

Words of Peace & Truth



NO. 120: September – December 2023 CONTENTS

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

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

No. 120: September – December 2023

Editorial

It has often been said that coming events cast their shadow before them. Surely we are seeing this in the present day. We know from 2 Thessalonians 2 that the Antichrist cannot be revealed so long as the restraint of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the church is still present – things would be far worse but for that – but surely some of the features that will soon become full-blown are already evident in principle. Indeed, verse 7 of that chapter tells us that “the mystery of lawlessness already works.” For example, we are warned that in the coming great apostasy and tribulation “God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie”; what lies are already being spread and believed even now!

Judgment must soon fall on this Christ-rejecting world and Peter tells us that this “must begin at the house of God” (1 Pet. 4:17) – that is to say, where the Name of Christ and the worship of God are professed. This was so at the time of the Babylonian captivity (Ezekiel 9:6). But as was the case then, so now there are those “that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done” (Ezek. 9:4). May we as believers on the Lord Jesus be concerned to stand apart from all that dishonours Him (2 Timothy 2:19) and prove that He is ever faithful to those who call upon Him (Psalm 145:18). Like Peter, we may well say, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). G.S.B.

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Heavenly Things in Hebrews

“Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession”

(Hebrews 4:14).

Heavenly calling 3:1 – The Lord Jesus is described as Apostle and High Priest. As Apostle, He comes from God to man on earth; as High Priest, He goes from man to God in heaven. He came from heaven and went to heaven, calling us there with Him.

Heavenly gift 6:4 – This section is a solemn warning against apostasy – falling away. They had “tasted of the heavenly gift,” the gift of the Holy Spirit. They experienced His miracles and power, but this is no guarantee (cf. John 2:23-25). Judas did miracles but was an unbeliever, an apostate – he fell away. But the writer of the Epistle was persuaded of better things concerning his hearers, things concerning salvation (Heb. 6:9).

Heavenly things 8:5 – The things in the Law were but a “shadow of heavenly things.” The tabernacle in the wilderness and sacrifices were “figurative representations of the things in the heavens” (9:23). In Hebrews, there is an emphasis on the superiority and supremacy of Christ over the Old Covenant, an earthly system which was growing old and passing away (8:13). We have a High Priest who has sat down on the “throne of the greatness in the heavens” (8:1).

Heavenly country 11:16 – The Old Testament worthies did not seek a country down here; they were strangers and pilgrims while here, which was a testimony that they were seeking a better one, a heavenly one. What country is important to us? Which one are we seeking and living for?

Heavenly Jerusalem 12:22 – Abraham was looking for a “city which has foundations” (11:10); we have no “abiding city” but seek the coming one” (13:14). The heavenly Jerusalem is our hope, not a city or kingdom on the earth!

Brian Reynolds

Reproduced from “The Lord is Near,” October 6th 2023, with permission.

CHRIST MAGNIFIED IN OUR MORTAL BODIES

“Christ shall be magnified in my mortal body, whether it be by life, or by death.” (Read Philippians 1:12, 21; 2:1-16; 3:8-14; 4:13.)

I HAVE only read a few verses, but I thought of speaking in a general way from the whole epistle, because it gives us great encouragement, in that it was written by a man who was once worse than any of us. He who had been the chief of sinners became the greatest monument of grace. **THE CHIEF OF SINNERS BECAME THE CHIEF OF SAINTS.** It is very interesting to see how the chief of sinners is set forth in the Scriptures as the very first of saints, as a pattern for all who belong to Christ, and yet he speaks of himself as the least of all saints. What specially and constantly marked him, as the epistle shows, was Christ. I should be thankful if I could open it out a little. The Holy Ghost delights to make the truth fresh and living to us as long as we are here, and one counts on Him to do so now.

I delight to think of that dear servant of the Lord Jesus, Paul. There was nothing of Christ in him at one time, but after his conversion all was changed, and we see everything that is blessed, manifested in him. You know how the four chapters beautifully divide the whole epistle into four parts, and each part is most instructive. The first chapter brings out specially that **HIS LIFE WAS CHRIST**; the second chapter that **HIS MIND WAS CHRIST**; the third chapter that **HIS OBJECT WAS CHRIST**; and the fourth chapter that **HIS STRENGTH WAS CHRIST**. So that he did not go outside of Christ for anything. I hope the younger ones here will understand what I mean, but sometimes the thought of Christ is limited in people's minds to Christ personally, and they do not take in that Christ is formed morally in the believer, whilst Christ personally is in heaven. Christ can thus be reproduced in us to any extent; the

blessedness in Christ can be developed infinitely. The riches of Christ are absolutely untraceable. He will soon fill all the nations; He will fill all the libraries; you will not want anything then that does not refer to Christ. He will give His thoughts to the whole world; He will fill everything in that thousand years when He will reign in glory – I mean in the Millennium; but we ought to be filled with Him now and begin the new world now in our own souls. The saints in that way will set the new world going, for the glory of Christ will shine out through His Body, that is, through the saints. To look at Christ alone will be too much for the world; they will gaze at Christ through the myriads of blessed beings who form the Church, the Holy City of Revelation 21. If you study and learn Christ now, you will be of great use in that day. God is forming us now in view of that day. If our enjoyment of Christ is very small now, our use will be very small then for manifesting Christ. The fact of the matter is, our mind and heart and life are often in a wrong direction, and we have to be exercised about these things. The great question is not how many people profess to be converted, how many are sure of going to heaven, but **HOW MANY ARE BRINGING HEAVEN TO EARTH NOW?** How many are expressing the heavenly Man here? God will have Christ reproduced here on earth. So few seem to apprehend and appropriate Christ, and feed on Him so that they really reproduce Christ and His ways and manner of life down here. That is what God is looking for. He has Christ in heaven, but He not only wants Christ in heaven, but He wants Christ on earth now, and if there is a little bit of Christ in us now, that all goes to form the testimony here in this world.

In the first chapter of this epistle we read that **HIS LIFE WAS CHRIST**. And wherever you put Christ – I mean, the man whose life is Christ – there must be blessing. Put Christ in prison, in the person of Paul, the testimony goes all through the palace. They never had a man there before like him. You might

think that to put Paul in prison would mean the downfall of Christianity, but his life was Christ, and so Christ shone out there, for CHRIST IN PRISON MAKES MORE MARK THAN CAESAR IN THE PALACE. Why did God allow Paul to be in prison? You may wonder the Lord did not let him out; but it pleased the Lord to let him remain there that he might glorify Him. It was a great test for him, no doubt, but it did not take away his joy. It is manifest in this chapter that he was a very happy man. He was the happiest man on earth, I have no doubt. THERE IS NO LIFE SO HAPPY AS THAT OF CHRIST. Of course Christ personally is the first in everything. He leads the way in joy and happiness, but His people who love Him follow in the same joyful and happy way. There is a happiness with Christ and a joy that is in direct contrast to the miserable spirit found in this world. And with all the hatred and misery in Rome, there was one happy man. They put him in jail, but instead of making him downcast, he was happy, and he knew that all was going right. He knew Christ too well than to think that all was going wrong, but other people did not know Christ so well, so he writes to encourage the Philippians. He had heard that things were going well with them at Philippi during his absence, and writes to tell them how well things were going at Rome. The preaching had even reached to Caesar's household! He says, the things that have happened unto me have turned out to the furtherance of the Gospel, and he asks their prayers that he may not give in, but that Christ may be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. That is the right thought. It is of the very first importance that CHRIST SHOULD BE MAGNIFIED IN OUR BODIES. All sorts of questions may exercise me in this world, but the first thing is the magnifying of Christ in my body, whether by life or by death. Every Christian has the same path marked out for him. There is only one golden way, and that is the way of Christ. The Holy Ghost is thoroughly well acquainted with it. It was in the

power of the Spirit that Christ marked out that golden way. He gave it to His disciples to walk in, and the Holy Ghost is grieved if we leave it, and supports every one that treads in it. That was what Paul was anxious about. He was a man like you and me, he felt his weakness, he had no great ideas of himself, but he counted on the prayers of the Philippians to go through to the end in testimony, and he did. He says, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation," etc. (verses 19, 20). Some were preaching Christ in pretence. Well, that led to enquiry as to who this Christ was whom they preached. Paul was not disturbed by that. The man who preached Christ in envy and strife got a crowd for the man who preached Christ in reality. If there is opposition, you can rejoice, because the Lord will win the day; Christ always wins the day. He says, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

Well now, dear young people, what a word that is for us! You can see a man like ourselves, and thoroughly set for it that Christ should be magnified in his body. What an example! Do you ever pray that Christ may be magnified in your body? What do you pray about? Is it not a wonderful thought that Christ should be magnified in your body every day? Do you pray for that? Think of the slang that is used nowadays! Do you think Christ is magnified in that? Are we seeking to pick it up? Can you conceive of Christ touching it? Children brought up in Christian homes often hear things outside they never hear at home, and which are not the language of a Christian. Let us ask: Do we learn such things from Christ? We have to learn to be listeners to Christ and not to the world around us. He can teach us and loves to do so, for He is not dead, though He died for us. He is risen, and has triumphed over death, and has been exalted to the right hand of God in heaven. And though no longer on earth HIS PATHWAY WILL NEVER BE OBLITERATED OR WIPED OUT. It is recorded in Scripture

and made known to His followers, that they may walk in it too. It has often been difficult to trace it by looking at the walk of us who profess His Name. It is perhaps pretty well obliterated in us; but the Holy Ghost knows it well, and knows how to recover it and retrace it, and to enable us to follow in it to-day. We shall see that chapter 2 connects Christ in heaven with His pathway here. As you begin to study Christ, you will find that He is morally exactly the same as when He was here on earth, and you will seek to be continually under His living influence; as you do so, you will find it will alter your way of speaking and it will change your manner of life in every way. You will be exercised about your reading. It is easy to get at books to-day, and especially at worthless ones. What then am I to do? I am to magnify Christ in my reading. It is delightful to see young people seeking that Christ should be magnified in the details of life. Such are not content with being outwardly in fellowship and breaking bread, they want to express Christ. They desire that Christ should be in everything, in their acts, their reading and their thoughts, so that Christ should be daily magnified in their bodies. Now Paul led the way in all this, and is far beyond us. He says "For to me to live is Christ." All that went to make up life for him, he found in Christ. It is a great encouragement for me to see how a man who was the chief of sinners can be the greatest witness for Christ. Is it not then for every one of us to desire to be on the same line, and not to be content with the desire, but to see that that desire is fulfilled. What a happy life is the Christian's! But many a Christian, instead of living as a Christian, seeks his life in self-enjoyment, and the more money and time he has, the more opportunity he has of doing so. Now such a one may be outwardly moral and good, but is he living the life of Christ? Compare him with Paul in prison: who is the happier man? Certainly Paul, who, though in prison, was always rejoicing. But if Paul's life was Christ, why does he say: "To die is gain"? Surely it was because he

would then be able to enjoy Christ fully without being disturbed by the wickedness of people around. Whilst here in the body the evil of this world constantly intruded itself upon his spirit. But then he would be absolutely free to enjoy Christ without anything at all to disturb him. Death to him was simply to depart and be with Christ, and so it is for all whose life is Christ. There is no sting in death. Then, in the special case of Paul, he had no natural links of wife and family, etc. He was wholly occupied with the Lord's things, and therefore he had nothing whatever to lose but everything to gain by going to be with Christ. All that was truly life for him could be expressed in one word – Christ.

In chapter 2 we have another thought: HIS MIND WAS CHRIST. It is exceedingly important what our mind is. Paul was a lowly man, more lowly perhaps than any man. He was a pattern to all the saints in his spirit of lowliness and self-emptiness. He did not consider himself at all, but was bent on serving others. His mind was Christ. But perhaps you say he was evidently a very intellectual man. Perhaps so, but how did he feed his intellect? With the rubbish of this world? with the learning of the Greeks? with the current thoughts of the day? No, he fed his mind with Christ. There is enough in Christ to feed and command the greatest intellect. If Christ cannot satisfy your intellect now, how is He going to do so in heaven? Perhaps you say, you will be all right there, but why not be right here? The man who every day seeks to get fresh thoughts from Christ, will find Him great enough to feed and more than satisfy his mind. He is quite equal to feeding and filling the minds of all His people to-day. He will feed and fill the minds of all the nations in the Millennium. He will be their daily bread. Surely then He can fill us now. At all events He filled one man, for He filled Paul.

You must remember that Paul was not with Christ in His

humiliation. I mean, he was not a disciple when Christ was on the earth. He learnt what Christ was down here from what he saw of Him in glory. He traced back, as it were, the path that led to glory from the glory in which he saw Christ in heaven at the time of his conversion. He traced it back to the beginning of that pathway here; yea, even further back still, for he gives us what Christ had in His mind even before He became Man. The twelve saw Him here on earth, and the evangelists trace His pathway through this world into glory. But Paul so saw Christ in glory that he was able to unfold His path of humiliation more fully than the twelve. He even tells us what was in the mind of Christ before He became Man at all. I mean, he tells us what Christ's thought was in taking up manhood. It was a come-down thought. He did not consider how He could climb up higher, but how He could come down and serve God here and save ruined man. HE MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION, or, literally translated, HE EMPTIED HIMSELF. For when He was in absolute deity, He conceived the thought of becoming man, of veiling His glory, and of taking the place of a humble lowly Man, doing not His own will but the will of God. Now how different His thought was to that of man! Man is never content, but always seeking to get more, to become greater; he must get on, get this and that for himself and his family, must push himself to the front. Then when he succeeds and reaches his goal, he is disappointed and finds "all is vanity and vexation of spirit," (*Ecclesiastes 1:14, 2:11 etc.*) and in the end, one word can describe his whole life – a void.

Paul learnt, I say, the mind and pathway of Christ by what he saw of Him in glory. The presentation to him, outside Damascus, of Christ in heaven was such that he could see that Christ as Man took a course in this world totally in contrast to the man of the world. It was not what He could get, and how high He could climb, but what He could give, and how low

He could come down in serving others. Self was never before Him at all. Verse 6 shows this very clearly: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation,” etc. This is an evident contrast to Adam. Adam thought he saw a splendid way of becoming a bigger man than he was, by eating of the forbidden tree. He saw something to grasp at, a prize to be snatched at, for this is the idea of the word translated “robbery,” and he snatched at it, and fell into ruin. God gave the human race 4,000 years to recover themselves, but they got worse and worse. Then He sent His Son; and His Son took the very opposite course to that of Adam, for, “being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” He had no thought of snatching some prize whereby to make Himself greater; but when at the top, for He was God, He had the thought of emptying Himself, and He did so, and He came down to do the will of God. Not only so, but when found in fashion as a man, He went further still: He humbled Himself, and that marked His whole course. There was nothing in His course contrary to lowliness and entire submission to the will of God. He went down even to death, and that death no ordinary one, but the death of the cross.

Now let us look at GOD’S GRAND ANSWER: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Paul learnt all this by seeing Christ in glory. He saw why God exalted Him – because His life was, in absolute contrast to that of every other man, entirely for the will and pleasure of God. He never vaunted Himself, never exalted Himself, He was ever the meek and lowly One. He was entirely self-emptied. Though He did so many miracles, He never did

any to serve Himself or to relieve His necessities. He served God, never Himself. Well might Paul say: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." It was Paul's mind, and He wished it for all the saints. Yea, he goes on to show how this mind of Christ can come out in a company of saints.

How wonderful it is that we can have the mind of Christ! — that we can even think as He thought! How otherwise could we walk with Him, and be truly His friends? The Lord said "Ye are My friends." But if He finds us thinking on lines the very opposite to Himself, where is the practical friendship? What God desires to see down here is A PEOPLE WHO THINK AS CHRIST THINKS, and who consequently act and live like Him. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless [*Darby Trans.:* 'harmless and simple'], the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." Surely we ought not to be found murmuring and disputing. Christ knew nothing of disputing, but the world is full of it. We ought to have nothing to do with their quarrels and disputes. The Holy Ghost is not here to be a party to such things. The verse I have just quoted gives us A MODEL CHRISTIAN COMPANY, and Paul encourages the dear Philippian assembly in this way to hold forth the word of life; that is, the testimony of life. This is what we are all called to do, and if others fail, it is all the more reason why you and I should "appear as lights in the world," like a beautiful star shining forth in the darkness of night. You will not be entirely alone; you will find others also seeking to walk so as to please God. Stars often shine in clusters. God has a great many, I doubt not, who are seeking to walk as Christ walked, and that Christ should at all costs be magnified in their bodies, whether it be by life or by death. Whatever they may have to suffer, may they not be diverted from the path of Christ! A poor man who

is faithful will make a greater mark in the world man who is selfish and worldly. An ambitious man who succeeds in his ambition does not really make a mark. The man whom people cannot forget, and who never lives in vain, is the man who does not serve himself, but God, and who is prepared for suffering, provided that Christ may be magnified in his body. That man will leave a mark for good wherever he goes. Christ in prison, as we see in the case of Paul himself, makes more mark than thousands in liberty.

We are getting near the Rapture (*or, being “caught up” – 1 Thessalonians 4:17*). The Lord is coming, and we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, but **HE WILL TAKE NOTHING INTO HEAVEN BUT WHAT CAME OUT OF HEAVEN**. I mean, if there is nothing in you that is out of heaven, nothing of Christ, you will not go to heaven. You say, Surely he will take all the Lord’s people. Yes, certainly, but if they are His, there is a bit of Christ in all of them, or they would not be Christians. But ought we not to seek to be very distinctly like Christ, the heavenly Man, now? Otherwise our size as vessels of light will be very small at that Day. May we be found then in the mind of Christ, not pushing others out of the way, and seeking to get rid of them, but willing to be pushed out of the way ourselves if only we can magnify Him and glorify God. We find later on in the chapter how “all seek their own [*things*], not the things which are Jesus Christ’s,” and then Paul instances two beautiful exceptions in Timothy, who naturally cared for others, and Epaphroditus, who for the work of Christ was nigh unto death. What an example for us!

In chapter 3 we find that **HIS OBJECT WAS CHRIST**. Paul had Christ ever before him filling his vision. You could not have been with Paul very long before you found that he was completely governed by an object, and that that object was Christ in glory. He first saw Christ when on his way to

Damascus to persecute His followers. But he so saw Him that he wanted to see no other man after he had seen that Man. **CHRIST IN GLORY COMPLETELY COMMANDED HIM.** He allowed no one to take the place of Christ in his mind and heart. He fastened his eyes on Christ for ever. If you had asked him what he was looking at, he would have replied: I am looking at Him and I want to be like Him. If you had said: But, Paul, you were a great man in the religious world once, what more could you have? He would have replied: “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ,” and “I count all things but loss . . . that I may win Christ,” or, as it might be translated, “have Christ for my gain.”

He found what true gain is. He might have got the tip-top place in the religious world, but he let the whole thing go. But Paul did not boast of what he had given up; he boasted of Christ: “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,” etc. First, he discovered to his amazement that Jesus, whom he thought to be a deceiver and in the grave, was alive and in heaven, that Man was in glory in the Person of God’s Son; then he got to know Him as the Son of God, and saw the love of God fully expressed in Him, and streaming down upon himself, the chief of sinners. Henceforth nothing would do for Paul but to know Christ and to be like Him. The purpose that marked Paul is well worth studying by us all. He says: “Not as though I had already attained, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” But when did he expect to attain what he wanted? Not fully till glory. He looked for Christ to come out of heaven as Saviour, and change this body of humiliation, the body as we have it now, and make it like to His body of glory. Then, and not till then, would he be **COMPLETELY LIKE CHRIST, NOT ONLY IN SPIRIT BUT EVEN IN BODY.** Meanwhile he was always looking upward at Christ, no longer seeking to make himself great, but “pressing toward the

mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” This was the truly upward line. He wanted more and more to be like Christ, like that blessed and glorified Man.

God will not always allow Christians to remain homeless strangers on the earth. The more you become like Christ, the more will all heaven, as it were, see that your home is above, and God will see to it, ere long, that you are with Christ in heaven. He will not allow a bit of Christ to remain in this Christ-rejecting world. When Christ comes into the air, everything that is of Him and like Him will be caught up to be with Him.

In chapter 4 we find HIS STRENGTH WAS CHRIST. “I can do all things through (or in) Christ which strengtheneth me.” Paul could go through anything in the strength of Christ which was wrought in him. With the exception of Christ, he was, I doubt not, THE STRONGEST MAN EVER KNOWN. It was inherent strength. Christ was *in* him. He was far stronger than the Latin Emperor, for in spite of Caesar keeping him in prison, his influence, and the Gospel he preached, extended all over the Latin Empire. Caesar never succeeded in overthrowing him. He maintained the truth till his death, and Caesar did not kill him till his work was finished. He was confronted and opposed by the world for some thirty years or more, but he stood his ground till the end. CHRIST WAS IN THE MAN; that was the secret of his strength which was greater than Samson’s. It was moral strength, not physical. Caesar is dead, and his glory has perished, but Paul’s work lives still, and his writings encourage us till this very day. Though Paul is not our food, he is our example.

He has led the way in the Christian path, and says to us: “As many as be perfect [grown up in Christ], be thus minded,” and if some of us feel we are far behind him, let us take courage from his words: “Nevertheless, whereto we

have already attained [wherever we are in the race, perhaps far behind], let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” If Christ be your rule and object, you are sure to make progress. Let us then continue in the race and hold our ground. The flag has never been captured yet; the Name of Christ is still precious to-day. The flag is flying still, it cannot be captured. **THERE IS MORE STRENGTH IN THE CHRISTIAN HOST THAN THERE IS IN THE WHOLE WORLD.** “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (*1 John 4:4*). That is the secret of it all; the Holy Ghost is here to maintain His Name. May we be greatly encouraged, and as Christ covers the Epistle, may He cover our lives, for His Name’s sake!

Henry D’Arcy Champney (1854-1942)

The Destroyer and the Deliverer

Matthew 4:1-11

... Then we get His commission or ordination, under the voice of the Father, and by endowment of the Spirit.

And then the temptation; a necessary part of this great solemnity also, and needful to the introduction of the Lord into His ministry.

If the work which now lay before Him be redemption: if He be about to repair, yea, more than repair, the mischief which the first man had wrought, and which all other men had but witnessed and perpetuated, so must He personally stand where the first man, and all beside, had failed. Hence the temptation. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. The Spirit, Who had descended and rested on Him at His baptism, in a bodily shape like a dove, now puts Him forth to withstand the serpent, who is also the roaring lion; for the dove-like ministry of grace to sinners is one with the full defeat of man’s destroyer. Jesus came to save

sinner, and to destroy the works of the devil (*see 1 John 3:8*).

Accordingly, Jesus, in the very outset, and as introducing Himself to His work, withstands Satan. He proves Himself to be impregnable. Eve surrendered God's word to the serpent; Jesus withstands him by it. No attempt of the enemy prevails. The Holy Thing that had been born (*see Luke 1:35*) is still as holy in full manhood as He had been in the virgin's womb. He proves Himself not to be in the common defeat and captivity. He leaves Satan without any title against Him; and thus He **binds** him.

And this binding of him is the first great action of our Deliverer with our destroyer.

He then comes forth at once, to enter his house and **spoil his goods** (*see Matthew 12:29*).

In the due season He will be his Bruiser, as well as his Binder and Spoiler. He will **bruise his head on Calvary** (*see Genesis 3:15*).

Then, in the far distance, He will **cast him from heaven** (Revelation 12).

Then He will **put him into the bottomless pit** (Rev. 20).

And finally, He will **cast him into the lake of fire** (Rev. 20).

These are the ways of our great Deliverer with our adversary; and these ways He here begins in the wilderness of the temptation. How simple, and yet how glorious! How perfect in order, as well as mighty in action, from first to last! No one binds or bruises Satan but Jesus the Son of God. Samson typifies him as the Stronger Man entering the strong man's house, to spoil his goods; and all the saints will have Satan bruised under their feet in season (*see Romans 16:20*); but Jesus the Son of God bound the strong man, and bruised the head of the serpent. These works were all His own, and His only.

Extracted from "The Evangelists" by J.G. Bellett (1795-1864).

WAITING, WATCHING, AND LISTENING FOR THE LORD JESUS

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15: 51-54).

“This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (*or anticipate*) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4: 15-1 7).

These Scriptures relate to *the true hope* of every believer who loves our Lord Jesus. They show that He is coming again, to claim every one of those for whom He has died, whom He has redeemed by His own precious blood. All who have ‘fallen asleep in Jesus’ will be quickened and raised, and those who are living will be changed instantaneously into the same image. All will have bodies of glory like to His own, immortal and incorruptible (Philippians 3:21). No mention is made of anyone else being raised *at that time*; it will be only those who belong to the Saviour.

Some believers are not clear about this. Although they believe in the resurrection, they have an idea that all the dead are going to be raised together, and that then the believers are going to be separated from the others and taken into heaven, and the others to be cast into

hell, according to the Divine assessment of their lives. This is based on a misunderstanding of the Lord's words Matthew 25: 31-46, which set out what will happen "when the Son of Man shall come in His glory," when He will separate the living nations, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, in His review *on earth* following the years of tribulation.

Now when the Lord Jesus comes for His own, as the Scripture in 1 Thessalonians 4: 16,17 puts it, "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Who will be among that happy throng depends simply and only upon whether we have believed on Him as our Saviour, not on anything we have done; nor can anyone be excluded who trusts in the finished work of Jesus, who has Himself established the right of those that are His to be there.

It is the privilege of every believer who knows these things, to be eagerly *waiting, watching, and listening* for Him. It is part of the gospel that the Saviour has not only died for us, but He is risen for us (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4, 22-23); and He is coming for us (Philippians 3: 20,21).

Waiting. When Paul wrote to them, the Thessalonians were only recently converted, but we are told they had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to *wait for* His Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1: 9,10). Since that time, millions have been waiting for Jesus, and the Saviour Himself is waiting, until the time comes "which the Father hath put in His own power (*or authority*) (Acts 1: 7).

There is much in this world which may, and does, attract us; and alas, many believers are so occupied with things down here that they tend to overlook the fact that the Saviour is coming – coming quickly (Revelation 22: 20). We are to be "like unto men that wait for their lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He

cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately” (Luke 12: 36). This emphasises the need to be *alert, and always ready* for the event.

Watching. Are we *looking for* the Saviour to come? If a person is really waiting for another, he will also be watching. If you have waited on a railway station platform for a train that is bringing a dear one to you, how expectantly you look along the line for the train to come. You hear a bell ring, which means that the train is approaching. Then the signal changes, and as everyone peers more expectantly, the train comes in sight! Now that is watching for a physical event, whereas it is a *Person* that believers are looking for.

The Lord Jesus tells His disciples, “Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching” (Luke 12: 37). The importance of watching for Him is further stressed in the account given in Mark’s gospel, where He says “*Take ye heed, watch and pray:* for ye know not when the time is” (Mark 13: 33), and then “what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13: 37).

Listening. We should not only be waiting and watching, but also listening. We are told that when the Lord Jesus comes for His own, “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4: 16). This is to call His own together: are we listening for these sounds? We may be waiting and watching, yet all continues around us as before; but the heart that loves Jesus will also be listening.

Many years ago, during the Indian Mutiny, a number of British troops with women and children were besieged in the Residency at Lucknow for many weeks. Day after day the attackers sought to break in. All around was the din of war, but one day a sick Scotswoman in the hospital started up with a cry 'Dinna ye hear it? The pipes!' Those around could hear nothing but the sound of fighting, but the ear of the Scotswoman had discerned the sound of

the bagpipes. 'Dinna ye hear it?' Every ear was strained, but nothing but the booming of guns could be heard. At last, after a long time had passed, through the din of fighting could be heard the skirl of the pipes. The relieving force was at hand. The ear accustomed to the sound of bagpipes had discerned it, long before those unacquainted with it.

So it is with the lovers of Jesus. If we are accustomed, in communion with Him, to *hearkening to Him*, our ears will be attuned, and soon we shall hear His well-known voice. Let us then be continually waiting, watching, and listening for Him.

B.G. Hardingham (1894-1973)

SLANDER – THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

I believe we should heed what the Bible tells us about this serious subject. **The first recorded slander is in the serpent's words to the woman in Genesis 3:1-5. The serpent, aka the devil (Revelation 20:2), calls God a liar: "You shall not surely die."**

Slander capitalizes on lies and half-truths. The Lord speaks of the devil as a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). He also says that he is a murderer from the beginning and links this with untruth. The serpent ascribes to God wrong motives – of withholding from man what would be for their greater happiness. Lies are mixed with truth: they **will** through disobedience now know evil, not just good, but with a propensity to do evil and inability to do what is good (see Romans 7:19).

"Satan" means 'adversary:' he aims to cause rebellion against God's purposes. The New Testament word *diabolos*, translated "Devil," means 'slanderer.'

The next text I wish to consider is in Exodus 20: the 9th commandment: "**Thou shalt not bear false witness.**" This was

recorded by Moses, but written by God Himself directly onto a stone tablet. So we are commanded not to copy the devil's example. Topical indices of the Bible link slander, lies and false witness as virtual synonyms (e.g. Abbot-Smith's Greek lexicon and Thompson's reference Bible). In Rev 21:8, along with murderers, we see the final dreadful fate of unrepentant liars.

Perhaps that is why our next text, Proverbs 10:18, tells us that "He who hides hatred with lying lips, and he who utters a slander, **is a fool.**" This puts him on the same level as the atheist, for "the fool has said in his heart, there is no God."

Now look at Matthew 26:60. Here Our Lord is subjected to slanderous accusations, cleverly twisted references to His prophetic statements. See how devious slander can be! The apostle Paul suffered from Alexander the coppersmith (*2 Timothy 4:14*). John Gill, that mighty expositor (1697-1771), believes that consisted principally of slander.

I wish to turn now to how slander is and should be dealt with, according to the Bible.

In Acts 5 we have false testimony by Ananias and Sapphira, with fatal consequences. Sin within the professing church needs to be dealt with, not ignored. When there was sin in Corinth, Paul does not say, 'Never mind: go on loving and forgiving and praying. Things will sort themselves out eventually.' No, there needed to be action, with the hope that it would lead to real repentance.

The proverb has been quoted that says that "where no wood is, there the fire goes out" (Proverbs 26:20) but unrepented sin (such as slander), if one permits the analogy, **is** the wood.

In looking at commentary on Matthew 18:15-17 in TGC (The Gospel Coalition) guidance on Christian living, I came across the following description of slander, which I think is extremely helpful: "Slander is a serious sin. Like its cousin gossip, slander is incredibly

destructive. It ‘lies in wait for blood’ (Prov. 12:6), destroys neighbours’ (Prov. 11:9), and ‘separates close friends’ (Prov. 16:28). But while both gossip and slander involve destructive speech, slander adds the additional element of dishonesty. Gossip spreads the fire, but slander sparks it.”

When slander is written, we call it libel. Yes, false witness is often direct, even face to face, but slander is cowardly, sneaky, often behind a person’s back.

Any concordance will list references to false witness, lies and slander, with at least seven words in the original languages to convey the matter, including the Greek *blasphem-eo/ia/os* which provide our English ‘blasphemy.’

While slander can be calculated, deliberate character assassination, it can also appear in thoughtless gossip. The K.J.V. translates as ‘talebearer’ the Hebrew *rakil*, which has the root idea of going about, for trade or gossip. Perhaps one can compare the Arabic *rakala*, meaning to kick a horse. Going around gossiping is condemned by Paul (1 Tim. 5:11-14), who links it to idleness and perhaps the loss of their late husbands’ companionship. One is reminded of the popular maxim: ‘Satan makes work for idle hands to do’.

Another Old Testament word translated as ‘slander’ is *lashon*, with emphasis on the tongue. James tells of the damage an unguarded tongue can cause (ch. 3). Compare Proverbs 30:10, “Accuse not ...” [The K.J.V. has a marginal reading: ‘hurt not with thy tongue’] “a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.”

The O.T. has much to say about the lying tongue: “Thou wilt destroy them that speak lies” [K.J.V. ‘leaving’, Hebrew *cazab*, deceit] (Psa. 5:6). “Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue” (Psa. 120:2).

“These six things doth the Lord hate: ... a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Prov. 6:16-19). Again, Prov. 16:28 tells us that “a froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer (or ‘talebearer’) separateth chief (or ‘very’) friends” (*see the earlier quotation in this paper from TGC*).

Perhaps the wide range of Hebrew nouns and verbs in the O.T. that relate to slander suggests how seriously the holy scriptures treat slander. These include *daphi*, *dibbah*, *ragal*, *sheqer* and *shaqar*, English equivalents being ‘alleging a blemish or fault, soft whispering, evil report, infamy, defaming, backbiting, deception, testifying falsehood, lying (spirit), swearing falsely, (forgers of) lies.’ Equally in the N.T. *diabolos*, *diaballomai*, *dusphemia*, *blasphemeo*, *pseudos*, *pseudomai*, *pseudo-martus/ur-eo/ia*, *pseusma/tes*, and closely related *loidoreo*, *loidoria*, *goggustes* have English equivalents in ‘evil report, reporting slanderously, swearing falsely, throwing aspersions, bearing false witness, lying, reviling, railing, whispering, speaking secretly, complaining, muttering.’

Just consider a few more examples from the Old Testament. See what mischief Potiphar’s wife caused in her slander of Joseph! (Genesis 39.) And slander has no scruples about preying on the weak, as seen in Ziba’s slander of Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 19:27). The motivation for slander is wide-ranging – in these last examples, frustrated lust seeking revenge, and plain greed – but whatever the motive, it is wrong and Biblically condemned.

As regards listening to false reports, there is, all too often, a fleshly desire with us to feed on gossip. We read in Prov. 18:8 that “the words of a talebearer are as wounds (or ‘dainty morsels’ [Darby Translation]), and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” The law given through Moses prohibited not only the bearing of false witness but also the acceptance of a false report: “Thou shalt not raise [“receive” per marginal note to K.J.V. – “accept” per J.N.D.] a false report” (Exodus 23:1). In the N.T. we are told that the Athenians “spent their time in nothing else than to tell and to

hear the news” (Acts 17:21). We must be careful not to copy their behaviour!

“As for the scoundrel – his devices are evil; he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right. But he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands” (Isaiah 32:7-8, ESV).

The Bible does, however, give us much **positive** guidance as to how we should think and speak. The Lord Jesus said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Both Old and New Testaments tell us what righteous judgment is – that based on the evidence of two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 2 Cor. 13:1). Further, we are exhorted to “speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Eph. 4:25) and a few verses later (verse 29) the apostle gives us more good advice: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

So we must not ignore or treat lightly the sin of slander, whatever form it takes. I pray every conscience may be touched by this brief survey of the subject, and appropriate action be taken where necessary.

Michael A. Godwin, October 2023.

Our Relationship with Christ to Reflect His with the Father.

John 6:57; 15:9, 10; 20:21; Revelation 3:21.

We surely need sanctified and reverent minds as we think about the relationship of Christ with His Father, a subject that extends beyond what we can understand. Who, for example, can grasp the full meaning of what the Lord said when He spoke to His Father of “the glory which I had with Thee before the world was;” and of the love with which “Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:5, 24)? Yet there is what has been wonderfully revealed to us. For example, John tells us (no doubt

referring to himself and other disciples), “we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father” (John 1:14). Again, in His first epistle he writes of “that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life; (and the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us) ...” (ch. 1, vv. 1, 2).

Indeed, the Lord Jesus in His ministry here on earth displayed sufficient of His relationship with His Father for Him to invite us to enjoy a like relationship with Himself. The verses referred to at the head of this article give us different contexts in which this is proposed to us. We should remember that, consequent on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, He has opened up to us a direct access to the Father; see John 16:26, 27 and 20:17. What a great privilege it is for us to know that we are in God’s family as His children (John 1:12) and have been adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26 and Ephesians 1:5)!

Yet the Holy Scriptures – indeed the Lord’s own words, as we shall shortly see – show that the Son of God desires us to enjoy with Himself a similar relationship to that which He enjoys with His Father. It is, for example, noteworthy that the evangelist who wrote of “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18) should also write of himself as “leaning on the breast of Jesus” (ch. 13, v.25).

In the verse in John 6, the Lord Jesus has been saying profound things about our eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man. It is to be noted that in verse 53 the person who has not done this has no life in him. This suggests that I am not really a Christian if I have no appreciation of the death and blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus. (That verse can be translated, “Unless ye shall have eaten...” [Darby Trans.]) In verses 56 and 57, however, it is

more continuing and characteristic – “he who eats” – and this is connected with dwelling in Christ (verse 56) and living “by” or “on account of” Christ (verse 57). The Lord Jesus then draws a parallel with His relationship with the Father: “As the living Father has sent Me and I live on account of the Father, *he* also who eats Me shall live also on account of Me.” (Eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the Son of man should not be confused with eating the bread and drinking the wine in the Lord’s Supper; the latter are only *symbols* of His body, given for us, and His blood, poured out for us [Luke 22:19, 20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26], to aid our remembrance, or calling to mind, of Himself.)

The Father, His will, His desires and His pleasure, were the whole reason for the Lord Jesus being here on earth and for all that He said and did. This is a big challenge to me: am I so occupied with Christ (or ‘feeding on’ Him) that He has become the reason for all that I do? This was evidently displayed in large measure by the apostle Paul, who could say, “For me to live is Christ, and to die gain” (Philippians 1:21).

The next reference (John 15:9) should surely amaze us – to think that the Lord Jesus loves us (those who belong to Him) in the same way that the Father loves Him! (It is noticeable that, while the love *of God* is spoken of in relation to the world [John 3:16], the love *of Christ* is connected with “His own” – see, for example, John 13:1.) But the Lord exhorts us to *abide* in His love and He tells us how to do this: “if ye shall keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love, as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” Here again the Lord Jesus is proposing that our relationship with Him should mirror His own relationship with the Father; this is surely a wonderful pattern for us. We are not under law (Romans 6:14) but the Lord Jesus says: “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). These no doubt include not only what He said during His ministry on earth but also what He has given us through His apostles from heaven. Thus we have

commandments respecting our personal life, family life, working life and assembly (or church) life. As we think of the way that the Lord Jesus emptied Himself and humbled Himself, taking a path of obedience to His Father (Philippians 2:5-8), we should surely be encouraged to submit ourselves to Him in willing and glad obedience. This is the way to abide in His love – to continue in the enjoyment of it.

The third scripture at the head of this article (John 20:21) relates to our being sent out in service; the Lord was sending His disciples out in the same manner that the Father had sent Him. He had referred to this earlier, when He spoke of Himself as “Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world” (John 10:36). This may well refer to the way in which the Lord Jesus, before beginning His public ministry, had been distinguished by the Holy Spirit descending upon Him. So here in John 20, after saying that He was sending forth His disciples, the Lord immediately breathed into them, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (For the *power* associated with the gift of the Spirit, they had to await the day of Pentecost – Luke 24:49.) Now none of us is an apostle, but surely we should all, as believers on the Lord Jesus, have some sense of being sent out in service for the Lord Jesus, as He had been sent by His Father.

The last scripture (Revelation 3:21) relates to overcoming and its consequences. How we must adore Christ for the way in which He overcame everything with which the world (with Satan behind it) opposed Him in His life here on earth! Not the temptation of Satan in the desert, nor the attempts to throw Him over a precipice or to stone him, nor the traps set for Him by the religious leaders, nor the people coming to make Him king, nor Peter playing down His coming sufferings, nor any other ploy or occurrence, could deter the Son of God from following the path of obedience to His Father’s will. Before leaving His own He said, “In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world”

(John 16:33). In consequence, He is now seated on His Father's throne, in fulfilment of Psalm 110:1. Similarly, He makes the promise to those who now overcome for Him that they shall sit with Him in His throne. None of us has to face all that the Lord faced in His life and death but the same powers that were against Him are opposed to us; "our struggle is ... against principalities, against authorities, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Ephesians 6:12) and we need to "be strong in the Lord, and in the might of strength." In this struggle the Lord sets before us the reward of sitting with Him in His throne "as *I* also have overcome, and have sat down with My Father in His throne."

May these remarks encourage us, reverently and adoringly, to meditate more on the perfect pathway of our Lord Jesus and the relationship He displayed in it with His Father (who is ours also through immense, divine grace), that the enjoyment of our own relationship with Christ may be enriched. G.S.B.

POETIC PAGES

Philadelphia

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 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. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that

*hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches –
Revelation 3:7-13.*

THUS saith the holy One, and true,
To his beloved faithful few;
“Of heav’n and hell I hold the keys,
To shut, or open, as I please.

“I know thy works, and I approve,
Tho’ small thy strength, sincere thy love;
Go on, my word and name to own,
For none shall rob thee of thy crown.

“Before thee see my mercy’s door
Stands open wide to shut no more;
Fear not temptation’s fiery day,
For I will be thy strength and stay.

“Thou hast my promise, hold it fast,
The trying hour will soon be past;
Rejoice, for lo! I quickly come,
To take thee to my heav’nly home.

“A pillar there, no more to move,
Inscrib’d with all my names of love;
A monument of mighty grace,
Thou shalt for ever have a place.”

Such is the conqueror’s reward,
Prepar’d and promis’d by the LORD!
Let him that has the ear of faith,
Attend to what the Spirit saith.

Laodicea

*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith
the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;
I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold
or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will*

spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me – Revelation 3:14-20.

HEAR what the LORD, the great Amen,
The true and faithful Witness says!
He form'd the vast creation's plan,
And searches all our hearts and ways.

To some he speaks as once of old,
"I know thee, thy profession's vain;
Since thou art neither hot nor cold,
I'll spit thee from me with disdain.

"Thou boasteth, 'I am wise and rich,
Encreas'd in goods and nothing need;
And dost not know thou art a wretch,
Naked and poor, and blind and dead.

"Yet while I thus rebuke, I love,
My message is in mercy sent;
That thou may'st my compassion prove,
I can forgive, if thou repent.

"Wouldst thou be truly rich and wise?
Come, buy my gold in fire well try'd,
My ointment to anoint thine eyes,
My robe, thy nakedness to hide. /P.T.O.

“See at thy door I stand and knock!
Poor sinner, shall I wait in vain?
Quickly thy stubborn heart unlock,
That I may enter with my train.

“Thou canst not entertain a king,
Unworthy thou of such a guest!
But I my own provisions bring,
To make thy soul a heavenly feast.”

The above two poems come from the “Olney Hymns” and were written by John Newton (1725-1807).

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.