

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 95: May – August 2015

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH
(Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19)
NO. 95: MAY – AUGUST 2015

Editorial

It is good if our sense of the imminence of our Lord's return springs from our communion with Him and with the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus is the Morning Star which arises in our hearts as the harbinger of the coming day (2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 22:16) and it is in unison with the Holy Spirit that the bride (the church, or assembly) says "Come" to the Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:17). Are we all in the present experience and joy of these things?

But perhaps our expectation of the Lord's coming may be stimulated too by external events. Did not the Lord Jesus say "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass ..." (Luke 21:31)? – although these words were perhaps said with those primarily in mind who, after the rapture of the church, will be on earth looking for Him before His public appearing. Still, the dreadful development of evil in the world around us should surely direct our hearts to the imminent return of Christ. It is one thing for secular governments in western nations, which have known great benefit over past years from the Christian testimony, to be setting their faces against the teachings of the Holy Bible, as in the recent declaration of support for same-sex "marriage" by the President of the U.S.A.; it is quite another for large sections of "the church" to go the same way, as demonstrated in the recent blessing of a "gay pride" march by the Canon of York Minster here in England. It is clear that professing Christians are being led away from God's truth by human reasoning (for example, distorted ideas about 'showing love' and 'being inclusive') instead of living by simple obedience to the word of God. *(cont'd opposite)*

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But how good it is to see that everything has been anticipated in the Holy Bible. Peter – no doubt recalling what is said in Ezekiel 9 – warns us that the coming judgment begins at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17). Likewise John tells us that the spirit of antichrist, even in his day, had proceeded from within the company of professing Christians (1 John 2:19). So it is not surprising if increasing opposition to God’s truth is coming from within the Christian profession. Indeed, this has been so in the past, as for example during the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries.

So, although we live in serious times, there is divine provision for them. The first article in this issue presents scriptural guidance for days of breakdown. The next (page 48) reminds us of the importance of laying hold of the eternal purposes of God. Why was it that most of the children of Israel perished in the wilderness? The psalmist gives us the answer: “they despised the pleasant land; they believed not His word (Psa. 106:24). We may take the promised land as representing, in Christian terms, the sphere of eternal life. Eternal life is the *entitlement* of every believer, just as God had given the land of Canaan to Israel, but we need to *lay hold* of it (1 Timothy 6:12), just as Israel had to take possession of the land. We should be a good testimony to our Lord while here on earth, and exert a beneficial influence on those around us, but, having a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1), we should be hastening through this scene as strangers and pilgrims with our hearts set on realising God’s eternal purposes for us.

Other articles in this issue will, I trust, guide and encourage us in the experiences we pass through and the tests we face both in our individual pathways and as we participate in Christian fellowship. But may our hearts be set upon the goal and on the One who is soon coming for us!

G.S.B.

PROVISION FOR “PERILOUS TIMES”

It is of the very last importance for every servant of Christ, in all ages, to have a clear, deep, abiding, influential sense of his position, his path, his portion, and his prospects – a divinely wrought apprehension of the ground which he is called to occupy; the sphere of action which is thrown open to him; the divine provision made for his comfort and encouragement, his strength and guidance; and the brilliant hopes held out to him. There is uncommon danger of our being allured into a mere region of theory and speculation, of opinion and sentiment, of dogmas and principles. The freshness of first love is frequently lost by contact with the men and things of what may be called “the religious world.” The lovely verdure of early personal Christianity is often destroyed by a wrong use of the machinery of religion, if we may be allowed to use such a term.

In the kingdom of nature, it frequently happens that some stray seed has dropped into the ground, taken root, and sprung up into a tender plant. The hand of man had nothing to do with it. God planted it, watered it, and made it grow. He assigned it its position, gave it its strength, and covered it with beautiful verdure. By-and-by, man intruded upon its solitude and transplanted it to his own artificial enclosure, there to wither and droop. Thus it is, too often alas! with the plants of God’s spiritual kingdom. They are often ruined by man’s rude hand. They would be much better if left to the sole management of the Hand that planted them. Young Christians frequently suffer immensely from not being left to the exclusive training of the Holy Ghost, and the exclusive teaching of Holy Scripture. Human management is almost sure to stunt the growth of God’s spiritual plants. It is not, by any means, that God may not use men as His instruments in watering, culturing, and caring for, His precious plants. He assuredly may, and does; but, then, it is God’s culture and care, not man’s. This makes all the difference. The Christian is God’s plant. The seed which produced

him was divine. It was directed and planted by God's own hand, and that same hand must be allowed to train it.

Now what is true of the individual believer is equally true of the church as a whole. In the First Epistle to Timothy, the church is looked at in its original order and glory. It is there viewed as "the house of God" – "The Church of the living God" – "The pillar and ground of the truth." Its office bearers, its functions, and its responsibilities are minutely and formally described. The servant of Christ is instructed as to the mode in which he is to conduct himself in the midst of such a hallowed and dignified sphere. Such is the character, such the scope and object of Paul's First Epistle to Timothy.

But in the Second Epistle we have something quite different. The scene is entirely changed. The house, which in the first epistle, was looked at in its *rule*, is here contemplated in its *ruin*. The church, as an economy set up on earth, had, like every other economy, utterly failed. Man fails in everything. He failed amid the beauty and order of Paradise. He failed in that favoured land "that flowed with milk and honey, the glory of all lands." He failed amid the rare privileges of the gospel dispensation; and he will fail amid the bright beams of millennial glory. (Compare Gen.3; Judges 2; Acts 20:29; 3rd John 9; Rev 1 & 2; Rev 20:7-9.)

The remembrance of this will help us in the understanding of 2 Timothy. It may, very properly, be termed, "A divine provision for perilous times." The apostle seems, as it were, to be weeping over the ruins of that once beautiful structure. Like the weeping prophet, he beholds "the stones of the sanctuary poured out in the top of every street." He calls to remembrance the tears of his beloved Timothy. He is glad to have even one sympathising bosom into which to pour his sorrows. All that were in Asia had turned away from him. He was left to stand alone before Caesar's judgment seat. Demas forsook him. Alexander, the coppersmith, did him much evil. All around him, as far as man was concerned,

looked gloomy and dark. He begs of his beloved Timothy to bring him his cloak, his books and his parchments. All is strongly marked. “Perilous times” are anticipated. “A form of godliness without the power” – the mantle of profession thrown over the grossest abominations of the human heart – men not able to endure sound doctrine – heaping to themselves teachers after their own lusts, having itching ears which need to be tickled by the fabulous and baseless absurdities of the human mind. Such are the features of the Second Epistle to Timothy. Who can fail to notice them? Who can fail to see that our lot is cast in the very midst of the evils and dangers here contemplated? And is it not well to have a clear perception of these things? Why should we desire to blind ourselves to the truth? Why deceive ourselves with vain dreams of increasing light and spiritual prosperity? Is it not better far to look the true condition straight in the face? Assuredly; and rather when the self-same epistle which so faithfully points out the “perilous times,” fully unfolds the divine provision. Why should we imagine that man, under the Christian dispensation, would prove a single whit better than man under all the dispensations which have gone before or under the millennial dispensation which is yet to follow? Would not the analogy, even in the absence of direct and positive proof, lead us to expect failure under this one economy as well as under all the others? If we, without exception, find judgment at the close of all the other dispensations, why should we look for aught else at the close of this? Let my reader ponder these things, and then accompany me for a few moments, while I seek, by the grace of God, to unfold some of the divine provisions for “perilous times.”

I do not attempt to expound this most touching and interesting epistle in detail. That would be impossible in an article like the present. I shall merely single out one point from each of the four chapters into which the epistle has been divided. These are, first, “unfeigned faith” (ch.1, v.5). Secondly, “the sure foundation” (ch..2, v.19). Thirdly, “the holy scriptures.” (ch.3, v.15).

Fourthly, “the crown of righteousness” (ch.4, v.8). The man who knows aught of the power of these things is divinely provided for “perilous times.”

And, first as to the “the unfeigned faith” – that priceless possession – the apostle says, “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” Here then, we have something above and beyond everything ecclesiastical – something which one must have, ere he is introduced to the church, and which will stand good though the church were in ruins around him. This unfeigned faith connects the soul immediately with Christ, in the power of a link which must, of necessity, be anterior to all ecclesiastical associations, how important soever they may be in their due place – a link which shall endure when all earthly associations shall have been dissolved for ever. We get to Christ first, and then to the church. Christ is our life, not the church. No doubt, church fellowship is most valuable; but there is something above and beyond it, and it is of that something that “unfeigned faith” takes possession. Timothy had this faith dwelling in him before ever he entered the house of God. He was connected with the God of the house previous to his manifested association with the house of God.

It is well to be clear as to this. We must never surrender the intense individuality which characterises “unfeigned faith.” We must carry it with us through all the scenes and circumstances, the links and associations of our Christian life and service. We must not traffic in mere church position, or build upon religious machinery, or be upborne by a routine of duty, or cling to the worthless props of sectarian sympathy or denominational

predilection. Let us cultivate those fresh, vivid, and powerful affections which were created in our hearts when first we knew the Lord. Let the beautiful blossoms of our spring-time be succeeded, not by barrenness and sterility, but by those mellow clusters which spring from realised connection with the root. Too often alas! it is otherwise. Too often the earnest, zealous, simple-hearted young Christian is lost in the bigoted narrow-minded member of a sect, or the intolerant defender of some peculiar opinion. The freshness, softness, simplicity, tenderness and earnest affection of our young days, are rarely carried forward into the advanced stages of vigorous manhood, and mature old age. Very frequently one finds a depth of tone, a richness of experience, a moral elevation, in the early stages of the Christian life, which too soon gives way to a chilling formalism in one's personal ways; or a mere energy in some barren system of theology. How rarely are those words of the Psalmist realised, "They shall still bring forth fruit *in old age*; they shall be fat and flourishing" (Psalm 92:14).

The truth is, we all want to cultivate more diligently an "unfeigned faith." We want to enter, with more spiritual vigour, into the power of the link which binds us, individually, to Christ. This would render us "fat and flourishing," even in old age. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God." We suffer materially by allowing what is called Christian intercourse to interfere with our personal connection and communion with Christ. We are far too prone to substitute intercourse with man for intercourse with God – to walk in the footsteps of our fellow, rather than the footsteps of Christ – to look around rather than upward, for sympathy, support and encouragement. These are not the fruits of "unfeigned faith" but quite the opposite. That faith is as blooming and vigorous amid the solitudes of the desert as in the bosom of an assembly. Its immediate, its all engrossing business is with God Himself. "It endures as seeing Him who is invisible." It fixes its earnest gaze

upon things unseen and eternal. "It enters into that within the veil." It lives among the unseen realities of an eternal world. Having conducted the soul to the feet of Jesus, there to get a full and final forgiveness of all its sins, through His most precious blood, it bears it majestically onward through all the windings and labyrinths of desert life, and enables it to bask in the bright beams of millennial glory.

Thus much as to this first precious item in the provision for "perilous times" – this "unfeigned faith." No one can ever get on without it, let the times be peaceful or perilous, easy or difficult, rough or smooth, dark or bright. If a man be destitute of this faith, deeply implanted and diligently cultivated in his soul, he must, sooner or later, break down. He may be urged on for a time, by the impulses of surrounding circumstances and their influence. He may be propped up and borne along by his co-religionists. He may float down along the stream of religious profession. But, most assuredly, if he is not possessed of "unfeigned faith," the time is approaching when it will be all over with him for ever. The perilous times will soon rise to a head, and then will come the awful crisis of judgment, from which none can escape save the happy possessors of "unfeigned faith." God grant my reader may be one of these! If so, all is eternally safe.

We shall now consider, in the second place, "The sure foundation." "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (ch. 2, v.19). In the midst of all the "trouble," the "hardness," the "striving" about words," the "profane and vain babblings," the errors of "Hymenaeus and Philetus" – in the midst of these varied features of the "perilous times," how ineffably precious to fall back upon God's sure foundation. The soul that is built upon this, in the divine energy of "unfeigned faith," is able to resist the rapidly rising tide of evil – is divinely furnished for the most

appalling times. There is a fine moral link between the unfeigned faith in the heart of man, and the sure foundation laid by the hand of God. All may go to ruin. The church may go to pieces, and all who love that church may have to sit down and weep over its ruins; but there stands that imperishable foundation, laid by God's own hand, against which the surging tide of evil may roll with all its fury and have no effect, save to prove the eternal stability of that rock and of all who are built thereon.

“The Lord knoweth them that are His.” There is the abundance of false profession, but the eye of Jehovah rests on all those who belong to Him. Not one of them is, or ever can be, forgotten by Him. Their names are engraven on His heart. They are as precious to Him as the price He paid for them, and that is nothing less than the “precious blood” of His own dear Son. No evil can befall them. No weapon formed against them can prosper. “The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” What rich, what ample provision for “perilous times!” Why should we fear? Why should we be anxious? Having “unfeigned faith” within, and God's foundation beneath, it is our happy privilege to pursue, with tranquilised hearts, our upward and onward way, in the assurance that all is, and shall be well.

“I know my sheep,” He cries:
“My soul approves them well:
Vain is the treacherous world's disguise,
In vain the rage of hell.”

It has been well remarked that the seal on God's foundation has two sides: one bearing the inscription, “The Lord knoweth them that are His;” and the other, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The former is as peace-giving as the latter is practical. Let the strife and confusion be ever so great – let the storm rage and the billows arise – let the darkness thicken – let the powers of earth and hell combine, “the Lord knoweth them that are His.” He has sealed them for Himself. The

assurance of this is eminently calculated to maintain the heart in profound repose, let the “times” be ever so “perilous.”

But let us never forget that each one who “names the name of Christ” is solemnly responsible to “depart from iniquity” wherever he finds it. This is applicable to all true Christians. The moment that I see anything that deserves the epithet of “iniquity,” be it what or where it may be, I am called upon to “depart from” that thing. I am not to wait until others see with me, for what may seem to be “iniquity” to one, may not seem to be so, at all, to another. Hence, it is entirely a personal question. “Let *every one*.” The language used in this epistle is very personal, very strong, very intense. “If *a man* purge *himself*.” “*Flee* also youthful lusts.” From such *turn away*.” “*Continue thou*.” “I charge *thee*.” “Watch *thou* in all things, endure afflictions.” “Óf whom be *thou* ware also.” These are solemn, earnest, weighty words – words which prove, very distinctly, that our lot is cast in times when we must not lean upon the arm or gaze upon the countenance of our fellow. We must be sustained by the energy of an “unfeigned faith,” and by our personal connection with the “sure foundation.” Thus shall we be able, let others do or think as they will, to “depart from iniquity,” to “flee youthful lusts” – to “turn away” from the adherents of a powerless “form of godliness,” wherever we find them, and to “beware” of every “Alexander the coppersmith.” * If we suffer our feet to be moved from the rock – if we surrender ourselves to the impulse of surrounding circumstances and influences, we shall never be able to make head against the special forms of evil and error in these “perilous times.”

This introduces us, naturally, to our third point, namely, “The holy scriptures,” that precious portion of every “man of God.” “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast

* I suppose there has never been a “Nehemiah” without a “Sanballat,” or an “Ezra” without a “Rehum,” or a “Paul” without an “Alexander.”

been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be THOROUGHLY furnished unto ALL good works” (ch. 3, vv.14-17). Here, then, we have the rich provision for “perilous times.” A thorough knowledge of the One from “whom we have learned” – an accurate, personal, experimental acquaintance with “holy scripture” – that pure fountain of divine authority – that changeless source of heavenly wisdom, which even *a child* may possess and without which *a sage* must err. If a man be not able to refer all his thoughts, all his convictions, all his principles, to God as their living source – to Christ as their living centre, and to “the holy scriptures” as their divine authority, he will never be able to get on through “perilous times.” A second-hand faith will never do. We must hold truth directly from God, through the medium and on the authority of “the holy scriptures.” God may use a man to show me certain things in the word; but I do not hold them from man, but from God. It is, “knowing of *whom* thou hast learned;” and when this is the case I am able, through grace, to get on through the thickest darkness, and through all the devious paths of this wilderness world. Inspiration’s heavenly lamp emits a light so clear, so full, so steady, that its brightness is only made the more manifest by the surrounding gloom. “The man of God” is not left to drink of the muddy streams that flow along the channel of human tradition; but with the vessel of “unfeigned faith,” he sits beside the limpid and ever-gushing fountain of “holy scripture,” there to drink of its refreshing waters to the full satisfaction of his thirsty soul.

It is worthy of remark that, although the inspired apostle was fully aware, when writing his first epistle, of Timothy’s “unfeigned faith” and of his knowledge, from childhood’s earliest dawn, of

“the holy scriptures,” yet he does not allude to these things until, in his second epistle, he contemplates the appalling features of the “perilous times.” The reason is obvious. It is in the very midst of the perils of “the last days,” that one has the most urgent need of “unfeigned faith” and “the holy scriptures.” We cannot get on without them. When all around is fresh and vigorous – when all are borne onward by the common impulse of genuine devotedness – when every heart is full to overflowing of deep and earnest attachment to the Person and cause of Christ – when every countenance beams with heavenly joy – then, indeed, it is comparatively easy to get on. But the condition of things contemplated in the Second Epistle to Timothy is the very reverse of all this. It is such that, unless one is walking closely with God, in the habitual exercise of “unfeigned faith” – in the abiding realisation of the link which connects him, indissolubly, with “the foundation of God” – and in clear, unquestionable, accurate knowledge of “the holy scriptures,” he must, assuredly, make shipwreck. This is a deeply solemn consideration, well worthy of my reader’s undivided, prayerful attention. The time has, verily, arrived in which each one must follow the Lord, according to his measure. “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.” These words fall on the ear with peculiar power as one seeks to make his way among the ruins of everything ecclesiastical.

But, let me not be misunderstood. It is not that I would detract, in the smallest degree, from the value of true church fellowship, or from the divine institution of the assembly, and all the privileges and responsibilities attaching thereto. Far be the thought. I believe most fully that Christians are called to seek the maintenance of the very highest principles of communion; and moreover, we are warranted from the epistle which now lies open before us, to expect that, in the darkest times, the “purged vessel” will be able to “follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, *with them* that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (Chap. 2.22)

All this is plain, and has its due place and value; but it in no wise interferes with the fact that each one is responsible to pursue a path of holy independence, without waiting for the countenance, and sympathy, the support, or the company of his fellow. True, we are to be deeply thankful for brotherly fellowship, when we can get it on true ground. Of such fellowship no words can tell the worth. Would that we knew more of it! The Lord increase it to us a hundredfold! But let us never stoop to purchase fellowship at the heavy price of all that is “lovely and of good report.” May the name of Jesus be more precious to our hearts than all beside; and with all those who truly love His Name may our happy lot be cast on earth, as it shall be, throughout eternity, in the regions of unfading light and purity above.

And, now, one closing word as to “the crown of righteousness.” “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing” (ch. 4, vv.6-8). Here the venerable pilgrim takes his stand on the summit of the spiritual Pisgah, and, with undimmed eye, surveys the bright plains of glory. He sees the crown of righteousness glittering in the Master’s hand. He looks back over the course which he had run, and over the battlefield whereon he had fought – he stands on the confines of earth, and in the very ruins of that church whose rise and progress he had watched with such intense solicitude, and over whose decline and fall he had poured forth the tears of tender, though disappointed affection – he fixes his eye on the goal of immortality which no power of the enemy can prevent his reaching, in triumph; and whether it was by Caesar’s axe that he was to reach that goal, or by any other means, it mattered not to one who was able to say, “I AM READY.” What true sublimity! What moral grandeur! What noble elevation is here! And yet there

was nothing of the ascetic in this incomparable servant, for though his vision was filled with the crown of righteousness – though he is ready to step like a conqueror into his triumphal chariot – he nevertheless feels it perfectly right to give minute directions about his cloak and books. This is divinely perfect. It teaches us that the more vividly we enter into the glories of heaven, the more faithfully we shall discharge the functions of earth – the more we realise the nearness of eternity, the more effectively shall we order the things of time.

Such, then, beloved reader, is the ample provision made, by the grace of God, for the “perilous times” through which you and I are now passing. “Unfeigned faith” – “The sure foundation” – “The holy scriptures” – and “The crown of righteousness.” May the Holy Ghost lead us into a deep sense of the importance and value of these things! May we love the appearing of Jesus, and earnestly look out for that cloudless morning when “the righteous judge” shall place a diadem of glory upon the brow of each one who really loves His advent.

By C.H. Mackintosh (1820-96). All scriptural quotations are from the King James Version.

A Word for Preachers

I have often pondered the preachings in the Acts; it would be a real study for those who give any sort of public testimony to see how men spoke who were in the power of the Holy Spirit. These preachings were very short, very much to the point, not a word out of place, no repetition, everything in the greatest sobriety – that is preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Extracted from “An Outline of Luke’s Gospel” by C. A. Coates.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD AND MAN'S OPPOSITION TO IT

Ephesians 3:8-11

I WOULD call your attention particularly to the last verse I read, "The eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I have been greatly impressed of late with the tremendous opposition there is to the purpose of God. I mean in oneself. And I think I have learned it particularly by seeing what it was in the apostle himself. The apostle learned the opposition there was to Christ; he learned it in himself. No man ever lived, I believe, who learned the opposition to Christ in himself so painfully and so tremendously. Have you ever thought of those three days when he was without food and without sight? Have you ever thought what he must have passed through all those days, in the light of heaven one moment, and in the next in the consciousness of all that he had been? He must have gone through the greatest exercise, as he became conscious of his terrific opposition to Christ. He did not even know how it would end. He did not know that on the third day Ananias (whom he had seen in a vision) would come to him with such a wonderful message from that blessed Man. There must have been tremendous searching of heart as he discovered the terrific opposition he had made against God and against Christ.

I do not say that he understood then the place Christ had in the counsels of God as he afterwards ministered it, but he must have had before him the *tremendous* opposition he had made against Christ.

And he was still alive! He had not been slain on the spot. God had preserved him for some purpose: he hardly knew what; but he was to go into the city, and there it would be told him what to do.

It seems to me it was a wonderful moment to the apostle, to Saul, when that humble and unknown disciple came and stood beside him. And it was the Lord's way to use an unknown man to do it. He would never put honour on flesh. He did not send the twelve apostles to him. It was a wonderful moment when Ananias, comparatively unknown, came and stood by him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightiest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

But I think it must have astonished him beyond all measure to learn the grace of Christ, that He really had taken him up as a vessel for Himself – that all through those terrible days of darkness Christ had not been against him though he had learned in a tremendous way how he had been against Christ. But the moment had come for the opening of his eyes and receiving the commission committed to him. Dear friends, I am greatly impressed with the grace of Christ, and how it must have touched him to see that instead of being against Saul (though he had been terribly against Christ and heaven but Christ had not been against him), that he, of all men, had been chosen for a vessel of testimony to the nations!

Do you not think he must have learned in himself even more than ever he learned it afterwards through other people what the opposition was against God and Christ? He had a very painful history afterwards, he had to learn the opposition even in the saints in his last days. He saw people unwilling to go on to the great things that had been made known and which belonged to Christ. But in whatever way he learned the opposition in others after, he learned it in a *tremendous* way in himself first.

It must have encouraged him also, because in spite of all the opposition in himself the Lord triumphed; and that man became a vessel for Christ to take His name world-wide. And

as he saw the triumph of Christ in himself, I think he must have been cheered in the thought of it. He would learn that Christ was bound to triumph in the end everywhere.

I feel in a way inclined to apologise for speaking, because I am younger than many here this morning, and would not wish to interfere with anything the Lord would give through another channel that would help more. But I have such a sense that there is not to-day in the church of God that appreciation for Christ of which we have been hearing. Appreciation for Christ shows itself. If people really love Christ they learn what He is in connection with God's glory and God's counsels; and as they learn it they find the present world becomes smaller and smaller in their eyes, and they look forward to "*that day*." I do not find much about "that day" said amongst men in the present day. Here we are in a world that is opposed to us and opposed to Christ, and the hopes of God's people have always been led up Godward in the direction of "that day." In the case of the call of Abraham it says: he "rejoiced to see my day." And as soon as the flood had taken place and Noah was out on the new earth, the Lord gave him a covenant and spoke of the eternal covenant, and the rainbow was the sign of it; and faith has ever looked forward to the day when God will bring about that to which He has pledged Himself. The most wonderful day is going to dawn upon this earth. It will be lighted up with glory, and by whom will it be brought about? Through Christ. And do you mean to say that anyone can have affection for Christ and not have an interest in all that concerns Him? Everything depends upon Christ. All the glory, all that God will bring to pass hangs upon Christ.

One notices how two great things are connected with God's purpose. The mystery, as we have heard, hidden in God through past ages, and now brought to light; and what God has brought to light is of the very greatest importance to all of us.

Then, too, the truth of eternal life is evidently on the line of God's purpose. You could not think of it apart from Christ. And there is just the same repugnance to the purpose of God as to the church. You must feel – many of you must feel – how few understand about the church and what the assembly is to God and in connection with Christ, and it is just the same as to eternal life. To my mind there is the same ignorance with regard to both, and it seems to me the reason is that both are on the line of purpose. What is the reason why we can give so little account of eternal life, or why we are so slow to enter into the truth of the assembly?

You remember a dear brother, now with the Lord, used to deplore how few seemed to know anything about the church. It is the same thing with eternal life, and I think the reason is that both are connected with God's purpose, and there is in one's own heart and natural being the greatest repugnance to going on to God's purpose in Christ. Suppose for a moment the Apostles John and Paul were here, do you think that they would be caught by anything that is going on in the world today? Do you think what is affecting men's minds would affect their minds? Take the Apostle Paul's line, the assembly; or John's line, eternal life – take it what way you will – if you really had in your mind the purpose of God, things here would be of no account at all.

The great talk about imperialism, and so on, shows really how little we understand what a true king is – what a King of kings is. He is morally above all kings, and all kings will take their character from the King of kings in that day. We read, "All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of Thy mouth" (Psalm 138:4). It shows such ignorance when people are carried away by present things – empire and all that; they have no idea of what a true king is according to God. It would help us very much if we saw more,

and studied to learn more, what Christ is. Everything hangs really on what He is. He is the Son of God. The one who learned that painful lesson in Damascus of his own terrific opposition to God and Christ, was the first to preach Jesus was the Son of God. What a glorious outcome of his exercises! It would have been worth while if the saints in Jerusalem had gone to Damascus to listen to that first preaching which was the outcome of those terrible exercises. It was in connection with the purpose of God.

The Son of God is the centre of those purposes. How could the Jews have eternal life without the Son of God? The Lord said to the Jews: "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." They wanted eternal life, but they wanted it their way, and according to their thoughts. They never will have eternal life without the obliteration of themselves. When God commands His blessings in Zion where will the nation be? They will have gone out of sight. It will be a new nation. Where was Saul of Tarsus when the apostle was preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ? He was gone out of sight. There was another man altogether, a lowly man. I was very much struck with it yesterday – the lowliness of the apostle, the prisoner of the Lord. It was not only that he *said* he was less than the least, but he *felt* it. No one had been so determined to get rid of the assembly as Paul, and no one now was so devoted to it; and he preached among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

You see the same thing in regard to Israel at the end. No nation will be so lowly as they will be then; they will not be in any way proud of themselves. If you speak of a great nation to-day it is a proud nation; but that part of the nation of Israel connected particularly with the crucifixion of Messiah will go through great exercises, and though they will have the greatest

place in the midst of the nations, they will be very lowly. They will take character from Christ and be most like Christ.

Though Israel missed the blessing of eternal life, we have come in for it, but in a different way. The nation would not have Him, but the assembly has been formed, as Christ said, "I will build my church;" and it is for us to make much of the purpose of God in this way, and much of Him in whom is eternal life, for "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

You could not think of eternal life apart from Christ, or apart from the knowledge of the Son of God. The two things hang on it. The Lord said to Peter, "On this rock I will build my assembly." The Rock was the confession He was the Son of the living God; and so, too, eternal life is likewise bound up with the knowledge of the Son of God. "This is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life."

Think of a people to-day in eternal life! Eternal life is our portion, the great blessing we have in Him. The very fact that eternal life is here is a wonderful testimony to the Son of God. You cannot go anywhere else for any blessing now. You cannot go to the Jews or heathen for anything. We have the greatest thing people ever had on earth. We ought to be able to say to the Jews, You have missed eternal life and we have got it. Things fail here; health goes, and everything else; but where is the source of life? In Christ in glory, the Son of God. There is not a greater testimony to the Son of God on earth than that there should be a people who are in eternal life. But it has a very wonderful meaning for us. We have the true God and Jesus Christ His sent One. The Jews used to boast they had the true God, in contrast to the nations in idolatry; but now we can say to the Jews, You have no real knowledge of God nor eternal life, you have missed it and we

have got it, for we have Christ, and He is “the true God and eternal life.”

That at once brings in the truth of the assembly, because you cannot think of one person having eternal life alone. It is a company of people to whom this blessing belongs, and it would be a wise thing if we were more on our guard against the counter-influence of the world. The Christian is doing great injury to people around if he does not go on with Christ. The real testimony is Christ. The state of things in the world may be put very much to our own door. If the church had been true to Christ there would not have been such a terrible state of things as we see around us in Christendom. It is because people have not gone on with Christ.

What are we to do now? Try to put things right? We cannot do that, but we can look forward to and seek to be influenced by the light of “that day,” the day of glory.

The world is trying to impress us with the great things in it. We can say, there are great things *coming*. Things here will end in Antichrist, and will go into the lake of fire, but we can look forward to what is eternal. Nothing there will be displaced. Everything is eternal when you come to God’s counsels. I have been struck with it in the Old Testament. God’s covenant with Noah was eternal and unchanging. When eternal life is brought in, nothing contrary to it will ever come in and supersede it. These things are lasting. The knowledge of the Father and the Son will never be lost, and the knowledge Israel will have in that wonderful day will never be lost. It is a wonderful thing to have in our souls the light of what is eternal: “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Eternal things will never pass away. It is all unchanging because it connects itself with the eternal

God. Evil will never come in after that, or at least it will not gain the day; there will not be either the reign of sin or man's rule after eternal life has come in in Christ in a public way, and there will never be again an evil age. Satan may be loosed to test man, but only "for a little season."

We ought to seek grace from Christ to impress people with the immense blessing we have. It is the city that has the tree and the river. The river is in the city, and the tree is by the side of it. It is a dry world, but we have the river and the tree, and I would like to impress people with that. No one knows where the river flows to. We are told where it flows *from*, but who can say where it flows *to*? That makes you evangelistic. You can go everywhere and tell people about the river of grace. Those who are Christians have these great things. How can anyone get to the tree of life without the river? The river comes first, the tree second. If only people had the river (the Spirit) they would have the fruit of the tree of life. We ought to see to it that we have the fruit, and not put it off till the eternal day, till the millennium. We ought to be eating the fruit of the tree, ever fresh and ever blessed: and to be seeking to evangelise on every hand, to impress people that things are greater than ever. We should be more than ever impressed with the thought how great they are, and with what a day will soon burst upon this world.

May God grant that we may be more set upon God's purpose! It will make demands upon us, of course. Look at that poor man who came to Christ and said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He was not equal to the demands upon him; and it always does make demands. The Jewish nation will have to give up everything before they accept Christ. They will have no pride of ancestry or history or anything of that sort. It will all go that they may get Christ.

But when we get to the purposes of God they are exceeding great. If you measure them by the way people put them forth it is very poor indeed, but really they are unspeakably great and blessed.

May the Lord set every one of us on the line that is right, the line of God's purpose! Who is going to fulfil it? – Christ! He has won the day. The apostle learned that. The Lord Jesus made that man who says of himself “me, who am less than the least of all saints” the vessel to carry His name among the Gentiles and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Christ will win the day. May we be overcomers, for He says, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things.”

Address by Henry D’Arcy Champney, given at Quemerford, Wiltshire, in May 1902.

MENDING THE NETS

Matthew 4:18-25;

I was thinking of this Scripture and a couple of brief references I would like to make in a moment, particularly thinking of the way the Lord Jesus called these four disciples and the purpose He had in calling them. They come in two twos: the first two were casting a net into the sea; it says: “for they were fishers.” The call was to “come after Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And they were made fishers of men. It’s not an original thought – I am sure others will have come across it – the mission largely of Peter and Andrew as we see it in the Scriptures unfolding was that of fishing, as fishers of men. The Lord *did* make them fishers of men; of course, that really goes without saying because He said He would do so in this passage, but we see the fishing going on later. We see Peter’s preaching on the day of Pentecost and subsequently, and we see him going to the Gentiles

and opening the door for them to come in. And we see Andrew in a much lesser role but still bringing people to Jesus. They were fishermen; the Lord saw them casting a net and He trained them to become disciples and fishers of men.

But then these other two; they also were fishermen – there they were in the ship on the shore of Galilee. But a slightly different emphasis is placed in the wording – and I am sure the wording of Scripture is always significant – “James ... and John his brother, in the ship with Zebedee their father, mending their trawl-nets.” They weren’t fishing; they were mending their nets. And He called them; He didn’t say of them He would make them fishers of men but He called them and it has been observed that although James did not have a long career, because it was cut short by martyrdom, nevertheless John did have a long career and ‘mending the nets’ and maintaining the unity of the family was very much the ministry John was given. It may be significant that they were mending their nets.

Now we see the ministry of the Lord Jesus in the next few verses and He was going “round the whole of Galilee.” He was “teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom” and we read of that elsewhere in the gospels, that His teaching and preaching was of the glad tidings, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh” (*Matthew 4:17*) – the glad tidings of the kingdom. Along with that went healing every disease; and it makes some point of that here in Matthew, “every disease and every bodily weakness” – quite an extraordinary thing when one comes to contemplate it. It gives a list, not by any means an exhaustive list but some idea of the range of conditions that were brought to Him: “all that were ill ... various diseases and pains.” And those hard, almost impossible, cases, even for medicine in the present day: “those possessed by demons, and lunatics and paralytics; and He healed them.” It says that He was going round the whole of Galilee and “His fame went out into the

whole of Syria.” There was a completeness about the Lord’s service, and His service besides preaching and teaching was healing.

I wanted to look also just at a verse in Galatians, chapter 6, verse 1: “Brethren, if even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.” It’s interesting that the word ‘restore’ there is the same in Greek as the word used for ‘mending’ in the first Scripture we looked at. The word can be to ‘restore’ or to ‘mend’ or it could be to ‘perfectly unite’, but you can see the drift of it. The nets would tend to come apart with hard use and they needed pulling together and mending and that’s what these fishermen were doing, John and James. We may have all seen it in our younger days. They used to be doing it on Brighton beach when you went along there, early in the morning, – I don’t know that they do it so much today – the fishermen would be displaying amazing skill with their spool of yarn: they would be pulling together the nets and they would get all the squares exactly the right size, just by eye, to renew and restore the net. And here the apostle exhorts – it’s not John, of course; it’s Paul - but he exhorts, “if even a man be taken in some fault” – and that could be some difficult problem, but he says – “ye who are spiritual restore such a one.” And I am sure it’s all in the same spirit of mending the net, drawing the company together. If there’s a hole caused by someone who has gone astray and been taken in a fault the objective is to restore and to pull together and to make the net whole again. “Restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.” So that explains something of the meekness and I think it’s remarkable how often meekness is spoken of in the exhortations, not only of the Lord but of the apostles also. Here’s an activity that should be going on in a spirit of meekness.

And then there was just one verse in the First Epistle to the Corinthians and chapter one, where we get the same word used again. The word, if folk want to check it, is *katartizo* and it occurs here in verse 10. “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all say the same thing, and that there be not among you divisions; but that ye be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same opinion.” Just that verse, and you can see that it’s the word ‘united’ there. There is a very helpful note in the Darby Translation which I have leant on in drawing these Scriptures together. It says: “where all the members have each its own place, or make a whole; or, if broken, are restored to one complete and perfect whole, as ‘mending’ Matt. 4:21.” So here again the apostle exhorts the importance of mending any kind of division: “that ye all say the same thing, and that there be not among you divisions; but that ye be perfectly united” – and mended, or made whole – “in the same opinion.” Well, there’s a challenge for us. The word can be looked up in “*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.” I noticed a very interesting comment that he makes about it here, as it’s used in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 10; he says: ‘The tense used here is the continuous present, suggesting the necessity of patience and perseverance in the process.’ And I thought that probably gives a very good idea of what is required. It isn’t just some brief, one-off exhortation, although one-off exhortations may be part of it, but it’s patience and perseverance in the process, suggested by the way the word is used here: “that ye be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same opinion.” I didn’t read it but we can go on and see that there were strifes there, and that was what Paul was setting about to have his part in mending. It looks as though it was quite a problem there and I am not suggesting we have problems of that order, but I thought it would be good to just focus on that word ‘to mend’ or to restore.

Word given by Norman Woolcock at Selsdon, Croydon, 25.03.15.

THE DROWNING MOTH

This is the story of a young believer's experience in his teen years as he was being drawn to know, to learn, to love and see the almighty God and how he has manifested himself in the Person of his Son.

While in the course of his duties as the third eldest of ten children, he had, as one of his duties, to procure milk for the rest of the family by milking the cows that his father kept. In the area where the cows would feed was a water tank out of which the cows would drink. It was at this tank that this dear young believer would undergo a lasting soul experience from his loving Lord.

On one of the mornings, as he went about his daily chores, he had a very heavy heart, for he was in soul agony as to his personal salvation. He was convinced that he was eternally lost, without any hope. He was in such a state that he was sure, not only that he was not saved, but that he could not be saved. He was in absolute despair.

As he was attending to the needs of the cows, he sat down on the rim of the water tank. He noticed a moth struggling to get out of the tank. It would manage to swim to the water's edge and climb up the edge of the tank, trying to rescue itself, only to find that when it reached the top edge it could not navigate the lip of the tank and would fall back into the water. This it did repeatedly.

The young man observed the efforts of this poor little creature and could not help but feel compassion for it. He reached down and gently scooped up the moth in the palm of his hand. After being allowed to dry off, the moth was able to fly away under the warm sunshine. The young man then could only cry out through his tears, "Oh, that someone would do that for me".

Some weeks later, while still in the depths of his soul distress, he was reading an article written by an evangelist brother

who, in that article, delineated his own very deep sole travail with respect to the assurance of salvation. While the circumstances were different, the doubts and fears were very similar. The evangelist wrote as to his own deliverance from doubt, which resulted ultimately in the joyful deliverance of this young man of our story.

This young believer went on to experience the very same wonderful care that he provided to that moth, provided to him by a wonderful, loving heavenly Father, this believer's Lord and Saviour, his Lord Jesus Christ. As his life went on, looking back on that experience at the water tank often reminded him of the verse in Jeremiah 31:3 "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

This and many other experiences throughout his life would bear witness to a Holy Father's unfailing love and his life would be marked by a burning desire to bear witness to souls of the love he had experienced from his loving God who desires that all should be SAVED and come to the knowledge of the truth, and that they too could trust a Holy Father's constant loving care.

Many years later, as a father of four children the young man was able to comfort his own young son who was travelling through similar soul exercises. He was able confidently to assure him that the very fact that he was deeply concerned as to his salvation and possession of the Holy Spirit, was proof positive of God's work in him. It is the knowledge of God gleaned from the depths of such soul exercise that yields that confident testimony! It is the "full assurance of faith..." (Hebrews 10:22) that is the divine result and that "ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). It is akin to what Paul could state with unwavering conviction: "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Contributed by David Cavanaugh and Art. Widtfeldt Jr., San Francisco.

CHRIST THE OBJECT OF FAITH

The object of faith is the Person of the Lord Jesus, and the redemption accomplished by Him; and all believers, reaping the benefits of this work, are saved. Now one investigates and scrutinises in order to know whether one has faith in the heart, and whether it be true faith. We all pass more or less through this state, but true peace is never to be found there. It is perhaps, however, useful in humbling us, and teaching us that in us dwells no good thing. But we are not called upon to believe in the faith which is in us, but to believe in Christ Jesus; and God declares that all believers are justified, and have eternal life. I do not examine my eyes to know whether I see, but look at the object before them, and know that I see. ... If we examine ourselves to know whether we walk as Christians, we do well; but if we do so to know whether we are Christians, it is not according to the word.

Faith looks toward Jesus, not towards self. The experience of the examination of the heart, in order to discover what passes there to make one believe, leads us to see that it is impossible thus to find peace, or even victory, for we are looking at what is behind us; but when we are convinced of this, the answer of God is there – He has given salvation in Christ, and he who believes is justified. The Lord says, “Thy sins are forgiven; go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee,” Luke 7. The woman looked to Jesus, and believed His word, not thinking of the state of her own heart. The state of her heart, the conviction that she could not find peace and salvation in herself, led her to look to Jesus, and in Him she found peace. The gospel gives the answer of God to the heart clearly and fully. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

The Collected Writings of J.N. Darby, Vol. 25, pp. 391-2.

“... Who Against Us?” (Rom. 8:31)

Nought happens without reason
Beneath God’s hand of love;
This life’s but one short season,
There’ll be no grief above.

Though earth gives tribulation:
Well may believers sing –
God has no condemnation,
Whatever earth may bring.

E’en if it’s persecution.
Still may the saints rejoice:
Christ’s love finds sure solution
For every hostile voice.

No doubting fear need scare us
Should we be called to die,
Since Christ went to prepare us
A home with Him on high.

Proud pomp’s no invitation
Where *Jesus* is ignored,
Nor earthly reputation –
Our glory’s in the Lord!

In very sore temptation
He’d teach us what to say;
With such a consolation
We’d still pursue our way.

Cheered on by thoughts of Jesus,
The pilgrim path we trace
And bless the love which frees us
And giveth “grace on grace”!

Robert G. Fear, Bristol, 17th July, 1935.

NOTE

The Editor trusts that the selection and composition of material for this magazine has been undertaken with the Lord's guidance and that the contents are of moral and spiritual value and appropriate to present needs. The only infallible statement of truth, however, is found in the Holy Bible and the reader is, therefore, urged to follow the practice of the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). The Editor is always happy to receive comments and inquiries, and to consider suggested articles for inclusion in future issues.