was the governing factor in Moses' life, and vision accompanied his life of faith. It taught him God's

purpose in Israel, his part in that divine intention, and that his preparation was necessary if it was to be accomplished. It was possibly with this in mind that he visited his suffering brethren, his heart moved with compassion toward them. He supposed that they understood that God intended using him as their deliverer, but they misunderstood. So Moses entered phase two of his life serving as a shepherd in the wilderness. This task would be disdainful in the eyes of the Egyptians for shepherds were viewed by them as disgusting and abhorrent (Gen.46:34).

How similar Moses' life was to that of the Lord Jesus, the most misunderstood One of all. Although He went about doing good, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, and giving eternal life to redeemed sinners, they misunderstood His true identity.

The purpose of His coming to earth as Son of God, Saviour-Messiah, was completely misunderstood. When He approached Jerusalem on the young ass He was publicly acclaimed with cries of "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matt.21:1-9). Garments and tree branches were spread before Him as a token of honour to His majesty. But the peoples' expectations seemed to be that their King had come to deliver them from the bondage of Rome. At no time was this promise given. He did, however, partake of blood and flesh that "He might paralyse him that had the dominion of death, that is the Adversary, and might release ... as many as by fear of death were all their lifetime liable to bondage" (Heb.2:14,15), Rotherham). As with all world conquerors, the power of Rome was temporary, and not to be compared with the Devil's power which Christ conquered, literally brought to nothing, at Calvary. This great fact was far too important to be misunderstood by Israel, or any Gentile.

Voices from the Past

Christian Behaviour

Paul in Eph.4:17 testifies in the Lord that the Ephesian saints no longer walk as the Gentiles walk. The picture of how the Gentiles walk is dark and gruesome, (1) in the vanity of their mind, (2) darkened in their understanding, (3) alienated from the life of God, because of ignorance and hardening of heart, and (4) being past feeling giving themselves to lasciviousness and to uncleanness with greediness. In contrast to this welter of wickedness stands out the monumental word — "But ye did not so learn Christ". Christ stands as a witness against the wickedness native to the human heart. It is this great objective life that is the Pattern for all Christian conduct.

The Christian is to walk in love, and the pattern of love is that of Christ: "Walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell" (Eph.5:2). How sweet is the perfume of an offering made in love! The sweet odours of Calvary have been wafted by winds to all lands and up to the throne of God. God smells the sweet savour of rest of this great Burnt Offering, for such was He who said "I delight to do Thy will, O My God" (Ps.40:8). Those who walk in love are they who walk over beds of sweet herbs, they spread fragrance as they go. But notice how walking in love in Eph.5:2 is contrasted with what the apostle says in verses 3 and 4: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetous-ness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks". Such things give off foul smelling odours.

Then we are exhorted to "walk as children of light" (verse 8). We once were in the dark, and, worse still, we were "darkness, but are now light in the Lord". We must neither be put under the bed nor the bushel, but on a stand to radiate light in this dark scene. Light ever reveals itself wherever found. Even a small light is of great value amidst the darkness.

Again we are to look carefully how we walk (verse 15). One has used the illustration of a cat walking on the top of a wall all beset with glass. How carefully pussy has to be where she puts her paws! So also has the Christian in this scene of danger and defilement. He has to pick his steps, and to walk as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Much depends on careful living on the part of the Christian, for eyes are on him, and a slip may be harmful to himself and to others.

J. Miller
Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

Twelve men on a mountainside in Galilee, able to survey all points of the compass; and from the lips of one of them words that were to turn upside down the world they looked out on. "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ...make disciples ...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you ..." The making of disciples of such a Master has been the noblest enterprise of man since that day, and many exemplary disciple-makers have graced the pages of Christian history — none with greater distinction than the stalwart apostle of. the gentiles who earnestly summarized his ambitions and methods to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. Serving ... lowliness of mind ... tears ... trials... coveting no man's silver or gold ... holding life itself not of any account as dear to himself.

Of course, there is no reason to suggest that Paul would not approve the judicious use today of available technology in declaring the whole counsel of God. After all he ably exploited the channels of communication available in his day as provided by the Roman empire. But the principles of Acts 20 will always lie at the very heart of disciple-making, as FOCUS makes plain in the magazine this month. Thus our main series article on discipleship is appropriately complemented, and challenges anew both the quality of our commitment to our all-authoritative Master, and our historical appreciation of all who have followed faithfully in the train of the eleven self-renouncing men of the Galilean mountain. The truth — "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) — stands unchanged.

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In the Shadow of Calvary

(6) Discipleship - Its Character and Potential

(Jn 13:31 - 14:15)

By G.M. Hydon, of Toronto, Canada
(All scriptures quoted from N.I.V.)

Long years before the Lord Jesus gathered with His disciples in the Upper Room, God revealed to Isaiah the situation of men in relation to Himself. He said, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa.55:8,9). How clearly this was demonstrated in the Upper Room dialogue. Just at the point when His thoughts seem to have been full of His impending sacrifice and the completion of the heavenly plan of salvation, the Son of God was faced with the earthly limited reasoning of His disciples. We can imagine the stunned, questioning looks on their faces as they listened to Him; His thoughts of ascension in victory translated in their minds to thoughts of abandonment and loss of position; concerns which were soon vocalized.

In this record of Upper Room events there is a reflection of the weakness found still in disciples today, but in the Lord's teaching there is a strong statement of what should really characterize them as their potential begins to be realized. Recognizing their weakness the Lord endearingly used the term "My children" *(Gk. teknion)* in addressing the disciples. He was reflecting on their character, relative spiritual immaturity and dependence on Him. In his first epistle, John used the same term (1 Jn 2:1,12,28) when writing to those whom he saw as needing fatherly direction and care. We can certainly see the appropriateness of this description of His disciples as the Lord speaks to them in the shadow of Calvary. In this respect the conversation between the Lord and Peter, Thomas and Philip will provide us with illustrations of the needs of all disciples, then and now, to develop a Christ-like character. Our inherent weakness necessitates reliance on the Lord, and His direction will constantly call from us the daily expression of love, faith and obedience He expects.

Peter: Love and Obedience

Jesus saw Peter's sincere loyalty, but knew better than Peter just how much that loyalty was soon to be tested. Peter heard the Lord's words establishing a key characteristic of Christian disciples, namely that they should have and display the same love

to each other that Christ had towards them. It seems, however, that Peter was so deeply concerned about the Master leaving them that he boldly made his loyal but rash statement of commitment, even unto death. Jesus knew that His own love, as the Good Shepherd, would cause Him to lay down His life for these sheep, but He knew Peter was not yet ready to follow Him in this fullest test of love; to give everything for others (Rom.6:7). He also knew that Peter would recall his threefold denial of his Master when he would be challenged (after the resurrection) by the Lord's three times repeated words "Do you love Me?" Peter was to learn that the character of the disciple should be one of loving dependence on His Lord rather than on himself. How else would he be able to fulfil Christ's charge of feeding His lambs, shepherding His sheep and feeding His sheep (Jn 21:15-17)?

What was the potential of the disciple Peter? The Lord said to him "Will you really lay down your life for Me?" At that time he was clearly not ready to make such a sacrifice; his loyalty exceeded his resolution. But he would be ready later (2 Pet.1:14), after faithfully adhering in true disciple character to the command of the Lord to strengthen his brethren (Lk.22:32).

Thomas: Faith

Thomas illustrated perhaps the most noticeable problem evidenced by the disciples. It was their apparent need for a clearly described goal and a route. In response the Lord Jesus plainly declared to them that He was (and is) the Way, the Truth and the Life. They were not to receive complex directions, simply that they should stay close to Him in heart and express their love for Him by loving one another. Herein is something of the essence of Christian discipleship. Thomas, however, was looking for more tangible guidance; he is presented to us in Scripture as a man with a very black and white outlook on life. "Seeing is believing" is an expression that is associated with him and is very much in accord with today's thinking in the world at large. However, it is not in agreement with the disciple character. The Lord knew that after His crucifixion Thomas would hear His words, "see My hands" (Jn 20:27) because of His initial unwillingness to believe in the supremacy of spiritual power over the constraints of a human body.

In the Upper Room on that night before His passion, the Lord Jesus heard Thomas express his doubts, no doubt shared by the other disciples there, as to the mission of the Saviour. It seems he wanted a "road map" of the Lord's impending journey to His glorious throne, something he could see and follow with his naked eye. He missed the point. Discipleship to Christ must be based on faith not on sight (2 Cor.5:7). However, Thomas would later set aside the temporal limitations to his appreciation of Jesus and proclaim Him "my Lord

and my God" (Jn 20:28). As a direct result we now benefit from the Lord's words to Thomas, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (v.29).

Philip: Works of Faith

Philip, like Peter and Thomas, was trying to understand the Lord's words in a material sense. So, having explained the spiritual reality of the Father being in the Son, the Lord Jesus appealed to the material evidence of the miraculous works He had performed. Jesus had demonstrated complete faith in His God and Father to work out His will through the Son's words and actions. All the disciples had to do was exercise similar faith. Had not the Lord conveyed this same thought when He had said to Philip and the other disciples at the outset of their service, "It is enough for the student to be like his Teacher and the servant like his Master"? (Matt.10:25). And now He adds in addressing Philip that he would have potential to do even greater things, if only he exercised that faith that should characterize those who bear the title "disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ".

Achieving Discipleship Potential

At this point, another of the Twelve must be brought into the picture to teach us by contrast. The apostle Peter was later to declare that Judas had "shared in this ministry" (Acts 1:17), but he did not typify it. His was a character of greed, dishonesty, hypocrisy and eventually treachery. His evil potential was fully realized when he opened his heart to provide a vehicle for Satan and he subsequently went where he belonged (Acts 1:25). His departure from the Upper Room was a necessary prerequisite to the discourse between the Lord and His true disciples on that momentous occasion. True disciples they were, despite their failings. These were men with great potential; men with "a future".

Christian character, as we have seen, is a developmental thing. Its basis is the initial work of the Holy Spirit and it is revealed in Christian activity through the ongoing work of the indwelling Spirit. Likewise, achieving the full potential of discipleship is subject to following the Spirit's leading in the exercise of the gifts and calling of God.

The purpose of God in choosing disciples is that they should be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29); that is the full realization of their potential. If His character is to be seen in His disciples they must inevitably be engaged in doing His work.

It was Christ's answer to Philip's question, "Lord, show us the Father" that contained the fullest picture of the disciples' potential. Christ had been sent from the Father to reveal Him to men. So full and complete was that revelation that Jesus could say "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father". He fully expresses the character of His Father; He is as Heb.1:3 has it, "the exact representation of His being". He consistently

displayed love, faith and obedience. These are characteristics expected in Christian disciples, as discussed above. Moreover, just as to see Christ is to see the Father, so also to see the Christian should be to see Christ (1 Cor.11:1). The purpose of God in choosing disciples is that they should be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom.8:29); that is the full realization of their potential. If His character is to be seen in His disciples they must inevitably be engaged in doing His work. Thus it is no surprise to hear Him say to Philip, "anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing" and "even greater things" (which we judge to refer to the scope but not the nature or quality of the activities.

The Challenge to Disciples

Peter, Thomas, Philip and the others in that Upper Room learned in those hours before Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha something of their role in the world for a Master in heaven and their potential in such service. The much needed ministry seems to have been received with a slowness of perception that with our hindsight we too easily condemn. The Lord was explaining heavenly things to them and their earth-centred vision limited their appreciation of such truths. But Jesus reinforced His guidance with the simple statement that love to Him would result in obedience to His commands. Also the power of prayer was to be fully unleashed for them to use (for the Lord always gives the ability with the responsibility). A further reinforcement was the promise to them of a place in the Father's house, which some commentators have understood to imply differing eternal stations for differing service here. In any event the promise was one of proximity to the Lord for ever. Our review of the character and potential of discipleship leaves us with inevitable questions in relation to our own service:

1. Is earthly preoccupation stunting our heavenly vision?
2. Are we quick to promise loyalty but slow to channel the love of Christ through ourselves to others?
3. Has the pattern and strength of our service been based on faith or human reasoning?
4. Have we, by our obedience to the teaching of Christ (which subsequently was called the apostles' teaching - Matt.29:20; Acts 2:42) demonstrated our love to our Master?
5. As He continuously reviews our lives, does He see us ever growing more into conformity to the character He displayed?

Until the Lord takes us to the place where we belong, the character and potential of our discipleship should be seen, by the help of the Spirit, in our emulating the love, faith, obedience and other qualities we see in our Lord and Master.

Some of Peter's Companions

(4) Martha

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada

One of the homes where the Lord Jesus was always welcome was the home at Bethany. That's where Martha and Mary lived, with their brother Lazarus. Martha was probably the eldest, for Lk.10 says she received Him into *her* house. And presumably she received the apostles, too, for they were with Him that day. It must have been quite a houseful. If you had as many to prepare for you might well be excused for feeling some sympathy with Martha for getting anxious. She so much wanted to do her best for her very special Guest. But she became distracted, and the Lord Jesus said something to her that day which has been helpful to many more people than herself. "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Lk.10:41,42).

If Peter was present that day — and I expect he was — maybe years later he remembered the occasion, when he wrote, "casting all your anxiety upon Him; for He careth for you". He cares for you! Martha had charged the Lord Jesus with not caring. That's the very last thing she intended doing. She was so anxious and bothered the words just slipped out. I'm sure she was sorry as soon as she'd said them.

The word "anxiety" is an interesting one. It means to pull in different directions, to distract. That's just what happened to Martha. She felt she was being pulled all ways. Do you sometimes feel like that? The pressures of life build up until you feel absolutely at your wits' end. Then remember Peter's word, "casting all your anxiety upon Him", and for the tremendous reason that follows, "for He careth for you".

An old Scottish preacher used to quote three texts. 1 Pet.2:24, "who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree". That's my sins away, he'd say. Then this verse in 1 Pet.5, "casting all your anxiety upon Him". And that's my cares away. And then Jn 14:3, "I come again, and will receive you unto Myself". And that's myself away, he'd say, with a smile on his face.

If the Lord cared enough about you to die for you, and if He cares so much about you that He's coming again for you, do you suppose He doesn't care enough to carry your burdens? Of course He does! So let's learn the lesson today, and let it go deep into our hearts "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee" (Ps.55:22).

FOCUS

Televangelism in the Eighties

"Televangelism"! This word has been coined to describe the communication of the gospel by television and video, a medium of gospel preaching which has developed phenomenally in recent years in North America. The number of "local TV stations which have religious formats" in the United States has more than doubled in the last twelve months. It is conservatively estimated that more than a billion dollars was spent by evangelical causes in the United States last year to purchase radio and TV time for the promotion of the gospel. This applies only to the evangelical preachers as distinct from "main line denominations" such as Catholic or Episcopal, which now have only a minor place in TV.

Paul made clear by the Spirit that there is a sense in which we should rejoice in every way that Christ is proclaimed (Phil.1:18). God will in His sovereignty honour and use the "word of the truth of the gospel". Every voice which challenges people to face their need as sinners and believe in the Son of God as personal Saviour may be used to point the way to the new birth. So in the great burgeoning of gospel witness through TV and video in North America we recognize a development which could have powerful spiritual impact.

In this, like Paul, we rejoice in every way that Christ is proclaimed, recalling also that the Lord Jesus said, "He that is not against you is for you? (Lk.9:49-50). His disciples had been concerned about one who cast out demons in Jesus' Name but did not follow with them. We thankfully acknowledge this principle as we see the world-wide work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. All who truly promote the gospel of Christ are in this sense "for us".

But on another occasion the Lord said, "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth" (Matt.12:30). From this standpoint we have a responsibility to prove all things and hold fast that which is good (1 Thess.5:21). The gathering of disciples into churches of God to give effect to the whole counsel of God was a primary objective of apostolic witness. This should be our aim also, and in this connection some trends call for comment. There is of course a wide spectrum of activity and a great variety of approach. Some present the gospel through conservative

preaching and discussion. Other programmes are in "show-biz" style, with accent on entertainment and spectacular appeal, methods which may so easily detract from the work of the Holy Spirit. But we draw more particular attention to two other features of the North American scene.

The Pervasiveness of Financial Appeal

"The gospel of the glory of the blessed God" flows from the heart of a giving God. He is possessor of heaven and earth, and His gospel should be vibrant with the fulness of the Gift of His Son, with whom the believer is given all things (Rom.8:32). In harmony with this Paul was concerned to "make the gospel without charge" (1 Cor.9:8), and warned against supposing that godliness was a way of gain (1 Tim.5:5).

In sharp contrast to such scriptural considerations a commentator regards televangelism today to be characterized by "an unrelenting emphasis on money ... Fund raising is pervasive ... The preacher's fund raising, the stuff of jokes and sometimes of scandal, is prodigious". Doubtless most of the millions of dollars subscribed as a result of these appeals is used to good advantage by the organizations concerned, although some of the preachers have left themselves open to criticism because of a lavish life style. But the impression that gospel evangelism is so money-centred seems entirely alien to scriptural precedent.

Political Associations

The televangelism scene tends to be dominated by preachers of strong personality appeal whose dynamism attracts a following of several million viewers. A combination of these followings may become a significant factor in the political scene. Some of these leading personalities in the United States have espoused political and social causes. Their powerful influence is attractive to the politicians, who see in this the possibility of harnessing millions of votes in their own political interests.

At a recent convention of National Religious Broadcasters, which was dominated by top evangelical preachers, many Congressmen and Senators attended. The Southern Baptist preacher, "Pat" Robertson whose daily "gospel show" reaches over sixteen million TV households each month, is understood to be a possible candidate for the U.S. Presidency "He applies his vision of scriptural truth to public concerns". *cont. on page 96*

The Prophecy of Caiaphas

By J.L. Ferguson, of Barrhead, Scotland

The sickness of Lazarus was "for the glory of God" (Jn 11:4) in several ways. Not the least significant was the effect on the people of the sign of the Lord's deity in the resurrection of His friend. Certain of the Jews believed in Him because of it. Others went to the Pharisees and reported it. This was the beginning of the end.

The chief priests and Pharisees convened a council. They envisaged total unrest among the people arising out of almost national acceptance of the sign-worker from Galilee. This would bring down the wrath of Rome and as a result they would lose their freedom, such as it was. Now Caiaphas was "high priest that year" (Jn 11:49). This does not mean that the appointment was annual but simply that he was high priest at that particular time, that year of all years. Actually he was high priest from A.D. 18 to 36, following his father-in-law, Annas, who had held the office from around A.D. 6 to 15.

According to Josephus, Caiaphas was a Sadducee, and Sadducees were known to be abrupt to the point of rudeness. He said to the council: "Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not". The council was impressed by this apparently shrewd human assessment of the situation. Far better let one man die, no matter how undeserving he may be, rather than the whole nation perish at the hands of the Roman legions. But the remarkable thing was that by reason of his office as high priest God had spoken an oracle through him. The Holy Spirit had given him a prophecy for their day and on into ours.

The prophecy was in two parts. First, Jesus was to die for the nation of Israel, so that they might be offered complete freedom from the bondage of sin, something incomparably greater than enjoying a measure of liberty under the sovereignty of Rome. In his own mind Joseph Caiaphas had no knowledge whatever of this wider, spiritual purpose of God in the Man they feared.

Similarly he did not grasp that in the death of Jesus, God had yet another purpose in view. It was that, in addition to dying for the nation of Israel, "He might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad" (v.52). The giving of Himself would not only be for Israel but it would be "for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51). Universally, as many as received Him would enjoy "the right to become children of God" (Jn 1:12). And God's desire was that those scattered

children would be gathered "together into one".

Thus John in his comment in Jn 11:51,52 gives the Spirit's twofold interpretation of the prophecy of Caiaphas some 60 years after it was spoken. By that time there were many thousands of children of God scattered abroad throughout the nations. And the death of the Saviour had been the basis in the divine mind for these children of God being gathered together into one. This was not their baptism in the Spirit into the Church which is His Body at the time of their conversion. Rather it was their gathering together as children of God into a oneness or unity. It was the bringing together of believers as disciples into one Community.

It had its beginnings in the Fellowship or Community expressed in the Church of God in Jerusalem, as it is written: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and *(Greek, the)* fellowship..." Again it is referred to in 1 Cor.1:9, where the church of God in Corinth is viewed as embraced in the wider context of all the churches of God in the one community; "God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the Fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord".

The language used in interpreting the prophecy of Caiaphas is comparable to the Lord's words in Jn 10:16. He said: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, one Shepherd". In these words the Lord Jesus took the longer, wider view. He would have other sheep beyond the fold of Israel. These would be believers in many nations who would hear His call to discipleship and be led by His voice. And it was His desire that they should be gathered together in one flock under one Shepherd. It was the same vision as in Caiaphas' prophecy. It was the same longing as He expressed in Jn 17:21: "That they may all be one".

In the choice early days of New Testament history the disciples, by the Spirit's help, were "gathered together into one", to give expression to the Lord's desire in His "one flock" teaching. They gathered together in local churches of God but were united together in one Community. This was in accordance with "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), "the (full) knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim.2:4). It was the will of the Father, the desire of the Son, introduced by the Spirit. But what has happened to the vision? The reader may well have seen it and will wish loyally to hold it and tell it abroad. On the other hand he may not have seen it, in which case "The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: turn ye, come" (Isa.21:12).

Worship and Service (4)

In relation to the Spiritual House

By J.K.D. Johnston, of Musselburgh, Scotland.

A material house, animal sacrifices, and a priesthood vested in the family of Aaron were distinctive features of the divinely-ordered worship and service associated with the first covenant. That form of service was in operation while the Lord Jesus was here on earth, but He stated clearly that a fundamental change was imminent (Jn 4:21-24). The material was to be replaced by the spiritual, the Old Covenant was to be superseded by the New Covenant, the shadows were to give place to the substance (Heb.8:13).

When the Saviour died upon the cross the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom (Matt.27:51) confirming that God had left His material house. A spiritual house was however in view, composed of persons (living stones) in which God would dwell by His Spirit (1 Pet.2:5).

The same divine principles that regulated the collective worship and service of God's people Israel under the terms of the covenant made at Sinai may also be discerned in association with the New Covenant made valid by the death of Christ. The New Covenant is, however, a better covenant opening up the way to better things and the worship and service associated with it are of a higher order and linked with a sanctuary which is in heaven. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews deals in some detail with these "better things" and depicts a worshipping people engaged in the ordinances of divine service of the New Covenant. Many parallels are drawn to establish the superiority of the New Covenant and its service as compared with the old. The New Covenant counterpart to what took place at Sinai is explicitly set out in Heb.12:18-29. The same parallel was evidently before Peter when he penned his first epistle, a comparison of the expressions used in Ex.19:5,6 and 1 Pet.2:9 will show this to be so. Both letters are addressed to persons who form part of a people redeemed, baptized, and separated in obedience to the will of God to render acceptable collective service. Peter describes them as "the people of God", "a spiritual house", "a holy priesthood", "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation". Each designation denotes a different aspect of the relationship of these persons to God and to the service of God. Those who form the house also serve in the priesthood, and the

function of the holy priesthood is to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet.2:5). The word translated priesthood in this verse is *hierateuma,* which means "'an assembly of priests" (Dr. Young) so it is collective worship and service that is in view. The spiritual sacrifices are "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ". The Saviour suffered without the gate to sanctify a people (Heb.13:12) who through Him might "offer up a sacrifice of praise to God" (Heb.13:15).

A major topic of the epistle to the Hebrews is the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in the office of High Priest on behalf of the people of God. That ministry takes place in the heavenly sanctuary and it is there that the collective worship of the people of God is offered (Heb.8:1,2).

The law of Moses governed the service of God's people under the Old Covenant and it remained valid throughout the dispensation in which the material temple was owned by God as His dwelling-place (Mal.4:4). The New Covenant counterpart to the law is the Faith, which is synonymous with the apostles' teaching. Obedience to that teaching leads to disciples being gathered together in churches of God in which they have the opportunity for collective witness and worship. Each church of God may be described as "God's building" (1 Cor.3:9) and is part of a larger building — the house of God (Eph.2:21). This spiritual house is on earth and built with living stones, but the sanctuary of the spiritual house is in heaven.

From the house on earth there is now a way of access to the holy place above. This link between earth and heaven, which was such a prominent feature of the vision of the house of God given to Jacob, is a very precious reality in association with the spiritual house. The perfection of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross and the value of His priestly work in heaven has made this possible, for it was necessary that the heavenly things should be cleansed with better sacrifices (Heb.9:23). Not only has our high Priest entered into the sanctuary in heaven to cleanse it by the virtue of His once-for-all sacrifice, but He has opened up the way of the holies for the people of God (Heb.10:20).

It is when the people of God are gathered together to keep the breaking of the bread and to engage in the spiritual exercises associated with that ordinance that they tread the way of the holies.

In this dispensation there are two particular collective activities in which disciples in a church of God engage in the exercise of their priestly privilege, namely "the breaking of bread" and "the prayers" (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7). It is when the people of God are gathered together to keep the breaking of the bread and to engage in the spiritual exercises associated with that

ordinance that they tread the way of the holies. In spirit they "draw near" and "enter in" to the holy place in heaven in response to the exhortation given in Heb.10:19-22.

Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood,
Before Thy throne Thy people fall
And worship Thee, O God.

The praise and worship that is offered in the privileged priestly service associated with the breaking of the bread is specifically directed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is clearly indicated in 1 Pet.2:5 and confirmed in Rev.1:6, where John, the apostle, includes himself among those whom the Lord Jesus has made a kingdom and "priests unto His God and Father". The Lord Jesus, when He instituted "the breaking of the bread" in the Upper Room, gave the explicit command, "This do in remembrance of Me" (Lk.22:19). References in the Acts and in Paul's letters indicate that this ordinance was kept week by week as a collective activity by the disciples gathered together in churches of God. The procedure to be observed in the keeping of this ordinance was one of the things that Paul, by divine authority, delivered to the church in Corinth to keep (1 Cor.11:23-26). He also drew the parallel between the spiritual activities associated with this ordinance and those of Israel in association with their sacrifices and altar (1 Cor.10:16-21). The importance of this ordinance in the collective life of the people of God is thus clearly established in the New Testament Scriptures. The opportunity it affords for collective expression of worship is unique. There is a giving of thanks associated with the loaf and the cup and flowing from that the opportunity for further thanksgiving and praise, "giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col.3:17), and for singing and making melody with our hearts to God (Col.3:6; Eph.5:19). Reverence and awe should be clearly in evidence when we gather with thankful hearts to render to God the glory that is His due, "for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb.12:28,29).

Our praise ascends through Christ the Lord,
According to Thy holy word;
The great High Priest is He.
The Spirit gives us power to raise
Our heart and voice in holy praise,
In holy praise to Thee.

Fishers of Men

By J.M. Lindsay, of Edinburgh, U.K.

Do you remember that occasion when the Lord came to His disciples after they, experienced fishermen that they were, had fished the night long without any success? "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught" He said (see Lk.5:1-11 AV). Not only must it have seemed to them that they were vastly more experienced in such matters than He, but all conventional wisdom indicated that the night hours were more appropriate for serious fishing. Furthermore they were exhausted and ready to head home for food and refreshment. Something of that came through in Peter's reply, an undercurrent of reluctance, "Nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net", he said. The result of course, was one of the best, if not the best, catch of their lives. They succeeded beyond all expectations when they went out in the Lord's company and allowed themselves to be guided by Him.

A Big Challenge

"Launch out into the deep" is the challenge to redeemed and consecrated disciples today as it was then. Then the challenge was a big one, "Go ye into ALL the world, and preach the gospel". The promise of fellowship accompanied the challenge — "Lo, I am with you alway".

Today the appeal is no less challenging. Launch out in service, out into the deep to the very boundaries of faith, to accomplish for Him the seemingly impossible. All too often, in the face of such a challenge we become intimidated by the apparent hopelessness of the task, whatever it is, an attitude which the great adversary of our souls will of course always actively and persistently encourage.

The Training

He *can* do without us but what an honour that He elects to call *us* to His royal service. "Come ye after me" He said, "and I will *make* you fishers of men". He needs to fit us for that task, and only under His direction can we possibly know success. The training and subsequent moulding to make us vessels fit for His use can only happen in personal dealings with Him. That means intimacy of communion and great earnestness in prayer.

The Method

Carefully prepared and well mended nets were essential to catch the fish of Galilee. Furthermore the manner of laying the nets was critical. What care we need to exercise in presenting the message of salvation to the perishing. How important,

for instance, to lead the sinner carefully step by step; first of all towards recognition of his true condition in the eyes of a holy and righteous God. Only after a definite conviction of sin before God will the sinner be ready to seek salvation. Thereafter the reality of inevitable judgement and the wonder of the sovereign mercy and grace of God in providing a way of escape will be more easily understood and accepted.

And so step by step, whether publicly or privately, the perishing need to be guided towards a knowledge of salvation full and free "through faith in Jesus' name". But above all, to be effective fishers of men, we must go in fellowship with Him and under His direction. Otherwise we shall "toil all night and catch nothing".

(Continued from page 89)

We can only deplore the involvement of evangelical leaders in political issues. The preacher of the gospel should be neutral to the political poles. His business is to win souls and make disciples for the Lord. The Lord Jesus refused to be drawn into adjudication on political issues or even a private grievance about an inheritance right (see Matt.22:17-27; Lk.12:13,14; Jn 6:15). In keeping with the Master's example His apostles also concentrated entirely on their spiritual service. They had their priorities right, understanding clearly the nature of this world's political systems and the Christian calling in separation from them (see Jn 15:18-21; Jn 17:14-17; 1 Cor.2:6-7; 2 Cor.6:14-18; Jas.4:4 and Rev.11:15).

Voices from the Past

The New Man

In Col.3:9,10 we read, "Ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him". The original word "new" in "new man" is the word *neos* which means "young". We have a somewhat similar passage in Eph.4:22-24: "Put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth". The word "new" in "new man" in the latter passage is *kainos* which means that which is "recent", "fresh", or "newly made".

The new man in Colossians is a man that is young, lively and active, and is ever being renewed (this word is a form of the word *kainos,* which shows that the young man is to be made anew) unto knowledge after the image of the Creator. The putting off of the old man and putting on the new are past acts in a believer's experience and were done once for all, at the time of regeneration, but the renewing of the new man is a thing that goes on during his earthly life. The same fact is emphasized in Eph.4:22-24.

This putting off of the old man and putting on the new is the consequence of learning Christ, having heard Him and having been taught in Him, that is taught not simply as a scholar by teachers, but taught as in vital union in Him. It is this vital union in life with Him that caused the shedding of the old man and the putting on of the new man, like the hedge which sheds its covering of old dead leaves as it puts on its fresh green coat. This teaching of Christ, which is bound up with life in Him, finds its true type, its objective truth, in Jesus; "truth is in Jesus" Paul says. We see in Him what the new man really means. It simply means Christ living over again in the believer, even as the Man Jesus lived here on earth. To such an end it is vital that the renewing of the spirit of our minds must go on.

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

We continue to consider the teaching of the Lord from the Upper Room. His concern and care for the disciples in the event of His departure from them gives urgency to His wish for them to know they will not be left on their own. "I will not leave you desolate" (orphans v.18 RVM). The chapter is full of feelings and emotions which are proper to the function of the heart (vv.1,27). He is going away to prepare many homes (Gr. *mone)* in His Father's house (v.2). Meantime, He wishes them to have the deep assurance and knowledge that Another, having equal care and tenderness as Himself, will be asked by the Father to act as Paraclete and to be with them for ever. Also, this other Person will not only abide with them but will be in them (v.20).

In addition to the Spirit of truth's presence there is a bonus for the disciple who loves the Lord Jesus and keeps His word (v.23). The fulfilment of these conditions will guarantee that the Father and the Son as well as the Holy Spirit will make their *home* (Gr. *mone)* with us now. References to the *home* in "My Father's house" future and the *home* in the disciple's heart now are the only two in the whole of the New Testament.

We also have in the Lord's words a further intimation of the profound relationships existing between the Father and the Son and the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Son making request of the Father (v.16 RVM) and the Father sending the Holy Spirit in My Name (v.26) signify the precedence of the Father. This unfathomable truth is completely misunderstood by the many today and taken to indicate inequality in the Godhead whereas it reinforces their unity and equality of purpose and action.

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Cover Picture: Amalfi, Italy

In the Shadow of Calvary

(7) The Promise of the Comforter

Jn 14:15-31

By G.K. Kennedy, of Sydney, Australia

One of the unsearchable beauties of the Lord is how He showed His love toward His disciples in that night when He was betrayed. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (Jn 13:1) and manifested that love in service, teaching and prayer. He who was soon to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt.26:38) and who Himself would be looking for comforters, but would find none (Ps.69:20), spoke for the comfort of His eleven disciples, and for our comfort as well. The great Comforter spoke to them of another Comforter, like Himself.

This Comforter (Jn 14:16) the Lord identified as the Spirit of truth (Jn 14:17), even the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26). He is elsewhere called the Spirit of Christ (Rom.8:9; 1 Pet.1:11) who is now the believer's Advocate or Comforter with the Father (1 Jn 2:1). All such comfort and advocacy has strength because of truth and holiness. Much of this world's comfort is wishful thinking and sentimentality. Why? Because the world cannot receive the Comforter (v.17). The whole world lies in the evil one (1 Jn 5:19) in whom there is no truth, because he (Satan) is a liar and the father thereof (Jn 8:44). The child of God has a unique and blessed Person dwelling within, the Holy Spirit of God (Eph.4:30). We receive this Comforter when we receive the Lord Jesus as our personal Saviour (Jn 1:12; Eph.1:13).

The world, said the Lord, does not behold the Spirit of truth, neither does it know Him. The word "behold" is translated "perceive" in several places and "consider" in Heb.7:4; while the word "know" means to take in knowledge, to come to know, to recognize (W.E. Vine). For the Christian this wonderful Comforter is no unperceived Stranger but a Witness with our spirits that we are children of God and He is the Helper of our infirmity (Rom.8:16,26).

It should be evident that the Lord was promising His disciples another Person, not an influence nor an abstract, impersonal power. I have before me a letter from a Jehovah's Witness (so called) who writes — "Surely these instances speak of the Holy Spirit as a tool of god, rather than a being having its own initiative" (quoted as

written). Truly the world beholds Him not, neither knows Him. While it is true that the word "Spirit" (Greek: *Pneuma)* is neuter gender in the original language, the Lord Jesus used the masculine personal pronoun seven times when speaking of the Holy Spirit. The first occasion is in verse 26 — *"He* shall teach you all things". The other occasions are Jn 15:26 *("He* shall bear witness"), Jn 16:7 ('I will *send Him* unto you"), Jn 16:8 ("And *He* ... will convict), Jn 16:13 ("When *He ...is* come" and "shall not speak from *Himself'),* and Jn 16:14 *("He* shall glorify Me"). Usually the personal pronoun is implied by the form of the verb, but significantly the Lord uses a separate word for "He", specifying not only third person, but also masculine gender, to put beyond reach of doubt the Personality of the Comforter.

Four times the Lord spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete, and indeed He is the only One to do so. Literally it means "one called alongside", that is, to aid or help, to succour and to console, to plead another's cause. It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit would be sent from alongside the Father (Jn 15:26). The Holy Spirit was already abiding (not "lives" as the N.I.V. translates) alongside the disciples (Jn 14:17). The wonderful new reality was to be that the Holy Spirit would be "in you" and "with you for ever". Never again would any child of God need to pray as David did, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps.51:11). The indwelling Spirit brings great blessing, "the love of the Spirit" (Rom.15:30); and great responsibility: "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph.4:30).

The work or service of the Paraclete ... is consistently expressed in the New Testament as comfort, consolation, exhortation and encouragement. In Acts 9:31 the early church is recorded as walking by the comfort (or exhortation) of the Holy Spirit coupled with the fear of the Lord. This is the secret of growth.

In the New International Version the word *parakletos* is translated "counsellor". Although "Paraclete" could have a legal application, this did not apply to the Lord in His earthly ministry. When the Lord spoke of *another* Comforter, He was referring to One like Himself as He had been among them, and perhaps no more clearly seen than in that night before He died. Its general meaning is that of a Comforter or Helper, One who cheers on, encourages and exhorts. A legal connotation may be seen in 1 Jn 2:1. The work or service of the Paraclete is *paraklesis* which is consistently expressed in the New Testament as comfort, consolation, exhortation and encouragement. In Acts 9:31 the early church is recorded as walking by the comfort (or exhortation) of the Holy Spirit coupled with the fear of the Lord. This is the secret of growth.

The Lord told the disciples that He would make request of the Father (not "pray"; the original word suggests equality and/or familiarity) for the gift of the Comforter (Jn 14:16). Martha had recently said to the Lord, "I know that, whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God, God will give it Thee" (Jn 11:22). Although she used the inappropriate word for "ask" in respect of the Lord's speaking to His Father yet she knew with a perfectly accurate perception that God would grant His Son's request. If the disciples that night shared Martha's faith it must have been a great comfort to them when the Lord said that He would make request of the Father. The response would be assured. Thus, "the promise of My Father" is the promise to the Lord by the Father that He would send the Holy Spirit upon them (Lk.24:49; Acts 1:4). It was the Lord who received the promise of the Holy Spirit as Acts 2:33 makes clear and He poured forth Him whose power and presence were seen and heard on the day of Pentecost. The Paraclete is the Holy Spirit of promise by whom every believer is sealed (Eph.1:13) and we receive Him through faith (Gal.3:14).

Concerning the coming of the Spirit of truth the Lord says, firstly, that the Father would give them another Comforter. He gives precedence to the Father. In the next reference He says that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in His name (Jn 14:26). Then in the third reference the Lord says that He will send the Comforter from the Father but also declares the Holy Spirit's activity, saying that He proceeds from the Father (Jn 15:26). Here is unity of purpose and action by the three Persons of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit is God's gift, even as is His Son. Both were given, both sent forth (Gal.4:4,6). Peter preached that his hearers would receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "God giveth His Holy Spirit unto you" (1 Thess.4:8) and through this gift God has shed abroad His love in our hearts (Rom.5:5). What a Comforter! "God gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor.1:22; 2 Cor.5:5). The Holy Spirit has been "sent forth from heaven" (1 Pet.1:12) and yet He "has deigned to make His dwelling place these mortal bodies frail". He is indeed "a Guide, a Comforter bequeathed, with us to dwell".

In that solemn yet blessed night the Lord spoke of the Comforter who was yet to come. That night is past as is the cross with its suffering and death. He is risen and exalted and glorified (see Jn 7:39), and we have received by faith (Gal.3:2) the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom.8:15), having received, "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God" (1 Cor.2:12). How very much indeed He is the Paraclete — the Comforter!

"No Longer I, but Christ"

(Gal.2:20)

By R. Hyland, of Rhyl, U.K.

The education that Saul of Tarsus received at the feet of Gamaliel was second to none, and the diligence with which he applied himself to his studies did not go unnoticed by the religious leaders in Jerusalem. He further proved himself at Stephen's death and by his hatred of the followers of the Way. There was no doubt that his zeal and vigour were necessary qualities for the work they willingly entrusted to him (see Acts 26:9,11).

A new movement was afoot in the city which was drawing many people away from the traditions of the fathers. Many priests too had been converted (Acts 6:7) and there was a general feeling of uneasiness and deep-seated concern. Something must be done, and done quickly. The movement was centred on a Man — "Jesus of Nazareth", and in particular upon His death and resurrection. Frequently during His lifetime He had spoken about His death, saying that He would rise again.

The unusual manner of His death was witnessed by the Roman centurion who said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt.27:54). Pilate too "marvelled" and had His death confirmed by the centurion (Mk.16:44,45). The message however that the Lord Jesus brought to the world could not be silenced by death. There were many more who could witness to His resurrection (1 Cor.15:5,8). Afterwards the apostles were charged with the task of preaching, beginning at Jerusalem, but spreading "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The preaching began at Pentecost. Peter preached that day in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the response was amazing. Many believed and were baptized, and added to the small community of disciples already owning allegiance to Jesus Christ.

These developments in Jerusalem clearly disturbed the authorities, but nothing could hinder the mighty work of the Holy Spirit. "And the multitude of them that believed were of ONE heart and soul" (Acts 4:32). Hoping to stem the tide the high priest, "moved by jealousy", put Peter and John in prison, but the respite the authorities were hoping for eluded them. That night the apostles were freed by the angel of the Lord, and were told, "Go ... stand and speak ... all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). It was an echo of the commission first given to them by the Lord in Galilee, only now they were experiencing the Lord's promise, "Lo, I am with you..."

(Matt.28:20). Further censure by the high priest brought this response from Peter, "we must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). Peter's days of promise but failure to deliver were past now, as he spoke fearlessly in the Holy Spirit's power. The reaction was extreme. "They were minded to slay them BUT..." (Acts 5:33,34). Speaking to His apostles in the Upper Room the Lord had warned, "whosoever killeth you shall think he offereth service to God" (Jn 16:2). It was not however in the will of God for His servants to give their lives —yet! That privilege was to be Stephen's first. Following Saul's approach to the high priest he was given every encouragement in his drive against these openly rejoicing new converts to Christ. He made his epic journey to Damascus, hotfoot and straining every sinew in his body, inwardly "being exceedingly mad", until he was stopped in his tracks. The light was brighter than the midday sun, the VOICE full of authority! "Who art thou Lord?" The years of learning, of advancing beyond his own countrymen, seemed to be no longer important. As he lay there in the dust he knew at once that he had been conquered. His question - "What shall I do Lord?" marked the beginning of his future commitment. Many years previously one of his forbears had written — "I was brought low and He saved me..." (Ps.116:6). The apostle knew that humiliation too. Nothing mattered now except the knowledge of Christ Jesus as Lord of his life. All his previous aspirations — "what things were gain to me", his self-esteem, "a Hebrew of Hebrews", were swept away as if by an avalanche. He not only saw himself as nothing, but also as "crucified with Christ". Although the words "no longer I, but Christ" were written much later, so great was his commitment from that moment, it was as if he had inscribed them on the Damascus road.

It was not just that he came to know Christ then, but that Christ began to live in him. The measure of his devoted self-sacrifice for his Lord is seen in his moving message to the elders of the church at Ephesus whom he met at Miletus. Speaking there he says, "I hold not my life of any account...so that I may accomplish my course..." (Acts 20:24). He genuinely regarded his beloved Lord as being richly deserving of his all. He sought every day to "gain Christ". This means "of so practically appropriating Christ to oneself that He becomes the dominating power in, and over one's life" (W.E. Vine).

And what of ourselves? There may not be much time left for us to serve the Lord, but however long or short our waiting and serving time may be shall we not ask, perhaps belatedly for some of us, "What shall I do Lord?"

FOCUS

"Positive Thinking" and Modern Evangelism

The power to succeed through positive mental attitudes (PMA) has been promoted in many business and professional contexts in modern times. It is based on the premise that "we may translate into physical reality the thoughts and attitudes we hold in our mind, no matter what they are". By persevering in deep belief that we will have great success, we shall certainly achieve it. Following this ethos of "mind power" many claim to have transformed their lives and gained positions of wealth and influence.

In recent years there has been an unwelcome intrusion of such ideas into the evangelical world. Linking the promises of God regarding faith and prayer with promises of material prosperity for the godly, it is being widely proclaimed that acceptance of the gospel is the highway to health, wealth and happiness. Believe that you are going to be physically fit and you will enjoy good health. Believe that you are going to prosper in your business or profession and God will ensure that this happens. The Lord is interested not only in our spiritual well-being but also in our physical and temporal welfare. Claim for yourself the material prosperity God wishes all His children to enjoy and it will come to you, if only you keep on maintaining the right attitude of faith.

We cannot but contrast this with the One who was meek and lowly in heart, and came to preach good tidings to the poor. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head. Far from offering His followers any guarantee of earthly prosperity, He said: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it". In His witness to the truth He was cut off and had nothing, and His body was buried in a borrowed tomb. Faithfully following their Master's footsteps, His apostles were characterized "as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor.6:9,10).

To many disciples in the "western world" today, God has granted a comfortable standard of living;

to a few He has entrusted considerable wealth; to some He has appointed that they glorify Him in comparatively needy situations. But what of the noble army of believers persecuted and deprived for the sake of the Name under oppressive regimes? Or the thousands of dedicated Christians in countries where the general standard of living is low? Is it not true of them as of many Christians in the first century that God has chosen "them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to them that love Him"? (Jas.2:5).

The application of PMA principles to the gospel of Christ runs counter to these scriptural considerations, and its practical effects are often devastating. As one sound evangelical commentator puts it: "There are hundreds of thousands of wounded Christians for whom it didn't work". They are left disillusioned and shaken.

Perhaps even more sinister is the result of applying PMA principles to subvert the very foundations of the gospel of Christ which declares the total depravity of man in God's sight because of sin. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom.8:7). U.S. Evangelist Robert Schuller arrives through PMA at a blatant reversal of this basic gospel truth. He regards emphasis on sin and judgement as negative thinking, a destructive influence in the human personality. This amounts of course to "another gospel", essentially different from the true message of Christ, yet it masquerades under the banner of evangelistic activities. By this means Satan seeks to blur the issues of the gospel, and traditional evangelicals are profoundly disturbed by the trend.

Nor is this PMA influence on the Christian message confined to the United States. It has over-spilled to Europe and other areas. Within recent months it was the subject of a BBC debate, when a spokesman in favour of the "prosperity theology" advanced the same range of arguments now so familiar on certain United States TV religious programmes. "Name it and claim it" could well summarize the message. The seeds of this distorted teaching have found fertile soil among some of the "house church" movements which have mushroomed in Britain in recent years.

In the face of such trends we share the apostolic concern "that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph.4:14), but remain nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine...followed until now" (1 Tim.4:6).

Some of Peter's Companions

(5) Mary of Bethany

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada

Let's go back again to the home in Bethany and learn the lesson Mary has to teach us. It must have been an impressive object lesson to the twelve apostles to see this devoted young woman sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus and drinking in every word He was speaking.

It says she *also* sat at His feet and heard His word. I've often wondered what the word "also" means in that context. Does it mean she'd done her share of the work in preparation for the visitors, and then she sat at the Lord's feet? I rather think so, for I can't imagine she'd have left her sister to do it all alone.

That's where Martha made her mistake, wasn't it? She learned her lesson though, for later on, another occasion is recorded when they entertained the Lord Jesus, and Martha is serving again, and this time without any distraction.

There's a time to serve and a time to sit at His feet. And the important thing is to get a right balance between the two. If our service, even for the Lord Jesus, fills our lives to the point where we are too busy to hear His word, then we've got our priorities wrong. We have to make our choice. Mary did. And the Master commended her for it. "Mary hath chosen the good part" He said, "which shall not be taken away from her" (Lk.10:42).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" wrote the apostle Paul to the Colossians (3:16). The word of Christ is an eternal word. And if we store it in our hearts it will bring us eternal reward. It will not be taken away from us. It's an enriching word too, "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold" said David the psalmist. And it's a cleansing word. "Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" said the Lord Jesus (Jn 15:3). Not only does it cleanse us initially, when first we come to Christ, but it keeps on cleansing us, if we keep on taking it into our hearts. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" or any man, or any woman, of course. "By taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Ps.119:9).

So from every angle Mary chose the good part, and we shall do well to follow her example. Let's make sure that nothing whatever is allowed to crowd out of our lives those vital times of communion with our Lord Jesus, when we sit at His feet and hear His word. It will take time and discipline, but we cannot do without them.

Misunderstandings (3)

By R. Darke, of Victoria, Canada

A more vivid picture of adoration and worship than that of the woman with the alabaster cruse is possibly not found in Scripture. It was an exceptional act of love and devotion; yet it was misunderstood by the Lord's disciples, who should have known better.

Some scholars contend that the records of the anointing of the Lord in Mk.14 and Jn 12 refer to the same incident in Bethany. There are striking similarities in the detail which might give rise to this. In John she is identified as Mary the sister of Lazarus, so recently raised from the dead. She anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with the hair of her head. Mark locates the event in the home of Simon the leper. Could he be the father of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus? Here "a woman ... having an alabaster cruse of ointment... brake the cruse and poured it over his head" (v.3). The estimated value of the ointment, 300 pence, is the same; so are the complaints, the location, and the close proximity to the Passover.

Combining the anointings provides a fragrant picture of the Headship, the Lordship of Christ, and the divine character of His walk of love and obedience in a world of sin and rebellion. His Father paid Him the supreme tribute: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3:17); and "This is My beloved Son, My chosen: hear ye Him" (Lk.9:35 RVM).

Human estimation reached its highest, we suggest, when the dear woman anointed the Lord with the fragrant nard, thus in effect acknowledging Him as Prophet, Priest, and King. All three in Israel were set apart by their anointing, but He alone retains uniquely these titles through eternity. Like the faithful ones of Heb.11, her vision extended far into the future; farther, it appears, than the disciples who witnessed what she did.

His disciples, possibly led by envious, grasping Judas, publicly rebuked and criticized the woman's gesture of love. But their words reflected more seriously on the divine Recipient of her gracious kindness. "To what purpose hath the waste of this ointment been made?" they said (Mk.14:4). The Lord, who had given so generously to others, and would yet give Himself totally as a sacrifice at Calvary, was denied this fragrant anointing in the minds of these ungrateful onlookers. Can anything for Him be called a waste? They not only misunderstood the woman and her motive of affection, but they also misunderstood the Lord of life and glory, and what was rightly due to

Him. He brings things into focus. "She hath done what she could: she hath anointed My body for the burying. And verily I say unto you, wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial to her" (Mk.14:8,9). This is His defence of one of His devoted followers who, like Himself, was misunderstood. He will do no less for us when we pass through any experience of this kind. We might have to remain silent as she did. In so doing, we leave the action to Him.

Victory at Ai

By David Smith, of Ayr, U.K.

No doubt Joshua's heart, like the heart of the people, "melted and became as water" when he rent his clothes and fell to the earth before the ark of the Lord following the tragic defeat of Israel before the men of Ai.

For God's people to suffer defeat is a solemn and heart-searching experience, as it was before Achan was tracked down and his sin put away in the death of the offender, before the Lord would continue with the people. Perhaps Joshua, having carried out the divine sentence of judgement, remained subdued, uncertain as to what the future would be, until the Lord said to him, "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed ... I have given into thine hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land" (Josh.8:1). God does not retain His anger but blesses where judgement has been affected, encouraging and reassuring all whom He calls to His work and service.

The military stratagem which Joshua applied in the conquest of Ai ranks among the most brilliant on record in the history of Israel. Their previous defeat he used to advantage, although on this occasion the Lord was working with them. Nevertheless :hey had to organize themselves and arrange their movements, and that they did with skill and diligence. But the success of their campaign hinged on one particular instruction given by the Lord when He said to Joshua,

"Stretch out the javelin that is in thine hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand". (Josh.8:18). No doubt Joshua was thinking little of having the city in his hand as in the heat of the battle he clutched tensely to this primitive weapon. But like every wise-hearted servant of God he acted instantly on the divine instruction and "stretched out the javelin that was in his hand" toward the city.

Dear saint of God, what are you clutching in the heat of the battle? What weapon, object or utensil cleaves to the palm of your hand? Is it the precious holy Scriptures by which men are blessed for all eternity? Is it the pen by which His will and comfort is communicated to others in need, or just a colouring pencil for the very young in the Sunday school, or the ordinary domestic dish that betokens the kindly hospitality of a Bethany home where the saints of God may be refreshed and strengthened for their journey? Beloved whatever we hold or are capable of holding, however paltry or unpolished, surely the Lord instructs us to stretch it out or extend it to the full, just as He said to Joshua. For an increase in our spiritual possessions and the expansion of God's Israel today depends on our stretching out to the objective which is according to the will of God and the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Joshua's resounding victory at Ai was assured by his steadfastness of purpose, for he "drew not back his hand wherewith he stretched out the javelin" (Josh.8:26). He was deeply conscious of the danger involved in drawing back. Well would he remember that solemn night in the camp of Israel, forty years before, when the people drew back from entering the land at Kadesh Barnea and in heart longed to return to Egypt. That night they wept, putting the blame on God's good servant Moses, and calling into question the working of Jehovah, while only Caleb and Joshua fully followed the Lord.

Many an illustrious life has ended under a cloud, having "drawn back". Solomon and many of the kings of Judah come readily to mind as well as Demas, not to mention saints of our own day who for a while have "stretched out" with all their might, but for some reason have grown weary on the way, or perhaps under the pressure of life have transferred their energy to another interest. How solemn in view of the very little time we may have that God says, if one shrink back "My soul hath no pleasure in him". May our response be in truth, "we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition: but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul" (Heb.10:39).

Worship and Service (5)

In relation to Heavenly Beings

By J.K.D. Johnston, of Musselburgh, Scotland.

Angels, like men, have the capacity to worship their Creator, and they do so in a divinely ordered heavenly service. "The host of heaven worshippeth Thee" cried the Levites as they praised God and recounted His dealings with Israel (Neh.9:6). That heavenly service continues without ceasing, and when we think of the reverence and beauty that must characterize it, we are constrained to echo the words of the hymn writer:

Give us to know the joy and love
With which all worship Thee above
In heaven, Thy blest abode.

It is amazing to consider that although God is willingly and joyfully worshipped by the heavenly host He longs for the worship of men (Jn 4:23).

Angels are greater in might and power than men (2 Pet.2:11), and there are numerous references in the Scriptures to the service that these mighty beings render. Jacob was given an insight into the activity of angels in the vision given to him at Bethel, and then at a later time he was given a reassuring glimpse of God's host at Mahanaim (Gen.28:12; Gen.32:1,2). Several scriptures speak of the vastness of the heavenly host, which is described as innumerable (Deut.33:2; Ps.68:17; Rev.5:11; Heb.12:22). In that innumerable host there are various orders of created beings and thrones, principalities and powers.

Isaiah was given a vision of the throne of Deity with the seraphim standing above it. He describes those mighty beings as having six wings and using two of them to cover their faces, two to cover their feet and two for flight. The impression given by their deportment in the divine presence is that they feel unworthy to look upon the One on the throne or to walk before Him but feel impelled to proclaim His holiness and glory. The reference that the apostle John made to Isaiah's experience in Jn 12:41 would suggest to us that the One Isaiah saw on the throne of heaven was the Son of God. We never cease to marvel at the willing condescension of Christ in stooping from heaven's throne to take human form, becoming for a little while lower than the angels (Heb.2:9 RVM).

Ezekiel too had visions of God and of the living creatures associated with the throne of God (Ezek.1:1-28; Ezek.10:1-22). Ezekiel identified the living creatures seen in his visions as cherubim (Ezek.10:15), and John the apostle in the visions given to him saw in proximity to the throne of God similar living creatures, which might be equated with the cherubim that Ezekiel saw. Whether or not a distinction can be made between cherubim and seraphim is more difficult to determine. There are numerous references in the Scriptures to the cherubim in relation to the presence of God in Eden, in the tabernacle, and in the temple as guardians of God's holiness (Gen.3:24; Ex.25:18-22; Ex.26:31; 1 Kgs.6:23-32).

In these scenes of heavenly worship that John describes (in Revelation) we cannot fail to be impressed by the reverence and awe displayed by these mighty beings as they worship in the presence of God. Similar reverence and awe should be in evidence in our worship also.

In Rev.4 John stresses the unceasing activity of the living creatures in the midst of the throne and round about it. "They have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come". He also saw on thrones surrounding the throne of God twenty four elders, apparently high ranking angelic beings, who were seen bowing in adoring worship before the throne. Glory, honour and thanks are rendered to God because of His intrinsic greatness and eternal worth, and for His greatness and power seen in creation.

In Rev.5 the same heavenly beings find a new theme for worship and praise. They speak of the worthiness of the Lamb because of His work in redeeming men unto God. In this ascription of praise they are joined by myriads of angels. Then John heard every created thing joining in universal praise saying:

> *Unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.*

To this doxology of praise the living creatures said "amen", and the elders fell down and worshipped.

In these scenes of heavenly worship that John describes we cannot fail to be impressed by the reverence and awe displayed by these mighty beings as they worship in the presence of God. Similar reverence and awe should be in evidence in our worship also. It should be noted that the worship of heaven is rendered to God and to the Lamb.

The same themes call forth the worship of angels and of men. Although angels have not known redemption they rejoice in the wondrous grace that has been shown to men and marvel at the divine wisdom displayed in God's dealings with them.

While angels have not been directly affected by the divine plan for the

salvation of fallen man they have played a part in its outworking. They were used in making known to men crucial events in the unfolding of that plan (Lk.1:11-20; Lk.1:26-38; Lk2:8-14), in ministering to the Saviour when He was here on earth (Mk.1:13; Lk.2:8-14; Lk.22:43), in announcing the resurrection of Christ (Matt.28:2-7), and testifying to His coming again at the time of His ascension into heaven (Acts 1:11). The sufferings of the Christ and the glories that should follow them are things that angels desire to look into (1 Pet.1:12). It is part of the divine purpose "that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph.3:10). The great themes of God's greatness, wisdom, power and love displayed in creation and in redemption will bow the hearts of angels and men before God in adoring worship for all eternity.

Mad, not mad. I find the apostle Paul in the same chapter confess and deny madness (Acts 26). "And being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange cities" (v.11). When Festus challenged him to be beside himself, he replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus" (v.25). Whilst he was mad indeed, then none did suspect or accuse him to be distracted; but when converted, and in his right mind, then Festus taxeth him with madness. If any refrain their tongues from common sins, they alone are gazed at as strange spectacles.

Thomas Fuller (15th Century)

Voices from the Past

Put on Therefore

As the apostle has been speaking of putting off the old man and putting on the new, he next turns to the wearing apparel of the new man. He says, "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye; and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col.3:12-14). God's elect, who are both holy and beloved, are to have clothing befitting their exalted station. First of all Paul calls attention to that excellent and beautiful part of Christian attire — a heart of compassion.

Then follows kindness. The original word comes from a word which signifies that which is useful and profitable. Take as an illustration the kindness of God which David showed Mephibosheth. How useful and profitable to him to be lifted from the poverty of Lo-debar to a place at David's royal table and to have all Saul's possessions restored to him (see 2 Sam.19). But when David sought to show kindness to Hanun the king of Ammon, Hanun did not appreciate David's kindness. He considered he had no need of it, and cast David's kindness back in his face (see 2 Sam.10).

After this comes humility. Pride is one great evil from which we suffer. It is the condemnation of the devil. We may be so deceived as to be proud even of our humility or humble estate. The Lord could humble Himself because He was humble. Humility may be found dwelling in a castle and pride reigning in a cottage. How attractive is genuine humility!

Meekness, this is gentleness, mildness, clemency. There is nothing of harshness here. Often it is found with its friend lowliness. "I am meek and lowly" said the Lord.

Longsuffering is seen in forbearing one another and forgiving each other. The Christian should consider how long he can suffer the affliction of others and how much affliction he can impose on others.

Then over all these other garments God's elect are to put on love, which binds all other virtues in one, and without which none of the other qualities mentioned before can exist. Love sums up all excellencies, and as Paul says elsewhere — "the greatest of these is Love".

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

In our main series entitled "In the Shadow of Calvary" we are considering this month the related truths of communion and fruitbearing. The Lord presented these vital truths to His disciples in the last hours that He spent with them before going to the cross, illustrating them so effectively by reference to the vine and its branches. "I am the vine", He said, "ye are the branches ... apart from Me ye can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). All that we need to make our lives and service fruitful comes from Him. In fruitful lives the Christian graces developed by the indwelling Spirit will be clearly seen. Communion known and enjoyed will enrich our worship and make our witness effective.

The unique opportunities for worship and service that will exist in the millennial age are outlined in the contribution on "Worship and Service" that appears in this issue. The halcyon days of that future age contrast sharply with the disharmony and strife that abound on every hand today.

Focus turns the spotlight on Libya, a land that has been frequently in the news throughout the year, and draws attention to some of the references to it in scriptural history and prophecy.

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Cover Picture: Coastal Scenery, North Devon

In the Shadow of Calvary

(8) The Vine and the Branches

(Jn 15:1-16)

By A.P. Sands of Stoke on Trent, U.K.

(All scriptures quoted from the NIV unless otherwise stated).

Have you ever been deceived by a bowl of plastic fruit? Perhaps you have at a distance; but you soon discovered that what was man-made, and very impressive, was only ornamental. It could do you no good. Only the real thing, the work of God, secured through human cooperation, can satisfy. This is the lesson of the Vine and its branches.

We have been following in this series the very precious ministry given us by our Lord Jesus in the Upper Room within less than twenty four hours of His cruel death for us at Calvary. Jn chapter fourteen closes with His words, "Come now, let us leave". Knowing every detail of the horrors that lay before Him, He was ready to face all, yet such is His amazing grace, He was more concerned for our needs than for His own as He prepared to go out into that dreaded night. Marvellous Saviour!

The fruit of the vine was on the table. Possibly there was also a vine curled round the window or doorway visible to the disciples in the Upper Room. Obviously this could be no artificial plant — it would be real enough. Yet Jesus spoke of something even more real, more enduring. Though He would die the next day, He saw beyond Calvary to the fruitful relationship He would have with many: "I am the True Vine ...you are the branches" (vv.1,5).

To the men gathered around the Lord that night vines were most familiar. Their countryside was decked with them, and their Scriptures spoke often of them too. Fruitful vines symbolized all that was good and prosperous and joyful in God's original plan for His people, and their annual grape gathering was a happy period. But the Scriptures also used the vine to describe the sad failure of those same people: "I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against Me into a corrupt wild vine?" (Jer.2:21).

How fitting that our Lord should take up the vine again, this time symbolic of a more wonderful divine plan; namely His own perfect self in unique and vital union with persons chosen and enabled to bear choice fruit to His Father's pleasure. The

intimacy He thus describes is to be the very source of God-honouring happiness and effectiveness for the people of God today. From the metaphor of the vine and its branches our Lord vividly depicts the consistent outcome of true spiritual relationship with Him. Branches of the vine are exposed to the necessary light and atmosphere, but if cut off, they wither and die. Rather, they must feed on the hidden supply from the vine itself. What we call simply "sap" is a marvellous complex solution containing all the vital ingredients for life and healthy growth. So the branches just stay where they are and, tended by a careful vinedresser, take character from the vine and produce luscious clusters of grapes, bringing divinely intended benefit to others.

Abiding in Christ will cause us to be properly sensitive to all God's dealings with us, and with His help we shall resist the temptation to complain or to become embittered.

Now in the portion before us, the Lord uses the word "remain" (or "abide" as in A.V. and R.V.) no fewer than eleven times in the first ten verses, in contrast to His use of the word "go" just once in verse sixteen. Clearly He is stressing a most important principle, and we could express it paradoxically like this: THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS IS TO STAY WHERE YOU ARE.

We who are described as "branches" are in Christ, and praise Him, we are eternally secure. However, our soul's security is not an issue in this discourse, but rather the effectiveness of our lives. They may be fruitful or fruitless; like branches laden with grapes, or sadly like withered twigs which God cannot use. The latter are so spiritually out-of-touch and useless as to be discarded like the dead branches on the fire. Whether this actually takes place during a lifetime or is the inevitable conclusion of the life reviewed at the judgement seat of Christ one cannot be dogmatic. But on the positive side, both individually and collectively, real fulfilment and effectiveness in service will depend on our being careful to develop in our Christian experience our relationship with Christ. Our eternal souls are bound close to Him in love forever, and by faith and obedience our temporal lives can be lived in the joy of that closeness; bearing fruit and bringing glory to the Father (v.8).

We may summarize what we are saying like this:—

UNION ⟶ COMMUNION ⟶
(In Christ) (With Christ)
EFFECTIVE SERVICE
(Through Christ)

The order and frequency of the words "remain" and "go" are a challenge in themselves. Eleven times "remain" (representing communion) occurs before the one "go" (representing service). How disastrous when we

put "go" first! Busy service without the energy and direction of prior communion will be rather like our bowl of plastic fruit - possibly impressive, but certainly useless. How often one has been painfully reminded of our Lord's words on this occasion, "apart from Me you can do nothing" (v.5). Now we need men and women of action, "doers of the Word" in the best sense, and we should encourage as many as possible to get involved, but the ratio of "remain" to "go" is eleven-to-one. Surely we need to examine our lifestyle and ask ourselves the question, "Am I giving a high enough priority to remaining? Only to the extent that the branch is feeding will the fruit continue. Perhaps some of us need to spend more time in speaking to God, and less, but more effective time, in speaking to men.

In stressing this vital matter of our remaining, or abiding, in Him, our Lord brings before us in this passage seven essential elements which are as follows: —

1. "If a man remains in Me *and I in him, he will bear much fruit"* (v.5). This practical fellowship with Christ entails a two-way commitment. He says, "Abide in Me, *and I in you"* (v.4 RV.). Clearly then if we are willing for Christ to take control in our lives He has promised to make them very fruitful.

2. "If you remain in Me, and *My words remain in you* "(v.7). Reading, studying, memorizing, meditating in, and applying the Scriptures: all these are so important.

3. *"Ask whatever you wish* ...the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name" (w.7,16). What an encouragement *to pray!* Yet we have some difficulty with these words. Certainly, it is only as we allow His word to dominate our thoughts that His will becomes our wish (and daily cleansing will be a paramount wish of course).

4. "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. *Now remain in My love"* (v.9). What boundless love! He laid down His life for us (v.13). This love seals our relationship with Him. How it should thrill our hearts! Now the enjoyment of His love, both *to* us, and *through* us, and the response of our own love to Him day-by-day require the yielding of our wayward will to Him, for we do not wish to grieve the One we love. He also says *"Love each other* as I have loved you" (v.12). So I cannot be truly abiding in Christ if I carry on just thinking about myself. May I then be increasingly concerned for others and enjoy their love in return.

5. *"If you obey My commands,* you will remain in My love" (v.10). So abiding in Christ not only involves hearing Him, speaking to Him, and thinking lovingly about Him, but it requires us to respond to His directions. Then the "going" we spoke of earlier is led by Him and is part of the experience of abiding in Him who said, "Go...I am with you" (Matt.28:19,20 RV).

6. Every branch that does bear fruit *He trims clean* so that it will be even more fruitful" (v.2). In ignorance one has stood aghast at the apparent drastic pruning by a skilled gardener. But the rich results which followed proved he knew what was best. So then, abiding in Christ will cause us to be properly sensitive to all God's dealings with us, and with His help we shall resist the temptation to complain or to become embittered. "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace ("peaceable fruit" AV) for those who have been trained by it" (Heb.12:11).

7. *"I have told you this so that My joy may be in you" (v.11).* Although our Lord knew the great troubles which lay ahead, such was His devotion to God, He knew a unique calm and satisfaction. In contrast, we don't know what lies ahead; but He speaks these words to us so that though we may be baffled at times, we can be strengthened by the serenity which comes with His own dear presence, and our submitting to His own perfect will.

Finally, regarding *the fruit itself* (the mark of true disciples — v.8), we may be sure that if we attend to the abiding, God will attend to His fruit. It will manifest itself in such things as:—

1. WHOLENESS. The development of a balanced Christlike character with those precious inward and outward graces, "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal.5:22,23).
2. WORSHIP. "The fruit of lips" confessing His glorious name (Heb.13:15).
3. WITNESS. The manner of life "bearing fruit in every good work" (Col.1:10).
4. WINNING. The vital "spiritual reproduction" through leading another to Christ.

Though we may be deeply conscious of past failure, may we be encouraged by our Lord's words: — "I CHOSE YOU TO GO AND BEAR FRUIT... FRUIT THAT WILL LAST" (v.16).

Ours are peace and joy divine
Who are one with Christ,
When, like branches in the vine,
We abide in Christ.
As a living grafted shoot,
Nourished from a hidden root,
We may bear all holy fruit
Through the love of Christ.
Love of Christ!
Clusters grow on every branch,
Through the love of Christ.

Do not think that yours is an extreme case because your spiritual life is one of much contest with sin. So far from being extreme, I believe it is but a specimen of the way in which the Lord deals with all His own beloved ones.

C.H. Spurgeon

Some of Paul's Companions

(1) Barnabas

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada.

Another Bible character who must have been well known to the apostle Peter was Barnabas. He was an encourager of others. His first name was Joseph. That's what his parents called him. But the apostles surname d him Barnabas, because he was particularly good at encouraging others. And Barnabas means "son of exhortation".

When the word of God reached Antioch in Syria and many Gentiles turned to the Lord, the church in Jerusalem chose Barnabas to send to them for their help. One reason may have been that men from Cyprus had carried the word to Antioch, and Barnabas was a Cypriot himself, so he'd be among his own people. But I'm sure another and stronger reason was that Barnabas was the right man to encourage them, and that's just what he did. It says in Acts 11, when he was come and had seen the grace of God he was glad. He saw God's grace in their changed lives. And he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

And then he did something which showed how big-hearted he was. He knew these new disciples needed something more than encouragement. They needed also good solid teaching from God's word. And in that task he felt his need of help. So he went to Tarsus to seek out Saul. It was Barnabas who'd introduced Saul to the brethren in Jerusalem soon after Saul got saved, when some were still afraid of him, not believing he was a disciple. So Barnabas knew his worth. He knew he was an ideal man to help the new converts in Antioch. And together they stayed with them for a whole year, teaching many people. Those were great days. And I'm sure many of them would thank God for sending Barnabas into their midst. The scripture records about him that he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. As we think of his special ability for helping others we realize it flowed out of a life which was under the control of the Holy Spirit. And as the Holy Spirit controls our lives we too shall be on the look-out for someone we might help along life's way. A word of cheer or a kindly deed will go a long way towards encouraging them, and our own lives will be sweetened as a result..

FOCUS

Libyan Light and Shade

World attention having been dramatically centred on Libya this year, there is special interest for the believer in tracing Bible references to that area of North Africa. What place has it held in earlier divine purpose? Will it have any significant part in the final great drama of Antichrist's confrontation with Israel and her Messiah?

Gen.10:6 indicates that following the Flood the area of modern Libya was peopled by the family of Put (or Puth) of the Hamitic line. Descendants of Cush, Mizraim and Put, three sons of Ham, occupied the North West Region of Africa, and gave their names to the ancient peoples of Ethiopia (Cush), Egypt (Mizraim) and Libya (Put). We read in Deut.32:8 that "when the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the children of Israel". God's vast overview of all history could include the future of all nations in relation to His sovereign purposes. In all subsequent shifts of power, in complex changes through conquest and settlement, or defeat and exile, God maintains His universal control (see Ps.78:5-7).

Over the centuries the peoples included in modern Libya have experienced many such changes, including colonization by Greeks and Romans, and in the ninth to eleventh centuries a massive influx of Arabic-speaking Semites. These still form the majority of the population, and are Sunni Muslims. Arabic is the official language and Islam the State religion of modern Libya.

Cyrene, which features of course in our New Testament, was the original capital of ancient Cyrenaica, now the easternmost province of modern Libya. Under Greek colonization it had been one of the great intellectual centres of the ancient world, and a large number of Jews lived there in New Testament times. Presumably Simon of Cyrene was a Jew from that city who was visiting Jerusalem at Passover time, when he was conscripted by Roman soldiers to bear the Lord's cross. It seems clear also that the Jews of Cyrene, like those of Alexandria, commanded an influential place in Judaism. Their representatives were identified among the religious leaders who disputed with Stephen (Acts 6:10).

On a happier note, there were devout men, both Jews and proselytes, from the parts of Libya about Cyrene who were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5,10). It seems reasonable to conclude that some of them believed the gospel that day, and were baptized and added to the church of God in Jerusalem. For Acts 11:20 confirms that some of the disciples scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen were men of Cyrene. When they reached Antioch they spoke the word of God not only to Jews, but also to Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus. "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord". A great church of God was established in Antioch, rich in spiritual gift and leadership, its prophets and teachers including Lucius of Cyrene. This church also became the base from which great outward missionary thrusts were launched into Asia Minor and Europe.

Scripture is silent about spiritual developments in Cyrene and surrounding areas following the Day of Pentecost, but other sources confirm a flourishing and extensive Christian witness leading to the founding of notable North African churches. We reflect sadly on the contrasting dominance of Islam in Libya today. Yet gospel messages are now regularly beamed into North Africa by radio. May the Lord the Spirit, in sovereign power and mercy, turn many Libyans from darkness to light through saving faith in the Lord Jesus!

What then of the prophetic word as it sheds light on the time of the end? Is Libya featured at all in that scenario? We draw attention to an important reference in Dan.11. The latter section of this chapter focuses on the final phase of Antichrist's plan to destroy the nation of Israel. Daniel describes the conquering path of Antichrist as he dominates the Middle East situation (Dan.11:40-42), and in verse 43 we read: "But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps".

Today's trends would lead us to expect that Libya may willingly co-operate with Antichrist in enmity against Israel. Her present place in the Arab League points clearly in that direction. As we continue to watch developments among such Middle Eastern States, we recognize God's sovereign control in fulfilment of the prophetic word.

Worship and Service (6)

In Relation to the Millennium

By J.K.D. Johnston, of Musselburgh, Scotland

The Lord Jesus Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt.28:18). In heaven that authority is unquestionably acknowledged, but on earth, among men, it is largely set aside (Heb.2:8). The time is coming, however, when it will be enforced on earth also, for He will rule the nations with a rod of iron when He comes to reign as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Ps.2:9; Rev.12:5; Rev.19:15,16). His world-wide reign on earth will usher in a final thousand-year period of unprecedented peace and plenty, and in that coming golden age the worship of God will be given its proper place. The theme of praise of the angelic hosts at the time of the Saviour's birth was "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased" (Lk.2:14). This state of concord will be delightfully illustrated during the Millennium.

Israel, delivered out of all her troubles by the coming of her Deliverer, will occupy the premier place among the nations of the earth. The Israel people of that day will discover that their Deliverer is the One who was rejected and crucified when He came the first time to His own people and to His own things (Jn 1:11). The veil of unbelief will then be lifted from their minds and the words of Isa.53:4,6 will accurately express their deep contrition, for all Israel will then acknowledge Him as their Saviour and Lord. Jeremiah wrote of the new relationship into which they will enter in that coming day, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ... I will put My Law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God and they shall be My people" (Jer.31:31-33). The writer to the Hebrews shows clearly that the covenant referred to is the New Covenant made effective by the death of Christ, arid that now in this dispensation, both Jew and Gentile know blessing under its terms (Heb.10:14-18).

During the Millennium, Jerusalem, the city of the great King, will be the administrative centre of world government, and, on the Mount Zion that God loves, a temple will be built. The Lord Himself will direct the construction of that temple, and the glory, beauty and fame of it will surpass

that of Solomon's magnificent building (Zech.6:12,13). Ezekiel saw it being filled with the glory of the Lord as Solomon's temple had been filled but the glory of the latter house will be greater than the former one (Hag.2:9), and the crowning glory of Jerusalem will be the fact that it will be called Jehovah Shammah (The LORD is there - Ezek.48:35).

It is a widely held view that the temple described by Ezekiel belongs to the millennial age, and that view is shared by the writer. Much of what is contained in chapters 36-39 of Ezekiel relates to the future and to the restoration of Israel to their land. The future new relationship predicted by Jeremiah is clearly envisaged in these chapters (Ezek.36:24,26-28; Ezek.39:25-29). It seems therefore logical to assume that the vision of the house described in the succeeding chapters is also set in that future period.

Many students of the Word have difficulty in accepting the concept of animal sacrifices having a place in the service of God's house in the future, but the references are too specific to permit an alternative explanation. Like the sacrifices of the past they will have no intrinsic worth, but will derive their value from the once-for-all sacrifice on Golgotha: they will be retrospective in character while the former sacrifices were prospective. They will be sweet memorials of the one sacrifice of abiding value, and will doubtless be used to teach Israel and the nations the ways of God and the value of Christ's atoning work.

The privilege of worshipping God in His house during the Millennium will be the treasured experience of myriads of the earth's inhabitants. Isaiah wrote of that future day in these words, "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa.2:2). For worship to be rendered that is acceptable to God it must be according to knowledge, and during the Millennium there will be a universal desire on the part of men to learn God's ways and to walk in obedience to them. "Many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa.2:3). This outflow of divine light and truth from Jerusalem will result in the earth being "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab.2:14). The knowledge of God will be universal (Heb.8:11). One of the major factors facilitating the rapid unhindered spread of this knowledge will be the imprisonment of Satan and his hosts during the thousand-year reign (Rev.20:1-3; Isa.24:21,22). They will not be able to practise their deceptions on men's

minds during that age and there will be great restraint on sin because of the firm righteous rule of the King of kings. Any overt act of sin on the part of individuals and nations will be firmly dealt with (Isa.11:4). In the felicitous environment of those days men and women will joyfully engage in the worship and service of God's house (Isa.55:7). The opportunity to participate in the service of God in the Millennium will not be limited by a brief life-span for there will be a return to the longevity that was a feature of the first thousand years of human history (Isa.65:20-23). Death will be a rare occurrence and persons will live through the thousand years period, exceeding the age attained by Methuselah. Then the righteous will indeed flourish as the palm tree and grow like the cedars in Lebanon fruitful and full of sap — delightful expressions depicting the spiritual vitality and fruitfulness that will be much in evidence during the Lord's glorious reign (Ps.92:12-15).

Another unique feature of that future time will be the presence on earth of men in resurrected bodies occupying honoured places in the administration of the world-wide dominion of the King who reigns in righteousness. There will be saints from the Old Testament period, members of the Church which is His Body and saints from the tribulation period (Dan. 12:13; Rev.11:18; 2 Tim.2:12; 1 Cor.6:2; Rev.20:4-6). Ezekiel tells us that David will be prince over Israel and the Lord indicated the role of His apostles in that day (Ezek.37:24,25; Lk.22:30). David, who had such a great love for the house of God in his lifetime, but was not allowed to build for God, will know great delight in the worship and service of the glorious millennial house. Daniel too will rejoice in the privileges of collective worship of which he was deprived during the long years of his captivity. Then, most important of all, God will receive from Israel and the nations a precious portion far in excess of any portion He received in the past (Mal.3:3,4). Year by year men of all nations will go up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech.14:16). Psalms 92-100 relate to the period of Messiah's millennial reign and are expressive of the joy that will characterize the worshippers of that period and the themes that will occupy their thoughts in worship.

Diversity of languages has been always a divisive factor in human affairs since the scattering of men at Babel. There will obviously be a need for a "lingua franca" when all nations are subject to one central authority. The value of such a facility for uniting men and women of diverse tongues in the worship and service of God would be invaluable. Zephaniah predicts that this desirable objective will be secured primarily for the service of God. "For then I will turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the Name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent" (Zeph.3:9).

My Work Is... (Ps.45)

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C., Canada

There is a man in Scripture who lost his life through jealousy and rebellion. If his sights had been raised to the devotional level of his later progeny, he would have been a happy, contented man of vision. Our contrast is between Korah, whose death is recorded in Num.16, and the sons of Korah for whom Ps.45 was written probably 400 years later. Korah's heart was filled with haughtiness, discontent, ambition, bitterness which led to such tragic circumstances that his name is linked with two of history's worst reprobates, Cain and Balaam (Jude 1:11). But the sons of Korah sing from hearts that are not only filled but bubbling over with gracious, beautiful, loving, joyful things concerning the king, for that is the meaning of "goodly" (Ps.45:1). If only Korah had said, "My work is for a king" (v.l RVM); what a different outcome there could have been. But he had things in wrong perspective; his sights were not raised above his discontent and selfish ambitions. The sad conclusion is that his work was for himself.

The sight which greeted Nehemiah when he arrived at Jerusalem after a wearying journey of months, would have broken the spirit of many other great men. Untouched rubble, burned gates, broken wall, and a dispirited people. Chaos in contrast to the orderly array of the palace and environs of Shushan, which he had left. Instead of despair or defeat he met the enormity of the task in the spirit of the words: "My work is for the King". Before he ventured out from Shushan he had spent time in the King's presence weeping, mourning, fasting, praying, and pleading with Him to remember the promise to His people if they returned to the land (Neh.1:9). It is no surprise, then, to hear from such a man these words: "... the hand of my God which was good upon me ... so they strengthened their hands for the good work (Neh.2:18) ...So we built the wall... So we wrought in the work; and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared (Neh.4:6,21) ... Yea, also I continued in the work (Neh.5:16) ...So the wall was finished ... in fifty and two days (Neh.6:15)". Against mockings, tauntings, threats, and devious plots by the enemy, Nehemiah and his people completed a memorable task against almost insurmountable odds. They climbed their mount Everest and reached the top. Their flag might have said, "Excelsior", but instead it read, "My work is for the King". A missionary to China wrote home to his parents outlining his grim prison ordeal. The details were not pleasant,

but each paragraph ended with the triumphant words: "The Lord reigneth". This was the way he kept things in perspective. He recognized with the Psalmist: "...my work is for a king".

When our earliest Christian forbears were challenged to declare: "Caesar is king", they replied: "Jesu Christos Rex", Jesus Christ is King! Their bold assertion led to death in the arena, torture at the stake, or being stretched mercilessly on the rack. Instead of slowing down progress in the gospel and the truth, it seemed to accelerate it, to the ire of their Roman tormentors. These Christian disciples did not need to declare "my work is for the King", for their very lives proclaimed it.

What of today's spiritual royal family? those who comprise the little flock, to whom was given the kingdom (Lk.12:32) — those proclaimed by Peter as a royal priesthood (1 Pet.2:9)? We are not thrown into prison, tortured or massacred because we pledge our allegiance to Jesus as King. Yet, it is still essential that we recognize, and others know, that our work is for the King. It is so easy to be discouraged and depressed by society's response to the word of God; easy for apathy, malaise to replace our former zeal; to lose faith in the effort of distributing leaflets, and in the personal work of sharing Christ with a desperate, needy world. Perhaps we need to convince ourselves on a personal basis that "my work is for the King".

On the positive side there are Christians who cheerfully fill jobs which need more grace than others. Nursing care, for example, in the home, in hospital, or at geriatric centres, where very unpleasant tasks have to be undertaken. How depressing and discouraging such work can be if it is not undertaken in the spirit of, "my work is for the King". This realization, with all its encouragement, enables us to bring our lives into perspective, with the added help in these words of Paul: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor.15:58).

Let us then rejoice! Let our hearts overflow with joy, grace, beauty — the goodly things! The Lord reigneth! My work is for the King!

The wicked sin, the godly smart most in this world. God singleth out His own sons, and beateth them by themselves. "Whom He loveth He chasteneth", whilst the ungodly, preserved from affliction, are reserved for destruction, it being needless that their hair should be shaved with a hired razor (Isa.7:20) whose heads are intended for the axe of divine justice. Thomas Fuller (15th century)

Aaron and Eleazar

By I. Lithgow, of Innerleithen, Scotland

To one family in the tribe of Levi the unique service of the priesthood was given (Num.3:5-10). It was a gift bestowed upon them by God (Num.18:7), and it carried with it great responsibility and privilege, for the nation looked to the priests for a correct understanding of God's Law (Mal.2:7). In this work they were helped by the Levites (2 Chron.17:7-9; 2 Chron.35:3).

God chose the family of Aaron to minister in the priest's office. That choice was wrongly challenged by Korah, Dathan and Abiram with fatal consequences. Pride and jealousy lay behind that challenge (Num.16).

The ministry of Aaron as Israel's first high priest commenced at a time in his life when most men, perhaps, would be thinking that their service would be in a quieter sphere than in earlier years, but this was not to be so in Aaron's case. We reckon that Aaron would be in his mid-eighties the day that Moses sanctified him and his sons for the priesthood (Lev.8). We arrive at this conclusion by subtracting the 39 years of his service in the wilderness from 123, his age at death (Num.33:39).

Aaron, like us, was a man who had his ups and downs in life for there were times when he failed in his responsibility towards God. The final words written about his earthly journey are found in Num.20:23-29. Moses was told by God to bring Aaron and Eleazar his son up Mount Hor, and the purpose of the ascent was also revealed to him, but he may not have disclosed it to Eleazar before they went up the mountain. The full significance of the event would, however, become apparent to Eleazar when Moses began to strip Aaron of his priestly garments and transfer them to him. The office of the high priest was for life, there was no retirement from it, only death brought its service to a close.

That day on Mount Hor was a sad and also a momentous one for Eleazar. God in His grace permitted only two men out of the entire nation to witness the garments of glory and beauty being removed from Israel's first high priest.

We marvel at God's grace when we consider the open shame that God the Father permitted His sinless Son to endure as the inhabitants of Jerusalem gazed on the Son of God on the cross. God takes account of the feelings of those He loves — "Tell it not in Gath. publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon" (2 Sam.1:20; Mic.1:10) - and shields them whenever possible. But there was no shielding for Him who suffered the ignominy of Calvary's experience.

Aaron was born in Egypt, and although he failed seriously in the matter of the golden calf (Ex.32) he was chosen in the purposes of God to fulfil a crucial role in the early years of the nation of Israel. He died on the mountain top.

Responsibility in Eleazar's case was the result of the death of his father and the deaths of his two brothers some 39 years earlier. Eleazar would not have been high priest but for the sin of Nadab and Abihu that brought upon them the judgement of God all those years previously (Lev.10:1). It is often the case that God passes over some and removes others for one reason or another and one who has gone on quietly in the Lord's things is unexpectedly brought into a place of responsibility. Such was Eleazar's experience.

Whereas Aaron was the priest of the wilderness journeys, Eleazar was the priest of the years of conquest when the nation was claiming the land. Joshua, the commander of the Lord's forces, was victorious as he pressed forward in the Lord's strength. His place was out on the battlefield fighting. Eleazar was the man of the sanctuary, and would be holding up the nation's forces before the Lord as they went forth to war. It meant much to Joshua to have a priest like Eleazar in the Tabernacle before the altar of incense. We remember what Moses did so effectively when Joshua led Israel out to fight with Amalek at an earlier date (Ex.17:8-13). God's Word does not refer to any particular exploit done by Eleazar, but during some 25 years of service as high priest of the people of God he must have been characterized by one of the most endearing qualities found in a man of God — faithfulness.

Voices from the Past

The Night is Far Spent

In 1 Chron.25, we are told of the twenty-four courses of the Levites, of twelve singers each.

"And the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in singing unto the LORD, even all that were skilful, was two hundred fourscore and eight. And they cast lots for their charges, all alike, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar" (verses 7,8).

It was a wonderful service. It was like a little bit of heaven on earth. Twelve singers followed each other in their courses for the whole twenty-four hours of each day and night. It says, "they were employed in their work day and night". The song never ceased. The holy music of the Levitical choir went on continually. How glorifying to God and how gladdening to the heart of the godly!

The writer of Ps.134 was greatly concerned with night singers. Ps.135 makes reference to the singers again, but does not distinguish between the singers, whether they are in the night or day courses but Ps.134 contains a special exhortation to the night singers. Night time is the time when people naturally go to sleep. There was the liability of the singers getting drowsy and the melody getting slower and slower; indeed it might stop altogether. So the words of the psalmist come to such —

"Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, and bless ye the LORD" (Ps.134:1,2).

If they felt a bit heavy and sleepy then to lift their hands up and keep them up would be an effective cure for sleep.

Is this not a cure still in the matter of praise and prayer? Paul said "I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands" (1 Tim.2:8). Here is a remedy for spiritual sleepiness. Let us also remember the words of Paul in Rom.13:11,

"And this, knowing the season, that now it is high time for you to awake out of sleep; for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand ".

As the night advances, as it grows darker and colder, let us be awake; let us lift up our hands to the sanctuary and bless our God.

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

Until recent times society in many Western lands displayed a distinctly Christian facade. This meant that the Christian disciple was usually indistinguishable from the rest on account of dress, behaviour or speech. But this situation is rapidly changing. The evil lives that were at one time seen only in the pagan fringe, are fast becoming the norm. Unfaithfulness, dishonesty, contempt for authority, foul language, sexual perversion, cruelty, drug taking, alcoholism and violence of every kind, even if not actually approved by the masses, are allowed to pass with scarcely a protest. They are depicted by the media as "true to life".

The perpetrators of such evils "think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (1 Pet.4:4). The apostle Peter's experience is fast becoming ours. The true Christian now clearly stands out from his contemporaries and is an obvious target for abuse. That is not altogether a bad thing, even though it may bring ridicule and perhaps persecution. A good testimony will demand in these circumstances a closer walk with the Lord and a fuller commitment, as Mr. Shattock emphasizes in our main article this month.

These signs of the approach of the last days (see Tim.3:1-6) find a link this month with what Focus has to say about the Chernobyl accident, hinting at the possible nature of the end time disasters foretold in Rev.ch.8. When men faint for fear and expectation of the things which are coming on the world (Lk.21:25,26), the Christian has his unfailing refuge in God.

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Cover Picture: Hearst Castle, California

The Son of God Loved Me

(Gal.2:20)

By Roy Hyland, of Rhyl, U.K.

Paul's statement "the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me" is both simple and profound. It is simple to understand because we all have an emotional part in our make-up, and even the hardest of hearts feels the need to love and certainly to be loved. Love is perhaps the strongest of our emotions but when thwarted can turn to hatred. Asked to explain love, someone replied, in the Lancashire dialect, " 'tis better felt than tell't"!

Paul s words however, introduce us to divine LOVE, which is on a different plane altogether, expressed in the New Testament in the words, "For God so loved the world..." Of course God loved men and women in the Old Testament too, but the New Testament reveals the full extent of that LOVE. "He gave His only begotten Son...", and our minds and hearts are directed to Calvary. Such love is profound, unsearchable, immeasurable, yet it can be experienced by poor unworthy sinners for whom this LOVE was expressed and for whose sake the Son of His love died. God's love is unlike human love. We choose those we love because we see in them qualities and characteristics that attract us, but God did not love us because of what we were, He loved us in spite of ourselves! (see 1 Jn 4:10).

When the Lord was with the apostles in the Upper Room He said to them, "For the Father Himself loveth you, because YE HAVE LOVED ME" (Jn 16:27). He loved Paul for the same reason, and Paul was well suited to be used by the Holy Spirit to write the finest exposition on love that has ever been written. "Love suffereth long, and is kind...is not puffed up...is not provoked, taketh not account of evil..."(l Cor.13:4,8). He wrote in this choice way because he had experienced and appreciated that love. Moreover, the love that God in Christ had shown to him he returned, perhaps to an unsurpassed degree. Paul recalls his unsaved days; "a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious" (1 Tim.1:13); he hardly knew what love was until that memorable mid-day encounter that changed his entire life.

No doubt Paul's primary object in writing to the church in Corinth was to instruct disciples of every age on how they should live, and yet, as we ponder these words we see that he was in fact defining divine LOVE — the Lord Jesus Himself was the perfect embodiment of LOVE!

Let us notice too, the word "gave" in our text. Someone has said that "love can only be measured by the actions it produces", and the Lord Jesus clearly spelt this out in the Upper Room when He said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13), but the Lord's own impending sacrifice would give an even greater meaning to giving. The word used in the Greek has the thought of "giving or handing over" and we see from the Gospels how the Lord willingly handed Himself over to cruel, murderous men so that Messiah's sufferings, foretold in the Old Testament, could ALL have their fulfilment in Him at Calvary.

It was in the Upper Room too, that the Lord Jesus gave the command "this do in remembrance of Me..." (Lk.22:19), and He was referring of course, to the breaking of bread and the pouring of the cup. Paul adds to this, "for as often as ye eat...and drink...ye proclaim the Lord's death until..." (1 Cor.11:26). It must have been a memorable experience for those worshipping early disciples in the newly planted churches of God to be present when the apostle remembered the Lord with them, and to hear his thanksgiving for the loaf and the cup. He delighted to proclaim the Lord's death in this way just as he delighted to "preach Christ crucified". We too have the same privilege and the same responsibility.

We can be sure too, that in his own personal exercise before the Lord he would be often "giving thanks unto the Father..." because of the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God "FOR ME" which so completely captivated his whole life that he had little time for anything else. "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ (Phil.3:7). "What things" in our lives are we prepared to count but "loss for Christ"? We live in a day of material prosperity, although not all fellow believers are blessed in this way, and we need to be watchful lest we become so taken up with *things* that they become of more value to us than Christ. So long as we give Him second place in our lives, then so long will we live as second-rate Christians, robbing ourselves of the JOY that will be ours through abiding in His LOVE! We naturally show our love to those who are dearest to us, but how often do we tell HIM that we love Him?

The writer was for many years in the same church of God as Dr. A.T. Doodson, late editor and contributor to Needed Truth. A lasting impression of him is his frequent reference to the hymn:

"Oh wonder to myself I am,
That I can view the dying Lamb,
Can scan the wondrous mystery o'er,
And not be moved to love Him more!"

Worship and Service (7)

In Relation to the Eternal State

By J.K.D. Johnston, of Musselburgh, Scotland.

At the end of the Millennium Satan will be released from his prison in the abyss and will resume the activities he has engaged in throughout the centuries. It is a sad testimony to the depravity of the human heart that, from among nations that benefitted from the benign and righteous rule of the King of kings, Satan will find a vast number responsive to his deceptions and willing to serve his purposes. It is evident that many, particularly towards the close of the Millennium, will be rendering "feigned obedience" (Ps.66:3 RVM). The thousand years of incarceration in the abyss will not effect any change in the Adversary of God and man, nor will human nature be altered by experiencing the blessings of Christ's reign.

The final rebellion masterminded by Satan will, however, be swiftly and utterly crushed and Satan will be consigned to the place of eternal punishment that was specifically prepared for him and his angels (Matt.25:41). The stage will then be set for the final act in this earth's history. The earth that now is and the heavens are destined to pass away (Matt.24:35; Ps.102:25,26), but before they do the dead will be raised to appear at the final judgement scene and hear from the lips of the God-appointed judge their eternal destiny. Multitudes of men and women will go from that judgement scene to share with the Devil who deceived them his place of awful torment. John captures the tremendous drama of that scene in his description:

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them (Rev.20:11). Taking the place of the old creation John saw a new heaven and a new earth. Some expositors take the view that the new heaven and new earth are the old heaven and old earth cleansed and purified. That is not the view of the writer. There is a distinct impression of finality conveyed by the words, "and there was found no place for them" (Rev.20:11). The word translated "new" in this context is *kainos* which emphasizes the superior quality of the replacements. In the new heaven and earth righteousness will dwell (2 Peter. 3:13). The effects of sin will be removed for ever from the universe, and a state of eternal felicity ushered in with the coming of the day

of God (2 Pet.3:12). This is the end towards which God has been working since the day His fair creation was blighted by sin.

Man's place of service in the beginning was in the delectable sylvan setting of a garden resplendent with attractive and fruitful trees and having centrally placed in it the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. From that garden of delight there flowed a river which divided into four tributaries flowing out to the surrounding lands. There man experienced sweet times of hallowed communion with his Maker before the entrance of sin.

The new earth on which redeemed men and women will dwell for ever has some striking parallels with the paradise of old, but there are also significant differences. The main feature and focal centre of the new earth will be the glorious city, New Jerusalem, breathtakingly beautiful. The height, length and breadth of the city are all equal, but the form is possibly pyramidal rather than cubical. The throne of God and of the Lamb will perhaps be at the apex of the structure, and the glory emanating from it will illuminate the city and the whole earth also. There will be "a river of water of life, bright as crystal" flowing out from the throne, and the tree of life will be there, features reminiscent of Eden, but in that future setting they belong to a state of perfection and to an order of things that will never pass away.

God has always longed for a dwelling-place among men, and for limited periods that desire has been fulfilled until persistent disobedience on the part of His people has forced Him at various times to forsake His dwelling-place. There will be no recurrence of this in that eternal setting. In previous ages God has had only one people in each age; in eternity He will dwell with His peoples. Three distinct groupings are identified, the Bride, Israel and the nations, all seen in relation to the divine centre, the New Jerusalem. It is clearly the divine purpose to have the redeemed of all ages brought together to share in eternal glory (Heb.11:40). Very little information is given of the form of the service of God in eternity, but it will certainly be a service unaffected by sin and failure, for all the inhabitants of the new earth will have sinless bodies fitted for eternal blessedness. John tells us, "His servants shall do Him service *(Latreia);* and they shall see His face; and His Name shall be on their

All acceptable service and worship is related to knowledge. The intellect as well as the emotions are involved in true worship. The quality of our service is limited by the imperfect state of our knowledge and by the sin and failure that so readily beset us. In that glad eternal day the present hindrances will have been removed ... we shall render acceptable service throughout eternity.

foreheads" (Rev.22:3). That service will know no end.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We'll have no less days to sing His praise
Than when we first began.

We are told that there is no temple in that eternal city "for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof (Rev.21:22). It would appear that it will no longer be necessary to set apart a specific sanctified area for the dwelling-place of God, for holiness will pervade all aspects of life and service on the new earth. The glory emanating from the throne will not be confined within a holy of holies but will radiate out to give to the translucent materials of the New Jerusalem their scintillating beauty and illuminate all that fair scene.

All acceptable service and worship is related to knowledge. The intellect as well as the emotions are involved in true worship. The quality of our service now is limited by the imperfect state of our knowledge and by the sin and failure that so readily beset us. In that glad eternal day the present hindrances will have been removed. "Now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face", now our knowledge is part knowledge, then we shall have a full knowledge (1 Cor.13:12). In the light of that full knowledge we shall render acceptable service throughout eternity. God's revelation of Himself to man has always been a progressive one and it will continue to be so eternally. There is no end-point to be reached in the pursuit of the knowledge of the infinite God, His love, mercy, wisdom and grace. There will be a continuing orderly phased unfolding of the riches of God's grace throughout the ages to come (Eph.2:7). It is fascinating to think of planned ages with fresh revelations always in prospect.

The references to the Lamb in the visions given to John are worthy of note. Before the present earth was brought into being the Lamb was marked out in the purposes of God for sacrifice (Rev.13:8). When He was here on earth the Son of God was identified as the Lamb of God destined to bear the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). In Patmos John was given the vision of the Lamb in the midst of the throne still displaying the evidence of having been slain, and the subject of the praise of heaven because of His redemptive work (Rev.5:6-9). It is the divine purpose that the Lamb of God will display eternally the marks of Calvary. The sight of those wounds will bow the hearts of redeemed men in adoring worship throughout eternity.

FOCUS

Fall-Out from Chernobyl

Disaster struck a nuclear power station in the Ukraine on 26th April 1986, and over a period of several weeks the extent of the problem was only gradually disclosed by the Soviet authorities.

Christian concern and sympathy go out to all who suffered through the tragedy. Some were killed by the original explosion and others died later from the effects of serious radiation. Many remain gravely ill as every effort is made to provide suitable treatment. It is impossible to assess the potential future damage to the health of thousands who had some exposure to the radiation. Added to this is the human distress resulting from the mass evacuation of people from polluted areas. It has been officially confirmed in Moscow that 92,000 people were evacuated from the area around Chernobyl, and are likely to be away from their homes for some time.

Tremendous efforts were made to seal off the damaged reactor and prevent the escape of further radioactive substances. Helicopters dropped tons of sand, lead and boron on to the reactor, and it is planned to encase the unit within a concrete barrier which will reach 96ft. into the ground. The earth in the immediately surrounding area has of course been heavily contaminated.

At the time of the accident strong air currents from the Black Sea were flowing north-westwards over the Ukraine to the Baltic Sea and Scandinavia. Abnormally high levels of radiation were first identified in Sweden, followed by other Scandinavian and East European countries. Widespread alarm led to immediate precautions by several governments as they carefully monitored radiation levels. There were warnings against drinking rain water, or dairy milk or eating fresh green vegetables. The European Community temporarily banned the import of meat or farm products from Eastern European countries affected by the fall-out from Chernobyl.

Mercifully the level of radiation from fall-out was relatively small in most countries, but the whole episode underlined that vast numbers of people may so quickly be put at risk by accidents of this kind. How dependent we are on God's providential care! The greater the power achieved by modern technology the greater the risk when things go wrong. "Let the nations know themselves to be but men", wrote David: a humbling reality once

more borne home to us by the tragic events at Chernobyl.

There was a sombre warning from Dr. Robert Gale, an American bone-barrow transplant expert who helped Soviet medical men in treating victims of the disaster. He said, "This incident has demonstrated our very limited ability to respond to nuclear accidents. If we are very hard pressed to deal with 300 cases it should be evident how inadequate our response would be in thermo-nuclear war". In a televised speech to the Soviet people Mr. Gorbachev struck a similar warning note — "inherent in the nuclear arsenals stockpiled are thousands upon thousands of disasters far more horrible than the Chernobyl one".

Assuming such possibilities, two features of the Chernobyl disaster suggest potential links with the prophetic Word about judgements at the time of the end — contamination of earth and vegetation and pollution of water supplies. For in Rev.7:3 we read: "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads". When the first trumpet sounded (Rev.8:7) "there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up". At the victorious climax, the sounding of the seventh trumpet, all heaven rejoiced in the triumph of God's Christ. The time had come "to destroy them that destroy the earth". As to pollution of water supplies, the sounding of the third trumpet (Rev.8:10,11) resulted in a third part of the waters becoming wormwood; and many men died of the waters because they were bitter.

Do the areas of Ukraine farmland contaminated from the Soviet nuclear accident today forebode the vast destruction of earth and vegetation tomorrow? Have we seen in the Chernobyl nuclear fall-out a tiny example of how such widespread water pollution could be brought about at the time of the end? A final answer to these questions must await fulfilment of Scripture; but the feasibility of literal fulfilment is increasingly apparent. Meantime, living in a generation under threat of nuclear war, our confidence lies in God who is our refuge and strength: "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him".

In the Shadow of Calvary

(9) The Disciple and the World **(Jn 15:17-16:4)**

By L.C. Shattock, of Leicester, U.K.

The little band of men upon whom the Lord would centre His commission to disciple the nations were left in no doubt at all by His words to them that they would be His witnesses in the face of human hostility. He therefore urged them to bind themselves together in the strength of their love one for another and in that strength face the hatred of the world.

The keynote in His statement to them is "A servant is not greater than his Lord" (Jn 15:20). It is inevitable that as the world persecuted and rejected the Son of God so it will persecute and reject those who follow and faithfully represent Him.

The call of the Lord Jesus to discipleship brings separation from a world in opposition to God and His Christ. That distinction, when manifestly expressed invokes the antagonism of unregenerate society, for the world loves its own and hates that which is not of itself and of its own nature.

This world has known the presence of the incarnate Son of God and the revelation of divine truth which He brought into it, and the wonder of divine grace which prompted Him to redeem sinners by dying an atoning death on their behalf. The condemnation of the world is in its rejection of the Christ, a fact underscored by His own words, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin" (Jn 15:22).

The tragedy of human existence without God is that it is enslaved and dominated by devastating forces of wickedness. Behind all man's rejection of God and Christ and of the revealed truth of Scripture, and the principles of holiness which govern life related to God, are Satan and the spiritual hosts of evil which he directs. As such the Devil is identified by the Lord Jesus as "the prince of this world" (Jn 12:31; Jn 14:30; Jn 16:11). The Scriptures describe him as "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph.2:2) and also as "the god of this world" — the one who, opposing all the purposes of divine grace for human life "hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving" (2 Cor.4:4). The spiritual hosts of wickedness which the Devil commands are described as "the world rulers of this darkness" (Eph.6:12).

The graphic phrase "this darkness"

is a Holy Spirit diagnosis of world condition spiritually. As it was in the days of the apostle, so now, it is an equally accurate description of human life under the destructive power of spiritual evil. The age in which we live supplies multiplying evidence of the darkness which engulfs mankind. Salacious writings which most people would have been ashamed to have on their bookshelves are now popularly acclaimed as being of literary worth. What might have been alleged to be subtle in media presentation of deviant behaviour is now blatantly portrayed, and exists as a terrifying incitement to impurity. Against such streams of corruption the disciple faces the challenge of the Lord's words "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt.5:13). Salt is antiseptic, astringent, arresting corruption. This influence in Christian witness is an essential part of the divine intention affecting discipleship. How tragic "if the salt has lost its savour"! Savourless salt is no longer salt. If a believer in Christ conforms to the spirit of the age in which he lives, his Christian identity is lost, his discipleship destroyed and his testimony nullified. There is always the need for vigilance to obey the command "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 Jn 2:15). Failure in this deflected Demas from discipleship (2 Tim.4:10) as it has diverted from the same pathway his successors in the same failure.

In every sphere of living of the Christian disciple, priority of claim belongs to the Lord Jesus. The terms of his following His master are not negotiable. As they are outlined in Lk.14 they seem severe and hard to understand. "If any man cometh after Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk.14:26). These words must not be construed as meaning that obedient disciples must adopt a malevolent attitude toward their loved ones. (This would contradict such scriptures as Eph.5:25). What they define is an attitude which makes the claims of the Lord Jesus supreme above all other relationships. In fact such claims are to be superior to every demand of the self-life (Lk.14:27). In face of the rampant greed surrounding him in a godless world, the disciple is called to renounce all that he has (Lk.14:33). In effect this means that he must not be held back from following the Lord by the claims of others or by that which he himself possesses. From such claims we may instinctively recoil until we understand why they are so imperative to discipleship.

The teaching of the Lord Jesus is not for mere academic debate or to satisfy intellectual curiosity. It demands obedience, and when obeyed emancipates us from every ensnaring entanglement which impedes our following Him. "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31).

The freedom which He brings us, as we abide in His word and are truly His disciples, is from every false concept which distorts the outlook of an unbelieving world. It frees us also from every ecclesiastical error which false interpretation of Scripture has imposed upon the minds of men, and in that freedom establishes us to witness faithfully to the truth which is revealed through Him.

To live a life in which the claims of Christ are supreme means that inevitably the disciple will face the ridicule and contempt of a society dominated by godless materialism.

Although living in a world of people who by nature are "alienated from the life of God" (Eph.4:17,19) the Christian is called to live a holy life. He is to "put away" all that which characterized his living before Christ saved him (see Eph.22-24). The grace of God has taught him to deny (that is to say "NO" to) ungodly lusts and to live soberly and righteously in this present world (Tit.2:11-14). Such a pattern of life will demonstrate that he is among the company of the redeemed to whom God's power has granted "all things that pertain unto life and godliness... having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (2 Pet.1:34).

The Lord told His own "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you". Holiness ever condemns corruption; obedience is a constant rebuke to rebellion. In describing the witness of His own the Lord said, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt.5:14). Light is an irritant to men who love darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil. For, in Scripture, "light" often means "truth and knowledge" and conversely "darkness" implies "error and ignorance".

To live a life in which the claims of Christ are supreme means that inevitably the disciple will face the ridicule and contempt of a society dominated by godless materialism. Often he will be misunderstood by his unsaved kinsfolk. In the fiercest expression of opposition he will face persecution from a world inflamed by hatred of the Lord Jesus. The Master tells us "All these things will they do unto you for My Name's sake" (Jn 15:21).

"For My Name's sake". This is the motivation which impels disciples to truly represent their Lord despite the opposing forces arrayed against them. Yet He has revealed that such witness to Himself will be a double witness. It will be the witness of the Spirit and also that of His own (Jn 15:26-27). In the energy of the Holy Spirit that is the only witness in this world capable of bringing conviction to men and women, boys and girls, whose minds are by nature at enmity with God.

Even as the Lord predicted, the days of persecution dawned for those first century disciples (e.g. Acts 8:1). Their faithful witness aroused the opposition of Jewish rulers, of pagan *(continued on page 144)*

Some of Paul's Companions

(2) Silvanus

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada

Another of the apostle Paul's companions was a man called Silvanus, sometimes shortened to Silas. And he worked with Peter too, for Peter writes about him at the close of his first epistle. In fact, it seems as though Silvanus was the scribe who wrote at Peter's dictation, for he says "By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written unto, you briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein".

What a great commendation! "Our faithful brother". He was a brother in Christ, and also in the Lord. In Christ, because they were both, through personal faith in the Lord Jesus, baptized by Him in the Holy Spirit into the Church which is His Body. They were new creatures in Christ. And "in the Lord" because, of their own free choice, they'd yielded themselves to the Lord, to do His will, and the outward evidence of that fact had been seen in their water baptism as disciples of the Lord Jesus, and their commitment to service in churches of God.

And in that course to which Silvanus had voluntarily given himself, he had proved faithful, at least by Peter's wise reckoning. The great reckoning day is still to come, of course, when all who have served the Lord Jesus will stand before His judgement seat and receive His assessment of their life's service. Silvanus will be there in that day, and so will you and I. And we shall each give an account of our service and how we have used our lives since first we put our trust in the Saviour.

Silvanus did well as far as we can judge from the Bible record. He and Timothy were linked with the apostle Paul in the two letters to the Thessalonians. And writing to the Corinthians Paul said, "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timothy" (2 Cor.1:19). So Silvanus was a preacher, too. He preached the Son of God as the Saviour of men and women. And he was a leader among his brethren, for when the decision of the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 had to be conveyed back to the church in Antioch, Silas was one of the men chosen for the task. Along with Judas Barsabbas he was referred to as a chief man among his brethren. And the record of his life and service is given for our encouragement, so that we might pattern our lives on his example.

The Five Poetic Books (Part 1)

By R.A. Parker, of Stoke-on-Trent, U.K.

It has often been observed by students of the Word that the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs lie centrally in the writings of the Old Testament. There are seventeen before and seventeen after them and each book has some great lesson to teach every man and woman of God today. They span a period of approximately 1000 years from the days of Abraham, circa 2000 BC, to those of Solomon, circa 1000 BC; beginning with the man who was the "greatest of *all* the children of the East" (Job 1:3) and ending with the words of the great, rich, wise king Solomon (2 Chron.9:22).

Job

Of all the men alive at the time of Job, God must have had an intense interest in him and love for him to mention his name to the Adversary on a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord (Job 1:6-8). God's pleasure in Job is clearly recorded by the Spirit of God in describing him as perfect, upright, one that feared God and eschewed (to shun or avoid) evil. The story, written by an unknown scribe, lifts the curtain on the counsels of God in respect of those He loves. It shows what He is prepared to allow in order that the man of God may be refined as gold now, to fit him for service hereafter. By allowing suffering, the great Designer brings balance into the pattern of human life for His own praise and glory.

In the day that evil was permitted to overtake him, this remarkable man demonstrated that his faith and trust were firmly resting in his God, insomuch that he could say, "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). Later, after being smitten with sore boils, his faith undiminished, he could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25).

Two important lessons arise out of the record of Job's traumatic experience. He gained:

1. a deep appreciation of his God whom he worshipped (1:20);
2. an equal, if not deeper, appreciation of himself *as God saw him.*

Whereas the majesty and glory of his Maker filled him with awe and wonder, he was led to see himself as of no account (Job 40:4) and to abhor himself (Job 42:6). His faith became so profound that he confessed, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15 AV). He thought he knew his God well before his trials but after treading the path of suffering with much uncertainty, he reached the state of mind and heart which enabled him to say, "He

knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:8-10).

The book of Job deals with experiences through which godly men and women must pass in order to become balanced in divine things; the desirable quality, so necessary to divine service. Balance makes a Christian complete, imparting a deep appreciation of God and an equally deep appreciation of oneself.

Psalms

There are five sections, called books, which record for us many personal as well as collective experiences. They vibrate with the daily heart-beats and aspirations of men and women who were born again. New birth is not limited to persons in the New Testament, for men and women are begotten again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet.1:23-25). Under the direction of the Spirit of God they have recorded for us matters concerning faith, hope, love, song, praise, thanksgiving and worship. As we read through these pages we cannot do other than identify with their experiences because they are ours. The heights of their achievements under God and the depths of their sorrows equate to our own pathway as day-by-day we are led onward to God. There are occasions, however, when the passage surpasses our own experiences and we recognize in them the prophetic utterances concerning the "Messiah, which abound in the Psalms.

Many of the declared experiences fill us with thankfulness because they crystallize for us what we wish to say, such as, "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity" (Ps.32:2) and, "the LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps.32:1) and again, "the LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Ps.27:1). In the days of adversity we have here an abundant source of sayings with which we can immediately identify, such as, "Preserve me, 0 God: for in Thee do I trust" (Ps.16:1) and, "Why art thou cast down, 0 my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him" (Ps.42:5). Also that passage of immense encouragement to God's people, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps.46:1).

There are many passages, uttered in the days of shadow, which we who are in the days of substance delight to apply in the service of the sanctuary. Consider how fitting it is, having partaken of the emblems in remembrance of our Lord Jesus, to use the words of David and say, "Give unto the LORD, O ye sons of the mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the. glory due unto His Name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Ps.29:1-2), and again, "enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: give thanks unto Him, and bless His Name. For the LORD is good: His mercy endureth

for ever; and His faithfulness unto all generations" (Ps.100:4-5).

In the Psalms we have a deep well of human experience from which men and women of God can draw comfort, encouragement and spiritual nourishment. May it be so for His Name's sake. Amen.

(continued from page 140)

Gentiles and of Roman Caesars. The Lord had told them, "The hour com-eth, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God" (Jn 16:2). An outstanding illustration of this was Saul of Tarsus (Acts 26:9). Yet divine grace changed the persecutor into the preacher of the gospel and to being Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ who urged the Philippian saints to be "blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Phil.2:15,16). Today, in the western world, Christian disciples live comparatively comfortable lives. By no stretch of the imagination can the ridicule we may sometimes experience be called persecution. Yet, even now, there are countries where God-denying political dogmas cause governments to inflict harsh punishment upon those who faithfully witness to the Lord Jesus. We should be constantly praying for these our brethren and sisters in Christ, and be thanking God that in the face of such oppression faithful witness to Himself is still maintained.

Meanwhile, for us all, the claims of discipleship remain relevant; they are unchanged and undiminished. Let us awake from mediocrity in spiritual living by obediently answering them as those committed to the cause of the Master.

World trends in mounting opposition to God imply that the Lord may be telling us "The hour cometh" and we shall be required to face an experience which will prove "all that would live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim.3:12). Should this ever be — may we seek now the grace which will find us with those "counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name" (Acts 5:41).

Voices from the Past

Door-Keepers

Few who have meditated on the words of Ps.84, one of the psalms of the sons of Korah, have failed to have their spirit moved by the words:

For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness (Ps.84:10).

The best and chiefest place that the lawless can afford is not to be compared with the portion of a man who stands on the threshold, caring for the door or gate of God's house.

The sons of Korah were not like their father. Korah, who was a Levite, left off caring for the gate in his day and went down and associated with Dathan and Abiram. But the rest of the people responded to Moses' entreaty and

... they gat them up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood at the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little ones.

But long years after, the sons of Korah looked differently on the things their father had done. They had learned of God's manifest displeasure in the act of their forefather, and they made the noble choice of serving others in the service of Jehovah their God; they would stand on the threshold and help others going inside. Surely this was a noble work. They were helpers and not hinderers. We read of their work in 1 Chron.9:19:

And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, of his father's house, the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates (or thresholds) of the tabernacle: and their fathers had been over the camp of the LORD, keepers of the entry. The sons of Korah were not self-choosers. They were quite content and perfectly happy in their service of being "keepers of the thresholds of the tabernacle". Happy men! They sang and others sang in holy melody after them, and so sing we still:

I had rather be a door-keeper in (R VM - stand at the threshold of) the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

Our main series of articles, "In the Shadow of Calvary" this month reaches the 16th chapter of the Gospel according to John, with its very precious promises and assurances from the Master. Promises and assurances concerning firstly the Holy Spirit, then the Father, as the purposes of the Triune God move ever nearer to Calvary. The chapter closes with the words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world".

Some of the tribulation inflicted on God's earthly people in Russia is highlighted by FOCUS, within the sovereign context of the divine purpose of grace. The place they occupy in our prayers is surely shared by the many beloved fellow-believers in our Lord Jesus who endure similar hardships for the love of His dear Name. And as we are led into our meditation on the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit, we remember the monumental words of Paul to the Corinthians, "Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". Unappreciative as we must confess we often are of the many liberties most of us enjoy daily, we are reminded of the ultimate in liberty — that which comes as the gift of the indwelling Spirit of God. May we prize this most highly and be unfailing in our supplication for a double portion of this freedom of the Spirit for our brothers and sisters who are bound in many lands.

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Cover Picture: Sunset over Ayr, Scotland.

Erratum: The cover picture for September issue was Rodel, Western Isles, U.K., not Hearst Castle as stated.

In the Shadow of Calvary

(10) The Holy Spirit's Ministry (Jn 16:5-15)

By J. W. Archibald, of Wembley, U.K.

The Lord knew everything about His disciples. Time after time they found that their very thoughts were known to Him. On the last night before Calvary the Lord from heaven spoke to His apostles of many things, and even as He spoke He well understood the effect of His words.

He knew that their hearts were filled with sorrow at the prospect of His departure from them. He had filled their hearts and their lives in such a blessed way that the thought of being without Him was utterly devastating. But their sorrow was great because they did not yet understand where He was going. None of them asked Him. If those disciples had appreciated the triumph and the glory of the return to heaven of the mighty Victor of Calvary, and if they had grasped the full weight of His promise, "I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:2) then surely their thoughts would have been very different. However, the gracious Master faithfully told them the truth although He well understood the disciples' limited ability to absorb it.

It is against this background of perplexity and sadness of heart that the Lord gives them the promise "If I go, I will send Him unto you" (v.7). This happy assurance stands in splendour alongside His earlier word, "If I go ... I come again and will receive you unto Myself (Jn 14:3)." Not only were they promised His personal return but in His absence they were to have the constant presence of the Comforter. No wonder Paul describes Him as the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph.1:13). Not only did the Comforter come in blessed fulfilment of the promise given, but His ministry and His very presence are a real and present pledge of that great promise yet to be fulfilled, "I come again and will receive you unto Myself." Now in the portion we are considering, before the Lord speaks of the Spirit's ministry to the believer, He first refers to

The Holy Spirit and The World

It is the Spirit's work to convict or reprove the world and in doing so He inevitably establishes the attitude that the disciple ought to have towards it. This is clearly stated by Paul, "the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal.6:14) and by John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 Jn 2:15). Three subjects form the

basis of the Holy Spirit's convicting of the world, and they must be the starting point in any awakening of sinful man to the true knowledge of God.

The first is sin. Sin is universal in the world since all have sinned. It stands between God and men as a mighty barrier which is far beyond human ability to remove. So great is its power that its victims are unaware of its full gravity and seriousness. The world of mankind does not recognize its desperate guilt before God. Just as the Lord Jesus denounced sin in uncompromising terms, so does the Spirit of God. The world is a world of unbelief in Christ and no one in it could begin to appreciate how hopeless is their case without the blessed ministry of the Spirit.

The second subject is righteousness and this is linked with the departure of Christ to the Father and His absence from the world. In the world of men there is none righteous, no, not one. The Lord Jesus is the only perfectly righteous man who has ever walked this earth. When He was here His words and His conduct shone in brilliant splendour against the murky background of the corrupt ways and institutions of men. What an experience for those who companied with Him during His short time here! They had first hand knowledge of the searching brightness of His divine character and some even turned away from the brightness. This declaring of the divine standard is continued by the Holy Spirit, who not only reproves sin but also declares absolute righteousness in a world without Christ.

Thirdly judgement, and here the Lord refers to the alien prince of a world which is alienated from God and His Christ. John says elsewhere, "the whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 Jn 5:19). It is the mighty Adversary of God and men who has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. But the divine sentence of judgement has already been pronounced on that evil prince, and judgement will pass to all who remain deceived by him. The godless society of men is doomed and it is the Spirit's work to make this clear. If anyone from such a world would find the way back to God then the way must begin with a deep awareness of sin, an understanding of the perfect righteousness of God as displayed so marvellously in Christ, and a lively recognition that mankind is under sentence of eternal judgement. Thank God for the gracious presence in the world of the Comforter, without whose helpful ministry none could ever escape.

The Holy Spirit and The Believer

Having considered the threefold ministry of the Spirit in the world, we review now His threefold ministry in the experience of the disciple of the Lord. We learn that "He shall guide you into all the truth" (v.13). Then "He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (v.13), and thirdly "He shall glorify Me" (v.14).

In the first of these promises the

Spirit is given the title Spirit of Truth. Now truth can be an uncomfortable thing. God's ways are not our ways and His plan for us will often contain elements that surprise us and which may not conform to our ideas of Tightness. If we are to have our grasp of divine truth enlarged then we need to expect that our ideas will need adjustment and we shall need a powerful guide. But in the end, the greater our appreciation the greater will be our joy. We have noted already that as the disciples began to understand that their Lord was going away, their hearts were filled with sorrow. As their understanding increased to take in the

The sweet promise is that whatever the future holds for the disciple of the Lord, the ministry of the Spirit will be more than sufficient to equip the disciple to face it.

triumph of His resurrection and the glory of His exaltation to heaven's throne and the promise of His coming again, their sorrow gave place to joy and their witness acquired an irresistible momentum. So it is for His disciples today. It is the Lord's desire that we should not settle for a limited appreciation of His truth, resting on a comfortable understanding and afraid to follow the Spirit's prompting to move forward. We have His promise, "He shall guide you into all the truth". With such a guide there is nothing to fear. Without Him we shall find only error.

Second is the promise that He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. This should be seen in the light of verse 4 "these things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you". The Lord emphasizes that "He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear". The Spirit's ministry forms a unity with the teaching of the Lord. It is nowhere at variance with the Lord's words and its content does not extend beyond what the Lord has said. This is an important point on which some have sadly erred. The sweet promise is that whatever the future holds for the disciple of the Lord, the ministry of the Spirit will be more than sufficient to equip the disciple to face it. In the most difficult times the Comforter will help our understanding and will strengthen us to accept the will of the Lord, even when we cannot understand. He knows the end from the beginning.

Thirdly, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you". Here we have God the Spirit glorifying God the Son. In the following chapter the Lord speaks of the Father glorifying the Son and of the Son glorifying the Father. It is a sublime contemplation that the Persons of Deity should glorify one another. The glory of God can be thought of as the effect on the beholder of God's greatness. It is therefore a great privilege for a man to glorify God. It means that the greatness of

God has so affected the man as to produce in him attitudes and actions which reflect that divine greatness. Now think of this applied to the Persons of Deity. In this case the Holy Spirit so appreciates the Person of the Son that He, the Spirit, reflects and declares the greatness of the Son. The theme of the Spirit's ministry is therefore Christ the Son of God. There could be no greater help and comfort than this. For those disciples to whom the Lord spoke in our chapter, there stretched out the prospect of days and weeks and years of their Master's absence. They had been enriched beyond telling by His company with them day by day since the unforgettable day that they first met Him and decided to become disciples. To them He gives the promise that God the Spirit will come and abide in them and day by day increase their store of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Along with these promises there comes a reminder of who He is who makes the promise. "All things whatsoever the Father hath are Mine". In the presence of those first disciples was the Man of Galilee who seemed to have no earthly power or wealth. In fact all things belong to Him and all things were made by Him. Can it be that He is saying that all the power and resource of Deity is there to be taken and made known to the disciple for his help? Yes indeed, but only through the agency of the Spirit of truth.

And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.

It is not the mightiest tree of the forest that we look to with hope, but to the Lord Jesus, our Beloved, who is the apple tree among the trees of the wood; His fruit is sweet to our taste. He is the way, the truth and the life to us; His person is most dear unto us, and His teachings are the food of our spirits. Happy are ye who dare to be singular with Christ. Blessed are ye who have found the narrow way which leadeth unto life eternal. Blessed are ye because ye are not carried away with the strong current and fashion of the age, but have heard the voice that saith, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds". Wisdom tells the hungry man to prefer the solitary apple tree to whole groves of the hugest oaks or beeches; and wisdom given from above has brought you, 0 believer in Jesus, to prefer your Redeemer to all the great ones of the earth.

C.H. Spurgeon

Some of Paul's Companions

(3) Onesimus

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada

Onesimus was a runaway slave, whom the apostle Paul helped to find the Saviour. He spoke about him as "my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus". He became very helpful to the aged apostle when he was in prison, and that's interesting, because his name means Helpful. Having received new life in Christ, he was now being helped to live out the meaning of his name. Paul would have liked to keep him with him, but there were things in his life which had to be put right first. He'd run away from his master Philemon, and stolen from him too, as far as we can judge. So Paul wrote the short letter which in our New Testaments bears Philemon's name and in it he pleads with him to forgive Onesimus. He promised to repay himself any debt Onesimus owed. It was a masterly letter, full of the love of Christ, and pleading for the forgiveness which springs out of love. I'm sure when Philemon received it, he'd be unable to resist the entreaty of his aged friend, and any hard feelings he may have had would gradually melt away.

This matter of forgiveness is so important, and especially when we are Christians. The Lord Jesus said "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt.6:14). An unforgiving spirit does far more damage to the person who has it than to the one he's unwilling to forgive. May I remind you of the words the apostle Paul wrote, also from the Roman prison, round about the same time as he wrote to Philemon, "be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph.4:32). Notice, as God forgave you. How has He forgiven us? Oh, freely and fully and finally, blotting our sin from His memory. He has forgiven all things, and He has loved us freely. And now He asks that we do the same with anyone who may offend us, or speak unkindly about us. "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you" (Eph.5:2). So we have two great examples on which to pattern our lives — the example of God's forgiveness and the example of Christ's love. Both have reached us through the gospel and now we are asked, by the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells within, to show out both these lovely traits in our lives — God's forgiveness and Christ's love.

FOCUS

"I will say unto the North, Give Up"

"How hath the oppressor ceased!" exulted those who had groaned beneath the tyranny of an ancient ruler who "ruled the nations in anger, with a persecution that none restrained" (Isa.14:4-6). He had shaken kingdoms and "let not loose his prisoners to their home" (v.17). History repeats itself. Tyrannies react savagely against dissidents in our generation. It's still a feature of such regimes that they let not loose their prisoners to their home.

Special attention was focussed recently on the release from USSR of the Jewish dissident Anatoli Shcharansky. On his return to Israel he was given a hero's welcome, for he personified the spirit of freedom which burns in countless hearts. Shcharansky had endured years of suffering in prison because of his outspoken championship of freedom. His release to Israel was seen as a tremendous triumph for skilfully orchestrated international protest. Yet he left behind him many thousands of Russian Jews who have been refused permission to emigrate to Israel. Many of them have been subjected to restrictive, penalizing regulations. This renewal of anti-Semitic policies in USSR recalls the pattern of judgement foretold so clearly by Moses over 3000 years ago. Departure from God would bring loss of national privilege, scattering among the nations and a constant sense of insecurity. Since 1948 we have seen the revival of Israel's nationhood after nineteen centuries of dispersion. But the plight of Russian Jews forbidden to return to Israel reminds us that there are millions of Jews still dispersed among the nations of the world.

This gives special point to prophetic scriptures which look forward to the time of the Lord's return as Israel's Messiah and the setting up of His millennial kingdom. Repeated reference is made to the regathering of the Jewish dispersion to share in the unique glory then to be enjoyed by the Israel nation.

"Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the end of the earth" (Isa.43:5,6). And again,

"Saying to them that are bound,
Go forth . . . Lo, these shall

come from far; and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted His people, and will have compassion upon His afflicted" (Isa.49:9-13). It's Isaiah also who writes:

"Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee"(Isa.60:9).

In May 1986 there was a well publicized reunion in New York City between Anatoli Shcharansky and Yelena Bonner, wife of the famous Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov. Sakharov, a distinguished nuclear physicist and Nobel Peace laureate, was banished to the city of Gorki in 1980 because of his advocacy of human rights. In 1984 his wife was forced to join him in exile. She later developed a heart condition which needed specialist surgery in the West. At first she was refused permission to leave the country: it was only after Sakharov had undertaken two hunger strikes on her behalf that she was granted a permit for a visit to the United States and Europe for medical treatment. Happily the surgery seems to have been a success. Her visit also brought her into contact with many western politicians, a circumstance of which the media took full advantage, highlighting the oppressive treatment experienced in USSR by the Sakharovs. Will the pressure of international opinion yet result in some improvement in their lot?

Whatever influence may be brought to bear for the help of a few well known people, it appears that the great majority of the oppressed must remain under a heavy yoke. Several organizations try to keep a world-wide watch on the situation and their reports emphasize the extent of the problem. For many their freedom will doubtless have to await the coming of the Lord as Son of Man, to take His great power and reign: "He shall break in pieces the oppressor ... He shall redeem their soul from oppression and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight" (Ps.72).

Meantime, however, each individual is offered through the gospel of Jesus Christ the most important of all freedoms — deliverance from eternal judgement and from the power of sin in their present experience. Blessed in this salvation, Christian submissiveness to the ruling power, however oppressive, will bring glory to God (Rom.13:1-7; 1 Pet.2:13-17).

The Five Poetic Books (Part 2)

By R.A. Parker, of Stoke-on-Trent, U.K.

Proverbs

We have in this book sound words of counsel for a son of God. In this dispensation of grace we "are *all* sons (men and women) of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:26), so we can take daily readings from the abundant writings of the wisest man that ever lived. They comprise laws from above for our life here below, couched in words of clarity and understanding.

Over and over again the writer addresses "my son". We read, "my son, hear the instruction of thy father" (Prov.1:8) and, "my son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov.1:10) and again, "my son, forget not my teaching" (Prov.3:1 RVM). Also, "my son, despise not the chastening of the LORD" (Prov.3:11). Go through and pick out the exhortations of the wise man to "my son". The book is full of teaching from the Lord called, *My sayings; My words; My commandments*. Note too how the writer appeals to his son to "keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov.4:23) and the double warning (Prov.14:12; Prov.16:25) of the "way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death".

Here also, in this volume of counsel, are words creating sensitivity about the. accountability of man to God; "the eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good" (Prov.15:3) against the day of reckoning. Words of advice to parents read, "train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it". The marginal reading contains a warning about allowing a child to have its own way. "Train up a child according to his (own) way, and even when he is old he will not depart from it". The alternative is much better, for when we train up a child according to His (God's) way, even when he is old he will not depart from it (Prov.22:6). The wisdom of this counsel is supported by verse 15 which says, "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him".

No one was wiser to exhort about the uncertainty of life than the Preacher who wrote, "boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov.27:1) nor could another be more astute to be able to declare the attributes of a virtuous woman (Prov.31:10).

Finally, it is the will of God that a son of God should grow spiritually and a "man's gift maketh room for him and bringeth him before great men" (Prov.18:16). But in all life's progress we have that wonderful assurance: "there

is a friend (lover RVM) that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov.18:24).

Ecclesiastes

Between the many proverbs (three thousand) of his mind and the Song (one out of a thousand and five — 1 Kgs.4:32) which so much filled his heart, Solomon has given to us sobering thoughts concerning things "under the sun" (occurring 27 times) and every purpose "under the heaven" (occurring once). The opening verses give us the key to the whole of the book regarding the vanity (emptiness) of life and the activities which engage men, defined as "labour under the sun". It is this emptiness which produces in the human heart a longing after material things by which to be satisfied, and a loathing once the things are possessed. The dangers and dissatisfaction of materialism are so vividly demonstrated by the Preacher, the son of David, that there can be no doubt of the intention of his message. There is no satisfaction to be found in the world, in worldly things or in worldly labour. Weariness and dissatisfaction are the results of vanity. It is because of the emptiness of the world that men and women find such supreme satisfaction only in Christ, as a writer so aptly expressed:

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me;
There's love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

It's interesting to reflect that the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes contain words proceeding from Jerusalem. It is the Lord's will that from this centre the whole earth shall receive His Word, and unto Jerusalem, as a result of receiving His Word, shall all nations flow. Jerusalem is the place of the Name and in due time the Judge of all the earth will sit there in judgement and reign in righteousness. Clearly, the fool will never arrive at this centre, nor at that future Jerusalem in the new earth (Rev.21:1-2) because "he knoweth not how to go to the city" (Eccles.10:15).

A sobering feature is found in chapter Eccles.7:13-14: "Consider the work of God: for who can make straight, which He hath made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful and in the day of adversity consider: God hath even made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out any thing that shall be after him".

Anyone who has turned his back on the world to follow the Lord Jesus will also listen to the words of the masters of assemblies which are like nails well fastened. Such words are given from one Shepherd (Eccles.12:11), the Lord Jesus Christ.

Song of Songs

Some of the choicest passages of the five poetic books are found in the Song of Songs. It condenses the desires, purposes and claims of men and women during their lifetime. The tone and purpose of its pages may well be summed up in the words, "Draw me; we will run after Thee" (Songs 1:4). Here is the

highest possible individual desire leading to the most comely collective purpose. Just as Ecclesiastes announces there is no satisfaction in worldly things or labour, so the Song of Songs confirms that only the Beloved can satisfy our desires and the longings of the soul.

Within this volume there are three stages of Christian development which answer to stages of our appreciation of Christ. There are two prominent considerations throughout the Song:

1) His voice and
2) Belonging to each other.

1) His voice

Of all the young men, to this black and comely woman her Beloved is as the apple tree *among* the trees of the wood. Her preeminent delight was to be seated *under* His shadow, tasting the sweetness of His fruit (Songs 2:3); to be in His banqueting house (house of wine) with His banner of love *over* her (Songs 2:4). But what constrained her most was His voice, "the voice of my Beloved" (Songs 2:8). In the early days of the call she was enchanted by it but the time came when she found other attractions which lulled her to sleep so that it was needful for His voice to knock upon her heart's door. "I was asleep, but my heart waked: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to Me" (Songs 5:2). Although her heart was moved, she responded too slowly so that He withdrew Himself and was gone. By the end of the Song her first love had been renewed and she longed once more to hear His voice as the One who dwells in the gardens and whose companions listen to Him. May we too seek the renewal of our first love and, of that lovely, beautiful Voice say, "Cause me to hear it" (Songs 8:13).

2) Belonging to each other

If the three stages of instruction about His voice find an echo in our experience as Christians how much more shall the three stages of belonging to each other answer to the way we respond to Him.

In the first passage she is primarily concerned that *He belongs to her,* "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Songs 2:16). The possession of Him as her very own looms large in her heart and is her consuming passion. The fact that she belongs to Him is of secondary importance. The greatest thing of all to her is this, "He *is Mine".*

As the Song proceeds, her love warms again to Him following the sleepy period. She now discovers the prime importance is belonging to Him and the fact that He belongs to her now recedes into the distance. She is now occupied with the truth that "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine" (Songs 6:3). Her personal claims lose their grip. She is now beginning to grasp the full meaning of His love but how much He loves and its intensity are something she has yet to fully understand and ravish her heart.

When the Song moves into its final phase her personal claims not only diminish but completely disappear.

Now His claims grip her heart as enraptured she exclaims, "I am my Beloved's and His desire is toward me" (Songs 7:10). Is not this the essence of our relationship to Christ as members of His Body, who are in inseparable union with Himself both now and for ever? As the value of our place in Christ increases in our hearts, so our appreciation of belonging to Him will change position in the following stages:

1) "My Beloved is *mine, and I am His",*
2) "*I am my Beloved's,* and my Beloved is mine";
3) *"I am my Beloved's,* and *His desire* is toward me".

Quest/on and Answer

What was Jesus' meaning in Matt.5:26? It seems to imply a type of purgatory.

It's interesting that the Lord introduced a very similar warning on a different occasion, as we read in Lk.12:58,59. I don't understand either of these passages as having reference to future divine judgement. Rather they appear to be the Lord's counsel against an obdurate attitude which insists on pursuing a quarrel instead of accepting amicable settlement. In Matt.5 this attitude is shown to be out of character with the privilege of offering to God at the altar. In Lk.12 it is seen as inappropriate to the critical time of the presence of the King, with the tremendous issues then at stake for the nation. To pursue a petty private feud against that background betrayed lack of spiritual perspective: failure to understand the time.

In both situations this foolish attitude would lead to severe penalty, likened to paying the last mite in a debtor's prison. In this way the Lord illustrated the severely penalizing results of a quarrelsome spirit.

G.P.

A Young Man Named Saul

This powerful challenge, first published in Needed Truth forty years ago, comes from the pen of the late Mr. T.M. Hyland. It is written in his characteristic compelling style and is reproduced here for the benefit of today's readers.

"The witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul". With these words the Spirit of God diverts our gaze from the dying martyr Stephen; finishing his earthly course, calmly sealing his testimony with his blood; to the contemplation of a young man on the threshold of life — "a young man named Saul". He was no mere onlooker at the scene; he was heart and soul in this business. Human life was less sacred to him than the ancient religion of his fathers; if *that* was in danger he must stand firm. And if the protagonists of this new teaching were of the calibre of the man whose dying words were still ringing in his ears, stinging him to fury, he must redouble his efforts; mercy must be cast aside, the situation calls for drastic action.

As he stood there, with the garments of the witnesses at his feet, every fibre of his being echoed the purpose of his heart. With what pride the rulers would look upon him! They knew his antecedents, his intellectual gifts, his strictness of life, his indomitable will. Here is a young man who will go far! Ah, yes! more lay at the feet, of this young man than the garments of those witnesses. The world lay at his feet; and if he pursue the career which opens before him it may well be that his name will shine in history as the greatest Jewish Rabbi of all time.

Hasting in midday heat along the Damascus road, this young man "saw a light" and "heard a voice". That is the story in his own words. Farewell now to hopes, and plans, and dreams! Lying in the dust of the Damascus road, blind and helpless, he utters the words which now become the consuming purpose of his life — "What shall I do, Lord?"

In the assemblies today are young men standing on the threshold of life. Hopes, and plans, and dreams engage their minds. Lookers on have hopes — and fears, too. Which road will they take? The years slip by and the Master still waits to captivate and enthrall those who, Saul-like, cast themselves at His feet.

Young man; Is this to be your story: "I saw a light ... I heard a voice ...What shall I do, Lord?" Many fervent hearts are praying "God, grant that it may be so".

The Eagle

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C., Canada

It was an awesome sight, yet one tinged with mystery, as hundreds of bald-headed eagles took up temporary residence near a spawning ground area of Canada's mighty Fraser river. They had travelled hundreds of kilometres to feast royally on the spawned-out salmon, but how did they know when and where to come? This question has some naturalists puzzled.

As distinct from the golden eagle, which feeds on small mammals and birds, the bald-headed variety lives mainly on fish. It is a magnificent looking bird: head, neck, and tail of the adult are pure white in contrast to the almost black plumage of wings and body. Sometimes called the sea eagle, it possesses a wing span of 7 to 8 feet, and a body length of 3½ feet.

Majestic in flight, and symbolic of strength and courage, the eagle has earned the sobriquet king of the birds. Even Scripture seems to give it a place of honour. Moses, for example, is quite picturesque when he writes: "As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, that fluttereth over her young, He spread abroad His wings, He took them, He bare them on His pinions" (Deut.32:11); a classic example of the Lord's care for His people. There was also the occasion when the Lord spoke to Moses on the mountain: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and ten the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself (Ex.19:14). This demonstration of power and protection would not be lost on the nations around as evidenced by Rahab's words: "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you ... And as soon as we had heard it, our hearts did melt..." (Josh. 2:11,12). His majesty and greatness remain unchanged today, and it must ever be of great consolation to the Israel of God when His people address Him as: "Thou God of power and God of love".

It is not without significance that the Persian and Roman empires used the eagle as a symbol. And the USA does so today, depicting, no doubt, the eagle's characteristics of power, keen vision, and protection of its own. No greater tribute could be paid to a warrior than being described as swifter than an eagle, which were the words chosen by David in his sad lament over Saul and Jonathan. As a shepherd David would have ample opportunity to observe the way of the eagle in the air, and his words ring out on a high note in his tribute to the late king of

Israel, and his son whom David loved. "...The bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided; They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions" (2 Sam.1:22,23).

In a vivid way David and Isaiah both seek to relate the lofty heights to which the eagle soars to the attainable experience of God's serving people. David seems to indicate praise, gratitude, thanks, and appreciation as a door to rejuvenation of spiritual well-being typifying the victorious life. In his psalm of gratitude Israel's king strikes the highest of notes in expressing his thanks to the Lord for His benefits, forgiveness, healing, redemption, lovingkindness, and tender mercies. Then comes a peak with these words: "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle" (Ps.103:1-5). Good, as in good things, is equated with better and best by the same word in Hebrew. It is also identical with sweet, pleasant, pleasing, and bountiful. These have one source for the Christian in the word of God, and the Christ of the word. Where else can our lives be satisfied, renewed?

Isaiah also brings us directly to the very source of the power which enables the eagle to leave an earthbound domicile to soar away to the vast heights of the heavens above, for which it was intended. It is in the Creator who also "giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isa.40:27-31). Obviously, then, the replacing of spiritual fatigue and weariness comes from waiting upon the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator. The word *wait* suggests a patience and expectancy associated with those whose occupation is to gather and twist cords into rope, with no thought of time or haste. How much do we know of such waiting upon Him in prayer and meditation to dispel heaviness of spirit, weariness of soul, resulting in renewing of strength and joyous uplifting of ourselves in daily living?

Voices from the Past

"Fret not Thyself"

In Ps.37, we have the advice of an old man. We know he was old when he wrote this psalm because he tells us so:

"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging their bread" (verse 25).

He does not say, "I have been young, *but* now am old" which would have been to quarrel with the passage of time and the arrival of old age. He has no objection to being old. The sweets of young life had been his. The joys of manhood he had known. Now he reaps the fruits of old age. The hoary head to him was a crown of glory, for he was found in the way of righteousness. Few men have had so full a life. The man to whom we are introduced in youth amidst the bleatings of the sheep speaks his last words to Israel, according to 1 Chron.29:20, before his death, as recorded in verse 28 saying, "Now bless the LORD your God". This was just like the man. While he lived he blessed the Lord, and as he dies, he says "Bless the LORD".

His advice to people younger than himself, which he gives in Ps.37, is well worthy of the attention of us all:

"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness ... Fret not thyself, it tendeth only to evil-doing" (vv. 1,8).

Who has not experienced this state of fretfulness at times? A state of feeling invades the mind in which you almost insensibly take up a mental attitude of antipathy and detestation at certain persons because of their manifest evil-doing, and such feeling begins to corrode the mind.

There are many evils in the lives of believers which cannot be dealt with in a disciplinary way and you wonder what is the remedy. Here again David's words are very useful in settling the unrest of the mind, for in verse 2 he continues to speak of the evil-doers, and such as work unrighteousness:

"For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as green herb".

Let none of God's saints who seek to do what is pleasing to the Lord think that He will overlook the ill behaviour of those who are His who walk in a self-pleasing way. The day will come when the Lord will deal with such. Our course is not to fret ourselves, but to "trust in the LORD, and do good". If others do badly let us do well.

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

In the passage from John this month we have a further example of the profound statements uttered by our Lord in the shadow of Calvary. In one verse, the stupendous assignment undertaken by Himself on behalf of humanity is graphically rehearsed, "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father". Love for Him and belief in His mission had secured for them the love of the Father (Jn 16:27,28). Overcoming the world was one of His main objectives, that the same victory may also be achieved by those who believe on Him. Writing later in his epistle John declares the mission accomplished. "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ" with the assurance that "whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that *hath* overcome the world, even our faith" (1 Jn 5:4-6). The very fundamentals of our Lord's mission are under attack. Focus this month reiterates the Scriptural declaration that maintaining basic truths of the Faith rests primarily with elders of the churches of God. If leaders fail, then true disciples of our Lord should cease to have fellowship with a church in which the erroneous doctrine is taught. "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness" (2 Tim.2:19) is truth for our day.

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Cover Picture: Grand Canyon, U.S.A.

In the Shadow of Calvary

(11) The Father Himself Loveth You **(Jn 16:16-33)**

By R.B. Fullarton of Innerleithen, Scotland.

Apart from and before all created existence is the infinite and holy fellowship of the three Persons of the Godhead. Although one God, indivisible in essence, Father, Son and Spirit are distinguishable in personality and distinctive in functions within the Godhead. There is a relationship of infinite love and joy between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Eternal Love and the Triune God

"The Father loves Me" (Jn 10:17 RSV). The Son of God was the worthy and adequate object of the Father's love when on earth and the One for whose glory the Spirit labours now. The Father's love and delight in the Son, however, was not confined to His life on earth, it existed before the foundation of the world (Jn 17:24). The Father is the source of all blessing for us, the Son has brought the blessing to us and the Holy Spirit makes good the blessing in us. The Father's love is the fount of all His giving, a love that lavishes its fulness upon its object.

God is self-sufficient. But His eternal love must find expression. "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8); love is not an attribute, but His very nature. It is described in Eph.2:4 as "His great love", unchanging, unending, incomprehensible. One beautiful implication of the unity of divine Persons is the existence of the sublimest fellowship of infinite love without a shadow of incompatibility, the most exquisite accord and most perfect unity and oneness of mind. Heaven is resplendent with the expression of this concept of highest fellowship. But eternal love embraces and draws others into that circle of sweetest communion — "God of all the families of Israel ... with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer.31:1,3).

So, "the FATHER LOVES YOU" comes to us as disciples in a warmth of love which may bring ceaseless enjoyment as we ponder its eternal wealth and vast purposes of blessing. The apostle John refers to the Father's love as being of a singular quality. What belongs to heaven is totally different from anything associated with the world's concept of love — "what manner of (Gk. *potapos* — what sort or kind) love the Father hath bestowed..." (1 Jn 3:1). This love produces astonishment, admiration, and above all, adoration in its beneficiaries. It

exceeds all other love in its magnitude (Eph.2:4); it defies explanation (Eph.3:19) and description (1 Jn 3:1). Its contemplation leads the believer in the Lord Jesus to sever himself from likeness to the world and become conformed to the likeness of the Son of God. Divine love was the moving force in redemption's plan; love that is more than sentiment, it reveals itself in action.

The Title of "Father"

The opening sentence of Hebrews chapter 1 tells us that God has fully and finally spoken in One who is Son, inferring the corresponding revelation of God the FATHER. This was the title constantly on the lips of the Lord Jesus. Six times in Jn 17 the Lord mentions "Father" in prayer, so in manifesting God's Name (v.6) there is no doubt what that Name is. "Show us the Father" said Philip; all that a child of God needs is to know God as "the Father" with all that this title implies. The God of the Bible is no nameless, faceless force, only to be feared and placated. He delights to express His infinity in terms which the Spirit-enlightened person can understand and glorify His Name. He is faithful, capable, strong, forgiving, tender and compassionate. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him yet He is pleased to take up loving abode with those who know the Son.

The distinctive title of God in the New Testament is "Father" (Gk. *pater)*. Old Testament variations of this usage are seen in such scriptures as Isa.63:16 in the nation of Israel's seeking forgiveness and restoration — "Thou, O LORD, art our Father". At the time of Malachi the priests who, with national pride, referred to Jehovah as Father, in reality had been despising His Name by their conduct. The Name of God represents His identity, authority, personality, character, rank, majesty, power and excellence.

Abba, Father

A careful reading of the contexts where the words "ABBA, FATHER" are found - Mk.14:36; Rom.8:15; Gal.4:6 — show that this expression is not a "baby-cry" but the name given to the Father by a mature son. "Father" itself implies family relationship, but while in infancy there is delight in the simplicity of the bond, in maturing years the title conveys the thought of sonship with true values and corresponding responsibilities. "Abba" is Aramaic, a word associated with the older Hebrew word "AB" meaning "Father". The root of the noun comprises two Hebrew characters — ALEPH (first, pre-eminent) and BETH (in, inside, particularly of a house). The thought is that of filial obedience. The Father has life in Himself, sustains and tutors His own, making every provision for their welfare. He meets every need. In the Lord's form of address in Mk.14 there is the recognition of need, acknowledgment of the Father's power and submission to His Father's will. No rhetoric can rise to the appeal of the heart-expression "Abba, Father".

The relationship between God as Father and His children is spiritual, established by grace on His part and the response of faith on theirs. By faith in the Son of God we know God as Father in the affectionate intimacy of His family "circle" (Jn 1:12).

Sons of God

In speaking to God as "Father" the Spirit of God confirms to our human spirit the truth of family-ship — we are children of God (Rom.8:15,16). Grandiose forms of addressing God are superfluous. His delight is to hear His children call Him "Father". He hears no more than what the heart speaks. Through faith in Christ Jesus we are sons of God, sons of a heavenly Father (Gal.3:26; Matt.6:6). In the latter verse the emphasis is on the child's trust and dependence; in the former, the status given through the operation of the faith-principle. The Sonship of the Lord Jesus is absolutely unique and independent of those who exercise faith. He is the only-begotten Son. He is "The Son", we are "sons". "Because ye are *sons,* God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts" (Gal.4:6). Although the Lord taught the disciples to pray "Our Father", He never used this expression. The Sonship of Christ is His own unique glory as co-equal, co-existent and co-eternal with the Father, dwelling in the perfect intimacy of the Godhead and, above all, as being the supreme object of the Father's love. Time never was, nor can be, when the Son is other than the joy of the Father's heart and the light of the Father's face. The Son has met with complete response every desire of the heart of His God.

The spontaneous invocation of God as "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is evidenced by obedience (1 Pet.1:3). That is a token of the indwelling Spirit's power in the life of the saint who gives acknowledgment of Jesus as his Lord. The evidence of love is obedience; to withhold obedience is a practical denial of the lordship and authority of Christ. True love in the disciple's heart yields glad obedience which is not slavish observance to a rigid law to which penalties are attached. In Scripture the title "sons of God" so often conveys and emphasizes the high dignity of fellowship with God through obedience to His will, rather than simply the possession of the divine life by new birth. In Jn 4:23 the Lord Jesus speaks of those who "worship the Father". This is worship based on a relationship of obedience and love to God as "The Father" in "spirit and truth"; such does "the Father" seek to be His worshippers.

Knowing the Father's love is no guarantee of immunity from difficulties and trials. A natural father knows it is not in the best interests of his child to shelter him from every difficulty and disappointment. There is a learning process through difficulties and problems that gives fitness for adult life.

By receiving Christ we become

children of God (Jn 1:12); by obedience to Christ and in fellowship with Him the Father receives us as sons and daughters (2 Cor.6:15, 17, 18). The Father's heart responds to every circumstance of His people, the faintest throb of the saints' hearts finds a counterpart in that great, divine heart of love. Love in the heart of a weak friend mocks by its futility to help; love in the Father's heart imparts power, joy and peace.

Providential Care of Fatherhood

The Lord appealed in Matt.7: 9-11 to the natural care of imperfect fatherhood as an argument for confidence in the greater, perfect care of a heavenly Father. Natural love in a father, while sincere, is never perfect; moreover, human wisdom is limited, and what appears to be beneficial in the natural realm might turn out to be harmful. The Father's love is measured by His love for the Son. It is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord from which no power on earth or heaven can separate us (Rom.8:39).

Knowing the Father's love is no guarantee of immunity from difficulties and trials. A natural father knows it is not in the best interests of his child to shelter him from every difficulty and disappointment. There is a learning process through difficulties and problems that gives fitness for adult life.

The chief concern of our Father is the development of Christ-likeness in character which helps in understanding much that would otherwise be inexplicable in spiritual experience. He desires fitness and capability for this life in which there is training for responsibilities and privileges in the life to come. The Lord Jesus, as in all else, gave the perfect example of confidence in His Father when, from a human standpoint, all had seemed to go awry — "... so it was well pleasing in Thy sight" (Matt.11:20-26).

Praise our God who willed it thus,
Praise His Son who died for us,
Praise the Father for the Son, Who
so vast a work hath done.

Some of Paul's Companions

(4) Phoebe

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada

The two opening verses of Rom.16 provide lots of useful instruction: "I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae, that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you, for she herself also hath been a succourer of many, and of mine own self.

She was a sister in the sense in which all Christians are brothers and sisters. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts we've been born again into the family of God, and we're brothers and sisters in Christ.

She was also a saint - all Christians are saints — and Paul asks the church of God in Rome to receive her worthily of the saints. Because we're saints we're expected to live saintly lives. When the apostle Paul wrote to the church of God in Corinth he described them as "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints". It simply means a person set apart. When we receive Christ as our Saviour God sets us apart in Him. From that moment we're different from unsaved people. That should not make us proud — far from it. But we should show the difference God has made by the way we live.

Phoebe did. Of her own choice she became a servant of the church. She lived to serve others. Maybe she remembered her Master once said, "I am in the midst of you as He that serveth". So she became like her Master, a servant of others, and one she served was the apostle himself. And by the way he wrote about her we can tell how greatly he appreciated it.

Her service was something special. *Succourer* is the word Paul used to describe it. It was a word of dignity. In Greek it was used of a citizen who'd responsibility for seeing to the welfare of resident aliens who were without civic rights. And that's the word he used to describe Phoebe's work. She protected others. What a lovely service.

Sister, saint, servant and succourer. A person like that enriches the life of any church. Have you any Phoebes among the Christians with whom you gather? I'm sure you have. Maybe you're one yourself. And if some of us feel we don't quite measure up to it, can we not ask the Lord's help that in the future we also might be a servant and succourer of others?

FOCUS

'The Nature of Christian Belief"

"The Nature of Christian Belief is the title of a Report to the Church of England Synod by its House of Bishops. Published in April 1986, it was the fruit of the bishops' reflection on a widely publicized debate in the General Synod in 1985. The debate had centred on the Bishop of Durham's views about the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus. There was deep disquiet that his views undermined confidence in the literal truth of these fundamentals of the gospel story.

The Report re-affirmed the literal truth of these miracles as the official doctrine of the Anglican Church. **As** to the Lord's birth: "The central miracle, the heart of the Christian understanding of God, is the Incarnation itself ... the belief that Our Lord was conceived in the womb by Mary ... without the intervention of a human father can be held with full intellectual integrity". As to the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the Church's teaching was that He "truly experienced human death; that that state of death was ended and wholly overcome; that there was genuine continuity between his dying self and his risen self; that the mode of existence of the Risen Lord was one in which his full human nature and identity, bodily, mental and spiritual, were present and glorified for eternal blessedness; and that his mode of existence was observed and experienced, and its essential secret grasped, by numbers of his disciples in personal encounter". It's a cause for thankfulness that these great truths were endorsed in contrast to concepts of religious philosophy which attempt to explain away the literal miracles of the Lord's virgin birth and bodily resurrection.

Yet the Report also proposed liberty for individual bishops to have divergent views on these vital truths. "Divergent views to be found among scholars of standing are reflected in the thinking of individual bishops... A bishop may properly enter into questionings on matters of belief ... But in all he says he must take care not to present variant beliefs as if they were the faith of the Church; and he must always make as sure as he can that his hearers understand what that faith is and the reasons for it".

The depth of one bishop's personal reservations was soon apparent! There had been judicious praise for the

Report, though some fundamentalists were dissatisfied. A leading evangelical made the point that the bishops had not come out unambiguously enough on what they actually believed in; until they did there would be continuing confusion. But the Bishop of Durham strongly reaffirmed his personal views. Referring to the virgin birth and empty tomb he said: "What sort of God are we portraying and believing in if we insist on what I will nickname 'the divine laser beam' type of miracle as the heart and basis of Incarnation and Resurrection? If we do so insist then we are implying if not portraying a god who is at best a cultic idol and at the worst a very devil". Durham was emotionally overcome as he went on: "We are always trying to pin God down by getting it cut and dried and decisive. God is always wanting to set us free to share in the mystery". He further called for a less firmly rooted view of God and acceptance of differences of belief within the Church. Dr. Jenkins' speech received a standing ovation, and he was later thanked by the Archbishop of Canterbury for a "moving and personal exploration of the questions before us". But one reviewer commented: "Instead of bowing out, Durham has counterattacked, deepening and widening his position, and the whole doctrinal muddle is back to square one". The outcome remains to be seen.

"What saith the Scripture?" Leadership of New Testament churches of God was entrusted to elders "holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching" (Tit.1:9). They were responsible to "hold the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim.1:13). There is no scriptural precedent for church leadership by those without personal conviction in the accepted truths of the faith. Departure from this guidance in God's word calls for deep heart-searching among all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. If a church tolerates leaders who openly express their disagreement with basic truths about the Lord, should disciples of Christ remain in fellowship with that church? We believe not. The challenge of Heb.13:13 rings out clearly in our time: "Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach". Christians of that day were called to leave their traditional religious setting and go forth unto Him, outside the camp. There they united with other disciples who had responded to the call. Together they joyfully served the Lord in divinely constituted churches of God. Should we be content with anything less today?

Growing in Grace and Wisdom

The Early Years of Our Lord on Earth (Part 1)

By M. Archibald, of Glasgow, Scotland.

As we read in the Gospels about the first years of our Lord in the days of His flesh, we must always wonder at the grace of those divine attributes that shine out from His learning and growing. The very idea of His divinity being subject to the development that is necessary to man leaves our comprehension behind.

But perhaps as glory follows glory in the record of those days in Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem, we miss something of the importance of the godly character of the earthly parents. An early lesson in the divine assessment of parenthood may be found in Isaiah 11:1, where the coming King is referred to, not as "the son of David" as in other places, but as "a shoot out of the stock of *Jesse* ...", the name being echoed in verse 10. Is our attention not being drawn to the influence for good of the grandson of Boaz and Ruth, and the father of seven sons and two daughters (1 Chron.2), who must have encouraged David in learning the harp, as well as shepherding?

From Matthew

The theme of inheritance is stressed also in the first words of Matthew's volume:

> *The book of the generation (genealogy, NIV) of Jesus Christ, the Son of David.*

Then comes the testimony to the righteous character of Joseph, to be echoed in the ample indications through the Gospels of the devoutness of his betrothed. Here is a first building-block of the godly home: as the Psalmist sings,

> *I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, And of them that observe Thy precepts (Ps.119:63).*

Then how important were the expectations of those parents! Both had been instructed by divine vision, carefully heeded and treasured. There had been striking confirmation for Mary from her cousin Elizabeth, who addressed her as "the mother of my Lord". There followed the witness of the shepherds and the Wise Men. Psychologists today are realizing more of the profound effect of hope on the progress of a patient's recovery. Their studies now also demonstrate how a child's development is powerfully influenced by the parent's beliefs about his family's abilities. Such "rediscoveries" simply return the disciple

to the ample attestation of Scripture, long before, to the same truths. How distinguished an environment must have surrounded the divine Child, when angel-ministered instruction operated on the sensitivity of such spiritually minded parents! How responsible, then, must believing parents be to expect and work for the communication of a rich spiritual heritage *from the earliest stages!*

Matthew concludes his account of the early days with the flight into Egypt, and safe return to Nazareth. It can be reckoned from history that this experience fell largely between the Judean census of 5 B.C. and the death of Herod in 4 B.C., and so lasted for months rather than years. It has often been observed how the potential hazards of travelling and the task of obtaining pure foods outside Israel, must have been reduced by the value of the Wise Men's tribute. The Spirit stresses the safety of the experience, and the spiritual significance of their return being ensured.

Having thus reviewed these features of the Lord's family background and its influence, let us ask ourselves if we have given thanks adequately for the care that our parents have shown, and the more so if the Scriptures have been respected, and the life of Christ manifest. Do we still return to give thanks to our Father in heaven?

From Mark

Since Mark sets out to record "the beginning of the *gospel* of Jesus Christ, the Son of God", the focus is on the forerunner, and on the ministry of the One sent to serve in word and deed. Later we learn of four named brothers, besides sisters, with whom the Lord grew up as the eldest. We might contrast the rough and tumble of family relationships that we know even in our days of smaller numbers, with the character that Isaiah foretold in the chosen Servant:

He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench (Isa.42:2,3).

Let the disciple of Christ, younger or older, ask if as the elder brother or sister, he or she ever abused superior strength or experience or favoured status. Let such pray forgiveness if need be; and strive to overcome a like destructive error in their children. Lord Tweedsmuir wrote of the fine manners of the Border shepherds among whom he holidayed in childhood, that they resulted from a secure place in society, and a stable view of their life's work. What then of our behaviour, who are called joint-heirs with Christ?

It Makes All the Difference

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C., Canada.

A Roman officer, a dying servant, Jewish elders, and the Lord Jesus, all participated in a dramatic event at Capernaum. The officer expressed to the Jews his deep anxiety for a valued employee; the elders responded by pleading with Jesus to heal the servant; the sick man lay helpless, awaiting death. Then, a simple sentence spoken by the Roman centurion proved to be the key to the miracle which followed. "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof... but say the word, and my servant shall be healed", pleaded this man (Lk.7:1-10). What implicit faith he showed in the spoken word of the Lord! For a Gentile this was indeed remarkable, and is a lesson to us today. The Jew knew from the ancient oracles that, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth...For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps.33:6,9). The Jew knew that God said, "Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen.1:3) and, "He commanded, and they were created" (Ps.148:5).

God's people knew that creation was literally spoken into existence by the Word of God, but whether they embraced this by faith is another matter. The Gentile Roman, however, may not have had the same access to this knowledge. He would have been raised among idol worshippers, a fact which serves to add dimension to his faith. He would not understand by faith, as we do, that the worlds have been framed by the word of God (Heb.11:3); or, in reference to Jesus, "He was in the world, the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (Jn 1:10). Nevertheless he manifested a believing faith which requested the Lord not to come to his house because of his unworthiness, but from where He was standing, whatever the distance away, to "say the word, and my servant shall be healed". He was acknowledging that only the Creator could do such a thing; and consciously or unconsciously he was acknowledging that Jesus was the Creator, God. He was also a man used to human authority (Lk.7:8), which in turn enabled him to recognize divine authority in Jesus.

Christians can learn from the centurion the importance, value and power of the spoken word from the Lord. Paul, in his writings, helps us too. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" he says to the Colossians (Col.3:16). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season" he exhorts Timothy (2 Tim.4:2). "God., in His own seasons manifested His word in the

message" he told Titus (Tit.1:2,3). Whether we preach, speak privately, or write, the power is in God's word. The well prepared message is to secure the listener's ear; the illustration to open the door of the mind; but it is the seed, which is the Word of God, that brings life, eternal life. So, speak the word! It makes all the difference!

Don't Let's Be Angry!

Don't let's be angry — it's never for good;
Think of the One who before Pilate once stood
Calm and unruffled —just think what He bore;
Can't *we* be patient with each other more?
Others are watching that sorry display,
Young ones are noting the things that we say
In outbursts of anger; how badly impressed
They'll be by the words in our temper expressed!
"I couldn't help it? I simply was *bound*
To stand for my rights, or be thrown to the ground!"
But who talks of "rights" when, body and soul,
We belong to the Master who purchased us whole?
"I was *righteously* angry, and never lost grip
Of myself - although really I could have let rip".
They crossed you with words, and their bait caught its prey;
Did *you* seek *forgiveness* at close of the day?
Now in battles of words (you cannot gainsay),
A soft answer turneth anger away;
He loses the battle whose temper is lost,
And how can be reckoned the ultimate cost?

J. Belton.

"My Father worketh-and I work'

(Jn 15:17)

By R. Hyland, of Rhyl, U.K.

For thirty years the Lord lived quietly in Nazareth, but these hidden years were years of preparation. Little is recorded of that holy life except that He "waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him" (Lk.2:40). We briefly glimpse His vision "... the things of My Father" (Lk.2:49 RVM) when He visited Jerusalem at Passover time, for the first time as a boy of twelve, and then Scripture falls silent except to say that He lived with His parents in Nazareth, "and He was subject unto them" (Lk.2:51).

During those years He must have watched Joseph as He worked at the bench, eager to learn those skills that He later used in the small family business. There was, however, another side to His life which went largely unnoticed by those about Him, although Mary pondered the things that Simeon had said about *"this child"* when they first brought Him to the Temple. Throughout those years He had not only applied Himself to acquiring the skills of a carpenter, but much more than that His time was spent in daily meditation on the Scriptures and in choice moments (or was it hours?) spent alone in communion with His Father. "He grew up before Him as a tender plant" (Isa.53:2). It was not only that He gave the early morning to His Father, but that every waking hour was spent in fellowship with Him. It is a mystery beyond human understanding that the Son of God who is perfect in wisdom and knowledge should, in His humanity, be seen to be developing in wisdom. Isaiah presents a picture of blessed contentment as He awakened to unwavering devotion and untiring fellowship "morning by morning". As the years came and went He knew fully the joys and sorrows of family life. Mingling with people about Him, He saw at first hand the effects of sin in miserable joyless lives, and the toll of death, which is sin's ultimate result. Death it seems, raised its ugly head even in His home. He must often have been subject to scornful jibes and ridicule, His sacred life standing out in vivid contrast to the sinful practices about Him. But He was content to wait patiently until he knew He had reached His Father's appointed time. The workshop door was closed then for the last time and, in perfect harmony with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Son set out to fulfil the purpose of His coming to earth. "I am come down from heaven, not to do

Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (Jn 6:38). He was on His way to Calvary!

Following His baptism by John in the Jordan the public ministry of Jehovah's Servant is narrated. His steps are traced from day to day by the evangelists, and we have a divinely inspired account of the things He "began both to do and to teach". Just as He had previously worked with His hands to fashion various objects to perform some useful function in home or field, so now he worked to heal the sick in mind or body, raising the dead and bringing release to many of sin's captives. The Carpenter had become the Physician. All that He did brought glory to His Father, and although He was never overburdened by His work He was wearied by it. We recall His meeting with the woman at the well, and the ensuing conversation that soared to the highest plane: "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23). Weary though He was and thirsty too, He chose to reveal such sublime truth to a sinner woman! When His disciples returned they begged Him to eat, but His eyes were focussed on fields ripe for harvesting; the men of the city "were coming to Him". He answered His disciples, "My meat it to do the will of Him that sent Me", to speak to the men of Sychar was His meat and drink that day.

We move on now, leaving that wholesome life for personal reflection and enjoyment, to consider the last hours He spent on earth. "Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing..." (Jn 13:1). The Lord knew the right moment to begin His public ministry, He knew also the time of His approaching sacrifice. He had almost reached the end now, having set His face like a flint, He was in Jerusalem for the climax of His mission. Isaiah's prophecy "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter" would soon be fulfilled, and He would move resolutely onwards, silent, bowed and bloodied to Calvary, to finish triumphantly the work He had been given to do.

For the present, however, His thoughts were centred on His disciples. "He loved them to the uttermost" (RVM). They had been drawn from different walks of life, each one responding to His call, men who had been given to Him by His Father, His personal choice for companionship during three momentous years. Hence His deep concern for their future. When the Lord awoke that Passover morning He knew what lay ahead. He could see beyond His gathering with the apostles in the Upper Room into the dark night. The midnight hours and the intense wrestling in the garden would be succeeded by agonies of soul and body as He endured the cross. Ps.22 would have its fulfilment in the sufferings of the Christ. It was not that He did not know the answer to the anguished cry that rang out in the darkness. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was for us, vile and helpless sinners, who look back with

deepest gratitude to our suffering Saviour's death, and express our appreciation for His atoning sacrifice.

Teach me that if none other
Had sinned, but I alone,
Then still Thy blood, Lord Jesus,
Thine only, must atone.

We recall His words "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer", and marvel at His concern for His disciples: He thought not of solitude for Himself in anticipation of what lay ahead, but of solace for them! The Devil activated Judas who went out into the night to do his foul deed, leaving the Lord of heaven to minister words of hope, encouragement and instruction to His troubled apostles. The last hours before He willingly laid down His life were spent working, "My Father worketh ... and I work". His first task in the Upper Room had been to wash their feet and like them we too are amazed at His humility! After the departure of Judas He directed their minds over a wide range of topics, pointing them first to His Father's house, promising to return to take them there. Then He revealed that in His absence the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, would be sent to indwell them, to be both guide and instructor. He would remind them too of all the Lord's teaching, and He would glorify Him. We too, like them, can be the channels through which He may choose to work today.

In conclusion we draw attention to the Lord's words in the Upper Room. "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father" (Jn 14:12). This would be impossible but for the Holy Spirit's promised help. Even with such help it is a challenging prospect. Paul exhorts us to "work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith" (Gal.6:10). The work that we have been given to do is comprehensive, but we draw encouragement from Paul's words to the Corinthians, "My beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding ... your labour is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor.15:58).

Voices from the Past

Trust in the Lord

"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers" is set by David in Ps.37:1,3 in contrast to, "Trust in the LORD, and do good". Evidently there were many evil-doers in the land in David's time, and even by a superficial reading of the word we can see that there were many who were evil workers in almost all the time of Israel's history. But should the righteous leave the land of God's choice because of them? Had not David himself known by bitter experience the costliness of leaving the land because of evil-doers? Saul caused David to flee from the land to the land of the Philistines, as it says in 1 Sam.21:10, "And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath". But if David's life was in danger in the land of Israel, it was not less so in the land of the Philistines. At a later date, when the persecution of Saul was reaching its end and climax, David said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines (1 Sam.27:1).

And so David went again to Achish. The sequel to this narrative is not that he seemed likely to lose his own life, but Ziklag his home was raided and destroyed by fire by the Amalekites, and all his loved ones, and those of his men, carried captive.

David the aged king no doubt thinks of the experience as he writes Ps.37. One might think if ever a man was justified in leaving the land that man was David. But were not his persecutions at the hand of Saul part of the preparation necessary to his place and work as king of God's people? Such afflictions were but part of the cutting and polishing of that gem called David. Without these trials he would not have been the brilliant character he was. That which saints have to endure, even from brethren, is part of their education, though they may not appreciate it at the time. Instead of a spirit of fretfulness laying hold of us, our course is outlined in the words:

Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and follow after faithfulness.
Delight thyself also in the LORD;
And He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
Commit thy way unto the LORD;
Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass (Ps.37:3-5)

J. Miller

Extracted from Needed Truth 1947

Editorial

Throughout the year we have been reviewing the actions and words of the Lord Jesus during the last days of His ministry. He was aware of the shadow of the cross falling on His pathway, for all things were known to Him, and He was treading the pathway that had been marked out for Him from all eternity. Once again we have been impressed by His concern for the comfort and welfare of His own at a time when the sorrows that were crowding in upon Him might have occupied His thoughts. When viewed in retrospect the Lord's words and actions in the Upper Room would have a greater impact upon the minds of the apostles because of the circumstances surrounding them. The Lord's supplications for His own, those eleven men that were with Him in the Upper Room, and for us also, are the subject of the concluding article in what has been a most instructive and thought provoking series.

"Let not your heart be troubled ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go ... I come again, and will receive you unto Myself (Jn 14:1-3). Those words, spoken more than nineteen centuries ago, still bring comfort to troubled hearts. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise" (2 Pet.3:9).

Some of the evils that are so prevalent in the world today are enumerated in this month's "Focus". Living in such a world we need to heed the exhortation to "live soberly and righteously and godly ...looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit.2:12,13).

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Cover Picture: The Sound of Taransay

In the Shadow of Calvary

(12) Final Supplications (Jn 17:1-26)

By J.L. Ferguson, of Barrhead, U.K.

Background

The Lord Jesus was still in the Upper Room, alone with the eleven. Judas had gone out to finalize the betrayal. It was night. But there was no darkness in the Room; just joy and serenity radiating from the Son of the Father's love, as He thought of the glory of the finished work. and Home, and of the Father's care for those He would leave behind. He had communed for the last time with His disciples. Now He would audibly, in their presence, commend them to His Father and the eleven would hear the confirmation of His promises to them.

He prayed in two different places that night. The Synoptic gospels record tenderly the garden prayer of Jesus, the Son of Mary. That was an agony prayer, anticipating Calvary and dereliction. But with John it was typically different. He records what was designated by a sixteenth century theologian as "the high-priestly prayer" of the Son of God, thoughtful as to the needs of His followers, calm in His own majestic place in the Father's sovereignty.

Verses 1 - 5

In His sublime opening meditation the Lord Jesus revealed that in His mind, as the eternal Son, His mission on earth was now complete. **The** "hour" had come at last. It had not come in Jn 7:30; was on its way in Jn 12:23; now it would be on the morrow. It was the hour of Calvary.

It was the final glory of submission to the Father s will. Through this act of obedience the Father would be eternally glorified and by means of it the Son would grant eternal life to all those whom the Father would give Him. In the temple of His body He had expressed the Father's glory; the work for which He was commissioned had been accomplished; now He longed for the Father to glorify Him alongside Himself with the glory they had shared before the world was. Truly our spirits worship before such fulfilments of eternal forethought.

Verses 6-10

Israel had enjoyed majestic names of God. Hebrew expressions in the several forms of El, Jah, Adon; names such as Shaddai; or the various combinations of the divine name such as Adonai Jehovah; these were all rich revelations of God in His power, lordship and covenant relationship.

But the references to Father in the Old Testament had been few. Its full revelation in all its affection was reserved for the day when the eternal Son came in human gentleness.

He had revealed it to the men and women (Gk. *anthropoi)* God had given Him; but in particular to the eleven men with Him in the Room; men of Israel given by the Father to the Son. They had been His own little fellowship of companions in His experiences. To these He had given the Father's new teaching. They had found it hard at times to receive. But they loyally accepted His deity and held on when others turned back. It was these men, not Israel or the world generally, who were the subject of His prayer. Everything was going to depend on them; and in them by the Spirit's help His confidence would be justified. "I am glorified in them". Such was the appreciation of the One who alone could say by reason of His deity, "All things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine".

Verses 11-16

At this point the main burden of the Lord's intercession was revealed. During the period of His ministry He had been central to the little group. He had held them together when their different personalities and backgrounds might have made for division. He had taught them the balanced way of enjoying victory and accepting defeat. He had demonstrated the life of suffering for righteousness' sake and shown them the path of greatness in His kingdom. He had alerted them to the weakness of self and the power of the Spirit. He had both watched over them and protected them so that the enemy had only been able to destroy the life of the twelfth man. He had kept them safe in the Father's name.

As a result of the Atonement, believing sinners would become members of the Church the Body, with eternal security. They would then be called upon to be baptized as disciples, added to churches of God, and there give individual and collective effect to the whole counsel of God. There they would be perfected into a corporate unity, and from one point of view the purpose of God in their life would be complete.

But now He was going Home, leaving them to face a hostile world which would hate them because His word had made them strangers to it. Henceforth their safety from the evil one would lie in their own maintenance of harmony in unity. For this His word, His joy, His intercession were vital. He had earlier referred to "Father" in relation to Himself. Now He referred to "Holy Father" regarding the sanctification of His own men. He made specific request, "Keep them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are".

Verses 17-23

Nor was it simply a matter of leaving the eleven behind. These were the

men to whom He had purposely given the Father's word. They had been His men in training. Now they would become His front-line men, sent with a sacred commitment into the world, just as the Father had initially sent Him. Under the Spirit's guidance they would oversee the spread of His word to the nations. Only men specifically set apart in the truth of the Father's word could undertake such a task. Not only so, but only those kept together in the same harmony of unity could in due course have fellowship with them, take over from them and continue the same truth of God down the centuries.

So for this He prayed and again the same burden is revealed: "That they may all be one" (v.21); "that they may be one" (v.22); "that they may be perfected into one" (v.23). And it was all for the purpose "that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me" (v.21); "that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and lovest them" (v.23). Thus He pleaded with His Father for a unity among His followers which the world would both see and know. A unity visible in operation, tangible, recognizable, corporate.

Not surely the unity of the Church the Body, for that Church is necessarily one in a unity which requires no prayerful protection from "the gates of Hades". Rather it must have been the unity of the churches of God into which the eleven were shortly to be called, together with those who would similarly be prepared to be set apart in the truth of the Father's word. Through that word of truth they would become "perfected into one". There was a sense of consummation of purpose in the word "perfected". The formation of the churches of God in the post-Pentecost period would be the completion of the purposes of God in testimony for this dispensation. As a result of the Atonement, believing sinners would become members of the Church the Body, with eternal security. They would then be called upon to be baptized as disciples, added to churches of God, and there give individual and collective effect to the whole counsel of God. There they would be perfected into a corporate unity, and from one point of view the purpose of God in their life would be complete.

It would need the Father's help and the co-operation of willing hearts to maintain the harmony in unity of that testimony. Yet only by this means would the world effectively see and know the reality of the Father's love. Verses 24 - 26

But He had used the word "may". He knew that He prayed for a unity among His followers which the enemy, perhaps above all else, would attack. The Trinity was united in giving all for it, was so deserving of it, yet would sorrowfully see it fragmented as time went on.

Now the Intercessor "willed" a request in these final verses which the Father will grant one day. As He sat in the Room that night there was no evidence of glory; just the well-loved Master in the simple, home-spun robe,

weary from a long day, filled with the sorrow of oncoming betrayal, denial and abandonment. Yet these eleven men had left all in faith to follow Him, won by His love, persuaded as to the ultimate triumph of His cause. How He loved them for it!

So He asked His Father that one day they too might come Home and see His glory, which like the Father's love, He had known before the foundation of the world. The world of men didn't understand. Had they recognized the "Righteous Father" in the Son, they would not be crucifying Him the following day. But He had told the eleven of the Father's love and they had believed it. Henceforth He would rely on them to spearhead the spread of the tidings of the significance of the Father's name, of the reality of the Father's love.

And as He interceded that night in the Room for His own, so we believe that today, nineteen hundred years later, He still pleads for His followers as He ministers in the heavenly sanctuary. Gladly He must have seen the vast spread of the knowledge of the Father's love. Sadly He must observe that it has not been in the harmony of unity of the Father's word. The words of His prayer are bound to affect our spirits. He would still have us all to be "perfected into one". That, we submit, is the unity which is presented in the New Testament as a unity beyond the unity of the Church the Body. It is the perfecting of disciples into corporate unity in testimony in the fellowship of churches of God. It is maintained by the principle of rule in the kingdom of God under the guidance of the Spirit in a united elderhood.

May the Lord help us not to fail Him in this.

Some of Paul's Companions

(5) Epaphras

By A.F. Toms, of Dundas, Canada

Epaphras was a Colossian. He's mentioned only three times in the Scriptures, but Paul says so much about him in those three references that we feel we know him well. He describes him as a faithful minister of Christ.

That's what he was to the Christians in Colossae. He was their teacher. He put God's word into their hearts, and there it bore fruit and increased. "Make disciples" the Lord Jesus said, before He went back to heaven, "baptizing them ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you", and that's what Epaphras did. He showed them Christ in the Scriptures, so appealingly that they wanted to follow Him too. And when they started to follow he was at hand to encourage them, until they gathered strength themselves and were able to go out and help others.

But Epaphras wasn't always at Colossae. Something happened that he found himself in prison at Rome, along with the apostle Paul. What it was, we're not told. So his teaching work among the Colossians was over. But he could still reach them through prayer. And that's what he did. This dear man gave himself to a new ministry on behalf of those Christians who were now so far away and yet so close to his heart. He gave himself to prayer. He *literally* gave himself to it. The language Paul uses to describe his praying is most arresting. He's always striving for you in his prayers, he wrote. It's the word used of an athlete in the games. It means to agonize. See the runner pounding down the course, every muscle strained; only one object in view — to reach the goal. That's the sort of energy and concentration Epaphras brought into his praying. Not just a few minutes by his bedside morning and evening. No! this was his work. "I bear him witness" said the apostle, "that he hath much labour for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis" (Col.4:13). So his concern reached beyond the Christians in his home church, to those in neighbouring churches. What a man he was!

Why was so much prayer needed? And why was it such a labour? Because there were spiritual hosts of wickedness against the disciples -Satanic powers of evil — and there still are. Those who take a serious part in the work of God find it can be a spiritual conflict. Paul wrote about it in Eph.6, and after calling on us to put on the whole armour of God, he says "with all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints".

God is looking for Epaphras-like men and women today who will strive for others in prayer. Are you willing to be one of them? Who among us is willing for this sort of praying?

FOCUS

"Floods of Ungodliness"

In the day when the Lord delivered David from the hand of all his enemies he was moved by the Holy Spirit to write a notable song of triumph which is twice recorded in Scripture (2 Sam.22 and Ps.18). David looked back over his experiences of injustice, oppression and evil. "The floods of ungodliness made me afraid", he recalled. "In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple" (Ps.18:4-6).

"Floods of ungodliness"! How vividly this describes the great upsurge of evil in our time, and it may well make us afraid. Like David, our refuge is in the living God who alone can preserve His people and bless their witness despite the menacing power of ungodliness in today's world. As we approach the close of another year may we be stirred to fresh awareness of our need to call on the Lord to help us to be "unblameable in holiness" (1 Thess.3:13).

A United States commentator recently referred to widespread anxiety about what many see as "a moral breakdown in American society". They have in view such developments as "more than sixteen million abortions performed since 1973; the fourfold increase since 1970 in children raised by unwed mothers; the rise in drug abuse; the emergence of gay liberation and the glamorization of promiscuity".

Similar concern was expressed early this year about moral standards in Britain. "Daily we are confronted with facts on increased crime, drug abuse, baby battering, violence and racial tension. Facts which call for our compassion and care, but also deep concern about the state of our nation. Behind the facts are changing standards. The Englishman's word is no longer his bond; millions of unborn babies have been denied the right to life, but the rights of homosexuals have become firmly established; live-in lovers cause no comment as thousands of illegitimate children are growing up with no concept of family life; the elderly are abused and abandoned".

We recognize, of course, that in the United States, Britain and Europe many organizations vigorously protest against such evils as abortion, homosexuality, drug addiction, pornography and the like. Many people work sacrificially to provide remedial care.

A Mori Poll carried out early this year indicated that two out of three adults in Britain would support the setting up of an organization to promote higher moral standards — only 6 per cent would oppose it. This suggests that many are alarmed at the social effects of declining standards and wish to see the trend reversed. Yet without spiritual revival to provide the motivation how will the powerful desires of the flesh and of the mind be controlled?

For a vital factor contributing to such decline is abandonment by many of faith in Scripture as the Word of God. As a result "there is no fear of God before their eyes". Standards based on truths of Scripture, formerly commanding wide respect, are now regarded as irrelevant. Accountability to God is dismissed as a scaremongering myth. They "seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" (Isa.29:15).

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa.59:19 AV). In its context this verse is a prophetic word about the future deliverance of the Israel nation. We borrow it for the moment in relation to the vast onslaught by the enemy of souls as he directs the floods of ungodliness in our time. They are frightening indeed! Yet we are not alone. The Spirit of the Lord is with us. His almighty strength will enable us to stand in the evil day and having done all, to stand. Each disciple of Christ may be an overcomer, however strong the currents of ungodliness. The Lord Jesus spoke of His disciples as "the salt of the earth", "the light of the world" (Matt.5:13-15). Having themselves escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust (2 Pet.1:4) their influence is likened to the preserving quality of salt; but how vital it is that the salt should not lose its savour! Themselves once in darkness, but now light in the Lord, His disciples are urged to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even to reprove them (Eph.5:8,11).

Mr. John Drain

We mention with sadness the Homecall on 7th August 1986 of our much loved former co-editor Mr. John Drain. He served on the editorate of this magazine from 1965 to 1978 and thereafter continued as a consultant until quite recently, offering wise advice on difficult scriptural questions. His writing was meticulously accurate, and while his scrutiny of submitted articles was extremely thorough, he was always kind and gentle when his comments were adverse. We record with gratitude his assiduous labours for the magazine.

The following article by him appeared in the October 1978 issue and we reprint it here as a mark of appreciation of his memorable work for Needed Truth.

Does it really matter where we worship God?

One has heard of a child of God who said that he could worship God just as well sitting alone in a public park as he could in any other place or circumstances. It is conceivable that a person in such a place as a public park or garden, seeing around him impressive evidence of the creatorial power and wisdom of God, may feel his inner being bowing before God in adoration and praise. It is indeed proper and desirable for a child of God to worship God as an individual, but the Scriptures show that a prominent purpose in God's dealings with men and women is to have a people who will render to Him *collective* worship. The revelation of this purpose insists upon the recognition of the truth that God chooses the place where His people will worship Him.

When the children of Israel were gripped in the bondage of Egypt the Lord sent to their oppressor, Pharaoh, the command, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me" (Ex.8:1). The service here referred to is that of worshippers. One of the purposes for which God wanted to release the Israelites was that He might have a people to worship Him. In the book of Exodus we have recorded how the Lord delivered them and constituted them a people in conditional covenant relationship with Himself. It was in God's purpose that His people should enjoy many personal blessings because He wanted them to be happy and grateful in their personal, family and tribal experiences. But in the matter of their national, collective responsibilities as a kingdom of priests God made it very clear in His law that the people would worship Him in the place of *His* choice. There would not be places of worship. There would be one place for all Israel. Moses instructed, "Unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His Name there, even

unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: and thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings..." (Deut.12:5,6). "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose..." (Deut.16:16). This insistence by the Lord that His people would come to the one centre of gathering is repeated many times. He was establishing very definitely in the minds of His people that there would be one place of worship, His house, the place where *His* Name would be put. So it does really matter where we worship.

In its day the portable tabernacle, wherever by divine leading it was sited, was the house of God, the place of the Name, the place of worship. Later, in the land to which He brought His people, God chose Jerusalem as the place where His house would be built. When a remnant returned from the captivity in Babylon to build the house of God (the history of that work will be found in the book of Ezra) it was to Jerusalem that they came: and when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth the house of God was in Jerusalem. That house was destroyed in the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., but in the glorious coming millennial reign of Christ a material house of God will again be erected, and the chosen site will be Jerusalem. To that appointed centre not only the Israelite nation, but also all the nations of the earth will flow to worship God (see, for example, Zech.14:16).

What about the present time? God does not now dwell in a material temple made by men's hands. But God's purposes for this dispensation still contemplate a house on earth, a temple. This building is a spiritual one composed of human beings who having accepted Christ as their Saviour have received eternal life, and who as living stones have been built up according to divine plan "a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet.2:5). "Whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end"(Heb.3:6). Observe the "if" and the "unto the end".

Does it really matter today where we worship God? We believe that collective worship of God is still associated with His house, His habitation in the Spirit. Those who constitute His house constitute the holy priesthood for the offering up of spiritual sacrifices. The place of worship for those who today are in God's house is the sanctuary in heaven, the holies into which Christ after His resurrection entered to discharge His functions as the appointed great Priest over the house of God. The house of God is on earth. The holies are in heaven. Into that heavenly place the holy priesthood of the house of God enters with holy boldness to worship the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does really matter where we worship God.

The Power of Example

By J. Renfrew, of Paisley, Scotland

The poet Longfellow once wrote:

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

The example of godly men and women has been a powerful influence for good on the lives of others, and we can all recall some brother or sister who, at one time or another, has in this way been an encouragement to us.

In my little study at home, I have a framed photograph of brethren taken at a Conference of Elders of the Churches of God, and as I look on their faces I thank God for their influence on my life. Many of them have now departed to be with the Lord whom they loved and served.

It is particularly important for leaders to set a high standard of conduct for others to follow. When Gideon was leading his three hundred men against the hordes of the Midianites he said to them, "Look on me, and do likewise" (Jdgs.7:17). They did this, and the Lord gave them a great victory. David also was a great leader who inspired his followers by his example. His slaying of Goliath was a feat that had a tremendous impact on the people of Israel, and his zeal for the house of the Lord was blessed to many.

We can think of the example of the Lord Jesus to His disciples. What a privilege they had to be with Him during His short ministry on earth. In recent articles in Needed Truth we have been considering the time spent in the Upper Room when He girded Himself with the towel and washed the feet of the disciples. He taught them, "If I then, the Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should also do as I have done unto you" (Jn 13:14,15).

The apostle Paul encouraged the Ephesian elders to follow his example (Acts 20:25). He spoke of "serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind" and of tears and trials; of labouring to help the weak and exhorting them "to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is

more blessed to give than to receive". Paul spoke of his willingness, if need be, to lay down his life at Jerusalem in order that he might accomplish his course.

The influence exerted by Christians in the world should not be underestimated. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden underfoot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid ... Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt.5:13-16).

Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). What was it about those disciples that had such an impact upon their fellow citizens. Was it not the transforming power of Christ in their lives?

The influence of Christian men and women today should not be underrated. Peter says, "If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (1 Pet.4:16). As the darkness of unbelief increases in the world, may the Lord grant that the witness of His people will shine the more brightly until the Lord returns from heaven.

The one hundred and nineteenth psalm is a very wonderful composition. Its expressions are many as the waves, but its testimony is one as the sea. It deals all along with the same subject; and it consists as you observe, of a vast number of verses, some of which are very similar to others; and yet throughout the one hundred and seventy-six verses the same thought it not repeated: there is always a shade of difference even when the colour of the thought appears to be the same. ... It is an incense made up of many spices, but they are wonderfully compounded and worked together, so as to form one perfect sweetness.

C.H. Spurgeon

Growing in Grace and Wisdom

The Early Years of Our Lord on Earth (Part 2)

By M. Archibald, of Glasgow, Scotland

From Luke

The writer whom the apostle calls "our dear friend Luke, the doctor" (Col.4:14, NIV) *investigates* "everything from the beginning ... to write an *orderly* account", so as to establish the *"certainty"* of his greatest "case-history ".

He thus opens with the remarkable parallel case of the birth of John. He then details the care that Joseph and Mary took to observe the Law (Lk.2:21-24). After circumcision on the eighth day, and a further thirty-three for purification (Lev.12:4), came the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem (estimated to require three days) to make offering, and to present the firstborn to the Lord. Here is the beautiful lesson of the free giving of so much *more* than the tithe of duty. The Law required that Mary bring the offering "to the door of the tent of meeting". But to present the Child to the Lord is surely the outcome of the parents' delight in the example of Hannah, which we understand had given rise among the devout to the custom of bringing the child. Naturally, in un-weaned days, mother and child would hardly be parted. (Here we do well to reflect on the Creator's design for closeness in the early days, and indeed years, again commended by recent medical and developmental studies of this bond. But in this case can we understand any less than the full force of the words "to present him to the Lord" (Lk.2:22)? Did not Mary show appreciation of Ex.13:2 - "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn ... it is Mine"?

"And the Child grew..."

If we wish to assess how far we have grown spiritually, a good test is to read 1 Pet.2, and note how deeply we care about those descriptions of citizens of the holy nation. We may think ourselves sensitive enough about envy or "evil speaking". We may regularly express our thankfulness for having tasted that the Lord is gracious. But what is our honest response to the lofty, searching themes of a spiritual house, or a people for God's own possession? The apostle's prescription for lack of progress or depth is to seek again the pure milk of the Word.

"... and waxed strong"

— surely a separate matter from simply growing. How able are we for the hard work that always awaits us in the churches of God? Some might answer, "When I'm rather older". But it often takes a young person to bring the young (though fortunately some *are* brought

by older people). Further, a strong incentive to search out the Scriptures, the teaching of the Kingdom, and the path of discipleship, is to undertake the hazards of witnessing to others.

"... becoming full of wisdom" (RMV).

Paul writes in 1 Cor.13:11, "... now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things". Perhaps parents' greatest fear is to see their family growing in body and mind, and yet increasingly taken up with "childish things" — the lusts of the flesh, of the mind and the eyes, and the vainglory of life. By contrast, the love of the Father was in Christ, as He caused that "body prepared" to serve in that which abides, and is for the welfare of other people. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". This reverence is the companion of a sincere desire and love for the Lord our God. With these things in our hearts, we will know more of "a mind at leisure from itself. We shall then appreciate more the divine life that is to be discerned in others, as we are guided by the greatest Textbook.

"And the grace of God was upon Him".

So it was with Joseph: "And his master saw that the LORD was with him ... And Joseph found grace in his sight" (Gen.39:3,4). So also with David: "And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him ... all Israel and Judah loved David" (1 Sam.18:14, 15). Wisdom leads to grace.

"And His parents went *every year* to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover". So it was no mere preparation at the age of 12 for the next year, when, according to Jewish history, it was the custom to regard youths as coming under obligation to the Law. At such festivals came the reminder that the firstborn belonged to God (Ex.13:11-16). It may be, however, that there was special emphasis on the twelfth year, answered by the Lord's readiness to become engrossed in the pursuit of understanding the sacred writings. It is instructive, and cautionary, to note that the Spirit refrains from any blame for the omission to ensure that the eldest son was in the departing company. May we deduce that Joseph and Mary had come to trust in His sense of responsibility, and did not inquire after Him as they otherwise would? He certainly seemed to think it right to follow the days of the festival with further study.

"And He was subject to them".

Let us consider again the loved record of this subjection to those who at times "understood not". Such patient grace was profoundly honouring to God, and so it will be with succeeding generations. Those who cultivate this character can be divinely used as other's cannot.

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature" (RVM, *age,* suggesting maturity).

He already had wisdom; so this is an increasingly rich experience of the blessing God bestows on obedience to Him. "... and in favour with God and men". Have *we* tasted of this, in prayer, in worship, or in

daily business? Here is the target!

From John

Thus the Lord appears on the pages of John, as the Light, the Eternal Word; not to be acclaimed as champion of Israel against oppressing Rome, but as the humble Lamb. But it was this lowly One who was able to take away the sin of the world. He humbled Himself, and therefore was strong to do the will of the Father.

He comes to the banks of the Jordan at the age of about 30 — at which age a Levite was deemed ready "to bear the charge of the sanctuary" in the exacting wilderness days. Two disciples of John wished that day to accompany the Master to His home. What degree of spiritual life stirs in us, so that we desire to serve the Son over God's house?

For this service we must learn obedience, through things such as those He suffered, so as to grow in wisdom and grace, and to come nearer to being accounted faithful in all God's house; childlike in fulness of faith, yet in the zeal of the house, quitting ourselves like men.

If the Word of God be in you, give it a place of rule. Let it be the master of your thoughts, ruling your understanding; the master of your affections, curbing your passions, and exciting in you holy desires. Let it be the master of your words; let all sinful and even all idle words be banished from your lips; let your speech be seasoned with the salt of revelation: let the Word of the Lord be the master of your action. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it".

C.H. Spurgeon