

CONTENTS

Behold the Lamb of God	2
Fellowship News	4
A Man After God's Own Heart	6
Almost Too Good to be True	13
Devotion to the Bible	14
The Bairns	15
Acceptance with God	15
The Jew	17
Epilogue	24

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

Far away in a part of Germany called the Black Forest, there is an ancient church, and over its doorway there is the carving of a little lamb, lying stretched out dead. A moving story lies behind this.

Many years ago, the tower of this church became quite unsafe and it was likely to collapse. The people who lived in that place sent for a man who had the reputation of being a skilled architect and sculptor and he was willing to undertake responsibility for the repair of the tower.

The first thing he did was to set up high scaffolding which he put all around it. This was for the masons to stand on while they worked, and each day he climbed up on the scaffolding to be amongst them and to direct their work.

One day he came as usual to see how things were progressing. He mounted the scaffold and began to speak to the workmen. He had been up there many times before, and he had become rather careless of danger. Suddenly his foot slipped, and with a loud cry he fell. Terror seized him as he realized there was nothing but death before him. In seconds he reached the ground, falling upon it with an awful thud.

As fast as they could, the workmen hurried to where he lay apparently lifeless. In fear and grief, they tried to lift from the ground what they believed was his dead body; but they were amazed to find he was only a little stunned by his fall, and in no way seriously hurt.

The secret of his escape soon became evident. There, on the spot where the man had fallen, was stretched a lifeless and crushed lamb. It had been feeding beneath the tower; and God, in His mercy, had mercifully allowed that it should stand just where it could break the fall of the poor sculptor - and so the lamb had died instead of him.

Do you not think it must have deeply moved his heart, as he stood and looked at the little innocent victim that had been sacrificed to save him? I am sure it did. He felt so grateful that he asked leave to carve the image of the dead lamb

over the doorway; and there it is to this day, just as the sculptor carved it many years ago.

I wonder if he thought, as he worked at the carving, of another Lamb, who had died for poor sinners - Jesus the Lamb of God? I cannot say; but I hope others may think of Him when they look at the carving and hear the story behind it. It would, indeed, be well, if the sculptured lamb made their thoughts turn to Jesus, that precious Saviour, who laid down His life that poor, fallen, helpless ones might be saved.

It was a very bad thing to fall down from that tower, but, you know, we have all had a greater fall? Yes, we have; for God at the beginning, made man innocent and upright, but, sadly, he listened to the devil's lie, and so he fell - he fell from God, and, as a result, we are all now sinners, "none righteous, no, not one"; and if God, "in His great love wherewith He loved us," had not given His Son to save us, we should have fallen down, down, down, into hell forever.

But how did the Lord Jesus save us? He died for us upon the cross of Calvary. There the Lamb of God came under all the weight of our guilt and the wrath that we deserved, and now God says, that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Many years after Jesus had laid down His life for us, one of His disciples, called John, had a vision of things in heaven. There were many beautiful and wonderful things to see there, but I think nothing was so glorious to that disciple as the sight of the throne of God, and in the midst of the throne there "stood a Lamb as it had been slain" - there, in heaven, was the Lord Jesus, God's Lamb. How happy it must have made John to see Him living there - not an image only of a dead lamb, like the sculptor's over the doorway, but a Lamb alive and alive for evermore.

But there is something more about the Lamb of God that I must tell you before I conclude. It is something most solemn and terrible - the last thing God tells us about His Lamb. God tells us that there is a terrible day coming, when all, who will not now come to the Saviour, will have to meet Him as their Judge, and then bear "the wrath of the Lamb."

How terrible is this! The meek, patient, long-suffering Lord Jesus appearing at last in dreadful wrath to those who have refused His love, and who would not come to Him that they might be saved.

I do sincerely hope that none of you will be among the number of those who will have to face "the wrath of the Lamb."

How good it is that "to-day is the day of salvation," and that to-day poor, needy sinners may turn to Him and call upon Him to save their never-dying souls! "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

We rejoice with Pastor Simon and Anneke on the safe arrival of a little boy early on Wednesday morning 15 January. We surround them all with our love and prayers during these early days of new parenthood and give grateful thanks to God for this precious gift.

On Monday 20 January, we gathered in the church with mixed feelings as we remembered with great affection our beloved member, Pauline Tunstell, who passed into the presence of her Lord on 27 December 2019. Since 2017, both Pauline and Alan, her husband, had been lovingly cared for at Bethany Care Home, Tadley, near Basingstoke. Alan was called home in June 2018, and Pauline continued to enjoy visits from her daughter, Liz, and other family members and friends. The service of thanksgiving for Pauline's life was conducted by Pastor Watts and Pastor Green. The address was given by Pastor Watts who reminded us that although Pauline had departed briefly from us, she was now "with Christ which is far better." (Philippians 1:21). The committal took place at Barford St Martin Parish Cemetery, after which, many gathered at Grove House where light refreshments were made available. We continue to remember Liz and Steve, Paul and Claire and their children, praying that they may know God's comfort at this time.

Some of us travelled from Salisbury to Cheltenham on Friday 24 January, to attend the funeral service at Providence Chapel of our dear friend Pastor Mick Harris who was called home on 23 December 2019. The service was conducted by Pastor Pooyan Mehrshahi. He and Pastor Watts both spoke movingly, recalling precious memories of this dearly beloved friend, Pastor, Elder and Mentor, who will be sorely missed. The Gospel, which was so dear to the heart of Pastor Harris, was clearly set forth, and we pray it will bear fruit in many a heart. We lovingly remember dear Jean in our prayers, together with Paul and Katherine and all the family - may God's presence be a comforting reality to them during these days of sorrow.

We have been much in prayer over recent weeks for Chloe H, whose mother, Julie, is chronically sick. This has necessitated frequent admissions to hospital, and it has fallen to Chloe to take the responsibility when these emergencies have arisen. We pray that Chloe, in these early days of her Christian faith, may see God's hand of love in all these things, and be enabled to say with the psalmist, "I was brought low and he helped me."

We held our Anniversary Services over the weekend of 1-2 February: the church's 67th and our Pastor's 49th. Our guest preacher was Rev Graeme Craig, minister of the Ayr congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). At the Saturday afternoon meeting, Mr Craig directed us to 2 Chronicles 17, where we considered Amasiah, one of Jehoshaphat's generals, who "willingly offered himself to the Lord". This was a great challenge to us as we seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in the home, in our church, as well as in our nation. We were pleased to welcome friends from other churches who joined us in sharing our anniversary, and refreshments after the service gave opportunity for further fellowship. Mr. Craig preached at both services on the Lord's Day. In the morning we considered the encouraging promise found in Psalm 102:16 - "the LORD shall build up Zion: he shall appear in his glory". At the evening service, the gospel was compellingly set forth as we looked at Hebrews 2:3 and thought upon the greatness of salvation and the danger of neglecting it. The day concluded with an After Church Fellowship when we were introduced to Patrick Hamilton, the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation who, in 1528, was burned at the stake for his faith, aged only 24. As a result of his untimely death, many were brought to faith in the gospel.

With this challenging picture in our minds, the weekend came to a close. We give thanks to God for the faithful ministry of our Pastor over these 49 years, and for keeping the light of the gospel burning for yet another year from Emmanuel Church.

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Isaiah 62:1

A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Malcolm H. Watts

Apparently, it had been agreed after Saul's anointing that Samuel would meet Saul at Gilgal for sacrifice and worship before major engagement with the Philistines. Samuel was late in coming, and, rather than waiting for Samuel's arrival, as he had been instructed, Saul offered a burnt offering himself and prepared for battle. When Samuel eventually arrived at Gilgal, Saul tried to justify himself and his action, but Samuel soundly rebuked him for serious disobedience and told him that, as a result, God would choose another to be king – *"the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart"* (1 Samuel 13:14).

'A man after His own heart' – It is a striking thing that this should be found in the Word of God since every man's heart is sin-stained and full of corruption; but here the reference is to a man who, *through grace*, has experienced a change of heart and is inwardly and spiritually like God (Ps. 51:10; Ezek. 36:26,27).

'A man after His own heart' – Here is true religion. Essentially, it is a matter of the heart. God must be known and felt *there*, in His love, power, and comfort; and there must be formed purposes of virtue and holy resolutions, which will make us steadfast in living a godly and pure life (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 5:8)

'A man after His own heart' – A heart like God's is *what God desires, what He takes pleasure in and delights in*. He cares not for mere outward profession, and certainly not for pretence of purity; but He looks to the inner man of the

heart, especially when it accords with His own nature, and leads to true obedience and service (Ps. 45:13; 51:6; Jn. 4:23; Rom. 2:29).

What sort of man is it that is after God's heart? The Scripture helps us to answer this question.

First of all, a man after God's heart is one who delights in divine, spiritual communion.

You see, God delights in fellowship with Himself and if someone is like God, he will also delight in such fellowship.

It was a sceptic who is supposed to have asked Augustine, What was God doing before He created the world? Augustine, apparently, replied with the words, He was making a Hell for people like you, who refuse to believe the Truth. Perhaps a better answer would have been that, as the ever-blessed One, He was finding happiness within Himself, in the sweetest communion of the Holy Three – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father rejoiced in the love of the Son and in the love of the Spirit, even as they delighted in His eternal and wonderful love. All three Persons of the Holy Trinity were entirely happy among themselves, for God does not need anything outside of Himself. As one theologian has said, 'God is a sufficient, and self-sufficient, and an all-sufficient Being'.

So, God loved communion with Himself. '*A man after His own heart*' will therefore be a man who also loves communion with God and wants nothing more than to keep close to Him. This is the man whom God will graciously own and bless.

Secondly, a man after God's heart is one who endeavours to maintain holiness of heart and life.

In Scripture, God is described as essentially and inexpressibly holy. He bears the name of 'the holy One of Israel' and is said to be 'glorious in holiness': hence, the seraphim render their three-fold description of praise: 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts'. God may be said to be completely taken up with

holiness; and ‘*a man after God’s heart*’, will therefore be one who also studies holiness, shunning all evil, and even the appearance of it.

As Thomas Brooks, the Puritan, says, “Holiness is the bond that ties God and souls together.” He goes on to say, “Keep up holiness among you, and ye shall keep me among you, saith God; but if you turn away from holiness, I will undoubtedly turn away from you: a holy God will keep company with none but those who are holy.”

‘Ye shall be holy; for I am holy’ (Lev. 11:44); ‘If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie’ (1 Jn.1:6).

Thirdly, a man after God’s heart is one who deeply appreciates the scriptures of truth.

We know that God delights in His Word. Why, He spoke it to the prophets and apostles. He put it into written form through a process of inspiration. He preserved it in its original and essential purity. He sent it out to men and women all over the world. He blessed it – and still does bless it – to the saving and sanctifying of precious souls. There can be no doubt about this: God greatly values His Word. “The Lord”, it was, who “*gave the word*.” He describes it as “*my word...that goeth forth out of my mouth*”: and He promises to His people, “I will perform *my good word* toward you” (Ps. 68:11; Isa. 55:11; Jer. 29:10).

‘*A man after God’s heart*’ will value and prize the written Word. Like the psalmist, he will say, ‘I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold’ (Ps. 119:127 cf. v. 72). ‘His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night’ (Ps. 1:2). In the holy Scriptures, he hears ‘good tidings of good’, the very words of God’s ‘salvation’ (Isa. 52:7).

O for heart devotion and heart attachment to the written Word of God! ‘Highly prize the Scriptures’, wrote Thomas Watson. He continued, ‘I have read of Queen Elizabeth I, that at her coronation, she received the Bible presented to her, with both her hands, and kissing it, laid it to her breast, saying, that book had ever been her chief delight.’

Fourthly, a man after God's heart is one who highly esteems, and dearly loves, God's eternal Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

God (the Father) speaks with reference to His Son, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom *my soul delighteth*' (Isa. 42:1). The Son was ever the object of the Divine love: hence, He could say in prayer, 'thou *lovedst me before the foundation of the world*' (Jn. 17:24). The Father viewed Him then with complacency and pleasure, even as the Son later recalled, 'I was by him, as one brought up with him: and *I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him*' (Prov. 8:30). And, in time, this special and ardent love continued, as was confirmed at the river Jordan when the Father's voice was heard, saying, '*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*' (Matt. 3:17).

If our heart is anything like the Father's, we will answer our Lord's question to Peter, 'Lovest thou me?', in the same way he did and with the same words he used – 'Lord, thou knowest all things; *thou knowest that I love thee*' (Jn. 21:17). Loving Him so, we shall seek to know Him in a deeper way, as in the apostolic prayer, '*that I may know him*' (Phil. 3:10); and taken up with Him, we shall make Him our supreme interest, living for Him and to Him, as it is written, '*for me to live is Christ*' (Phil. 1:21 cf. Rom. 14:7,8).

'Thou art the Father's chief delight:
Thy beauty angels view:
Thou art all fair in Zion's sight,
And my Beloved too.

Thy precious name shall joy impart
To all that are Thine own:
In life and death, O may my heart
Be my Beloved's throne.'

- Joseph Irons, 1785-1852

Fifthly, a man after God's heart is one who sincerely loves the company of other believers, especially when they are assembled for public worship.

The Scriptures insist that God loves His people. He loved them before the world began, with an everlasting love. That love He has expressed so wonderfully in the gift of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In His love, He has laid up for them all spiritual blessings. Lovingly He deals with them day by day. And we are told in Romans 8 that His love will remain and that nothing shall ever separate us from that love. So, who is the person after God's heart? The person who loves those whom God loves. Was David a man after God's heart? Yes, he certainly was. He loved 'the saints that are in the earth', whom he called 'the excellent, in whom is all my delight'. In another place, he says, 'Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me'.

It is not always easy. We are to love the Lord's people, even when it is difficult to do so – and it is difficult at times, because experience compels us to say that, at times, some of them can be irritating and upsetting. But we are to love them with all their weaknesses and faults. Why? *because Scripture commands us to love them*: 'See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently' (1 Pet. 1:22); *because grace has given us the closest of relationships with them*: 'Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren...' (1 Thess. 4:9,10); and *because God sets us the greatest example of love for them*: 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another' (1 Jn. 4:11).

Let me put it as strongly as this: you are never more *unlike* God than when you fail to show love to other believers. This is such a solemn truth, is it not?

'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion (through which multitudes pressed to engage in public worship) *more* than all the dwellings of Jacob (their private houses and homes)' (Ps. 87:2). His people feel a similar love for the church when it meets for worship. David, during Absalom's rebellion, driven from the Tabernacle at Jerusalem, expresses the strongest of affections for the House of God: 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!' (Ps. 84:1) And why does he love that place so? He tells us in the following verse. 'My soul longeth,

yea, fainteth, for the *courts of the Lord*' (84:2) – 'the courts' were the areas around God's House where the people gathered and where the services of public worship were conducted. His great desire, next to God Himself, was for His people, assembled for stated, public worship.

As Alexander Patterson says, 'The social genius of Christianity, the example of the apostles and primitive believers, and the express precepts of the Christian law, require the followers of Jesus to gather together oft for public worship...'

Sixthly, a man after God's heart will rejoice in scriptural and spiritual worship, such as evidences the beauty of holiness.

Worship 'in the beauty of holiness' is mentioned a number of times in God's Word, as in 1 Chronicles 16:29, 2 Chronicles 20:21, and in the book of Psalms, Psalm 29:2 and 96:9. It is this which pleases God and this which God seeks, not external adornment or rich and costly altars.

It has been well said that 'the beauty of holiness' implies at least three things:- 'that the worshipper must worship, in the beauty of exact obedience to the Divine commands (the Regulative Principle); that he must worship in the beauty of Christ's righteousness, apprehended by faith; and that he must worship in dependence upon the beautifying influences of the Holy Spirit'.

Emphasizing, in particular, the first point, the writer added: 'if he (that is, the worshipper) sets aside the Divine ordinance, and worships in any way of self-will, he violates every condition of holy and acceptable worship.'

James Fisher's Catechism (1753) makes a similar point. Dealing with the Second Commandment, which, as the Assembly's Shorter Catechism states, 'forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or in any other way not appointed in his word', Fisher explains this further, asking the Question (24), 'May they (images, pictures and the like - MW) be placed in churches for beauty and ornament?' to which Question, this Answer is given, 'No: *the proper ornament of churches is the sound preaching of the gospel, and the pure dispensation of the sacraments, and other ordinances of divine institution.*'

In strictly maintaining the Regulative Principle ('What Scripture does not prescribe (in worship – MW), it forbids'), we are stating that 'the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is *instituted by Himself*, and so *limited by His own revealed will*, that He may not be worshipped...in any other way not *prescribed in the Holy Scripture*' (*The Confession of Faith*).

Putting it simply and plainly, we love what God loves.

Seventhly, a man after God's heart is one who shows great zeal for His cause and His kingdom.

According to the scriptures, there is zeal in God. Recall that verse in Isaiah 9, which, after mention of the enlargement and establishment of Christ's kingdom, states, 'the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this' (v.7). It finds mention in other scriptures: for example, 2 Kings 19:31 and Isaiah 37:32. God's zeal – how shall we define it? In his 'Dictionary of the Holy Bible'. John Brown of Haddington writes, 'God's zeal is His wise, high, and holy regard to His honour, and to the welfare of His people.'

Like God, David had an intense concern for these things. When he brought the ark up to Jerusalem, he did so with real energy and enthusiasm, and subsequently he confessed in one of his psalms, 'the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up' (Ps. 69:9 cf. 119:139).

David stands as a shining example to us. All too often in the Lord's work we lose strength and lose heart. Difficulties may contribute to this; criticisms may play a part; and general fatigue and weariness may be involved; but '*a man after God's heart*' will neither falter nor flag. He will preserve his vision and renew his strength, always praying from the heart, 'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven...For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen'. As one of the Puritans says, 'What you do, it must be done with all the heart and all the might. Consider, religion is not a fancy. You do not worship the vanities of the gentiles, therefore be not dead, cold, and careless. You *worship the living God*, and he will be served with *life, zeal, and strength of affection*'.

God grant to us all that we may be – and always remain – a people ‘after His own heart’!

ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

In the nineteenth century, the Chaplain of a State Prison related the following incident:

I want to describe a scene that once occurred. Our Commissioners went to the Governor of the State and asked him to give his consent to grant pardons to five men on account of their good behaviour. The Governor said the record was to be kept secret; the men were to know nothing about it until they were actually pardoned.

At the appointed time, the criminals were brought out, the roll was called, and the president of the Commission came up and spoke to them; then putting his hand in his pocket he drew out the papers and said to those 1100 convicts, “I hold in my hands pardons for five men.”

I never witnessed anything like it. Every man held his breath and was as silent as death. Then the Commissioner went on to tell how they obtained these pardons; that it was the Governor who granted them. The suspense was so great that I spoke to the Commissioner and asked him to read out the names of those who were pardoned before he spoke further, and the first name was given out thus: “Reuben Johnson will come out and get his pardon.”

He held out the papers but no one came. He looked all around expecting to see a man spring forward at once, still no one arose; and he turned to the officer of the prison and said, “Are all the convicts here?” “Yes,” was the reply. “Then Reuben Johnson will come and get his pardon.”

The real Reuben Johnson was all this time looking around to see where Reuben was; and the Chaplain beckoned to him, and he turned and looked around and behind him, thinking some other man must be meant.

A second time he beckoned to Reuben, and called to him, and the second time the man looked around to see where Reuben was, until at last the Chaplain

said to him “You are the man, Reuben;” and he arose up out of his seat and sank back again, thinking it could not be true.

He had been there for nineteen years, having been placed there for life; and when he came up and took his pardon he could hardly believe his eyes, and he went back to his seat and wept like a child; and then when the convicts were marched back to their cells, Reuben had been so long in the habit of falling into line and taking step with the rest, that he fell into his place, and the chaplain had to say “*Reuben, come out; you are a free man.*”

The Gospel, when preached, declares, through Christ, full and free forgiveness (Lk. 24:46,47; Acts 13:38). This is truly amazing; and, at first, it is hard to believe, too wonderful to be true, but God’s Word to us is wholly reliable and entitled to implicit credit – “ a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance” (1 Tim. 1:15).

DEVOTION TO THE BIBLE

Matthew Hale Smith, in his book, “Marvels of Prayer,” tells of a shipwreck, and of the rescue by Captain Judkins and the crew of the “Scotia.” Among the rescued was a lad about twelve years old, who had lost everything. “Who are you, boy?” asked Captain Judkins. The young lad replied, “I am a Scotch boy; my father and mother are dead, and I am going to America to find my uncle, who lives in Illinois.”

“What is this? said the Captain, as he took hold of a rope that was tied around the boy’s breast. “It is a piece of cord, Sir”, said the boy.

“And what is that tied under your arm?” asked the Captain. “It is my mother’s Bible: she told me never to lose it”, was the reply.

“Is that all you saved?” the Captain asked. “Yes, Sir”, the boy said.

“Couldn’t you have saved something else?” was the Captain’s further question. “No, not and save that Book”, answered the boy.

The Captain then said, “Didn’t you expect to be lost?” to which the boy answered, “I meant, if I went down, to take my mother’s Bible down with me.”

“Alright,” said the captain, “I will take care of you.”

Having reached the port of New York, Captain Judkins took the boy to a Christian merchant, who, on hearing what the Captain had to say, spoke as follows: “I want no other recommendation; the boy that holds on to his mother’s Bible in such perils will no doubt give a good account of himself.”

THE BAIRNS

In the time of the Covenanters, some children were ordered to be shot. A little girl of eight looked up into the face of one of the soldiers, and said: “Soldier-man, will ye let me take my wee brother by the hand and die that way?”

“Bonny Whigs (‘Whigs’ was a nickname for Scottish Presbyterians) ye are,” cried the soldier, “to die without a prayer.”

“If it please you, Sir,” said the little girl, “Alec and I cannot pray, but we can sing ‘*The Lord’s my Shepherd*.’ My mother taught it to us before she went away.” Then, all the bairns (or children) stood up, and from their lips arose the quavering strains, “*The Lord’s my shepherd: I’ll not want.*”

As they sang, trooper after trooper turned away, tears flowing down from their cheeks as they did so.

At last, even Johnstone turned and rode away. The victory was to the bairns through the singing of the Twenty-third Psalm.

ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD

Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-1899)

Reader, hast thou ever thought of the purity of Heaven – of the holiness of the Living God? Heaven is a happy place; for joy, and light, and love, and peace are, in all perfectness there. It is a happy place, but it is also a holy place – too holy for us as men. Is it not wonderful that any should hear of the holiness of God and imagine that they are fit to meet God, or that they are able to make themselves fit? Unless we have kept God’s holy Law always and in everything

– in thought, and word, and deed, from childhood to the grave, we are manifestly unfit for God. God tells us that we are unfit. He says, 'There is none righteous, no, not one' (Romans 3:10). Shall we say that we are righteous when God says that we are not? Shall we be hypocrites, and say that we have in everything loved, and honoured, and served God perfectly, when we know that we have not?

Yet there has been one Righteous, one Holy One in the earth. It was Jesus – Immanuel – God manifest in the flesh. He did love, and honour, and serve God perfectly. He did keep every jot and tittle of God's holy Law. He was light and not darkness – heavenly in all His thoughts, and words and ways – as unlike other men in holiness, as Heaven is unlike to earth, He honoured and glorified God's Law by perfect obedience to it, in life and in death. He honoured it by bearing the curse that it had pronounced against sin. What then, if God, desiring to magnify the riches of His grace, and to honour the name and work of Jesus, should be willing to accept sinners, such as we, in the value of that holy name? What if He should propose to us that we should be allowed to stand under the shelter and under the preciousness of all that Jesus has accomplished on behalf of sinners? What if He should be willing to extinguish, as it were, the worthlessness of our names, and to substitute for that worthlessness the worthiness and preciousness of the name of Jesus?

This, God is willing to do. This is what He proposes to us in the Gospel of His grace. He speaks to us of the death of Jesus under the wrath of the accursed Tree, and He says that He is willing to receive us under the redeeming power of those sufferings and that death. He speaks to us of the excellency and preciousness of the Person and character and service of Jesus and says that He is willing to impute to us that excellency, and to accept us in it just as if it were our own.

Shall we then despise this proposal of God? Are we too proud, too self-righteous, too careless to cast ourselves on the grace thus proposed to us through the work of Jesus? Shall we be numbered among those of whom it is said, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish,' or shall we cast ourselves on God according to this grace, and become 'accepted in the Beloved'?

Every man upon earth, as regards the future, either leans upon nothing, or leans upon something. If he leans upon nothing, he is lost – if he leans upon

something he is lost, unless that something be that which the God of Truth and Holiness proposeth, to wit, the sufferings and merits of Jesus crucified.

Such leaning, such reliance is faith – justifying faith. He who thus relies (though it may be feebly), believes, and ‘he that believeth shall never be confounded.’ A covenant God has said so, and He cannot lie. Is He not able to preserve such even to the end. ‘Preserved in Christ Jesus’ are words which the Scripture teaches us to use. The Holy Spirit ‘dwells in,’ and forsakes not those who have fled to the Blood of Jesus as their refuge. Christ is the Shepherd and Bishop of His believing people, and as such watches the counsels of their hearts, and the way of their steps. Soon, when Jesus shall return, they shall, in the twinkling of an eye, be changed, in body, soul, and spirit, into His heavenly likeness – and then, they shall not only be perfect as regards acceptance (that they are now, the moment they believe on the Lamb of God) but they then shall be perfect absolutely. Indwelling sin that now lusteth against the Spirit, shall no longer be found in them. They shall be like, as well as with, their Lord, and they shall love, and serve, and glorify Him worthily for ever.

THE JEW

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

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1. Let us speak reverently of the Jew. Let us not misjudge him by present appearances. He is not what he once was, nor what he yet shall be. Let us speak reverently of the Jew. We have much cause to do so.

What, though all Christendom, both of the East and West, has for nearly eighteen centuries treated him as the offscouring of the race? What though Mohammed has taught his followers to revile and persecute the sons of Abraham? What though one Roman Emperor after another sought to exterminate them as thorns and briars? What though Cicero speaks sneeringly of Jewish gold (aurum Judaicum), and tells us that “their religious rites were at variance with the splendour of the Roman Empire?” and Horace, of the credulity of the Jew Apella and of the circumcised Jews? and Petronius, of

their worship of a “porcinum numen”—a swine divinity, and their bondage to Sabbath fasts?

What though he is to this day a wanderer, a sufferer, an outcast? What though he inhabits the narrow Juden-Strasse of Frankfurt, or the Old Jewry of London, or the poor Zionquarter of Jerusalem, or be pent up in the Ghetto of Rome? Nay, what though he may have a grasping hand, and a soul shut up against the world, — a world that has done nothing but wrong and revile him? What though he may inherit the crookedness of his father Jacob, instead of the nobility of Abraham, or the simple gentleness of Isaac?

Still let us speak reverently of the Jew,— if not for what he is, at least for what he was, and what he shall be, when the Redeemer shall come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Isa. 59:20].

In him we see the development of God’s great purpose as to the woman’s seed, the representative of a long line of Kings and Prophets, the kinsmen of Him who is the Word made flesh. It was a Jew who sat on one of the most exalted thrones of the earth; it is a Jew who now sits upon the Throne of Heaven. It was a Jew who wrought such miracles once on our earth, who spoke such gracious words. It was a Jew who said, “Come unto me and I will give you rest;” and a Jew who said, “Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.” It was Jewish blood that was shed on Calvary; it was a Jew who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. It was a Jew who died, and was buried, and rose again. It is a Jew who liveth to intercede for us, who is to come in glory and majesty as earthly judge and monarch. It is a Jew who is our Prophet, our Priest, our King.

Let us, then, speak reverently of the Jew, whatever his present degradation may be. Just as we tread reverently the level platform of Moriah, where once stood the holy House where Jehovah was worshipped; so let us tread the ground where they dwell whose are the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came. That Temple Hill is not what it was. The beautiful House is gone, and not one stone is left upon another. The seventeen sieges of Jerusalem, like so many storms rolling the waves of every sea over it, have left few memorials of the old magnificence. The Mosque of the Moslems covers the spot of the altar of burnt-offering; the foot of the Moslem defiles the sacred courts; the Muezzin, from the neighbouring minaret, screams out the name of Allah, instead of Jehovah; and

the Koran is chanted instead of the Psalms of David. But still the ground is felt to be sacred; the bare rock on which you tread is not common rock; the massive stones built here and there into the wall are witnesses of other days; and the whole scene gathers round it such associations as, in spite of the rubbish, and desolation, and ruin, and pollution, fill you irresistibly with awe. The Moslem fabulists tell you that the stones of which the mosque is built still retain the odour of the musk in which they were originally steeped; but there is a holier fragrance there, transporting you back to yet older times, and recalling not only David and Solomon, but Him who said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." The same Moslem fabulist will tell you, or show you, the imprint of the prophet's foot upon the sacred rock; but there are, to you, visible everywhere, I may say, the imprints of a holier footstep, that of him who, somewhere on that flat rock where you are now walking, stood and cried in the last and great day of the feast, "If any man thirst, let Him come to Me and drink." So it is with the Jew, — I mean the whole Jewish nation.

There are indelible memories connected with them, which will ever, to anyone who believes in the Bible, prevent them from being contemned; nay, will cast around them a nobility and a dignity which no other nation has possessed or can attain to. To Him in whose purposes they occupy so large a space, they are still "beloved for their fathers' sake" [Rom. 11:28]. Of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever.

2. Let us speak with compassion (as well as reverence) of the Jew. The heaviest burden that ever rested on a nation now weighs them down; the sorest curse that ever smote a people, great or small, is now smiting him. He has the primal, eldest curse on him, a brother's murder. He is Cain all over, — in guilt, in remorse, in condition, — a fugitive, and a vagabond on the earth. His is a history for the last eighteen centuries altogether unparalleled, for scattering and persecution, and contempt. It has been an underground history, unnoticed in the world's annals; but, judging from the glimpses we have got of it, it has been one of weariness, silent terror, broken-heartedness, and martyrdom; yet, also of grandeur, and romance, passing anything the world has recorded of any of its mightiest nations. But that which excites in us the profoundest pity in that very thing which we find such difficulty in comprehending, — their stubborn unbelief. Not unbelief of God, or of revelation, or of miracle, in the general sense, but unbelief of that special fact for which their belief of these other things should have specially prepared them,—unbelief of Jesus of Nazareth as the dead and risen Christ.

It seems as if they had lost the power of believing anything that has happened these eighteen hundred years. We read the touching incident regarding a group of some of our own emigrants, that sitting one day somewhere on the Canadian sea-board, they fell into talk as to their own past sorrows, endeavouring to ascertain which of them had suffered the heaviest loss during their past years. One told of his whole substance, entrusted to one vessel, having perished in the ocean; another; of an only and beloved daughter recently laid in the grave; another, of a son breaking loose from restraint and plunging, like the prodigal, into the wickedness of a great city. It was agreed that these were sore afflictions; and it was wondered whether any could produce sorer. One who had hitherto kept silent now spoke, "Yes; I can tell of something sadder than all these", he said; "a believing heart has gone from me." There followed a deep silence at these words; and when the little group of exiles spoke again, they agreed that the last was the heaviest sorrow, that there was no calamity like it.

So it is truly with Israel, though they will not own it. A believing heart has gone from them. And what greater calamity could overcome a nation. May they not, then, well be the objects of our profoundest compassion? True, they did it themselves. They not only rejected the light but quenched their seeing faculty; not only cut the olive, but sowed the soil with salt; - Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away Richer than all his tribe. But that alters not the sadness of their condition, as a people encircled, beyond all others, with truth, but without a heart to receive it; set down at a princely feast, yet without appetite for one of its dainties; the heart of faith quite gone, and in its place the evil heart of unbelief in full vigour of its stubbornness.

But the conscience of a Jew may sometimes be reached even when his faith is immovable. We remember when once conversing with a Karaite Rabbi in Jerusalem, we appealed to this Jewish conscience, and were listened to with solemnity. We said to him, "How do you approach God?"—"By prayer," he said. "But," we said, "your fathers were not allowed to approach God without blood; Do you expect to be listened to?"—"Yes," he said, "for God is merciful."—"So He was in the days of your fathers; yet He would not accept them without blood; and if He would not without accept Moses or David, do you think He will receive you?" He was silent and thanked us. He saw our meaning and did not attempt further reply. The questions had touched his conscience, though they had not shaken his unbelief.

It was the conscience of His people that God sought so specially to educate. It was for the purgation of a conscience thus divinely educated, that the whole Levitical ceremonial was provided. It was to the conscience of the sinner that the blood so specially appealed, as the one thing which could reach and pacify it. It was to the conscience of a nation that Peter appealed in his first sermon in Jerusalem, under which the three thousand were pricked to the heart.

It was to this same conscience that the divine appeal is to be made in the latter day, when they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn; and when, not in tens or hundreds, but in tens of thousands, they shall renounce their ancient belief, and return to their more ancient faith,—the faith of him who saw the day of Christ afar off and was glad.

Let us try his conscience and see if we cannot call forth some response from it. Son of Abraham, doest thou know the God of Abraham? Has thy soul found rest in Him as thy portion and thy gladness, even as Abraham found rest? Thou man of the wandering foot and weary breast, of the troubled conscience and the heavy heart, doest thou know anything of the blessedness of what David sung when he said, “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered?” Member of the scattered nation, canst thou tell us, or canst thou tell thyself, why it is that for eighteen centuries thou hast been an outcast, without a city, a temple or a home? Such thou mayest say is the fate of nations; but was there ever a fate like this of thine? And what if it really be, as the Nazarenes tell thee, because once, in Jerusalem, thy fathers shouted, His blood be upon us and our children? It may be found now, as it will be found before long, that it was not for nothing that God took such pains to educate the conscience of the nation.

3. Let us speak with great hope and expectation for the Jew. I am one of those who believe in Israel’s restoration and conversion; who receive it as a future certainty, that all Israel shall be gathered, and that all Israel shall be saved. As I believe in Israel’s present degradation, so do I believe in Israel’s coming glory and pre-eminence.

I believe that God’s purpose regarding our world can only be understood by understanding God’s purpose as to Israel. I believe that all human calculations as to the earth’s future, whether political or scientific, or philosophical or religious, must be failures, if not taking for their data or basis God’s great purpose regarding the latter-day standing of Israel. I believe that it is not

possible to enter God's mind regarding the destiny of man, without taking as our key or our guide His mind regarding the ancient nation—that nation whose history, so far from being ended, or nearly ended, is only about to begin. And if anyone may superciliously ask, What can the Jews have to do with the world's history? — may we not correctly philosophize on that coming history, and take the bearing of the world's course, leaving Israel out of the consideration altogether? We say, nay; but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Art thou the framer of the earth's strange annals, either past or future? Art thou the creator of those events which make up these annals, or the producer of those latent springs or seeds of which these arise?

He only to whom the future belongs can reveal it. He only can announce the principles on which that future is to be developed. And if He set Israel as the great nation of the future, and Jerusalem as the great metropolis of earth, who are we, that, with our philosophy of science, we should set aside the divine arrangements, and substitute for them a theory of man? Human guesses of the future are the most uncertain of all uncertainties; and human hopes, built upon these guesses, are sure to turn out the most disappointing, if not the most disastrous, of all failures.

I believe that the sons of Abraham are to re-inherit Palestine, and that the forfeited fertility will yet return to that land; that the wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them, and the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose. I believe that, meanwhile, Israel shall not only be wanderers, but that everywhere only a remnant, a small remnant, shall be saved; and that it is for the gathering in of this remnant that our missionaries go forth. I believe that these times of ours are the times of the Gentiles; and that Jerusalem and Israel shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. I believe that in the filling up of these times of the Gentiles, and the completion of what the apostle calls the fullness of the Gentiles, there will be the signal for the judgments which are to usher in the crisis of earth's history, and the deliverance of Israel, and the long-expected kingdom.

How the Jew, so long in abeyance, shall resume pre-eminence, I do know not; but that he shall do so, seems written plainly enough in the prophetic Word. How Jewish history shall once more emerge into its old place of grandeur and miracle, and how it shall unwind from itself the bright future of all nations, I know not. But so it is fore-written, "What shall be the reconciling of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15) "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the

face of the world with fruit.” (Isa. 27:6) This is the day of the election; the age of the glory follows; and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.

Let us have faith in God, not in self or in intellect, but in God. Let us have confidence in His Word; not in science, or philosophy or eloquence, or human dialectics; but in the mighty Word. Let us “not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth.” Thus, let us deal with the Jew or Gentile; but let us deal in earnest, as men who feel that life and death are in every word they utter. I may not, in all that I have said, command your sympathies; but let me at least crave your attention. I have not advanced anything at random, or without fullest conviction that what I had said is true; “I believed, therefore I have spoken.” It becomes everyone to search the Scriptures whether these things be true.

There is much work to be done, both among Gentiles and Jews. Let us do that work as apostles did. We have the same weapons and the same divine power; the same promise, the same gospel, and the same Almighty Spirit; and what is the whole array of Gentile and Jewish unbelief when assailed by these. We have a sword to strike or to fence with which the world knows not of. We have a power for wielding that sword which the world knows not of. Let us do justice to that sword and to that power. Then we cannot fail; we must succeed.

Life lies before us, longer or shorter as it may please its Giver. Let it not be a wasted one; let it be useful. Our first concern is no doubt with ourselves. We must know the Christ we speak of; we must taste His love; we must clasp the Cross. Let us not preach an unknown God. It is in the consciousness of personal reconciliation that we are to preach the everlasting gospel, in the Spirit of Him who said, “He hath reconciled us to Himself, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” We are told of the modern Jew in some places, that they point to the Christian as “The man who says he has a redeemer.” Let this be a true name for us; and in the strength of the name let us plead with others; let us plead with Israel, till they also shall say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

Submitted by Keith G

EPILOGUE

“And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.” Mark 12 v 42

The Bible does not give us much information regarding this dear lady. We do not know her name, her age, the name or tribe of her late husband, how many children she had, if any, or if any were still alive and dependent on her.

However, we are given some important facts regarding her circumstances. We are told that she was a widow and so would have known the great sadness of losing her husband, her sole means of support. She was very poor, having spent all her substance, apart from two coins worth just a “farthing”. We also can deduce that this woman was devout. She had attended the temple to worship the only true God and was leaving the temple at the end of the service. She loved the God of Israel sufficiently to throw into the treasury all her wealth, all that she had, leaving herself with no resources at all. She would be wholly reliant upon charity to survive.

Unknown to this widow, Jesus watched those who gave gifts to the temple treasury. He knew this woman and saw that she gave everything that she had. Whereas He saw the rich giving merely a small fraction of their large wealth. In the eyes of the Lord the cost to this widow far exceeded the cost to the rich. It cost her everything!

In Luke 10 v 27 Christ tells us that the first commandment is “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind:” Clearly this widow was obeying this command and is a great example to all of us. She gave of herself and her substance, and so should we. She was trusting that the Lord would take care of her and meet her every need, in life and then in death when she would pass into glory.

The Bible does not record what happened to this widow after throwing all that she had into the temple treasury. But I think we can assume that such devotion was richly rewarded by the Lord.

Bill Norton