

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2021

£1.50

The Gospel Magazine



What we shall have • Knowing the Lord – Paul's excellent knowledge • Michael

Contents

129	Editorial.....	<i>The Editor</i>
131	What we shall have.....	<i>The Editor</i>
136	A sermon on Isaiah 1:2–3	<i>C. Tuinman</i>
136	Seasoned with salt	<i>Carine Mackenzie</i>
139	Knowing the Lord Jesus—Paul’s Excellent Knowledge	<i>Wylie W. Fulton</i>
142	Covenant Communion with God.....	<i>John Hooper</i>
147	Michael	<i>J.E. North</i>
153	God’s Incarnation in Human Flesh (Pt. 3)	<i>William T. Foley</i>
155	Former Days, Being a summary of past issues from <i>The Gospel Magazine</i>	
159	Book Review	<i>JBD</i>

1766–2021

*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

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

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

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

Editor

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

The Secretary

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

**Cheques and postal orders
should be made payable to *The
Gospel Magazine*, in Sterling.
Please do not mail cash.**

Where subscriptions are due
a reminder is sent and prompt
payment is appreciated.

Subscription Rates

Bi-monthly, **£8.50 a year**
Previous issues, where available,
are **25p plus postage**
Current copies **£1.50**
*We encourage Church and
Chapel group subscriptions to
reduce administration*

Advertising Rates

To advertise please send details **six
weeks** prior to publication, and
include your cheque for the correct
amount as follows:

Full page **£30 mono, £45 colour**

½ page **£16 mono, £24 colour**

¼ page **£8 mono, £12 colour**

Classified adverts **14p per word**

*We reserve the right to refuse
advertisements*

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC
Account Number 00236284
Sort code 20–41–12

gospelmagazine.org.uk
Charity No. 1070357

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and the British Protestant

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.

New Series
No. 1740

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER 2021

Old Series
No. 2740

EDITORIAL

'God is love' (1 John 4:8)

A CHURCH near me displays a poster on its noticeboard or wayside pulpit bearing the caption, 'God loves you with an everlasting love.' It is set above an image of two swans, beak to beak, with their necks arched, giving the impression of a love heart. This may tug at the emotions, but do we consider this to be scripturally true?

That God is love cannot be doubted, for the Scripture of truth declares it, 1 John 4:8. That love underlies the Father sending his Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, is also true. That our Lord Jesus Christ, having loved his own, loved them to the end, is a matter of great rejoicing now, and of greater rejoicing in the world to come. But can we really say to all men that God loves us with an everlasting love? Consider some implications.

In the first place, *this would mean that God must love the damned in hell.* There is no getting away from this, if indeed the love

of God for the unsaved is everlasting. Being everlasting, it must be without end. Death itself, which cannot separate the redeemed from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, cannot stand as an obstacle to everlasting love. Therefore, if this sentiment is true, God loves the damned in hell.

In the second place, and following on from this, *it would mean that the love of God is an ineffectual love.* What sort of love would God have for the damned in hell, if he did nothing to change their situation? And yet we are told that there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, which would come from thence. Not only is the individual powerless to move from hell, but the love of God appears to be unable to remove the sinner from hell. All who are not found in the book of life are cast there: if God loves all with an everlasting love, it follows that he loves some who are not in that book, and who cannot be added to it.

In the third place, *this would mean that the love of God is no source of hope for any*. Yes, God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, but if that love cannot save some, why should we believe it will save any? Of course, the love of God is not the ground of our salvation: the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is. Yet it is evident from John 3:15 that Christ's death was moved by the love of God: but if that love must lose some, how can we be certain it will not lose all?

In the fourth place, *it would make God a liar*. Our Lord Jesus, in describing the final judgment, shows that he will tell some, 'I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (Matt 7:23). If, however, all are loved with an everlasting love, then our Lord Jesus *does* know even the workers of iniquity. Can we think that he loves any whom he does not know? What manner of love would he have for us, if, being God, he could not save some whom he professed to love?

We know that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, Ezek. 33:11, and that he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, Psalm 145:9. We know that he makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Matt 5:45. In his *Historic Proofs of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* Augustus Toplady denied bearing hatred towards any man—including John Wesley—but only hating the sin in them. He said this was because we are all to hate the sin that is in us, and to confess that we are saved by grace. We should therefore show such grace towards the persons of those with whom we contend. But God is not bound by the same limitation with which we are bound. We dare not hate the sinner because we are sinners by nature. The Lord God is so very far from sin that he may indeed take a different view of sinners from the view we

must take. He does not condemn himself by hating anything that is opposed to his perfect nature and will.

We know that, at the judgment, the wicked will condemn themselves out of their own mouths; or their deeds, being read from the books, will condemn them. Indeed, were the record of our thoughts, words and deeds used to judge us, who would abide the day of his coming, or stand when he appeareth, for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, Mal 3:2? We are loved by him for the sake of him who loved us, and *gave himself* for us, even Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, if we would be loved by God we must be in the beloved. We must have that union with Christ, whereby we are, to change the metaphor, hiding in the Rock of Ages, cleft for me. Our Lord Jesus cried over Jerusalem, saying he would have gathered her people as a hen gathers her chickens, but they would not, Matt 23:37. This was not a statement about ineffectual love, but a word of condemnation to those who, in the day of grace, hardened their hearts as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness, Ps 95:8.

Thus it follows that, if we tell the unbelievers that God loves them with an everlasting love, we are telling them something that cannot be true. It may be that the Lord does indeed love them, and if he does, it will be with an everlasting love. But until he begins the work of grace in their hearts neither we nor they have any ground on which to make such a claim. But we can declare the love of God in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We can preach the authentic gospel. But we dare not say anything for which we have no warrant. When the work of grace is begun, then does the sinner truly *know* that divine love. And then they need none to tell them! Such is grace! Such is Christ's love! ¶

WHAT WE SHALL HAVE

A Sermon by THE EDITOR

‘Then Peter answered and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?’ Matthew 19:27

PETER has two matters in view here, the reward that awaits Christ’s most faithful followers, and intrinsic worth of those who have given up most for him. We see this as we take notice of the context in which these words appear, and we see how our blessed Lord responds in the parable that follows.

The matter was first broached by the man who came to Jesus in v. 16, asking, ‘Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?’ Our Saviour’s answer is instructive. He points the man to the law, not because eternal life may be had by keeping the law—for none can keep it properly except Christ—but because the man, a Jew, was under the law and believed that law obedience would bring the desired reward. His reply, that he has kept all these from his youth up, and his further question, ‘What lack I yet?’ reveal his true concern. He feels that something else is required, something more than obeying commandments. There was some shortfall in his obedience, and he desired to know what. ‘If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.’ Part with your earthly ties and comfort the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me. Our Lord’s words were not designed to encourage the notion that poverty and godliness are one and the same, but that we cannot serve two masters. This man loved his wealth too dearly as v. 22 reveals, but if our

love for Christ displaces all other affections, and we serve him wholeheartedly, we have laid up treasure in heaven.

The conversation led the Saviour to warn his disciples about the dangers of wealth. It is hard for the rich to enter into heaven, and it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter heaven. The love of money, which is the root of all evil, binds burdens onto us that keep us from the blessings of redemption. Such love may be found among those who have wealth, and among those who desire wealth.

The disciples are amazed at this, v. 25. If the privileges and advantages of wealth are an obstacle to entry into God’s kingdom, how will anyone get in? ‘With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.’ No man can get himself into heaven, struggle as he might; but those whom the Lord brings in by his grace are indeed blessed.

It is now that Peter asks his question. Christ had told the man to sell all he had and give to the poor, and he would have treasure in heaven, and he was then to follow the Lord Jesus. Peter points out that he and the disciples have give up everything, and are following the Lord Jesus. If that man could have had treasure in heaven, and we have done the same, what treasure will we receive?

In this question are three things to note, before we turn to consider the answer given by our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the first place, we see that Christian service involves forsaking

The Galilean fishermen left their nets, boats, fellow fishermen and families to follow Jesus, Matt 4:18ff. Did they do this because such a life was uncertain, as John 21:3 indicates? Did they hope for an easier life? Peter's question shows that, if that had been the motive, it had proved to be mistaken. No doubt Matthew Levi had more money as a tax collector than ever he did as a disciple, and so we cannot think that to forsake all is to enter into present riches.

Again, we may ask why these disciples forsook all and followed Jesus. Was it a conscious decision on their part to try some new thing? Did they weigh the future and calculate the benefit of following him? We cannot think so. They were called with an irresistible call, for it was the will of their heavenly Father that they be the disciples. If asked, no doubt each would have given a reason why the call of Christ was so readily obeyed. They may not have been able to explain it very clearly, but at the moment of being called they had felt the rightness of obedience. His grace, his love, his authority, were sensed in the way he called them, and they were glad to obey. Of course, their obedience was not a matter of mere feelings, as the more detailed account of the calling of Nathanael shows, John 1:43ff. There was a degree of conviction that rises above mere emotion, a conviction that is a work of grace, and evidence of Christ's power.

This forsaking is not temporary but total. Our Lord Jesus put the matter starkly when he said, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:26). This is not to deny the Fifth Commandment, but it is to show that

no natural affection or earthly tie may be permitted to rival our love to Christ. This is the point of Christ's words to the man whose question had led to Peter's question, as recorded in v. 21: 'go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' Those who would lay up treasure on earth are taught that they will suffer the loss of that treasure, for moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal, Matt 6:19ff. The Apostle James warns against trusting in riches, James 5:1-5, echoing the declamations of Amos and Hosea, and other Old Testament prophets.

Our forsaking of earthly things is by no means confined to wealth, as if that alone were the anchor that ties us to this earth. Misplaced affection is as strong a tie, and is harder to break. We love our families: but if they are between us and our faithful obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, we must put aside those ties of affection in order to do the more important service. This is one of the reasons why believers ought not to marry unbelievers: the believer has a different attitude to Christ than the unbeliever, and the latter cannot understand the values of the former. This leads, inevitably to tension, or, worse, to the believer becoming less careful in their Christian living.

If we would ask what, in particular, we are to forsake for Christ's sake, we will find the clearest answer by examining those things we hold dear. Anything that is not Christ or his glory or his will or his word that takes up our affections, time, energy or will, is to be forsaken for his sake. Such sacrifices are truly so called, for they are costly and difficult, unless and until we learn to see the true beauty and worth of our Saviour. Only then will we willingly give up all for his sake.

In the second place, we see that Christian service involves following Christ

Our Christian life is not merely to be measured by the degree to which we have separated from earthly ties. If that were all, then the best of the Buddhists would be one with us, and perhaps adherents to other religions. No, the measure of our Christian life is to be seen also in our following Jesus Christ. What do we understand Peter to mean, when he said that he and his fellow disciples were following Jesus?

The answer may appear to be obvious: they had left Galilee, and, wherever Jesus went, there they were. On the whole they walked where he walked, slept where he slept, and ate where he ate. There is much more to our following Jesus than this.

To follow Jesus means, in the first place, *to have faith in him*. Had the disciples followed Jesus without faith we would have just cause to ask why they followed him at all. No doubt the faith of Judas differed markedly from the faith of Peter, James, John and the others. Perhaps Simon the Canaanite, or Zealot, began with a different expectation—the Jewish hope of another David who would rid the land of enemies and make Israel great again. As to the ongoing following of Jesus by the disciples, particularly after his resurrection, ascension and sending down of the Holy Spirit, we know beyond all doubt that this was testimony to the faith they had in him. Peter's preaching at Pentecost, and the readiness of the apostles to face all manner of opposition for his sake, shows the depth of their faith. They knew the truth for which they contended in their sermons. They knew the truth on which they stood as they resisted attempts by various authorities to silence them. They knew that, in the end, a better reward was laid up for them. Faith in Jesus Christ constrained them to follow him in all things.

To follow Jesus means, in the second place, *to be obedient to his will*. We do not choose our own way of following Christ, but we go in the way we are led. The apostles preached because they were both called to preach, and constrained to preach. 'For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!' (1 Cor 9:16). Paul went on his missionary journeys because he was led by the Holy Spirit, going to those places to which he was called and not going where he was prevented, Acts 16:6ff. It was the Lord's will that James be killed with the sword, that Peter be taken and imprisoned, that Stephen be stoned to death, and that Paul and Silas be imprisoned at Ephesus. It was the Lord's will that Paul languish in prison for many years, and that he suffer shipwreck, and be bitten by a serpent. It was the Lord's will that Dorcas should die, and that Mary should endure the agony of seeing her son die on the cross. The Lord's will is very often that his people should go through times of suffering, as Daniel did in the lions' den, and his three friends did in the fiery furnace. But it is also the Lord's will that his people glorify him in all their circumstances, giving praise to his name and confessing him before the world. This is how the gospel goes forth, and this is how the wonderful truth of the new birth is demonstrated to the world.

To follow Jesus means, in the third place, *to bear all things for his sake*. If we will obey our Lord truly, we must obey him in all things. Whether we are brought into the valley of the shadow of death, or to rest beside the still waters, it is the Lord's way and therefore we are to go as he leads us. At times it may seem that we are being led in odd ways. When Israel left Egypt there was a direct route to Canaan, along the Mediterranean

coast, but the Lord did not take them that way. He knew they would face greater opposition from the Philistines than they could bear, so they were led into the wilderness. There, they faced the Red Sea, the bitter water, the lack of food, and many trials: yet this was the right way, and, at last, they came to the promised land. Obedience to Christ's will may involve hardship, but if it is his will, we are to receive such things for his sake. We do not follow our Lord Jesus truly, nor submit to his will faithfully, if our walking after him is woven through with complaints, and coloured by reluctance. Paul was met by Agabus, who testified to him that bonds awaited him at Jerusalem, Acts 21:10ff, but he professed himself to be unmoved by such things. Notice that, as part of the conclusion to this section of Matthew's Gospel, our Lord tells his disciples that he must suffer mockery and death, 21:17–19. Dare we think we can avoid what the Father has prepared for us, when we owe our salvation to the willingness of our Saviour to fulfil his Father's will completely? If we would follow Jesus, we must bear all things for his sake.

In the third place, we see that such forsaking and following is not in vain

Peter's conclusion, or perhaps the thrust of his question, is in these words: 'what shall we have?' Jesus had told the man whose question began this section, 'Thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' What treasure shall we have, asks Peter.

Hear what our Lord replies, vv. 28–30.

In the first place, *he speaks only to those who have followed him*, v. 28. There will be many in that day who say, 'Lord, Lord', but only those who have obeyed the Father's will shall enter the kingdom of heaven, 7:21. Some might assent to the truth of the gospel, and be very knowledgeable about it, but that

is not saving faith. Some might be very active in seeking to help their fellow man, but that is not obedience to the Father's will unless he has commanded it. We are to be followers of Jesus, for we have called to follow him.

In the second place, *he tells us that our reward will be had 'in the regeneration.'* That is, we are not to look for heavenly treasure in this life, but in the next. In so doing we are reminded of two things. First, we are reminded that all earthly comforts, privileges, advancements and honours are for this life only. In the end they will pass. 'We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out' (1 Tim 6:7). To seek after these things is to seek after what the Gentiles seek, as food, drink and clothing, Matt 6:31. Our heavenly Father knows our needs, and supplies all we need according to his grace. Of course, our perception of our needs may be different from his knowledge of them, and faith accepts what grace gives without murmuring. Secondly, we are reminded of the certainty of the world to come. The end, or fulfilment, of our faith is the salvation of our souls, 1 Peter 1:9. That salvation is in the form of eternal life, a life to be lived in its fullness in the regeneration, that making new of all things which will follow the end of the world as we know it. Since the gift is everlasting life it follows that nothing in this life can be compared with it. Everything we know now will pass, and only eternal things will continue. We therefore look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

In the third place, *he tells us that we shall be more than conquerors.* The disciples, he says, will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Time does not permit a lengthy consideration of this, but we should bear in mind what is involved in being a judge. Those who judged Israel before the

establishment of the monarchy were men—and in one case a woman (and perhaps on one occasion only)—who judged matters by the word of God. They were appointed by the Lord God to this role, and they were given authority to speak in his name. Many who profess to speak in the Lord's name today speak with uncertainty and doubt: that is not the way of faith. We note also that the saints shall all judge the nations, (Luke 22:28–30, 1 Cor 6:2,) and angels, v. 3. All who overcome will sit with Christ on his throne, Rev 3:21. Peter and his fellow disciples are not being told something unique to them, but something that is true of all the saints properly so called.

In the fourth place, *he tells us that our reward will be according to our loss*. All those earthly blessings and comforts we forsake for Christ will be repaid a hundred times over. Is that to happen only in the regeneration, or does it begin to be fulfilled now? When the church is truly the body of Christ, and when Christian hospitality is observed according to the command of Christ and his apostles, then believers begin to enjoy these things now. The love of the brethren and the welcoming in of strangers helps to restore all that some have had to forsake in order to be faithful to Christ. If the church cannot love and support its own, why will unbelievers think that the gospel preached by the church is something to desire? Let us learn to love the brethren truly.

In the fifth place, *he tells us that we will inherit everlasting life*. He came to give life to all who believe in him, as many as the Father has given him. He came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. He came to take off the curse from his people, and to redeem them from death and judgment. If eternal life is promised to us by him whose word cannot be broken, it follows that we

can bear the loss of all things now for his sake, in the knowledge that we will receive far more than we have lost. If eternal life is set before us, what need we of any other treasure in heaven? Satan said to the Lord, 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life' (Job 2:4), in which he spoke truly as to the fact, but falsely as to the believer. The child of God knows that separation from all things, including this life, is not too high a price to pay to remain faithful. Our Lord Jesus tells us we must lose our life for his sake, Matt 16:25, for our attempts at saving it will end in eternal damnation.

The final words of this chapter speak to a truth that is explained in the parable that follows. 'But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.' It is evident from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard that the hope of all believers is equal. Those who laboured long through the burden and heat of the day were paid the same as those who laboured but one hour. Why is this? Because the blessings promised, and the gift held out, is not according to our doing but to the will of him who has called us to be his faithful soldiers and servants. Many are called, but few are chosen. The sovereign will of our heavenly Father is worked out in the calling of sinners in our Lord Jesus Christ. None will be able to say that they have forsaken more, and so are worth more: all are called to forsake whatever they must forsake, and to serve as they must serve. Our following Christ is not by our choosing either the hardest or the easiest path, but by going the way he leads us. This being so, we should be content to know that our brethren in the faith will enjoy the same blessing we look to enjoy. Let this thought engender love, support and concern for one another, as we seek to serve Christ according to his will. Amen. ¶

A SERMON ON ISAIAH 1:2–3

REV. C. TUINMAN (1659–1728)

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

Part 16

A comforting conclusion

And if we do that, beloved,

1. Then heaven and earth shall be treasures of God's favour (Malachi 3:10) and we shall one day exchange the earth for the blessed heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1). The Lord shall look from heaven upon us and help us (1 King 8:28).
2. Then he shall speak to us, but in grace, for he will speak peace unto his people, as is written in Psalm 85:8. See Isaiah 40:1.
3. We are, as children of God, his heirs (Romans 8:17 and ours shall be:
 - a. *His fatherly love* (John 14:21; Isaiah 49:14, 15).
 - b. *His fatherly care* (Matthew 6:32).
 - c. *His fatherly compassion* (Isaiah 49:14, 15; Psalms 103:13; 27:10; Jeremiah 31:20).
 - d. *His fatherly forgiveness* (Matthew 6:14).
 - e. *His fatherly cleansing* (Malachi 3:17).
 - f. *The house and kingdom of our Father* (John 14:2, 3). A kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).
4. We shall not be as the ox and ass, let alone even worse, but as angels, yea God himself and renewed by him, increasing in knowledge after the image of him (Colossians 2:10).
5. This knowledge shall be our reason of our boasting (Jeremiah 9:23). Yea an invaluable treasure (Proverbs 3:14; 8:11; Philippians 3:8). This is the course of blessedness (Proverbs 3:13). In Heaven this all shall be perfect. For we see now though a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am know (1 Corinthians 13:12). ¶

SEASONED WITH SALT

by CARINE MACKENZIE

Our kitchen cupboards are full of ingredients which we use to cook our meals. Some items may not be used very often, like cinnamon or turmeric. But one thing I use every day is salt. I add it to vegetables as they are cooking. I season meat and salads to enhance the flavour.

Salt has many uses. As well as adding flavour to our food, it can be used as a preservative. Fishermen on trawlers in the Atlantic cover their catch with salt to keep it fresh till they get back to port.

Salt has a purifying effect too if you have ever had a tooth extracted, the advice is given to wash out your mouth regularly with a salt solution to keep infections away.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus told his followers that they were the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). How does the Christian compare to salt? How does he add a good flavour to his dealings with the world? When we are speaking with others, do they notice the savour of Christ in our conversation? 'Let your speech be always with grace,' said Paul to the Colossian church, 'seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man' (Colossians 4:6). Grace is a gift from God and it is only through his power that our words will be wise and gracious and helpful to others.

By nature our words can be proud, hurtful or hasty, but we are warned to 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers' (Ephesians 4:29).

If salt loses its taste, it is good for nothing. Jesus tells us that it is cast out and trodden under foot of men. Man was created in the image of God, but at the fall that image was tarnished and judgment came on mankind. We were lost in sin. But the good news is that recovery came through Jesus Christ. He dealt with sin on the cross and drew sinners to himself. That new life in Christ shows the Christ-like flavour in its dealings with others.

The preservative nature of salt points us to the fact that we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1 Peter 1:5). We are preserved in Jesus Christ (Jude 1).

Psalm 121 speaks many times about the Lord preserving his people.

The Lord preserves his people from all evil (v. 7).

He shall preserve thy soul, the Psalmist adds (v. 7).

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore (v. 8).

The believer has the wonderful promise of being kept for eternal life.

The purifying effect of salt reminds us of the need for holiness. God tells us, through Peter (1 Peter 1:15) to be holy in all manner of conversation. Peter then quotes from the book of Leviticus chapter 11. 'Be ye holy; for I am holy.' We must remember that we cannot be holy in our own strength. But the Lord's people are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ and covered with his righteousness. Not until death are the souls of believers made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory. (Westminster Shorter Catechism 37.) But as we live in this world, we should be obedient to the commands of the Lord out of love to him.

One mark of having purified our soul in obeying the truth through the Spirit (1 Peter 1:22) is to show unfeigned love to others and to love one another with a pure heart fervently. If we are wondering if we are truly one of the Lord's people, a reassuring test is told us in 1 John 3:14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. When we meet a Christian, even for the first time how special it is to feel the unity we have through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:2 instructs us to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

Therefore be seasoned with salt so that your life will show the savour of Christ in your words and actions, remembering that you are kept by God's power in every situation, as you grow in grace to be more like the Saviour.

Bible Search

Find the words missing from the texts. The initial letters of the correct answers will spell out a phrase from Mark 9:50.

1. Hold fast the form of _____ words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 1:13)
2. A word fitly spoken is like _____ of gold in pictures of silver. (Proverbs 25:11)
3. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the _____, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. (Isaiah 50:4)
4. If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be _____ under the foot of men. (Matthew 5:13)
5. But I say unto you, That every _____ word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. (Matthew 12:36)
6. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every _____ shall be salted with salt. (Mark 9:49)
7. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister _____ unto the hearers. (Ephesians 4:29)
8. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye _____ to answer every man. (Colossians 4:6)
9. If any man _____ not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. (James 3:2)
10. For ye were sometimes _____, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)

KNOWING THE LORD JESUS— PAUL'S EXCELLENT KNOWLEDGE

by WYLIE W. FULTON (USA)

'But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death' (Phil. 3:7–10).

PAUL is the man of one theme. There are three facets to the one theme and all are centred in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is not remembered as a distinct systematic theology teacher, although he is surely the foremost Bible writer for setting forth the great doctrines of the faith. But Paul is noted as a preacher of Christ, an excellent letter writer on the subjects surrounding his Lord and as a humble servant of Jesus Christ who had appeared to him first on the Damascus road. Christ is the central theme of all Paul says and does—and why not so? God had stopped him in his mad career, delivered him by special mercy and grace, and brought him as a bond slave to the obedience of Christ (read his full story in Acts 9). Oh what amazing grace that stops one so blatantly antagonistic to the claims of Christ, then works effectually in his heart and life to make of him the New Testament example of how God saves sinners (1 Tim. 1:16).

Note 'Paul's Excellent Knowledge' as we treat it in these three particulars:

I. *To know him*, for this is salvation. 'That I may know him'—just *know* him, be identified and united with this glorious person, our Lord and Saviour. This is what salvation means, 1 John 2:2–3. We'll call this 'Life's

Foundation.'

II. *To centre upon the knowledge of him* and his Cross in preaching. Not in eloquence of words but in demonstration of the Spirit, for the word of the CROSS is the word of power! 1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14. Then, like Paul, this will be our 'Life's Function.'

III. *To experience more of his love* and see it shed abroad in his own heart and among those to whom he preached. Eph. 3:19. Here you find 'Life's Fulness.'

'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' And first—

I. To know him as Lord and Saviour—life's foundation

1. This involves a turning loose all that was gain (v. 7). Your natural gain will prove loss, while the worldly losses of this life will be, by God's grace, your clearest gains.

2. It brings the concerned sinner to fix his searching heart upon one goal—Christ's so-great salvation, and to let all other ambitions go (v. 8).

3. All works and law-righteousness and creature confidence must be expunged from the soul; for this excellent knowledge is in the works of Another and not within the

scope of any real or imagined human attainments (v. 9).

4. Any sinner who comes to the end of himself and says, 'Christ is all I want; I cannot live unless God gives Christ to be my own possession!' is a sinner who will assuredly find him and be found in him. God cannot give more, and God will receive you with no less than a personal, intimate acquaintance with his only-begotten Son!

5. The greatest thing you can ever experience is to be separated from all else that God might give you Christ!

6. Not many ever come here. In Paul's persecuting years he no doubt had many associates in his mischief, but do we know of any who became believers with Paul? No easy profession—no charismatic emotional crisis—no 'praying through'—no 'just believe or make a decision'—no baptism—no church membership—no amount of 'good works,' etc. can bring you to Christ. No! You must be separated—come out from among these things! Free-will and work-mongering cannot help such a separated and broken sinner as Paul was—as I was, as you were, if you possess this saving knowledge of our Lord.

7. Paul is a *pattern*, remember. 'Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a *pattern* to them which should hereafter believe' (1 Timothy 1:16). Have you come Paul's way? This is that 'strait gate and narrow way' that our Lord points out in Matthew 7. Your life has *no* foundation without this.

II. To centre on the knowledge of him and his cross in preaching—life's function

'That I may know him ... and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death' (v. 10).

1. His sufferings and his death—that

was Paul's central knowledge in coming to know him, as we have seen. 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal. 6:14). That was his salvation, his faith and his assurance. And that is also the *centre* in Paul's preaching and all true ministry in every age. 'For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (1 Cor. 2:2). What is your doctrine of the atonement, of the Cross? According to this test is seen whether you know the gospel or not.

2. The Cross is the dividing line between the world and the believer. Notice again Gal. 6:14—what else can a believer 'glory' in? And Paul would preach that Cross as it is, for by it the world had been crucified to Paul and Paul to the world. Preach it as such! The Cross demands a death, a separation, a crucifixion and a resurrection—I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2:20). That was how Paul was saved, and that was how Paul lived and preached—his excellent knowledge was to know Christ Crucified.

3. The revelation of Christ crucified for you is what breaks a sinner's heart and brings him to Christ at the first. The Law condemns; the Law shuts the sinner up; the Law accepts no excuses, no alibis, and makes no allowances for infirmity or old age. According to Gal. 3:22–25, the sinner is kept under the Law for a time; the Law works death within him, the death to all his own perceived goodness, and to all else in which he gloried at one time. But it is the *love* of God manifested at Calvary that finally breaks the heart in repentance, and that is where faith is given. Preach to that end! We are weary of easy professions that make no changes in sinners'

lives for such shallow work doesn't get them to Christ.

4. And so Paul demonstrates a contrast between the excellent wisdom or the cleverness of invitations and oratory. Read 1 Cor. 2:1–5. It is by God's Spirit and power exclusively that any good work is done through preaching. When a true gospel preacher comes before any people, he is dependent on a sovereign God to do the work and to reveal God's salvation to everyone that he wills to save. It is all in the hands of God—as we recognize the sinner's real condition of total inability, God's unflinching requirements, and the sovereignty of the Spirit in executing the work.

In a true work of gospel ministry and in genuine revival and sound conversions, the Spirit alone is active and necessary. It is not by 'offers,' not by conditions set forth, not by accepting, willing or any 'doings' that a sinner might perform. The gospel of Christ Crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God to the regenerate and called elect sinner alone! Oh, the power of this message! Who can measure it? Who can surpass it? This is your function. So we have said:

1. Life's Foundation is to know *him* as Lord and Saviour.

2. Life's Central Function is to preach *him* as a Crucified Lord. And we come,

III. To experience of love of Christ and see that love shed abroad among those whom he preached—life's fulness

Once more, the text says: 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.'

1. The Christian life is illustrated as a race. 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us' (Heb. 12:1). And there are different phases in that race, or different way-marks as we move along. It begins with (1.) Knowing Christ himself. It continues as we

are enabled (2.) To set forth Christ Crucified to others. Then it culminates in (3.) Loving Christ supremely as the Exalted One. Notice that we do not say anything in this race about a Christian becoming 'advanced' or 'more holy' and getting 'better and better' within his own heart—the race is all about Christ, making much of Christ, being filled with purposes to worship Christ, and loving Christ more and more. As you love the Saviour, this will separate you from fleshly 'loves' that may be in competition with him.

2. We can never say, 'I have arrived; now, soul, I will take my ease!' Oh, no! It is a reaching forth that we might 'know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God' (Eph. 3:19). All that God gives a Christian is Christ, but *he* is all the redeemed sinner needs.

3. There is no stopping place, no armistice in this war. 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved!'

4. Perseverance is a grace that God gives, then he lays upon us the duty to press on in the pilgrim journey. Although often discouraged and tempted to turn aside, we find that he places within us the will and the power to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12–13). But we must never grow lax. There is not a time—as the believer grows in grace—when he can feel secure or at ease, except in the midst of a most intense and valiant fight for truth against the enemy. Life's fulness indeed!

Conclusion

Remember it was the Apostle Paul who gave us the 7th chapter of Romans; read it. Are you in this conflict? And so what have we seen about this 'excellent knowledge'? *To know him*—do you know him? *To preach him*—do you love such preaching? *To experience his love*—have you? It is not to 'major'

on Calvinistic theology or to debate any points of doctrine. It is not to find the proper church affiliation or the best preacher. It is to set your sights on that Middle Cross and the One who died there. Let the world call you crazy—that is how they treated Paul!—or call you off centre, unlettered, beside yourself or any other name it chooses. With sin and depravity behind me and within me, with eternity facing me, with God observing all my thoughts and actions, I would join with dear old Paul in saying of this *excellent knowledge*: 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Let us pray:

'O Lord our Father, help us to experience

this acquaintance with thy Son, that we might know him in his death, experience him in the wonderful power of his resurrection, and come before him as our Enthroned King! He reigns on a Throne of Grace—he is forever alive to make intercession for the saints of God, and all power is in his hands! May all the dear ones who have heard or read this message be drawn into and experience for themselves that Excellent Knowledge which was such a desirable attainment to the Apostle. Lord, hear us, and meet our needs at this time, for we pray in Christ's precious Name. Amen.'

(Originally written on 24.01.87, a snowy day in Forest City NC)

COVENANT COMMUNION WITH GOD

by JOHN HOOPER (Saltash)

4. COMMUNION WITH GOD

WHEN seeking to understand the meaning of biblical words it is never a good idea to rely on dictionaries, even those that take us to the origin of the words in the underlying languages. In biblical exegesis we are not just looking at the etymology and normal usage of a word or phrase, we are looking at its *biblical* usage. We are approaching the Scriptures from the point of view of them being divinely inspired. We are looking to determine what the Spirit of God means in his use of a word, and that will involve comparing Scripture with Scripture.

As we search the Scriptures to learn more about the nature of covenants, we discover

that there is a close association between covenant-making and the sharing of a meal or eating bread together. This is true, for example, of the covenant made between Jacob and his father-in-law, Laban. Genesis 31:54 reads, 'Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.' This was not the first time the two men had eaten during the making of their covenant. A few verses earlier we find, 'And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap' (v. 46). In his comment on this verse Matthew Henry tells us that

this was common practice in former times: 'Covenants of friendship were anciently ratified by the parties eating and drinking together. It was in the nature of a love-feast.'

¹Later Jacob offers a sacrifice and calls on his kinsmen 'to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount' (v. 54).

A similar incident took place in the life of Jacob's father, Isaac, when he established a covenant of friendship with Abimelech. Isaac had said, '...let us make a covenant with thee,' then he 'made them a feast, and they did eat and drink' (Genesis 26:28, 30). Much later we find a similar association of covenant and feasting in the life of Moses. At the time of the making of the covenant with Israel, Moses 'took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. ... Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: ... also *they saw God, and did eat and drink*' (Exodus 24:7–10).

To say as some do that this was no more than the standard form of swearing peace treaties between the nations in those days—heathen nations even—is to mock the holy God of the covenant. Once again it is using unholy things to define the holy. It is to attribute to Israel forms of behaviour that were completely contrary to what God had required of them. When the children of Israel were on the borders of the promised land God promised them that He would 'cast out ... the Hittites' and other powerful nations from before them and he went on to command them to make no covenant with them and to introduce nothing of their worship or culture into Israel's way of life (Deuteronomy

7:1ff.). To suggest that God used Hittite peace treaties as a kind of template on which to build his own is bizarre indeed.²

Searching the Old Testament scriptures, then, we find sufficient evidence to establish a connection between the making of a covenantal bond and sharing together in the eating of a meal. David once had a close friend and counsellor in a man named Ahithophel. It was Ahithophel whom David had in mind as he wrote Psalm 55: 'We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company' (Psalm 55:1). The friendship ended, however, when Ahithophel plotted with Absalom for David's overthrow, to David's great grief: 'Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me' (Psalm 41:9).

In his book *A Price for a People*, Tom Wells devotes a chapter to the subject of reconciliation. He notes that this is a term stressing 'the personal bond that God has with his people.'³ Reconciliation 'reminds us that men once enjoyed fellowship with God and that God made us for such fellowship and friendship.'⁴ Wells then goes on to tell us how he sees this friendship portrayed in the Bible:

The Bible pictures this friendship by the act of eating. Someone has called the Gospel of Luke 'the Gospel of Jesus at Table.' Often there we find him dining with others. When his critics mocked him for eating with tax collectors and sinful people, they did not know that he

² Meredith Kline popularised this idea in the 1960s in his book *Treaty of the Great King*. It has been taken up by other writers, often appearing in books and articles on the covenant.

³ Tom Wells, *A Price for a People* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 37.

¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (McLean, VA: Macdonald Publishing Company, repr. undated), Vol. 1, p. 190.

was mirroring the heart of the Father... This was his way of saying, 'Do you know what kind of bond My Father will make between himself and ordinary men and women? It will be this kind of bond, the kind that leads two friends to sit down and to eat together.'

That's why we read of 'the wedding supper of the Lamb' in the Book of Revelation. Some think of this 'supper' as a single event; others see it as a picture of eternity. But in either case the truth is the same. God and Christ will enjoy the fellowship and friendship of their people in such a way that a shared meal depicts it best.⁵

A beautiful portrayal of this friendship is given to us in Psalm 25:14: 'The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.' Again, in Amos 3:7 similar terminology is used: 'he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.' God gives away his secrets! The word 'secret' used in both these passages is an interesting one in that means literally a couch or cushion 'on which persons recline.'⁶ It takes us back to the Eastern banquet where guests would lounge on cushions in private conversation, talking at close proximity of the most treasured thoughts and secrets of their hearts. As David recalls times of delightful conversation with his erstwhile friend, taking sweet counsel together and walking to the house of God in company, so is the experience of the believer with his God. To those who fear him he reveals the intimate details of his counsel. He confides to them the deep and hidden thoughts of his wisdom and the glorious

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ William Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, repr. 1979), p. 580.

wonders of his grace. 'His secret is with the righteous' (Proverbs 3:32). What a privilege!

He deals familiarly with them. He calls them not servants only but friends, and he treats them as friends. He affords them more than promises for he opens to them the plan of his great designs from everlasting to everlasting; shews them the strong foundations and inviolable securities of his favour towards them, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of his love, which passeth knowledge, and the unsearchable riches of his grace. ... They have obtained the Pearl of great price, they have communion with God.⁷

Bearing in mind that our subject is God's covenant, we cannot help but notice that following the pattern of Hebrew poetry Psalm 25:14 identifies God's sharing of his secret with those who fear him, with his revealing to them of his covenant. It is not only that God confides to us truth about the covenant, true and wonderful though that would be, but the meaning of the text is that that very friendship, the confiding, the relationship of love and its sharing of secrets—is what defines the covenant. To know the friendship of the Most High is to be the partaker of his covenant.

The truth and sincerity of God to his people appears in the openness and plainness of his heart to them. A friend that is close and reserved, deservedly comes under a cloud in the thoughts of his friend; but he who carries, as it were, a window of crystal in his breast, through which his friend may read what thoughts are writ in his very heart,

⁷ John Newton, letter on Communion with God in *The Works of John Newton*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, repr. 1985), Vol. 1, p. 310–312.

delivers himself from the least suspicion of unfaithfulness. Truly, thus open-hearted is God with his saints: 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.'⁸

Geerhardus Vos, in a sermon already quoted, explains this verse in the following way:

The 'secret' means the secret counsel, the homilia as one of the old translations has aptly rendered it. It is the intimate converse between friend and friend as known from human life where there is no reserve, but the thoughts and feelings of the heart are freely interchanged. And the notion of the covenant here expresses the same idea: the covenant being conceived not as a formal contract for the specific purpose, but as a communion in which life touches life and intertwines with life so that the two become mutually assimilated.⁹

Outside of the covenant there is no friendship with God and no communion with him.

The Hebrew word translated in Psalm 25 as 'secret' is also found in Job 29:4 where it conveys a similar thought: 'As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle.' Interestingly some commentators interpret 'the secret of God' as meaning the Divine 'friendship.' In Job 29 the Lord's servant, now plagued by trouble and suffering all the day long with many afflictions, is reminiscing. He is looking back to better times when he enjoyed good health,

⁸ William Gurnall, quoted by C H Spurgeon in *The Treasury of David*, (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, repr. undated), Vol. 1, Part 1, p. 410.

⁹ Geerhardus Vos, 1902, downloaded from <http://www.kerux.com/doc/0301A1.asp>.

earthly prosperity and a happy family life. Those were the days, he muses, when God was with him and blessing him, when God himself came to his house and reclined at his table, as it were. 'Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness ... When the Almighty was yet with me' (Job 29:2, 5). Those were the days when he knew the sweetest times of communion with his God and God shared with him the deep secrets of his counsel. But now he feels that those days are past and God no longer visits his house. No longer does God come to him and speak intimately with him as a friend with his friend. The Almighty God has broken off their friendship and left him. That was Job's perception, but was it true? Of course not, and the latter chapters of the book of Job demonstrate that fact powerfully as God shares with his covenant friend the secrets of his counsel. God never forsakes his friends.

Think too of Abraham. He is the only person in the Old Testament privileged to be called 'the friend of God' (Isaiah 41:8; cf. 2 Chronicles 20:7) and God says of him, 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?' (Genesis 18:17). There are no secrets between God and his covenant friends. Interestingly the similarity between Abraham and Job does not end there because Abraham too knew what it was to experience the silence of God. For thirteen whole years God had seemed to withdraw himself from his servant until, when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God came and revealed himself to him as never before, as the Almighty God (Genesis 16:16-17:1). He is his people's faithful Friend who uses even his silences for their blessing.

In the New Testament we find precisely the same idea of friendship. Here

the friendship is expressed by way of the Mediator of the covenant, our Lord Jesus Christ, saying to his disciples, 'Ye are my friends ... Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you' (John 15:14–15). Here are the disciples and they are obeying their Lord, but what kind of obedience is it? Is it the obedience of slaves and household servants whose role is simply to do, to obey, to carry out their masters' orders without knowing the reasons behind those orders? Not at all—it's the obedience of friends, and to friends the Master of the house divulges the secrets of his plans and purposes, indeed 'all things that I have heard of my Father.'¹⁰ Jesus' disciples were 'the men of his counsel,' to whom it had been given 'to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 13:11). What a mighty privilege it is to be among the friends of God and privy to the very words that Christ himself has heard from his Father.

So how does the Lord divulge his secrets today? We need to be so careful in handling a question like this because there are many who would want us to believe that God speaks to us and reveals his secrets in all kinds of mystical ways. We should not be distracted. The answer is expressed perfectly in the words of an old Baptist writer, Nehemiah Coxe. He wrote, 'No one can pretend acquaintance with the secret of God except as he has been pleased to reveal it in his word. ... The covenant of God is his secret and only he can make us know it.'¹¹ In his word! It is there in the Scriptures, and there alone, that God talks to us intimately and

personally with words of love and truth. It is there that he makes known to us the mystery of his will (Ephesians 1:9; Colossians 1:26). There he speaks to us of his perfections and glory, his great power and eternal love, his mighty works of creation and providence, and his saving grace as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. From a great many these things are hidden and they remain in unbelief with deaf ears and closed hearts, and of such were all of us until God himself in Christ came in the preaching of the gospel and our ears were unstopped and our hearts opened.

And, of course, we cannot leave this aspect of our subject without noting that it finds a beautiful New Testament demonstration in the Lord's Supper. We know that the Supper is a commemoration. It is, in the words of John Gill, 'a commemoration of the ratification of the covenant of grace, by the blood of Christ, and wherein and whereby the faith of God's people is strengthened and confirmed, as to their interest in it.'¹² But it is also much more than that. It is a spiritual feast. It is a spiritual feeding upon Christ such that in the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup we are by faith eating and drinking of him. That is communion.

The Westminster Larger Catechism explains in Answer 168 that 'by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; [and] have their union and communion with him confirmed.'¹³

Under the symbolism of a meal, by the Spirit of God, Christ becomes one with us and we one with him so that in this simple

¹⁰ Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1126.

¹¹ Nehemiah Coxe, *Discourse of the Covenants*, p. 40, 41.

¹² John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, repr. undated), p. 215.

¹³ *Subordinate Standards*, p.102 (emphasis added)

feast we give expression to our union and communion with him and he with us. Just as we are strengthened in body by the eating of a physical meal, so we are nourished spiritually by partaking of Christ at his table. Our faith is strengthened and confirmed. 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day' (John 6:53,54).

There is, to be sure, a great mystery here and our hearts should echo the words of Calvin, 'I am overwhelmed by the depth of this mystery, and with Paul am not ashamed to acknowledge in wonder my ignorance,'¹⁴ but there are also great truth and great blessing.

¹⁴ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, repr. 1989), p. 210.

TO BE CONTINUED

MICHAEL

by J.E. NORTH (Landford Wood)

THERE are ten people in the Old Testament who carry the name of Michael. It is not with those men to which I want to draw your attention in this article, but it is with the One who is called the Archangel Michael.

This person is mentioned but five times by that name, three times in the book of the Prophecy of Daniel, once in the Epistle of Jude and once in the book of The Revelation.

There has been a lot of speculation as to whom Michael represents; there have also been fanciful interpretations of Scripture as to the place Michael takes in the interpretation of prophecy. There have also developed great speculative theories as to the order of angels, archangels etc, all of which have no basis is the Scriptures of Truth.

We intend in this article to consider what Scripture has to say about Michael, and hopefully lay to rest the speculation of former generations. In order to do this we need to consider the five Scripture references to Michael and also the contexts in which those

references appear. We will also, in passing, refer to other passages of Scriptures which we consider to be relevant.

Infallibility belongs to no man, so we ask the reader to weigh what the writer has written in the balances of the sanctuary, and bring all things to the touchstone of Holy Scripture!

We begin, firstly, to consider the office of archangel

What does the Scriptures say of the archangel? Surprisingly, there are only two references to there being an archangel. There is, first, 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first' (1 Thess. 4:16). It is the Lord who descends into the air on his return to this earth. He shouts! His is a power voice that raises the dead, as he called forth Lazarus from the grave, 'Lazarus, come forth' (Jno. 11:43),

so his voice called forth all the redeemed of glory who have died and are sleeping in their tombs awaiting his awakening call. His voice is not like the voice of an archangel; it is the voice of the archangel. It is not the voice of many archangels, it is the voice of One, singular Archangel, namely the Lord Jesus Christ! The second reference is: 'Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee' (Jude 9). Here the name of Michael is introduced—this is the fourth time the name of Michael is used. Here, Jude is speaking of the contention about the body of Moses. It is interesting to note that Luther mentions in his Sermons on the Epistle to Jude that the Romish Church at one time rejected this Epistle because it mentioned that this is the only place in Scripture this incident concerning the body of Moses is related. We accept to full and total inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Ghost (2 Tim. 3:15)! We will consider this disputation later in this article in the order in which Michael appears chronologically in Scripture.

There has often been a presumption made that Gabriel is an archangel. His name appears only four times in Scripture: twice in the Prophecy of Daniel (8:16 & 9:21) and twice in the Gospel of Luke (1:19 & 1:26). On neither of these occasions does he attribute to himself nor is given the title archangel. All we are told of him is that he stands in the presence of God and he is sent from God.

However, what we desire to notice is that the archangel is mentioned only in the singular, never in the plural! The only conclusion we can draw is that there is one and only one archangel. We cannot argue that there is a multiplicity of archangels from the silence of Scripture. To use the phrase of the ancient

hymn which says, 'Therefore with angels and archangels...' is therefore incorrect, as are references to archangels in more modern hymns.

We can conclude from Scripture that there are two orders of angels, the angels who kept their first estate and the angels who did not but rebelled against Almighty God and who are kept and reserved in chains of everlasting darkness (Jude 6), that is, elect angels and fallen angels of whom is Lucifer, the son of the morning (Isa. 14:12).

We turn, then, to the five passages of Scripture which mention the name of the Archangel Michael.

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia (Dan. 10:13).

But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince (Dan. 10:21).

To understand these verses of Scripture we must look at the context of the whole chapter. Daniel had a vision in which that which was to happen in the last days was given to him. He alone was given the understanding of the vision. He was by the river Hiddekel (this was the third branch of the river which flowed out of the Garden of Eden, Gen. 2:14) when he saw 'One man' (10:5 mgn) who was 'clothed in linen and whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz.' Dr John Gill in his commentary says this man is

not Gabriel, but the Son of God, the Messiah; who, though not as yet incarnate, yet was so in the counsel and

purpose of God; had agreed in covenant to be man, was promised and prophesied of as such; and now appeared in a human form, as he frequently did before his incarnation, as a pledge of it, and showing his readiness to assume human nature: he appears here 'clothed in linen', in the habit of a priest; which office he sustains, and executes by the sacrifice of himself, and by his prevalent intercession; and may denote his purity and innocence, as well as direct us to his spotless righteousness he is the author of, which is like fine linen, clean and white, (Revelation 19:8).

Gold in Scripture denotes the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was given the gift of gold along with frankincense and myrrh when the Magi visited him in the house (Matt. 2:11).

John Calvin in his commentary on Daniel does not disagree. He writes, 'Some think the word Michael represents Christ, and I do not object to this opinion.' The description that follows in v. 6 is very much like the other spiritual descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ given in Song of Solomon chapter 5:10–16; Psalm 45 and Rev. 1:13–16. The sound of his voice is described in similar tones as that of Christ's appearance to John on the Isle of Patmos. But there is more. In v. 11 Daniel is exhorted to 'stand upright'. The marginal reference here is very helpful for it says, 'Stand upon thy standing' which infers that Daniel was encouraged to stand upon his foundation. What foundation is that? It can only be the Lord Jesus Christ, 'For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 3:11 cf. Ps. 40:2; Matt. 7:24, 25 etc). The pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ then speaks to Daniel saying, 'Thy words were heard, and I am come for

thy words' (v. 12). Some commentators on the Scriptures take this person who is speaking to Daniel as being Gabriel but I take it to be the Lord Jesus Christ who then speaking in the third person refers to himself as Michael. Again, to quote Dr Gill:

but, lo, Michael one of the chief Princes, came to help me; called in the New Testament an Archangel, the Prince of angels, the Head of all principality and power; and is no other than Christ the Son of God, an uncreated Angel; who is 'one', or 'the first of the chief Princes' superior to angels, in nature, name, and office.

He is the Chief prince or, as the margin says, 'First Prince' (Dan. 9:25). He is the lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5). The use of the word 'first' is also very appropriate to the Lord Jesus Christ for in the Book of Proverbs we are told that, 'The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was' (Prov. 8:22,23). He is 'his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature' (Col. 1:13–15). Again, we are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to John on the Isle of Patmos where he is in exile for the Word of God and the Testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty' Rev. 1:8. We can only conclude, therefore, that Michael and the Lord Jesus Christ are the same being.

Let us turn now to the other verse in this chapter which refers to Michael: 'But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture

of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince' (Dan. 10:21).

Dr Gill paraphrases this verse in the following way:

There is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your Prince; Christ the Prince of the kings of the earth, he was the Prince, Protector, and Guardian of the people of the Jews; he is the Angel that went before them in the wilderness, and guarded them in it, and guided them into the land of Canaan; he is the Angel of God's presence, that bore, carried, and saved them all the days of old, and was their King and their God, their Defender and Deliverer.

Likewise, Isaiah tells us, 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old' (Isa. 63:9). Michael is the Angel of God's presence with his people. Who is it, then that is with his people always? none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen' (Matt. 28:20).

The next verse in Daniel is to be found in chapter 12, verse 1. It reads: 'And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.' The verse commences with the phrase, 'And at that time.' This is a clear reference to the previous chapter of this Book. The time is specified in 11:40: 'And at the time of the end...' The time, then, that Michael stands up is the last time, the last days when that great

prince shall be revealed. No angel has ever been designated as a prince. Surely this great Prince can be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He it is who stands for his people. In what way does he stand for them? He stood for them as their substitute. He stands for them as he intercedes in heaven for them. He stands for them as he delivers them in the hour of temptation, and delivers them from all their foes. Why and how? He stands for them because they are his people given to him in covenant bond from the foundation of the world and written in the Lord's book of life, in the book of God's decree. And the promise is that every one shall be delivered—not one left behind to suffer in those last days even though it is a time of trouble. What a mercy, then, that Michael is not just an angel given a superior role in heaven, but he is Christ Jesus our Lord, the eternal Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Having briefly considered the three references in the Book of Daniel, we move to the remaining two references which are found in the New Testament.

The first is to be found in Jude's Epistle where we read in v. 9, 'Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.' Thomas Manton in his commentary on Jude writes,

Michael signifieth he is Strong God, or, who is like the Strong God, and therefore some apply it to Jesus Christ, who in many places of Scripture is set forth as 'Head of Angels.' ... Jesus Christ seemeth there to be intended by Michael, he being the prince of Israel.

The verse continues by relating the contention between Michael and the devil about

the body of Moses. There are those who would deny Michael as being the Lord Jesus Christ by saying that the Second person of the Holy Trinity would not use the rebuke, 'The Lord rebuke thee' if Michael was part of the Godhead. But that is not the case, for the Godhead is recorded as using the same rebuke to Satan. Zechariah 3:1, 2: 'And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' Here, the Lord, the Covenant God of Israel is speaking and he uses the same form of words used by Michael. In the prophecy of Zechariah, the Lord uses exactly the same words! He speaks in the third person, not in the first person.

The second time the name Michael is used in the New Testament is to be found in the Book of the Revelation. 'And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not' (Rev. 12:7). This is the final battle of the ages. The final victorious battle against Satan, the devil, called in this instance the dragon. He is fighting with his infernal, fallen angels against Michael and all his angels. It is Michael who leads the angels of heaven. These are the angels of God who are lead by the Lord Jesus Christ. In another place we are told the Lord Jesus Christ goes forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. 6:2). Later in this same chapter at v. 10 there is the proclamation of victory and Satan is cast out. Now this victory could only be obtained by the Lord Jesus Christ and none other. James Durham in his Commentary/Lectures on the Book of the Revelation says

Michael is General on the woman's side, we take it to be Christ, who is Commander and Leader, and Captain. It is like he is also intended [in] Dan. 12 to which this alludeth.

As we have looked at the references to Michael in both the Old and New Testaments, we have shown that the person to whom that name is given is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. This conclusion is the same as many of the commentators on Scripture. But why should we really bother about the name? Is it necessary for there to be a multiplicity of names?

Throughout the Scriptures there are many names given to the Lord Jesus Christ in both the Old Testament and the New. Each name tells us something more of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will never know the fullness of Christ Jesus whilst here upon earth. We will know more when we arrive in heaven, but until then, 'we see through a glass darkly,' and the names and titles of Christ Jesus tell us more about him. Peter speaks of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10), which means many sided, many coloured. So then, what do we see in this name which pertains to the Lord Jesus Christ?

The literal meaning of the name Michael is 'Who is like God'. Isaiah asks the question on two separate occasions, 'Who is like God?' 'To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?' (Isa. 40:18); 'To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One' (Isa. 40:25). The use of the name Michael is to show yet again that the Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious second Person in the Holy Trinity, and the futility of idolatry and the worship of other pretended deities. Indeed Isaiah goes on to say in that same chapter, 'Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard,

that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding' (Isa. 40:28). This name displays something of the glory of God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Samuel Davis in his hymn, 'Great God of wonders' asks the question:

Who is a pardoning God like thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

And as we consider that the glory of Christ is revealed in this name and the actions undertaken by the Lord Jesus Christ we can see more of that glory revealed as the Eternal Son of God; the glory of God revealed in the incarnation; the glory of God revealed in the sufferings and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and we will see something more of the of the glory of God when the Lord Jesus is revealed on the Last Day, when he returns for his blood washed church. So in considering 'Michael' we have the encouragement to wait upon him to reveal more of his glory to us, as Isaiah says, 'But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint' (Isa. 40:31).

We see, in the second place, the Victory of the Lord Jesus Christ set forth. In the three references in Daniel Christ is victorious over all his foes. In Jude Christ is victorious

over Satan when contending for the body of Moses. And in the Revelation the Lord Jesus is victorious in the final battle against Satan, the dragon. What a mercy it is to know that the victory won at Calvary will be finally consummated at the last day when all the saints of God will be gathered unto his great and glorious name, when sin and Satan will finally be defeated.

And in the third place, we see in the Lord Jesus Christ/Michael that salvation is set forth. We looked at the setting forth of Michael in Revelation 12, and of his victory over the dragon. In that same chapter we read the following, 'And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death' (Rev. 12:10, 11). Here, Michael is not only identified as the Lord Jesus Christ, but we have the setting forth of the salvation of the people of God. 'Now is salvation...' The accuser of the brethren is cast down, and the saints of God overcome by the word of their testimony and the blood of the Lamb.

What a mercy that salvation for the child of God is signed, sealed and delivered by this one whose name is Michael, Emmanuel and the Lord Jesus Christ. ¶

Faith is a gift of God, poured into man from heaven, whereby he is taught with an undoubted persuasion wholly to lean on God and his word; in which word God doth freely promise life and all good things in Christ, and wherein all truth necessary to be believed is plainly declared.

Henry Bullinger, Decades, First Decade, Sermon iv.

GOD'S INCARNATION IN HUMAN FLESH (PT. 3)

by WILLIAM T. FOLEY (London)

5. Proclaimed the Gospel to the Gentiles

...preached unto the Gentiles...

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has been proclaimed, heralded, propagated throughout the nations. For example, Isaiah prophesied that the gospel would be preached to non-Jews. 'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth' (Is. 49:6). The natural Jews rejected Jesus and the Gospel was preached throughout the world. The natural Jews' rejection was the gospel opportunity for the Gentiles. Simeon said, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel' (Lk 2:29-32). But we do well to remember that God is not finished with the Jews. Presently there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Paul's argument about the Jews is complex, but nevertheless true. God will fulfil his plans (see Ro. 9-11).

Paul was a supreme teacher, preacher, teacher and missionary. Paul was called to preach to the Gentiles. 'But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)' (Gal. 2:7-8). Again, Paul says, 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the

Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ' (Eph. 3:8). The wonder of it all: 'That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel' (Eph. 3:6). Jews and Gentiles form part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'And if some of the branches [Jews] be broken off, and thou [Gentiles], being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree' (Ro. 11:17).

Paul was the instrument that God used to preach and plant churches among the Gentiles. We are the 'wild olive tree' as a result of the middle wall of partition being broken down, in grafted into Christ, to make up one body.

Note also that preaching is vital, and that God has mightily used godly and gifted men in proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God. The duty of the Christian minister is to be faithful and proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ in his saving power and love.

6. Believers in Christ

...believed on in the world...

Multitudes have believed and been ushered into the kingdom of God, thought the preaching of the Word of God, through the effectual sovereign calling by the Holy Spirit, resulting in sinners forsaking their sin and works of religion, and trusting the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers trust the merits of the Lord Jesus and cast themselves on God's grace, as vessels of mercy.

The word 'world' does not mean that

every single person believes the gospel. Universalism is false as a theological system. Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it. Broad is the road that leads to destruction.

We must interpret the word 'world' in the sense it refers to 'a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,' (Rev. 7:9), but the elect of God are a definite and defined number. Since Adam we do not find evidence that one hundred percent of humanity believes the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The way the world is used in Luke 2, is an appropriate example: 'here went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed' (Lk 2:1). This was the Roman empire. For example, it did not stretch to the far distant peoples in the Americas and Australia and the aboriginal people.

Throughout history and in the nations of the world the elect of God are always called to believe the Word, because they are fore-ordained. Of course, we believe because of God's regeneration by the Holy Spirit, John 1:12, 13; 3:3, 7. Believing in Christ is the fruit of regeneration, being born again (see 1 Pe. 1:23). Many people, multitudes have believed in Christ in every generation, throughout the world, where the Gospel has been preached. The gospel will be preached to every part of the world, and then Christ will return. At the time of the flood the inhabitants of the earth perished and only eight souls were saved. God's people are 'vessels of mercy' and are distinct from the 'vessels of wrath', the former are saved by the finished work of Calvary, but the latter, don't have a Saviour, so they will be condemned to hell forever.

Western civilisation is founded on Christianity and, unfortunately, we are seeing significant 'unbelief' being manifested

by men and women who are denigrating the Word of God, and indifferent about the claims of Christ. Governments are undermining the Word of God with legislation that is opposed to God. Rebellion against God is plain to see. The good that has come to the world in the gospel has come through Jesus Christ alone. We have a great and wonderful Saviour.

Salvation will reach the ends of the earth. One day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, Habakkuk 2:14. Isaiah said so, too. (see Is. 11:9). Continue to be faithful like Timothy, 'holding the mystery of the faith in pure conscience' (1 Tim. 3:9).

7. The Ascension and Session of Jesus into Heaven

...received up into glory.

The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was gloriously lifted in the clouds. He returned to the glory of heaven from whence he came. Divinely ascending into heaven; and with many witnesses watching, it must have been a spectacular and obviously a memorable event for the people of God (See Acts 1:9–12).

The Lord Jesus Christ is now seated in the glory in intercession for his people, in session: what a glorious reception into Heaven for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Revelation of Jesus Christ is a spectacular and beautiful book, for it shows us the glory and triumph of the risen and seated Christ, the Lamb that was slain, and his return to glory, and his coming again.

David, speaking in the Spirit, wrote: 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift

them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah' (Psalm 24:7–10) Make no mistake about it, Christ is the King of Glory. He is the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, Rev. 19:16.

David, speaking in the Holy Spirit, says, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool' (Ps. 110:1). Having accomplished his magnificent work on Calvary, Christ was invited by his Father to sit at his right side. The implications of this verse are the incarnation and the exaltation of Christ. He finished his work on Calvary.

Christ used this text to confound his critics, 'What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions' (Matt. 22:42–46). Christ is on the Throne of Glory now, which is a Throne of grace (Heb. 4:16) to believers. Sitting in session, as our advocate, is our praying Saviour.

Remember, not only had Jesus a body of

flesh in his incarnation, and crucifixion, and he has a body in his glorification. We will be changed into the likeness of his glory at his second coming in power and great glory.

John says, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' (1 John 3:2).

Finally, to emphasise the point: Christ will come again, what a blessed hope, a mystery, a descent in the clouds for reunion (See John 14: 1–4; Titus 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

Meanwhile, 'in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us' (Ro. 8:37). We hear about people saying, where is the promise of his Coming? (see 2 Pe. 3:4). Be assured, Christ will come, for he has promised!

'He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen' (Rev. 22:20–21)

So, 1 Timothy 3:16 is fresh and real in truth to every child of God. To God be the glory. A blessed assurance to all believers.

So, in conclusion, 1 Timothy 3:16 is a very strong chain of divine events in the life of Christ, from his Incarnation to his Ascension, which every believer should rejoice in as profound truth to the glory of God. ¶

FORMER DAYS

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

250 years ago: September & October 1771

The first article in the **September** magazine is a letter on the subject of 'social' or corporate

prayer. The author gives his thoughts on the matter, addresses some common errors, and draws attention to useful books. These

include Isaac Watt's book on prayer, which was republished a few years ago by Banner of Truth (*A Guide to Prayer*, 2001). This is followed by a letter from a lady to a friend, answering the recipient's concern that she was not worthy to receive the Lord's Supper. It is full of wise counsel and good comfort.

The letter begins previously on the error of asserting our repentance for acceptance with God instead of unsinning obedience is concluded. If the author were to argue that the unsinning obedience were to be ours, we would have cause to reject him as a teacher of gross error: rightly, he points us to Jesus Christ as the only one who has obeyed without sin. The righteousness we seek is the imputed righteousness of Christ. Repentance is necessary, but it cannot cleanse us from sin.

Another correspondent asks a question about final perseverance. How do we reconcile the doctrine of final perseverance—which the writer agrees is founded on plain words of Scripture—with the case of King Saul? Does not his case indicate the possibility of falling away? It remains to be seen how this is answered, but in the meantime, any reader interested in this matter is advised to obtain John Owen's volume, *The Doctrine of the Saint's Preservation* (Vol 11 of the Collected Works). Another query follows, after a brief note criticising the wisdom of John Wesley. This second query relates to universal redemption, and asks questions that expose flaws—at least as far as the writer is concerned.

The subject of perseverance appears again in a letter to John Wesley. The author is concerned that Wesley has set himself and human reason up as the standard by which to judge God and his word. Can the saints indeed fall from grace, and be lost for ever? Surely they cannot! God be praised!

An article on the blessing of private

prayer is followed by a testimony from a formerly backslidden believer. Reviews and poetry end the issue, including more on the Wesley controversy.

The magazine for **October** opens with a long letter on Controversy, advising an unnamed writer to pray for those against whom he contends, and to remember that others need help. A second letter is addressed to Lovers and Frequenters of Plays, putting forward sound reasons against participating in such a pastime. Another writer reflects on John 15:5, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' The letter on private prayer continues from the previous month.

The controversy with John Wesley and certain leading Methodists is continued, in the form of a letter about their conversions. Why did they believe, when others who had the same opportunities, not believe? Was there some cause in them, or was the cause supernatural? If in them, then salvation is not of grace.

John Ryland writes on the perfections and glories of Christ. A question is asked about afflictions: are they always for our good? Poetry, as ever, concludes the issue.

200 years ago: September & October 1821

The **September** issue opens with the second part of an article on the active and passive obedience of Christ. Here, the author takes the passive obedience. It is defined as 'the sufferings and death of the Redeemer, at, and previous to the crucifixion'.

Ephesians 3:8 is expounded to show the nature of Paul's preaching. Tomlinson's Attempt to Rescue Holy Scripture from Ridicule continues. A letter sets forth the light of Christ as our hope in all circumstances of life. A correspondent answers an earlier question about the nature of the new life in the believer. Another correspondent

seeks to end a discussion about suffering in the believer: is sin a cause of it? The correspondent argues that it is, against his opponent. Sin certainly plays its part, for although our heavenly Father accomplishes all his purposes in us, our suffering cannot be divorced from our sinning. John Ryland writes on the power of the gospel. Controversial matters take up several pages, and are followed by a letter on Christian experience. A lengthy poem from the pen of John Cennick is submitted, and leads into Poetry.

The **October** issue is introduced with an exposition of Psalm 51:17. This is followed by an extract from Gurnall's *Complete Armour*, where the good author draws attention to the way in which the devil mixes truth into his errors in order to deceive. Another piece considers the indwelling Holy Spirit and his regenerating work. Three letters to John Berridge show the true nature of self-examination.

Another writer commends the Editors of *The Gospel Magazine*, but takes occasion to criticise the lack of certain subjects. They reply that they cater to a variety of readers in various situations, and cannot please everyone. Some things do not change.

The Theological Review reports on a number of works, mostly without approval. The exception is Dr Hawker's *Notes on Milton's Paradise Lost*. A brief obituary and poetry bring the issue to an end.

100 years ago: September & October 1921

The **September** number opens with a sermon on the Priesthood of Christ's People, from 1 Peter 2:5. We are priests figuratively, by divine appointment, equally, a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, and a sacrificing priesthood.

The fine hymn by Augustus Toplady, 'Rock of Ages', provides the theme for an

article. The writer describes a recent 'pilgrimage' to Burrington, the supposed location of the cleft rock in which Toplady hid from a storm. Ritualists, Methodists, Salvationists, Congregationalists and Baptists were all present, and the music was accompanied by the band of the YMCA. That such a mixed multitude should celebrate such a hymn surprises the writer, as the doctrine it holds forth is opposed to much that the 'pilgrims' would have accepted.

Ezekiel 16:8 is the text for a discussion about the Eye of the Lord, which is over his people. It is followed by a sermon by William Romaine on Song of Solomon 1:4, 'Draw me, we will run after thee.' Questions propounded in Holy Writ takes Luke 12:28, and seeks to show the perpetual care of the Father for his children. The Three Fs of 2 Kings 6:24–33—Famine, Faithfulness, Fulness—provide the theme for an encouraging article.

The 'pilgrimage' referred to above puts in another appearance. Since writing the first piece, the Editor had received a number of newspaper cuttings. These show that some 10,000 people were present on that occasion, and the report from *The Daily Telegraphs* is reproduced in full. This gave the Editor occasion to make further remarks on Toplady, his theology, and his importance as a writer. This latter is seen most particularly in his longest work, 'Historic proof of the doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England.' It is a work that is largely overlooked today, but is to be found in the volume of his collected *Works*.

Some words from Job 28 provide a text for a meditation on the wisdom and power of our heavenly Father. Any who have access to Joseph Caryl's monumental work on Job would do well to read his summary of the chapter, which shows the limitation of human wisdom and the blessing of the divine.

Changing attitudes to Rome are highlighted by an extract from Bishop Ryle's *Principles for Churchmen*. Thoughts on praising God, from Psalm 106, and an extract from the magazine of Widcombe Baptist Church, Bath, shows that there can be no new terminology with which to express eternal truth.

A notice of death, with a letter describing the circumstances of that life, is followed by Protestant Points, and the subject is the Altar. After tracing the biblical nature of the altar, the writer shows that there can be no such item for believers since the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Very brief reviews end the issue.

The census of 1921 provides the theme of the opening article for **October**. The text is Revelation 7:9, and the innumerable number is the subject. There are many things man cannot number, both in nature and concerning the eternal Godhead: yet our heavenly Father numbers them all. Among the points made, the Editor notes that the Registrar-General was not particularly interested in happiness, although the great multitude was happy beyond imagination, all tears being wiped away. Readers may recall that happiness was supposed to be measured in the most recent census. Man's happiness, and the happiness that we receive through Christ Jesus our Lord, cannot be compared.

A writer from Canada writes about worldliness. He quotes from a publication he has received, in which a writer, advocating a social gospel, says,

But I sometimes fear that in our eagerness to meet the social needs of the hour, we have swung the pendulum a little too far in one direction, and as a result many of our social activities are merely surface supply agencies, that is, may supply for the time being certain

physical cravings and passing fancies, and their mission ends there.

There is no spiritual note, no prayer, no Christ, behind them.

These things are to be found only in the old, unloved, despised gospel of grace. We give thanks and praise to the Father of light for his good and perfect gift.

Paul's call for cheerfulness, Acts 27:33, is treated. In surveying the present scene, the writer states,

Even many of those who still cling to the name Evangelical have broken loose from the old Evangelical truths. The old antagonism to Romanism is dying out. The great truths of Inspiration, the Fall, the Atonement, Eternal Punishment, and the former simplicity of worship are being abandoned. As for the comforting doctrine of Election, that is totally rejected by the larger number, in spite of a solemn assent to the Seventeenth Article of Religion. Add to these things the increasing looseness in regard to the sanctity of the Lord's Day, the loose ideas as to divorce and the growing rejection of the Divine command, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,' and we cannot but feel that the predicted apostasy which is to precede the end is rapidly coming to its full development. All these things are depressing to the Spirit-taught children of God.

Things have not improved. The writer goes on to show that there are sound reasons to be cheerful, if we are indeed the children of God. The same theme is continued in the following piece, on 1 Peter 1:9, where the writer shows that the child of God is going to be saved, for the end of our faith is salvation!

A sermon by the late James Ormiston, on 2 Corinthians 6:10, looks at the seeming paradox. The sermon by William Romaine on Song of Solomon 1:4 is concluded. Toplady appears once more, as a missionary writes of having translated his hymn, 'A debtor to

mercy alone', into Chinese. She taught it to many converts. Christ's compassion and understanding are spoken of in the context of his calling us apart to rest. Various other good articles follow; Protestant Points deals with Priests. Reviews conclude the month.

TO BE CONTINUED

BOOK REVIEWS

Forgotten Reformer Myles Coverdale

G F Main

self-published, 2021 240pp £10 pbk ISBN 978-1-9168737-0-4

Order from the Protestant Truth Society bookshop or Ossett Christian Bookshop

The author's intention is implied in the title, to make one of the forgotten heroes of the English (and Continental) Reformation better-known. There is a sense in which Coverdale is already very well-known for his version of the Psalms in a rhythmic prose that superbly matches the parallelism of the Hebrew original is still sung daily in Anglican cathedrals up and down the land, as well as weekly in many parish churches, in the offices of Evening Prayer, and to a regrettably much lesser extent Morning Prayer. These are often said to be one of the few growth points of the unhappy Church of England.

Even so, one must wonder whether the name of Coverdale is known to those who sing or hear sung his translations of the Psalms of David. His pioneering Bible of 1535 was followed by the first authorised version, the Great Bible of 1539 and he was later involved in the preparation of the Geneva Bible of 1560; this in turn influenced the translators of the Authorised Version of 1611. The following words from Coverdale's Prologue to the 1535 Bible are quoted at the start of the book and illustrate his purpose: 'that the Holy Scripture may have free passage and be had in reputation, to the worship of the author thereof, which is even God himself, to whom for His blessed word be glory and dominion now and ever. Amen.'

However, Coverdale was not just a great Bible translator; he was one of the leaders of the English Reformation, translating works of leading European reformers, especially from the German, as well as authoring several original works in defence of the reformed faith.. He was evidently also an able preacher. Mr Main includes in his appendices a useful list of around 20 of Coverdale's works.

Coverdale lived a long life which mirrored the religious history of England from the late 15th century to the latter half of the 16th. Almost half of his 80 years was spent as a Roman Catholic up to his conversion c. 1526, including 13 years as an Augustinian monk in Cambridge. Although the exact circumstances of his conversion are unknown it seems likely

that he was influenced by that of his prior, Robert Barnes, and through him Thomas Bilney, both later martyrs under Henry VIII. Half of the remainder of his life was spent in exile during three separate periods, representing the vicissitudes of Protestantism under Henry VIII's mood-swings and the later reaction under Mary I. In this final exile, he was unique among the major reformers in that he owed his survival to an intervention by the King of Denmark rather than flight. Finally he enjoyed a sunset period under Elizabeth I although his uneasiness over parts of the 'Elizabethan Settlement' prevented him from resuming his episcopate and perhaps limited the extent that he was able to exercise an effective ministry during his declining years.

An attractive feature of the book is the use of well-chosen extracts from Coverdale's 1535 Bible as 'epigraphs' at the head of each of the book's 12 chapters. Thus Chapter 6 on his Second Exile aptly begins with Our Lord's words from Matthew 10: 'When they persecute you in one city, fly in to another.' There are three introductory chapters, setting out the author's motives in writing the book and the historical background ('England before the Reformation' and 'The Dawn of the Reformation'). Chapters 4 to 11 relate the principal incidents of Coverdale's life following his emergence from monastic life while the final chapter provides a useful evaluation of his life and witness.

In his discussion of Coverdale's achievements as a Bible translator Mr Main takes issue with C.S. Lewis who in an essay published in 1951 described Coverdale as 'a rowing-boat among battleships.' This remark is said to have damaged Coverdale's reputation but Mr Main is perhaps a little unfair here to Lewis who was chiefly pointing out his defects as a scholar; it is undeniable that he knew no Hebrew. It is also possible that as the essay originated as a public lecture it had more influence than would otherwise have been the case. In his major work, 'Poetry and Prose in the Sixteenth Century' (Vol 4 of the *Oxford History of English Literature*), published in 1954, Lewis, the professional critic, provides a generally positive appreciation of the literary qualities of Coverdale's Bible translations, especially the Psalms, referring to his 'poetic impulse' and pointing out the 'felicities everywhere' in his versions, noting in particular 'baptized into his death', 'tender mercies' and 'lovingkindness'. Lewis, the amateur theologian, also used Coverdale's version, as it appears in the 1662 Prayer Book, as the basis for his 1961 work, *Reflections on the Psalms*, noting again that in poetry and beauty he is (along with Jerome) 'beyond all whom I know.'

The author's final evaluation of Coverdale notes eight ways in which Coverdale contributed to the Reformation: as Bible translator, as preacher, as a writer of metrical psalms and hymns, as a willing exile, as a translator of works by Luther, Calvin and others, as bishop under Edward VI, as one prepared to suffer and die under Mary and finally under Calvin's influence as a pioneer of the Puritan movement. He also points to his renunciation of celibacy and his long and happy subsequent marriage.

It has to be said that the interior layout of the book is somewhat unattractive and, while the author has provided generous acknowledgement of the many who have assisted him in his work, it would also have benefited from the provision of a bibliography. However, these points do not detract from the excellence of the book in successfully setting forth the life and achievements of Myles Coverdale. It can be warmly recommended to the reader.

MINISTRY

BIDEFORD, DEVON: *North Road Chapel*. Consecutive Expository Ministry. AV, *Christian Hymns*. LORD'S DAY 10.45 am and 6.30 pm. *Minister:* Mr R.J. Steward. northroadchapel.org. nrcbideford@gmail.com.

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.

LANDFORD WOOD, WILTSHIRE: *Landford Wood Mission Hall*, Stock Lane, Landford Wood, SP5 2ES (off A36). Weekly Service on each Lord's Day at 3 pm, (God

willing) from February to December). Conservative Evangelical Worship using the AV at all services. Elder: J.E. North, phone 07500265419

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.

WOLVERHAMPTON *St Silas Church of England (Continuing)*, 49 Long St, WV1 1HU. Lord's Day, MP 11 am EP 6.30 pm Holy Communion as notified. AV and BCP, *Christian* and *Anglican Hymns* used. Contact Paul Hooper (m) 07477 704921.

AUDIO MINISTRY

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (CONTINUING) *Audio ministry*. For the latest CD list contact Donald Morgan, 7 Cearn Sheileidh, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2YW, or email donaldmorgan186@googlemail.com

Amid ecumenical error,
theological liberalism
and secularism, multi-
faithism and the Romeward
movement

THE ENGLISH CHURCHMAN

advocates 'the old paths
... the good way, and walk
therein'. The divine promise
is, 'and ye shall find rest for
your souls', Jeremiah 6:16

THE ENGLISH CHURCHMAN

SEND FOR A FREE COPY

THE ENGLISH CHURCHMAN

is a fortnightly journal of news,
comment, correspondence,
book reviews and articles.

We seek to maintain a
testimony to the Scriptural
principles of the Reformation,
and the Doctrines of Grace, as
set out in the XXXIX Articles.

£40 per year post paid

**Details from the Manager
The English Churchman,
8 Cradlehall Gardens, Inverness, IV2 5FW
Tel: 07452 991434 or 01463 794534**



**WHATEVER CALAMITY COME UPON YOU
OUTWARDLY, DEPRECATE MOST SPIRITUAL
PLAGUES AND GOD'S DESERTING.**

OUR GRIEVING HIM MAKES HIM WITHDRAW HIS COUNTENANCE ...
THEREFORE ARISE, AND DO NOT SETTLE AND QUIET YOURSELF IN
SUCH A CONDITION.

- HUGH BINNING -



**REFORMATION
SCOTLAND**

We all need to seek God's blessing through closer obedience. Reformation Scotland helps by mining the riches of the past for today's Church. As we devote ourselves to everything Christ has commanded, lives, families and churches can be reformed through closer obedience to the revealed will of God.

www.reformationscotland.org

BRITISH CHURCH NEWSPAPER

The New Protestant Newspaper

NON-DENOMINATIONAL • FORTNIGHTLY*

16 pages – full colour

SEND FOR YOUR FREE SAMPLE COPY TODAY

--- • ---

£32.50 for 12 months (*average 24 issues) • £16.25 for 6 months (*average 12 issues)

Cheque to: 'British Church Newspaper'

31 Stanchester Way, Curry Rivel, Langport, Somerset TA10 0PS

Tel: 07525 473276. Email: yorkshiremoore@outlook.com