

# *new covenant* Choice

*If you are the children of God, live together lovingly. If the world quarrel with you it is no matter: but it is sad if you quarrel together ... Dost thou see a man that has the image of God in him? Love him, love him. Say, 'this man and I must go to heaven one day.' Serve one another, do good for one another. If any wrong you, pray to God to right you and love the brotherhood.*

*John Bunyan*

**But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to GOD the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect and to JESUS the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel See that ye refuse not him that speaketh**

**HEBREWS 12:22-25**

# TRAINING FOR WARFARE

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*Edited transcript of message given at Summer Conference 1988*

A deservedly complimentary remark was made the other morning about Amy Wilson Carmichael. What a challenge it is to think that a woman who so often lay in bed writhing in pain could and did write verses like that! What a magnificent soul she was! 'Don't let me sink to be a clod, make me thy fuel flame of God', wrote that great woman of pain and power. Amen. (While I was singing her verses I thought of Jessie Porter Head, another great soul who wrote that other great hymn, 'Let me burn out for Thee, dear Lord, burn and wear out for Thee.') Sometimes I wonder whether the ladies have more courage and endurance in them than men, I really do. I've discovered that men are softies. I had to discover it in myself first. But of course, if you're a man, you are not ever supposed to admit that - you want to be thought a 'tough guy'! There aren't many men that have written that kind of poetry though, are there? Writhing in pain, Amy Wilson Carmichael thought, 'Make me a soldier, make me Thy soldier'. Fancy saying things like that! You may pray 'Oh Lord, have mercy on me'. She says, 'I don't choose easy things, I want to be a soldier.' That's why we keep talking about her. I often wonder whether people will talk about us after we have died, whether there'll be anything worth telling. What a tremendous thing it is to have the challenge of the gospel laid upon us by people who know truth by life and not just by print on a page! As for me, I could have delighted in going on in that vein. 'Make me a soldier, make me Thy soldier, Lord.' So many people just want to be like lambs carried in His bosom (and there is always that aspect of it), but there's nothing offensive about lambs. They haven't even got horns to prod around with. Some of them develop horns when they grow up, nice curly ones of course.

## SHARPEN YOUR WITS

'Make me a soldier and aggressor, Lord.' The thing that's missing these days is aggressive Christianity. It is being, if it has not already been, eliminated. The devil is succeeding in shutting people up into fellowships - they get together every Sunday and have a wonderful time but they never think about going out on their own and preaching. That never crosses their mind and they never seem to have qualms about their lack - not a twinge of conscience, nothing. What a tremendous thing it is to be an aggressive evangelist! By that I do not mean be rough when dealing with people, but being rough with yourself, refusing to be shut up inside your little castle and going out fighting for the Lord. Much needs to be done, beloved, not only abroad as we are being exhorted, (and shall learn tomorrow morning too) but right here at home, just where you are. Be aggressive, much more aggressive than the adversaries are. You say, 'But how can I love them if I'm an aggressor?' That is the way you love them best. I spoke to you yesterday about that old man from the backside of the desert - 80 years old or more, who went down with his wife and children, to do battle against the might of Egypt. Moses did not set out to slay, kill and maim, but to deliver. And that's what you have got to do. We all must sharpen our wits and responses and come out fighting for God and for souls. We have to fight for souls beloved - go out on

the offensive, not fight on the defensive to maintain OUR position. God forbid that we should keep ourselves intact, that last of all. Recall that when at last the Lord led his people over Jordan, He put the fighting men in front. Israel only had as much of the promised land as they fought for - not a bit more. It was the gift of God to them, but they had to fight and fight and fight for it. I don't know why I'm talking to you like this, it's not what I had thought I was going to talk to you about this morning.

## SHARPEN YOUR SWORD

If you read the book of Joshua you will find that just before Caleb steps up to speak to Joshua in Canaan, 'the land had rest from war'. In that atmosphere of victory and peace, when Joshua was dividing up the land between the people for inheritance, his friend Caleb (who was then about as old as Moses was when he invaded Egypt), said to him, 'I want this mountain'. It was astounding. The man would not have rest and peace when it was provided, and he started fighting again. So many, far too many, people want to settle down and rest. They've got something, the gift of God to them, a wonderful inheritance of their own. The land had rest for all of them, yet knowing what his friend's request meant to Caleb's brave heart Joshua says 'Fine, it's yours'. Caleb wanted the mountain - he could have it. I guess some said, 'Oh Caleb, I wish you'd just settle down, leave us to possess our possessions. We want to settle down and enjoy what we've got. Why go stirring up trouble again?'. But Caleb said to Joshua and to anyone else who could hear, 'You know what Moses said to me'. Yes, Joshua remembered, he could hear it now, 'Every place that the sole of your feet has trodden on is yours'. Caleb had received it and so had he. That other 80 year old had spoken to young Caleb, and by the time he grew out of boyhood to manhood, and had reached 80 years of age, he says 'I'm going up this mountain. Give it to me - I'm going to take it'. Sure enough, that meant more trouble. There are some people who won't let you settle down, will they? They seem to want to stir you up with themselves.

I remember that old elder of whom some of you have heard me speak before, he used to say to me (when I was a young pastor, that is somewhere about 40), 'That's right, brother, keep stirring them up, keep stirring them up'. He knew how easy it was for people professing holiness, upon whom the Spirit of God has come, to settle down. It's so easy, so deadly easy. The love of softening things comes creeping in so silently and unobserved. If you're a holy man or woman, you'll be a lovely soft person. God's love makes you tender, but you've got to sharpen your sword, go out and fight and win people for Christ. Fight the devil on their behalf - that's what you've got to do.

This I will tell you, that AFTER you've had your testing, endured temptations and overcome your disappointments, after all that, God will bless you. I repeat - AFTER that. When you've seen and been through enough for the devil to come and say to you 'Well, we'd better have an elders' meeting about this.

We're not getting anywhere, are we? I mean, they aren't getting saved are they?', that's when the battle has to be fought. Do you know why God blesses you? Simply because you're obedient to Him. That's right. He wants you to go out and preach the gospel everywhere: 'They who believed Him went forth and preached the gospel everywhere' - and God went with them. He didn't commit Himself to stay with those who stayed home. The test is not success, the test is obedience. Go into all the world. Don't think that shutting yourself up in the modern faith, (having one meeting on a Sunday - we'll all get together and socialize all the rest of Sunday, or something like that) is Bible teaching - it isn't. Hardly meeting in the week save for a nice time when you always have a cup of coffee in somebody else's home is not Bible faith. Of course it's all plush and nice, so lovely and enjoyable, everybody is so pally, just about 'our set'. The Holy Ghost is the Comforter, isn't He? But beloved, how about all the rest of the people?

## SEE THE CHALLENGE

Do you know of that infamous man Tom Payne? He lived in the Victorian age, and wrote a book called 'The Age of Reason' - you may have heard of it. By it he taught, or hoped to teach, that reason has now taken over from faith, and that if a thing isn't reasonable to the mind, there's nothing in it - it's all pie in the sky! This man, a self-confessed atheist, an opponent of the church, an antichrist in attitude, said about the Christians, 'If I believed what you believe, or what you say you believe, I'd crawl all round this world, even if it was all broken glass, on my knees to preach it'. He mocked the Christians. What a terrible accusation that was, but was it entirely unjustified? Outsiders know the churches are failing to obey Christ and fulfil their calling whilst pushing up themselves, telling themselves lovely things, and learning new choruses. This is what the devil is wanting. I'll tell you his strategy. It is very simple really, but very effective. If you are a born again person, he is powerless to prevent you going to heaven, but he's not going to let you take anybody else with you - that's his strategy. He can't interfere with your destiny - but he has interfered with God's purposes with you already if all you want to do is shut yourself up and have nice little meetings, in a very nice area, where it's impolite to get out in the street and shout. You see, these things aren't done - if you're nice and polite you even tone down your television, or your radio so that you don't disturb your neighbours. But God doesn't care tuppence about that, nor have one shred of respect for you if you practise that kind of religion. When you look around in your New Testament, you find that the Lord Jesus invited trouble. He had hardly performed His first miracle, when up He goes into the temple - and you know what happened there: all His friends thought He'd gone off His head. 'Have you heard what your Jesus has done Mary? He's been into the temple and created havoc.' He knew perfectly well He'd never be accepted, and what would eventually come to Him if He did it, yet He went in and kicked over the tables - the money went 'tinkle, tinkle, tinkle' across the floor - it sounded like joy-bells in His ears. He was in trouble from the beginning. He started by drawing trouble upon Himself. Would you like to join Jesus and be a soldier, would you really like to? You keep singing about it, but would you really like to do it? Leaders of fellowships, it's time you got your churches organized - you ought to be in the vanguard. Don't send them out and stay at home yourself saying, 'I'll pray for you'. You've heard of the game 'Follow my leader', haven't you? It's patterned on what human beings

do. Beloved, you and I must see the challenge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The challenge, as well as the charm.

If you have been reading the magazine published by John, it must have become obvious to you that lots of the articles are about what God did in the beginning. Beloved, we are needing an outpouring from God as in the beginning when God said, 'Let them be'. In the beginning God poured out the Spirit. Oh, how we prayed and praised. But at the same time we were holding at least two open air meetings in the week beside the usual church meetings - keep that clear. If there was a pattern to it, and you want it, there it is. Nobody can tie up God to one method, I know, perhaps there may be someone wanting to shout that out to me - I've heard it all - well, I think I have. We were running two open air meetings a week, we were running a late night meeting for people coming out of the pubs dead drunk, sobering them up to preach to them. We were visiting the flats and houses - my brother-in-law, sitting there, led the party, giving out tracts, and all the band, under instruction, that they were not to say 'Please Mrs. So-and-So, would you like to have a tract?' Oh, no. The understanding was that when the door was opened, at some early point they should say, 'Is anybody here sick? We'd like to come in and pray for them.' That was the aggressive approach - not said in an aggressive manner of course. As may be expected, doors were slammed in faces, everybody was not delighted with them, not everyone said, 'Oh yes, come in, this is marvellous'. Oh no. Soldiers are men and women who go out and fight for the Lord Jesus ... people like Caleb, one of God's special favourites, 'I want this mountain', he said. He would tackle the giants. Praise the name of the Lord!

## TRAIN YOUR CHILDREN

People have no idea of what it is all about. You may say 'I've heard you say it came because you waited on God ... That's not ...' Yes, we waited on God, but we didn't ONLY wait on God, we also believed that we should go into our little world fighting. We didn't go very far abroad - I never left the place for probably ten years. I did not accept any invitation to go out for ministry. These days young men receive invitations to go abroad for ministry, which they mostly accept. They want to be flying round the world - it is a popular thing to do. As God and others in this place are witnesses, I stayed there with the people, prayed with them, preached to them, witnessed with them - anyone, everywhere. It was glorious, strenuous work; except we received strength from heaven, we would have been absolutely exhausted - that is what service is about. But everybody is so busy now and so tired. We're living such lives of luxury and making ourselves so soft - I mean, we buy a suite, and soon we say 'We'll get a better suite next time, with deeper cushions; we'll get rid of that old iron bedstead too.' - they're coming into favour now, aren't they? Especially if they have brass knobs - 'And we'll get a bigger and better sleep-easy mattress'. We do all these things, and everyone thinks it's all fine. Everybody's doing it and it's marvellous. It's the tendency of the age. Have you realized that in the church it's a creeping paralysis? Don't you know the devil is undermining you? You say, 'But what's wrong with it?' All right, all right, we will not argue - I'm just warning you. Let there be one warning voice, Lord. No, two, Norman's as well, Lord. How often he sleeps on the floor! Oh God, give us sanity, give us sanity. Get out there and stop living soft, and softer and softer. Stop it as you value your soul and the reward you MIGHT get in the beyond.

Do you remember Moses? In Hebrews 11 the writer said 'he endured'; he saw Him that was invisible and had respect unto the recompense of the reward. He has gone to it now. Do you know where that man was buried? No, you do not. At his burial, he was not even allowed the respect of his people, no-one came sorrowing to his grave with a bunch of memorial flowers. God took him and buried him somewhere in the desolate wilderness where nobody could get at him - he was ever a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth. Even in his death he had to be laid among the stones and the dust in the burning heat or the terrible cold. God put him there. There was no other place fit for him - he was a soldier. He was laid in the place where he won his battles. I guess when he woke up in the arms of the Lord, he said, 'Thank you, Father'. If only men and women could get something of the backbone of Jesus Christ into them. If only they could. Beloved, do you think it was for nought that God had His Son born in a stable? Do you think it was? He was training Him from the beginning. His training was harder than anybody else's. Others were born in their homes - they didn't have nice hospitals anyway - but He had to be born in a manger. Whatever was His Father doing? Why did He allow that? Allow it? He was making Him a soldier. And you men, you're not training your children to be soldiers, are you? Well are you? It starts from the moment they're born. Yes it does. 'Well, they're not saved yet.' No, and if they get saved, they might have the wrong ideas of it. Make them soldiers. Train them from the beginning. I always have said this, that one of the mistakes that my old mother made was that she had marvellous feather beds (of course they've all gone out now, they're supposed to be bad for you) but I was brought up on them, we had feather beds. I used to get in mine and sink in it and think it was marvellous. But later that was my regret. When I went abroad, I had to lie down on thin raffia mats on damp floors! Oh!! To this day I hate sleeping on the ground, I hate it. But I don't have to stop doing it because I hate it. When I was fifty, sixty years old, I didn't stop doing it either.

## THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Here then is the great thing that you have to see. You, you people that say you are baptized in and filled with the Holy Spirit, are undermining the intentions of God in your family life. That's what you're doing. Do you understand that? My eye caught a man sitting out there - there he is - I can just see his grey hair and his glasses peeping over somebody's head. If you talk to him, he will tell you how they held meetings in the house in which they lived, and the noise was so tremendous that - to quote him - 'If I wanted to speak to my wife, we had to sit together on the sofa and I almost had to shout in her ear because of the great noise that was going on all around'. Go and try it. I mean you can easily shut off the television (if you've got one) when that's making a noise, can't you? It's so easy. Have you ever heard of a people raising an army without getting recruits and putting them through training? Square-bashing? I've never been in the army but this I know: they train them. Glory be to the name of the Lord for every church that TRAINS its people for battle!

I can remember that our family were about the most unorthodox crowd you ever could have imagined. I mean ... a Christian family that never went to church on Sunday nights? Oh, we did not go out on the beaches, or on trips, or visit our friends - we didn't socialize. Oh no, in the morning, church, in the afternoon, Sunday School, but when it came to Sunday

evening, off I went with my dad. We walked I don't know how many miles through London streets - we had to, we hadn't got much money - and a car - what was that? We walked, and we walked, and we walked till finally we arrived at a dingy dungeon of a place smelling strongly of its surroundings, that we called the 'mission'. It was situated in Flower and Dean Street, off Whitechapel Road, in the East End of London. There we would meet with others to pray, and then divide into small parties and go off into the lodging houses that seemed to abound everywhere (one in every street, it seemed) to preach the gospel. That was my Sunday night. I enjoyed myself pushing around a harmonium on four pram-wheels. It didn't seem to matter who I rammed into, people looked upon me with a benevolent eye, and I enjoyed it. We used to go into these places, and sing and preach to them. I didn't preach in those days, I was just a part of the crowd. 'Were you saved?' No, of course I wasn't saved, but my parents were training me right. They were pointing me in the right direction. What are you doing with your children? You say, 'Oh well, we pray and read, say grace at meals.' Well, what's particular about that? I'm talking about training for warfare, not trying to make your home civilized and decent. On Monday morning I had to go to school, just as your children do. Sunday nights for my sisters were different - they used to go off with Mother to a hospital, Mildmay Mission Hospital. The matron of the hospital, a godly woman, used to have meetings there with staff and patients, and the female side of the family used to gather with them. Mother had a marvellous voice, she really did, and she used to sing the gospel there - that was our world. We would traipse on foot everywhere, they over to that hospital with my mother, and I with my father to the Lodging houses, because we hadn't got the money to ride on a bus or tram. Talk about walking! People think they're marvellous if they walk the Fells and the Dales - you want to try walking on a London pavement for hours. We walked to and fro. Occasionally we would, if we were abnormally late, and had the cash, ride home on a clanking tram on Sunday night, and so to bed - school in the morning. No wonder I'm such a duffer! You can see what effect it's had on me. 'I wasn't treated right.' I laugh at it all underneath. I'm too polite to tell the brethren that I laugh at them though. It's a lot of nonsense. You're letting the state get hold of your children and choke them with education. And you love it. And you adore them if they become an 'ABCer'. You think that's great. And I want to tell you, my beloved, that soldiers are not made that way. You say, 'Ah, but I've got a good boy.' Yes, that's right, but do you think that perhaps he's done it despite you, because he's got something in him?

## THROUGH THE FIRE

You've got to put first things first. And what SHOULD be (if it is not already) the first thing in your life? Tell me man. I'll tell you - obedience to God, and seeing souls saved. That's the first thing. The first thing is not this, that or the other thing that is being put up and preached about these days. The first thing is that you should know the training and the power of God in your life. I'll tell you this, you will not raise any delinquent children if you do that. My sisters were not delinquent, their children aren't delinquent, my children aren't delinquent. You say 'With a strict regime like that?' Yes, with a strict regime like that. Glory to God!

We want God to do things when we don't, and won't do things we should do for God. I'm talking to the converted now.

I wouldn't preach this to the outsiders - they don't know. Deep down somehow, though, they know what the church should be. The call of God is to be a fighter, beloved, a fighter for the Lord. The Old Testament records that heathen nations used to put their children through the fire, unto their god. The Lord told Israel that He did not want that of them. It was never in His mind, He said. But I tell you this, in the new covenant, God expects you to put your children through the fire, the fire that's burning in you. And what is this fire that's burning in you? Is it a fire that makes you want to save souls? Get this right beloved and it won't matter much if you get a lot of other doctrines wrong. Blessed be the name of the Lord. One soul in heaven, just one, that you've won for Christ is better than arriving there and saying 'This is good, I got it right, I knew what new birth was'. Don't you see? Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I know He came for other things also, but this He said, and Paul said it also, He came to save sinners.

Not so long ago, I was riding on a train, sitting in my seat, talking here and there. Looking up, I saw across the carriage a lady with three children. She was reading to them. I think she was reading something from Patricia St. John. I was glad. I don't know whether you give your children those kind of books, or whether you let them have tapes that are almost bound to lead them astray. This lady was reading out quite loud. I don't know whether she was purposely doing it, or whether she had a marvelously clear voice, but I could hear her about two rows back. I guess she wanted the whole carriage to hear. Her voice was musical, her tones well-modulated, a highly educated lady, I discovered. I got up and went across to her, and do you know what I found out? She'd only just been baptized in the Spirit. What's more, a little later she was reading her Testament. Not only was she training her children right, she was setting an example and was wanting the whole carriage to know. I said to her, 'Are you baptized - filled with the Spirit?'. She said, 'Yes, I am.' I said, 'So am I', and we began to talk. How many of you have done that kind of thing? Oh, of course, you have private cars, so you can't talk to anybody but your family and your friends. Isn't that right? Public transport is for you to transmit the Word, that's what it's for. It's an opportunity. I don't do it every time I travel on public transport, but do you ever do it? The devil is isolating us, that's what's happening. The Lord knew this would happen, He knew that there would be a time called 1988, He knew there was going to be a twentieth century. What will it be like in the 21st century if the Lord doesn't come back? Who can guess? Oh, may the Lord give us courage - courage.

## THROUGH WEAKNESS

We were touching on this on Saturday night - though not particularly - when considering Joshua. When God came and chose that man Joshua, he was not so young as people here in the room. He was as old as Caleb, but age is a comparative thing. And God said to Joshua, 'Only be strong and of good courage'. Joshua returned to the crowd of Israelites, and told them what God had in mind. And do you know what they said to him? 'Only be strong and of good courage.' They begged for strong leadership and for strength and courage. That's what they begged for. Read Joshua, read it again with enlightenment. They said to him, 'Oh yes, we'll go, but be strong and of a good courage'. Hallelujah. How about that? That's what they saw was needed, and that's what they felt was needed. And that's what God knew was needed when He told him. 'Be strong -

you'll never do it if you're not strong.' You say, 'But then you just told us about a weak woman. Yes, and Jesus Christ was crucified through weakness.' But strangely enough (I don't know whether you've ever let this sink into you) you read in the New Testament about 'when I am weak, then I am strong'. Let me put it this way, when the big capital 'I' is weak, then the little 'I' becomes strong.

Let me read this to you, beloved (Hebrews 11:33) 'Who through faith subdued kingdoms'. How about that? Do you know that you could subdue the kingdoms of wickedness and unrighteousness all round your fellowship, you can subdue them and be greater than they? You can get them under your feet instead of them driving you back. You can overcome, but you've got to fight to do it. When the scripture says that 'He giveth us the victory', it doesn't mean that He gives us the victory without fighting. If you don't get in the fight, how are you going to know what victory is? You've got to get into it. So many people do not have the victory because they don't get into the fight. Let's read on: 'Through faith they subdued kingdoms.' They didn't say, 'Oh God, subdue kingdoms for us', THEY did it. The Lord did it for them, of course, but the emphasis was on them - THEY had faith. That's where God wants the emphasis laid. THEY had faith, THEY subdued kingdoms, THEY wrought righteousness. THEY obtained promises, THEY stopped the mouths of lions, THEY quenched the violence of fire, THEY escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness THEY were made strong. That's it beloved, out of weakness THEY were made strong. Isn't that a marvellous thing? Out of weakness? Surely I'm made strong from strength - but then you see, Jesus Christ was crucified through weakness. Crucified through weakness. It was the mightiest thing He ever did.

Oh Lord, give us the desire to go out and win people, instead of waiting for people to come and join us. Oh, I hear that, I hear that one, oh yes, 'those who've joined us'. Brother, in the early days of Liverpool, what used to happen? Did you wait for people to join us? You did not. Some came that way, but we've not to make our boast in people who join us. Do you know why people join us? You hear it, I hear it, right out of the mouths of the leaders ... 'Well, they were dissatisfied with where they were going.' I tell you that it won't be long before they get dissatisfied with where they are going now, if all you're getting is dissatisfied people ... I can quote the scriptures on your behalf - The cave of Adullam - all that were in debt, all that were dissatisfied came and joined David there. It was fine, but before long he had trained them into soldiers. He didn't stay in the cave of Adullam, he did not fail to see the thing God wanted doing. He made soldiers out of them, and said in effect, 'Come out of this old dug-out. Let's go'. Listen to one of the glorious things he said: 'Moab is my wash pot, over Philistia have I cast out my shoe.' That's the way he thought. 'Moabites? What do they think they can do! They are just the pot in which I wash my hands.' And his name was not Pilate. 'I washed my hands in them', he said, and he also first demonstrated what he later said about Philistia, starting with Goliath first. He wasn't using exaggerated terms. He tried to put things into true perspective for people - so that we should understand. Will it ever be said of you that for every one Saul had slain you have slain ten? Will that ever be said of you? You say, 'Well, we can't all be Davids'. No, that's right, you can be better than he. 'Really?', you say, 'What? Greater than that great man?' Yes, of course you can. We're in the New Covenant. I'm ever so glad, my

friend, that when our Lord Jesus was born on this earth He could claim a heredity of warriors. He has warrior blood in His veins, naturally.

## LEARN TO SHOUT

Let's read Matthew chapter 1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David (there is good fighting blood in Him, isn't there?), the son of Abraham. What fighting blood was in father Abraham! He gathered his household men around him and went to battle for Lot. These men were not an army, they were only his family retainers! The enemy had trained armies. They had Generals, experts, they knew all about warfare, they had spoils to prove it. Old Abraham, he gathers a rag-tag-and-bobtail crowd of people - a lot of men that followed the plough and looked after the sheep and the goats, that's all. The chief of the house says 'Come on', and they went - day and night, and they'd never had any training. They went on and on because they knew righteousness and the will of God. God gave them strength and they went on and on through the night to battle in the morning. They didn't say, 'Oh Abraham, we can't. We're tired, exhausted, we've been working all day long.' I can hear men saying this to their lovely little wives, and their sweet wives say 'Yes, dear, you need to rest'. My wife never talked to me like that. No, she didn't. I give her credit. Bless her. They went. They went all night. When Jesus was born He was expected to be a warrior - it was in His blood. There was that something in His blood on the natural side, as well as the glorious new covenant in His blood. New covenant blood is fighting blood, it's the blood of a warrior, and SO He lived His life, and went out in the ministry. Everybody thought He was mad. He didn't care. He went straight at it - bang, bang, bang. He never hurt anybody. He drove those people out of the temple, though. If they got out of the way of His whip, they were safe. Out, out, out, out! You say, 'Really? I've always thought of Him going to the house of the broken-hearted sisters and Lazarus or saying such things as 'Rise up, little pet lamb', and giving her her life back'. That's the way we think of Him. It's so true. I'm only supplying the balancing factor. People haven't got balance in their make-up. Strong to fight - tender to heal and love. This is a right personality - the other is unbalanced. May God show us. 'The head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now. A royal diadem adorns the mighty Victor's brow'. He fought to the last, and that's what you have to do if you're a true child of God. He is expecting it of you, especially after this morning. If you've never had your attention drawn to it before (which I think perhaps you have), you are to see that you train for battle. You leaders are to train your people to fight, you have got to instil it into them, inseminate them with it. Jesus was inseminated with it. Your prayer meetings have got to be battle grounds, as well as places where you, and they, say 'Praise your name Lord, praise your name Lord, praise your name Lord'. I've done it, please ... I'm saying 'as well as'. I'm not saying it's wrong. But your prayer meetings must not be full of nice little self-contained sentences where people just mumble something in a scarcely audible voice, you've got to learn to shout the shout of victory. You must learn to do it. You say, 'Well it's not in my make-up, I've always been quiet.' Yes, I know that, but you've got to learn to shout. 'But our neighbours might hear us.'

## GOD'S PRIORITIES

Let me tell you something. When we lived in that

famous or infamous place called Bradford, we used to take devil-possessed people into our house, and we lived in a terrace, an ordinary Yorkshire-stone terrace. And my wife would see that perhaps she'd got a rough night coming, so she would go to bed. She never deserted me - I hope she was praying for me. But at times she used to call downstairs and say, 'Dear, stop it, you're making too much noise, you'll wake the neighbours up'. My, there was some shouting and some screaming going on. I tell you. It would have gone through thick walls. I used to approach the neighbours occasionally, and say 'Sorry if we disturbed you'. They'd say, 'We never heard you, we never heard anything.' I'm telling you the truth. And yet let me tell you the corollary of this. I once had a displaced disc and I was in terrible pain, I really was - it pinched the sciatic nerve. I didn't know anything except that I was in awful pain. In the night I was groaning with the pain and the neighbour next door heard it. It was nothing, nothing like those terrific shouts and screams that pierced the night as devils came out of people. They heard me though - I only made normal pain groans (or something a little extra than that - you're allowed to when your sciatic nerve's either on fire or frozen cold) - that's all - yet I was heard. People screaming with devils were never heard. God must have deafened them. God healed me, though. My wife anointed me. I've never had any back trouble since. You people who say you've back trouble and you get healed, and you've got it again, there's something wrong. When the Lord heals you, you don't get relapses. I'm telling you. You don't get lapsed healings when the Lord heals you. The glory of the Lord is that He plugged up their ears when we were casting out devils. He must have done - they never heard anything. Get in trouble with your neighbours? Well, you deserve to when you've got your television too loud. Oh the holy shouts that used to go up! They never heard those either, as God is my judge - I'm talking to you with one of my family present. Listen, they were trained in the same way - we used to get them up out of their beds if necessary and put demon-possessed people in the beds they had just left. The children went somewhere else - that was good enough for them. Everybody has got it all wrong, because of this cursed insistence on the family, the family, the family. There's a greater family, it's called the family of God. And you've got to sacrifice everything for that. You say, 'Well the children are not saved, they won't understand.' Yes they will - when they see the genuine thing. They'll understand when they're old enough to understand. And if you train them for it, both by instruction and example, they'll take to it like mother's milk. I'm telling you the truth.

There has to be a revolution. Everything must change so that God should know that WE mean it, and when He sees YOU mean it, He'll take care of your children. He is the supreme educator, and He loves them. He also loves those people out there, perhaps in one sense more than He loves your family. You say, 'But we're saved people'. Yes, but you see your children have had the opportunity, those out there haven't. Why did God's love abound to the world? He'd got His Son with Him, He had got all the angels there with Him, He was very comfortable, everything was wonderful, but He loved the people of earth, and He sent His Son down here for them. 'Go, Son, become Jesus in a manger, get the blood of a man in you, some fighting blood', and that is what He did. The Lord will correct me when I get home if I'm not saying it all exactly right so that everyone should understand what it's all about. The world is perishing because of the lack of care and courage on the part of the Church, you know it is. The majority of people do not sin

because they choose to sin, it isn't because they choose to drink, it isn't because they choose to smoke hash, it isn't because they choose to look at pornographic literature, it isn't because of these things - they are results not causes. You say, 'But that's what they do.' That's right, exactly right, but nearly everyone hooked on those things was led into them - they did not make a definite decision to do them, but what have you chosen to do about it? Your choice comes before theirs. You're a child of God. It's you God looks to and listens to.

## GOD'S STRENGTH

The other day I spoke to a brother about the weather and how God had favoured us with what we asked for. 'Suppose some farmer was praying for rain?', he asked. 'We are God's children', I said, 'and we've asked God to do us a special favour.' There lies the difference. The hypothetical farmer asking for or wanting rain may not be saved anyway. We have rights through the Lord Jesus, we have access by the Spirit to the Father, we can ask Father for special privileges, and He hears us. Having these privileges, we can proceed to do what the old hymn says, 'Gird your armour on, stand firm everyone, rest your cause upon His mighty word and go to battle.' What does it matter if somebody says 'Boo' to you? Spoken suddenly it may make you jump, but what does that matter? Fear ... fear ... the other morning a sister prayed that we should be free from fear. Fear. Did you take up the prayer and say in your heart, 'I'm going out, I'm going to do so and so, and so and so'? Do you say, 'Well, I'm not one of those fanatics who go out on the street. We're not like that in our church'? Nobody, least of all God, is asking you to be a fanatic. There isn't anybody that ever achieved anything great for God that wasn't at some time regarded as a fanatic. Let us name a few of them ... C.T. Studd, Hudson Taylor, Mary Slessor ... General Booth, Jesus, Paul, I could go on. They were real people, they all did SOMETHING for God. When John Wesley first considered George Whitefield, and his open air preaching, he shuddered at it. John was baptized in the Spirit, but he still preached in church buildings only - which shows you how much more education we need after we claim to be baptized in the Spirit. Being honest, John had to admit that Whitefield was 'gaining his ten thousands', while he himself was gaining but thousands. So as he said, 'I consented to become MORE VILE', and began to preach in the fields. Hallelujah. 'I consented to become more vile'. How about that? Vilification is all part of the cross. Who will bear it and go after Jesus? Supposing I challenged you and said 'Stand up everyone that will now consent before God to become more vile', would you stand? Don't do it, don't tell me, tell God. But let me tell you that if you tell God you'll tell everyone else also - everybody will know. Do you know what I discern in this present move of the Spirit? It's running to seed. You say, 'What?' Yes, you'll find this is so, it's quite general among almost all the middle class, and every other person that is trying to rise higher and better their lot in this world. I just observe, that's all. Let everyone be honest and admit that this is so. It is, isn't it? You say, 'I knew somebody down the street, he was a real one, he got really baptized in the Spirit, he ...' But for every one of these you know, I could probably tell you of many quite different from that. It's natural in the human heart to want to improve one's lot. A man says, 'I came the hard way. I want to see my children have a better life than I had'; that is quite natural. You climbed up from the few old sticks you had when you were first married, you now have this, and that and the other, and so on ... It is proper in the human heart to want

these things. It follows as day follows night. But they are not the sign of God's blessing. Once you get that blessing into your heart, the sign of it is that a man or a woman speaks out and goes out in His name. The Spirit gives utterance. I'm not saying go to some far corner of the earth (there are those that have gone, and bless the Lord for them, they've been obedient) Your job is to go out in your world, the environment around you, do what you should do, and witness for the Lord, and let people know that you are there. Don't shut yourselves in and say, 'You'll always find a hearty welcome here'. You see that kind of thing on many a church notice board - it's very nice. Don't say 'The door's wide open, please swim in', go out there. Did you read with me the other day in Luke chapter 14, and take notice of what was said? The Lord and owner of the house who provided the supper, said, 'Go out and compel them to come in' - it was the final move in the effort to save souls. At first it starts with an invitation. It went out to the Jews - they had the first invitation - then he said, 'Go out into the highways and bid them come in, then go out into the hedges', and finally he said, 'Go out and compel them to come in'. That's the end of the age. What are you doing about it? 'Oh, we're waiting for God to pour out the Spirit'. 'Go out and compel them to come in.' He is insistent and uncompromising. We were praying, we were witnessing, we were out in the street - we had the police call to see us. Neighbours complaining, people down the roads, police came ... we kept on. Saturday after Saturday, the police would come and tell us we shouldn't do this, it blocked the causeway. They didn't want to stop us, but we shouldn't do it, so we would draw back to the deadline. But when the police had gone (not because we wanted to defy the law - they were kind to us and as co-operative as possible), I was trespassing again - not deliberately, but zealously.

Men have to be compelled to come in. You've got to bring the compulsion of God upon them and make them feel they can't stay away. The power of compulsion is the power of conviction. Every child of God needs it to do what must be done if he or she wants to be credible in heaven. If I said to you 'How many of you in this room are doing it?', you men (I'll leave out the ladies), do you think ten of you would stand up? And would you be one of them? Listen to what scripture says: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' You'll never get wise about these things until you have this holy fear of God. Call it worshipful reverence if you like and make it more palatable to delicate appetites.

We were reading last night about fathers of our flesh, to whom we gave reverence - that's the kind of thing, a real reverential regard for God. Do you say, 'I've got that', and have you forgotten He commanded His Son to be born in a stable? Don't take anything out of the context and general atmosphere of overall truth. Do you realize that He commanded His Son to go and make a big disturbance right at the start of His ministry? Have you real respect for Him? Have you? The writer goes on to say, 'and we obeyed them'. It is this kind of fear that is the beginning of your wisdom. You keep asking for wisdom to be given you? Well, this is only the start. Later it begins to dawn on you that 'he that winneth souls is wise'. It's all in your Bible. Construct a sermon on it, but don't do it just to construct a sermon, do it to take a strong dose of medicine. 'He that winneth souls is wise.' Do you want to stand and look a fool in heaven? No wisdom! 'Oh, I have got the spirit of wisdom' - but you haven't, have you, if it's not on the biblical foundation. May the Lord open our hearts unto the truth. The best way to be

clean and to keep clean, and to know you're clean, is to get out there where it's dirty. That's how you'll know. The best way to know whether you're strong is to get out there and fight. That's how you'll know whether you're strong or weak.

## THERE IS A CAUSE

Turn with me to the first book of Samuel, chapter 16. There we read that David was anointed. Then, in chapter 17, we read the story that you often heard when you went to Sunday School, or you told to your Sunday School classes. It's about David and Goliath, but we won't spend time on all the story. Going down the chapter we find that David was sent by his father to take some cheeses and so on to his brethren at the battle front, and a special gift to the captain of the host. With what high regard the real strong fighting men were held! David obediently goes down to the battle area, and while he's there, out comes this terrible man Goliath, and young David stands there watching and listening to it all. Verse 24: 'All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were sore afraid. And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel has he come up.' That's what men are doing - they are defying God and His people, the Israel of God. That should stir the blood in you. Men do not consider themselves to be potential converts, they're defying the host of God. Let courage rise with danger, brethren. Let us read on in the middle of verse 25. 'It shall be that the man who killeth him, the King will enrich him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel. And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, what shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?' David was amazed. Such a prize! The King shall give him his daughter for such a small thing as this. It's not worth such a reward - who is this Goliath? David couldn't understand that the King was offering such a marvellous gift as an incentive to somebody to slay the giant. What? David slew him. He didn't kill him for fame or for hope of reward, though, but just because it had to be done for God's glory - to vindicate His name. David didn't think anything of Saul's promise - he wasn't after obtaining promises. Read it and rejoice - read it and feel ashamed of yourself. 'And Eliab, David's eldest brother, heard when he spake unto the men, and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, 'Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.' And David said, 'What have I now done? Is there not a cause?' What did he mean 'a cause'? Dad had sent him with the food - that was the cause surely. Oh no, that was not the cause. Whatever other cause or causes there were, David knew in his heart that he had been sent there to hear Goliath's challenge - that was the cause. And like Jesus of the New Testament (of Whom we thought the other day, when the man with the dropsy was in front of Him), he rose to the challenge and answered it. That's some blood to have in your veins, brother, isn't it? If you have that kind of heart blood in you, brother, your sons will thank God for you one day, boy.

There's something about the blood, not that we've got to fall into the mixed-up Jehovah's Witnesses thinking about it, but there's SOMETHING about the blood. If the pattern of your life was in your father's genes and the little squiggly lines in your veins, all these can be affected by the glorious Holy Ghost.

He can affect everything in a man. When born of God, we are not the puppets of satan or the powers of chance, mixed up and thrown about, something miscast through some parental inadequacy. Glory be to God, we have received a whole and wholesome salvation, and I believe that when the Church rises into understanding of this, that wholeness will be communicated into the very 'spiritual' genes of us. We're not at the mercy of some parental this, that or the other - we have a new parent. Why doesn't the church believe it? There was a cause - nobody knew the overruling power of God in young David's life. Wouldn't it be wonderful if your son was marked out like that by God. You'd want ten of them, wouldn't you? David's brother was jealous of him - his brother, who everyone thought was going to be the king following Saul's decease. Even Samuel, the kingmaker himself, made that mistake. But God passed over Eliab and over all the rest of them. Is there a man here? Is there a man sitting down there, one man that God can anoint a warrior king? Is there a man who has Abrahamic tendencies, a man with Davidic genes in him, spiritual genes inbred in him from our blessed Father and our glorious David? It's all right, I'm not going overboard on it. Don't pray for me. Well do, but not for that reason.

## ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE

Who believes in the cleansing of the blood? Do you? Why the blood? Wasn't everything in his mind as well? Of course it was. That is why we have to develop the mind of Christ in us. And who's clever enough to dismember the human personality and divide mind from spirit and heart? Oh God, help us to see that we come forth as one new entity from the Lord. It's inherent, and I trust coherent too, that the Lord may show us this glorious truth. There's a cause, there's a cause, man, and if the men won't do it, I appeal to you women, here's a ministry you may have. I meet so many women who are complaining that their leaders won't let them do this, that or the other. I don't judge in these cases, I'm telling you what I hear. I wonder if they're greater than their leaders. I don't know, I refuse to judge. Should men be a disadvantage, or should they be Joshuas and say, 'Go on, sister, I'm with you'?

Oh, beloved, when you come to this tremendous place, you understand that you're called to be a soldier in an alien land - chosen, called, and faithful for our Captain's band. In the service royal, don't let your heart get cold. Be right loyal, faithful, true, bold. Be bold. Call the wrath of these other gods upon you, for they're no gods. Don't go out and make an ass of yourself, that's not what I'm talking about. When I first entered into the realm of the gifts of the Spirit, unlike what so many of the pundits insist, I did not speak in tongues first. In fact, I didn't come into the realm of the gifts for quite a while after I was baptized into the Spirit. That's why I know the wrongness of the false teachings about it. I was helping conduct a campaign in another denomination, a Baptist pastor paired with another brother of that denomination when it happened. I was invited to join him. Now I had been brought up anti-the gifts of the Spirit. I had been taught they were not for today, and I had believed it. The gifts of the Spirit had been taken right out of the Bible, according to the teaching. It was false, of course. I went to this meeting with some pretty strong convictions about women's ministries too. Don't blame these men if they can't get their sights right - it's what they've been brought up on, lots of them. To continue - we were in a prayer meeting and a little Welsh lady was kneeling over there in the corner. I heard her

speaking in tongues, and thought at first it must be Welsh, but after a while I realized that it couldn't be. It was nice and quiet and orderly though, nothing like I expected it would be - a sort of devil's talk. I was a little bit cagey (I don't know what word to use) about it, but I wasn't leading the prayer meeting that morning, it was my fellow campaigner's responsibility. I thought, 'Tomorrow morning, I've got to lead this prayer meeting, Lord. If it happens then, what am I going to do about it?' He hasn't done anything. There was challenge in it all to me. I don't know whether you're a person who likes a challenge, but I always had to accept the challenge. But then Jesus was the same. What's wrong with that? David was the same. Abraham was the same also. I wasn't under any compulsion to do so, except compulsion from the Holy Spirit, leading me to the death of something in me. I'm very grateful to Him. The next morning came, and sure enough it was the same again. She spoke out in tongues, only this time instead of it being a quiet, worshipful, lovely tongue (which thing I had had to admit to myself though I had expected it to be just a lot of babble), she came right out with it, filling the room and everybody's ears with it, including mine - lying on the floor on my face, I said to the Lord, 'Lord, tell us what that means' (I didn't know the jargon, I didn't say 'Give us the interpretation', I wasn't in that realm), and as soon as I'd said it, right out of my mouth came a flood of words. Now that's how I know that speaking in tongues is not the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit. The first thing I did in that realm was to interpret, wondering whatever was happening to me! All I was ever able to remember of the interpretation was this - God was going to raise up an army to walk through the length and breadth of the land. That was forty years ago. I've heard it quoted in all sorts of places since - that was my introduction to the gifts of the Spirit. What the Spirit said is happening in England. There has surely been a fulfilment of that word here, and in other places in the world also. I received the gift of tongues later and am very

thankful I have too. Do you wonder then that this is the way in which I'm pointed? You may say, 'Well, God didn't speak to me like that'. Don't dodge the truth. God is wanting to. I've heard people say 'Well God has never told me I've got to give up tobacco' - dodging the truth. 'God's never spoken to me and said I should get baptized in water' - dodging the truth. You have a Bible beloved; this Bible takes precedence over any other counsels you may or may not have received, from her or him, and even your own self-counselling also. The Bible is that more sure word of prophecy, infinitely superior to any other. Do you believe that? Then you are to be a soldier, and get up and fight. If you would only get up and fight, you wouldn't be lying about saying, 'Oh, I do feel bad, I don't feel strong. Lord, get me out of this mess.' Get up man, go out there and get somebody else out of a mess. Fight with them and for them. That's your duty, not pressing buttons and pulling triggers - He takes that out of you. I'm not a fanatical pacifist, just a born again child of God wanting to confront you with your duty. Love is the reason, love - stronger than death and hell. 'Jesus Thou my great pacific Prince, come upon us with Your own fighting spirit!' He fought to give you peace, beloved. He fought to give you salvation, He fought to pour out His blood for you. He fought to do it, fought and fought and fought, till all was done, and His last but one cry on the cross was: 'Finished!', the cry of the outright Victor. When I read my New Testament, I read of an army of people like Him - the ministers of that great age were fighters. And they never went down fighting - they went up.

I suppose if I said 'Stand up every one of you that will be a soldier of Jesus Christ', practically every one if not all of you would stand up, beloved. So I will not do it. Next week we shall see, next month will tell us. You say, 'Well, we're not very many'. Jesus Christ was just one. And having won, He went out and gathered many like spirits round Him. Amen. One man, glory be to the name of the Lord. Copyright © G.W.North 1990

## FAITH THAT WORKS

### NORMAN MEETEN

God is only interested in things that work. The Scriptures speak of 'Effectual' - Effectual salvation - 2 Cor. 1:4; Effectual prayer - James 5:16; Effectual word - 1 Thes. 1:13; Effectual power - Eph.3:7; Effectual ministry - Gal. 2:5.

Although things often do not work as we preconceive or hope, 'God is working everything together for good to them that love Him' (See Rom. 8:28).

Over Christmas, I was meditating on the scriptures related to the Incarnation. I saw afresh how God had the right people in the right place at the right time in order that the Right Person should be born - thus fulfilling all the prophetic scriptures concerning Him.

A pagan government, without knowing it, had to legislate, to set the stage to facilitate God's eternal purposes - The Incarnation. We also see at the death of Jesus, Caiaphas, an

enemy of God, uttered true prophesy. '*Caiaphas, being high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this he spake not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*' Isa. 11:50/52. '*Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people*' Jn. 18:14.

Pilate, ignorant of his role in history, sentenced Jesus to death, thus fitting in to God's great plan of salvation (see Acts 2:23). '*Him being allowed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain ...*' Even satan has to capitulate to God's great foreordained plans. '*When he came to Jesus he had no power over him*' Jn. 14:30. '*For the prince of this world*

cometh and hath nothing in me'.

F.W. Faber appreciated this truth when he wrote his lovely hymn, 'I worship Thee sweet will of God':

'Ill that He blesses is our good,  
And unblessed good is ill,  
And all is right that seems most wrong;  
If it be His sweet will'.

In seeing this, we discover what Joseph, the patriarch, knew so long ago in Egypt. *'Joseph said unto them' (his brethren who had so wrongly used him), 'Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought ill against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive' Gen. 50:20.* We read also in Gen. 45:57, *'Now therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me higher, for God did send me before you to preserve life.'* Once we get truths of this nature sealed in our hearts we cease to live in the agony of uncertainty. Our confidence is in God; behind Whose word is all His power and ability to perform it.

*'Now faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God' Rom. 10:17.* That is more than clinging to the cold letter - for as Paul says, *'The letter killeth' 2 Cor. 3:6, 'but the spirit giveth life. The manifestation of that life is Love. The Love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost' Rom. 5:5.* This is what caused the Apostle Paul to write to the Galatian church. *'Faith works by Love'*. One of the loveliest expositions of this statement and principle in the New Testament is found in the letter that Paul wrote to Philemon from Rome, where he was *'the prisoner of the Lord'*, which he sent by the hands of Epaphras and Onesimus, along with two other letters - one to the Colossian Church and the other to the Laodicians. *'And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea' Col.4:16,* the latter now being lost.

The letter of Paul to Philemon was a love letter of the highest order. We will now look into this letter and see how faith works, *'That the communication of thy faith may become effectual'*, Philemon 6.

## 1. Love is all-inclusive

*'Hearing of thy love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints' v.5.*

*'For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee brother' v.7.*

It is obvious that Philemon had a big, generous, open heart. He would have had no problem with the exhortation of Jesus; *'Love your enemies'*. The fulfilling of the law had become the habit of his life. Those who have the faith of the Son of God have the ability to live and behave as the sons of God. All that is mean and tight goes. God takes away *'the stony heart and gives us a heart of flesh'* - that is soft and generous and easily moved. It is said often in the Gospel record *'He was moved with compassion'*. This was the underlying explanation of His life and ministry.

*'And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand*

*and touched him and said unto him, I will, be thou clean' Mk. 1:41.*

We read the same at the *'feeding of the five thousand' Mat. 14:14.* *'Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion'*. How different this is to the natural disposition of men, illustrated for us by the behaviour of the disciples, *'send the multitude away.'* Jesus said, *'No - give them to eat'*.

Faith works by Love - Jesus, in absolute dependence upon His Father, looked up to heaven and fed them; seeking the co-operation of the disciples.

Love is always 'all inclusive'. Love never wants to leave anyone out. *'Give and it shall be given unto you.'* It is then that we see the miracle of God. Love releases God's supply. It is a law in the spirit. Some call it 'risky living' - but those who live by *'the faith of the Son of God'* find God true. As Hudson Taylor once said, *'It is from God's hand to my mouth.'*

Over the years I have found myself involved in the lives of many people all over the world. There are so many in need of the tangible, practical Love of Jesus. We are to be the incarnation of His love. It was St. Theresa who said, *'Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He is to look out in compassion to the world; and yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good, and yours are the hands with which He is to bless us now.'*

Once I was driving down the road from our home in Crosby, Liverpool, and the Lord spoke to me concerning an elderly woman who had come to the Lord during a series of meetings in Luchnar, N. India. She was virtually destitute owing to the 'riotous living' of her late husband and son - both drunkards. The Lord said to me: *'I want you to be responsible for Mrs. Chanbey until she dies.'* Already I was caring for numerous children in different parts of the world. I said to the Lord, *'How many more?'* He replied, *'Who is paying, you or Me?'* That settled the matter. The Lord continues to provide. Over the years, with ever increasing need, there has come ever increasing supply.

God is faithful. What He promises He will perform. He cannot lie. When we identify with His generosity we will experience His faithfulness more and more. Love knows no bounds. Love never fails.

## 2. Love is personal

Over against the 'all-inclusive love of God' we find His love is personal. Love is able to devote all of its energy and devotion and attention on a single person, thus making that person feel they are the only one that matters.

*'I beseech thee for my son Onesimus whom I have begotten in my bonds' v.10.*

Paul was the aged Apostle - the prisoner of the Lord - He had the care of all the churches on his shoulders, and yet he was able to concentrate the Love of Jesus down on to this one, rebellious, run-away slave boy. No one was too insignificant

for his care and attention. He was like his master, so often illustrated in the Gospel record. There was blind Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:46). There was the demoniac of Gadara, with legion of demons (Lk. 8:26). There was the harlot of Sychar (Jn. 4), plus many others. All were significant to Jesus. As we read the Gospel we find Jesus much more often engaged with individuals than ever we do with the crowds. He saw every individual as His potential Bride. Everyone was welcome to Him. He gave His life for all - *'Not willing that any should perish'*. He placed a value on every man - the value of the Son of God. His blood was - is - the currency valid in heaven. .

Into all of our lives there will inevitably come those who are difficult - those in whom, naturally, there seems little potential - those who would devour our time and energy - showing little gratitude for all that is lavished upon them. Yet the prodigality of God's love, shed abroad in our hearts, should always outweigh the prodigality of sin in the other. It was so in the story of the prodigal son. I call it the story of the prodigal father. Never has there been a time in history when men and women needed individual care so much. Everything today is mass, enbloc, reduced to a number or a mark. Man is created for personal relationship both with God and his fellow-man. This is why I resist circular letters and duplicated sheets. I would rather write these words on a postcard, 'I love you', personally, than send reams of computerized information in the form of a letter.

Everyone needs to know that someone cares for them personally.

### 3. Love is Strong

*'Whom I have sent again'* v.12. It would have been so easy for Paul to have created an easy way out for Onesimus. He personally needed one such as Onesimus. *'Whom I would have retained ...'* He was confident that Philemon would have willingly allowed that, but the Apostle, in his mature wisdom, knew that it was for Onesimus' good that he should face up to the outworking of his new life in Christ. Here was his first opportunity to prove it.

It is not only necessary to get right with God - but also with man. Jesus commands Zaccaeus on this issue in Luke 19:9. This is the evidence of true salvation.

Over the years I have had the joy of seeing and being identified with, a number of people who have behaved in like manner.

I knew a young woman to whom God spoke from the same scripture - Luke 19. She responded to the Lord, received His word, went home and sought His face for the application of that word in her life, and then by the grace of God practically worked it out in relationship to people whom she had formerly wronged. I still have the little piece of paper upon which the details of that transaction was written - a precious treasure!

I knew another young man, whom the Lord sovereignly begat again and baptized in the Holy Ghost in a meeting one Sunday afternoon. He was transformed - overwhelmed with joy. The next morning he came back to me and said, 'Brother, it is not enough that I be right with God - it is also essential that I be right

with man.' The Lord had brought to his remembrance and convicted him of his involvement in a crime some years before. He knew he must do all in his power to put it right. Ultimately this involved confession to the police, appearance at the Magistrates Court, and later the High Court to be tried by Judge and Jury. He could have gone to prison for a number of years. He was prepared for that, but the Lord intervened and he was put on probation for one year under my care. Today he is a leader in the Church. He has never looked back.

Next is also a brother in America, whom when I first met him was a 'hippy'. A friend of mine, a school teacher, picked him up on the road one morning on his way to school. The next day he brought him to me. He responded to the Lord and was changed. During his unregenerate days he had, over a period of time, used someone else's telephone card, which had been stolen, and over a period of time had run up a bill of some four thousand pounds telephoning U.S.A. He went to Telecom and owned up. The result was he was summoned, brought to trial, fined four thousand pounds and deported back to America. His father sent the money and paid the fine. He returned home, got a job in a factory, earned the money and paid it all back. His testimony so influenced a number of people that a new fellowship came into being in Chicago, in which he has been a leader. He is still going on.

When God changes a person's life, He makes him a *'partaker of the Divine Nature'*. He puts true spine and manhood into him. He stops running away and has the ability to face life realistically. Paul learned that. It is illustrated by his behaviour at Phillipa (Acts 16). When the jailor was running away, Paul wasn't. Christianity is not a religion of escapism. It is life abundant.

### 4. Love never presumes

*'But without thy mind I would do nothing'* v.14. Love is not demanding or possessive. Love sets people free - that is free to do what they know is the will of God.

Possessive love repels. Pure love draws. We have all met possessive people. Some of us have been like that ourselves. Such 'love' leaves one feeling like a sucked orange. It has neither ability to give or receive. The very thing it wants it loses.

Jim Elliot - the missionary martyr of Equador - expresses pure love in his well-known statement: - 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.'

Paul liberates Philemon from all sense of 'ought' and compulsion. He was free. God's love is like that. It is powerful. His love wasn't conditioned by man's response. *'He loved us while we were yet in our sin.'* Such love never puts us under a sense of obligation. It sets us free to respond or not. Of course those who respond to and reciprocate the Love of God will show its true benefits and joys.

### 5. Love transforms relationships

*'Not now as a servant-slave ... a brother beloved.'* v.16. Whilst faith works love transforms human relationships.

Sin originally ruined not only the relationship between

God and man, but also between man and man, culminating in the crime of crimes, the murder by Cain of Abel, his brother. All that spoils the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus was the result of sin:

International sin - Onesimus was more than likely a political prisoner, one of many political victims.

Social Sin - He was a slave, sold into bondage.

Personal Sin - Rebellion and wrong doing.

In some senses, Onesimus had a legitimate grudge. He could have, and probably did, argue that he was right - but he was wrong - because of his heart attitude. There have been times in my life when I have known that I was absolutely right - but God showed me that I was wrong. We can find many excuses for sin and self justification, but we are all wrong until God puts us right.

*'All have sinned'* Rom. 5:12

*'All children of disobedience'* Eph. 2:2

*'All were by nature the children of wrath even as others'* Eph. 2:5

Both Philemon and Onesimus were wrong. It's even harder for a 'good' man to know he is wrong. It takes the Holy Ghost to convince us of sin. *'But God'* changed them by the miracle of regeneration on the basis of redemption. They were *'new creations'* - thus their relationship was changed. They were Brothers.

*'Jesus is not ashamed to call us Brothers'* Heb. 2:11. What we are to Him we become to each other. That is wonderful beyond comprehension. Paul makes it very practical by adding *'both in the flesh and in the Lord'*. The proof of the reality in the latter is its outworking in the former.

## 6. Love pays all

*'If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put that in mine account.'* That is what Jesus did for us all at Calvary.

*'There was no other good enough*

*To pay the price of sin.'*

*'Ye were redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.'* 1 Pt. 1:18/19.

We can add nothing to what God has done for us. We must take nothing away. His final cry from the cross was *'Finished: debt paid'*. Paul wasn't making a *'rice Christian'* out of Onesimus. But having proved him, he was willing to identify with him and share all his need. This was the spirit that pervaded

the original Church. *'They didn't regard anything that they possessed as their own - but had all things in common'* (Acts 4:32). *'Neither was there any among them that lacked'* (Acts 4:34). Some would argue that if you live according to the spirit of the Gospel - the teaching of Jesus - then people will take advantage of you. Well, that is what they did to Jesus. Are we really prepared to live as He lived and thus be the incarnation of that same life today?

Jesus says *'unless you do, you cannot be My disciples.'*  
*'Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciples'* (Lk. 14:27).

We have to take into account *'the cost of discipleship'* both in relationship to God and our fellow man.

Paul was prepared to pay all. That is the cross - that is love - that is faith that works.

## 7. Finally, Love will always go the second mile

*'Do more'* v.21.

One would think the foregoing was enough. But love has no limit. Love never fails. Love never gives up.

Paul, in Ephesians 3:18, describes love in the terms of dimensions - breadth, length, depth and height. That speaks of infinity. So is the Love of God. It is illustrated in Ephesians 4:32 by forgiveness. *'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God - for Christ's sake - has forgiven you.'* Until seventy times seven. To the natural man that is impossible. That is the whole point of the Gospel. If it had been possible Jesus need never have come. He need never have died. He came to make the impossible possible by shedding His love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. That enables us to love even as Jesus loved in this world, 1 Jn.4:17.

This is the proof that I have the faith of the Son of God that works by Love.

It worked for Paul. He believed it to work for Philemon. It must work for us. It is not an impossible standard.

It works!

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**This perpetual hurry of business and company ruins me in soul if not in body. More solitude and earlier hours! I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises, as private devotion and religious meditation, Scripture-reading, etc. Hence I am lean and cold and hard. I had better allot two hours or an hour and a half daily. I have been keeping too late hours, and hence have had but a hurried half hour in a morning to myself. Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition that without a due measure of private devotions the soul will grow lean. But all may be done through prayer - almighty prayer I am ready to say - and why not? For that it is almighty is only through the gracious ordination of the God of love and truth. O then, pray, pray, pray!**

**William Wilberforce.**

# THE NEW BIRTH

EDITED FROM A SERMON BY JOHN WESLEY

**Ye must be born again. John 3:7** (See John 3:1-21)

**This article has been edited from the original sermon of John Wesley, by Dick Porowski, the leader of the Resurrection Life Church, Santa Ana, California, and it is printed with his kind permission.**

If any doctrines within the whole compass of Christianity may be correctly termed 'fundamental', they are certainly these two: the doctrine of justification and the new birth. The former relates to that great work God does FOR US in forgiving our sins; the latter to the great work which God does IN US in renewing our fallen nature. In order of TIME, neither of these is before the other. In the moment we are justified by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Jesus we are also 'born of the Spirit'. But in order of THINKING, justification precedes the new birth. We first see His wrath to be turned away through justification, and then His Spirit to work in our hearts through new birth.

How important must it be, then, to every person to thoroughly understand these fundamental doctrines! Many have written on justification and the new birth, but not so clearly as might have been desired, nor so deeply and accurately. A full, and at the same time, clear account of the new birth is still lacking; one that may enable us to give a satisfactory answer to these three questions:

1. Why must we be born again?  
What is the foundation of this doctrine of the new birth?
2. How must we be born again?  
What is the nature of the new birth?
3. For what purpose must we be born again?  
To what end is it necessary?

These questions, by the assistance of God, I will briefly and plainly answer, and then add a few conclusions which will naturally follow.

## 1. First, Why must we be born again?

What is the foundation of this doctrine? The foundation of it lies nearly as deep as the creation of the world. In the scriptural account we read, 'And God', the three-one God, 'said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him' (Genesis 1:26,27): not merely in His NATURAL image, not merely a spiritual being endowed with understanding, freedom of will and various affections; nor merely in His POLITICAL image, the governor of this world, having 'dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth', but chiefly in His MORAL image which, according to the apostle, is 'righteousness and true holiness' (Ephesians 4:24). In this image of God man was made. 'God is love.' So man was full of love when he was created. This love was the basis of all his

emotions, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy and truth. So was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity. And so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot. Otherwise God could not have pronounced him, as well as all the other works of His hands, very good' (Genesis 1:31). Man could not have been called 'very good' had he not been pure from every sin and filled with righteousness and true holiness.

But, though man was made in the image of God, yet he was not made unchangeable. This would have been inconsistent with the kind of trial in which God was pleased to place him. He was created with the ability to stand, and yet liable to fall. And this God Himself informed him of, and gave him a solemn warning concerning it. Nevertheless, man did not remain in honour. He fell from his high estate. He 'ate of the tree whereof the Lord had commanded him, Thou shalt not eat thereof.' By this wilful act of disobedience to his Creator, this open rebellion against his Sovereign, he openly declared that he would no longer have God to rule over him; that he would be governed by his own will, and not the will of Him that created him; and that he would not seek his happiness in God, but in the world, in the works of his own hands. Now God had told him before this, 'In the day that thou eatest' of that fruit, 'thou shalt surely die.' And the word of the Lord cannot be broken. Accordingly, in that day he did die. He died to God, the most dreadful of all deaths. He lost the life of God. He was separated from Him with whom through union his spiritual life consisted. The body dies when it is separated from the soul; the soul dies when it is separated from God. Adam proved this immediately, showing by his behaviour that the love of God was extinguished in his soul, which was now 'alienated from the life of God'. Instead of this, he was now under the power of enslaving fear, so that he fled from the presence of the Lord. So little did he retain even of the knowledge of Him who fills heaven and earth, that he tried to 'hide himself from the Lord God among the trees of the garden' (Genesis 3:8). He had lost both the knowledge and the love of God, without which the image of God could not exist. And so he was deprived of the image of God at the same time, and became unholy as well as unhappy. In the place of the image of God he had sunk into pride and self-will, the very image of the devil, and into sensual appetites and desires, like a mere animal.

And in Adam all died, all mankind who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is that every one who has descended from him comes into the world spiritually dead: dead to God, completely dead in sin, totally void of the life of God; void of the image of God, of all of the righteousness and holiness in which Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world now bears the image of an animal in sensual lusts and desires. This, then, is the foundation of (and reason for) the new birth: the entire corruption of our nature. And so it is, that, being born in sin, we must be 'born again'. Every one that is born of a woman must be born of the Spirit of God.

## 2. But how must a man be born again?

What is the nature of the new birth? This is the second question. And it is a question of the highest importance that cannot be conceived. We will not, therefore, in so weighty a concern, be content with a superficial investigation; but will examine it with all possible care, and ponder it in our hearts, till we fully understand this important point, and clearly see how we are to be born again.

Not that we are to expect any detailed, philosophical account of the manner how this is done. Our Lord sufficiently guards us against any such hope by the words of John 3:8, in which He reminds Nicodemus of an indisputable fact which no one can fully explain. 'The wind bloweth where it wills and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' You may be absolutely assured of the fact of new birth, as of the blowing of the wind. But the precise manner how it is done, how the Holy Spirit works this in the soul, neither you nor the wisest of men is able to explain.

However, without getting into strange, critical inquiries, we can give a plain scriptural account of the nature of the new birth. This will satisfy every reasonable man who desires only the salvation of his soul. The expression 'being born again' was not first used by our Lord in His conversation with Nicodemus. It was well known before that time, and was in common use among the Jews when our Saviour appeared among them. Our Lord uses this expression, which Nicodemus, being 'a teacher in Israel', ought to have understood well, in conversing with him; only in a stronger sense than Nicodemus was accustomed to. And this might be the reason of his asking, 'How can these things be?'. They cannot 'be' (or happen) literally. A man cannot 'enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born.' But they can happen spiritually. A man may be born from above, born of God, born of the Spirit, in a manner which bears a very near analogy to the natural birth.

Before a child is born into the world he has eyes, but sees not; he has ears, but does not hear. He has a very imperfect use of the other senses. He has no knowledge of any of the things of the world, or any natural understanding. In that state we would say he must still be born. But as soon as he is born, he begins to see the light and the various objects around him. His ears are then opened, and he hears sounds. At the same time, all the other organs of the senses begin to be exercised upon their proper objects. He breathes and lives in a manner wholly different from what he did before. How exactly the parallel holds in all these instances! While a man is in a mere natural state before he is born of God, he has, in a spiritual sense, eyes and sees not. A thick impenetrable veil lies upon them. He has ears, but hears not. He is utterly deaf to what he should hear the most. His other spiritual senses are all locked up. He is in the same condition as if he did not have them. So, he has no knowledge of God, no relationship with Him. He is not at all acquainted with Him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of spiritual or eternal things. Therefore, though he is a living man, he is a dead Christian.

But as soon as he is born of God, there is a total change in all these things. The 'eyes of his understanding are opened' (such is the language of Paul). And as God, who of old 'commanded light to shine out of darkness' shines on his heart,

he sees 'the light of the glory of God' (His glorious love), 'in the face of Jesus Christ.' His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God saying, 'Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee'; 'Go and sin no more.' This is the substance of what God speaks to his heart, although perhaps not in these very words. he is now ready to hear whatever 'He that teacheth man knowledge' is pleased to reveal to him. He 'feels in his heart the mighty working of the Spirit of God.' He is inwardly sensible of the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart. He is conscious of a 'peace which passeth all understanding.' He many times feels such a joy in God as is 'unspeakable, and full of glory.' He feels 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him,' and all his spiritual senses are then made use of to discern spiritual good and evil. By the use of these, he is daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and of all the things pertaining to His inward kingdom. And now he may truly be said to live, God having made him alive by His Spirit. He lives a life which the world knows nothing about, a 'life which is hid with Christ in God.' God is continually breathing, as it were, upon the soul, and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart, and prayer and praise ascending to heaven. And by this relationship between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and Son, as by a kind of spiritual breathing, the life of God in the soul is sustained; and the child of God grows up, till he comes to the 'full measure of the stature of Christ.'

This is the nature of the new birth. It is that great change which God works in the soul when He brings it into life, when He raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change worked in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is 'created anew in Christ Jesus', when it is 'renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness', when the love of the world is changed into the love of God, pride into humility, temper into meekness. Hatred, envy, and malice are changed into sincere, tender, unselfish love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change by which the earthly, sensual, devilish mind is turned into the 'mind which was in Christ Jesus.'

## 3. 'To what end is it necessary that we should be born again?'

It is not difficult for anyone who has considered these things to see the necessity of the new birth and to answer the third question. This is necessary, first, in order to be holy. For what is holiness according to the scriptures of God? Not a mere external religion or a list of outward duties. No, gospel holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart. It is no other than the whole mind which was in Christ Jesus. It consists of all heavenly affections and attitudes mingled together in one. It is a continual, thankful love to Him who has not withheld from us His Son, His only Son, so that it is natural and necessary for us to love every human being 'with mercy, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering.' It is such a love that teaches us to be blameless in all our manner of living, that enables us to present our souls and bodies, all we are and all we have, all our thoughts, words, and actions, a continual sacrifice to God, acceptable through Christ Jesus. Now, this holiness can have no existence till we are renewed in the image of our mind. It cannot begin in the soul till we are 'brought from darkness to light, from the power of satan unto God.' In other words, till we are born again, which, therefore, is absolutely necessary in order to be holy.

But 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Because of this, the new birth is absolutely necessary in order to obtain eternal salvation. Men may indeed flatter themselves (so desperately wicked and so deceitful is the heart of man!) to think they may live in their sins till they come to the last gasp, and yet afterwards live with God. Thousands really believe that they have found a broad way which leads not to destruction. One of these will ask with all assurance, 'What! Shall I not do as well as my neighbours even if they aren't born of God?' Yes, as well as your unholy neighbours; as well as your neighbours that die in their sins! For you will all drop into the pit together, into the deepest hell! You will all die together in the lake of fire, 'the lake of fire burning with brimstone.' Then finally, you will see (but God grant that you may see it beforehand!) the necessity of holiness in order to 'see the Lord', and consequently, of the new birth, since none can be holy except he is born again.

For the same reason, except he is born again, none can be happy even in this world. For it is not possible, in the nature of things, that a man should be happy who is not holy. The reason is plain: all unholy affections are restless affections. Not only malice, hatred, envy, jealousy, and revenge create a present hell in the heart. But even the softer passions, if not kept within due bounds, give a thousand times more pain than pleasure. Every desire which is not according to the will of God is liable to 'pierce' us 'through with many sorrows.' And all those major sources of sin (pride, self-will, and idolatry) are, in the same proportion as they prevail, major sources of misery. Therefore, as long as these reign in any soul, happiness has no place there. But they will reign till the bent of our nature is changed, that is, till we are born again. Consequently, the new birth is absolutely necessary in order to obtain happiness in this world, as well as in the world to come.

#### 4. Finally,

I add a few conclusions which naturally follow from the preceding observations. First, it follows that water baptism is not the new birth. They are not one and the same thing. Water baptism is a sacrament in which Christ has ordained the washing with water to be an outward sign and seal of an inward new birth by His Spirit. It is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual experience. What can be more plain than that the one is an external, the other an internal work; that the one is a visible, the other an invisible thing, and therefore entirely different from each other? One is an act of man, purifying the body; the other a change wrought by God in the soul. The former is just as distinct from the latter, as the soul from the body, or water from the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, the new birth does not always accompany baptism. A man may possibly be 'born of water', and yet not be 'born of the Spirit.' There may sometimes be the outward sign, where there is not the inward reality or experience. 'The tree is known by its fruits.' Many of those who were children of the devil before they were baptized continue the same after baptism. They continue as servants of sin, without any aim either to inward or outward holiness.

A third conclusion is that the new birth is not the same as sanctification. Sanctification is a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees from the time of our first turning to God. New birth is a part of sanctification, not the whole; it is the

gate to it, the entrance into it. When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness, begins. It is from then on that we are gradually to 'grow up in Him who is our Head.' A child is born of a woman in a moment, or at least in a very short time. Afterwards he gradually and slowly grows till he attains to the stature of a man. In like manner, a child is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterwards grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. The same relation, therefore, which there is between our natural birth and growth, there is also between our new birth and our sanctification.

One last point we may learn from the preceding observations: What must one who loves people and is grieved that any of them should perish say to one whom he sees living in any wilful sin? What can he say but, 'You must be born again'? But perhaps the sinner to whom in real love we say, 'You must be born again', has been taught to say, 'I oppose your new doctrine. I need not be born again. I was born again when I was baptized. Do you want me to deny my baptism?' I answer, first, you have already denied your baptism, and in the most effective manner. For in your baptism you supposedly renounced the devil and all his works. Whenever, therefore, you submit to him again, whenever you do any of the works of the devil, then you deny your baptism. Therefore you deny it by every wilful sin; by every act of uncleanness, drunkenness, or revenge; by every oath that comes out of your mouth. Yes, every time you do anything to another which you would not want him to do to you. I answer, secondly, that whether you are baptized or unbaptized, 'you must be born again.' Otherwise it is not possible for you to be inwardly holy. And without inward as well as outward holiness, you cannot be happy, even in this world, much less in the world to come. Do you say, 'No, I do no harm to any man; I am honest and just in all my dealings; I do not curse or take the Lord's name in vain; I do not profane the Lord's day; I am no drunkard; I do not slander my neighbour nor live in any wilful sin'? If this is so, it would be wished that all men went as far as you do. But you must go farther still or you cannot be saved. Still, 'you must be born again.' Do you add, I do go farther still; for I not only do no harm, but do all the good I can'? I doubt that fact. I fear you have had a thousand opportunities of doing good which you have allowed to pass by undone and for which therefore you are accountable to God. But if you had done them all, still, 'you must be born again.' Without this nothing will do any good to your poor, sinful, polluted soul. Nothing will keep you from hell, unless you are born again. Go to church twice a day; go to the Lord's table every week; say many prayers in private; hear many good sermons; read many good books; still 'you must be born again.' None of these things or anything else under heaven will take the place of the new birth.

If you have not already experienced this inward work of God, let this be your continual prayer: 'Lord, add this to all Your blessings, let me be born again! Deny whatever You please, but deny not this: let me be 'born from above'! Take away whatever seems good to You: reputation, fortune, friends, health. Only give me this, to be born of the Spirit, to be received among the children of God! Let me be born, 'not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.' And then let me daily 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'!

## EDITOR

**M = MIGHT**

Strength, Power, Principality

It is not possible to distinguish nicely between the meanings of these three English words, still less between those of the Heb. and Gk. words so rendered in the EVV. STRENGTH represents some thirty different Heb. words, and there are six Heb. words which are rendered, now by STRENGTH, now by MIGHT, and now by POWER, and two Gk. words of which the same is true. In the RV some inexact renderings in the AV have been corrected, but no attempt has been made to render the same Heb. or Gk. word by the same English word throughout.

The plural POWERS, which occurs only in the NT, means (except in Heb. 6:5) the holders of power, whether human, rulers and magistrates, as in Luke 12:11, Rom 13:1,

Tit 3:1, or superhuman, as in Matt. 24:29, Mark 13:25, Luke 21:26, Rom. 8:38, Eph. 3:10, 6:12, Col. 1:16, 2.15, 1 Pet. 3:22. The superhuman 'potentates' are maleficent angelic beings who were believed to exercise power both on earth and in 'the heavenly places', but who in principle, if not yet in actual fact, have been overcome by Christ. In Mark 13:25 and the parallel passages in Matt. 24:29, Luke 21:26, 'the powers in (of) the heavens shall be shaken' is an (inexact) quotation of the Gk. version of Isa.34:4, 'all the host of heaven shall moulder away'. The 'host of heaven' means the stars, which were supposed to be spirits or at least animated by spirits. These spiritual beings had their power from God, but they misused it for evil. They are variously designated in the NT (see Rom.8:38), 1 Cor. 2:6, 15:24, Col.1:16, 2.15, Eph. 1:21, 3:10, 6:12, 1 Pet.3:22), but the precise difference of meaning, if any, between the terms used cannot be defined.

## THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

GEORGE W. NORTH

PART ONE

**1. ONE FLOCK, ONE SHEPHERD**

Thinking about Christ and the Church, the apostles Peter and John found the idea of a shepherd and his sheep most attractive to them, and very apt also. Being fishermen they would naturally have been inclined to think more in terms of fish than of sheep, but fish more naturally typify the unconverted than the saint. Fish need to be caught, they cannot be led: on the other hand sheep do not need to be caught, but they do need to be led. Fish swim freely in the wilds and wastes of earth's oceans, without fold or home or human master. They are numberless and uncountable and do not belong to anyone. They are anybody's fish, everybody's fish, nobody's fish; they have to be caught. Unlike them, sheep do not live in wild, free conditions. Unled and unkept without a shepherd they could not exist. Sheep have a shepherd and owner, and to him they belong: he calls them his own, and speaks of them as 'my sheep'. Perhaps it was this great difference that so appealed to the hearts of those fishermen. In any case, Peter and John were familiar enough with the figure for Jesus had repeatedly used it of Himself and His people.

As yet the Lord had not applied the figure of Shepherd and sheep to Himself and His church. The church had not yet been formed, nor had its truth been fully revealed. Nevertheless the Lord very plainly spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd

and of His people as sheep. That the Lord intended His teaching under this figure to extend into the Church age is certain, for He spoke of other sheep that He must bring: these, He said, would be formed with believing Jews into one flock under one Shepherd. The apostles, being Jews, would not have found the thought of God being a Shepherd new, for both Moses and David had used that very same idea, to David the theme was very dear. David started his working life as a shepherd, he was brought from the flock to his anointing when he was chosen to be king. As Israel's great shepherd-king he wrote wonderfully of the sheep/shepherd relationship between God and His people. The spiritual truth of it was equally as precious to God as to His people, it is so aptly presented truth to simple hearts - it is very appealing.

Paul also recognized and used the shepherd/sheep idea and so also did each of the other Gospel writers besides John. Matthew and Luke are more concerned than he with one or two of Jesus' stories about sheep and recorded them, but unlike John, neither of them are so taken up with the doctrinal application of the truth implicit in the figure. Mark only touches on it in a fragmentary quotation by Christ from the Old Testament concerning things that were shortly to happen to Him. 'I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered'. But that was not to be the end of this particular relationship, for the Lord continued, 'But after I am risen I will go before you into

Galilee'. Death did not break this relationship, nor did it need restoring, it was not even interrupted, death only made it more real. The flock was not destroyed by His death, it was momentarily scattered; but after three days He rose from the dead and came and stood in the midst of them again, as He had done so often before. Fear and wonder, joy and doubts chased each other through their astonished hearts, it was beyond their comprehension. He knew it was, but patient as ever, He succeeded at last in identifying Himself to them, and they were completed and satisfied. He was the same great good Shepherd they had known and loved and followed for three years past.

This was exactly as He had said of course; He had taught them that 'the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.' 'I lay down my life that I might take it again', He said. This was the commandment He had received from His Father, He had left heaven with it, so He had done it and now He was alive again. Seeing Him standing there in the midst of them with the marks of the cross fresh upon Him, they could see He had accomplished His part of it faultlessly. Not one word of all His great prophetic promises had fallen to the ground. All was true, it was exactly as He had said to them. How patiently He went after the scattered sheep, shepherding them together again, finding for them once more the green pastures they loved. Some had gathered in little groups, a couple had started out for 'home'; Peter - where was he? Somewhere! He found him. Gradually from here and there He collected them and somehow held them together, teaching them, making provision to them, giving them commandments, preparing them for that 'hereafter' of which He spoke in the upper room. What a great, great Shepherd He is.

It is indicative of John's heart that the one parable he included in his Gospel is about the Good Shepherd. How telling and full of truth it is. The Shepherd was telling the story and how graphically He depicts the course of events as He speaks of calling His sheep and gathering them to Himself! Everything is there, and in so few words! He doesn't mention his name, but John Baptist is there, in the unfamiliar role of a porter, he it was who opened the door into the Jewish sheepfold to Christ. John easily recognized the Shepherd of the sheep, God had identified Him to him at Jordan by the coming of the dove. With absolute certainty John said, 'This is the Son of God', and officially opened the door into the 'fold' unto Him. Jesus did not climb up some other way into the nation, He was not a thief or a robber, nor was He a hireling. Though miraculously, He came into the race through the natural doorway of birth just as all the sheep did, but beyond that He needed to be marked out distinctly so that no-one should mistake His identity. He must be able to establish His claims to be the Good Shepherd, beyond doubt.

Before any shepherd can prove that he is a GOOD shepherd he must first prove that he is a shepherd indeed, a TRUE shepherd. The Lord was well aware of this and was quite prepared to submit Himself to the test, in fact He stated it, incorporating it into the parable and into the teaching He developed from it. The test is very simple, the simplest thing that could be imagined, requiring no effort at all from the shepherd: He does not have to identify Himself even, all He has to do is call the sheep. It is the sheep that identify the shepherd, they hear His voice and respond, they come to Him and follow Him, they know their shepherd by His voice. An impostor they will not follow, if he calls they will ignore him for they do not

know his voice. Jesus' purpose in calling His sheep was not only to gather them to Himself but also to lead them right out of the Jewish fold: 'He putteth them forth', John says. Perhaps none of His hearers understood the full significance of Jesus' words. It was a very strong and decisive act. The Greek word 'ekklesia', translated 'church' in the New Testament, consists of two words - ek, meaning out of, or from, and, kelesis, meaning 'a calling'. When telling the parable, the Lord never used the word church, it was not in keeping with the story He was telling, but master of words that He was, He introduced the fundamental idea of it. No-one listening to Him could have been left in any doubt that He was calling out a people unto Himself and that these were to be a flock - His flock.

Perhaps the Lord was thinking of the future rather than of the present when He spoke of putting forth His own sheep and going before them. He certainly had other sheep not of the Jewish nation in mind when He spoke, as He said, and how exclusive His flock was to be. When He spoke of 'My sheep', He really meant it, He not only calls His sheep, He is the only door of the sheep, there is no way into His flock but by Him: 'I am the door', He said. He may also have been anticipating the occasion when He would stand resurrected in the midst of His disciples in the upper room at Jerusalem, His greatness stamped upon Him. It was on His mind all the time, for as Mark records, He said it on His way to Gethsemane, and when He rose from the dead He repeated something like it to the women.

## 2. THE SHEEP KNOW HIS VOICE

Whatever may be the case, and however much meaning the Lord's remarks may have held for those to whom he spoke, their greatest meaning is best shown by what took place after His resurrection. The Lord had said, 'The sheep follow Him for they know His voice, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him for they know not the voice of strangers'. How deftly the Lord brought this out one day following His resurrection, when He joined two of His sheep on their way home from Jerusalem to Emmaus. 'What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?', He said. 'Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?', said Cleopas. 'What things?', said Jesus. What a good Shepherd He was, He spoke as though He was perfectly ignorant of all knowledge of the events of the past few days, and He had been the centre of them. How could He speak so, when He, of all people, knew all about them? How He had suffered: surely no-one had ever suffered so, yet He spoke as though nothing had happened. Why? How could He do it? What was His purpose? How could He possibly walk alongside these two people and speak as though nothing had happened? The answer can be given in a word - He is not only a true shepherd, He is the Good Shepherd. To His mind the awful sorrows and pains of that terrible day were not worthy to be compared with the glory into which He had entered; at that very moment, walking along that road, beside two of His sheep, His joy was full.

Seemingly He was going their way, moving with them toward their home, and very kindly they were intending to give this stranger an invitation to join them in a meal at the end of the journey. It was as though they were shepherding Him, but it was not like that at all. Though unknown to them, He was shepherding them, leading them into green pastures of love,

feeding them with truth they had never known before, so filling and thrilling their hearts, that they burned within them. At last, the journey done and the meal set before them, as He was breaking the bread, light and revelation filled their burning hearts - He was the great Shepherd: suddenly they knew, and He vanished. It was wonderful: they no longer wanted their home nor their food, they left everything, and full of excitement, they rushed back to Jerusalem, wanting nothing but to share with their friends their new found knowledge of the Lord. 'What things?', He had said; He had not come seeking help, He was not a wandering sheep, His soul needed no help or pity, quite the opposite, in love and grace He had come to care for them. What a Shepherd!

The two companions, perhaps through no fault of their own, had not been present when He had identified Himself to the company at Jerusalem, or they might have known Him, they were therefore not to be blamed for failing to recognize Him. They thought He must be a stranger, but it was they who were the strangers; strangers to Him and to the truth of which it is fatal to be ignorant. He was their Shepherd by an everlasting covenant, and He loved them, but they knew none of these things. Unrecognized, this stranger with His strange words led His blinded, foolish sheep with gentleness; first he gave them enlightenment, and then opened their eyes. How tender He was with them, walking with them at their own pace, leading them on to the place where He revealed Himself to them as they broke bread together in their home. They recognized Him, and as soon as He had brought their hearts to recognition He vanished out of their sight; He had reached His objective. Wanting neither food nor home, they hurried back along the road to Jerusalem, flaming evangelists, almost running to rejoin the flock to which they belonged. Overflowing with joy they burst into the room ready to spread the good news, only to discover that everyone there knew as much as they: He was alive.

What had He been doing since He had been with them at Emmaus? Where had He been? Had He accompanied them all the way back to Jerusalem? Had He been out finding other wayward sheep? Who knows? Save to Him what does it matter? He was there, this same Jesus, in the room, and His little flock was gathered around Him. How greatly we are indebted to Luke for the content of the last chapter of his Gospel. Toward the end of it he places the Lord's commandment to them to tarry in Jerusalem that they should be endued with power from on high. So doing he links that event with His death and resurrection. Good Shepherd that He was He set everything in perspective for them: by the command His death and resurrection and the coming of the Spirit were joined together. That same day, if they had ears to hear, they heard that despite all their new-found knowledge and joy, except they had the Holy Spirit, they were powerless and would be useless to Him: loved as they were they could not live in all He had done for them. For all they knew, and for all they had gone through, they were still quite dead; He had life in Himself, but they did not have life in themselves, and He so dearly wanted all His sheep to enter into all the fulness of His life.

### 3. HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP

How large the re-assembled flock was by then we do not know, perhaps it numbered many hundreds (see 1 Cor.15:6), but however many there were, Great Shepherd that He was, He

was about to leave them. His final leave-taking was at Bethany, He met them there by appointment, and in full view of them all He stretched out His hands in blessing, and then, rising from the earth, He ascended up on high: they watched till a cloud at last enveloped Him. Angels came to announce His coming again and spur them on, and they returned to Jerusalem. He left them with a blessing and a command, an expectation also, but which heart there would not gladly have exchanged all of them for Him Himself? 'I am with you', He said, 'Lo I am with you. Go'. But was He? How could He be? They had yet to learn how and why, they must not jump to conclusions, but wait, tarrying awhile, soon all would become plain. He had put them all out of the Jewish fold; none of the sheep could remain in it any more. They felt so comfortless, so helpless, how they needed a shepherd and a fold: they must have felt it very keenly, they were strangers on the earth. Things have not changed since then, it is still the same today, and shall be till He comes; every person who responds to Jesus is put out of his or her national and religious 'folds'. His sheep have to be put out, it just has to be, or they cannot be gathered into His flock, there is no nationalism there. The Church, the one great flock of God is the new fold now, and the Shepherd Himself is the Door of it.

The Lord made no attempt to hide His intentions to call people out of their own national religion. He was hated for it, but He insisted: He did not spare the ruling religious leaders and their ideas either; 'All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers', He said, and then added, 'but the sheep did not hear them'. This is why John Baptist was so careful to say so when he was asked if he was the Christ. 'He is preferred before me', he said, 'He is before me'. John, the senior in age, did not come before Jesus in spiritual position or personage, and all who have ever pretended or do now pretend that they are before or greater than Christ are thieves and robbers. Mahomet was a thief and a robber, so was Buddha. During the Lord's lifetime the Jews were trying and still are trying to make Moses a thief and a robber. But, good shepherd though he was to Israel, Moses will have none of it, he knows and always did know that he was not the great Shepherd of Israel. There are those who have striven to elevate Mary above her Son, but she is no shepherd and has no wish to be greater than He. There are those who listen to the voice of any of these, but not one of the Lord's sheep hear them, they know better. As it was in the Lord's day, it is now.

The Lord knew that by making such statements He was making more enemies than friends, and hastening the day when He would be smitten and the flock scattered, but that did not deter Him; it had to be that way. His one intention was to make sure everybody understood He was not a hireling, He did not tend sheep for personal gain in the sense of being paid a wage for His services. He came to lay down His life for the sheep in order to GIVE IT TO the sheep. There was no possible way that He could be the Good Shepherd and have a flock of His own unless He voluntarily laid down His life for them. Unless they could have that life, whatever He did it would only be a noble sacrifice made in vain, a last desperate venture to spare them. No shepherd of earth can give his own life TO his sheep, they have their own life and he has his own life. Surely it is this uniqueness which constitutes him the true shepherd of the sheep. Obviously sheep and shepherd remain distinctly apart, they are separate - they cannot be one. He may lay down his life FOR the sheep (perhaps in a vain effort to save them from murderers or rustlers) but he cannot give his life TO the sheep; that is impossible.

Every one of Christ's sheep must and does have His life.

When the Lord came to earth, no-one had His life, it was His alone, He had life and no-one else. He had therefore to relinquish His life, He must lay it down; that was only plain common sense, unless He did so it was impossible for the sheep to have it, this is what constitutes Him Shepherd. In order to have the life He voluntarily laid down, each person must voluntarily consent to lay down his or her own life: this is absolutely vital and must be thoroughly understood and agreed to by all. To those who were following Him then, this was totally incomprehensible, and to their way of thinking, absolutely unnecessary. They were very content to have Him with them - they didn't want anything to change. Everybody knew He was good, he did not need to lay down His life in order to prove that to anyone. But that thinking is of the lowest order, that is, the order of man, but it is not God's thinking. 'Your thoughts are not My thoughts', He says, 'neither are your ways My ways, for as the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than Your thoughts'. There was real enough affection between all those whom he had put out from Jewry, at least some of them felt as well able to lay down their lives for Him as He for them and they didn't hesitate to say so. How ignorant of true salvation and eternal life they were, not one of them had the least idea of the kind of life God planned for them, nor could they begin to imagine it; they weren't expected to. The true sheep/shepherd relationship between Himself and them was not possible to them then, and would never be except He died and rose again. The relationship with His Son God planned for them could only be forged in spirit; men could hear His voice, respond to His call, join themselves to a band of fellow-men, embrace a common aim, and follow an acknowledged leader, but that was not all God wanted.

The revolutionary instinct in man is very strong, and, in many, highly developed, but Christ was not desiring response from that spirit, nor was He appealing to it. He had earlier put down these tendencies when men sought to take Him by force and make Him king; He dismissed them, that was not the way. When they persisted in following Him He speedily offered them His terms of discipleship, the Shepherd had only one kind of food and drink to offer them, His flesh and blood - they must eat and drink Him, that was the test of whether they had any life in them. The ardour of the revolutionaries soon cooled. His terms were completely unacceptable to them, it was impossible, they said, and speedily left Him. If men listened to Him they soon discovered that to be one of His sheep evidently meant more than going along with the crowd, or being carried away by His teachings or His miracles. Beyond that kind of self-attachment to Him, to be one of His sheep there must be a bond much stronger than loyalties or even beliefs. God requires that all the sheep must be one in spiritual union with Him, bound with a bond so real that it results in identity of life issuing into nothing less than entire conformity to His image. There must be commitments, but of themselves these are insufficient; though they be true and many, and oft repeated, none of these is strong enough to bind men to Christ; nothing in man which is of man can do this, for what he requires God must supply everything Himself. All man's powers must be brought to an end, so Jesus faithfully led to the cross: without it and all that He accomplished there He could not give them His life, it would have been wrong had He led them to believe otherwise. Beside

this He could not have fulfilled His Father's commandment to bring many others than Jews into His flock. All these things were later to be proved at the crucifixion. There God smote the Shepherd and everything the Shepherd had said came to pass - the flock was scattered - He laid down His life for the sheep. On the surface it appeared but a fruitless gesture, it seemed He gave Himself in vain. Not so though, the sheep were scattered but not decimated, not one of THEM died, ONLY HE. But He had not come only to lay down His life in sacrificial love and devotion to duty beyond the normal. He came to lay down His life and take it again. He is alive and He regathered that little flock and led them out to Bethany to watch Him return to heaven from whence He came. The life had left the earth, they still hadn't got it. That is why He told them to wait for it, 'Tarry till you be endued with the power from on high', He said. They would receive His life and power, then He would be in them, they would be His sheep indeed.

Running throughout the whole of this parabolic utterance, the Lord's consciousness of responsibility to His Father is clearly discernible, so also is the underlying mystery of the relationship between them. Although we may not fully see and therefore do not appreciate it, this is the most important feature of all He said. His inspired remarks about the hirelings' attitude to the flock emanate from this source; Jesus was not only the Good Shepherd, He was God's Shepherd. We rightly think of Him as the Shepherd of the sheep, for so He is, but He was also the Shepherd of God, that is to say He was the one chosen of God to be the Shepherd. As a man responsible to God for everything, He was conscious at all times that His Father had sent Him to be the Shepherd of men. His scathing remarks about the hireling were to inform people that he was not a mere hired servant; being God He could not be paid anything for what He did. He knew and said the sheep were not His originally but His Father's, and had been put in His charge by Him. The sheep were His sacred trust and He called them and kept them as His own. Calling, commission and commitment were very powerful factors in His life, influencing all He said and did, therefore He did not have the mentality or attitude of a person working for wages; never at any time did He render mere service to anyone.

Everything He did was completely voluntary and spontaneous, a pure gift of love rendered as much to His Father as to His sheep. The Good Shepherd GIVETH His life; this is the only way He could let the sheep have it. As He did not work for hire or reward from His Father, neither can anyone pay for that life as a purchase, it cannot be received as a reward for services rendered, or for good conduct, or as being in any way a payment for work; it is not available under such terms. Fully understood, this gives deeper insight into Peter's words to elders of churches, 'Feed the flock of God which is among you ... not for filthy lucre'. Eagerness for base gain or even well-earned wages was not the motivation, money had no plan in His thinking, nor must this subtle lust motivate the labours of anyone who tends the flock of God. Consciousness of His manhood was ever with Jesus and the degree of subjection it imposed upon Him pervaded all His thinking, conditioning His words and controlling His works all through His life. This was never more noticeable or more freely confessed than in the final weeks of His ministry, and specially on the cross.

During the whole of His time on earth the Lord never lost sight of eternal relationships; both prehistoric and post-historic

purposes occupied His mind, guiding Him in His every act: they were His priorities. Beside this, at no time did He become unaware of, or insensitive to, the self-emptying made necessary to Him because He and His Father were determined upon His incarnation. Godlike in all He did, He had been very thorough about this, and in manhood waited patiently on His Father until he should be pleased to give Him the sheep, and these being given to Him, He held them jointly with His Father; they were both His Father's and His own. He knew and rested in the fact that no-one was able to pluck the sheep out of His Father's hand: 'I and My Father are one', He exultantly declared. This was the plan agreed and fixed between them in eternity-past; at all times he was to act as a man indwelt by God should act: He was the God-man, not a Man-god. He therefore placed confidence of ultimate safety for the sheep in His Father's hand and not in His own alone. The Lord's statement concerning this is sometimes thought to indicate a two-handed grip on the sheep, one hand supplied by Jesus and the other by His Father. Far more likely He was stating that His hand is identical with the Father's, and saying that, being one in substance, Their hand is one in eternal strength also.

This is always the way with the Lord. With modesty becoming His manhood, he sought no honour for Himself but gave it all to His Father, acknowledging Him as the greater Person in the partnership. They were equals to the point of identity, but as befitting His humanity He voluntarily placed Himself under commandment from God. The Lord filled a dual role which enabled His Father to give Him the sheep and the ability to purchase them. The Lord both received the sheep as a gift and bought them with His own blood. It was as though He had first to prove Himself worthy of the latter honour and learn the privilege of dying for the sheep by being a faithful Shepherd to them for three years beforehand. Oh, the mystery of love and devotion - how little we understand of it. But small though our grasp and appreciation of it may be, it is very real: how great is His love. We are our Lord's by fourfold right:

1. He created us.
2. We were given to Him.
3. He bought us.
4. He has given us His life.

Praise His name.

#### 4. THE SHEEP OF HIS PASTURE

David, Israel's king, loved the thought of this great shepherd/sheep relationship with God; having been a shepherd, he easily took to the idea of being a sheep. He loved the experience. The precious truth he wrote into Psalm 23 reveals his heart and the heart of every other sheep. Such later phrases as, 'It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves, we are His people and the sheep of His pasture' (Ps. 100:3), and 'We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand' (Ps. 95:7) come from a very appreciative heart. He revelled in these things, even saying that He who dwelt between the cherubim was the Shepherd of Israel. The words, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, he maketh me to lie down in green pastures', say it all. David saw that under the Lord's shepherding, and provision, and guidance, leadership and protection were guaranteed him all the way through this life: even though it be spent in the valley of the shadow of death, he would finally dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. With

marvellous insight he saw beyond national 'folds' and all time, into 'the house' of God. He grasped the truth of sonship and fatherhood, and the eternal family/flock gathered into the everlasting fold of God. Whether he understood all he saw is another matter - but who does?

Not everybody in ancient Israel understood these things as well as David did. Perhaps the nation had the best opportunity of understanding them when they were led out of Egypt by the pillar of cloud and fire in their beginnings. By those unsubstantial elements the visible manifestation of the invisible Shepherd was associated with the very substantial flesh of Moses. The permanent, yet ever-changing pillar, combined with the tangible manhood of Moses, though unavoidably limited, adequately set forth to Israel the Good Shepherd not as yet revealed. How soon after the nation's settlement in Canaan the pillar disappeared we do not know; it seems to have disappeared as mysteriously and abruptly as it came. Presumably this was because, in a certain way, the promised land was to Israel a type of heaven, that is, heaven on earth, the 'fold'. The exact time when God removed the cloud may well have been when the tabernacle was finally pitched in the land, in its permanent position. The pillar is not mentioned as being a national phenomenon in Israel during the lifetime of any writer subsequent to Moses. It seems that the outward, visible manifestation of the presence of the Shepherd was only given while the people were in transit, for after they crossed Jordan into their heaven on earth it disappeared. The inward manifestation of the shekinah remained, the Shepherd still abode in glory between the cherubim though no longer outwardly visible He was still there.

All this, with modifications and adaptations suitable to God's present purposes, has its counterpart in the history of God's dealings with the Church. 'God was manifest in the flesh' as the Good Shepherd that should bring them out of Jewry and form them into a new flock. A few days before His departure from Olivet to the Father, the Lord said a mysterious thing to the disciples, 'I go away and come to you'; they were absolutely baffled by it, they did not at all understand what he was talking about. They were soon to learn. Just as He said, during a succession of days following His resurrection, Jesus went and came, went and came, between heaven and earth, manifesting Himself to them and disappearing again, until finally on the day of Pentecost, He came to them by the Spirit and left them no more. Invisibly, gloriously, the unseen Shepherd of their souls now dwelt with them permanently. Having laid down His life FOR the sheep, He had taken it again, and His Father loved Him - the more, if possible, because He was not giving His life TO His sheep. He was IN them. 'My Father who gave them me is greater than all', He said, and He loved Him. The flock had really become the new flock and the whole concept of the sheep/shepherd relationship had entered a new phase. Shepherding is now from within.

#### 5. PASTORS OF THE FLOCK

Paul, who did not often use the figure of the flock, took it up when bidding the Ephesian elders his last farewell. In his charge to them he clarified three important things for the Church for all time:

1. The flock and the Church are the same
2. God purchased it with His own blood

### 3. The elders were to regard themselves as shepherds

In these days of abounding heresy, it is important to emphasize point number 2. According to this, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is God. It was Jesus, not the Father, who shed His blood which bought the Church. It is His. However, in the same way in which all that the Father has belongs to Jesus, all that Jesus has is His Father's also. In this sense, Jesus' blood is also the Father's blood, for though the Father did not become flesh and blood, the Son shed it for His Father at His Father's request. Some time later Paul wrote to the Ephesians about Christ's gift of pastors to men, and it must have been plain to these elders then, if not before, that each of them was considered by the Lord to be a shepherd. The word pastor could hardly be better interpreted than 'pasturer' - one who leads the sheep into pasture. If sheep had power of imagination, it would not be possible for them to imagine a person more wonderful.

Of all the apostles, perhaps Peter was the most definitely commanded by the Lord to be a shepherd; certainly when he wrote his first epistle, he did so as from the heart of a shepherd: what a good shepherd he was. His thoughts while writing were concerned with the sheep who had been scattered because of the persecution which had arisen over the death of Stephen; besides this, Jesus' unforgettable commission to him by the sea of Tiberias still rang in his ears. What the Lord said that day had completely changed his thinking; it was amazing. In one great searching interview, when he was made to face it out with Jesus, Peter's thinking was completely changed. He had entered the dialogue with the mind of a fisherman, he came out of it with the mind of a shepherd. So effective was this meeting with the Lord that for the rest of his life that apostle could not go back to fishing again. Never would he be able to forget or break the bond of love the Great Shepherd bound around his heart that day. At the time he did not fully realize all that was happening, but Jesus knew. The time had come for Peter to commit himself utterly to God's international plans, it was absolutely necessary. He had been a great rationalist, a true Galilean. He loved to fish in the Galilean lake at first, but he finished fishing in the Tiberian sea.

It was not without significance that the Tiberian Caesars name dominated Galilee and everywhere else in Palestine. The Lord caught Peter there on the sea and dealt with him on the lakeside. Peter must become a shepherd with international vision, narrow nationalism is no better than narrow sectarianism. Peter must see it Christ's way. He had put him out of Jewry, called him away from home, chosen him out from the crowd, drawn him away from boats and fish and things, and given him a glimpse of glory. What was he doing fishing in national ponds? In preparation for His international plans, Jesus had already given him the keys of the Kingdom of heaven and within fifty days the new age would begin. Although he did not then know it, Peter was chosen to be the chief public spokesman and miracle-worker in it during its opening phase. It was imperative therefore that he caught the Lord's vision. Another door needed to be opened, and somehow he must be made to see and understand the connection between the door

and the keys and the sheep. The doors had to be entered, sheep had to be put forth, Peter must be a great shepherd. He was a natural leader, a man gifted above the average, selected from among the apostles for the task and fully equipped by the Lord; some even thought him to be chief among the shepherds; even apostles followed him; all men are sheep.

Tragically, not having the Spirit, Peter led those other apostles astray; launching forth in the fading day, he took them into a dark night of fruitless fishing, ceaseless toil and barren hopes, it was heartbreaking. Frustrated and weary, the following morning they headed for home, and as they approached shore, Jesus, ever full of grace, came and stood there too, waiting for them. He called to them across the sea, 'Children, have you any meat?' He loved them, but He loved all men too and with them in mind firmly resolved to teach those apostles an unforgettable lesson. 'No', someone shouted in response. 'Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find', He said: they did and filled the net. Fishes, great, heavy, and very many, swam straight into the net: it was astounding; they could not get the net into the boat. The only sensible thing to do was to give up trying and make for the shore, and this they did dragging the net behind them, hoping that the net would not break. Directed by Peter, they had caught nothing: instead of success - failure; instead of fulness - emptiness; instead of food - hunger; so much for Peter's leadership and direction. Faced with his failure and knowing now that the stranger on the shore was the Lord, Peter abandoned ship and struck out for the land and Jesus. What did the other apostles think of that? What a complicated person Peter was! And what was he thinking? He had made a mess of things again, what would Jesus say? Nothing! Not one word of rebuke, He only asked for the fish to be brought to land. Silently they counted them - one hundred and fifty three. What now? 'Come and dine', He said. They left their catch, sat down around the fire before Him, and ate, without a word. What was there to say?

Something was wrong, very wrong indeed. It had been a massive catch of fish, yet during the night they had not caught one. Why? It was no good enquiring then. All they knew was that only the Lord's presence and His word had put right what had been wrong. He was the only one who was right, nobody else had been. They knew they were wrong and had done wrong, they needed no-one to tell them that. He had told them to tarry in Jerusalem and they had disobeyed Him. 'Ye shall be endued with power', He had said. Oh, how they needed it, they hadn't power to catch fish even. Yet He did not disown them or rebuke them. 'Children', He said, He had called them children; they had disobeyed His commandment, yet He called them His children - or had He? He did not say, 'My children'. Was that word a rebuke, was He calling them children because they had acted childishly? He fed them though and gave them final success without saying 'I thought I told you ...'. He loved them, oh how He loved them!

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**Editor: This article will be finalised in the next issue.**

**The act of praying is the very highest energy of which the human mind is capable; praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties. The great mass of worldly men and of learned men are absolutely incapable of prayer.**

**Coleridge**

# BIBLE STUDY

ROGER SHUTTLEWORTH

THE SONG OF SOLOMON - PART FOUR

In our previous study of this book we saw how the Lord brought His betrothed to an understanding of the life of faith, where she was no longer depending upon the conscious awareness of His presence. She has discovered that He is truly within her heart (ch.6:2,3) - her life is hid with Christ in God. Having come to this point, she is now able to enter into all the fullness of that which the Lord has for her, at least as far as is possible in this life. The Song thus ends with the same cry as the Bible itself ends - 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!' - that faith may be swallowed up in sight, and prayer transmuted to perfect praise unto all eternity.

## 1. Unparalleled Beauty - ch.6:4-9

The temporary lapse of ch.5 now being over, and the bride having learned her lesson well, the Lord now speaks to her again, repeating many of the things which He has said before (ch.4:1-3), to reassure her heart. How wonderful He is, and how aware of the heart's need!

Tirzah means 'pleasantness'. It was chosen as the capital of Israel after the secession of the ten northern tribes (1 Kings 14:17 15:33), while Jerusalem was the capital of Judah. See Psalm 50:2.

It is noteworthy that the beauty described here, the beauty which the Lord appreciated, is not the kind that arouses passion or desire; rather, it is awe-inspiring (v.10). It is a beauty rendered more potent by holiness. Even the Lord is overcome by it (v.5).

Beyond all the various facets of her beauty, the Lord points to something more wonderful still - her uniqueness. There may be queens, concubines, virgins, but my undefiled is but one. Compare Psalm 45:9. This is not to exalt any one person above the rest, but it does mean that the Lord takes special delight in those (few?) who ascend to these realms of oneness with Him. May we not, each one of us, aspire to be such a one? And her uniqueness is recognised also by other believers (v.9); far from mere carnal adulation, this is a right appreciation of her particular standing.

## 2. Unclouded Vision - ch.6:10-12

Her eyes have been mentioned before as the epitome of her beauty (ch.4:1,9; 6:5). Now, rather than contemplating her own perfections, she looks forth with unclouded eye, like the sun as it rises, seeing all things bringing all things to the light. She has become a person of vision. Note the adjectives of v.10 - fair, clear, terrible.

**vv.11,12.** Now she is coming to the place of usefulness and service. She goes to the torrent-bed ('valley'), where water flowed at one time during the flood, but which is now dried up;

she reviews the times and places of the outpourings of the Holy Ghost and of past revivals. The nuts would be walnuts. All nuts are hardened fruits with a shell that has to be broken open. Reviewing these things, she finds a spontaneous desire to consecrate herself to God (v.12) - literally, 'My soul set me among the chariots of my willing people.' There are few things more likely to promote revival than the reading and considering of revivals past. See Psalm 110:3.

Her pre-eminent desire now is to be fully involved with the Lord in His work; this theme recurs in ch.7:10 onwards. But there now interposes in v.13 another demand, that of souls who are following on, who desire to know the secrets of her power. To this the writer now turns.

## 3. Unabashed Testimony - ch.6:13 - 7:9

The end of v.13 should be translated 'the dance of Mahanaim'. We are dealing here with an allegorical dance, by means of which the Holy Ghost answers the question of v.13, 'What will ye see in the Shulamite?' The first five verses of ch.7 are a record of the Spirit's testimony concerning her. Mahanaim was the place where Jacob met the angels of God (Gen.32:1,2); it was the place from whence he set out across the brook Jabbok on that fateful night which was to see the changing of his nature and his name, to make him 'a prince with God' v.1. She is first described as the 'Prince's daughter' - see Psalm 45:13.

Shoes attract attention in a dancer, and so are mentioned first (see Eph.6:15). Thighs denote strength - in this case, a strength derived from her Lord, not natural (remember Gen.32). The cunning workman is of course the Spirit of God (Eph.2:10).

**vv.2,3.** 'Navel' is really 'waist' (the Hebrew word occurs only here), and the 'goblet' was a large bowl (called a crater) which was used for mixing spiced wine. Such a bowl would be ornately decorated. In Syria the colour of wheat was considered the most beautiful for the human body. We see here the inward beauties which she possesses - spiced wine being reminiscent of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, lilies signifying purity. The breasts signify again faith and love (see note of ch.4:5).

**v.4.** See note on ch.4:4. Here, however, the emphasis is not so much on her strength of will as upon the beauty of a will which, though strong still, has been ennobled by suffering (ivory). Fishpools suggest stillness, clarity and depth. Heshbon was the citadel of King Sihon, one of the first taken by the Israelites. The nose has not been mentioned before - the 'sense of smell' in spiritual things is a late development, suggestive of acute discernment.

**v.5.** Carmel means a 'fruitful field'. Purple signifies beauty and authority. Hair speaks of consecration (see ch.4:1). 'Galleries' is literally 'tresses', and denotes the captivating power which

she held over her Lord, such that her desires could not fail of an answer.

**vv.6-9** It seems that at this point in the description the Lord Himself breaks in with glad agreement (v.6). He now takes over the description with the emphatic 'This, thy stature.....' The 'roof of thy mouth' is again 'palate' as in ch.5:16. There it was His palate and the things which He has tasted for us; here it is hers, and the truth is emphasised that she has also become a partaker of His sufferings (2 Cor.1:7; Phil.3:10) and has come through undefiled.

It may be that in v.9 the maid herself breaks in thus:  
Bridegroom: 'The roof of thy palate is like the best wine -'  
Bride: '- the best wine for my Beloved'.

Thus ends the description of her character for the benefit of those who had enquired in ch.6:13. Now the Song returns to the theme of ch.5:10-12.

From this point on there is no more suggestion of anything unacceptable in the bride. She has come through the various trials and experiences described before, to a place where she is totally identified with her Lord. The fullest expression of this awaits the redemption of the body when the Lord comes, but until that time and for the remainder of her life she is taken up only with Him, His interests, His thoughts, His desires.

#### **4. Unself-conscious Companionship-ch.7:10 - 8:4**

In vv.11-13 we notice the use of the words 'we', 'us', 'our'. First comes a concern for 'the field' and 'the villages'. She shares His concern for His work all over the world. Note the plural 'villages' - she is not obsessed, like some, with one particular nation or place. Compare the plural 'vineyards' of v.12 with the singular of ch.1:6. She is not self-conscious anymore; her interest is in the welfare of others.

**vv.1-4.** It was considered unacceptable in Oriental society for lovers to kiss in public; only blood-relatives were allowed to do so, e.g. Gen.31:55. Here she wishes that she could demonstrate her affection for Him without restriction. We see the expression of a longing to be free from the restraints of earthly life and expectations of others, a longing which is expressed again in vv.2 and 3.

So in v.4 the charge is repeated which we have seen before. This time she waits in eager anticipation for that day when all limitations of flesh shall be done away, and she can bestow her all upon His as she desires.

#### **5. Uninterrupted Communion - ch.8:5-13**

**v.5.** Again the Holy Ghost uses the device of the third party asking, 'Who is this?' - see also ch.3:6. Now unlike the former occasion, where the wilderness signified her own internal imperfections, the wilderness here denotes the world, out of which she is coming. She has her eye fixed upon His coming, like the apostle in 1 Cor.13:9-12; Col.1:21-23; 1 Thess.

4:15-17; 2 Tim.4:6-8. We are reminded again of Jacob's leaning on his staff and worshipping (Heb.11:21).

He reminds her of the way in which He has brought her - by grace alone, ch.2:3,4. For the mother, see Gal.4:26; Heb.12:22; Psalm 87.

**vv.6,7.** Conscious of her own dependence upon Him, she says, 'Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm.' Just like the priests of old, who bore the names of Israel engraved over their hearts and shoulders (the seats of affections and strength), a man would carry a jewel next to his heart, engraved with the name of his loved one. See Jer.22:24; Haggai 2:23.

In the New Testament love is revealed as stronger than death. The jealousy here mentioned is a godly jealousy (2 Cor.11:2), that attribute of God which will not countenance a rival (Exodus 20:5). So here she is conscious of a love which will not let her go, though the sorrows of death encompass her. Was it not that love which Jesus displayed on the Cross? Let the world and satan throw all they have against it, they will not prevail; even death itself is swallowed up in victory.

**vv.8,9.** Now her interest is not self-centred; rather, it shows a concern for other, less mature believers, the 'little sisters'. Note the plural 'we' - she is co-worker with Him now. A wall denotes separation unto God; silver, redemptive grace. The door is an entrance for others to enter into this life. In v.9. the bride speaks as one who is set apart entirely for God; faith and love are grown up to full maturity.

**vv.11,12.** The Lord looks for increase and for a return on His investment in us and in His work. See Isa.53:11; Matt.21:34. Baal-hamon means 'Lord (or husband) of a multitude'. In Isa.7:23 we see that a thousand shekels (silverlings) was the profit on a vineyard containing a thousand vines. So now the bride expresses her confidence that from her life the Lord shall certainly receive His due. What a contrast to ch.1:6!

**v.13.** The Hebrew makes it clear here that these words are spoken by the Lord to the bride. He too delights in companionship with His loved ones. He hears all our conversation with others, but above all He desires us to address Him and to pray.

#### **6. Unfulfilled Longing - ch.8:14**

It may seem strange that at the end of this study we should speak of unfulfilment. Yet we know that all the depths which we may experience in this life, of fellowship with the Lord, are all 'in part' until He comes. Let us read again those lovely words of hope in Revelation 21:1-7.

Thus this lovely book yields up some of its treasures to us. We have scarcely done it justice. Yet beyond an understanding of the text, we realise that it is all allegorical, and that the reality lies in our own life with the Lord, in our own lifetime. May the Lord then grant to us large desires, and grace to cast off all weights and to enter into these things. Amen.

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**For nothing reaches the heart but what is from the heart, or pierces the conscience but what comes from a living conscience.**

**William Penn**

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