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“BE OF GOOD CHEER”

Malcolm Watts

Dr. John Henry Jowett, the well-known preacher, was in Birmingham one miserable morning when the dirty snow was melting in the streets and a thick November fog was possessing the whole city. He met an acquaintance who that day was suffering quite badly from depression. “I feel”, the man said, “so very depressed; my feelings are gloomy; I feel as though my Lord were far away.” Dr. Jowett listened sympathetically and then he said, “Do you think the Welsh water is running into our town today? Has the supply from the Welsh hills been stopped? The day is gloomy enough, the fog is about, and the atmosphere is certainly chilly, but the water from the Welsh hills is flowing into the city quite as abundantly as it will do on the sunniest day in June! The fog in Birmingham will not check the gracious supply from the hills!” He meant, of course, that the supply of comfort and grace through God’s Word is unaffected by the changes around and within. That river flows even on the darkest of days.

“From the throne of God there springs
A pure, a crystal stream:
Life, and peace, and joy it brings
To His Jerusalem:

Rivers of refreshing grace
Through the sacred city flow,
Watering all the hallowed place
Where God resides below.”

Sometimes things do look fairly bleak and dismal but we ought never to forget the consolation and encouragement which are in God’s Word. What does the Scripture say? “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but **a good word** maketh it glad.” (Proverbs12:25).

This verse deserves more than a passing thought. “A good word”, as one commentator so rightly observes, “is wider than the good news which would

remove the cause of the anxiety but is not always possible; a good word gives courage to face it.”

When here upon earth, the Lord Jesus spoke many a good word when ministering to those who were bowed down with care and in the depths of sorrow. I notice, however, that on three occasions He used a very special and very gracious exhortation. He said: “Be of good cheer.” (Matt. 9:2; Mk. 6:50; Jn. 16:33).

There is something for us here, whatever our condition may be.

1. A good word to those disturbed by SIN.

Make no mistake about it; sin is like a sore and cruel “sting”, piercing the spirit and causing terrible hurt and sorrow (1 Cor 15:56). The sense of guilt can be agony. Cain, suffering it, cried out: “My iniquity is greater than I can bear (Gen 4:13, marginal reading). Judas, when he realized the fatal effects of his transgression, experienced such trouble of spirit as terminated in despair. “I have sinned”, he said, then he “hanged himself” (Mt 27: 4,5). Men, when they begin to feel their sins, know the pangs and terrors of a wounded conscience. In one of his sermons, Thomas Manton accurately described this wretched state: – “We think a man in a fever is in a miserable condition, who hath little rest day or night: but alas! feverish flames are nothing to the scorplings of conscience, and the fearful apprehensions of divine wrath: they that are under these are miserable indeed, because the pains of hell do compass them round about, and wherever they go, they carry their own hell along with them.”

There was a poor man brought to the Lord Jesus. Though stricken with palsy, his sins caused him most pain. As the Saviour looked on him, He saw all the guilt and anguish of his heart, and mercy moved Him to speak words of comfort and peace. As we hear them once again, let us remember that the pardon of our sins is the greatest comfort of all. The Lord said to him: “Son, **be of good cheer**; thy sins be forgiven thee.” (Mt 9:2).

2. A good word to those disturbed by FEAR.

I do not refer here to that fear which God has implanted within us to guard us from the various dangers and miseries of this life, but I have in mind that

unreasonable fear of things which often rises to an excessive degree and makes life unbearable. This is the fear which Isaac Watts called “the tyrant-passion”. It may be that you are oppressed and tormented by such a fear. The precise nature of it I do not know. It could be the fear of a person. It could be the fear of some circumstance. A great many people have the fear of the unknown. The fear of death is perhaps most common. The list seems endless. There are so many fears which can possess our hearts. David could speak of “all my fears” (Ps 34:4).

Comfort and relief can only come when Jesus draws near and proclaims Himself to our souls. This was what the disciples learned when that storm came to Gennesaret and their little boat was threatened by every blast of wind and every raging wave. The most terrible thing that night was seeing the form of something, or someone, coming towards them. “They supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw him, and were troubled.” But it was then, when their fears had risen to such a pitch, that the Lord made Himself known to them, and His voice – the voice they knew and loved so very much (Jn 10:3,4; Song 2:8) – banished the fear from their hearts. “Immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, **Be of good cheer**: it is I; be not afraid.” (Mk 6:50).

Even so today: to know His presence is enough. “I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me” (Ps 23:4).

3. A good word to those disturbed by TROUBLE.

None of us can claim an immunity from that. “Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7) – “So many are they, so thick and so fast does one follow another.” (Matthew Henry)

To those in trouble, the Lord Jesus says: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but **be of good cheer**: I have overcome the world.” (Jn 16:33). He claims a power infinitely superior to anything and everything in this world and He promises to His people His all-powerful help. With Christ as our Saviour and Supporter, we are able to cope with the greatest of life’s problems and triumph over them all. “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” (Rom 8:37).

Are you cast down for some reason? I would bring you a word from the Lord –
“Be of good cheer!”

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Liz Storey

It was a great encouragement and a blessing to witness the Baptism and receiving into Membership of Katie M on 2 May and to hear her testimony of the Lord's dealings with her. We assure Katie of our continued prayers for her as she seeks to follow the Lord and serve Him in the days ahead.

The Church has been much in prayer about the Youth Work and the current needs we have for both teachers and helpers. The Seniors have been meeting regularly again in person since 9 May. Please pray for Paul, Tom & Pauline, Susan and Jo B as they plan this group for the remainder of the term. Nathan and Jo T have taught the Primary age group children from within the fellowship on a few occasions this term, and we continue to pray that the Lord will provide for every need in the Youth Work so that we will be able to invite others from the locality in the days to come.

We are thankful to the Lord that after a long period of not being able to observe the Lord's Supper, we were able, under Government guidelines regarding Covid, to meet around the Lord's Table again on 23 May. Although the virus still restricts some of our endeavours as a Church, we are thankful for the Lord's preserving of us as a congregation, the improvement in the general situation in our county and the many vaccinations now given.

Much in our prayers is the need for a future Pastor for our Church. With this in mind, we met together via Zoom for a special evening of prayer on Thursday 10 June. The prayers offered acknowledged our need for the Lord's guidance in this very important matter, that He would lead us and direct us to a man of His choosing. We acknowledge, however, the Lord's goodness to us as a fellowship, in providing good and faithful men to minister to us, while we wait on Him to answer our prayers.

The marriage of Neil B and Miriam P will take place, God willing, on Saturday 21 August, at Beacon Park Baptist Church in Plymouth. We rejoice with them that the Lord has brought them together in His perfect time and we pray that the Lord would richly bless them as they begin married life together, to His glory.

We continue to pray very much for Jenni T's father who was recently involved in a motorbike accident, sustaining serious injuries. Our thoughts and prayers are with him, and all the family at this time, that a good recovery will be made, and that they will know the nearness of the Saviour at this concerning time.

TESTIMONY OF KATIE M, AT THE BAPTISING SERVICE ON 2 MAY 2021

I have had the blessing of growing up in a Christian home and attending this church every Sunday. God has always had a place in my home, and therefore I have always been aware of Him in my life. I do not ever remember rejecting the idea of God. I always had a belief that He existed. but for a lot of my early childhood, up until the age of 11, His existence didn't have any real meaning or significance to me.

However, from growing up in the Church and in the Youth Work, I gained a lot of knowledge about the Bible and I was aware of the spiritual meanings behind many of the stories, but I never thought that it had anything particular to do with me. So, although aware of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, it didn't affect me personally, and in my heart.

God and Church were very normal in my family, but I knew that the overriding majority of people did not believe in Him or meet up to worship Him. I confess I didn't find coming to Church particularly interesting, mainly because it wasn't the cool thing to do and it meant me having to turn down parties and other events on Sundays, which was disappointing and somewhat frustrating (I am now very grateful to my parents for creating in me the biblical habit of keeping holy the Lord's Day.)

It was when I was about 11 years old that God first started His work in me. I started to listen attentively to the preaching and I tried to understand the deeper meanings of God's Word and the relevance of it to me and to my life.

I recall at Juniors on a Friday night that the talk given was often focused on God's punishment of sin and the danger of rejecting Christ, the only Saviour of sinners. These truths God impressed upon my heart, opening the eyes of my understanding for the first time to my sin and my unworthiness.

At this time in my life, I remember lying in bed terrified that God was going to take away my life and then that would be it, I wouldn't be ready, and I would spend eternity without God.

I knew God had the power to take my life. I knew too that eternity was real enough. At last, it seemed, I was finally taking God's Word to heart. Tomorrow had not been promised to me, and I was becoming very aware that I had most certainly fallen short of the glory of God.

I knew that if I were to meet God, I would have nothing to say to Him, either to explain my sin or to excuse it.

One night, I remember being very troubled by the thought that I wasn't included in God's eternal plan of salvation and that therefore I would never be one of His children. I went to my mum crying and in great distress. She was able to comfort me and to reassure me, telling me that God would never reject me if I came to Him sincerely and wholeheartedly through the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

God used her words to turn my crippling fear into desire and into hope. A short while after this, I spoke to my mum again, only this time I remember saying to her how amazing it must be to walk with God. Without doubt, it seemed that God was working in my heart, creating a desire for Him and His salvation.

That year we went and bought notebooks and I started noting down the messages given at the youth meetings, after which I began taking notes of the

sermons preached in the Church. I learnt - and continue to learn - so much about becoming and being a Christian and my Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was about that time that I asked for Discipleship Classes and I attended these with Pastor Watts. But life became very busy, so we didn't move on to Baptismal Classes, yet God still kept the flame alight within me.

Sadly, in 2018, for no particular reason, I started to wander away from the Lord. I didn't have a stable friendship group and was trying to fit in with various groups at school and attending their clubs. I became a "people-pleaser" constantly striving for these girls' love and friendship. In actual fact, I was trying to fit into the world, and, in trying to do this, completely hid from others the fact that I went to church.

Some of the friendships made were quite destructive, but I still kept pushing, desperately trying to be accepted. Looking back now, I wonder how I ever thought I could be accepted in this world when God had made me not for this world, but for Himself and for heaven. Then it was that I lost my grandma, who was a beautiful believer. I felt God had shown me the world, and He had also shown me the path I could and should now take.

I felt so lost at that time. I spoke to Andrew W at the Summer Camp and he reminded me to keep the flame of my belief and desire burning. God had obviously not left me.

Then, on New Year's Eve, the sermon preached at the evening service was to not let another year go by continuing to live in sin and unbelief. God seemed to touch my heart again and I promised Him in prayer that I would not wander another year, that I would work purposefully on my faith again.

At the beginning of 2019, I found myself somewhat confused, struggling with knowing whether or not I was now saved but very much basing my faith on my emotions and feelings. Then, at Senior Camp, a strong fire of hope and faith burned once again in me. I just knew that I was no longer relying on my parents' faith and I found the joy of God for myself, in personal experience.

One Lord's Day in September, Pastor Watts delivered a sermon to the effect that we must not let Christ "pass by", because it just might be the last time He makes His presence and love known to us. This was around the anniversary of my grandma's death, so God was teaching me the preciousness of each day and the need to be sure that I was right with Him. At the end of the sermon when Pastor was praying, I called to God from my heart, pleading with Him not to pass by me, but rather to save me. On returning home later that evening, I prayed the same prayer; and I believe and know that that night the Lord answered my prayer and saved me from sin and from terrible judgement.

I can't really answer the question, How did I know that I was saved? but I just know that the following week God gave me such joy and peace, that it could only have come from Him.

He taught me in my mind and in my heart that the reason I felt as I did was because He had wonderfully answered my prayer. I am so thankful to the Lord for His kindness and goodness to me that week.

I began and completed Baptismal Classes with Pastor Watts and, although the virus and the subsequent lockdowns delayed my testifying of my faith before you all, yet it was during these difficult times that I began living for my Saviour. As Dan Tribe put it a few weeks ago, once dead in sin, I felt, in all my trials, what it was to be alive in Christ; and the Lord opened up to me the unsurpassed beauty of His Word and the excellence and the loveliness of His Son.

In the words of Psalm 9, and verse 1, "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works."

ETERNITY

"Suppose a little bird is set," says an old writer, "to remove this globe by taking from it one grain of sand at a time, and to come only once in a thousand years. She takes her first grain, and away she flies on her long and weary course; and long, long, are the days ere she returns again. It will doubtless seem to many as if she would never return; but when a thousand years have rolled

away she comes panting back for one more grain of sand, and this globe is again lessened by just one grain of its almost countless sands. So the work goes on; so eternity wears away – only it does not exhaust itself a particle. That little bird will one day have finished her task, and the last sand will have been taken away, *but even then eternity will have only begun. Its sands are never to be exhausted.*

Taking up again our figure of the little bird removing the sands of our globe, we may extend it, and suppose that after she had finished this world she takes up successively the other planets of our system – Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, each and all on the same law – one grain each thousand years; and when these are all exhausted then the sun, and then each of the fixed stars, until the hundreds of thousands of those stupendous orbs are all removed and gone. *But even then eternity is not exhausted. We have not yet even an approximation towards its end. End! There is no end!*

That poor little bird makes progress. Though exceedingly slow, she will one day have done her appointed task - but she will not even then have come any nearer to the end of eternity.

Eternity – Who can comprehend it?"

GOD'S GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE

Janet Macpherson, a poor widow, lived far away in the north of Scotland. She had no family, only a son who had gone abroad, and it was years since she had heard anything from him.

She had many and various needs, and her great poverty made life unbearably difficult.

One day the postman knocked at her door. She was very surprised, for it was six or seven years since any letter had come for her, but that morning a foreign letter was put into her hand.

She opened it eagerly, the more so on realising it was from her son, and she so carefully read every single word of it. Her son, apparently, was doing well in a distant land; and he told his mother no longer to worry about her situation. He promised to send her money to supply her every need and this for the rest of her life.

Her joy filled her heart and soon the letter was quite worn out with her reading it again and again.

Another letter, and then another came, each saying much the same thing. She could not help telling her friends and neighbours, who rejoiced with her over the news.

She put the letters carefully away.

Rent day was approaching. She paid her rent half-yearly, and she had no money to pay for it. Each day she looked out for the postman, wondering if there would be something for her from overseas. But day by day the postman passed her door without stopping.

What could it mean? She took out the letters once again and read their content. "I will pay your rent." That is what her son had written. His words were clear enough, but where was the fulfilment of his promise? Where was the money?

Rent day came. She explained her predicament to her landlord, telling him she expected the money every hour. He promised to wait, but many days came and went. She decided something had to be done. She must leave her house and sell all of her treasured possessions to pay her landlord. Then, there was nothing for it, but she must go to the workhouse.

"If only Jem knew", she kept saying to herself. "What can it mean? He *promised* to pay."

A friend, hearing of her severe trouble, came to see her, and said to her: "I heard that your son promised to pay your rent."

"So he did", said the poor, desperate woman, "and I cannot think why he is not as good as his word."

"Have you still his letters?" her friend asked. "Will you let me see them?"

"Certainly", answered the poor woman; and she passed them over to her friend.

"Was there nothing at all in his second letter" the friend asked.

"Why, yes", said Janet, "there was a printed piece of paper – an advertisement or something. I saw it wasn't in my son's hand-writing, so I put it by and thought no more of it." Janet quickly found the paper. "Here it is", she said. "This is what was in the envelope. There was no money there, if that's what you are thinking."

Looking at it, her friend exclaimed, "Why, its all right! This is a Post Office Order, more than enough to pay your rent."

Together, they hurried to the Post Office. The Order was cashed at the Counter, and the money put into the old woman's hand.

"Oh", she exclaimed, "to think this money was at the Post office for me all the time, and I didn't realize it and I didn't claim it!"

She was relieved of all her fears; and never again did she feel the slightest concern or anxiety. She lived comfortably for the rest of her life, in the home that she loved.

God has promised to us “eternal life and this life is in His Son: he that hath the Son hath life.” (1 John 5:10,11).

Do you understand that? Have you claimed this precious gift? Why delay any longer? Trust in God’s Son. Present before God the lost sinner’s plea. And rejoice that the Lord Jesus is able and willing to save to the uttermost.

POWERFUL, EFFECTIVE INTERCESSION

Aeschylus was condemned to death by the Athenians and was about to be led to execution.

His brother Amyntas had signalled himself in the service of his country, and in a day of most illustrious victory, in a great measure obtained by him, he had lost his hand. He came into court just as his brother was condemned, and without saying anything exposed the stump of his arm from under his garment and held it up in their sight.

The historian tells us that when the judges saw this mark of suffering, they remembered what he had done, and for his sake discharged the guilty brother, whose life had been forfeited.

In like manner the wounded body of Christ, standing at God’s right hand, pleads, if we may so speak, for His sinful and condemned brethren, and thus the guilty but sincere and humble penitent finds mercy when he approaches, through Christ, the throne of the Almighty.

THE ILLUMINATING SPIRIT OF GOD

There was once a traveller who was called by his business to a small fishing town in Cornwall. He reached the place very late in the evening; but as it was

a pleasant night, though very dark, he decided after supper to stroll through the town and to climb the steep hill on its farther side.

After pursuing the road for some distance, he determined to return. In the dim light he saw an open piece of ground. By crossing this, it seemed, he would lessen the distance by taking “a short cut.”

He did so, and crossing the hill, he came to a wall at the farther side. “This,” said he to himself, “is the boundary wall of the road, and I have only to cross it to be on the highway.” He therefore got over, and he was surprised not to touch the ground with his feet. He was, however, about to let go his hold and drop down, when it occurred to him that perhaps it might be a little deeper than he thought, and that it would be wiser for him to retrace his footsteps and go back the way he came. He did so and reached his inn without further incident.

On the morrow, having transacted his business, he thought he would walk up the hill and see in the daylight the place where he turned back the night before. But what was his surprise to find that he had in the darkness crossed a field to the very edge of a cliff; that the wall he had thought to mark the road was really on the verge of a precipice; that where he had hung, imagining that the highway was only a couple of feet beneath, there was in reality a depth of hundreds of feet to the shore far below. Had he sprung lightly over as he had intended, or let go his grasp, he would have met with instant death! Thus the daylight revealed to him the danger in which he had unconsciously been; and so does the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit make clear to the sinner the peril from which God has mercifully preserved him!

SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

These words are true. I once heard a cry running through a country village. The people were hurrying hither and thither. Everyone looked anxious, all were asking the same question, “Has anyone seen the lost child?”

A little boy was missing. He had ventured out of an open cottage door, and, it was supposed, he had wandered down the street. The mother was almost frantic. Every one knew what must be the danger of the little fellow left alone with no one to care for him.

Hours passed, and it was not until very late at night that he was found. A working man discovered him straying through the fields and took him to his own cottage and fed and cared for him. When, at last, he found out where the child's home was, he carried him back to the weeping mother.

What joy there was all through the little village that night! "The child is found!" they said. "The child is found!"

There are many wanderers today in the streets of our great cities – whether rich or poor it matters not – who need salvation of the Lord. To be without Christ is danger indeed.

Make sure, dear friend, that this SALVATION is in your possession; and then go out to seek other wanderers.

NO ESCAPE FROM THE JUDGEMENT

When I was living in the North, I learned of a notorious unbeliever who was dying. He called his sister to his bedside and said, "I have just one dying request to make of you; will you do it?" "If it is in my power I will do it," she said. "But that will not do," replied the dying man. "Promise me that you will fulfil my last request." "Dear brother," said his sister, "you know that I love you, and would do anything for you! And if it is within the limits of my power, I will grant your last request."

With some difficulty the dying infidel raised himself on his elbow, while a shudder ran through his frame, and he said, "I want you to have me buried away out there, in that lonely point," carefully identifying the spot. "Dear

brother,” said the sister, “why be buried away in that lonely and desolate point, where nothing but the fierce wind and storms of winter can come near you? Why not be buried with the rest of the family in our own quiet spot in the cemetery ground?”

With a groan he raised himself a little higher in the bed, and sadly replied, “I want to be forgotten by God in the Judgement Day.”

Dear friends, God cannot and will not forget. He will gather all the guilty and the guiltless before Him. We *must* all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ.

THE NOBLE AND GLORIOUS ARMY OF THE REDEEMED

It is a grand sight even on earth to look at an army of conquerors. I saw the troops come home from the Crimea, and watched miles of bright bayonets as regiment after regiment marched by; men who had fought at Alma and at Inkerman, men who had ridden in the death-ride at Balaklava, men who had lain in the freezing trenches before Sebastopol.

Hearts throbbed and eyes flashed as those conquerors went by. But what must be the sight in Heaven, when high and low, rich and poor, walk in one grand procession, bearing the palms of victory; of victory over sin, victory over self, victory over pride, and falsehood, and unbelief!

“Fling open wide the golden gates and let the victors in!”

BIBLE PLACE NAMES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Malcolm H. Watts

In Christian circles, there are many Bible-readers but comparatively few Bible students. This is cause for real concern because, while there is truth upon the surface of God's Word, there are many hidden treasures which superficial and careless readers never discover.

The Lord Jesus taught the need to "search" the Scriptures, using a word which means "investigate" or "explore" (Jn. 5:39; cf. Isa. 34:16), and, in the book of Acts, the Bereans are commended for doing just that: "they searched the scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

Real Bible study requires that we pay careful attention to detail. This includes noting the place where an incident occurs. It can be very significant. Allow me to illustrate.

The Lord Jesus began his public ministry at a "river" to show that He was the One to immerse people in the life-giving influences of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:13; cf. v.11); and, immediately afterwards, His presence in the "wilderness" drew attention to the condition of this world as spiritually barren and desolate (Matt. 4:1; cf. Isa. 41:19).

As a king, He sat upon a "mountain" to set forth his "Manifesto", in which He both identified His subjects and promulgated His laws (Matt. 5: 1; cf. Ps. 2:6). "When the Saviour ascended the mount", remarks Arthur Pink, "He was elevated above the common level, and did, in symbolic action, take His place upon the Throne."

Often He taught by the "sea-side" because the sea was an emblem of the multitudes and His message was for all peoples (Matt. 13:1; cf. Rev. 17:5). He

did, however, reserve more intimate discoveries of truth for His believing brethren, in the “house” (Matt. 13:36; cf. v.11).

Appropriately and significantly, He was at a “well” when He spoke to the Samaritan woman about His ability to supply living water (Jn. 4:6). As Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, the distinguished German commentator, observes: “It was surely not by chance that Jesus seated himself directly on Jacob’s well. In a spiritual sense, He was himself the well of Jacob; and that He had this in mind is shown by verse 10.”

He instituted the Lord's Supper in an “upper room” (Mk. 14:15). Repeated mention of that place in the Gospels suggests its spiritual importance. But what idea is it meant to convey? Surely, as Bishop Reynolds has written, that “our thoughts and affections, while conversant about these mysteries, should not lie grovelling on the earth, but should be raised unto high and noble contemplations.”

At the very end, how remarkable that both Christ’s suffering and his sepulchre were in a “garden” (Jn. 18:1; 19:41). Under the axe of divine Judgment, He was cut down in the midst of life, but miraculously, after lying prostrate for three days, He rose again to astonishing glory; and now, to every believer, He is “the tree of life”, changing death into “paradise”, the “royal garden” (Lk. 23:43; Rev. 2:7).

These details are all too often overlooked, as are the names given to Bible places. God, in his providence, has overruled the naming of many places to make them spiritually significant; and the Holy Spirit has drawn our attention to this by interpreting some of them for us.

For example, Scripture says that the blind beggar was told to wash in “the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent)” (Jn. 9:7). Why is the meaning given? It is simply because there is in that name something significantly prophetic of Christ and his mission. It bears witness to Him as “sent” by the

Father, to be the fountain of life for poor sinners (Jn. 7:28,29; Rev. 1:5). This is the key to a fascinating study.

“Bethlehem” literally means “house of bread”, and there Christ was born, “the bread of God ... which cometh down from heaven” (Matt. 2:1; Jn 6:33). He alone can satisfy man’s deepest need.

“Nazareth”, “town of branches”, was where the Lord, “the righteous branch”, grew up (Jer. 23:5,6; Matt. 2:23; Lk. 4:16). Under his shadow, there is not only provision but also protection (Song of Solomon 2:3).

“Capernaum” is “city of consolation”. After His rejection at Nazareth, the Lord went there (Lk. 4:31) and, in that city area, He spent the best part of the next three years, preaching the gospel (Matt 4:13-16). However sinful and wretched men are, the gospel holds out to them the promise of “everlasting consolation” (2 Thess. 2:16; Heb. 6:18).

"Bethsaida", when translated, reads “house of fishing.” Andrew, Peter and Philip came from this town which was close to the sea of Tiberius (Jn. 1:43,44). They became, by his appointment, “fishers of men.” It was then their business to tell out the gospel and draw men to the Saviour. As Jesus said, “From henceforth ye shall catch men” (Lk. 5:10; cf. Matt. 4:18-22).

"Cana" has the lovely name, "place of rest." It was the scene of Christ's first miracle, the place where He turned water into wine (Jn 2:11). Mary said to the servants: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (v.5). They were prepared to trust Him, and all was well. Scripture declares our Saviour to be the true "rest-giver", and "we which have believed do enter into rest" (Matt. 11:28,29; Heb. 4:3).

"Bethphage" means "house of unripe figs", reminding us of how Christ, in this vicinity, cursed the barren fig tree, symbol of unbelieving Israel (Matt. 21: 1, 18ff; cf. Hos. 9: 10). "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn. 3:36).

"Jerusalem", as is well known, means "foundation of peace." Our Lord's death for us outside Jerusalem's walls has established everlasting peace with God. "(He) made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20; cf. Isa. 53:5).

In our thoughts, it would be profitable to wander around this city. We could then follow the Lord over "the brook Cedron", "the black brook", recalling how it represents his sufferings (Jn. 18:2). "He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head" (Ps. 110:7). We could also go after him into "the garden of Gethsemane", "the garden of the wine-press", to witness His agony when, in the winepress of the wrath of God, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him" (Matt. 26:36; cf. Isa. 53:10; Rev. 19:15). We could eventually visit "Calvary" (in Aramaic, Golgotha), "the place of the skull", so called from the skulls of condemned men which remained there after the executions. Truly, "he made his grave with the wicked... and he was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:9,12).

Wonder of all wonders this - he died in the place and for the sake of sinful men!

*Stretched on the cross, the Saviour dies!
Hark! his expiring groans arise:
See from his hands, his feet, his side,
Runs down the sacred crimson tide!*

*Can I survey this scene of woe,
Where mingling grief and wonder flow;
And yet my heart unmoved remain,
Insensible to love or pain?*

*Come, dearest Lord! thy grace impart!
To warm this cold, this barren heart,
Till all its powers and passions move
In melting grief and ardent love.*

Anne Steele

Precious as Calvary is to every believer, we will stay no longer there. The crucified One, risen from the dead, led his disciples out to the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, to "Bethany", "the house of palm dates" (Lk. 24:50). From thence He ascended into heaven. Bethany was so named from the palm trees around it. But, in Scripture, "palms" represent the joy of victory (Jn. 12:13; Rev. 7:9). Christ has overcome for us sin, death, and all the powers of hell, and now he lives for ever to reign as the Head and Guardian of his church.

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:58). The Bible is the most wonderful book the world has ever seen. All who prayerfully study it will find nuggets of gold surpassing the gold of Ophir.

Guards for the Soul

*(adapted from a communion sermon on the Song of Solomon 2:8-12,
attributed to Samuel Rutherford).*

Now, if you ask for a guard to watch the soul, take the following:

The first soldier that should be set in the very entrance to your soul is, "**The fear of God.**" See how excellently "fearing God" and "running away from evil" are joined together, as cause and effect.

The second soldier to set at the door of your soul is, "**sober-mindedness and temperance.**" Noah and Lot forgot these, and therefore they fell asleep. This sober-mindedness is modest and wise conduct, in enjoying of the pleasures of this life. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

The third soldier is that virtue which Solomon calls "**discretion**". Let it be in front of the door to test what guests come into the soul, what thoughts enter

in. "Try the spirits whether they are of God." (1 John 4:1) One devil is like another devil, and when we think we are keeping out one, another rushes in.

The fourth soldier is "**suspicion and fear of our own ways**", which should keep us awake. "Happy is the man that feareth alway" (Proverbs 28:14). Paul says, "Watch thou in all things," (2 Timothy 4:5); even in the things of this life, in bringing a cup to our lips, in putting a bite in our mouth, or setting soup at the table, we should watch. If that seems to be but a trivial business, remember that the devil entered into Judas with soup; it is to make us careful between the hand and the mouth, to look at our own behaviour. To speak two words of pity to a friend seems a small matter; yet when Peter told our Lord to pity Himself, he was the devil's agent (Matthew 16:22-23). Never believe well of yourself, nor of the old man within you. Let no man excuse his own word, or approve his own heart, "for the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17: 9).

The fifth soldier that stands at the door of the heart is "**meditation on death**". Let this meditation stand on the threshold. Why did Jerusalem come down wonderfully (Lamentations 1:9)? She came down because she remembered not her last end. If men would remember Christ, and that death and judgment come in the night as a thief, they would have their hand always on the door latch, and stand behind the door, watching until the Lord should knock. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46).

The sixth soldier that keeps the soul always alert, is a continual "**practice of good, and walking with God**". Moving, walking, and serious business stop men falling asleep. Only be completely honest with God, walking with Him in sincerity and truth, considering His mercy, justice, kindness, and power. Remember the great work of your salvation, the keeping of an immortal soul, the gaining or losing of Christ.

The seventh soldier, and last man of the guard, that I shall mention is “*faith*”, which tells us of the particular passages of heaven, hell and judgment, and of the tricks and devices of the roaring lion (Ephesians 6:11).

These are like Solomon’s valiant men that watch about his bed (Song 3:7). They are the graces of God that keep Christ in the soul.

Submitted by Richard W

EPILOGUE

Building in Silence

1 Kings, chapter 6, tells us about the house that Solomon built for the Lord. Verse 7 of that chapter tells us that it was built of stone. Nothing unusual there; but what is unusual and interesting is that, while under construction, not a hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, was heard in the house.

Put on your hard-hat, lace up your safety-boots, and go to a building-site today. Stop and listen to the noise. If we could go back in time and step onto the building site of St. Paul’s Cathedral - founded AD 604, then rebuilt in the late 17th century – there can be no doubt that it would have been very noisy, even though the workmen were not using modern power-tools. We all know that building-work is noisy.

A hammer hitting a chisel, a masonry-saw cutting through stone, and almost everything done in construction makes a noise. In the case of Solomon’s Temple, of course, it was not just four walls with a simple roof. Read and consider the detailed and elaborate description of this temple given to us in 1 Kings 6.

Yet verse 7 clearly states that it was built in silence, with stones “made ready” before they were brought to the site. There is no way of estimating how many

stones were used, but probably there were thousands. God was the architect and the master-builder, and we must assume that measurements were taken, so that back in the quarry stones were hewn, cut to size and polished. Then they must have been brought to the site and each one put into its place.

No doubt there were adjustments made. What if they were five or ten millimetres out, either too big or too small. Remember, no hammer, nor axe, was to be heard, no chiselling at the site; and yet, if those stones were not absolutely right, fitting others perfectly, they would put the wall out of plumb, losing the perfect symmetry, harmony, and beauty.

My guess is that then these imperfect stones would have been taken back to the quarry for further work to be done on them until such time as the clerk of the works judged them to be acceptable.

1 Peter 2:5 describes Christians as “lively stones... built up a spiritual house”; but are we perfectly prepared to take our place in God’s temple? No, to begin with, we are perhaps ungainly stones, with many rough edges and corners.

What a picture of Christians, so attached to the world and its sin. In God’s sovereign grace and mercy, He comes to us, and, by His sharp Word and powerful Spirit, He separates us from what we were by nature. Through His work of sanctification He works further on us by His Word and Spirit, by prayer, fellowship with others and His dealings with us in providence. At times, this can be a difficult and painful work, but it is worth it all in the end, when we enjoy a favoured place in God’s earthly House; and, at last, find honour and glory in God’s heavenly House.

A final thought: I wonder how many times our God holds us in His hands to examine us, to see if we are what He would have us be. Christian friends, let us rest in His hands, to be changed into stones truly beautiful and holy, to His glory and praise.

Steve Storey