

JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2020

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The Gospel Magazine

Christ the Wisdom of God • The thirsty satisfied • Some thoughts on John 3:8

Contents

1	Editorial.....	<i>The Editor</i>
3	A sermon on love (1 John 4:7–12).....	<i>The Editor</i>
5	Christ the Wisdom of God (part 2)	<i>Thomas Chalmers</i>
9	The light of the world	<i>Carine MacKenzie</i>
11	A sermon on Isaiah 1:2–3, part 2	<i>C. Tuinman</i>
12	The thirsty satisfied	<i>Wylie W. Fulton</i>
20	Former Days, Being a summary of past issues from <i>The Gospel Magazine</i>	
23	The Church in the world.....	<i>Diognetus</i>
24	Some thoughts on John 3:8.....	<i>E.J. Malcolm</i>
28	What is the purpose of God's law?	<i>W.T. Foley</i>
31	Book Review	<i>EJM</i>
32	Poetry	<i>P.C. Murcott</i>

1766–2020

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.

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

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EDITORIAL

THERE can be little of more comfort to believers than the doctrines of grace. These are the windows by which we see ourselves as we are, our God as he is, and our Saviour as he is.

The doctrines of grace are far from popular with all. Those who cry up the free will of man detest the scriptural truth taught us in these doctrines. Let us consider them briefly, in the five headings by which we usually learn them.

Total depravity is that solemn doctrine, whereby we learn our true spiritual condition. We once lay in darkness, and the shadow of death. We were dead in trespasses and sins. This death was in our soul, and we had inherited it from our first father, Adam. The doctrine of total depravity does not teach that each is as bad as he could possibly be. It teaches that none is capable of doing good, no, not one. See how total depravity operated in our first parents, when they first sinned. It is said of them that their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They did not revel in their nakedness, but were

ashamed and afraid. They did not become irrational, but sewed aprons of fig leaves with which to cover themselves, and they hid from the presence of the Lord God. These are the actions of rational beings. They are not, however, the actions of spiritual beings. They were incapable of coming before their Maker and confessing their sin. Instead, they fell to self-justification and finger-pointing—to the extent that Adam blamed God for giving him the woman. This is total depravity. It permits us to function as human beings, but denies us the ability to think of God or ourselves aright.

Unconditional election is that humbling doctrine, where we learn that God did not choose us because he saw any good in us, but he chose us because he chose to choose us. The Arminian loves to go to Romans 8:29, and from there, seeks to argue that God looked into the future, saw who would believe, and chose them. Election, to them, is conditional on us; we have power with God to be saved or to be damned. But the Scripture teaches us something rather different. All who are dead

in trespasses and sins—and all *are* dead in trespasses and sins—are as capable of choosing life as the bones in Ezekiel's valley were capable of living again. The curse is real. Death has come upon all. We are spiritually dead outside Christ, and all by nature are outside him. That God should choose any is a matter of wonder and humble thanksgiving.

Limited atonement, or particular redemption, is that comforting doctrine whereby we learn that Christ knew for whom he was going to the cross—and still he went. The Arminian goes to John 3:16, and teaches that God's love is universal (which it is) and that therefore Christ died for all (which he did not). They fail to distinguish God's general love for his whole creation, such that he provides the rain and the sun, and so that the fields of the just and the unjust are equally fruitful. See Job 21:7–14 for more on this. But our God has a special love for those he has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. For their sakes came Christ forth. For their salvation did the eternal Son of God become flesh, and become obedient unto death. All who know themselves to be born of the Spirit give thanks for the atonement.

Irresistible grace is that pride-destroying truth, whereby we learn that we did not choose Christ as an act of our own free will (though in truth it may have felt like that at the time) but rather we were drawn with bands of love (Hosea 11:4). Why is it that some are arrested by the gospel, and others pass by without a care in the world? Can we ascribe this difference to the person's mood, or state of mind, or particular circumstances? If so, let us make solemn and lengthy enquiry into the state of mind of those who heeded the gospel, and then let us do all in our power to so arrange circumstances that all our hearers first endure the same experience. That way, we can guarantee converts,

and heaven will soon be full! Except, of course, that it is the Lord of heaven who decrees who shall and who shall not enter therein. It is he who draws all whom he will. The Arminian protests that this view is fatalism, and that it denies the individual his free will. But remember, the individual is in a state of sin, and is spiritually dead. He can no more come to Christ of his own free will than Lazarus could come forth from the tomb at the moment of his choosing. Rather, it took the life-giving word of Christ, crying, 'Lazarus, come forth', to bring that corpse to life, and out of the tomb. Such is the power of sovereign grace!

Perseverance is that comforting doctrine, whereby we learn that Christ shall never lose one of his sheep, for whom he shed his precious blood. The careless and carnal Christian will use this as an excuse behind which to hide his persisting in sin. I shall be saved, come what may, he reasons, and therefore my sins cannot count against me. But such thinking is the fruit of a corrupt mind, and not the Scripture-taught response of the sinner saved by grace. When Legion was delivered from those devils, his one desire was to be with Christ, Luke 8:38. This is the state and condition of the true child of God. Christ and his righteousness are our delight, and sin is an ever-present reminder that we are not yet delivered from the corruptions of the old nature. But our longing to be free, and our striving against sin within, speak to our regenerate nature. The doctrine of perseverance of the saints comforts us when we fall—and fall we do, frequently, for we are not better than our fathers—because it teaches us that Christ will never let go of one of his precious lambs, for whom he laid down his life.

May these doctrines be our daily comfort in the months ahead, for Christ's sake. ¶

A SERMON ON LOVE

by THE EDITOR

'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.' (1 John 4:7-12)

OF all the many statements set before in Scripture, concerning the nature and character of our God, there is one that particularly thrills and comforts the heart of all believers. 'God is love.' None may know this with any degree of certainty until he has been brought under grace. To all who are not under grace, God is a consuming fire. To all who are in their sins, it is the wrath of God that abides on them. Only those who have been brought to repent of their sins, and to cast themselves on Christ, can say with assurance, 'God is love.' It is love, more than anything, that reveals the character of God to us. Whatever we may truly say about love is a true saying about him who is love. His love is not limited in any way, for it is called 'great love,' Ephesians 2:4, and is a love that moved our salvation. It is exceeding abundant, 1 Timothy 1:14. But what the Holy Spirit inspired John to say here is worthy of our close attention, because of the truth it teaches.

We learn, first, the necessity of love, vv.7-8 John addresses his readers as 'Beloved'. This is not a cynical attempt at getting them on side, but a genuine demonstration of the love the apostle bears to them. John knew what it was to love and to be loved. He who reclined on Christ's bosom at the last supper understood better than most the true quality of

Christ's love. He who had felt the draw of the Lamb of God was drawn to all who had also been drawn.

John exhorts us to 'love one another'. In v.2 he told us we have an infallible way of knowing who is Christ's. 'Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.' When we meet others who confess this, we see a fellow believer, a child of grace as we are. How can we not love such a one?

That we should be driven home by the next thing John says; 'for love is of God.' That is, love is from God; he is the source and fountain of that love, of which the Apostle is speaking. There is a spiritual love and there is a carnal love. Paul wrote about those who have pleasure in all who sin as they do, Romans 1:32. John is not declaring that such love is of God; only the love that flows from our being loved of God is to be sought. Such love affects our view of the world in which we live, of the people we meet, and of our delight in the truth of the gospel.

'Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.' We read in Romans 5:5 that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and is therefore inseparable from faith; if we believe, we love! Any professing believer who admits to a lack of love in their hearts is admitting to a serious

imperfection. Such a person must repent of their sin, and learn in Christ's school what it is to love. Anyone who does not show love indicates that they have not known the love of God. Let us be sure to show the love we feel.

'He that loveth not knoweth not God'—because to not love those who have the Spirit of God is to show that we have not the Spirit, have not faith, and so are not God's. Therefore is love a clear evidence of faith; and the lack of love a cause for deep concern.

'For God is love.' God's nature is to love, and there is one love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's love for us depends not on what we are but on who he is; God is love. His, therefore, is an unchangeable love, a never-ending love, a pure love, and an effectual love.

We have, secondly, the greatness of divine love, vv.9–10

'Herein is the love of God manifested toward us'—this is not a love we could know unless it had been revealed. Saying 'God loves you' to unbelievers is meaningless because they have no way of recognising divine love. It remains a mystery to them. In that the Apostle says, 'Herein is the love ... manifested', he shows that, if we would know the love, we must know it in the way it has been made known. An all-too-common attitude is happy to say, 'I think of God as...' or, 'I want a God who...'. The only true God is the one who makes manifest his true nature. We have no cause to either reject any part of that manifestation, or to seek anything he has not manifested.

'Because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world'. Now the mystery is revealed, John 3:16, 1 John 3:16. Love is the presenting source of God's saving acts, and these are the clearest manifestation of that divine love. Unless we recognise, affirm and

declare that the incarnation and atonement are manifestations of the love God bears towards the world, we deny the Scriptures.

'That we might live through him.' Christ the creator of life came to bring life, John 1:3–4. This life is the new birth, by which we are made sons of God, John 1:12–13. There is a life possessed by all, from Christ but not in Christ. There is a life possessed only by grace, from Christ, in Christ and through Christ; this is the true life, and it is eternal.

'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us'. True love is not the love we have for God, real though that is; it is the love God has for us. God's love is active, moving him to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves—and what we would not know to hope for if his love did not first make him known to us. That his love is active is shown immediately, for John adds—

'And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' Paul writes the same thing, Romans 5:6–8. How unlike human love, which might conceivably die for a worthy or good person. Christ died for the ungodly, for those who as yet did not know that God is love, and who had no experience of the love of God. This is the great mystery of the atonement. It was required by God's wrath against sinners, occasioned by our sin. And yet it was provided by the same God whose wrath was upon us! He must pour out his wrath, and in love he provides himself as the one on whom it is poured out so that we, the fit objects of wrath, might know his love and be saved!

We have, thirdly, the effect of divine love, vv.11–12

'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another'—not just 'if God loved us' but 'if God so loved us'. Our love must bear testimony to the nature of divine love. Hence

1 Corinthians 13:1–7. Note 1 John 3:17

‘No man hath seen God at any time’—an odd matter to be raising at this point. But...

‘If we love one another, God dwelleth in us’—both we have ‘seen’ God through our being filled with his love, and we bear the image of God to each other and the world;

‘and his love is perfected in us’—reaches its aim, which is to make us the sons of God, not by status only, but in fact, in effect, in the evidence of lives now lived in the Spirit, crying ‘Abba, Father,’ keeping God’s word (2:5), loving the brethren, and so on.

How shall we apply this teaching?

1. The love of God is a securing love. So Romans 8:38–39. Our security here is ascribed to Christ, vv.31–37, to his finished work, and to the ongoing grace of God in us through the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This teaches us something of the true quality of God’s love for us, in that here is a love stronger than the opposition of the devil, since nothing can separate us from the love of God. No charge can be laid against us in the heavenly court that is capable of robbing us of our eternal hope.

God’s love is stronger than all the powers

in this world, for their power is limited to the body, but cannot touch the soul. So Matthew 10:28. The love that comes from the world promises much, but can deliver very little.

God’s love is stronger than the last enemy, death, and every possible spiritual barrier to eternal life. We are secure in and through the love of God, a love manifested in the cross of Christ.

2. The love of God is a patient love. So 2 Thessalonians 3:5. Note the close connection between the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ. That is, that we might have the same endurance we see in Christ. He patiently bore affliction, and was content to submit to the will of his Father, even though it meant abuse and hatred from the very sinners he had come to save. We know what Isaiah said of him, chapter 53, and we know how he bore himself before Pilate at his examination. We know how he had compassion on the lost, and showed love to the unlovely and despised; how he loved the one who came sincerely seeking, and how he spent himself in the service of his Father. Here is the great effect of love; it causes us to show forth Christ in us, to his glory and praise, for ever and ever. AMEN. ¶

CHRIST THE WISDOM OF GOD

by THOMAS CHALMERS (1780–1847)

‘Christ the wisdom of God’ 1 Corinthians 1:24

AND here we cannot but insist on the hopelessness of their circumstances, who hear these overtures of reconciliation, but will not listen to them. Theirs is just the case of rebels turning their back on a deed of grace and of amnesty. We are quite confident in stating it to the stubborn experience of human nature,

that all who reject Christ, as he is offered in the gospel, persist in that radical ungodliness of character on which the condemnation of our world mainly and essentially rests. And as they thus refuse to build their security on the foundation his merits, what, we would, ask is the other foundation on

which they build it? If ever they think seriously of the matter, or feel any concern about a foundation on which they might rest their confidence before God, they conceive it to lie in such feelings, and such humanities, and honesties as make them even with the world, or as elevate them to a certain degree above the level of the world's population. These are the materials of the foundation on which they build. It is upon possession of virtues which in truth have not God for their object, that they propose to support in the presence of God the attitude of fearlessness. It is upon the testimony of fellow rebels that they brave judgment of the Being who has pronounced of them all that they have deeply revolted against him. And all this in the face of God's high prerogative to make and to publish his own overtures. All this in contempt of that Mediator whom he has appointed. All this in resistance to the authentic deed of grace and of forgiveness which has been sent to our world and from which we gather the full assurance of God's willingness to reconcile; but at the same time are expressly bound down to that particular in which he has chosen to dispense reconciliation. Who does not see, that, in these circumstances, the guilt of sin is aggravated on the part of sinners, by rejection of the gospel? Who does see, that thus to refuse the grant of everlasting life in the terms of the grant, is just to set an irretrievable seal upon their own condemnation? Who does not see, that, in the act of declining to take the shelter which held out to them, they vainly imagine that God will let down his approbation such performances as are utterly devoid any spirit of devout or dutiful allegiance to the Lawgiver? This is, in fact, a deliberate posting of themselves, and that more firmly and more obstinately than ever, on ground of their rebellion—and let us no longer wonder, then, at the terms of

alternative of which we read so often in Bible. We there read, that if we believe, we shall be saved; but we also read, that, if believe not, we shall be damned. We are there told of the great salvation; but how we escape if we neglect it? We are there invited to lay hold of the gospel, as savour of life unto life; but, if we refuse the invitation, it shall be to us the savour of death unto death. The gospel is freely proclaimed to us, for our acceptance; but if we will not obey the gospel, we shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Saviour's power. We are asked to kiss the Son while he is in the way; but if we do not, the alternative is that he will angry, and that his wrath will burn against us. He is revealed to us a sure rock, on which, if we lean, we shall not be confounded; but if we shift our dependence away from it, it will fall upon us and grind us to powder.

And this alternative, so far from a matter be wondered at, appears resolvable into a principle that might be easily comprehended. God is the party sinned against,—and if he have the will to be reconciled, it is surely for him to prescribe the way of it,—and this he has actually done in the revelation of the New Testament,—and whether he give a reason for the way or not, certain it is that, in order to give it accomplishment, he sent his eternal Son into our world; and this descent was accompanied with such circumstances of humiliation, and conflict, and deep suffering, that heaven looked on with astonishment, and earth was bidden to rejoice because of her great salvation. It is enough for us to know that God lavished on this plan the riches of a wisdom that is unsearchable,—that, in the hearing of sinful men, he has proclaimed its importance and its efficacy,—that every Gospel messenger felt himself charged with tidings pregnant of joy, and of mighty deliverance to the world.

And we ask you just to conceive, in these circumstances, what effect it should have on the mind of the insulted Sovereign, if the world, instead of responding with grateful, and delighted welcome, to the message, shall either nauseate its terms, or, feeling in them no significance, shall turn with indifference away from it? Are we at all to wonder if the King, very wroth with the men of such a world, shall at length send his armies to destroy it? Do you think it likely that the same God, who, after we had broken his commandment, was willing to pass by our transgressions, will be equally willing to pass them by after we have thus despised the proclamation of his mercy,—after his forbearance and his long suffering have been resisted,—and that scheme of pardon, with the weight and the magnitude of which angels appear to labour in amazement, is received by the very men for whom it was devised, as a thing of no estimation? Surely, if there had been justice in the simple and immediate punishment of sin—this justice will be discharged in still brighter manifestation on him, who in the face of such an embassy, holds out in his determination to brave it. And, if it be a righteous thing in God to avenge every violation of his law, how clearly and how irresistibly righteous will it appear, when, on the great day of his wrath, he taketh vengeance on those who have added to the violation of his law, the rejection of the gospel!

But, what is more than this—God hath condescended to make known to us a reason, for that peculiar way of reconciliation, which he hath set before us. It is that he might be just, while the justifier of those who believe in Jesus. In the dispensation of his mercy, he had to provide for the dignity of his throne. He had to guard the stability of his truth, and of his righteousness. He had to pour the lustre of a high and awful vindication over

the attributes of a nature that is holy and unchangeable. He had to make peace on earth and good will to men meet and be at one, with glory to God in the highest; and for this purpose did the eternal Son pour out his soul an offering for sin, and by his obedience unto death, bring in an everlasting righteousness. It is through the channel of this great expiation, that the guilt of every believer is washed away; and it is through the imputed merits of him with whom the Father was well pleased, that every believer is admitted to the rewards of a perfect obedience. Conceive any man of this world to reject the offers of reward and forgiveness in this way, and to look for them in another. Conceive him to challenge the direct approbation of his Judge, on the measure of his own worth, and his own performances, and to put away from him that righteousness of Christ, in the measure of which there is no short coming. Is he not, by this attitude, holding out against God, and that too on a question in which the justice of God stands committed against him? Is not the poor sinner of a day entering into a fearful controversy, with all the plans, and all the perfections of the Eternal? Might not you conceive every attribute of the Divinity, gathering into a frown of deeper indignation against the daringness of him, who thus demands the favour of the Almighty on some plea of his own, and resolutely declines it on that only plea, under which the acceptance of the sinner can be in harmony with the glories of God's holy and inviolable character? Surely, if we have fallen short of the obedience of his law, and so short, as to have renounced altogether that godliness which imparts to obedience its spiritual and substantial quality,—then do we aggravate the enormity of our sin, by building our hope before God on a foundation of sin? To sin is to defy God: but the very presumption that

he will smile complacency upon it, involves in it another and a still more deliberate attack upon his government and all its sanctions, and all its severities are let loose upon us in greater force and abundance than before, if we either rest upon our own virtue, or mix up this polluted ingredient with the righteousness of Christ, and refuse our single, entire, and undivided reliance on him, who alone has magnified the law and made it honourable.

But such, if we maybe allowed the expression, is the constitution of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that, in proportion to the terror which it holds out to those who neglect it, is the security that it provides to all, who flee for refuge to the hope which is set before them. Paul understood this well, when, though he profited over many of his equals in his own nation,—when, though had he measured himself by them, he might have gathered from the comparison a feeling of proud superiority,—when though in all that was counted righteous among his fellows, he signalized himself in general estimation,—yet he willingly renounced a dependence upon all, that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which was of the law, but that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is God by faith. He felt the force of the alternative, between the former and the latter righteousness. He knew that the one admitted of no measurement with the other,—and that whatever appearance of worth it had in the eyes of men when brought

to their relative and earthly standard, it was reduced to nothing, and worse than nothing, when brought to the standard of Heaven's holy and unalterable law. Jesus Christ has in our nature fulfilled this law; and it is in the righteousness which he thus wrought that we are invited to stand before God. You do not then take in a full impression of gospel security if you only believe that God is merciful and has forgiven you. You are called farther to believe that God is righteous and has justified you. You have a warrant to put on the righteousness of Christ as a robe and a diadem, and to go to the throne of grace with the petition of, Look upon me in the face of him who hath fulfilled all righteousness. You are furnished with such a measure of righteousness as God can accept, without letting down a single attribute which belongs to him. The truth and the justice and the holiness which stand in such threatening array against the sinner who is out of Christ, now form into a shield and a hiding place around him. And while he who trusts in the general mercy of God does so at the expense of his whole character, he who trusts in the mercy of God which hath appeared unto all men through the Saviour, offers in that act of confidence, an homage to every perfection of the Divinity, and has every perfection of the Divinity, upon his side. And thus it is that under the economy of redemption we now read not merely of God being merciful, but of God being just and faithful in forgiving our sins, and in cleansing us from all our unrighteousness.

TO BE CONCLUDED

There is no public action which the world is not ready to scan. There is no action so private, which the evil spirits are not witnesses of. I will endeavour so to live, as knowing that I am ever in the eyes of my enemies.

Bishop Hall

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

by CARINE MACKENZIE

In the wintertime in the North of Scotland, where I live, we are very conscious of the shorter time of daylight. The darkness falls in the late afternoon and the sun does not come up again until much later than places further south.

In the summertime we have long hours of daylight and we can read in natural light until about eleven o'clock in the evening.

The light is a wonderful gift from God—his first gift to us. In the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth, God's first words recorded for us in Genesis 1:3 are 'Let there be light' and there was light.

God also created the sun to give us warmth and light and to make plants grow. He gave us the moon and stars also which can be used by sailors and travellers for navigation.

Everything was made by God. 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men (John 1:3)

John the Baptist was given special work to do. He came 'to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe' (John 1:7). Who was that Light?—The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God who was sent to this world by his Father. Jesus himself declared, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (John 8:12).

Jesus' light shines into our life to reveal sin and lead us to repentance. Everyone needs Jesus as their light. Without him we abide in darkness. Sadly many reject Jesus, the light of the world. They prefer darkness because their deeds are evil (John 3:18–20).

Jesus the light shows us the glory of God. 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Matthew Henry, a minister from long ago, put it like this. 'Christ is the light of the world. God is light, and Christ is the image of the invisible God. One sun enlightens the whole world, so does one Christ, and there needs no more.'

Just as we all need light for our health and well being, so we all need Jesus Christ to be our Lord and Saviour. 'The Lord is my light and my salvation' said David in Psalm 27. 'Whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?'

As well as being the light of the world, Jesus is also the light of heaven. In John's amazing vision in Revelation, he tells us about the holy city, the new Jerusalem—a beautiful place, having the glory of God. The light was like a stone most precious, clear as crystal. John gives us a magnificent description of all the precious stones and gold. 'The city had no need of the sun,' he tells us, 'neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof' (Revelation 21:23).

Isaiah had a glimpse of this wonderful truth in his prophecy. 'The sun shall no more be thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee and everlasting light, and thy God thy glory' (Isaiah 60:19).

When Jesus was at the height of his suffering on the cross, forsaken by his Father, bearing our sin in his body, there was darkness over all the land in the afternoon, from noon until

three o'clock. What a reminder to us of the seriousness of sin and the suffering of our Saviour who is the light.

Jesus wants his follower to reflect his light to the world—‘to show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1 Peter 2:9). If we belong to Jesus our daily living should demonstrate that. ‘If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin’ (1 John 1:7).

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus described his people as the light of the world. Their lives should be transparently different and stand out from the worldly people around—just like a city high up on a hill, or like a candle giving light to the house.

If we reflect the light of Jesus, others will see our good works, not to praise us, but to give glory to our Father in Heaven. (See Matthew 5:16).

Bible Search

Find the missing words from the verses. The initial letters of the correct answers will spell out a word from the story.

1. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the _____ of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1:18)
2. And it was about the sixth hour and there was a darkness over all the _____ until the ninth hour. (Luke 23:44)
3. A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy _____ Israel. (Luke 2:32)
4. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were _____. (John 3:19)
5. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the _____ shine the as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. (Psalm 139:12)
6. But he that doeth _____ cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:21)
7. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be _____? (Psalm 27:1)

8. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse _____, among whom ye shine as lights in the world. (Philippians 2:15)
9. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a _____; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. (Matthew 5:15)
10. For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will _____ my darkness. (Psalm 18:28)
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A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 7

And they have rebelled

To rebel is in the original *pashá*, with actually means apostasy, rebelling, as subjects fall away from their lawful king (1 Kings 12:19; 2 Kings 8:20). This also fits here. God, who was the Father of this people, also was their lawful King (Exodus 19:6; Psalm 44:4; Isaiah 33:22). But from this they apostatised as disobedient rebels and had rebelled against him. (Ezekiel 2:3). This they did—

1. When they drew away from that special Divine government. God was their King (Numbers 23:21; Judges 7:23). But they desired another king (1 Samuel 8:6, 7; 10:19; 12:2).

2. When they fell into idolatry and forsook the Lord their Father and King (Jeremiah 2:11). The idols often bore names as king or queen, such as Molech, Malcham, etc. See Jeremiah 44:17.

3. When they left the true faith of the Messiah in whom alone God could be their Father and King. So they became bastards of their fathers and sought their righteousness in offerings etc (verse 10).

4. When they naughtily and notoriously made themselves guilty of all kinds of ungodliness. (See Hosea 4:1; Ezekiel 22:1; Daniel 9:5; 1 Samuel 15:21).

TO BE CONTINUED

From the loveliness of created things, we can in a fitting degree see the Creator himself, and acknowledge him who is truly God, through whom everything came into existence and is now sustained in existence.

Cyril of Alexandria

THE THIRSTY SATISFIED

by WYLIE W. FULTON (USA)

‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.’ (Isaiah 41:17–20)

HERE we have a marvellous passage, by way of promise to Israel that the LORD their God would be their one and only Provider. At the outset, please allow a personal word: When it pleased the Almighty to quicken my soul, and bring me down into the throes of repentance and deep-felt need, then it was that HE pointed me to this great passage. It became a special promise to me as I was seeking the Lord and learning to trust in him for all. And you can imagine the encouragement when I discovered that these sayings to the people of old were equally applicable to me—providing I was in the same relationship with God! And grace had made it so, and it was to that grace alone I could look for complete deliverance. Notice:

I. The heirs of the promise—‘The poor and needy’

As you go through the Bible, you will find all the richest SALVATION promises are given to people in this same condition—‘Poor and needy.’ The helpless sinner who lives to feel his need shall enjoy the rich fulfilment of the promise. This salvation-promise is not a universal one, nor is it an ‘offer’ to all and sundry, but is a proclamation of God’s divine method in bringing the heirs of salvation to the Saviour. He never has a word of grace for those who desire none of his spiritual

favours; they are turned empty away, but the soul who DESIRES GRACE already possesses the PRINCIPLE OF GRACE and can claim such promises as: ‘Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden.’ ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters.’ ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto ME and drink.’ ‘I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.’

II. Their need—‘Seek water!’

Friends, you may live for many days without food, but not long without water.

1. Bodily thirst is the most painful sensation to which the frame of mortal man is liable. Ask anyone who has travelled over desert plains under a tropical sun.

2. Any old soldier will tell you that WATER is the chief want of the wounded on the battlefield. Offer the wounded man a soda pop, or even a bottle of beer; he refuses as he pants the word for the one substance that his entire being calls for: ‘WATER!’

3. Remember what the crews of ships lost in mid-ocean, tossed for days in boats without WATER, go through. Water all about the vessel but no clear free water to drink, and soon they are parched by thirst.

4. Mark the dreadful words of the rich man in Luke 16:24, ‘Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in WATER to cool my tongue for I am tormented in

this flame.' He didn't even ask to be taken out of the flames, but the one concern was 'WATER, COOL REFRESHING WATER!'

In John 7:37 and following, we read, 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' 'If any man thirst.' Listen closely now. 'These words no doubt were meant to have a spiritual meaning. The thirst before us is of a purely spiritual kind. It means anxiety of soul—conviction of sin—desire of pardon—longing after peace of conscience. When a man feels his sins, and wants forgiveness—is deeply sensible of his soul's need, and earnestly desires help and relief—then he is in that state of mind which our Lord had in view when He said, "If any man thirst." The Jews who heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost, and were "pricked in their hearts"—and the Philippian jailor who cried to Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" are both examples of what the expression means. In both cases there was thirst' (J.C. Ryle, in *Expository Thoughts on the Four Gospels*).

Such a 'thirst' as we have outlined is known by only a few. Everybody ought to feel the need of the spiritual waters that Christ has to give, and they would feel it if they were wise, if they were convicted, if they were awakened, if they were in a state of repentance and seeking after our Lord. Knowing we are all sinful creatures, mortal creatures that must soon die and stand before the Holy One, there is neither man nor woman who ought not to be a 'thirsty beggar' after the Lord's salvation. Many thirst,

it is true, but their thirst is after fame and fortune and the follies of this present world, and not after Christ. There is no more definite proof that men are fallen and totally depraved than the fact they seek after everything else except GOD. They are utterly corrupt, they are filled with darkness—yea, blind and asleep and dead towards God. The Scripture says, "Dead in trespasses and in sins" (Ephesians 2:1), and they must experience a quickening; God must sound the alarm deep inside and cause them to be thoroughly awakened to their need of salvation, of the living waters. Listen again to Bishop Ryle: 'The beginning of all true Christianity is to discover that we are guilty, empty, needy sinners. Till we know that we are lost, we are not in the way to be saved. The very first step toward Heaven is to be thoroughly convinced that we deserve Hell. That sense of sin which sometimes alarms a man and makes him think his own case desperate is a good sign. It is in fact a symptom of spiritual life: "Blessed indeed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."'

And Jesus says, 'COME TO ME AND DRINK.' He is the true fountain of life, the supplier of all spiritual necessities, and the satisfier of all spiritual wants—and if you are thirsty, you've got to get to Christ to find the true, lasting waters you crave. If you miss Christ and fall in with a mere religious profession, you may feel a sense of 'relief' but that's merely the soothing syrup of Satan and his religious deception. But, dear soul, if the burden and thirst are so heavy that a synthetic cure cannot meet your case, then COME to Christ, CALL on his Name, BELIEVE his Word, and TRUST him; and then it is that He will surely show himself as your Helper and your Supplier and your Saviour! 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth COME

YE TO THE WATERS' (Isaiah 55:1). 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man THIRST, let him come unto me and drink' (John 7:37).

But I know awakened sinners must still face ...

III. Their hopelessness

And we see it in our text. 'There is no water; their tongues fail for thirst.' Nothing else is their hearts' desire at that moment except *water*, that wondrous God-created H₂O! Souls thus caught in destitution cannot make provision to satisfy their own need. So it is with the sinner who comes into the fullness of this provision and this promised 'water.'" He is a 'poor and needy one' and has no pump with which to draw up the water, nor sufficient funds to buy, if such were available to him. He is in deep and dire need, and can only lament, 'I need water; there is none; my tongue is so dry; my head hurts and my heart sinks within me. Where can I go but to the LORD?' He finds neither well nor spring flowing with the water he so sorely needs; his thirst is for the water that JESUS gives to the spiritually thirsty soul. 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is' (Psalm 63:1).

'When the poor and needy seek water... and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.' 'The tried children of God are here represented in the dark seasons of their experience as being very poor, thirsty and destitute, spiritually. Sometimes they are given a much deeper experimental knowledge of their poverty condition than at others. But however needy their condition may be felt to be, in Jesus Christ they find by faith everything needful and so graciously suited to their state. His positive promise is that He

will not forsake them but will richly supply their spiritual needs. How true it is that the precious promises of the gospel of the grace of God are always addressed to the poor, needy and thirsty in spirit" (W.S. Craig). Only regenerate and called souls are such in their spirit, made so by the operation of God that has awakened them to see their condition and to have some degree of hope in their Redeemer.

With every one of us, at first it is true that 'the soul of man, finding itself empty and necessitous, seeks for satisfaction somewhere, but soon despairs of finding it in the world, that has nothing in it to make it easy; creatures are broken cisterns that can hold no water, so that their tongue fails for thirst' (Matthew Henry). Then it is he becomes weary of trying *and trying* to find satisfaction in the world, but finding none available there. He cries, 'Oh, where can I find the living waters? Where can I find a Saviour?' Sorrow and disappointment are the forerunners of deep thirst, hunger and exhaustion; he is finally broken down in anguish before the Lord. This is the beginning of evangelical repentance and the seed of saving faith, as the sinner contemplates his need and rejects the miserable worldly physicians ('physicians of no value'), turns aside from the soothsayers of religion and begins that one activity that can bring him into peace—he begins to CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.

'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Romans 10:13). 'The Scriptures are clear that this does not mean that all who have, with their *lips*, cried unto the Lord or sought God in the name of Christ to have mercy upon them, have been saved. Many are deceived by the mere sound of words. The Scriptures are not to be read like a daily newspaper and neither is the Word of God to be understood by lazy

people. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself tells us that there are many who call him 'Lord,' and His reply is 'Depart from me' (Matt. 7:22-23). Our Lord hears not him who calls upon him because of his fear of Hell. God is not at the beck and call of any rebel who, when he is terrified, sues for mercy. 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination' (Prov. 28:9). 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy' (Prov. 28:13). The only 'calling upon the name of the Lord' that our Lord hears and heeds, is that which issues from a broken, penitent, sin-hating heart, and thirsts after holiness' (Quoting Lynn V. Connell, Romans commentary).

Let us hasten to add that were it not for promises such as are found in our text and in this Romans passage (10:13), the soul on a quest for a taste of the waters of salvation must sink into despair. When we are convinced enough to know our need so keenly, and find no way of escape and no avenue of deliverance—surely deep soul depression and despair would ensue. But it is God's delight to supply the coming sinner's need—as He has brought the sinner to see and feel that need—and we invite your attention again to these words in Isaiah, as well as other Scriptures of promise.

When, as a teenager I was brought under conviction of my soul's need, it was finally to this verse the Holy Spirit seemed to direct my attention. I looked at it and said, "Surely I am a poor and needy one. I am not a Jew, and not one to whom this promise of water was first given—but I am a sinner who desires more than all else to be freed of sin, to have the gift of God's salvation and a personal relationship with Christ. Take the world but give me JESUS; I am tired of all the world's evil practices, its entertainment, its sports

and its games and thrills and parties, etc. I am also equally tired of its shallow religion and church work. I want reality! O God, give me Christ and his waters that I might never thirst again!' This passage was kept before my eyes in the Bible and seemed to settle deeply on my spirit and fill my soul with encouragement. Christ was set to give his waters of life freely to the 'poor and needy,' according to the text, and also to the 'thirsty,' according to Isaiah 55:1 and John's Gospel 7:37, as we have seen.

It was about this time when the Lord seemed to graciously begin hearing my cries, and he finally brought me to rest on a word uttered by the troubled and tried psalmist: 'I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD' (Psalm 116:13). My mind was fixed; I had crossed the 'point of no return,' and felt that HE would indeed hear me. He alone had those waters I was so thirsty after, and he alone could release them and flood my soul with his grace and his salvation. But, mark this point: I was fully aware that in the dispensing of his favours my Lord was a sovereign; he didn't owe me anything except *punishment*; but it was his prerogative to show *mercy*. There I rested and the peace of God soon flooded my soul. Thirsty reader, may it be so with you also. Don't turn aside to easy-believe religion which can do your soul no good, but turn fully to the Sovereign Saving God of Scripture—and 'thou shalt be saved!'

There is darkness and there is hopelessness for you every way you turn, unless and until you are enabled by the Spirit of his grace to lay hold on 'the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour'

(Titus 1:2–3). The promises are so necessary, dear sinner; they are the ‘life preserver’ for your poor needy soul all the time that you are tossed about on the sea of a troubled conscience and Holy Spirit conviction. Cling to the promises as you look about for...

IV. God’s faithful provision

Listen to the words of life: ‘I the LORD will hear...I the LORD will open rivers in high places; fountains in the valleys; make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land into springs of water. Rivers don’t normally run on high hills and mountains, but in the valleys; neither does dry land open up in springs of waters—but when Jehovah is coming for the provision of His poor, hungry, thirsty creatures, He will work mighty wonders and miracles for their salvation.

Note it is the LORD that will provide. In the promise there is no ‘preacher,’ ‘teacher,’ ‘worship leader,’ ‘priest’ or ‘pope.’ ‘God has no need of outward and natural means for aiding his church, but has at his command secret and wonderful methods, by which he can relieve their necessities, contrary to all hope and outward appearance’ (John Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah*). The Lord disburses his bounties by giving the sinner a TOUCH from himself. And what a soul-refreshing, glorious touch that is!

And as they cry out in the deep-felt need of their souls, Jehovah says ‘I will listen to them; I will hear them and I will respond with ABUNDANCE of waters!’ As Jesus said to the woman at the well, ‘I will give you a spring of water welling up to eternal life. And whoever drinks of the water I will give him will never again be thirsty’ (See John 4:7–15). Once the sinner has partaken of this spiritually refreshing drink, peace and contentment begin to flood his soul—‘Never thirst again!’

‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.... Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon’ (Isaiah 55:1–3,6–7). Listen to him, O sinner, and don’t be imagining in your mind that God has forgotten to be gracious, for he has given multiplied texts to show his willingness to receive you and pardon all your sins, and accept you freely in Christ His all-glorious Son. Come now and come freely, lest it be said of you at the last, ‘I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set a naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when you fear cometh...Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD: they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof’ (Proverbs 1:24–30).

Since God’s provision of grace has been made and his call has been sincere, we have only ourselves to blame when the bounties of his grace are not received and enjoyed. While God is forever sovereign in the dispensation of his favours, man is always responsible for

his sin in regarding the promise so lightly. God said, 'I give you the truth and the promise of my mercy and reward of eternal life, but you treat it lightly, despise and reject it, and then wonder when JUDGMENT falls!' Dear soul, we cannot stress these sweet promises of eternal life, the waters for the thirsty, in too broad terms, for we must thereby leave you stripped of every solitary excuse for not closing in with the Promiser and receiving the fresh waters of his eternal grace.

And what a provision this is! 'Rivers on top of the mountains...springs of water flowing freely in the wilderness...and fountains opened in the desert!' The promises will all be fulfilled, because they rest on the firm foundation of God's Word.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

Saints of the Lord and sinners who truly desire his mercy, you rob yourselves of the blessing when you refuse to grasp the promise so freely given. And especially when we further notice:

V. The fullness or Divine extras in deliverance

'Not only the water, but an abundance of other riches—Beautiful trees in the wilderness and springs in the desert.' All through the Scriptures we have the story of God's ABUNDANT grace and mercy, his abundant provisions for his believing people during all the days of their wilderness journey. 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'

In order to confirm his statement more fully, he promises that he will perform miracles contrary to the nature and order of things, that we may not imagine that we should think and judge of these

things according to human capacity, or limit the power and promises of God to these inferior means. The Lord has sufficient power in himself, and needs not to borrow from any other, and is not confined to the order of nature, which he can easily change whenever he thinks fit; for when he says that he will make waters to flow on the tops of mountains and fountains in valleys and pools in deserts, we know that all this is contrary to the order of nature.

The reason why he promised these things is abundantly evident. It was that the Jews might not think that they were prevented from returning to Judea by that vast desert in which travellers are scorched by the heat of the sun and deprived of all the necessities of life. The Lord therefore promises that he will supply them with water, and with everything else that is necessary for the journey. Now these things were fulfilled when the Lord brought his people out of Babylon, but much more abundantly when he called the whole world to himself by Christ the Redeemer, from whom flow in great abundance throughout the whole world waters to quench the thirst of poor sinners. At that time such a change took place as could never have entered into the imaginations of men (John Calvin, on *Isaiah*).

The wideness of the promise is akin to what we are told of the 'Blessed man' in Psalm 1: 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'

Then how true it is that he who sent his Son to suffer in the place of Hell-bound sinners, will not recall his Spirit or work of Grace until all the elect are effectually

brought into the benefits of the promise—for we read: ‘He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is rise again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, For thy sakes we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Romans 8:32-39). ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’ (v. 31).

‘Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound’ (Romans 5:20). The Law of God was so honourable in bringing forth man’s need, rendering him a verdict of ‘guilty,’ and causing him to mourn under deep convictions that his state is a miserable one and likely to leave him in condemnation for eternity. Yes, the Law abounded to awaken our hearts and to frighten our souls, and to make us stop still in our tracks under a sense of deep guilt and feel ‘worthy of death.’ Then God appears in displaying boundless stores of mercy and truth. Sin abounded in strict condemnation and produced alarm, but then grace steps in and freely justifies and saves—it “much more abounded.” He brought not only the thirst-quenching flow of ‘living waters’ but also the fruit trees, the oil and myrtle trees, the springs and pools

of water a-plenty. Abounding ‘much more’ is the grace of God, for it can reach deeper than the stain of sin in the life of a believer. Listen to these encouraging words from a good American Presbyterian: ‘God does not barely save the soul that hopes in his mercy; he *abundantly* pardons. He renders double for all our sins. He ministers an entrance abundantly into his everlasting kingdom. If sin and death reigned as tyrants, truth and righteousness shall much more reign in glory by Jesus Christ. So illustrious is God’s plan of bringing men to a saving knowledge of himself, and so wondrous the salvation he thus bestows, that there is no mistake in saying, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound’ (William S. Plumer, *Commentary on Romans*).

Then the blessed Son of God himself brought all this abundance to pass when he came down to this sin-destroyed world to live as the Perfect Lamb and then to take our sins on himself and die as the Sacrificial Lamb—bringing in everlasting righteousness and a salvation that can never be forfeited, can never fail—and it is ‘all because of God’s amazing grace’ that we ever heard the message of a free fountain and came to him, finding refreshing for our souls. Come to the waters; Oh come today! Then you can know and understand^ our final point...

VI. The sinner’s gratitude for God’s provision

‘That they may see and know and consider and understand together THAT THE HAND OF THE LORD has done this!’

1. When once this water is yours, like the woman at the well in John 4 you will be busy telling it—and your message, like hers, will be, ‘Come see a MAN that told me all things. Come see the GOD-MAN, not any human intermediaries, no priest, no pope,

no soul-winner, no decision, no aisle-walking or card-signing—for mine eyes have seen the KING, the Lord of Hosts (Isaiah 6:5)—for mine eyes have seen “THE LORD’S SALVATION” (Luke 2:30)—For ‘he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness’ (Psalm 107:9)—and how great is HIS GOODNESS which he has laid up for those that fear him (Psalm 31:19)—I thirsted; I came; He satisfied—I’m just a poor beggar telling you other beggars where I found the water and bread of life. COME TO JESUS AND FIND IN HIM ALL YOU NEED, FOR THIS WORLD AND THE WORLD TO COME!’

2. When once this water, this refreshing, this forgiveness, this salvation, is YOURS you will know from whence it came, and will never be content with a religion of works or part-works. The deliverance of your soul clearly testifies to your heart and understanding that it was all brought about by THE HAND OF THE LORD, and he has done this, and HE ALONE!

How can any delivered sinner ever give honour and glory to a human agency or institution rather than to CHRIST ALONE? If a person is brought into the covenant blessings of the atonement in Christ the Lord, that sinner will know WHO saved him. He will not be out here dividing the honour with some man or institution, but will say plainly ‘It was the LORD JESUS CHRIST who saved me; he purposed to save me; he suffered and died to save me; he came to me in the person of the Holy Spirit and revealed HIMSELF. Truly my “Salvation belongeth unto the LORD” (Psalm 3:8).’

3. ‘It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed,’ cried Jeremiah in his Lamentations—and continued, ‘The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them

that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD’ (Lamentations 3:22–26). It is when an awakened sinner feels his transgressions and iniquities so sorely that he abhors his daily food and feels himself drawing near the gates of death—‘Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saves them out of their distresses’ (Psalm 107:19; read the entire psalm).

4. Then there is nothing more certain than that when God saves you, HE is going to be the only one who gets any credit for your deliverance from Satan, sin, death and Hell.

Conclusion

I have been out there in the wilderness, spiritually speaking, where no water IS provided for the weary traveller—and, Oh, the *desperation!* Just one drink of water...seeing mirages on the hot sands, demons taunting, death and Hell drawing near, etc. As the camel caravan crosses the Great Sahara Desert, the men in charge long for an oasis where they can find fresh water and when they find such a place, usually there is a merchant driving a hard bargain against every thirsty soul, for just a drink of water! When thirsty ENOUGH, none can evaluate the price of WATER, for the obtaining of refreshing drink becomes a matter of life or death.

Have you ever thirsted with a desire unquenchable by the world’s drinks and foods and dainties? Has it become so intense that your one longing expressed in the ears of God was, GIVE ME CHRIST, OR I DIE! I AM SO THIRSTY, LORD, THAT I CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT THE LOVELY LORD JESUS! MY SOUL BITTERLY ABHORS THE SORRY SUBSTITUTES THAT THE WORLD AND ITS RELIGION HAVE TO

OFFER. O CHRIST, SAVE ME OR I PERISH! Then you are the 'poor and needy one' for whom these living waters are flowing! Now that cry is coming from a soul under Holy Spirit conviction who has reached the 'place of no return.' Your cry rises from one in whose heart Divine life has been planted,

and you won't give up until the LORD personally comes and satisfies your throbbing thirst. May the Good Shepherd find one of his chosen and satisfy that soul—even now. And we shall rejoice together in his saving grace through Christ our Lord. Amen! ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: January & February 1770

THE first item for the year is the Preface, which begins,

The ultimate intention of this work, is to promote vital Christianity, as founded on the Scriptures, and derived from the sound and genuine principles of our evangelical reformers; to inculcate and exalt the unspeakable love of God the Father; the rich mercy of his dear Son our Lord Jesus Christ; and the almighty and gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son—the triune God—in providing, purchasing, and applying an estimably great and precious redemption to and for lost sinners, by restoring them from a state of forlorn and desperate misery to a holy and happy union with Jehovah-Jesus (who is Salvation Itself) through an infallible and everlasting covenant towards the elect.

This remains the aim of the *Magazine*.

The **January** issue begins with the next part of Deering's Lectures on Hebrews, at 2:8–10. Having shown that the Apostle, in the first part, shows that Christ is fully God, the author now intends to show that the Apostle teaches him to be fully man. It is as perfect man that his saving work is our

salvation.

The Biography is of John Dod, a Chester man who died in 1645. His life is full of interest for the reader, and so full that the account will be concluded in the next issue.

Song of Solomon 3:4 is expounded, followed by a new Dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist. This time, the two come to the clergyman, and the Methodist explains why he has ceased attending the parish church. His reasons have not changed in two hundred and fifty years.

A letter exhorting the afflicted to seek healing in Christ is followed by Reflections on Christian Love. The author calls on all believers to love Christ more than party or sect. Amicus writes to a Follower of the Lamb, to provide spiritual guidance to one only recently converted. The Experience of a Christian is continued from an earlier issue.

A timely piece entitled, 'The Christian Censor' takes a critical view of the way in which some Christians conduct themselves in coming to, attending, and departing from the worship of God.

The Review is of a sermon critical of a sermon preached by William Romaine (the reviewer is highly critical of the 'replying' sermon) and poetry ends the issue.

For **February**, Deering's Lecture on

Hebrews 2:8–10 is continued, and the Dod biography is concluded. Next comes an exposition of Matthew 13:45–46, the Pearl of Great Price, in dialogue form, followed by the next part of the Dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist. Among the subjects covered is the accusation that the gospel breeds antinomianism, countered by the accusation that the alternative is to teach justification by works. The piece stops short of a full discussion on this point; it will resume next time.

Two pastoral letters are followed by the next part of *The Experience of a Christian*. Another correspondent writes, enclosing an answer from John Wesley to an accusation that he both refused and approved the phrase ‘imputed righteousness.’ Wesley’s brief reply is worth noting.

Mr. Wesley does not at all scruple to use the phrase Imputed righteousness; but he does not insist upon others using it: This is the very thing to which he objects. To use it, is one thing; to insist upon everyone’s using it, is another. To the former, Mr. Wesley has no objection; to the latter he has a very great one. It is not scriptural: Whether the sense is or no, the phrase Imputed Righteousness is not. And the whole present question relates to the Phrase (not the Sense), and that only.

We leave readers to draw their own conclusions.

Some examples of how we may draw spiritual lesson from everyday things is followed by the second part of *The Christian Censor*. The author of the sermon criticised last time is subjected to further criticism in a new publication.

Poetry concludes the issue.

200 years ago: January & February 1820

The Preface for 1820 contains the information that the Editor (Walter Row) has been in the role for twenty-four years, the longest tenure of any Editor in any publication, apparently. He would continue in this role until 1838.

The **January** issue opens with a tract from the pen of Dr Hawker. The serious errors of his day are named, including denial of the Trinity and confusion over conversion. He writes, ‘It is not the birth of nature, but of grace; not a natural, but a spiritual birth, which makes the Christian. Christ himself in five words, hath decidedly shewn this, when he saith; Ye must be born again. John 3:7.’

Samuel Eyles Pierce provides a New Year meditation on Psalm 71:8. One Robert Tomlinson seeks to rescue Holy Scripture from the ridicule of unbelievers. He was writing only three or four years after Hegel had published his great volume of philosophy, and the attack on Scripture was coming more and more from within the confessing church. A writer takes up the question of indiscriminate preaching that fails to take into account the various classes of hearers within the church, never mind those who are unconverted.

Love Truth answers the request of Seek Truth, to explain the effect in the life of the believer that comes from trusting in the blood and righteousness of Christ. Love Truth believes that Seek Truth is arguing in favour of works, and replies accordingly.

An exhortation to read the Scriptures is followed by poetry.

In **February** the reader is warned against spiritual pride, and Myra writes against the doctrine of progressive sanctification, from Genesis 17:1. His main ally in this is Alexander Cruden, whom he quotes approvingly.

Tomlinson continues his attempt to rescue Scripture, arguing that some of the apparent problems would be resolved if the translation were attended to. In particular, he quotes verses that teach the Lordship of God as Creator over his creation. Given that Darwin was less than forty years from publishing his theories, there is something almost prophetic about the timing.

An enquirer asks the justification of the title, 'Supreme head of the Church', as used by our monarchs. The Editor replies that it is given by Act of Parliament, that it does not grant any spiritual powers, but that it does place all people under the king's rule, and therefore under his law. It is a necessary riposte to papal claims to rule over kings.

A possible objection to the doctrine of election—that men might as well live as they please, since the elect will be saved come what may and the reprobate damned come what may—is thoughtfully answered by showing that the child of God cannot live as he pleases. If in sin, then he is brought to repentance; if in holiness, then he cannot live as he desires while he is in the flesh.

Seek Truth is asked to identify himself. Some thoughts on coming to the throne of grace remind the reader of our privileges in Christ. The Review section deals with a sermon that attempts to illuminate the doctrine of predestination (it fails), and a book that gathers some helpful selections from Christian writers. There follows a review of a biography of Thomas Paine and a sermon preached against the prosecution of Richard Carlile for reprinting Paine's *The Age of Reason*. The last item includes an argument against Christians going to law to prosecute their religious opponents. It is quoted at length, with approval. Poetry ends the issue.

100 years ago: January & February 1920

The issue for **January** opens with a piece warning of the dangers in sight. The War had ended, but industrial unrest was increasing. Christianity was under attack, and the move towards reunion with Rome was gaining support. In all this, Thomas Houghton reminds the readers that God is our guide, as he was to Israel in the wilderness. The theme of God being our Helper is continued in Wayside Notes, from Psalm 63:7.

A long roll-call of readers whose earthly pilgrimage closed during 1919 reminds us of the brevity of life. James Ormiston's sermon on Psalm 5:8 show the faith of a child of God. An exposition of Proverbs 30:9 points the reader to Christ. Religion and Christianity are contrasted, and the words, 'Look up' (Luke 21:28), provide a New Year promise. Dr Candlish's comments on Abram and Melchizedek are reproduced. The sufferings of Alice Benden, one of the Marian martyrs, are described.

The life of William Pollock (one from the roll-call) is recounted, and a letter on the dangers and fallacies of Higher Criticism is published. The fostering of Ritualism by the Bishops is exposed. Brief reviews end the month.

A sermon on the Good Shepherd opens the February issue. Thoughts on 'the words of this life' (Acts 5:20) follow. Wellsprings considers 'I Jesus' from Revelation 22:16, then a sermon on Zechariah 3:1–7 speaks of the change of raiment. The doctrine of the Trinity in Unity is treated, and the words, 'Sir, we would see Jesus', provide comfort for all who love him. Christ the key of David will finally overthrow the Church of Rome (a doctrine hardly held today, to the great weakening of the church). Thoughts on Luke 10:42 are continued from the previous year. Isaac's question in Genesis 22:7

is considered, and the building of the room for Elisha becomes a lesson in serving the Lord. An article warning of the dangers of Spiritualism, first published in the *English Churchman*, is followed by some precious words from Winston Churchill. A moving testimony to the goodness of the Lord in answering prayer, and a letter adding to the Life of William Pollock, provide encouragement. The procession of the Enabling Bill is considerably less encouraging. This newly-passed law permitted the Church of England to become self-governing, no longer requiring

the approval of Parliament (that is, the representative members of the Established Church) to make changes. Instead, Convocation (now Synod) would govern as it saw fit. Protestants were rightly concerned that, unless the electing and elected bodies were made up of Protestant Evangelicals, the future of the Church of England was dark. So it has proven to be. However, the proposed remedy—that Protestants stand for the posts—has largely been ignored.

Brief reviews conclude the issue.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

An extract from THE EPISTLE OF DIOGNETUS (late 2nd Century AD)

FOR Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a peculiar form of speech; they do not follow an eccentric manner of life. This doctrine of theirs has not been discovered by the ingenuity or deep thought of inquisitive men, nor do they put forward a merely human teaching, as some people do. Yet, although they live in Greek and barbarian cities alike, as each man's lot has been cast, and follow the customs of the country in clothing and food and other matters of daily living, at the same time they give proof of the remarkable and admittedly extraordinary constitution of their own commonwealth. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land. They marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but they do not cast

out their offspring. They share their board with each other, but not their marriage bed. It is true that they are 'in the flesh,' but they do not live 'according to the flesh.' They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their own lives they go far beyond what the laws require. They love all men, and by all men are persecuted. They are unknown, and still they are condemned; they are put to death, and yet they are brought to life. They are poor, and yet they make many rich; they are completely destitute, and yet they enjoy complete abundance. They are dishonoured, and in their very dishonour are glorified; they are defamed, and are vindicated. They are reviled, and yet they bless; when they are affronted, they still pay due respect. When they do good, they are punished as evildoers; undergoing punishment, they rejoice because they are brought to life. They are treated by the Jews as foreigners and enemies, and are hunted down by the

Greeks; and all the time those who hate them find it impossible to justify their enmity.

To put it simply: What the soul is in the body, that Christians are in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, but does not belong to the body, and Christians dwell in the world, but do not belong to the world. The soul, which is invisible, is kept under guard in the visible body; in the same way, Christians are recognised when they are in the world, but their religion remains unseen. The flesh hates the soul and treats it as an enemy, even though it has suffered no wrong, because it is prevented from enjoying its pleasures; so too the world hates Christians, even though

it suffers no wrong at their hands, because they range themselves against its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh that hates it, and its members; in the same way, Christians love those who hate them. The soul is shut up in the body, and yet itself holds the body together; while Christians are restrained in the world as in a prison, and yet themselves hold the world together. The soul, which is immortal, is housed in a mortal dwelling; while Christians are settled among corruptible things, to wait for the incorruptibility that will be theirs in heaven. The soul, when faring badly as to food and drink, grows better; so too Christians, when punished, day by day increase more and more. It is to no less a post than this that God has ordered them, and they must not try to evade it. ¶

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN 3:8

by EDWARD J. MALCOLM (Reading)

‘The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.’

NICODEMUS had been explaining his understanding of who Jesus Christ is, v. 2; ‘a teacher come from God.’ He felt he had good cause to hold this view, adding, ‘for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.’ To Nicodemus, then, the testimony of the miracles was that they showed the power and presence of God to be with Jesus of Nazareth. In this way, Nicodemus was acknowledging Jesus to be like Moses, Elijah or Elisha—three men with whom the Lord was in power, and whose power was shown in the mighty acts associated with them.

As far as he went, Nicodemus was

correct. He had rightly understood the signs as demonstrating true divine power. He did not come to the blasphemous conclusion of some—that they proved that Jesus was demon-possessed, Matthew 12:24—and so is to be recognised as having more understanding than some. It is clear from Christ’s words in v. 3 that this answer, good as it was, fell far short of the truth.

‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ On first sight, this appears to be a wholly unexpected response to Nicodemus’ words. While some think that the preamble (‘Jesus answered and said unto

him...') implies an unrecorded question from Nicodemus, the truth is to be sought in the words themselves, and not in any apparently omitted material.

Given that Christ speaks of the kingdom of God, it is clear that Nicodemus, in some way, had the kingdom in mind when he began to speak. Given that Christ declared the impossibility of seeing the kingdom without the new birth, it is clear that Nicodemus, in some way, considered Christ to be key to the coming of the kingdom, and the miracles evidence of reality of that kingdom. Given that Christ said all this to one who came by night, it seems eminently reasonable to infer that Nicodemus believed his better understanding of who Christ is, somehow put him in line to enter the kingdom. Therefore the words of our Lord are intended to disabuse him of his error, and instead to point him to the vital truth which lies at the heart of the gospel.

The answer of Christ to Nicodemus stripped away that man's errors concerning Christ, his kingdom, and the means of entry. None shall enter without the new birth. Indeed, without the new birth that kingdom remains out of sight. The Greek word translated 'see' is *ὁραω* (*horaō*), to perceive. Whatever Nicodemus thinks he has seen, he has not seen the kingdom of heaven, because he has not been born again.

The matter is made plain by the explanation which follows. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Our version rightly distinguishes Spirit from spirit at the end of the verse. The clear meaning is that bodies reproduce bodies (and carnal preaching brings forth carnal Christians), and the Spirit reproduces spirit. One who is a master in Israel, and a ruler of the Jews, knows all about physical descent. The ability to trace one's lineage was important, as Paul

shows in Philippians 3:5—though he does not rely on physical descent for his blessings. However, to be born of blood and of the will of the flesh is to inherit what blood and flesh both give and inherit; the physical, passing world with its promises and corruptions. Only those who are born of the Spirit are spiritual, and therefore able to perceive the kingdom of God.

The next verse, 7, appears to be in response to the look on Nicodemus' face. 'Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again.' Christ's words in v. 6 fly in the face of experience, reason and sense. No wonder Nicodemus had trouble accepting it. Christ then provides words of explanation, in v. 8. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' What are we to understand by this?

The first point is that the comparison of wind and Spirit is useful. Of course, the word 'wind' is the same as the word 'spirit', *πνευμα* (*pneuma*): the qualification, 'bloweth' distinguishes 'wind' from 'spirit'. The use of the comparison lies in this: nobody can tell when the wind will come, nor from which direction—and neither can they tell where it will go next. Of course, some will say that they can predict the wind, and be sure of its direction, based on observations. But our Lord is speaking of one who is out and about, and who is suddenly overtaken by a breeze. There was little or no warning of it, and its passing leaves no mark to show either its brief presence or its course. The person who experiences the breeze will know that it came, and will perhaps be grateful for a momentary relief from heat. But none can summon the wind, nor go to the place where it is certain to be in order to obtain the benefit.

The second point to note is that Christ

ascribes a will to the wind. Of course, the wind, being without personhood, cannot truly possess a will, for will is an aspect of person. But in that the wind is compared with the Spirit, we are clearly meant to see that the Spirit does possess a will, and is therefore truly a person. This helps to answer those who falsely believe that the Holy Spirit is merely a term for the divine influence that comes on people from time to time. Christ teaches the personhood of God the Holy Spirit by ascribing to him a will.

The third point to note is that this will is not under the control of man. Just as the wind blows where it will, so the Spirit goes where he wills. None can command the Holy Spirit, nor go to the place where he will next be. He comes and goes, visiting and passing on at will.

The fourth point arises directly from the third. Christ adds, 'so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' This does not, and cannot, mean that all who are born of the Spirit also come and go as they please, possessing a will that none can command. It does, however, that the Holy Spirit must 'blow over' us, so to speak, in his time and in the place of his choosing, if we are to experience the new birth.

This truth carries certain implications for us.

In the first place, *it shows us the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit for salvation*. If any would undergo the new birth they must do so under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. He is, after all, called 'the Lord and giver of life' in the Nicene Creed—and the Creed is a statement of orthodox Christianity accepted by the people of God for more than 1,500 years. That he is the Lord and giver of life is seen in the first mention of him in Scripture. We read in Genesis 1:2 that 'the Spirit of God moved on the face of the deep.' The significance of this statement

is revealed immediately, when God said, 'Let there be light: and there was light.' The whole work of turning the first result of creation into the ordered, life-supporting world it quickly became is dependent on the presence of God the Holy Spirit. Yes, it is also dependent on the presence of God the Father, and of God the Son, by whom all things were made, but it is peculiarly the role of God the Holy Spirit to give life to what God has ordained. There is no new birth without the operation of God the Holy Spirit.

In the second place, *we learn that we are to depend on the means of grace*, by which and in which the Holy Spirit works. The same Creed declares that it was the Spirit 'who spake by the prophets'. This echoes Peter's statement in 1 Peter 1:11, concerning the prophets who searched 'what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify' of those things concerning Christ and his sufferings. We have no cause to believe that the prophets made their enquiries led by the Spirit but wrote down the results without the Spirit. In the same way, Peter goes on to speak of gospel preachers: 'them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.' These men, the apostles and their successors, were first overcome by the Holy Spirit in conversion, then filled with the Holy Spirit to minister the gospel, and then strengthened by the same Spirit in preaching. Added to these means of grace—Holy Scripture and the preached word—we have prayer. Romans 8:26–27 make plain our complete dependence on the Spirit in prayer. Then there are the sacraments. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper can only be received aright by faith, and there is no faith without the inner working of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in all the means of grace granted to us by our gracious Lord, we depend on the presence,

working and power of God the Holy Spirit.

In the third place, *we learn something of the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost*. Christ declared that all manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but the sin against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, Matthew 12:31f. If it is the particular role of the Holy Spirit to testify to Christ and his truth, through the empowering of the word written and the word preached, it follows that the denial of his testimony is blasphemy and cannot be forgiven. It is blasphemy because it calls evil that which God has declared to be good. It is unforgivable because the one who persists in this opinion will never repent of this or any other sin. Such a person testifies that they hate the truth, the light and the Saviour. Such a person cannot expect to receive any good from the means of grace, nor from the declaration of salvation in Jesus Christ to all who repent and believe.

In the fourth place, *we learn to look for and welcome the motions of the Holy Spirit*. One of the difficulties we face is that the modern Charismatic movement has ruined many people's ability to enjoy the blessings of the Holy Spirit in a right and proper way. Expressions of joy and love in the Lord, as we worship, pray and read, are suppressed for fear of appearing to be approving of Charismatic excesses. Rather than fear what

men think, we ought to break out in praise as the Spirit moves us; we ought to weep and rejoice as the word directs us through the illumination of the Spirit; we ought to express in prayer the motions of our hearts as the Spirit gives utterance, and not rely so much on formal expressions. In our formal, congregational worship we are to do all things decently, and in order. There is to be a spirit and air of reverence and awe in the presence of the Holy God we worship. There is also to be a true sense of joy, especially when we are reminded of our blessings in Christ. In our personal devotions we should be ready to express that joy more freely. Anyone who has read Whitefield's *Journal*, for instance, knows how he was moved by the power of the Holy Spirit to express his emotions, even to the point of casting himself into a ditch and pleading with the Lord to leave him alone for a while, the sense of his presence being too great for the evangelist. Would that we were in that happy position!

Without the work of God the Holy Spirit there would be no church, no Scriptures, no preaching, and no salvation. Let us give due honour to him who is God blessed for ever, whose coming was by promise and gift of the Father. He confirms the identity, work and witness of God the Son. May we know, with the disciples, the joy of the Holy Ghost. ¶

The *Gospel Magazine* website has been updated, and now carries all available issues to the end of 2017. The web address is gospelmagazine.org.uk. Users need to click the 'Read past publications' link in the bar towards the top of the page, then use the links panel at the top of the new page (<https://www.gospelmagazine.org.uk/publications.html>) to choose the period they wish to search. In the box that says 'Filter', type the year desired, and then choose the month/s that appear below. Some files are large, and will take a few moments to download. More recent files are much smaller.

Do note also the link to 'Very special publications.' These are perhaps the most historically significant of our collection.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S LAW?

by WILLIAM T. FOLEY (London)

WE live in an age of confusion about values and morality. Ethics have changed dramatically. The Media is constantly pushing gender equality, diversity and climate change, and a multitude of other issues. Politicians are looking for answers. Some scientists are looking for alternatives to God. Evolution is now taken as the scientific explanation for the existence of the universe and all living things. A young earth or even creation is cast aside as being impossible. Even theistic evolution is believed by some preachers and teachers. Theological compromises between religious denominations are increasing. Unification of world religions is being pursued under the guise of peace and security. The LORD is being replaced by man's thinking and indeed the LORD is being made in the image and sinful reasoning of modern man.

Yet, people are looking for answers in an age when many want to develop their own standards and morality. Everyone wants to do that which is right in their own eyes. There are no absolutes because of post-truth doctrine, postmodernism and pluralism. There are those who reject the Bible and its message of salvation. They see Jesus as merely another figure in human history.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are the basis of Western morality, but unfortunately legislators are promoting lawlessness by ignoring their requirements. Judaeo-Christian commandments have been fundamental to our legislative and judicial process for many years.

Conscience tells us too we are breaking God's Law but we try and stifle it by our thoughts, words and actions/deeds. Then

there are those who believe they can earn their way to heaven by keeping the Law of God. There are those who believe if they keep the Ten Commandments that they will merit their entrance to paradise.

Ponder the Ten Commandments and the role they play in bringing a sinner to Christ. Following is a simplified version of the commandments from Exodus 20.

1. God must come first in your life
2. You must not make an idol of anything
3. You must only use God's name in reverence
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
5. Honour your parents
6. Do not murder
7. Do not commit adultery (including lustful thoughts, and all immorality)
8. Do not steal (regardless of value)
9. Do not lie (including 'white lies')
10. Do not covet (desire) what is not yours

God demands perfect obedience to his commands! In all, there are 613 commandments. The Ten commandments that God gave Moses in Mount Sinai, on tables of stone, are the perpetual moral law.

Ask yourself: throughout your entire life, have you kept God's commands perfectly? Of course not. If you think you have kept the commandments, just go back and read again the Ten Commandments; and ponder carefully each one, and the spiritual nature of each commandment. The Word of God teaches if you break one commandment then you are guilty of breaking all of them (James 2:10). For example, to take the first commandment: have you put God first in all of your life? If not, then you are totally guilty before a Holy God, and will endure his wrath and judgment.

Jesus kept the law

The beauty of the Gospel of God is that Jesus kept the law of God absolutely for us. Jesus kept each commandment exactly. What a beautiful and wonderful and kind thing Jesus did for us. Christ is impeccable.

When you become a believer in Christ, God looks at Jesus when he looks at you and me. If he looked at me he would just see a little wretched and miserable sinner.

The law of God is intended to drive you and me to Christ. Our moral hopelessness is exposed by the law of God. We come under conviction and condemnation, and realise our situation is absolutely madness and folly to try and win God's favour. We find that we desperately need an advocate, a Saviour to take away the plague of our sin. Then we discover that Christ has done everything necessary for us, and God doesn't lay anything to our charge, but instead God laid all our sin on Christ.

Forgiveness through Christ alone

God forgives our sins only and exclusively through Christ. Christ bore the wrath of God on the Cross. It is a penal substitutionary death. The depth and breadth of Christ's suffering and punishment for you and me is vitally important to contemplate and seek to grasp and understand.

Justification through Christ alone

God declares us righteous through Christ alone. Christ is the alone Saviour of sinners. This is the essential doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone—we must not compromise this noble and necessary doctrine under any circumstances.

You cannot merit the merit of Christ. God alone justifies all sinners. Christ performs all that is required by the law of God. Take nothing away from Christ and don't rob him of his glorious righteousness or

work on Calvary. By grace we are saved (Ephesians 2:8,9). Nothing more or nothing less. Salvation is a gift! Christ paid the price, we don't pay anything. It is a free gift!

Our justification is all of God and is an instantaneous and permanent act of God, a once for all act, outside the sinner, and cannot be added to or subtracted from.

Christ righteousness is imputed to us because he kept the law of God perfectly and completely. We are still sinners and we have to mortify sin in our flesh but in God's method of justification through Christ we are forgiven and perfect in his eyes. There is no charge against us, because God has justified us (Romans 8:33).

Christ took my liabilities (my debts) and my guilt (for breaking the law of God); and God has given Christ's righteousness to my account. I can't pay a thing for my salvation; I can't purchase salvation; I can't negotiate or do a deal with God for my salvation. I resign myself to God's way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. I rest alone in Christ for full and free salvation. Still a sinner am I but in Christ I'm regarded as righteous. It may seem like a legal fiction to some and a contradiction, but to me it is joy unspeakable and full of glory, because of Christ.

Atonement through Christ alone

Full atonement by Christ's blood was made at Calvary. The wrath of God has been satisfied by Christ's propitiatory sacrifice. It is finished, and no Roman priest can convert the wafer or wine into the body and blood of Christ. Christ, the Great High Priest, has done a most wonderful thing and made an eternal covenant with his shed blood.

Blessings abound to the Church of the Living God because of Christ's life, death and resurrection. There is still power in the blood to save the vilest sinner, without

money or religious practices. Behold the Lamb of God, and cry out for forgiveness and pardon. God can save to the uttermost through Christ. You'll never be righteous enough to be saved in yourself, you need the righteousness of God and that only comes through Christ having kept the Law of God in its totality. As the old hymn says:

Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands...

And again,

Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling...

Guilty Before God, but the Cross is the answer.

Your case is hopeless before God without Christ as your Saviour, Advocate and Mediator. Cling not to the Law for salvation, but cling to Christ. You are guilty and charged with sin before a holy God.

Note, it is not the wood of the Cross that saves, it is the Christ of the Cross who saves. Don't make the Cross into a relic or the Crown of Thorns, or the nails of the Cross. It is the Christ of the Cross that gives salvation and meaning. Look at the Cross, as it were, through the eyes of the Resurrection. Victory has been achieved over the Devil, Hell, Death and Sin for our salvation. Everything and everyone who was against us has been defeated. What a triumph in Christ.

All my sins on him were laid and I'm no longer under his wrath and condemnation, because of God's sovereign free grace. I was a slave to sin. Now I'm free in Christ. Grace abounding to you and me is through Christ alone—amazing and manifold grace to the whole household of faith, spanning the ages. Christ is the answer through the Cross.

Christ's righteousness imputed and the law fulfilled

All I want, and nothing else, is Christ's righteousness. Christ stands as my surety before the scrutiny of God's holiness. Praise God Christ is my victorious and vicarious Saviour. Praise God for his Holy Spirit, making salvation real to me in all his preciousness. The Lord Jesus Christ is my way, my truth and my life.

Christ is the fulfilment of the Law of God for all my righteousness. It is a done deal! The Law of God always shows the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The Law of God is holy, just, and good; it is spiritual and is an expression of the holiness of God. Christ righteousness is imputed to the believer, forever! We are united to Christ because of his doing and dying; both aspects were accepted by God for God's elect. We now have communion with God in prayer because of Jesus Christ.

Remember it is Christ alone that secured your righteousness and acceptance with God. Admit you cannot keep the Law of God for righteousness. Trust Christ alone for your righteousness. By doing so, you are showing the true and exact purpose of the Law of God—it is a schoolmaster to drive you to Christ. The Law of God has done its job and therefore you are no longer under the Law for any righteousness, and you now have the righteousness of Christ. There is therefore 'now' no condemnation to you and me because we are in Christ Jesus.

No Boasting Allowed

Can we boast about becoming a Christian in our own strength or power or through our own works? Paul in fact asked a similar question? 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds

of the law' (Romans 3:27–28). What triggers the question? 'To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus' (Romans 3:26). So, boasting of any description that we merit, work for salvation is of no avail with God. Salvation is all of the Lord. It is a gift. God is just and the justifier of any person who believes in Jesus.

Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6). If you believe in Christ that he justifies the ungodly, your faith will be imputed or counted, or reckoned for righteousness (Romans 4:6). Christ, the just, died for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18). By keeping the Law of God for righteousness there will be no person justified in God's sight, because by the Law of God is the knowledge of sin. Everybody's mouth is stopped and the world

is guilty before God through the work of the Law of God (Romans 3:19–20). Our goodness springs from a heart and will that is totally polluted and is rejected by a holy God. Forensic justification is the way that God has designed. He must declare you righteous or you are damned. Sin must be punished by God. Eternity in the lake of fire is for those sinners who are not forgiven by God through Christ's penal and blood sacrifice.

The Law of God defines sin and gives the knowledge of sin. As Paul says, 'What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet' (Romans 7:7). That is the purpose of the Law; it exposes sin. But Christ has fulfilled the Law for all righteousness. ¶

BOOK REVIEW

Beyond the Big C.

Hope in the face of death

Jeremy Marshall

10Publishing, 2019. 76pp £2.50 pbk ISBN 978-1-913278-03-8

Small, short books are sometimes assumed to contain little of value. Some people ignore them, some read them with low expectations. This book will likely surprise all who read it. Written by the son of a well-known Baptist minister (gone to be with the Lord), it is the personal testimony of one who has suffered from cancer for more than six years, who has lived beyond the expectation of the specialists, and who knows that his time is in the Lord's hands.

The book is not about how to survive cancer, nor is it a triumphant account of overcoming. Instead, it is a well-written exhortation to the reader to consider an unpleasant truth. The writer was ill before he knew it, was terrified by the diagnosis of cancer, but has been greatly helped by a skilled and compassionate oncologist. In a far more serious way we are all sick, whether we know it or not, and the discovery of our condition must terrify us. There is one who is the physician of souls, who has defeated death in dying on the cross, and has declared this to the world in rising again from the tomb. Faith in Jesus Christ will not keep us from cancer or any other trial, nor will it guarantee a cure in this life. It is, however, inextricably linked to our being raised to eternal life and to the joys of heaven, since it is faith in the one who has himself died and risen again. The author urges his readers to take seriously what he says.

The account is illustrated with quotations from and references to such writers as J.C. Ryle

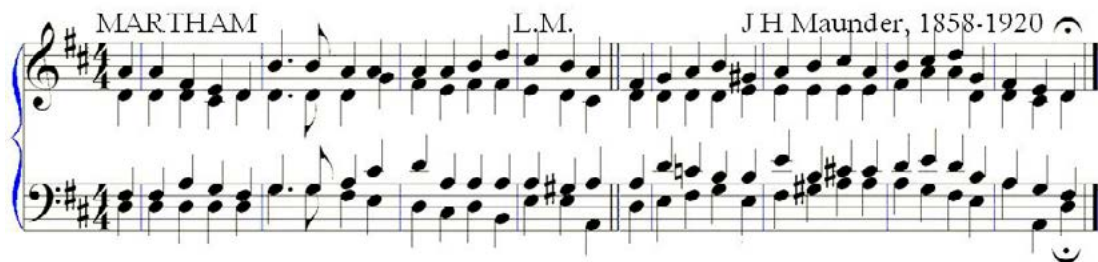
and C.S. Lewis. There are also references to books and films from popular culture. The effect is to produce a testimony that will be comprehensible to the modern, unchurched generation. The Bible version quoted is the NIV.

EJM

POETRY

by PETER MURCOTT (Isle of Man)

CLEANSING THY WAY



(Psalm 119:9–16)

For cleansing of thy way—from youth
Take earnest heed, and seek God's truth;
O wander not! but be made whole
By Christ, the Saviour of thy soul.

Secure the Scriptures deep within
Thine heart; to be kept safe from sin;
O blessed Lord, Thy statutes teach
To me, I earnestly beseech.

So with my lips will I declare
The judgments of Thy mouth with care;
Be glad, my soul, lift up thy voice,
Such riches make a man rejoice.

O meditate throughout life's days,
And fix thy thoughts upon God's ways!
And make His statutes thy delight,
And joy, and treasure, in thy sight.

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CHELTENHAM. *Providence Baptist Chapel*. Lord's Day services, 10.30 am and 6.30 pm. Bible Study and Prayer Meeting, Wednesdays 7.30 pm. Use AV and *Christian Worship*. *Pastor:* Mr Pooyan Mehrshahi. Tel. 01242 245116.

FRISTON, SUFFOLK: *Baptist Church*, Mill Road IP17 1PH (4 miles from Aldeburgh, 3 miles from Snape Maltings). Lord's Day services: 10.45 am and 2 pm. Bible Study Tuesdays 7.30 pm. AV and *Gospel Hymns*. Reformed Evangelical worship. *Pastor:* Michael Harley. fristonbaptistsuffolk.org.uk. Tel 01728 602657.

SUFFOLK: *Wattisham Chapel*. Evangelical and Reformed services each LORD'S DAY 10.45 am, 2.30 and 6.30 pm. Metrical Psalms and hymns. AV only used. Telephone 01449 612524.

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