

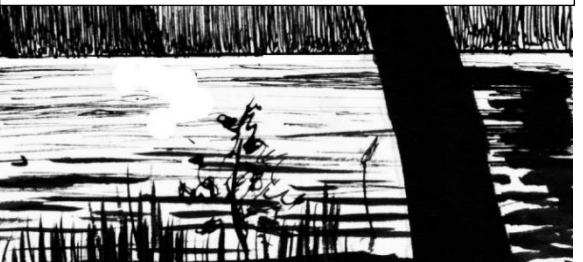
Words of Peace & Truth



No. 124: January – April 2025

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

(Esther 9:30; see also Jeremiah 33:6 and Zechariah 8:19)

No. 124: January – April 2025

Editorial

This being the first issue of WPT in 2025, a piece evidently written with a new year in mind is included; see page 3. This introduces a vital theme which runs through this magazine, namely the need for a continuous, conscious relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the articles on pressure remind us that our appreciation of the Lord Jesus can be enhanced through the sufferings that we experience. We next (page 9) have exhortation to find our place at the feet of the Lord Jesus, followed (page 18) by encouragement to be engaged with the things concerning Him. Lastly, from page 22 we are reminded of the importance of coming, in our hearts and minds, to Christ. The apostle Peter says of Him, “to Whom coming, as unto a Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house ...” Evidently, this is to be a continuous movement on our part.

Without doubt this engagement with Christ is the only way to be sustained and preserved in the face of the ugly and ungodly state of the present, evil world, the corruption and confusion of Christendom and the failures, fears and frustrations of our own lives.

G.S.B.

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SUNRISE AND SUNSET: THE ETERNAL AND THE TEMPORAL

A message for the New Year

Another year opens on us. The past has been one of abundant mercy, as is proved by the one fact that the Lord is increasingly precious to us. He is the Sun of the one eternal day, and the more He is before the heart, the better and easier do we accept the falling shadows on man's life here. He is before us as the Sun rising. On His side every joy and every tie is abiding and perennial; on our side it is a sunset, everything is gradually yielding up its vigour and beauty, though as the rising sun engages our hearts, the *ignis fatuus** of our sunset is eclipsed.

It is an unequalled moment to our souls when the Lord Jesus, the Sun of the never-ending day, is the light of our hearts, and the set-off for the evening shades of our own life. The circle of His radiancy, in its diameter, reaches down to the utmost line of our fading life, and up to the excellent glory; so that, once within this circle, there is darkness nowhere; death is abolished. We are then Simeons (see Luke 2); the sun of nature going down, holding as it were in our feeble arms of failing strength the Lord Jesus; our eye fixed on Him, and connecting the great future with Him, we let the past, with all its chequered hopes and sorrows, glide away. "Lord, now Thou lettest Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." When the eye is diverted from the rising Sun, it is beset by either the hopes or the fears of the setting one. But when it is steadily and immovably fixed on Jesus, like Stephen, when he looked up into heaven, then the halo around Him embraces

*A dictionary explains: "a meteor or light that appears in the night over marshy grounds; Will-o'-the-wisp (Latin, foolish fire)."

us – includes us in its blessed circle, and distances the darkness or the sparks of our own kindling (*see Isaiah 50:11*), on our own side. We come up to Jordan to see the ark of the covenant where the waters of death were, and practically to find that there is nothing between us and the heavenly land. The eye must be turned to the east and not to the west. I mean that when the eye turns to what is sinking below the horizon, there is either fear, or an attempt to retain the retiring light; but when it is simply and continuously set on the Lord, the light of His presence is above the brightness of the sun (all created life and power); and we know we have it because we are blind to things here because of the glory of that light (*see Acts 22:11*).

Everything depends on the way the eye is turned. There are the two lights – the fading or closing one, and the opening or eternal one. When the eye turns to the former, the varied distortions which haunt the twilight are conjured up before the mind; but when it is fixed on the latter, the encircling wave of light encloses us, and we see in beautiful outline the eternal realities. The sunflower has but one sun, and to this it turns all day long, with an expanding heart: the sun has always a message for it, a ray to strengthen, to cheer, and to beautify; and thus as your eye is set on Christ, so will you not only know that the pretensions of man are eclipsed, but that every moment there is a message from Him to your heart by the Holy Spirit, conveying to you the love and thought of His heart about you. You are not only in the presence chamber, where all is light and perfection, but the greater than Joseph assures you heart that you are His Benjamin (*see Genesis 45:12-13*).

May each of us enter on the new year as sunflowers, with the eye of the heart unfurled to Christ, and receiving from Him the gentle, exquisite and invigorating influence of His own presence. There must be jealousy of heart that the eye turn not to any rival, for

then we commit two evils: we forsake Him, the Fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves cisterns which hold no water (*see Jeremiah 2:13*). Let our motto for the year be “Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God (*Colossians 3:1*).

J.B. Stoney (1814-1897)

PRESSURE

Many Christians are undergoing pressures of various kinds, whether through ill-health, bereavement, persecution, poverty or other causes. The following reflections on pressure, suffering and the exercise of the discipline of our loving and all-wise God and Father, offered by past writers, are reproduced for the present encouragement of readers.

“In pressure Thou hast enlarged me” (*Psalm 4:1, Darby Trans.*)

The secret searchings of discipline bring to light precious fruits for God and man. We ought to value discipline, for it is an asset, and is the proof of living love. Nebuchadnezzar, amongst others, proved it towards the end of his course. God disciplined him – the band of iron and brass was there (*Daniel 4:23*) – but there was also the dew of heaven. How comforting is the dew of heaven in our days of pressure, reminding us of the disposition of God towards us. He sees it necessary to pass us through the testings, but His ways with us are but to bring about His own end in us. His love is behind all His ways. Romans 8 closes with the love of God (“*Neither death, nor life ...etc... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*”), and this blessedly comes in before the ways of God are spoken of in chapter 11.

How fortifying to our spirits in the hour of trial is the knowledge of divine love. The doxology in Romans 11:33-36 is

from the exulting heart of one who, as knowing the love of God, can bow to His ways. If “His ways are past finding out,” they are, as He is, perfect. “As for God, His way is perfect (Psalm 18:30).

How wise is our God, using even the external things of this life and our seemingly adverse circumstances to prove to our hearts His own love. His power is great and He could lift us by His hand out of any and every circumstance; but He allows the pressure and proves His love to us in the chastening, “for whom the Lord loves He chastens” (*Hebrews 12:6*).

And when every necessity for the display of His power has forever passed, His love will remain in all its blessedness and be responded to by countless myriads who learned it in the sorrows and pressure of the time scene.

J.H.T. (*probably J.H. Trevvett*)

Pressure.

The experiences of the love of Christ in tribulation or distress puts a very distinctive impression of Him upon the heart. I have a blank sovereign which has never been minted; it is gold, but it does not bear the features of the king. It needs pressure to put the king’s image there. I believe that the time of trial is the time when a distinctive impression of Christ and His love is put upon the believer. God would put the impression of Christ on every bit of His treasure which is “hid in the field” (*Matthew 13:44*) of this world. We more than conquer when the pressure results in the features of Christ appearing distinctively in us.

C. A. Coates (1862-1945)

Sorrows and trials are not only like the sand and grit that polish a stone, but I shall be made to taste, through the trouble, what Christ is to me.

G.V. Wigram (1807-1879)

Perfect Through Suffering.

I kept, for nearly a year, the flasket-shaped cocoon of an Emperor moth. It is very peculiar in its construction. A narrow opening is left in the neck of the flask, through which the perfect insect forces its way, so that a forsaken cocoon is as entire as one still tenanted, no rupture of the interlacing fibres having taken place.

The great disproportion between the means of egress and the size of the prisoned insect makes one wonder how the exit is ever accomplished at all, and it is never without great labour and difficulty. It is supposed that the pressure to which the moth's body is subjected in passing through the narrow opening is a provision of nature for forcing the juices into vessels of the wings, these being less developed at the period of emergence from the chrysalis than they are in other insects.

I happened to witness the first efforts of my imprisoned moth to escape from its long confinement. Nearly a whole forenoon, from time to time, I watched it patiently striving and struggling to get out. It never seemed to get beyond a certain point, and at last my patience was exhausted. I thought I was wiser and more compassionate than its Maker and resolved to give it a helping hand.

With the points of my scissors I snipped the confining threads to make the exit just a very little easier, and lo! immediately, and with perfect ease, out crawled a swollen body, and little shrivelled wings. In vain I watched to see that marvellous progress of expansion in which the wings silently and swiftly develop before our eyes, and as I traced the exquisite spots and working of divers colours which were all there in miniature, I longed to see these assume their due proportions, and the creature appear in all its perfect beauty, as in truth one of the loveliest of its kind.

But I looked in vain; my false tenderness had proved its ruin. It never was anything but a stunted abortion, crawling painfully through that brief life which it should have spent flying the air on rainbow wings.

The lesson that I got that day has often stood me in good stead. It has helped me to understand what is called “the hardness of God’s love.” I have thought of it often when watching with pitiful eyes those who were struggling with sorrows, suffering, or distress, and it seemed to me that I was more merciful than God, and I would fain have given deliverance. Short-sighted fool! – how know I that one of those pains and groans could be spared?*

The far-sighted, perfect love of God, which seeks the perfection of its object, does not weakly shrink from present transient suffering. Our Father’s love is too true to be weak. Because He loves His children He chastens them, that they may be “partakers of His holiness” (*Hebrews 12:10*). With this glorious end in view, He spares not for their crying. “Made perfect through suffering,” as Christ was,† the sons of God are trained up to obedience, and brought to glory “through much tribulation” (*Acts 14:22*).

“All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come” (*Job 14:14*).

Author unknown, but said to be “one laid for years on a couch of suffering.”

**Respect for God’s ways in His dealings with other people does not, of course, exempt us from showing love and care for the afflicted.*

†It hardly needs to be remarked that there was never anything imperfect about the Lord Jesus – far be the thought – but He who had been in the place of command took a place of obedience to His Father and was made perfect through (not by) suffering in the sense of being qualified to become our Saviour and High Priest – Editor.

AT HIS FEET

OF all the disciples of Christ that pass before us in the Gospel story, perhaps none are more marked by single-hearted devotedness to Christ than Mary of Bethany. She makes nothing of self, but everything of Christ, and hence, on the three occasions that she comes before us, she is found at the feet of Jesus.

We see her first in her sister's home at Bethany, when the Lord of life entered that home and Mary sat at His feet as a *learner* (Luke 10). Later, when death had entered the home, she is found at His feet as a *mourner* (John 11). Lastly, when a few of His loved ones make a supper for the Lord, who had just manifested His resurrection power and glory, she is found at His feet as a *worshipper*.

She not only knew that the Lord was the great Teacher come from God, the One who can sympathise with us in our sorrows, and the Object of our worship, but she had experienced His teaching, tasted His sympathy, and worshipped at His feet.

Good for us if, like the Apostle Paul, we can each say that the desire of the heart is "That I may know Him" (*Philippians 3:10*). We may know much about Christ, but in order to know Him we must be in His company and, at His feet, learn His mind through His word, taste His sympathy, and in His presence worship and adore.

It is true that the Lord delights to honour the One that puts honour upon Him in the day of His rejection, and has said that wheresoever the gospel is preached the story of Mary shall be told for a memorial of her (*Mark 14:9*). But the story of Mary has also been recorded for our profit, for all Scripture is given by God for our instruction. May we then, as we read her story, profit by her lowly and devoted life.

1. AT HIS FEET AS A LEARNER Luke 10: 38-42

If, as sinners, we have been at the feet of the Saviour discovering that, in spite of all our sins, He loves us and has died for us, then, if we are to make spiritual progress – if we are to be “meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 *Timothy* 2:21) – the “one thing needful,” as believers, is to take our place at His feet and hear His word.

This plain but important truth is brought before us in the homely scene described in the five closing verses of the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Journeying on His way to Jerusalem, we are told that the Lord came to a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. She gladly opened her home to the Lord, and at once set herself to minister to His bodily needs. This indeed was right and beautiful in its place; and yet the story clearly shows that there was much of self in Martha’s service. She did not like to have all the burden of this service, and felt grieved that she was left to serve alone. There was one thing lacking in her service.

The one thing needful – the one thing that Martha missed – was to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His word. She loved the Lord, and with all her energy she zealously set herself to serve the Lord; but her zeal was not according to knowledge. She set herself to work without having first been in the company of the Lord, and in communion with the Lord, and therefore without being instructed in the mind of the Lord through the word of the Lord. As a result she was “distracted with much serving,” was “careful and troubled about many things,” complaining about her sister, and even entertaining the thought that the Lord was indifferent to her labours.

Alas! do we not, at times, act like Martha? We may take up service according to our own thoughts, or under the

direction of others. From morning to night we may busy ourselves in a continual round of activity, and yet neglect the one thing needful – to be alone with the Lord, and in communion with Him hear His word and learn His mind. Little wonder that we get “distracted” and “troubled about many things,” and complain of others. How true it is that it is easier to spend whole days in a round of busy service, than half an hour alone with Jesus.

In Mary we see a believer who chose the “good part.” Sometimes it is said that Mary chose the better part, as if Martha’s part was good, but Mary’s was better. It is not thus that the Lord speaks. He definitely says that Mary’s part was “that good part,” for she chose the “one thing needful” – to sit at His feet and hear His word.

Clearly, then, Mary had a keener perception of the desires of the heart of Christ than her sister. One has said, “Martha’s eye saw His weariness, and would give to Him: Mary’s faith apprehended His fulness, and would draw from Him.”

Martha thought of the Lord only as One who was requiring something from us; Mary discerned that, beyond all the service of which He is so worthy, the desire of His heart, and the great purpose of His coming into this world, was to communicate something to us: “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” and at the end of His path He could say, “I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me” (John 17:8). By the word of God salvation is brought to us (Acts 13:26); by the word of God we are born again (1 Peter 1:23); by the word of God we are cleansed from defilement (John 15:3); by the word of God we are sanctified (John 17: 17) and by the word of God we are instructed in all the truth of God “that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

May we not say that Martha set herself to do good works

without having been thoroughly furnished by the word of God? In Mary we learn that communion with Christ, and instruction in the word of Christ, must precede all service that is acceptable to Christ. He delights that, in His own time and way, we should minister to Him; but, above all, He delights to have us in His company that He may minister to us.

Mary chose this good part and the Lord will not allow any complaints by her sister to belittle her choice – it shall not be taken from her. So, again, in the last days of the Church’s history on earth, the Lord commends the Philadelphians, not for any great activity that would give them a prominent place before the world, but that they had “kept His word.” Like Mary of old, they set greater store on His word than their works. It is not, indeed, that Mary was without works, for having chosen “that good part,” in due time the Lord commends her for doing “a good work” (Matthew 26:10). So with the Philadelphian saints, the Lord who commended them for keeping His word, is the One who can say “I know thy works.”

Of old Moses could say of the LORD, “Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand; and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words” (Deuteronomy 33:3). This presents a lovely picture of the true position of God’s people held in the hand of the Lord; sitting at the feet of the Lord and listening to the words of the Lord – secure in His hand; at rest at His feet; and learning His mind. May we, then, choose this good part, and in due course do the good work.

2. AT HIS FEET AS A MOURNER

John 11:32

In the touching scene described in the eleventh chapter of John, we again hear of the two sisters, Martha and Mary. Sickness had ended in death casting its shadow over the home. Their brother has been taken from them.

In their trouble they rightly turn to the Lord as their unfailing resource, and very blessedly they plead His love for their brother, for they say, "He whom thou lovest is sick." This, indeed, was true; the Lord loved Lazarus, but we are also told that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." And as the story proceeds, we are permitted to see the way love takes in order to declare, on the one hand, the glory of the Son of God, and, on the other, the compassions of the heart of Jesus.

Further, we again see the difference between these two devoted women. Martha who, on the former occasion, had been cumbered with her service when the Lord of life and glory had visited her house, is now restless and distracted when death has come into the home. Mary who, in the former day, had listened to His word, can now quietly wait for Him to speak and act. Thus we read, "Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him: but Mary sat still in the house." When, however, she received the word, "The Master is come and calleth for thee," she at once acts in obedience to the word, for we read, "She arose quickly, and came unto Him."

"Then when Mary had come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet." For the second time this devoted woman is found in the lowly place at the feet of Jesus. The Jews, mistaking her action, say, "She goeth unto the grave to weep there." She was doing that which is far better, that which faith alone can do; she was going to the feet of Jesus to *weep there*. To weep at the grave of a loved one even the world can do, but it brings no comfort to the sorrowing heart. But to weep at the feet of Jesus is to find the comfort of His love, for we weep at the feet of One who, in His own time, can raise our dead, and, in the meantime, can comfort our hearts. So it came to pass that Mary, who had been at his feet as a learner is now found at His feet as a mourner.

It is noticeable that in this touching scene there is no

record of any word spoken by the Lord to Mary. This only we learn that, in the presence of her great sorrow, “Jesus wept.” The Jews wrongly interpret these tears as being a token of the Lord’s love for Lazarus. He did indeed love Lazarus, but there was no need to weep for one that He was about to raise from the dead. It was the sorrow of the living that drew forth the tears of Jesus, as we read, “When Jesus saw her weeping . . . He groaned in the spirit and was troubled,” and His trouble found vent in tears, for “Jesus wept.”

In the days of old we read of Jehovah that, “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3). In order to heal the broken-hearted He became flesh, and shed His tears to dry ours, and broke His heart to bind up our hearts.

And Jesus is still the same, “The same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (*Hebrews 13:8*). In our sorrows, and when our loved ones are taken from us, we still learn that our only real and lasting comfort is found in bowing at His feet, and pouring out our sorrow in the presence of the One who once wept with these broken-hearted women.

3. AT HIS FEET AS A WORSHIPPER

John 12

The beautiful scene that passes before us in the beginning of the twelfth chapter of John, takes place just six days before the Cross. The Lord’s devoted life, in which self was ever set aside to serve others in love, draws to its close. At every step of His path He had been dispensing blessing – spreading a feast, as it were, for all the world. Now, at last, a few of His loved ones make a feast for Him, as we read, “There they made Him a supper.”

Christ was in this needy world as a Giver, but it was not

often that anyone gave to Him. Once, in the beginning of His way, a few wise men “presented unto Him gifts” and had fallen down and “worshipped Him.” Now, at the end of His path, they make a supper for Him and, again, one is found at His feet with her gifts as a worshipper.

Truly, too, there had been a moment when Levi had made Him “a great feast in his own house” (*Luke 5:29*). There the Lord had sat down with “a great company of publicans and others” in order to dispense blessing to sinners. Now He sits down in company with a few of His own in order to receive the homage of saints.

Christ is the One for Whom they make the supper – the Centre of the feast and the Object before every heart. Lazarus, and others, are present, but, we read, they “sat at the table *with Him*.” The supper was *for Him*, and the guests were “*with Him*.” The blessedness, and the greatness, of the occasion was that He, the Son of God, was present.

Again, the two sisters, Martha and Mary, are present. Martha serves, but no longer is she cumbered with her service, or complaining of others. She thinks only of the One for Whom they had made the supper. For the third time Mary is found at the feet of the Lord, but no longer to receive His words and His sympathy, but to give to Him the worship of a heart that loved Him, for Mary’s gifts, Mary’s acts, and Mary’s attitude, all breathe the spirit of worship.

Drawn by attachment of heart to Christ she had sat at His feet, listened to His words and learned something of His mind. Now we see that affection for Christ is the secret of all true service. Moved by this love for Christ she does the right thing at the right moment. She might have left the ointment in the alabaster box and presented it to Christ, but this would not have put the same honour upon Christ. She pours it out upon His feet. She

does *the right act*. She might, at some earlier moment in the Lord's life, have anointed His feet with the ointment, but she waits until the hour of His going to the Cross and the grave has arrived. Moved by the instincts of love she does the right act *at the right moment*, as the Lord can say, "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." Christ was everything to Mary. Christ was her life, and all that she has is devoted to Him. The costly ointment, and the hair of her head – the glory of a woman – are used to put honour upon Christ. She is not even praising Him for all that He had done, or was about to do, but she bows at His feet as a worshipper because of *all that He is*.

Thus acting, she puts honour upon the One that the world had rejected and was about to nail to a Cross. She forgets herself, and her blessings, and thinks only of Christ. How blessed, if, when we make Him a supper, in a like spirit of worship we could each one pass out of sight of ourselves, and our blessings, and see no man any more save Jesus only and His glory (*see Mark 9:8*). Similarly, we may, like Mary in her day, be misunderstood by the world, and even by many true disciples, but we should, also like Mary, have the approval of the Lord. In the eyes of the world her act was mere waste. So in Christendom today, Christianity is viewed (*by many – Ed.*) merely as a system for making the world a better and a brighter place. The one great aim is to benefit man; all else is waste. In one parable the Lord likens the Kingdom of Heaven to "a certain King that made a wedding feast for His Son" (*Matthew 22*). In the spirit of this parable the disciples had made a supper for the Lord, and Mary had put honour upon Christ. And though the world may condemn, the Lord approves, for He says, "Let her alone," and again, in another gospel He can say, "She hath wrought a good work upon Me." Indeed, so highly does the Lord appreciate Mary's act that He adds, "Whosoever this gospel is preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (*Matthew 26: 13*).

Moreover, the Lord can say, “Me ye have not always.” It will be our privilege and our joy to worship Him in glory, but it was Mary’s privilege, and it is still ours, to worship Him in the world where He is rejected, and in the face of the scorn and reproach of men. Mary seized the occasion to render to Him this precious service. As one has said, “She never could have recalled it in eternity ... Love will find new ways of expressing itself to Him then. But it will not be what He looks for from us now. There will be no self to be denied, no cross to be borne, no world to be surrendered, no reproach to be encountered then.”

How blessed, too, was the effect of her act of devotion to Christ, for we read, “the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” Lazarus may hold sweet communion with Christ, and Martha may serve Christ, but Mary’s act of worship, that was so precious to the heart of Christ, was also a joy to all (*many? – Ed.*) that were in the house. That which gives honour to Christ will bring blessing to others.

We may rightly commune with Christ about many things, we may rightly serve Him in many ways, but the worship that makes everything of Christ will surpass all else in the day when we make Him a supper. So will it be in that great day when all the redeemed are gathered home. The new song will be sung that renders praise to the Lord for all that He has done. Heaven and earth will join to celebrate His glory, but, above all, we read of those who “fell down and worshipped Him.” Beyond all the mighty work that He has done, and beyond all the glory that He has acquired, ***He will be worshipped because of all that He is.*** Then we shall be able to say,

The heart is satisfied, can ask no more;
All thought of self is now forever o’er:
Christ, its unmingled Object, fills the heart
In blest adoring love, its endless part. (*J.N. Darby*)
Hamilton Smith (1862-1943)

“These Things”

“These things” is an expression occurring often throughout the Holy Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, in many different contexts. It may be profitable to consider just a few occurrences in the New Testament.

The Birth of Christ.

Luke tells us that he composed his “first discourse ... concerning all things which Jesus began both to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1); but He began his account of the life of Christ by recording the extraordinary events surrounding His birth, and we read that Mary “kept all **these things**, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). Here is a lesson for us: do *we* spend time pondering the wonderful facts concerning the holy incarnation of Christ – how that God Himself became manifest in flesh?

The Sufferings and Death of Christ.

When Clopas and his companion were walking, downcast, to Emmaus (Luke 24:13), Jesus drew alongside them and asked them, “what things” were they talking about? Their reply was, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth ...” What about us? If I were asked what things I have just been thinking or speaking about, what would I say? The two disciples went on to speak of their disappointment that the One on Whom they had set their hopes had been “delivered up to the judgment of death and crucified.” But the Lord Jesus enlarged their thoughts by saying “Ought not Christ to have suffered **these things**, and to enter into His glory?”

The Gospel of Christ.

Those things – the suffering, death, burial and

resurrection of Christ, and His ascension, glory and coming again – provided the subject-matter of the gospel that was preached in the following years, as recorded in the Acts. How good it would be if all preaching today focused on these essential matters! In chapter 26 we have Paul, when addressing King Agrippa, able to say: “the king is informed about **these things**, to whom also I speak with freedom. For I am persuaded that of **these things** nothing is hidden from him; for this was not done in a corner.” This reminds us of Psalm 98: “Jehovah has made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly showed in the sight of the nations.” It is indeed a tremendous fact that the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ demonstrate, as the old hymn says, “how God can save, yet righteous be.” It is good to tell others of the love of God, but we need to declare also His righteousness, as set out in the early chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.

The Holy Spirit’s Witness to Christ.

On the eve of His apprehension and crucifixion, the Lord Jesus had expended care on His disciples, preparing them for the time when He would no longer be with them. He spoke about His coming glory, His Father’s house, the coming of the Holy Spirit, our communion with Himself and His Father during His absence, the importance of abiding in Him, and many other things. During this discourse, He said, “**These things** I have said to you, abiding with you; but the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, *He* shall teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you” (John 14:25, 26). This raises the question, how much opportunity do I give for the Holy Spirit to fill my mind and heart with the things of Christ?

Suffering for Christ.

Later in that same discourse, He told them “**These things** I have spoken unto you that ye may not be offended ... I have spoken **these things** to you, that when their hour shall have come, ye may remember them, that I have said them unto you. But I did not say **these things** unto you from the beginning, because I was with you” (John 16:1-4). He was preparing them to face persecution. May all those who today are persecuted for Christ’s name’s sake find help, strength and comfort from the things that the Lord Jesus taught us with a view to these times. Indeed, the apostle Paul tells us that “all indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Faithfulness to Christ.

Staying with Paul’s letters to Timothy, we find there warnings as to “the latter times” when “some shall apostatise from the faith” (1 Timothy 4:1). Surely we are now in such times. How should we behave in them? The apostle exhorts his child in the faith to exercise himself unto piety (verse 7), to enjoin and teach “**these things**” (the things he had heard from Paul), to “be a model of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (verse 12), to give himself “to reading, to exhortation, to teaching,” and to occupy himself “with **these things**” and “be wholly in them” (verses 13-15).

Pursuing the same subject (the believer’s conduct in an evil day) in his second epistle, Paul exhorts us to withdraw from iniquity and to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:19-22). In the next chapter he exhorts Timothy to “abide in **those things** which thou hast learned, and of which thou hast been fully persuaded, knowing of whom

thou hast learned them” and goes on to emphasise the importance, inspiration and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. Never was it more important than it is today to adhere to the truth that the Lord gave to the apostles to deliver to us, and to the inspired word of God.

The Return of Christ.

The last book in the Bible gives us the history of the Church in chapters 2 and 3, culminating in the solemn fact that Christ will spue professing Christendom out of His mouth (3:16). Then we are told of the dreadful judgments that will fall on this Christ-rejecting world after believers have been called up to be with the Lord in glory (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 3:10). It seems that the study of this Book of the Revelation is avoided in some quarters, but we should bear in mind that it is the Lord Jesus who gave it to the apostle John for us: “**I** Jesus have sent mine angel to testify **these things** to you in the assemblies” (Rev. 22:16). There follows a solemn warning to anyone who “shall add to **these things**,” or take away from them. Then we read, “He that testifies **these things** says, Yea, I come quickly.” Is our response “Amen; come, Lord Jesus”?

Thinking on the Things of Christ.

Let us close this short article by returning to the subject of what occupies our minds. In writing to the Philippian believers, Paul gives us this beautiful exhortation: “For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if any praise, think on **these things**” (Philippians 4:8).

January 2025.

G.S.B.

CHRIST THE RESOURCE FOR GOD AND FOR MAN

Matthew 11:20-30; 12:1-50

WE had before us last time how God's people had ever proved His fidelity. Whatever man might be, and man had ever proved unfaithful, in every circumstance God showed His unfailing faithfulness. This is presented in a remarkable way in the Gospel of Matthew. In spite of the condition of the people, Christ was "Immanuel," God with them. The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in that way. That is what the presence of Jesus in the midst of Israel meant, and nothing short of that. You cannot understand the responsibility of the people, and their guilt, unless you apprehend that the One among them was "Immanuel." It was the last test applied to them. In connection with that, God took care to make good the import of another prophetic name in Isaiah, namely, "Shear-jashub" (*meaning "a remnant shall return" – see Isaiah 7:3*). He ordered that a remnant should return. But the presence of Immanuel tended in general to bring out the perverseness and lawlessness of the people. They said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours" (*Mark 12:7*). Nothing ever brought out the character of the people like the presence of God among them. This rejection of God was bound to bring out other developments. This came before us last time. Christ was there in compassion for the leper, but at the same time recognising the faith of the Gentile. If God came in compassion to a leprous Israel, it was impossible for Him to ignore the faith which was found in the Gentile. They should come from the east and west and sit down in the kingdom of heaven, and the children of the kingdom would be cast out. That was the result of the last great test which God was pleased to apply to His people. But the fidelity of God was proved in that, in spite of the perverseness of the people, He had taken care to maintain a remnant.

We shall, I think, find the same principles in the passage

I have read tonight, and in a more distinct way. There is more light here in regard to what was in the purpose of God. In the first instance the woes which the Lord pronounced showed that everything was coming to a point. He pronounced woes on the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done. All had failed on that ground; the testimony of His mighty works had not produced repentance, but what comes out is, that God had a resource, and that the revelation of that resource furnished a ground for those who were in any way conscious of the condition of things in Israel. That is evident in the end of chapter 11. God brings out other things which were in His mind in contrast to the presentation of Christ to the responsibility of the people. These come out, and it is important to see how, in them, God proves His faithfulness in that He finds a standing-ground in them for any one who felt the condition of things amongst the people.

What follows upon that is, that God sets aside the public link between Himself and Israel; this comes out in the next chapter; and Christ becomes the hope of the Gentiles. It is remarkable to see the Lord contemplating this. We are familiar now with the new thing which the Lord has brought in, consequent upon the lack of repentance on the part of Israel. That is the resource of God, Christianity. I am speaking of Christianity in the true power of it. The first to be brought into Christianity was the remnant of Israel. They composed the church at first, and there was nothing else there. A little later on Cornelius was brought in. God provided a standing-ground for faith in that way. God's covenant with Israel has been set aside; all testimony to them specially has been sealed up, and Christ has become the Hope of the Gentiles. That is what is true at the present time. I suppose we are all looking on to the time when Christ will take up again, in the mercy of God, His relation to Israel. Then God will show judgment to the Gentiles. In the meantime, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust" (*Matthew*

12:21). That has come to pass. The Apostle Paul quotes this in the latter part of the Epistle to the Romans as a justification of His mission and preaching to the Gentiles.

I will ask you to look now at the end of chapter 11 (verses 20-30). The point that comes out first in this chapter is that the Lord pronounces woes on those cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, and the result is that they are, so to say, lost in the judgment day. There is a comparison between Sidon and Tyre and those cities. That was the effect of the presentation of Christ to the responsibility of man; everything was ended in the judgment day. There was nothing but lawlessness in the heart of man in regard of God. That is true now. You have only to look round to see the disposition there is to set aside every bond of God. It is not only that men set aside that which we believe to be the revelation of God, but they reject the thought of revelation entirely. There is a word abroad now, men call themselves agnostics. An agnostic regards revelation as an impossibility. The result of it is, that man must be left in the dark completely with regard to God. I merely speak of this as evidence of that which marks the mind of man. His mind is essentially lawless. It refuses the law of God. And yet when you look around in the physical universe you see everything governed by law, and men are ready enough to form rules and laws for themselves. If every one were lawless in this world, society could not go on. As men have congregated, they have been obliged to make a system of laws to render life enduring. But with regard to God, man's mind is lawless. The effect in itself of the presentation of Christ's mighty works was to bring woes upon these cities.

But what is the effect as regards Christ Himself. It says, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and He thanked God. Christ is spoken of in scripture as the wisdom of God. I understand by that that He is God's resource. The occasion of Christ's rejoicing was the

consciousness of the resource which God had. God had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes.

Suppose the revelation of God accommodated itself to the wise and prudent; suppose it needed a highly cultivated intellect to apprehend the things of God, what a poor look-out there would be for the poor and ignorant! It seems to me, the revelation of God must suit the meanest and the poorest, because with Him there is no respect of persons. It is in a way a sort of accident that a man attains great culture – many people have not the opportunity – God could not take account of an accident in that way. It must be that any revelation of God, to be really a revelation, should be such as to suit itself to the poorest and meanest. That is exactly what God has done. He has “hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes.” God could not put any sanction upon the cultivation of man.

Well, the resource of God is found in the expression, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” The Lord brings to light what existed in the heart of the Father. There are resources in God, and those resources really depend upon the truth of the Godhead. We can understand these resources of God, because we know the truth of the Godhead. There was One in the unity of the Godhead who could come forth from God. It was in becoming a man that He came forth from God, and it is to Him who came forth from God, and who was God, that all things could be delivered: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” The Father had counsels and plans and thoughts in His heart, and all was delivered to the Son in order that He might give effect to all.

I believe that this involved two things, namely, that Christ should be a centre and point of gathering for man, and that He should accomplish redemption, that is, that the rights of God in

regard of man should be maintained and vindicated. Man was under certain responsibilities and liabilities – all that had to be maintained and vindicated in redemption; and the One in whom redemption was accomplished has become a centre and point of gathering on that ground for man. This was true in the Son. The ground is that He maintained the rights of God. He has accomplished righteousness. “By one righteousness the free gift is toward all men unto justification of life” (*Romans 5:18*). That is as to the bearing of it. God had the right to redeem. Man was under liabilities, and God saw fit to exercise His right of redemption in the death of Christ. Righteousness is established, redemption accomplished, and Christ has become the centre and gathering-point for man. We get the thought of this in John 12:32 “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

The condition of man was brought out fully by the presence of Christ. The incarnation made things only darker as regarded man; the mighty works made men more responsible; but there were resources in God. God has been presented in a man. Now He says, the Father has put all into My hands; I am going to accomplish everything. The terms were that He should taste death for everything, that the rights of redemption might be maintained in *Him*, and also that, on the ground of these rights, He might be a gathering-point for man.

Have you ever considered the point why Christ is the Sun of righteousness? (*See Malachi 4:2*). The reason is plain: He is the righteous One who has accomplished righteousness, Redemption originated in grace, but the character of it is righteousness. Christ has maintained the rights of God, hence it is that He is the Sun of righteousness. He will arise with healing in His wings, but in the meantime He has become the gathering-point. That is implied, I think, in the expression here: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father.”

Then another thing comes out. He is the Revealer of the Father. He came down here to give effect to the Father's will, and on this all the Father's counsels turned. But then, in the fact of His coming to accomplish the Father's counsels, the Father is revealed. It is a great point to apprehend what Christ is. We have come to a state of things pretty much analogous to that which existed in Israel.

The Lord makes an appeal: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," &c. (vv. 28, 29). The Lord would draw to Himself those oppressed under the condition of things which existed in the religious world. There were those in that day who were heavy laden, and the Lord appeals to them that they should detach themselves from the system under which they were heavy laden and come to Him and He would give them rest. The same thing is true in the present day. There are many Christians connected with the great ecclesiastical system who groan and are heavy laden; they cannot be entirely unconscious of the state of things – infidelity all round, vital Christianity swamped by the formalism around, the decrease of piety and the fear of God, everything going to the bad – and the so-called ministers of Christianity accommodating themselves to the mind of man. What strikes one at the present day is the disposition of the ministers to find a footing on the ground of man's mental activity. They are using the pulpits to undermine the faith of the saints. The true outlet is to detach yourself from what is worn out. What is the good of remaining in it and groaning? It is a poor thing to continue groaning, though many relieve their consciences by it. If you are in a state of things which keeps you groaning, it would be wise to consider whether you are right to stay in it. I do not think God means His people to be always dissatisfied and weary. The relief is in coming to Christ; there is nothing for you but Christ. "Come unto *Me*." People sometimes find it difficult to come to Christ. It seems so un-

substantial; and yet it is the only thing to do. Have done with what keeps you weary and heavy laden! Get to Christ! But take care that in seeking this you do not get to another system! There is the danger! People leave these great systems sometimes and attach themselves to some other kind of system. That is what you have to be careful of. It is a great thing really to come to *Jesus*. Then you will never go to another system. Such a thing as to come to Christ is possible – we are attached to Him – Christ is enough for you.

I look upon myself as a unit. I do not say but what I am in company with other units, but I try to keep my mind clear from the thought of connection with any kind of system down here. Having come to Jesus, I seek to walk as a unit in His light.

Groaning is not rest. If I see a person groaning or depressed, I should say he has not come to Jesus. If he had, He would certainly have given him rest. It was the provision made in God's goodness for a people heavy laden in a condition of things that was worn out. The point for faith was to detach itself from Israel and all connected with it, and to come to Jesus. He was the blessed centre of God's universe and the gathering-point of all in whom God had wrought. I ask each one, can you stand alone with Jesus? People want a system as a prop to lean upon, but by-and-by the prop fails them. Another class of people depends on meetings, and meetings are (*can be? – Ed.*) an artificial prop! Others depend upon the letter of scripture. I believe that too may be an artificial prop. Everything will fail you but Jesus. He will never fail you if your soul has really come in contact with Him. He is the Father's resource, who came to accomplish all the Father's will. He has become the resource to us, and says, "Come unto me I will give you rest." Rest is a great thing down here. A person burdened has not rest. A person depressed has not rest. A person excited has not rest, nor a person elated. I believe there is nothing more valuable here on

earth than rest – nothing is more indispensable to people even in natural things as rest. Then the Lord adds, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ... and ye shall find rest to your souls.” That is coming under the law of Christ. “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (*Galatians 6:2*). The Lord Jesus put Himself in the place of lowly service down here, and we have to take His yoke upon us in the service of love (vv. 29, 30). All this comes out from the simple statement, but pregnant with the deepest meaning, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” Christ was independent of man; He was the blessed centre and point of gathering, and the appeal is to come unto Him.

I have a strong conviction that Christ is making the same kind of appeal to people in the present day. We get a wonderful word in the address to the church of Laodicea: “I stand at the door and knock” (*Revelation 3:20*). It applies to the last phase in the church’s history. Think of Jesus, the Root and Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star, saying, “I stand at the door, and knock! If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” It is a great thing for Christ to manifest Himself to you. Do you think it impossible? I believe in the reality of it; and of His coming to sup with you and you with Him.

It is a great thing to have your soul brought by the Spirit into contact with Jesus, so that you are free of the necessity of any human organisation. You are dependent then on nothing but Christ. God would not have you dependent on anything else. If you yourself know the support of Christ you will be a support to other people, but not otherwise.

I desire to add just a word on chapter 12:14-21. The sabbath was the sign of the covenant between God and the people. The Lord allowed certain things to show that the covenant was about to be broken. God put mercy above the

sabbath. The Lord seals up the testimony among His disciples. He charged them that they should not make Him known. He does not discontinue His service, but He finishes the testimony. His voice was not to be heard in the street – the street of Israel – this was a solemn thing for Israel. But Christ could retire into the truth that He was God’s beloved Servant. The Son of the Father, but also God’s beloved Servant. “Behold my servant, whom I have chosen” (*Matthew 12:18*). God’s Spirit was upon Him. It is a wonderful change to think of Christ coming to show judgment to the Gentile. The Jew had not, but Christ will. Now comes the point which is peculiar to this moment: “In his name shall the Gentiles trust.” The Lord is coming into the world to establish judgment. Judgment is to return to righteousness (*Psalms 94:15*). He is coming to swallow up death in victory. Satan’s power is to be broken. Christ will send forth judgment, not to destruction, but to victory, and in His name shall the Gentiles trust. Christ is the Head of every man and the Hope of the Gentiles at this moment; He is both the root and offspring of Jesse, and the bright and morning Star. He says, “Let him that is athirst come.” That is what arises out of the rejection of the mighty works of Christ. There were resources with God. It was impossible for God to be baffled.

I wonder what Christ is to us at the present time. I am afraid of people being content in a rightly ordered system with well-ordered meetings, and living on that, with a decrease at the same time of personal piety. I plead for piety. I can say for myself, in measure, that my soul feels independent of everything save Christ. I do not know that I am dependent upon any order or organisation. The point is that Christ is enough. Have you come to Him? If you come to Him, He will give you rest. Coming to Him is very real – He is there to come to, and if there be the movement in your soul, come to Him; He will make Himself very precious to you. Christ will be enough for you even if you should be bereft of everything down here.

Nothing will be able to stand its ground against the power of the enemy in the present day except Christ. Nothing will meet the character of thing we have to meet except the reality of life in Christ.
Address by F.E. Raven, 1902.

POETIC PAGE

Always Confident

I have a mighty Friend
In heaven above;
All who on Him depend
His care shall prove:
In every trial here,
All through the desert drear,
I can have nought to fear:
His Name is Love.

Only a little while
He is away:
Soon will my Saviour's smile
Turn night to day.
Oh, joy beyond compare
To meet Him in the air,
His home of light to share
Soon and for aye!

Home! how that word so sweet
Thrills to the heart!
Home! where the children meet
Never to part.
Then like Him I shall be,
Whose blood was shed for me;
Then, Jesus, I shall see
Thee as Thou art.

Miss Hannah K. Burlingham (1842-1901)

NOTE

The Editor trusts that the selection and composition of material for this magazine has been undertaken with the Lord's guidance and that the contents are of moral and spiritual value and appropriate to present needs. The only infallible statement of truth, however, is found in the Holy Bible and the reader is, therefore, urged to follow the practice of the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). The Editor is always happy to receive comments and inquiries, and to consider suggested articles for inclusion in future issues.