



# THE OLD PATHS

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For Private Circulation Only

# The Old Paths

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This is a quarterly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus for the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

**EDITOR:** A. Davidson

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From non-Indian writers to Alan Davidson – **jadavidson@tiscali.co.uk**

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## **COMMITTEE**

Ajay Chhatria

Joseph Shah

Paul Sheppard

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## **PUBLISHER**

Ajay Kumar Chhatria, BIBLE BHAVAN, Katkiapara,  
TITLAGARH-P.O., Bolangir-Dist, Odisha, 767 033, India

Mobile: **+919437638199** Email: **ajaychhatria@gmail.com**

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*All communications concerning this magazine should be sent via email to –*  
**topnew2016@gmail.com**

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I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Thy word. Consider how I love Thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Thy lovingkindness. Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

(Psalm 119:158-160)



## From the Editor's Desk

### **“THE WORD – WATER FOR CLEANSING”**

**“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Psa. 119:9)**

The careful study of the Word of God leads to a study of self. Obedience to the Word is the means of purification and preservation. A net is not a vessel to contain water but by running water through the net, it is cleaned. The disciples found it necessary to wash their nets because they had caught seaweed and scum. A sieve will not hold water but if water under pressure, is forced through the sieve, blockages will be cleared. Sin will keep us from the Word. Better to apply the Word to our lives so that its cleansing power will keep us from sin. Thus by application of the Word of God to the heart and habits, we will be preserved in the path of sanctification and practical holiness.

The first vessel on the way of approach into the Tabernacle was the Brazen Altar. The second vessel was the Laver. The Altar, speaking of sacrifice, gives us our standing, cleansed by blood. The lesson of the Laver is relevant to our practice, cleansed by water. “Thou shalt put water therein, For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat” (Ex. 30:18-19). Water flowing speaks of the Holy Spirit. Water contained in a vessel speaks of the Holy Scriptures.

The Laver had:

No Contamination. The priests washed in the water from the laver. They did not bathe in the laver. The Scriptures are known as the Holy Scriptures. The memory of a verse of Holy Scripture may preserve us in the moment of temptation.

No Shape. We are not told that it was square. If it was round then it was the only round shaped vessel in the tabernacle. The Word of God is limitless in application. It is applicable to the “young man” and the young woman, there is no generation gap and is the same standard for all ages.

No Size. We are not given the dimensions. The inspired Word reveals the infinite demands of the Throne.

No Lack. “He made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling” (Ex. 38:8). The mirror reveals what we are. The water of the Word shows us what we should be.

There was No Entry into the Sanctuary without bathing in the water from the Laver. Obedience to the Holy Scriptures will lead us into a life of holiness, “Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

No Carelessness. The priests washed “their hands and their feet”, before they engaged in service. “Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet” (Heb. 12:12-13).

In John 13:5, the Lord “poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet”. “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit” (John 13:10).

Why do we not practice literal feet washing in the present age? The answer is that we have the complete canon of Holy Scriptures. Let us all cleanse our ways, by “taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Psa. 119:9).

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2Timothy 2:22)

# Called to Holiness

T.J. Blackman

## **The Holy One who Calls us**

The apostle Peter declares: “He which hath called you is holy“, and He Himself declares, “I am holy” (1Peter 1:15,16). Some of God’s attributes may seem to be mutually exclusive, such as love and wrath, mercy and judgment, but holiness combines with every other divine attribute. His love is as holy as His wrath, His mercy and judgment likewise are equally holy, and every other attribute – wisdom, power, sovereignty, compassion, etc. is fully and invariably characterised by holiness. The Father is holy (e.g. John 17:11); The Son is holy (e.g. Luke 1:35), and the Spirit’s holiness is emphasized everywhere; in fact we understand that the Greek for “the Holy Ghost” is often literally, “The Spirit, the Holy One”.

What is holiness? In the King James Bible we find words such as holy, saints, hallowed, sanctify. These are all synonyms, and while they illustrate the richness of the English language, perhaps other languages which use just one or two words are less confusing! The Lord taught His disciples to pray, “Hallowed (or sanctified) be Thy name”. This obviously did not imply that God’s name could become any holier than it already is. It simply meant to desire that God’s sacred name be separated from everything unworthy or unclean. This is generally what is meant by holiness in the Scriptures – separation from everything that is unworthy of God’s name, God’s will, God’s presence or God’s people.

Thus the first reference to God’s holy presence in the Bible is found in Exodus 3:5 where God appeared to Moses in the burning bush: “And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for

the place whereon thou standest is holy ground". We cannot measure or describe the holiness of God, but as His children and His people we must seek to reflect it "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" (Philippians 2:15).

### **The Holy Calling**

God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Timothy 1:9). Our calling was according to God's purpose and grace. This is traced back to "before the world began" or "before the ages of time" (JND). Thus, our calling by grace was planned before sin came into existence, when all was holiness. It was in order to make us fit, and prepare us for, the holiness of heaven in the future – "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). The call came to us through the preaching of the Gospel message, which showed us how we could be "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" on the cross (Hebrews 10:10). This was made effectual "through sanctification of the Spirit" (1Peter 1:2).

### **The Holiness to which we are Called**

We are called to holiness individually and collectively.

*Individually.* We are called to a life which is totally different from our former way of life: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance" (1Peter 1:14). We are called to a life which is holy in every part: "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (behaviour)" (1Peter 1:15). And the reason is simply that our holy God and Father says to us, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1Peter 1:16). There can be a tendency to departmentalize our lives into physical and spiritual, but in the Scriptures holiness has to do with the whole person. Thus Paul prays for the Thessalonians, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit

and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”, and we can be sure God is willing and able to answer such a prayer, for he says in the very next verse, “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Thessalonians 5:23,24). The standard of holiness required with respect to the believer’s body is made plain in 1Corinthians 6: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (vv. 19,20).

*Collectively.* In chapter 2 of his first epistle, Peter teaches us that once we come to the Lord (“as unto a living stone”) we form part of a “holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Peter 2:5). One of the great contrasts between Israel and the church is that, while in Israel the privilege of priesthood was limited to one family (children of Aaron), in the church every believer is a priest with the right to offer up praise, prayer and thanksgiving “by Jesus Christ”. This is something which has often been obscured through clericalism. Not all have the liberty to praise and pray audibly in the assembly gatherings, but all have the same access to the immediate presence of God, without any mediator except the Lord Himself.

Two of the purposes of inspiration are “for reproof, for correction” (2Timothy 3:16). This is evident in Paul’s first inspired epistle to the Corinthians. The assembly had become defiled through discord, immorality and false teaching. Right at the beginning Paul reminds them of the importance of holiness in a threefold way, “Unto *the church of God* which is at Corinth, to them that are *sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called to be *saints*, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1:2). First “church of God” is not a building, but is connected with the idea of our calling. It means a company of people which God has called out



of the world to belong to Him and to be His holy dwelling place. Then He shows that they are “sanctified in Christ Jesus”. This is their position before God in His gracious purpose. Thirdly he says they are, “called to be saints”, that is, His holy calling has made them to be saints, and this is something they ought to live up to. So, we are holy by possession, holy in our position, and should be holy in practice.

In 1Corinthians 3 Paul returns to the subject of the holiness of God’s assembly. The figure of the temple, the holiest part of the temple, is used, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1Corinthians 3:16,17).

In Old Testament days there was no holier place on earth than the sanctuary of the Tabernacle or later of the Temple in Jerusalem. The same word is used both of the believer’s body (Ch. 6) and of the local assembly (Ch. 3). When idolatry was introduced into the very Temple of God in Jerusalem, severe judgements inevitably followed; see, for example, Ezekiel chapter 8, which closes with the solemn words, “Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them” (v. 18). “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy”, is God’s word to us today.

“Be ye holy”. Where do we begin? Peter tells us where: “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1Peter 3:15). Through prayer and the reading, memorization and study of His word, cultivate holy thoughts and desires. By nature, His thoughts are not our thoughts and our ways are not His ways (Isaiah 55:8). But when we think His thoughts, speak His words and share His desires, we shall begin to be holy as He which has called us is holy. If we are “sanctified vessels” we shall be “meet for the Master’s use” (2Timothy 2:21). May the Lord enable us to live in accordance with our holy calling.

# The Acts of the Apostles

## Chapter 7:44-60

Ian McKee

We continue our consideration of Stephen's response to the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin. We have thought about Stephen's references to incidents in the life of Abraham, Joseph and Moses. We now come to the spiritual applications he makes from the lives of David and Solomon, from the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple at Jerusalem.

### **(d) From Moses until Solomon, the Tabernacle/Temple Section (v.44-50)**

In contrast to the time of idolatry when there was a "tabernacle of Moloch" (Acts 7:41-43) there was a true "tabernacle of witness in the wilderness." This Tabernacle was constructed according to the pattern given by God to Moses and "the glory of the LORD" filled it (Exodus 40:34). Even so that earthly Tabernacle was a temporary and portable structure for a pilgrim people. Stephen is teaching that God is not restricted to any one place and that His purpose progresses.

That Tabernacle was "brought in with Jesus [that is, Joshua, the successor to Moses] into the possession of the Gentiles" [that is, into the land of Canaan]. Stephen reminds his hearers that God drove back the heathen enemies to allow the children of Israel to take possession of their land.

This Tabernacle was the focus of national life for many successive generations until the reign of King David. His desire to build a permanent habitation for God was refused, 2Samuel chapter 7, but the Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple built by Solomon in accordance with God's will and design. The temporary Tabernacle for a pilgrim people was therefore replaced with a permanent structure for a people now in full possession of the land.

But the Jewish mind must not conclude that God was ever restricted to the Tabernacle (which was superseded) or the Temple (which was later destroyed and replaced) as “the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” It wasn’t just that Stephen said this: this truth was stated by Solomon at the dedication of the Temple that he himself had built, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” (1Kings 8:27). Isaiah the prophet also made a similar statement, “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest?” (Isaiah 66:1). In light of these Scriptures, Jerusalem and the Temple seem very small indeed.

The Sanhedrin must decide whether it is they, or Stephen, who are in accord with Old Testament Scriptures; in particular with those statements of Solomon and Isaiah. Both could not be right! The Sanhedrin knew that the Tabernacle lasted 350 years, the first Temple 400 years and, on restoration, for a further 550 years. But neither Tabernacle nor Temple should be considered in any absolute sense as being God’s house. The Creator of the universe cannot be contained in man-made structures. God cannot be localised; and He has already demonstrated that He is a ‘pilgrim’ God who dwells with and among His people. Even the Temple was never intended to become a permanent institution and Stephen is indicating that the day of the present structure in Jerusalem is passing.

### **Stephen’s conclusion (v.51-53)**

It is when preachers apply faithfully the word of God to resisting and resentful hearers that the opposition really begins! Stephen’s conclusion is that the Jewish leaders were: resisting the Holy Spirit (as they had always done); persecuting and killing the prophets (as they had always done); and were failing to keep the Law of Moses (as they had always done). Stephen in using the words “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears” is employing similar words to

those used by Jehovah in Exodus 32:9; 33:3, etc. when the nation in blatant rebellion turned to the idolatrous worship of the golden calf.

Stephen, the accused, now becomes Stephen, the accuser. He must have known that his courageous denunciation of the Sanhedrin would result in serious consequences for him, but he remains faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. The religious status and credentials of the Jewish leaders had no spiritual value: they were motivated solely by natural and fleshly desires. They were stubborn and unbelieving in heart and deaf to the truth.

He denounces their rejection of the appeals of the Holy Spirit speaking through Moses and the prophets. Their previous resistance to the Lord Jesus Christ is now compounded by their mounting antagonism to Stephen's Scriptural and spiritual exposition. Stephen asserts that it is not he that has shown a disregard for Divine revelation, but they. Like their fathers before them, they had disregarded the heaven-sent Deliverer, "the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."

The Jews wanted a kingdom suitable to themselves. They did not desire a King to reign in righteousness and princes to rule in judgment, see Isaiah 32:1. The Jews down through history unleashed their hatred on God's faithful prophets. Now they have slain the "Just One" whom the prophets predicted. They knew what they were doing. No mitigation of ignorance is used here as, for example, when Peter spoke to the population in Acts 3:17. The Sanhedrin, led by Sadducean High Priests, with the collusion of the Pharisees, had acted against the Lord Jesus Christ with their eyes wide open. They were not manslayers; they were murderers!

Their guilt is all the more serious as the Jewish nation had received special privileges: receiving the Law from God, being transmitted to Moses by the mediation of angels. The law, which was their boast, was to their condemnation and shame as they have not obeyed it.

Stephen has now finished his defence; he has not been cut short.

## **The Martyrdom of Stephen (v.54-60)**

Stephen has not said anything that has not already been said by, for example, Moses, David, or the prophets. However, the Sanhedrin “were cut to the heart”, a phrase which has already been used in Acts 5:33 for conviction of sin. But here there is no contrition or repentance, rather “they gnashed on him with their teeth”, that is they were grinding their teeth like wild animals; they were Hellish in their attitude (Luke 13:28).

In contrast to the furious council, we have the final reference to Stephen’s Holy Spirit filled life and service. What a man! On trial for his life, He is fully confident in the Holy Scriptures which he uses both by direct quotation and in summary. He “looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God.” This chapter, which started with a reference to “the God of glory” appearing to Abraham, ends with Stephen seeing “the glory of God”! But more than that, he sees “Jesus standing on the right hand of God”, in the place of authority and power. We are now demonstrably in a completely new dispensation with a risen Man in the glory.

He goes on to state, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” His thoughts and worship are focused on a risen Christ, not on Jewish traditions or any building. This description is similar to the quotation used by the Lord at His own trial (Matt. 26:64) where He identified Himself with the Messianic prophecies of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14. The Lord stands to receive the first martyr in this new dispensation (or age) of grace. As Stephen had stood to confess Christ before men; so Christ stood to confess His servant before God. This is the last New Testament occurrence of the “Son of man” title of the Lord Jesus Christ and the only time this title is used by anyone after His ascension – the reference in Hebrews 2:6 is an Old Testament quotation and those in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14 are different. This is the first of only three New Testament manifestations of the glorified Christ, the others being to Saul of Tarsus and to the apostle John on Patmos.

The use of this “Son of man” title by the Lord and by Stephen in their respective trials occasioned hatred. “Then they cried out with a loud voice”, seeking to drown out Stephen’s voice with their yelling. As they were unwilling to listen they also “stopped their ears”. The martyrdom of Stephen was the final indictment of Israel for rejecting their Messiah; being in effect the religious leaders’ formal response to the renewed offer of kingdom blessing earlier announced by Peter (Acts 3:19-21). They “ran upon him with one accord” indicates that they rushed upon Stephen with a murderous intent. They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. This has all the features of a killing by an out of control mob, rather than an official execution by a national leadership after due judicial process. In effect, by their actions, they were restating “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14).

“The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” Although they were compliant with Deuteronomy 17:7, which required the witnesses (whether the false witnesses of Acts 6:13 or the Sanhedrin as a whole) to cast the first stone, this present execution has no other semblance to justice. Indeed this summary execution may have pricked Saul’s conscience and prepared the way for his later conversion. In murdering Stephen the nation sinned against the Holy Spirit and thus became apostate.

Stoning was the Jewish capital punishment for blasphemy (Lev. 24:14-16) and they kept on stoning Stephen until he was dead. This is the nation’s third murder in as many years: they had permitted the murder of John the Baptist; demanded the murder of the Lord Jesus Christ; and now they murdered Stephen themselves.

Stephen dies with a Name upon his lips. He is calling to the Lord Jesus; it is a prayer direct to Christ, offering worship to Him in his final moments. The Lord Himself had cried “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (Luke 23:46). Stephen used similar wording. His confidence is in One who did not save Himself from death; and Stephen’s form of address clearly places the Lord on equality with God: affirming the essential Deity of Christ.

Like the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, Stephen also evidences Divine love for his murderous enemies. Stephen's exclamation, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", would surely remind them of the Lord's "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

"And when he had said this, he fell asleep" is a sad but sweet expression. It is an unexpectedly beautiful end to so violently cruel and brutal a death. On a believer's death the spirit goes immediately to be with the Lord (v.59; Phil. 1:23) while the body sleeps in the grave awaiting resurrection (v.60; 1Thess. 4:14). Sleep as a metaphor of the death of a believer in the New Testament refers to the believer's body, not to their soul.

In Stephen's declaration he exalts Christ as: the antitype of Joseph; the prophet like unto Moses; the Just One; the Son of Man; and the supreme LORD.

(To be continued D.V.)

## THE LORD JESUS – "I AM NOT"

Denis O'Hare

### Seven Mentions in John's Gospel

It has been pointed out frequently that, in the Gospel according to John, the Lord uses the expression "I am" seven times to describe His own Person and Work. But it is interesting to notice that, in the same Gospel, the Lord also says seven times "I am not". In contrast with the "I am's", where each declaration is distinct from the others, the references to "I am not" can be seen as four separate groups.

## **The Lord Was Sent By The Father**

“I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me” (7:28,29).

The writer to the Hebrews describes the Lord in different ways. In chapter 3, he writes “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (v1). The word “apostle” means ‘one sent forth’. The foremost, of course, is the Saviour. Then we have the 12 apostles, designated thus in Luke’s Gospel: “And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles” (6:13). Finally, in 1Corinthians, Paul describes himself as an apostle:

“... He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1Cor. 15:7-10).

The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, as Paul stated in the epistle to the Ephesians (2:20). In the same epistle, he describes the gifts bestowed upon the church: “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (4:11). It is a mistake to think that there are still apostles today, as some would claim. Along with that of the prophet, it was a foundation gift for the establishing of the Church and, once the last apostle went to be with the Lord, that office ceased.

## **The Lord Was Supported By The Father**

“And yet if I judge, My judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me” (8:16).



“I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” (16:32).

In John’s Gospel, the Lord says “I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (5:43). History gives us countless examples of men who came, claiming to have been sent by God, but their claims had neither substance nor support. In Arabia, Mohammed affirmed that he had been sent by God and, despite the absence of any proof, countless millions of souls defend and propagate this lie. Nearer to our times, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon sect, made the same claim. Set against this, we read that the testimony of the disciples had divine support. The great salvation of Hebrews 2 “was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will” (vv 3-4).

### **The Lord Was Set Apart By The Father**

“And He said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world” (8:23).

“I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (17:14).

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (17:16).

From His birth in Bethlehem, until His ascension to Heaven, He was totally devoted to the Father. At the age of 12, when His parents found Him in the temple with the doctors of the law, He said to his mother “How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). When He encountered the man blind from birth, He said to His disciples “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day” (John 9:4).

The Lord’s separation from the world is seen in features of the Nazarite in Numbers 6. The Nazarite was a person who, during a certain period, devoted himself totally to God in observing the

prescriptions set out in that chapter. There were two specific prohibitions. The first was that he was to abstain from the fruit of the vine, from the kernel to the husk, drinking neither wine nor strong drink and, secondly, he was not to cut his hair. Wine would tell us of natural joy. The Psalmist reminds us that “wine ... maketh glad the heart of man” (Psa. 104:15). Then, we read in 1Corinthians that long hair is shameful for a man (11:14). Thus, the Nazarite was to refuse the natural pleasures of life, typified by the wine, and to accept the shame of having long hair. The Lord’s meat and drink was to do the Father’s will; this was His pleasure, and then He accepted the shame heaped upon Him by His enemies when they said “We be not born of fornication” (8:41), and “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (8:48).

### **The Lord Satisfied The Father**

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father” (20:17).

In what sense did the Lord Jesus satisfy His Father in that encounter with Mary Magdalene? It was in the fact of His resurrection: as Paul points out: “and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1Cor. 15:17). The Saviour was stating a certitude to Mary; not a possibility. The reality of His resurrection demonstrates to us that, at the cross, our sins had been dealt with, and that His cry “It is finished” (John 19:30) was not a cry of despair but, rather, one of victory.

Why did He say “Touch Me not”? We read that the disciples did indeed touch Him when they “held Him by the feet” after His resurrection (Matt. 28:9). However, it would seem as if Mary was fearful that He would once again disappear, and she therefore sought to lay hold upon Him to restrain Him from going away. Thus, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ were the essential and irrefutable demonstrations of the Father’s pleasure in the Person and work of His Son. He was sent by the Father, supported by the Father, set apart by the Father, and He satisfied the Father.

# See No More

John J. Stubbs

We are going to look at four interesting departures in the Scriptures. They all concern persons who were left behind without the presence of those whose company they experienced. Each of these departures was necessary. Two of them were departures from earth to heaven and two of them were removals from one place to another on earth. Each of them was essential for the furtherance of the work and purposes of God. This is a very interesting line of truth and contains a number of lessons for us as the people of God in the times in which we live.

## **2Kings 2:12 – “And he saw him no more”**

Elisha had to learn how essential the departure of his master Elijah was. Elisha says: “where is the LORD God of Elijah” (v14). Note he does not say “Where is Elijah?” God is the unchanging God and Elisha has to learn this. Here we see he is left with GOD. Elijah’s God is the God that GUIDES, PROVIDES and ABIDES. He is the God of power and the God of the impossible as well as the unexpected. We too need to know such a God in the difficulties of life and as we seek to serve Him. We need God. This is the great lesson we learn here.

## **John 16:10 – “I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more”**

The disciples in their new role and responsibilities would feel keenly the absence of the Lord, but the Lord made clear to them that His departure was expedient in order that the Comforter Himself could come. So in this reference we see that the disciples were left with THE HOLY SPIRIT. The ministry of the Spirit would be vital for the disciples in their testimony in the world, in regard to them knowing more of Christ and also having things to come revealed to them. This

is the dispensation of the Spirit and yet how much we seem to neglect Him. We really cannot do without Him in the work of God. We need His presence, power and help. Are we depending on Him?

**Acts 8:39 – “The Eunuch saw him no more”**

Suddenly and supernaturally the evangelist Philip was transported from the desert which had been the scene of blessing. God’s timing had been perfect in the meeting of the Eunuch, and God’s timing was just as perfect in taking His servant away from the new convert. Doubtless the Eunuch would have loved to have retained the preacher that little while longer so as to get advice as to what he should do next and how he should get on. The man was taken, but the message was left. Here then we find that he is left with THE SAVIOUR. We all too often tend to lean on men, but there must come a time of separate usefulness. Are we going on WITH CHRIST in the reality of fellowship with Him?

**Acts 20:38 – “That they should see his face no more”**

What a touching and moving scene we have here showing the affection that existed between servant and saints in those days. The parting of Paul from the Ephesians was necessary. The word of God has to go on in other places. As an apostle, leaving them is a picture of the character of the age, for he leaves them with the word of God. Notice he commends the brethren to God and to the word of His grace. It would have no meaning to commit these elders not only to God but also His word, if the word were not in itself powerful. The word of the Lord liveth forever. There is no substitute for the Word of God. Let us delight in it and delve in it more. So these brethren were left with THE WORD OF GOD.

What a message for us today to go on with God, the Saviour, the Holy Spirit and with the Scriptures. In the Christian life more than ever today we cannot prosper unless in dependence on God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Word.

## MISINTERPRETED TEXTS

### **Hebrews 10:12 – “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”**

The interpretation of this beautiful text depends on where the punctuation mark is placed. This determines whether the words “for ever” refer to the “sacrifice” or sitting “on the right hand of God”.

Christ Supreme is the theme of Hebrews. The expression, “He sat Himself down” (middle voice) is recorded four times.

THE PURGER. “When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3). The emphasis in chapter 1 is on His Person, “Himself”, who He is.

THE PRIEST. “We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8:1). As minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man; the emphasis in chapter 8 is upon the Priest and where He is. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith ... is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

THE PROOF. “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever” (Heb. 10:12). The emphasis in chapter 10 is upon the Perfection, the perfect expiation for “sins” committed; what He has done. “Forever” looks back to the past, His Sacrifice upon the Cross. This is the context of this text in chapter 10, contrasting many O.T. sacrifices which were always repeated, with the one sacrifice of Christ forever (10:1,3,5,6,10). “One sacrifice”, not many, once offered, “forever”, for all time, in perpetuity. The emphasis is upon time, bringing perfect satisfaction to God and perfect expiation for sins. “Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (10:18). This sitting does not imply a present inactivity, rather it looks back to His “finished” redemptive work on the Cross in contrast to the unending sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood.

THE PATTERN. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:3). The fourth reference to the seated Christ would have us consider what His is now. "Looking unto Jesus", contemplating fully, carefully compare and estimate, attentively gaze upon the great example in His own faith, His submission, His reliance upon God. He has far surpassed even the worthies of faith in chapter 11. "Consider"; not Abel, but the far more excellent sacrifice of Christ on "the cross"; not Abraham, but Christ and the "joy that was set before Him"; not Moses, but the Christ that he chose. Do not be discouraged, do not give up in the path of faith. Christ is the Sin Purger, the Priest, the Proof, the Pattern, the Prototype of faith, the Pledge of the recompense of the reward. He is risen, ascended and seated.

"The Throne on which He now appears  
Was His from everlasting years,  
Yet a new glory crowns His brow,  
And every knee to Him shall bow".

## Get to Know Your Bible

J.A. Davidson

### NEW TESTAMENT OUTLINE – Paper No 2.

#### THE GOSPELS

##### THE WORD:

Why does the N.T. begin with four Gospels? The O.T. begins with 5 books by one inspired author. Why are we not given one long Gospel by one author omitting all repetitions and giving us more parables and miracles? One obvious answer is that while the work of creation was a vast work of God concisely given in two chapters, when the

incarnate Word, the Eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ came to earth the narrative becomes infinite. John concludes “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25). The Gospels are not biographies, nor stories, not parables, nor reports, though all these aspects are included. The Glorious Gospel to needy sinful mankind told in our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, is revealed to us in these four accounts of His Person, life, death and resurrection.

### THE FOUR GOSPELS:

The Gospel that the Holy Spirit is presenting is a universal Gospel. The O.T. begins with one man; then a man and his wife; seven great men, a family, a tribe and later the focus is mainly within the boundaries of a nation. In the N.T. the forerunner introduced, “The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Nicodemus must have been amazed when he heard; “God so loved the world” (John 3:16) far beyond Jewish limitations. The Holy Spirit is seeking to reach out to the four different groups of people.

Matthew presents the One who is born King of the Jews. Numerous O.T. quotations set the Jewish background. His Gospel has more parables and WORDS of the Lord Jesus.

Mark needs no genealogy to present the active Servant to the Romans. His Gospel has more miracles and WORKS of the Lord.

Luke the physician, the Gentile writer stresses the beauty of the Perfect Man in cultural style and literacy excellence that appealed to the logical thinking of the Greeks. Luke records many of the journeys of the Lord Jesus and is the Gospel of His WALK.

John writes later in his universal Gospel with evangelical appeal to pagan readers who are neither Jew or Gentile. His call is to whosoever and presents the intrinsic WORTH of the Son of God (John 20:31).

### THE FOUR SYMBOLS:

This presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels is often linked with the four symbols of Ezekiel and Revelation.

The Lion – links with Matthew, the Royal Gospel, the King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The Ox – the beast of burden is reflected in Mark, the Gospel of the Servant.

The Man – is the key to Luke’s Gospel, the Son of Man.

The Eagle – is the symbol of John’s Gospel, the lofty vision of the only begotten Son.

### THE FOURFOLD PROPHECY:

This presentation of Christ is accurately predicted in the O.T. prophets.

“Behold, thy King” (Zech. 9:9)

“Behold, My Servant” (Isa. 42:1)

“Behold, the Man” (Zech. 6:12)

“Behold, your God” (Isa. 40:9)

The beautiful presentation of Christ as the Branch in the O.T. prophecy agrees with this fourfold presentation in the Gospels.

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a KING shall reign and prosper” (Jer. 23:5)

“Behold, I will bring forth My SERVANT the Branch” (Zech. 3:8)

“Behold the MAN whose name is the Branch” (Zech. 6:12)

“In that day shall the Branch of the LORD (JEHOVAH) be beautiful and glorious” (Isa. 4:2)

Anyone who has delighted in the variegated glories of God’s creation will know that the vision varies from different points of view and



even the time of day. The Grand Canyon (USA) looks different when viewed from the North Rim or the South Rim. The depth, vastness and colours are different when viewed in the brightness of the morning sun or the haze of approaching dusk. If the beauty of nature is so glorious to the natural eye, how infinitely supreme are the four beautiful inspired revelations of Immanuel given to us by the Holy Spirit.

### THE FOUR COLOURS:

The four colours of the fabrics of the Tabernacle have symbolic meaning with the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the four Gospels.

**PURPLE:** The regal colour of Matthew (Judges 8:26; Matt. 2:2).

**SCARLET:** The dye obtained from the crushing of the cochineal worm suggests the Gospel of Mark, the lowly Servant. "A worm, and no man" (Psa. 22:6; Mark 10:45).

**WHITE:** The righteousness and perfect humanity of the Son of Man in Luke (Rev. 1:13-14; Luke 19:10).

**BLUE:** The representation of the Heavenly One, the Son of God who was made flesh and we beheld His glory (John 1:14).

### CALVARY:

The fourfold aspect of our blessed Lord is beautifully seen in His death on the cross.

#### Matthew 27:50 – LIFE DISMISSED – GOSPEL OF THE SOVEREIGN

"When He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost", with Royal Dignity He let go, sent away, released, dismissed His spirit.

#### Mark 10:45 – LIFE GIVEN – GOSPEL OF THE SERVANT

"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto (served), but to minister (serve), and to give His life a ransom for many." After His life of tireless labour He gave His life as a substitute, a ransom in the place of many.

## Luke 23:46 – LIFE YIELDED – GOSPEL OF THE SON OF MAN

“When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost”. As Man, Perfect Man, submissive Man, He expired, breathed out His spirit.

## John 10:17-18 – LIFE LAID DOWN – GOSPEL OF THE SON OF GOD

“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, I have power (authority) to lay it down, and I have power (authority) to take it again”. He relinquishes His life in purposeful surrender and took it again in vicarious victory.

### ORDER:

The first three Gospels are called the Synoptics, meaning taking a common view. The writers do not just record a mere outward succession of historic events. The facts, miracles, parables, conversations, journeys and discourses are developed in a moral order in accordance with their causes and consequences. Matthew and John were eyewitnesses. Perhaps Mark records Peter’s remembrances. Luke is inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us beautiful pictures of the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that no historian or mere chronicler could compile. John wrote later, not repeating the same details of what had already been written but giving a more reflective presentation of Divine truth relative to Deity revealed in the humanity of the Word, which was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

### INSPIRATION:

The various differences of the Gospels blend in beautiful complimentary harmony as the human writers are guided by the Holy Spirit. “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

# Presenting the Gospel

N. John Jeyanandam

## **“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1Corinthians 1:21)**

The gospel must be preached with dignity and with the fear of God. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”. The first purpose of any gospel meeting is to bring glory to God and honour to Christ Jesus.

One city preacher earned the reputation of being a great orator and he lived up to his reputation. His voice was powerful, his pronunciation perfect, his logic persuasive and his jokes funny. Though his sermon might not always have to do with the Bible, as a speech it would be a masterpiece. He visited a rural church as guest speaker. When the sermon was over, an old man in the congregation was asked by a friend what he thought of his preaching. The old man, a Christian of many years standing and with practical wisdom, summed it up thus, “Much wind; loud thunder; no rain”. Let us not just chuckle at this story, but let it make us think seriously and act wisely.

We shall consider, in this chapter, the area of the public proclamation of the gospel. Some guidelines are given, which if followed, will enhance its presentation. These practical instructions would enrich the content of any preaching ministry. There must be no uncertain sound, no trimming down, and no apologies. There must be a clear, simple and a plain proclamation of the good news that is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Preaching with Reverence and Dignity**

While preaching the gospel, utmost reverence and holy fear of God are the most important factors. It is neither the *manner* nor the

*matter* this is effective in making known the message, but the spirit of the man who preaches. They “wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke 4:16-22). The Spirit of the Lord was upon our Lord in His public proclamation of the gospel (Isa. 61:1,2). It is therefore, most important to have reverence for the word of God and then preach with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (1Pet. 1:12). As we preach, though the facts are presented clearly and the doctrine correctly, yet it may lack the unction of the Holy Spirit. Many eloquent preachers have not won even one soul for Christ. Only a God-sent-preacher would carry divine dignity and reverence to the platform. “An actor can move his audience to tears with unrealities, but a preacher can turn them to stone with solemn divine truths”.

### **Preaching with Clarity and Simplicity**

A preacher need not use a bombastic and pompous style of words. He must avoid windy and winding sentences. His compositions must be easily understandable. His flow of language must be simple and forthright. He should determine in his heart to make his words simple, searching, sweet and short. He must avoid using a basketful of words to present just a spoonful of thought. We should take advice from Solomon the wise, seriously. “The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth (Eccl. 12:10).

It is essential in all gospel preaching, and for that matter in all our preaching, that we *speak plainly*. Our presentation must be clear and understandable even to ordinary men and women. “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1Cor. 14:8). The audience should never leave a meeting confused as to the message presented. Our words and language must be easily understandable. The points we put forth must be *clear* and *precise*. They are to be arranged in an orderly manner developing in thought and reasoning, so that they cannot be refuted. We should not beat about the bush or speak ambiguously to the air (1Cor. 9:26).

The message must be clear to the preacher's own mind before he can deliver it to others. He has to ask himself, "What is the point I am driving at? What am I seeking to emphasize?" At times it would rather be beneficial to take just two to three points from the Scripture verses than to touch on a dozen. We need to speak simply and relevantly. How we marvel at the absolute simplicity and clarity with which our Saviour spoke!

The gospel is the presentation of great facts. Unlike other religions, *faith* rests on mighty historical facts with great spiritual blessings. Christ died for our sins. He is the sin-bearer. His death was sacrificial. He was the Lamb of God and the world's sin-bearer. Man is a sinner and is lost forever. He carried God's condemnation. It was for such a sinner that the Saviour came to die, as the propitiation (appeasement) for his sins (Luke 19:10; 1Tim. 1:15). Those who believe this great truth and obey Him, receive Him, and put their faith in Him are saved and will become God's sons and can say, "The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

We have to preach Christ and Him only. He once was slain for our sake, but is now alive. He is able to save and sustain. The gospel is the *Person* – the Man Jesus Christ – His *worth* and His *work* must be made clear and plain to the audience. The preacher who points out such a glorious Person is sure to see results. Pointing to *Christ on the cross* is the story of remission by precious blood. Pointing to *Him enthroned* in glory, is the story of the power to live for Christ and to be preserved. Pointing onward to *His coming* in the air to take the saved ones home is the prospect which we all long for. "*Christ is all in all*" should be the theme of all who preach the gospel.

### **Preaching Plainly and Positively**

Whether it was the Old Testament prophets or New Testament apostles and evangelists who spoke, they presented their message plainly. When people indicated that they did not understand, either it was because they did not want to understand or they did not want to

receive it. If Belshazzar did not understand the handwriting on the wall, why was he trembling? If the Athenians said, “What will this babblers say?” (Acts 17:18), it is because they did not want Jesus or believe the resurrection of the dead. Let us strive to be plain in our presentation, leaving the audience with a clear understanding of our message. The Lord Jesus Christ was conscious of His audience and the manner in which He presented His message. The selection of His parables was tailored to suit the need of His audience and their circumstances. Their presentation and the manner He did it were varied, as the four Gospels clearly indicate.

God does not state His suggestions and suppositions. But He speaks with a declaration of absolutes. In presenting Christ and His vicarious (substitutionary) death on the cross, and other scriptural truths, we should speak in a similar manner. There is no need to apologize for being forthright in our statements about the word of God. *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”* (1Peter 4:11). We must therefore, make sure that the manner of our preaching is such that our audience is able to understand what we say, and what the gospel message is all about. They should be able to grasp the message and accept it as such.

### **Preaching Suitably and Spiritually**

While presenting a message, we must be sure that it was obtained from the Lord Himself, and appropriate for the occasion and apt to meet the needs of the people who form our audience. We must be able to discern the mind set of our hearers and should speak pertinently, to the point and clearly. The spirit of discernment is therefore needed to deliver a suitable and apt word from God for the particular occasion.

We must be able to first discern the pulse of our audience. In the Gospels we see how our Lord spoke differently to different people. What He said to the general masses was quite different from what He spoke to the Scribes and Pharisees. We need to carry the depth and style of our presentation to suit the audience. The way the Lord

approached Nicodemus in John 3 was not the same as when He reached out to the Samaritan woman in John 4.

The aptness of Peter's presentation of the gospel on the Day of Pentecost to the Jewish audience and again in the house of Cornelius to a Gentile gathering is remarkable. It contains a wealth of material to guide every gospel preacher, exemplifying how to present suitable words to various types of individuals in complex situations. Paul displayed that kind of ability in presenting the gospel. It suited the needs of the Jewish people at their synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia. But the same Paul addressed an altogether different audience of heathen idol worshipers on Mars Hill. These apostles, by their very methods of presenting the gospel, turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Thousands were saved and brought to the Lord and churches were planted wherever they went out preaching. Their methods of presentation of the gospel are recorded for us as standard examples to be adopted and followed.

Our presentation must always be *spiritual*. As they are of eternal realities, they require divine approval. Sometimes we indulge in needless story-telling and imaginary narrations. We resort to shouting and yelling and try to make emotion appeals. Let us stick to the language and method of the Holy Scriptures.

A preacher must be a *spiritual* person and should not grieve the Holy Spirit. About Joseph it is said, "A man in whom the Spirit of God is" (Gen. 41:38). Of Stephen it was recorded, "They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). Barnabas was "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people were added unto the Lord" (Acts 11:24). Handling of deep spiritual truths demands the preacher to be a Spirit-filled man of God.

### **Preaching with Intelligence and Intrigue**

We have been called upon to preach the infallible and the "Unchanging word of God to the ever changing world". Thus we have before us a number of practical and pressing concerns that require the utmost intelligence and balance handling.

The listener must receive clear, reliable and solid facts upon which to base his convictions. This is true for both scriptural facts as well as general information. For today's educated audience, it is absolutely necessary to quote verifiable facts. If we proclaim inaccurate "earthly" facts, how can we expect our listeners to accept unseen spiritual claims? We are called upon "to persuade men". Therefore we must feed them with clear scriptural truths so that the Holy Spirit can bring about enlightenment, conviction, faith and deliverance. An evangelist once observed, "We must address the '*whole person*' (mind, heart and will) with the '*whole gospel*' (Christ incarnate, crucified, risen, reigning, coming again and much else besides). We must speak to his *mind* and plead with his *heart*, in order to move his *will*, and towards this end we must completely rely upon the working of the Holy Spirit".

### **Preaching with Balance and Benefit**

Another important factor necessary in our preaching is that we should always maintain a *good balance* both in emphasis and style of delivery. We must offer a good and well-balanced spiritual diet and cater for wholesome growth. Over emphasizing and undue stress on one particular pet doctrine or half-truth or a favourite passage does not constitute good preaching. We should not lean too heavily on one truth or one point to the exclusion of others. The varied requirements of our listeners should be considered. Variations of volume and tone control are also very effective methods in holding the attention of the listeners. This would result in instant conviction and clearer understanding of spiritual truths.

### **Preaching with Authority and Power**

We are called upon to speak the word of God on behalf of God Himself. Like our Lord Himself, our message should be given as "one having authority" (Matt. 7:29). Not only must we have the God-given *confidence* in what we are saying, which accurately reflects the mind of God, but also with *conviction* what God would have us say.

Preaching the gospel is a *spiritual mandate*, and so it must be carried



out only by the assistance and direction of the Holy Spirit. There is a tremendous need for power – both *with* God and *with men*. We should not try to “move” people by various natural means. Human cleverness will not bring conviction. A clever outline, an appealing story, skilful and smooth flowing of words may enhance the value of our presentation, but they can never transmit regenerating spiritual power. We need to have the Holy Spirit’s presence and power in all our preaching and presentations of the gospel.

It is also very important that in all our preaching we need to affirm the total reliability and authority of the Scriptures. We must emphasize their verbal inspiration and always remind listeners that the living God keeps His promises exactly and truthfully, “The LORD hath performed His word that He spoke” (1Sam. 3:19; 1Kings 8:20; 2Chron. 6:10). Our reference to the Word of God should be clear and simple, as the listeners do not know much of the Bible; therefore it should be handled accurately and reverently.

### **Preaching with Care and Compassion**

Every preacher is different with respect to his thrust and approach with different expressions and varied mannerisms. We are to be what we are! Trying to imitate a popular preacher often results in failure and ridicule. We cannot deal with eternal issues without sincerity and earnestness. Our Lord wept over the unbelieving and hardhearted. Our tearless preaching is a sad revelation of the coldness of our heart. We read in the Gospels that our Lord was moved with compassion over the multitude (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; Mark 1:41; 6:34).

We must have concern of the people to whom we preach – “*Cease to amuse, seek to arouse*”. Let us remember that our battle is not against the “flesh and blood” of our hearers, but against principalities and powers that hold them captive (Eph. 6:12). We should not be vindictive against such men. Warn them kindly with a warm smile and with a stern voice so that they do not go astray. Traditions and customs hold many people in their evil clutches. Let us *lovingly warn* them unmasking traditional customs as we present the truth.

## Preaching – Communication with Communiqué

There are indeed many methods of communication. We can see the truth of this when we see how God communicated with men in the Old Testament. He spoke directly to certain individuals or through an angel or a prophet. He revealed His mind through visions and dreams and through several circumstances and situations of life, which He ordered and controlled. His oral communications were also varied. Sometimes it was a simple plain saying, and yet at times, it was in graphic language and at other times it was a warning with harsh words. He used illustrations and parables, to make certain points clear and understandable. God once instructed his prophet to visit the potter's house and then He spoke to him (Jer. 18:1-13). This kind of demonstrative proclamation enabled His people to visualize and appreciate the message, and to comprehend it with clarity.

In the New Testament, our Lord Himself is our pattern in how He communicated His Father's mind and thoughts to the common people, to the religious leaders, and to His own disciples. His methods differed from person to person, in such a manner that they could not offer any excuse.

It is marvellous to note in Acts 8, how the Holy Spirit has carefully used different expressions to convey how His people were preaching and declaring the message of God. We find in this chapter, seven expressions as to how the gospel message was communicated.

Four different Greek words are used, which our translations have failed to bring out the clear meaning. In verse 4, the word "*evangelizo*" meaning, "evangelize" is used. "It is almost always used of God as proclaimed in the gospel" (W.E. Vine). The derivatives of the same word are used in verse 12, in connection with the preaching of "the kingdom of God" and the name of Jesus Christ (v35), the gospel (v25) and as the general declaration of the gospel in verse 40.

In verse 5 the Greek word "*kerusso*" meaning "to proclaim or publish" is used. Here Philip as a herald is proclaiming Christ in public.

In verse 25, two Greek words "*diamarturomai*" and "*laleo*" are used.

The first word means “to testify or protest solemnly”. Here the apostles are “testifying the word of the Lord”. The second word “*laleo*” means “to talk or utter words” meaning “to converse”. This same word is also used in Acts 16:13, when Paul and his team were conversing with the women at the riverbed at Philippi.

Another Greek word “*dialeymai*”, literally meaning “dialogued” or “to ponder, resolve in one’s mind” is used in Acts 20:7,9, when Paul was discoursing in the upper chamber at Troas.

Thus we find that the N.T. describes various methods that the apostles used. We have to adopt the most suited and the best form of communications, as we try to proclaim and herald the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the word of God. We have to preach, proclaim, contend, converse and dialogue, defend and thus make the glorious gospel appeal to others.

### **Preaching – In Season and out of Season**

The apostle instructed young Timothy to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season” (2Tim. 4:2). One of our greatest enemies of preaching the gospel is waiting for the right time to preach. There never was a more right time, than today, now and this moment is “the due time”. The gospel has to be proclaimed to all men in every place and at all times. Solomon the wise has a word for all hesitant and the doubtful, “He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap” (Eccl. 11:4).

The scriptures encourage us to be fully engaged in this highly privileged responsibility of being His witnesses and to preach the gospel (John 4:35; Eccl. 11:1,6). A good reward and rejoicing awaits the one who is involved in this most desirable activity (John 4:36).

### **Preaching – Modelling from a Model**

The apostle Peter’s first sermon to the church (Acts 2:14-36) contained no pretensions of great learning and it dealt exclusively with the heart and conscience of his hearers explaining the PERSON – JESUS CHRIST, the Lord. Every preacher can learn many lessons, if he

would only take time and interest to study this. We have to appreciate that Peter was not academically trained for this work, but see how appropriate and effective he was when God *used* him. Peter took the *word of God* and preached the *Christ of God*, in the *power of God*, and in fellowship with the *people of God* (Acts 2:14-36).

- His message was *CHRIST*:
  - Christ on the cross (v. 23); Christ in His death (v. 24);
  - Christ risen up (vv. 24,32); Christ exalted (vv. 25,33);
- His message was *instructive*, confirming the prophetic scriptures and the approbation of God’s servants (vv. 16,33; Joel 2; Psalms 16 and 110)
- His message was *effective*, reaching the heart and conscience of his hearers (v. 37)
- His message was *declarative*, as a prophetic declaration (vv. 16-21)
- His message was *affirmative*, as Christ’s personal manifestation (v. 22)
- His message was *descriptive*, as the Saviour’s painful humiliation (v. 24)
- His message was *corrective*, exposing the lie his hearers had heard concerning Christ’s resurrection (vv. 24,30-32)
- His message was *directive*, pointing the hearers to the same Jesus whom they crucified, seated now in exalted glory (vv. 33-36)
- Finally, his message was *positive*, declaring that even those who had so grievously sinned against the Lord could be assured of remission of sins and also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (vv. 38-40)

May our Lord grant us His wisdom and the leading of His Holy Spirit as we present the gospel to needy and thirsty souls, teach and guide His people in what to say, how to say and when to say it and also to apply the scriptural truths, truthfully and effectively.

# The Death of Christ Exhibits God's Faithfulness

Selected

The very first book in the New Testament, the Gospel according to Matthew, reminds us repeatedly that the advent of Christ in all its phases and details is the making good of Divine promise and the fulfilment of prophecy.

Doubtless this is because Matthew writes primarily for the Jew. He seeks to convince that nation to which were committed the oracles of God that Jesus Christ is the long-promised Messiah of which those oracles spoke, "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Ch. 1:1). For the same reason the early gospel preachers from Pentecost onwards followed the same course. This we may discover both from the historical record of the book of Acts, and from the New Testament epistles.

This great fact is not of relevance only to the Jew, however; it has a voice for the Gentile also. So Paul, in describing the gospel he had preached at Corinth, asserts emphatically that it is "according to the Scriptures" (1Cor. 15:3,4). By this means the consistency of the gospel with previous divine revelation is established, and the character of God is revealed. He is shown to be a faithful God, One whose word is completely reliable. The complete accord of the advent of Christ with the promises and predictions of the Old Testament, stimulates faith in Christ and in the work which He came to do, and also confirms the reliability of those promises and warnings yet unfulfilled, those which refer to His coming again.

When Peter said in relation to the mount of transfiguration, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy" (2Peter 1:19), he was speaking subjectively. In the absolute the word of God can never be more sure than when it is first uttered. From the beginning it is absolutely and utterly sure. But its certainty can be demonstrated

and confirmed. So the experience on the holy mount was a confirmation of the Old Testament predictions of Christ's coming kingdom. And so, in a slightly different yet similar way, every prophecy of Scripture fulfilled at the first advent is a testimony to the veracity of God's word, and a guarantee that those prophecies as yet unfulfilled must in their own times find as complete a fulfilment.

As Solomon considered what God had done in his day he exclaimed, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who hath with His hands fulfilled that which He spake with His mouth to my father David" (2Chron. 6:4). How much more might these words be uttered by the One who could say, "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:42). Paul reminded his audience at Antioch in Pisidia, "of this man's (David's) seed hath God *according to His promise* raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts 13:23). He also asserted, "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him" (v. 27).

The Lord Jesus Christ both before His death and after His resurrection sought to assure His disciples that His death was in accordance with the written word of God (e.g. Matt. 26:24,31; Mark 9:12; Luke 18:31-33; Luke 22:37 and Luke 24:26,27,44-46).

Perhaps we might note specifically a few of the points which Scripture had predicted.

***The time of His death*** may be discovered from the most remarkable prophecy commonly referred to as "Daniel's Seventy Weeks" (Daniel 9:24ff.), where we read "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off". If we reckon seven plus sixty two weeks (literally "sevens") of prophetic years (each of three hundred and sixty days) "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem", we are brought right up to the time of Christ.

***The day of His death*** is revealed in the divine programme of the feasts of Jehovah. "In the fourteenth day of the first month", "Christ our Passover" was "sacrificed for us" (Lev. 23:5; 1Cor. 5:7).

The Old Testament types also indicate ***the place of His death***. Hebrews 13:11,12 shows how the detail of the Levitical sin-offerings prefigures the death of Christ outside the city of Jerusalem, the divine gathering centre (see Mark 15:20).

Scripture also foretold ***the means of His death***. He was betrayed by His companion to His enemies. This treachery of the traitor (Psalm 41:9; Mark 14:21; Acts 1:16), the reward of His iniquity (Zech. 11:12,13; Matt. 26:15), his subsequent history (Matt. 27:3-10) and the appointment of his successor (Psalm 69:25; Acts 1:20 ff.) were all foretold in Scripture.

***The mode of His death*** was also foretold. When Judas had betrayed his Master to the Jews, they delivered Him over to the Romans, who crucified Him. Psalm 22 is a graphic description of death by crucifixion. See also Zech. 12:10 and John 19:36,37. The lifting up of the serpent of brass upon a pole was a divine foreshadowing of the lifting up of the Son of Man upon the cross (Num. 21:9; John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32,33).

The Old Testament also had described ***the associates of His death***. He was crucified between two robbers, and so “numbered with the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12; Mark 15:27,28; Luke 22:37).

Another point on which Scripture had pronounced most decidedly was ***the purpose of His death***. See 1Corinthians 15:3. Apart from the types of the ceremonial law, especially the sacrifices, such prophecies as Isaiah 53 clearly revealed the substitutionary, sacrificial and atoning character of the death of Christ. The personal integrity and impeccability of Messiah, and the vicarious character of His death, are two fundamental considerations which can never be separated (2Cor. 5:21; 1Peter 2:21-24; 3:18; 1John 3:5). The whole sacrificial system, from the fall onwards, was intended to prefigure the redeeming work of Christ by the shedding of His blood. Many other circumstances were predicted, such as:

- The forsaking and fleeing of the disciples (Zech. 13:7; Matt. 26:31)
- The multitude and might of His enemies (Psalm 69:4; Mark 14:43)

- The violent apprehension (Isaiah 53:7; Matt. 26:47-57)
- His submissiveness (Isaiah 53:7; Acts 8:32-35)
- His trials and restraints (Isaiah 53:8; Luke 22:54; 23:1)
- His silence (Isaiah 53:7; Matt. 26:62,63; 27:12-14)
- Rejection by the leaders of the nation (Psalm 118:22; Acts 4:8-12)
- Rejection by the nation (Isaiah 49:7; 53:3; Matt. 27:20-23)
- Cooperation of Jews with Gentiles (Psalm 2:1,2; Acts 4:24-28)
- Being smitten on the cheek (Micah 5:1; Matt. 26:67 [R.V. Margin])
- The spitting and scourging (Isaiah 50:6; Matt. 26:67; 27:26,30)
- Mockery and scorn (Psalm 22:6-8; 69:7,9,19; Matt. 27:39-44)
- Casting lots for His clothes (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23,24)
- The offered drink (Psalm 69:21; John 19:28-30)
- Intercession for His enemies (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34)
- The cry of forsaking (Psalm 22:1; Matt. 27:46)
- The violent and untimely death (Isaiah 53:8; Daniel 9:26; Acts 5:30; 7:52)

These references enable us to understand a little better just how much Paul was really saying at Antioch in Pisidia when he declared, “*And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre*” (Acts 13:29). Also they indicate that Peter had every justification for proclaiming before his fellow-countrymen, “*But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled*” (Acts 3:18).

Paul’s custom in the synagogue was to reason “out of the Scriptures” concerning the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, and to demonstrate on this basis that Jesus is the Christ (e.g. Acts 17:2,3), and we may gather from Acts 18:28 that Apollos adopted the same method.

Indeed on one occasion Paul insisted that having obtained help of God he had continued in his life of gospel testimony and service,



*“Saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer”* etc. (Acts 26:22,23). And so the book of Acts leaves him in Rome persuading those called to his lodging “concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, *from morning till evening*” (Acts 28:23). Obviously then, we can only touch the fringe of the subject in a brief article like this!

Many years ago the Psalmist wrote, “I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation” (Psalm 40:10), showing that even in Old Testament times the experience of salvation was the fulfilment of divine promise and the manifestation of divine faithfulness. We have seen how more obviously and gloriously true this is of the salvation of God wrought out by His incarnate Son at the cross. The precious blood which He shed was “the blood of the New Covenant”, not merely the blood which sealed the covenant, but that upon which the basic New Covenant blessing of the forgiveness of sins was founded. It was the covenant-keeping God who sent His Son so that “all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in (through) Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2Cor. 1:20). In Christ and in His completed redemption every promise of God finds its validity.

It should be our delight in worship as well as in preaching, to extol the faithfulness of God, to exalt Him as the God of truth, the God of the Amen (Isaiah 65:16 lit.). For if “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers”, the same Holy Scriptures foretold mercy and blessing in Christ for the Gentiles (Romans 15:8-12).

So we, the converted amongst the Gentiles, have as much cause to respond to the Chief Musician and His song of praise, as the Jews. It is for us, to “rejoice... with His people”. If Solomon could bless the Lord God of Israel, and Ethan the Ezrahite could celebrate God in his great Psalm of divine faithfulness (Psalm 89, especially vs. 1-8), then both Jew and Gentile today have even greater cause “with one mind and one mouth (to) glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6).

# Assurance of Salvation

Cliff Jones

God tells us in His written Word, the Bible, that life is brief, it is likened to a vapour which appears for an instant and then vanishes (James 4:14). Life is full of uncertainties, changes and for many people it is not full of enjoyment but of stressful, worrying and unpleasant, painful experiences. Physical death is not the end: all of us will exist forever. A million years from today and on into eternity, we shall be in existence, and we shall be experiencing either unimaginable joy, bliss and peace in heaven in the presence of God (Ps. 16:11) or we shall be separated from God, being punished eternally for our sins.

God is holy, and tells us that we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23), that is we are all sinners, we have all broken His commandments: we have all gone astray like lost sheep (Isa. 53:6).

“God is love” (1John 4:8) and so great is His love that He sent His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to suffer, bleed and die for our sins (John 3:16). The Lord Jesus Christ is holy: He did not and could not sin (Luke 4:34; 2Cor. 5:21). When He was crucified, God His Holy Father, punished His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for the sins of the whole world (1John 2:2; John 1:29). After He had borne that terrible punishment the Lord cried in triumph “It is finished” (John 19:30) and voluntarily died. He had finished the work His Father had given Him to do. He had glorified His Father and had made possible a sure and certain way of salvation. After three days the Lord rose from the dead (Luke 24:6,7) and after forty days ascended back to heaven where He now sits on the throne of God (Heb. 12:2).

There is now a way for a sinner to be saved. There is only one way, and it is a sure and certain way. If a sinner is to be saved, that is if he

wants the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ to be effective for him personally, then he must repent, that is turn from his sins, and put his faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, believing that He suffered, bled and died on the cross, bearing, instead of the sinner, the punishment the sinner deserves from God. The sinner can then, and only then, have complete assurance that his sins have been forgiven, that he has peace with God and will be with Him in heaven eternally.

### **The Word of God**

There are those who say that it is presumptuous, arrogant and conceited to claim that a person knows that he has been saved and has full assurance of that fact. They would say that one must try to live a good life and only after death will a person discover whether or not he has been saved and will be in heaven eternally. However the Word of God is clear and unequivocal regarding the way in which a sinner can be saved and have full assurance that he has been saved.

The Lord said "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6), and we are told in John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him". Speaking of those who are saved the Lord said, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:28,29).

In Ephesians 1:4 we are told "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love", and in John 15:16 we read, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain". Those that the Father chose in the Lord Jesus Christ from eternity, will come to Him and are saved eternally.

Despite the many assurances given in the Word of God regarding the eternal security of believers, some believers pass through times in their lives when they lack the full assurance that they have been saved eternally, by grace, through faith in the completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross (Eph. 2:8,9). A believer might have assurance for a while and then lose that assurance, and then assurance will return, only to be lost again, and so it continues. Once a person has been saved that person is saved eternally and can never lose that salvation (John 3:36; 5:24; 10:28). The fact that a believer may not have full assurance of his salvation does not affect the reality of that salvation, but it certainly affects the enjoyment of that salvation.

Many things can cause a believer to lose assurance of salvation. Satan may use a believer's poor physical condition. Ill health and mental stress can cause him to lose assurance of salvation. Lack of assurance can cause great sadness and worry and can adversely affect a believer's physical and mental condition. Distress and despair are experienced and tears may be shed.

A believer lacking assurance may wonder if he has committed the unforgivable sin and may go down into the depths of depression. The truth is that no one who yearns to be saved or yearns for the assurance of salvation has committed unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit. The troubled believer does not doubt God's power to save eternally, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He may also believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, but he is unsure as to whether or not he ever really trusted Christ or is truly and fully trusting Him at this present time. Satan causes confusion in the mind of the doubting believer.

A believer has eternal peace with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1) and nothing can change or alter this. On the other hand a believer may not always enjoy "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), because this peace is lost when a believer sins. Sin interrupts fellowship with God. The believer does

not lose his salvation but loses the joy of that salvation and effective service for God is impossible. However, the peace of God can be recovered if the believer repents and confesses his sins to God (1John 1:9). Obeying our righteous, holy God brings peace, for “the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (Isa. 32:17).

We change and fluctuate but God does not change (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17). He cannot lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18), and His Word is truth (John 17:17; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5). A believer’s complete and absolute assurance of salvation is not based on feelings or emotion but on a knowledge of God, belief in the eternal efficacy of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

In the Word of God we are told of things that we may know with full assurance. John wrote “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1John 5:13). The Holy Spirit is stating clearly and unequivocally, through John, that a believer may know, that is have full assurance, that he has eternal life. Assurance is based on believing God’s Word. John uses the word “know” many times in this epistle.

The worried believer needs assurance: he needs to know that he is eternally saved. Is it possible from a study and belief in the Word of God to have this assurance. If we keep His commandments then this is evidence that we know Him (1John 2:3). We fail and sin, but if we repent and confess our sin, and, in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit strive to keep His commandments, this is evidence of our regeneration and salvation. “Whoso keepeth His word” (1John 2:5), knows that he is saved. A believer has further evidence of his salvation, if he seeks to do that which is righteous (1John 2:29), does not sin continually (1John 3:9; 5:18), and loves the brethren (1John 3:14).

## **Eternal security**

A believer who trusts God's Word will be assured of eternal salvation and security through the witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit will provide evidence of His indwelling within a believer (1John 3:24; 4:13) by producing fruit in the believer's life (Gal. 5:22,23). The believer will want to tell others of the way of salvation (Rom. 10:9).

The Lord Jesus Christ loves and gave Himself for each individual believer (Gal. 2:20). He saves "them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). The Lord said, "him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Paul knew his God and with full assurance wrote, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2Tim. 1:12).

We must examine ourselves to see "whether ye be in the faith" (2Cor. 13:5). Once we are sure we have put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ then to lack assurance of our salvation at any time in the future is to disbelieve the truths and assurances given in the Scriptures and to make out that God is a liar (1John 5:10), and to lose the peace, comfort, assurance and confidence we should be enjoying. Such disbelief hinders praise and love for God, stifles spiritual growth and prevents effective service for God.

Those wonderful words in Romans 8:38,39 give full assurance. We read in these verses, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord".

There are so many things in John's First Epistle that we may know. We read, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1John 5:12). These words leave no room for doubt regarding the position of the person who is saved and the person who is lost. The Word speaks clearly and gives comfort, certainty and assurance to each individual believer. God says to

believers, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine” (Isa. 43:1).

What joy and peace is enjoyed by a believer who believes what God says in His Word. That believer enjoys the blessed assurance of sins forgiven and is looking forward to eternity in heaven. Such a blessed believer can enjoy singing hymns like that written by James G. Small (1817-88):

I’ve found a Friend – O such a Friend!  
He loved me ere I knew Him;  
He drew me with the cords of love,  
And thus He bound me to Him;  
And round my heart still closely twine  
Those ties that nought can sever;  
For I am His and He is mine  
For ever and forever.

What joy and peace can be felt in that lovely hymn written by Fanny J. Crosby (1820-1915):

Blessed assurance – Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

## The Believer’s Hope in Christ

- To be **CAUGHT** up to meet Him ..... (1Thess. 4:17)
- To be **FOREVER** with Him ..... (1Thess. 4:17)
- To be **GLORIFIED** together ..... (Romans 8:17)
- To **REIGN** with Him ..... (2Tim. 2:12)
- To **SEE** His face ..... (Rev. 22:4)
- To **SERVE** Him ..... (Rev. 22:3)
- To be **LIKE** Him..... (1John 3:2)

# Help for Young Believers

## The Veterans Advise – No 4

This is the fourth reprint from the writings of a veteran brother who served the Lord for 48 years in South America.

**“But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19)**

Having been duly called of God to devote full time to His work, how is the preacher to be supported, and what financial means will he have to cover the cost of his work? It would be most unwise to look to any of the religious denominations around us for an example. We profess to be guided in all such matters by one rule – the Holy Scriptures. Nor need we go back to the law of Moses for a formula. How was such work conducted in the early days of this dispensation? The apostle Paul, and others, were greatly used of God in pioneer work. What was their custom?

In their commendation by the assembly at Antioch to missionary work in Asia minor and elsewhere, as given in Acts 13, there is no mention whatsoever of funds to cover the campaign. It seems clear that “for His Name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles” (3John 7). This does not mean that they begged their way, like the monks of Rome, but it surely does mean that their dependence and trust was in God alone. They went as God’s servants, and looked to Him to meet their need. They did not visit assemblies already formed, telling of the work they were going to do, and secretly hinting, if not openly soliciting, their financial support.

Did they not require means to pay their way, as do others? Most certainly, but they served the “living” God. Did He send it down from heaven? No doubt they received it as from God, but we find recorded later that He used His own people as channels, and it is



certain that from the first, He supported them in this way. They were happy to live simply and to carry on their work in humble dependence upon God. Many were the hardships endured, and it would be clear to all that they were not in it as a comfortable profession. On land they travelled mostly on foot. Some missionaries of today land in a foreign country with a vehicle that to the native people represents a small fortune. This can really be a barrier and a hindrance to the Gospel.

After some years of such work for God, the apostle Paul lets us into the secret of how he and others were supported in those days. In writing to the Philippians (Ch. 4:10-18), he tells of times of lack and times of abundance. Both of these circumstances he accepted as the will of God, seeking to be contented with that will. He even speaks of being "hungry". Saints in Philippi had been stirred up by the Holy Spirit to communicate with him, but they lacked opportunity. How thankful they were when they were able to send Epaphroditus with a gift. The apostle rejoiced mostly because it would mean reward for them in eternity, and because God was getting pleasure out of their consecrated lives.

While he rejoiced upon receiving a gift from the saints of Philippi, he refused to accept anything from the Corinthians, even while he was labouring among them, for they were not in a healthy spiritual state. Some were questioning his apostleship, and others were hinting that he sought their monetary support, indirectly, through Titus (2Cor. 12:17,18). Being a true man of God, he could say: "I seek not yours, but you" (2Cor. 12:14). The godly man will do the same today. Beware of the man who shows a keen interest in what he may get. A good man is much more concerned about what he can give to others.

The Scriptures state clearly that those who "labour in the word and doctrine" (preaching and teaching) are worthy of double honour (1Tim. 5:17). The meaning of this is clear from the quotation following: "The labourer is worthy of his reward," (Read also 1Cor. 9). This certainly does not mean that the preacher should be hired for a

stated salary. The apostle Paul, at times, met his own needs and those of others with him, applying his skill as a maker of tents. This did not mean he had left the work of the Gospel, but that he would not dishonour God by making his need known.

We are fully aware that men have changed things. They say that times have changed, so they form a society, solicit funds, arrange salaries, allot sums for buildings, travel expenses, etc., and congratulate themselves on their apparent success. The writer can say, after forty-eight years in the work of the Lord, looking alone to God for support, that God's way is always better.

## Questions and Answers

**Q**uestion: Is the phrase, "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1Thess. 1:10), the correct rendering of the text?

**A**nswer: The phrase is in the present tense; literally is the One delivering. "Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath" (JND). "Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come" (RV). The context is that we "Wait for His Son from heaven, Who He raised from (among) the dead, even Jesus". The Lord Jesus Christ will deliver His own of this age from the coming wrath. The wrath is the great tribulation, the settled indignation of God upon this earthly scene after the termination of the present period of grace.

The deliverance of this verse precedes the return of the Lord to earth, and therefore refers to the Rapture, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thess. 5:9). This is salvation or deliverance from coming earthly judgement in the "Day of the Lord".

**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)**

The above verse has for centuries proved itself a blessing to many souls and remains true and relevant for today as when first uttered from the lips of the Son of God to a man named Nicodemus during an interview 2000 years ago. This in due course led to Nicodemus' evident conversion (John 19:38-42). It is a concise declaration of the Gospel of God with His Son at its centre, and as its theme.

### **For God so loved the world**

Unjust and hypocritical criticisms are frequently levelled against the God of Heaven that, if He is a God of love, why then is there so much suffering and injustice in the world – in other words, He is surely to blame by not resolving the causes. We need to face up to the fact that these situations are not of God's ordering, but of man who often is not prepared to face the responsibility that is his in moulding the world into what it is today. Each one of us fulfils a part in this!

The Bible does not flatter man in its moral description of him, exposing the corruption and guilt of each individual before the one true and holy God. The Lord Jesus Himself taught, ***“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man”*** (Mark 7:21-23). Once we have grasped how totally sinful and unworthy we really are before God, we would find the unprecedented manner in which ***“God so loved”*** us somewhat remarkable. To love your friends is one thing: to love your enemies by sacrificing for them the most dearest to you for their good and wellbeing, is something quite different.

### **That He gave His only begotten Son**

It is set against this wretched and “unlovable” condition of man that the depth and reality of the love of God for His fallen creatures is expressed. With man unable to provide a remedy for his own perilous condition, with the judgment of God bearing down upon him, God has taken action to commend His love towards us in the provision of a Saviour, given at such great and immeasurable cost to Himself.

It was not some ‘higher order created spirit life form’ that God gave up and sent into the world to be that Saviour but His ***“only begotten Son”***, One on an equality with Himself, of closest and dearest affection, for this is the real meaning of the term ‘only begotten’. This title does not convey any thought of origin as some

would deceive you into believing as the Son has always existed as God (John 1:1; Phil. 2:6). There was a point in time however when He was born a man, ***“the Man Christ Jesus”***, in order to give Himself up to the shameful death of Calvary’s cross. It was here that God’s eternal Son once and for ever, suffered for sins to provide so great a salvation for such great sinners as ourselves.

## **That whosoever believeth in Him**

This expression of love is without partiality. The selfless sacrifice of the ***“only begotten Son”*** of God on the cross has scope to embrace all of mankind, reaching across generations without constraint on race, gender, language or status of any class. It is not a matter of how guilty or good we think we are for ***“all have sinned”***.

All can be saved, whosoever would venture by faith upon Him as none will be refused, cast away or lost if they come in true repentance and child like faith. Elsewhere the Son would say ***“him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”*** (John 6:37), male or female; He will receive them irrespective of their condition.

## **Should not perish**

Those who place their confidence in the merits and work of the ***“only begotten Son”*** will never perish. This is significantly more than ‘not dying’ physically. It is not being hurt of the second death, that dreadful ordeal of torment in the ***“lake of fire”*** (Revelation 20:15) where those who refuse to believe in the Son will suffer for ever. Purgatory, annihilation and reincarnation are not teachings of the Bible but myths of the devil, the master liar, and many are continually being deceived by such false ideas concerning what lies beyond death for mankind. Be sincerely warned! The Bible tells us the truth. Christ, as in our verse, often warned on Hell (Luke 16:19 ff.).

## **But have everlasting life**

In contrast to perishing, those who believe become possessors of everlasting life to be fully enjoyed in Christ’s company when life on earth ceases for them. This is one of the many great blessings given to those who receive the Son. He alone gives true, and abundant life within the soul, quoting His words, ***“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”*** (John 10:10). This is a stark contrast to the vain, purposeless, sin filled ‘life’ that the world at large claims that it has. Being possessors of the ‘life of God’ will not eliminate trials on earth or opposition. It may cost us severely but to refuse Christ, is to miss ‘life’ and perish and nothing could be more sobering or despairing than this.

The truth that ***“God is love”*** (John 4:8) is indisputable and yet in expressing His love towards us ‘sinners’ there has been no compromise in His holiness. As Nicodemus, we must each personally bow to that love in true repentance and believe upon and identify ourselves with the ***“only begotten Son”***. We will not only be eternally saved but be able then to show the love of God towards those that offend us in a way that is consistent with God’s own holy character for ***“Love is of God”*** (1John 1:7).