

Words Of Peace & Truth

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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

Surely every true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ must feel both the rapid deterioration in the world around us and the way in which the trends in the world are, alas, manifest in what is called “the church,” that is to say, the aggregate of all those who profess to be Christians.

As to the world at large – “the present evil world” from which Christ died to deliver us (Galatians 1:4) – we should not underestimate the “spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies” (Ephesians 6:12), which is bearing down on governments and other organisations, deceiving them and causing them to connive at, and even promote, what is evil.

As to Christendom, I would not wish for a moment to plant doubts in the mind of any true believer but there needs to be reality with us, not just profession. Some will come to the Lord claiming a relationship with Him – even to have spoken in His Name – and yet He will have to say to them, “Depart from Me” (Matt. 7:23; Luke 13:27). May every reader truly know Jesus as Saviour and Lord and be preserved from the influence of the grievous and ravaging wolves (Acts 20:29; Matt. 7:15) that have come among the flock of Christ.

But let us not be alarmed by the rise and spread of evil. Let us remember that God is utterly supreme and so above everything that happens that He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him (Psalm 76:10). Someone has said “You have to be very powerful for your enemies to do your will, while acting against you!” The article about Samson’s riddle should encourage us as to this. G.S.B.

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THOSE WHO ARE JUSTIFIED

“**THEREFORE** we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28). With these words the Apostle Paul strikes at the root of that teaching which instructs us to keep the law with a view to being justified.

It may be interesting in considering the subject of justification to inquire in the first place who are those that are justified, for there is a popular notion abroad that we must by improved living and exemplary practice prepare ourselves to be justified.

When so many different opinions prevail it is safe to return to the holy scripture, of which it is said, “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Please turn then to Romans 4:5. Here we read, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth

The ungodly.”

The ungodly then are they who are justified, not those who have attained a pure and blameless life by the correction of evil and ugly habits. And after all, such practice is only an outward improvement.

The ungodly then are justified. This is a comforting word for those who long after justification and have tried by good works to attain it and have been bitterly disappointed. Are there any such? Indeed there are, thousands. They carry a burden upon their heart and long for liberty with a desire difficult to describe. On what ground are the ungodly justified; in what manner do they enter upon this blessed state?

Let me say just here that

it is God who justifies.

He does it Himself unaided by us (see Rom. 8:33), and He

justifies the ungodly apart from the works of the law. We must not forget that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was delivered for our offences. These have not been overlooked, nor have they been passed over in the kindness of God, as some would have us believe. No; a divine Person has been on earth and has borne the judgment of the throne in regard of man's sins; hence it is God that justifieth. Our Lord Jesus Christ was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. Have we nothing to do, nothing to give in order to be blessed in this marvellous way? Again let us turn to scripture (Rom. 3:24):

“Being justified freely

by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Justification comes freely to us, but remember it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. That hour of woe and death through which the Saviour passed, in which He lifted up His voice and cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” must ever tell how much it cost to secure the blessing, of which we have spoken.

And are we fully cleared from all that was against us or can come up against us? Yes, the work which God has undertaken to do has been done worthily of Him who has done it. We are

justified from all things,

from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).

Alas! the law of Moses could never justify a man; it could only condemn him. But here it is said “*by him*,” that is, by Christ Jesus, through Him. It is then what He is as risen from the dead (Rom. 4:25), not what we are at all. By Him! Look away from yourself and your own feelings and fears. It is not *by you*, but *by Him*.

It should be noted, however, that this blessing of justification is known to those

who believe.

What does this mean? Briefly this, that instead of attempting to appear before God in the acceptance of what you can be, or bring, or become, you turn wholly away from any hope in yourself and believe in Him whom God has raised from the dead. If you take God at His word that He justifies the ungodly; that it is God who justifies; that He justifies freely; that He justifies from all things, then your faith is counted for righteousness, for it is written: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

It is a wonderful thing for one who is a sinner and who has deeply felt his sinfulness to have the sense of being justified, and in the language of those words so familiar to many to be able to say: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ : by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1, 2). May God grant that both reader and writer may know these things better.

Author unknown; reproduced from "The Believer's Friend," edited by Russell Besley, Vol. III (1911).

THE LAW AND CHRIST

There are three things the law could not do: it could not give life, and, even suppose we got life, it does not give strength; and, another thing of the deepest moment for our souls, it does not give an object. But in Christ I find my life, my strength, and my object. "They that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5); they have the true object. I get in Christ an object that is sufficient to delight God Himself.

Collected writings of J.N. Darby (1800 – 1882), Vol. 31 (New Series), p. 155.

SAMSON'S RIDDLE

Genesis chapters 1-9

“OUT of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” (Judges 14:14). Samson’s riddle – God’s riddle.

This has been abundantly illustrated in the story of this world. May I not say it is the key of the whole of it. It figuratively shows us God and the enemy at their several work – the enemy doing his work as the strong and the eater, and God, in gracious, victorious power, forcing him to yield both meat and sweetness – constantly and ever bringing good out of evil, and building new systems of wonder and glory and joy out of the ruins Satan has wrought.

I am now, however, looking at this only as it is presented to us in the earliest chapters of scripture; I mean Genesis 1-9.

Man in innocency is set in the garden of Eden; and there (as His whole creation) God is glorified and has His joy, while the creature is blest and happy.

But man loses this goodly estate. He forfeits his innocency under the temptation of the serpent, and with His innocency he loses everything.

This leads at once into a new scene. To be sure it does. But we have to ask, What do we see of man, and of the blessed God Himself there?

God makes a coat of skins for Adam, and puts it on Adam, and also another for Eve, and puts it on her.

I ask again, Was this a work more or less grateful to Him than His previous six days’ work of creation? Let us consider it. At the work of creation the Lord God had materials before Him, and in beauty and in fruitfulness He was garnishing the heavens and furnishing the earth. But now He has *Christ* before Him, and He is occupied with that work of grace which had been the secret and

counsel of His bosom in His own eternity, and which will be for wonder and joy and praise in another eternity.

And as to Adam, he, at the beginning, called his help-meet “woman,” but now he calls her “Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”

I ask again, In which of these names of his help-meet did Adam find his chief joy? I will let *this* give the answer: ‘He-received her at the first as from himself, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; but now he receives her as the mother (and to himself the witness) of that mysterious Seed who was to conduct a controversy with the great enemy who had lately ruined Him, till He had overthrown and crushed him.’

May I not now say, Can we doubt which of these was the spring of the richer joy to Adam? And besides this exultation in the spirit of *Adam*, there is evidence of a like joy or exultation on the lips of *Eve*, when she cries, “I have gotten a man from the Lord,” on the birth of her firstborn. And afterwards there is a striking expression of intelligent, believing triumph in Abel, when he offers the fat with the lamb upon his altar. And still further, as we do not see in Eden, saints are presented to us as calling together on the name of the Lord, as walking with God, as dying to this life and this world, and as taken to heaven. And what is all this to the heart of man? Is this more or less than innocency and the garden? Is not heaven a brighter scene than Eden could have been, had it continued man’s unsoiled inheritance for ever? (Gen. 1-5.)

I leave these contrasts, that they may tell us whether or not the eater was forced, in that earliest moment of our history, to yield meat, and the strong one sweetness.

We come, however, to another and a later field of observation, where again we find God Himself and His creature man, as well as the ruthless eater.

Wickedness ripens itself, heads itself up to its full form, and the flood, the judgment of God, overwhelms it. But an ark, for salvation through the judgment, is in grace prescribed by God, and in faith built by Noah. And when it is ready, all the creatures of the earth, according to God's election, I may say, come up to take their place in it. And then, in the due moment, when all are housed, Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives, and all these separated creatures of every sort, God Himself shuts them in, imparting His own strength and safety to His chosen, and making their condition as unassailable as His own throne could be.

Then, while in the ark, Noah had exercises of heart – exercises, I may say, in the Spirit. There was the opening of the window, and the mission of the raven and the dove, the taking in of the dove, and again sending her out, and again a second time taking her in with an olive leaf in her mouth; and then, the uncovering of the ark; all this having its various mystic meaning of bright and wondrous truth. And as the time comes for leaving the ark, everything goes forth just as fresh and abundant as when they went in thirteen months before; nothing wanting – however small and insignificant – nothing damaged, however tender and exposed; and all this, a second time, under the eye of Noah. What must all this have been to his spirit! What fresh and varied delight must all this have been to him, though the work of the eater had made this imprisonment in the day of the judgment of God necessary to him. (Gen. 6-8.)

And, after all this great parenthetical season, and the ark is left of all that it had carried through the judgment of God, and “the earth that now is,” as Peter calls it, is trod by Noah and his ransomed host; we see his altar and his sacrifice, and God's acceptance of it. Noah takes the new world as in the name of Jesus. He enters it on the authority and by virtue of what Christ was to him. He reads his title to it in the blood of the Lamb of God and offers his burnt-offerings of praise accordingly. The ark had been Christ to him in the day of judgment, and the kingdom that follows shall be his only through

Christ. What a free-will offering was this! And what was it to the God of his salvation? We may know something of that when we read, “And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more, for man’s sake.” Had there ever been such language in the divine bosom before? God had rested in His work of creation with infinite delight, we know. He rested, as we read, and was refreshed. But now, the value of Christ for a doomed creation is before Him, put there in all the preciousness of the blood of atonement, by the faith of a sinner who was confessing to Him, in the mysterious language of his altar, that all his title to anything and to everything was to be found in the sacrifice of His own Lamb. Before this, God had said, “It is not good that man should be alone;” but now He says “*in his heart*, I will not curse the ground any more for man’s sake.” Before this, He had seen that the work of His hand was good, but now He was smelling a sweet savour in the work of Christ.

Was not all this meat and sweetness again? The enemy had indeed approved himself an eater and a strong one, as afore he had in the garden – corrupting man outside Eden, as at the beginning he had corrupted him within it. But had not God again made him yield meat and sweetness? Were not divine delights in this scene of redemption of a higher character than they had been in the day of creation? Is not the value of Christ more to God than all the beauty and order that are displayed in the works of His hand? And is not His ransomed Noah in the ark, a richer one than Adam His creature in the garden? He was receiving the gifts of grace and rendering the free-hearted obedience of faith; he was learning the sufficiency of Christ for him, and experiencing the exercises of the Spirit in him. He saw himself not merely in a *created* but in a *redeemed* system.

It is a great sight to see to – the eater has yielded meat, and the strong sweetness. And we are still in sight of this great mystery to the end of these chapters, after the new world has been gained, and “the earth that now is” has been formally taken and inherited. For

there we see Noah seated in royal and priestly state. He is “blessed,” as Adam was in his day, and told to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28; 9:1). The trail of the serpent is indeed over the whole scene and condition of things. Adam had the earth subdued to him, and the creatures of the forest, and of the field, and of the sea, and of the air, owned his lordship of them, taking names from him as it pleased him to give them, they in the acknowledgment, and he in the exercise, of sovereignty; while it is only in the dread and fear of Noah that the creatures of the earth now stand. It was no longer their homage rendered to man, but their sense of control by reason of the eminency of man. Here was the fruit and the witness of the work of the eater. But with this, Noah’s table was more richly spread now than Adam’s had been at first. The herb of the field nourished man then; the flesh of the beasts of the field shall now nourish him; for Adam’s was the due food of an innocent one, Noah’s is the food of a ransomed one. Adam enjoyed the life of an untainted creature, Noah the life of a blood-bought sinner.*

Here was the witnessing afresh how meat was forced out of the eater. It was a world around, wearing the scars and bruises of a deadly fight; it was a table within, which told of full, and sure, and glorious, and blood-sealed redemption.

But further. The Lord God makes a covenant with Noah, and with all the creatures around him, that He will secure the earth from a second flood. And in token of this, He hangs the bow in the cloud, up there as under His own eye, that He may look on it, and thus remember His promise. What thoughts and words are these; and yet these are the words of the Spirit, telling us of the intimate ways of God with us, and our souls, and our circumstances! The cloud might

** The blood was not to be eaten with the flesh; the blood was reserved to make atonement with (See Lev. 17). Noah, therefore, fed on the witness of his redemption, just like Israel in the paschal night of Egypt. His feast was the feast of a blood-bought sinner.*

threaten and swell itself with water; the bow should control it. The cloud might frown; the bow should smile. The Lord should be refreshed and glorified now in the *counsels of His grace*, as at the first He had been in the works of His hands. And the creation was set, not in fallible, but in sure conditions.

There had been no threatening cloud in the sky of Eden; but then, there was no shining bow riding in triumph upon it. The cloud was now the witness that the eater had done his work – a deadly work, a work of forfeiture and ruin; but the bow was alike the witness that God had got meat and sweetness out of him. (Gen. 9.)

Wondrous riddle! beginning to show itself here at the very first.*

The fall or ruin of man has been accomplished through the subtilty of the eater, the strong man, the old serpent which is the devil and Satan; but in the midst of the ruins God Himself is gathering richer joy and brighter glory than He had known before; and as to His creature man, his communion with God is deeper and more blessed, his destinies more excellent and glorious, being either heavenly, like that of Enoch and the antediluvian saints, or in royal and priestly dignities, like that of Noah, in a *redeemed* and not merely a *created* system, with the sure tokens of God's unfailing guardianship before him.

** It is said in chapter 6 that God repented that He had made man, that it grieved Him at His heart. But this does not affect this wondrous riddle, or touch the teaching of this little paper. For that was the divine experience when the work of the eater was looked at in itself, and apart from the work of God as forcing meat and sweetness out of him.*

Extracted from "Short Meditations" by J.G. Bellett (1795-1864).

THE CROSS – ITS BLESSINGS AND ITS CLAIMS.

THE first and the natural resource of a soul awakened, through grace, to a sense of need, is the cross of Christ. The need of relief from the weight and pressure of a conscience burdened with a sense of sin, is felt in all its intensity; and the relief sought for is found in the wondrous fact that the One who hung upon the cross, bore my sins in His own body there, and in God's sight they are gone for ever. The relief is immense; the burden is gone, and the heart is free to be occupied, like the poor sinner in the end of Luke 7, with the One who has brought me that relief. But is that all that the cross of Christ brings with it? Far from it indeed. That is but the first lesson it teaches, and if I have not learned more than that I have not got to God's side of the cross at all. I may stand and contemplate, by faith, the immensity of the love which brought the Son of God down to that scene of shame and death for me; I may rejoice in the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, and of acceptance with God, and yet so bad and treacherous are these hearts of ours, that we are quite capable of taking all these blessings, and then turning our backs on the cross, and finding our resources, if not our joys, in the very world which crucified the One to whom we confessedly owe our salvation, We are willing to accept the blessings of the cross, but we are not willing to own its claims. And in these closing days of the history of the church on earth, there is special danger of this. Many, if not all, of those who may read this paper are in possession, doctrinally, of truth which has been entirely lost since the first days of the church on earth, but was recovered through the grace of God. But how far is that truth reproduced in our lives down here? How far can we say that we have, as before God, accepted the cross of His Son as He sees it, and sees all through it? How far can we say that the cross gives its colour to our associations, our connections, our business, our houses, and all in them, our dress and the dress of our children, in short to all the details of our daily path? Are these

trivial things, do you think, to mention in connection with the cross? Not, surely, if I know its real import, and what the God who forsook His beloved Son on the cross, reads in that scene. It is just in these things, seemingly, though not really, of small account, that we show how far we really understand the true meaning and import of the cross. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." A lesson that is learned from God's side of the cross is never forgotten.

It is not only that the first man, in his badness, was morally and judicially ended there, but that all that was good and beautiful in man was ended there too. "The Son of man must be lifted up." All that was of the first man must pass away, his history must end for ever, in order that the second Man, alive from the dead, and having for ever broken the power of death, might come out the Head of God's new creation, and take humanity with Him into the glory of God. That is what God has got from the cross, and it is the knowledge and acceptance of it that enables me to glory in the cross – to glory in that which was my deepest and greatest shame as a man, from the very fact (and what a blessed fact!) that the cross has ended for ever before God, the man that set it up and nailed the Son of God to it. On the world's side of that cross there is death, and after death the judgment – on God's side of it the new creation.

In the Epistle to the Galatians, which was written to those who were trying to improve the first man, the cross is brought in three times. In chapter 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ," that is, the man is gone. In chapter 5:24, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts." That is not a practical thing which I have done myself, but what the cross has done for me before God, and I accept it. What belongs to the man, and comes out of him, is gone also. In chapter 6:14, "The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." What appeals to and acts on the man is gone too in the cross. It stands as an impassable barrier between me as belonging to, and associated with, the risen Man, and all that I was

as associated with the man under death and judgment. What then is or can be left? The new creation, and nothing else (verse 15). Now how far, beloved brethren, can we say honestly, as before God, who knows the secrets of our hearts, ‘I accept the cross, not only with its blessings, but with its claims’?

How far can we say, as we look around us, in our associations and surroundings – There is *nothing* of which I should have cause to be ashamed, if I were to find standing by my side the One who was on that cross for me? There is nothing on which His eye could not rest with perfect satisfaction! I accept with praise and thankfulness all the wondrous blessings His cross has given me: and it is the greatest privilege and joy I have to own the claims of that cross to the full, in and over everything that belongs to me! In the great truth that “If one died for all, then were all dead,” I recognise and own what was my status and condition before God, now gone for ever; and in the blessed fact that, through grace, I am now one who “lives,” I see that His death has ended my history as a man, and I desire that all connected with me may be the expression of the practical reality that I am not living to myself, but “to him who died for me and rose again.”

May the Lord make this the language of hearts that are learning daily more of the wonders of His cross.

Author unknown. Reproduced from “Voice to the Faithful” Vol. XII (circa 1880), edited by J.B. Stoney.

Fragments about Fellowship

You do not reach Christ through the company, but the company through Christ. (*F.E. Raven, New Series Vol. 7, p. 380*).

The moment you come into life you come into fellowship, and fellowship does not admit of the idea of supremacy; it is participation in common, and the only supremacy is the Lord.

(F.E.R., N.S. Vol. 11, p. 481)

THE ELEVEN-DAY JOURNEY

Deuteronomy 1:2; 6:23.

We have been occupied with the eleven-day journey in Deuteronomy 1:2 where we read, “there are eleven days journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-Barnea. We notice in our second scripture, Deuteronomy 6:23, that God brought His people out thence to bring them in. That is the divine purpose – the eternal purpose of God – to bring us in. Israel of old never really went in. They fell short of God’s purpose. Through unbelief and disobedience the wilderness journey took them thirty-eight years. The wilderness as we are aware is not part of God’s purpose but of His ways.

The eleven-day journey is the spiritual journey. There is what is moral and we are morally responsible. There is what is spiritual and we are spiritually responsible. The challenge is as to where we are spiritually. This journey took Israel thirty-eight years. They wandered in the wilderness in unbelief. They did not walk in concert with God.

There are *landmarks*, *steps* and *milestones* on this spiritual journey. Tonight I wish to touch, with the Lord’s help, on some milestones and to call attention to some of the warnings given in the epistle to the Hebrews to help us to go on and to go in. I believe we can assess our progress in divine things but we may touch on that a little later.

First, let us review a little the ground we have considered today so far. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:11 particularly, and also in Romans 15:4, shows us the relevance of the Old Testament scriptures and he points out the dangers of not going on spiritually. In Acts 20 we see Paul’s thrust, his energy and his personal example that the saints may enter into all the counsel of God.

The landmarks are Horeb, by the way of Mount Seir, and Kadesh-Barnea. This is like a panoramic view of the spiritual

journey, each of the three landmarks having great meaning and bearing with lessons for each one of us. I take it that this journey begins properly when one receives the Holy Spirit, Exodus 17:6. What a landmark it is! Horeb speaks of Christ stricken and the Spirit given. So that the first impressions of God have an immense impact upon the soul. Redemption is accomplished, and the Holy Spirit given, Romans 5:5,6. It is at Horeb that we learn to turn to God from idols and it is there we acquire a spiritual judgement of the world, 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 11:8.

The second landmark is, “by the way of Mount Seir”. This brings in another set of lessons connected with Esau, Genesis 36:8. Esau, Jacob’s brother, is put forward in the Bible as a man of the field; as a person who despises the birth-right; a profane person and he represents someone who lacks the grace of God, having a root of bitterness springing up causing trouble and defiling many. Oh, how awful! Scripture uses a similitude “...as Esau” to teach us how we ought not to behave, Hebrews 12:12-17. There is no remedy for the man after the flesh. The flesh may manifest itself in us in various forms – however nice and polite, or however hateful and obnoxious – the flesh must be judged unsparingly root and branch, Romans 7. Amalek, Exodus 17; Agag, 1 Samuel 15; and Haman, Esther 3 are all of the Esau line. Included in the deep lessons of “by the way of Mount Seir” is that we remember the brotherly covenant, Amos 1:9. It says of Saul in Acts 9:1 that he still breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. It is said of Benaiah that he went down and slew the imposing man, 2 Samuel 23:21. There are many other references in the Scriptures, especially in the Psalms, which speak of the violent man, the lying and the deceitful man, the foolish man – these are the features of the man of sin and shame that we are confronted with and do battle with. In speaking of this man Paul says, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of this body of death.” Romans 7:24. When you arrive at this in the soul’s experience it is a definite landmark.

The third landmark is Kadesh-Barnea. There are ten provocations, or murmurings against God, recorded in the wilderness journey. The most serious of all took place here. Instead of walking in step with God they complained against Him. We see just how serious a landmark it is to us on the spiritual journey, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews it is called “the provocation”.

In addition to landmarks on the spiritual journey there are *steps*. I refer to three initial steps of an infant believer. There may be more steps to be taken but I call attention to the basic baby steps of a Christian.

The first step of the infant Christian is: to know that God loves me; to know that God wants me; to know that God has accepted me – I am chosen in Christ before the world's foundation. *I am taken into favour in the Beloved.* Romans 5; Ephesians 1.

The second step is: to know that I am united to Christ by the Holy Spirit given from a glorified Christ – Jesus has been rejected in the world; they crucified Him. But He was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father; Romans 6:4. God has glorified Jesus in heaven and has given me the Holy Spirit – *I am united to Christ in heaven,* Ephesians 2:6.

The third step is: I come back to this scene to bear testimony of Him there: “*As he is, so are we in this world,*” 1 John 4:17. We need to be taught how to walk. The Lord said, “It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,” Hosea 11:3. Think of that! Who was it that taught you how to walk?

Three great pillars are given to us for this spiritual journey. They are namely; Holy Faith, Jude 20, Hebrews 11:6; the Holy Spirit, Romans 1:4, Romans 8:1-10, Galatians 5:16; the Holy Scriptures, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 3:15. Dear brethren, let us use diligence to keep in-step with God, to walk in concert with God, Ephesians 4:1. It is to be a daily exercise. I challenge everyone here, where are you on this spiritual journey? Have you learned the

basic steps? If not, why not? It is God's great desire and pleasure to have His children walk in concert with Him, 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Enoch is an example, Hebrews 11; and Judah, Hosea 11:12, and Ephraim, Hosea 14:8,9.

I have alluded to three initial steps and there are three milestones that are an advance on those steps that I would seek the Lord's help to call attention to now. Before we can advance to the milestones, that is if we desire to go on, the initial steps must be arrived at in our souls. Dear brethren, if we desire to enter into all the counsel of God we must walk "in-step", in concert with Him. There are no short-cuts, not a step can be missed by us if we want to advance spiritually.

The three milestones in spiritual progress that I point you to are:

1. **To learn what it means to be to Another**, that is, *to be married to Christ*, Romans 7:1-4. You will discern immediately that a milestone in spiritual progress follows what we have been speaking of as infant steps. We get a type of this in Genesis 24. Rebecca is asked, "Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go." Happy answer! "This man" here represents in type the Holy Spirit. If you read John 16:13-end along with Genesis 24:50-end you see a lovely dovetailing of Holy Scripture and how the New Testament is concealed in the Old and the Old Testament is revealed in the New.

Then in Genesis 24:63, we have a touch as to Isaac who represents our heavenly Bridegroom that "he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, camels were coming. And Rebecca lifted up her eyes, and saw Isaac." We may speak later about our eyes but I would seek to interest you in the eyes of the Lord Jesus. Not here the eyes of the Father of Luke 15:20, looking, waiting, longing for the returning son. Here it is the journey of the Christian who is fully committed to Jesus, being led by the Spirit to our heavenly Lover. She "lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac." What a sight! Blessed

contrast to Lot! Genesis 13:10,11. Lot lifted up his eyes and saw and then he chose for himself, whereas Rebecca chose first then “saw Isaac and she sprang off the camel.” Not weary with the journey, not she! She springs toward her heavenly Bridegroom. This is not brotherly-covenant love like we learn at “by the way of Mount Seir”. The result of learning that lesson is given in Psalm 133 “how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Nor is this the love of the Father for the Son, Genesis 22:2, John 3:35. Here it is our love for the Lord Jesus; our affection for Christ. We are to be to Another! Romans 7:4.

Paul, speaking of some Christians, said that they gave themselves first to the Lord – He is the ‘Another’. Paul says that the love of the Christ constrains us. His interests are to be our interests, Psalm 45:10,11.

There is a lovely touch given to us by Moses in Genesis 24:67, “Isaac loved her”. What a constraining power in the heart is the love of Christ for us. There are many examples of this doctrine in God’s Word – to be married to Christ, 2 Corinthians 11:2.

It was often said by the older brethren, as already mentioned, that the New Testament is in the Old contained and the Old Testament is in the New explained. If you get on your knees and pray over these magnificent matters, getting a hold of these things in your mind and heart, you will see the Lord Jesus Christ magnified on every page of the Bible.

Now, I wish to show you the result in a soul that has arrived at and learned this blessed milestone. I call your attention to the Book of Ruth, and to Ruth the Moabitess herself. She is presented in the Scriptures as one of the most comely of women, a woman of worth and so honoured in the sacred writings, coming in as she does in Matthew 1:5 in the royal line of Jesus Christ. In the Book of Ruth the original meaning of the names given is quite remarkable and is a study in itself. In Ruth’s case the correspondence with Romans

7:1-4 is quite striking. Both of Naomi's sons, Mahlon and Chilion, are described by their given names, 'sickly' and 'pining'; one of them was married to Ruth, Micah 6:13; Ezekiel 24:23; Romans 8:3, but they have died. Her husband having died she is clear of the man after the flesh and now she is free to be to another. Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, did it all for Ruth and our Lord Jesus Christ has done it all for us; Ruth chapters 3 and 4, Acts 20:28, Revelation 5:9-14, Romans 7:4; "in order that we might bring forth fruit to God." You say, what is this fruit? Well, in Rebecca, the fruit is that Isaac's interests became her interests. With Ruth the fruit is in a worshipper, Obed whose name means 'worshipper', and then on to King David, the sweet psalmist of Israel. Time would fail to go into the details; I leave it to you to search it out. It is not worship that the Father seeks exactly, it is worshippers. The Father seeks such today. John 4:20-27. Are you among them? Hebrews 13:15,16.

Now, Lydia comes to light at Philippi in Acts 16 as a worshipper. Paul came into western Europe and he declared the counsel of God. I want you to notice that attention is called to prayer. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul. Paul both preached and prayed. He had learned how to kneel early on; Stephen had shown him how in Acts 7. The Lord Jesus said, "when ye pray enter into your closet and close the door", Matthew 6:6. Paul did that in Ephesians 1:15-23, and if we put our ear to the door we may hear him pray. However, in Ephesians 3:14 he leaves his closet door slightly open and we can catch a glimpse of Paul on his knees. He had preached, declared in public but he does not stop there; he prays, down on his knees in private. Paul's language in prayer is superlative. The church's inheritance is much, much greater than what pertains to Israel, Ephesians 3:18; then in verse 19 the love of Christ is brought in, after which you may have expected the Holy Spirit to put a period, a full stop. But no. You say, what could Paul ask for more! Ah, there's always more in Christianity – "more and more". Paul had not shunned to declare "all the counsel of God" and now he expresses

his desire to the Father that the saints be filled to “all the fulness of God.” What does this mean, dear brethren? Who can explain it? Who is able for it? What a milestone on the eleven-day journey! Yet Paul breaks out in spontaneous worship and doxology, “To Him that is able to do far exceedingly above all that we can ask or think.”

Following on from this there is another milestone:

2. **Looking on the glory of the Lord.** 2 Corinthians 3:18. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Well, I think you can see the advance in spiritual progress in these milestones in contrast to the infant steps alluded to earlier. The second milestone, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face and being changed, transformed, according to the same image from glory to glory is very near the end of the journey! We come to the sphere where there is liberty, where the Holy Spirit is free in His operations, and we are at liberty there. There is no veil as in the Old Testament; it is with open face. The word translated ‘transformed’ is ‘metamorphosis’; as we look, not exactly on the Lord, but on the glory of the Lord. The change is from the inside. “From glory to glory.” What is the meaning of that and how does that work out? I will tell you what it is not – it is not from degradation to glory. What does that mean? The journey from the far country, the pig-pen, to the Father’s house, Luke 15, is not from “glory to glory”; and the journey from the fields of Moab to Bethlehem, Ruth 1, is not from “glory to glory”. Mephibosheth taken from Lodebar to king David’s table, 2 Samuel 9, is not from “glory to glory.” These passages show you examples in Scripture of the journey from degradation to glory. There are many Scriptures that could be brought forward and although the fields of Moab and Lodebar are not the pig pen it is still the “far country”. When Paul delineates his testimony in Philippians 3, even the socially ‘nice’ and ‘refined’ things, he counted as dung. No, beloved, this

milestone on the spiritual eleven-day journey is in advance of all that. You say it is a dark day, and where can you see the glory shining? It was a dark day for Moses and he prayed to see God's glory, Psalm 90 and Exodus 33. How God answered his prayers in Exodus 33 and Matthew 17.

We could mention others, like Isaiah and Ezekiel but I refer you to Acts 7. Stephen is set in the Bible as a sample Christian, an example to us of normal Christian living. What an impression he must have made on Saul of Tarsus, "being full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, 'Lo, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God'", verses 55,56. "And they stoned Stephen, praying and saying, 'Lord Jesus receive my spirit'. And kneeling down, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And having said this, he fell asleep"; verses 59,60. The crowd with stones never crossed his horizon. What an exit from this world! What an entrance into that world! I believe this gives us an insight into what it means to be changed from glory to glory.

3. The third milestone that I call attention to is to "draw near," Genesis 45:1-4. The desire of the Lord Jesus in John 17:22-26 is fully answered and in this sphere of holy intimacy and complacency Divine affections flow in all their oceanic fulness and blessedness. Esther, the queen, required nothing but what the keeper of the women provided. The blessed Holy Spirit in all His wondrous power and service pervades this sphere as the love of Christ and the love of God is known and enjoyed. "And Esther drew near," Esther 5:1-2.

The warnings given in the epistle to the Hebrews are to be taken to heart. The epistle is not evangelical in so far as the thrust of the writer is not to save sinners from hell and get them to heaven but rather in "bringing many sons to glory." It is written to "holy brethren".

In chapter 2:1-4, they were warned not to “slip away” by neglecting “so great a salvation”.

In chapter 3:1-4:16, they were rebuked for their lack of faith, and were warned against having an “evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God”.

In chapter 5:11-6:20, they had become “dull of hearing” having failed to “have their senses trained to discern both good and evil,” and now they were being warned of the danger of falling away and the impossibility of being renewed to repentance.

In chapter 10:19-39, after being cautioned that to go on sinning wilfully would result in severe punishment, they were challenged to “hold fast the confession of the hope without wavering”.

In chapter 12:1-29, they are admonished to “consider Jesus,” and endure discipline in order to our “partaking of His holiness” because “our God is a consuming fire”.

Now how can we trace where we are on this spiritual journey? Have you taken an inventory as to where you are? In Deuteronomy 33:3 you are given the secret of how to review your progress according to the Divine mind. You may not realise it but your progress may be manifest to others! 1 Timothy 4:15. But you want to get an evaluation according to how God sees you. To learn this insight as to your own progress in spiritual things look at Mary of Bethany. The place of learning is at Jesus’ feet; low at Jesus’ feet. It is there that we learn the deepest lessons. Have you been there lately? When last were you there? Just to retire from all around and be in His presence. To sit in stillness at Jesus’ feet and hear His word which brings peace and pure delight. Is there anyone here at a disadvantage? Are you distressed that ungodly persons seem to prosper in the world around; where wrong is made right, bitter is made sweet, darkness is made light and it is all turned upside down, and you cannot get any answers about the issues that are pressuring you, and still the wicked prosper. I refer you to Psalm 73. Read

down and you will get the answer – it is found in the sanctuaries of God – at the feet of Jesus.

Dear brethren, be encouraged and go on. Isaiah shows us the Divine method of teaching and growth that involves being weaned, then he says, “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little...” Isaiah 28:9,10. It is evident that we do not grasp everything all at once; yet when it says, “here a little there a little...” this is not haphazard but rather that we should be constantly in concert with the Lord. The return of our Lord Jesus is very close at hand. He brought us out thence that He might bring us in, Deuteronomy 6:23a. The rapture is imminent.

God is not arbitrary in forcing you into divine things – His things that are so wonderful, that are so great, so worthwhile, so blessed and eternal. God will not force you but will graciously take you as far and as high as you want to go.

May God grant it for His Name’s sake.

Edited version of an address given at Croydon, 17th June 2017, by David F. Wiseman.

That which lasts eternally

(Jesus said:) The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My words shall in no wise pass away – Luke 21:33.

Jesus Christ is the Same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come – Hebrews 13:8.

We are sometimes anxious in face of the instability of this world where everything changes so quickly, but God would reassure us in drawing our attention to ***that which lasts eternally***.

- “*The Christ abides for ever*” (John 12:34). How good to be able to place our confidence in Him who, “because of His continuing for ever, has the priesthood unchangeable. Whence also

He is able to save completely those who approach by Him to God, always living to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:24, 25).

- *“The word of the Lord abides for eternity”* (1 Peter 1:25). The words of men are numerous, ephemeral, contradictory, often false. But in contrast to that, the word of God remains at all times like a reliable compass, and points always in the direction of heaven.

- *“He that does the will of God abides for eternity”* (1 John 2:17). He who does the will of God is firstly he who repents, who confesses his sins to God and accepts his pardon. He then receives a new life and the certainty of spending eternity with Jesus in heaven. Moreover, *“his righteousness remains for ever”* (2 Corinthians 9:9). In this context, the word “righteousness” indicates the good works practised by the believer. God takes note of all we do for Him and puts it to our credit for eternity! What grace!

Christians, we need fear nothing; our blessings are eternal.
Translated from “La Bonne Semence” (the Good Seed) for 27th July, 2018.

To Know Christ Where He is

(Extract from a Letter)

My Loved Brother,

I think I have had my mind more occupied of late than ever with the subject which your letter suggests – the being with the Lord. I am sure it is deeper, happier, fuller acquaintance with Himself that our hearts need; and then we should long and desire and pant after Him in such a way that nothing but His presence could satisfy. I know souls in this state; and yet it is not knowledge that gives it to them, but personal acquaintance with the blessed Saviour, through the Holy Ghost.

I alighted, as by chance, the other day on some fervent thoughts of an old writer, in connection with this precious subject. In substance they are as follows, and almost so in terms, only I have somewhat condensed them:

“It is strange that we, who have such continual use of God, and His bounties and mercies, and are so perpetually beholden to Him, should after all be so little acquainted with Him. Hence it comes that we are so loath to think of our dissolution, and of our going to meet God, for, naturally, where we are not acquainted, we like not to hazard our welcome.

“We would rather spend our money at an inn, than turn in for a free lodging to an unknown host; whereas to an entire friend, whom elsewhere we have familiarly conversed with, we go boldly and willingly as to our home, knowing that no hour can be unseasonable to such an one. I should not live upon God and His daily bounties, without His acquaintance. By His grace I will not let one day pass without renewing my acquaintance with Him, giving Him some testimony of my love, and getting some sweet pledge of His constant favour towards me.”

Beautiful utterance this. It expresses a character of mind which, in this day of busy inquiry after knowledge, we all need – personal longings after Christ. May the blessed Spirit in us give that direction to our hearts! It is a hard lesson for some of us to learn, to reach enjoyments which lie beyond and above the provisions of nature. We are still prone to know Christ Himself “after the flesh” (*2 Cor. 5:16*), and thus to find Him in the midst of the relations and circumstances of human life, and there only.

But this is not our calling – this is not the risen, heavenly life. It is hard to get beyond it, I know, but our calling carries us beyond it. We like the home, and the respect, and the security, and all the delights of our human relationships and circumstances, and would have Christ in the midst of them; but to know Him and to have Him in such a way as tells us He is a stranger on earth, and that we are to be strangers with Him, “this is a hard saying” (*John 6:60*) to our poor fond hearts.

In John's Gospel, I may say, among other things, the Lord sets Himself to teach us this lesson.

The disciples were sorry at the thought of losing Him in the flesh, losing Him as in their daily walk and conversation with Him. But He lets them know that it was expedient for them that they should lose Him in that character, in order that they might know Him through the Holy Ghost, and ere long be with Him in heavenly places (*see ch. 16, particularly v.7*).

And this is again perceived in chapter 20. Mary Magdalene would have known the Lord again as she had already known Him, but this must not be – this must be denied her. This was painful, but it was expedient – good for her then (just as it had been already good for the disciples in chapter 16) to know that she was going to lose Christ in the flesh. For Mary is now taught that she was to have fellowship with Him in the more blessed place of His ascension.

So the company at Jerusalem in the same chapter. They were glad when they saw the Lord. But this gladness was human. It was the joy of having recovered, as they judged, the One whom they had lost – Christ in the flesh. But their Lord at once calls them away from that communion and knowledge of Him, to peace which His death had now made for them, and the life which His resurrection had now gained for them

All this it is helpful for our souls to ponder, for we are prone to be satisfied with another order of things. The sorrow that filled the hearts of the disciples (*John 16:6*) at the thought of their Lord going away – the “Rabboni” of Mary Magdalene and the disciples being glad when they saw the Lord – show the disposition of the heart to remain with Christ in the midst of human relationships and circumstances, and not to go with a risen Christ to heavenly places.

Would that it were the experience of the soul. But I desire to have it so.

G.V. Wigram (1805-79).

The Prodigal Son – Spending and Serving

“And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all . . . he began to be in want” (Luke 15:13, 14).

The younger son gathered together his newly inherited riches and left his father’s farm for the bright light of a far country, a place that offered more opportunity to fulfil all his desire for pleasure and excitement. He was thinking that fulfilling the desires which God has prohibited – the lure of the flesh – would bring happiness and fulfilment. This has been Satan’s lie and man’s folly since the foundation of the world.

A major theme in the Book of Proverbs is the wisdom that keeps us from the paths of sin. In Proverbs, the nature of sin is often shown to have this deceitful character – holding out a promise it can never fulfil (Prov. 5:3, 4). It is very attractive, sweeter than honey, but the end is bitter. The charm of sin is gone in the committing of it; as another has said, “Sin is attractive as a prospect, but hideous in retrospect.” This is why so many sins are called “deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22).

The “far country” is Satan’s land, a place that is morally at a distance from God’s presence. In the far country, the prince of the world leads men on, through their lusts, to destruction and wrath (Eph. 2:1-3). “But when he had spent all . . . he began to be in want.” That’s the thing about Satan’s country; there is no giving there, only spending. “And no-one gave him anything” (v. 16). The young man was learning that you cannot enjoy what money can buy when you disregard that which money can never buy. He thought he was free from serving on his father’s farm only to be forced to work for a “citizen of that country” (v. 15). We all are serving something; we are either slaves of sin and Satan, or slaves of righteousness and God (Rom. 6:16). *Brian Reynolds (from “The Lord is Near”).*

POETIC PAGES

The Glory Shines before Me

The glory shines before me;
I cannot linger here:
Though clouds may darken o'er me,
My Father's house is near.
If through this barren wilderness
A little while I roam,
The glory shines before me,
I am not far from home.

Beyond the storms I'm going,
Beyond this vale of tears;
Beyond the floods o'erflowing,
Beyond the changing years.
I'm going to the better land,
By faith long since possessed:
The glory shines before me,
For this is not my rest.

The Lamb is there the glory:
The Lamb is there the light.
Affliction's grasp but tore me
From phantoms of the night.
The voice of Jesus calleth me;
My race will soon be run:
The glory shines before me;
The prize will soon be won.

The glory shines before me;
I know that all is well:
My Father's care is o'er me.
His praises I would tell;

The love of Christ constraineth me;
His blood hath washed me white;
Where Jesus is in glory,
'Tis home, and love, and light.

Hannah K. Burlingham (1842-1901)

It Matters to Him!

1 Peter 5:7

My child, I know thy sorrows,
Thine every grief I share;
I know how thou art tested,
And what is more – I *care*.

Think not I am indifferent
To what affecteth thee;
Thy weal and woe are matters
Of deep concern to Me.

But, child, I have a *purpose*
In all that I allow;
I ask thee then to trust Me,
Though all seems dark just now.

How often thou hast asked Me
To purge away thy dross!
But this refining process
Involves for thee – a *cross*.

There is no other pathway
If thou would'st really be
Conformed unto the image
Of Him Who died for thee.

Thou canst not be like Jesus
Till *self* is crucified;
And as a *daily process*
The cross must be applied.

Just as the skilful gard'ner
Applies the pruning knife,
E'en so, **I** too would sever
The worthless from thy life.

I have but one sole object –
That thou should'st fruitful be;
And is it not **thy** longing
That I **much** fruit should see?

Then shrink not from the training
I needs must give to thee;
I know just how to make thee
What I would have thee be,

Remember that **I love thee!**
Think not I am unkind,
When trials come to prove thee,
And joy seems left behind,

'Tis but a little longer
Until I come again;
What now seems so mysterious
Will all be then made plain.

Take courage then; and fear not!
Press onward to the prize.
A crown of life awaits thee,
Glory before thee lies!

A.C.L.

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