

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2018

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The Gospel Magazine

Search and Rescue • The Synod of Dort • On the nature of prayer

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1766–2018

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

These texts, which have been associated for so many years with *The Gospel Magazine*, give some indication of what this bi-monthly stands for. We seek to present the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour for a lost world: to edify the people of God; and to promote unity among believers, ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’.

The Gospel Magazine is believed to be the oldest religious periodical still being published. One distinguished former editor was the Rev. Augustus Toplady, whose famous hymn, ‘Rock of Ages cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee’, was first published in these pages.

The Trust Deed of *The Gospel Magazine* is defined in terms of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, but the magazine itself is non-denominational. We aim to provide variety in unity, publishing articles from a wide diversity of past and present writers committed to ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’.

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THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

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EDITORIAL

READERS of *The Gospel Magazine* will no doubt have offered up prayers of thanksgiving to our gracious heavenly Father for the court ruling in favour of Ashers Bakery. The details of the case are no doubt well known, and require no repeating. Suffice it to say that we are deeply thankful to the Lord for this vindication of the stand taken for the gospel by those involved.

It would be a great mistake to assume either of two things. On the one hand there can be a temptation to think that no good thing can be had in this life. We see the way in which Christian people are being oppressed in many parts of the world. The Christian newspapers are full of accounts of churches being closed forcibly, of Christian pastors being imprisoned, and of preachers being silenced. Nation after nation appears to be joining in the general attack on the people of God. It is not just the atheists in the West who are doing this, nor is it just the Communists in the East and elsewhere, or Islamic powers. Christians face serious

opposition everywhere they are to be found. Furthermore, we seem to rarely hear good news. Churches that have been closed never seem to reopen. Christian pastors who are incarcerated seem never to be released. Christian freedoms, once taken away, seem never to be restored. From all this we might conclude that the world is past hope, and that the end times are on us, and that Christ is about to return.

On the other hand, there can be a temptation to think that, with the right arguments, and the best lawyers, and with a swell of public opinion (or at least, a vocal proportion of the Christian public) on our side, we ought always to be able to overturn injustices. The recent case of the open-air evangelist in Bath, who was threatened with arrest, but who later received a full apology, might lead us to think that such outcomes will always materialise. The ruling in favour of Ashers Bakery, which made the headlines in the national news, would seem to confirm this. But it would be wrong to expect this.

After all, it was our Lord Jesus Christ who said, 'Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also' in John 15:20, referring to his words in 13:16. If the Lord of glory, whose very presence was such a joy to many, whose gracious words were a wonder to many, and whose mighty and loving power was a blessing to many, should be opposed by others, shall we not expect at least as much? We have not his joyous presence, nor his gracious words, and certainly not his mighty and loving power; why should we be treated better than he was? Christian charities, in common with all charities, have to be able to demonstrate that they provide a public benefit. We have no hesitation in declaring that the preaching of the gospel is for the benefit of the public. It is the greatest public good. No civil engineering project, such as the creation of the water and sewerage system in Victorian London, has been anything like the blessing that gospel preaching has been. We would not be without our running water and our easy system of waste disposal; how much more should the world rejoice to hear the gospel! And yet it would prefer to silence the call to repentance, and the setting forth of the glories of Christ, and the promise of

forgiveness to all who believe in him.

The example of the apostles shows us that the common response to the gospel is opposition and hatred from the majority. Everywhere they went they met opposition and violence, as well as with thanks from those whom the Lord would save.

The truth is that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They cannot bear to have the light of God's word and truth to shine on them. Anything that brings the light to bear on any aspect of their ungodly lives is abhorrent to them. They react with anger and fear, running from the very Lord whose word condemns in order to work repentance. They flee the only hope of sinners. What is left, but the fear of the wrath to come?

Our Lord Jesus said, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (John 16:33). This is our hope and our joy. The day of Jesus Christ has been set already. God the Father knows the very hour in which the Son will come to judge the living and the dead. That day cannot be put off, nor can we plead for a stay of judgment. If we are saved by grace we long for that day, knowing that our reward will be brought to us with Christ. Can we not bear the world's hatred for a little longer? Christ has overcome the world!

The Gospel Magazine Trust holds a complete set of bound volumes of the magazine from 1766 to date apart from the years 1772, 1799 and 1824. Additionally the volume for 1783 contains only January–September, missing October–December and January 1784, which was the final issue before a break in publication. If any of our readers can assist in locating the missing volumes with a view to acquisition, please contact the Editor. The set of volumes is currently held at St Mary's Library, Castle Street, Reading, and is available for reference and study *by prior arrangement*. In addition a full set of issues has been scanned to the website at www.gospelmagazine.org.uk.

A SERMON ON LUKE 1:37

BY THE EDITOR

'For with God nothing shall be impossible.'

THE words of our text are taken from the Second Lesson, the account of the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary, to tell her that she would bear the Saviour. The Child is described in the highest terms, verses 32 to 33, leading Mary to pose a question. 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' Mary's difficulty is easily understood. She knows the natural means by which children are procreated. She knows that she has not partaken of the natural means. What is being said to her implies that the act of procreation has taken place, verse 31, and that conception is inevitable. Mary knows that this is not true; 'I know not a man.' This is the natural response of someone who is thinking only in natural terms. Mary has no idea at this stage of the way in which she will become the bearer of the Christ. This shows us the limit of her faith; what is beyond nature is, in her mind, beyond possibility. Her question, 'How shall this be?' is not so much a request for information as a serious doubt concerning the truth of what she has been told.

The answer she receives from Gabriel is instructive. First, he tells her how she shall be with child. This is in verse 35. Using language taken from Genesis 1:2, 'And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,' Gabriel informs Mary that the same life-giving power will overshadow her. The Lord and giver of life will cause life to arise in her womb, and for this reason the holy thing which shall be born by her shall be called the Son of God. In this way the method by which she will be with child is explained, and with

it a strong, even incontrovertible, proof of the identity of the Child to be born. This means of conception, which is unique in the history of the world, is reserved for the One who is unique, the Saviour of the world. As an answer to her question, 'How shall this be?' however, this information is of limited value. Until she knows she is with child, without resorting to the natural means of procreation, she has to take on faith the words of the angel. Since she has already displayed the limit of her faith in questioning Gabriel's words, another answer is needed. This follows.

Secondly, Gabriel gives Mary an immediate sign. She is told that her cousin, Elizabeth, is with child. Of itself this would constitute no sign. What makes it one is that Elizabeth is known to be barren, v. 36. She is not capable of conceiving a child by the natural means, as her history testified. Zacharias's testimony had been that he was an old man, and his wife well stricken in years, verse 18. That Elizabeth should be with child was proof of the power of God. Furthermore, since Elizabeth was in the sixth month of her pregnancy, it would be easy for Mary to verify the truth of the angelic revelation, simply by visiting her cousin and seeing for herself.

Thus in two things the angel answered Mary's question, met her doubts, and provided for the weakness and limitation of her faith. All of which he summed up in the words of our text, 'For with God nothing shall be impossible.'

In these words we note three things: first, the context in which these words

apply—‘with God;’ secondly, the limitation set—‘nothing;’ thirdly, the matter—‘nothing shall be impossible.’

I. First, *the context*; ‘with God.’ Certain things appear to be impossible to us, but with God all things are possible. So Matthew 19:26; in answer to the disciples’ objection that, if it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, ‘who then can be saved?’ Jesus said, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’ That things may appear to be impossible which are in fact possible is shown in Matthew 17:20. ‘If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; for nothing shall be impossible unto you.’ This shows us something of what is meant by the words, ‘with God.’ If we are with God, in the sense of having our faith in him, seeking to do his will, and believing his word, then that which is impossible with man becomes possible with God. The reason is that it is God who works. So Zechariah 8:6, ‘Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts.’ Our doubts and inabilities to believe are not to be compared with the power and will of the Lord to accomplish what he has spoken. Jeremiah understood this, crying, ‘Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee’ (Jeremiah 32:17). Finally, consider the words of Isaiah. ‘Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear’ (Isaiah 59:1). ‘With God’ there is all power, and readiness to do all he has said.

II. Secondly, *the limitation set*; ‘nothing.’ This word may be taken as including everything, or as being confined to the matter at hand. If we say that nothing whatsoever is impossible with God, we run the risk of saying that the holy and just God is capable of unrighteousness and injustice. Such a thing cannot be, and so we may not understand ‘nothing’ to mean ‘no thing whatsoever.’ There is a legitimate limitation set on that which God cannot do. That limitation is given to us in the context of the text. The reason why Mary will be with child, and the reason why that Child shall be called the Son of the Highest, Luke 1:32, and the Son of God, Luke 1:35, is that sinners would be saved. In short, Mary is to bear the Saviour of the world, the Messiah, the Son of God, David’s heir who will reign for ever on the throne of his father. Here is the One who will bear the sins of his people, the Lamb of God, who will bear our sins in his own body on the tree. Thus Gabriel declares that, in the matter of the saving of sinners, ‘nothing’ shall be impossible with God. This declares to us that no obstacle stands, or can stand, between the Lord and his people, to save whom he will, when he will and how he will. No question raised over the integrity of God’s justice in declaring sinners to be righteous can be valid if ‘nothing’ is impossible with him. From the sin of Adam, and the consequent curse that came upon all the creation, to the faithlessness of the chosen people, to the rejection of the Messiah by that people, nothing can stand in the way of God’s salvation. Our own sins, and our lack of faith, and our continual falling into sin, cannot stand between us and the salvation promised. All these things are overcome in the Lord Jesus Christ, and with God ‘nothing’ is impossible.

III. Thirdly, *the matter*; ‘nothing shall be impossible.’ It is significant that this is cast

negatively. Gabriel did not say, ‘with God everything shall be possible’ but ‘with God nothing shall be impossible.’ That is, this is an encouragement to us in the weakness of our faith to trust in the Lord and his words, and not to doubt. If he had said, ‘with God everything shall be possible’ it is likely our imagination would run riot, and we would conceive of all manner of things we consider important, and then expect God to do. By putting the matter as he does, the angel shows us that it is our lack of faith that is being addressed; we may doubt the ability or capability of God to do one thing or another in saving sinners, but these words teach us plainly that, in the matter of salvation, nothing is impossible with God. We are to find a ground for our faith here, somewhere to lay hold on the Lord. This is a sound bottom on which to rest our anchor, a secure mooring in the winds and tides of faith. We have a secure rest for our faith, and can trust that the Lord’s word to us is yea and amen. ‘With God all nothing is impossible.’

From which consider that the power of God to save sinners is absolute.

I. That God has power to save sinners.

That God has power to save cannot be doubted. He saved Noah and his family from destruction in the Flood by causing him to build the ark. He saved Israel from Egypt, both by showing his power over the Egyptians, and by parting the waters of the Red Sea, that they might cross on dry land. From which we see that there is both a will in God to save, and a power to save.

1. First, that it is the will of God to save sinners.

The will of God to save is shown in those words spoken in the Garden of Eden, concerning the child who should bruise the

serpent’s head. No human action resulted in these words beyond the act of disobedience; that is, neither Adam nor Eve pleaded with the Lord to make this promise, or to offer an alternative to his plainly spoken warning that, ‘in the day thou that eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’ Likewise no human pleading caused the Lord to bring Israel into existence, and no human action required him to respond by so doing, except that sin of Adam already mentioned. What we find in Scripture is that the cause of human salvation is not to be found in us, but in the God who made us. It is a manifestation of the divine will.

i. *It is the will of God the Father to save sinners.* ‘Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom’ (Luke 12:32). To receive the kingdom is the same as to be saved, since none but the redeemed of the Lord may enter into that kingdom. What we take to be our good pleasure is the same as what we will. What we will is the same as what we delight in. So with God the Father. ‘For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.’ (Ezekiel 18:32). Again, ‘Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?’ (Ezekiel 33:11).

ii. *It is the will of God the Son to save sinners.* We read in Hebrews 10:7, ‘Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.’ Note the words, ‘I come’, showing that this is spoken by the one whose coming is recorded, even Jesus Christ. That he says, ‘I come’ shows it is his will to come, even though he comes to do his Father’s will. This shows us the unity of the divine will, that there is no discord,

no division, between Father and Son. That it is the Son's will to save, note Luke 19:10, 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' The Apostle Paul declared, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (1 Timothy 1:15). Indeed, he wrote elsewhere, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Philippians 2:5-8). And so we see the voluntary—that is, the willing—way in which Jesus Christ came to save sinners.

iii. It is the will of God the Holy Spirit to save sinners. This is a necessary consequence of the first two points, since there can be no division in the Godhead. The Holy Spirit was promised to the disciples as 'another Comforter', one who would be to them in the stead of Jesus Christ, John 16:7. That is, he would not be to them in the stead of Christ as Saviour, but as Comfort, the Paraclete, whose drawing alongside them would be for the purpose of salvation. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, John 14:17, who teaches all things to those to whom he sent, verse 26—by which is meant all things concerning our salvation. Since salvation is 'through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth' (2 Thessalonians 2:13), it follows that there is no salvation apart from the Spirit. Since there is no coming of the Spirit apart from the will of the Spirit to come, and since his coming is to save sinners, we say with confidence that it is the will of God the Holy Spirit to save sinners.

Not only is it the will of God the Father,

God the Son and God the Holy Spirit to save sinners, it is also their work. Consider—

2. Secondly, that it is the work of God to save sinners

That God wills to save sinners is evident. That he has power to do so must be shown, since for us the willing of something and our ability or power to perform the same are two different things, for as St Paul declares, 'for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not' (Romans 7:18). If we are to have confidence in the salvation set forth in Scripture, we must know that God has power to save. That he does, we see in his work.

i. It is the work of the Father to save sinners. So Philippians 2:13, 'For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' That work has been seen in the world since the very beginning. All God's saving acts in the Old Testament are connected to the work of salvation revealed in the Gospels. That there was an expectant people, holding fast the word of prophecy, and looking for salvation at Jerusalem, is all the result of those saving acts recorded in the prior generations. It was by God's saving power that Noah was delivered from the Flood, to become the heir of the righteousness which is by faith. It was by God's saving power that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelt safely in tents in a land not their own, until the time of inheritance should come. It was by God's saving power that Israel was preserved whole in Egypt, and kept through the events of the exodus, to come at last to the Promised Land. It was by God's saving power that Israel's sins and backslidings did not bring about the destruction of the people. It was by God's saving power that the exile, and the return, and the preservation of the people from her many enemies, worked

for the good of all mankind. The evidences of God's saving power are everywhere in Scripture, and the Psalmist has much to say about them. 'Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise?' (Psalm 106:2). 'Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness' (Psalm 150:2). 'I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old' (Psalm 77:11). Nowhere are those works more evident than in the Incarnation, whereby a virgin conceived and brought forth a son, calling his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. God the Father has worked the salvation of sinners.

ii. It is the work of the Son to save sinners. This most particularly, since it was Jesus Christ the Son of God who died on the cross to be the propitiation for our sins. Indeed, although much might be considered under this point, we confine our thoughts to those that relate to the cross. There, Jesus Christ did more than die passively, a lamb who remained dumb before the slaughterers. Rather, he actively submitted to the wills of sinful men, that he might be the Saviour of sinners. In particular he did two things. First, he defeated our great enemy, the devil. Satan sought by various means to overthrow the will of the Father concerning the Son. Why was it that Solomon turned to idolatry, in spite of that God-given gift of wisdom? Why was it that Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was so foolish as to discard the counsel of the old men, and heed the counsel of the young men, thus guaranteeing the dividing of the kingdom? Why was it that David's line suffered as it did, to the point of apparent destruction in the Babylonian exile? Why was it that Joseph and Mary had to flee the wrath of Herod, or that Jesus was almost the victim of stoning, or in peril in a boat in a storm?

Satan tried by various means to stop God's will from being fulfilled, but in the end it was he and not the Lord who was defeated. Satan received a terrible wound when Jesus Christ died, according to the justice of the Father, in the place of sinners. Secondly, he reconciled us to the Father. We know that our sin has separated us from God, but we may not always grasp so readily the way in which our sin has separated God from us. It was he who cast man out of the Garden, not man who fled in fear. It was he who permitted man to come to him through sacrifice and in prayer, not man who discovered this way of having communion with God. But on the cross the requirement to come to the Father through the mediation of priests, and by the means of sacrifices, was done away with. Jesus Christ is our high Priest, and our final sacrifice. God has been pleased to be reconciled to sinners through Christ's finished work. We have access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Hebrews 10:19. The price of our sins, the debt we owe, has been paid. Our consciences are sprinkled with pure water, that is, with the blood of Christ, so that we are entirely clean. Christ has effected salvation, and he has done so fully. There is no more work to be done, and he has ascended to the right hand of the Father as much to prove this as to take up his throne and reign.

iii. It is the word of the Holy Spirit to save sinners. This, not by effecting the work of salvation, for that is the glory of the Son. Rather, it is by the application of salvation, for that is the glory of God the Holy Spirit. When we come to faith, how do we suppose this happens? Is it by our taking thought, as if we can reason our way to Christ? It is entirely reasonable to come to Christ, but reason alone will not cross the great gulf fixed between us and him. Rather, it is the delight of the Holy Spirit to work faith in us. This he does by

preparing our heart both to hear the word of the gospel, and in the preaching of the gospel. That is, by nature the gospel makes no real impression on us. We are like ground that has been packed hard by years of being walked on. Nothing penetrates. What is required is the passing of the plough, and this is the operation of the Holy Spirit. The trials and troubles of life, the raising of doubts and fears, all serve to break open that hard surface. Then we hear the gospel, and it is like the falling of good seed into the ploughed earth. Now the seed can sink down, since that hardness has been taken away. When we hear the gospel as the gospel, and when we are led to see in it the glory of Christ and the mercy of God, then we find we are in the way of faith. We have begun to walk a path which, by grace, will lead us to Christ and to salvation. The Holy Spirit leads us in this path, bringing us by stages to the point of faith. It is a point often recognised after we have reached it, so that we see that we do now believe, though we may not be able to say at what point we first believed. Having believed, which is a work of the Spirit, we are kept by him from the assaults of the evil one, who would drive us off Christ if he could. The Holy Spirit remains with us, and in us, to intercede for us in our prayers when we pray in faith, to give us understanding of the Scriptures when we read in faith, and to help us to honour Christ when we live in faith. Without the work of the Holy Spirit we could not come to faith, and so we have cause to be thankful for his work, and for the grace of God in sending the Comforter to us.

II. That this power to save is absolute.

That this power is absolute is a most comforting truth. If there were any uncertainty as to the absolute power of God to save, we would have no real rest from doubts and fears. How

may we prove that this power is absolute?

First, there is no other saviour. Only God saves, and if he cannot save absolutely, then we have no other hope, and could look nowhere else for salvation. Isaiah 43:11, 'I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.' Isaiah 45:21, 'Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.' Hosea 13:4, 'Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.'

Secondly, God saves absolutely. So Hebrews 7:25, 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth as proof of this. Romans 8:34, 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' As for our being secure in Christ our Saviour, hear John 10:27–29, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.'

Thirdly, it is not the property of God to do anything less than well. The same Lord who declared the creation to be 'very good', and who 'saw of the travail of his own soul and was satisfied' cannot will or do anything that does not come to pass exactly as he willed. Therefore, since he has willed the salvation of sinners, and worked that salvation, it follows that salvation stands before us.

All that remains therefore is for us to become partakers of that salvation, to hear the word of promise, to forsake all doubts that arise from a consideration of our own sins or from the seeming improbability that grace should extend even to one such as me, and to

lay hold on Christ. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me' (John 14:6). He was set forth that we might come to the Father, and so, laying hold on Christ, shall we not come to him who is the only Saviour? AMEN.

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

Supplied by A.W. DE LANGE (Scherpenzeel, The Netherlands)

Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. (Isaiah 1:2–3)

Introduction

GOD'S heavy plagues and judgments of wrath have thus great and just reasons, namely the rising and stubborn ungodliness. This is shown, amongst others, clearly by this testimony of Israel's God to that nation: I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased. Why criest thou for thine affliction? Thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things to thee (Jeremiah 30:14–15). See also Romans 1:18. It is the duty of a nation to acknowledge it unto self-humbling and justification of God (Lamentations 1:18; Daniel 9:7). To this end they must examine themselves precisely and unfeigned (Lamentations 3:39–40). Only acknowledge

thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every tree, and ye not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 3:13). This is the mean for true repentance (Jeremiah 31:19). And the fruit thereof in salvation (2 Chronicles 7:14). But the sinner is so blind and foolish, that he flatters himself, hides and denies the guilt, yes accuses God of unrighteousness (Jeremiah 2:35; Ezekiel 38:25). God hath a strife over this with such a nation. (Hosea 4:1). And he normally convinces the sinners of their ungodliness by his ambassadors (Isaiah 58:1; Ezekiel 6:11). So that the fairness of his acts may be shown there by. (Psalms 119:137), and so that they may be warned to repent or otherwise bear responsibility (Ezekiel 2:3–5).

TO BE CONTINUED

The righteous man hath grace beyond expression. The hypocrite hath expression beyond grace.

Ralph Venning

SEARCH AND RESCUE

BY CARINE MACKENZIE

WE spent a few days in a lovely coastal town on the West of Scotland. Ferry boats to the islands were regularly leaving and arriving at the terminal. Smaller boats were taking tourists to visit the seal colonies. Fishing boats and leisure yachts were constantly sailing across the bay. The weather was beautiful and the sea was calm.

At other times of the year conditions can be quite different. Sometimes the boats using these waters can be in great danger. We were reminded of that when we noticed the lifeboat standing at the ready on the slipway, waiting for the call to go to the rescue.

The Coastguard Service is always at the ready too to help people in trouble on the shore, on the cliffs all round the coast. We saw their van which had the words SEARCH and RESCUE painted on the side. Their work is to ensure the safety of people around the coastal waters.

Seeing that van reminded me of another 'Search and Rescue' operation. Jesus tells us that he, 'the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10). Zacchaeus was keen to see Jesus as he passed through Jericho. He climbed up a sycamore tree to get a better view. But Jesus sought him out and told him to come down. Jesus went to Zacchaeus' home with him and as a result, Zacchaeus was a changed man. 'This day is salvation come to this house,' said Jesus. That was an amazing 'search and rescue' mission.

God sent his Son into the world 'that the world through him might be saved' (John 3:17). He lovingly seeks out those who are lost. Jesus told a story to illustrate this love and concern for his people. If a man who owned a hundred sheep lost one of them, he would leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after that lost sheep until he found it. When he did find it he would rejoice and tell all his friends. There is joy in heaven when a sinner repents and is rescued by the Lord Jesus (Luke 15:4-7).

Jesus also told about the woman who lost one of her precious silver coins. She diligently swept every corner of her house until she found it. She too then rejoiced with her friends. Jesus came to save his people and he says to the Father, 'Of them which thou gravest me have I lost none' (John 18:9).

Saul was on a journey to Damascus, intending to do harm to the followers of Jesus who lived there. He did not realise he needed rescuing, but he certainly did. Jesus stopped him in his tracks, blinded by an intense light from heaven. 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Jesus asked. 'Who art thou, Lord?' he replied. Jesus told him who he was and that dramatic experience was the search and rescue operation for Saul (later called Paul). God used Paul to preach and teach his word to many people. He travelled thousands of miles and faced many dangers and difficulties but he continued to tell about the Lord Jesus, the Saviour who had rescued him.

In Psalm 107 the Psalmist described seamen in trouble in a stormy sea (Psalm 107:23-31). The waves made them feel and stagger on the deck. They were frightened and anxious. Then they cried out to the Lord and he rescued them from their distress. The Lord calmed the waves and the sailors made their way back to the harbour in safety. This rescue operation is another example of the Lord's goodness. 'Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for

his wonderful works to the children of men' (Psalm 107:31). The Lord is the one who rescues us from the storms of life—all sorts of troubles of body, mind and soul.

The disciples experienced that kind of rescue too when they were out with Jesus on a ship on the Sea of Galilee. While Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat, a storm blew up. The waves beat against the ship and it started to fill with water. The disciples were afraid they would drown, even although Jesus was with them. They woke Jesus up. Jesus rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still.' Immediately the wind died down and the waves ceased. The disciples were rescued but Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith.

We are in danger and trouble too. We need rescuing and the only rescued is the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. We must call out to him. 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Romans 10:13).

BIBLE SEARCH

Find the missing words from the verses. The initials of the correct answers will spell out the subject of the story.

1. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to _____; and we shall be saved. (Psalm 80:3)
2. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of _____ his troubles. (Psalm 34:6)
3. But Israel shall be saved in the _____ with an everlasting salvation. (Isaiah 45:17)
4. Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O _____ me with thy salvation. (Psalm 106:4)
5. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the _____ of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them. (Isaiah 63:9)
6. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they _____ in him. (Psalm 37:40)
7. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make _____ for them. (Hebrews 7:25)
8. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to _____ salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:9)
9. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the _____ of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

THE SYNOD OF DORT

THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER (1769–1850)

JAMES Arminius, or Harmensen, was born at Oudwater, in south Holland, in the year 1560. His father died when he was an infant; and he was indebted to the charity of several benevolent individuals for the whole of his education. At one time he was employed as a servant at a public inn, and in this situation was so much noticed for his activity, intelligence, wit, and obliging deportment, that numbers became interested in his being enabled to pursue the cultivation of his mind. Accordingly, by one of his patrons, he was placed, for a time, in the University of Utrecht; on his decease, by another, in the University of Marburg, in Hesse; and finally, by a third, in that of Leyden. In 1582, in the twenty-second year of his age, the magistrates of Amsterdam had received such impressions of his promising talents, and of his diligent application to study, that they sent him, at the public expense, to Geneva, which was then considered as the great centre of theological instruction for the Reformed Churches. In that far-famed institution Theodore Beza then presided, with equal honour to himself, and acceptance to the students. Here Arminius, as before, manifested much intellectual activity and ardour of inquiry; but indulging a spirit of self-sufficiency and insubordination, in opposing some of the philosophical opinions held and taught by the leading professors at Geneva, and delivering private lectures to turn away the minds of the students from the instructions of their teachers, he became a kind of malcontent, and was constrained to withdraw from that institution. This circumstance somewhat impaired that confidence in his prudence which

his patrons had before reposed. Still they were willing to overlook it. After travelling eight or ten months in Italy, he returned for a short time to Geneva, and soon afterwards to Holland, where he met with no small acceptance in his profession. Such was his popularity, that, in 1588, he was elected one of the ministers of Amsterdam, and entered on a pastoral charge in that city, with every prospect of honour, comfort, and usefulness. But his restless, innovating spirit soon began, in his new situation, again to disclose itself. Not long after his settlement, the doctrine of Beza concerning Predestination was publicly opposed by some ministers of Delft, in a tract which they printed on this subject. When this publication appeared, Martin Lydius, professor of Divinity at Franequar, having a high opinion of the learning and talents of Arminius, judged him to be the most proper person he was acquainted with to answer it; and, accordingly, urged him to undertake the task. Arminius, in compliance with this request from his venerable friend, undertook to refute the heretical work; but during the examination of it, and while balancing the reasoning on both sides, he went over to the opinion which he had been employed to refute; and even carried it further than the ministers of Delft had done. This change of opinion, which took place about the year 1591, and which he was not long in causing to be understood, soon excited public attention. About the same time, in a course of public lectures, delivered in his own pulpit, on the Epistle to the Romans, he still further disclosed his erroneous views. He was soon accused of departing from the

Belgic Confession, and many of his brethren began to look upon him and his opinions with deep apprehension. Such, however, were the vigilance and firmness manifested by the other members of his Classis, that they so far curbed and counteracted him as to prevent the agitation of the controversy, which it seems to have been his intention to excite.

Arminius, however, though deterred, at that early period, from public and open controversy, exerted himself in a more private way, with considerable effect. With some divines, whose friendship he had before conciliated, his talents, his learning, his smooth address, and his insinuating eloquence were successful in winning them to his opinions. The celebrated Uytenbogart and Borrius were among the number of his early converts and followers. He also took unwearied pains to gain over to his opinions some of the leading laymen of the country, and soon enlisted several of them in his cause.

In the year 1602, when the illustrious Francis Junius, an eminent Reformer, and no less eminent as a Professor of Divinity in the University of Leyden, was removed by death, to the great grief of the Belgic churches, Uytenbogart, who was just mentioned as a particular friend and partisan of Arminius, proposed, and, with great zeal, recommended him to the Curators of the University, as a candidate for the vacant Professorship. The leading Belgic ministers, hearing of this recommendation, and deeply apprehensive of the consequences of electing such a man to so important a station, besought both Uytenbogart and the Curators of the University to desist from all attempts to place in such an office one who was the object of so much suspicion. But these entreaties were disregarded. The recommendation of him was prosecuted with undiminished zeal, and the Curators at length elected and formally called him to the vacant chair.

The call being laid, as usual, before the Classis of Amsterdam, that body declined to put it into his hands. They supposed that he was more likely to prove mischievous in the office to which he was called than in his pastoral charge, where he was more immediately under the supervision and restraint of his brethren in the ministry. But, at length, at the repeated and earnest entreaties of Uytenbogart, of the Curators, and of Arminius himself, he was permitted to accept the call, and was regularly dismissed from the Classis to enter on his new office. This dismissal, however, was granted upon the express condition, that he should hold a conference with Gomarus, one of the theological Professors in the same University with that to which he was called; and should remove from himself all suspicion of heterodoxy, by a full and candid declaration of his opinions in regard to the leading doctrines of the gospel; and, moreover, the Classis exacted from him a solemn promise, that if it should be found that he held any opinions different from the Belgic Confession, he would refrain from disseminating them. This conference was held in the presence of the Curators of the University, and the Deputies of the Synod, in the course of which Arminius solemnly disavowed Pelagian opinions; declared his full belief in all that Augustine had written against those opinions; and promised in the most explicit manner that he would teach nothing contrary to the received doctrines of the Church. Upon these declarations and promises he was placed in the Professorship.

On first entering upon his Professorship he seemed to take much pains to remove from himself all suspicion of heterodoxy, by publicly maintaining theses in favour of the received doctrines—doctrines which he afterwards zealously contradicted. And that he did this contrary to his own conviction at the time,

was made abundantly evident afterwards by some of his own zealous friends. But after he had been in his new office a year or two, it was discovered that it was his constant practice to deliver one set of opinions in his professorial chair, and a very different set by means of private confidential manuscripts circulated among his pupils. He was also accustomed, while he publicly recommended the characters and opinions of the most illustrious Reformed divines, artfully to insinuate such things as were adapted, indirectly, to bring them into discredit, and to weaken the arguments usually brought for their support. He also frequently intimated to his pupils, that he had many objections to the doctrines usually deemed orthodox, which he intended to make known at a suitable time. It was observed, too, that some pastors who were known to be on terms of great intimacy with him, were often giving intimations in private that they had adopted the new opinions, and not a few of his pupils began to manifest symptoms of being infected with the same errors.

The churches of Holland observing these and other things of a similar kind, became deeply apprehensive of the consequences; they, therefore, enjoined upon the Deputies, to whom the supervision of the church was more especially committed, to inquire into the matter, and to take the earliest and most decisive measures to prevent the apprehended evil from taking deeper root. In consequence of this injunction, the Deputies of the churches of North and South Holland waited on Arminius, informed him of what they had heard, and urged him, in a friendly manner, if he had doubts or difficulties respecting any of the received doctrines of the Belgic churches, either to make known his mind in a frank and candid manner to his brethren in private; or to refer the whole affair, officially, to the consideration and decision of a Synod.

To this address of the Deputies, Arminius replied, that he had never given any just cause for the reports of which they had heard; but that he did not think proper to enter into any conference with them, as the Deputies of the churches; that if, however, they chose as private ministers, to enter into a conversation with him on the points in question, he was ready to comply with their wishes; provided they would engage, on their part, that if they found any thing erroneous in his opinions, they would not divulge it to the Synod which they represented. The Deputies considering this proposal as unfair, as unworthy a man of integrity, and as likely to lead to no useful result, very properly declined accepting it, and retired without doing anything further.

In this posture of affairs, several of the magistrates of Leyden urged Arminius to hold a conference with his colleagues in the University, before the Classis, respecting those doctrines to which he had objections, that the extent of his objections might be known. But this he declined. In the same manner he treated one proposal after another, for private explanation; for calling a national Synod to consider the matter; or for any method whatever of bringing the affair to a regular ecclesiastical decision. Now a Classis, then a Synod, and at other times secular men attempted to move in the case; but Arminius was never ready, and always had insurmountable objections to every method proposed for explanation or adjustment. It was evident that he wished to gain time; to put off any decisive action in the case, until he should have such an opportunity of influencing the minds of the leading secular men of the country as eventually to prepare them to take side with himself. Thus he went on evading, postponing, concealing, shrinking from every inquiry, and endeavouring secretly to throw every possible

degree of odium on the orthodox doctrines, hoping that, by suitable management, their advocates both in the church and among the civil rulers might be gradually diminished, so as to give him a good chance of a majority in any Synod which might be eventually called. This is a painful narrative. It betrays a want of candour and integrity on the part of a man otherwise respectable, which it affords no gratification even to an adversary to record. It may be truly said, however, to be the stereotyped history of the commencement of every heresy which has arisen in the Christian church. When heresy rises in an evangelical body, it is never frank and open. It always begins by skulking, and assuming a disguise. Its advocates, when together, boast of great improvements, and congratulate one another on having gone greatly beyond the 'old dead orthodoxy' and on having left behind many of its antiquated errors: but when taxed with deviations from the received faith, they complain of the unreasonableness of their accusers, as they 'differ from it only in words.' This has been the standing course of errorists ever since the apostolic age. They are almost never honest and candid as a party, until they gain strength enough to be sure of some degree of popularity. Thus it was with Arius in the 4th century, with Pelagius in the 5th, with Arminius and his companions in the 17th, with Amyraut and his associates in France soon afterwards, and with the Unitarians in Massachusetts, toward the close of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. They denied their real tenets, evaded examination or inquiry, declaimed against their accusers as merciless bigots and heresy-hunters, and strove as long as they could to appear to agree with the most orthodox of their neighbours; until the time came when, partly from inability any longer

to cover up their sentiments, and partly because they felt strong enough to come out, they at length avowed their real opinions. Arminius, in regard to talents, to learning, to eloquence, and to general exemplariness of moral deportment, is undoubtedly worthy of high praise: but if there be truth in history, his character as to integrity, candour, and fidelity to his official pledges and professions, is covered with stains which can never by any ingenuity be effaced.

At length, after various attempts to bring Arminius to an avowal of his real opinions had failed, he was summoned by the States General, in 1609, to a conference at the Hague. He went, attended by several of his friends, and met Gomarus, accompanied with a corresponding number of orthodox divines. Here again the sinister designs and artful management of Arminius and his companions were manifested, but overruled; and he was constrained, to a considerable extent, to explain and defend himself. But before this conference was terminated, the agitation of his mind seems to have preyed upon his bodily health. He was first taken apparently in a small degree unwell, and excused himself for a few days to the States General; but at length grew worse, was greatly agitated in mind, and expired on 19th October, 1609, in the 49th year of his age. His mind, in his last illness, seems to have been by no means composed. 'He was sometimes heard' says Bertius, his warm friend and panegyrist, 'He was sometimes heard, in the course of his last illness, to groan and sigh, and to cry out, Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth. I have lent to no man on usury, nor have men lent to me on usury; yet every one doth curse me!'

TO BE CONTINUED

THOUGHTS ON ELECTION

BY W.T. FOLEY

LET us examine the words found in Ephesians 1:4, 'he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world'.

This is a text that is worth pondering to draw assurance and comfort from, especially for the poor and thirsty soul in their pilgrimage walk, and in their fear of the Lord.

The pronoun 'he' is God taking action. Election or choice is of God the Father. And it is God Almighty without any involvement of humans in the decision. Our salvation is God's decision only.

The term 'hath' is a past event or initiative and it was before the foundation of creation.

The term 'chosen' is reference to God's choice in his sovereignty. The word 'chosen' means election.

The term 'us' means a number which no human can number but is a number that is limited. So, it means saints, whom God has chosen.

Election was 'in him'. It is in Christ. And therefore there is no election of anyone without Christ. The little preposition 'in' shows us that God views us in Christ only. If someone is 'in' Christ, then it is the opposite of 'out' of Christ. Both states cannot be true. So, the chosen were always 'in' Christ. There was never a moment when the saint was outside of Christ in the plan of God. This is viewed from the eternal perspective.

From a human perspective we did make a 'response' when coming to Christ because of the Eternal Decision or Decree. The calling of God was effectual in us because we were given the gift of faith and repentance.

The phrase 'before' in this verse strikes me immediately with force, in that, my salvation

is only and exclusively in Christ, in eternity.

The phrase 'before the foundation of the world' is wonderful to me. The time frame is only in eternity, yet there is no time in eternity. For eternity is outside time.

Another way of putting it is:

'God chose us, in Christ, before the foundation of the world.'

How can anyone, who is a true believer in Christ, argue with that clear and emphatic statement?

Did God chose 'us' because he saw that we were going to chose him? Banish the thought!

Did God chose us because we were good and had so called spiritual qualities? Banish the thought!

Did God chose us because we would meet him halfway way in salvation? Banish the thought!

Did God chose us because we were born into a Christian family? Banish the thought!

Did God chose us because of the foreknowledge or prescience that we would follow Christ? Banish the thought!

Did God chose us because of our religious nature? Banish the thought!

Clearly the answer is found in God in the family of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. God set his love upon us, according to his free sovereign choice, and purpose, not on the basis of our will, our way, our evil heart, or anything in us, or about us.

Here is a key biblical text in Romans 9:11 that brings out the truth that election is evidenced in two people, Jacob and Esau.

Paul writes, '(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to

election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)'

God did chose us for his glory, and made us the object of his love, his mercy, his kindness, his grace, his compassion, but all is 'in Christ'.

For example, think about it! God chose us not on the basis of merit, deeds (good or bad), or qualities in us, or our deserving.

Election is the cornerstone of God's plan for us, in Christ, in which he does everything for us. This is a major foundational truth.

Furthermore, all of the great biblical doctrines are about God taking the initiative.

Note just a few examples, as follows:

1. Predestination and election are all of God.
2. Calling is all of God.
3. Regeneration is all of God.
4. Justification is all of God.
5. Redemption is all of God.
6. Reconciliation is all of God.
7. Glorification is all of God.

Will God allow us to add or take away from these truths? Of course not!

God's Elect are God's elect and they are not God's elect because they were good candidates for election. God loved his elect and everything that God did for them was in Christ alone without consultation with humans or their behaviour.

Paul said, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth!' (Romans 8:33).

At the heart of God's election is God's

choice and mercy and it is not based on our will, which is in bondage to sin. Paul says, in Romans 9:15-16, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' Mercy and compassion are God's prerogative, and there is no unrighteousness with God. If any believes the they show they are elected. If any show that they do not believe then it is because they have not been elected. Believing in Christ is the fruit or evidence of divine election, in eternity.

Jesus said, in John 8:24, 'I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' Again, Jesus said to those who believed in him, in John 8:31, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.' Finally, Jesus said, in John 6:47, 'He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.' In other words, if one truly believes savingly then they show they are elected of God, and are truly regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Remember, too, that Jesus said, in John 6:37, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'

Thank God for your election. Don't think for one moment that you contributed to it, otherwise you are in error, and you are robbing God of his glory. Meanwhile, Peter says, in 2 Peter 1:10, 'brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall'. ¶

You may have much knowledge, and seeming grace, but not true worth. A shop full of barrels will not make a man rich, unless those vessels be full of commodities: gifts, as to heaven, are but the lumber of a Christian; it is grace that makes him rich towards God.

Christopher Love

ON PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

BY THOMAS BOSTON (1676–1732)

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you (John 16:23)

SECONDLY, I am to show wherein acting in prayer in the strength of Christ lies. It lies in two things:

1. The soul's going out of itself for strength to the duty; that is, renouncing all confidence in itself for the right management of it; 2 Corinthians 3:5. Every duty is to be undertaken, begun, and carried on, under a sense of utter weakness and insufficiency for it in ourselves.

1. *Gifts are not to be trusted to*; Proverbs 3:5. That is the way to get gifts blasted, for they are but an arm of flesh; Jeremiah 17:5, 6. And though ye should have the free exercise of your gift; yet a bare gift can never make a man do a duty graciously. The work will still be but a dead work, without the life of grace derived from Christ the Lord of life.

2. *Nay grace received and implanted in us is not to be trusted to for this end*. Learn ye, that even of our gracious selves we can do nothing; 2 Corinthians 3:4, 5. There must be continued supplies of grace from Christ unto us, else we will bring forth no fruit; John 15:5. It is true, grace is a seed that in its nature tends to fruit; but what will come of the seed, if the showers, and dew, and heat of the sun be withheld?

2. The soul's going to Christ for strength to duty, by trusting on him for it; Isaiah 26:4, 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' This is the exercising of faith, by which the saints live; Galatians 2:20, and derive grace and strength

from Christ their head; John 1:16. Faith is that grace by which the weak soul fetches in strength and grace from the fountain of it in Christ. So he prays in the name of Christ, in this respect, who goes about the duty in confidence of, and trusting in Christ for, strength and ability to manage it acceptably; Psalm 71:16, 'I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.' To make this more plain, consider,

1. *By faith a Christian sees, in the glass of the word, an utter inability for duty in himself*, believing, on the testimony of the word, that of himself he is unable to work any good work, Isaiah 26:12; nay, not to begin it well; Philippians 1:6, to will it; 2:13, nor so much as to think it; 2 Corinthians 3:5. In all which the Christian's faith is strengthened by experience.

2. *By faith he sees also a fullness of grace and strength treasured up in Christ the head*, to be communicated to the members of his body; 2 Corinthian 12:9, 'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Colossians 1:19, 'It pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell.' And he beholds the promises he has made of it, as the conduit pipes by which it is conveyed unto them; 2 Peter 1:4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.' These things the Christian believes

on the testimony of the same word of God; and thus he sees a sufficiency to oppose to his own emptiness, and a fullness of strength to remedy his own weakness.

3. *By faith he trusts that this fullness in Christ shall be made forthcoming to him*, in a measure of it, for the duty, according to the promise; Psalm 18:2, 'The Lord is my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.' Habakkuk 3:19, 'The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.' Thus there is a particular application in faith, that the Christian trusts in the word of promise, that grace and strength shall be given to him. So the word holds it out for particular application by faith; 2 Corinthians 12:9, 'My grace is sufficient for thee;' and this is the way to bring in strength, as the Psalmist's experience testifies; Psalm 28:7, 'The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped;' and so the promise secures it; Jeremiah 17:7, 8, 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth not her roots by the river, and shall not see when boat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.' Take away that trust, that particular application, the soul is left helpless, having nothing to gripe to, and the communication of strength is blocked up; according to what the apostle James says, 1:6, 7, 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.'

4. **We must in praying to God pray for Christ's sake, as the only procuring cause of the success of our prayers.** Daniel 9:17, 'Now

therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.' Going to God in prayer, we must as it were put off our own persons, as not worth noticing in the sight of God, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ; come and receive the blessing in the elder Brother's clothes, having all our hope from the Lord's looking on the face of his Anointed. This is the main thing in the text, a relying on the Lord Jesus for the success of our prayers in heaven. Here I shall shew,

1. What is presupposed in this.

2. Wherein it consists.

First. I am to shew what is presupposed in praying to God for Christ's sake. It presupposes,

1. That sinners in themselves are quite unacceptable in heaven, even in their religious duties. Not only are the wicked so; Proverbs 15:8, but even the saints considered in themselves; Isaiah. 64:6. The reason is plain, God is holy, we are impure and defiled. There is such a rank smell of sinful pollution about us, that the opening of a sinner's mouth in prayer is like the opening of an unripe grave; Romans 3:13. It is too strong, that we cannot sweeten ourselves. The loathsome savour of the sins about the best, cannot be mastered by any sweet savour of their duties, but only by the sweet savour of the sacrifice of Christ; 2 Corinthians 2:15, with Ephesians 5:2.

2. Christ is most acceptable there; he is the darling of heaven, the prime favourite there; Matthew 3:17, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' He is acceptable there as God, the only begotten of the Father from eternity; but that is not it. He is acceptable as God-man, Mediator, who has in our flesh fulfilled his Father's will, by his obedience and death; Ephesians. 5:2, 'Christ hath given himself for us, an offering and a

sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.' And he is acceptable to the Father,

1. *In himself*; Matthew 3:17, above cited. The Father is well pleased with his person, and delights in him, as the brightness of his own glory, and his own express image. He is well pleased with his undertaking the work of our redemption, and his management of that work; he is pleased with his holy birth, righteous life, and complete satisfaction; so pleased with his humbling himself, that he has 'highly exalted him,' Phil. 2:9.

2. *He is so well pleased with him, that he accepts sinners for his sake*; Ephesians. 1:6, 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' For his sake rebel sinners are accepted to peace and favour, criminals, to eternal life, their performances, mixed with much sinful imperfections, are accepted as pleasing in his sight. The sweet smell of his sacrifice so masters the rank savour of sin about them, that they are for his sake brought into his presence and made near. The Father knows not to refuse him any request; John 11:42, 'I knew that thou hearest me always.'

3. Sinners are warranted to come to the throne of grace in his name; Hebrews 4:15, 16, 'We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' It is sinners of mankind, not of the angel tribe; 2:16, 'For verily he took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham.' Whatever be our ease, he will do for us to the uttermost; Hebrews 7:25. He is an Advocate that will take our most desperate causes in hand, carry them through, and that in a way agreeable to justice; 1 John 2:1, 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

righteous.' The petitions put into his hand cannot miscarry.

SECONDLY, I am now to shew wherein this praying to God for Christ's sake consists. And,

First, *In general, it consists in our relying on the Lord Jesus only, for the success of our prayers in heaven. And,*

I. Consider what we are in this matter to rely on him only for.

1. *We are to rely on him only, for access to God in our prayers*; Ephesians 3:12, 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.' In vain do we pray, if we get no access to the prayer-hearing God; and there is no access to him, but through Christ; John 14:6. Whoever attempt to draw near to God otherwise, will get the door of heaven cast in their face; but we must take hold of the Mediator, and come in at his back, who is Heaven's favourite and the sinner's friend.

2. *For acceptance of our prayers*; Ephesians 1:6. Our Lord Christ is the only altar that can sanctify our gift; Hebrews 13:10, 15. If we lay the stress of our acceptance on any person or thing, but Jesus Christ, the crucified Saviour, we cannot be accepted. For our best duties being mixed with sinful imperfections, cannot be accepted of a holy God but through a Mediator; and there is no Mediator but he, 1 Timothy 2:5.

3. *For the gracious answer of prayer in granting our petitions.* So the text, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' We have forfeited all other pleas for Heaven's favours, by Adam's fall. And now no prayers can be heard and answered in heaven; but for Christ the second Adam's sake. A sinner cannot have the least favourable glance from the throne of God, but what is given for Christ's sake. What men get otherwise, they get with

a vengeance, an impression of wrath on it; Hosea 13:11; Psalm 78:29.

2. Consider how we are to eye Christ as the object of this reliance. We are to eye him in it as our great High Priest; Hebrews 4:15, 16, forecited. A believer is to eye Christ in his prayers, in all his offices. We are to eye him as our Prophet, teaching us by his Spirit bow and what to pray for; as our King, having the office of distributing Heaven's favours to poor sinners; but in point of our access, acceptance, and hearing, we are to eye him as a Priest; for it is in that office only we can find what to rely on before God, for these ends. And here we find,

1. *The infinite merit of his sacrifice to rely on*; Romans 3:25, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.' Man by sin lost himself, and all Heaven's favours from the greatest to the least, from heaven's happiness to the least drop of water to refresh him. Accordingly Christ redeeming sinners by his blood, paid the ransom not only for their persons, but for all Heaven's favours to them, from the greatest to the least. Therefore he says, 'Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;' Isaiah 55:3. He bought their seat in heaven, their peace, and pardon, yea and their seat on earth, their bread, and their water; Isaiah 33:16, 'He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.' Now, would we pray in his name? Then in prayer eye Christ on the cross, bleeding, dying, and by his bloody death and sufferings paying for the mercy thou art seeking. Is it a spiritual mercy, or a temporal mercy? It is a purchased mercy, the purchase of the blood of Christ; seek it of God as such, as the purchase of the blood of Jesus.

2. *His never-failing intercession to rely on*; Hebrews 7:25, 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Our great High Priest having offered his sacrifice on earth, is now gone into the heavens, presenting there the blood of his sacrifice in the infinite merit thereof before his Father; that he may obtain the purchased mercies for his people. So that the supply of the needs of his people, is his business in heaven, as well as it is theirs on earth. And he offers their prayers to his Father; Revelation 8:4. Therefore if ye would pray in his name, in prayer eye Christ as your Intercessor at the right hand of God, Romans 8:34. If the price of his blood was extended to the purchasing of all the mercies we need; surely his intercession extends from the greatest to the least of them also. And therefore we need not stick to put our petitions for any mercy we need, in his hand.

Hence it may appear,

Secondly, More particularly, wherein praying in the name of Christ, and for his sake consists,

1. Renouncing all merit and worth in ourselves, in point of access, acceptance, and gracious answer, saying with Jacob, Genesis 32:10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.' If we stand on personal worth, from the consideration of our doings or sufferings, or any thing in or about ourselves, we pray in our own name, and will speed accordingly. Self-denial is absolutely necessary to this kind of praying, that stopping our eyes to all excellencies in ourselves or duties, we may betake ourselves to free grace only.

2. Believing that however great the mercies are, and however unworthy we are, yet we may obtain them from God through Jesus

Christ; Hebrews 4:15, 16. There can be no praying in faith without this. If we do not believe this, we dishonour his name, whether our no belief of it arise from the greatness of the mercy needed, or from our own unworthiness, or both. For nothing can be beyond the reach of his infinite merit and never-failing intercession.

3. Seeking in prayer the mercies we need of God, for Christ's sake accordingly. So we present our petitions 'in his name;' John 16:24. We are to be ashamed before God in prayer, ashamed of ourselves, but not ashamed to beg in the name of his Son. Our holy shame respects our unworthiness; but Christ's merit and intercession are set before us, as a ground of confidence.

4. Pleading on his merit and intercession; Psalm 84:9, 'Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed.' We are not only to seek, but to plead in prayer, as needy petitioners whose pinching

necessity makes them fill their mouths with arguments; Job 23:3, 4. Christ's merit and intercession is the fountain of these arguments; and to plead on mere mercy, mercy for mere mercy's sake, is too weak a plea. But faith founding its plea on Christ's merit, urges God's covenant and promise made thereupon; Psalm 75:20, his glorious perfections shining in the face of Jesus, the honour of his name manifested in Christ.

5. Lastly, trusting that we shall obtain a gracious answer for his sake; Mark 11:24, 'What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' The soul praying according to the will of God, is to exercise a faith of particular confidence in God through Christ, which is not only warrantable, but necessary; James 1:6, 7. This glorifies the Mediator, and glorifies the faithfulness of God in the promise; and the want of it casts dishonour on both. ¶

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE GOOD SAMARITAN

BY J.E. NORTH (Totton, Hants)

THE parable of the Good Samaritan is recorded in Luke 10:25-37. A lawyer was seeking to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ by asking him the question 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life' (Luke 10:25) in reply to which the Lord Jesus pointed him to the law: 'What is written in the law? How readest thou?' (v. 26). The lawyer replied by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 (v. 27). When the Lord Jesus accepted that answer (v. 28), we are told that the lawyer

sought to justify himself by asking the question 'And who is my neighbour?' The Lord Jesus replied by speaking the words of the parable that has become known as The Parable of the Good Samaritan, concluding with the question, 'Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?' The lawyer, refusing to identify the Samaritan said, 'he that showed mercy on him' (v. 37) to which the Lord said, 'Go, and do thou likewise.'

But, as in all Scripture, there is much more than a superficial understanding of that particular passage. A further look will reveal that here in this parable there is a disclosure of the gospel of the grace of God.

We notice in the first place the journey which was undertaken by the man. 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves' (v. 30). Notice that journey: he went downwards. Is this not the journey of the sinner? The Lord Jesus spoke of there being two pathways: 'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it' (Matthew 7:13,14). The Broadway leads downward to a lost eternity whereas the narrow way leads ever upward to heaven itself. But this man had chosen the downward pathway. He chose a path that led away from Jerusalem, Zion, the city of God. Jerusalem was the place where sacrifice was made, where the Jews gathered for worship. He was taking his journey away from that place, to a place which had been cursed! 'And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it' (Joshua 6:26). After the destruction of Jericho, God's curse had been placed upon that city (1 Kings 16:34). It was rebuilt and it is to that city that this traveller was taking his journey. From the City of God to the City of the curse. Was it any wonder that he fell among the thieves? It is a dangerous pathway to tread! Taking our journey away from the things of God into the things of this world it is almost certain that we will fall among thieves. What a mercy it is that our

salvation cannot be taken from us, but there are things that can be taken away from the child of God—the peace of God in believing, the sweetness of Christian fellowship both with the Lord Jesus Christ and with fellow-believers, the desire to pray, the desire to join in worship on the Lord's Day &c &c. all these things can be lost and taken from the child of God by taking that downward path. Look at Jonah. The Book of Jonah tells us of the downward pathway he took; he went down to Joppa—he went down into a ship—he went down into the depths of the ship—then when the storm was at its highest and strongest he was thrown overboard and went down into the depths of the sea where a great fish had been prepared by Almighty God and he went down into the belly of hell until he was brought to confess that 'salvation is of the Lord' (Jonah 2:9). God grant that we never take that downward path to Jericho.

Well, here is the poor man, robbed of all he possessed, wounded and bleeding, cast on the side of the road. Then certain men came along; A priest, a Levite and a Samaritan! Each one reacts to that bundle of humanity who had been sorely afflicted by the thieves on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Consider, firstly, the priest. He was a faithful devotee of Moses. He could do nothing for this poor man, he would do nothing for this man, because if he touched him he would be made unclean and not be able to fulfil his religious duties. His religion consisted in nothing but duties, forms and ceremonies all of which had to be undertaken. Does this not speak of an empty religion. The wounded, the sin sick soul cannot be helped by religion of this kind. It is only the Saviour who can help this man. With all his religion he walks on by on the other side of the road!

Then consider the Levite. Here is one who undertakes various duties in the temple. He

is an assistant to the priests so helps in worship. The Levite is also a singer in the Temple. He is also a doctor of the law. He knows all the intricacies of the Mosaic law. He can argue and give reasons why this man should not even have been travelling along that road and what should happen to those who set upon the poor victim, but as for helping him, he was not prepared to act at all for that would make in ceremoniously unclean, and so just walked on his way. The law and the lawyer could do nothing for this man. There are many who would look to the law to keep them safe in eternal matter. The original lawyer who asked the question of the Lord Jesus Christ sought to justify himself in the presence of the Eternal Son of God, but failed to do so. The rich young ruler tried to do the same. And to each the Lord Jesus Christ pointed out the spiritual nature of the law. It was not just the keeping of the law that brings salvation, it is the application of the law showing the sinfulness of the sinner. Paul says, 'What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet' (Romans 7:7). But this Levite/lawyer had no answer for the poor victim.

Then came the Samaritan. He showed compassion on the poor victim of the thieves. Oh how tenderly he deals with him! He gently lifts him up and puts him on 'his own beast' (v. 34) but before he does so he binds him up and pours in the oil and wine—primitive medicines—the wine as an antiseptic and the oil as an emollient, and takes care of him. What a wonder picture of the Lord Jesus Christ is this! Oh the sinner has fallen among thieves. He is wounded! He is sick and sore! He needs the 'wine' of the words of Christ: 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee' (Mark 1:25); 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and

sin no more' (John 8:11). And these words could be repeated many times in the Gospel records. But the Samaritan also poured into the wound and emollient, the oil. Such is the Covenant of Grace. It is THE emollient to the one who is wounded by the curse of the law; the one who has been wounded by the plague of his own heart, by his own sinfulness. What a mercy it is that Christ is the Surety of the Covenant of Grace.

But there is more to the Samaritan. He takes the poor wounded victim and cares for him. What a mercy the Lord Jesus Christ does not forsake his people—ever!

Once in him, in him for ever

Thus the eternal covenant stands

Those who have been loved by Christ Jesus will be loved for ever, Just as the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, so is his love and care of his people. Never changing, never waning. 'Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you' 1 Peter 5:7. He takes him to the inn and at his own expense, he pays for the care of this wounded man, and then he tells the inn keeper that care is still to be given to this wounded man until he is better and, such is the compassion of this Samaritan, that he promises to cover any future debt incurred by the poor man. What a lovely picture this is of the provision made by the Lord Jesus Christ for his people. Is there any wonder the hymn writer says:

A Fullness resides in Jesus our Head

And ever abides to answer our needs

The Father's good pleasure hath laid up in store

A wonderful treasure to give to the poor.

Or again

Plenteous grace with thee is found

Grace to pardon all my sins.

To go back to the original lawyer who

posed the question in the first place, I wonder if he saw and heard some of those things the Lord Jesus said when he spoke the parable or if he was deaf to the Gospel. What a mercy it is if it is given to us to hear and to understand why the Lord Jesus spake in parables, 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of

the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them' (Mark 4:11,12). ¶

FORMER DAYS

BEING A SUMMARY OF PAST ISSUES FROM *THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE*

250 years ago: November & December 1768

The **November** issue begins with a lengthy treatise on the Sacraments of the New Testament, under the general heading, 'Christian Divinity.' The Old Testament sacraments of circumcision and the passover are first described, and both are shown to be illustrative of our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament sacraments are then described, with a note reminding readers of Rome's additions without warrant.

The rest of the treatise is taken up with a discussion with lengthy quotations to show the Reformed doctrine of both sacraments. The practice of infant baptism is upheld, but not to the exclusion of believer's baptism. The aim of the piece is to remind readers that we have a duty to improve our baptism in considering the significance of our washing. Since the sign shows us the washing away of sin, we are to mortify the lusts of the flesh as those whose sins have been washed away. In a right receiving of the Lord's Supper there is a joyful remembrance of Christ's death, and faith lays hold on Christ and the blessings of the atonement. Rome's errors in this sacrament are highlighted, and useful advice is

given to help us to discern spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

The biographical sketch covers the life of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, defender of Nicene orthodoxy, and contender against the errors of Arius. Much of the text is given over to an account of the rise and progress of the Arian heresy, which denied that God the Son is of the same substance as God the Father—in other words, the Father and the Son are two different Gods, not distinct persons in the Trinity. It is a miserable account in many ways, as accusations and lies were spread by both sides, and as excommunications and exile were imposed on one and another. If one were to attempt to settle the question by looking at the character of the protagonists, one would be hard put to tell right from wrong. Athanasius' greatest asset was that he was contending for the truth. The Council of Nicea had confirmed the orthodox doctrine of the three persons of the Trinity, but Arius, not being content with this, tried by every means to draw the Church away from the truth. By the grace of God, had it not been for the faithful witness of Bishop Athanasius, the true doctrine

would have been overthrown. The struggle was long, bitter and bloody. The true doctrine of the Trinity may be something we rather take for granted today. The lessons of history show us how hardly such blessings were won. May we have a better love for the truth.

The Dialogue between Christian and Truth is a meditation on the Song of Solomon 1:11, 'We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.' Truth expounds this to mean, 'Christ proceeds in this verse, in his own and in the name of the other two persons of the Trinity, to promise increase, continuance and perfection in grace.' Further expositions of verses 12 to 14 follow, in each case showing the blessings of believers through our being in Christ Jesus.

Question 46 of Casuistical Divinity asks, 'Wherein consists the union that is between Christ the head of the church, and true believers the members of his mystical body?' After giving four biblical illustrations of that union, the author goes on to show both the reality and the quality of the union for the true child of God. The piece ends with a number of inferences drawn from the teaching, showing the blessings and security we have through our union with Christ.

'Gospel comforts for doubting minds' in the form of three letters conclude the main part of the issue, and run to several pages. The final part is Poetry, consisting of five compositions of varying quality.

The **December** issue opens with a treatise on the nature of prayer. Because it deals in some detail with such an important subject, it is being reproduced in the next few pages of this issue, concluding in the following issue.

The conclusion of the article on prayer is followed by a brief explanation of the rationale for setting out a system of orthodoxy in the first thirty-six issues of the *Magazine*. The intention was to teach such things as are

received by all Protestant churches since the Reformation, and that are agreeable to the Thirty-nine Articles and to the Westminster Standards. It is not enough to have an external knowledge of the Scriptures, but we must have that inward work of grace in order to understand God's word.

The biographical sketch takes the life of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons in the second century. All but five of his books have been lost; those we have are against heresies. Irenaeus suffered a martyr's death, with many thousand fellow believers, in a severe persecution.

A second biographical sketch follows, looking at the life of John Frith, the scholar and martyr whose teaching on the Lord's Supper greatly influenced Thomas Cranmer.

The Dialogue between Christian and Truth continues to explore gospel metaphors in the Song of Solomon, from verses 16 and 17.

Casuistical Divinity asks, 'Wherein doth it appear that all believers receive the forgiveness of their sins, through the riches of grace, by the blood of Jesus Christ? The three-part answer deserves our attention.

'Gospel comfort for doubting minds' continues the letters, and the issue ends with poetry. Again, the poems are of varied quality, but two stand out. 'Redemption by Christ alone' from 1 Peter 1:18–19, begins,

Enslaved by sin and bound in chains,
Beneath its dreadful tyrant sway,
And doomed to everlasting pains,
We wretched, guilty captives lay.

The other is 'The fear of God illustrated.'

Fear—thou dread passion of the mind!
What torment dost thou give?
Thy fierce arrests my spirit bind,
I die while yet I live.

The Index is missing from the version on the web site.

ON THE NATURE OF PRAYER

PRAYER is a duty of very great extent, according to Scripture, and includes not only a request or petition for mercies, but it is taken for the address of a creature on earth to God in heaven, about everything that concerns his God, his neighbour, or himself, in this world or the world to come. We are to pray to God only, he only being to be believed in, and worshipped, with religious worship. Prayer, which is a special part thereof, is to be made by all to him alone, and to none other.

Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies. Prayer is to be made to God only, and to none other, because he alone is able to search the hearts, hear the requests, pardon the sins, and fulfil the desires of those who call upon him.

We may pray to any of the three persons in the Godhead; for in Scripture we find prayers directed, sometimes to the Father, John 16:23, Eph. 3:14; sometimes to the Son, Matt. 8:2, Acts 7:59. 1 Cor. 1:2; sometimes to the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. 13:14.

We are not to pray to angels or saints departed because it would be gross idolatry, they being but creatures; nor can they supply the wants, or remove the miseries which sin has brought upon us.

We in prayer cannot make known to God what he knew not before; for he understands our thoughts afar off, Ps. 139:2, 3, 4. But it has pleased him to command us to make known our requests to him, as the means by which we are to receive the good things promised, Phil. 4: 6. Ps 50:15, Joel 2:32, Rom. 10:12. In prayer we come as needy beggars to ask mercy only by mere favour.

We are to direct our prayers only to God,

- 1) Because prayer is a part of religious worship, and God is the only object of it; 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,' Matt. 4:10.
- 2) Because God only is every where present to see his people, and to hear their prayers; 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.'
- 3) Because God only can answer our prayers, by fulfilling our desires, and giving the things we pray for and stand in need of; 'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him; to all that call upon him in truth: he will fulfil the desires of them who fear him; he also will hear their cry, and save them,' Ps. 145:8, 9.

We are not to pray for the fulfilling of any sinful desires. 'Ye ask, and ye receive not; because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts,' James 4:3. But we may and ought to pray to God for such things only as are agreeable to his will: 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he heareth us, we know that we have the petition that we desired of him.'

By things agreeable to God's will, we do not here mean his secret will, which is unknown to us, but his revealed will, which is contained in his word; and these are the good things, both spiritual and temporal, that we stand in need of, and which God hath promised in his covenant. Those spiritual things we should pray for, are an interest in Christ, pardon of sin, regenerating grace, supplies of grace, deliverance from sin and wrath, and eternal life. We are most earnestly to pray for spiritual mercies; but for temporal mercies

with submission to the will of God, and if they are for God's glory and our real good; and they are promised in the covenant, so far as we have real need of them. 'The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,' Ps. 34:10. 'Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure,' Isaiah 33:16. The work of grace in the soul, and Christ's surety-righteousness imputed as the foundation thereof, are to have the preference above all other, which great mercies may be meant by the command of our blessed Lord, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you,' Matt. 6:33. Spiritual blessings are absolutely necessary to salvation; for without them we cannot serve God here, nor enjoy him hereafter.

We are to pray for all sorts of persons, for kings, for magistrates and ministers, for all saints, for afflicted persons, for the unconverted, for our relations and friends, and even for our enemies, 1 Tim. 1:1, 2. Eph. 6:18, 19. Matt. 5:44, Ps. 72:19 and 67:2, 3, 4. But there are some persons for whom we are not to pray, namely, those that, have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, 1 John 5:16. Those miserable persons who have sinned the sin unto death may be sometimes known from their rejecting the gospel, which they once professed to embrace; by their malice and envy against Christ and the way of salvation through him, by their treating the convincing evidences of Christianity, and the peculiar doctrines thereof, with blasphemy and contempt; and by their rooted hatred of true religion and the professors of it.

We are to pray to God only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son: If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it,' John 14:13, 14. To pray in the name of Christ is to pray

in obedience to his command, in confidence of his promise, and to ask mercies for his sake. It is not barely to mention his name with our lips in the conclusion or any part of our prayers, but it is by faith to mention his name, depending upon Christ alone for admittance and access to God in prayer, for acceptance, audience, and a gracious return to our prayers. 'In Christ we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him,' Eph. 3:2. We are to draw our encouragement to pray and our confidence strength and hope of acceptance in prayer from Christ and his mediation, because the sinfulness of man and his distance from God, 'by reason thereof, is so great, that we can have no access into his presence without a Mediator; and there being none in heaven or earth appointed to, or fit for that glorious work, but Christ alone, we are to pray in no other name but his only. 'And another came, and stood at the altar,' that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is 'the Angel of the covenant' 'having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne; And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand,' Rev. 8:3, 4. The incense that Christ, the angel of the covenant, is said to mix with the 'prayers of the saints' the merits of his obedience and sufferings. There is great need of mixing the incense with the prayers of the saints, in order to perfume them, and take away the ill favour of the imperfections and defilements which cleave to our best duties. But we are not to make use of the names of saints or angels as our intercessors with God; for this would be very dishonouring to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the alone intercessor and advocate with the Father for us, 1 Tim. 2:5. Heb. 7:25, 1 John 2:1.

The Spirit helpeth us to pray, for we, not knowing what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, by enabling us to understand both for whom, and what, and how prayer is to be made; and by working and quickening in our hearts, although not in all persons, or at all times, in the same measure, those apprehensions, affections and graces, which are requisite for the right performance of that duty.

We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God, and a deep sense of our own unworthiness, necessities, and sins, with penitent, thankful, and enlarged hearts; with understanding, faith, sincerity, fervency, love, and perseverance, waiting upon him, with humble submission to his will.

There are several kinds of prayer, namely, secret, private, and public prayer: *Secret prayer* is the retirement of individuals or persons, from all company for a time, that they may have free and familiar intercourse with God by themselves; 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret,' Matt. 6:6. Secret prayer is incumbent upon every Christian, because he has his own particular wants to be supplied, doubts to be resolved, and difficulties to be removed, which none but God himself can do, Ps. 32:6. and 34:4, 2 Cor. 12:8.

There may be secret prayer in company with others, which is ordinarily called ejaculatory prayer. It is a secret and sudden lifting-up of the soul's desires to God, upon any emergency that may occur in providence. It is done by a simple thought darted up to heaven, as it seems Nehemiah did, 2:4. Or by words uttered in the mind, yet so as the voice cannot be heard, as Hannah did, 1 Sam. 1:13. Those ejaculatory breathings of foul have met with quick and happy returns; as in the

instance of Moses, who in the midst of the peoples murmuring at the Red Sea, offered up his desires to heaven in some short ejaculation, to which the Lord immediately answered: Wherefore criest thou to me? speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward,' Exodus 14:15. And the sons of Reuben, when fighting with the Hagarites, 'They cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them,' 1 Chron. 5:20. Ejaculatory prayer tends to maintain fellowship with God, without any interruption in our lawful callings, Ps. 73:23. It is also a means to repel sudden temptation, 2 Cor. 12:8, 9. and to dispose the heart for the more solemn performance of the stated duties of prayer and praise in the season of them, Ps. 42:6, 8.

Private prayer is prayer in a family, or among a few Christians met together for joining in that solemn exercise, Rom. 16:5. Or it is a fellowship of Christians out of several families, joined in spiritual conference on soul-edifying subjects; and at such times as they agree among themselves, Mal. 3:16.

Public prayer is a solemn worshipping of God by the church in her public assemblies; wherein a minister or pastor who preaches the gospel, is the mouth of the people to God, Acts 20:36. When we join in private or public prayer where one is the mouth of the rest, we are to offer up the petitions or desires that come from the mouth of the speaker for things agreeable to God's will as if uttered by ourselves. It is incumbent on those who are the mouth of others in prayer to God, to take special care that their prayers be regulated exactly by the revealed will of God; which may encourage all present to join in every part of the duty. In joining in prayer there ought to be close attention without wandering, and a lively faith, and a series of ejaculation concurring with the words that may be spoken.

TO BE CONCLUDED

POETRY

Supplied by JOHN WESTMACOTT (Wokingham)

See, gracious God, before Thy throne
Thy mourning people bend!
'Tis on Thy sovereign grace alone
Our humble hopes depend.

Tremendous judgments from Thy hand
Thy dreadful pow'r display;
Yet mercy spares this guilty land,
And yet we live to pray.

Great God, and why this nation spare,
Ungrateful as we are?
O be these awful warnings heard,
While mercy cries, 'Forebear.'

What numerous crimes increasing rise,
Where Satan shows his smile?
What land so favoured of the skies,
And yet what land so vile?

How changed, alas, are truths divine
For error, guilt, and shame!
What impious numbers, bold in sin,
Disgrace the Christian name!

Oh bid us turn, almighty Lord,
By Thy resistless grace!
Then shall our hearts obey Thy word,
And humbly seek Thy face.

Then, should insulting foes invade,
We shall not sink in fear,
Secure of never-failing aid,
When God, our God, is near.

Anne Steele

*We pray the Lord's richest blessings for the new year
on all readers of The Gospel Magazine*

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