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THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

“The Blood of Christ?” The subject is one of matchless importance. Give me your attention while I try to show you what the expression means.

The Blood of Christ is that life-blood which Jesus shed when He died for sinners upon the Cross. It is the Blood which flowed so freely from His head, and hands, and feet, and side, in the day when He was crucified and slain. The quantity of that Blood may very likely have been small. The appearance of that Blood was doubtless like our own. But never since the day when Adam was first formed out of the dust of the ground has any blood been shed of such deep importance to all.

It was the Blood that had been long covenanted and promised. In the day when sin came into the world, God mercifully engaged that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” One born of a woman should appear one day, and deliver the children of Adam from Satan’s power. That seed of the woman was our Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus shed His life-blood on the cross, the head of the serpent was bruised, and that ancient promise was fulfilled.

It was the Blood that had been long typified and prefigured. Every sacrifice that was offered up under the Mosaic law was meant to foreshadow the dying of the true Lamb of God for the sin of the world. When Christ was crucified these sacrifices and types received full accomplishment. The true Saviour for sin was at length offered. The red atoning Blood was at length shed. From that day the offerings of the Mosaic law were no longer needed. The work was done. They might be laid aside.

It was Blood which was of infinite merit and value in the sight of God. It was not the blood of one who was nothing more than a singularly holy man, but of One who was God’s own fellow, very God of very God. It was not the blood of one who died involuntarily as a martyr to the truth, but of One who voluntarily

undertook to be the Substitute and Proxy for mankind, to bear their sins and carry their iniquities. It made atonement for man's transgression. It paid man's debt to God. It provided a way of righteous reconciliation between sinful man and his Holy Maker. Without it there could have been no remission of sin. Through it God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. From it a fountain has been formed, wherein sinners can wash and be clean to all eternity.

Reader, this wondrous Blood of Christ, applied to your conscience, can cleanse you from all sin. It matters nothing what your sins may have been. "Though they be as scarlet, they may be made like snow; though they be red like crimson, they can be made like wool." (Isa. 1:18). From sins of youth and sins of age, from sins of ignorance and sins of knowledge, from sins of open profligacy and sins of secret vice, from sins against law and sins against Gospel, from sins of head, and heart, and tongue, and thought, and imagination – from sins against each and all of the ten commandments – from all these the Blood of Christ can set us free. To this end it was appointed. For this cause it was shed. For this purpose it is still a fountain open to all.

John Charles Ryle (1816-1900)

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The lockdown imposed upon all of us during the coronavirus pandemic has put the concept of "fellowship" in a completely different light. That which we have taken for granted over the years has suddenly become something so very precious to us that we have made it our greatest priority to maintain it and enjoy it. Never has the phone, the internet and other technology been so vital as now, and for these material blessings we give grateful thanks to God. But above all, we bless God for "the unity of the Spirit" we have experienced, and which we have endeavoured to keep as we seek, with many challenges, to encourage and strengthen one another in the Lord.

The online livestreaming of our Lord's Day services and midweek Bible Study have been an immense blessing to all of us. And the interactive prayer meeting

via Zoom has helped to bring us closer to one another and to our prayer-answering God while we have been confined to our homes. We are very thankful to our two Pastors who have given much of their time to make these services so meaningful to us. We are fully aware of how difficult it must have been to preach in such unusual situations. We are also deeply indebted to Dale R and Nicholas T for their expertise in the technology which has made all these services possible.

As well as these services, there is "Thought for the Day" which comes into our homes each morning from Pastor Green via email or Facebook - a great encouragement as we prepare to go through another day in isolation. The Ladies' Prayer Meeting has also continued each Wednesday morning via a WhatsApp group, which has been a means for mutual encouragement and has helped us to keep up to date with matters for special prayer.

Some of our members have been uppermost in our prayers in recent days. Jill T, working on the NHS front line, was tested positive for COVID-19, and was unwell at home for several days. She has since made a slow but steady recovery, and we trust she will soon be well enough to return to her work at Southampton Hospital.

Our brother Richard W suffered a severe infection of his leg early in April, which necessitated a stay in hospital for 12 days while he received intravenous antibiotics. He was discharged home on oral antibiotics and we pray that he will soon be fully mobile.

On 15 April we received the sad news that our sister, Jenny Chatfield, passed away at Kimberley House where she had been in care for the past few years. Jenny came into membership at Emmanuel many years ago after meeting Janet B who invited her to the services. She faithfully attended until she became physically unable to do so. Jenny was registered blind; but we rejoice in the knowledge that she is now able to clearly see her Saviour and that she can say with David the psalmist, "as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness."

It is with great sadness that we received the news of the death of our dear sister D'een Whistance. D'een faithfully attended the morning services at Emmanuel Church for many years. Her kindness and generosity of heart was appreciated by many of us. Failing health made it necessary for her to move into residential accommodation several years ago and a place was secured for her in Devizes. There she became a popular resident within the home and for a few years she regularly attended Maryport Street Baptist Chapel, kindly facilitated by members of the church. Increasing frailty in the past eighteen months meant that attending the means of grace became too difficult, but we believe she continued to enjoy visits from Pastor Yates and other members of Maryport Street Chapel. On 13 April, she celebrated her 100th birthday. Shortly after this momentous milestone, she succumbed to a chest infection from which she did not recover. D'een will be sorely missed by many friends but we give thanks for a long and happy life that was filled with much joy and friendship.

We rejoice with Tom and Pauline W on the safe arrival of a girl on Thursday evening 23 April. Pauline returned from hospital the next day and we are pleased to know that both mother and daughter are doing very well indeed. We are thankful to God for His goodness, and we seek His special blessing on the family both at this time and in the future.

How thankful we are, in these unprecedented days, for the mercy seat!

“There is a spot where spirits blend,
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;
Though sundered far, by faith we meet
Around one common mercy-seat.”

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

WHAT IS GOD SAYING IN THIS PANDEMIC?

John Hooper

"... thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood" (Jeremiah 13:23)

A week or two ago I was sent by a friend the thoughts of Bill Gates on the coronavirus pandemic. You may have seen them too. It is a set of fourteen statements telling us what the pandemic reminds us of, or should remind us of. Here are two to give you a taste of the kind of thing he is saying:

- It is reminding us that our true work is not our job, that is what we do, not what we were created to do. Our true work is to look after each other, to protect each other and to be of benefit to one another.
- It is reminding us to keep our egos in check. It is reminding us that no matter how great we think we are or how great others think we are, a virus can bring our world to a standstill.

It is easy for us to forget, easier for some than for others it's true, but all of us from time to time need to have our memories jogged. The children of Israel were often having to be told by the Lord to remember. He gave them the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread to remind them of their bondage in Egypt and the great deliverance God had given them, but still they forgot, or refused to remember. The text at the head of this message tells us that their sufferings in the days of Jeremiah were accounted for by their having forgotten God. Instead of listening to Him and living in obedience to Him, they had placed their trust in lies. In judgment God would scatter them like stubble blown by the wind.

We too are experiencing temporal judgments from God. Of that we can be in no doubt. The Covid-19 infection itself with its spectrum of symptoms and its mortality, the lockdown restrictions, and above all, the closure of churches at a time of great spiritual need, all point us to the Lord's displeasure.

Bill Gates has given us a list of what the pandemic itself is reminding him of but I suggest we need to go back a step further, to the Sovereign Lord who is controlling the course of this infection. By means of the pandemic it is God Himself who is reminding us of issues that go far beyond this life and even this world, but that have been largely forgotten, whether by humanity as a whole, this nation specifically, or by professing Christians. Here are seven, and you may well be able to think of others:

- God is reminding us that He is there. As mankind and as a nation we have forgotten Him and we have turned our backs on Him by trusting in philosophies of our own making, provoking Him by our self-reliance and pride. We continue to deny and ignore Him at our peril.
- God is reminding us that we are not the master of our fate and the captain of our soul, but that He is the sovereign Lord and King who governs the universe according to His eternal purpose, who we were created to serve and to whom we are accountable.
- God is reminding us that we are not self-sufficient but need to humbly cast ourselves in total dependence on Him for every daily provision.
- God is reminding us of the fragility and brevity of our life and that all must one day come to judgment.
- God is reminding us that the world is in its present state because we have made it so by our sin, and we need the only Saviour, Jesus Christ His Son whom He has sent, to make us right with God. One day He will put the earth right too by making it anew.
- God is reminding us of our need for solemn heart-examination and repentance of our sinful ways, returning to Him by His Son Jesus Christ, that we might live from henceforth faithfully in obedience to His word by His enabling Spirit.
- God is reminding us that the church is not ours but Christ's; neither is it comprised of buildings, but of men and women, young people and children

who are united to Christ by faith, and who seek to serve and worship Him according to His Word, for His glory alone.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." (Psalm 103:17,18)

PEACEFUL TRUST

"My Times are in Thy Hand" (Psalm 31:15)

John Ryland D.D., son of John Collett Ryland, was born at Warwick, 29 Jan, 1753. At that time his father was Baptist minister at Warwick, but in 1759 removed to Northampton. "John Ryland, Junior," as for many years he was accustomed to subscribe himself, professed faith at 13 years of age, and was baptized by his father 1767. In 1770, he preached his first sermon and, in 1781, he was ordained as co-pastor with his father at Northampton, becoming sole pastor there in 1786. A few years later, in 1793, he was called to Broadmead Baptist Chapel in Bristol, and the following year, in 1794, he was invited to be President of the Baptist College there. These offices he retained until his death on 25 May, 1825.

Sovereign Ruler of the skies!
Ever gracious, ever wise!
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command.

His decree, who formed the earth,
Fixed my first and second birth;
Parents, native place and time,
All appointed were by Him.

He that formed me in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb;

All my times shall ever be
Ordered by His wise decree.

Times of sickness, times of health,
Times of penury and wealth;
Times of trial and of grief,
Times of triumph and relief.

Times the tempter's power to prove,
Times to taste a Saviour's love:
All must come, and last and end,
As shall please my heavenly Friend:

Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He bids I cannot die:
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love thinks fit.

O Thou Gracious, Wise and Just,
In Thy hands my life I trust:
Have I somewhat dearer still?
I resign it to Thy will.

May I always own Thy hand
Still to Thee surrender stand;
Know that Thou art God alone,
I and mine are all Thine own.

Thee, at all times, will I bless;
Having Thee, I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with Thee?

John Ryland, 1777

CHRIST'S PHYSICAL, BODILY RESURRECTION

Malcolm H. Watts

The physical, bodily resurrection of Christ has been described as 'the miracle of the New Testament'. Unbelief, of course, has always denied it as a historical fact. In the last century, David Strauss, the German critic, tried to prove that over-active imaginations were really responsible for that belief. He spoke of the resurrection as 'something which took place in the minds of the disciples'. Ernest Renan, a professor in the college of France, advanced the same theory but in a slightly different form, suggesting that Mary Magdalene, a rather excitable woman, distraught by the shock of Christ's death and longing to see him again, experienced a mental hallucination. This set in motion the whole train of visions. Referring to her alleged encounter with Christ, Renan exclaims: 'Divine power of love! Sacred moments in which the passion of a hallucinated woman gives to the world a resurrected God!'

Such visional and apparitional theories are adopted by the modern cults. Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, teach a 'spiritual resurrection'. While recognizing that something actually happened, they assert that God raised Christ 'a spirit being' which 'took on different materialized forms'. 'The king Christ Jesus was put to death in the flesh and was resurrected an invisible spirit creature' (*Let God be true*, p.122).

David Jenkins, a former Bishop of Durham, also tried to 'spiritualize' the resurrection. His typically liberal approach was as follows: 'God enabled some men to perceive the lasting significance of the shape of Jesus' personality' (*Living with questions*, p.138). Yes, that is the resurrection according to the former Bishop of Durham. In a subsequent Radio 4 programme, the bishop defended his reinterpretation of Christ's resurrection, and then remarked: 'After all, a conjuring trick with bones only proves somebody's clever at a conjuring trick with bones.'

Now, we discover, the Pope of Rome endorses the same error and heresy. In an interview with the Italian journalist and frequent papal interviewer, Dr. Eugenio Scalfari, Pope Francis reportedly said: "He (Jesus) was a man until

he was placed in the tomb by the women (?)...That night, in the tomb, the man (Jesus) disappeared and came forth from the grotto in the semblance of a spirit that met the women and the Apostles while still preserving the shadow of the person, and then he definitely disappeared" (*La Repubblica*, and *Il Diounico e la societa moderna*). One Romanist, Nick Donnelly, wrote: "The Scalfari claims about (Pope) Francis' heretical beliefs are...shocking, and the Pope's adamant silence...incomprehensible" (a report from Church Militant).

These unbelieving theories have one thing in common: they all deny that there was a coming-to-life of the *same body which was crucified*. This, however, is what the Scriptures clearly affirm.

Inspired of the Holy Spirit, David used expressions which were prophetically true of the Messiah, and he wrote, 'My flesh shall rest in hope.' He explained this to mean that, although the Messiah would die and be placed in the grave, he would expect to be raised before his body began to experience 'corruption' (Psalm 16:9-10, cf. Acts 2:25-28; 13:35-37). When our Lord was on earth, he confirmed that this was indeed his hope. He said to the Jews, 'Destroy this temple ("he spake of the temple of his body"), and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2:19-22 cf. Matthew 12:38-40).

What other evidence is there for believing that our Saviour emerged bodily from the grave?

1. The New Testament insists upon the word 'resurrection' (Acts 1:22; 2:31; Romans 1:4 etc.) The Greek word *anastasis* comprises two words: ana, up, and histemi, to cause to stand. So literally it means 'to cause to stand up'. But what is supposed to be fallen? It is the body. Then it must have been the body which was raised. 'They took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead' (Acts 13:29-30).

2. Emphasis is also placed upon our Lord's 'burial' (Matthew 27:57-61). It became part of the apostolic gospel: 'I declared unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Dr J. Gresham Machen comments: 'When

Paul mentions the burial, he means that the resurrection of Christ about which he is speaking is a bodily resurrection. The thing that was laid in the tomb was the thing that came out of the tomb in the resurrection. "He died, he was buried, he rose." We follow here, as we read, what happened to the body of Jesus.'

3. The resurrection is stated to be a historical event which took place in our space-time world. It happened on *the 'third day'* (Matthew 16:21; Acts 10:40) *in 'the sepulchre'* (Matthew 28:1-2; Mark 16:5-6). It cannot be understood in terms of the disciples' faith: it happened just once, when none of the disciples were present. Neither can it be understood in terms of a spiritual manifestation: it happened where no one was able to see it. The resurrection was something which happened to the body of the Lord – 'Jesus Christ... was raised from the dead' (2 Timothy 2:8).

4. The fact of *the empty tomb* is a major evidence for the materiality of Christ's resurrection body. On the morning of the first day of the week, *the women went to the grave and found it empty* (Luke 24:1-3). They were informed by an angel that Christ was 'risen'; and they were invited to see for themselves that the body was no longer lying upon the slab. '*He is not here: for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay*' (Matthew 28:6). Can anything be plainer than that? The angel obviously meant them to understand that the Lord has resumed the form of his bodily existence.

5. There were at least ten appearances of the risen Christ between his resurrection and his ascension; and, according to the accounts of eyewitnesses, *Christ's body displayed the usual physical characteristics*. It was *visible* (John 20:14), *audible* (Matthew 28:9), and *tangible* (Matthew 28:9). It was even capable of receiving food: '*They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it and did eat before them*' (Luke 24:42-43 cf. Acts 10:41. See also Luke 24:30; John 21:1-14). Our Lord took every care to prove the reality of his body after the resurrection. But was it the body in which he had lived and died? Undoubtedly it was. People to whom he appeared were able to recognize him immediately (e.g. Matthew 28:9). Mary recognized him by the tone of his voice (John 20:16); the two disciples at Emmaus by a familiar gesture (Luke 24:30-31); while John recognized him by his performance of a particular miracle (John 21:6-7). *But the identity of his*

body was proven beyond all doubt by the nail-prints in his hands and feet and by the spear-mark in his side (John 20:20, 27).

6. On one occasion when Christ appeared, his disciples thought that they had seen a 'spirit' or 'ghost', but Christ was quick to dispel such an idea holding out to them his hands and feet in order to show them that *his bodily members were solid flesh and bone. 'Handle me and see', he said, 'for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have'* (Luke 24:39). He was certainly not a disembodied spirit and body together, and the body was his own physical body restored to life.

7. His appearances came to an abrupt end after forty days. *'He shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days...'* (Acts 1:3). Now that is most significant. On the supposition that the appearances were illusions or impressions created in the minds of the disciples, how do we account for the fact that, at the time, of greatest excitement and expectation (ten days before Pentecost), they suddenly ceased? Our Lord had promised his disciples that his spiritual presence would always be with them (Matthew 28:20; John 16:22) and this continuous presence they evidently enjoyed (2 Timothy 4:22; Revelation 2:1). *It was Christ in the body whom they saw no more. 'He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God'* (Mark 16:19 cf. Acts 3:21).

8. It was the uncontradicted testimony of the apostles and of the whole apostolic church that Christ had risen in the very body which had been crucified and buried. Peter made this point in his first sermon. He told the Jews of Jerusalem how *'the pains of death', like bands and cords, had taken hold of Christ's body, restricting its movement until finally it was still and immovable in the grave; but, he went on to say, God 'raised' him up, having 'loosed' the bonds which confined him to the grave, 'because it was not possible that he should be holden of it'* (Acts 2:24). Peter's statement can only mean one thing: God miraculously released Christ's captive body.

9. In addition to the Word, we have the testimony of the two sacraments. The apostle Paul uses the phrase 'buried with him in baptism' followed by 'wherein also ye are risen with him' in order to teach that *baptism exhibits the*

Redeemer's burial and resurrection (Colossians 2:12 cf. Romans 6:4; 1 Peter 3:21). Now there must be agreement between the sign and the thing signified and, that being the case here, we observe that *what is immersed under water is raised up again and we therefore conclude that it was the buried body of Christ which rose out of the grave*. This brings us to the Lord's Supper which also proclaims his bodily resurrection. *The 'bread' of this ordinance is the appointed symbol of our Saviour's 'body'*; but while we are told to exhibit that emblem, we are not to understand from this that his body is perished: on the contrary, Paul tells us that *one day Christ shall return in the body* and, when that happens, there will be no need of any emblems. *'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come'* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

10. Finally, we need to assert that Christ's physical resurrection is absolutely essential to the biblical gospel. *The New Testament describes how men condemned our Saviour to an accursed death, but it tells us that God overturned that verdict*. Judging and approving Christ as 'the righteous one', God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, raised him from the dead and thus put right the greatest injustice of all time. He was 'justified in the Spirit' (1 Timothy 3:16 cf. Romans 1:4; Acts 2:23-24; 4:10). What sort of justification is it which leaves his body under penalty of death? No justification at all! But God did justify him. God raised the body which was entombed. Believers rejoice in that truth. Christ has been raised; his claims are confirmed; and sinners may wholly trust him for salvation and for eternal life. 'The Lord is risen indeed.'

SEVEN "MUSTS" OF THE GOSPEL

1. What *must* I do to be saved? Acts 26:30
2. Ye *must* be born again. John 3:7
3. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up. John 3:14
4. Neither is their salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we *must* be saved. Acts 4:12
5. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, as Thou hast said so *must* we do. Ezra 10:12

6. And Jesus said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for to-day I *must* abide at thy house. Luke 19:5
7. For we *must* all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body – according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 2 Cor. 5:10

LIFE FOR EIGHTEEN PENCE

The great, ragged, rock-bound coast of Old Cornwall could tell many a thrilling tale. How the mariner's ears would tingle if only the caves re-echoed some of the exciting happenings of the past centuries.

Many a heavily laden vessel, after battling her way through the seven seas, eventually became a cropper within sight of home. Others became the easy prey of vigilant pirates who filled the caves with untold treasure. But our story is a more recent one.

The winter sun had dipped behind angry clouds. The wind whistled and increased to hurricane fury, lashing the gigantic waves, and dashing the spray far into the darkening sky. A small vessel came in sight, evidently in difficulties, and endeavouring to make for the nearest port.

A grating sound! A terrific crash! A gaping hole! She had struck some unseen rocks and the whirling waters came pouring in. She was doomed.

"To the boats!" shouted the Captain. A few seconds later found the crew lowering the life-boats and pushing off. Only two men remained on board, the Captain and the mate.

"Half a minute, Captain", and, that said, Jack dived back into his cabin for something, while the Captain leaped into the boat, not any too soon either. A second more and it would have been too late, for the vessel took one final plunge and disappeared beneath the dark waters, with the mate aboard.

A few days later the stormy seas washed a body ashore. It was that of the mate. One hand was clutching a purse. The secret was out. For this purse he had risked and lost his life. Inside it there was found the small sum of eighteen pence! For that he had thrown away his one opportunity to be saved; *and, for eighteen pence, he had perished.*

“What a fool!” you exclaim, and rightly so; but perhaps you may be guiltier than he. It may be you too have not realised your peril as a sinner, born under sin’s power and penalty and going on to judgement (John 3:18; Rom. 6:23). You may be doing with your invaluable, eternal soul what the poor sailor did with his life. Hear again the words of the Saviour: “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36).

Salvation was provided. All he had to do was to trust himself to the life-boat. God in infinite mercy gave His Son to the death of the Cross as the Great Sin-bearer and Substitute of all who believe on Him. The work of redemption is entirely finished and to God’s satisfaction. Hell’s gates are closed. Satan’s power annulled, the grave overthrown, the slaves’ shackles broken; liberty, forgiveness, and everlasting glory available for all who rest in the merits of the precious blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7).

Time is flying, eternity draws near. Before you are engulfed in the waters of eternal judgement, think of the folly of bartering your soul for some passing pleasure, a cherished sin, a trifling toy of earth. The risk is too great, the consequences too far-reaching.

“Oh, we pray you, count the cost
Ere the fatal line is crossed;
And your soul in hell is lost.
BE IN TIME.”

*“Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of Salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).
“As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God even to them who believe on His name” (John 1:12)*

SEVEN ALLUSIONS TO “ONE THING”

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

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

3. Assurance, John 9:25 – “*One thing* I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” Jn. 1:11-12; 5:24; Matt. 11:28; Isa. 45:22; Lev. 16:21; Heb. 10:19-22; Eph. 2:1-10; 1 John 5:13.

4. Communion, Psalm 27:4 – “*One thing* have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.” It is well to remember that communion follows assurance, as assurance follows salvation, and that the word *fellowship* is the same as the word *partnership*, 1 John 1:3; Luke 5:7; Ex. 25:22-30; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; 10:16-21; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

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

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

7. The coming of the Lord, 2 Peter 3:8 – “Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Matt. 24:36-51; 17:26-37; 21:24-26; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Rev. 7:7, 12, 20.

CHOICE EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF WILLIAM DYER (1632-1696)

“A sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue; a heart full of grace is better than a head full of notions; notional knowledge may make a man’s head giddy, but it will never make a man’s heart holy; that which most tickleth delicate ears, least helpeth diseased spirits.”

“Jesus Christ is called ‘the desire of all nations’ because all nations stand in need of Him...You may go to heaven without health, without wealth, without honour, without pleasure, without friends, without learning; but you can never go to heaven without Christ.”

“Christ loves His people with a most cordial love; He loves them with all His heart: nay, they are the dearly beloved of His soul, as He Himself calls them, Jeremiah 12:7, ‘I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies’ ... Christ loves His people as His Father loves Him; and how is that, can you tell? No, not all the men on earth, nor angels in heaven, can declare the love that the Father bears to Christ; and yet, as God loves Christ, so doth Christ love His people. You have a text for this, they are Christ’s own words: ‘As the Father loveth me, so love I you.’ O sirs, how infinitely doth the Father love the Son, and how infinitely doth the Son love His people.”

“Man is the excellency of the creature, the saint is the excellency of the man; grace is the excellency of the saint; and glory is the excellency of grace...The saints are called godly from God; Christian from Christ; spiritual from the Spirit, and heavenly from Heaven, because their conversation is there, because their Head is there, and they be heirs of Heaven...Indeed, sirs, a good heart is better than a great estate; inward holiness is better than outward happiness; a Christ without honour is better than honour without Christ; piety without prosperity is better than prosperity without piety; goodness without greatness is better than greatness without goodness.”

“The believer hath good hopes, and this bears him up many times. Alexander thought this so great a thing, that when he gave to one man, whole countries, and to another, vast treasures, and being asked what he would keep for himself, he said, I will keep hope. The hopes of mercy, and joy, and peace, will carry a man through thousands of difficulties.”

“Humility makes a man like an angel, and for want of it, angels were made devils...The most lovely professor is the most lowly professor. A believer is like a vessel in the sea, the more it fills, the more it sinks: none live so humble on earth as those that live highest in heaven: do but see how one of the best saints looks upon himself as one of the least of saints. ‘Unto me who am less than the least of all saints’, said the great Paul, Ephesians 3:8. The most holy men be always the most lowly men: where humility is the corner-stone, there piety is the top-stone...The cloth of humility should always be borne on the back of Christianity.”

“When believers change earth for heaven, they do not lose their happiness, but complete their happiness John 17:24, ‘Father I will that they also whom thou gavest me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me from the foundation of the world’...To be with God and Christ for ever, implieth these seven things: 1. The presence of God. 2. The happy union with God. 3. The blessed vision with God. 4. The glorious communion with God. 5. The fruition of God. 6. The rest that the saints shall have in God. 7. The enjoyment of themselves in God.”

EPILOGUE

“That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” Psalm 78 v 7

The context of this verse is the passing down of spiritual knowledge through the generations, from parent to child, trusting that the children will repeat this process to the next generation in due course. We need to be inwardly convinced of the truth, so that we can apply it to ourselves in the first place, and then proceed to teach it to our families.

Firstly, we are to “set our hope in God” – that is, to have faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. Without faith we have no true hope of eternal life. This faith must be exhibited in every aspect of our life so that by our words and actions we teach our children (and others).

Secondly, we are to teach the need to constantly remember “the works of God”. It can be so easy to forget! We need to have constant reminders of these works. His highest work is the redemption of His elect people and this truth must be taught and explained constantly. In addition, God has created this world. It is He who raises up nations and brings them down. His works of providence may at times be hard to understand, but we need to submit to His perfect will always bearing in mind that He is Sovereign. We need to pray for sanctified memories enabling us to recall the works of God we have experienced personally, in our families, in our church, in our nation, and in the whole world.

Thirdly, and *finally*, we are to “keep his commandments”. His commands have been summed up by our Lord as “loving the Lord our God” and “our neighbour as ourselves.” Obedience in keeping God’s commands is the day to day outworking of our faith. Recalling all that God has done for us will strengthen our resolve to obey his commands, thus demonstrating to our families and friends that our faith is real. This is eminently practical teaching and is designed to regulate our days. As the old hymn says, “Trust and obey.”

Bill Norton