

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 103: January – April 2018 CONTENTS

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

(Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19 and Jeremiah 33:6)

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Editorial

Whether one looks at Christendom or at the wider world, to say nothing of what many are experiencing in their individual or family lives, it seems that there is trouble on every hand. But the Psalmist says, “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me” (Psa. 138:7).

The Lord Jesus has known trouble beyond anything that anyone else has ever known. Who can measure the extent, or appreciate the character, of all that affected Him when He said, “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name” (John 12:27, 28). But now on high He is able to help all His own who are being tested, in whatever way it may be.

Let us never forget that God allows and uses our afflictions that we may learn to judge and put aside the things of the flesh and the world and that we may become practically more like His dear Son, looking away from this place where He was rejected and crucified to Himself in the glory, expecting His return at any moment. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy word” (Psa. 119:67). “In pressure Thou hast enlarged me” (Psa. 4:1).

I trust that all readers will find ministry in this issue that suits their needs and desires. May the Spirit of God graciously increase the hunger we feel for God’s truth!

G.S.B.

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THE PRESENCE AND NEARNESS OF CHRIST

“And David arose and went with all the people that were with him from Baale-Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God which is called by the name, the name of Jehovah of hosts who sitteth between the cherubim” (*2 Samuel 6:2*).

David had the very good desire of having the ark of God in his presence. The ark speaks to us of Christ. Do we desire, as David, the very presence and nearness of Christ in our life?

The ark was not something casual; it was called “*by the name*, the name of Jehovah of hosts who sitteth between the cherubim.” There was a way and a manner to bring the ark, so solemnly named, to enjoy the blessing of its very presence. Unfortunately, David had been influenced by the way the Philistines handled the ark (1 Sam. 6:10-11). They knew not what to do, but David should have known better. Yet we see him doing as they did. Alas! This only brought the death of Uzzah – because of his misconduct in a situation that should have never happened – and indignation, fear and confusion. But David later learned of his error and was encouraged, seeing the house of Obed-Edom being blessed, to bring the ark the way it had to be brought.

We all desire to enjoy the nearness and presence of Christ in our lives, homes and assemblies. But we must learn that “*the excellent name* which has been called upon you” (Jas. 2:7) is a holy one. His name is “Lord Jesus Christ.” We cannot live as the world does. We cannot use the means that the world is using. There is a way to carry His name – and we are instructed how to carry it. We cannot carry the name of our Lord Jesus Christ by the world’s methods and standards. Doing so will only bring spiritual death – due to inappropriate behaviour arising from circumstances that should never have happened first – and indignation, fear and confusion.

But if we do according to the Word of God, there will be much

blessing from the enjoyment of the very presence of Christ.

Alexandre Leclerc

Reproduced from “The Lord is Near,” 20th November 2017, by kind permission.

A LESSON FROM ISAIAH

“As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths” (Isaiah 3:12).

Social conditions in Israel were all wrong in Isaiah’s day. Everything seemed to have been turned upside down. God’s plan for His people had been rejected, and leaders were bringing in new ways which were diametrically opposed to His divine purpose. Instead of men being in positions of leadership, women had usurped these roles. Children, rather than being under control, had the upper-hand and were ruining society. Progress was impossible, and God’s people were drifting further and further from Him.

Do we not see something paralleling our society in this verse? Gender distinctions are rapidly disappearing, and traditional roles are being reversed. The Church of England is now ordaining as many women as men. Putting all denominations together, about 20% of today’s church ministers are women, while a third of today’s Members of Parliament at Westminster are women. I am certainly not implying that they are *less* capable than their male counterparts but simply pointing out the rise of rampant feminism. The situation in the church is, of course, another matter because God has entrusted **men** with leadership responsibilities. But there is another observation which can be made from Isaiah’s day. Like the prophet we see a new generation, deprived of the benefits of discipline and loudly demanding rights. How many young people today are involved in anti-social behaviour, crime, and even murder? Often after a killing has been reported we hear

that the offender cannot be named because of their age.

Our spiritual paths today are being destroyed by leaders who are obsessed with alien “British values” and who are blatantly opposed to divine truth. Truly we *are* being destroyed! There is *one* solution – and one only. We must return to the Bible and to the ways of God. Sadly, for the immediate future we can see little hope. The situation is deteriorating fast – not improving. News items are becoming more and more unsavoury. God, in His mercy, may yet reverse things. Whether or not He does, the Bible’s message is one of *hope*: Christ is coming again. Let us lift up our heads: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Martin Girard

Extracted from “Sky-Way Messages” with kind permission.

THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE

Revelation 5

In the Book of Revelation we have the winding up of the history of this world. Man is not only the being in whom God’s eternal purpose is established, but he is also the creature in whose history the question of good and evil has been solved, and in whom the conflict between God and Satan has been settled. The victory has been won in man; hence this book is very specially engaged with overcoming. Finally, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things” (Rev. 21:7).

There have been changing scenes and dispensations in the fevered history of this world, but the living God remains the same. He who is the Alpha of Genesis is the Omega of Revelation. Through all dispensations He is the same, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. It is stated in Psalm 90: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting [eternity to eternity], thou art God.”

The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is not only the One in whom all God's eternal purpose centres, but He is also the Beginning and the End of all God's ways. "Jehovah possessed me in *the beginning of his way*, before his works of old. I was set up [anointed] from eternity." This is spoken of Him who is the Wisdom of God. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, that is, that the Spirit of Christ spoke in every prophetic testimony. All things were created by Him and for Him, and of necessity every testimony of God must have reference to Him, and every dispensation has its accomplishment in Him. He is the great end of all God's ways, as well as the beginning.

There were no direct dealings of God with the world, after He had driven man out of paradise, until the flood. "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, *perished*" (2 Peter 3:6). God gave testimony in Abel, Enoch and Noah, but there was no dispensational ordering; that began with "the heavens and the earth which are now." Dispensations, strictly speaking, belong to the earth, but in connection with the heavens. We read, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). All depended upon the heavens, and the bow in the *cloud* betokened God's covenant with the *earth*, while upon earth government was put into the hands of Noah for the repression of evil.

We need not trace the successive dealings of God – His ways – and His intervention at various times in the ordering of the heavens and earth that are now; they will perish by fire as the old world perished by water; but in the Book of Revelation we have the final ways of God in relation to them, and the bringing in of a new heavens and earth where righteousness will dwell. Yet these ways of God are of all moment because Christ is the Centre of them, and all will be gathered up under Him. Moreover,

Christ is the subject of all the testimony given during the successive dealings of God. The Book of Revelation brings us to the last testimony on earth, the church being the vessel of such testimony. The seven churches are looked at as set to give light for Christ upon the earth whence He had been rejected, and in chapters 2 and 3 the history of this responsible witness for Christ is given to us.

In chapter 4, the witness in the responsible light-bearers having failed, the Seer is called up to heaven. There a throne, and also a Sitter upon it, the One who entered into covenant with the heavens and earth that are now. The present providential ordering of the created scene, as well as its creation, proceed from the Sitter upon the throne. There can be no doubt as to who it is. But there is a new thing in heaven, there is an elderhood who are sitting upon thrones, and who are intelligently acquainted with the mind of heaven, and they express in worship the reason why all God's ways must be for His own glory. "For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." The true saints are now in heaven; but what a state of things has come to pass upon earth! What a tangled mass of confusion where there should have been divine order! If we look at the churches, the world had crept into the church, and the church had sunk down into the world, and where good should have been found, there was spiritual wickedness. If we look at government, it had assumed the character of unrighteousness and violence. "The kings of the earth, stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ" (Acts 4:26). This was true in principle when the world powers condemned Jesus, but its full-blown character comes out in this book. The throne can but be arrayed according to the glory of Him who sat on it with the symbols of divine judgment.

In chapter 5 the Sitter on the throne has a *sealed* roll in His right hand. Its contents formed no part of the prophetic

declarations which are found in the Old Testament, nor had it anything to do with the mystery of Christ and the church – that had been made known to holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. It evidently contained a further unfolding of the dealings of God in connection with the state of things which had come to pass upon the earth – apostate Gentile government and an apostate church. The prophecies of the Old Testament show us the ways of God in regard to Israel as idolatrous and apostate, and in confederacy with the Gentiles. They rejected Christ, and said, “We have no king but Caesar.” That the church (which was set to give light for the One whom God had glorified in heaven, and who was coming again) should also have become mixed with Gentile powers involved, it seems to me, further dealings of God than those unfolded in Old Testament scriptures, in order to disentangle the confusion upon earth and to scatter the imaginations of wilful and apostate men. It is the apostasy of that which bears the name of God, whether Israel or the church, which brings the judgment of God both on itself and on the world, as Samson, the Nazarite to God, through unholy alliance with the Philistines, finally dragged down the building on the Philistines, but perished with them.

The question arises, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” God had raised up men of old in connection with His ways upon earth – Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah and others, but none was able to open the book or look thereon. ***One only*** could take it, and set in motion the various instruments which were to free this poor world from its bondage to Satan’s power as god and prince of it, and to disentangle all the confusion resulting from that which belongs to God becoming mixed with the world. “The Lion of the tribe of Juda hath ***prevailed*** [it is conquering power] to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof;” but it is as ***a Lamb*** that He takes it. It is the Lamb who suffered, once led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers dumb; it is ***He*** who opens the

seals and sets in motion the actings of the throne, so that the created scene shall be freed from the confusion of corrupting influences, and from the power of evil; so that it may be filled with the glory of redemption. He who is before us here as the Lamb who suffered, had known “the day of trouble” as we read in Psalm 20, and had cried to Him that was able to save Him out of death, and heard from the heaven of God’s holiness. Psalm 21 gives the answer to His petitions; but that which is perhaps most connected with the subject of Revelation 5 is contained in the words, “His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast set him to be blessings for ever” (margin). Such is the answer to His heart’s desire. The moment has come in the ways of God for the Lamb to take the book. The elders and living creatures understand what is involved in such an action; and are not we in the same intelligence?

The glory of the Lamb is great in the salvation which has been effected. Man, the world, and Satan are no longer to have things their way, but all that was set forth in Jesus in meekness and lowliness – the good pleasure of God – is to fill the earth. *He* is set to be blessings for ever. The new song heard in heaven is the song of redemption, and those who know redemption sing it. It is a song of anticipation consequent on the Lamb having taken the book; its great theme is the acquisition by the blood of redemption of the Lamb’s title to take out of this poor world what shall be for God; *His* kings and priests are to reign on the earth. Satan has set in motion every influence of evil which has corrupted and ruined the earth. How blessed now to see the Lamb take the book and in due time set in motion the hitherto hidden agents of God’s dealings. The cries of saints are to be answered; they have been in sympathy with the sorrows of the suffering Lamb, and as such their prayers are regarded as odours when He takes the book.

The angels, those ministers of His that do His pleasure, those that shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid, who formed the glory and chariots of Jehovah when He redeemed Israel and set His throne in their midst, those who now minister for those who are heirs of salvation, in their sphere they proclaim the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain to receive all the glory and blessing that is His. They had seen Him in weakness, in poverty, in humiliation, and in woe; they are not those who have part in the worth of redemption, but they take up the note of the elders and celebrate the glory of Him who effected it. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Lastly, the creature that has groaned now utters its note of praise to the Sitter on the throne and to the Lamb. All is now blessed in the full salvation of Jesus, and knows neither sorrow nor thraldom. Our part now is to keep the word of Christ’s patience. It may be that we are in the moment when He stands at the door and knocks in the wonderful patience of His love to the church. He knocks while there are any to hear amidst that indifference and self-complacency which is nauseous to Him. As the Lamb in the midst of the throne He is in sympathy with all that suffers for Him in the midst of evil, and He who suffered will in due time set in motion the actings of the throne to free everything from evil and to set up all in the power and blessing of redemption – the only ground on which the creature which has been tested can be brought into blessing in Christ.

T. H. Reynolds. Extracted from “Food for the Faithful,” Vol. V. (1902).

Four instances of early opposition to Christ in the four gospels: Matthew 2 (Herod’s action); Mark 3 (counsel of the Pharisees and Herodians); Luke 4 (rejection at Nazareth) and John 5 (persecution after healing the paralytic) – *Michael Godwin.*

THE STORM ON THE LAKE

Luke 8:22-25

In and through all the trouble the Lord has not turned hair's-breadth out of His way. We may be in distress, but faith will not say the Lord is far away, but will know Him nigh at hand. The Lord let them be in jeopardy, the ship filled with water, and Himself asleep, on purpose to put their faith to the test, to prove if they were really trusting Him and that it might be seen if such foolish thoughts would arise, when they were put into jeopardy. They say, "Lord, we perish;" but they were in the ship with Christ, and could they be drowned? He said to them, Where is your faith? Well might He say thus to them, for though the water was in the boat, He was there too, and could sleep through it all. It was not so much of Him they were thinking as of themselves. "We perish" (said they), and it is just the same now; for the fact of being in danger with Christ in the boat is the same at one time as at another – just as impossible now as then; and in truth Christ is much more with us now, being more perfectly revealed to us, and we are united to Him, one with Him, so that He is with us every moment in the power of the Spirit.

However high the waves may rise, there is no drowning His love and thoughts towards us. The test is to our faith. The question is, Have we that faith which so realises Christ's presence as to keep us as calm and composed in the rough sea as [in] the smooth? It was not really a question of the rough or the smooth sea, when Peter was sinking in the water, for he would have sunk without Christ, just as much in the smooth as in the rough sea. The fact was, the eye was off Jesus [and] on the wave, and that made him sink. If we go on with Christ, we shall get into all kinds of difficulty, many a boisterous sea; but being one with Him, His safety is ours. The eye should be off events, although they be ever so solemn, and surely they are so at this present time, and I feel them to be so; for none perhaps has a deeper sense than I of the growth of evil, and of the

solemn state of things ; but I know all is as settled and secure as if the whole world were favourable. I quite dread the way many dear saints are looking at events, and not looking at Christ and for Christ. The Lord Himself is the security of His people, and, let the world go on as it may, no events can touch Christ. We are safe on the sea if only we have the eye off the waves, with the heart concentrated on Christ and on the interests of Christ. Then the devil Himself cannot touch us.

Extracted from “Notes on the Gospel of Luke,” by J.N. Darby; Collected Writings Vol. 25.

THE REPENTANT THIEF

Luke 23:30-43

Thus, then, in spite of the grace of Jesus in intercession, Jews and Gentiles joined in mockery of the crucified; yet God had prepared, even here, the consolation of His mercy for Jesus in a poor sinner. But no sorrow, no shame, no suffering brings the heart too low to scorn Jesus; a gibbeted robber despises Him! There is an instinct, so to speak, in every unrenewed heart, against Jesus, which was not quelled even by that power of love in which He was going down into the deepest humiliation, to suffer the wrath due to sin. Say not that you are one whit better than this wretched man. “There is none righteous, no, not one: none that understandeth; none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable.” In two words, there is no difference. You are as bad, in God’s sight, as the railing impenitent thief. See now the fruit of grace in the other. Grace works in a man who was in as low a condition as he who, notwithstanding his own dying agony and disgrace, had pleasure in outraging the Lord of glory; indeed both had done it (Mark 15: 32). But what more blessed and certain than the salvation of this thief, now that he bows to the name of Jesus? He is going to Paradise in companionship with the Lord whom he owned.

It is often idly said, that there was one saved in this way, that none might despair, and but one, that none might presume. The truth is, that this is the only way whereby any poor sinner can be saved. There is but one and the same salvation for all. There was evidently no time for him to do anything, had this been the way; but all is done for him. That very day his knees were to be broken. But how could he get into Paradise! Christ wrought his deliverance through His own death, and his eye was opened in faith to what Christ was doing.

Nor was it only that Christ's work was wrought for him – the ground on which his soul rested for salvation. There was a mighty moral work wrought in him through the revelation of Christ to his soul by the Spirit who convinced him of his utter sinfulness. “Dost not thou fear God,” is his rebuke to his railing fellow, “seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly.” It was not all joy. Conscience had its place. There is a real sense of good and evil; for he has got in spirit into God’s presence, and this, making him forget circumstances, elevates him into a preacher of righteousness. And if he owns the rightness of his own punishment in honest confession of sin, what a wonderful testimony he bears to Christ! “This man hath done nothing amiss.” It was just as if he had known Christ all his life. He had a divine perception of His character; and so with the Christian now. Have you such jealousy about the spotlessness and glory of Christ, that you cannot help crying out when you hear Him slighted? He believed that He was the Lord, the Son of God, and so could answer with assurance for what He had been as a man. As completely a man as any other, the holy obedience of Christ was divine. “This man hath done nothing amiss.” What a response in the renewed heart to the delight of sinlessness! His eye glances, as it were, over the whole life of Christ; he could answer for Christ anywhere, because he has learnt to know himself.

Then he says, turning to Jesus, “Lord, remember me, when

thou comest in thy kingdom.” As soon as he can get rid of what was sad, when he has done with his testimony to the other thief, his heart turns to Christ instinctively. How undistracted he was! Was he thinking of his pain? or of the people around the cross? As is always the case, where God’s presence is realised, he was absorbed. In the extremity of helplessness, as to outward appearance, he hears the Shepherd’s voice, and recognised Him as the Saviour and King. He wants Christ to think of him. The judgment of men was that Christ was a malefactor. The weeping women saw not who He was. But no degradation of circumstances could hide the glory of the Person who hung by his side. He owned Jesus as the Lord, and knows that His kingdom will certainly come. The other malefactor thought only, if he thought at all, of present deliverance; but this one saw the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. His mind was set, not on being free from bodily pain, but on the loving recognition of Christ in glory. He looks not to earth, nor nature, but to another kingdom, where death could not come. There was not a cloud, not a doubt, but the peaceful settled assurance that the Lord would come in His kingdom.

And the Lord gave him more than his faith asked. There was the answer of present peace. It was not only the kingdom by-and-by, but “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” As if He said, You shall have the kingdom when it comes, but I am giving now soul-salvation; you are to be associated at once with Me in a way far better and more than the kingdom, blessed and true as it is. For indeed the work was accomplished on the cross, which could transport a soul into Paradise. If the Saviour had taken the sinner’s place, the sinner is by grace entitled to take the place of the Saviour. The poor thief might know but little of Christ’s work and its effect, but the Holy Spirit had fixed his heart on the person of Christ. The words of the Lord (v. 43) imply the atonement, by virtue of which we are made fit to be His companions in the presence of God. The

work of Christ is as perfect now for us, as then for him; it is as much accomplished for us as if we were already caught up into Paradise. How distinct this is from anything like progress of the soul to fit it for heaven! And how wonderful that such a soul should be a comfort to the Saviour! He had come into the condemnation; yea, and wrath was on Him to the uttermost. And now the converted thief was a bright witness of perfect grace and eternal salvation through His blood.

*Extracted from “Notes on the Gospel of Luke,” by J.N. Darby;
Collected Writings Vol. 25.*

WAITING ON GOD

Isaiah 64:4

The New Translation by J.N. Darby helps us to understand the meaning of this verse by rendering the last part: “a God ... who acteth for him that waiteth for Him.” What I had in mind was to say a word with regard to waiting on God.

I believe that this must be regarded as distinct from prayer, although intimately connected with it. That is to say, you may have prayer without the element of waiting upon God. There is evidently great blessing accruing to those who wait upon God. I have no doubt everyone here is accustomed to pray, for there is no more delightful occupation for a believer than praying, unless it be praising. But the one is often the outcome of the other. But to have the favour of speaking to God, and to speak with the Lord in heaven, is greatly valued, I am sure, by every one of us. The thing to which we look forward on arising in the morning is to speak to God – and to speak **with** Him, for there are experiences in the life of all believers when they have the sense of God speaking to them as they speak to Him.

Prayer fortifies the believer as having to meet the influences

of the world and of his own heart. But what I have very much before me now is the experience of waiting upon God. There are wonderful things – “things which the eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man’s heart” (1 Corinthians 2:9) – which God has prepared for those that wait for Him. The apostle in 1 Corinthians gives an additional touch to the matter as showing that those who wait upon God are those who love Him. I believe that all the persons whom God has taken up from the very beginning have been accustomed to wait upon Him, and I raise the enquiry as to whether or not we ourselves are accustomed to do this.

I suppose you have all, in varying measure, had the experience of speaking to God about a matter but receiving no reply. Now what are you going to do? Will you abandon the pursuit, or will you wait upon God? The waiting process tests us much, but it is a most delightful experience to wait upon God with a sure and certain sense in your soul that none ever did so in vain. It is part of our education for the realm in which we are soon to dwell, that we should wait on God.

I think Noah stands out as one who had to wait on God. The inferences are too strong to be disregarded that Noah recoiled from the condition of things in the earth where he lived and took an opposite course. ***He was a righteous man*** and God regarded him as such; and there was a time when God intimated to him that the end of all flesh had come. God frequently indicates what He is about to do before He does it, and Noah had to learn to wait on God as to what He was about to do.

As waiting upon God you rejoice in your heart in the sense that you have a secret with Him. It is a wonderful experience to be in a secret with God. * Noah enjoyed that. And as he built the ark during that long period he was waiting. Day by day he

* See Psalm 25:14 – Editor.

no doubt communicated with God while waiting. And when he was put in the ark and the door was shut, he had to wait for God to release him (*see Genesis 8:15, 16*).

I am perfectly certain that Noah, as the outcome of waiting upon God, developed a moral greatness which distinguished him above the whole generation in which he lived.

Then again one may refer to Abram. The God of glory appeared to him in a land of idolatry, where evidently there were movements in the heart of this beloved man. God appeared to him and called him out of his country, his kindred and his father's house (*Genesis 12:1*) and he came out, not knowing whither he was going, but he was waiting on God. What did it matter if he did not know where he was going if he had God to wait on? The experience which he had he could not have derived in any other way.

Then in the matter of offering up his son, God said that he was to do this "on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (*Gen. 22:2*), so still further Abraham was compelled to wait on God. All through his remarkable experiences, save for certain lapses, this thing characterised him, that he waited on God.

As to ourselves, as brought into relation with God – in His family as His children and in His household as His sons – it is our privilege to wait upon God. I understand that this far exceeds simply making a request to Him and leaving it there. **Waiting upon God is with the affection of heart borne constantly towards Him, ever having in mind what we have spoken to Him about.** It may involve patience, but this is amply rewarded.

We are called into holy intimacy with God; do we understand this? I understand that in the world great prices are paid in order to be allowed to speak to royal personages, but you need pay no price nor negotiate any unholy machinery to come into God's presence; it is your rightful place to be near Him.

Nothing, surely, can be greater in the life of a believer than to be intimate with God and to know what it is to wait continually upon Him.

Besides Noah and Abraham, I might speak of others – of Joseph, David and many others – who knew what it was to wait upon God. There were those who through long hours of darkness consciously and patiently waited on God. None waited in vain.

As surely as the sun rises in the morning, so surely will God answer you. The process of being kept waiting may test you much but it educates you greatly. When once you have passed a period of waiting on God with no answer, no apparent issue, the dawn will come and God will show you His way. Of that I am absolutely certain.

Now in the life of Jesus here, perfect though He was, the great and Holy One of God, there was this particular element of waiting upon God. Some of us cannot wait: somebody must speak, somebody must act but why not say, somebody must wait? **God will never fail anyone who waits on Him.**

Think of the Lord in Jerusalem (*Luke 2:42-50*); He knew about His Father's business – what great affairs were to be put into His hands! Think of Him as a boy of twelve years old in the city, in the temple, the One who was going to bring about the reconciliation of all things, who was going to destroy the power of death and the whole power of evil. He says, “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?” Think of Him coming down to Nazareth and waiting. Think of that heart turning heavenward daily – frequently – and waiting upon God. Which is greater: to accomplish great things for God, or to be near Him?* The Lord, I believe, placed greater value on the intercourse He had with His Father than on the greatest thing He ever did for Him. So He went down to Nazareth and was in sub-

* *No doubt the latter may lead to the former – Editor.*

jection to His parents.

The item for our consideration is this: are we really ourselves in touch with God? Do you know Him? I have known obscure people who did. A case comes to my mind now: a person who lived in a little wooden cottage who could speak in the most intimate way. Never shall I forget the look: "Do you think God will ever fail me? – Never, never!" Are we really intimate with God? God's great work at the present time is to bring us near to Him. We have become nigh by the blood of Christ (*Ephesians 2:13*). We all have access in the power of one Spirit. Do we know this nearness? Do we know what it is to wait upon God? It is positively lovely to get in touch with someone who is accustomed to wait on God.

The time came in the precious life of Jesus when He was baptised by John the Baptist. All the people having been baptised, and Jesus having been baptised, He was praying (*see Luke 3:21*). He was not preaching yet but waiting on God, praying. It is a most touching thing to think of Him, the lowly, humble Man, coming up out of the river, His garments all wet; standing there, praying by the Jordan, waiting on God. What will God do next? What will He, Jesus, do next? He waits. What God did was to open the heavens; the Spirit came down in the bodily form of a dove and there was a voice from heaven that was for His own heart as to the place He had as the Beloved.

Beloved brethren, we are missing much if we do not know what it is to wait, and to wait only on God. You may say, I am in difficulty with my home; I have to leave the place in which I am living. Well, when you do not know what to do, don't do anything. Wait upon God and leave the way open for Him to come in, for that He certainly will. What about your family? Are we accustomed to letting things drift, allowing our children to drift into the world? You and I as parents and heads of families are to wait on God. You say it is impossible. Have you never

read these words, “with God all things are possible” (*Mark 10:27*)?

You say that the case is a hopeless one. No, I challenge that. I ask you earnestly, is any case hopeless when you can bring God in? It is a practice, this waiting on God, and the Lord Jesus in His lowly, humble life pre-eminently set it forth. There came a moment – the transfiguration – when He went up the mount knowing what was coming, which shows that nothing ever took the Lord by surprise. * I have often had the desire that one might be nearer to God and that things might not take one by surprise.

I am greatly concerned now with the coming of the Lord Jesus. I believe that if we will only wait on Him He will give a definite indication that He is coming. § Have you any intimation from Him that He is coming? What is your own personal experience with the Lord? Is so great a moment to come without any kind of intimation in the hearts of those who love Him? I rather doubt it.

Just before He ascended, they said, “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (*Acts 1:6*). I have a strong impression that there will be those here on the earth who will be in the secret of the fact that the Lord is about to come; I would like to be one of them. I believe there will come an impression into the hearts of believers that the Lord is at hand. I would like to wait upon Him so that I have some indication from Himself that He is about to come. I would like to put my book down – or whatever I was doing – and say, “Lord Jesus, come”

* *I think the speaker may have had in mind that they spoke of His departure which He would accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31 – Editor.*

§ *This at first struck me as a somewhat presumptuous claim but then I remembered the indication which was given to Simeon as to the Lord’s first advent (Luke 2:26) – Editor.*

and He will come, and we shall be gone. I am convinced that the Lord would have us wait on Him as to it, for it is at hand. He is at the very doors. He will come. If He comes in the dead of night, remember that it is daylight on the other side. I would love to wake out of sleep and know the Lord is coming and so be ready in affection to greet Him. It will be with waiting upon Him. How many days do we let pass without referring to it at all? This should not be.

I went into a brother's house and on the wall was "Perhaps Today." How lovely to be in the household of a brother who on his knees, with his whole soul throbbing, says, "Oh, Lord, is it today?" Now the Lord is awaiting everywhere this enquiry as to His coming, and if we wait upon Him we will get some intimation from Him that His coming is imminent. I was referring to the Lord going up the Mount as knowing; yet having ascended we find Him praying, or waiting on God (*Luke 9:29*). As He prayed – not *after* His countenance was altered and His clothing changed – the fruit of waiting upon God was that this transfiguration took place. It is open to us all to practise waiting on heaven, waiting on God as it is here in the passage of Scripture we have read (*Isaiah 64:4*): "nor hath eye seen a God beside Thee, who acteth for him who waiteth for Him."

Now to pass on. Think of the moment of the Lord's crucifixion and recall the remarkable words of the fortieth Psalm: "I waited patiently for Jehovah." Think of that moment on the cross, as abandoned by God and enduring His wrath against sin: "I waited patiently." While God forsook Him as then the Sin-Offering, yet He saw in that Person in that place the most transcendent glory of a Man who, although abandoned, yet waited patiently for God to come in. "He brought me up ... out of the miry clay ... and He hath put a new song in my mouth." Look what an array of things has come in with waiting patiently upon God. Oh, beloved brethren, there was a measure of solace

in the heart of Christ; though abandoned, He waited upon God. It was not only that, as Man, He prayed to God; He did that, but He waited on Him.

Quoting Psalm 22 (v. 21), “Thou hast heard Me.” Neither you, nor I, nor any other saint at any time, in any place, can ever come into such dire circumstances; yet here is the eternal witness that God will never forsake any that wait on Him. For although, in His righteousness and holiness, He forsook Christ when bearing our sins, yet while the work was being accomplished and He was hung on a cross to die, there was One who waited on God and, when the work was done, God came to Him and answered Him. It says, “and having been heard because of His piety” (*Hebrews 5:7*). He brought God in as in His very inmost affections He clung to Him. Although He was forsaken He waited on God. The establishment of universal glory will be the answer to it.

We have the joy of waiting upon God, and He will never fail us. I say most respectfully that merely to offer our prayers is not enough. There are, alas, Christian households where prayers are not offered but thankfully there are others where they *are* offered and, moreover, where the head of the household shuts himself in (*Matthew 6:6*) and waits on God. The most dire need in any family will be met, and all business difficulties will be solved, if you will only wait on God. Any difficulty in the church will be solved if we know what it is to wait only on God. May the Lord graciously help us to do this.

Uncorrected (but lightly edited) notes of an address given in Manchester by Mr. Russell Besley on 5th July, 1930.

What a happy people we should be if we were mirrors reflecting Christ, in the perfect consciousness of our weakness, but looking at Christ in heaven, bearing up amidst all the evil that is coming in like a flood, because He is up there! – G.V. Wigram

FELLOWSHIP IN A DAY OF BREAKDOWN

Any right-minded Christian must be sobered, even distressed, at the increasing corruption of Christendom. Yes, thank God, there are those who are faithful (the Lord knows who and where they are), just as in Elijah's day God could say, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18). Nevertheless, the overall picture of Christendom today, certainly in western countries, is one of increasing disobedience to the Holy Scriptures and the spreading of immoral teachings and practices. The present rapid decline of the secular world is one thing, but when things are said and done **in Christ's Name** which are an affront to God and blatantly contrary to His word, we can understand why the Lord has to say (actually to the church at Laodicea but no doubt prophetically as to the carcase of unbelieving Christendom), "I am about to spue thee out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:16).

What, then, is the Christian to do who seeks to be faithful to the Lord? Firstly, the Bible is clear and authoritative in its injunctions to depart from evil. "Depart from evil, and do good" (Psalm 34:14 – alluded to by the apostle Peter in his first epistle, ch. 3, v.11); we should note that departure from evil precedes doing good. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 we are exhorted to "cleanse ourselves from every pollution of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Paul writes to Timothy against the background of worsening conditions in the church and says: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ (*or 'the Lord'*) depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). He also exhorts us to purge ourselves from vessels "to dishonour" (vv. 20, 21). J.N. Darby in his translation explains that the word rendered "purge" in the KJV means to purify oneself "from these in separating from them."

Sometimes the parable which the Lord spoke about the

wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30) is adduced to justify continuance alongside what is plainly evil; but in His exposition of this parable the Lord explains that “the field is the world” (v.38) – not the church. It was indeed misguided of reformers in past centuries to try and impose Biblical truth on the populace through civic government. Paul distinguishes between the church and the world when he writes to the Corinthians: “Do ye not judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth” (1 Cor. 5:12, 13).

But, having stood apart from what we judge to be evil in God’s sight, how do we then find Christian fellowship? One thing is important: nowhere are we given a mandate to start a new church. The Scriptures recognise only one church, whether locally or universally, comprising all true believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, those who by one Spirit have been baptised into one body.

What Paul goes on to exhort in 2 Timothy 2 is that we should follow certain moral principles – “righteousness, faith, love, peace” – and that we should do so “with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (v. 22). It has been contended that it does not say “*all* those who call ...” but surely the plain meaning of Paul’s words is that the test for my enjoying fellowship with other believers is whether or not they call on the Lord out of a pure heart; there is no right extended to me to select a certain group of these and limit my fellowship to them.

We are thus brought into (not an externally defined position or grouping but) a path marked out by certain governing moral principles. We do not claim to be the church (though of it) but hold to the truth that there is one church of which Christ in heaven is the Head. As seeking to please Him, we would surely want to regulate ourselves according to what He desires to see in His church, as Scripture teaches us. This would include both the positive things – for example, continuance “in the apostles’

doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42) – and the maintenance of right discipline (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6 etc.).

I believe it was on these lines that many Christians in the early part of the nineteenth century acted in leaving the established churches and dissenting bodies to gather together simply on the ground of the one body. They became known as brethren, although this is a scriptural appellation which applies to all believers. As time went by, however, some of their successors withdrew into closed fellowships for fear of being linked with elements that did not match with their own faith and practice. As had been demonstrated in the monastic movement, however, withdrawal into a closed fellowship has again proved no protection against evil; it eventually arises from **within** the group. In any event, such an attempt to be separate from evil denies the truth of the one body of Christ as thoughts, affections and commitments become limited within a small, defined circle. In particular, the breaking of bread, which should be the expression of the unity of Christians, becomes the index to various groupings of Christians, each with its own distinctive position with regard to teaching, practice and past events.

Perhaps, therefore, it is timely to bring forward some of the teaching, exhortations and warnings that were given on these matters more than 100 years ago.

From J.N. Darby (1800-82)

I do trust that you will keep infinitely far from sectarianism. The great body of Christians who are accustomed to religion, are scarce capable of understanding anything else, as the mind ever tends there. If they become so in their position before God, they would be utterly useless, and I am persuaded, immediately broken to pieces. You are nothing, nobody, but Christians, and

the moment you cease to be an available mount of communion for any consistent Christian, you will go to pieces or help the evil.

(Letter, April 30th, 1833)

There cannot be too much care as to holiness and truth: the Spirit is the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of truth. But ignorance of ecclesiastical truth is not a ground of excommunication, where the conscience and walk is (*sic*) undefiled ...

In all that concerns faithfulness, God is my witness, I seek no looseness; but Satan is busy to lead us one side or the other, to destroy the largeness of the unity of the body, or to make it mere looseness in practice and doctrine; we must not fall into one in avoiding the other. Reception of all true saints is what gives its force to the exclusion of those walking loosely. If I exclude all who walk godlily as well, who do not follow with us, it loses its force, for those who are godly are shut out too.

There is no membership of brethren. Membership of an assembly is unknown to scripture. It is members of Christ's body. If people must be all of you, it is practically membership of your body. The Lord keep us from it; that is simply dissenting ground.

(Letter, April 19th, 1869)

The principle of meeting is the unity of the body, so that a person known as a Christian is free to come: only the person who introduces him should have the confidence of the assembly as to his competency to judge of the person he introduces. ...

I have never changed my views at all. The practice is more difficult because of the growing looseness in doctrines and practice all around. But if an assembly refused a person known to be a Christian and blameless, because he was not of the assembly, I should not go. I own no membership but of Christ. An assembly composed as such of its members is at once a sect.

(Letter, date unknown)

From C.H. Mackintosh (1820-96)

... But I must hasten on to other branches of our subject, only stating another simple principle connected with the Lord's Supper, to which I desire to call the special attention of the Christian reader; it is this: the celebration of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper should be the distinct expression of the unity of **all** believers, and not merely of the unity of a certain number gathered on certain principles, which distinguish them from others. If there be any term of communion proposed, save the all-important one of faith in the atonement of Christ, and a walk consistent with that faith, the table becomes the table of a sect, and possesses no claim on the hearts of the faithful.

Furthermore, if by sitting at the table I must identify myself with any one thing, whether it be principle or practice, not enjoined in Scripture, as a term of communion, there also the table becomes the table of a sect. It is not a question of whether there may be Christians there or not; it would be hard indeed to find a table amongst the reformed communities of which some Christians are not partakers. The apostle did not say, "there must be heresies among you, that they which are **Christians** may be made manifest among you." No; but "that they which are **approved**." Nor did he say, "Let a man prove himself a Christian, and so let him eat." No; but "let a man approve himself," i.e. let him show himself to be one of those who are not only upright in their own consciences as to their individual act in the matter, but who are confessing the oneness of the body of Christ. When men set up terms of communion of their own, there you find the principle of heresy; there, too, there must be schism.

From E. Dennett (1831-1914)

Nor were they (*i.e. those returning from Babylon to Jerusalem – Ezra chapter 8*) unmindful of the Lord after the

difficulties of their journey were over; for “the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he-goats for a sin offering; all this was a burnt-offering unto the Lord.” It is touching in the extreme to see this feeble remnant, as also was the case at the dedication of the house of God (chap. 6, v.17), embrace in their faith the whole of Israel. They were but few in number, but they could accept no narrower ground than that of the twelve tribes, and to this they testified by the number of their offerings. It is the same now, or should be so, with those who are gathered out to the name of the Lord Jesus on the ground of the one body. They also may be few, feeble and poor; but if they have any intelligence of the wealthy place into which they have been brought, they will refuse any narrower ground than that of all the members of the one body; and if they hold this truth in power, their sacrifices of praise will bear witness to it in the presence of all. Failing to do so, they degenerate, whatever their profession, into the narrowest sectarianism, than which nothing is more abhorrent to the mind of the Lord. Others may taunt them with their poverty and broken condition; but if they do (but “with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love”) endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, maintaining before God the sense of oneness with all the saints, the Lord will abundantly sustain them with His blessing.

(Ezra, or, Restoration from Babylon, page 82)

These extracts (and many others could be cited of a similar purport) are not reproduced as ‘authoritative ministry’ but the reader is invited to consider prayerfully whether or not they fairly represent the truth of Scripture – Editor.

POETIC PAGES

To God, who preserves all things in life

1 Timothy 6:13-16

To Thee – alone
Dwelling in uncreated light –
Who hast unknown,
Immortal Being beyond sight –
Honour and everlasting might.

Yet though our eyes
May not behold Thy Deity
(So broadly lies
The gulf between all else and Thee),
We Thine unmeasured glories see!

By faith we see
Jesus with highest honour crowned;
And majesty
Divine and human, without bound,
Filling with joy all heaven around!

In Him revealed
Thy counsel, ere the world began;
Naught is concealed,
O God, of all Thy wondrous plan,
Divine perfection in a Man!

Soon shall the veil
That covers Him be drawn aside;
Suns shall grow pale
Before His splendour, beaming wide;
Nor any nook His glory hide.

The Potentate,
The Lord of lords and sovereign King,
Shall reign in state,

All nations shall His virtue sing,
To Him their gifts and treasure bring.

To God – alone
Dwelling in uncreated light –
Who hast unknown,
Immortal Being beyond sight –
Honour and everlasting might!

From “Poems by E.L. Bevir (1847-1922). In an edited form, this poem has appeared as No. 20 in several more recent editions of “Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Little Flock.”

A Garden

Song of Solomon 4:12-16

We are a garden wall'd around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness.

Like trees of myrrh and spice we stand,
Planted by God the Father's hand;
And all His springs in Sion flow
To make the young plantation grow.

Awake, O heav'ly wind! and come,
Blow on this garden of perfume;
Spirit divine! descend and breathe
A gracious gale on plants beneath.

Make our best spices flow abroad,
To entertain our Saviour God;
And faith, and love, and joy appear,
And ev'ry grace be active here.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

The Sympathy of Jesus

"His compassions fail not" – Lamentations 3:22

When my heart is weary, heavy,
Bending 'neath the weight of woe,
When the streams of earthly gladness
All for me have ceased to flow;

Oh, how blessed to remember
Him whose heart doth beat for me,
Him whose sympathy is ever
Strong, and fresh, and full, and free!

Trace Him as He went His journey
From the manger to the grave,
Loved so little, yet so loving,
Gracious, pitying, strong to save.

Never from a tale of sorrow,
Heedless did He turn His ear;
Oil and wine He always carried,
Wounded hearts to heal and cheer.

See Him through those hours of darkness,
See Him on the shameful tree!
What but love could e'er have led Him
To endure so much for me?

As on earth, so now in glory
Jesus' heart is loving still;
Nothing – even all my coldness –
Can suffice His love to chill!

T. Willey (1847-1930)

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