

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2019

£1.50

The Gospel Magazine



Knowing the truth • The whole truth • A true confession

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1766–2019

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'.

Editor

The Rt Rev Edward J Malcolm
**1 Downshire Square,
 Reading, Berkshire RG1 6NJ**
 Telephone: 0118 9595131
 edward.malcolm@btinternet.com
*Only matters to do with
 articles and book reviews
 should be sent to the Editor*

The Secretary

Mr Philip Lievesley
 1 Chaplins, Kirby Cross
 Frinton-on-Sea, CO13 0RU
 philip.lievesley@sky.com
*Only subscriptions and advert-
 isements should be sent to the
 Secretary*

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EDITORIAL

THE actions of a large group of climate protestors, known collectively as Extinction Rebellion, have been in the news recently. They have used a variety of means to draw attention to what they consider to be most vital, the imminent and desperate catastrophe of irreversible damage to the climate through irresponsible human action. They believe mankind's days are numbered, and are very few at that.

A number of 'celebrities' have spoken in support of the group. It is said to have been received with sympathy among people generally, even if many have complained about the disruption caused by the protests.

Of course, in one respect, Extinction Rebellion is just another doomsday cult. We can see the future, they declare, and only those who join us and do as we say have any hope of surviving the great event we have foreseen. This is the language of all sorts of odd groups, going back at least two thousand years.

In another respect, Extinction Rebellion is presently the most vocal and visible

manifestation of humanism. The Greek philosopher Epicurus famously declared, 'I was not, I am, I shall not be; I do not mind.' This is the humanist's creed, and each is happy to affirm this individually. They are not happy to affirm it of the rest of the world—of animals and plants, and of mankind in general, and the coming generation in particular. They have a collectivistic rather than individualistic attitude to their fellow man (though would probably say human).

Extinction Rebellion has also managed to gather active supporters from all walks of life, and the number of church ministers of various denominations who have joined is worth noting.

It is here most visibly that the presence of self-professed Christians is to be noted among the ranks of Rebels. No doubt many others who claim to be Christians are also members. They are concerned for the planet, and for future generations. Should we be listening?

Consider what lies behind the fear being expressed. Man, the argument goes, has so

polluted the world in which he lives, and has so abused the natural resources he finds, that he has hastened the collapse of the ecosystem. There is very little time in which to act to begin to reverse the consequences of our actions. In one sense this has much the same urgency as the old prophetic cry to flee the wrath to come.

At the head of this movement stands a figurehead, one whose words are counted for wisdom, and whose visions are received as prophetic. The Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg has addressed the United Nations, no less, and has told the representatives of the nations of this world what they should do, and scolded them to get on and jolly well do it. Of course, one might make comparisons with the visions supposedly received by the children at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. In England the Maid of Kent once awed the great and good of her county with her visions and revelations from the Virgin Mary—until she was exposed as a fraud whose messages came from the Roman Catholic upper class opposed to Henry's 'divorce'. One wonders who is whispering in Greta's ears, and what their ultimate agenda might be.

It is hard to miss the quasi religions aspect of modern climate protest. Its spokesmen declaim like prophets, warning of a huge catastrophe, and offering the only safe solution. Followers are to take up the creed and show their convictions by a change of life. Hypocrisy is condemned, and non-believers are exposed as enemies of the truth. How long before the stakes and bundles of fagots appear—only they won't, because burning wood releases carbon, and that is a very great and dreadful sin. A different form of punishment will perhaps be meted out to the heretics and unbelievers.

What a joy it is to know the truth! Holy Scripture, the very and actual word of God,

tells us that Almighty God created this world out of nothing, and that he sustains it moment by moment. The same Scriptures teach us the purpose for the universe, that God might reveal himself to the people he has created, that we might worship him in spirit and in truth. And because human nature has been corrupted by the Fall, God has sent forth his Son Jesus Christ, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Given that heaven and earth shall pass away, though God's word shall never pass away, the blessing of eternal life becomes all the more precious. Though the earth shall only remain for as long God wills, all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth shall dwell with him for ever. Scripture promises a new heaven and a new earth, one where righteousness dwells. Here, the very real consequences of sin will be ended, the curse will be no more. There shall be no suffering, no sorrow or death, and all tears shall be wiped away.

Wonderfully, this new heaven and new earth will not be made or restored by sinful man but by Almighty God. The future does not depend on what man can do but on what God has done in his Son. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. As God, he accomplished his purpose, giving thanks to the Father before his death for those whom the Father had given him. 'Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.'

With this comes a solemn thought. If the churches of our land were more obedient to the command of Christ to go out into all the world and teach all nations to observe all he commanded, would men now be in such fear that they heed the prophets of doom? Would they not recognise the rule of the sovereign God? Yes, sin will persist, but the truth would be better known. Let us not be part of any rebellion. ¶

KNOWING THE TRUTH

by THE EDITOR

'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief' (1 Timothy 1:15)

TRUTH is a commodity that is often hard to find, harder to accept, and hardest to convince others of. When the truth concerns that most vital, most fundamental and most eternal of subjects, the immortal soul of man, it meets with an almost pathological rejection in those to whom it is declared. Unless and until the free grace of God in Christ works in us we will always reject the truth. When that free grace does work in us, and our eyes are opened to behold wondrous things, the truth seizes us, holds us fast, and transforms us.

We have here in Paul's own personal testimony a demonstration of this fact. Here is one who, above all others in his nation, hated the truth and all who held to it. He was zealous to silence it wherever it appeared. He would stop at nothing, welcoming even the deaths of his enemies, to put down the truth. To him it was not the truth; his truth was different, and it was his truth that had to triumph. But when free grace worked in him and he met the risen Lord Jesus Christ, then was his own truth defeated, and the truth of the gospel became real to him. Therefore, when Paul speaks of the truth, and of its true nature, we do well to listen.

We have in these words four things—

1. *A bold affirmation*; 'This is a faithful saying'
2. *A plain exhortation*; 'and worthy of acceptance'
3. *A clear doctrine*; 'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'

4. *A humble proof*; 'of whom I am chief.'

1. **The bold affirmation.** That Paul could call this a faithful, or true, saying, shows both that he knows this to be true, and that he knows this to be an unpopular and frequently rejected truth. He will use the expression, with the one following, later in the same Epistle. In 4:9 he speaks of godliness that is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, of that which is to come. This he contrasts with the small profit to be gained from bodily exercise, which can only benefit the life that now is, and can do nothing for the life that is to come. We meet with another 'faithful saying' in 2 Timothy 2:11, where the same Apostle states, concerning his bonds and sufferings for the gospel's sake, 'I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.' Again, Paul offers a faithful saying in Titus 3:8, concerning the mercy with which God our Saviour has saved us, 'by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life' (verses 4–7). For Paul therefore, a faithful saying is a truth concerning eternal life and the God-appointed means by which we come to it. This being so, any faithful saying, any spiritual truth of this order, is one we do well to heed.

2. **The plain exhortation.** There are all sorts of truth in the world. It is true that Seville oranges are bitter, pithy and full of pips; but unless you plan to eat one, or want to make marmalade, this is a truth you can well live without. Paul knows that truth is in competition with apparent truth. When he went to Athens he debated with the Epicureans and Stoics, Acts 17:18. Neither school believed in any sort of life after death, and neither believed that the gods—if they existed—were worth taking any notice of. Both had their (competing) ideas about happiness, and both considered that they had arrived at the truth. Paul is not writing to Timothy—or to any other of his readers—to put forth an alternative to such philosophies; he is countering falsehood with truth. This truth is worthy of all acceptance, worthy of all men to be received. This is a truth that can be received and believed without shame or embarrassment. This is a truth that grants true satisfaction to the soul.

3. **The clear doctrine.** We can take this under three subheadings.

i. First, *of whom Paul speaks*; ‘Christ Jesus’. Timothy knows who Jesus Christ is, but those to whom he preaches probably do not. People first need to know of whom we speak, in whom we believe, and what we believe concerning him.

ii. Secondly, *of what Christ did*; ‘came into the world’. This is rooted in the Incarnation, when God became man for a season. That is, he took human nature upon himself, and has it still, since it was the God–man who ascended into heaven. Yet the focus here is on the fact of God coming down to earth, not as one of the Greek gods, disguised in order to deceive, but as one of us in order to save. Jesus Christ manifested his Godhead in the miracles and in his teaching, showing that he is very God.

iii. Thirdly, *why*; ‘to save sinners’. This was the great promise to Adam in the garden, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. Christ came to redeem us from sin and death, paying the price of our sins that we might indeed be the purchased redemption. Now, if God must become man in order to save sinners, it is plain that man cannot save himself. We need the Saviour.

4. **The humble demonstration.** Paul puts himself forward in this matter under three points. First, that he knows the truth of which speaks. Secondly, that he knows the glorious benefit of this truth, and so can press it on others. Thirdly, that he has experienced the blessing contained in this truth, for he, the chief of sinners, has obtained mercy.

Two matters come from this:

1. The natural man is blind to the truth;
2. The truth is known experimentally

1. **The natural man is blind to the truth**

This is hardly a new doctrine in Scripture, since it is plain almost from the beginning that fallen mankind is incapable of receiving the truth, or even acknowledging as true those things that may only be received by the regenerate.

To begin almost at random on the Bible, consider the response of Pharaoh to the words of Moses. When his magicians could match the first signs—Aaron’s rod becoming a serpent and the changing of water into blood—Pharaoh felt confident he could deny the Lord. This was a contest between equals, he believed, and in time his own magicians would prevail. Therefore anything Moses demanded could be refused. We know that his reaction was through the overruling providence of the sovereign God, who hardened his heart. But if Pharaoh had been asked to

justify his actions, he would not have had any difficulty in so doing; reason dictated that, at some point, he would be victorious.

Another significant incident took place when Jeremiah’s words were read by Jehudi before Jehoiakim. The king, not liking the defeatist talk of sieges, defeat and exile, thought to silence the word of the Lord by cutting off strips from the scroll and casting them into the fire. If he had been asked to justify his action, he would have replied that such words would have weakened the resolve of the people in the face of adversity, and that, as ruler, it was his duty to maintain the national spirit. Reason dictated his course of action, but it was a reasoning devoid of spiritual understanding of any kind.

We may turn to the Gospels, and to the reaction of the high priest as recorded in John 11:47–52. ‘It is expedient,’ he argued, ‘that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.’ He spoke the truth, but not because he knew or believed the truth. He was arguing from a purely human and worldly point of view. The death of Jesus of Nazareth would remove the looming danger of Roman intervention in the province. All the while Jesus gathered followers, and taught them a different doctrine from the one approved by the Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers and scribes, there appeared to be a real chance of rebellion. Better to cut off the source than risk the freedoms of the people. Of course, our Lord was indeed warning people against the errors of the Pharisees and others, but not for political motives, nor because he desired to set up an alternative sect, but because the people were being led by blind leaders and needed to know the truth.

The most telling words of all in this matter are those that come from the lips of Christ’s human judge, Pontius Pilate. The

same Gospel records the exchange between Christ and Pilate, John 18:28–38, which concluded with these words. ‘Jesus answered, Thou sayest I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?’ While some may wish to take his words as a genuine enquiry, the fact that ‘when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all’, indicates that he was not waiting for an answer. Rather, he was being presented with two truths; on the one hand the Jews accused Jesus of crimes worthy of death, and on the other, Jesus claimed to be a king. If he put a king to death, then that king’s followers would certainly rise up in rebellion; and yet the Jews were seeking his death to prevent that very thing. No wonder Pilate felt confused! But more than this, Christ’s claim, that he had come into the world to bear witness to the truth, and that all who are of the truth hear his voice, was met with resistance in Pilate. How can anyone know the truth? How can anyone even tell truth from error? Pilate was doubtless surrounded by advisers who professed to tell him the truth, but he knew both that their ‘truth’ conflicted with that of others, and that they had their own reasons for calling anything ‘the truth’.

We meet with the same response today. We have no doubt heard politicians speak of ‘true truth’, as if there is also ‘untrue truth’. We have all heard about fake news, and perhaps we have recognised stories in the media to lack the ring of truth. At the same time we know that, on occasions, the truth is so incredible that we can well understand why many refuse to believe it. And then there are those special-interest groups who loudly proclaim ‘the truth’ but are really trying

to sway public opinion in their direction. What is there in human nature that makes us doubtful of the truth, and prone to believe lies? The answer, as no doubt we well know, is sin.

The problem of sin is not simply that we cannot help ourselves from doing wrong. The usual opinion among people is that we are free to choose to do right or wrong, to act on principles of good or principles of evil. Free will is touted as the neutral position in which all stand; many who break society's laws only do so because they have not been given the right choices, or their impoverished upbringing has unduly moulded them. In short, it is not their fault, and if only everyone had the same chances in life everyone would act more or less in a right, proper and lawful manner.

The word of God reveals a very different picture. Man, created in the image of God and capable of choosing obedience, instead chose disobedience. The first man sinned, and when he did so he corrupted his own nature. As the federal head of the whole human race he bequeathed that corruption to all his descendants. None are free from that corruption. This corruption is no small matter. It cannot be overcome by choosing to be better than we might be. It cannot be defeated by education, better social conditions or having a sense of purpose. Far less can it be overcome by removing all restraints, and allowing people to choose their sexual orientation, or their sex, or even their species. Such things prove only the extent of the corruption; people are incapable of seeing themselves as they really are.

From time to time some people are given to recognise the truth. When Jonah came to Nineveh and warned of judgment, he was believed. Given that the nation lasted about fifty more years, it is hard to see this as

anything more than an outward repentance, but nevertheless the people did turn from their sins for a season. Again, when Daniel and his three friends bore witness to the saving power of the Lord, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged him to be the true God, and gave him the glory. And yet the nation was not converted, and there is no indication that the king himself did more than accept that the Lord was one God among many.

Such is the corruption of our nature that people look upon the truth as error, and on error as the truth. The whole matter has been turned upside down. Man worships the creature more than the Creator, and has pleasure in all who do as he does. The Apostle Paul's description of the world in Romans 1 is unchanged in our day. Man is, by nature, blind to the truth, and cannot receive it even when confronted by it. The very people who claimed to be waiting for their Messiah believed themselves to be justified in condemning to death the one who declared that he was indeed that Messiah—and had given many infallible proofs of this by the miracles witnessed by so many. Such is the effect of sin.

The consequences of this are many and serious, for our sinfulness puts us under the wrath of God. We are both condemned as sinners, and incapable of changing our nature or our situation. How we need to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2. The truth is known experimentally

This is Paul's point in this verse. He is declaring the great truth that alone offers hope to lost sinners. That truth is Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners. But how may anyone know that Paul is telling the truth? His answer is plain, 'of whom I am chief.' Paul, the chief of sinners, knows perfectly that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners because he is a sinner who

has been saved. He is not an 'ordinary' sinner, one of the common herd; he is the chief of sinners, the one who, in the eyes of the herd, was beyond all hope of salvation. After all, they may not have been as good as they ought to have been (though would insist they were no worse than most others); but Paul persecuted Christians, and consented unto their death. He was a bigot, a rabid zealot, and someone who delighted in imposing his own views on others.

Yet Paul did not remain like this. There came a time when he was confronted by a truth so vast that it appears almost to have destroyed him. There he was, travelling to Damascus to carry out his persecuting work, when he was stopped dead in his tracks. 'Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' (Acts 9:3–4). Such a question demands a response. 'Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' The word 'hard' does not mean 'difficult' but 'cruel'; the Greek word, *skleros*, is used in medicine of the hardening of tissues; usually fatally. In short, Paul (or Saul, as he was then called) was harming himself by resisting all the evidence of Christ's Messiahship. Paul knew the accounts of the miracles, and the proclamation among Christ's followers that he had risen from the dead. He knew the blamelessness of the lives of those he was sending to prison and death. The evidence had to mean something, but Paul chose to deny it, and so was damaging himself spiritually. He was searing his conscience, hardening his heart, and remaining stiff-necked and proud in the face of God's truth. He was, therefore, in very real danger of eternal damnation.

This is the lot of all mankind by nature.

The evidence in favour of the gospel of grace is overwhelming. The truth as it is in Christ Jesus is plain. The church has been proclaiming this truth since the days of Christ—not that outward organisation that calls itself the church, for that is often corrupt, and capable of becoming the enemy of the very truth it is meant to proclaim. The true church—the body of the elect—the sinners who have been saved by grace—is the place where the gospel is loved, and from where it sounds forth. But the world will not receive our witness.

And yet Paul continued to witness. He began at the very place to which he had come as a persecutor, instead going into the synagogues and preaching that Jesus is the Son of God. He travelled from there to the region nearby, Arabia (probably not the Arabian peninsular, but the region east of Damascus) and preached there for some fourteen years. At length, being commissioned by the Holy Spirit, he went out into the regions to the west, towards Europe, and preached the gospel in many places. By the grace of God he came to Rome itself as a witness for the truth, to declare the good news as it is in Christ Jesus. It is possible he travelled as far as Spain; that was certainly his intention, Romans 15:24, but whether he ever made the journey is not recorded in Scripture. Wherever he went, unless expressly forbidden by the Holy Spirit, he confessed Jesus Christ, and called on sinners to believe the gospel.

What made Paul such a fearless preacher? What made him willing to suffer scourgings, beatings, stoning, shipwreck, perils of all sorts, and privations of every kind? It was his supreme confidence in Jesus Christ, that he is the very and only Saviour of sinners. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. How do you know this, Paul? Because I am the chief of sinners, and the grace of God reached even unto me. I was the persecutor,

not only of the followers of Jesus Christ, but of Christ himself. I hated the very thought of him, and wished only that he had never been born. I delighted in hearing of his sufferings, and wished only that he had suffered more. I reviled his teachings, much preferring the opinions I had inherited from my father and teachers. I wished only to rid the world of this Jesus and his gospel, and, like the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, would have preferred a desert to a nation of heretics.

And then, in the midst of my hatred and blindness, the truth broke in as light into darkness. I met the very Christ whose death I had rejoiced in. Only now I could not rejoice, because he was alive. He was speaking to me in the manifestation of his divine glory, and he was speaking to me from heaven. He even confirmed to me what I was seeking to deny to myself—and believed nobody else could possibly know—that I was being torn up inside by what I was doing. I was a slave to it, yet was not willing to be freed from this slavery. I knew I was harming myself irreparably by my actions, but nothing would be allowed to come between me and my prey. I hated the gospel, yet all the while was racked with the knowledge that I was hiding from the truth it so evidently declared. And then Christ came to me, and spoke with me, and brought comfort to me. He did not strike me down as I had once wished to strike him down, but he sent me off, telling me that he would reveal his will to me. He sent his servant Ananias to make known to me the will of Christ for me, and he came and was faithful to the heavenly charge. I was brought to believe the gospel, and when I did it was as if scales fell from my eyes. I had been left blind by the encounter with Christ, but in believing on him my sight was restored, and I could see again. Whereas I had been physically sighted and spiritually blind, I was

then physically blinded but began spiritually to see, dimly, the truth. Then, through the ministry of Ananias, I was brought to faith in Christ, and my spiritual sight was made whole; and with it my physical.

It is for this reason that I, Paul, am content to suffer the loss of all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. I know the truth, and I know it so deeply that nobody can dissuade me from it. I know the power of Christ over sin that I am moved to proclaim him to all the world. I see perishing sinners wherever I go, and I preach as utterance is granted to me. I rejoice that, everywhere I go, such as should be saved are brought to faith in Jesus Christ. Like me, they repent of their sins. Like me, their spiritual sight is restored. Like me, they are regenerate, and in their regenerate state they testify to the saving power of the gospel.

So, when Paul tells us that ‘this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’, we may take him at his word. Paul is not telling us that this was true for him; that this is *his truth*, and that this may have some interest to us; he is saying that this is *the truth*, and it is the truth in which alone we live, and without which we will perish everlastingly.

Will we receive the testimony of the Apostle Paul? In our day it is fashionable to criticise Paul, and to dismiss large parts of his writings as being outdated, sexist, and so on. But wisdom is known of her children. True wisdom is seen, not in standing over God’s words, or over his servants, but in submitting to his word, and believing on his Son, the only Saviour of sinners. Where do you stand? There is a worldly wisdom that ends in hell, and a spiritual that is Christ. ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 6

And brought up

Not only that, God addeth to this: I brought them up from lowness to a state, honour, and glory, so that they reached out above all nations. 1. This God did by granting them his word and the true religion (Psalm 147:19). An excellent privilege! Paul says about this: Chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God (Romans 3:2). And there by they were elevated and glorified (Deuteronomy 5:24; 4:6-8; Isaiah 42:22). 2. By his special dwelling among them, first in the tabernacle and later in the temple (Jeremiah 17:12; Zechariah 2:5). 3. By glorious victories and wonderful deliverances (Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 44:1) according to the promise to Moses: ‘And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail: and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and do them’ (Deuteronomy 28:13). 4. In earlier times they had become a flourishing and mighty kingdom (Ezekiel 16:13) which was at its zenith under Solomon. 5. By giving them great riches and goods to them (Psalm 144:12). So that they had become

famous among the heathens (Ezekiel 16: 13, 14). For the all, besides the spiritual part, the Church prays to God in this manner: ‘Save thy people and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever’ (Psalm 28:9). Thus God dealt with them only in voluntary goodness (Ezekiel 26:1). His augment was that they would behave themselves to him as children of such a Father (Deuteronomy 26:16-19). And he commanded them with a promise, among others to set them high above all nations of the earth (Deuteronomy 28:1) Compare Leviticus 26:3.

And how they owed a debt of gratitude and thankfulness to this Father for such effects of his goodness, might, wisdom, truth etc. How should they have shown themselves to be his children by gratitude, love, fear, honour, obedience etc. See Deuteronomy 26:19. But O great crime, they acted fully differently. How the question of Moses became suitable: ‘Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?’ (Deuteronomy 32:6) And that God hath against them, saying: and they have rebelled against me.

TO BE CONTINUED

I live, but not I; it is my Beloved that liveth in me: I love myself, not with my own love, but with the love of my Beloved that loveth me: I love not myself in myself, but myself in him, and he in me.

Anonymous

THE WHOLE TRUTH

by CARINE MACKENZIE

If you ever go to a courtroom to see a legal case being prosecuted, you will hear the witness promise solemnly to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

There is a famous incident in the Bible of a court case when truth was not heard. Jesus was appearing before Pilate, the governor of Judaea. Pilate could not understand why Jesus was appearing before him.

‘What have you done?’ he asked.

‘My kingdom is not of this world’ Jesus told him.

‘Are you a king?’ Pilate responded.

‘You say that I am a king’ said Jesus. ‘I came into this world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hearth my voice’ (John 18:37).

‘What is truth?’ asked Pilate.

He did not wait for an answer, but went out to the Jewish people, and in spite of finding no fault with him, gave in to their cries to crucify Jesus.

No truth or justice in that court.

If the question had been *who* is the truth, the answer had been given by Jesus not long before. ‘I am the truth,’ he said to his disciples (John 14:6). God the Son became a man and ‘dwelt among us, full of grace and truth’ (John 1:14). The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

Jesus always told the truth, never did or said anything deceitful. He ‘did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth’ (1 Peter 2:22).

How different we are. Telling lies comes naturally to us. Nobody ever has to teach a child to lie; we do it from the beginning—to get us out of trouble, to cover our bad behaviour, to make us appear better than we really are. But in the ninth commandment, God gives us specific instructions to tell the truth and turn from lying and falsehood. We cannot do this in our own strength, but with the help of God the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, we should make every effort to ‘put away lying, and speak the truth with our neighbour’ (Ephesians 4:25).

Telling lies has consequences. Satan, the father of lies, deceived Eve in the garden of Eden, casting doubt on the word of God. This led to Adam and Eve falling into sin, bringing disastrous consequences to all mankind.

Jacob lied to his father in order to get his blessing. ‘I am Esau thy firstborn,’ he said (Genesis 27:19). Jacob did receive his father’s blessing, but that roused the hatred and wrath of Esau. To escape Esau’s murderous intentions, Jacob had to flee to a far off land.

All sin has consequences. It leads to a troubled conscience and feelings of guilt. How thankful we should be that the Lord Jesus Christ was sent to this world to deal with the sin of his people. ‘Christ died for the ungodly’ (Romans 5:6). Not only did he die for his people, he lived a perfect life for them too.

We are given the promise that ‘if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9).

What a relief to know that the righteousness of the crucified Saviour covers all our sins—every lie, every evil thought, all our greed and envy—washed clean because of the work of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus prayed for his people. ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth’ (John 17:17). Jesus, who is the truth, draws his people to himself through his word which is the truth. ‘Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’ (John 8:32).

Word Search

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

1. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, _____ and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Colossians 3:16)
2. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgement: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and _____ is he. (Deuteronomy 32:4)
3. Woe is me! For I am _____; because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. (Isaiah 6:5)
4. The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the _____. (Proverbs 22:12)
5. Everyone that is of the truth _____ my voice. (John 18:37)
6. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the _____. (Colossians 1:5)
7. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp _____, working deceitfully. (Psalm 52:2)
8. The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go _____ as soon as they be born, speaking lies. (Psalm 58:3)
9. The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the _____ of the wicked are deceit. (Proverbs 12:5)
10. Wherefore putting away lying, speak _____ man truth with his neighbour : for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

A TRUE CONFESSION

by WYLIE W. FULTON

I met a young man absorbed in doctrine, but who had no testimony of Christ

Through the many years that I have believed in and contended for the doctrines of sovereign grace, many people have come into my life who seemed to fully believe and deeply love these truths. As I have watched, however, for 50 years, many have proved to be false.

There is one instance I would like to relate now. Some 25 years or so ago, here in Forest City, I happened to meet a young man who had just recently become acquainted with Arthur W. Pink's great book, *The sovereignty of God*. He ordered about 10 of those books to give to family and acquaintances, and was greatly excited by the truths Mr. Pink taught. When I met him we set up a time to have lunch together (both of us were businessmen here in the community) in order to discuss and fellowship in the precious truths. After we finished our meal, and just before time for me to return to my office, I began to tell this young man something of my experiences along the way of grace—how God had first awakened me, how he brought me out of all modern free-will religion, brought me down to the place of a beggar before Heaven's King, and then revealed himself to me out of the Book of God.

I asked the fellow if he would like to tell me how he was 'saved.' 'Oh,' he replied, 'that's easy to tell. You see I was in college in Oklahoma years ago and a group of us fellows went to an evangelistic crusade.' I have forgotten whether he told the name of the evangelist, but he must have been typically Arminian. He said, 'After a few services, as

we began to talk among ourselves around the dorms, I knew that I really needed to be saved. As we continued talking, one of my friends told me what I needed to do to be saved.'

'Oh, he did, huh?' I replied.

'Yes, he told me that if I wanted to be saved, I could just come to Jesus and believe on him and he would save me.'

'Well, did you get acquainted with your lost and helpless condition as a fallen son of Adam, as a rebel against Heaven's courts, as one who is dead to God and alive to the world?' I asked him.

'My friend said that Jesus had died for me and was willing to save me, and he would save me if I come to him,' the young man explained.

'Well, when did you get saved?' I pressed the question. 'If you are saved, can you tell me WHY you are saved?'

'Yes, I heard what Jesus could do for me, and I am saved because I trusted him,' was his confident reply.

'But, my friend, you and I have been talking today about the sovereignty of God, and how God elected his people, how that Christ died for these chosen ones, and how the Holy Spirit comes and quickens them and brings them effectually to the Saviour.'

'Yes, that's right—I agree,' said he.

'BUT in giving me your 'testimony' I don't find this to be true. You said you heard about Jesus and that he would save you, and you came to him and now you said, "I am saved because I did so-and-so." I warned him that the power of God was not evident in such a shallow 'testimony,' but only his own

creature 'power.' He was, no doubt, a little offended, but continued with his confidence.

'Well, I AM saved because I heard what the Lord could do for me, and because I came to him and trusted him as my Saviour.'

'There is not a word about Christ being the Author and Finisher of your 'salvation,' so I would not want to meet God on the basis of what you have told me,' said I.

'But I KNOW I am saved. How would you want me to express it, except to say that I trusted him and he saved me?' he asked.

'Before God, I cannot tell you what to say, but I know that I must say something about GOD coming to me and beginning the work of grace in MY soul, and how the Lord brought me down in repentance and despair, how he brought me to see Christ as my only hope and then rested my case at his feet until God lifted me up. And a true believer must say, 'I am saved because HE did the work'—NOT 'because I did something' ... Do you see the point?'

'Yes,' the young man said, as he opened the door of my car and exited. 'Yes, I see the point! You are striving against me and the Bible says a servant of God must not strive, and I say GOOD-BYE!' Then he slammed the door and I've never seen him since.

You may think that I was too harsh with this young man, but I believe he was caught in the trap that has enmeshed so many professing Christians who get all drummed up and excited about doctrines and church dogma, but have never come to personally know Christ as Lord and Saviour. If he were truly a saved man, the examination should not have ANGERED him.

There is more pleasure in suffering than in sinning; for a saint of God may suffer and not sin, but he cannot sin and not suffer.

Ralph Venning

The purpose of this anecdote is to show you that a person PROFESSING the doctrines of grace or Calvinism, as a mere addendum to an easy-believe Arminian profession, is still not saved. His experience does not tally with the doctrine he espouses, and by his own words and actions he stands condemned. 'For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned' (Matthew 12:37). IF indeed your own personal salvation was 'of the Lord' (Jonah 2:9) in election, it will also be 'of the Lord' in application, and 'of the Lord' in your testimony! Therefore, how sayest thou, 'I am saved because I DID SOMETHING!' That's not of God but an empty profession and you need to have somebody faithfully warn you, as I tried to do with the young man of my story.

When God awakens one to salvation, he brings that sinner to the point of felt personal guilt and condemnation and great need. Then as a guilty sinner before such a Holy God whose Law condemns him, the sinner readily sees that there is no remedy except that he be pardoned and justified by that same Holy God. We must come to this point, my friends, in our own souls. Empty profession stalks the land, and the most cruel person on God's green earth today is that one who has 'come to the doctrines of grace' but has never been delivered from an empty, unsaved, easy profession and never been broken down in his spirit as a lost, helpless soul before God. That is why we preach and teach and cry out to God continually for an AWAKENING and a GOD-SENT REVIVAL. ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: November & December 1769

THE **November** issue continues the series on Hebrews by the Rev Edward Deering, which has now reached Chapter 2. Deering was published in 1576, and a comparison of his translation with that of the Authorised Version is useful. Ours has 'lest at any time we should let them slip' at the end of v. 1; his has, 'lest at any time we run out.' While our translation carries the sense of the word, his gives the actual translation. We are as barrels that have lost their seal, and whatever is poured into us is in danger of leaking out. This is why we must 'give the more earnest heed' and come back again and again to the word of God. Being prone to leakage, we must be ever filled by the Word and Spirit of God. Deering goes on to argue that we neglect the gospel, not only with open sins, but even in not loving it or delighting in it as much as we ought. We must learn to count all things but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. There is much encouragement to be had in these lectures, and we commend them to you all.

The biographical sketch is of one Roger Balsom, a Nonconformist minister from Somerset who was captured by the Royalists during the Civil War. He was sentenced to death on a number of occasions, but the Lord intervened time and again to deliver him. He was freed to minister again, and the sketch contains two accounts of healings under his prayerful ministry. The first is of a girl whose affliction defeated the doctors, but who was raised from her sickbed after prayer. The other is of a formerly godly man who was much troubled. Balsom suspected

demon possession, and this was confirmed. After a night of prayer involving many local believers, the afflicted man was delivered.

The Dialogue between Christian and Truth reaches Song of Solomon 3:2–3, and Casuistical Divinity continues the letter from Mr Boehm concerning the legitimacy of gaming for Christians; Boehm believes such pastimes to be illegitimate.

The Miscellaneous portion begins with a discourse on aspects of Article 17 of the Thirty-nine Articles, on the true comfort of a right understanding of predestination. A dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist highlights the difference between formal and experimental religion; the Methodist agrees that the ancient doctrine of the Church of England is sound, but is rarely met with. Therefore the desire of the Churchman, that the Methodist return to his church, is shown to be grounded on a false premiss. The situation is much the same today as it was in 1769, and the damage has extended to Methodism as well. Correspondence concludes the issue.

The **December** issue opens with Deering's lectures on Hebrews, 2:5–8, and speaks among other matters to the constancy of the divine revelation in the word of God. The Biography is of the Rev Richard Sedgwick, from Norfolk, who died in 1643. He was converted under the most unpromising circumstances, and exercised a godly ministry, first at Kent, and then among English merchants in Holland. Upon his return he went to Monmouth in Wales, and ended his days at Wapping. He was by all accounts a godly and faithful minister of the gospel.

The Dialogue between Christian and Truth reaches Song of Solomon 3:4, and the Casuistical Divinity continues Mr Boehm's letter. The Miscellaneous section begins with 'Thoughts on Redemption' and continues the Experience of a true Christian. Several short pieces, and a longer letter from John Hervey to one who was blessed by his ministry, conclude the issue. Among the short letters is one from a man who quotes two contradictory statements from John Wesley on imputed righteousness, and desires Mr Wesley or one of his friends, to explain the contradiction.

200 years ago: November & December 1819

The issue for **November** opens with an essay on The New Man, and then carries the second part of the article On Perfection. The notion of progressive religion is argued against, with good reason. Some quotations from Bishop South are followed by a piece entitled, 'What think ye of Christ?' This takes up a question that was troubling the church at that time, concerning the eternal generation of the Son. The problem is back with us today, as the error of eternal subordination has infected so many so-called Evangelicals.

Psalm 121 is commented on, with references to William Romaine and Martin Luther, and A Cottager writes on the error of progressive and bodily sanctification. Some short pieces, including one on the various attacks to which Christianity is subject, and another on thoughts about death and the resurrection, conclude the issue.

The **December** number begins opens with an article on the Trinity, before continuing the piece On Perfection. A chapter from John Brine intended to refute the charge of Antinomianism is published at the request of the same author whose writings on bodily and progressive sanctification

have been criticised already. An Address to Teachers exhorts all who are called to teach to set forth Christ in the fulness of his glory at every opportunity. A longer piece on our being exalted only in the righteousness of Christ, and one or two other short pieces—including poetry—complete the issue.

100 years ago: November & December 1919

'Christ's priestly ability', being an exposition of Hebrews 7:25, is the opening piece for the **November** magazine, and the extent—and limit—of Satanic power, from Acts 26:18, leads into a piece on the accession of Rehoboam. The fact that such a son should come from such a father leads the author to contemplate the mystery of Providence in permitting useful ministers of the gospel to perish young.

'Sermons and notes of sermons' begins with a piece entitled, 'What think ye of Christ?' This is an exposition of Zechariah 11:12, and is followed by a sermon on Compulsion, from Luke 14:23 (continued from an earlier number). Three shorter pieces follow. An exposition of Ephesians 3:19f is continued from another earlier number and two other pieces conclude the section.

The proposed revision of the Prayer Book is compared with New Testament truth and found wanting. Specific parts of the services are examined, to demonstrate that Higher Criticism was influencing the omissions from Old Testament readings.

The final piece is an advertisement for 'My Pocket Companion', the diary of the Protestant Truth Society. Then, it cost 2d; it is still in print, and costs £2.60.

The **December** issue begins with sermon on 1 John 3:2. Matthew's teaching on The Coming of the Lord, and an exposition of Luke 22:61f, lead into sermon notes on Matthew 4:1 and the temptation of Christ.

This is followed by a thoughtful piece on the order of faith and regeneration; the author argues that we cannot believe until we are born again, and uses many Scripture quotations to illustrate his point. Salvation is not by our believing but by the sovereign, free grace of God in Christ.

Among the last pieces for the year is one on what constitutes a successful preaching

ministry. The case of the Rev J.K. Popham, whose plain and unadorned services appeared to contradict every rule for success, is named respectfully by one who clearly would not be naturally sympathetic. What the world counts a success and what the Lord chooses to bless are two very different things.

The usual short letters and advertisements conclude the issue and the year.

TO BE CONTINUED

CHRIST'S DEATH: A FRUITFUL VICTORY—PART 2

by WILLIAM TIMOTHY FOLEY

Ultimately, there would be no victory without the cross of Christ. Gunton (p.74) would seem to agree with this analysis. The cross is the centre of Christianity. When the cross is removed from biblical Christianity, there is a major crisis. There is absolutely no salvation without the shed blood of Christ on the cross. Every minister should preach the cross in their sermons, particularly the penal substitution and satisfaction of God's wrath.

Liberals refer to the cross and the shed blood of Christ as being akin to a 'slaughterhouse religion'. But that is to show evidence of a serious disregard for the whole concept of the sacrificial system throughout the Old Testament, beginning with God's killing of the first lambs, recorded in Genesis 3:21, and the clothing of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Blood was shed by God, and being clothed with sheepskins by God, typically means the blood of Jesus being shed and the imputed righteousness of Christ. The offering of Isaac in Genesis 22 is also typical of the death of

Christ. Types and shadows and prophecies had their major part to place in pointing to Christ. Key Scriptures are Psalm 116:22, 23, 24; 110; Isaiah 52 & 53, and Zechariah 12.

Certainly a theology to be fruitful to humanity must contain victory; and the inclusion of the blood of Christ, for if there is no victory there is no realizable benefit to sinners. For example, if Christ did not conquer and triumph over sin, hell, death, Satan and evil what hope is there for humanity? We would be of all men most miserable; we would be dead in our sins; we would be still in our bondage, chained and shackled; we would have to endure God's justice and wrath; we would be sent to hell and deprived of heaven.

Because Jesus was victorious we can be victorious. We have hope, we have confidence and joy, we can enter directly into God's presence, we can come boldly to the throne of grace, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This free access to God means that we do not have to

go through the Levitical sacrificial system, which unquestionably foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

There is only one path to God and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. (See Acts 4:12 with John 14:6.) This is where the liberals and other religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism and Mohammedanism (Islam) are all wrong. They all claim they worship God, but on what basis? Christ alone brings access to God through his blood alone. We do not all worship the one true God! It is delusional to think so! No man or woman, can come to God in their own defined or sinfully imagined way; it must be through the atonement of Christ. If sin is not removed by the blood of Christ, then the sinner will die in their sin.

The blood is crucial and essential, for it is required by God, for Christ is the only propitiation for guilt and sin. That applies to all, all must come to God through Jesus' blood. How can anyone go and pray to God without the blood of Christ? We need the merit of the blood of Christ because we are all guilty before God. Christ willingly shed his blood for us on the cross. He wasn't coerced or compelled to die for us. Christ died 'for' us, and that word 'for' shows it was a death of 'substitution'. In our stead, or in our place, or on our behalf Christ died, as our substitute. Christ voluntarily died for his elect people to fulfil the everlasting covenant of the triune God. Christ's death at Calvary was planned to the minutest detail, and it was not a surprise to the Father or the Holy Spirit. The blood atonement was part of God's plan for the redemption and forgiveness of the elect to bring them to glory.

We enjoy the victory by our fellowship and communion with God through our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, because of his blood. Moreover, for the church of God

to experience revival there must be a fresh awareness of the victory of which Christ purchased at Calvary, in shedding his blood. There must be an awakening to the mighty victory in the defeat of evil by the blood of Christ. Victory is also seen in the statement by Paul for the Christian 'in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us' (Romans 8:39). Also John writes similarly for the whole born-again community, 'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith' (1 John 5:4).

Even in death the devil is deprived of victory because the sting has been removed. Paul quoting from Hosea (Septuagint) writes, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). This is now the believer's triumph. Paul clearly saw this 'victory' in Christ.

There is victory too in so far as man did not have to find a way of escape from the evil and bondage which resulted at the Fall of our first parents. God did that! Adam's sin resulted in disobedience; Christ the second Adam *oboedientia activa* fulfilling God's law in every detail results in our way of escape and liberation. Christ achieved active and passive righteousness for the whole body of believers, since the salvation of Adam and Eve, to the salvation of the last member of the Elect. We have been given the gift of salvation here and now which cannot be earned by our fallen wills, merits, deeds, or deservings; it is the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. This makes salvation a reality for all of God's people.

For Christianity to have force and vigour it must contain the essential element of victory through the blood. This is what Luther recognised in his ministry and writings, and

that is what gave purpose and focus to the Great Reformation. When one is fully regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and one is walking in fellowship with the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, they go on from strength to strength, faith to faith, glory to glory and this results in victorious Christian living. The cleansing blood is at work, in its effect. This may be the factor that Aulén appreciated that was evident in Luther's writings.

Macquarrie (p.21) acknowledges that even after allowing a demythologized version of the classic view there are still some stubborn questions to be addressed. For example, he asks the question: 'We talked of a "finished work" but in many ways it would seem far from finished, for men are apparently just as enslaved as ever.' His conception of the term 'finished' extends beyond the transaction of Calvary to that of the individual. What are the fruits for the individual, if he is still enslaved? Jesus said, 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' (John 8:32). Furthermore, Jesus said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed' (John 8:34-36).

Quick (p.225) seems to put it like this by writing, 'But if we suppose that such powers have held mankind in bondage, and have now by Christ's death and resurrection been utterly and finally defeated, it is hard to explain the remarkable vigour which they still apparently display even within the life of the redeemed community of believers'. Of course, in believers there is a battle with sin, the world and the devil, but we have the Holy Spirit and the new nature to help us to triumph. Victory in Christ cannot be achieved by natural pessimism, but spiritual faith concerning the atonement of Christ, and

commitment to the Word of the Living God.

Paul Fiddes (p.113) seems to ask the same question 'about the effect of one past event can have upon our experience of salvation today.' It was a past event but viewed eternally by God. He writes, 'In what sense could evil have been decisively defeated in the cross of Jesus, if its power seems undiminished today?' Alluding to the Nazi Holocaust and to the evil threat of the nuclear holocaust and the face of such rampant evil in societies and individuals, 'what victory could have been objectively achieved in the death of Christ?' His idea of victory has more to do with earthly victory and the reality of physical victory from suffering and persecution, rather than the spiritual emancipation of God's people from sin. This statement is worrying as it seems to deny the objective idea of the victorious atonement of Christ. Again he writes, 'if any defeat was objectively inflicted upon evil at a single point in the past, what link can there be between 'that' victory and the overcoming of sin and evil in our own lives in the present?' But again, it needs to be stated that a fatal and final blow was made to Satan and evil and sin by the shed blood of Jesus. The death of Christ on the cross was a single historical event, to free God's people from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and ultimately the presence of sin. Subjectively, of course the answer for Christians is to be found in the Holy Spirit working in and through us, as individuals, in our families, church, business, college, etc., and in the extension of the Kingdom.

Also, as Christians we are informed by the Scripture, we have a new nature or what Paul calls the 'new man'. Therefore the victory of Christ finds fruition in our holiness and experience today. Fiddes (p.135) writes, 'the victory of the cross empowers us to enter upon God's victory in the present'. But what

does he mean? He is always on about God's victory in the present, but God is everlasting and outside of time. He denies penal substitution and doesn't believe in a literal Hell or Heaven, but a state of consciousness after death. Fiddes argues for a view of the atonement that is relational. Yet, again another model of the atonement! He doesn't care much for the juridical factors, the administration of justice or the office of Judge. He is concerned more with healing of people and restoration to God, but seemingly on man's terms, with a strong emphasis on free will. He prefers the concept of expiation rather than concepts of propitiation and courtroom metaphors. No wonder that he doesn't care for the idea of placating God's wrath. He uses the term 'victory', so, it seems, it is something quite different to the way an evangelical uses the term.

But what is the difference between expiation and propitiation? Expiation is an act that results in the change of God's disposition toward us. It is the difference between what Christ did on the cross, and the result of Christ's work. So, the consequence of expiation is propitiation. God's wrath is turned away, propitiated by Christ's blood.

Modern theologians get very upset and angry about the concept of appeasing God or satisfying his wrath. But the term wrath is frequently used in the Bible. For example, John the Baptist said, 'flee from the wrath to come' (Matthew 3:7); and Jesus said, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him' (John 3:36). Furthermore, Paul said, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men' (Romans 1:18). Again, Paul said, speaking of the Second Coming of Christ, 'And to wait for his Son from heaven,

whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come' (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Ultimately, we must remember, that God delivered, or saved, us from his wrath.

Unsaved sinners will face a crisis at the Judgment. There will be no escape or place to hide. Jesus preached about the impending judgment of the world. God is going to pour out his wrath against the lost, the ungodly, and the impenitent, the vessels of wrath, at Christ's return. It will be a day of vengeance and punishment! The only way of escape from that outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb is to be covered by the atoning blood of the Lamb of Calvary. The saints will be the victors with Christ, having received by godly faith the victory and benefits of Calvary.

The very heart or the essence of the gospel of Christ is attacked by liberals, and modernists, who are, no doubt, intellectually brilliant, with their natural and fleshly reasoning to create paradigms of the atonement that suit them, and their equals, rather than accepting the biblical account of penal substitution. They should repent now and glorify God rather than being in rebellion against the revealed truth of propitiation.

We must always make an immediate reversion to the cross of Christ, when we note any liberals, undermining or seeking to diminish the cleansing blood of Christ's cross, and it's absolute necessity for the salvation of sinners. Liberals attack the atonement of Christ in the name of scholarship, and with the desire to make a contribution to theological knowledge, with little regard or esteem for the inerrancy and infallibility of the Word of God. We must examine what they mean by the blood of Christ. They tend to talk only of the death of Christ rather than the blood of Christ. They avoid the critical implications of Christ-centered

blood theology and disregard, or avoid the consequences. Liberals use ways and methodologies of trying to undermine the blood of Christ and his final work by raising doubt, by false speculative reasoning, about Christ's work on the cross. They like to talk of and emphasise the love of God, and downplay or deny God's wrath.

We are dealing primarily with the concept of victory, so let's return to this aspect.

Moreover, in the sacraments of baptism and in the Eucharist Christ's act of victory is repeated, in celebration and joy. Ultimately, however, the victory sees the full accomplishment in the return of Christ. There can be no question or evidence gleaned from the Word of God to support liberals who say Christ will not return. Some liberals and modernists have a very strange eschatology, in saying that Christ has returned in spirit only. Christ dying on the cross and rising bodily from the dead, and ascending to heaven, reigning in victory has vast theological and eschatological implications, for everyone, everything, and the universe. There will be a new heavens and new earth, wherein dwells complete righteousness.

For every member of humanity there is victory if they would believe the gospel. But humanity cannot believe savingly unless the Holy Spirit quickens, empowers, effectually calls each sinner to believe. In other words, in a general sense the sacrifice of Christ is proclaimed as humanity's victory, but in a specific sense the work of Christ has to be applied by the Holy Spirit to the individual person to have effect, resulting in the sinner believing savingly.

Great multitudes which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, will be among God's elect. It is the Elect that actually believe to the salvation of their soul. There is a strong and final

argument to say that sin, hell, death, Satan have been defeated, at the Cross, are being defeated and will ultimately be defeated. It is interesting to note that Jesus said in his prayer to the Father before he went to the cross 'I have finished the work' (John 17:4); He was very positive even though he had not yet been crucified, and on the cross he said, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). Jesus' thinking was objectively victorious.

Liberation is now possible for the human race, especially 'for' those who believe the gospel, and a fruitful victory over evil has been achieved because of the absolute redemptive and complete work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. Even if there is a diversity of opinions among the theologians it would seem that they would agree that victory has resulted from the death of Jesus, but some fall short in their understanding of why God had to punish sin, and satisfy his unwavering and inflexible justice. They don't seem to have understood the character and nature of God; and the revealed decrees and attributes of God, precisely as revealed in Scripture, especially the vindication of God's holiness and the propitiation of his wrath.

The death of Jesus is an overwhelmingly powerful victory and the task of theologians and preachers is to understand the cross-work, and the necessity of the blood in salvation—some Christian theologians recognise that if there is no victory there is no hope for humanity, but a fearful and awesome judgment, and an everlasting hell of torment and suffering. However, some so-called evangelicals have a distorted view of why God had to punish sin, in Christ, at the cross, referring to God as 'a cosmic child abuser'. The proponents of this 'revolting view' cannot be regarded as biblically defined Christians, even though they use the facade of being Christians, and use Christian terms, and language. They fail

to realise: no blood, no heaven!

In the final analysis we know that Jesus, before he ascended into heaven, said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Matthew 28:18). Therefore, the victory over sin and evil has been forever won, but it was as a result of the shedding of the atoning blood of Christ that secured the victory. Satan and the forces of darkness are forever under Christ's conquering feet until the Kingdom is handed over to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). Christ reigns now! They and the reprobates will be cast into the lake of fire! Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! (Revelation 19:6).

So, we can be glad and rejoice, for our Passover Lamb has opened up the way to God, and has, once and for all time, achieved salvation, which was impossible for man to achieve by human efforts or merits, because of the vileness of sin. The shed blood has resulted in victory.

Never forget the imperative and essential doctrine of the vicarious and penal substitution of our dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has brought us true and everlasting 'victory' over sin, the world, the devil and all his works.

Let Scripture have the last word:

'And from Jesus Christ, who is the

faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen' (Revelation 1:5-6).

And again,

'And they sung a new song, saying, (of Christ), Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth' (Revelation 5:9-10). ¶

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THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

by J.E. NORTH (Totton, Hants)

'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (Mark 1:1)

IN our previous studies of this verse of Scripture, we have considered that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a gospel that has

been promised, and we saw that promise fulfilled in the promises of Holy Scripture concerning the coming and the incarnation of

the Lord Jesus Christ. We then went on, in the second place to notice that the gospel is centred in a person, noting what the Scriptures have to say about the Person of Christ, that he is Jesus Christ, then we looked at the title, that he is the Son of God, again, noting what the Scriptures say about the Son of God, both in the Old Testament, and also in the New. We now continue with the third facet of the gospel. It is a gospel that is prepared.

3. It is a gospel that is prepared

The first part of this chapter of Mark's Gospel is about the ministry of John the Baptist. He was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' (Mark 1:2-4). John tells us that he is the one who was sent of God to be the forerunner, to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ, to point to the Lord Jesus Christ. He 'confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias' (John 1:20-23). The Pharisees who asked these questions of John would have known immediately that he was quoting from the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 40 verse 3 which is a Messianic prophecy. He was pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ as being the coming Messiah!

Other of the Old Testament prophets point to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

as the Messiah who would deliver the Israel of God. Malachi was one of these prophets. He tells us, 'Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap' (Malachi 3:1, 2). He is the messenger of the covenant, the new covenant of God's grace (Jeremiah 31:31); but he is also the refiner, he will refine the people of God. He will bring them to see their sins and rebellion against Almighty God. But what a mercy, that the Lord Jesus Christ said, 'They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Mark 2:17). He refines the sinner by firstly showing him his sinfulness and then washing that sin away in the fountain of his own precious blood (Zechariah 13:1).

The preparation was more than that, more than the Old Testament prophets speaking of the one who was to come to deliver his people.

Both Matthew and Luke write of the historical circumstances surrounding the advent of the Lord Jesus, of his birth.

But the preparation was more than that!

Paul tells us that Christ came when the time was right, when God had prepared all things, all nations and all peoples—prepared in God's eternal decree—which were necessary for the atonement to be made; 'But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons' (Galatians 4:4,5). Elsewhere he

gave the purpose of Christ's incarnation: 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh' (Romans 8:3). You see that *all* things are in the hand of Almighty God.

Can I illustrate what I am trying to say with the following?

D-Day, 6th June 1944, didn't just happen. There was much planning, many meetings of the leaders of the armed forces, there was intricate planning before the invasion of Europe, and the ultimate defeat of the Hitler and his forces.

Consider some of those things that happened at the time of the incarnation. The solar system created by Almighty God ('He made the stars also' Genesis 1:16). The time was just right at the Incarnation for the wise men to see 'his star' in the east and to follow it to Bethlehem. The economy of the Roman Empire was obviously in a parlous state when the decree from Caesar Augustus was made that all the world should be taxed (Luke 2:1). Rome was the dominant political power with its empire, and with its dreadful means of execution—crucifixion. That had to be in place in Jerusalem in order for the Lord Jesus Christ to die in the room and stead of sinners, and to fulfil the prophecies concerning the death of Christ Jesus as recorded in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 etc.

All events of history are in the hands of Almighty God and moved towards that time, the fulness of the times that the Lord Jesus should come to this earth to be the Saviour of sinners, the Saviour of his church, the Saviour of his people. Daniel reminds us, 'I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for

ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?' (Daniel 4:34, 35).

Well did Charles Wesley write:

He laid His glory by,
He wrapped Him in our clay;
Unmarked by human eye,
The latent Godhead lay;
Infant of days He here became,
And bore the mild Immanuel's name

Unsearchable the love
That hath the Saviour brought
The grace is far above
Or man or angel's thought
Suffice for us that God, we know,
Our God is manifest below.

And when all these things of history were accomplished, Simeon came into the temple. He took the infant Lord Jesus Christ into his arms and said, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel' (Luke 2:29-32).—'Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.' 'This thing was not done in a corner' (Acts 26:26), and although Paul was speaking of the resurrection of Christ, it applies equally to every event in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and before his incarnation. All history moved towards the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the events of the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ were done openly, and not in a corner. All history moves from the

incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the redemption he accomplished at Jerusalem.

The Lord in his wonderful providence moved nature, nations and mankind to prepare for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth, to this world, for the bringing in of the gospel of grace through the blood of his cross and the bringing of many sons to glory. 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me' (Hebrews 10:5). The quotation here made by Paul is from Psalm 40:6, but that only applies to the opening clause. The phrase 'a body hast thou prepared me' comes through the Greek Septuagint. However, as all Scripture is given by and under the inspiration of Almighty God, we accept that what Paul writes is the truth of God. The construction of the sixth verse of Psalm 40 and the fifth verse of Hebrews 10 apply to a person; 'when he cometh...'—a person is here referred to. Only a person can make sacrifices (Psalm 40:6; Hebrews 10:5). The Psalmist says, 'Mine ears hast thou opened...' (v.6). It is therefore reasonable to accept that Paul is referring, under the direct leading and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to the body, the sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know nothing from Holy Scripture about the preparations of the body, the sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, except to say that when the angel appeared to Mary, he said to her, 'Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end...' (Luke 1:30–33). Mary's

reply to the angel was, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word' (Luke 1:38). Mary was prepared by Almighty God, and in due time the Lord Jesus was born in the stable at Bethlehem. Beyond those things concerning the conception of the Lord Jesus and his birth, Scripture draws a veil over them, and we must leave the subject of the preparation of the body, the sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there are further preparations in the gospel of Christ Jesus.

There is the preparation of the heart, the hearts of the election of grace. For this we turn to the book of Proverbs. 'The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord' (Proverbs 16:1). Solomon, who wrote most of the book of Proverbs, was a man who was given wisdom and taught of God in answer to his prayer: 'Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?' (2 Chronicles 1:10). And in this verse (Proverbs 16:1) Solomon is saying that the work of preparation in the heart is solely and only the work of God. The preparations in the heart, the reply given by the heart come from the work of the Lord by his Spirit. John says the same, 'as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (John 1:12,13). Think of your own experience of coming to faith in Christ: when did it begin? how did it begin? was not the initiative with the Lord? Did he not prepare your heart. Did he not indite the prayers that flowed from your heart towards God? Can you not echo the words of John Newton:

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Or the words of Philip Doddridge:
Grace first contrived a way
To save rebellious man;
And all the steps that grace display,
Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.

Or the words of Augustus Montague Toplady:
Grace first inscribed my name
In God's eternal book;
'Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,
Who all my sorrow took.

Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes o'erflow;
'Twas grace that kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.

So there is that preparation in the heart of the sinner, causing him to be prepared to receive 'the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.'

But there is more!

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the people in parables. Mark records the parable of the sower in the fourth chapter of his Gospel in which he records the Lord Jesus speaking of the types of ground into which the seed fell. It is not our purpose to discuss the meaning of the different types of ground, merely to note that some of the seed fell into good ground 'and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and

some sixty, and some an hundred' (Mark 4:8). Why did that particular ground bring forth fruit? Because the ground had been prepared by the farmer. He had ploughed the ground, he had watered the ground, he had weeded the ground, he had nourished the ground. And thus it is with the child of God.

The Lord ploughs the ground. 'The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows' (Psalm 129:3). The ground is turned over, and all the stones are removed. The Psalmist is speaking about the conviction of sin, being brought to see his natural state of a corrupt heart. Paul said that he knew nothing about sin until the law ploughed him up, as it were. 'I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death' (Romans 7:7–10).

The ground of the heart is watered, the seed is sown in ground that is refreshed by the water of the Spirit of God. 'Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass' (Isaiah 33:20).

The weeds speak of the natural corruption of the heart—when any ground is left to go fallow, it will produce all manner of weeds, thistles and thorns. But the Lord says to his people, 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you' (Hosea 10:12). How is the fallow ground broken up? Only by the work of God in the heart.

The Lord nourishes his children as a garden: 'A garden inclosed is my sister, my

spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed' (Song of Solomon 4:12 cf. 4:16; 5:1). When the seed is sown into the heart of the awaked sinner then spiritual life is seen to exist in that heart. 'For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations' (Isaiah 61:11).

Can we not see, then, that there is a preparation by the Lord in the hearts of he people when they are brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is a future preparation, and that is the preparation of heaven. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. The Lord Jesus, when he was to be parted from his disciples, spoke to them of his going to prepare a place for them. 'I go to prepare a place for you' (John 14:2). He prepares that future heaven in two ways. Firstly, he has prepared that place by his death. Mrs Alexander puts it so beautifully:

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven and let us in.

And, secondly, he prepare us for heaven. He does that by bringing us to see our continual sinfulness, and weaning us from this world of sin and woe. 'And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall

purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness' (Malachi 3:3). As we quoted above, 'The preparations of the heart in man ... is from the Lord' (Proverbs 16:1). And the wonder of it all is that the sight of that glorious city, the New Jerusalem is far beyond our comprehension. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him' (1 Corinthians 2:9).

What a mercy!

If this gospel, then, is prepared in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, prepared in the hearts of the children of God, prepared in the hope of the child of God how much more should we follow the example of John the Baptist, and the rest of the Old Testament prophets, and point to the Lord Jesus Christ. And likewise, we should follow the example of Philip who, when he spoke to the eunuch we are told that he 'opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus' (Acts 8:35).—He pointed him to the Lord Jesus Christ.

God grant that we may know something of the preparations of the heart and see in Christ the only way to that glory which has been prepared for his people and bring us safe to that place where we will join all the redeemed of glory in singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb.

TO BE CONTINUED

As David, when he saw in Mephibosheth the feature of his friend Jonathan, took no notice of his lameness, or any other defect or deformity: so God beholding in his people the glorious image of his Son, winks at all their faults and deformities, which made Luther say, 'Do with me what thou wilt, since thou hast pardoned my sin.'

Thomas Brooks

CHRIST THE WISDOM OF GOD

by THOMAS CHALMERS (1780–1847)

'Christ the wisdom of God' 1 Corinthians 1:24

We cannot but remark of the Bible, how uniformly and how decisively it announces itself in all its descriptions of the state and character of man; how, without offering to palliate the matter, it brings before us the totality of our alienation; how it represents us to be altogether broken off from our allegiance to God—and how it fears not, in the face of those undoubted diversities of character which exist in the world, to assert of the whole world, that it is guilty before him. And if we would only seize on what may be called the elementary principle of guilt,—if we would only take it along with us, that guilt, in reference to God, must consist in the defection of our regard, and our reverence from him,—if we would only open our eyes to the undoubted fact, that there may be such an utter defection, and yet there may be many an amiable, and many a graceful exhibition, both of feeling and of conduct, in reference to those who are around us,—then should we recognize, in the statements of the Bible, a vigorous, discerning and intelligent view of human nature, an unfaltering announcement of what that nature essentially is, under all the plausibilities which serve to disguise it,—and such an insight, in fact, into the secrecies of our inner man, as if carried home by that Spirit, whose office it is to apply the word with power into the conscience, is enough of itself to stamp upon this book, the evidence of the Divinity which inspired it.

But it is easier far to put an end to the resistance of the understanding, than to alarm the fears, or to make the heart soft and tender,

under a sense of its guiltiness, or to prompt the enquiry,—if all those securities, within the entrenchment of which I want to take my quiet and complacent repose, are thus driven in, where in the whole compass of nature or revelation can any effectual security be found? It may be easy to find our way amongst all the complexional varieties of our nature, to its radical and pervading ungodliness; and thus to carry the acquiescence of the judgment in some extended demonstration about the utter sinfulness of the species. But it is not so easy to point this demonstration towards the bosom of arty individual,—to gather it up, as it were, from its state of diffusion, over the whole field of humanity, and send it, with all its energies concentrated to a single heart, in the form of a sharp and humbling, and terrifying conviction,—to make it enter the conscience of some one listener, like an arrow sticking fast,—or, when the appalling picture of a whole world lying in wickedness, is thus presented to the understanding of a general audience, to make each of that audience mourn apart over his own wickedness; just as when, on the day of judgment, though all that is visible be shaking and dissolving, and giving way, each despairing eye witness shall mourn apart over the recollection of his own guilt, over the prospect of his own rueful and undone eternity. And yet if this be not done, nothing is done. The lesson of the text has come to you in word only, and not in power. To look to the truth in its generality, is one thing. To look to your own separate concern in it, is another. What we want is that each of you shall turn his eye

homewards,—that each shall purify his own heart from the influence of a delusion which we pronounce to be ruinous,—that each shall beware of leaning a satisfaction, or a triumph, on the comparison of himself with corrupt and exiled men, whom sin has degraded into outcasts: from the presence of God and the joys of paradise,—that each of you shall look to the measure, of God's law, so that when the commandment comes upon you in the sense of its exceeding broadness, a sense of your sin, and of your death in sin, may come along with it. 'Without the commandment I was alive,' says the Apostle; 'but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.' Be assured, that if the utterance of such truth in your hearing, impress no personal earnestness, and lead to no personal measures, and be followed up by no personal movements, then to you it is as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. The preacher has been beating the air. That great Agent, whose revealed office it is to convince of sin, has refused to go along with him. Another influence altogether, than that which is salutary and saving, has been set into your bosom; and the glow of the truth universal has deafened or intercepted the application of the truth personal, and of the truth particular.

This leads us to the second thing proposed in our last discourse, under which we shall attempt to explain the wisdom opposite to that folly of measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves among ourselves, which we have already tried to expose.

The first step is to give up all satisfaction with yourself, on the bare ground that your conduct comes up to the measure of human character, and human reputation around you. This consideration may be of importance to your place in society. But, as to your place in the favour of God, it is utterly insignificant. The moral differences which obtain in

a community of exiles are all quite consistent with the entire obliteration amongst them of the allegiance that is due to the government of their native land. And the moral differences which obtain in the world may, in every way, may be as consistent with the fact that one and all of us, in our state of nature, are alienated from God by wicked works. And in like manner, all convicts may have a sense of their reciprocal obligations under which they lie to the sovereign—so may we, in reference to our fellow men, have a sense of rectitude and honour and compassion, while, in reference of God, we may labour under the entire extinction of every moral responsibility, so that the virtues which signalize us may, in the language of some of our old divines, be neither more nor less than splendid sins. With the possession of these virtues, we may not merely be incurring every day, the guilt of trespassing and sinning against our Maker in heaven; but, devoid as we are of all apprehension of the enormity of this, we may strikingly realize the assertion of the Bible, that we are dead in trespasses and sins. And we pass our time in all the tranquillity of death. We say peace, where there is no peace. Though in a state of disruption from God, we live as securely and as inconsiderately as if there were no question and no controversy betwixt us. About this whole matter, there is within us, a spirit of heaviness and of deep slumber. We lie fast asleep on the brink of an unprovided eternity, and, if possible to awaken you, let us urge you to compare, not your own conduct with that of acquaintances and neighbours, but to compare your own finding of the ungodliness that is in your heart with the doctrine of God's word about it to bring down the loftiness of your spirit to its humbling declarations—to receive it as a faithful saying, that man is lost by nature, and that unless there be some mighty transition, in his history, from a state

of nature to a state of salvation, the wrath of God abideth on him.

The next inquiry comes to be, What is this transition? Tell me the step I should take, and I will take it. It is not enough, then, that you exalt upon your own person the degree of those virtues, by which you have obtained a credit and a distinction among men. It is not enough, that you throw a brighter and a lovelier hue over your social accomplishments. It is not enough that you, multiply the offerings of your charity, or observe a more rigid compliance, than heretofore, with all the requisitions of justice. All this you may do, and yet the great point on which your controversy with God essentially hinges may not be so much as entered upon. All this you may do, and yet obtain no nearer approximation to him who sitteth on the throne than the outlaws of an offended government for their fidelities to each other. To the eye of man you may be fairer than before, and in civil estimation be greatly more righteous than before,—and yet, with the unquelled spirit of impiety within you, and as habitual an indifference as ever to all the subordinate claims of the divine will over your heart and your conduct, you may stand at as wide a distance from God as before. And besides, how are we to dispose of the whole guilt of your past, iniquities? Whether is it the malefactor or the Lawgiver who is to arbitrate this question? God may remit our sins; but is for him to proclaim this. God may pass them over; but it is for him to issue the deed of amnesty. God may have found out a way whereby, in consistency with his own character, and with the stability of his august government, he may take sinners into reconciliation; but it is for him both to devise and to publish this way;—and we must just do what convicts do; when they obtain a mitigation, or a cancellation of the legal sentence under which they lie; we must passively accept of it, on the terms

of the deed;—we must look to the warrant as issued by the sovereign, and take the boon or fulfil the conditions, just as it is there presented to us. The question is between us and God; and, in the adjustment of this question, we must look singly to the expression of his will, and feel that it is with him and with his authority that we have exclusively to do. In one word, we must wait his own revelation, and learn from his own mouth bow it is that he would have us to come nigh unto him.

Let us go the to the record. 'No man cometh unto the Father but through the Son.' 'There is no other name given under heaven, but the name of Jesus, whereby we can be saved.' 'Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin', and 'God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' 'He was once offered to bear the sins of many, and 'became sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' 'God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses.' 'Justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord' 'and we become the children of God, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.' We are 'reconciled to God by the death of his son,' 'and by his obedience are many made righteous,' and 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' These verses sound foolish to many; but the cross of Christ is foolishness to those that perish. They appear to them invested with all the mysteriousness of a dark and hidden saying; but if this gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost. They have eyes that they cannot see the wondrous things contained in this book of God's communication; but they have minds which believe not, because they are blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them.

TO BE CONTINUED.

VICTORY ASSURED



‘And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.’ Judges 6:12

To Gideon, the least	(Judges 6:15)
(The choice of God Supreme,	(Judges 6:16)
Twice proven by a fleece,	(Judges 6:37–41)
To lead three hundred men),	(Judges 7:7)
God’s angel, from beneath an oak,	(Judges 6:11)
As to a mighty warrior spoke.	(Judges 6:12)
God in a dream declared,	(Judges 6:25)
A seven-year bullock take	
For sacrifice prepared,	
And Baal’s altar break;	
All things were done with one accord,	(Judges 6:28)
Thus was Jehovah’s name restored.	
God proved by barley bread,	(Judges 7:13)
That fell within the host	
Of Midian, as was said,	(Judges 7:14)
Their cause was surely lost;	
God’s chosen few were thus assured	(Judges 7:15)
Their victory was of the Lord.	
Raise high the Gospel lamp,	
The battle is not yours;	(2 Chronicles 20:15)
The Bread of Life takes Satan’s camp—	(John 6:35 & Luke 11:22)
And so the cause	
Of sinners saved, through Christ alone,	(John 14:6; Acts 4:12)
Is guaranteed, and will be done.	(Hebrews 7:22)

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