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THE SEA-CAPTAIN'S CALL

Thomas De Witt Talmage (1832 – 1902)

In the year 1775, the captain of a Greenland whaling vessel found himself at night surrounded by icebergs, and so he 'lay to' until morning, expecting any moment to be ground to pieces. In the morning he looked about, and saw a ship nearby.

He hailed it. No answer. Getting into a boat with some of the crew, he saw through the port a man at a stand as if keeping a log-book. He hailed him. No answer. He went on board the vessel, and found the man sitting at the log-book, frozen to death. The log-book was dated 1762, showing that the vessel had been wondering for thirteen years among the icebergs. The sailors were found frozen among the hammocks, and others in the cabin. For thirteen years this ship had been carrying its burden of corpses.

So from this Gospel craft tonight I catch sight of voyagers for eternity. I cry, 'Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!' No answer. They float about, tossed and ground by the icebergs of sin, hoisting no sail to heaven. I go on board. I find all asleep. It is frozen sleep. O that my Lord Jesus would come aboard, and lay hold of the wheel, and steer the craft down into the warm Gulf Stream of his mercy! Awake thou that sleepest! Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.

*"He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind (or "spirit") to blow, and the waters flow."
(Psalm 147:16-18)*

ANNIVERSARY SERVICES, 2017

God willing, **the Church's 64th and our Pastor's 46th Anniversaries** will be held the weekend of **11th and 12th February, 2017**, when we hope the guest preacher will be **Rev. Alasdair J. Macleod**, Minister of Knock & Point Free Church (Continuing), Isle of Lewis. (Mr. Macleod is the son of Rev. William Macleod of Glasgow).

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

TESTIMONIES OF JAMES AND JOSHUA

James

I want to speak of the Lord's gracious dealings with me, how that He led me in the days preceding my conversion and drew me by His Holy Spirit to salvation through Jesus Christ my Saviour. It is the love, mercy, and goodness of God that I wish to show forth, for it is by the gift of His grace alone that I am saved.

Since the beginning of my life, I was raised up and taught by my godly Christian parents, with whom the Lord saw fit to bless me, and I have known the Bible from a young age. I have sat under powerful ministry for many years, but never was my belief personal. Mine was an academic faith, and, although I heard many forceful, challenging sermons, I never really sought the Lord and experienced the great change about which so many spoke. I heard so much about saving grace, faith and conversion, but I was uninterested in spiritual matters. I behaved reasonably well, as was expected, I spoke the correct things, and I concurred with the words of true believers, despite having nothing to add to spiritual conversation. I had no inward desire for Christ; I did not seek Him, I did not read His Word, and I did not call upon His name in prayer. If given any choice, I would not have come to hear the Gospel or fellowship with believers on occasions outside of the Lord's Day.

During youth work in the church, my faithful leaders would always give a

clear, Gospel message on Friday nights and Lord's day mornings, and, although I usually listened and tried not to fidget so as to maintain a positive image as one of the church-children, those messages were like water off a duck's back, going in one ear and escaping out of the other. I did my duty without gladness, and the prospect of a Lord's Day, or church meetings, to me was boring and unattractive. Although I was taught to live with morals and follow God's and my parents' commandments, I wanted to enjoy the same things as the world, watching and listening to the same things, and not keeping myself completely pure and separate. As I look back, I see that the world was never worth it, and that those years were vain, short-lived, and empty.

I thought that the Bible was true, and sometimes described evidence which supported it, or spoke against other accounts for the origin of the present world, such as the theory of Evolution, but, as the Bible says in James 2:19, "The devils also believe, and tremble." Faith comes from a true, heartfelt belief in the words of Scripture and in Jesus Christ and His ability to save to the uttermost, and, in my heart, I had not believed, nor had I committed myself unto the Lord. When I was a few years younger, I determined to memorize the book of James. Although it has been a blessing to me over the years, and I tried to meditate on it, even then, it is amazing how the Word did not have the same personal power in those days. When I read it, it was little more than words, sentences and chapters.

My response to those who questioned me about my relationship with Christ, which I avoided mentioning, changed over the years from a confession of uncertainty to a false affirmation. I would often feebly reply "Yes!" to their questions and stated that I was a Christian. I thought that I was, even if it didn't mean anything to me. I served not God, and obeyed not the Gospel. Sometimes, when I would sin against the Lord, flagrantly transgressing His law, I would feel guilty in conscience, knowing that His eyes were upon me. I would occasionally pray, just to reassure myself that I was bound for heaven despite my iniquity. There was no deep repentance there, but just in word only. These mechanical prayers were amongst the only prayers which I offered, and still I relapsed presumptuously. My Pastor would vehemently urge the congregation to flee from the wrath to come, and I would be uncomfortable in my seat, having no certainty that, if the Lord should rend the heavens and come down that very night to judge the earth, I would be

safe from hell-fire. I would sometimes pray with concern thereafter, but I never had full, Spirit-filled assurance. I still rarely read the Bible, and was content to go by my own strength, being confident in my own bodily strength and my own knowledge, without a dependence upon Christ.

The question of baptism surfaced time and time again over the years leading up to my conversion. I was frequently questioned by friends and believers on why I had not been baptized. I would make excuse that baptism does not save, and was therefore unnecessary. Sometimes, in my defence, I would refer to people who were baptized and showed no sign of righteousness. The truth was: I wasn't saved, and I had no desire to heed this particular directive. About a year ago, I was challenged by one zealous Christian man about baptism, and I said something along the lines of "Yes, but it is unnecessary for salvation", to which he promptly said, "True, but it is the first command of discipleship."

Preceding conversion, I felt no direction in life, and did not know the Lord's leadership. I decided to study A-levels at a local sixth-form. I prayed about my steps and entered the institution in September, 2015. I'd sometimes pray, or recite some Scriptures as I cycled to and fro, but I never witnessed or devoted time to God's Word. I did not meditate in His precepts, but focused on study. Throughout my time there, I was aware of the enervating emptiness of a godless system, and started to become downcast, confused as to my direction, and longing to return to working at home as I always had. I see now, that, although I am not proud, but ashamed of my failure to continue with determination, the Lord took me out. So, I bade farewell to friends and teachers, and applied myself to study at home. I was unaware that the Lord's ways were above my ways, and His thoughts above my thoughts, and that I was to be saved and walk by His strength, with assurance under His leading.

There was a weekend for young people, organized by Spring Road Evangelical Church, which took place in April. I had adamantly refused to attend the 2015 weekend, but, after being persuaded that young people known to me should be present, I reluctantly agreed to spend the weekend with the group. It was across the course of this weekend that the Lord began to impress His truth upon my soul by His Spirit far more effectively than any faithful minister could ever have done. The Spirit of God was to awaken a desire within me to possess Christ. I began to focus on the ministry, and the

Lord by the Spirit gave life to His Word.

The words of James 4:14 greatly challenged me: “For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” In a transient life, I started to consider how much I needed the God who is everlasting. Other words that stood out to me were the opening words of Romans 12 – “present your bodies a living sacrifice.” I knew that I did not die daily for Christ, and needed His help to overcome sin. The Lord began to open my eyes to His truth.

Throughout the weekend, I asked various believers how they had discerned the Lord’s will for their lives. They answered that it was with the Lord’s help and guidance that they had made decisions; and that they could pray to Him, and He would lead them. They mentioned other means obtaining direction, but their primary means of finding peace in decisions lay in their assurance that, in answer to prayer, the Lord would undertake for them. I outwardly agreed with their counsel, but inwardly longed for the same faith and peace that they possessed. I recall the words of one believer, a year older than I was, who said, “Ever since the Lord Jesus came into my life, He’s made everything so much easier.” Being among the Lord’s people made me desire the same spirit of faith and trust in the Lord that they professed and clearly manifested. I was not far from the kingdom of heaven, and the Lord was imparting unto me new eyes and a hunger for the truth.

On April 24th, it was time for us to go our separate ways on the Lord’s Day. I felt that I was missing out on the faith that the other believers showed. I yearned to live with the same holiness of heart and life as those with whom I had spoken and enjoyed fellowship, yet still I did not receive God’s salvation through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord then began to convict me of my need for forgiveness – forgiveness through His Son, who died upon the cross to save sinners. During the evening service, as I was following the praises and the prayers, I began to experience in my heart the power of the worship. I prayed constantly throughout, concentrating on the Word and the ministry. Richard Brookes, the visiting minister that day, mentioned that at the name of Jesus, every knee would bow and every tongue would confess on the last day, something which I had heard more than once on the young people’s weekend. He spoke of how the

unconverted would have to confess, but what struck me was his joy when he spoke of the believers, of what bowing and what confessing they'll be engaged in! I desired that same joy, and was praying to the Lord that He would remove my trespasses as far as the east is from the west and grant me eternal life.

I arrived home that night troubled by my sin, and I knew that I could not resist the evil one by my own might, having failed time and time again. I wanted to be made pure, and to be redeemed from all unrighteousness, and to have the same joy and peace in the Spirit as other believers had. I was at my wit's end, on my knees, praying that the Lord would not abandon me to live an empty life, but release me from the bonds of sin, and make me righteous through the blood of Christ. I felt I was as nothing before Him, and I was stricken with heavy compunction for my sin. I knew that I should sooner die than have any other know my corruption, and that I was worthy of damnation. I pleaded assurance of redemption, but had none. I was wretched and undeserving, remembering that I had heard so many forceful Gospel messages and yet I had time and again disobeying the Gospel. God humbled me to see that I needed Christ.

I turned to God's Word for instruction. From the outset of the year, I have been reading according to a read-through-the-Bible-in-a-year scheme. My readings for that day in the Old Testament were in II Samuel, and I was reading chapter 22, David's Psalm of Thanksgiving, which is also found in Psalm 18 of the book of Psalms. While reading it, I desired all the things which the psalmist says of God, that He would hear me in my distress and hear my voice out of His temple, and that my cry would enter into His ears. The words dearest to me were those of verse 17, at which I stopped reading: "He took me; He drew me out of many waters." Oh, my sins were as deep waters, and I was as a man drowning in iniquity; and I besought the Lord God, that, through Christ Jesus His Son, He would draw me out of many waters.

Whenever David mentioned that he was rewarded according to his righteousness, I scarce could read the words for conviction. I had NO righteousness, so could only plead that the Lord would remove the burden of my sin and grant me His righteousness. I was brought low, conscious of my complete unworthiness and begging for assurance of the Lord, but it did not immediately come to me. It was then that words I knew so well came to

mind, the refrain of Psalm 136: “For His mercy endureth for ever.” Although the chief of sinners, and worthy of torment in hell-fire for eternity, His mercy was FOR EVER. “Thou art able to save even me” – “FOR EVER”. I kept falling back on those words in my distress: “For His mercy endureth for ever.” I knew then that His mercy was sufficient to save me, and I believed. I knew – not just in mind, but in soul – that His mercy, which was everlasting, was ABLE to save me from my sins. In all my guilt, I held onto these words, and asked the Lord’s pardon of all my transgression and assurance of salvation, with FAITH and REPENTANCE.

All my life, I had heard of the great change, how that a person, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance, undergoes a radical change and is saved, but never had I thought much upon it personally, or understood and believed it; There is a change! I finished my supplication with “Amen”, and the Spirit of the Lord filled my soul. This is the joy! No longer did I have doubt that I was Christ’s. I knew assurance then and there. As Jacob of old, the Lord blessed me there. I felt so full of the indescribable joy of the Lord. I lay in bed, with the lights off, and looked out my open curtains, thinking of the Lord in the heavens. I’m sure that only the Lord’s people know of such a peace. I was one of His people, and I knew, with my whole heart, that if my Lord Jesus Christ were to rend the heavens and descend with the heavenly host to judge the earth, I would not be in any fear as before, but would go to be with Him in paradise. “He is mighty to save.”

Amidst my prayers of thanksgiving, I was overjoyed at the thought that I was beginning a new life. I had wasted all the years before, but the Lord had raised me up to reveal these things to me. “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” was another treasured verse. Thus far He has helped me. I had no righteousness, but this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jeremiah 23:6).

“Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”

Joshua

I was brought up in a Christian household and have been going to church for as long as I can remember. I was raised to be godly from an early age, and being educated with a Christian curriculum I would be encouraged to read my Bible and pray every day by myself and with other people. I had the outward appearance of a Christian, but inwardly, I wasn't truly saved.

Quite wrongly, I thought that being a Christian simply meant to follow the right doctrine and to live a holy life consequential to that. I also thought I could be saved just by praying a prayer of confession to God. My relationship with God never felt very personal, but I was never really bothered by this.

In my ignorance, I never thought of myself as a self-righteous and hypocritical sinner who was in need of saving, instead I thought that I was a true Christian who was going to Heaven. I did not have any doubts concerning my salvation and when people asked me whether I was a Christian my answer would always be a firm and resounding "Yes!" However, I never personally knew Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

For a number of years I continued like this, increasing in head-knowledge of the Scriptures and attending the church services. Sometimes I would pay attention during the sermons, but at other times my mind would wonder and be distracted by other things. My daily devotions were very erratic and I would find it hard to find time for them.

Earlier this year I began to have periods of doubt concerning the Bible's authenticity, the truth of Creation, and even the existence of God. I would answer my questions and doubts by reading creationist literature and by praying to God. God then showed me that believing in His existence and the Bible's authenticity was not enough to get me to Heaven, as it says in James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

Gradually, I realized that I was not truly saved, and despite all my efforts, I was not a true Christian. I did not have a sense of peace and security at all, and at times I would be despairing over my soul's state.

Then it was that I began to read my Bible and pray more often than previously. I really wanted to have for myself the peace and assurance that other Christians possessed. Looking back on this, I realize that God was revealing Himself to me. As it says in Matthew 11:25, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Even though I thought that I had a reasonable knowledge of the Scriptures, the reality was that I was totally ignorant of the things of God.

For several months after this, I continued seeking: reading my Bible and asking God for salvation, but I never felt any spiritual change throughout this period. I did not seek help from anyone because I did not want anyone to worry about me, nor was it something that I wanted to talk about when someone asked me about it.

This year, however, I went with my family to the annual Cardiff Summer Conference. It was a time of blessing throughout the whole week: powerful preaching and great spiritual encouragement. On the Thursday evening, Rev. John Greer preached on Acts 2:41, focussing on the need of repentance. It was a very powerful sermon and it struck me very deeply. When the sermon had finished, I knew that I needed to do something about my state, but I did not know what to do.

My dad then noticed that I was looking depressed and started talking to me. I did not know what to say to him but he understood that I had been affected by Mr. Greer's preaching. We found Pastor and told him about my concerns for my soul and about salvation. Pastor then asked questions about how I had sought for salvation. I then realized that *I had been trusting in my prayer to save me*. I had thought that all I had to do was to pray to God and all my sins would be forgiven. God then showed me that *I had to put my trust in Christ to save me*, not in my prayer. I then put my trust in Jesus Christ, who had died for my sins. Although I had known about His death before this happened, it never felt as real and as personal to me as it did then. After I prayed to God, putting my trust in Christ, I felt a sense of peace and security I had not known before. I knew I did not have to worry about things like I had previously done, and I had the comfort of having Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour.

A SHORT TREATISE CONCERNING A TRUE AND ORDERLY GOSPEL CHURCH

Benjamin Griffith

Part 5

OF THE COMMUNION OF CHURCHES.

Every particular congregational church incorporated by and according to the institution of Christ in the Gospel, and duly organized according to the pattern of the primitive churches, hath sufficient power from Christ to call and ordain its own officers; so that no man, or set of men, have authority to choose officers for them, or impose any officers on them, without their previous knowledge and voluntary consent.

Deacons are to be chosen by the multitude, Acts 6:2, 3. Elders were ordained in every church by election or suffrage of the church, Acts 14:23; and every particular church, as such, assembled with her proper elders, hath sufficient power to receive members, Acts 2:41; Romans 14:7.

And in the exercise of any acts of discipline, such a church being convened with her own officers or elders in the name of Christ, may act according to the gospel rule in any case, even to excommunicate such members as are found to be obstinate in disorders, or heretical in principles, after due admonition, or such as are guilty of gross and scandalous immoralities in conversation etc., independent on any other church power superior to itself, or higher judicatory lodged in any man or any set of men, by any institution of Christ: and therefore, the elders of a church, meeting in the absence of the members, or convened with the elders of other churches, are not entrusted with a power to act for a church in admission of members, ordination, or censures, etc. and it is the duty of such a church to admonish any of her members or officers, their teacher or pastor, Colossians 4:17, and exclude any too, when their crimes require, according to the rule of the Gospel.

And such particular congregational churches, constituted and organized according to the mind of Christ revealed in the New Testament, are all equal in power and dignity, and we read of no disparity between them, or subordination among them, that should make a difference between the acts

of their mutual communion, so as the acts of one church should be acts of authority, and the acts of others should be acts of obedience or subjection, although they may vastly differ in gifts, abilities and usefulness.

Such particular distinct churches, agreeing in gospel doctrine and practice, may and ought to maintain communion together in many duties, which may tend to the mutual benefit and edification of the whole: and thereby one church that hath plenty of gifts, may and ought, if possible, to supply another that lacketh, Song of Solomon 8:8. They may have mutual giving and receiving, Philippians 4:15. And mutual translation, recommendation or dismissal of members from one church to another, as occasion may require. It is to be noted that persons called to office are not to be dismissed as officers, but as members; though another church may call such to the same office again.

By virtue also of such communion, the members of one such church may, where they are known, occasionally partake at the Lord's Table with a sister church. Yet notwithstanding such communion of churches, by voluntary consent and confederation, the officers of one particular church, may not act as officers in another church, in any act of government, without a particular call thereunto from the other church where they occasionally come.

It is expedient that particular churches constituted in the way and manner of the ends declared in the former part of this narrative when they are planted by the providence of God, so as they may have opportunity and advantage so to do, should, by their mutual agreement, appoint proper times and places, to meet by their respective messengers or delegates, to consider of such things as may be for the common benefit of all such churches, for their peace, prosperity, and mutual edification, and what may be for the furtherance of the Gospel, and the interest of Christ in the world.

And forasmuch as it falls out many times that particular churches have to do with doubtful and difficult matters, or differences in point of doctrine or administration, like the church of Antioch of old, wherein either of the churches in general are concerned, or any one church in their peace, union or edification; or any member or members of a church are injured, in or by any proceedings in censures not agreeable to gospel rule and order; it is according to the mind of Christ, that many churches holding communion

together, should meet by their messengers and delegates to consider of and to give advice in or about such matters in difference; and their sentiments to be reported to all the churches concerned; and such messengers and delegates convened in the name of Christ, by the voluntary consent of the several churches in such mutual communion, may declare and determine of the mind of the Holy Ghost revealed in Scripture, concerning things in difference; and may decree the observation of things that are true and necessary, because revealed and appointed in the Scripture. And the churches will do well to receive, own and observe such determinations, on the evidence and authority of the mind of the Holy Ghost in them, as in Acts 15:29. Yet such delegates thus assembled, are not entrusted or armed with any coercive power, or any superior jurisdiction over the churches concerned, so as to impose their determinations on them or their officers, under the penalty of excommunication, or the like. See the *Philadelphia Confession*, Chapter 26; sections 14, 15. See also Dr. Owen: *On the Nature of the Gospel Church*, Chapter. 11; and Dr. Goodwin, Vol. 4. Chap. 8,9,10. etc. *Of the Government of the Churches of Christ*.

Concluded

CHRIST'S KINGSHIP AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

William Luff

Solomon, who wrote the Proverbs, was undoubtedly a type of Christ. This was particularly true in his kingship, "There is another King, one Jesus" (Acts 18:7) – one "greater than Solomon" (Matt. 12:42) – one of whom it is said, "The government shall be upon His shoulder" (Is. 9:6) – a King anointed (Ps. 89:20), crowned (Ps. 21:3), enthroned (Ps. 2:6), girded (Ps. 145:3), proclaimed (John 12:15).

He is "King of peace" (Heb. 7:2), King over all the earth (Zech. 14:9), King of glory (Ps. 24:10). He is King over creation. The sun is His crown, the snowpeak His ivory throne, the lightning flash the waving of His sceptre, the earthquake the stamping of His foot, awing the world into silence. He is King in providence.

“He overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs;
On worms of earth the King of kings
Bestows His counsels and His cares.”

But pre-eminently King over all principalities and powers – angelic, Satanic, and human – for or against (Phil. 2:10). Thus He rules over some things *without* their will, over others *against* their will, and over others *with* their will.

William Dyer, writing about 1666, has the following: - “Christ is first, His enemies’ King; secondly, His saints’ King; thirdly, His Father’s King. The first, He rules over; the second, He rules in; the third, He rules for.”

Let us approach this grand subject with lowly hearts: from the depths of humility we shall best see this bright star.

“*Put not forth thyself in the presence of this king*” (Prov. 25:6). A spider may take hold with her hands, and dwell in the king’s palace; but let her not build her nest in his crown (Prov. 30:28). Men, sinful men, put themselves forth in the presence of Christ, the sinless Man? Never! Self must retire. “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). “What are all the mighty men, the great, the honourable men, of the earth to Jesus Christ? They are but like a little bubble in the water; for if all the nations in comparison to God be but as the drop of a bucket, or the dust of the balance, as the prophet speaks in Isa. 40:15, O how little, then, must be the kings of the earth!” Shall we who are not even kings set forth ourselves before the King of kings? Yet, as Miss Havergal sweetly wrote, “He has graciously accepted the poor little fleeting breath and speck of dust which was all we had to offer.”

“*Mercy and truth preserve the king; and his throne is upholden in mercy*” (Prov. 20:28). Therefore His throne is “for ever and ever” (Heb. 1:8). A similar passage occurs in Rev. 15:3: “Just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints.” And in Zech. 9:9, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass.” Few kings unite these qualities – mercy and truth, justice and lowliness. He sits upon a spotless white throne of justice; but the sprinkled blood has made it a “throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16). Thus in His righteousness He can say, “I will be merciful to their

unrighteousness” (Heb. 8:12). Many thrones are upholden by cruelty and craft. Not so His throne. Here is cause for joy; for “when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.” (Prov. 29:2).

“In the multitude of people is the king’s honour” (Prov. 14:28). When the Queen opened the Indian and Colonial Exhibition it was stated in the papers that not far short of three hundred million people were there represented, all owning the sovereignty of Her Majesty; but what is this vast multitude to those who have acknowledged, do, and shall acknowledge Christ as King? “The kingdom is the Lord’s; He is Governor among the nations” (Ps. 22:28). “There was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him” (Dan. 7:14). That day will come when it shall be said, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). Multitudes followed Jesus of old, “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev. 7:9). “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand” (John 3:35); thus fulfilling the words of Ps. 89:27: “I will make Him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.”

“The king’s favour is toward a wise servant; but his wrath is against him that causeth shame” (Prov. 14:35). “Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant?” (Matt. 24:45). He is a *watcher*, watching against thieves and for his Master. He is also a *worker* (Luke 12:40), doing according to his Lord’s will (verse 47); not enjoying himself, but attending to the household. “to give them their portion of meat in due season.” He is also a *winner of souls* (Prov. 11:30), carrying on his Master’s great business.

The wise servant is known by his *ear*, which “seeketh knowledge” (Prov. 18:15), and “hearkeneth unto counsel” (12:15); also by his lips which “disperse knowledge” (15:7). The King’s favour is toward such an one. What that favour is, Solomon tells us in the following words:- *“In the light of the king’s countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain”* (Prov. 16:15).

Here we have sunshine and shower. Favour in the heart gives light in the countenance, and a smile is a sunbeam of life. A butterfly had been hidden away through the long winter in a dark thatch, but one spring day the warm beams of the sun shone in: it was the light of the King’s face, and brought

life, wooing the insect forth revived and glad. The King's countenance – the light of the King's countenance.

Quoting F. R. Havergal, we may say, "God's love is not a cold, beautiful, far-off star, but a sunshine that comes and enfolds us, making us warm, and glad, and strong, and bright, and beautiful." Add to this "the latter rain," and the refreshing is complete. Oh, what showers of blessing come in His favour, arching us in a bow of promise! We have both in some old lines –

The Sunshine

"The sick, with frequent sighs,
Pass many a tedious night;
But when the morning beams arise,
How cheering is the light!

"So when sad sinners pass
A legal night of fears
And see the Sun of Righteousness,
How sweet His light appears!

"It bids their guilt depart,
A heaven in view it brings;
The peace of God revives the heart,
And life eternal springs."

The Shower

"The seed in sorrow sown,
Springs up and thrives apace;
New verdure on the field is grown,
And wears a smiling face.

"Yet grain, of kindly birth,
Will sigh for help again,
Nor can be fostered by the earth
Without a latter rain.

"The Gospel fields must call
Upon the Gospel King;
And when He bids His showers fall,
Oh, how they laugh and sing!"

"Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right" (Prov. 16:13). If this be true of ordinary kings, how much more is it true of Him who is called "King of righteousness" (Heb. 7:2), who "shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32:1), with a "sceptre of righteousness" (Heb. 1:8). How blessed to be the object of such a King's delight and love! "Behold, the King hath delight in thee, and all His servants love thee" (1 Sam. 18:22). But who has righteous lips? Righteous lips betoken a righteous heart, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10). "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isa. 6:7). Here is the secret! Touched lips "drop as the honeycomb" (Song of Sol. 7:11), and are the King's

delight. Such lips are righteous lips, and win the King's kiss. (Song of Sol. 1:2).

Having seen the brightness of the king's favour, let us look a moment upon the dark storm-cloud of his anger. *"The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whose provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul"* (Prov. 20:2). What terror is produced in the forest of the roar of the king of beasts! An awful hint at the fearfulness of Christ's anger. Kiss Him, lest ye perish from the way (Ps. 2:12). He who does not, is in danger from two lions – the devil (1 Pet. 5:8, 9), and the wrath of the King. "Whoso provoketh Him to anger." Will any do this? Oh if the Lion-King were not marvelously meek, He would never bear our provocations. But the end will come. "The powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Rom. 13:1, 2).

"The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass" (Prov. 19:12). What a contrast! The fierce noisy lion, and the soft gentle dew. The one is destruction: the other, life. How can we escape the curse and win the blessing?

"The wrath of a king is as messenger of death: but a wise man will pacify it" (Prov. 16:14). Let rebels beware! The King is making out their death warrant, and the "messengers of death" are already mounted. How can we pacify Him? Send an embassy and desire conditions of peace (Luke 14:32). "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously" (Hos. 14:2). The answer will be, "I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him" (verse 4). Then shall we have the dew of favour (verse 5). Submit! for "yielding pacifieth great offences" (Eccl. 10:4). Sweet words, "I will be quiet, and will be no more angry" (Ezek. 16:42). "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee" (Isa. 54:9). Blessed experience! "Though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me" (Isa. 12:1).

"A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgement" (Prov. 16:10). Christ is "the King" by Divine Right, therefore His sentence is a Divine sentence. A sentence of forgiveness – "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2). A sentence of liberty – "Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1). "His mouth transgresseth not in judgement," so that we may safely rest upon the sentence He has pronounced. "It is God that justifieth" (Rom.

8:33).

The marginal reading in Proverbs 16:10 is, “Divination is in the lips of kings.” Undoubtedly this is true of our King. “Wot ye not that such a King as He can divine?” (Gen. 44:15) The future may be dark to us, that we cannot divine, but the Lord knows. This leads up to another passage: “*The honour of kings is to search out a matter*” (Prov. 25:2): to fathom all mysteries, plots, rebellions, cases of oppression and wrong. “There is nothing hid which shall not be manifested” (Mark 4:23). “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). He knows all His subjects’ hearts and smarts, wants and ways, fears and tears.

“He knows!
Yes, Jesus knows, just what you cannot tell –
He understands so well!
The silence of the heart is heard,
He does not need a single word,
He thinks of you,
He watcheth and He careth too:
He pitieth! He loveth! All this flows
In one sweet word: He knows!” – (F.R.H.)

“*The heart of kings is unsearchable*” (Prov. 30:3). Christ can search me; but I cannot search Him. There always must be a mystery here. The King does not explain Himself to His subjects. Thank God, if the King’s heart is unsearchable, it is full of love. It is an unsearchable store of wealth (Eph. 3:8). The Spanish ambassador heard of treasure of St. Mark, at Venice: thrusting his hand in, he felt for the bottom, saying, “My great master’s treasury differs from yours in this: he hath no bottom as yours hath,” alluding to the mines of the Indies. So with the heart of our King. One has said, “Christ is a mine of gold, which we must dig till we find heaven.” “*Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness*” (Prov. 25:5). How this is illustrated (Matt. 22:13). The feast was spread: the guests were gathered: all was light, joy, and praise: but when the King came in, “He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment;” and the word was given, “Take him away.” Solomon’s idea was that of wicked courtiers; happily none such can abide in the presence of our King, to influence His mind; indeed, one glance of His eye is enough.

“A king that sitteth in the throne of judgement, scattereth away all evil with his eyes” (Prov. 20:8). *“A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them”* (ver. 26). Our King is Judge, and appoints no deputy – “a king that sitteth in the throne” – while the wicked are as chaff, which the wind driveth away. He scattereth, or winnoweth them, and bringeth the threshing-wheel over them (Isa. 28:27). A wicked man and a righteous king cannot be long together: “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement” (Ps. 1:5). According to the book of Proverbs, a good king pleaded for the poor. *“Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.”* (Prov. 31:8, 9). The day of Christ’s humiliation is over, and He is exalted (Phil. 2:8): but does He forget those appointed to death?

Let an extract from William Gurnall answer: “Suppose a king’s son should get out of besieged city, where he had left his wife and children, and these are all ready to die by sword or famine if supply come not soon; could this prince, when arrived at his father’s house, please himself with the delights of the court, and forget the distress of his family? Or rather would he not come post to his father (having their cries and groans always in his ears) and before he ate or drank, do his errand to his father, and entreat him, if ever he loved him, that he would send all the force of his kingdom to raise the siege, rather than any of his dear relations should perish.” Forget his loved ones! Why, He sent the Spirit, “as soon almost as he was warm in His seat at His Father’s right hand.” Hark! I hear the old familiar voice saying, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21). Said one, “There are many kings that undo their subjects, but Christ makes His subjects; many kings make their subjects beggars, but Christ makes His subjects kings; many kings put their subjects to death, but Christ died that His subjects might live; they give their subjects titles, but Christ gives all His subjects grace and glory.” Forget! “Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory” (John 17:24; Isa. 35:2).” Such a king is *“a king, against whom there is no rising up”* (Prov. 30:31). He rules the heart, the will, the conscience. “Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us” (Isa. 26:13). Revolt would be useless. The kings of the earth set themselves to try the business; but it was a failure (Ps. 2; Matt. 26: 16, 26:59; Acts, 4:27). Who would rise up against One who could say, “All power is given

unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18), to which is added, “authority to execute judgement also” (John, 5:27).

Another reading of this verse – Proverbs 30:31 - speaks of the stately march of a king *“when his army is with him.”* A united host, led by their royal lord. A grand sight. Do we not get a glimpse of it in Rev. 19:11-16: “Behold, a white horse, and He that doth judge and make war... And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” He is “King of Kings,” and will have the throne. In the meantime let us rest upon the word, “He must reign” (1 Cor. 15:25). He does reign. Not only when the things go as we wish, but when they disappoint us and we have to learn that at least we do not reign. Our plains may fail, our programme fall through, our desires be withheld, but HE MUST REIGN.

They Know His Voice

“They know His voice,” though “words be good,”
And “speeches fair” that strangers use,
The sheep, fore-warned, will still refuse
To follow such.

‘Tis not the words alone, the voice
That sayeth “Follow, follow Me,”
From Jordan’s waves to Calvary, -
This voice we need.

Only this voice can draw our hearts,
Only this voice to us is sweet,
We gladly follow at his feet
To pastures fair.

And if the way be stony now,
Our Shepherd goes before, and makes
The roughness easier for our sakes,
Lest we should faint.

And ever backward on the wind,
Is borne His voice of music sweet,
The while we follow at His feet
To Paradise.

THE STORY OF “THE LOVE OF GOD”

Throughout the centuries, men's hearts have often been comforted by thoughts of the boundless love of God. Some years ago the patient in a hospital room found mental relief by writing on one of the walls of his room the following profound and moving lines:

"Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade: To write
the love of God above would drain the ocean dry. Nor could the scroll contain
the whole though stretched from sky to sky."

In the ensuing years these lines were often quoted, and many hearts were touched. Early in the twentieth century two further stanzas and chorus, with a simple melody, were written by F. M. Lehman, and he used the lines above as the third stanza. The melody was harmonized by his daughter, Mrs W. W. Mays. However it was not for nearly twenty years later that the song became well-known and people began to sing it.

Inquiries were made about "that third stanza," since many felt that the language of those lines indicated an earlier source, perhaps somewhere in the distant past. They felt that the lines had only been recalled and quoted by the patient in the hospital.

After thorough searching in many libraries, someone mentioned the quest to a Jewish rabbi who responded by saying, "Yes, I can tell you who the author of those lines is. Rabbi Hertz, chief rabbi in the British Empire at one time, wrote a book entitled 'A Book of Jewish Thought.' Go to a Jewish bookstore, and on page 213 you will find that this poem was written in A.D. 1050 by a Jewish poet, Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai." It is in the hymnology of the Synagogue used for the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).'

These many years ago this man, standing perhaps on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, began to contemplate the great love of Jehovah, God of Israel. As this great love swept over Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai's soul, he became totally lost in wonder at the thought of God's infinite and measureless love. Nehorai's poetic lines lay dormant through the succeeding centuries, until, by Divine Providence. God put it into the heart of a Gentile song-writer, F. M. Lehman, to add the first two stanzas and refrain in 1917, in Pasadena, California.

1. The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with
care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

Refrain

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—
The saints' and angels' song.

2. When hoary time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms
fall,
When men who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains
call,
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—
The saints' and angels' song.

3. Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment
made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the
whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Frederick M. Lehman, 1917

FAITH

David Clarkson (1621 – 1686)

The proper and principal object of faith is the person of Christ; not the promise of Christ, not the benefits of Christ, but the person of Christ... Faith is not an assent to a proposition affirmed, but affiance in a Saviour offered; not the benefits firstly and principally. Faith unites the soul to Christ; it is the bond of our conjugal union. Now, we marry not the dowry, but the person.

That faith respects Christ Himself in the first place, appears by the notions of faith, which we may collect from Scripture:

Faith is the **HAND** of the soul; so it receives Christ Himself, who is the gift of God (Jn 4:10).

It is the **ARM** of the soul; so it embraces Christ (Song of Solomon 5:4).

It is the **EYE** of the soul; so it looks upon Christ, as the stung Israelites upon the brazen serpent (Jn 3:14, 15).

It is the **MOUTH** of the soul; so it feeds on Christ the bread of heaven (Jn 6:32-34).

It is the **FOOT** of the soul; so it comes to Christ (Matt. 11:28).

It is the **LIPS** of the soul; so it kisses Christ (Ps 2:12).

In all it has an immediate respect to Christ, to His person.

TITLES OF THE PSALMS

Malcolm H. Watts

Altogether, there are 116 psalms with titles or inscriptions: the other 44 are sometimes called *orphan psalms*. The precise meaning of these titles is sometimes uncertain, but they deal with various matters:

1. Authorship: e.g. “A psalm of David” or “of Asaph” (Pss 37; 73);
2. Nature: “Maschil” – “teaching” i.e. “A teaching psalm”, cf. Ps. 32:8 – a cognate or kindred verb is “to instruct” (e.g. Pss. 32, 78, 142); “Michtam”, possibly from ‘to cover’, and therefore a psalm with a hidden meaning, or a psalm revealing some great mystery (Pss. 16, 56-60);
3. Setting: e.g. Ps. 3 – “A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son”; Ps. 53 – “Upon Mahalath” – “sickness” or “disease” (cf. Ex. 15:26) – possibly a spiritual condition cf. Isaiah 1:5. Compare “Upon Mahalath Leannoth” – “sickness, or disease, in order to humble” (Ps. 88);
4. Classification: “A Song of degrees” or “of ascents” (Pss. 120-134), probably sung as pilgrims “went up” to Jerusalem at the time of the annual festivals cf. 1 Sam. 1:3; Ps. 122:4;
5. Music: “On Neginoth” – “With music of stringed instruments” (Pss. 4, 6, 54, 55, 67, 76); “Upon Neginah” – “With music of a stringed instrument”; and “Upon Nehiloth”, “with music of wind instruments” (Ps. 5). “Upon Gittith”, a feminine adjective of the Philistine town “Gath”, and so possibly an instrument (or tune?) which came from there (Pss. 8, 81, 84);
6. Voice: “Upon Alamoith” – literally, “virgins” and therefore “sung by sopranos” (Ps. 46); “Upon Sheminith”, “the eighth”, perhaps an octave lower – tenor or, more probably, bass (Pss. 6,12);
7. Tune: “Shiggaion” – derived from a verb “to wander”, possibly a tune with changing rhythm (Ps. 7); “Upon Muth-labben”, “the dying of the son”, the name of a tune or the opening words of a song associated with a particular tune (Ps. 9);

8. Subject: “Upon Jonath-elem-rohokim” could be the name of a tune called, “The silent dove afar off” (Ps. 56); or it could describe the contents, how David felt when in Gath, far from the Sanctuary and silent as to public praise; “Upon Aijeleth Shahar”, again could be a tune, “The hind of the morning” (Ps. 22), but it could also be (as Martin Luther thought) a reference to Christ, the innocent and lovely hind, who was hunted and driven to the ground, but who, before daybreak, rose up and leapt to the very heights; “Upon Shoshannim”, “the lilies”, and, since lilies were the emblem of sacred love (Song 2:1,2; cf. 1 Kings 7:19,32,36), this suggests a psalm about the excellence of our Lord’s person, beauty and love (Pss. 45, 69; cf. “Shoshannin Eduth” – “Lilies, a testimony”, Psalm 80), and “Shushan Eduth” – “Lily of testimony”, Ps. 60);

9. Purpose: “To bring to remembrance” (Pss. 38, 70).

10. Occasion: “At the dedication of the house of David” (Ps. 30); “For the Sabbath day” (Ps. 92) - Jewish authorities tell us there was a Psalm for each day in the worship of the Temple: Ps. 24 for the first day, 48 for the second, 82 for the third, 94 for the fourth, 81 for the fifth, 93 for the sixth, and 92 for the seventh.

MISSIONARY WORK

Glyndwr Davies

The Bible lays great emphasis on missionary work:

1. The **first** message at the birth of Christ was a missionary message – Luke 2:10.
2. The **first** prayer Christ taught was a missionary prayer – Matthew 6:10.
3. The **first** disciple, Andrew, became the first missionary – John 1:41.
4. The **first** message of the Risen Lord was a missionary message – John 20:17.
5. The **first** command of the Risen Lord to His disciples was a missionary command – John 20:21.
6. The **first** apostolic sermon was a missionary sermon – Acts 2:17-39.
7. The **first** reason the Lord gave for Christian love was a missionary reason,

“By **this** shall all men **know**” – John 13:35.

8. The **first** coming of Christ was for missionary work – Luke 6:13-21.

9. The **second** coming of Christ is to be hastened by missionary work – Matthew 24:14.

10. Our Saviour’s **last** command was a missionary command – Matthew 28:19.

EPILOGUE

“Remember Lot’s wife.” Luke 17:32

Scripture contains examples of people whose lives we should seek to emulate. People like Enoch who ‘walked with God’; Abraham who was called the ‘friend of God’; Ruth who was a godly woman; David who was said to be ‘a man after God’s own heart’; Daniel who was a great man of prayer. Many other helpful examples could be given, not just from Scripture, but from the lives of our spiritual forefathers. But there are also examples of people who did not keep the faith, and Lot’s wife is one of them.

Notice it is our Lord Jesus Christ who gave this warning to his own disciples and not to unbelievers. The sad story is recorded in Genesis 19. Lot’s wife had undoubtedly spent time in Abraham’s family before he and Lot went their separate ways. She and her family had been rescued by Abraham when the four kings had captured Sodom and Gomorrah. She had benefitted from the presence of the two angels sent to rescue Lot and his family before God executed judgement upon the wicked cities. Lot’s wife had known all these blessings. The angels had specifically commanded that they should not look back, but she disobeyed! The consequence was that God turned her into a pillar of salt as judgement upon her sin, and an example for us all.

By looking back at Sodom she revealed her true heart was not that of a servant of the Lord. She may have physically left Sodom (dragged out by an angel), but a love of Sodom and its ways had not left her. Christ has told us to beware of having a love for the world and its ways hidden in our hearts.

Doing all the right things will not finally save us. God looks at our hearts. We have negative examples in Scripture of pitfalls to avoid. We also have many positive examples in Scripture to teach us how to live and serve God. But the

greatest example we can seek to follow is our Lord Jesus Christ.

‘Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.’ Hebrews 12:2.

Bill Norton