

CONTENTS

Are you a Sceptic?	2
Church and Pastor's Anniversary	3
The Jester	3
Seven References to "One Thing"	4
Joe Ford, The London Fireman	6
The Astonished Slave	7
How to Teach Children	9
The Deathbed of John Knox	14
Under His Wings	19
Epilogue	27

ARE YOU A SCEPTIC?

It is told of a famous unbelieving lecturer, how, after he had concluded one of his lectures in a village, he challenged those present to discussion. Who should accept the challenge but an old, bent woman, who went up to the lecturer, and said: "Sir, I have a question to put to you."

"Well, my good woman, what is it?"

"Ten years ago," she said, "I was left a widow, with eight children utterly unprovided for, and nothing to call my own but this Bible. By its direction, and looking to God for strength, I have been enabled to feed myself and family. I am now tottering to the grave, but perfectly happy, because I look forward to a life of immortality with Jesus in heaven. Tell me, what has your way of thinking done for you?"

"Well, my good lady," rejoined the lecturer, "I do not want to disturb your comfort; but..."

"Oh! That is not the question," interposed the woman; "Please keep to the point, sir. What has your way of thinking done for you?" The lecturer endeavoured to shirk the matter again; but the feeling of the meeting gave vent to applause, and the infidel had to go, discomfited. The mother of Hume, the infidel philosopher, was once a professor of Christianity. Dazzled by the genius of her son, she followed him into the maze of scepticism. Years passed and she drew near to the gates of death, and from her dying bed she wrote:

"My dear son, - My health has failed me. I am in a deep decline. I cannot live long. Your philosophy affords me no comfort in my distress. I am left without hope or consolation, and my mind is sinking into a state of despair. I pray you, hasten home to console me, or, at least, write to me the consolations that philosophy affords at this dying hour."

Men may live without Christ, but they cannot die without Christ. You may scoff at the words "Heaven" and "Hell," but they are solemn realities. Why be wise for time, but a fool for eternity? If you reject Christ's so great Salvation, there remains nothing for you but fearful judgment. Remorse, anguish,

despair! Why, these words do not half describe what it will surely be “where hope will never come!”

But why should you ever come to this, when the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us, is even now calling you, in the Gospel, to believe that he has died in the place of sinners and that he now lives to be both Saviour and Lord?

Seek Him with all your heart and lay hold upon eternal life.

CHURCH AND PASTOR’S ANNIVERSARY

The Church’s 63rd and the Pastor’s 45th Anniversary will be held, God willing, the weekend of **20th and 21st February, 2016**. The guest preacher this year is **Rev. John P. Thackway**, Minister of Holywell Evangelical Church, North Wales.

There will be a preaching meeting on the **Saturday at 3.30pm**, followed by the **Sabbath services at 11am and 6.30pm**. There will also be an **After Church meeting at approximately 8.30pm**.

We extend to all a very warm invitation to these services and meetings.

THE JESTER

A certain lord kept a fool, or jester, in his house, for his amusement, as great men did in olden times. This lord gave a staff to his fool, and charged him to keep it until he met with a greater fool than himself, and if he met with such a one to deliver it over to him.

Not many years after the lord fell sick. His fool came to see him, and was told of his master’s illness. “And wither wilt thou go?” asked the fool. “On a long journey,” said the lord. “And when wilt thou come again? Within a month?” “No.” “What then – never?” “Never.”

And what provision hast thou made for wither thou goest?" "None at all." "Art thou going away for ever," said the fool, "and hast made no provision before thy departure? Here, take my staff, for I am not guilty of any such folly as that."

SEVEN REFERENCES TO "ONE THING"

1. Death

"That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts; even *one thing* befalleth them: as the one dieth so dieth the other" -Eccl. 3:19. It is not certain that believers now on the earth shall die, 1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:51; but, unbelievers, however exalted their social station, however remarkable their scientific attainments, shall surely die even as the beasts; and if they die in unbelief, they will mourn with unavailing regret through eternity that they had not ceased to exist, like beasts, in the dark hour of death. Alas! they are dead already, John 5:40 & 2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 2:1; 1 Tim. 5:6; 1 John 5:12.

2. Salvation

"Jesus beholding him loved him (the rich young ruler), and said unto him, *One thing* thou lackest" - Mark 10:21. This salvation by grace every dying son and daughter of Adam's race must have or perish forever. The best can do with nothing less; the worst need nothing more, John 3:7 – 18; Acts 4:12; 10:43; 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 10:9; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:12 – 14; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 1:7.

3. Assurance

"*One thing* I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" - John 9:25. This is everyway desirable and it is available: John 1:11, 12; 5:24; Matt. 11:28; Isa. 45:22; Lev. 16:21; Heb. 10:19 – 22; Eph. 2:1 – 10; 1 John 5:13.

4. Communion

"*One thing* have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the

Lord, and to enquire in his temple” - Ps. 27:4. It is well to remember that communion follows assurance, as assurance follows salvation, and that the word fellowship is the same as the word partnership, 1 John 1:3; Luke 5:7; Exod. 25:22 – 30; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:21 – 23; 10:16 – 21; 2 Cor. 6:14 – 18.

5. Devotedness

“But *one thing* is needful: and Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her” - Luke 10:42; Matt. 20:28. Nothing pleases Him so much as to see His people forgetful of everything but His presence and sufficiency for all their wants, and nothing will throw such light upon our path as to keep our eyes exclusively fixed upon Him, Luke 11:34 – 36; John 8:12; 15:7; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 6:10; Gal. 6:10; Phil. 1:21; Rev. 14:4.

6. Progress

“This *one thing* I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” - Phil. 3:13, 14. The apostle did not feel the slightest anxiety about his salvation, but he so much wanted the prize; and hence he continually pressed forward that he might lay hold of that for which also he was laid hold of by Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. 3:12 – 15; 9:24 – 26; Gal. 6:7; 2 Tim. 4:6 – 8; James 1:12; 2 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 3:11.

7. The Coming of the Lord

“Beloved be not ignorant of this *one thing*, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” - 2 Pet. 3:8. Consider the following scriptures: Matt. 24:36 – 51; Mark 13:33 – 37; Luke 12:35 – 40; 17:26 – 37; 21:34 – 36; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Rev. 7:7, 12.

JOE FORD, THE LONDON FIREMAN

The National Newspapers said of Joe Ford: "But for him the lives of six persons would have been sacrificed." The six were in danger from fire; they were unable to help themselves, nor could any friends render them assistance. Very soon tidings of the fire outbreak reached the fireman and, buckling on his helmet, he ran swiftly to the spot.

As the fireman entered the street, clouds of dense black smoke were rolling up from the lower parts of the house that was burning; but with great courage he fixed his machine, and threw up his ladders to where the poor terrified people were. Then up to them he went, and they waited his coming to them.

Meanwhile, the flames within the building were spreading rapidly; the smoke without was becoming blacker and hotter. The fireman mounted the ladder, and descended with a precious but terrified person. Again he ventured up and made his way down again with another. Before long he had saved five from the dreadful flames!

Now the crowd stood breathless – a woman appeared at the open window. There was one still left in peril. Did the fireman have enough strength to reach her? If he did, the fire had taken such hold that it would surely be at the risk of his own life.

Rallying his strength, the brave man mounted a sixth time, amidst ringing cheers from the crowd. He reached her! Steadily, step by step, he bore her down the ladder to the opening into the canvas shoot. He placed her in it, and slid her to the ground. She was saved!

As the fireman made his way further down the ladder, the flames burst through the first-floor window immediately beneath him and set the canvas of the escape on fire. At the same instant Joe's axe became entangled in the wire-netting, and he hung suspended in the very fire from which he had

rescued the woman. While she stood in safety, beyond the reach of harm, he was consumed in the very flames from which he had saved her. With dying energy, the poor man managed to break away from his terrible position, but only to fall some twenty-five feet to the pavement below, which fall crushed his helmet and wounded him fatally.

Joe Ford died that day. He died saving people from the awful fire.

A few days later, as his body, carried upon a draped engine, passed through the London streets, his battered helmet was visible among the wreaths upon the Union Jack which covered his coffin. Even strangers honoured this hero and that day the sight touched many, many hearts.

Oh, if a London crowd could weep as a fellow-man suffered, what tears ought we to weep as we remember how the gracious Saviour expired for sinners on the Cross! Christ took the sinner's place in perfect love; he bore the wrath of God that was due to us; he was, as it were, consumed as a sacrifice in the fiery flames of Divine judgement and altogether on our account. He died that we might live.

THE ASTONISHED SLAVE

A British merchant, who had taken his passage in a Turkish vessel on the Levant, had his attention drawn during the voyage, to an interesting slave, a Muslim.

He entered into conversation with him, and found him intelligent, quick, and of strong, lively affections. He drew from him some particulars of his history, and found that he had been free-born, but had been made captive in war. The merchant was touched with sympathy for this helpless captive.

The more he knew of him, the deeper was the interest he felt in his welfare; and he actually began to entertain the thought of effecting his release.

Cautiously inquiring as to the sum requisite for this purpose, he found that it was considerably greater than the mercantile profits of his entire voyage. Still he could not abandon the thought.

An offer was at last made – and accepted; but the slave having overheard part of the conversation and mistaking the design of the merchant – supposing that he was purchasing him for his own use abroad – he sprang forward, his eyes gleaming with indignation, and cried out, “And do you call yourself a free-born Briton, an enemy to slavery, and yet purchase me? Have I not as much right to freedom as you have yourself?”

He was proceeding in this strain of burning, indignant invective, when the merchant turned his eyes affectionately upon him and said, “I have bought you, to set you free.”

Instantly the storm of passion was hushed. In deep humility, the slave sincerely and quietly said, “You have taken my heart captive! I am your willing slave for ever!”

Reader, when first you heard of One who wished to have you for his own, did you rebel and oppose His purchase? How little you realized it was out of pure love for you! Does not your heart break as you think on these words, “to set you free” the price was paid; and can you but say to the One who gave His life for you, “I am your slave for ever”?

God says to his people, “Ye are brought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20) – “purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28) – “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19).

HOW TO TEACH CHILDREN

Archibald G. Brown (1844 – 1922),

C.H. Spurgeon's Successor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle

Part 3

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

We must go a little deeper. How is this talking to our children to be done? You find in the text it is to be done in an easy style, for it says, “And thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest.”

The religious education of the child, you see, is to be conducted in an easy manner. It is as the man sits quietly down of an evening that he is to scatter the crumbs. Suppose he were, all of a sudden, to jump up and say, “Now children, all in a row, I am going to talk to you about the things of God.” Why, in all probability, their young sensitive spirits would only revolt against the talk. Says God, through Moses to His people, “Do it in a quiet, easy way, as you sit; not as if you premeditated making a sermon.”

Don't you think, dear friends, that it would be a good thing if there were a little more of this talking as people sit? I mean not only in Sabbath schools, but in pulpits too; it would be a good thing if there were to be found rather less of the “bold upright, stiff and starchy,” and rather more of the easy style that God here prescribes for children; for, after all, men and women are not much more than grown-up boys and girls, and what is good for one, is, in a modified form, just as good for the other. As thou sittest talk to them.

Oh, parents, never make the religion of the love of Christ a disagreeable thing to your children by the stiff, formal way in which you teach it. Learn from your Lord's words here, and "talk of them when thou sittest."

The next thing that follows in order is just as essential. Not only was this talking to be done in an easy style, but you will see it was to be done in a pleasant way. "When thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way." That is, when you take the youngsters out for a walk, talk to them about the things of God "As thou walkest".

I am convinced, though some of you may smile, this is the real teaching of this portion of the Word. God who made man out of the dust knows what a child's heart is like; and he is most careful to have Israel understand, that in the instruction of children there must be pleasure combined with learning. It is not, "And take your children, and lock them up in a room, and do not let them go out for a walk until they have learnt a hymn." And when they have learnt it, won't they love it! It is not "Keep your children cooped up, and only let them out for a treat after they have learned a passage of Scripture; or committed to memory half a chapter of the book of Proverbs". "No," says God, "what you have to do is to teach your children as you walk. Drop just a word for Me as you go."

I can hardly imagine a better school in which to teach, than the school of a child's walk with a parent. The child picks a wild flower, and the father who carries out this text will say, "Ah, by the way, lad, you have picked a flower, and the father who carries out this text will say, "Ah, by the way, lad, you have picked a flower, have you? Well, do you remember anything about a flower of the field?" Why, that child will answer you in an instant, "Yes, yes. 'Like a flower of the field, it flourisheth, and is cut down.'" And next time the child sees a wild flower, he will link that flower with the truth which the father taught as he walked. There are some lambs playing, and he says to the child, "Harry, do you see those lambs? What text do they remind you of?" And the boy will say, in a minute, "He shall gather the lambs with his arms." Oh,

if you and I have hearts really full of love to Jesus, and love to the souls of our children, we shall be inventive in the modes we shall adopt, in order to lay hold of them.

Now, thus far I can imagine, most of you have agreed with me, and I think I can hear someone saying, "I am very glad, Mr. Brown, you have inculcated teaching children in this easy, pleasant way." Stay a minute, friend, for you will find, if you look into the text, that all this is in conjunction with – not in the place of – stated seasons of instruction.

"And when thou liest down and when thou risest up." There was to be, do you see, morning and evening prayer, and this pleasant way of teaching the truth when you sit and when you walk was to be in addition to the stated seasons.

Ah, sir, this is not quite so palatable to you, you who never have family prayer. You quite agreed with the other Scripture, but do you agree with this? – "and when thou risest and when thou retirest to rest." It is all very well to run down routine and form, and say, "Oh, abolish it. Who can eat an egg-shell? The mere shell is nothing." Quite right, but who can eat an egg without a shell? The one extreme is as bad as the other. Have all shell and there is no sustenance in it; but I should not like to eat an egg that had not got a shell. And so, whilst there must be work that is purely free from form, there must also be work which has a form to conserve it. What the shell is to the yolk of the egg, that is a stated season of instruction to the pleasant style of talking as you walk.

One other point and I will close, for my time is gone.

You see from the passage that the children were to be taught through their eyes, for it says, "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them on the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." What was the good of an Israelite talking, if he did not act? Children learn best with their eyes. If you doubt it,

put two Bibles before your children, one illustrated and the other not, and you will soon see which they will look into first.

Parents, you have to be illustrated bibles to your children. They ought to look at you and see the truth on the forehead that they hear coming from the lip, and see the obedience on the arm that they hear commanded by the tongue. God says to you, "After you have talked to them, and after you have tried to sharpen the truth upon them, and after you have sat down with them, take care that when the children look at you they see the identical thing on you." If they do not your words will not have much influence. It is all very well for you to take the children and bring them round you and say, "Now learn this" –

"Let dogs delight
To bark and bite,
For God hath made them so; (which, by the way, God never did do. AB)
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
For 'tis their nature to;
But children you should never let
Such angry passions rise:
Your little hands were never made
To tear each other eyes."

Yes, you may teach them that, and then what does Thomas see? Why he sees you growling like a bear with a sore head over some little thing that has gone wrong, and sees you snapping all round like a dog with hydrophobia because somebody has offended you. You smile, but I tell you the child will forget your words, but he will remember your actions. He will forget all you said about his little hands not being made to do anybody harm – he will forget that, but he will remember that father is very cross, and that mother soon gets out of temper, because he will see written on the brow of his teacher something that contradicts, not illustrates, the word that fall from the lip.

You tell your children to be good, and to be sweet-tempered – you tell them that they are to be forgiving, that they must not speak naughty, angry words. But what words do they hear sometimes drop from your lips? You tell them they must not be selfish; and do you think young eyes are so blind that they cannot detect selfishness in the parent? So, though you talk as you sit, and talk as you walk, God crowns the order of teaching by saying, “And let it be seen as a frontlet on thy brow.” A calm, happy face, free from a frown, will be a better sermon on good temper than all you can possibly say. The lips that are quick to kiss because the heart is ready to forgive, the temper that is slow to rise – these little things, like frontlets on the brow, teach young children best.

And, to conclude, do you see that the truth was also to be seen in the household arrangements, for it says, “And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates.” Not only were the parents to have the truth on their brow, but the children were to see the same on the doors of the house. The home that is in everything conducted on pure Christian principles is the best Sabbath school for any child. The home in which all the arrangements are subservient to the glory of Christ – the home that has “Holiness to the Lord” written on the door-post – “Holiness to the Lord” inscribed on all its details, is the home that shall best teach the young ones living beneath the roof.

Ah, but some say – and rightly enough – “Sir, you don’t know exactly what my home is. How could I spend all Sunday afternoon, the only time I have, in teaching the children?” Many a wife says that, and rightly. “Father is the only at home on the Sunday. It is the only day we have. And, more than that, would it be right of us to spend all the time on a Sunday afternoon teaching those children?” Well, perhaps in some cases it would not. Then, do you see, God’s Church provides a Sabbath school? The Sabbath school, I take it, is not to be in exchange for home-teaching – it is to be in addition to it; and if, parent, you feel that you can take your child and teach him in your home, according to the directions of our text, I see no particular need for you to send that child

to school. I do not look upon Sunday-schools as the place for children of Christian parents who sometimes only send their children to school simply to shelve the responsibility, and to escape from what they count drudgery. The Sunday-school is the Church's magnificent weapon to lay hold of the children of those who would never teach them the things of God, and it comes in as a handmaid of help to those parents who have got all the will to teach them, without having neither the ability or the opportunity.

Parents, I commend this text to you. I ask you to read it through when you get home, and then apply it this way: "Have I the truth in my heart? Do I know Jesus? Knowing Him, do I talk about Him at home? Do I interweave the name of Jesus into my every day conversation?" Ask whether, when you sit and when you walk, you are still dropping words for God in the hope that children may pick them up. And amongst other questions, forget not to ask this – "Do I show upon my brow, and on my hand, and on the posts of my door, and in all my home arrangements, the truth I declare to my children?"

May God bless you in your homes, and give to you parents the greatest joy that any parent can have – the joy of being yourself the means of the conversion of your children!

God add His blessing for His name's sake.

Concluded.

THE DEATHBED OF JOHN KNOX

Dr. Thomas M'Crie

On Friday, the 21st (November, 1572), Knox desired Richard Bannatyne to order his coffin to be made. During that day he was much engaged in meditation and prayer. These words dropped from his lips at intervals: "Come Lord Jesus, Sweet Jesus, into Thy hand I commend my spirit, Be merciful, Lord, to thy Church, which thou hast redeemed, Give peace to this afflicted

commonwealth, Raise up faithful pastors who will take the charge of thy Church. Grant us, Lord, the perfect hatred of sin, both by the evidences of thy wrath and mercy.” In the midst of his meditations he often addressed those who stood by in such sentences as these: “O serve the Lord in fear, and death shall not be terrible to you. Nay, blessed shall death be to those who have felt the power of the death of the only-begotten Son of God.”

On Sabbath the 23rd (which was the first day of the national fast), during the afternoon sermon, after lying a considerable time quiet, he suddenly exclaimed, “If any be present, let them come and see the work of God.” Thinking that his death was at hand, Bannatyne sent to the church for Johnston of Elphingston. When he came to the bedside, Knox burst out in these rapturous expressions – “I have been these two last nights in meditation on the troubled state of the Church of God, the spouse of Jesus Christ, despised of the world, but precious in the sight of God. I have called to God for her, and have committed her to her head, Jesus Christ. I have fought against spiritual wickedness in heavenly things, and have prevailed. I have been in heaven, and have possession. I have tasted of the heavenly joys where presently I am.” He then repeated the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed, interjecting devout aspirations between the articles of the latter.

After the sermon many came to visit him. Perceiving that he breathed with great difficulty, some of them asked if he felt much pain. He answered that he was willing to lie there for years if God so pleased, and if He continued to shine upon his soul through Jesus Christ. He slept very little, but was employed almost incessantly either in meditation, in prayer, or in exhortation. “Live in Christ – live in Christ, and then flesh need not fear death. Lord, grant true pastors to thy Church, that purity of doctrine may be retained. Restore peace again to this commonwealth, with godly rulers and magistrates. Once, Lord, make an end of my trouble.”

Then stretching his hands towards heaven, he said, “Lord, I commend my spirit, soul, and body, and all, into thy hands. Thou knowest, O Lord, my

troubles; I do not murmur against them.” His pious ejaculations were so numerous that those who were waiting on him could recollect only a small portion of what he uttered, for seldom was he silent when they were not employed in reading or in prayer.

Monday, the 24th November, was the last day he spent on earth. That morning he could not be persuaded to lie in bed, but, though unable to stand alone, rose between nine and ten o'clock, and put on his stockings and doublet. Being conducted to a chair, he sat about half an hour, and then was put to bed again. In the progress of the day, it appeared evident that his end drew near. Besides his wife and Bannatyne, Campbell of Kinyeancleugh, Johnstone of Elphingston, and Dr Preston, three of his most intimate acquaintances, sat by turns at his bedside. Kinyeancleugh asked him if he had any pain. “It is no painful pain, but such a pain as shall soon, I trust, put an end to the battle. I must leave the care of my wife and children to you” continued he, “to whom you must be a husband in my room.” About three o'clock in the afternoon his eyes failed and his speech was considerable affected.

He desired his wife to read the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. “Is not that a comfortable chapter?” said he, when it was finished. “O what sweet and salutary consolation the Lord hath afforded me from that chapter!” A little after he said, “Now, for the last time, I commend my soul, spirit, and body, (touching three of his fingers), into thy hand, O Lord.”

About five o'clock he said to his wife, “Go, read where I cast my first anchor;” upon which she read the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, and afterwards a part of Calvin's Sermons on the Ephesians.

After this he appeared to fall into a slumber, interrupted by heavy-moans, during which the attendants looked every moment for his dissolution. But at length he awaked as if from sleep, and being asked the cause of his sighing so deeply, replied:

“I have formerly, during frail life, sustained many contests and many assaults of Satan; but as present he hath assailed me most fearfully, and put forth all his strength to devour and make an end of me at once. Often before has he placed my sins before my eyes, often tempted me to despair, often endeavoured to ensnare me by the allurements of the world; but these weapons were broken by the sword of the Spirit – the Word of God – and the enemy failed. Now he has attacked me in another way.

The cunning serpent has laboured to persuade me that I have merited heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God, who has enabled me to beat down this fiery dart by suggesting to me such passages of Scripture as these: ‘What hast thou that thou has not received? ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am.’ ‘Not I, but the grace of God in me’. Upon this, as one vanquished, he left me, wherefore I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ, who has been please to give me the victory; and I am persuaded that the tempter shall not again attack me; but, within a short time, I shall, without any great pain of body or anguish of mind, exchange that mortal and noble life for a blessed immortality through Jesus Christ.”

He then lay quiet for some hours, except that now and then he desired them to wet his mouth with a little weak ale. At ten o’clock they read the evening prayer which they had delayed beyond the usual hour from an apprehension that he was asleep. After this exercise was concluded Dr. Preston asked him if he had heard the prayers. “Would to God,” said he, “that you and all men had heard them as I have heard them. I praise God, for that heavenly sound.” The doctor rose up, and Kinyeancleugh sat down before his bed.

About eleven o’clock he gave a deep sigh, and said, “Now it is come.” Bannatyne immediately drew near, and desired him to think upon those comfortable promises of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which he had so often declared to others; and, perceiving that he was speechless, requested him to give them a sign that he heard them and died in peace. Upon this he lifted

up one of his hands and, sighing twice, expired without a struggle.

He died in the sixty-seventh year of his age, not so much oppressed with years, as worn out and exhausted by his extraordinary labours of body and anxieties of mind...

On Wednesday, the 26th of November, he was interred in the church-yard of St Giles. His funeral was attended by the newly-elected regent, Morton, by all the nobility who were in the city, and a great concourse of people. When his body was laid in the grave, the regent emphatically pronounced his eulogium in these words, "There lies he, who never feared the face of man"... In Bannatyne's journal, after giving an account of Knox's death, he writes: "In this manner departed this man of God: the light of Scotland, the comfort of the church within the same, the mirror of Godliness, and pattern and example to all true ministers, in purity of life, soundness of doctrine, and boldness in reproof of wickedness; one who cared not the favour of men, how great so ever they were. What dexterity in teaching, boldness in reproof, and hatred of wickedness was in him, my ignorant dullness is not able to declare, which if I should labour to set out, it were as one who would light a candle to let men see the sun; seeing all his virtues and better known and notified to the world a thousand fold that I am able to express."

UNDER HIS WINGS

William Childs Robinson (1897 – 1982)

**Minister in the Southern Presbyterian Church and
Professor at Columbia Theological Seminary**

“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.” (Psa. 91:14)

Gypsy Smith visited Ira Sankey in his final illness. “Is there anything I can do for you?” asked the visitor. “Yes,” replied the sick man, “sing for me, ‘Under His Wings.’” And so the man who had sung so many into the fold passed into the valley of the shadow with a refrain he had himself written and with these words of comfort warming his heart:

Under His wings I am safely abiding;
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild,
Still I can trust Him, I know He will keep me;
He has redeemed me, and I am His child.

The Bible’s first reference to the wings of the Almighty is in the blessing a wealthy Hebrew farmer passed upon a poor, foreign-born maiden who gleaned in his field. Boaz said to Ruth, the Moabitess: “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” (Ruth 2:12) And for those who love a love story – as we all do – this cordial greeting had a much happier ending than the somewhat similar romance which an American poet saw nipped in the bud as the wealthy judge watched Maude Mueller rake the hay. Out of the pastoral romance of Boaz and Ruth came Obed and then Jesse and then David, the king.

No doubt David heard as a child the thrilling story of the love-making of his great-grandparents and with it the wings of the Lord which Boaz had spread

over Ruth that day. At any rate, this sheltering figure of God's love and care became very precious to the poet king of Israel. It occurs in five Psalms attributed to David, as well as in the ninety-first, which is ascribed to no author.

Standing on Mount Olivet overlooking Zion, great David's Greater Son took up the same figure that His distant ancestor had used: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matthew 23:37) What Jerusalem refused is our only refuge. All the grounds of our acceptance, our forgiveness, our righteousness, our peace, our adoption of a merciful hearing of our prayers are in Christ. We take refuge under the covert of His sacrifice and beneath the shield of His intercession. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves and what we cannot do without. He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification. As we take refuge under His wings, we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. By His obedience we sinners are declared righteous.

Moreover, as we Gentile believers take refuge under the robes of His righteousness we may well pray for the time when He shall gather more of His ancient people, the Jews, as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings. After the American army liberated Cherbourg the Jews gathered again and worshipped in their synagogue for the first time since the fall of France. A Christian caretaker had hidden the sacred scroll and the pieces of synagogue furniture; the Jews had been taken into Christian families and had temporarily adopted Christian names. In the hour of danger Cherbourg Jewry – that is, those who survived, took refuge under the wings of Christ and so escaped the wrath of the Nazi. May this be a parable and a prophecy that these many others of the flesh of Abraham may take refuge for time and for eternity under the wings of their own Messiah, Jesus the Son of David, and be hidden from the wrath of God by His blood and righteousness sealed to them by baptism in His Name!

A Habitation for Trust

Our text presents to us the overshadowing wings of the Almighty as a habitation in which to trust:

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty...He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust.” (Psalm 91:1,4)

Many of our American fliers on Guadalcanal began every mission by repeating this ninety-first Psalm. Generally they came back, sometimes “on a wing and a prayer.” And those that came not back went out, like Ira Sankey, under His wings. Some months ago, when the minister called, a mother had a glad cablegram that her son had completed the awful shuttle trip from England across Germany to North Africa and back in safety. Later that lad was one of the handful who returned safely to this country after the air battle of Munster and the terrific toll of duty accomplished in his plane, the “Rose Marie.” When he left his mother had given him the eleventh verse of this Psalm: “For he shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” Several papers have carried the letter of a Pennsylvania officer to his sister telling how he was shot down, but saved because the bullet was stopped by his Bible at this other verse from the same Psalm: “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.”

Two years ago we read the ninety-first Psalm at my mother’s table before two brothers went overseas. They have written back no stories of narrow escapes but one was several times on Anzio and was protected. So now with my own son in the combat area we would keep our trust under the shadow of His wings.

There is a safe and secret place
Beneath the wings divine,

Reserved for all the heirs of grace –
O be that refuge mine!

The Christian's consolation is to apprehend that His Heavenly Father restrains all things by His power, governs all things by His will, and regulates all things by His wisdom, in such a manner that nothing can happen but by His appointment. Moreover God has taken him under His protection, and committed him to the care of angels so that he can sustain no injury from water, or fire, or sword, any farther than the Divine Governor may be pleased to permit. "Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence... Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in the darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon day." "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?...Though an host should encamp against me...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me." (Psalm 27:1,3; 23:23)

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you.
Beneath His wings of love abide.
Thro' ev'ry day, o'er all the way
He will take care of you.

An Encouragement for Prayer

The wings of the Lord were not only the psalmist's shield of protection, they were as well his encouragement in prayer. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." In the hour when our loved ones are being committed to battle we pray for ourselves:

Jesus, lover of my soul
Let me to Thy bosom fly.

And for them:

Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

In heat of mortal combat David lifted his heart in this prayer: “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O Thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies who compass me about” (Psalm 17:7-9).

As he hid from Saul in the Cave of Adullum and there seemed only a step between him and death, David cried: “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make refuge until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God, Most High... He will send from Heaven and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.” (Psalm 57:1-3)

Again when his heart was overwhelmed the fainting Psalmist prayed: “Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer... lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from my enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle; I will trust in the covert of thy wings.” (Psalm 61:1-4)

Finding our shelter in the covert of His wings, let us also pray:

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of...
For so the whole round world is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

When the American fleet joined battle in the Philippines the Presbytery and congregation lifted their hearts in the Navy Hymn:

O Trinity of love and power!
Our brethren shield in danger's hour
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them wheresoe'er they go,
And ever let there rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea

In praying, we know that God's gracious arms are over and about those we love, for we have an High Priest who ever liveth to intercede for us.

High Priest of the Church dispensation,
Lift up, we pray, Thy pierced hand,
And bless Thy ransomed congregation
In every place, by sea and land.
Before Thy Father's face remember
By name each individual member:
Thy face now on us shine,
Grant us Thy peace divine;
For we are Thine.

A Refuge in Sorrow

Under the wings of the Almighty the Psalmist hears the promises: "I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him... I will shew him My salvation." As the reports come in of a dear one killed here, of another wounded there, of a third missing, let us all nestle nearer to the heart of the Eternal and find through Christ the God of comfort and the Father of consolations!

In the sixty-third Psalm David is out in the wilderness of Judah thirsting for God and longing to see His glory and power as he had seen it of old in the

sanctuary. Before his plane was reported missing Captain Brooks Sheldon had written his father that the men in his squadron loved to sing: “Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, City of our God.” Like David, these men long to see the glory and the face of God as they saw it when His lovingkindness and His majesty were presented in the home church. But also like the Psalmist, they and we find solace under His wings. When the Lord took the youngest life we had on the campus, his mother found her anchor in these words of the Psalm: “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.” (Psalm 63:3)

David continues: “My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips; because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me.”

On another occasion David turned from the wickedness and the wrath of man to the lovingkindness of the Lord and His faithfulness which reached unto the skies. And here he found solace in suffering: “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings... Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life; in thy light we shall see light.” (Psalm 36:5-10)

As the valley of the shadow of the bitter death which He was to endure for our sins closed around the Redeemer, He found a blessedness in communion with the Father and prayed that His overflowing joy might be in His disciples and that our joy might be made full.

His work of removing our condemnation and opening the way of access to the Father so re-established communion with God that His servants were able to sing praise unto the Lord when their scourged bodies were fast in the stocks of the inner prison at Philippi.

Later one of these same servants wrote from a Roman prison to the Philippian church: “Rejoice in the Lord, always: and again I say, Rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4)

Under His wings, what a refuge in sorrow!
How the heart yearningly turns to His rest!
Often when the earth has no balm for my healing,
There I find comfort and there I am blest.

O what precious enjoyment!
There will I hide, till life's trials are o'er;
Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me.
Resting in Jesus I am safe evermore.

Under His wings, under His wings,
Who from His love can sever?
Under His wings my soul shall abide,
Safely abide forever.

EPILOGUE

“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” Deuteronomy 5:29

The leaders of the nation of Israel had just witnessed the giving of the Ten Commandments on the two tables of stone. This experience had a profound impact upon them and they were rightly fearful of staying in the presence of the Holy God. The verse that before us is a part of the Lord's response to his people.

The first thing to notice is that the Lord expects “heart” religion, and not just the mere token observance of rituals and ceremonies. He requires sincere worship that is in spirit and in truth. Our hearts need to be changed so that we feel a holy and reverential fear of God and that we cease to be sinful rebels against him. This can only be accomplished by the grace of God.

One evidence that our hearts have been changed is that we have a desire to keep all of God's commandments all the time. Luther said "prior to conversion the law is the beating stick in God's hand against our sins, but after our conversion the law is the walking stick in our hands to help us walk with God." Enoch walked with God (Genesis 5:22) and so must we. Christ said "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Such obedience should never be onerous, as there is a promise attached to it. Jehovah will ensure that it will be well with those (and their children) who seek to keep all the commandments of God all the time. We will never achieve perfection in this world, but our hearts must strive after it. To be aware that we have the loving care and protection of Almighty God as we seek to walk with him through this earthly pilgrimage is more than sufficient reward and afterwards it will lead to everlasting life.

Bill Norton