

Words
Of
Peace
&
Truth

No. 107: May - August 2019

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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

On reading through Jeremiah's prophecy recently I was struck by the number of times (about twenty) it is said that God's people had not hearkened to Him. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines "hearken" as an archaic word meaning "listen" but I am sure it means more than this. If I hear what someone says and disregard it, have I hearkened to him? In some places in Jeremiah instead of "not hearkened" we have "not obeyed the voice" in the King James Version, which I think gives the sense.

What a dreadful state the world around us is getting into because people are not hearkening to the teachings, injunctions and exhortations which God in His love and wisdom has set before us in the Holy Bible! Yet what authority, what convicting power, lies in the "the Scripture of truth" (Daniel 10:21). I read recently of a Christian who refused to answer an argumentative gainsayer except by texts of Scripture; the disbeliever was at first irritated by this but was subsequently convicted and converted; see Hebrews 4:12.

But how about us as professed believers? Do we hearken to what we read in the Bible – actually submit to what its words plainly mean? Alas, the clear meaning of many passages is today offset by being related to past cultures, or (badly) re-translated or reinterpreted, or deemed unimportant – often so that we can avoid being seen as different from people in the present evil world around us. Let us be more like our dear Lord and Saviour who always hearkened to His Father (Isaiah 50:4), despite the suffering entailed, and who fulfilled His will in every detail. *G.S.B.*

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DWELLING IN SPIRIT WHERE CHRIST IS

What we want, as Christians, is to be lifted up, in our lives and characters, into a height much higher than the level with which too many are satisfied. But this we can never be until we realise the place which God has given us; for we must know the place itself, and our right to be in it, before we can cultivate the character suited to it. Even now we are “raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). Did we estimate ourselves thus, it would give the character of wrong to everything, however small, which did not comport with Him. That which put us into such a place was grace, and that which keeps us before God is the same: we are kept by the precious blood of Christ, the value of which has been paced to our account. We are kept by Christ in the very secret place of God, where our sins and our iniquities are remembered no more, and where, as before God, unblameable and in love (*Eph. 1:4*), we are without spot or blemish, “complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10). That we are there is not a matter of attainment on our part; we are there by grace. But it is a matter of attainment that our life correspond therewith. There can be no failure as to our standing before God; there may be – alas, there is – as to our life.

In order practically to live a life of holiness and righteousness, we must dwell in spirit where Christ is, and by communion with Him through the Word enjoy what He is in Himself, and what He is there doing for us. In Hebrews we are told that He appears in the presence of God for us (*ch. 9, v. 24*). In John 13 the Lord said, as if already gone to the Father, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me” (*ch. 13, v. 8*); as if He had said, “If I am to have you at all, I must keep you clean; if I keep you not, you cannot be with Me.”

As Moses kept his flock in Midian “far removed from all the defilements and entanglements of Egypt,” so in our divine Midian the Lord, in the presence of His Father, is keeping us. It is through Him our faith does not fail.

Were we to live more in spirit, with the Lord where He is, we should be holier and happier here. Moreover, our practical conduct would be such that no place would be given for the darts of the enemy to penetrate, and our love would be manifest. “I find few,” said Hewitson, “who seem to love the Lord as His redeemed ones should. Often do I feel longings for a higher sort of fellowship than I am privileged to enjoy, at least with saints.” The fellowship of saints, to be of value, must come of fellowship with the Lord. Were we in company with Him more, it would soon be blessedly felt in our own souls, not only in correcting the levity natural to the heart, but in giving power for every good word and work. Such a life is felt by others; for, living in communion with Him where He is, we bring with us the blessed tone of it where we are. As ships from the balmy isles betray whence they have come by the very fragrance of the spices they bring, so we should ever, in our dealings with others, bring a savour of the scene whence we too have consciously come.

From “The Brides of Scripture” by J. Denham Smith (1817-1889).

THE CURE FOR WEARINESS

WHO does not know what it is, sometime or other, to feel weary, disappointed with oneself, overcome by failures, irritated because things that usually go right persist in going wrong, or tired of the monotony of life or the vanity of worldly pursuits, aggravated with others and even perhaps (though we might not like to own it) complaining against God!

There is but one cure for it, and that is real REST. If it is a case of physical weariness, we know well enough that the body must be rested; if it is mental weariness, sleep is required. But what I refer to is a weariness of the *soul*, and I believe – indeed, thousands have proved – that the lasting cure for this is found completely outside of oneself in a living Person – JESUS. “Come unto me,” said JESUS “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28, 29).

Now if the soul is at rest, it is remarkable how bodily weariness is eased, and even the mind stimulated, so that it will be for the reader’s benefit in every way, I trust, to consider a few conditions set out below that produce this soul weariness, and the way to obtain the cure.

I. Weary of the World.

“Hast thou wandered on till wearied
Of the broken founts below?
Cold the heart that long hath held thee
From the Heart that loved thee so.”

The attractions that the world has to offer – and they are many and varied: amusements, sports, societies, music, art, sciences, professions, and everything leading to fame – lose all their charm when a heart gets world-weary. “I have come to the conclusion,” a man once said, who had tried it, “that the world is like a bubble.” For a moment a bubble may be fascinatingly beautiful, but then dark spots appear; it bursts, and nothing is left.

It was a heavy heart that came to Sychar's well that day when the Samaritan woman brought her pot to be refilled (*John 4*). How perfectly the Saviour knew it as He sat waiting for her! "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again," were His words, and their echo comes down the ages to the present day. The well is deep, but not the water; the effort to obtain is great and the reward is little. Weary soul,

YOU ARE OFFERED "LIVING WATER."

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (*John 4:13, 14*). These are no vain words. They are spoken by one who was weary Himself, "wearied with his journey" of faithfulness and holy devotion to God. Get alone in His presence, and let Him reveal to you what a poor, worthless life yours has been; then let Him show you something of His own grace and compassion, the One who has come to seek worshippers for the Father.

Does your heart long after something that you cannot express? "HE satisfieth the longing soul" (*Psalm 107:9*); something more stable than the world gives? "MY PEACE I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (*John 14:27*). Let this be your language:

"Oh! fill me, Jesus Saviour, with Thy love;
Lead, lead me to the living Fount above!
Thither may I in simple faith draw nigh,
And never to another fountain fly,
But unto Thee."

(Mary Shackleton)

Thus, and only thus, will you acquire the peace which passeth all understanding.

2. Weary of Sin.

Those who have in any degree struggled against sin know full well its terrible power, and the weariness that results when again and again one has broken down in hopeless failure, and is ready to call out from the depths, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” (Romans 7:24). A chained prisoner may sleep blissfully and dream pleasant dreams of liberty. But soon he wakes up, feels his chain, and sees the barred windows and bolted door. He tries one scheme of escape after another, but each failure only shows him how securely he is held, and his heart grows sick and weary.

In the same way a sinner may go on without in the least feeling his need of Christ; but when he awakes he finds what a captive he is, and this awful struggle begins. Probably only God knows what the soul is passing through. It may be hidden from the most intimate friend. We do not like to burden others with our secret troubles, and as a rule we are too sensitive to own them. All the “works of the flesh” are hateful to God, and must go before we can stand in His favour.

Then is there no means of relief? Yes, alone in the presence of God we must unburden every secret. Our hearts may condemn us, and rightly so, when we have sinned, but “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:20). *He* does not condemn us, but if we are learning the awful depravity of our fallen nature, He wants to show us how much Christ suffered to remove it. He would turn our eyes to Calvary, to the Man who hung there on the cross as a curse and a shame. The jeering of the priests, the

wailing of the women, and the cold mockery of the soldiers as they sat and stared at Him, were brought to an end by a fearful darkness that came over the whole land. And in that darkness for three hours the soul of Christ was brought into deep anguish, till those words were wrung from His lips, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Ah,

HE WAS THE WEARY ONE THEN.

His was the thirsty soul. Judas had actually betrayed Him. Peter, in spite of all his boasting, had denied Him, and the other disciples had forsaken Him. But, far more, the closest of all links was now broken – “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (*Matthew 27:46*). He had become the sin-bearer, and stroke after stroke of the sword of divine justice fell upon Him.

But at last another cry was heard – a glorious triumphant one: “It is finished” (*John 19:30*). Then He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. Never has there been, nor will there ever be a greater event than that! Eternally will God’s relation to men depend on it, and it will be the endless theme of the redeemed!

“My soul looks back to see
The burden Thou didst bear,
When hanging on th’accursèd tree,
And knows her guilt was there.”

(*Isaac Watts, 1709*)

There is nothing that loosens the chains of sin and removes the load from our spirits like the contemplation of this. It was when Christian in Bunyan’s dream “came up to the cross” that his burden “loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back.” “Then was Christian glad and lightsome and said with a merry heart, ‘He hath given me rest by His sorrow and life by His death.’” Then he

stood awhile to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden.” Yet so it does. Here is the spot for the sin-distressed to get relief.

“The tempest’s awful voice was heard;
O Lord, it broke on Thee!
Thine open bosom was my ward;
It bore the storm for me.
Thy form was scarred, Thy visage marred;
Now cloudless peace for me.”

(Mrs. A.R. Cousin, 1824-1916)

3. Weary of Circumstances.

We may have turned away from the world and its vain pleasures, and may have got relief from the burden of sin, but we may still become weary. There are difficulties of circumstances, home cares, business worries, ill-health, pressure, bereavement, and a host of other troubles that come upon the saint as well as upon the sinner. But how sweet it is to know that the blessed Person from heaven who walked through this weary scene and “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:17), yea, and even went to the cross to remove our sins, is the same Person whom God has raised from the dead and seated in the heavens! And He is there to sustain us, comfort us and intercede for us on our chequered road.

“It is good when our burdens are heavy to bear
If they send us to Him and drive us to prayer.
Every need is a boon, every sorrow is blest,
When it leads us to put His great love to the test.”

There is a well-known saying that “troubles are halved by

sharing.” But how gracious of the glorified Lord to deign to take not half but all our burden upon Himself! “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee” (Psalm 55:22). The trouble is nothing to Him, but you are everything. His all-wise hand allowed it because He loved you and wanted to bring you nearer to Himself. You may not, while under the cloud of sorrow or pain, see the value of it, but be assured of this, “that

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). You may realise the gain long after when you go to see someone else in affliction. You are able to say, “I have passed through it myself, and know just what it is.” Then God gives you a word of cheer. We have to become “learned” ourselves before we can “give a word in season to him that is weary” (Isaiah 50:4). May not this encourage you to bear the trial?

Perhaps you are a sufferer. What unspeakable joy it will be to you when you are safely gathered home, that in any degree you have learned what suffering is, for you will be for ever in the company of the Lamb who suffered! Meanwhile in the secret of His presence strength is found, and a sweet calm that is foreign to the world around. I doubt if there is anything that gives men greater wonder and God greater praise than the sight of a Christian in the face of a severe, perhaps very sudden, calamity with a peaceful, resigned spirit that waits upon the Lord, and when the time comes knows how to act. Oh, that we knew more of it! “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:30, 31).

“There is rest in the tender love
That has trodden our path below;
That has given us a place in the realms above,
But can all our sorrows know!

There is rest in the blessed yoke,
That knows no will but His;
That learns, from His path, and the words He spoke,
What that loving patience is!

Where He too has gone before
Is the path which we have to tread;
And it leads to the rest where sorrow’s o’er,
To the place where His steps have led.”

(J.N. Darby, 1879).

4. Weary of Service.

It is surely the wish of every heart that truly loves Christ to live here for His pleasure and to serve Him. Love delights to serve. There is a joy in it that is quite characteristic. “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge ... that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15).

And yet even in such service it is possible to grow weary; in fact the most devoted servants of God have at times felt like giving up discouraged and depressed. (See Numbers 20:10 [*and 11:11-15? – Ed.*]; 1 Kings 19:4; Acts 15:38.) The eye of faith grows dim, the work seems to yield no results, and it seems useless to go on. Some have laboured for years without apparent fruit, and is it any wonder that they feel like resigning? “Brethren ... LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELL-DOING: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). The stonebreaker knows that he may

have to hammer away for a long time at a stone without any apparent effect, but if he keeps on, it will eventually be shattered by one blow. And in any case, if a man has been employed to do a piece of work, his duty is to carry on, quite apart from the result.

But the Master delights to encourage his weary servants. When the disciples were on the sea tossed by the waves, we are told that He was “alone on the land” and “saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary” (Mark 6:47, 48). It was He who had constrained them to get into the ship. He saw them toiling, and at last He comes to them in the fourth watch of the night with those precious words,
“BE OF GOOD CHEER: IT IS I.”

On another night, many years after, He comes to one of His servants, whose earnest desire for the salvation of his countrymen had brought against him hatred, assault and tumult. The Lord comes on that night and stands by him saying, “Be of good cheer, Paul” (Acts 23:11).

Whatever may be the cause of our weariness, even if we have to blame ourselves, true relief and refreshment always come from Christ. If we are unfaithful, “He abideth faithful” (2 *Timothy* 2:13). If on the other hand He can say of us that we have been faithful “in a very little” (Luke 19:17), what joy it will be to be welcomed into His presence above for evermore and hear Him say, “Well done.”

“ ‘A little while’ - ’twill soon be past;
Why should we shun the promised cross?
Oh, let us in His footsteps haste,
Counting for Him all else but loss!
Oh, how will recompense His smile
The sufferings of this ‘little while.’!”

(*J.G. Deck, 1807-84*).

“ ’Tis not far off – the hour
When Christ our Lord shall come;
According to His gracious word,
He soon will call us home. ...

Rest, Lord, in serving Thee
As none have served below:
Oh! through that blest eternity,
What tides of praise shall flow!”

(Mrs. H.K. Burlingham, 1842-1901)

Article written by C.O. Haughton.

THE UNEQUAL YOKE

2 Corinthians 6

Verse 14 contains an allusion to Deuteronomy 22:10. The word literally is “**diversely yoked**” (ch. 6:14) though of course if two, of diverse nature and form, such as the ox and the ass, were put together the resultant yoke would prove to be unequal. Any yoking together of the believer and the unbeliever must be unequal because they are *diverse* in their very nature and character—the one, born of God, a child of light; the other still in the Adamic nature, a child of darkness. The yoking together of two, so wholly diverse, must prove disastrous.

It is a question, be it noted, of a *yoke*. The believer is left in the world, and comes into contact with all sorts, as is indicated in 1 Cor. 5:9, 10. While mixing thus with all sorts he is to be careful to avoid being yoked with any. The most intimate and permanent yoke that the world knows is that of marriage. A believer may yoke himself with an unbeliever by a business partnership. Before he is through with it he may suffer much spiritual loss and the Lord’s Name be dishonoured; since he has to share in the responsibility of

evil things wrought by the unconverted partner. But at least he can get out of it in process of time, even if at financial loss to himself. But marriage he cannot get out of save by death—his own or his partner's (*that is, according to Scripture – Ed.*). And there are many other yokes besides those in marriage and in business, though not so strong and enduring. We are to shun *all* of them.

Consider what the believer stands for—righteousness, light, Christ, the temple of God. The unbeliever stands for unrighteousness (or lawlessness), darkness, Belial, idols. Now what possible yoke, or fellowship, or agreement, can there be between the two? None whatever. Then why take up a position which involves an attempt to bring together things which are as the poles asunder? The unbeliever cannot possibly fit in with the things which are the very life of the believer. ***He has not got the life which would enable him to do so.*** The believer can entangle and damage himself with the things of unrighteousness which occupy the unbeliever, for though born of God ***he still has the flesh within him.*** Yoke the two together, and what must be the upshot?

No deep understanding is needed to answer that question. The one can only travel in *one* direction: the other can travel in *either* direction. The way of the unbeliever prevails, though the believer may be dragged very unwillingly, and hence act as a kind of brake on the wheels.

The exhortation then is that we come out from among the unbelievers and be separate, not even touching what is unclean. The believer cannot be too careful to avoid every kind of connection and complicity with what is evil; and that because of what he is in his individual character as a child of light, and also what he is collectively with other believers as the temple of the living God.

Being the living God, He not only dwells in the midst of His people but He walks in their midst, observing all their ways. And holiness becomes His house forever (*Psalms 93:5*).

Some of us may say to ourselves, “Yes, but if I obey this injunction and consequently break these or those links, I shall suffer a great deal of loss and be in a very difficult position.” That is very possible. But such a contingency is foreseen. The world may cast you out, but God will receive you, and be a Father to you. The last verse of our chapter does not refer to proper Christian relationship which is established in Christ, which is expounded by the Apostle in Gal. 3:26 to 4:7; but rather to that practical “fathering” of the believer which he needs when suffering from the world. If we may so put it, with all reverence, God Himself will play the part of Father to him. Hence we are said to be His sons and daughters. When it is a question of proper Christian relationship we all, whether male or female, are His sons.

And notice this; the One who is pledged to play the Father’s part is the Lord, Almighty. Here then we have brought together His three great Names – Father, Jehovah, Almighty. He is Jehovah, the unchanging One, faithful to His word. He wields all power. And the value of both Names He brings into His fatherly care. We need not be afraid to cut all links with the world, cost what it may.

An interesting and encouraging contrast between this verse and Eph. 6:12 may be pointed out. There are “*the rulers of the darkness of this world,*” (Eph. 6:12) or, more literally, “the world-rulers of this darkness”—Satanic authorities and powers, no doubt, who dominate this world of darkness. We might well fear them were it not that we are under the protection of the Lord Almighty. The word translated, Almighty, is literally the All-ruler. The *world-*

rulers may be great, but they are as nothing in the presence of the *All-ruler*; just as this world, though great to us, is very small when compared with all things—the mighty universe of God.

Extracted from “2 Corinthians: Briefly Expounded” by F.B. Hole (1876-1964). Reproduced by kind permission of copyright holders Scripture Truth Publications, 31-33 Glover Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3LD

THE HEAVENLY CALLING AND THE CHURCH

(continued from last issue – WPT No. 106)

Further reflections on the Epistle to the Ephesians:

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

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

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

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

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

And so again with the *golden city* of Revelation 21. The judgments which were to clear the inheritance and to take out of the kingdom all that offended, have been executed. The victory of the white-horsed Rider and His army has been won. The reign of the thousand years has been set (chapters 19 and 20). But as yet the bride has remained unrevealed. But now at the last, in the very close

of the book, as we take leave of the unspeakably precious oracles of God, it is the woman we see, the woman again of Genesis 2, the Jerusalem again of the land of Israel – only, it is the heavenly woman, and not the Eden-woman, the heavenly and not the earthly Jerusalem. She now, the Lamb's wife, stands revealed, the chiefest in divine workmanship, the latest in divine revelation,

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

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

When Israel had got beyond the fear and the sword of the destroying angel, and, under the conduct of the cloud, had reached the neighbourhood of the Red Sea, they were commanded to stand still and see the salvation of God (Exodus 14). They did so – and that salvation displayed itself in vast and wondrous forms of grace and power which till then had been hidden. They had already known redemption by blood. The firstborn had been already delivered, and the judgment of God was now left behind. It had spent itself, and they were safe. But, the glory in the cloud, the rod of Moses, the angel that waited in the camp, all had now to disclose some rare and wondrous virtues which as yet, up to that moment, had not been told. The angel changed his place and came between the camp of Israel and the host of Egypt, to keep the one apart from the other all the night. The rod of Moses commanded the waters of the sea to stand up as a heap. The glory looked out from the cloud and troubled the

Egyptian army. Strange, mysterious powers, new and surpassing revelations of grace! Israel is safe and quiet and triumphant, and have only to go forward, and sing the song of victory and deliverance, of present service in the sanctuary, and of coming glories in the kingdom.

So here, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the sinner has been already rescued by the blood of Jesus. Sins are forgiven – and the saints, thus beyond judgment, are summoned to listen, till the high calling of the church in Christ Jesus under the exceeding riches of the grace of God, like the salvation of God at the Red Sea, discloses itself in their hearing. They have but to listen. If they talk of responsibility, this is it; to listen, to accept, to be happy and thankful, because all this is what it is, and the God of all grace is to them what He is. And the apostle, who teaches them these rich and marvellous secrets, only prays for them, that as they listen, they may have hearts to understand.

His prayers for them, whether in the first or third chapter, give us other samples of that accumulation of language, of which I have already spoken, and which is so expressive of the consciousness of having to deal with themes and thoughts of very peculiar weight and dignity.

As we get in on the fourth chapter, we come into company with something wonderful in its way, like that which we have seen already.

The captivity of man under the hand of the old servant, in Genesis 3, was complete. Satan's lie was accepted, man became a sinner, separate from God, and lost: Eden was forfeited, the ground put under a curse, the man and the woman under penalties, and Satan as a liar and a wanderer went about on the face of the earth.

This earliest story of man's captivity is glanced at in Ephesians 4 – as by contrast. The captor himself and all his host are now made captives (a captive multitude), and by man's Deliverer led in triumph, or made a show of openly, as another kindred scripture speaks (Colossians 2). But this Deliverer has proved Himself not only mighty after this manner, but glorious. He fills all things. He has both descended and ascended: has been in the lower parts of the earth, the grave, the very stronghold of the captor; and is now far above all heavens. And such an One, this Deliverer, mighty and glorious, has taken it upon Him to write the history or secure the fortunes of Satan's old captive. And it is wonderful, as we further read in this chapter. Having wrought the deliverance in the lower parts of the earth, He has now in the highest places, far above all heavens, received gifts for the former victims of the serpent; and has dispensed them; and through them has endowed them with the richest portions and highest dignities. These endowments have brought the ancient captive of the great enemy to perfection; made him, in a divine, spiritual sense, independent; given him security against the wiles of the deceiver; and set his resources *within himself*, through the Holy Ghost given to him (see verses 8-16).

It may surprise us at first to find such a thing as this – the ruins of man in Genesis 3 thus confronted by the recovery of man in Ephesians – the gain and triumph of the old serpent there, answered and annulled by his shame and overthrow here. But so it is. And the surprise may cease, when we remember that the Epistle to the Ephesians, as we have seen, is the most marvellous exhibition of the results of redemption, which scripture presents to us. We may, therefore, expect to find Genesis 3 confronted in such an epistle. It is the special writing on the church which is “the body of Christ” and “the bride of Christ,” the first of these titles telling us that she is

set in the *very highest place of honour*; the second of them telling us that she is set *also in the dearest and most intimate place of personal affection and relationship*. She is, moreover, to the creation of God, to principalities and powers in heavenly places, the great witness, the only, adequate witness, of grace, glory, and wisdom; of the exceeding riches of grace, of the praise of glory, and of the manifold resources and secrets of wisdom. She is this – and the revelation of her, again we may remember, has completed or filled out and up to its full measure, the word of God.

It has been observed by another, that the calling of God of old was either of *individuals*, that they might walk with God; or of a *nation* (as that of Israel), that they might observe the statutes and do the laws of God their King. But now, the calling of God is into a *body*. But though this is so, the individuality of the saint is still contemplated; and the Epistle to the Ephesians keeps this in view, addressing us emphatically in our personal, individual places, in chapter 5.

This is suited, seasonable truth, at the close of this wondrous epistle. And surely we ought to know our personal standing, our own individual perfection, ere we occupy ourselves with the calling of the church or the body. Accordingly, in another place, the apostle lets the saints know that he would speak of such wisdom, the wisdom of these divine mysteries, only among them that were perfect (1 Corinthians 2:6). And so here, in Ephesians, we are individually chosen, predestinated, forgiven, accepted, instructed, sealed (according to chap. 1), and then, we are prayed for, that we may have that spirit of wisdom and revelation which capacitates us to learn our church-calling, the strength that is leading us, and the glory that we are to reach: “The church corporately is composed of individual believers; and, while viewed in its corporate character, it

has relations to Christ which the believer individually has not – for no believer is the body of Christ or the bride of Christ – yet it is in the affections and conscience of the individual believer that the relations of the church to Christ are to be recognised and have their effect.”

Surely this is so. Individual saints are first perfected, under the given Spirit, and then the body is edified – as we have in chapter 4, verse 12. The precepts which we find from chapter 4, verse 17 to chapter 6, verse 9, address us individually; but the church-state is assumed or contemplated here and there throughout.

And here let me say, as to precepts, that the calling itself, the grace in which we stand, might direct us, without precepts. This thought is sanctioned by such passages as Titus 2:11, 12, and 2 Peter 3:11, 14. The saints in Genesis act without law or precept. Their calling suggested their duties. “How can I do this great wickedness,” said one of them, “and sin against God?” The grace in which New Testament saints stand might do the same. Still they are called to listen to precepts – as here in this portion of the Epistle to the Ephesians. But the precepts strikingly honour the doctrines. They commonly either refer to, or tacitly assume, the doctrines; and thus, as I may say, they present themselves as so many expressions of the *moral* virtue which lies hid in the doctrine.

And further. They let us know that holiness must have a dispensational character. It is not simply moral virtue, such as conscience would suggest: it is not legal righteousness, such as the law might demand: nor is it what John the Baptist would have prescribed. It is *Christian*. The holiness, or the due character, of a saint is to derive itself out of the christian calling. It finds its springs and sanctions in christian truth. It measures itself by that word

which now addresses itself to us, and which delineates our dispensational place and peculiarity. It is the sanctification of the *truth*, the washing of water by the *word*, that is looked for. It is this which gives definite character to the morals which God accepts, and which the Spirit works. And this is what is very much neglected or passed by, but which, to be in the light as God is in the light, must be heeded.

But there is another thing in this epistle. There is conflict or wrestling. We see the *walk* of a saint in Ephesians 5, his *fight* in Ephesians 6. His walk lies through the chequered paths of life, the circumstances and relations which make up human history. His fight is with “the wiles of the devil,” or with “spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.”

These wicked spirits come forth from heavenly places – and they come with lies and of infinite variety. 2 Chronicles 18 is a direct witness of this. There, a spirit is seen to come forth from heaven with a lie in his mouth; or with a lie which he puts into the mouth of one of Ahab’s false prophets. And that lie leads Ahab to the fatal battle of Ramoth-gilead.

The serpent, at the beginning, entered the garden as a liar, and with one of his “wiles” ruined man (Genesis 3). Satan, with another of them, tempted David to number the people, and led him to a terrible day of retribution (1 Chronicles 21). This same character of a deceiver is recognised in Revelation 12:9, 20:8. And signs and lying wonders and all deceivableness of unrighteousness are spoken of as the working of Satan in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10.

Thus we have wicked spirits in heavenly places exercising “wiles” here in the midst of us.

These wiles, these lies of “the rulers of the darkness of this world,” may be multitudinous; such as infidel suggestions, perversions of truth, devotional human superstitions, confounding of things which dispensationally differ, false calculations touching the world’s progress, and the like. How solemn the thought! But how well to be told of these wiles, and thus to be put in preparation for them. Distinct instances of these wiles are again noticed in 2 Corinthians 2:11, 11:2; 2 Timothy 2: 26.

It is with these wiles we have to wrestle. In other characters (as when he is a liar and a persecutor), we may have to fall under the enemy. For our fight is not with flesh and blood, as was that of a Joshua or a David. God sent them forth to such conflict, having put armour upon them that was suited to meet flesh and blood. But it is in no wise so now. Not one piece of our armour would do for the battle at Ai, or for the day of the battle of Elah. Our enemies are not the Amorites or the Philistines. It is armour fitted to meet the corrupter of the truth, him who ceaseth not to pervert the right ways of the Lord (Acts 13:10). It is the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.*

The whole age through which we are passing is regarded as “a war,” with occasional fights or “evil days” – and therefore the apostle says to us, “That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

* Satan is an *accuser of the brethren* in heaven (Job 1; Rev. 12). On earth he is an *accuser of God* (Gen. 2), and a *persecutor of saints* (Job 2; Rev. 12.). But the apostle here speaks only of his wiles or deceivings.

These “wiles,” too, may become “fiery darts.” That is; these lies and deceivings which at all times are abroad, may now and again in some shape or another, be levelled directly and personally at ourselves.

And it is striking to observe what this one epistle teaches us about these evil principalities and powers. It tells us that they are *Christ’s captives*, the *saint’s enemies*, with whom he has to wrestle, and the *rulers of the world’s darkness* (ch. 4:8; 6:12). *

But here I might add (though our epistle does not suggest it) that the present ruler of the darkness of this world is doomed to take a solemn journey by-and-by. He is to be cast out of heaven where he now is, and act on the earth only. He is then, in season, to be taken from the earth and put into the bottomless pit. He is then, as taken out of the pit, to be given over to the lake of fire, or his eternal doom (see Luke 10:18; Revelation 12, 20).

And this, I may further add, is the very contrary or opposite journey of that of the Lord. The Lord Jesus came from the grave as a Conqueror. He had been “death of death and hell’s destruction.” He returned to the earth, tarrying there for forty days, giving pledges and promises touching His future kingdom here. And then He ascended to the highest heavens, receiving all power, and sending down the Holy Ghost to dwell in His saints and prepare them for Himself in the day of His exceeding glory, when He shall be displayed as filling all things – according to this same epistle.

Here we end, save the very conclusion, which has, however, a character in it that I must notice. The apostle speaks of Himself as

* It has been observed by another, that Ephesus is exhibited very specially as having been the scene of those wicked spirits that practise their lies and deceivings (see Acts 19:19).

“an ambassador in bonds.” What another witness was he, then, at that moment, of the character of the world which he had just recognised as under the rule of the powers of darkness! God’s ambassador was put in prison by the world into which He had sent him! Does one nation treat the representative of another in this way? Is not the person of an ambassador sacred?

But man’s prisoner is God’s freeman; and in the care of thoughtful love, from his prison-house he will send messages of sympathy and comfort and encouragement to his loved brethren hundreds of miles away from him beyond the seas.

From “Short Meditations” by J.G. Bellett (1795-1864).

HOW THE LORD WILL COME

1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16.

THESE Scriptures should be studied prayerfully. They are so clear and explicit as to require no expounding.

Some of the believers at Thessalonica had died. The others were sorrowing because they were afraid that those who had died would miss the Lord’s coming. Paul writes to comfort them by assuring them that the believers who had died would have part in it as much as those who were alive when He came. The spirits of all departed believers are with Christ, though their bodies are still here in the grave. When the Lord comes, the very first thing that will take place will be the raising of “the dead in Christ.” That which was sown in weakness, dishonour and corruption, will be raised in power and glory, and invested with the splendour of immortality. As it is said in 1 Corinthians 15 : “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”

Then we which are *alive*, upon whom death has not laid its hand, *we* who have not descended to the grave, shall be changed and “caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

That assembling shout may be heard to-day. Oh! what a soul-transporting thought it is, that in the twinkling of an eye we may be *caught up into glory* with the One who loves us and who gave Himself for us! The last message that has come down from the glorified Saviour is a thrice-repeated declaration, “Behold, I come quickly.” “Behold, I come quickly.” “Surely I come quickly.” Revelation 22: 7, 12, 20. Are we ready to look up *now*, and say with the beloved John: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”

We may now look at *the two-fold character* of the Lord’s coming. Scripture plainly indicates that there are two events – two acts, as it were – in the Lord’s coming, and if we confound these two events we shall come to wrong conclusions. We gather from Scripture that Christ will come firstly *for His saints*, and secondly *with His saints*. We have seen that the Lord Jesus is coming again to receive His own to Himself, that where He is they may be also (*John 14:3*). This is true scriptural hope of the church. But the second event has a very prominent place in the Holy Scriptures, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in great power and glory to judge and reign over the earth. It is this event which is the grand theme of prophecy throughout Scripture. The great mistake which the Jews made, and in which, as a nation, they are still involved, was that they were so occupied with the scriptures which spoke of Christ coming in glory and power that they overlooked those which spoke of His humiliation and suffering. *They* lost sight of the fact that Christ was *coming in humiliation to suffer*, just as Christians now are in danger of losing sight of the fact that *He is coming in glory to*

reign.

Yet all the prophets testify that the Lord is coming to judge the nations, and to rule the earth in righteousness. They speak largely of a time of future blessing for Israel and the whole world: a time when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea: a time when swords “shall be beaten into ploughshares, and the nations shall not learn war any more.”* How are all these things to come about?

At this point we must be warned against a common mistake. Many Christians fail to see the difference between Israel and the church, and they apply to the church Old Testament promises and prophecies which belong exclusively to Israel. The Old Testament is the record of God’s past and future dealings with people on earth, and of those dealings Israel is the centre. In the Old Testament there is not a line about the church of God. The church is composed of Jews and Gentiles, formed into one body, and united to Christ in glory by the Holy Spirit. It is thus a complete contrast to everything we read of before.

All the prophecies concerning Israel’s future glory will yet be fulfilled. On account of idolatry and unbelief, and finally because of the rejection of Christ, Israel has been set aside for the present. But the day is coming when Israel will be brought from exile, and from wandering, to that promised land where the glory of God shall be her light, and the presence of the Lord her everlasting joy. See Isaiah 11: 11-16; Jeremiah 16: 14, 15; Ezekiel 20: 40-44; Isaiah 60; etc. The prophetic period of future happiness and peace on earth, commonly spoken of as the millennium, is always connected with the restoration of Judah and Israel to their own land. This present period of grace in which we

**See Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3. Having a contrasting passage in Joel 3:10 shows how important it is to see each scripture in its right context – Ed.*

live is a gap in God's dealings with Israel. He has laid them aside "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11: 25). God is not now dealing with Israel as a nation: He is gathering out a bride for Christ – the church – from among both Jews and Gentiles. But when the church is complete and caught up to meet the Lord, God will resume His dealings with Israel. A number of Jews will be convicted of their sins, and will repent deeply of their individual and national wickedness. They will be brought to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, and they will look out for Him to come as their Deliverer and King. They will have to pass through the great tribulation spoken of in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, and will look out for the signs which are there spoken of as preceding the coming of Christ in power and glory.

Many students of prophecy have not distinguished the two parts of the Lord's coming, and have supposed that these things are to happen before He comes for the church. It is an utter mistake for Christians to *look for signs*.* Before this time of signs, wonders, earthquakes and tribulation begins, the church will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and will be happy in His presence during the time of all these terrible disasters and calamities on earth. His own word to the church is, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience; I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," (Revelation 3: 10).

The period of great tribulation is described in Revelation 6-18. To read those chapters is enough to make the heart quake: what will it be to go through the terrible realities which are there so vividly described? But where is the church during that fearful time? She is seen on earth up to the end of Revelation 3, but in chapters

** As has often been remarked, coming events do cast their shadow before them, but the actual fulfilment of prophecy is another thing – Editor.*

4 and 5 she appears in heaven under the figure of four-and-twenty crowned elders round about the throne. God has taken pains to let us see that the church will be complete and in glory before a seal is opened, a trumpet sounded, or a vial poured out.

Then *after* that great tribulation shall all the tribes of the earth see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24: 29, 30). *Then* shall the Lord Jesus Christ be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1: 8). This is the event proclaimed in Revelation 1: 7: “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”

C.A. Coates (1862-1945).

POETIC PAGES

Christian Blessings

Love of God beyond all telling,
Shown in grace so full and free,
Able through Christ's perfect off'ring
To embrace us righteously.

Rich in mercy, too, our God is,
Quick'ning us when dead in sins;
E'en with Christ, in Whom our life is –
Him, the Firstborn of all things!

Great Thy favour, Father, on us,
For we share Thy Son's blest place –
He, entitled to all honours;
We, brought in through wondrous grace!

Praise, our Father, for Thy Spirit,
Earnest He of things to come;
Things we shall with Christ inherit
When we reach our heav'nly home.

While we wait the longed-for glory,
For the meeting in the air,
Father, we Thy children bless Thee
For Thy detailed, daily care

Shown to us in myriad mercies
All expressing love divine.
Oh! How precious is the promise:
Safe we are in hands like Thine.

Having too Christ's intercession
In His place within the veil,
We're sustained in our confession,
Knowing joys that never fail!

G.S.B. Composed in hospital 22nd July, 2019.

Hyssop

“Wash me with hyssop and I shall be clean” –
Words from the Bible: and what do they mean?
A way of redemption from God was foretold.
To captive Israelis in Egypt of old:
The doorposts of each house and lintel above
Were sprinkled with blood from a lamb they did love.
Then God passed over and saw them obey;
They were saved from destruction and enemy sway.
Hyssop was used to sprinkle this token,
Which saved every soul as God had thus spoken.
“A root from dry ground” – the hyssop and Jesus;
It has to be God's way that cleanses and frees us. /p.t.o

On hearing this story, we think of our Lord,
The innocent Lamb by His Father adored,
Who offered His *blood* to recover each soul;
And God saw the *blood* that would render us whole.
Oh, think of such love and guide your behaviour
To love and adore and obey such a Saviour.
The Sinless to rescue the sinner I am,
Our God in His mercy provided the Lamb.
The rock out of which the hyssop would grow
Provided the means to apply and to show
That all is available, pre-planned and free:
All is of God and nothing of me.

Mrs. A. Edna Godwin

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.