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## ETERNITY

*“Thus saith the high and holy one who inhabiteth ETERNITY, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place...” Isaiah 57:15*

Arthur Stace was born in Australia, in a Balmain slum, in the year 1885. His father and mother were drunkards, as were two of his sisters and two of his brothers who spent most of their lives in prison. At the age of 12 he became a State ward and he went to prison himself for the first time when he was 15. He became mixed up with various housebreaking gangs. He was a loser, a no-hoper, an alcoholic and he was completely illiterate. He lived in the streets of Sydney and was regarded by many who saw him as a lost cause.

On 6<sup>th</sup> August 1932 he entered St Barnabas’ Anglican Church on Broadway, Sydney, and heard the Reverend R.B.S. Hammond preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That evening Arthur was convicted by the Spirit of God. He left the church, went across to Victoria Park, fell on his knees, and prayed Jesus Christ to become his Saviour. By God’s sovereign grace, he became that night a new person.

Later, in Burton Street Baptist Tabernacle, at Darlinghurst, he heard the evangelist John G. Ridley preaching. Ridley had won the Military Cross in World War I, and he was known to be a very fiery preacher of the Gospel. In the course of his sermon, Ridley challenged his hearers – “Where will you spend Eternity?”

Then, with great authority and power, he exclaimed: “I wish I could shout ETERNITY through the streets of Sydney.” “ETERNITY! ETERNITY! Oh, that this word could be emblazoned across the streets of Sydney!”

Recalling this powerful sermon, Arthur Stace said, “he (John Ridley) repeated himself and kept crying out, ‘ETERNITY! ETERNITY!’ And his words were ringing in my brain as I left the church. Suddenly I began to cry and I felt a powerful call from the Lord to write ETERNITY. I had a piece of chalk in my pocket and I bent down there and wrote it. The funny thing is that before I wrote, I could hardly have spelled my own name. I had no schooling and I couldn’t have spelled ETERNITY for a hundred (pounds). But it came smoothly

in beautiful copperplate script. I couldn't understand it and I still can't [understand it].”

Throughout that night and for the next 40 years, at least 50 times a day, while Sydney slept, Arthur would take his chalk and write in immaculate copperplate handwriting the word “eternity” on footpaths, entrances to the train station, and anywhere else he thought it would catch people’s attention. They would alight from their commuter trains of a morning and see this word as they walked to work.

On Saturday evenings Arthur held Gospel Meetings at the corner of Bathurst and George Streets.

Arthur Stace, at the age of 83, died of a stroke in a nursing home on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1967.

In Sydney today, you can still see the word in three places:

- 1) On his gravestone in Waverley Cemetery, commemorating the life of Arthur Stace who had become known as ‘Mr Eternity’.
- 2) Inside the huge bell in the GPO clock tower which had been dismantled during the Second World War. When the clock tower was rebuilt in the 1960s, the bell was brought out of storage and as the workmen were installing the bell they noticed, inside, the word “eternity” in Arthur Stace’s chalk. (No one ever found out how Stace had been able to get to the bell, which had been sealed up, to add this mysterious entry to Sydney’s folklore.)
- 3) In Town Hall Square, between St Andrew’s Cathedral and the Sydney Town Hall. When the area was redeveloped in the 1970s, a solid brass replica of the word in Stace’s original copperplate handwriting was embedded in the footpath near a fountain as an eternal memorial to Arthur Stace.

As the year 2000 was welcomed, the word “ETERNITY” in Stace’s handwriting, was emblazoned NOT across the streets of Sydney as John Ridley had wished, but across the face of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and, thanks to modern technology, it was seen around the world.

Of all the words that have been spoken during the first two millennia, the one chosen by otherwise-godless people to be featured on the Harbour Bridge at the dawn of the year 2000, is the one that was used to remind so many busy people in Sydney of their impending appointment with their Creator.

Because Sydney's fireworks display was the first of the international celebrations to be telecast around the globe, people in every continent witnessed the miracle that God performed when he touched the life of one little, 'insignificant' man – Arthur Stace – a man who heard the call of God and responded by committing his life to 'preaching' this one-word sermon.

Heaven only knows how God will continue to speak to the hearts of so many people around the globe, continuing the work He started back in the 1930s through Arthur Stace and his piece of yellow chalk.

1 Eternity! Eternity!

Where will you spend Eternity?

This question comes to you and me!

Where will you spend Eternity?

Tell me, what shall your answer be –

Where will you spend Eternity?

3 Eternity! Eternity!

Where will you spend Eternity?

Leaving the strait and narrow way,

Going the downward road today,

What shall the final ending be –

Where will you spend Eternity?

2 Eternity! Eternity!

Where will you spend Eternity?

Many are choosing Christ today,

Turning from all their sins away;

Christ shall their blessed portion be:

Where will you spend Eternity?

4 Eternity! Eternity!

Where will you spend Eternity?

Turn, and believe this very hour,

Trust in the Saviour's grace and power:

Then shall your joyous answer be,

Saved through a long Eternity!

# OUR NATION'S IMMINENT FAMINE

## Reformation Scotland

Currently, Eastern and Southern Africa are in the grip of a severe drought. This is threatening a famine that may affect up to 40 million people. Such catastrophe is distressing but seems all too remote from our own experience. We know nothing of what the experts describe as “food insecurity”. There is such a thing as spiritual famine, however. The Bible speaks of “a famine of hearing the words of the Lord”. To many, it would be absurd that we could be on the brink of that. We have Bibles. There are still many preachers in the land. Some seem to gather large enough congregations. But availability of preachers does not always equal availability of the Word.

This “famine of hearing the words of the Lord” is described in Amos 8:11-12. There might well still be numerous prophets in the land, but they would not be proclaiming the words of the Lord. Why would God judge His people in this way? Simply because they would not obey His Word. This was seen in their false worship. Following on from Jeroboam they had invented things in the worship of God that He had never commanded. Since they would not obey His Word, He would, therefore, withdraw His Word from them. Failure to obey God’s Word in the area of worship and in many other areas is the great evidence that the Church in our land despises the Word of God.

We then get the preaching that we both want and deserve: a populist message of pragmatic platitudes. It is preaching that does not exalt God and will not proclaim eternal realities. The lives of all too many are filled with trivialities and much preaching declines to unsettle this. It communicates a “feel-good” gospel that neither offends nor benefits anyone. Sometimes it is so vague that is not even distinctively Christian.

Many preachers do not want to press home to their congregations the particular parts of God’s Word that they are ignoring or disobeying. Sin is played down and holiness neglected. It reveals a lack of confidence in the power and authority of the Word of God. Messages prevail therefore in which Scripture is alluded to in the lightest of ways. We have succumbed to our culture’s resistance to reading anything carefully or in depth. Many sermons concede defeat to the most minimal attention span and seem obliged to offer

entertainment. The result is biblical illiteracy and malnutrition. Perhaps the greatest curse is not simply to experience such spiritual famine but not to be conscious of it.

False prophets of every variety are the greatest threat to the Church in our nation. Thankfully there are faithful preachers but they are a comparatively small number. This is the imminent famine facing our nation. It may be that the time will come when some will realise too late that they have effectively lost contact with the Word of God. Now is the time to seek out authentic, soul-nourishing preaching.

*“I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12).*

George Hutcheson draws vital lessons from this solemn verse. Since they were so desirous to be rid of the Word of the Lord, He threatens that in their extremities they should be deprived of it. Though they would seek after it, they would not find it. This teaches us:

### **1. The Word of the Lord should be, and is to the soul, what food is to the body.**

It refreshes, strengthens it and keeps it in life, enabling action and work. The lack of it is called famine in the land (see Job 23:12).

### **2. When the Word is despised, God is just in removing it.**

When the Word is despised, and men are weary of it, God is justly provoked to take it from them. The false priest Amaziah expressed their general attitude in his words to Amos (chapter 7: 12-13). Now “I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD”.

### **3. Famine of the Word is worse than famine of food.**

Men’s souls are better than their bodies and their eternal welfare should be preferred to physical life. Thus, a famine of the Word is a more solemn

affliction and expresses greater wrath, then if the Lord should let a nation starve for lack of food and drink. Therefore it is “not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water (which is small compared to this) “but of hearing the words of the LORD”. This is why the verse also begins with “Behold”.

**4. Those who despise God’s Word most may yet realise their loss in not having it.**

There are those who despise God’s Word most and would think it a great mercy to be rid of the trouble it gives them. These may yet experience such extremity that they will miss the Word and would be glad to have it. They will even expend great effort to enjoy it. Thus, “they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD”.

**5. It is just that God should entirely remove His Word from such, even though they seek it.**

It is righteous for God to remove the Word from those who despise it when it is offered. Even though they miss it and seek after it when they afterwards experience trouble. They only seek it because they want to get rid of their calamities. It is not because they are conscious of their sin or desire true spiritual comfort. It is righteous for God to give them no success when they are seeking after the Word. Even though they make the greatest efforts to run through all corners of the land. Thus, “they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD”.

## **THE UNWELCOME VISITOR**

“What is your business?”

“Oh! It is just to speak a little about your soul and its eternal interests. But I see you are busy.”

“Well, yes, I am very busy.”

The preacher put out his hand to say “Goodbye”, and drawing close to the man, he whispered solemnly in his ear – “Suppose I had been Death?”

## **STOP DOING, START TRUSTING**

Imagine a man rowing a boat on a river just above a dreadful cataract or waterfall. The current bears him swiftly along, spectators on the river's banks become anxious, then fearful, finally concluding that he is lost. One cries out, "He's gone!"

The next moment a rope is thrown towards the wretched man; it strikes the water close to the boat. Now, how does the case stand? Do all the spectators call upon him to row harder to reach the shore? Oh, no; their eager and united cry is, "Drop your oars! Catch hold of the rope!"

So all the sinner's hope lies not in struggling to save himself, but in ceasing to struggle; for while he tries himself to accomplish the work of salvation, he will not look to Christ to do this for him.

It is not doing, but trusting, that is required.

## **A SHORT TREATISE CONCERNING A TRUE AND ORDERLY CHURCH GOSPEL**

**Benjamin Griffith**

### **Part 1**

*Benjamin Griffith was born in South Wales, 6<sup>th</sup> October, 1688, and emigrated to America in 1710. He was baptized upon profession of faith 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1711; and, in 1725, was ordained to the ministry of the Montgomery Church, Bucks Co., Philadelphia on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1725. He remained there as Pastor until his death on 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1768. During his ministry he read extensively in the works of the Puritans and he became an able minister and was highly esteemed on account of his faithful preaching of God's Word. In 1743 he wrote the following treatise which was published by the Philadelphia Baptist Association.*

Before there can be any orderly discipline among a Christian assembly, they must be orderly constituted into a church state, according to the institution of Christ in the Gospel.

1. A visible Gospel church is made by gathering divers select persons into Jesus Christ, in a spiritual body, and relation to him as their political head, Ezek. 34:11. 2 Thess. 2:1. himself being the great Shepherd that first seeks them, and prepares them by the work of renewing grace, for such spiritual building.

2. Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant, ordereth the everlasting Gospel to be preached, and accompanying it with his Holy Spirit, blesseth it to the turning of men from darkness to light, working faith and love in them, Eph. 2:17. Acts 26:18.

3. When sinners are thus wrought upon effectually, to such a suitable number, as may be an essential Church, i.e. so many as may act properly and orderly as a church, Matt. 17:15-17. that then it will be proper for them by their mutual consent, to propose to be constituted a Church. or that others seeing the expediency thereof may encourage the same, Acts 11.

4. For the accomplishment of so glorious a work, it is necessary that a day of fasting and prayer be appointed by and among such believers, and that such procure such neighbouring helps as they can, especially of the ministry, Acts 8:14. 1 Thess. 3:2.

5. The persons being first orderly baptized, according to the command of Christ in Matt. 28:19. and being all satisfied of the graces and qualifications of each other, and being willing in the fear of God to take the laws of Christ upon them, and do by one mutual consent give up themselves to the Lord, and to one another in the Lord, 2 Cor. 8:5. solemnly submitting to the government of Christ in his Church, and being united, they are to be declared a Gospel Church of Jesus Christ, Phil. 2:2-4. Rom 15:7. and 12:1. Acts 2:41, 42.

6. A number of believers thus united under Christ their mystical head, are become a church essential; and as such is the first and proper subject of the keys, and have power and privilege to govern themselves, and to choose out their own ministerial offices, Acts 14:23. and 6:3.

### **CONCERNING MINISTERS, &c.**

1. A church thus constituted, is not yet completed, while wanting such ministerial helps, as Christ hath appointed for its growth and well-being; and wanting elders and deacons to officiate among them. Men, they must be, that are qualified for the work; their qualifications are plainly and fully set down in Holy Scripture, 1 Tim. 3:2-7. Titus 4:5-10. all which must be found in them, in some good degree, and it is the duty of the church to try the persons by the rule of the word.

#### *Objection:*

But what shall a church do, in case they can have none among them fit to bear office according to the rule of the word?

#### *Answer:*

(1) That to expect to have officers perfect in the highest degrees of those qualifications, were to expect apostolic and extraordinary ceased gifts in ordinary time.

(2) If none among the members of the church be found fit in some measure for the ministry, A neighbouring church may and ought, if possible, to supply them, Song of Solomon, 8:8.

(3) Let such as they have, if they have any that seem hopeful, to be awhile upon trial; and the person that the Lord shall choose, will flourish in some good measure with Aaron's rod among the rods of the tribes.

2. The church being destitute of ministerial helps may, after mature and often deliberate consultation, and serious prayers to God, pitch upon some person

or persons in particular, giving him or them a solemn invitation to the work of the ministry upon trial; and if such accept of church's call, let such be upon trial, to see if such fear God, make godliness their business, and be addicted to the work of the ministry, seeking to further the interest of Christ and the edification of his people in sound and wholesome doctrine; and to see if any vices or immorality appear in their advances, 1 Cor. 16. Phil. 2:20, 21. Read the qualifications in 1 Tim. 3. And in case a church should call a person to be their minister who is a member of some sister church, and he accept their call to be their minister, he must in the first place give himself a member with the church so calling him, that so they may choose him among themselves, as Acts 6:3.

3. After having taken all due care to choose one for the work of the ministry, they are, by and with the unanimous consent or suffrage of the church, to proceed to his ordination; which is a solemn setting apart of such a person for the sacred function, in this wise, by setting apart a day of fasting and prayer, Acts 13:2, 3. the whole church being present, he is to have the hands of the presbytery of that church, or of neighboring elders called and authorized by that church, whereof such a person is a member, solemnly, laid upon him, 1 Tim. 5:22. Titus 1:5. Acts 14:23. 1 Tim 4:14. and thus such a person is to be recommended into the work of the Lord, and to take particular care of the flock of whom he is thus chosen, Acts 20:28.

4. The minister, being thus put upon his work, proceeds:

(1) to preach the word of God unto them, thereby to feed the flock, and therein ought to be faithful and laborious, studying to show himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, 2 Tim. 2:15. as he is a steward of God in the mysteries of the Gospel, 1 Cor. 4:1, 2. and therefore ought to be a man of good understanding and experience, being sound in the faith, not a novice, or a double-minded, unstable man, nor such as is light spirited or of a shallow understanding, but one that is learned in the mysteries of the kingdom, because he is to feed the

people with knowledge and understanding, Jer. 3:15. He must be faithful in declaring the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:20. He is to instruct them in all practical godliness, laying before them their manifold duties, and to urge them upon their consciences, Titus 2:1-15. 1 Tim. 4:6.

(2) He must watch over them, as one that must give an account to God, Heb. 13:17. Such must have an eye upon every member to see how they behave in the house of God, where the presence of the Lord is more eminently, and where also the angels do always attend; and also their behavior in the families they belong to, and their conversation abroad; according to their capacities, they are not to sleep under their charge.

(3) He is to visit his flock to know their state, in order to minister suitable doctrinal relief unto them, and that he may know what disorders there may be among them, that the unruly may be reprov'd, Prov. 27:23, 1 Thess. 5:14, 15.

(4) He is to administer all the ordinances of Christ, amongst them: as Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and herein he must be careful to follow the primitive pattern, thereby to hold forth the great end, wherefore they were ordained.

(5) He must be instant with God, in his prayers for and with them, as opportunity may serve.

(6) He must show them a good example in all respects, in conversation, sobriety, charity, faith and purity, 1 Tim. 4:12. behaving himself impartial unto all, not preferring the rich before the poor, nor lording it over God's heritage, nor assume greater power than God hath given him, James 2:4. 1 Timothy 5:21. 1 Peter 5:2.5.

## **OF RULING ELDERS**

Ruling Elders are such persons as are endued with gifts to assist the pastor or teacher in the government of the church; it was a statute in Israel, Exod. 18. Deut. 1:9-13. The works of teaching and ruling belong both to the Pastor; but in case he be unable; or the work of ruling too great for him, God hath provided such for his assistance, and they are called ruling elders, 1 Tim. 5:17. governments, 1 Cor. 12:28, or he that ruleth, 1 Rom. 12:8. They are qualified for, and called unto, one part of the work: and experience teacheth us the use and benefit of such rulers in the church, in easing the pastor or teacher, and keeping up the honor of the ministry. Their qualifications are such as are requisite to rule, as knowledge, judgement, prudence, &c.; and as to the manner of their ordination, it is like ordination unto other offices in the church, with fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands. Their office only relateth to rule and order, in the church of God, and doth not include teaching; yet if the church findeth they have gifts and abilities to be useful in teaching, they may be put upon trial, and if approved, they may be called and solemnly set apart by ordination, it being wholly a distinct office from the former, which was only to rule well, and not to labor in word and doctrine.\*

*\*An interesting feature of the early order in Baptist Churches was the presence of ruling elders as well as of deacons. This apparently held true through the eighteenth century. In 1798 the Philadelphia Association adopted a discipline revised by Samuel Jones. This document approves the office of ruling elder but makes it plain that churches would be free to decide whether or not to have ruling elders. By the middle nineteenth century the office had disappeared from the American Baptist scene. It is our opinion that the early Baptist fathers were more Biblical in their church order than their grand-children. Walter J. Chantry*

## **OF DEACONS**

Deacons are men called forth by the church, to serve in the outward concerns thereof whose office is to serve tables, Acts 6:2-7. They are to be entrusted with the stock of the church, out of which stock they are to assist the poor

members of the church, and to provide bread and wine for the Lord's table, and also to have regard to the minister's table; and moreover they should see that all the members of the church do contribute towards the proper uses of the church, that therefrom all necessary occasions may be supplied, as God hath given them, they to the poor, so that none be neglected, 1 Cor. 16:2.; by the faithful discharge of which office they shall purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith, 1 Tim. 3:13. The qualifications of these officers are laid down, 1 Tim. 3:8-13. Acts 6:2-8.

*To be continued*

**ANOTHER LILY GATHERED**  
**THE CONVERSION OF JAMES LAING**  
**Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813 – 1843)**

**Edited and Abridged**

*“My beloved is gone down into His garden to gather lillies.” Song of Solomon 6:2*

JAMES LAING was born on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1828, and lost his mother before he was eight years old. God dealt so graciously with his elder sister, that she was fitted to watch over the other children with a mother's tenderness, but James was seized with the same fever as that of which his mother died, and he never enjoyed good health afterwards.

He was naturally a very quiet and reserved boy, not so rough in his language as many of the boys around. One day, when he was lying on his dying bed, I was asking his sister what kind of boy he had been. She said that he was as wicked as other boys, only he did not swear. After I was gone, he told his sister that she was wrong. He never used to swear at home, because he was afraid he would be punished for it; but when among his companions he often used to swear. “Ah!” added he, “it is a wonder God did not send me to hell

when I was a swearer.” Another day, hearing some boys swearing near his window, he said, “It is a wonder God did not leave me to swear among these boys yet.”

Such was the early life of this boy. He did not know the God who guided him, and in whose hand his breath was; and such is the life of most of our children – they “cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God.”

The Holy Spirit strives even with children. And when they grieve Him, and resist His awakening hand, He suffers long with them. The first time that James showed any concern for his soul was in the autumn of 1839. It was a solemn time in this place; St. Peter’s (Dundee) was like Bethel. The divine ladder was set down in the midst of the people, and its top reached up to heaven, and even strangers were forced to say, “Surely God is in this place.” Oh that these sweet days would come back again!

James’ elder brother, Alexander, a sailor boy, was at that time awakened, and the same glorious Spirit seemed to visit James for a time. One evening their sister Margaret, returning home from a meeting, found her two brothers on their knees earnestly crying for mercy. She did not interrupt them; but Alexander afterwards said to her, “Jamie feels that he needs Christ too. We will easily know if he be in earnest, for then he will not need to be bidden to pray.” The test was a trying one; James soon gave up secret prayer, and proved that his goodness was like a morning cloud and the early dew which goeth away. This is the mark of the hypocrite laid down by Job, “Will he always call upon God?” (Job 27:10).

Another night Margaret observed James coming from the prayer-meeting in the school in great distress. He kept close by the wall of the church, that he might escape observation. He was much concerned that night, and, after retiring to rest, said to his sister, in his own Scottish dialect, “There’s me come away’ without Christ to-night again.”

One Thursday evening he attended the weekly meeting held in the church. The passage explained was Romans 4:4–6, and sinners were urged to receive the “righteousness without works.” Many were deeply affected, and would not go away even after the blessing. James was one of those who remained, and when I came to him he was weeping bitterly. I asked him if he cared for his soul: he said, “Whiles.” I asked if he prayed: he said, “Yes.” He was much concerned on his return home that night, both for others and for his own soul. But these dewdrops were soon dried up again.

He attended the Sabbath school in the lane where their cottage stands. Often, when the teacher was reading the Bible or some awakening anecdote, the tears flowed down his cheeks but he tried to conceal his emotion from the other boys, lest they should laugh at him. He afterwards said in his last illness, “ Oh that I had just another night of the Sabbath school! I would not care though they should laugh at me now.”

Sometimes, during the reading and prayer in the family, the Word of God was like a fire to him, so that he could not bear it; and after it was over, he would run to his wild companions in order to drown the cries of his awakened conscience.

One night in 1841 he heard Mr. Cormick of Kirriemuir preach in a cottage on John 7:37. He felt it deeply, and wept bitterly; but he remarked that none of the people wept. He knew well when people showed any concern for their soul; and he often remarked that to be anxious is not to be in Christ. When he came home, he spoke much of the carelessness of the people where he had been. “Ah, Margaret, there was no Bible read yonder. The people a’ went to their bed just as if there had not been a God.” What a faithful picture is this of the state of many of our country parishes!

The long-suffering of God waited upon this little boy, the good Spirit strove with him, and Jesus stood at the door and knocked; but he would not hear.

The day of Immanuel's power, and the time of love, was, however, near at hand.

As the cold winds of autumn set in, his sickly frame was much affected: he became weak and breathless. One Tuesday, in the end of October, he turned decidedly worse, and became intensely anxious about the salvation of his soul. His lamentable cry was, "Oh, Jesus, save me – save me!" Margaret asked if his concern was real, for he had often deceived her hopes before. He wept, and said, "Yes." His body was greatly pained; but he forgot all in the intense anxiety for his precious, never-dying soul. On the Saturday I paid a visit to their humble cottage, and found the little sufferer sitting by the fire. He began to weep bitterly while I spoke to him of Jesus having come into the world to save sinners. I was enabled in a simple manner to answer the objections that sinners make to an immediate closing with Christ. Margaret wondered; for the minister could not have spoken more to the case of her brother if he had known it; and she inwardly thanked God, for she saw that He was directing it.

James spent the rest of the day on his knees in evident distress of soul. Oh, how little the most of those called 'Christians' know what it is to pass through such deep waters! Margaret asked him if he was seeking Jesus: he said, "Yes." She asked, "If he would like anything—a bit of bread?" He said, "No; but I would take a bit of the bread of life if you would give it me." She replied, "I cannot give you that; but if you seek it, you will get it."

He remained alone till evening, and was never off his knees. Towards night he came to the other end of the cottage, and put this question: "Have I only to believe that Jesus died for sinners? Is that all?" He was told, "Yes." "Well, I believe that Jesus died for me, for I am a poor, hell-deserving sinner. I have been praying all this afternoon, that when Jesus shed His blood for sinners, He would sprinkle some of it upon me, and He did it." He then turned up Romans 5:8, and read these words, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died

for us.” His sister wept for joy, and James added, “I am not afraid to die now, for Jesus has died for me.”

Often after this he bade his sister read to him Romans 5, Psalms 103 and 116. These were favourite portions with him. From that day it was a pleasant duty indeed to visit the cottage of this youthful inquirer. Many a happy hour have I spent beneath that humble roof. Instead of dropping passing remarks, I used generally to open up a passage of the Word, that he might grow in knowledge. I fear that, in general, we are not sufficiently careful in regularly instructing the sick and dying. A pious expression and a fervent prayer are not enough to feed the soul that is passing through the dark valley. Surely if sound and spiritual nourishment is needed by the soul at any time, it is in such an hour, when Satan uses all his arts to disturb and destroy.

One Thursday afternoon I spoke to him on Matthew 23:37: “How often would I have gathered your children.” He was in great darkness that day, and, weeping bitterly, he said, “I fear I have never been gathered to Christ; but if I have never been gathered, oh that I were gathered to Christ now!” After I was gone he said, “It would give me no peace though the minister and everybody said I was a Christian, if I had not the sense of it between God and myself.”

He was very fond of the Song of Solomon, and many parts of it were opened up to him. One day I spoke on Song of Solomon 5:13: “His lips are like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.” I told him that these were some of the drops that fell from the lips of Jesus: “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.” “I came to seek and to save that which was lost.” “Wilt thou be made whole?” “I give unto them eternal life.” He said solemnly, “That’s fine.” Another day, Song of Solomon 1:5 – “I am black, but comely” – was explained. He said, “I am black as hell in myself, but I’m all fair in Jesus.” This was ever after a common expression of his. Another day I spoke on Song of Solomon 5:15 – “His legs are like pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold” – and I showed him the almighty strength of the Lord Jesus. The next day when I came in, I asked him how he was; but, without answering my

question, he said, "I am glad you told me that about Jesus' legs being like pillars of marble, for now I see that He is able to carry me and all my sins."

On another occasion he said, "I am glad this psalm is in the Bible." "What psalm?" He answered, "'Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale.' He has promised to be with me, and God is as good as His Word." At another time I read to him Isaiah 43:2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;" and I explained that when he came to the deep, deep waters, the Lord Jesus would put His foot down beside his, and wade with him. This often comforted him, for he believed it as firmly as if he had seen the pierced foot of Jesus placed beside his own; and he said to Margaret, "If Christ put down His foot beside mine, then I have nothing to fear."

One Sabbath I had been preaching on Caleb following the Lord fully (Numbers 14:24), and had stated that every sin committed after conversion would take away something from the believer's weight of eternal glory. Alexander, his brother, was present, it being his only Sabbath on shore. He was much troubled, and said, "Ah! I fear mine will be all lost." He told the statement to James, who was also troubled. Alexander said, "You don't need to be troubled, Jamie; you are holy." James wept, and said, "I wonder to hear you speak." Alexander said, "Ah! but you are holier than me."

In the same sermon I had said that if believers did nothing for Christ, they would get in at the door of heaven, but nothing more. The sailor-boy told this to his brother, who wept again, saying, "I have done nothing for Christ." Alexander said he had done less. James added, "I would like to be near Jesus. I could not be happy unless I was near Him." Speaking of those who had gone to glory long ago, James said that "those who died in Christ now, and did most for Him, Jesus would take them *in by* (that is, near to Himself), though they were late of coming."

Some of my dear brethren in the ministry visited this little boy, to see God's wonderful works in him, and to be helpers of his joy. It is often of great

importance, in visiting the dying, to call in the aid of a fellow-labourer. Different lines of testimony to the same Saviour are thus brought to meet in the chamber of sorrow. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. Mr. Cumming of Dumbarney, visiting him one day, asked him if he suffered much pain. James – “Sometimes.” Mr. Cumming – “When you are in much pain, can you think on the sufferings of the Lord Jesus?” James – “When I see what Jesus suffered for me, it takes away my pain. Mine is nothing to what He suffered.” He often repeated these words: “My light affliction, which is but for a moment.”

At another time, Mr. Miller of Wallacetown called with me, and our little sufferer spoke very sweetly on eternal things. Mr. Miller – “Would you like to get better?” James – “I would like the will of God.” Mr. Miller – “But if you were getting better, would you just live as you did before?” James – “If God did not give me grace, I would.”

During the same visit I was asking Margaret when he was first awakened. She told me of his first concern, and then of the first day I had called. James broke in, and said, “Ah! but we must not lean upon that.” His meaning was that past experiences are not the foundation of a sinner’s peace.

I never met with any boy who had so clear a discovery of the way of pardon and acceptance through the ‘doing’ and ‘dying’ of the Lord Jesus, laid to our account. One time I visited him, I said, “I have been thinking of this verse today: ‘The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake” (Isaiah 42:21). He said, “Explain that to me, for I don’t understand it.” I opened it up to him, but I feared he did not take up the meaning. Some days after he said to his sister, “Margaret, I have been thinking of a sweet verse today.” She asked what it was; but it had slipped from his memory. Margaret – “Was it about Christ?” James – “Ay.” She quoted one. James – “No, that’s not it.” At length she quoted, “The Lord is well pleased,” etc. “Ah! that’s it,” he said; “I was thinking it’s no’ for my righteousness’ sake, but for His righteousness’ sake.” This showed how fully he embraced what so few comprehend –the way of

salvation by “the obedience of one” for many. Surely God was his teacher, for God alone can reveal the sweetness and glory of this truth to the soul of man!

Mr. Bonar of Collace often visited him, and these were sweet visits to little James. One day, when Mr. Bonar had been opening up some Scripture to him, he said, “Do you know what I am saying, Jamie?” James – “Yes, but I cannot get at it (I cannot feel its power); I see it all.” Mr. Bonar – “I think there would be a pleasure in seeing the people drink when Moses struck the rock, even though one did not get a drink themselves.” James – “Ah! but I would like a drink.”

One of the loveliest features in the character of this little boy was his intense love to the souls of men. He often spoke with me on the folly of men living without Christ in the world. I shall never forget the compassionate glance of his clear blue eye as he said, “What a pity it is that they do not a’ come to Christ! – they would be so happy.”

One Sabbath evening I spoke to the scholars in the Sabbath School about him. When the school was over, they all came into his cottage to see him. The little throng stood silent round his bed, while he spoke to them with great solemnity: “You all know what I was; I was no better than you; but the Holy Spirit opened my eyes, and I saw that I was on the very brink of hell. Then I cried to Jesus to save me, and He gave me a new heart; I put my finger on the promise, and would not come away without it: and He gave me a new heart; and He is as willing to give you all a new heart. I have sinned with you; now I would like you to come to Christ with me. You would be far happier in Christ than at your play. There are sweeter pleasures in Christ. Here are two awful verses:

‘There is a dreadful hell,  
And everlasting pains;  
There sinners must with devils dwell  
In darkness, fire, and chains.

Can such a wretch as I  
Escape this cursed end?  
And may I hope, whene'er I die,  
I shall to heaven ascend?

Then, pointing to the fire, he said, "You could not keep your finger long there; but remember hell is a lake of fire. I would give you all a prayer to pray tonight. Go and tell Jesus that you are poor, lost, hell-deserving sinners, and tell Him to give you a new heart. Mind, He's willing, and oh, be earnest!—ye'll no get it unless ye be earnest."

Strange scene! A dying boy speaking to his friends. They were impressed for a time, but it soon wore away. Several Sabbath evenings the same scene was renewed. The substance of all his warnings was, "Come to Christ and get a new heart." He often told me afterwards that he had been inviting them to Christ, "but," he added, "They'll no come." One evening during the week, a number of the children came in. After speaking to them in a very solemn manner, he took from under his pillow a little book called 'A Letter about Jesus Christ.' He turned up the part where it tells of six boys laying their finger on the promise (Ezekiel 36:26) and pleading for its fulfilment. He was not able to read it to them, but he said he would give it to them; and each boy should keep it two days, and read it, and do the same. The boys were much impressed, and agreed to the proposal.

One day, during his illness, his sister found him crying very bitterly. She asked him what ailed him. He said, "Do you remember when I was at the day-school at the time of the Revival? One day when we were writing our copies, one of the boys had been some anxious about his soul; he wrote a line to me on a slip of paper: 'Ezekiel 36:26. To James Laing. Pray over it.' I took the paper, read it, and tore it, and threw it on the floor, and laughed at the boy. Oh, Margaret, if I had not laughed at him, maybe he would have sought Christ

until he had found Him! Maybe I have been the means of ruining his soul to all eternity!”

In how touching a manner this shows the tenderness of his care for the souls of others; and also how a rash word or deed, little thought of at the time, may plant a sting in the dying pillow.

One night I went with my little cousin to see James. I said, “I have brought my Jamie to see you.” He took him kindly by the hand, and said, “We’re two Jamies together. May we both meet in heaven. Be earnest to get Christ. You’ll no’ get Christ unless you are earnest.” When we were gone, he said to his sister, “Although Jamie bides with the minister, unless the Spirit open his eyes, he canna get Christ.”

*To be continued*

## **THE LITTLE WORD “ALONE”**

In 1540, in the heat of the Reformation, Joachim II, Elector of Brandenburg, said to his ambassadors, who were about to proceed to an important Disputation at Worms, “See that you bring back that little word, ‘Alone’: do not dare to return without it.” Both parties – Romanists and Protestants – were prepared to confess that salvation was “through faith in Christ Jesus”, but the Protestant Reformers insisted on the little word “alone” – Salvation through faith in Christ ALONE. And so this little word became the pivot of the contendings throughout the whole Reformation period.

It is round this little word that the conflict between the Spirit and our own self-righteousness is being urged. We are willing, perhaps, to trust Christ, if we may add to that reliance a trust in ourselves, in our good works or in our religious observances. But this cannot be. Christ’s death at Calvary is the only provision of God’s grace for our salvation.

*"We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."  
Romans 3:28*

## **FORGIVENESS**

**James H. Brookes, D.D.**

The moment we are in Him by faith alone, twenty things are said of our sins.

First, they are *blotted out* (Is. 43: 25);

second, they are *borne by another* (1 Pet. 2:24);

third, they are *cast behind God's back* (Isa. 38: 17);

fourth, they are *cast into the depths of the sea* (Mic. 7:19);

fifth, they are *washed away with cleansing blood* (1 Jn. 1:7);

sixth, they are *covered* (Rom. 4:7);

seventh, they are *finished* (Dan. 9:24);

eighth, they are *forgiven* (Col. 2:13);

ninth, they are *not seen* (Num. 23:21);

tenth, they are *not imputed* (Rom. 4:8);

eleventh, they are *not remembered* (Heb. 8: 12);

twelfth, they are *pardoned* (Mic. 7:18);

thirteenth, they are *passed away* (Zech. 3:4);

fourteenth, they are *purged* (Heb. 1:3);

fifteenth, they are *put away* (Heb. 9:26);

sixteenth, they are *remitted* (Acts 10:43);

seventeenth, they are *removed* (Ps. 103:12);

eighteenth, they are *subdued* (Mic.7:19);

nineteenth, they are *sought for and not found* (Jer. 50:20);

twentieth, they are *taken away* (Is. 6:7).

The believer in Christ may know upon the sure testimony of God that all this is true as it respects both the sins of his nature and the sins of his life; and hence the believer may know in the same way that he is saved.

## EPILOGUE

*"I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord" Psalm 119:145*

The Psalmist cries unto the Lord with all his being. Throughout this psalm various words or phrases are used to indicate prayer and prayer is particularly united with the study and keeping of God's Word. The psalmist makes his heart-felt petition to his Lord, as he had come to know Him through His Word and in his own personal relationship with Him. There are three different aspects in our relationship with the Lord to consider whenever we pray to Him.

First, we must recall that God is our Creator and we are His creatures. We must bow before Him with reverence and awe as being almighty and all wise, recognising that every breath that we take and every beat of our heart is due to His sustaining power.

Secondly, we must view Him as our Redeemer. Unless God had taken the initiative, we would never have been saved. God is a merciful and gracious God. By nature we were dead in trespasses and sins, but God has laid upon His Son the sins of the elect and Christ bore the punishment that we deserved. However, our redemption is so much more than merely the removal of God's wrath. We rejoice that we have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

Thirdly, we must accept that God has adopted us into His family and that He is now our loving heavenly Father. We have an intimate relationship with Him who has promised to take care of us and to do us only good all the days of our earthly life until He receives us into His heavenly kingdom.

In prayer we may concentrate upon just one or two aspects of our relationship with God. However, over time, we should cover all these different aspects – considering all that He is and all that He has done.

*Bill Norton*