

COUNSEL

FEAR NOT...

FARTHER

OUR LORD'S SET FACE

SALVATION: VAST, FULL, FREE

SO THAT YE WERE EXAMPLES

"SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS"

THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN

THE TRIAL OF FAITH

GOD WILL ANSWER

YET A LITTLE WHILE

September—December 2009

The Christmas story is full of interesting details and lessons. Oddly enough they are often lost on us because of the busyness of the season itself. However a careful reading of the accounts of Matthew and Luke never fail to yield new things that seemed to have escaped us in Christmases past.

In this connection we observe there are three angelic visits surrounding the birth of Christ in Luke's gospel. They are: "an angel of the Lord," Gabriel appearing to Zacharias (Luke 1:11-20), Gabriel again appearing to Mary (Luke 1:26-35) and the angel of the Lord and "a multitude of the heavenly host" appearing to the shepherds (Luke 2:9-14).

Now angels are not something seen everyday. They evidently are sensitive to the human condition. With kindly compassion they attempted to allay the fears of their human listeners with the words, "Fear not." Fear would have been the natural reaction to such an experience. The appearance and voice of an angel would instill fear in any of us. We are not used to the sight of angels.

In each case their voice eases their auditor and paves the way for them to communicate the message they have been charged to deliver. Zacharias was not to fear because his prayer was to be answered. Mary was not to fear because she had found favour or grace with the Lord. And the shepherds were certainly not to fear because it was a message of "good tidings of great joy." Fear not. Fear not. Fear not.

Luke writes with careful attention to detail and he handles this supernatural story in such a way that we know we are confronted with, not a myth or legend, but facts of history. And soon we realize the angels'

message gives us confidence to trust that the "fear nots" have scope far wider than for the original hearers. The implication of all that happened lifts us out of the realm of the natural and seemingly uncontrollable movements of life and puts us squarely in the hand of the eternal God.

The Saviour, Sovereign, Son of God and Shepherd of the sheep have come to us. The Christian believer belongs to this One from eternity and consequently is guaranteed an eternity with Him.

Zacharias was not to fear. His prayer was to be answered. His prayer for the coming of the Messiah would be prepared by the supernatural birth of his own son. John would be the prophesied forerunner of Messiah. Most commentators suggest that Zacharias' statement of unbelief was met by a punishment of silence imposed on him by the angel. And indeed Luke 1:20 goes a long way to support that idea. However another explanation is possible. Zacharias was likely overwhelmed at this news. Yes, he and Elizabeth had prayed for a son. Naturally speaking that prayer appeared not to be answered. But their desire for a son was not just for themselves. As spiritually minded Jews, every son strengthened the possibility that Messiah would be born. Their prayer was more than answered, to borrow Paul's words, "above all that we ask or think..." (Eph. 3:20). The imposed silence on Zacharias gave him time to think. As he thought over all that he heard and was now transpiring before him, his heart was full of praise to God. And he was "filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1:67).

There was no need to fear. God's purposes will be realized. The hope of every Jew and of the world would come and Zacharias' son would be

the promised forerunner (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1). Have you ever been surprised by answered prayer? Have you fainted in praying and given up? Fear not. Faint not.

Mary was not to fear. She was to face something unique. She had been chosen as the means whereby the Son of God would enter humanity. God in human form. The Saviour would be born and Mary found favour with the Lord.

The virgin birth is a fundamental truth of the Bible. It cannot be set aside. It is foundational to the message of the gospel. Only a man untainted by sin could be a Saviour. He was human, but not merely human. Our language is limited. This event is unexplainable by normal standards. We can only read, observe and worship. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh..." (1 Tim. 3:16).

The shepherds were to fear not. Were these Jewish or Gentile shepherds? We do not know. But we know they were assured that the coming of the Saviour would be "to all people." A Saviour. Peace. Good will toward men. A universal salvation for a universal need.

The Christmas story should leave us breathless. Every detail a fact of history. Every event vital to salvation. Fear not then the circumstances of life. Fear not the uncertainties of our pathway. Fear not the unknown and unexplained. Fear not the apparent contradictions of life. The last "fear not" of the Bible strengthens our faith:

"Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen" (Rev. 1:17, 18)

Brian Gunning
St. Catharines, Ontario



COUNSEL

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**“Tarry ye here and watch with me,”
...“And he went a little Farther, and fell on His face and prayed...”
(Matt. 26:39).”**

Farther

HE WENT A LITTLE Farther.

There are times in the Gospels when we read about the Lord undergoing certain experiences that no other could share in, and which He must enter into alone. In this short meditation, we wish to look at three such occasions, and hopefully find our hearts moved to worship as we view these moments in the life of the Lord.

THE LORD IN GETHSEMANE:

When the Lord Jesus was nearing the Cross, and all that it involved, He took His disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane, and He asked the disciples to remain behind, whilst He

took Peter, James and John with Him to pray. But then there came that moment, when even His intimates must be left behind, and we read that He said to Peter, James and John “Tarry ye hear and watch with me,” then we read “And he went a little Farther, and fell on his face and prayed...” (Matt. 26:39). The fact that the Lord left His disciples behind in Gethsemane and went “a little Farther” was highly symbolic. There were certain things that His disciples could share along with Him, but here He was facing agonies that not even His intimates could enter into, and which He must bear alone.

When the nation of Israel was about to cross over into the Promised Land, Joshua commanded the people saying “When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place,

and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.” (Josh. 3:3-4). It was the Ark that first felt the chill of Jordan, and before which the waters receded. The Ark of the Covenant in the Levitical economy was the symbol of the presence of God in the midst of His people, of which Christ is the substance, so, like the symbolic Ark, the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane left others behind, and He alone faced the agony of anticipation in the Garden of Gethsemane – “He went a little Farther.” The Lord was never reluctant to go to Calvary, nor as some have erroneously suggested, that there was a conflict of wills between the Father and the Son in Gethsemane. No! The Lord willingly went to the Cross, there to

do His Father's will, and He only could do this.

Gethsemane can I forget?
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and
blood-like sweat,
And not remember Thee?

—James Montgomery.

THE LORD ON THE CROSS:

We see the Lord go "a little Farther" even on the Cross. For hour's men heaped shame and suffering upon Him, and Psalm 22 gives us a glimpse of the inner feelings of the Lord as they did so.

But the same Psalm takes us beyond the visible sufferings of the Lord and gives us a glimpse into the terrible hours of darkness on the Cross. That darkness was something that shut out all human sight or understanding of what was taking place, as the Lord suffered for sin. What a moment, when Jehovah lifted up His rod against His fellow, and when we hear that awful cry emanate from the Cross "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me...?" Not only was the Lord separated from man in the darkness, but mystery of mysteries, even separated from His God. Yes, the Lord Jesus went "a little Farther" on the Cross.

How didst Thou humble
Thyself to be taken,
Led by Thy creatures,
And nailed to the Cross?
Hated of men,
And of God too forsaken,
Shunning not darkness
The curse and the loss.

—H. d'A. Champney.

THE LORD IN GLORY:

We have considered the Lord "going a little Farther," in Gethsemane, and also on the Cross and finally we wish to consider that in His resurrection and ascension, He has once again gone "a little Farther." When the nation of Israel celebrated the Feast of Firstfruits, the priest went to the field and cut a sheaf of unripened grain and took it into the presence of God as a "wave offering."

May the Lord give us a deeper appreciation of those moment when he "went a little Farther" where our intellect cannot possibly follow, but where our hearts should be moved to worship and adoration.

That one solitary sheaf in the presence of God, was the symbol and surety of the mighty harvest that would follow. So also with the Lord. The apostle Paul takes up the symbolism of the wave sheaf to illustrate the significance of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote concerning the resurrection "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." (1 Cor. 15:23). The fact that Christ has already carried humanity into the presence of God, is the sign and assurance of the mighty resurrection harvest that will follow when He returns, and the guarantee that we will also join Him in the Father's house. The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that

within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus..." (Heb. 6:19-20). Yes, He has gone "a little Farther" in His resurrection.

May the Lord give us a deeper appreciation of those moments when he "went a little Farther" where our intellect cannot possibly follow, but where our hearts should be moved to worship and adoration.

Like shoreless seas,
Thy love can know
no bound;
Thou lovest me!
Deep vast immense,
Unfathomed, Lord
—profound,
Lord I love Thee!
And when above,
My crown is at Thy feet,
I'll praise Thee still
For Calvary's mercy seat

—Edwin C. Quine

W.H.BURNETT
Oakville, Ontario

Our Lord's SET FACE

Towards the close of chapter 9 of his gospel, Luke says of our Lord Jesus that, “when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”¹

“The time was come” (literally, “the days were accomplished”) that he should be received (“taken”) up” is an unmistakable reference to our Lord’s forthcoming ascension. For this is the word used by Luke again in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up,” and by Mark in the closing section of his gospel, “after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.” Our Lord was, as Paul expressed it in his first letter to Timothy, using the very same word, “received up in glory.”²

And the Lord Jesus knew that, though the goal of His present journey (namely, His ascension) was

glorious in the extreme, and would mean His return to both the Father and the heaven from which He had come down, the road to that goal lay through indescribable sorrow and suffering—that this road led Him inescapably to Jerusalem. For, as He explained to the Pharisees a little later, given Jerusalem’s centuries-long reputation for killing God’s prophets, Jerusalem was the right, the proper, indeed the only, place for Him to die.³

At the time of which Luke wrote, the ascension still lay some six months away. And much would happen during those six months, not least two very eventful visits by our Lord to Jerusalem (for the Feast of Tabernacles, recorded in John 7, and for the Feast of Dedication, recorded in John 10). Much was to happen then before His final entry to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover at which He died. But in our text Luke draws attention to this critical moment in our Lord’s ministry when He left Galilee for the last time—to return there again only after His resurrection.⁴

And between this point in chapter 9, and that time in chapter 19 when Jesus ‘went before, ascending up to Jerusalem’, Luke reminds us no less than twelve times that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem.⁵

In chapter 20 of his Acts of the Apostles, the same writer, Luke, tells how the apostle Paul “sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them ... now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide (‘await’) me.”⁶

And from Paul’s words, “I go bound in the spirit (possibly meaning ‘compelled by the Holy Spirit’) to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there (literally, ‘not knowing the things going to meet me there’),”⁷ we learn that, apart from the Spirit’s general forewarning of imprisonment and afflictions, the apostle had no idea what lay ahead of him at Jerusalem.

But our Lord knew full well what lay ahead of Him there. He knew in detail all that would “meet” Him there. Not long before He set His face to go to Jerusalem, He had told His disciples that “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain.”⁸

And in the intervening period, on the so-called Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah “appeared in glory and spake of his decease (His departure,

1 Luke 9:51.

2 1 Tim. 3:16 literally. The expression “received (or, taken) up” is the same as that used in the Greek Old Testament to describe the ascension of Elijah in 2 Kings 2; “it came to pass, as they (Elijah and Elisha) were going, they went on talking; and, behold, a chariot of fire, and horses of fire; and it separated between them both; and Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind as it were into heaven,” (v. 11). Before Elijah was “taken up” from Jordan, he had to go from Gilgal to both Bethel and Jericho. But before our Lord was “taken up,” He had to go to Jerusalem. In the event, Elijah didn’t die before he was “taken up;” but our Lord went to Jerusalem for that express purpose – to die.

3 Luke 13:33.

4 See Matt. 26:32; 28:7.

5 Luke 9:51, 53, 57; 10:1, 38; 11:53;

13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1, 11, 28.

6 Acts 20:17-24.

7 Acts 20:22-23.

8 Luke 9:22.

His 'exodus') which he should accomplish at Jerusalem,"⁹ following which, having come down from the Mount, when the crowd were astounded at the majestic greatness of God and had marvelled at all the things which Jesus did, He forewarned His disciples, "The Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men."¹⁰

Make no mistake—unlike His servant Paul—the Lord Jesus knew all that would "meet" Him at Jerusalem. He was under no illusion what

12 that, "Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem"—to go up to Jerusalem for battle against the King of Judah, that is.¹² And, according to the Greek Old Testament rendering of 2 Chronicles 24 verse 23, when Hazael reached Judah and Jerusalem, he "slew all the chief-men of the people."

But our Lord set His face to go up to Jerusalem knowing full well that there He would be "slain!"¹³ And yet, knowing this, there was nothing

of the word Isaiah used¹⁸) more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."¹⁹ And so the face which, in our text, was determined ("steadfastly set") to go to Jerusalem, when at Jerusalem was both dishonoured and disfigured.

I think of the fourth verse of Mrs. Anne Cousin's great hymn, "O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head," which reads,

'The tempest's awful voice was heard;

The Lord Jesus knew all that would "meet" Him at Jerusalem. He was under no illusion what sufferings awaited Him there!

sufferings awaited Him there!

And yet, "he ('He Himself', literally) *steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*" Indeed, the expression "steadfastly set" translates the word used by Abraham in the story told by our Lord in Luke 16, when Abraham addressed the once-rich man, now in torment, "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed."¹¹ That is, our Lord "fixed" His face to go to Jerusalem, the expression laying emphasis on our Lord's firm resolve to pursue His course to Jerusalem at all costs—on His unwavering purpose to continue His way to Jerusalem without turning aside. It shows that for the Master, as for the disciple, in the language of the last verse of our chapter, having put His hand to the plough, there was no looking back!

I was interested to find that more or less identical words are used in the Old Testament of one of the kings of Syria. We are told in 2 Kings

ing that could divert our Lord Jesus or turn Him aside.

Knowing all, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

And what did Jerusalem hold for His face?

Ask Matthew what the members of the Sanhedrin and their servants did; "then did they spit in his face."¹⁴

Ask Mark what they did; "some began...to cover his face."¹⁵

Ask Luke what they did; "when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, *Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?*"¹⁶

Over 700 years before, the prophet Isaiah had said it all for Him in chapter 50 of his book: "I hid not my face from shame and spitting."¹⁷ And again, in chapter 52, "His visage (His appearance, His countenance) was so marred (was 'disfigured' is the mean-

O Christ, it broke on Thee!
Thou wast sore stricken
of Thy God—
There's not one stroke for me:
Thy form was scarred,
Thy visage marred—
Now cloudless peace
for me'.

And the glorious prospect before us is that, on the ground alone of what the Lord Jesus then accomplished at Jerusalem, one day we will gaze on that same lovely face, as it is written, "His servants shall serve him: and they shall see His face."²⁰ What a wonderful day that shall be!

18 "Disfigurement of face," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Moody Press, number 2370c. "His face was more disfigured than that of any other man," New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, Paternoster Press, number 5425.

19 Isa. 52:14.
20 Rev. 22:3-4.

9 Luke 9:31.
10 Luke 9:44.
11 Luke 16:26.

12 2 Kgs. 12:17.
13 Luke 9:22.
14 Matt. 26:67.
15 Mark 14:65.
16 Luke 22:64.
17 Isa. 50:6.

Malcolm Horlock
Wales, UK

SALVATION: *Vast, Full, Free*

**“And, salvation
is free.
Not cheap;
not easy;
but absolutely free.”**

Salvation is a miracle of transformation, wrought in the life and soul of a sinner. It is not a casual event. It is the work of the Spirit of God. Salvation cannot be brought about by the sinner himself, or by any other human. It is nothing less than spiritual rebirth. It is the bringing of the soul from death to life in Christ. It is deliverance from the power and realm of Satan into the kingdom and family of God. Salvation dramatically changes and improves the quality of personal life. The moment a sinner is saved he gets a new Person dwelling within. That Person is no one less than the Divine Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings peace to the soul. He brings assurance as to eternal life and Heaven. His work is to cultivate the qualities of Christ in the life. True enough, the old nature still exists, and will

constantly assert itself. Satan will attack for he hates to lose a victim. But the saved soul has a new life, a new defense, a new power in his Savior. This is a vast salvation.

This salvation breaks the power of sin. It justifies. God sees the saved soul to be in Christ; and in God's eye, sin is then gone. Its power is gone. Its penalty is gone. Its sentence is gone. The saved soul is free. Salvation delivers the sinner from his former ways. It cleans up his life, unless the person in question choos-

es to grieve the Spirit of God by resisting Him. This great salvation has three aspects: The present life, the body, and the soul. It is God's purpose that, by salvation, the personal life is to be saved from the ravages of sin. If the born again person, who has committed his soul to Christ, will likewise commit his present life to Christ, the result will be a guided

life of purpose, joy, and fruitfulness.

Sin has touched our bodies before we were saved. The fact is: Physically, we begin to die as soon as we are born. Aging is a fact of human nature. Time and disease take their toll. Physically we die. But we will live again; in bodies glorified and fit to enjoy the environment of Heaven. Our new body will be fashioned like the glorified body of the Savior Himself. The effects of sin will never touch our glorified bodies. On the other hand, the sinner who never

**“The saved soul has a new life, a new
defense, a new power in his Savior.
This is a vast salvation.”**

accepts Christ as his Savior has no new life, and will get no new body. The death that comes with sin is as real as the life that comes with salvation. And, the saved soul is saved eternally. The Lord gives to His own eternal life. He says they *“will never perish.”* Nothing can pluck them out of His Father's hands. Neither Satan, nor sin, nor failure, no doubts, nor

all mankind combined can bar the saved person from Heaven forever. Truly this is a full salvation.

And, salvation is free. Not cheap; not easy; but absolutely free. Nothing can be done to add to it. No one can take anything from it. It is a gift of unspeakable value, simply to be accepted by the sinner and enjoyed. But, many struggle over how to obtain this great salvation. What are the requirements of accepting the gift? First, the sinner must agree with God about himself. That is, he must honestly conclude that God is right when God declares that we all have sinned, and there is none righteous, no, not one. The sinner who thinks he has some merit or self-worth in the sight of God will never

heart; faith which recognizes that the work of Christ has put away the sin of that person. That faith, which is simply believing what God has said regarding oneself and regarding the work of Christ at Calvary, is salvation. All who thus believe are saved. There is no limit to the sacrifice of Christ; His blood avails for all. At Calvary, He put away sin in its entirety. It is now the will of God that all should be saved; all coming to repentance (1 Tim 2:4-6). No soul will ever be able to claim before God that no salvation was available to him. His access to salvation depends, and to the end will depend, on his willingness to turn his back on his own guilt, believ-

“Salvation cannot be brought about by the sinner himself, or by any other human.”

become possessor of this great salvation. What is required is repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance toward God means that the soul comes to the point of recognizing his own guilt as a sinner and acknowledging that God is righteous to punish him for eternity. No sinner ever becomes a Christian without wanting to be rid of his sin. However, when he honestly reaches that point in his own mind, and acknowledges his guilt before God, the Spirit of God takes over from there. The Holy Spirit will then reveal to that sinner the truth that Christ died, not just for the whole world, but for that specific sinner. Faith is born in the

ing what God has said, and resting in faith in Christ. This is the salvation that is highly costly to God, but absolutely free to the sinner. It is not complicated.

We join with God in wishing that all persons should be saved. We assert, with God’s word, that salvation is available to all. It is the greatest gift mankind can ever know. This salvation is the only way to Heaven. Without this salvation, the sinner is hopelessly lost. There is no rational reason for any sinner to reject this salvation. It is vast. It is full. It is free. Take it while you may.

**God in
mercy sent
His Son.
To a world
by sin
undone.
Jesus Christ
was
crucified.
T’was for
sinners
Jesus died.**

Doug Kazen

**“So that ye were
examples to all
that believe in
Macedonia and
Achaia.”
(1 Thess. 1:7)**

Whether we realize it or not, we set an example for someone. Parents provide patterns for their children; teenagers for those younger. We tend to imitate the age group just beyond us. Like the apostle Paul, we must imitate Christ so closely by conformation to the principles of scripture that others can be assured of an accurate model if they pursue our practices (1 Cor. 11:1).

—Garry W. Seale

Let the beauty of Jesus
be seen in me—
All His marvelous passion
and purity.
O Thou Spirit Divine,
all my nature refine
‘Till the beauty of Jesus
be seen in me.
—Author Unknown



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“Sir, we would **SEE JESUS**”

A Meditation on John 12:20-33

The Seeking Greeks

These Gentiles, who were probably Jewish proselytes, had come up to Jerusalem to worship at the forthcoming Passover. But they also had a desire to see Jesus, the controversial Teacher whose fame had evidently reached their ears, for themselves. Perhaps they were merely curious about Him. More likely, however, they had become dissatisfied with the emptiness of Jewish formal religion, and were seeking true faith in Christ. Certainly, the Lord's reaction to their request would suggest the latter motive, as we shall see. But we should ask ourselves if we are as eager today to see our Saviour face to face as these Greeks were to see Him; for that is our destiny, and should therefore be our ever-joyful hope. If not, why not? Also, we should consider, if others were to approach us, as the Greeks approached Philip and Andrew, and to ask us to introduce them to the Saviour, whether we would be as ready to do so as were Philip and Andrew. Such an approach could come to us at any time, and it is unlikely that we shall be able to help others, unless we are fully satisfied with Christ ourselves.

The Signal for the Lord's Hour

The approach of the Greek Gentiles was to the Lord an unmistakable signal that the decisive “hour” of His suffering, death, and subsequent glorification in resurrection had at last arrived. God in His sovereignty has always been working according to a precisely-determined timetable and eternal purpose. The Son of God Incarnate was, of course, well aware of this fact, as His own eight references to “*the hour*” in John's Gospel prove. Previously, the Lord had said, in chapters 2:4, 7:30, and 8:20, that His hour had not yet

come; and so He could not be taken and killed by His enemies, despite their attempts to do so. Now, however, the climax of all human history and divine purpose, the cross and its aftermath, had drawn near. It was a moment fraught with intense suffering for the Saviour, but its outcome was the greatest victory of all time and eternity. For the Lord Jesus

knew that, after His death and resurrection, and entirely because of this “*hour*” of His, the gospel of God's grace would be proclaimed in His Name to all nations. These Greeks were thus the first of many millions of Gentiles who would soon begin to seek and find Him as Saviour.

The Sequel to the Saviour's Sacrifice

Now the “*hour*” of the Saviour's self-sacrifice on the cross teaches us a most important principle which is of wider application, as He Himself here explains to His disciples. The

We should ask ourselves if we are as eager today to see our Saviour face to face as these Greeks were to see Him.

Lord, in one of His many solemn and authoritative “*Verily, verily*” statements, likens Himself to a grain of wheat that is sown in the ground to die, but in so doing becomes the means whereby much fruit is produced which could never have been produced without the prior death of the original grain of wheat. In effect, He was saying that His own self-

sacrifice on Calvary was the only way in which God could produce a harvest of redeemed people to live for God's glory in newness of life. And the wider principle to learn is that the way to spiritual life, blessing, and fruitfulness is always and only through the death of our own self-life. Even Christ "pleased not Himself," but willingly gave Himself up for us at Calvary, thus setting His disciples an example to follow.

The Servant's Similar Pathway

As Christ's servants, we must be prepared to follow Him in a similar self-sacrificial pathway. In fact, if we do selfishly love and attempt to hold on to our natural lives, we shall end up by losing out spiritually. If, on the other hand, we unselfishly hate and risk losing our lives in this world for the Lord's sake, we shall keep them to enjoy the highest kind of life, spiritual and eternal life, which is fellowship with God Himself. Christ's servant will enjoy Christ's heavenly Home, and receive there the honour that he was willing to forgo in this life. Certainly, Jim Elliot, one of the five Ecuador missionary martyrs in January 1956, was right, when he said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." What a wonderful harvest of good for God's glory has resulted from that apparent tragedy and waste of young Christian lives and abilities! It led to the eventual conversion of some of the misguided murderers. It deepened the spiritual experiences of those most affected by their self-sacrifice. And it has inspired many others to engage in similar reckless, but true, missionary endeavours ever since then.

The Lord's Troubled Soul

But now we are to consider the

cost to the Lord Himself of facing and enduring the extreme agonies which He was to experience during His impending "hour" of suffering and death. The anticipation of being made sin for each one of us, and so bearing God His Father's unmitigated wrath against our accumulated sins, quite apart from the physical pain involved, caused Him to become very troubled in His human soul. As a morally perfect and entirely sinless Man, He recoiled even from the thought of exposing Himself to such a traumatic experience as lay before Him. What was He to do? To pray for deliverance from the "hour" was unthinkable in light of the divine purpose that had brought Him to it. No, the only course open to Him was to submit Himself willingly to His God and Father's perfect will, and to go through with Calvary and all its shameful horror, in the sure knowledge that through it God's Name would be glorified and He Himself would eventually be completely vindicated and glorified also. Although we, His disciples, cannot fully share our Lord's emotions at that time, nevertheless we can appreciate sufficient of them to understand their implications for our own service on earth. In the face of sacrifice and death for Christ's sake, submission to God's will with a desire that His Name be glorified in us is the only option open to us; but it will eventually lead to our own vindication and glory in His Presence.

The Broken Silence of Heaven

God never wastes words, but He could not refrain from breaking the long silence of heaven in the face of mounting opposition to His Son Incarnate and that Son's evident distress at the prospect of Calvary lying before Him. So, for the third and last

time during our Lord's public ministry, He opened the heavens and spoke audibly to His Son, although few understood the words that He spoke. It was a word of encouragement to Christ Himself, but, as the Lord explained, also and primarily intended to encourage His disciples, who would one day be expected to follow His steps in similar service and suffering. The divine message was that in the past God had glorified His Name, and in the future He would continue to do so. If we, like the Lord Jesus here, have sincerely and completely surrendered our wills and our lives to God, then we can rest assured that God will somehow one day bring glory to Himself through us, and ultimately bring us also to share His own glory in Christ. Final victory is thus assured to all who pray that God's perfect will be done in their lives and His Name glorified; for this is true prayer.

The Saviour's Drawing Power

This leads us, finally, to consider the extent and implications of the Saviour's victory during His "hour" on Calvary. The Lord here predicts that, if He is lifted up, He will draw all men unto Himself. Now the thought of being "lifted up" probably bears two meanings. First and foremost, as verse 33 indicates, it refers to His imminent crucifixion. But, secondly, it can bear the meaning of "be exalted," as the Lord was after His "hour" of suffering on the cross. Either way, He meant that He would become the unavoidable Center and Object of mankind's attention and attraction; for we now find that all of us must one day meet the once-crucified, but now highly exalted, Christ, either as our Saviour, or as our Judge. The Lord first spells out the negative effects of His crucifix-

ion and exaltation, namely, the final judgement of this world that cast Him out, and that of Satan, its prince. But, secondly, and primarily, He predicts the positive and most blessed saving effects of the cross, in terms of His own strong attractive drawing power over sinful men and women like ourselves who have trusted in Him. Manie P. Ferguson (1850-1932) well appreciated and finely expressed this drawing power of the crucified Saviour in her hymn, "That Man of Calvary."

How, then, should we today respond to our Saviour's drawing power over us? Surely with heartfelt worship, gratitude, and eager anticipation of seeing Him face to face in glory!

THAT MAN OF CALVARY

Fairest of all the earth beside,
Chiefest of all unto Thy Bride,
Fullness divine in Thee I see,
Beautiful Man of Calvary!

Refrain

That Man of Calvary
Has won my heart from me,
And died to set me free,
Blest Man of Calvary!

Drinking a dire and dreadful cup,
Crucified Jesus lifted up,
Bearing our guilt and misery,
Sorrowful Man of Calvary!

Granting the sinner life and peace,
Granting the captive sweet release,
Shedding His blood to make us free,
Merciful Man of Calvary!

Giving the gifts obtained for men,
Pouring out love beyond our ken,
Giving us spotless purity,
Bountiful Man of Calvary!

Comfort of all my earthly way,
Jesus, I'll meet Thee some sweet day,
Center of glory, Thee I'll see,
Wonderful Man of Calvary!

Gathered with Thee eternally,
Sharing Thy love by glassy sea,
Like Thee forever I shall be,
Glorified Man of Calvary!

— Manie P. Ferguson—

Malcolm C. Davis
Leeds

THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN

In the first epistle of John two great truths are unfolded and enforced — the doctrine of Christ and the fellowship of saints. In this epistle the Sonship of Jesus Christ and the brotherhood of saints are the immense pillars — the Jachin and the Boaz (1 Kgs. 7:21)—of the house. Upon these two pillars the two commandments of the epistle hang. *“This is His commandment, that we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment”* (3:23). When we have faith in the Son of God and love those who are begotten of God, we can truly say, *“our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,”* and, *“we have fellowship one with another”* (1:3, 7)—that is, we have the fellowship of truth and the fellowship of love.

From the First, Satan’s grand object has been to separate truth and love, to attack them by open assault, or undermine them under cover of a profession of superior light and advanced truth. But this comes out specially in the two later epistles.

THE SECOND EPISTLE

In the second epistle, the attack is upon the truth touching the Person of Christ. “The doctrine of Christ” had been surrendered by many deceivers, and the saints needed a word of warning as to that (v. 7-11). Anything touching the honour of Christ must be guarded with jealous care by every child of God, not merely by the elders of the assembly, but by everyone who is loyal to Christ, *“for whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ,*

hath not God.” Such a person is not to be received, even into the house, nor to be saluted with “God speed.” Thank God for such a warning, so much needed in our day. But let us be balanced. The enemy would persuade us to turn the sword against those who do abide in the doctrine of Christ and to cut off those who are walking in the truth. The apostle recalls the commandments which we had from the beginning that *“we love one another,” “walking in the truth as we have received commandment from the Father.”* (v. 4-5)

THE THIRD EPISTLE

In the third epistle it is not the deceiver abandoning the doctrine of Christ, but the overbearing man who lords it over God’s heritage. He receives not the brethren and casts out of the Church those who would. This is an attack upon our fellowship one with another from within, while in the previous epistle our fellowship with the Father and with the Son is undermined from without. As this is a subject that often occupies the minds of many of the Lord’s people causing stumbling even to the godly, it would be well to look more closely at the contents of this third epistle.

Here only in John’s epistles do we get the word “church” which occurs three times. In the first epistle the common life of all God’s children is the theme; in the second, family life; in the third it is church life. But in all three epistles the life is assailed. In the first the danger is a spurious profession; in the second, false teaching; and in third, unscriptural fellowship. In each case it is something human in place of that which is Divine—the fleshly and natural seeking to rule out the godly and spiritual. Therefore in all three epis-

bles, truth is the only path for our feet and love is the only bond of our fellowship among saints. The course of declension (worsening or falling away) in the apostles' day finds its counterpart in our days, but the remedy is a fresh laying hold of the truth given at the first.

Church truth is set forth and the responsibilities and experiences of Church fellowship are brought out. Everyone who understands this will know how perfectly the facts of recent years accord with this feature of John's third epistle. At the close of an

taken place. The Living Head above looks down upon the confusion among His members that should have been "*knit together in love,*" and beholds variance, emulations, strife, heresies (sects), and now two ominous words, "THEM" AND "US" to describe the two separated groups. There is the one group headed by Diotrephes, "*who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them*" —that is the church to which John wrote without effect (v. 9). We have also those described by the word "us" which included John, Gaius, with

be received." He then proceeds to unearth the carnal spirit that would not receive them. It is helpful to see how the character of those who are not received is given in detail. Of Gaius it is said that the truth was in him and he walked in the truth. He is an exponent of the truth in his life, an epistle of Christ, manifestly declared before all men. This report brought much joy to John so that he had no greater.

Now let us look at the way of Gaius with his brethren. He who prospers in soul, who has the truth

In the first epistle the common life of all God's children is the theme; in the second, family life; in the third it is church life.

apostate age our Lord brings back a handful of His own to simple Scriptural teaching and order, according to Matthew 18:20 and kindred Scriptures. It is thus the assembly appears here. It is in its local aspect and not as the "*Church, which is His Body.*" A number of children of God gathered together unto "*His Name*" (9:7) are called "an assembly," a called out and called together company.

The next feature is particularly noticeable. Two brethren are named whose actions are specially mentioned, and we find that they are not of "*one mind and one judgement.*" In spirit, word, and act they differ widely. More sorrowful still, there and now two groups. The hateful seed of discord sown among brethren has produced a terrible harvest of division in the assembly. The weakening of brotherly love, at first allowed, makes way for difference of judgement; self-assertion follows; and we are staggered by the acknowledgement in Scripture for the first time, that actual division has

the brethren of verse five and Demetrius, all of whom are in happy association and love as brethren.

One little touch tells a lot here and should not be unnoticed. The word "church" occurs in connection with both of these companies of saints. In verse nine and nineteen it is used twice in relation to "*them*" and it seems clear that in verse six it is used in connection with "*us*". The brethren who had gone forth and had received the loving hospitality of Gaius had returned to John and mentioned the action of Diotrephes, while also bearing witness of the love of Gaius "*before the church*" from which they had set out. The central point of the letter touches the question of the reception of brethren who ought to be received by one assembly from another (v. 5, 8) and the church where godly brethren would not be received is conspicuous (v. 9, 10). John does not teach a peace-at-any-price fellowship, but dwells upon the character, walk, and service of such who "*ought to*

in him, and who walks in the truth, will never become a leading man in the divisions of God's people, "*for every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him.*" Therefore it is just what we might expect of Gaius, when we read that the brethren who came and testified of the truth that was in him should bear witness also of his love before the church (v. 6). His love was shown, not only to well-known brethren, but to strangers likewise, i.e., to brethren coming from a distance. "*Beloved thou doest faithfully, whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and strangers which have borne witness of thy love before the church.*" His love was not in word only, but in deed and in truth, and the brethren were able to say that he had brought them on their way "*after a godly sort.*" His was no cold reception, for he was a fellow-helper to the truth. "*Beloved Gaius,*" would that more of us were like Him.

Ephraim Venn

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The *TRIAL* of FAITH

"The word of the Lord came unto him, saying, ... Hide thyself by the brook Cherith ... And it came to pass, after a while, that the brook dried up" (1 Kgs. 17:2-3, 7).

In the land where the bread and the water were failing fast, Elijah was led to Cherith and fed there. That is a very simple passage in the history of God's providence – a very simple illustration of the promise, *"My God shall supply all your need."* But, the second chapter of the story makes much harder reading. *"It came to pass that the brook dried up."* God sent Elijah to the brook, and it dried up. It did not prove equal to the need of the prophet. It failed.

God knew it would. He meant it to fail...

"The brook dried up." This is an aspect of the divine providence that sorely perplexes our minds and tries our faith... God knows that there are heavenly whispers that men cannot hear till the drought of trouble and weariness has silenced the babbling brooks of joy. And He is not satisfied until we have learned to depend, not on His gifts but upon Himself. – Percy C Ainsworth.

If thus, ah soul, the brook thy heart hath cherished
Doth fail thee now-no more thy thirst assuage—
If its once glad refreshing streams have perished,
Let Him thy heart engage.
He will not fail, nor mock, nor disappoint thee;
His consolations change not with the years;
With oil of joy He surely will anoint thee,
And wipe away thy tears.
—J. Danson Smith

God Will Answer

God will answer when to thee,
Not a possibility
Of deliverance seems near;
It is when He will appear.

God will answer when you pray;
Yes, though mountains block thy way,
At His word, a way will be
E'en thro' mountains, made for thee.

God who still divides the sea,
Willingly will work for thee;
God, before whom mountains fall,
Promises to hear thy call.

—M.E.B.



Yet a Little While

During His earthly journey and especially close to its end our Lord, as recorded in the Gospel of John, used the expression “*Yet a little while*” on more than one occasion. Twice He was addressing unbelieving Jews. The other three times took place when He was speaking to His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed; as He was alone with them in the upper room. What he meant by the little while was different things on different occasions. And the length of those “whiles” varies from a few hours to almost two millennia now.

However, in studying these statements in the context in which they were spoken, we find a pattern of progressive un-veiling of truths. We are successively introduced to the Lord’s ministry to the Jews, His suffering on the cross, resurrection, ascension and glorification and finally to His coming again.

MINISTRY TO THE JEWS (John 7:33-34)

While enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself our Savior maintained a loving, patient and compassionate attitude towards His persecutors. He knew all along that the nation as a whole has rejected Him. But He was still hovering over them as He tried to reach out to them with the message of God’s love. Yet they seemed to have regularly ignored His words and refused to heed His warnings. He said to them on one occasion “*Why do you not understand My speech? Even because*

ye cannot hear My word” (John 8:43). And again “*But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep*” (John 10:26). Notwithstanding, He did not refrain from warning them of the dire consequences of rejecting Him, all the way to the end, (see Luke 23:27-31).

During the Lord’s visit to Jerusalem on the occasion of the feast of Tabernacles mentioned in John chapter seven, the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to the Temple to take Him, John 7 verse

However, in studying these statements in the context in which they were spoken, we find a pattern of progressive un-veiling of truths.

32. Those officers belonged to the Temple Guard and when they came seeking for Him, the Savior said to them “*Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go to Him that sent Me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, there ye cannot come*” (John 7:33-34). The “*little while*” here is referring to the short time left to Him here in this world before He went back to the Father. It is hard to ascertain the exact timing of this incident. Yet judging that the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated about six months before the Passover, that period of time could have been either six or eighteen months, depending on whether this incident took place during the second or the third year of our Lord’s public ministry. But

just the same this reminds us of the prophecy of Isaiah how that Messiah will be cut off out of the land of the living, (Isa. 53:8) for he had tasted death in the prime of His life.

Notice, however, how He specifically states that He was going back to the Father who has sent Him. And when this takes place they may seek Him but will not find Him. Furthermore since He will be in the Father’s house they will be unable to come there. He Further explained to them

in chapter eight, why they could not be with Him where He was going. For He said to them “*I go my way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins; where I go, ye cannot come... for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins*” (John 8:21, 24). Sin cannot be admitted into heaven; where He was going to be. And unless they, or anyone else, believe that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, they would surely die in their sins, without any hope of going to heaven.

MINISTRY TO THE JEWS AGAIN (John 12:35-36)

Following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His meeting with the Greeks who wished to see Him,

our Lord spoke of how He must be lifted up from the earth, referring to His death by crucifixion. But His listeners on this occasion were unable to understand how that “the Christ” must die.

“Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have light, lest darkness come upon you; for he who walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth” (John 12:35). This was a clear reference to

“But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him” (v. 37). How this must have broken His heart as, for all intents and purposes, His labor among them seemed to have been in vain, (Isa. 49:4). Yet we hear Him again repeating, unfortunately to no avail, that offer to them in the same chapter. *“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness”* (v. 46).

will long for the days of His presence with them. Notice however when He said *“ye shall seek Me”* that He did not add *“and shall not find me”* as He said to the Jews. Because in the case of unbelieving Jews He will in no way be available to them after He is gone, but with His own He is always available to their faith and to their supplications.

Also remember that *“where I go”* refers here to the cross and not to the Father’s house, as we learn from His words to Peter in verse 36. None of them could go to the cross with Him because it was His cross, (John 19:17).

And no one could have shared in His sufferings and His atoning travail for our sins at Golgotha.

Since all His promises in Christ are yea and Amen, we know that He will fulfill this promise and come again for us

Himself as the Light of the world; He extended to them an offer to avail themselves of His light while He is still with them. The “*Little while*” here was only a few more days before He goes to the cross. After that darkness would overtake them, and it did. Thick spiritual darkness descended on the nation which, with few exceptions, has rejected the glorious Gospel of His grace. And the moral darkness, from which they were already suffering, got even worse. And finally a darkness of despair came upon them as they were scattered into all the nations after the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans.

Yet the Savior continues to extend His invitation to them to believe on Him. *“While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the sons of light”* (v. 36). Yet we know that sadly the offer was rejected as we read

ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS (John 13:33, 36).

On the night of His betrayal, alone with the Eleven, the traitor having already departed, the Lord addresses them saying *“Little children, yet a little while I am with you, ye shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, Where I go ye cannot come; so I say to you”* (v. 33). Notice He was speaking to His own whom he loved to the uttermost (margin) John 13:1. And for the first time in the Gospels narrative he uses this lovely term of endearment “*Little Children.*” This speaks not only of His love to them but also of His concern for them as He was about to leave them in a hostile world.

The “*little while*” here could only amount to a few hours that night before His arrest, trial and crucifixion. Undoubtedly they will sorrow after His departure, they will miss His care for them while here and they

AFTER RESURRECTION, ASCENSION AND GLORIFICATION (John 14:19)

In the middle of the discourse, and having spoken to them of His coming again for them, (14:3), and of the coming of the other Comforter; the Holy Spirit, (14:16-17) (which necessarily had to wait for the glorification of Christ, John 7:39), the Lord said to the disciples *“Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me. Because I live, ye shall live also”* (John 14:19). The last time the world had publicly seen our Lord was on the cross. After His death, burial and resurrection no unbelieving eyes had seen Him risen. Only, to believers on Him, did the Lord reveal Himself, and they became witnesses of His resurrection, (Acts 10:40- 41). The world cannot see the risen Lord as it lacks the faith necessary to behold Him. And now since

He is ascended and glorified, He is available only to the eyes of faith of His people. The reality of His person and of His life cannot be perceived by the world that had rejected and crucified Him. The "little while" in this passage is just about the same as the previous one, just a few more hours from then, till He was taken down from the cross to be buried.

But now He lives by the power of an endless life; death has no more dominion over Him. He could say "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18). Yet He shares this resurrection life with those that are His "Because I live, ye shall live also" (v. 19).

Furthermore, their life, in and through Him, is sustained by His continual interceding on their behalf as their Great High Priest "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). And when, in their weakness and infirmity, they sin, they will always have Him as their Advocate with the Father pleading their cause, (1 Jn. 2:1).

HIS COMING AGAIN (John 16:16, 22).

In that same discourse he said to them later on "A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again, a little while and ye shall see Me, because I go to my Father" (John 16:16). This may have puzzled the disciples and they uttered in words, their confusion about this statement. Has he not just said "ye shall see Me"? What does He now mean "ye shall not see Me"?

The Savior, however, was talking

about His physical presence with them. He was soon going to disappear from before their physical sight, when He shall have ascended into heaven. But reiterating His promise of coming again he said "Again a little while and ye shall see Me".

Notice that we have two "little whiles" here. The first would be a little over forty days. For in three days from then He will rise from among the dead. And afterwards He will show Himself to them alive for forty days by many infallible proofs, (Acts 1:3). And on that day when He was assembled with them on the Mount of Olives, while they beheld, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight, (Acts 1:9). They saw Him no more with their physical eyes.

The second "little while" in this passage has now lasted for close to 2000 years. But we are assured that according to His faithful promise, He will come again for His heavenly people, for then we shall see Him as He is.

However it is the last phrase in this verse that still draws our adoring hearts to worship both Father and Son. "Because I go to my Father." When this wicked world gave our Savior a cross, The Father has vindicated Him by giving Him to sit with Him on His own throne, (Ps. 110:1). His going back to the Father in seen here in an entirely different light than when it was used in His warnings to the Jews. To all those who love Him and are waiting for Him, this phrase, gives us full assurance of God's faithfulness, for "He raised Him from the dead, and set Him on His

right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:20). And since all His promises in Christ are yea and Amen, we know that He will fulfill this promise and come again for us.

Then, by way of explanation and Further assurance, the Lord said to them "And ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (v. 22). And beloved we will indeed see Him face to face, and eternal joy that no one can take away from us will fill our hearts.

Without a cloud between,
To see Him as He is,
O, who can tell
the height of joy,
The full transporting bliss

—Albert Midlane

Finally the word of God assures us of the imminent return of our Lord, for He will come and will not tarry, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37).

Without a cloud between,
Lord Jesus haste the day,
The morning bright
without a cloud,
And chase our tears away.

—Albert Midlane

"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"
(Rev. 22:20).

Boushra R. Mikhael
Toronto, Ontario

Another Christmas

Again they peal, the wistful Yuletide chimes
Amid the jarring clang of changing times;
The angel songs float down through history-
God born as Man!—time's super-mystery!
Sad marvel: millions hear without surprise
The biggest news which ever clove the skies!

Again they play, the children with their toys,
And parties draw the older girls and boys;
Regathered families hail the festive day,
And jovial revelers their gifts display;
How strange!—how almost inconceivable,
So few receive Heaven's "Gift Unspeakable"!

Yet none the less, as carol strains resound,
Adoring hearts will everywhere be found;
The throne-room of the soul they will prepare,
To give the Saviour-King new welcome there:
And He will see, and say, with gentle smile,
"The nails and thorny-crown were all worthwhile."

—J. Sidlow Baxter