

# ***Words of Peace & Truth***



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## **WORD OF PEACE & TRUTH**

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

No. 115: January – April 2022

### **Editorial**

The fascia to one of the two buildings comprised in the Purley Out-Patients Hospital declares in cast concrete that this building was constructed in 1940. As this hospital is not far from our home I have often seen it and visited it but looking at it again recently I reflected on the circumstances in which the building bearing the date of 1940 was erected; those were, of course, the dark days of the Second World War, and 1940 saw the evacuation of Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain.

It struck me as significant that the peril in which the nation stood at that time had evidently not deterred the designers and builders from pressing ahead with a positive, and no doubt much needed, project for the welfare of the people who lived around the area. This reminded me of that good King Josiah. Acceding to the throne of Judah at only 8 years old (apparently in 641 B.C.) he was about 26 years old when the “book of the law of Jehovah by Moses” was discovered (2 Chronicles 34:14). This law, which had evidently been ignored, should have been copied out by every succeeding king but, as soon as it was brought to him and read before him, Josiah humbled himself, sought a word from God through Huldah the prophetess and, despite the declaration that God was going to bring evil upon Jerusalem, set the wheels in motion to restore what was due to God. This recovery, which affected even the northern kingdom of Israel, resulted in the holding of a Passover of which the like had not been held since the days of Samuel the prophet.

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## **Editorial** (*continued*)

What has this to say today to those who desire to be faithful to the Lord in the face of accumulating hideous evils and on the threshold of that divine judgment upon the present evil world (both religious and secular) of which warning has long been given? I suggest that we can learn the following lessons from Josiah. Firstly, we must apply ourselves to the reading of the Holy Scriptures and submit ourselves to what they set before us. Secondly, the certainty of impending divine judgment must not be used as an excuse for inaction. Thirdly, our primary concern should be about what is due to God Himself, then what is for the blessing of others. Josiah said “Serve now Jehovah your God, and His people Israel” (2 Chron. 35:3). Fourthly, who knows but that the Lord may give – even if only for a little while; that is, until He returns – an experience of His help and blessing not known for many years. This may not be extensive but can nevertheless be very real. G.S.B.

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## **TO HIM THAT OVERCOMES**

### *Revelation 2*

THE failure of man, of the church, even, does not touch the source of divine grace – the goodness of God. From Adam downwards everything placed in the hand of man has failed; but this very failure and evil of man has been made the opportunity by God of showing out more and richer grace.

He judges the failure, and then presents an object of hope. When Adam sinned, “the seed of the woman” was promised. When the law was broken and Israel failed, prophetic testimony came in and all the promises of the Messiah. ***Promise*** is that on which faith can rest when everything else fails.

Times of declension and unfaithfulness in the body give occasion for brighter manifestations of grace in individuals,

who under such circumstances are brought into the enjoyment of close and blessed communion with God. See Elijah, Moses, etc. Moses had to leave the camp (Exodus 33), because the golden calf was there, and to go outside: but in so doing he got into a place of greater nearness to God than he had ever known before – “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.”

At the beginning of the gospel dispensation the energy of the Holy Ghost was so plainly manifested in the church, that man was nothing, God everything. This is of course true to faith all through the dispensation. But then, even after these epistles to the churches were given, things had become sadly changed. The Lord, in this and the following chapter, turns His eye to that which should have been “the place of righteousness,” and behold “iniquity is there” (Ecclesiastes 3:16); therefore it is necessary that judgment begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17), as it is said, “the Lord shall judge his people” (Hebrews 10:30). At first this is in the way of testimony against the evil; for the Lord ever warns before He executes judgment, and in judgment He remembers mercy.

The Lord takes notice of every circumstance, every shade of difference, in these churches, as also in individuals in them; thus showing that He is not indifferent as to the state of His people by the way – their daily steps, because He has secured blessing to them at the end. His love is not a careless love. We have all, more or less, lost sight of the judgment exercised by the Lord in “his own house,” and it is too frequently supposed that, because the salvation of the saint is a sure thing, God is indifferent about character here. But to love this is impossible. A child would be sure eventually to inherit his father’s property, but then what parent would be satisfied (if he loved his child) with knowing that? Would he not anxiously train him up, watching every development of his mind and faculties, and

ordering all things in his education, so as best to fit him for his future destination? How much more is this the way of the Lord's love with His children! This is for our comfort and blessing – there is wonderful comfort in seeing it to be the spring of all God's dealings with us; but at the same time it is intended to act strongly on our conscience in the way of warning.

We have to remember that the church, and indeed every individual saint, is set in the place of direct conflict with Satan, the more so because of the high standing and privilege given us in Christ. Now it may be in triumphant victory, as it is said, “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20). To effect the purpose of God's glory, coming in as it will by-and-by when He shall establish His kingdom, we know that Satan must be really fully dethroned; but in order, even now (before that time comes), that we realise our blessings in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3), it is needful he should be practically dethroned from the heart through the power of the Holy Ghost. Although it is quite certain that he shall be bruised under our feet “shortly” (there is no doubt, of course, about the power of the Lord Jesus to do it), yet the certainty of Christ's final victory with the church should not lessen our sense of the power of the enemy in the meantime. This is so great as to make constant watchfulness necessary, for without it we shall be giving him a direct handle against ourselves. The flesh, by which Satan works, is still present, and it needs to be “mortified” (Romans 8:13). Perhaps we have often been surprised at grievous falls in ourselves or others; but if we fail to watch against the flesh, it is not really at all surprising such should be the result. Habitual faithfulness in judging the flesh in little things is the secret of not falling.

The promise at the close of each of these messages to the churches is addressed to “him that overcometh.” As stated above, it has ever been in times of general failure that the

promises of God have been most graciously brought out, and that His faithful ones have had increased communion, being thrown thereby more entirely upon Himself. If, through any measure of faithfulness, we find ourselves in trial and exercise of soul because of corporate general declension, that is just the very time we should look for more intimate revelation of the grace of God and of His love to our hearts. And this will be not only in giving us clear and firm apprehension of the promises of God, but also in a fuller knowledge of all that in Christ which is suited to be drawn upon by our need. He that is faithful may ever count on this. The principle is clearly seen in these epistles, both in the promises, and also in the different character in which the Lord Jesus presents Himself according to the circumstances of each “church.” It is very sad to see man (whether it be in Israel, the church, or any other place) always failing; but still the faithful ones in the midst of failure find a fuller, deeper revelation of the grace of God, even through it, than when all is going on well. \*

This is most blessed!

*The opening of “To Him that Overcometh,” from the Collected Writings of J.N. Darby (1800-1882), Vol. 17 (New Series), p.348.*

\* “In pressure, Thou hast enlarged me” (Psalm 4:1)

## **NAME IN THE BOOK OF LIFE**

*“He who overcomes ... I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” – Revelation 3:5.*

The Lord Jesus had promised the overcomers in Sardis that they would be clothed in white garments and that they “shall walk with Me in white” (3:4-5). Blessed promise! Their works and walk of separation on earth, though forgotten by man, and perhaps done in secret, would not be forgotten by God (Heb. 6:10; Mt. 6:4, 6). They

would be rewarded openly, in glorious display, “arrayed in fine linen” in the heavenly scene to come (Rev. 19:8). What encouragement for our own hearts!

But there was more promised to these overcomers: their names would not be blotted out from the Book of Life. Some have been alarmed about their eternal security by this verse. However, rightly understood, it is a great confirmation of the security the overcomer has in Christ. Sardis was an assembly which had a *name* to be *alive*, but was *dead*. The majority were lifeless professors whose names were written in its registers while the small, despised, believing remnant among them had their names struck off the registers. The Lord’s promise is positive not negative; it is an affirmation of their security, not a weakening of it: though religious authorities might blot their names out of the membership rolls on earth, Christ would *not* blot their names out of the Book of Life!

And, as if to confirm this amazing promise, the Lord Jesus also says that He would confess the overcomer’s name before His Father and before the angels. The overcomers had confessed Christ’s name before men; this is the essence of what an overcomer is as we see in 1 John 5:4-5 (Rom. 10:9-10; cf. Mt.10:32). What a privilege to confess “our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” here on earth! (Jas. 2:1 NASB).

*Brian Reynolds*

*Reproduced by kind permission from “The Lord is Near” for April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021 – item 9 in a series on “Promises to the Overcomer.”*

## **THE PILLAR OF THE CLOUD**

*Exodus 14:19, 20*

The several points in this miraculous deliverance may now be noted. First, the angel of God removed and went “between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel.” God thus interposed between His blood-bought people and their pursuers. For indeed all that He was, in every attribute of His character, was engaged on

their behalf. That panic-stricken multitude might well be scorned by the flower and chivalry of Egypt, but they were under the aegis of Omnipotence, and before they could be reached God Himself must be met and overcome. Oh, what strength and consolation lie in this precious truth, that God Himself undertakes the cause of the feeblest of those who are under the shelter of the blood of Christ! Satan may set all his legions in battle array, and seek to terrify the soul by the display of his power, but his vauntings and threats may alike be disregarded, for the battle is the Lord's. It is therefore not what we are, but what God is. And it should be observed, that He that is *for* the believer is *against* the enemy. That which gave light to the children of Israel was a cloud and darkness to Pharaoh and his army. The presence of God terrifies all but those who are cleansed from sin by the precious blood. Hence the camp of Egypt was shut off from Israel, and "the one came not near the other all the night" (v. 20). How fearless, then, we ought to be, when this truth, God for us, is so plainly revealed. Elisha knew its power when, in answer to the expressed fears of his servant, he said, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them;" and then, when in answer to the prophet's prayer the young man's eyes were opened, "he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17). Be it, however, repeated, that the alone foundation of God being for us is the precious blood of Christ. This, then, is the first thing here taught, that God protects His people as against the power of Satan.

*Extracted from "Typical Teachings of Exodus" by Edward Dennett (1831-1914)*

### **Fragment**

Nature has circumstances between itself and God; faith has God between the heart and circumstances. And what a difference!

*From "Practical Reflections on the Psalms" by J.N. Darby; Collected Writings Vol. 17, page 22.*

## INWARD POWER IN A DAY OF BREAKDOWN

*Judges 15:18*

IT is well for us to keep in mind that, Samson being the last of the judges,\* his history brings out the most important principles for us in the last days. It would seem that we learn in Samson the secret of strength and the secret of weakness.

It is mentioned twice that Samson judged Israel twenty years, indicating that there was that in Samson which was for the deliverance of the people of God. Just because there was that, he seemed to be especially assailed by things that would divert him and deprive him of his power. He sets forth exercises that come very closely home to our souls in these last days.

We have already noted three times in which we are told that the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Samson. Whenever that was the case he was marked by power to overcome, whether it was the lion or the Philistine. Then we see that power in itself is not sufficient to maintain us for God. There must be that which is inward. There may be great power for service in certain quarters and it is of the Spirit of God wherever souls are being converted and the people of God helped; but we see in Samson (verse 18) that, after doing very great exploits in the power of the Spirit of God, he after all was a thirsty man. A man may have the power of the Spirit of God on him for mighty acts of service, and yet not have inward satisfaction, the power of life in his own soul by the Spirit. These great lessons are for the last days. Power is a matter of sovereignty. God by His Spirit can work sovereignly; He can use any instrument He sees fit; but the real life and joy and satisfaction of our hearts inwardly is another matter. Many a servant may be publicly marked by

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*\*That is to say, in the western part of Israel: it seems that the later judges in the eastern part (Jephthah and others) were collateral – Editor.*

extraordinary power in service, and yet not know the blessedness of inward satisfaction – he may be a thirsty man. At the end of chapter 15 Samson has to learn the Spirit in a new way. Perhaps the Lord would call our attention to the Spirit under this beautiful designation, En-hakkore, “the caller's spring.” Paul speaks of “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (*Philippians 1:19*); he feels the need of this in order that he might meet his sufferings, persecutions, and pressure with an inward source of supply. The epistle to the Philippians brings out largely the inwardness of things. There are two incidents in the life of Samson where he is seen as calling on Jehovah. One is in chapter 15:18, where he is very thirsty, and he called on Jehovah, “And God clave the hollow rock which was in Lehi, and water came out of it. And he drank, and his spirit came again, and he revived. Therefore its name was called En-hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.” The other time is in chapter 16:28: “And Samson called to Jehovah and said, Lord Jehovah, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may take one vengeance upon the Philistines for my two eyes.” I would suggest that Samson as calling on Jehovah is a greater man morally and spiritually than he was in all the other incidents of his history. It is a peculiar resource of the last days that we call on the name of the Lord (*see 2 Tim. 2:22 – Ed.*). The power spoken of in 2 Timothy is an inward power rather than what is outward. I have known several instances of men who have served and been used of God, but when they had been withdrawn from what is external it came to light that they had very little of what was internal. Samson was one with a most extraordinary power – there is not a man in Scripture who externally had such strength – but, notwithstanding that, he was conscious inwardly that his heart was unsatisfied and he was a thirsty man. He has to call, and then, in type, he gets the Spirit in a new way in connection with what is inward – not power to do great exploits outwardly, but

to satisfy his inward cravings. My impression is that in Samson calling on the Lord we see something morally greater than his killing thousands of Philistines. However much God is pleased to use me publicly, sooner or later the question is raised, Have I the thirst of my soul satisfied? Have I the Spirit inwardly, not only for outward power; that is “the caller's spring,” a beautiful designation of the Spirit.

We are so apt to go on with what is outward, but I believe a time comes with every one of us when we are brought face to face with this question: I have had meetings, and they have been very precious; I have had the companionship of the brethren, and it was very sweet; I have had ministry and it has been happy; I have had the power for service and it has been wonderful, but I am not satisfied. None of these things or all put together will give inward satisfaction. Inward satisfaction would not detract from the power God gives for service; it would add to it. I think it was a poet who said, “All great deeds flow from the centre of a quiet heart.” It is from a quiet, restful, and satisfied heart that the most efficient service flows; we want the caller’s spring.

*Extracted from “An Outline of Judges” by C.A. Coates.*

## **THE LORD JESUS: FEET-WASHING AND BETRAYAL**

*John 13:12-30*

What excessive grace, that He who is the Eternal God and Lord of all things should condescend to perform the duties of a servant and wash the feet of His disciples!

Before telling them to do as He had done, He asks them “Do ye know what I have done to you?” This suggests that before we can follow in the way He has demonstrated we need to understand, at least in some measure, the meaning of His action. What did it mean? He gives us a clue in saying (verse

8) “Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with Me.” Jesus was about to “depart out of this world to the Father” (verse 1). In that wonderful holy prayer recorded in chapter 17 He would express His desire that His own should be sanctified while in this world and then that “they also may be with Me, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me.” A little later, after His resurrection, He would declare to His disciples that His Father was their Father. The Lord Jesus had in view a scene in which His own would have part with Him before the Father’s face.

This is something which by the Holy Spirit, who is “the earnest of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:14), we can anticipate now, while we await its fulness when we are in the Father’s house above (John 14:2). But these are holy things and we need to be free from defilement to touch them. It is too easy to slip into a casual approach to the things of God. As one approaches the Lord’s Supper he should examine, or prove, himself “and thus let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup” (1 Corinthians 11:28).

The Lord’s action was not about the forgiveness of sins; His service was to those who were already clean (“but not all” [verse 10] – a reference to Judas, still present in the room) but we all tend to pick up defilement as we move through an evil world and this needs to be removed if we are to have part with Christ. Under the old order the priests needed to wash in the molten sea before presenting the offerings to God (see 2 Chronicles 4:6).

How can we help one another about these things? Well, the word of God has a cleansing power and, as Christians, we can all refresh, encourage and, if necessary, reprove one another by passing on what we have gleaned of Christ from the Scriptures. “A word in its season, how good is it!” (Proverbs 15:23).

Verse 12: “When therefore He had washed their feet and taken His garments, having sat down ...” This action of the Lord brings to our minds what is stated in Hebrews 1: “having made by Himself the purification of sins, [He] set Himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high.” The sitting down closes a perfectly completed work.

It is noticeable that the disciples referred to Christ as “the Teacher and the Lord” (verse 13) but He reversed the order when He said “If I, therefore, the Lord and the Teacher ...” We need to be subject to Him as our Lord if we are to receive the benefit of His teaching.

Verse 17 is particularly challenging: if the Lord has shown me His mind about a matter, am I complying with what He has shown me? If I am in some measure acquainted with God’s truth, am I walking in the truth? Knowledge in my head is not enough.

Verse 18: Judas was chosen to be among the disciples – see Luke 6:16 – but he was not “chosen ... to salvation” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). The three synoptic gospels record Jesus as saying to His disciples that “the Son of man goes indeed as it is written concerning Him” (or “as it is determined”) but John is the only one of the gospel writers to tell us that the Lord directly quoted an Old Testament scripture that was to be fulfilled; see Psalm 41:9. Even on the cross the Lord was concerned “that the scripture might be fulfilled” (ch. 19, v. 28). We believe that John’s Gospel was written comparatively late and with the last days particularly in view; how important it is in days of breakdown and confusion to keep close to the Scriptures!

“I tell you it now before it happens.” God has graciously throughout the Scriptures given warning of things before they happen. To take just two examples that have been fulfilled, Isaiah prophesied concerning King Cyrus before his time (Isa.

45:1) and Daniel wrote of the three kingdoms that were to follow the Babylonian. God is just and fair: the Book of the Revelation tells us of much that is yet to happen. Especially in difficult times, we might be bewildered had we not been told what would take place. Thus the present breakdown in Christendom was foretold in the addresses to the seven assemblies in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

From verse 21 we have the deep feelings of Jesus about His impending betrayal by Judas. Although this gospel account does not tell us this, we read in Matthew that Judas delivered up his Master for thirty pieces of silver; whereas Mary of Bethany had expended on the Lord ointment thought to be worth ten times that amount (a piece of silver being understood to be equivalent to a penny or denarius).

John was closer to the Lord than Peter – it seems not only physically – and so Peter prompts him to put the question to Jesus, “Lord, who is it?” John was conscious of the Lord’s love for him; spirituality involves the intimacy of love. If a younger Christian today has a problem about which he or she needs help, where is the spiritual person to whom they can resort?

It has been suggested that the offering of the morsel (or “sop”) to a guest was a mark of favour and, if so, the Lord showed great grace towards Judas; but when there is no work of God in a person, the showing of grace, far from producing a positive response, brings out antagonism. On this occasion, Satan entered into Judas following his receipt of the morsel and he went out into the night. Surely today if evil is present in a company rightly gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus His presence in the midst will expose and expel it.

In his first letter, John tells us that “many antichrists ... went out from among us.” Judas was later described by the Lord as “the son of perdition” (ch. 17, v. 12) and this is also one of

the descriptions of *the* antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3). It is not for us to say who is the Lord's and who is not but we are living in solemn times when much sifting of professing Christians is going on. Some clergymen and pastors who once apparently defended God's truth are succumbing to current evils and even denying what they once professed. The *only* protection against being drawn away is to abide in Christ, as the poet expresses:

'Tis only in Thee hiding  
We feel ourselves secure;  
Only in Thee abiding  
The conflict can endure.

(*J.G. Deck*)

This is what John's position symbolises.

After Judas had gone out, the Lord Jesus was free to open His heart to those that remained, bringing out heavenly truth in the succeeding chapters.

*Substance of a Bible reading in Coulsdon, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2021.*

## **GOD AND THE WORD OF HIS GRACE**

*Acts 20: 17-38*

THERE is a question that is forced upon us in the present time, a question of the very highest importance, and that is, What have we got to guide us in the midst of the confusion around us?

I say "confusion," for there is a Babel of voices in Christendom. Many would call to us to hear the church, many others to listen to reason; the question becomes more and more momentous to every true-hearted Christian, as to his obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to God through Him, at the present time.

I purpose briefly to notice one or two things in the charge given by Paul to the elders of Ephesus, in which I believe the question will be fully answered. May God bless the word to us all!

It has been rightly noticed that the apostle here speaks of his work in the past;\* that is, of his public service as a past thing: “they should see his face no more.” It is probable that he may have been liberated for a little from the captivity mentioned at the end of the Acts, but his public apostolic service terminates in the passage before us, and the summary given to us of his work, his doctrine, and his life, with the brief prophecy as to what should happen to the church of God when his labours had ceased, is of the utmost importance to souls.

Let us listen to the great apostle of the Gentiles. I recollect once having a very interesting conversation with an Italian church dignitary as to apostolic succession ; and, waiving the question of St. Peter (whose succession, by the way, he entirely failed to establish), asking him: “Why he did not rather attempt to trace succession to St. Paul, who was the apostle to the Gentiles?” The prelate, I believe, a sincere man, confessed that it was worth consideration.

If we listen to the inspired words of the great apostle, we shall have light enough for our present path; no succession or hopeless ecclesiastical traditions, but *God and the word of His grace*, and ample directions for our path, eighteen hundred years and more after the message was given to Ephesus.

The whole character of the work here is given to us in a few words; and I believe the first thing to notice is its solidity. There must be a basis for the grand teaching about the church of God (and it is evident that Paul’s heart and mind were full of this, the assembly purchased by God with the blood of His own); and this

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\* I have sometimes thought it is a significant fact that at Rome (the professed centre of Christendom), whilst they have crowned St. Peter, and dedicated a huge temple to him, they have left St. Paul’s church about three miles outside the town, on the Appian Way.

basis consists of the utter demolishing of the first man, and all his pretensions. I mean by the first man the whole race of Adam and all that it can produce for God; it is a significant fact that Adam's first-born son failed utterly in his religious attempts, and though it will be said by many that we are not all so bad as Cain, yet the flesh is the same in all men, and this is entirely set aside by the gospel.

This is what caused the fierce enmity of the Jews alluded to here by Paul; they could not bear a man who demolished at one blow all their carnal rights, and who put Jews and Gentiles on the same footing before God. They plotted against him, and their opposition and hatred were of the murderous kind of Cain who slew Abel. (See Acts 23:12.)

In laying, then, the foundation of the work in Asia Minor and Europe, the apostle began by announcing *the end of the first man*. Before going any further, I would pray all those who read this to ask themselves very seriously whether they are truly upon this basis. If so, more may be added, and our great subject be understood. Many have understood that their sins have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus; nay, that they are brought into blessing through Him, who have never accepted by faith the judgment executed on the man that committed the sins, the utter worthlessness and final condemnation of the first man.

When Saul of Tarsus learned this, it was for him the basis of a deep work of God in him; every claim of the flesh set aside, that there might be a new beginning through the work of Christ, the accomplishment of God's counsels in the last Adam. It must be so for every true Christian.

Thus we may understand Paul's instant ministry both public and private, both by day and by night, in which he insisted upon repentance\* towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

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\*See footnote to next page.

Repentance is a real and deep work, and when there has been a true breaking down in God's blessed presence, there is an aptitude for receiving the glorious Object of faith: the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a fine beginning. May every one who reads this enter fully into it. If man be set aside, and self truly judged, may each soul look up to the one Object, the glorious Christ, and understand that He is made to us from God, wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

I shall never forget going once down to the sea shore, after a tempestuous night in the Mediterranean, to see the sun rise after the storm. The mighty luminary rose calmly over the whole scene of wreckage and filled the whole firmament. So does the glorious Christ rise to the view as a day of calm and never-ending splendour, over the utter ruin of everything down here; the eye of faith is directed toward Him, the heart is satisfied, the conscience fears not His light, for it has been purified for ever. The soul enters into that new creation where all things are of God.

Now we may proceed with our subject. The apostle speaks of the assembly of God, and it is of this that I would desire to say a few words. I believe it to be impossible that this truth be not brought before the souls of God's children in some way or other in our day. Happy are they who give heed to it, and seek to discover God's mind as to their own path with regard to it. It was in this sense that I said that the question was forced upon us.

The apostle's devoted service was closing. Bonds and tribulation awaited him; it was a privilege for him to live for the assembly of God, though he counted not his life dear to himself. He

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\* I give the following definition of repentance in the words of another, from whom I received it: "Repentance is the judging of all that *I have done and been* in the presence of a God of grace. Not 'all that I am,' for you cannot repent of a nature." (J. N. D.)

reproduced, in this, in his measure, the active love of Him who gave Himself for the assembly; he filled up that which was behind of the tribulations of Christ in his flesh, for His body which is the assembly (Col. 1:24).\*

Whilst he was there he could by his active apostolic care keep at bay the wolves from the beloved flock of God; he was now going, and those whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers must shepherd the assembly which had been bought by God with the blood of His own. As an illustration, I once saw in the high part of the Cévennes, a circle of cressets burning at midnight, to scare the hungry wolves from the sheepfolds; so did the energy of the apostle surround and protect the beloved object of God's heart – His assembly.

If we think for one moment of the value of this blessed company, our hearts become filled with praise and adoration to the God of grace; to Him who bought the assembly with the blood of His own. Surely we shall sing of this throughout eternity!

But the question before us concerns the assembly in the present time. Happy they who are interested in this object of the heart of God; happy they who can enter a little through God's grace into His gift for the assembly, into Christ's devotedness towards it, and into the apostle's service to it to fill up what was lacking of the sufferings of Christ. Truly we may understand better the force of: "It is more blessed to give than to receive," if our souls are truly concerned about the assembly of God.

Paul, having laid the sure foundation, had not shrunk from announcing the whole counsel of God. We have in his epistles the full revelation of all this counsel; all that the God of glory has

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\* It was only in the devotedness that Paul could thus "fill up that which was lacking;" he had nothing to do with the work of expiation, which the Lord alone could accomplish.

determined in His own sovereign thoughts, as to Christ and the assembly, has been made known to us.

It is not merely that we have been saved from ruin and brought, each one of us, into supreme blessing, but we are taught what the church of God is, as a whole, and the value to Him of that highly favoured company, whose price is none less than the blood of His own.

The wolves should come in, there should rise men speaking perverted things from among their own selves. The divinely-given foresight of the apostle contemplated the evils that should come; and how fully has all this been accomplished.\* It is not necessary to speak now of all the aberrations of the Latin and Greek churches, nor of the later history of Christendom. The confusion of which I spoke at the beginning exists at the present moment; the flock has been wasted and dispersed by wolves, and the teachers of perverted things are to be met with on all sides.

Still the words of the apostle hold good, and he who night and day admonished the Ephesians with tears, is still saying to us that we are commended to God and the word of His grace.

This will meet the question as to what we have got to guide us in our day, and I firmly believe that it will answer the need of every soul that wishes to walk according to the Lord's mind. There is no apostle on earth now; we are not told to go to Rome, Jerusalem, or Constantinople for light; but we are directly commended to God and to the word of His grace.

The God who gave His own Son for us can never fail us, we may have direct recourse to Him in any difficulty; and the word of His grace we have still before us intact, and this divine word is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among all the sanctified.

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*This was written in 1896; what would the author say today? – Ed.*

The word of His grace is that in which the full revelation of His heart of love is made known to those who were lost and ruined. We might call the revelation given to Israel through Moses “the word of His law,” for it was that which God justly required from man, and which he never could accomplish.

The word of His grace includes all that God is as now revealed in Christ; we have it, through His mercy, still in our hands, and I believe that we are justified in saying that in the scriptures we have the full expression of God’s mind that cannot fail us at any epoch of the church’s history on earth.

Thus there must be an appeal to God’s word if any one wishes to be found in the right place in such a time as ours. I recollect the question as to guidance for the present path being settled for some Christians, who were truly exercised as to their actual duty, by some one saying : “Will you really go by what scripture says about it ?”

Many would tell us to “hear the church,” and to listen to man’s interpretation of God’s word, whereas one truly subject will be directly under the influence of the word itself, allowing it to judge and enlighten the heart and mind, and whatever the exercise may be, will be found in true obedience to God, who has given the word of His grace.

It is interesting to notice the earnestness of Paul on this occasion; his whole life had answered to what he had preached; we never should have known that our blessed Lord had pronounced these words: “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” had not the devoted apostle so carried them out in his life and service. His fervent prayer, too, with the elders puts a seal upon these last words of his of sincerity and divinely-given purpose.

It may very rightly be said that there are no more elders now, as at Ephesus; and that for centuries the order established in the church of God has been lost. This is true, and we cannot get back

to the time of Acts 20; but the question is whether there is sufficient light to guide us, each and all, in God's way, at the present time.

“God and the word of His grace” answers the question fully. May none of our readers be satisfied till he can answer the question fully, in the presence of God, as having to do directly with Him and His own revealed word.

*By E. L. Bevir; extracted from “Helps for the Poor of the Flock” (1896)*

### **THE CROSS: MEETING PLACE AND FRONTIER**

“I ... no longer live, *I*, but Christ lives in me; but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, 21).

It is at the cross where Jesus died that we met together; I brought my sins and God, who is righteous and holy, was there to punish them. Jesus turned towards me and took my errors upon Himself. Then He turned towards God and submitted to the punishment from God that I merited. He was condemned in my place, and by His death I am saved. The cross reconciles me to God.

The cross is also placed between the Christian and the world that refuses God. Kept near to Jesus, I can accept the reproach of that world. The world which appears so attractive, I see it such as it showed itself to be when it crucified the Saviour. Its language has not changed: “We will not that this man should reign over us” (Luke 19:14). “Take him away, take him away, crucify him” (John 19:15). It remains what it has always been, the enemy of God. If I look to the world for its approval, I have not truly grasped the meaning of the Christian life.

Thus the cross of Christ has this double aspect: it reconciles me to God, and it separates me from the world which wants to do without Him.

“Far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom [*or, though which*] the world is crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).

*Translated from “La Bonne Semence” for 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022.*

## STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

*Hebrews 11:13, 14*

IT is that word ***plainly*** I would speak on. Are we giving a plain answer to the grace that has been given us?

It is not the church here but individuals, and the road they are treading – the pathway of faith; this is the road we too are treading.

I want to speak of the answer, the plainness of the answer, our Lord seeks from those who receive such grace, those who are set in the path of faith.

Their confession, here in these verses, was that they were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Is that our confession – yours and mine? We have just been hearing about the cry that goes up from hearts that desire to be with Him, and in that connection I will quote a verse:

“But ah! the Master is so fair,  
His smile so sweet to banish’d men,  
That he who meets it unaware  
Can never rest on earth again.”

Is that the reason we cry “Come”? What is it makes this world a wilderness to us? It should not be the troubles and trials in it; but because the One we are waiting for, and to whom we are brought in such wondrous nearness and blessing, is no longer here. We are treading the path to the place where He is, and therefore should ***declare plainly*** that we are “strangers and pilgrims” here.

There is a real difference between the thought conveyed by those two words – “strangers and pilgrims”: I **am** a stranger here; we are all strangers in this world. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (*John 17:14*). “As thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” But is there not a danger of our very soon finding ourselves at home, getting at home in the world?

What should make me a pilgrim there?

Well, I am going away to-morrow, I have my home and home ties in another place, for “where your treasure is there will your heart be also” (*Luke 12:34*).

A Christian is both a stranger and a pilgrim; we are strangers because we do not belong to this place, and pilgrims because we are going home; home ties and home calls known and felt will make us really pilgrims; “They that say such things **declare plainly** that they seek a country” – “declare plainly,” or make manifest, not so much by what they say, but their lives declare it.

Is it so with us? Are we so walking that those around us may see we are seeking a country? But, before we can thus declare plainly, there are two other “*plainlys*” which we must know the power of; the first is in Exodus 21:5, 6.: “If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free.”

The Lord is the One who speaks here; He is the Antitype of the Hebrew servant; He declares He “loved the church, and gave himself for it.” But there is a higher thing too, that He came to do the will of His God. “I love my Master” is the first thought of the One who said, “Lo I come to do thy will, O God;” then follows, “My wife and my children, I will not go out free.” The One who has made God so known in this world had **God** before Him before He had **us** before Him; but then

comes next the “*wife*,” type of that church for which He gave Himself; and then the “children,” figure, I believe, of us as individuals – “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (*Hebrews 2:13*). “All that the Father hath given Me shall come to Me” (*John 6:37*). He will never lose one of His own. Oh! that wondrous plain-speaking at the cross, laying the basis for the blessing that follows, and which we see revealed in John 16:25, “I shall show you *plainly* of the Father.” Does not this passage speak to us of the One whose love was so plainly told out at the cross; nothing between Him and death here, nothing between Him and the cross with all its shame; but what does *He* say? “I shall shew you plainly of the Father.” Was not this a joy to Him? There are two kinds of knowledge; conscious knowledge means my knowing the Person, not simply knowing about Him.

As we really enter, in any little measure, into the wondrous relationship into which we are brought, we shall realise more the present thought of the Lord for us, the desire of His heart, to show us “*plainly* of the Father,” no longer now in “proverbs” or parables (*or allegories – Ed.*), but “*plainly*.”

Well, we have these three things: first, on the cross He said *plainly*, “I will not go out free;” the start for us is there. Secondly, “I shall show you plainly of the Father.”

We belong to Him in that bright place where He is, and He seeks to wash our feet to bring us consciously into His present place, that He may “show us *plainly* of the Father.” Then, thirdly, as these truths become realities to us, the response from the youngest would be to own, and to own it to Him, that we want to go through this world for Him, drinking in from Him, declaring to all around, by life even more than by lip, *declaring plainly* that we seek a country, that we are strangers and pilgrims here, and that our country is where He is, for He has become dear to our hearts. *J. R. Binney (1893)*

## THE YELLOW LEAF

*By John Grayling*

*[Editor's Note: At the end of his short life (1788-1824) the poet Lord Byron wrote a maudlin poem evincing no hope beyond the grave and containing the following verse:*

*My life is in the yellow leaf;  
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;  
The worm, the canker and the grief  
Are mine alone!]*

For poets the “Yellow Leaf” symbolises the loss of strength that leads to death and oblivion. Byron’s youth, squandered on self-indulgence, led to utter loneliness; in Shakespeare’s Macbeth ambition ends with “I have lived long enough to fall into the sere (i.e. withered) yellow leaf, and in “As You Like it” old age is the last act of an actor ending in nothing. For modern existentialism, life has no meaning, and finds its hope in a desperate leap away from reason. In nature, the green leaf turns yellow, drops to the ground and decays. Men long to be freed from the tyranny of such a life. The Bible attributes the meaningless of human life to our failing to fulfil our Maker’s purpose as His “image and likeness” by practically excluding him, which leads to death.

When the Preacher in Ecclesiastes examines life “under the sun” he finds that it all is “vanity”, a fruitless chasing after the wind until we return to the dust we were made from (Genesis 3:19). In Psalm 90 man’s life was shortened to an average 70 or 80 years with humiliating discomforts for those who lived longer. Jacob describes his 130 years as “few and evil” (Genesis 47:9), James says life is a “passing mist” (James 4:14) and Peter likens it to a “flower of grass” that withers and disappears (1 Peter 1:24, 25). Man incurs judgment for the evil he commits during his lifetime (Ecclesiastes 12:14) because he refuses to take God into account in spite of the clear revelation of His eternal power and deity in the things seen (Romans 1:20), says “no God” in his heart against all reason (Psalm 14), and

will not respond to God's call "Come now, let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). (God is no "escape from reason.") Man, made to fear God, excludes Him (Romans 1:28), but then he finds that what is "under the sun" cannot satisfy the longing that God gave him for what is beyond it (Ecclesiastes 3:11). God is the very meaning of man's life (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

But then, as the leaves of the tree were made by God to delight the eye of man (Genesis 2:9), in autumn their glory exceeds their beauty in other seasons. Although man has lost the glory of representing Him when everything He had made was still "very good" (Genesis 1:31; Romans 3:23), God has not given up His original thought. He has a Man who has glorified Him (John 17:4), Jesus, who is now crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews 2:9). If the yellow of the leaf reminds us of the unerring judgment of evil (Ecclesiastes 12:14), its gold reminds us of the glory of the One in whom He offers pardon, salvation and reconciliation in a relationship with Him that surpasses anything seen "under the sun". The weakness in the yellow accompanies the glory of the gold, supremely in the Lord who died in outward weakness (2 Corinthians 13:4) but destroyed death by His suffering for us and rose again in incomparable glory. Then, as we come to Him, we get the answer to the question "Who knows the power of His anger?" (Psalm 90:11). He, alone, Jesus, the Son of God, knew it all on the cross for our salvation. His cry "It is finished" (John 19:30) declared He had absolutely exhausted all that righteous wrath required to cleanse our sin.

What that meant for Him and for the Father is beyond all our thoughts; it belongs to eternity. The sacrifice of the Lamb was planned before the world existed (1 Peter 1:20) so that eternal life could be offered to all who put their trust in Him, and will be the theme of eternal worship and glory (Revelation 5:13). He glorified God (John 17:4), received a name to be owned universally to the Father's glory (Philippians 2:11), is now crowned with glory and

honour in heaven (Hebrews 2:9) and brings many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10). The yellow of His weakness in death shines eternally as gold for God's glory and we enter via repentance into the joyful celebration in heaven (Luke 15:7) as led there by God's goodness, to receive eternal life in the knowledge of the Father and the Son (John 17:3). When Moses, in Psalm 90, contrasts God's greatness with the puny people among whom He deigns to dwell he is moved to worship Him. God is eternal; their lives are a "passing sigh" but nevertheless God has promised to be among them through the generations. His sovereign love gives Moses the assurance of His mercy so that even the reduction of man's lifespan and the terror of judgment ("power of His anger") must be for man's good. This encourages him to cry to God to "Return" to His people so that they can enjoy His presence, have their longings satisfied, sing for joy all their days, and that His work might appear to His servants and His majesty to their sons. In this way the humbling of repentance goes with the glory of His grace.

The weakness of those who grow old is also associated with glory. Jacob's "few and evil" 130 years are accompanied by the sober wisdom and dignity of an old man qualified to bless the greatest known King of his day (Genesis 46:7,10), having learnt to lean not on his own strength but on his staff in worship to God (Hebrews 11: 21). Elders, older men with experience with God, were chosen by Moses to administer justice, and later named by the apostles in the early churches to care for spiritual welfare there (1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 5:9). Experience over long periods gave a sobriety in contrast to the impulsiveness of youth from which Timothy is exhorted to flee (2 Timothy 2:22). The "inner man" grows in the presence of increasing weakness (2 Corinthians 4:16). Those who contemplate Christ's glory are changed from glory to glory so that they become more and more like that Man (2 Corinthians 3: 18), who is to be the centre of a universe entirely for God's pleasure (Ephesians 1:9,10). The glory of having "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27) shines through our

physical weakness as aged believers.

Paul, imprisoned, abandoned, and facing martyrdom, can say: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render to me in that day; but not only to me, but also to all who love His appearing.” What Paul did he did out of love for the Lord, delighting in the day when He will be vindicated in the glory of His appearing. On that day, the Lord, the righteous Judge will give a crown of righteousness both to him and to all those who love His appearing. The key to the crown is love, without which the labours would be in vain (1 Corinthians 13.1-3). The more believers grow in the knowledge of Him and His love, the more they will look forward to His appearing in the brightness of His glory in the very place where He was despised and crucified.

There is no need, then, to fear the yellow leaf when we know God’s grace turns it into gold for His eternal pleasure. Then yellow mellows into gold.

## **POETIC PAGES**

### **The Yellow Leaf**

“My days are in the yellow leaf,”  
The poet mourned who’d seen  
Youth’s glory fade to his deep grief,  
His life sapped of its green.

The Preacher\* marked the downward track  
Of shrivelling, weakening pain,  
Failing eye and ear, bending back,  
And proved man’s life was vain.

He tells us in God's Holy Word  
Man's life's beyond the sun.  
Its meaning is the fear of God  
That does not end in dust.

But see the splendour of the leaves  
In autumn glory told;  
Unequalled hues adorn the trees,  
Then yellow shines as gold.

The yellow shows God's judgment sure,  
The gold His love so wise –  
The Son who bore that judgment sore  
To give eternal life.

And though the outward wears away,  
The inward glory grows  
Of Christ in each, who day by day  
More of His beauty knows.

Who learns to lean upon the rod  
All through the "evil years,"  
His strength, the strength received from God  
To worship Him so near.

Through yellow of their dwindling strength  
In those who have grown old  
Shines Christ in them, their hope at length  
A crown of lasting gold.

We need not fear the yellow leaf;  
The gold's its lasting treasure.  
The Father's love gives sure relief;  
Christ's glory is its measure.

*John Grayling (2013)*

\* *See Ecclesiastes 1:1.*

## **Lord, Thou Hast Sought, and with Blood Thou Hast Bought Me**

Lord, Thou hast sought, and with blood Thou hast bought me,  
Snapped are my fetters, the captive is free;  
Out of my sins unto God Thou hast brought me:  
Holy Redeemer, I sing unto Thee.

*O Thou art worthy! O Thou art worthy!  
O Thou art worthy! God's glorious Son;  
Ever in heaven my glad heart shall praise Thee,  
Ever remembering the work Thou hast done.*

Great was the love, Lord, that brought Thee from glory,  
Great the compassion that led Thee to die,  
Great is the joy of Thy wondrous salvation,  
Great is Thy glory, my Saviour, I cry.

Nought but Thy favour can please me, O Saviour,  
Nought but Thy love can my soul satisfy;  
O keep me near Thee, and ne'er let me grieve Thee,  
Fill Thou my heart with Thy grace from on high.

*J.T. Mawson (1871-1943)*

### **Erratum**

In WPT No. 114 there was a mistake in the Editor's note at the top of page 86, where "Eph. 3:1" should have read "Ephesians 3:19."

## **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.