

# COUNSEL

**WHAT A YOUNG SHEPHERD  
LEARNED IN GOD'S SCHOOL**  

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**ANTICIPATING "THE VISION GLORIOUS"**  

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**SOME CHANGES AT COUNSEL**  

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**HOW GOD TRAINS HIS MEN**  

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**GOD WITH MAN (PART 2)**  

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**"MY PEACE" JOHN 14:27**  

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**CHRIST**  

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**GIFT**  

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*May — June 2008*



# Gift

What a beautiful word. Who isn't delighted by a gift? Birthdays? Anniversaries? Christmas? It is hard to say no to a gift.

Salvation is a gift. *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). Thayer defines the word *charisma* (gift): "a favour with which one receives without any merit of his own."

The Lord Himself is a gift. *"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift"* (2 Cor. 9:15). It is 'unspeakable' in the sense that it is indescribable. We are not able to completely describe the nature and extent of the Person of Christ. He is a gift.

Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 are classic passages of Scripture that tell about gift in the church. Spiritual gifts are given to the church as a vital part of her development and design. Each believer has been given at least one gift and we are all intended to work together under the Lord's direction. None of us are unnecessary. None of us are unequipped. None of us are independent. Paul draws a comparison to the human body in 1 Corinthians 12 pointing out how each part may be different yet vital to the healthy functioning of the body. Some well meaning believers are so enthused about their gift they act like everyone should do what they do. The evangelist is always encouraging evangelism, the teacher is always encouraging teaching and so on. There is some value to this, but be careful

in your enthusiasm you don't distract another from their own work. *"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him"* (1 Cor. 12:18).

Gift is given in diversity. No one member possesses all the gifts. Scripture makes it plain that *"the body is not one member, but many"* (1 Cor. 12:14). This diversity of gift means that each member is to function according to one's own gift. As the members work together in their own respective spheres, this diversity will contribute to a unity of the body, since the gifts are given not for one's own advancement, but for the health and vitality of the body. Whenever we glory in a gift—ours or someone else's—the body will become dysfunctional and suffer accordingly. The sad record of the church is littered with examples of this occurring. We need to be careful that it does not happen to us.

Our gift is something that we need to discover in our own ministry. How do I know what my gift is? There is no formula given in scripture. In Romans 12 Paul speaks about gift beginning in verse 4, however prior to that he calls us to certain things. In verse 1 we are exhorted to present our bodies as living sacrifices. In verse 2 we are called not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds. In verse 3 we are instructed to be humble and give sober thought to our gift. This is necessary to the discovery of gift.

We need to be aware that we have a duty to exercise our gift. The mere discovery of it would do nothing if we did not actually rise to our calling. We have a duty to do all that we can to exercise our gift. Paul wrote to Timothy these words: *"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands"* (2 Tim. 1:6). That

word "stir" means to rekindle or fan the flames. It indicates that while the gift is from God, we have a duty to keep it aflame or else through neglect it will die out. This will mean through effort we will seize every opportunity where circumstances allow to do what the Lord has given us to do. *"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery"* (1 Tim. 4:14).

From a practical consideration we must recognize there will be discouragement in the exercise of gift. The devil certainly doesn't want us to exercise our gift. We can often be tempted to stop exercising our gift because of failure. Gift requires development and experience. We make mistakes. There will always be room for improvement. This keeps us dependent on the Lord. But we should not give up because of failure.

Criticism from others may discourage us. We can overreact to criticism. It may be a much needed correction that will be a more positive thing than we imagine. On the other hand some believers can be thoughtless in their comments and we need to weigh them up accordingly. All of us need to heed to the exhortation, *"Quench not the Spirit"* (1 Thess. 5:19). We can easily do that in another as well as in ourselves.

Weariness or overwork can discourage us from exercising our gift. *"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing"* (2 Thess. 3:13). Do not assess your work for the Lord based on changing or temporary circumstances. Persistent 'weariness' may mean you are trying to do too much.

Gift. It is a wonderful provision from the Lord for the carrying on of His work. Make sure you are doing your part.

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**Brian Gunning**  
St. Catharines, Ontario



# COUNSEL

TIMELY TRUTHS FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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# CHRIST

The anointed of God; the same with the Hebrew Messiah (Ps. 45:7; Isa. 61:1). The eternal Son of God, the second Person the glorious Trinity (Matt. 28:19; 1 Jn. 5:8). In His divine nature He is equal with the Father, and over all, God blessed for ever; but in His human nature ... being like to men in all things, sin excepted. Both natures are united in the person of Christ, that He might be our prophet, priest, and king, and the author of a complete, perfect, all-sufficient, and eternal salvation. He ever lives to intercede for all that come to him (Heb. 7:25).

In Christ all the types, prophecies, and promises centre. He is the most suitable object for the sinner to look to, trust in, and expect all his hopes, joys, and consolations from, as by him alone life and salvation are procured. He is the head of principalities and powers, the brightness of His Father's glory; and the express image of His person (Heb. 1:3), the glory of all worlds, and the refulgent luminary of the universe (John 1:9), the inexhaustible fountain of all the treasures of nature, grace and glory, and the matchless, incomparable Redeemer of all that come to Him (John 6:37). Christ was the sum and substance of the apostles' ministry (Acts 8:5), and, indeed, a sermon without Christ is like a cloud without water, or a shadow without substance. One moment's communion with Christ is of more worth than ten thousand worlds; His person most glorious, and He is altogether lovely (Cant. 5:16).

The ancient Hebrews, being instructed by the prophets, had very clear notions of the Messiah: but

they were changed by little and little, so that when Christ appeared in Judea, they had entertained a very wrong notion of the Messiah, expecting a temporal monarch and conqueror that should bring the whole world under subjection. From whence it came to pass, that they were much scandalized at the outward appearance, the humility, and seeming weakness of our Saviour, which hindered them from acknowledging Him as the Christ whom they expected.

The ancient prophets had foretold, that the Messiah should be God and Man, exalted and abased, Master and Servant, Priest and Victim, King and Subject, mortal, and a conqueror of death, rich and poor, a king, a conqueror, glorious yet a man of griefs, involved in our infirmities, in a state of great humiliation. All these seeming contrarieties were to be reconciled in the person of the Messiah, as they did really meet in the person of Christ. It was known that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin, of the tribe of Judah, of the race of David, in the village of Bethlehem: that he was to continue for ever, that His name should be continued as long as the sun, that He was the great prophet promised in the law, that He was both the Son and Lord of David, that He was to perform great miracles, that He should restore all things, that He should die and rise again, that Elias should be the forerunner of His appearance, that a proof of His coming should be, the cure of lepers, life restored to the dead, and the gospel preached to the poor: that He should not destroy the law, but should perfect and fulfil it; that He should be a stone of offence, and a stumblingblock, against which many should bruise themselves; that He should suffer oppositions and

contradictions, and that a strange people should come and submit themselves to His discipline.

When Christ appeared, these notions of Him were still common among the Jews. Our Saviour herein appeals even to themselves, and asks them if these were not the characters of the Messiah, and if they do not see the completion of them in Himself. The evangelists take care to put them in mind of them, to prove thereby, that Jesus is the Christ whom they expected. The Evangelist Luke says, that our Saviour entering into a synagogue at Nazareth, there opened the book of the prophet Isaiah, where he read, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor*" (Luke 4:18). After which He shewed them that this prophecy was accomplished in His person. And St. Peter and the other believers being assembled together, Acts 4:25 say to God from Psalm 2:1, 2, "*Why did the heathen rage...*" and apply this prophecy to Christ, (v. 27). And in Acts 10:38, Peter, speaking to Cornelius the centurion, and to those that were with him, tells them that the Lord had sent peace to men, by Jesus Christ, whom God had anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. So that when Christ, or His disciples, are said to be anointed, it is to be understood of the spiritual and internal unction of grace and of the Holy Ghost, of which the outward and sensible unction, with which they anciently anointed kings, priest, and prophets, was but the figure and symbol.

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**Alexander Cruden**

An excerpt from  
*Cruden's Complete Concordance*

# Some Changes at **COUNSEL**

In this issue of Counsel we wish to announce a variety of changes that took place in the early part of 2008.

## **Retiring Committee Members**

### *Garry Seale, Calgary Alberta*

Garry Seale has been associated with Counsel for over 20 years going back to the early days of the magazine. Garry was valued by the committee as a brother of sound judgment and faithful commitment to the work. This caliber of men is not easily found today. Residing in Western Canada made it difficult for him to be a regular attendee at committee meetings due to health challenges and so our brother decided it was time to be relieved of committee responsibilities.

### *Doug Kazen, Kirkland, Washington*

Doug Kazen has also been associated with the magazine going back several years when brother Boyd Nicholson was editor. Doug was President of Counsel Magazine Inc. in the United States and handled its business affairs including the acknowledgment of gifts received and related correspondence. In addition Doug has (and will continue to be) a regular contributor of articles in the magazine. He too has been an invaluable asset to the magazine. We will miss his valuable help in the work of Counsel Magazine.

## **New Committee Members**

### *Boushra Mikhael, Toronto, Ontario*

Boushra Mikhael is a retired surgeon, who served as an elder for over 25 years at Rideauview Bible Chapel in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Now he is commended by two Ot-

tawa area assemblies, to a full time teaching ministry. He is involved in itinerant ministry in North America and overseas. He is also active in camp ministry, and in writing for various assembly publications. He speaks in conferences at home and abroad. He is married to Nadia, and they have two sons that are also physicians involved in the Lord's work. They have three beautiful grand-daughters.

### *Bill Yuille, Markham, Ontario*

Bill Yuille was born and raised in Scotland in a Christian family. He came to know the Lord at age 11. His wife Naomi also had Christian parents and was saved at an early age.

Bill and Naomi were married in 1964 and immigrated to Canada that same year. The Lord has given them two daughters and a son, all married, and nine grandchildren.

In Canada Bill worked in various technical and management aspects of information systems, mostly with Ontario Hydro in Toronto. In 1993 he was able to take advantage of an early retirement offer.

Bill is involved as an elder at Markham Bible Chapel and in Bible teaching in assemblies, mainly in Southern Ontario. In 1978 he became a member of MSC Canada, a service group which encourages and supports service for the Lord by assembly commended workers, with particular emphasis on foreign missions. He was President of that organization for 25 years until April 2007 and continues to serve, providing help in the office and visiting in different countries as opportunities arise.

## **Other changes at Counsel.**

For many years brother William McCullough of West Sussex, U.K. handled the address changes and gifts received from U.K. readers. In April the Lord called brother Bill to his heavenly home. We have always been grateful for our brother's diligence and care in handling the business matters of the magazine.

### *New U.K. address*

Roy Hill of Bristol has agreed to assume the business related responsibilities of Counsel Magazine in the U.K. Gifts and address changes can be sent to him at the following address:

Roy Hill  
The Glebe House  
Stanton Drew  
Bristol  
BS39 4EH

### *New U.S. address*

With the resignation of Doug Kazen we have asked brother Warren Hagey to handle the receipt of gifts and address changes for the U.S. Any correspondence relating to this should be sent to him at:

Counsel Magazine  
P. O. Box 176  
Palos Park, IL 60464-0176  
USA

### *New Canadian Treasurer*

And finally we are pleased to welcome Mr. David Kirk of Hamilton Ontario as the new Canadian treasurer for Counsel Magazine. David is a chartered accountant professionally and he has agreed to oversee the business affairs of Counsel Magazine.



**The divine Potter sits at the wheel fashioning, out of the most humble and unpromising looking material, vessels for His use.**

In recent years many of God's honoured servants have been called home. The question naturally suggests itself, "where are the men coming from to fill their places?" There is a crying need for God-sent and approved men, not only to maintain and build up the present assembly testimony, but also to pioneer and plant assemblies in new fields. How are the men to be called, fitted, and trained for this all important task? The Scriptures have not left us in the dark as to the answer to these questions.

# HOW GOD TRAINS HIS MEN

## God's Choice

First of all, God is absolutely sovereign in His choice of workers. The divine Potter sits at the wheel fashioning, out of the most humble and unpromising looking material, vessels for His use. We cannot raise up labourers. It is at our peril that we seek to multiply workers by human means; we are completely cast upon God for this. In Old Testament times He chose a farmer, a cowherder, a shepherd, a plowman, an aristocratic well-educated son of Pharaoh's household. In the New Testament He laid His hands on unlettered fishermen, a doctor, a tax collector, and an enthusiastic, clever delegate of the Sanhedrin. In more modern times, He called John Bunyan, the Bedford tinker, from mending pots

and pans to preach the gospel and, after hard discipline in jail, to write the immortal allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*. William Carey, the cobbler, was called from the shoemaker's bench to blaze a pioneer trail in India and to translate the Word of God into many languages and dialects. Did these men have no training? They certainly had, but it was in God's school.

## God's School

The great principle of the Lord's method of training is to be found in Mark 3:13, "*And He goeth up into a mountain and calleth unto Him whom He would and they came unto Him. He ordained twelve that they should be with Him and He might send them forth to preach.*" Here is the divine or-

der: God's school first, service afterwards. A servant of Christ now with the Lord wrote the following:

"It is remarkable that so far as is revealed the Lord never added one iota to the secular knowledge of the chosen twelve. Even after three years with Him their rough Galilean tongue was still discernable and from the world's point of view they remained to the end of their days unlearned and ignorant men. But they had learned from Him what no human schools of learning are able to teach and what no unregenerate men are able to learn. They had learned the lesson, only imperfectly perhaps, of meekness, gentleness, lowliness, and love. Of philosophy, rhetoric, and technical theology He taught them nothing, and their ministry did not suffer from the lack of them. Biblical criticism formed no part of His curriculum, for He taught them to love and to reverence the Scriptures and to regard them as the Word of God which cannot be broken. He taught them that there was a heaven and that it was only sentimentality to pretend to be more loving than God. He taught them that there was a hell, and did not indicate any way of escape from it save that of repentance and faith in Himself. He did not overload the disciples nor cram them for an examination. The deepest and most profound lessons were left to be taught by the Holy Spirit in later days as they were able to bear them."

### **God's Method and Spheres of Training**

It is instructive to notice the methods God uses and the spheres to which He sends His men for training. Moses was sent to the back of Mount Horeb for forty years to keep a few sheep; Elijah had the personal discipline of sitting by a drying up brook and later in the

caves of Horeb and Carmel. John the Baptist spent thirty years in the Judean desert as a preparation for six months' public ministry. Does this seem out of all proportion? It is often God's way. A study of the chronological details of Paul's life show that fourteen years elapsed between his conversion and his

## **There is a crying need for God-sent and approved men, not only to maintain and build up the present assembly testimony, but also to pioneer and plant assemblies in new fields.**

call at Antioch. At least three years of this time was spent in the Arabian desert. He had to unlearn much of what he had acquired in Gamaliel's divinity school, as well as having much to learn from God. David learned to use his simple but very effective weapons in the desert before he felled Goliath with them. Consequently he had no use for Saul's clumsy brazen armour. When the brilliant Alexandrian orator Apollos needed to get beyond the baptism of John and learn the way of God more accurately, God did not send him back to the philosophers and polished theologians at his home town but to the humble home of a godly couple who made tents for a living and at the same time pioneered with the gospel. The late Andrew Frazier was once asked where he obtained his rich store of biblical knowledge. He replied, "on my knees with my Bible in a little whitewashed cottage with a clay floor in Ireland." The saintly McCheyne said, "It is not great ability that God uses but great likeness to Himself."

### **God's Assembly**

As well as companionship with Christ and the discipline of the desert, another divinely constituted training ground for God's men is the scripturally gathered assembly. Here Christ is Lord and the gifts given by the ascended Head have room for their exercise. Here the el-

ders, pastor, and teachers exercise their various functions. The assembly is not only the House of God, it is also a nursery where the young are taken care of and taught that fundamental basis of truth, without which real progress is impossible. This is where Timothy's gift was developed and where, five years after His conversion was manifested, not only to the assembly elders, but also to the apostle on his second visit (Acts 16:1, 2). An assembly without systematic Bible exposition is in a sorry plight. There should always be an opportunity, not only on the Lord's Day but also on some suitable week night for continuous systematic Bible teaching.

So then, beloved brethren, let us get on our faces before the Sovereign Lord of the harvest, that He Himself would call and fit and train the men for carrying on the great work of the gospel and for building up the assemblies of His dear people until He come.

---

**T. Ernest Wilson**



# What a Young Shepherd Learned in God's School

**David learned at least seven lessons of spiritual value while engaged in this humble earthly occupation. Far more ... may be learned by us,**

**W**hen seeking to set before saints their responsibility in the matter of learning God's Word or engaging in practical service for Him, one often meets with the excuse, "I have no time for it." Yet experience shows that it is not always those who have much "spare time," who know their Bibles best, or who most diligently serve the Master. In any case if we have so much business of our own that we have no time for the Lord's Word and work, we have more than the Lord ever meant us to have.

## **Idlers—Not God's Choice**

In 1 Cor. 7:29-31, a passage that reminds us that "*time is short*," it is made very clear that neither earthly business nor earthly interests of any sort should absorb our entire attention. We should not "use to the full" (R.V., Margin) such things. Also in Eph. 5:16 we have a verse which means "to buy up the opportunity," which may well suggest to us that however busy we may be, if our heart is right with God we shall find opportunity to "buy up" for Him. It is not usually people who have nothing to do that the Lord takes up to use as His servants. Moses, when called, was caring for Jethro's flocks in the backside of the desert. Gideon was threshing wheat. Elisha was ploughing. Andrew, Peter, James, and John were at their work as fishermen. Matthew was at his tax-collector's desk. Concerning a certain preacher, it was said to the writer that the Lord evidently intended him to give his whole time to preaching, because he had failed every business he had attempted. One would surely like to have better proof than this of fitness for the Lord's work.

An interesting example of how much one can learn, and of how adapted for God's service one can become while busily engaged in an earthly calling, is that of David. While yet a lad he had the care of his father's sheep, an occupation which apparently his elder brothers despised (1 Sam. 17:28). It was difficult and dangerous work in circumstances in which a lion or a bear might appear at any moment, as in the case of those other Bethlehem shepherds of Luke 2:8 where a watch had to be maintained by night and day. But it was not lost time to David, for he learned many things that proved useful to him in later years.

First, he learned courage in his conflicts with these wild beasts and courage is a virtue of which many of us need more.

Secondly, he learned to handle weapons and especially to use his sling accurately, an ability that stood him in good stead when the great day of testing came and he went out to meet Goliath. We today have a different kind of weapon, "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*" But are we able to make equally

good use of it?

Thirdly, while lying among his sheep by night gazing up at the starry heavens, David learned enough about astronomy to know that they were the handiwork of God, and he has recorded for us in two beautiful Psalms (8 and 19) the feelings and thoughts which they stirred up in his mind: on the one hand the exceeding greatness and majesty of Him who had made them, and on the other, the littleness of himself and his fellow men in contrast to that Almighty Creator.

But these meditations (Ps. 19:14) of his took another turn as he learned the grandest lesson of all—that this same all-wise and all-powerful Jehovah was actually taking a shepherd's care of him, even the humble working lad that he was, and would continue to do so *"all the days of [his] life."* Thus came into being the sweetest of all Psalms (the 23rd), one which, humanly speaking, only a shepherd could write.

### Preparation For Further Service

Further consideration along these lines suggested another lesson. Just as Jehovah was caring for him, He would have him care for others of His people and feel toward them as he felt towards his sheep. So when he later learned that God did really intend him to be leader and king in Israel, his idea of what he should do and his actually doing of it, are well described by Asaph in Ps. 78:70-72, *"He chose David also, His servant, and took them from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes great with young. He brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands."* Even toward the end of his life, when his error in numbering

the people had brought on a dreadful plague, he still this shepherd heart, as may be seen in his plea to God, *"I have sinned...but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray Thee, be against me."* Surely here is a little of the Spirit of Christ, *"the Good Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep."* One is reminded, too, of the Lord's commission to restored Peter in John 21, *"Feed my lambs...shepherd my sheep...feed my sheep."*

### Love of God's Word and Habitation

A sixth part of David's training, which many of his Psalms illustrate, was in the knowledge of God's book. It was unlikely that he was able to carry a pocket Bible about with him, as a diligent Bible student would do today, but somehow he became familiar with the Word of God and loved it. The 19th Psalm follows its description of the Book of nature by another interesting one of the law of the Lord, in which is very fully depicted what it is and what it does. Here David says that to him it was *"sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."* Can we truly say as much?

Probably closely linked with this love of God's Word was a seventh characteristic of David's early life, a desire to find a resting place for the ark of God (Ps. 132). Almost one hundred years before, the ark had been captured by the Philistines, only to be speedily returned by them when they discovered how dangerous this symbol of God's presence could be to those unfit to have it. The Israelites of the priestly city of Bethshemesh, to which it first came back, had to learn a similar lesson because of their irreverence in handling it, and stricken with fear they sent it away to Kirjath-jearim, where it was deposited in

the house of Abinadab. For a time the Israelites felt its loss, and *"lamented after the Lord"* (1 Sam. 7:2). Yet when some twenty years later a measure of revival took place under Samuel's leadership, no steps were taken either to return the ark to Shiloh, or find another resting place for it. In the course of time all Israel seemed to have forgotten its existence, with the exception of one shepherd lad who was caring for his sheep on the hills around Bethlehem (called Ephrathah in Ps. 132). He became exercised about it lying, as it were, neglected some ten miles away from him at Kirjath-jearim (called the field of Jaar, Ps. 132 R.V. Margin). As he considered the matter, he made a vow that, before he would dwell in a home of his own, he would find a "place" and "habitation" for it (Ps. 132). This is surely a notable example of putting God's things first.

He kept his vow too, though much time and many difficulties intervened before he was able to do so. Even when Hiram, king of Tyre, built him a house of cedar in token of his friendship (2 Sam. 5:11), he refrained from taking up residence in it, and still *"dwelt in the fort"* (v. 9) until he had the Ark safely installed in the place he had prepared for it (2 Sam. 6:17). Then he returned to *"bless his house"* (1 Chron. 16:43), or, in other words, to dedicate it and take up residence in it (see 2 Sam. 7:1; Ps. 30, title included).

Thus the young man David learned at least seven lessons of spiritual value while engaged in his humble earthly occupation. Far more than seven lessons may be learned by us, if we ponder these Scriptures which set his experiences before us.

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**William Rodgers**

# “My Peace” (John 14:27)

As soon as Judas had left the room at the end of chapter 13, Jesus began to speak to the remaining apostles of His own imminent departure. It isn't difficult to imagine how they felt. He had won their hearts and they had forsaken all for Him – father and mother, wife and children, home and calling – and had found in Him more than adequate compensation for that sacrifice. They had been with Him now for over three years, continuing with Him through all His temptations (trials) (Luke 22:28). Yes, there were times when He had sent them out alone to preach, heal and cast out demons but He had always been there for them to come back to and tell Him all they had done. And He had always been there to shelter them when they came under fire from their foes.

I read recently of a little boy who, during the days of the blitz in the Second World War was removed from London to the country. When going to bed on his first night away from home, he prayed, “Now I lay me down to sleep” – and then added, “Lord, please take care of my Mummy and Daddy. And please, Lord, take good care of Yourself, because if anything happens to You, we're sunk.”

And here, in the Upper Room, the disciples came to realize and accept that something was going to happen to Him – He was going to leave them because He was going to die. And as they saw it at that moment, they were sunk – well and truly sunk.

And so the Lord spoke to dispel

the fears and anxieties of His disciples – to assure them that, in fact, His leaving them would be for their good. But they were going to need some persuading that they would truly be better off as a result of His going. “I tell you the truth; it is expedient/profitable for you that I go,” (16:7).

The fact that He repeats in verse 27 the very words of verse 1, “Let not your heart be troubled” tells us that everything between is aimed at comforting and encouraging their troubled hearts. But this is not the first time we find the word ‘troubled’ in this section of the Gospel. In chapter 12, knowing that the hour had come for Him to be glorified through His sufferings, He had said, “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’?” (v. 27). In chapter 13, of Judas He had quoted the Scripture, “He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.” John added, “When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me’,” (v.21). It is Jesus who is facing the agony and anguish of the cross. It is Jesus who is troubled in soul and spirit and you would have thought that now is the time for the disciples to comfort, encourage and support Him. But they are concerned only with their own loss – leaving it for Him to comfort them.

In a sense, verses 1 and 27 act as bookends. Jesus began the section with the promise of a future hope, (vv. 1-3), and ended it with the promise of a present peace.

And He spoke of that peace in two

ways. On the one hand it is a legacy bequeathed. In Psalm 17:14 David speaks of “the men of this world who have their portion in this life” and “who leave the remainder of their substance to their children.” When Jesus declares, “Peace I leave to you,” He uses the same word as the Greek Old Testament in Psalm 17. Jesus speaks then as if this is, as it were, His last will and testament. He has no earthly possessions to leave them – no property, investments or wealth – the kind of stuff which men usually lay up for their offspring. But the legacy which He bequeathed to His disciples was of far greater value – it was His very own peace.

And then His peace is a gift bestowed. Among the Jews, “Peace” was the ordinary, everyday, conventional greeting. It was usually an empty form, at best conveying someone's best wishes. That is not how Jesus gives peace. Unlike the world, He actually bestows – actually gives – peace. And it is His own peace – a calm serenity in the face of all kinds of pressures, trials and dangers – which nothing could shake – and which He ever enjoyed. Rouse Him from well-deserved sleep if you must – tell Him the boat itself is about to sink underneath Him – but you will not ruffle Him. And we note that He speaks of His peace now – not sitting in the sun on some grassy slope overlooking the Sea of Galilee – but on the evening before His cross, at the moment of supreme crisis and trouble – when he knows that His hour has come! Clearly then this is a peace altogether independent of outward circumstances.

Thinking of the peace which Jesus gives, I was struck late last night by the words of Edward Bickersteth,

"Peace, perfect peace!  
By thronging duties pressed?  
To do the will of Jesus,  
this is rest."  
[HLL 342; Praise 797]

"By thronging duties pressed" – most of us know something of that. Many of us often feel, – if we don't actually say, that there just aren't enough hours in the day. It is wonderful to know that, in all my busyness, Jesus offers me peace – His very own peace.

**Busy?** Oh, yes, the Son of man knew what it was to be busy! Just reading the second Gospel leaves you breathless. Mark's narrative is littered with the word "*immediately*." Twice he informs us that Jesus was so busy that He had no time/opportunity/leisure even to eat (3:20; 6:32).

**Busy?** Matthew tells us how, on one occasion, at the end of a busy day teaching, between the time that Jesus instructed His disciples to go with Him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and the moment He could get to the boat, He had to deal with several cases of men who insisted on discussing the terms of discipleship with Him (Matt. 8:18-23). Small wonder, Mark tells us that they then "*took Him as He was*" – tired – and that He soon fell sound asleep!

**Busy?** On another occasion, He entered a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee seeking rest

and solitude for Himself and His disciples, but it wasn't to be. The crowd spotted them leaving, raced around the lake and were there to meet them when they reached the other side (Mark 6:30-34). It was just like the Master to be moved with compassion, and so to teach them, heal their sick, and later treat them all – thousands of them – to a meal.

**Busy?** I think of the time when He performed one miracle when on the way to perform another. I refer respectively to the woman with a flow of blood and the daughter of Jairus. Luke in particular intertwines these two case studies (8:42-43), drawing attention to a man who would have given all he had to hold onto something he had enjoyed for 12 years – his only daughter – and a woman who had already spent all she had in attempt to rid herself of something she had endured for 12 years.

**Busy?** What of Bartimaeus and his un-named companion, who, with their cry, "*Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!*" arrested the attention and movement of Jesus as He strode into Jerusalem to perform the momentous work of redeeming His people? He once said, "*Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out*" (John 6:37) – and He meant it.

**Busy?** Yes, because He gave Himself to others in service. True, we read that angels ministered to Him (Matt. 4:11), and that women from Galilee ministered to Him

(Luke 8:3), but principally the Son of man came to minister – and minister He did. And there was never anything slipshod about anything He did. All he did, He did well; "*He has done all things well*" (Mark 7:37).

**Busy?** Yes, He was busy. But he was never overwhelmed! His ear was always open to His Father's instructions (Psa. 50:4-5). He asked the Sovereign Lord to instruct Him in the use of His time – and so enjoyed His own peace in the midst of all the pressures and demands He faced.

Rest assured! We have a great High Priest who understands, who knows all about our pressures, our busy-ness, our weariness. When you fell worn out, remember He once sat by a well weary (John 4:6).

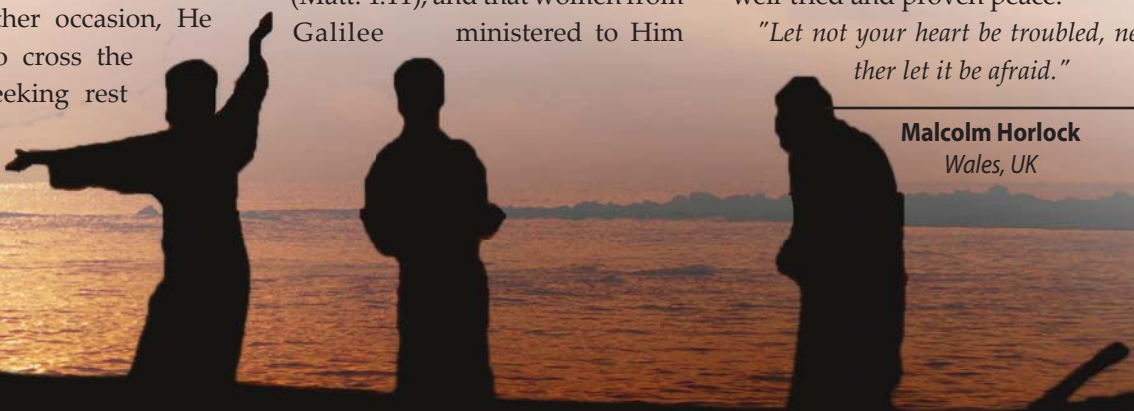
Don't misunderstand me. At times, some of us really do need to take stock – to be careful that we don't overdo it. There may well be times when we just have to cut back – and certainly if we find ourselves getting stressed or depressed. It is true for us – as it was for Jesus – that God always gives us all the time we need to do everything He wants us to do.

No, the original disciples weren't "sunk" – nor are we. The Lord Himself has promised to come to us in Person now by the Holy Spirit (v. 18) – and with His presence, He has promised us the luxury of His own, well-tried and proven peace.

*"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*

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# GOD with Man

## The Dwelling Places of God—Part 2

### Herod's Temple

#### BUT GOD WAS NOT IN THIS TEMPLE

**H**erod was a cruel man who intended to make a name for himself, and so thought of building a temple to perpetuate his name (BC 20 to AD 70) Scripture reminds us that *"there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out"* (Prov. 24:20).

There was no Ark of the Covenant, and no Shekinah glory. The Ark of the Covenant, from the time it was taken in to the Temple (2 Chron. 5), was not heard of again until the reign of Josiah. It appears to have been moved out of the Holy Place, and was thus replaced by his command (2 Chron. 35:3).

Most certainly it is never heard of again even after the destruction of Solomon's Temple through Nebuchadnezzar. The Lord Himself only ever moved in the outer courts, for God was not there. God was moving from shadow to substance (Heb. 10:1).

We must not forget that there is a day, yet future, for Israel.

*"And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit [it]; neither shall [that] be done any more.*

*"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gath-*

*ered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart"* (Jer. 3:16-17).

But we, as believers, have a sweet foretaste in that, for:

#### God was in Christ

The fifth temple was Christ, and five speaks of grace.

*"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation"* (2 Cor. 5:19). *"God was in Christ"* is not in reference to His (the Lord's) deity. Rather, its meaning is best expressed as follows: God was reconciling men unto Himself, and He was doing it in Christ. Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ never ceased to be who He was, the eternal Son of God.

How precious to think that our loving God would ever deem to send His Son to be the Saviour of the world (John 3:16; Rom. 8:32; 1 Jn. 4:9). To even include those who were *"at that time ... without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world"* (Eph. 2:12)! How lovely are the words of the hymn writer:

*"In loving-kindness Jesus came,  
My soul in mercy to reclaim,  
And from the depths  
of sin and shame  
through grace He lifted me.*

*From sinking sand  
He lifted me; with tender hand  
He lifted me;  
From shades of night  
to plains of light,  
Oh, praise His Name,  
He lifted me."*

The Lord in John 1 is spoken of as *"the Word"*, and that same one *"Tabernacled"* amongst us (John 1:14). Wonderfully, the Spirit of God, through John in chapter 2, gives the discourse of the Lord to the Jews saying, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ... But he spake of the temple of his body,"* thus speaking of His death which He would die for the salvation of men and women.

Immanuel—God with us. In the person of Christ, in the form of man, God was getting nearer to man in fellowship. Every temple was short lived; the Tabernacle wore out—substituted by the Temple. Solomon's was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; Zerubbabel's by Herod's; Herod's by Titus; Christ's, having accomplished His work is removed to glory—and God brings in a new Temple which is:

#### God in You

#### The Local Assembly

*"The Lord has returned now to His Father, and our Father, to His God, and our God"* (John 20:17). He is now the head of that mystical body of believers, called the church, of which the

local assembly is a part. This of itself is a picture of the church as a whole. Here we have the indwelling, the presence and the fellowship of divine persons:

### God the Father

*"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16).*

Separation from the world, whether secular, religious or social is that which should mark the distinction of the local assembly and that of the believer too. It certainly does not mean that we should be totally exclusive, for the Saviour Himself mixed with the people around Him. True, we are in the world, but the world and its ways must not be in, or amongst us (1 Jn. 2:15), for this is what we were saved from. It is also imperative that we maintain that separation in respect to the assembly (2 Cor. 6:17).

### God the Son

*"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).* Here it is the thought of the fullness of Christ, in all that the gospel has brought to us, the immeasurable grace, mercy, peace, hope and outworking of what He has done for us, and the glorious future prospect of eternity with Him. *It is to be so taken up with Him, that our hearts and thoughts think of nothing else but the amazing grace that God has shown to us.*

### God the Spirit

*"Know ye not that ye are the temple of*

*God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).* The indwelling Spirit would seek to bring, through the hearts and lives of each believer that which is evident of lives lived in the unity of Divine Persons. It is He who will lead us in to all truth, who raises up gift and enablement in the assembly. It is where the *"two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matt. 18:20).

### The Body of the Believer

#### 1 Corinthians 6:19

*"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?"*

We, who were redeemed from the slave market of sin, are brought into the liberty of the sons of God. Now we are to serve, out of love, the one who at great cost to Himself paid that supreme sacrifice and sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us. *Therefore, because we have the divine indwelling, we are to live holy and obedient lives in order that we not only shine as lights in a darkened world but also bring delight and pleasure to Him.*

#### 2 Corinthians 5:1

*"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This verse refers to the resurrection body of the believer, and some day soon we are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).* The bodies of our humiliation shall be fashioned, like unto His glorious body, we shall be clothed upon of our body from heaven. Thereafter, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, where-

in dwelleth righteousness, and God will usher in the eternal state. There we will find:

### The Tabernacle of God THE TRUE TABERNACLE

#### Revelation 21:3 - 4

*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."*

What lies before the believer is far beyond the understanding of these finite minds of ours. To ever think that the eternal God, in the wonder of His love and grace, *"in the ages to come ... might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"* (Eph. 2:7). *"Truly, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"* (1 Cor. 2:9).

Thus it will be:

### GOD WITH MAN AND MAN WITH GOD

*"Forever with the Lord,  
Amen, so let it be.  
Life from the dead  
is in that word 'tis immortality.  
Here in the body pent,  
absent from Him I roam.  
Yet nightly pitch  
my moving tent  
a day's march nearer home."*

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# Anticipating 'The Vision Glorious'

The concept of 'the Vision Glorious' has been borrowed from the well-known hymn, "The Church's one Foundation, Is Jesus Christ, her Lord..." The last stanza of this hymn goes as follows:

"Mid toil and tribulation,  
And tumult of her war,  
She waits the consummation,  
Of peace for evermore,  
Till with the vision glorious,  
Her longing eyes are blessed,  
And the great Church victorious,  
Shall be the Church at rest."

It epitomizes the purpose of this article, namely, to attempt to express the present-day New Testament Church believer's thoughts and feelings in view of the imminent hope of the coming of the Lord to the air for us, His own blood-bought bride. Christ Himself in all His resurrection glory is "the Vision Glorious" we long to see. All else is secondary to Him. But, realistically, how soon can we expect Him? What will He be like? How can we best prepare to meet Him? What adjustments do we need to make in our lives before we see Him? Will our relationship with Him then be very different from our experience of Him now? Such are the questions that naturally arise in our minds when we think seriously

about our rapture or resurrection. In the following paragraphs we shall endeavour to address some of these issues with the practical aim of inculcating in all of us greater moral conformity to Christ, that is, truer holiness of life, even before He redeems and changes our mortal bodies and removes sin from our natures altogether.

## Harbingers of 'the Day'

The Oxford English Dictionary says that a harbinger is "a person or thing that announces or signals the approach of something," similar to a herald. Now as we survey the current world scene, consider the history of the past century in particular, and compare what we see with many of the Old and New Testament prophecies of events which will happen during the so-called "Day of the Lord," we are led to conclude that the end-time events could begin quite soon. Coming events do cast their shadows before them, and we see those shadows, or rather storm-clouds, forming before our eyes in a way that brethren of even a century ago confessed they did not, although they had read of and understood some of them in Scripture. The most obviously significant

pointers towards the final fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures are the following:

1. The establishment of the Jews' State of Israel in their own land in 1948 and their recent history;
2. The gradual emergence of power-blocks in the world similar to those envisaged in the prophecies of the Day of the Lord: notably, the growth of the European Union in the West based significantly on the 1957 Treaty of Rome; the now independent Arab nations in the Middle East surrounding Israel, constantly threatening her, and probably backed by Russia in the North; and the recent rapid development and growing influence of Eastern nations, especially China;
3. The increasingly rapid artificial shrinking of the world to a 'global village' by means of vastly improved communications technology, which a world dictator could easily take over and misuse to gain absolute worldwide power for his own evil ends;
4. The general fear in the world of approaching catastrophe, due partly to the apparent increase in the number of various natural disasters, and partly to the recent rise in world terrorism;

rapture of the church and subsequent end-time events.

All these trends and events have been most marked since 1945, and could easily come to a head before very long. Since the rapture of the church is an ever-imminent hope for the Christian, it will necessarily occur even before the events of the Day of the Lord. How very near, therefore, must be the moment when our Lord will come to the air for us! We were always meant to wait eagerly for God's Son from heaven, as our Deliverer from the coming wrath, that is, the Great Tribulation (1 Thess. 1:10). But how much more so today!

#### **'How shall I meet those eyes?'**

This line from the last stanza of James Montgomery's hymn, "The Lord Himself shall come," is a chal-

service for Him now will be thoroughly tested by the fire of His holiness, revealed for all to see, and then rewarded, or not rewarded, accordingly. We could suffer loss of reward for unfaithfulness, though not loss of salvation, and enter the Kingdom of God with less responsibility in Christ's service than we might have had, and perhaps few crowns to cast at His feet in worship. The imminent prospect of seeing our Lord in all His eternal risen glory, as did John on the Isle of Patmos, should create in us a wholesome, though not paralyzing, reverential fear of displeasing Him now by falling into sinful ways, or serving Him with impure motives or half-heartedness. The Judgment Seat review will not be merely like a summer flower-show, but a rigorous examination of our whole lives as Christians. Therefore, as we anticipate that moment

5. The recent development of precursors of the false world religious system called in Revelation, "Mystery, Babylon the Great";

6. The worldwide development since 1945 of nationalism and the granting of independence by most former colonial powers;

7. The development since the Industrial Revolution of a highly sophisticated civilization independent of God similar to the days of Noah and Lot before God's judgment fell upon men, accompanied by resultant predicted moral conditions of widespread immorality and lawlessness;

8. The explosion of the world's population during the past century, especially in the Eastern nations, probably similar to that before the Flood judgment;

9. The increasing momentum of the modern church missionary movement to all parts of the world, facilitated by improved methods of communication, so that there are possibly more Christian believers alive today than have ever lived up to now during the church age;

10. The parallel gradual, but definite, growth in our understanding of prophetic truth since 1800, and an increasing awareness among true Christians of the imminence of the

## **The anticipation of the coming of the Lord for us should be one of our most powerful incentives to diligent service and whole-hearted evangelism for Him during what remains of the age of grace.**

lunge to us all. Will we have to stand ashamed before Him at His coming, or will we be rewarded for our life's work and witness as believers with His commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"? For, as far as we can deduce from the relevant scriptures, the resurrection and rapture of the church to heaven will probably be followed immediately by the Judgment Seat of Christ. There the quality of our conduct, motives, and

of meeting His searching gaze in His immediate presence for the very first time, let us continually pray the words of another hymn:

"Search me, O God,  
my actions try,  
And let my life appear,  
As seen by Thine  
all-searching eye:  
To mine my ways make clear.

"Search all my thoughts,  
the secret springs,  
The motives that control...

"Search, till Thy fiery  
glance has cast,  
Its holy light through all...

"Thus prostrate  
I shall learn of Thee,  
What now I feebly prove;  
That God alone in Christ  
can be,  
Unutterable love!"

For, if we constantly practice  
the presence of our as yet un-  
seen Lord, we should become  
better prepared to meet Him  
whenever He does come for us.  
And we shall certainly come to

them the only gospel that can lead  
to their salvation from the wrath  
to come. For, although the present  
world-scene does clearly suggest  
that the Lord's coming is probably  
quite near, there are two other fac-  
tors to be borne in mind which may  
mean that He will not come quite as  
soon as we have thought likely. The  
first factor is the present evident re-  
straint on the full and final develop-  
ment of the 'mystery of lawlessness'  
in the world in the form of the Holy  
Spirit's presence on earth indwell-  
ing the true church of Christ - this  
being the most probable interpre-

and saved during the twentieth-  
century after Christ was crucified.  
Had Christ returned to judge and  
reign earlier, we would never have  
had the opportunity of coming into  
the blessings of His salvation. Now  
all these considerations lead the  
writer to wonder whether perhaps  
there may still be at least another  
full generation of mankind born be-  
fore the Lord does return, simply so  
that many more people can be saved  
and added to His church. After all, it  
is not yet quite two thousand years  
since the crucifixion of Christ took  
place. Think of it this way, therefore,

**Therefore, in view of the lateness of the hour  
in this world's history, and also in view of our Lord's  
great longsuffering in holding back the judgment  
of the world, there is no time for idleness or  
slackening off in the great work of God.**

understand that He is far more  
merciful and gracious to those  
who humble themselves before  
Him than we could ever have  
imagined. Our Lord is not "*a  
hard man,*" but a loving Saviour  
and a righteous Judge.

**The fields are still  
"white unto harvest"**

The anticipation of the com-  
ing of the Lord for us should  
be one of our most powerful  
incentives to diligent service  
and whole-hearted evangelism  
for Him during what remains  
of the age of grace. Countless  
millions are perishing in their  
sins all around us, and we  
are responsible to proclaim to

tation of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7. Be-  
lievers and their godly influence on  
human governments still act as salt  
and light in the world, preventing  
the complete corruption of human  
society, on the one hand, and hold-  
ing forth their testimony to Christ  
in the gospel by preaching and holy  
living, on the other hand. The sec-  
ond factor which is probably hold-  
ing back the fulfillment of God's  
judgment on the world is the Lord's  
great longsuffering, mentioned in  
2 Peter 3:9, because of which He is  
granting all men ample time to re-  
pent and believe the gospel before  
He does finally intervene in judg-  
ment. God is "*not willing that any  
should perish, but that all should come  
to repentance.*" And, concerning our-  
selves, consider how gracious God  
has been in waiting for us to be born

that there could well be another  
whole worldwide generation of  
younger and older men and wom-  
en, boys and girls, to reach with the  
gospel and teach with the truth of  
Scripture! And that is still exactly  
our task and responsibility, accord-  
ing to our Lord's Great Commission  
in Matthew 28:18-20. Therefore, in  
view of the lateness of the hour in  
this world's history, and also in view  
of our Lord's great longsuffering in  
holding back the judgment of the  
world, there is no time for idleness  
or slackening off in the great work  
of God. Rather, these truths should  
inspire in us an ever-greater ur-  
gency in the Lord's service, and a  
stronger desire to do His will, while  
there is opportunity, by declaring to  
all whom we meet "*the unsearchable  
riches of Christ.*"

## "The Bride eyes not her garment"

An older brother once remarked in the writer's hearing that he doubted if any bride paid no attention to her wedding-dress. But Anne Cousins' hymn clearly refers to the church in

Work in every scriptural way open to us. So then, how deep is our personal devotion to Christ who loved us and gave Himself up for us? Have we forsaken our "first love" for Him, or do our "first works" prove

ing. Paul has been looking back at all his real achievements in life so far "in the flesh," and has counted them as worthless refuse in comparison with his present knowledge of Christ, which had in fact cost him everything he had previously held dear. Now his one aim in life was to come to know Christ even better and to experience His power and fellowship more deeply. He was profoundly dissatisfied with his progress in the Christian life so far, but his ultimate vision of complete conformity to Christ was not dimmed. Therefore, forgetting all past successes, and failures too, he was still single-mindedly pressing on towards "*the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" Now Paul's attitude and spiritual ambition should be our normal and constant attitude and ambition today as we live to glorify Christ in this present evil world. Paul is given as an example to us. So we should not be either dwelling in despair on our past failures in life and witness, or even on our past spiritual achievements, nor be at

## So then, how deep is our personal devotion to Christ who loved us and gave Himself up for us?

glory as the future bride of Christ. And of us certainly it should be true even now that we are completely preoccupied with worshipping our heavenly Bridegroom, and longing to see His face for the first time. Our fine linen wedding garments then, which are explained in Revelation 19:8 to be our righteous deeds as Christians in this life, beautiful though they will undoubtedly be, will pale into insignificance in the light of His own surpassing glory and grace. Made ready by our prior appearance at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we shall then at last be a fit companion for our Lord, "from Him, for Him made." But the whole focus of the marriage of the Lamb will not be the church as His bride at all, but rather the Bridegroom, Christ Himself in all His perfection and loveliness. For, "the Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land." And we shall look then on His wound-prints and His face, once marred beyond recognition at Calvary for us, with intense gratitude; He will be all the lovelier to us because of them. Now we can anticipate our future bridal relationship with Christ by cultivating bridal affections towards Him and expressing our deepening appreciation of His whole Person and

that we still love Him without reserve or rival? Do we regularly enjoy times of sweet communion with Him in prayer and Bible reading, so that our relationship with Him can develop as He would wish it to? Do we respond positively to His occasional rebukes of love whenever we begin to lose our affection for Him and His interests? How highly do we prize times of corporate worship of Him in the local assembly, especially at the Lord's Supper, which we sometimes speak of as "a fore-

## Have we forsaken our "first love" for Him, or do our "first works" prove that we still love Him without reserve or rival?

taste of heaven"? What, then, is the spiritual temperature of our love for our heavenly Bridegroom? For He is certainly worthy of the very best that we can give Him.

### 'Forgetting those things that are behind'

The context of these words in Philippians 3:13 is most instructive for us as we anticipate the Lord's com-

all content to remain in our present spiritual condition, but rather be enthusiastically exerting every effort in the Lord's own strength to attain ever higher heights in our consecration to His worship and service. On the one hand, we are responsible to strive to the utmost for His Highest; but, on the other hand, we need in doing this to acknowledge that we can only "*do all things through Christ,*"

who strengthens us, that is, through His continual spiritual enabling. Self-effort and self-confidence are sure to fail. A Christ-centered life alone will be blessed by God. Now the anticipation of meeting the Lord

to be seized for God's glory before they pass away for ever. From such a vantage-point in life, any serious Christian looks forward to the future with mixed feelings. On the one hand, we have the glorious hope of heaven and home with Christ, which

we will glorify God, however it happens. For Peter and Paul that meant martyrdom for Christ, as it has for many others all down through the age of grace. For some of us it may mean a long trying illness; for others of us, a peaceful and quick entrance

**On the one hand, we are responsible to strive to the utmost for His Highest; but, on the other hand, we need ... to acknowledge that we can only "do all things through Christ," who strengthens us.**

for the first time should spur us on to ever greater heights of spiritual experience and endeavour. And this passage assures us that there is a prize to be won at the end of the pathway which will make all our trials and difficulties encountered in it worth enduring now for His name's sake. Yes, the sure prospect of the Lord's coming alone gives us the incentive we need to keep going on.

**Looking over  
"the Valley between"**

The writer, who is currently 64 years of age, would judge that he is in the early autumn of his days on earth, with some infirmities, but still with some degree of strength and life-expectancy. The "fever of life" is largely past, and there are many new opportunities for service in early retirement, which is proving to be perhaps the most productive and rewarding part of a true Christian's life and spiritual ministry. But time is precious and opportunities need

we firmly believe from Scripture to be very far better than continuing to live in this present world. But, on the other hand, there is some uncertainty and apprehension concerning the precise route by which the Lord will receive us individually to glory. In short, will the next stage on our way Home be "the sky" or "the grave"? For no one knows whether we shall be part of that favoured generation of Christians worldwide who will be raptured to heaven without dying, or whether, like all the believers of the past nineteen centuries since our Lord returned to heaven, we shall in our turn have to face "the last enemy," physical death, in one way or another, and become part of the first resurrection when the Lord comes to the air for us. Either way, we shall not lose out spiritually at all; our ultimate place in glory is assured. But, if the Lord in His longsuffering to mankind does not come for a few more decades, many of us will need to be prepared to go through "the article of death", sometimes referred to by Christians as "*the valley of the shadow of death*." Our concern should be that it might be a death by which

into the Lord's presence. Now facing physical death, in whatever way it comes, requires real faith in our as yet unseen Lord, who is Himself our only, but certain and joyful hope. Christians today still need to be realistic about the future. Yes, the coming of the Lord is drawing near; He could easily come in our life-time. But neither do we know the day of our death. Either way, we need to remember that we are not here for ever, or even necessarily for very much longer. Therefore, in the light of the imminent dawn of eternity, let us hold lightly the things of earth, but prepare with all our beings to meet our soon-coming Lord and Saviour.

**"O the blessed joy of meeting!"**

In these words Paul Gerhardt has attempted with the intuition of faith to anticipate our feelings of rapture when we first see our heavenly Bridegroom. The remainder of his hymn well captures the joyful atmosphere of that first meeting with Christ in the air:

"O the blessed joy of meeting,

All the desert past!  
O the wondrous  
words of greeting  
He shall speak at last!  
He and I together ent'ring  
Those bright courts above;  
He and I together sharing  
All the Father's love.

"Where no shade  
nor stain can enter,  
Nor the gold be dim;  
In that holiness unsullied  
I shall walk with Him.  
Meet companion, then,  
for Jesus,  
From Him, for Him made;  
Glory of God's grace for ever  
There in me displayed.

"He, who in the hour of sorrow  
Bore the curse alone;  
I, who through the  
lonely desert  
Trode where He had gone.  
He and I in that bright glory  
One deep joy shall share;  
Mine, to be for ever with Him,  
His, that I am there."

Other believers have expressed  
very similar sentiments. E. Grimley,  
for instance, wrote:

"O what shall we feel in  
Thy presence when first  
The visions of glory upon  
us shall burst!  
Since now our soul longeth  
and seeketh for Thee;  
O when, blessed Saviour,  
Thy face shall we see?

"That face, once so marred,  
we shall gaze on at length,  
And fearless behold,  
as the sun in his strength;  
Those eyes, flames of fire,  
that so searching we prove,  
Shall beam on us then  
inexpressible love."

And J. N. Darby ends his well-  
known hymn, "And is It So! We Shall  
Be Like Thy Son," with these words:

"Not we alone,  
Thy loved ones all, complete,  
In glory round Thee  
there with joy shall meet,

All like Thee, for Thy glory like  
Thee, Lord,  
Object supreme of all,  
by all adored.

"The heart is satisfied,  
can ask no more;  
All thought of self is now  
for ever o'er;  
Christ, its unmingled object,  
fills the heart  
In blest adoring love  
—its endless part."

But, we may ask, how far will  
our experience of Christ then be  
the same as that which we enjoy by  
faith in Him now, and in what ways  
will it be totally different and tran-  
scendent? Here it may be helpful  
to quote the last stanza of another  
hymn by Darby, of whom it has  
been said that all his hymns end in  
heaven, as follows:

"There no stranger  
God shall meet thee;  
Stranger thou in courts above!  
He who to His rest  
shall greet thee  
Greets thee with a  
well-known love."

Now this verse neatly summa-  
rizes our experience then. For, on  
the one hand, God and Christ will  
be no strangers to us, because the  
Holy Spirit has already made real  
in our experience now as the chil-  
dren of God their love for us, and  
has from the written Word revealed  
to us many of even "the deep things  
of God." By grace we do already  
know God in some measure today.  
In that way, we shall not feel strange  
in heaven; we shall simply continue  
there to enjoy eternal life, which  
is fellowship with God, in a fuller  
measure than we do now. But, on  
the other hand, we shall be strang-  
ers in our new heavenly environ-  
ment, and certainly quite different  
in ourselves from our present con-

dition. For sin will have been eradi-  
cated from our natures at the Lord's  
coming; we shall have glorified bod-  
ies like Christ with no limitations or  
infirmities; and faith in Christ will  
have been superseded by our first  
sight of Him with our transformed  
eyes. There will, therefore, be no  
more inhibitions in the exercise and  
expression of our love for the Lord  
due to the down-dragging effects of  
indwelling sin. We shall be able to  
serve Him then worthily, "with un-  
sinning heart." And we shall know  
Him fully, even as we are now fully  
known by Him. Our relationship  
with God and Christ will therefore  
be far better and deeper than it is  
now. And there will be all heaven to  
explore in our new married life and  
home with Christ. So, in many ways  
our experience with Christ will be  
the same as it is now; but in many  
other ways quite different and far  
better. Such, then, are some of a  
Christian's thoughts as we antici-  
pate meeting our Lord for the very  
first time and beholding Him who is  
the church's "Vision Glorious."

Finally, we may ask ourselves are  
we really longing intensely for this  
moment to arrive? Or are the things  
of this world beclouding our spiri-  
tual vision of Christ? How much do  
we love Him and want to be with  
Him for ever? May the words of  
the chorus of another well-known  
hymn become the true expression of  
all our hearts as we wait for God's  
Son from heaven:

"O Lord Jesus, how long?  
How long—ere we shout  
the glad song?  
Christ returneth! Hallelujah!  
Hallelujah! Amen!  
Hallelujah! Amen!"

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**Malcolm C. Davis**  
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## Life and Death for the Christian

What is this thing called life—  
This short swift span of years  
So veiled with mystery,  
So filled with toil and tears?  
What is this thing called life,  
Dear friend, you ask of me?  
'Tis but the threshold to  
A blest eternity.

A time to love and serve  
The Saviour we adore,  
A time to trust and pray,  
And prove Him o'er and o'er;  
A time to glorify  
His great and holy name—  
The wonders of His grace  
To sinners to proclaim.

A time to walk by faith  
And trust His pow'r to keep;  
A time to watch and wait  
While others fain would sleep;  
A time to yield to Him  
The sacrifice of love,  
E'er He shall ope' the gate  
To Glory up above.

And what is death you ask?  
'Tis but the open door  
To yon fair Land of Light,  
Our Home forevermore,  
Where we shall gaze on Him  
With whom we've walked below,  
And sing His endless praise,  
While ages come and go.

—Avis. B. Christiansen