

new covenant Voice

*A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky;*

*To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfil:
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's will!*

*Arm me with jealous care,
As in Thy sight to live,
And O! Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give:*

*Help me to watch and pray,
And on Thyself rely,
Assured, if I my trust betray,
I shall for ever die.*

Charles Wesley 1707-88

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

REPENTANCE

GEORGE W. NORTH

The Gospel according to Matthew begins with a shortened version of Christ's ancestry. Noticeably, Matthew does not go back to Adam, but only as far as Abraham, tracing Christ's line down through successive generations to Joseph, Mary's husband. By this, Matthew establishes the fact that had Jesus been Joseph's son He would have been Abraham's and David's son also. Several reasons may be advanced for Matthew's desire to do this, but beyond the obvious reason that he did it under the direction of the Holy Spirit, none of the reasons really matter, for Jesus was not Joseph's son, but Mary's and God's. The ancestry given by Luke is the far more satisfactory one; he traces Christ back to God through Adam. Matthew refers to certain events immediately prior to Christ's birth which further confirmed that claim, and then adds some more equally important incidents following His birth which in his view furnish conclusive evidence of Christ's divinity. This done, Matthew swiftly turns to the matter in hand introducing into the narrative the person of John Baptist, who played such an important part in the life of the nation prior to Christ's ministry thereto. John's business was to alert the nation to its need and to introduce to all the One who brought to them its remedy. He summarized every man's urgent need in one word, 'Repent'.

John repeated that message often, because it was God's command, but he was the only man preaching it. Neither by priests in fashionable temple or elders in rural synagogue, was the command being delivered, so John stood in the wilderness by Jordan and cried it out there; he had no other platform. John was a simple country preacher, a prophet of God, a man on fire, he wanted neither fancy clothes or fine foods, he disdained all reward, and to him fame meant nothing at all. He had been born into the world full of the Holy Spirit and the light and the fire of God, burning and shining before men as of old the pillar of cloud burned and shone before ancient Israel leading them out of the wilderness into the promised land, and a season of rejoicing dawned in Palestine.

Though his message of warmth and light was preached unheard by those in higher circles, there were those who flocked to hear his word. They who received it turned from traditional belief to God who baptized them with the invisible baptism of repentance. Having ascertained this, John then baptized them in Jordan, thereby preparing the way for the coming of the Lord who should baptize them in the Holy Spirit and fire. By water baptism John presented to his converts an understandable picture of both the baptism of repentance and baptism in the Spirit. Though John could not say all that later prophets like Paul said about the baptism in the Spirit, his illustration of the power and meaning of it was graphic and has never been excelled. The approach of Pharisees and Sadducees to his baptism drew from him statements such as, 'Ye generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?', and, 'Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves We have Abraham to our

father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire'.

Pondering these words, it becomes clear that repentance is among the most serious of all spiritual exercises possible to the soul of man. It is like the falling of a tree cut off from its roots, without so much as the stump of it left standing above the ground. Certainly to John true repentance and total destruction meant the same, his definition of it as described by his illustrations cannot be interpreted any other way. It is apparent that with inexorable purpose he set out to demolish from the minds of men every false idea which could ever be built up about baptism. Before announcing death to the former life, and in preparation for it, he pointed out one or two other very important things also. These must be borne in mind and thoroughly understood as the soul considers repentance unto forgiveness.

A COMPLETE CHANGE

The first of these is that repentance is not merely a matter of changing coats, that is, outward appearances. Though everyone who approaches salvation is not a Pharisee or a Sadducee, John's merciless exposure of them points to a fact which all must receive. Thankfully he did not scathingly denounce everyone as a viper, but did not evade the fact that every member of the human race is infected with the serpent's poison. The nature of sin in every man is serpent like and so is one peculiarity of its nature, namely the ability to change its skin annually. This phenomenon requires no internal change in the reptile, it is the law of nature to do so: without pain or fuss, once a year it sheds its entire coat of skin and there ready to take its place is a new one exactly the same. By this natural process the snake appears new - but it is not, it is still the same old serpent in a new skin. No change has taken place at all, in texture, in colour, in markings and in size, the 'new' coat it now wears is exactly the same as the one it shed; neither internally or externally has any radical change taken place in the snake, it has simply undergone an external renewal. What John was telling his hearers is this; whoever they were, whether Pharisee or Sadducee, or a member of any other party or sect, no man should think or act under the delusion that repentance is a mere outward change. Repentance is much, much more than that, it is a total change of a persons inward states, resulting in the changing of that person's outward states, and therefore of the person's whole appearance. Obviously the inward change is the most important of the two.

The second thing to understand is that repentance cannot be superimposed upon or added to erroneous beliefs. As a burning, shining light, sent into his generation by God, he enlightened people as to their former beliefs so that they should renounce them, turn from them, and flee from them. No

person's inward state can be changed unless he gives up all false ideas about himself and God. Repentance cannot be had upon the grounds of personal merit or the supposed merits of others, whether they be personal spiritual forbears or some other great saint. John's remarks about father Abraham would have devastated far more than the Pharisees and Sadducees who were listening, he comprehended the whole race and by implication the entire world in them. In a sentence he shattered the foundation of all their long cherished beliefs, 'God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham': in that remark he included the whole race. John allowed none of them to believe or advance one argument to support the theory that because they were Abraham's descendants they were included in the new move of God. Apart from deep repentance no-one could be included in what God was doing: to think otherwise was a preposterous assumption, matched only by a colossal pride. So easily could God make children of flesh and blood from pieces of stone, that it was absurd for any man to think so highly of himself.

NOT A CHANGE OF COAT

Every man must understand that by John's baptism, God was making the first of a new series of moves by which when completed He could make sons of man sons of God. John did not announce that, it was altogether too revolutionary a message to announce at that time. John's function was to preach the beginning of the good news and introduce to them the Christ who should carry the whole thing further. God could not make children of God from stones, children of Abraham yes, but not children of God. To be a child of Abraham no man needed to repent, all that was needed was to be born of Abraham's line, as Jesus was, but to become a child of God a man must needs first repent. To slip out of one coat and don another which is not another but the old replaced as new is easily enough accomplished by any man, he need not repent to do that, he makes it himself, as every serpent does.

It is very easy to superficially accept and pay mental homage to another set of beliefs which may not be so radically different from ideas formerly held, and yet, underneath the cloak of words still cling to and build upon those things the heart has always believed. The serpent's bite has poisoned the whole human being, self-deception cloaks the consciousness and destroys the heart of all men. But the truly repentant man hastens to be rid of all such things, indeed part of his repentance unto God is that he ever had the nature and mind to do any of it. True repentance breaks a man and cuts him adrift from his former manner of life and prepares him for the work of total destruction God must work in him before he can qualify for sonship.

This is the way of approach John made for men to his baptism. Up to this point he has laid the emphasis on what man must do, or perhaps, as in some cases, what he may not do or be if he sought John's ministrations. If a person refused the Baptist's teachings there was no-one else to whom to appeal, for there was no other prophet of God in Jewry, John was the only one. False prophets there were in plenty as the Lord later said, but John was 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness', he had neither peer nor helper. God was in him though, it was God who was crying, it was His voice that was calling out, John preached God's word, his ministry unique, he was fearless. The only

person greater than he, in the nation, had not yet been revealed to him or any man. There was no appeal therefore against John's word, it was final, like a sword it cut through all concepts of righteousness and contrary beliefs, 'the axe was laid to the root of the trees'.

GOD'S AXEMAN

John was God's axeman and he wielded the axe expertly, he was looking for fruit for God in peoples lives, and if he could not find it he made the call to repentance, sounding it loud in every man's ears. Except he was assured in his heart that the fruit of repentance was there and plainly to be seen, John did not baptize anyone in water. Fruit of whatever kind is the natural product of the tree on which it grows, if it is there it can be seen hanging on and from the tree in full view. This is simple truth of such elementary nature that we distinguish and name fruit trees by the particular fruit they bear. It was the Lord Himself who said of people, 'By their fruit ye shall know them.' That is common sense, and what assurance it brings to hearts. Words, prophecies, habits, prayers, claims, works, miracles, are no proof of nature, for all these may be assumed, or learned, or copied, or deliberately counterfeited, but where the fruit is seen and tasted it is known and the tree cannot be mistaken for what it is. If the tree is right the fruit is right, and if the fruit is of one kind, the tree is of that kind, there can be no deception.

So far as we know, John's mission was specifically to his nation, he preached and ministered to his own countrymen. Only by the grace of God and the obedience of man has his message come to all mankind. His demands of men were precisely the same as those of the husbandman to whom Christ alluded in His parable spoken years later. In words of unmistakable meaning, the Lord told the nation thereby that grace rejected brings inescapable judgement. The words Christ put into the mouth of the husbandman were these, 'Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?'. The Husbandman was God, it was He who passed sentence on the fruitless fig tree. The dresser of the vineyard pleaded with the Husbandman and gained a year of respite for the nation, but it was only conditional, there must be fruit or else ...! In the end the sentence had to be carried out, there never was any fruit, and there should have been. In the parable the Lord uses the symbol of the tree in a slightly different way than John, but the teaching is basically the same. By it the Lord deliberately linked His ministry with John's. The difference lies in this - in the parable the tree symbolizes the nation, whereas John used it as a symbol of the individuals in it.

PREPARATION FOR GRACE

Between them John and Jesus ministered to the nation for some four or five years, but during their lifetimes their ministries appeared to be fruitless, the nation rejected them both. John's ministry to the nation preceded and was preparatory to Christ's, it was only intended to be that, he was not the king. In view of the many privileges bestowed upon them, the Jews were expected by God to be already bearing the fruits of repentance when John came. Instead of this they had to be called to repentance. God knew that, of course, but nevertheless He let them understand what they ought to have been, and what He should have found. Some in the nation could

immediately produce the fruit upon demand - John Baptist's own parents, for instance, and Anna, and Simeon, and Mary and Joseph also, others like them, were also bearing fruit. Not all the Jews were practising sin, many were walking in the fear of the Lord in all the light they had. Nonetheless they all needed preparing for the new era of grace which was shortly to be introduced on earth, wherein by the power of God every man and woman should be made aware that he or she could become a new creature. 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight', said Isaiah of this time. 'Repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand', said John, this was the way. He knew and was commissioned to declare that repentance is the first step everybody must take who would prepare His way and pass into that Kingdom.

NO CONCESSIONS

For this reason John preached, the axe had to be laid to the root of every tree, it must be hewn down, the former life must be destroyed. The straight path into the Kingdom must be made plain to everybody, whoever he or she be, and whatever the state and manner of each life, each individual must be cut off at the root from the former position, for their root was Abraham and not God. This was John's ministry. He knew that, against his wishes and without his knowledge, Abraham had been elevated to the position of God, the nation had idolized him. John made no concessions to anybody, irrespective of who the person was, if he or she could not show to him the fruit he sought on God's behalf, that life must be cut down, never to be reared up again. To ensure they understood this, John made clear to everybody that after the axe came the fire, the tree was fit for nothing, it must be burned up, nothing, but nothing, must be allowed to remain, everything - trunk, limbs, branches, twigs, leaves, fruit - must be reduced to ashes.

John was absolutely ruthless, his gospel devastating, his attitude unyielding, his task was superhuman and his time limited. Not only had he to preach repentance, but also to raze mountains, fill in valleys, level out everything and everybody, and make a straight road on earth for his God. It was said of him that he performed no miracle, but Christ did not say so, it was the observation of mere men. True, John did not do miraculous works, as men count miracles, he did not or give a single miraculous sign, but he did not need such things; his whole life, his work and ministry, was one long continuous miracle, immeasurable, gargantuan.

THE TALL TREE OF PRIDE

Sometimes it takes a man a long time to receive into his heart the idea that his life is of no use whatsoever to God. Pride often makes a man grow into a very tall tree in his own eyes, great of girth, mighty of strength, having many limbs spreading afar and bearing much fruit, a man of many parts and purposes and possibilities, such a person is so accomplished he cannot believe he cannot possibly please God. To such a one the whole concept of truth suggested in John's parabolic teaching concerning the tree is completely unacceptable. But the Baptist did not tone down the doctrine of repentance because of that, on the contrary he the more sternly pressed it home, 'cut it down, burn it up', he was relentless.

The man who at the coming of God and in His sight

brings forth that fruit which indicates a truly repentant spirit is in the way of salvation, but let him never forget that he must retain that spirit of repentance permanently. At whatsoever stage and in whatever state of life a man is when God comes to him, he must be able to produce that fruit of repentance, he can never be without it. Never for a moment must the heart entertain the idea that having once come to repentance a man then passes on out of that condition into some further experience of a supposedly more advanced nature by which he will be in a better position and have higher standing with God. Nothing could be further from the truth and more destructive of spiritual life: everyone must pass on in the same repentant attitude of spirit in which he first came to Christ. At whatever moment the call of God to repentance comes to him afresh, let him respond meekly and humbly, God will be looking for the fruit.

At no time did faithful John allow people to think that they were alright really, or that all they needed was to be transplanted onto better soil - in the Kingdom of Heaven for instance. Had he done that he would have been telling them that there was nothing at all wrong with them personally at all, it was only the ground that was evil or poor, or perhaps unsuited to them. Not so, had he done that he would have been a liar like unto them, a messenger of satan, totally untrue both to them and God. John remained true to all men and with power preached to them the gospel as he knew it. His knowledge was limited though, he did not know of Golgotha; he knew the Christ as the Lamb, but only when He was pointed out to him; the cross and the grave he did not know. He knew that trees must be felled, cut off from the roots on which they grew, but he did not know where men must be replanted. That was no fault of his, he was not expected to know, it was a secret not yet revealed, but what he knew he preached, and O how he preached it. With what power and fire and fierce insistence he pressed home the truth, fearlessly exposing sin wherever it lay, whether in high places or among the mean and lowly, applying or withholding water baptism to men as he saw fit before God.

One of John's greatest virtues was his frank acknowledgement of his limitations. With all his great power and authority amid the seductive glitter of great national success he remained his humble self. It is not usual for a man to be one of the greatest of all human beings and to know it and yet it have no ill-effects upon him; to so many, fame is utterly destructive, but not to John. Till the day of his apprehension and imprisonment leading to his early martyrdom, John remained in the wilderness clad in camels hair, girded with leather, feeding on the locusts he caught and the wild honey he found. Fame did not go to his head, power did not corrupt him, it drove him deeper into God; he lived by the fire in him, it burned up the chaff, refining and purifying his life, uniting him with God. He belonged to another covenant than Jesus, he wasn't His brother, nor yet of His bride, but on his mother's side, he was His first and only cousin.

CHRIST'S FORERUNNER

He was Christ's forerunner, a separate being, of a different order, but he was not of another spirit, for the spirit of Christ was in him for his ministry. John was completely at one with his Lord, he fully realized and proclaimed the vital relationship between his baptism and Christ's, and saw and spoke the same things as He. John's ministry and ministrations

were preparatory to his Lord's and Christ's were complementary to His servant's. John bracketed them together, for to his understanding they fulfilled their two earthly ministries. Christ frankly acknowledged this, for some forty or so months later when about to baptize His followers in the Holy Spirit as both John and He had promised, He did precisely as John had done originally, He linked John's baptism with His. He did not equate the baptisms any more than John did, they are not the same, instead he bracketed them as John before Him. 'John truly baptized with water, and ye shall be baptized with (in) the Holy Spirit not many days hence', He said. The point is obvious, and the link undeniable, in the pages of scripture, both John and Christ are seen to be baptizers.

It is quite noticeable that having satisfied himself as to the genuineness of each applicant's soul contrition and spiritual repentance, John had baptized them, pointing every one of them to Christ and His baptism. John knew that men had attached themselves to him, and had become his disciples, that was unavoidable. It is in the nature of good men to become followers of that which is good, and John was certainly a good man, everyone confessed he was a prophet. But John knew his own limitations and fallibility, so much so that at his first encounter with Christ he openly confessed his need to be baptized by His Lord. Great though he was, John knew he needed the same baptism to which he had been pointing all others, and he sought it. But it was no more available to him then than it was to any man, it just could not be. Perhaps John had some inkling, if not full knowledge, of what that baptism was all about, what it held for men and was meant to be to them, but it was not given to him to experience it or to explain it, he longed for it though, nevertheless. As Christ said at the time, all righteousness had to be fulfilled before men could be baptized in Spirit, He wanted to baptize men as much as some men wanted to be baptized, but He could not do it yet. If, as a result of the way John linked His baptism with his own, any man thought it would take place immediately Christ was identified to them, they were entirely mistaken, that baptism was not yet fully prepared for them.

Christ had to prepare the baptism He was going to administer it by dying and rising again. Only the risen Christ can baptize men and women in the Spirit. The uncrucified Christ having neither died nor risen from the dead, could not do for anybody that which His baptism was designed to accomplish. From the foundation of the world God had planned to baptize a company of men and women in the Holy Spirit and form them into the body of Christ in earth and heaven. The Holy Spirit, eternal as the Father and the Son, had always been ready and willing for this, but before it could be accomplished, the means to that end must be established. The work and power of what Christ accomplished before leaving earth must be first wrought permanently in God. What Christ did on the cross He did alone, God, both Father and Spirit, forsook Him there, the actual work of redemption was not wrought by the Father nor by the Holy Spirit, but by Christ alone. This work had to be ratified by Him in heaven to the Father and established in the Spirit by Christ; until that had been done baptism in the Spirit could not have been made available to men, nor did God in any way indicate that it could be.

While uncrucified on earth the Lord never once used the phrase, 'baptism in the Spirit', nor any other phrase which could be mistaken for it or construed into it, only when He was risen from the dead did He use the word baptism in connection

with the Holy Spirit. Neither did He make any explanation of it or give any direct teaching about it. He spake about the Holy Spirit now and then and near the time of His departure taught His disciples some things related to Him and His coming; He also taught them about things connected with the baptism, but never once did He try to teach them the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit. John had informed all who questioned him about himself and his mission, that Christ would baptize men and women in the Holy Spirit, and Christ was content to leave it at that. John could not give them any further light on it and Christ did not attempt to do so. He was planning that the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit should be taught to the Church later by one of His apostles who had not known water baptism at John's hands, namely Paul. This man takes up the theme with joy, and being himself a partaker of it, defines the progressive experiences through which a man passes in the experience of it. A man may not be any more conscious of these things at the time of baptism than he is conscious of having been cut off from the roots of his former life when he repented and was baptized in water, but nevertheless if a man be baptized in Spirit, what the apostle says in his epistle to the Romans is what happens to that man.

It may be of some importance here to note that in the New Testament only two persons directly speak of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Others record the fact that the phrase was used by someone else, but it seems not to have been part of their own vocabulary as such. These use phrases which speak of the results of that baptism, such as receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and other related or similar words, but they do not refer to the means whereby the person of the Spirit and the fulness of the Spirit are received.

The means used by God in this dispensation to bequeath to and fill a man and woman with the Holy Spirit is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The two persons previously referred to who use the phrase 'baptize with the Spirit' are John Baptist and Jesus Christ, these only. Even Paul, who is the foremost teacher of the doctrine does not use the phrase. He uses the word baptize freely enough in places, but does not always specify the baptism of which he is speaking. Omitting the particular element involved he emphasizes the method only, baptism and the only way we have of deciding which element he is referring to is by learning what takes place in the baptism and the results of it. By doing this we may with ease discover whether he is talking about water or the Holy Spirit. There is no difficulty in deciding this, nor ought we properly to imagine that there should be, for on both John Baptist's and Christ's authority everybody must know personally and with surety that he or she is baptized in the Spirit. This is a very critical matter, there must be no confusion about it.

SOMETHING MORE

As we have already seen, John Baptist's baptism was in water. His message was the baptism of repentance administered by God, and John's ministry was to the end that this should be illustrated to all by the baptism he administered. That was as far as he could go and it was all that was required of him, and by the prophetic scriptures he came to fulfil it. He knew that his ministry was entirely preparatory and his baptism only parabolic. He also knew that to be of greatest effect it must be linked with and understood to be both introductory to and utterly inferior to, Christ's baptism. Being unknown to him

John could not venture to describe what that baptism was like, he did not know what took place in it, nor what the results of it would be. Though being himself filled with the Holy Spirit he was very aware that the baptism of the Spirit must be something other and more than being filled with the Spirit, and when he requested Christ to baptize him he was earnestly seeking that something 'other', or 'more', else why should he seek that baptism? John was not the man to fawn upon anyone, he did not seek the favour from Christ in order to patronise Him, John was not a reed shaken by the wind, he knew what his need was and he confessed it, but neither was Christ a shaking reed - He refused him.

BREAKING FRESH GROUND

At that time Jesus Christ also had His limitations, they were different from John's, though self-imposed; like John He was a servant and under orders as a man sent from God. It was utterly impossible at that time to baptize John or anyone else in the Spirit. Many persons in times past had known mighty experiences of the Spirit. He had come upon them, filled them, spoken through them, used them and moved them, many and varied are His offices and operations, but no-one had been baptized in Him. John realized this. The idea of baptism had never before been connected with the Holy Spirit, and when John was commanded by God to tell people that Christ would administer this baptism he knew that both he and God were breaking fresh ground, this was an entirely new doctrine.

Christ is a baptist, the baptist who baptizes in God, John was not, he could not do that. He had his day, but he is not a baptist now. Christ superseded him, He is the baptist now. While He was on earth He never baptized anybody, though He attracted multitudes to Himself and made many disciples, He did not baptize one of them. They were baptized in water by His first followers. By this He made quite clear to all that He had not come as a second baptizer in water with intention to continue John's ministry, having been baptized by him, He left him. His ministry lay in a different element altogether - in the Person who is the Holy Spirit. The spirit, that is, the person of man

must be baptized in the person of the Holy Spirit unto the person and life of Christ, that they may be made new spirit persons; only by this baptism are men made sons of God. God the Father had decided that this should be so, He is the Father of spirits, and Christ His Son was appointed to perform this baptism, therefore He left water baptism severely alone. The baptism He must administer could not be performed in that element, there was nothing of substance in it, it was entirely figurative. It could be made to represent a cutting off, a hewing down, the end of a former life, but not a planting and a beginning of a new, there was no life in it. A man was baptized by John to show he was repentant, having this done he then had to await the baptism in the Spirit by Christ, and he had to wait some time until the substance of the baptism was fully prepared, and God was ready for it to take place.

TWO PARTS OF ONE WHOLE

As this preparation had entirely to do with the death and resurrection of Christ, and because it is a heavenly and not an earthly baptism, its details were not explained by Him while He was on earth. He once said, 'If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?', so He refrained from speaking to them of things He knew they would not understand and therefore would not believe. The events which constitute the twin pillars through which the spirit of man must enter into the body of Christ are the death and the resurrection of Christ. These were His chosen way of departure from earth, and though He informed His disciples of them upon occasion, He never attempted to unfold the doctrine of the future baptism of which His future death and resurrection would be the major and most vital feature. The death and resurrection of Christ had not only to be established historically on earth among men, they had to be established eternally in Heaven among the persons of God also. These twin works of love and power are forever fixed by God in the Spirit, they are two parts of one whole without which there could be no baptism in the Spirit for any man, it would have been impossible for God to accomplish it.

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SORROW, ONE OF GOD'S SERVANTS

BERNARD HULL

It may sound strange that such a thing as sorrow could be employed by God as one of those means by which He accomplishes His pleasure in us. Yet, it is so. As in the homes of the wealthy, a number of people are enlisted in service, each having their place and work to fulfil in the household, so the Lord employs many things to accomplish His ends. We may say that sorrow is like a chauffeur, in that it is not always being used. Rather, a chauffeur may be used infrequently by his employer when he has need, the rest of the time he spends cleaning and attending to the cars, waiting on the master's call. It is thus with God's use of sorrow.

God has ordained that sorrow should not only have a

place in our lives, but have a ministry too. Like the chauffeur, sorrow is not always in use, yet from time to time, as God sees fit and knows best, sorrow comes to do her work. It seems good to use the feminine gender for sorrow, for sorrow is as one of God's handmaids, employed as, when and where necessary. The first mention of sorrows was to the woman in the garden, where she was told that sorrow would be multiplied to her in childbearing, and that the mothering of children into the world would from then on be hedged with sorrow.

There is clear evidence to show that sorrow is one of the fruits of sin. If sin had not come into the world, then there would be no sorrow here, the thoughts and actions which cause

it being absent. However, sin did enter in, and sorrow in its wake. But God has taken up the sorrows as a servant under His mastery. That which has power to master us and enslave us in hopelessness and grief, He is able to make of service to us. Here is a glorious aspect of redemption.

THE FACT OF SORROW

We cannot escape sorrow, no matter how we try. Not all our sorrows are of our own making. The effects and ramifications of sin in the earth have their impact on us all. The world is full of that which causes grief and sadness, and it can be traced back to Satan and sin. Generalising a little, we may say that some sorrows are just part and parcel of life here on the earth, some are of our own making, because of sin and imperfect obedience to God on our part, and some are the direct result of walking close to the Lord in this world. God is able to make all sorrow His minister, even if we have caused it ourselves. It seems too, that some lives are more surrounded by sorrows than others, as though some can better bear them. Think of Jeremiah for a moment, who was brought into deepening fellowship with God as he trod the path of trouble in his day.

Job's life was much touched by sorrow, at least at one significant stage, and he said that 'man was born into trouble as the sparks fly upward'. Sorrow, sadness and grief are the result of trouble though not necessarily the final outcome of it. In Job's life, the final outcome should be examined and noted with care, for it exemplifies God's utilisation of many painful things for the eventual benefit of the soul. Not that God works in a soul simply for its own benefit, but that He may have much more from that one as a result, fellowship of deeper substance and quality.

CAUSES OF SORROW

How manifold are the causes of sorrow. Misfortunes of various kinds. Events which take place reaching in to the settled states of lives robbing of tranquillity, possessions, friends and loved ones. None are spared and at times it may seem more than the soul can bear. Then there are those things which belong more particularly to being one who seeks to walk with God. The loneliness, the absence of understanding friends, the breakdown of fellowship and church life, these sometimes occur, bringing deep sorrow. Times when the enemy seems to get an advantage and be poised, ready to destroy. And what of the occasions when, through personal foolishness, a man errs from the simplicity of walking with the Lord, as David did, and increase, to himself sorrows which otherwise he would have avoided? Yet to the repentant heart the Lord comes and uses all these things to fit that heart for the future and the age to come. These things are among His many mercies.

USES OF SORROW

Examining simply we can discover at least five things in which God uses sorrow to the good of our souls, if we will let Him.

Firstly it is God's minister to us in piercing, wounding deeply the interior hardness of nature with which we are endowed. Sin's effects in our nature tend to make it hard, unfeeling, thoughtless and critical. Sorrow's painful thrusts are used of God to pierce through that unfeeling, harsh armour. Joseph, the young man of many visions and bright, God-given

future, displayed much hardness of nature and insensitivity of heart as he arrogantly declared what God had revealed was to come to pass. But twenty years later, after many sorrows had done their work, his attitudes to those same brothers and his father showed a nature of great sensitivity: no hardness is evident, only the tenderness of a softened heart.

The hardness of heart, the accumulation of years lived on this earth is also eroded, or ground into smallness, by the action of sorrow, which makes the heart malleable, ridding it of its hard set. This wearing action is connected with certain sorrow which pierces and breaks the hard lump of the rigid heart, and that which erodes and grinds gradually.

EXPANDED AND ENLARGED

A second ministry that sorrow exercises in us under God is that it enlarges and expands the heart it melts and pierces. One major characteristic of those who have not tasted sorrow is the narrowness and selfishness of their view of life. The absence of true sympathy and the presence of a tendency quickly to judge others. Our hearts have great capacity for enlargement whilst we dwell here in the days of our flesh. As we pilgrim on in the way and pass through valleys of sorrow from time to time, opportunities come for enlargement of understanding, deepening of appreciation of the states of humanity, and a greater fellowship with God. Increasingly we see as He sees and feel as He feels. A heart thus widened and deepened by sorrow's work is able to contain and dispense of godly understanding, much like the river flowing onto the sea. Sorrow cuts deep, dislodges narrowing attitudes and views of things, leaving space for the virtues of the Lord to abide and flow. Sorrow rids the heart of the smallnesses which too often preoccupy and fill the attention, making room in the widened, expanded heart for God to fill it with those things that truly matter.

WONDER AND AMAZEMENT

Closely connected with these things is a third effect of sorrow, that of a growing delight, amazement, and wonder as we discover these large and great things. David the psalmist was thus brought into 'the large place' of which he speaks in Psalm 18. The Lord had drawn him out of 'many waters', some of which he speaks of in poetic vein, and so he was brought into that place of spiritual understanding of God and of himself which filled his heart with wonder. This then is part of the 'joy that cometh in the morning' after the night of tears. Now the heart, in its states of deeper understanding, is filled with appreciation of God's grace as never before. These things are no longer merely words and concepts, but the marrow and fatness of the soul. Isn't it amazing how we can think that 'the large place' is to do with geography? Rather, it is those possessions of enlarged spiritual understanding of God and men, based in His dealings with me, myself, which induce wonder in the soul. Psalm 139 exemplifies the overflowing of a heart filled with delighted amazement and God and self, the discovery which David had made concerning himself, of the depths of his nature and the care of God for him. All those understandings had come as a result of the manifold sorrows through which he had passed.

ON TO MEAT

The exercise of sorrow in our lives fosters spiritual

growth. It nurtures us beyond the infant stage, taking us into that which is more to do with meat and solid foods than milk. This is borne out in the Hebrews letter where solid food is connected with an ongoing through difficulties which cause sore trial to the soul, when the sons brought to glory are brought there through the weaning away from human attachments. Moses was a proper son. He is mentioned in chapter 11. He was weaned away from self-reliance through the sorrows of being a stranger in the wilderness. Prior to this, whilst living as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, his sense of grief at the plight of his Jewish brethren drew him away from the pleasures of Egypt. So, by the action of sorrow he was weaned from the things of the world, the transient things, and the spiritual calling upon him came more and more to the fore. However, he erred. Relying on his own strength he sought to fulfil that calling, but the exercise of the sorrows of years in the backside of the desert weaned him from self reliance.

Many examples could be given of this separating action of sorrow by which we are weaned from former things, human links and attachments and dependencies, and brought into God alone as our strength and stay. How easily the heart chooses the security and safety, the warmth and closeness of the human, even the human elements in church-life, in friendships and family. Yet God, permitting certain sorrows to come our way, separates us from those natural props. It can be a difficult time to pass through, but by it God brings us onto Himself so much more and He does not change, nor come and go.

A BETTER OBEDIENCE

All these actions of sorrow upon our lives are interconnected, and a further result of its ministry is that obedience to God is perfected in us. We are wooed away from worldly ways of attempting to do God's will unto a proving what is 'that acceptable and perfect will of God'. We can view Abraham in this light for a moment. He imperfectly obeyed the Lord's will when he went in and conceived a son, Ishmael, by Hagar. His desires and intents were right, but his method was wrong. The result of this action was sorrow and grief in the household, and a long wait on his part as his soul was scourged by a sense that all was not right. It was a sorrow of sorts. Yet, it did its work. When the Lord came to him fourteen years later, he obeyed perfectly and knowingly, and Israel was conceived. Here was the 'laughter' (the meaning of the name, 'Isaac') which followed the sifting sorrow. Abraham had been brought to a perfect obedience. We may be sure that he had occasions to regret those defections from God's purposes which were based in incomplete understanding of His ways. Regret and sorrow which are godly, have their place in bringing us through to a far better place.

GODLY SORROW

Perhaps all these principles concerning sorrow and its use can be summed up in considering the section in 2 Corinthians 7 which deals with 'godly sorrow', i.e. that sorrow which we own that God is in. 'The sorrow of the world worketh death', we are

told. If we do not humble ourselves and let the Lord come to us through those sorrows then it is simply the sorrow of the world and has no redemptive features in it, but rather grinds the soul into hopelessness and fosters a root of bitterness therein. However, those sorrows which we allow God to be in, by thoroughly turning our hearts to Him in them, 'work repentance not to be repented of' in us. That is, a deep inner change of attitudes, the very spirit of our thought being changed. The course and direction of the hidden springs of being are permanently altered and redirected into fellowship and alignment with God's own nature and being. This is a permanent change from which the soul does not return, it is repentance 'not to be repented of'.

As Paul writes in this passage, he elucidates certain other facts about the sorrow which profits the soul. He mentions that the souls exercised thereby 'receive damage by it (the sorrow Paul's letter had brought) in nothing'. This is the truth indeed. Sorrow used in our lives by God, and which we permit to work in us, does not damage us. Rather, as we have seen, it profits the soul most wonderfully. That which could work ill, works unto good under God's hand.

Not only so, the Corinthians were to examine the results of godly sorrow in their lives. It had produced a spiritual alacrity in them which was not there before: their desires after God were fanned into bright flame. They became a people clean and transparent in the things of God, able to distinguish that which was evil, good and that which mattered most. They were a people who purified themselves, putting away from them the lesser things, hating that which was spotted by the flesh, and thus became a people approved and clear in the sight of all.

FOR A SEASON

Just a final word from this section of 2 Corinthians. Paul mentions that 'they were made sorry, though it were but for a season'. The promise of God is that sorrow belongs to life here and is therefore but for a season. It will pass away. In the age to come 'God shall wipe away all tears from men's eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away'. (Rev. 21:4).

We dwell in the time of 'former things'. However, even our present sorrows come for a season. We do not always dwell in times of grief. Sadness is not a constant companion. Though we may be called to bear a considerable burden or sorrows, yet there will be that other travelling companion 'always rejoicing', which Paul mentions along with sorrow (2 Cor. 6:10). To yield ourselves to God swiftly in all things is the simple secret. Whether our sorrows be caused by personal folly, or whether caused by circumstances beyond our control, let us let God have our hearts and He will employ His servant sorrow to our good, but for a season, and so shall we pass into more of His likeness, and sorrow be turned to joy.

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What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men who the Holy Ghost can use - men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through method, but through men ... men of prayer.

E.M. Bounds (Power through Prayer)

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

EDITED FROM A SERMON BY JOHN WESLEY

There is hardly any expression in holy scripture which has given more offence than this. The word PERFECT is what many cannot bear. The very sound of it is an abomination to them, and whoever preaches perfection (as the phrase is), that is, asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being considered by them worse than a 'heathen man or a publican.'

And so some have advised to totally lay aside the use of those expressions, 'because they have given so great offence.' But are they not found in the Bible? If so, by what authority can any messenger of God lay them aside, even though all men should be offended? We have not so learned Christ. Whatever God has spoken, that we will speak, whether men will hear or whether they will not, knowing that then alone can any minister of Christ be 'pure from the blood of all men', when he has 'not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God.'

We may not, therefore, lay these expressions aside, seeing they are the words of God and not of man. But we may and ought to explain the meaning of them, because, in the verse already repeated, the apostle speaks of himself as not perfect. 'Not', says he, 'as though I were already perfect.' And yet immediately after, in the fifteenth verse, he speaks of himself, yes, and many others, as perfect. 'Let us', says he, 'as many as be perfect, be thus minded.'

In order, therefore, to remove the difficulty arising from this apparent contradiction, as well as to give light to them who are pressing forward to the mark, and that those who are lame be not turned out of the way, I will endeavour to show:

1. In what sense Christians are not, and
11. In what sense they are perfect.

1. In the first place I will endeavour to show in what sense Christians are not perfect. Both from experience and scripture it appears, first, that they are not perfect in knowledge. They are not so perfect in this life as to be free from ignorance. They know, it may be, like other men, many things relating to the present world. And they know, with regard to the world to come, the general truths which God has revealed. They know also 'what manner of love' it is with which 'the Father' has loved them, 'that they should be called the sons of God.'

But innumerable are the things which they don't know. Touching the Almighty Himself, they cannot search Him out to perfection. 'Lo, these are but a part of His ways; but the thunder of His power, who can understand?' Neither is it for them to know the times and seasons when God will work His great works upon the earth. They don't even know the reasons of many of His present dealings with men. Yes, often with regard to His dealings with themselves, their Lord says unto them, 'What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.' So great is the ignorance, so very little the knowledge, of even the best of men!

No-one is so perfect in this life as to be free, secondly, from mistake, which is an almost unavoidable result of ignorance. Those who 'know but in part' are always liable to err concerning the things which they don't know. It is true that the children of God do not mistake as to the things essential to salvation. For they are 'taught of God', and the way which he teaches them, the way of holiness, is plain. But in things unessential to salvation they err frequently. The best and wisest of men are frequently mistaken with regard to facts or circumstances, believing them, or many of them, to have been quite different from what they truly were. And from this arise many further mistakes. Also they may not judge according to truth with regard to the characters of men. Even with regard to the holy scriptures themselves, as careful as they are to avoid it, the best of men are liable to mistake, and do mistake day by day, especially with respect to those parts which don't immediately apply to daily living. Even the children of God are not agreed as to the interpretation of many places in holy scripture, nor is their difference of opinion any proof that they are not children of God, on either side. It is a proof that we are not to expect any living man to be infallible.

Christians are not so perfect as to be free, thirdly, from weaknesses. Only let us take care to understand this word rightly. Let us not give that soft title of 'weakness' to known sins, as the manner of some is. So one man tells us, 'Every man has his weakness, and mine is drunkenness.' Another has the weakness of uncleanness. Another, that of taking God's holy name in vain. It is plain that all you who speak like this, if you don't repent, shall with your weaknesses go quick into hell! But what I do mean is this: not only those which are rightly termed bodily weaknesses, but all those inward or outward imperfections which are not of a moral nature. Such are the weaknesses of slowness of understanding, dullness of knowledge, incoherency of thought, the lack of a good memory, slowness of speech and pronunciation, to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, both in conversation or behaviour. These are the weaknesses which are found in the best of men, in a larger or smaller degree.

Nor can we expect, till then, to be totally free from temptation. Such perfection does not belong to this life. The Son of God Himself, in the days of His flesh, was tempted even to the end of His life. Therefore, let His servant also expect to be.

Christian perfection, therefore, does not imply an exemption either from ignorance, or mistake, or weaknesses, or temptations. Actually, Christian perfection is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing. Thus every one that is holy is, in the scripture sense, perfect. Yet we may, lastly, see that there is not any absolute perfection on earth, none which does not leave room for a continual increase. No matter how much any man has attained, or to what high degree

he is perfect, he still needs to 'grow in grace', and to daily advance in the knowledge and love of God his Saviour.

11. In what sense, then, are Christians perfect? This is what I will endeavour, secondly, to show. There are several stages in Christian life, as in natural. Some of the children of God are only new-born babes. Others have attained to more maturity. St. John, in his first epistle (2:12-14) refers separately to those he terms 'little children', 'young men', and 'fathers'. Mainly I speak of these mentioned in the latter part of this passage, for only these are perfect Christians. But even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect, or born of God, as, first, not to commit sin. If any are not sure of this privilege of the sons of God, the answer is not to be found by abstract reasonings, which may be drawn out into an endless length, and leave the point just as it was before. Neither is it to be determined by the experience of this or that particular person. Many may suppose they do not commit sin, when they do, but this proves nothing either way. 'Let God be true, and every man a liar'. By His Word will we live, and that alone.

Now the Word of God plainly declares that even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, 'do not continue in sin.' They cannot 'live any longer therein' (Romans 6:1,2). They are 'planted together in the likeness of the death' of Christ (verse 5). Their 'old man is crucified with Him', the body of sin. Being dead with Christ, they are free from sin (verse 6,7). They are 'dead unto sin, and alive unto God' (verse 11). 'Sin hath no more dominion over them', who are 'not under the law, but under grace.' These 'being free from sin are become the servants of righteousness' (verses 14,18).

The very least which can be implied in these words is that the persons spoken of, namely, all real Christians, or believers in Christ, are made free from outward sin. And the same freedom which St. Paul here expresses in such variety of phrases, St. Peter expresses in 1 Peter 4:1,2: 'he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live to the desires of men, but to the will of God.' For this 'ceasing from sin', if it be interpreted in the lowest sense, as regarding only the outward behaviour, must denote the ceasing from the outward act, from any outward transgression of the law.

But most plain and direct are the well-known words of St. John in 1 John 3:8-9: 'He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in Him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' And those in 5:18: 'We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.'

It is said this means only, 'He does not sin wilfully', or 'he does not commit sin habitually', or 'not as other men do', or 'not as he did before.' But by whom is this said? By St. John? No. There is no such word in the verses, nor in the whole chapter, nor in all his epistle, nor in any part of his writings whatsoever. The holiest men among the Jews did sometimes commit sin. But if you would from this infer that all Christians do and must commit sin as long as they live, this conclusion we utterly deny. We cannot measure the privileges of real Christians by those formerly given to the Jews. We agree that their 'ministration'

(or dispensation) 'was glorious', but ours 'exceeds in glory.' So that whoever takes up the examples of weakness recorded in the law and the prophets and then infers that they who have 'put on Christ' are endued with no greater strength, greatly errs, not 'knowing the scriptures, or the power of God.'

There was then no man that sinned not. Even from the day that sin entered into the world there was not a just man upon earth that did good and sinned not until the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins. 'But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons,' that they might receive that 'grace which is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ; who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Timothy 1:10). So now, since the gospel was given, 'he that is born of God sinneth not.'

It is of great importance to see, and that more carefully than is commonly done, the wide difference there is between the Jewish and the Christian dispensation. In John 7:38-39, after John had related those words of our blessed Lord, 'He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly (or innermost being) shall flow rivers of living water', he immediately adds, 'This spake He of the Spirit which they who should believe on Him were afterwards to receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' The Holy Ghost was not yet given in His sanctifying graces as He was after Jesus was glorified. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, it was the first time that they who 'waited for the promise of the Father' were made more than conquerors over sin by the Holy Ghost given unto them. The fulness of time has now come, the Holy Ghost is now given, the great salvation of God is brought to men by the revelation of Jesus Christ! The kingdom of heaven is now set up on earth.

If you are going to prove that the apostle's words, 'he that is born of God sinneth not', are not to be understood according to their plain, natural, obvious meaning, it is from the new testament you must bring your proofs, or else you will fight as one that beats the air.

'But St. Paul besought the Lord three times, and yet he could not escape from his temptation.' It does by no means appear that this thorn, whatever it was, caused St. Paul to commit sin, much less laid him under any necessity of doing so. Whatever it was, it could not be either inward or outward sin. From this it can never be proved that any Christian must commit sin.

'But does not St. James directly contradict this? His words are, 'in any things we offend all' (3:2). Is not offending the same as committing sin?' In the word 'we' (used as a figure of speech common in all other, as well as the inspired writings) we see that the apostle could not possibly include himself or any other true believer from the same word in the ninth verse: 'Therewith', he says 'bless we God, and therewith curse we men. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.' True, but not out of the mouth of the apostle, nor of any one who is a new creature in Christ. The very verse itself proves that 'We offend all' cannot be spoken either of all men, or of all Christians. For in it there immediately follows the mention of a man who offends not, who is clearly contrasted with the 'we' first mentioned, and declared a perfect man.

Another difficulty may arise in some minds concerning what St. John writes in his first epistle. He declares, 'We know that he which is born of God sinneth not.' Yet in another he says, 'if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,' and again, 'if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.' As great a difficulty as this may at first appear, it vanishes away if we see, first, that the tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth: 'If we say we have no sin,' in verse 8 is explained by, 'If we say we have not sinned' in verse 10. Secondly, that the point we are now considering is not whether we have or have not sinned up till now, and neither of these verses states that we do sin, or commit sin now. Thirdly, that the ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' It is as if John had said, 'I have before stated, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' But let no man say, 'I don't need it, I have no sin to be cleansed from.' If we say that we have no sin, that we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and make God a liar. But 'if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just', not only 'to forgive our sins', but also 'to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' that we may 'go and sin no more.' If we place all his statements touching this matter in one view it will be more clearly seen still. He declares, first the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Secondly, no man can say, I have not sinned, I have no sin to be cleansed from. Thirdly, but God is ready both to forgive our past sins, and to save us from them for the time to come. Fourthly, 'These things write I unto you', says the apostle, 'that you may not sin. But if any man should sin', or 'have sinned' (as the word might be rendered), he need not continue in sin, seeing 'we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' This far all is clear. But lest any doubt should remain in a point of so vast importance, the apostle resumes this subject in chapter 3:7-10. In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John, and to the whole tenor of the new testament, we fix this conclusion, a Christian is so far perfect: as not to commit sin

This is the glorious privilege of every Christian, though he be but a babe in Christ. But it is only of those who are strong in the Lord, 'and have overcome the wicked one', or rather of those who 'have known Him that is from the beginning', that it can be said that they are in such a sense perfect, as, secondly, to be freed from evil thoughts and evil dispositions. First, from evil or sinful thoughts. Here let it be seen that thoughts concerning evil are not always evil thoughts. A thought concerning sin, and a sinful thought, are very different. A man, for instance, may think of a murder which another has committed, and yet this is no evil or sinful thought. Jesus had no evil or sinful thought, nor was capable of having any. Neither have real Christians, for 'every one that is perfect is as his Master' (Mark 7:21). If, therefore, his heart is no longer evil, then evil thoughts can no longer proceed out of it. If the tree were corrupt, so would be the fruit. But the tree is good. The fruit, therefore, is good also, our Lord Himself bearing witness, 'Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit', as 'a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit' (Matthew 7:17,18).

And as Christians indeed are free from evil thoughts, so are they, secondly, from evil dispositions. This is evident from the above-mentioned declaration of our Lord Himself: 'The disciple is not above his Master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master' (Luke 6:40). He removes the two grand objections with which these wise fools meet us at every turn

('These things are too hard to be borne', or, 'They are too high to be attained') saying, 'The disciple is not above his Master.' In other words, 'If I have suffered, be content to tread in My steps. And doubt not that I will fulfil My word, 'For every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.' The disciple's Master was free from all sinful tempers. So, therefore, is he and every real Christian.

He, therefore, who lives in true believers has 'purified their hearts by faith'; so that every one that has Christ in him, the hope of glory, 'purifieth himself, even as He is pure' (1 John 3:3). He is purified from pride, for Christ was lowly of heart. He is pure from self-will or desire, for Christ desired only to do the will of His Father, and to finish His work. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word, for Christ was meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering. I say in the common sense of the word, for all anger is not evil. We read of our Lord Himself (Mark 3:5), that He once 'looked round with anger.' But with what kind of anger? The next word answer it: 'being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' So then He was angry at the sin, and in the same moment grieved for the sinners.

'True', say some, 'we shall thus be saved from our sins, but not till death, not in this world.' But how are we to reconcile this with the plain words of St. John? 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement: because as He is, so are we in this world.' The apostle here, beyond all contradiction, speaks of himself and other living Christians, of whom (as though he had foreseen this very evasion, and set himself to overturn it from the foundation) he plainly states that, not only at or after death, but 'in this world' they are as their Master (1 John 4:17).

So, the Lord has fulfilled the things He spoke by His holy prophets, which have been since the world began, most remarkably by Ezekiel, in those words, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; ... and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgements, and do them ... Ye shall be My people, and I will be your God ... I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it' (Ezekiel 36:25, etc.).

'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved', both in the law and in the prophets, and having the prophetic word confirmed unto us in the gospel by our blessed Lord and His apostles, 'let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God'. 'Let us fear, lest' so many 'promises being made us of entering into His rest, any of us should come short of it.' 'This one thing let us do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus', crying unto Him day and night, till we also are 'delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God'!

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.

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N = NEW

This word is, of course, frequently used in the Bible in its ordinary everyday sense. But the word 'new' acquires its distinctively biblical meaning whenever it takes on an eschatological significance and implies the passing away of the old order - this present world-age - and the breaking in of the new, 'the world to come.' Thus the OT looks forward to the making of a 'new covenant' (Jer. 31:31; cf. Ezek. 34:25, 37:26), the imparting of a 'new spirit' (Ezek. 11:19, 18:31, 36:26), the making of new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17, 66:22), and so on. The NT claims that the 'new age' has already broken in and has manifested itself in Jesus and his Church (cf. Heb. 6:5); the new covenant has been made and sealed in the death of Jesus the Messiah (Mark 14:24, Heb. 9:15); the 'new Spirit' has been given and brings 'seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord' (Acts 3:19); the new creation has been achieved (2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, Eph. 2:15, 4:24, Col. 3:10). There is thus a very distinctive Christian meaning in the word 'new' in the 'New'

Testament: Christians have a new song (Rev. 5:9, 14:3) and a new commandment (John 13:34, 1 John 2:8); in their baptism, being new persons, they receive a new name (cf. Rev. 2:17). The very proclamation (kerugma) - the message heralded - is news, good news (evangelion). Religious truth always strikes one afresh and is always news, however often we have previously experienced or heard it (cf. Lam. 3:23: 'Thy mercies are new every morning'), and this is supremely true of the news of Jesus' Resurrection. But over and beyond this in-breaking of the new age, which was manifest in Christ and the Kingdom of God which he proclaimed, the NT looks forward to a full and utter realization of the eschatologically new - at the end of this age, the Parousia or Second Coming of Christ. The word 'new' can be used in an absolute sense only in respect of the Parousia. The new heavens and new earth will then be revealed (2 Pet. 3:12f., Rev. 21:1,5), and the New Jerusalem will be established (Rev. 3:12, 21:2); until this time comes, the heavens must receive Jesus - 'until the times of the restoration of all things' (Acts 3:21).

Editor

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

GEORGE W. NORTH

PART TWO

6. LOVEST THOU ME?

What a lesson in shepherding these seven shepherds received that day. How are sheep who ought to have known better, sheep privileged and gifted above most, to be treated when caught red-handed in deliberate disobedience? Ought they to be lectured, punished, demoted, or ought they to be at least corrected? What did they deserve? The whip, the rod, or a tongue-lashing? But the Good Shepherd asked Himself none of these questions. He did not ask what they deserved: - what did they need? To be welcomed, loved, and warmed, and fed; that was the only conclusion they could come to. What else could they think? Would they ever be able to forget such love? The Lord's attitude was the same to each of them, but He had something further to say to Peter, He knew who had led them off: what special grace he needed. Unless He had revealed His will to Peter upon some past occasion, what the Lord wanted His apostle to know now was still secret from him. Peter was to be a shepherd, a bishop of souls. If this was actually the first time the Lord mentioned this to Peter, the commandment must have come to him as a complete shock. He was a fisherman called and told by the Lord to be a fisherman; was he really to be a shepherd?

The Lord did not once use the word shepherd throughout His whole conversation, yet it was as plainly implied by Him and understood by Peter as if it had been formally introduced as the subject. That is just how the Lord intended it should be. He was going to promote him, yet before He was prepared to do that, the Lord had to make sure of two other things far more

important than promotion to office. First He must make certain of Peter's relationship with Him, He must be assured of his allegiance, then He must ensure that Peter accepted his new calling: then He must make sure that Peter knew how and with what to feed the flock. There was another major matter also which must be settled between them, but that would become plain enough as they proceeded. It would be implicit in all He had to say: Peter could not fail to notice it. Without preamble the Lord addressed Himself straight to His man's heart, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me MORE THAN these?', He asked, and brought the primary matter directly to the fore. 'More than' - THAT was the focal point. Jesus was not just seeking Peter's love, He was demanding first place in Peter's life.

Unless Peter could first satisfy the Lord on that point, there could be no further progress. The Lord is not content to be loved, He cannot be content with anything less than the love which gives Him first place. In the lips of anyone other than Jesus this would have been a totally unacceptable question. First love? Yes. Surely He had the right to ask that Peter should love Him more than he loved the sea, and boats, and fishing. By these things Peter was loving himself, serving his own desires, doing his own will, by THINGS no-one can love Jesus as he ought - and as He desires. The Lord asked His question for Peter's sake and for the sake of the ministry and the sake of all those 'others' He must bring. He was determined He was not going to fail His Father. He loved His Father, He loved Peter, He loved the unreached others: He must know Peter's answer. The Lord knew so much, He spoke as one who knew the future, he foresaw

what kind of death awaited Peter; but He would not tell him of it yet. Without the strong bond of love between them, He dare not mention that. In any case, Peter's life would only take the course leading to that death if He first secured his love, for He would not direct his life into it except he loved Him supremely. Given that He would commission him and set him on course for his life ministry and martyrdom, it was a vital enquiry, everything turned on it.

The loves of Peter's life were many; he loved his family, his home, the sea, fishing, boats, the challenge of the elements, his fellow companions of the way; he had a big heart. Above all, he loved Jesus. He had left all to follow the Lord, he treasured his apostolic calling and all the works that went with it, but now, faced with the challenge, he found tremendous difficulty in making an honest answer. Peter wanted to be absolutely truthful. He had said so much in the past and had acted so contradictorily to it. He had no doubt that Jesus loved him, he had never questioned that, nor did he think that this was being posed in the challenge, but did he really love Jesus? The question disturbed him greatly. The Lord had not spared him at all, he had used the word for the highest form of love known to God or man, and Peter was not sure he could claim to love Him with that kind of love. How could he? Events had disproved it, the Lord had caught him red-handed in open disobedience of His command. He had influenced others to disobey too, it was all the more reprehensible for that, and after all that had happened just previous to that too! He had denied Him three times, finally with an oath, yet when He rose from the dead, Jesus had been most wonderful to him - and He had gone to His death knowing what Peter had done! In vain he had fled from the court-room to weep in shame outside. He had wept till he could weep no longer, but he could not bring Him back. Would he ever be able to bear having a cock crow again without breaking his heart?

Things were all the worse because he had so strongly declared he would never deny Him and that he would rather die than do that. But he had done it: he felt utterly ashamed: surely he was lost forever: and then Jesus came back to him and everything was put right. Peter felt he would love Him and serve Him for ever after that; but now this - he had gone wrong again, shame filled him. How could he claim to love Jesus more than anything or anyone else in the world? He dare not say he did, he couldn't pretend, events had proved that he didn't. But Jesus was pressing, He would not be denied, He wanted Peter's love, and he did love Him, even though he could not say he loved Him supremely. 'Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee', he said, being careful to use a word which spoke of a different, lesser, love than Jesus wanted; 'Feed my lambs', Jesus responded. What a reply! Peter had not expected that; how could he have anticipated such a change of office; he was a fisherman. Did Jesus really want him to be a shepherd? He hardly had time to assimilate it before Jesus was speaking again: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' It was the same question, but this time there was no mention of other things - no comparisons were made, no reference to anything or anyone else, just Jesus and Peter. Priorities and degrees of love were not the most important thing now; was the love Jesus wanted there? Did Peter at all love Him with supreme love like the love of His Father? Jesus was seeking quality now, not degree; He was making the question easier. If only the right kind of love was there, He could refine His wavering apostle until he could love him to the supremest degree, it was the supremest quality of love that Jesus was seeking now.

The initial challenge was over, the real battle was on. The Lord knew His man, He also knew what it was that was eating out his heart, and He was determined to bring it all to an end. Peter would make a great shepherd when He had finished with him - He waited for his answer. 'Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee' - again the lesser quality: Peter had concluded that his failure proved he did not have the love Jesus required. The Lord pressed on; His estimation of Peter was greater than Peter's estimation of himself: 'Feed my sheep', He said. The breaking point was coming and He knew it, it had to be now. He spoke to Peter yet again, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' The same question! He did not probe into a hundred other things, all he wanted to know was this one thing, nothing else. Why? Peter was grieved. Jesus knew! He knew he loved Him. Despite all his failures and weaknesses and fears and self-will and inconsistent behaviour, he still loved Him. He felt unworthy to say so, or even to be so favoured as to be allowed to say so. What a wonderful shepherd Jesus was to him at that moment, he knew everything about him and still loved him and wanted him; how could he hold out against such love? Jesus never goes back on His call, He wanted him to serve Him: that's why He called him. Could it be true that despite all He still had confidence in him? Peter found it almost unbelievable; He was irresistible. Peter broke - 'Yea Lord, thou knowest - all things - thou knowest that I love Thee'. This time the response was right. It was what the Lord wanted, what He had fought for. 'Feed my sheep', He said. Peter could be a shepherd now, he could feed the flock. Both the quality and the degree of love were right, all was settled.

Having settled the first and most important issue, the second matter was settled as well. His sheep and lambs would be fed properly also. The flock would be given the same kind of food from Peter that Peter had received from the Lord - love, supremest love. Love is the only food which will feed and nourish and build up God's people, proven love, that is, love in experience. Love which has flowed and been received in grace, persistent and tender, issuing in forgiveness and restoration and communion. Peter had just had this proved to him in an unforgettable way. Despite all his ingratitude and waywardness and self-will, the Good Shepherd had sought him out and, with unrefuseable grace had finally succeeded in feeding his self-condemned soul on love. He had no need to ask Peter whether he thought He loved him, His persistent pursuit of him, His gentle pressure, proved it. In the same way the flock must be fed on love by a lover of souls like Jesus. The shepherd must be a man of righteousness and holiness, full of grace and faith, strong and patient, acquainted with suffering and grief, with a heart of compassion and understanding, more ready to comfort than to condemn. This is the heart a shepherd must have, a heart and a life like his Lord's, which can be laid down for the sheep. These things are the food of love. Love furnishes a rich variety of provisions to meet the overpowering need. It reads the situation aright, whether or not that need be recognized by the hungry one. Love is the sum of all the virtues, it is the soul's only life-giving sustenance.

7. FEED MY SHEEP

How wisely and with what purpose the Lord directed Peter into his new office; his appointment to shepherding that morning was made with a view to the fulfilling of God's highest thought and dearest wishes for His people. The commandment was simply stated, 'Feed my lambs', 'Feed my sheep'; the

change of phrase was most noticeable. It was purposeful also, for in His eyes and for His purposes, lambs and sheep are not the same. The distinction He made was not primarily of age and development, it was far more meaningful than that. It is highly probable that He had in mind the need for nursing the flock; His shepherds must understand that the sheep with young should be led gently, not harshly or too fast, and certainly not overdriven. While the flock is being moved on to new pastures or living fountains of waters, the lambs must be carried by the shepherd, and cherished in his bosom. How greatly Peter needed to know this; his was a driving personality, he was a dynamic force of a man. He had jumped out of the boat, he had swum to shore, hauled the net of fishes to land, he was powerful, a man who had lived to catch fish - now he must gently tend and lead, everything must change. But beyond all this, Jesus was leading His servant out to further understanding. Throughout scripture lambs are associated with sacrifice, even Jesus Himself was called the Lamb of God. In heaven the roll of the elect is called the Book of the Life of the Lamb, it is not known as the book of life of the sheep. God wants us to be lambs, all must be fed and led to that understanding, the food is supplied for that reason only. We shall indeed be lambs if we receive it and eat it for God's purpose, all the flock must be lambs of God as His Son was, not one of us seeking to save our own lives any more than He did. Peter's business from henceforth was to shepherd the sheep in order to produce these lambs; he must have thought he had been highly honoured by the Lord.

The other point, not directly stated as a claim by the Lord, yet implicit in all that passed between Himself and Peter, was this - the flock was His. Every shepherd appointed by Christ is very privileged, but he is only an under-shepherd. He may be an overseer, but he is not an over-shepherd. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd, the flock belongs to Him alone. He only has the ability and to Him belongs the right to appoint the flock's diet. When He appoints shepherds, He does not thereby abdicate His office, or relinquish His ownership nor does He renounce His claims on the sheep - neither do they lose their individual standing with Him. Each sheep and lamb's personal attachment and primary allegiance is to Him. A true shepherd recognizes himself to be a very needy person, who himself needs a shepherd - the same Shepherd as every other sheep needs - Jesus. He will not then deny every sheep the right to be shepherded individually and in all matters by his Lord. Peter, who became one of the great shepherds of the early New Covenant era, was acutely aware of this, and in giving counsel to other under-shepherds of his day, laid great emphasis on the necessity to free the sheep from domination. He knew how dearly some hearts love to have dominion over others. In its correct degree, and directed to its proper end, this was granted by God to Adam in the beginning; he was lord over all the animals (including sheep) in creation. Time has not eliminated this election and in the hearts of some wrongful desire to exercise it above God's intention is evident to a large degree. Knowing this, Peter sounds a very clear note of warning to both sheep and shepherds alike; 'Not as being lords over God's heritage'. To assume lordship is sheer pretentiousness and thoroughly objectionable; the only condition upon which a man can possibly be acceptable to God and man, or even to be thought of as a shepherd, is an exemplary life - he must be an ensample. Adam was created lord, but as he ceased to be an ensample he was demoted - he had lost his spiritual life and moral ascendancy. Sheep must not be encumbered with such a person. Love and obedience to Christ must first be seen, in a man, meekness and gentleness also, or he cannot be a shepherd of men.

8. I SAW A LAMB

John is the one who records both the story of the fold and the flock, and gives this account of Peter's conversion to shepherding. Perhaps he heard it all, for he was following the Lord and Peter during the whole of the conversation. John also tells how he was called up into heaven and recognized the true Shepherd there - 'The Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne'. 'He shall feed them' (or be their shepherd), he said, 'And shall lead them unto living fountains of waters'. Only genuine lambs can be true shepherds; before a man may take his place at the head of a flock of God, he must learn to be a lamb in a flock. Though a man be promoted to the office of shepherd among men, he is never more than a lamb in God's flock. This had been Peter's and everyone else's trouble, they had not discovered that the key to shepherding was being a lamb, so that the Shepherd could lead and feed them. Everyone must learn with the Lamb before he can lead with his Lord. 'Lovest thou me more than these?' Peter must be thoroughly convinced in his heart and totally captivated by Jesus; only utter devotion bringing into total subjection to Jesus and His will would fit him to use those other vital keys. Doors and keys go together, a closed and locked door either shuts people out or keeps people in.

9. OTHER SHEEP I HAVE

Jesus would never forget the Syro-Phoenician woman who came to Him one day. She had crept up to Him as a little dog might creep up to its master's table, seeking crumbs. Nor could He forget the Greeks, who had more recently sought Him out during those hectic days before the Passover; the pleas and needs of these souls would never pass from His mind. 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold', He had said; the truth of it had already been demonstrated. Although of a different race, other sheep were hearing His voice, the cry for crumbs, and the request for a sight of Him made Him cry out to His Father, He must respond. 'The hour is come ... Father glorify Thy name ... now is the judgement of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me'. How He longed for the hour of ingathering to commence. The hour of Jesus' death was perfectly timed, other sheep in other folds were calling for Him: He could wait no longer. John said that by these words Jesus was signifying what kind of death He would die; but the people did not understand any of it nor know that the Good Shepherd had heard His sheep. The time had come for the nations to see Jesus, who He is; the door of salvation must be opened to the Gentiles. Within a few months it was.

The Lord was born a Jew, He said He was sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel; no-one knew what He meant. Practically all the chief civil and religious rulers had refused to believe in Him. The political-religious door into Israel was fast closed against Him, it had been for some time. By the time He told His parable of the sheepfold, He had been rejected outright, that is why He proclaimed Himself to be the Door of the sheep. God had opened the door into humanity for Himself by the virgin birth. He did it so that the door into His house and unto Himself may be effectively opened for men. The time had come, and God took over: He sent John Baptist as a kind of door-keeper to open the door of national understanding, by presenting Jesus to them. As He began His public ministry people began to flock to Him. He called out to them,

encouraging them, 'Come unto me', He said. He invited them for rest, for food, for water, for sight, for hearing, for healing, for forgiveness, for blessing. The door was open, but everything was outgoing through it from Him to them - no-one was coming in; they were greatly blessed, but would they go further and become His own sheep? They were sheep gone astray, they were lost, but would they recognize that and become HIS sheep in heart? So many were only after the crumbs that fell from the table, they wanted neither the whole loaf nor His flesh and blood - except on a cross. The Syro-Phoenician woman, a Gentile from the coastlands, would stand up in the day of judgement and condemn them; she had seen so clearly that, whether for Israel or the world, healing and deliverance were only crumbs.

Did His fellow-Jews see it too, or were they only following Him for the loaves and fishes, having no intention of becoming one of the sheep? He was offering them the children's bread because they were the descendants of Abraham, not because they were children of God. 'We have Abraham to our father', was their proud boast, but the Lord's answer to that was at once an acknowledgement and a denial of their claim. 'I know Abraham is your father', He said, but also added, 'Ye are of your father the devil'. The devil was the father of their most vital selves; physically they were children of Abraham, but not spiritually. Upon occasion Jesus said that He did miracles for people just because they were Abraham's descendants, and gave no other reason for doing so. Zacharias, John Baptist's father, speaking by the Holy Spirit, had no doubt that the miracle which had happened to him and was beginning to happen for Jewry was because of the oath God had made to Abraham. But the nation only wanted the crumbs falling from God's table, they did not want the whole bread of life. As Jesus said of them, 'the men of this generation are like children sitting in the market-place, piping and mourning to each other; after the flesh they were Abraham's children, but not after the spirit'. How many caught the significance of His saying, 'God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham?' God cannot raise up His own children from stones, He can only raise them up from the death of His Son! 'I am the Door', Jesus cried, 'by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture', but they did not want His pasture. He was the Door into salvation, He was absolutely wide open for that; His sheep could go in and out among men in course of daily living and find spiritual pasture everywhere all the time.

10. THE BLIND SHALL SEE

The real tragedy of the Jews lay in their complete inability to see the Door, they were blind. Not in the physical sense of course, they had physical sight, but physical sight, wonderful as it is, is by far the least important part of sight. The Lord had demonstrated this to them by a miracle: its results and His comments upon them are recorded by John immediately preceding the parable of the sheepfold. The man upon whom the miracle was wrought was born physically blind, he just could not see a thing, he was in complete darkness. Yet when the miracle had taken place, he not only received instantaneous physical sight, he gradually received spiritual sight - this sight is sometimes called insight, though not always correctly so. With regard to physical sight, the man could say, 'one thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see', it was wonderful; but what was even more wonderful was his declaration about Jesus who he did

not as yet know, 'If this man were not of God He could do nothing'. He was a courageous, as well as a convinced man, for though few believed that Jesus was a man of God, he could see it. His spiritual eyes were open, and were now getting accustomed to the light, he was beginning to see. For his reward he was comprehensively cast out by the Jews. When it came to Jesus' ears that he had been excommunicated, He went and found him, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?', He asked. 'Who is He Lord, that I might believe on Him?', replied the man - and therein lies his secret, he was wanting to believe on the Son of God! The Lord gave him the final revelation of Himself, and the end of the miracle was achieved: 'I believe', he cried, and worshipped Him.

From this marvellous double miracle the Lord moved straight into the parable of the sheepfold, so ideally suited to His purpose to reveal Himself as the Door of exit from Jewry, and entrance into His flock. But those who did not see that He was the Son of God failed just as completely to see Him as the door and the Good Shepherd. The Lord had put out the man of miraculous sight from Jewry and proceeded to lead him, in company with all the true children of Abraham, into the new flock of God. The hand that had anointed his physical eyes with clay and given him sight, had anointed his spiritual eyes with sight also; it had also led him into that flock. It was the hand of the Father and the Son which would hold him for ever safe. John, with one of those touches of inspiration almost exclusive to him, hints at the presence and power of the Holy Spirit too, in order that in our minds he may not be excluded from the word - the eyes of the man, both physical and spiritual, were anointed! That is the eloquent reference to the presence of the Holy Spirit to which the Lord so plainly testified later, saying, 'He is with you', He was. Like the Father, the Holy Spirit was also in the Son, they were all together there, personified in the Son: Jesus' hand was Father's hand, Jesus' anointing was the Spirit's anointing - they are One, but nobody saw that then. Even John, who recorded it all, did not see it all then, for as he records so faithfully earlier, the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified.

How wonderful is sight, though what it is who can tell? What is sight? What is hearing? What is mind? Man is a mystery. Men have attempted to define these things, but have only succeeded in giving a name to what they understand them to be, yet having uttered the name and thereby stated a fact and acknowledged a point of recognition, it is pretentious to assume that we know what it is, and have defined it; we have not, we have only distinguished it. The Lord did not give the man eyes, He gave his eyes sight, and He did so by anointing him with (of all things) clay made from his own spittle; it was not only a miracle, it was an astounding miracle.

Of course the sight did not come from the clay, nor from its twin components, dust and spittle. Sight comes as a gift from God and is as indefinable as God Himself. God MADE the eye but not sight, He imparted that: sight was given with the inbreathing of spirit into man. Sight is both acquisitive and expressive, of the spirit rather than the body, having the ability to function in either realm. That which is merely human and earthly can only see human and earthly things; that which is spiritual can see both visible earthly things and heavenly invisible things. To be able to do this, a man does not need a vision or an apparition, he has vision; as Moses he lives as seeing

Him who is invisible. This sight is not 'second sight', nor is it psychic perception, it is seeing with the understanding, about which Paul some time later wrote in one of his recorded prayers for the Ephesians. The Jews of Christ's day were for the most part blind. In fact He had come into the world for judgement along this line, so He said, 'that they which see might not see and those who see not might see.' The miracle wrought upon the man born blind was performed precisely for this reason. He was not born without eyes, but without sight; the organs of sight were there but not the sight - he was first a parable of his nation, and afterwards a sign to the nation. Isaiah had been told by God that this would happen to Israel, in fact it was his ministry to his people. 'Blindness in part had happened to Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in'. The Lord Himself came to finalize the ministry and did not hesitate to tell them so; they had waxed so fat and grown so gross that they could not see the Shepherd or the Door or the flock of God, they were blind. Having given the nation their opportunity, the Lord was concerned for the 'other' sheep.

11. TO THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH

The door of Jewry having been opened, and the door into the flock of saved ones flung wide open for all to find and see, the Lord was concerned that the doors of other nations should be opened too. For this he had given the keys to Peter. God needs men. Although salvation is of God, everything to do with it has come by man; God had to become man in order to establish it for man by man's blood. The Door is a man, sheep are men, doors are doors of men, that is to say they are opened unto groups of men by some fellow-man who to that group is the key figure. Whoever that person is, whatever may have been, or may still be, whatever his earthly position or occupation, he must, besides this and everything else, become a shepherd. The prime qualifications for all such key-men are that each has a shepherd-heart, full of love and unswerving devotion to Jesus Christ, and strong determinations to follow Him. It was in order to establish this that Jesus came down to the sea that morning: His heart was filled with the persistence that first brought Him to earth and took Him to the cross and the grave. Rising from the dead, and following further consultations with His Father, He came again from heaven to the familiar shore. God now had the purchase price for all the flock, so they must be gathered; but doors must be unlocked and opened, which meant that Peter must be wholly and finally won. He was. So it is that we find Peter taking the leading role, first before Pentecost at Jerusalem among the disciples and apostles who were the earliest of the sheep, then at Pentecost (still at Jerusalem) to his fellow-countrymen there, and then spreading out to all Judea. Soon after, following his calling, he moves out to Samaria and finally to Caesarea, where he opens the door of the Gentiles to Jesus, the open Door of the flock.

When Paul returned to Antioch from his first adventurous and highly successful missionary journey, he is found a ready advocate to the truth of this. Standing with his companions in the midst of the church, he declared, 'God hath opened the door of faith to the Gentiles'. Doing so, he also laid proper emphasis on one of the keys - faith. What a man of faith Peter was. With faith he unlocked the doors which withheld the three main divisions of the world of men from Christ. But Peter was not the only key-man of his day; Paul also was a key-man. His was not the threefold responsibility of opening the 'main' doors of

Jerusalem, Samaria and Caesarea, but he was privileged perhaps to open more local doors within the Gentile area than any other man of his generation. He never laid quite the emphasis on the flock aspect of the Church that Peter did, this may well be because of his understandable absorption with the topic of the Church which is His body. Peter had regard to the lack in all its international composition and connections though, so he wrote his first epistle to the 'strangers' scattered throughout large areas of the Gentile world. How perceptively he wrote: he chose the same word for the sheep as the two on the Emmaus Road used about the unrecognized Shepherd who had come seeking them - 'stranger'.

12. STRANGERS V PILGRIMS

True to the Lord's unforgettable statement, the sheep are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, they do not belong here. The flock has no fold, national or international, no home, no continuing city in this world, the sheep are sojourners. One of a later generation wrote some lines, which in translation read as follows: 'To me remains no place nor time, my country is in every clime, and regions none remote I call, secure of finding God in all'. Another, of later date still, wrote, perhaps romantically and sentimentally, 'I know not when thy islands lift their fringed palms in air, I only know I cannot drift beyond Thy love and care'.

Whether David or Peter or Madame Guyon or Whittier, each knew that the only fold, haven, house, or home is beyond this world; here we are strangers. To us the world is as the wilderness was to Israel as they journeyed to Canaan, Canaan became their fold wherein they were kept under the law unto the faith, that is, the personal faith of the Lord Jesus, which was afterwards to be revealed. Jeremiah describes that wilderness as a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and the shadow of death, a land not sown; there was nothing in it for the flock of God, save the path through. Peter says Jesus is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, whom we are to follow so particularly and closely that we walk in His steps. What a calling! How many hear His voice? We are not called to pad along in the flock somewhere; the Shepherd leads all His sheep individually as well as personally. We are not to seek to walk in the footsteps of another sheep, but in His; we may find ourselves walking in another's way though, if that person is also walking in the Lord's footprints himself.

The Lord is not just seeking to head us in the same direction, or even in the right direction, or in the same way, but in His exact steps, 'who did not sin'. He set the perfect example to all His sheep. He was utterly guileless, He never reviled or threatened anyone, even when under extreme provocation. All the time He was on earth He walked as a Lamb, totally committed to His Shepherd and His righteous judgement. He suffered wrongfully, which is why to us His stripes were healing and His blood so redemptive. Though travelling through this wilderness, we are not wandering. We must make sharp distinction between Israel loving and eagerly following the Lord as in her beginning, and Israel, having lost her first love, being led all unloving and sinful yet still not forsaken, by a disappointed Shepherd. Those who love Him with the first love of true espousal will follow Him everywhere unseen. Amen.

WHAT IS THE CHIEF END OF MAN?

Answer:

Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

An extract from **A BODY OF DIVINITY** by Thomas Watson, printed by permission of the Publishers **THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST**, Edinburgh, Scotland.

The glorifying of God, 1 Pet.4:11. 'That God in all things may be glorified.' The glory of God is a silver thread which must run through all our actions. 1 Cor.10:31. 'Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' Everything works to some end in things natural and artificial; now, man being a rational creature, must propose some end to himself, and that should be, that he may lift up God in the world. He had better lose his life than the end of his living. The great truth is asserted, that the end of every man's living should be to glorify God. Glorifying God has respect to all the persons in the Trinity; it respects God the Father who gave us life; God the Son, who lost his life for us; and God the Holy Ghost, who produces a new life in us; we must bring glory to the whole Trinity.

When we speak of God's glory, the question will be moved, What are we to understand by God's glory?

There is a twofold glory: (1) The glory that God has in himself, his intrinsic glory. Glory is essential to the Godhead, as light is to the sun: he is called the 'God of Glory.' Acts 7:2. Glory is the sparkling of the Deity; it is so co-natural to the Godhead, that God cannot be God without it. The creature's honour is not essential to his being. A king is a man without his regal ornaments, when his crown and royal robes are taken away; but God's glory is such an essential part of his being, that he cannot be God without it. God's very life lies in his glory. This glory can receive no addition, because it is infinite; it is that which God is most tender of, and which he will not part with. Isa.48:11. 'My glory I will not give to another.' God will give temporal blessings to his children, such as wisdom, riches, honour; he will give them spiritual blessings, he will give them grace, he will give them his love, he will give them heaven; but his essential glory he will not give to another. King Pharaoh parted with a ring off his finger to Joseph, and a gold chain, but he would not part with his throne. Gen. 41:40. 'Only in the throne will I be greater than thou.' So God will do much for his people; he will give them the inheritance; he will put some of Christ's glory, as mediator, upon them; but his essential glory he will not part with; 'in the throne he will be greater.' (2) The glory which is ascribed to God, or which his creatures labour to bring to him. 1 Chron. 16:29. 'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.' And, 1 Cor. 6:20. 'Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit.' The glory we give God is nothing else but our lifting up his name in the world, and magnifying him in the eyes of others. Phil. 1:20. 'Christ shall be magnified in my body.'

What is it to glorify God?

Glorifying God consists in four things: 1. Appreciation, 2. Adoration, 3. Affection, 4. Subjection. This is the yearly rent we pay to the crown of heaven.

(1) **Appreciation.** To glorify God is to set God highest in our thoughts, and to have a venerable esteem of him. Psal. 92:8. 'Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore.' Psal. 97:9. 'Thou art exalted far above all gods.' There is in God all that may draw forth both wonder and delight; there is a constellation of all beauties; he is *PRIMA CAUSA*, the original and springhead of being, who sheds a glory upon the creature. We glorify God, when we are God-admirers; admire his attributes, which are the glistering beams by which the divine nature shines forth; his promises which are the charter of free grace, and the spiritual

cabinet where the pearl of price is hid; the noble effects of his power and wisdom in making the world, which is called 'the work of his fingers.' Psal. 8:3. To glorify God is to have God-admiring thoughts; to esteem him most excellent, and search for diamonds in this rock only.

(2) **Glorifying God consists in adoration**, or worship. Psal. 29:2. 'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.' There is a twofold worship: (1) A civil reverence which we give to persons of honour. Gen. 23:7. 'Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the children of Heth.; Piety is no enemy to courtesy. (2) A divine worship which we give to God as his royal prerogative. Neh. 8:6. 'They bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces towards the ground.' This divine worship God is very jealous of; it is the apple of his eye, the pearl of his crown; which he guards, as he did the tree of life, with cherubims and a flaming sword, that no man may come near it to violate it. Divine worship must be such as God himself has appointed, else it is offering strange fire. Lev. 10:1. The Lord would have Moses make the tabernacle, 'according to the pattern in the mount.' Exod. 25:40. He must not leave out anything in the pattern, nor add to it. If God was so exact and curious about the place of worship, how exact will he be about the matter of his worship! Surely here everything must be according to the pattern prescribed in his word.

(3) **Affection.** This is part of the glory we give to God, who counts himself glorified when he is loved. Deut. 6:5. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.' There is a twofold love: (1) *AMOR CONCUPISCENTIAE*, a love of concupiscence, which is self-love; as when we love another, because he does us a good turn. A wicked man may be said to love God, because he has given him a good harvest, or filled his cup with wine. This is rather to love God's blessing than to love God. (2) *AMOR AMICITIAE*, a love of delight, as a man takes delight in a friend. This is to love God indeed; the heart is set upon God, as a man's heart is set upon his treasure. This love is exuberant, not a few drops, but a stream. It is superlative; we give God the best of our love, the cream of it. Cant. 8:2. 'I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.' If the spouse had a cup more juicy and spiced, Christ must drink of it.

It is intense and ardent. True saints are seraphims, burning in holy love to God. The spouse was *AMOR PERCULSA*, in fainting fits, 'sick of love.' Can. 2:5. Thus to love God is to glorify him. He who is the chief of our happiness has the chief of our affections.

(4) **Subjection.** This is when we dedicate ourselves to God, and stand ready dressed for his service. Thus the angels in heaven glorify him; they wait on his throne, and are ready to take a commission from him; therefore they are represented by the cherubims with wings displayed, to show how swift they are in their obedience. We glorify God when we are devoted to his service; our head studies for him, our tongue pleads for him, and our hands relieve his members. The wise men that came to Christ did not only bow the knee to him, but presented him with gold and myrrh. Matt. 2:11. So we must not only bow the knee, give God worship, but bring presents of golden obedience. We glorify God when we stick at no service, when we fight under the banner of his gospel against an enemy, and say to him as David to King Saul, 'Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' 1 Sam. 17:32.

A good Christian is like the sun, which not only sends forth heat, but goes its circuit round the world. Thus, he who glorifies God, has not only his affections heated with love to God, but he goes his circuit too; he moves vigorously in the sphere of obedience.

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TREVOR HODSON

SOME NOTES ON DETAILS AND PATTERN

The following article was prepared by Trevor Hodson. Having originally studied at University for entrance into the Anglican Ministry, he is now Head of Faculty in Personal and Social Education at a Comprehensive School in Skelmersdale, Lancashire, and is part of the leadership team at Warrington Fellowship.

GETTING STARTED: LEANING ON JESUS' BOSOM

The writer of the gospel is the same disciple who was 'leaning on Jesus' bosom' (John 13:23) at the last supper. If we are to begin to enter into the gospel which John wrote, then we also must find that same position - no number of qualifications, nor college training, could ever make up for the knowledge found in that place of fellowship with Him.

FINDING A PATTERN IN THE GOSPEL

When we think about John's gospel, we recall famous verses, snippets of preaching and parts which have spoken to us in the past. But, in order to feel the full force of the message, we need also to be able to view the gospel as a whole, and finding a pattern into which we can slot all the bits that have blessed us is the key!

The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are written in the order that events happened in the life of Jesus. John is very different, because he gave his gospel a special structure, building it around SIGNS.

WHAT IS A SIGN?

At the end of the passage concerning His first miracle, in 2:11, the changing of water to wine, John uses a special word for 'miracle'. It is not the normal Greek word for miracle. It is better translated as SIGN. And just like a sign, it means that THIS MIRACLE POINTS TO SOME DEEPER TRUTH AS WELL. The Greek word for sign is SEMEION (pronounced: sem-ay-on) ... we get our English word 'semaphore' from it. This miracle is a kind of semaphore from the Holy Ghost.

LOOKING FOR OTHER SIGNS

As we read through the gospel, we find that each miracle, as well as being an encouragement in itself, seems to point to something more, even more precious, about Jesus' dealing with human lives. Guided by the Holy Ghost, John carefully remember 8 miracles from the ministry of Jesus, and each is a sign:

1st	2:1-12	5th	6:15-21
2nd	4:53-54	6th	9:1-7
3rd	5:1-18	7th	11:38-44
4th	6:1-14	8th	21:5-14

WHY USE SIGN LANGUAGE?

After the first sign, in 2:11, John explains why these signs are important. What are the two reasons he gives?

GETTING INTO THE DEEPER MEANING OF THE SIGNS

John had been a witness to staggering events beyond normal human experience. Somehow he had to find words to express what he had both seen and heard. (Have another look at the struggle Matthew (17:1-13) Mark (9:2-8) and Luke (9:28-36) had to find words to describe the Transfiguration!) As we read through his gospel, we realize that John takes everyday items and events and uses them to stand for other things. He gives special meaning to words like:

Wine, bread, impotent, sea, blind, dine, and numbers.

John wasn't doing anything unusual with these words, for he would have known of this same picture language in the Scriptures, where sea can stand for 'rage' (Ps.46:3) and a meal for 'fellowship' (Ps.23:5)

HAVE AN EYE FOR DETAIL!

There is one more important understanding of John we need to be aware of before looking into the signs: every detail that he included in the gospel is important ... tiny words, details of size, colour, number: six stone water jars, 153 fish, five porches etc. ... the Spirit does not waste information.

A BRIEF LOOK AT FOUR OF THE SIGNS

Looking at the first, the third, the seventh and the eighth signs will provide a good introduction to how John uses Jewish traditions, important numbers, fine detail and picture language to tell of the glory of the Lord.

LET'S HAVE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE FIRST SIGN (2:1-11)

Read the passage and give special attention to the details in vv6-10. Which details stand out? Firstly, six waterpots, 'after the manner of the purifying of the Jews'. Why does John give us these details? If John only wanted to testify to Jesus' power over creation, why was he at pains to include information which has little bearing on the actual miracle?

These pots were the ones used for the religious cleansing laid down by Jewish tradition. But the writer also goes to the trouble of telling us there were six. Now, if seven stands for perfection or completion (eg seven days in a week), what does six stand for? ... imperfection. So to begin with, John points out that the Jewish traditions in all their detail are imperfect. In this case, unable to bring about true, practical change in the believer.

In the Old Testament, wine is often associated with the LORD'S blessing. (Have a look at Joel 2:23-24) When we put these details together we see that Jesus is able to do what the Law, and traditions, are not able to do: to transform basic nature to the richness of the LORD'S full blessing: take special note, Jesus did NOT change water into wine - rather a beautiful mature wine that convinced the governor of the feast that the best wine had been saved till last. If then unblessed human life is the water, the implications of this sign are beyond our deepest longings!

LOOKING AT NUMBERS IN THE THIRD SIGN (5:1-18)

This chapter is mainly concerned with Jesus and Jewish traditions about the Sabbath.

As in the first sign, the third sign is a picture of how Jesus wants to help the Jews. On the surface, it appears to be a straightforward account of a miracle of healing, but once again John has included two important details which point to a deeper meaning. Firstly, John is careful to tell us that Bethesda, where the man was waiting, had five porches.

How could this number be an important reference to Jewish Law?

Secondly, we are told that he has waited there for 38 years. How could this number be an important reference to Jewish history? (see Deuteronomy 2:14)

38 years was exactly the time of wandering in the wilderness after the Jews had declined to enter the promised land at Kadesh-barnea. Five is the number of the books of Moses. In picture language, this impotent man represents the Jews who spiritually continue to decline entry into the LORD'S fulness, preferring to wander, impotent, in the five books of Moses and their own wayward traditions. All that was required was that they, like the man, would engage their wills, and in a moment, enter into the promise.

LOOKING AT DETAILS IN THE SEVENTH SIGN (11:38-44)

Much could be said about this miracle, but once again the details give us access to the core of the sign. John remembered that Martha commented that the corpse would smell, and that Lazarus had been dead for four days. These details communicate an obvious message: Lazarus was well and truly dead.

(Incidentally, Jewish writings of the time show that the fourth day after death was important, since the face was usually so deteriorated by then that the person could not be easily recognized)

Nevertheless, Jesus calls the undeniably dead Lazarus to life. This sign points to a life giving hope; Jesus can even raise what to us is IRRETRIEVABLY dead!

PICTURE LANGUAGE IN THE EIGHTH SIGN (21:5-14)

Space would not allow a careful study of all the signs, but a quick look at the final sign could be profitable before moving on.

The very fact that there are eight signs is interesting in itself, since the number eight is associated with the idea of a 'new beginning'. (The eighth day is the beginning of a new week, eight people were saved in the Ark during the flood that they should be the beginning of a new world).

The eighth sign is connected with the new beginning for the disciples. Read the passage, and once again pay special attention to the details. At first reading it appears to be a straightforward miracle of a huge catch of fish after many hours of struggle. Why is John so precise about the number of fish? - 153. One early commentator pointed out that this was the total number of different kinds of fish in the Sea of Tiberias.

'DRAWN FROM EVERY KINDRED, TRIBE AND NATION'

In v6 and v11, John uses the word 'draw' as fishing language, but exactly the same word is used in 6:44 and 12:32, where Jesus teaches that He and the Father have to draw MEN in. So we can begin to see that this sign points to the drawing in of men from 'every kindred tribe and nation' (remember the 153 kinds of fish!), which can only be fulfilled under the power and authority of the Lord Jesus.

Even more lovely is the Lord's preparation of breakfast. This is not merely picture language for the Lord feeding the disciples, because a meal had very special meaning for John and his readers. Participating in a meal was the depth of intimacy, the act of closest fellowship.

This final sign then is a picture of the new beginning, looking forward to the drawing in of all men into the Church and the depths of eternal fellowship that the believers would enjoy with their Lord.

HOW DO THESE SIGNS FIT INTO THE REST OF THE GOSPEL?

In Ezekiel 36, the LORD speaks of the coming time when it will be possible for a person to receive a new heart. In Ezekiel 37, the Spirit paints a picture to reinforce chapter 36 - the dried bones receiving new, living bodies. This idea of picture and preaching, or preaching and picture is common in the Old Testament. The signs in John's gospel do the same.

CHAPTER TWO, A PICTURE OF CHAPTER THREE?

Let's look at how the first sign (2:1-11) fits into the early part of the gospel.

The first section of detailed ministry in the early part of the gospel is Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, where the main theme is the new birth. The first sign has already served as a picture of this before the conversation opens. John has spoken of the Lord's power to transform. Furthermore, between the first sign and the conversation is a second reinforcing of the Lord's purposes: the Cleansing of the Temple.

By the time we read the teaching in chapter three, we know already that Jesus has come to completely overturn the old way of doing things and transform human lives.

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