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LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

God's Upholding Hand

"The LORD upholdeth him with his hand" Psalm 37:24

These are precious words. They apply to each believer, whose steps are ordered by God and who is prone to falling. Concerning each one: "The LORD upholdeth him with his hand."

Condescension

This reminds us of the condescension of our God. He who upholds the universe and governs the nations is a Father to His people. He regards them as His children and holds their hand. Of course we must understand this figuratively. "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24) — He does not have hands, or any bodily parts. The statement is an "anthropomorphism:" a term that attributes bodily parts and actions to God to illustrate His relationship to us. But do not let this language of accommodation weaken this truth. He does not *literally* hold our hand, but as a God to us, in all His gracious dealings, He *actually* does.

Bold

The Bible is quite bold in using language like this of God and us. Consider these verses:

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, *I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*"

"For *I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand* saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

"My soul followeth hard after thee: *thy right hand upholdeth me.*"

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; *even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*"

(Isaiah 41:10,13: Psalms 63:8; 139:9,10).

Weakness

These choice verses are not sentimental. They remind us of our chronic weakness and our Lord's all-sufficiency. We face a wicked, seducing world, our corrupt flesh warring against us, and a tireless devil awaiting his opportunity. Given these foes on three fronts, how likely it is that we shall go down. But these verses tell us that God is an almighty Father to us. And as that caring, protective Parent, He holds His child's hand - particularly in times of danger, worry or upset. What better comfort could we wish for? God going with us, holding our hand, imparting His strength, keeping us from falling, leading us along in the way! Let us believe this and walk with God. Fanny Crosby captured this when she wrote:

Hold Thou my hand! So weak I am and helpless,
I dare not take one step without Thy aid;
Hold Thou my hand! For then, O loving Saviour,
No dread of ill shall make my soul afraid.

Challenging

As well as sublime comfort, this thought is also challenging. For it means that if God is holding our hand every moment of life – it means that we commit sin in that very place. We sin while God holds our hand! What a truth! To really understand that would be a most sanctifying experience. What wife would be unfaithful to a wonderful husband *while he is holding her hand*? Was this not what helped Joseph, when assailed by temptation, to say, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). If we see the Lord holding our hand like this, sin becomes hateful and (seemingly) impossible.

Unbelief

However, it means that when we *do* sin, we have been guilty of unbelief. At the point of sinning, we had to deny to ourselves God's existence. Otherwise, how could we bear to sin against a God so near and dear? Sinning believers are practical atheists. The root sin — disbelief - does away with God, then the way is open for the sin we are going for. This is why all our sin is such a

compounded and heinous offence. It has ingratitude and rejection of God in it. And the potential for apostasy from God.

Those who were Christians only in profession began their fatal plunge just here. Repeated unbelief and sinning meant “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). King Saul, Judas, Demas, and a host of others have shipwrecked themselves this way. However, the Lord keeps true believers from following this through (Jeremiah 32:40), but none of us dares presume all is well if we are living carelessly and sinning with a high hand. Who is to say that today’s backslider will not be, after all, tomorrow’s apostate?

Preserving Grace

There is, though, a better note on which to end. Notwithstanding all our backslidings, falls, failures and shortcomings, why are we still loving our gracious God in Christ and seeking to please Him? Is it not because of the truth of our verse: we fell into sinning, but we were not “utterly cast down” because the Lord “upheld us with His hand.” It is the truth of preserving grace: “Kept by the power of God through faith” (1 Peter 1:5). Asaph gratefully acknowledges this when, looking back over his personal crisis, he says: “Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand” (Psalm 73:23). He was still in the presence of God, and God held on to him throughout and restored him!

The Lord has kept us, and He *will* keep us. Let us, then, use the psalmist’s prayer as we go forward with Him: “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually” (Psalm 119:117). And then we shall know Jude’s benediction: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24,25)

With Christian love,
John Thackway

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

Daniel Tribe

On Wednesday 24th April, we were very encouraged by a visit from our friends James and Rachael Swanson, who brought us an update on the Lord's work in Northern Cyprus. We thank the Lord for evident blessings among the African students, the Turkish speaking members, and the opportunity to go into the prison with the gospel. We continue to pray for the Swanson family and for the church in Cyprus.

Some of our number were able to join the Lord's people at the Halve Strict Baptist Chapel in Trowbridge for their anniversary service on April 25th. We look to the Lord to bless His cause there in Trowbridge, and we are thankful for every opportunity to fellowship with their pastor, James Burgess, who recently became a member of the Wessex Reformed Ministers Fraternal.

It was a joy for many of us to be able to support Crosslanes Chapel in Ibsley, for their 173rd church anniversary on 18th May. The Rev Timothy Nelson was enabled to preach helpfully from Acts 18:9-10, *"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."* We trust that the encouragement of the anniversary weekend will stay with the Lord's people at Crosslanes for a long time to come.

On Saturday 22nd June at 6pm, Totton Evangelical Free Church marked their anniversary. We pray for the Lord's rich blessing upon the service held, and for the work in Totton. In this day of small things it is no small comfort and cause for rejoicing that there are many faithful churches, serving Christ in the gospel, here in the southwest. It is our earnest prayer that the Lord would *"look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine"* (Ps. 80:14).

As editor of the Bible League, our Pastor travelled to Wales for a deputation meeting at Swansea Evangelical Reformed Church, on 21st May. A good number were in attendance at the meeting, and our Pastor was greatly helped to speak on the work of the League and to preach God's Word.

Thomas Goodwin said, *'Those blessings are sweetest that are won with prayers and worn with thanks.'* And the Lord our God has given us many sweet answers to prayers, in recent months, that we seek to wear with thanksgiving.

We thank the Lord for bringing Hazel M safely through her knee surgery on 31st May. In the Lord's mercy the procedure was successful and Hazel was quickly discharged and is recovering well at home. We continue to pray that she will be given much grace and will know increased strength day by day.

We are also very grateful to the Lord for hearing our prayers for Margaret T, who had been awaiting a date for an operation on her lung. We bless the Lord that His appointed time came for the surgery to take place (on 7th June), and that the operation went smoothly and successfully. It is our earnest prayer that Margaret will know divine help to recover swiftly and fully.

We also give thanks to the Lord for answered prayer for the Grewcock family in the provision of a new home. We trust that this will be a blessing to them and prove a very happy and comfortable place to live.

Likewise, we heard, with rejoicing, that Joy W has secured accommodation nearer to her daughter. Joy is one of our longest standing members here at Emmanuel and has served faithfully, alongside her late husband Tom, for many years. Although we shall miss her immeasurably, we thank the Lord for providing for Joy's needs, and she will be followed by our love and prayers. (At present, Joy is still awaiting a moving date.)

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Philip Woodger, a former member at Emmanuel who served faithfully as a deacon and Secretary of the church. The funeral service was held in Melksham on Wednesday 5th June. We pray very much for Andrew and Christine and all the family, that they will continue to know the upholding grace of the God of all comfort.

We have been prayerfully supporting many of our young people over the exam season. May the Lord enable them to cope with the pressure, and we trust they will be able to enjoy a well-earned summer break.

Words of Thanks

Since the recent death of Abi's Mum, Linda Webster, we would like to thank the church for their tokens of kindness, and loving support. We did receive a good number of cards with timely promises from Scripture, beautifully written messages of support, and assurances of continued prayer. Over the years, many have asked with concern about Linda, but now we can take comfort in Paul's words, knowing that these words may be applied to Linda: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Keith and Abi G

Pastor and Margaret would like to thank everyone in the fellowship for their very kind expressions of support and prayers over Margaret's recent operation. We were very conscious of being remembered at the Throne of Grace by you all, and by friends far and wide. The Lord wonderfully answered prayer for the successful surgery, with no complications, and the excellent recovery so far. In it all we have known the peace of God and are deeply conscious of His abounding goodness.

"Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul" (Psalm 54:4).

With Christian love and much appreciation,
Pastor and Margaret

25th ANNUAL SALISBURY CONFERENCE

4th – 6th October 2024

General Theme: "*Experiencing the Word of God*"

Visiting Minister: Dr Jeff Riddle

Friday 4th October

7.30pm — The Life and Legacy of Adoniram Judson

Saturday 5th October

10.30am — *The Preservation of Scripture (Jeremiah 36)*

Lunch Interval

1.00pm — *The Universality of Scripture (Zechariah 5:1-4)*

2.30pm — *The Goal of Scripture (John 20:30-31)*

A light tea will follow the final address

Lord's Day 6th October

Dr Riddle will preach at both services at 11am and 6.30pm

8.30pm — After-Church Meeting: Dr Riddle's Testimony

All dates and times are God willing.

The conference addresses will also be available via live stream.

For further information visit: salisburyemmanuel.org.uk/conference

THE ETHOS OF THE SALISBURY REFORMED SEMINARY

Report from the Seminary Open Day 1st June 2024

It is not for the first time that I have heard the Rev Malcolm Watts, Principal of the Seminary, speak about the Seminary's formation and its distinctive ethos, which, in essence, is to present and to provide clear, Reformed, and Calvinistic instruction with respect to both biblical preaching and the pastoral ministry.

About a year ago I heard a similar introduction to the Seminary, yet I am ashamed at how much I had forgotten about its purpose and its doctrinal and spiritual principles. It is no wonder that Scripture makes mention of our natural infirmities with respect to our memories, emphasising our need to often hear "the same things", which is never "grievous" or "wearisome", but for us, as God's people, it is "safe", enabling us to recall vital truth, to be stirred in our hearts, and then to be provoked to godly endeavour (Phil 3:1). [Formerly it was said of Samuel, the prophet, that "the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Sam. 3:19).]

Pastor Watts' statement and subsequent exhortation were of immense value and help to me; and I trust everyone present gained much spiritual profit from what was said.

The scripture read at the beginning of this session properly set before us both the scene and the theme. It was 2 Timothy 2:1-10, containing Paul's earnest instructions to Timothy, highlighting the desire of men in the apostle's generation - and now, in our own generation - prayerfully to do all they can to provide teaching and instruction for men called to the ministry, that such men may be grounded in the truth, impressed by the reality of God's presence, and so be equipped to serve the Lord and His Church.

We were reminded of how God, through the ages, has graciously provided the means whereby His church might be properly led and taught by men who were taught by others, older and more experienced.

We think of Samuel, Elijah, and, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who spent so much time preparing others for the ministry of God's Word, that they might be useful to the saving of souls, the nurturing of new converts, and the strengthening of pilgrims in perseverance, that they might at last reach Sion, the glorious city of God.

Thus, the Seminary offers nothing new. No new doctrines, no new forms of worship, no new methods of evangelistic outreach; but instead, adhering to biblical doctrine, faithfully taught by our Reformation and Puritan forefathers, the Seminary is committed to "the old paths", where is "the good way", leading men to find therein "rest for (their) souls" (Jer. 6:16).

The historic Reformed Confessions – the Westminster Confession (1647), the Savoy Declaration (1658), and the Second London Baptist Confession (1689) – all unite in affirming our Most Holy Faith. The Seminary receives and supports these Confessions and strives to be "most in the main things", to maintain, defend, and proclaim divinely revealed Truth, which Truth is Gospel-orientated, Christ-centred, and God-glorifying.

Quite rightly, the Seminary gives special and strong emphasis to experiential religion, not to head-knowledge, nor to academic excellence, nor to the attainment of degrees, but to the true religion which is, as Joseph Hart once wrote, “more than notion: something must be known and felt” (1 Jn. 5:20).

Pastor Watts also stressed the absolute need for revival, in the souls of men and in the Visible Church. O that God might visit our beloved land once again, as He did in the 1740s, in 1859, and in 1904, that it might yet be ours to know days of grace and glory!

“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.” (Rev 15:4)

Various aspects of the Christian Ministry were then considered. Referring to Acts 13:2, it was stressed that a minister must have the inward call of God, which is to be followed by the outward call of His Church. Such called men are to be *Teachers* and *Pastors* (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim.5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4), feeding God’s flock, leading His people into paths of righteousness, supporting them in the life of faith, healing their spiritual diseases, comforting them in their many sorrows, supporting them under their heavy burdens, and encouraging them to continue in the exercise of grace to the attainment of glory. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

We were reminded that the great need in today’s Church is for godly men in the pulpit: Bible-believing, Reformed, Christ-exalting, true, and faithful, declaring “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4). And “who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor. 2:16). “Our sufficiency is of God; who hath made us able ministers of the new testament.” (2 Cor.3:5,6)

It is God who calls men and makes ministers, and yet by the right use of means, like the Seminary, such men are properly instructed and wonderfully enabled to serve Christ and His Church in this our day.

Following the address by the Principal, Rev William Macleod, our Guest Preacher, read from Matthew 6:1-18 and spoke on the all-important subject of prayer. It was a very challenging and humbling sermon, most suitably chosen and most movingly preached. This sermon was followed by another also on prayer, based on the words of James 5:13-20. Mr. Macleod was greatly helped in both these sermons, and we were all greatly blessed in our hearing of them.

In conclusion, it was a most excellent day, with over forty in attendance, and we hope that the trustees, lecturers, and students, were all very much encouraged in the Lord their God.

May God bless the Seminary; and may He move many others to train for the Christian ministry here in Salisbury!

Keith Grewcock

WHO MADE IT?

Sir Isaac Newton had a friend who, like himself, was a great scientist; but he was an infidel, while Newton was a devout Christian. They often discussed their views concerning God, as their mutual interest in science drew them much together. Newton had a skilful mechanic make him a replica of our solar system in miniature. In the centre was a large gilded ball representing the sun, and revolving in proper order around this were small balls fixed on the ends of arms of varying lengths, representing Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. These balls were so geared together by cogs and belts as to move in perfect harmony when turned by a crank.

One day, as Newton sat reading in his study with his mechanism on a large table near him, his infidel friend stepped in. Scientist that he was, he recognized at a glance what was before him. Stepping up to it, he slowly turned the crank, and with undisguised admiration watched the heavenly bodies all move with their relative speeds in their orbits. Standing off a few feet he exclaimed,

"My! What an exquisite thing this is! Who made it?"

Without looking up from his book, Newton answered, "Nobody!"

Quickly turning to Newton, the infidel said, "Evidently you did not understand my question. I asked who made this?"

Looking up now, Newton solemnly assured him that nobody made it, but that the aggregation of matter so much admired had just happened to assume the form it was in. But the astonished infidel replied with some heat, "You must think I am a fool! Of course somebody made it, and he is a genius, and I'd like to know who he is."

Laying his book aside, Newton arose and laid a hand on his friend's shoulder. "This thing is but a puny imitation of a much larger system whose laws you know, and I am not able to convince you that this mere toy is without a design and maker; yet you profess to believe that the great original from which the design is taken has come into being without either designer or maker! Now tell me by what sort of reasoning do you reach such an incongruous conclusion?" The infidel was at once convinced and became a firm believer that "Jehovah, He is God."

OUR SOLITARY SAVIOUR

Robert L. Moyer, D.D.

*The Pastor of the First Baptist Church and Dean of the North-western
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"He was... alone" (Matthew 14:23)

Our Saviour is none other than Immanuel -"God with us." Nineteen hundred years ago God walked and talked with men as Jesus Christ. There is no question concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. Of Him it is written: "This is the true God" (1 John 5:20). But Jesus Christ is also man. We read of Him, "The Word was God," and "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John

1:1,14). He became a partaker of flesh and blood; He took upon Himself our nature; He became one of us (Heb. 2:14-18). The incarnation was by way of the virgin-birth. God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, to be born in a stall and cradled in a manger. He was a baby, a boy, a man. He was subject to all the sinful infirmities of the human race. He slept, He walked, He ate, He drank, He worked, He sorrowed, just as we do.

In the text it is stated that "he was ... alone." This has reference to Him alone in the mountain, praying. But that text might be written over the whole of His earthly life, for He was lonely, solitary. That is one of the peculiarities of His humanity. One, in commenting on it, said, "His was the solitude of the royal stranger who tarries for a night."

In this study we shall see that from the manger to the cross He was alone; that through His whole life there ran a deep, silent, sad undercurrent of loneliness.

He Was Solitary in His Singularity

Jesus Christ is unique. He is the only One of His kind. There has been and there is none other like Him. There has never been, nor will there ever be, another incarnation. There has been but one God-man. It is not right to say that Jesus Christ was a good man, a great man, a great leader, a great teacher—He was all that, of course, but more. He was human, yet He was God. There was in Him a duality of nature, yet a singleness of person. Two persons did not dwell in the one body— make no mistake about that. There were two natures, not two persons. Into union with His divine personality God took a human nature, to become the solitary One, for He was never paralleled by any created person. He is far separated from the human race. He was in the midst of death — the living One. He was in the midst of darkness — the Light of the world. He was in the midst of sin — the holy One.

It is possible to be surrounded by human beings and still be alone. On the writer's first visit to New York City, he went alone. In that city he was surrounded by five or six millions of people yet he was alone.

I saw a Chinaman on the streets today, a man in the midst of men, yet solitary. He was away from his land, away from his home, away from his people. He was alone.

But what can a finite illustration do to bring to us the thought of Christ surrounded by man, yet alone, alone because no other being of His kind ever existed?

He was Solitary in His Sinlessness

Someone has described Jesus Christ as a "white Rose in the midst of a bed of scarlet poppies." Isn't that a vivid picture of our Saviour in the midst of the sinful men of this world? He had nothing in common with them. It was true then, as now, that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." How His sensitive soul must have shrunk from the blasphemy, sin, and hypocrisy of His day! His stainless purity could have no fellowship with the wrongs, sins, impurities, shames, of this earth. His own disciples wounded Him again and again. In a very true sense of the word, He had no companions. Men could not be His companions, for they were impure, while He is pure; their aspirations were unholy, while His are always holy; their hearts were full of hate; His full of love. Did you ever stop to think how lonely a saint would be in Hell? Yet loneliness such as that is not comparable to the loneliness of our Lord while here on earth. He was alone in His sinlessness.

He was Solitary in His Love

Jesus Christ loved men – they did not love Him. They "hated me without a cause," was His declaration. He called to men, "Come unto me," but "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The leaders of His nation – His own nation – derided Him, and cried out, "It is not fit that such a fellow should live. Away with Him! Crucify Him!" His own denied Him, forsook Him, sold Him. I have often imagined Christ walking the highways and byways of His own land, His eager eyes scanning each face that He met for some sign of recognition, but He was in the world and the world knew Him not.

When my boy was a baby, I came home every two or three weeks from some evangelistic trip, and I remember how I walked to the crib where he was lying – my boy – to look down into those blue eyes of his, longing for some sign of

recognition. He was my own, yet he gave no sign of recognition whatsoever. How often I turned away from that crib to say, "Oh! he doesn't know me." He was my own but he didn't know me. That brings grief to the heart of a man.

There isn't anything more depressing, or anything that makes a heart heavier, than to long for those whom you love, only to find them beyond reach or out of touch.

This was impressed upon me recently when I went into the home of a man over ninety years of age, who had, just a few months before, buried away from his sight, like Abraham of old, the wife of his bosom. She had been a wife to him. She had made a home for him. She had been a companion to him. Now she was gone. He was ill. In weakness he sat in his chair that day and said to me "Brother Moyer, I don't want to stay!" And then in his weakness he broke into tears and, unable to speak, pointed with shaking finger to the wall where hung her picture. I knew that he longed to be with the one he loved. His heart reached out after her, but she was beyond his reach.

Yet, never in all the history of the race did one yearn after a loved one as Christ yearned after men. Full of loneliness is that wail, that sad, sad wail, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How oft I would have gathered you together, but you would not!' The very men whom He loved, instead of coming to Him, instead of loving Him, spit upon Him, smote Him, thorn-crowned Him, mocked Him, crucified Him. Oh, the heartache of it! How lonely He was!

And He has the same yearning over men today. He still calls to men, "Come unto me," and men still refuse to come. Have you? Is His heart still yearning for you? Is He still the solitary Saviour, the lonely Lord, as far as you are concerned?

He Was Solitary in His Mission

There was a dullness of the human intellect, a deadness of the human heart with reference to the mission of our Saviour. He knew His mighty task, but no one else seemed to comprehend it. When He was born, they called His name Jesus, because He was to save His people from their sins, but that seemed to mean nothing even to His dear ones. All through His life His eye was on the

cross. When He spoke of His "Father's business," He referred to the cross. When He mentioned "mine hour," He had in mind the cross. From the beginning He knew the awful climax of His earthly life, that of agony, anguish, shame, pain, beyond human description.

If some of us knew the future, the responsibility would break us; we would be overwhelmed; some would become insane. The only hope for us, did some of us know the future, would be in the companionship and fellowship of those who love us.

But the Lord Jesus had no one who understood. He was alone. His heart must have yearned for sympathy, but He found none. He was misunderstood at every step. His own people were blind to His mission. They thought only of temporal glory, not of redemption. They knew that their Scriptures declared of their Messiah, "The government shall be upon his shoulder." He would dash His enemies "in pieces like a potter's vessel." But here was this man Jesus, called the Christ, 'tis true, yet walking through the dust of the land while the enemy rode in chariots, with nowhere to lay His head while the enemy dwelt in palaces. So they laughed Him to scorn and cried out, "Away with him." And, finally, they condemned Him as an impostor and nailed Him to the cursed tree.

Even His own disciples were disappointed in Him. They shared the hopes of their people, and expected Him to go to the throne of David in the overthrow of Rome. Then when He told them that He must suffer, that He must be killed, they rebuked Him, and cried out, "Not so."

And beyond this, even His mother, who knew of His supernatural birth and sinless years, did not seem to understand His course. It seems that she joined with others in considering Him crazy — "beside himself" (Mark 3:21).

It was all of this misunderstanding and rejection, this loneliness, which culminated in the cross which inspired the poet to write, "He died of a broken heart."

He Was Solitary in His Suffering

Go to Gethsemane. See Him in the travail of His soul. See the agony and bloody sweat. Hear Him cry out to His Father. Oh, how He needed sympathy that night! How He longed for the disciples to watch with Him for a little while! And they were asleep! He was alone. They did not comprehend the agony which shook His soul. He was alone. Then, when He stepped out from beneath the shadow of the olive trees, He was betrayed by one of His familiar friends - betrayed with a kiss! Then they all forsook Him and fled! And then Peter-Peter! took an oath that he had never known this man Jesus! What a scene! The Friend of men stood without a friend! He was alone.

He stood alone before the High Priest with no-one to protest the indignities offered Him. He stood alone before Pilate with not a single one to speak a single word in His defence. Oh, one did carry His cross, but not for love, only because he was compelled to do so.

Then when they nailed Him to the tree, what friendly hearts there may have been were lost in the crowd, and He was confronted on every hand by the face of a foe. The crowd milled round the cross, the priests wagging their heads, the rabble mocking and reviling, the multitude shouting, all with hard, unmoistened faces waiting to see the end, watching to see Him die. There was no cry of sympathy anywhere. He was alone.

Oh! if that were all, it might not be so bad, for others have endured pain, agony, persecution. But—He was forsaken of God! That is the meaning of that strange cry that pierced the air, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Even God forsook Him. No angel came to help Him. Earth clenched her fist at Him, and Heaven turned against Him. There was no look of love, no word of hope, no hand of help from either earth or Heaven. Around about, enemies shouted hatred at Him; above, God turned away from Him. He was alone. The dense darkness that came at mid-day seemed to declare and intensify His loneliness, for it cut Him off from everyone, from everything. He was left to Himself. And there has never been, in all the annals of the human race, such solitude as this.

When the three Hebrew children were thrust into the fiery furnace, the king saw walking with them in the flames the Son of God. They were not alone. An early Christian martyr was taken by the cruel hands of torture, to have flesh rent and bones broken, in an effort to make him deny his faith. When he was left, he was a mass of bleeding flesh and broken bones. Yet he endured all the suffering without a single cry. When his dear ones found him and sobbed over him, they said, "How did you stand it all without a single cry or complaint?" And he answered simply, "Jesus was with me." He was not alone. But our Lord on the cross was denied the comforting presence of God. He was alone.

He died alone. He wrestled, prayed, sorrowed, suffered, and died alone, and our sin made that necessary. The sinless One on the cross was made to be sin for us. He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He was made a "curse for us." He was there "smitten of God, and afflicted" in our room and stead. He bore what we deserved. He alone died for us because He alone could do it. Hebrews says, "When he had by himself purged our sins"— and it must be "by himself" for it could be by no other one. No other person could do it, not even the one who loves you most. That is why He was alone in the work of redemption. He alone bore our iniquity. He alone bore the curse of God. He alone bore the wrath against sin. He alone could do it, so He was alone in it.

He is not now Solitary

We believe that now our Saviour is in Heaven, surrounded by multitudes of men and women who are absent from the body and at home with Him - because He died alone. Isaiah may have meant something like this when he wrote of the time when "he shall see his seed." Paul tells of the bringing of "many sons unto glory". God has always desired to surround Himself with men. A blessed intimacy existed between God and man in Eden - an intimacy marred by sin.

God dwelt in the midst of His people Israel in the tabernacle, and later in the temple. God dwelt in the midst of men in the days of His flesh, and He will dwell again in the midst of His people in the everlasting Kingdom. God's purpose will one day be fully realized and gratified in the eternal state, in that day when all Heaven and earth shall be gathered round Him, and when He shall be all in all. That purpose might be expressed in the words, "The tabernacle of God is

with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Alone

It was alone the Saviour prayed
In dark Gethsemane;
Alone He drained the bitter cup
And suffered there for me.

It was alone the Saviour stood
In Pilate's judgment hall;
Alone the crown of thorns he wore,
Forsaken thus by all.

Alone upon the cross He hung
That others He might save;
Forsaken then by God and man,
Alone, His life He gave.

Can you reject such matchless love?
Can you His claim disown?
Come, give your all in gratitude,
Nor leave Him thus alone.

Alone, alone, He bore it all alone;
He gave Himself to save His own,
He suffered, bled and died,
Alone, alone.

B. H. Price

THE NAMES OF THE PATRIARCHS

Adam, Sheth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered, Henoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah" (1 Chronicles 1:1-4)

Adam: Man

Sheth: Being set, constitutes, or having become

Enosh: Wretched

Kenan: Mourner

Mahalaleel: The Light of God, or the Blessed God

Jared: Came down

Hench: Consecrated

Methuselah: (by) His death, to send (selah)

Lamech: to the poor, or oppressed

Noah: Comfort

Henry Craik (1805-1866)

Such are the meanings of the Hebrew words here used, and they show that when God named the Patriarchs, He had reference to redemption through the precious blood of His own dear Son: for read as follows, they express that blessed truth: Man, having become (a) wretched mourner, the Blessed God came down, consecrated (by) His death, to send to the oppressed, comfort.

C. Russell Hurditch (1839-1908)

WISE IN WINNING SOULS

Henry Cowles (1803-1881)

Ordained with a view to home-missionary work, at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1828, Henry Cowles served Ashtabula and Sandusky, and then took pastoral charge of the Congregational Church in Austinburg, Ohio. In 1835, he became a Professor in Oberlin College, where he continued until 1848. Later, he published sixteen helpful and edifying commentaries on various books of the Bible.

“He that winneth souls is wise.” – Proverbs 11:30

There are few among the multitude of professing Christians who are really engaged in winning souls to Christ. Would that their number were increased a thousand-fold!

As a general fact, those who are engaged thus with all their hearts, are eminently successful. The text seems to assert that the successful labourers in this work are really wise. I believe this to be true. Whether they have the philosophy of science, or only the philosophy of common sense, they surely have great practical wisdom. This must be quite apparent to anyone who duly estimates the difficulties they surmount. What can be a more difficult, delicate thing to manage than the sinner’s heart? Think of the clustering prejudices, the confirmed sinful habits, the giant powers of temptation, the proud committal in evil-doing, and the subtle perversions of truth, which all combine to crowd sinners straight onward in the broad road to death. Ah, how few of the far-gone are ever reclaimed!

Then, conceive of the immense interest at stake. He who can manage the destinies of kingdoms successfully is a wise man. How much more is he who can rightly move the main-spring of a self-moving, deathless spirit – who can skilfully touch the keynotes which are to respond forever with the music of heaven, or with the wailings of the lost!

Reader, will you be one out of the many readers of these lines who will really try to save souls? And do you ask anxiously, *How can it be done?* Then, I answer,

1. *Sympathize, yourself, with God and with Christ.* By this I mean that you should enter into their feelings; exercise and cherish the benevolence which they feel towards the sinner. Let your own bosom glow with that love for human well-being with which “God so loved the world as to give up his Son,” and Jesus so loved the lost as to come to seek and save them, even through the shame and agony of the cross. Moreover, you must take God’s part against the sinner, and defend the interests of justice. This you must do; for your business is to

convict the sinner of his wrong against God, and persuade him to turn back, confess and forsake his guilty rebellion.

2. *You must also sympathize with the sinner.* Not with his sins however, nor exactly with him as a sinner; but with him as a fellow-being, destined to bliss or woe immense and eternal, and now deluded and on the brink of ruin. Viewed in this relation, you may sympathize with him most intensely. Perhaps he is your brother, your husband, or your child. How, how you may and ought to love his well-being! How intensely should you seek to save his soul from the grasp of sin, from the doom of the damned!

3. *Study that sinner's character and precise moral condition.* Find out where he stands, what his views are, what are his chief temptations, what kind of bonds Satan has thrown round him, and under what refuges of lies he is hidden. You need to know the points of access. You want to get off his triple coat of mail, and aim God's sharpened arrows at his heart. Perhaps you may reach him in the line of his social sympathies. The honest tear may melt where the thunder of rebuke is powerless. You need to know what manner of spirit that is with which you have to do.

4. *Study your own heart and your own past history.* That sinner's heart is much like what your own once was. What took hold of your mind may take hold of his. What always repelled you will probably repel him. Much, very much you may learn in this line of inquiry. The lesson is simple and near at hand, but rich with instruction. It is a page of wisdom. Clogged with imperfections and infirmities as you may be, you have at least this one great facility – you have the experience of one human heart to guide you – your own. Besides this, you have some precious ties of sympathy, friendship, or relationship, by which, if wise, you may draw sinners to Christ. In this view we may see one of the reasons why God employs converted sinners and not angels in the work of winning souls.

5. *Work with God, for you can hope to do nothing effectually unless both your hand and your heart are with God.* Your heart must be in most close and constant communion with Him, so that you shall be led by his Spirit. If you set about winning souls to emblazon your own name, or to build up a party church,

or for any, even the most refined selfish objects, how can you hope for success? Will God smile on your hypocrisy and bless your selfishness? Or can you convert souls without God's blessing?

6. *Forget not to pray for God's Spirit, and rely upon Him for the real energy which gives success.* You may plant and water, but God gives the increase. And "God will yet for this be inquired of," as He has said. If you would labour with might for God, be mighty in prayer.

I am pressed to make one more suggestion.

7. *If you would win souls, Try! Be not too prudent, or too timid to attempt this.* Be not afraid to begin. Leave not the work to others. And do not wait even for your minister. Let him do what he can, but if he is a man of God, he wants you also to do all you can. And if he does little or nothing, how much greater is the need that you should take hold mightily and spare not. Probation is wasting; every heart is growing harder; your day of effort is passing, and souls are dying; and who now will try to win souls to salvation?

Seeking the lost

A lady possessed a very valuable diamond ring. One day she was walking through the streets of Paris when she pulled off her glove; the ring slipped from her finger, rolled away, and then dropped through a grating into a drain. In great distress she tried to catch it, and then stood peering into the black mud, vainly trying to secure the ring by means of her black umbrella, but all her efforts were in vain. Some of the bystanders offered to search for her, but the ring was so valuable that she was afraid to give permission. Nothing remained but for her to find it herself. Baring her hand and arm, she plunged both into the black and putrid mass. Within a few minutes she had located and recovered the ring. Has not the Lord Jesus done more – much more - for sinners like you and me? He plunged – body and soul - into the dark waters, in order to take men and women out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set us among his saved people (Psalm 40:2).

Only Believe

After one of his amazing exploits, Charles Blondin, the French tightrope-walker, famous for crossing the 1,100 ft. Niagara Gorge, observed a young boy looking intently at him with real astonishment and admiration. Approaching the boy, Blondin said: "You saw me carry that big man across: do you believe I could take you across?" "Yes, sir", replied the boy, "for he was a big man, and I'm only small." Well, come on", said Blondin, "jump up", and he bent down so that the boy could climb onto his back. "No, no thank you!", said the boy, and immediately he was off as quickly as his legs could carry him. Some look at the Lord Jesus and they are impressed; and they wonder at His ability and power. But this doesn't do anything for them. It achieves nothing at all. The Bible says that to be saved, we must be willing to "trust" Him and to "commit" ourselves to Him (2 Timothy 1:12). Then it is, that He will graciously undertake to bring us safely to heaven.

The King Alone is Worthy

King Phillippe-Auguste, of France, conquered the Flemish and English armies at Bouvines, in A.D. 1214. Before the battle he caused an altar to be erected in the middle of the camp, and on it he deposited his crown, with this inscription: "Au plus digne", which, translated, reads, "To the worthiest"; and then he said to his lords and knights, "He who fights the best, and wins the day, shall be king; and I waive all rights, and will have none but those you give me tonight." History records that, in the ensuing battle, the king fought like a lion, and when evening came, all those left of his nobles gathered around the altar, and shouted: "Thou, O King, art the most worthy!" and they gave him back his crown, placing it upon his head. So it will be when we reach heaven: all the glory for the victory over sin, death, and hell, will be given to the Lord Jesus Christ, for He fought for us in life and in death, until He had won the battle and obtained deliverance for all His people; and then they shall shout with a loud voice: "*Thou art worthy...and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* (Revelation 5:9)"

THE BIBLE: THE BOOK OF BOOKS

“The Scripture appears to be the Word of God by the matter contained in it. The mystery of Scripture is so abstruse and profound that no man or angel could have known it, had it not been divinely revealed. That eternity should be born; that He who thunders in the heavens should cry in the cradle; that He who rules the stars should suck the breasts; that the Prince of Life should die; that the Lord of Glory should be put to shame; that sin should be punished to the full yet pardoned to the full; who could ever have conceived of such a mystery, had not the Scripture revealed it to us?... As the matter of the Scripture is so full of goodness, justice, and sanctity, that it could be breathed from none but God; so the holiness of it shows it to be of God. Scripture is compared to silver refined seven times (Ps. 12:6). The Book of God has no errata in it; it is a beam of the Sun of Righteousness, a crystal stream flowing from the fountain of life.”

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

“The sacred writings deserve the most serious and patient study, and affectionate regard. It is the great God who speaks to men in these writings. It is God your Maker, your Lawgiver, your Redeemer, your Judge. It is the voice of your Father which is in heaven, uttering truths which no human intellect ever conceived; dictating them by His own Spirit, and subscribing them with his own name and seal. He who inhabits eternity, and fills and occupies it as his own dwelling-place, here makes discoveries of the eternal world to the view of mortals, as momentous as the heaven where he dwells. Every other book is fiction and romance, compared with this. If there be an altar where the human intellect may bow in profoundest reverence, and where human learning may find laurels that never wither, it is at the altar of revealed truth.

This one book will live, when the remembrance of all other books is passed away. It will go down through the successive generations of men; and when the earth shall be burned up, and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, it shall remain inscribed on the hearts of an exceeding great multitude, which no man can number. It shall go up to the bar of God, shall enter into the gates of the heavenly city, and there shall be hailed as the charter of its immortal joys. Precious, precious, thrice precious book of God! It can cheer

when every other comforter is far away. It can visit the chambers of solitude, and counsel and comfort on the bed of languishing. It can soothe griefs which nothing else can soothe. It holds up the torchlight of Heaven's tenderest mercy in the midst of the dark valley. It is the comforter of the otherwise comfortless, wiping away the tear that trembles in the eye which fixes its last look on things below.

We do earnestly invite the sons and daughters of men to this rich field of thought. We bid them rove over it from flower to flower, and we bid them dig for its hidden treasures. It has running streams, and sparkling fountains, and deep wells, at which he who drinks shall find living water."

Gardiner Spring (1785-1873)

"This book is the hive of all sweetness, the armoury of all well-tempered weapons, the tower containing the crown jewels of the universe, the lamp that kindles all other lights, the home of all majesties and splendours, the stepping-stone upon which Heaven stoops to kiss the earth with its glories, the marriage ring that unites the celestial and the terrestrial, while all the clustering white-robed multitudes of the sky stand around to rejoice at the nuptials. This Book is the wreath into which are twisted all garlands, the song into which has been struck all harmonies, the river of delight into which hath flooded all the great tides of hallelujahs, the measureless firmament into which all suns and moons and stars and constellations and galaxies and immensities and universes and eternities wheel and blaze and triumph."

Thomas DeWitt Talmage (1832-1902)

"Open the Bible where you will and the first impression is that of vastness. It has in it the curve of the earth and the arch of the sky, great and wide like the world. It is rooted in the abyss of creation and rises into the blue mysteries of Heaven. Here, there are continents of truth, seas of mystery, marshes of melancholy, depths sombre and sunless, and peaks that press the sky. It reveals a world in which men live and love, sin and suffer, hope and die...."

The Bible is like a great organ with myriad keys on which the Master plays. In the Bible there is every form of literature: art, history, poetry, drama, fiction, biography, letters, lyrics, elegies, epics, epigrams, proverbs, parables, allegories, and the dreams of the apocalyptic seers. Here is a splendid, spacious book in which we find every variety of thought, mood and feeling,

from bitter scepticism to death-defying faith, from the sob of despair to the shout of ecstasy, from sensuous love poetry to prayers that have wings; songs of victory and of faith over death and time, and confessions that lay bare the soul of the weary pilgrim.”

Dr Edward McShane Waits (1871-1949)

“The Bible is a majestic palace. I entered through the portico of Genesis and walked down through the Old Testament's art gallery, where I saw the portraits of Joseph, Jacob, Daniel, Moses, Isaiah, Solomon and David hanging on the wall; I entered the music room of the Psalms and the Spirit of God struck the keyboard of my nature until it seemed to me that every reed and pipe in God's great organ of nature responded to the harp of David, and the charm of King Solomon in his moods.

I walked into the business house of Proverbs.

I walked into the observatory of the prophets and there saw photographs of various sizes, some pointing to far-off stars or events—all concentrated upon one great Star which was to rise as an atonement for sin.

Then I went into the audience room of the King of Kings, and got a vision from four points—from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I went into the correspondence room, and saw Peter, James, Paul and Jude, penning their epistles to the world. I went into the Acts of the Apostles and saw the Holy Spirit forming the Holy Church, and then I walked into the throne room and saw a door at the foot of a tower and, going up, I saw One standing there, fair as the morning, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and I found this truest friend that man ever knew; when all were false, I found him true.”

Billy Sunday (1862-1935)

EPILOGUE

A little while back, someone I know had to spend time in hospital. Due to the treatment required, a specialist hospital, some distance away from his home, had to be used. This meant that he and his wife were temporarily separated. The treatment proved successful and, after a period of hospital convalescence, my friend was due to come home. On hearing this, I sent a text message to

his wife, asking how things were going. Due, no doubt, to her busyness, I received a short, simple reply which said, "Everything is ready."

I thought about those words: I could imagine that she had made the home as warm, welcoming, and comfortable as she could: her husband's chair in its place, with everything at hand, the bed prepared, awaiting his arrival, all done with the tender care of a loving wife. Nothing too much trouble for her husband of many years.

Then my thoughts turned to Christ and His people; and, in a similar way, those words are both true and fitting: "Everything is ready."

In the book of Genesis, at the beginning of time, we read that "God said", and, in His eyes, creation was ready even then; and later when the Fall took place and sin entered the world, in God's mercy and grace, redemption was ready, represented in the sacrifice made and the covering provided for our first parents' guilt and shame (Genesis 3:21).

When, at last, the promised Saviour entered this world, Bethlehem's manger was ready; then, at the end of His earthly life, Gethsemane was ready, and Calvary was ready. And then, on His day of glorious resurrection, victory over death and hell was ready, for the Lord, and for all His believing people.

The Bible teaches us that, from eternity, every event, detail, twist, and turn, was ready in God's plan and purpose; and when the time of fulfilment comes, God, in His providence, takes care to ensure that all due preparation has been made. This is true even with respect to our afflictions and troubles. Psalm 41:3 says of the believer, "thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

Of course, we especially think in this connection of our Lord's words recorded in John 14:3, where, speaking of our heavenly home, He says: "I go to prepare a place for you." He means by this that everything will be perfectly arranged and provided, ready for our arrival – the time, the welcome, and every comfort.

Let us praise God that in life, in death, and in eternity, "Everything is ready."

Steve Storey