

new covenant Voice

**Let go of
the old
grain of wheat
if you want
a harvest**

Anon.

**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

RESIST THE DEVIL

GEORGE W. NORTH

The devil is not a popular person with the children of God, but though he is not popular among us he is very real, and is very powerful also. He is referred to in scripture as a lion and a dragon and a subtle serpent whose intention is to wreak havoc wherever he can, especially among churches where his disguises and devices are unrecognized. By many deceptions his purpose is to take advantage of the saints, and oppress and deceive them, bewildering them so that they do not even know who it is that is doing it. Resultantly many of satan's personal activities are thought to be the work of demons when all the time it is the devil himself who is working. This deception is all the more powerful because he does work through evil spirits but clear distinction should be made in the minds of God's people between the devil himself and the many different devils who serve him and his purposes. It is important that this should be done so that appropriate action should be taken against who and whatever it is.

THE PRINCE CAST OUT

No attempt is being made here to enter into an exhaustive discussion of this subject, we will not therefore investigate prehistoric events relating to how Lucifer became the devil. Suffice it to say that satan was once an archangel who gave birth first to sin and then to Old Adam. The theological and doctrinal aspects of this we will leave aside, considering instead the practical issues of it which effect the churches of God to this day. Because of his sin, satan was cast out of heaven: speaking of this ejection, Jesus said, 'I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven'; when lightning falls it strikes as we all know. The whole creation was smitten in a very dreadful way, when satan fell, for he fell with purpose, and man was the one most terribly affected. Directly to offset the evil effects of that fall Christ Jesus came into the world and destroyed the works of the devil. In his Gospel, chapter 12, verse 31, John records Jesus as saying 'Now is the judgement of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out ... I will draw all men unto me'. At this point we are also acquainted with the means and method of that outcasting, 'I, IF I BE LIFTED UP from the earth will draw all men unto me'.

This is a most tremendous statement. The inference from it being that until then the devil had been drawing all men unto him: it is true. The devil repeated on earth what he had first instigated in heaven. There, before he was cast out, he had done exactly the same - he had drawn many angels to himself in rebellion against God. The Lord is here asserting

His authority and superiority, 'I will draw all men unto me'; but notice how conditional He makes it - 'if I be lifted up from the earth'. O the power of the cross - the necessity for it also. He is speaking of ultimates and of supreme power. The devil never drew all the angels to himself, Christ will draw all men to Himself though in the end. Some will go with Him into highest realms of bliss and fullest degrees of eternal life, tragically some will be despatched to an unrelinquishing hell. When Jesus was crucified to death this world committed its worst crime and was judged for it: it now exists under suspended sentence of death, judged, cursed, awaiting its end: it was a dual judgement. At the same time as the prince of glory was judged and cast out by man the prince of this world was cast out also.

GOD TAKES POSSESSION OF AN ANGEL

When Lucifer was cast out from heaven he was not despatched to his final destination, but was allowed for some reason to practise his powers in two other principdoms: he became the prince of this world, and the prince of the power of the air. He now operates in these spheres and perhaps others also of which we know very little. Whether or not it is palatable to us, the devil is allowed by the Lord to do this and from these positions he affects the churches of Jesus Christ. We often sing choruses like, 'In the name of Jesus, demons will have to flee' and that is true, but demons are very inferior beings really. Do you understand that these inferior beings are less than we are and we shouldn't take too much notice of them, except to cast them out? It is the one who moves behind and sometimes through demons (just as God moves in the midst of and through angels) who is the mighty one. One of the wonderful things about angels is their ability to give themselves over so completely unto the Lord that He can indwell and use them as though they were He and He they. He has often come down to man in an angel, temporarily taking him over, so that God and the angel have been thought to be the same. The angel of the Lord is not an uncommon person to meet in the Old Testament. Theologically these occurrences have been called theophanies, but we need not pay too much attention to terminology. Taking possession of an angel the Lord can indwell him and speak and work and appear in and through him to the utmost degree, even to the point of identity.

All leaders of churches must understand that the messages of Jesus to the churches recorded in the book of the Revelation are written to the angels of the respective church. The angels of each respective church was identified with the particular church under his charge, and the message was as much to him as to

the church. See how God could come and become so identified with the angel that when he spoke it would be God speaking through him: that is exactly what God intends in all our churches. Whether or not the church leader or messenger (that is, the person with the message of the Lord to that church) are to be identified as one is not easy to discern. John who was the vessel chosen to receive the Revelation of Jesus Christ and commit it to writing himself received it from the angel of the Lord, yet who can doubt he received it direct from the Lord through that person. It seems that the messages came from the Lord through the angel, to John, then from John to the angel and through him to the church. Whatever be the untangling of the mystery one thing is certain and must be faced by all - unless the message of the Lord is being directly communicated in any church, the preacher should abdicate his office immediately. Do not carry on in future under the pretence or assumption that everyone thinks you are the angel or one preaching as an angel, of the gospel (see Gal.4:14) - be honest and face it. It is so subtly easy once you are in 'the ministry' to keep carrying on, even though the glory of the anointing which is the power of the ministry is long since departed. The man who does this can only minister death to others and lay up wrath to himself.

To return to our theme (though surely this also is connected with it) the devil himself can and often does identify with a demon and use him any time and anywhere he wants. According to the Lord Jesus, at the time He spoke the devil was moving in realms from which he was going to be cast out. What these realms are we are not told so we must not pretend that we do know. Maybe they are the realms in which we find him moving in the book of Job. At that time satan could 'go into the presence of God among His sons and accuse man before God. We are told that the accuser of the brethren has now been cast down, so Christ may have been referring to that. One thing is certain, the cross ousted satan and placed Christ at the centre of attraction in the realm of spirit.

God wants us to understand, beloved, that we are now living in an age in which the devil has been cast out from somewhere. It must have been a place of power he had usurped and occupied far too long. In the Hebrews letter, chapter 2, verses 9-14, reference is made to these things 'We see Jesus who was made a little (you can put 'for a little', that is for a little while) lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour. That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man, for it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee: and again, I will put my trust in him, and again, behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise took part of the same that through

death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil. And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage'.

SATAN DESTROYED

The Lord took on our nature in order to do this: from our position and in our name, as a man for man, He destroyed satan. The word destroy here does not mean annihilation, there is no such thing as annihilation of human beings. There may be annihilation of matter but personality cannot be annihilated, the spirits, souls, personalities of man shall be forever. The devil is a destroyed person, he destroyed himself and is going from destruction to destruction to final destruction in Gehenna. Through His death, Christ destroyed satan, cast him out still further. You and I have to understand this and in this understanding move forward into the light that illuminates these realms of mystery.

There is much talk around these days, which exhorts us to have this, to have that, possess this, possess that, get more and more in the material realm. Here is a realm, beloved, in which you and I may have complete mastery and move into it. All the Lord did he did as a man, for men, for us all beloved. He came down and did it all as a man, He didn't wave a wand or just say something, God sent a flesh and blood man. God did it demonstrably, so that you and I could enter into the full understanding of His work and move confidently in this realm of faith where the devil is destroyed and has no power whatsoever.

OPPOSING THE SEED

Now let us turn to the parable of the sower, in Luke 8. Each Gospel writer has a specific pathway marked out with great precision by the Holy Ghost, and each pursues it. This gives the Gospels distinctiveness and character and testifies that the writers were not mere copyists, but wrote with originality. The synoptists seem to say so many things the same, but read with the precision with which each wrote every one of them is seen to be most exact and remains faithful to the substance and his own method of writing. The sower, says Luke, went out to sow his seed - singular: we would normally say that the sower sows multitudes of seeds, he does not, he sows the seed. The parable is this; the seed is the word of God, those by the wayside are those that hear - then cometh the demons? No, the devil. The devil. Not an evil spirit, THE evil spirit. Think of the birds of the air pecking up the seeds - here come all the demons - no, it is the devil. The devil comes personally to oppose the ministry of the word directed toward the generation of sons.

However lovely the fellowship, however spiritual the ministry, during the course of it, the devil actively engages to take away the seed. It was happening when the Lord Jesus was on the earth, and

there was and is no greater sower than He. All preachers of the word have to face this same thing. Beloved, the devil actively opposes us; he is against you. This is why the Lord sometimes used to cry out, 'He that hath an ear to hear let him hear'. What He was saying is, unless you are very careful, the devil will rob you of the seed, and of the life of it. These are very simple things, but we need to take note of them.

STAND BY FAITH

Let us proceed further. In the last verse of chapter 1 of his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul tells them that he does not have dominion over their faith, but was a helper of their joy. He knew that if anyone has dominion over anybody else's faith that person will not be able to stand: this is a word for today, everybody must stand by his own faith. How far removed this is from the modern curse of eldership domination over churches. To be dominated over is to be propped up, such a church can never stand. But what a thing it is to be helpers of another's joy. Every man must stand by his own faith. If only we did. Let us all stop being bossy and dominating and becoming more dominating and bossy by asserting that we are not. Every man should move in the simplicity of being just who he is, and stop trying to be an official.

Have you ever written a letter like this letter of Paul's, 'I write to you with many tears'? This epistle was stained with his tears. 'If any have caused grief, he has not grieved me but in part that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment that was afflicted of many so that contrariwise you ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Therefore I beseech you that you would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write. That I may know the proof of you, whether you be obedient in all things. To whom you forgive anything I forgive also'. Would you do that? Do you read this Bible without really thinking what it's about? Would you, - do you - trust your brethren and their judgement to this extent? Would you forgive people because other people had forgiven them, with no proof at all that they should be forgiven? Listen to this man - if you forgive him or them, then I forgive him or them. We speak of having one heart and mind and of being one heart. What mockery sometimes are all these expressions we use. We want to investigate for ourselves, we have noses like bloodhounds, we bay for blood, thinking we're doing God's will and using our office properly. It seems we know little or nothing of true love so lowly and meek which says 'If you forgive them, I forgive them'. Can you do that? Beside this, we sometimes act as greater sages than the apostle, thinking we have superior gifts than he, such as 'knowledge' or 'discernment': but all are deceits without love.

Paul could, for love has more wisdom and knowledge than all, and he was a man, just like you and I. Listen to him again 'If I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes I forgave it in the person of Christ'. Did you know that when Christ forgave you He forgave you for your sake. Too often our praying is on the wrong basis. We pray, 'For Jesus Christ's sake'. But you cannot do that, you must pray in Jesus Christ's name for the sake of that person or that thing. This is why I do what I do, he says, 'Lest satan should gain an advantage of us': 'we are not ignorant of his devices', he adds. Paul says that when he came to Troas he came to Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto him by the Lord, but he refused to go into it. What an astonishing thing, God opened a door, and he wouldn't go through it. Surely that was disobedience wasn't it?

This will show the measure of you. He didn't run away, he didn't funk it. His refusal was not in fear, neither was it disobedience, nor was it inability. Paul would not go through it because it was a trick of satan. Paul did not go through that door, simply for their sakes. Had he done so he would not have been able to have written this second letter. To Paul the Church of Jesus Christ was the most precious treasure on earth. He had given himself, spirit, soul, and body to Christ for it. Every local church, of which the church at Corinth was one, was a pearl bought at such great cost, that its life and continued existence was of vital importance both to Christ and himself. Had he continued with his ministry and gone through that door evangelizing the masses and establishing churches, he would have been considered a great success - by some people - but not by God.

The prosperity, even the continued existence of the Corinthian church hung in the balance. Why establish another when this one was in such a perilous state? Paul could not do it. He had to wait till he could get hold of young Titus, his messenger, this Corinthian matter must be settled before he could go ahead. Hearts must be pure and restoration accomplished before he was prepared to proceed any further. It did not matter to him if what he thought was right or wrong, neither did he care what anybody else thought was right or wrong; whether he was judged right or wrong did not matter either, his heart was too big for that. He did not demand or even desire that people should come and kneel at his feet, or beg his pardon, he had an enlarged heart big enough to forgive everybody everything. People never will come to you to get forgiven if they know beforehand that your heart will not give it to them anyway. If a man's heart has forgiven, he seldom needs to say so. So many stand on principles, they think more of the application of truth according to them, instead of on life itself. God save us from it.

Paul had to answer to God for refusing to go through that opened door, and he was quite prepared to do so. His answer if charged is, 'Lest satan should take advantage of it'. Had he gone through, wonderful

things would have happened, he would have cast out demons, healed the sick, led many to Christ, raised up another church, but satan would have taken advantage of him - he would not have done the thing he ought to have done. He would have been already deceived by the devil. You may have a great preaching ministry, and people may fall down when you look at them, or touch them, but if the heart of love has departed, sooner or later the great gospel ministry which God has given us will cease also. We must not carry on in ignorance of satan's devices. Two things emerge: 1. A man must stand on his own feet. You are able to help his joy, but do not take dominion over his faith or you will destroy him. If need be let him grope through to reality himself. 2. Do not let the devil take advantage of you even by an open door and an inviting ministry with promise of success - even spectacular success. The devil's devices are often masked with golden promise.

In the end beloved, it will not be how many have fallen down before us on earth, but how many stand before the throne in heaven. Paul told the Thessalonians that his joy and crown in the presence of the Lord would be they themselves.

RESIST THE DEVIL ...

James and Peter combine to tell us wonderful truth on one of the particular issues connected with our theme. What they say is virtually the same thing. James puts it this way, 'Submit yourselves to God, Resist the devil, he will flee from you'. Peter says, 'You younger, submit yourselves unto the elder'. 'Submit yourselves one unto another, under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour whom resist, steadfast in the faith. Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world'. One of the great plans of the devil when he comes to oppress and tempt people, is to make them think that they're alone and that they are bearing temptations that no-one has ever had to go through. It is not true and to yield to that temptation is a form of pride, inverted pride. Some of the things that psychologists are trying to deal with are already answered in the Bible. The great upstanding 'I', that great proud person we all hate is easily recognized and universally rejected. But that same person can also turn inward and look downward, and appear so piteous, and forlorn and rejected. 'Pity me', he says, 'I'm such a poor weak thing'. But it's just the same ugly thing in reverse, he hasn't changed, he has only changed his position, his boasting has changed to whining, but he is the same old terrible self. Ignorant of self, ignorant of the devil, tragically ignorant of God, what can he do? He can be born again.

Beloved, you and I are to resist the devil. Did you know that you can resist him and that you must resist him? - him, not a demon. I meet so many

people who get depressed and think they have demonic problems. They may have, but just as likely they have not and it's the devil who is attacking them. We all have to learn to discern between these things. When a person has demonic trouble he is needing help from his brethren - when he is being attacked by the devil he has to resist him himself. That man needs to get up on his own two feet and say to the devil 'Get off!', and make him get off. He is the one that must do it. He may need advice from an elder, but he himself must resist the devil till the devil quits.

... AND HE WILL FLEE

Here is one of the devil's devices: without people knowing it he comes on them and envelops them in darkness or thrusts them down into depression, or some such related condition. He doesn't mind what you think about or what or who you blame as long as you don't think it is him. You may think the cause of your trouble is your mother-in-law, or the fact that you haven't had a job for six months, or your social conditions, or you can lay it off to ten or a dozen likely enough causes. So long as you fail to see that the cause of your troubles is him, the devil doesn't mind. The truth is that it doesn't matter if you have the worst mother-in-law in the country, or that you have the most indisciplined children whining around you - if you are a child of God you must get up and tell the devil to get off! We all need prayer, fellowship and help, but at such times you do not need prayer, you need faith and determination. You are able to resist the devil yourself and you must, or he will destroy you. Resist him, do not let him have his way with you, make him go - he will flee from you in Jesus' name.

A young miner, soon after he had been born of God, was working down the pit one morning when he was (to use his own words) flooded with a stream of filth and obscenity. Having so recently received a pure heart from God, he could not understand whatever was happening to him. For a whole week this continued, every day his mind was filled with the most terrible uncleanness, he was mentally reeling under it: he felt ashamed. He tried prayer, he tried Bible reading, he felt ashamed, nothing seemed to help or relieve him, till one day it dawned on him what the trouble was. 'O Lord', he said, 'this isn't of me, and it's not of Thee, it must be the devil', and he turned on him and drove him off. He had a pure heart, but that did not prevent satan from invading him with a stream of filth. Satan is no gentleman, he is a filthy being, rotten to the core. Turn on him! He knows he can stun you, make you think you've never received a pure heart or been filled with the Spirit, and that you just could not have received Him. The devil is a liar, but he is also deadly serious, he will play with you as with a puppet if you let him - stand up like a man of God and tell him to get off! If he resists you, endure to the end, greater is He that is in you than the devil and all his hosts. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. You have not got to do the conquering, you are more than a

conqueror, you and I have to walk in the sweets and benefits of what Christ accomplished on the cross, where the devil was cast out. The devil was destroyed in these realms, then and there. Read the scripture on it, resist the devil, he is already defeated: watch him flee.

Now, if the devil could be paid a compliment, it is this, he is very persistent. Ability is only a virtue if it is used aright, used wrongly it is sin. This is the devil's weakness - he has used his power wrongfully. Nevertheless his ability to persist must be acknowledged. If Christians were as persistent as the devil, if they had persevered as he has persevered, the world would have been conquered by now. We must take heed to this persistence of satan we must also recognize that he has powers of resistance too. James introduces to us an area of spirit operation where the devil will resist you hip and thigh - submission to God. The devil will resist that and you will not even know he is doing it. He will not tell you he is trying to prevent you submitting to God, but that is what he is doing.

God resists the proud, humble yourself, submit yourself, resist the devil. Learn the difference between the devil resisting you, and God resisting you. On the one hand God resists all pride, on the other hand the devil resists, saying, 'No you can't', and you are in between, thinking 'what's going on in me?' The battle for your soul is joined. Now is the time to resist the devil, if you don't he will destroy you.

Here is a farmer, his orchards are full of promise, fruit in abundance, apples, pears, plums, cherries, wait to appear and develop from these blossoms. All are growing wonderfully, the future is assured, then one night - just one night - there's a cold, cold frost. Everything is destroyed, all hope of harvest is gone. The trees are still there but the fruit is destroyed. That is an idea of the truth which we need to understand. If you do not resist and overcome satan - that is, destroy him in his intentions towards you - you will look for fruit and find withered blossoms, even green leaves will shrivel and die. By the Lord's enabling you are to stand up and tell the devil you are not ignorant of his devices, and clear him out. Do not start abusing him, do not call him names, trying to impress people you have discernment, you have not. This is not said to belittle the gifts of the Spirit in any way, they are wonderful, it is an attempt to prevent boys trying to wear men's clothes and use men's tools.

STAND THEREFORE

In the book of Jude, verse 9, we read this: 'Michael, the archangel (when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses) durst not bring against him a railing of accusation, but said 'The Lord rebuke thee'. Now we are told that angels are greater in power than we are, yet all too often jumped up little Tomnoddies call the devil names the

archangel Michael would not think of using. Do not start abusing or trying to abuse the devil or his devils. Angels did not do so, neither did Jesus, so don't you. When people do that it is usually a sign of great weakness, not of great knowledge or power, and it is a great pity. In the Ephesian letter, Paul says, 'having done all stand': 'stand therefore'. Resist and stand in resistance, persist, persevere. You may say: 'I've resisted him', but for how long? Two minutes? We are on test beloved; standing? keep standing. God wants to make you strong. He wants to stablish you in the finished work.

Read Peter again, verse 9: 'Whom resist, steadfast in the faith ... The God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen'. God is perfecting you. This is what He is after in us all. The Lord Jesus resisted the devil throughout His life till He hung on the cross and once there cast him out of these great realms where you and I would have been so vulnerable to him beloved. We are still vulnerable in many realms, and will be till finally glorified in heaven. As James says, the spirit in you lusteth to envy, we still have great strong desires. The spirit in you - the human spirit which is you - wants this, and that, it gets envious of somebody else's crown or wants somebody else's position. Doesn't the Word say 'covet earnestly the best gifts'? Yes, it does, but do not get into the realm of polemics and try to make scripture contradict and therefore destroy itself. We must read with understanding and be able to rightly divide the word of truth.

To take a boy who has started to learn science at school into one of the laboratories in Cambridge or Oxford where they're studying this dreadful AIDS, or atomic energy - and, just because the lad can work a bunsen burner or a pipette, turn him loose to play with all the knobs and switches; what would the end be? There are times to read scriptures and appropriate them to yourself, but never appropriate a scripture to yourself unless it is quickened to you by the Spirit. That is all. If you venture beyond that you will go to destruction. When God applies it to you in your reading, stand on it. When He applies it, you know. When God applies something to you it either goes right into your heart like an arrow, or a kind of soft suffusion of your being steals over you - a knowing - an inexplicable unification of your mind, and senses and feelings, a kind of synthesizing, a total understanding and acceptance. Faith is inward knowledge, it is certainty and conviction. If you're looking for faith on some other level than that, you'll never find it.

You have an adversary - the devil. Don't talk to him too much, but say to him sometimes, 'you are my adversary'. He is going about seeking to devour you, he will do it too if you allow him. He will eat you up, centre you on yourself and you won't be able to shake off the feeling. You will say 'it's what they did'; no, it is not, it's the devil taking what they

did and fixing it on you. You are to stand up to the devil, clear him off and you'll be able to love everyone. See and know that behind all circumstances either God is manipulating them to your good or the devil is trying to manipulate them to your destruction.

In every temptation there are always two extremes to take into account: by the very same thing God is wanting to take you on to perfection and the devil is wanting to drag you down to hell. This is why old James says 'Count it all joy when you fall into ever so many different temptations'. Notice he wasn't talking about climbing up the golden stairs to glory, he was talking about falling into temptations. What? Yes! When you believe what God's men say, you get a completely new focus on life, see things in perspective and begin to grow by them. By this contest you will get strong. By these victories you will prove that you are more than conqueror. Of course, if you are ill, you can get the elders of the Church to come and pray for you, they and that have their place, but you've got to learn to stand by yourself. How about it now? This present thing in which you are engaged or which is engaging you? The devil would dominate your thoughts, oppress you, have you down. Many men have lost out in this realm beloved: if only they had stood! Have you ever considered that little four letter word, guts? Having done all - stand! The armour in Ephesians chapter 6 is only a form of Christ, that's all it is. It is Paul's way of talking about Christ preparing you for warfare. Christ is made to you whatever you need.

BE SOBER

But look at this beloved: we're to be sober (verse 8). Vigilant, watchful, wide awake, balanced, grave, moving on to a fulness of all that God has for us. Do you know the sweets of victory in this realm? The Lord has cast out and destroyed the devil for you. He wants every man to stand and reap the fruits of His victory. Do not put up with the devil and his tactics

any more, and don't go round whining and moaning and complaining again. God does not want you to keep grinning like some gargoyle though, thinking that's the proof that you're in power and victory. It isn't, it's a mask. And you know how dangerously near to hypocrisy that is, for that is all the word means, a man that wears a mask. You and I are to move in reality for God, and sing and shout the glorious victory we know in our own lives.

YOU NEED NOT BE DEFEATED

Coming back onto the demonic level, we must never forget that the devil does work through demons. He has many of them at his disposal, he works under many covers through agencies galore. There is not an agency in the world, whether it be the agency of religion, or of politics, or of medicine, or of education, through which he does not work, he uses them all. Everybody in these realms is not devil-possessed or trying to do the devil's works, but many are, and he certainly works through them. He works through authors, poets, composers. He works in every realm - there is nothing the devil has not touched and cannot use. But here is good news - there is nothing God cannot use either.

Beloved, you need not be defeated: get your life and all these things sorted out. Do not try and push the pyramids over, don't go wild in your imaginations about things you're going to do. Come down into the areas of your own personality and environment. Do not always say 'I'm going to push this door till it opens', be a Paul and sometime say 'if it opens I won't go through'. Do not try to dominate another person's faith. The rather take to heart James' word, 'Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself'. The Lord tears down all the great imaginations that build up in people's minds, they only lead on to destruction. Go steadily on with the Lord. 'Quit ye like men and be strong'. If you have the Holy Ghost in you, you are a potential winner. Jesus conquered, to give you the Holy Ghost: move. GWN

NEW BIRTH - PART TWO

NORMAN MEETEN

HOW CAN I BE BORN AGAIN?

That is the question that presented itself to the intellectual Nicodemus. He was a brilliant man. He qualified in many spheres; he was a statesman, he was a religious man, he would have come out of the top drawer of Jewish society. In the eyes of men he was the man, the sort of man that people wanted to be. Yet there was that within him that, as he beheld the life of Jesus and heard of His teaching, made him

aware that here was a Man that made him look anything but a man. It is when you see yourself in the light of Jesus that things really begin to fall into their proper perspective.

If you compare yourself with this one and that one, you're not such a bad chap, you haven't sunk to the bottom, you're quite a respectable, educated, sophisticated person; you fall into that class of society where what you do is accepted. In the generation in which we live the standard is going down and down.

Someone rang me recently and told me he was following a certain pattern of behaviour; and I said, "My young friend, if you go on living like that you will go to hell". "I won't", he said. I said, "Who said so?". "Oh", he said, "it's legal, it's permissible, the government has authorized my behaviour".

We have been subject to governments that have legalized sin, seducing men and women into the depths of hell, under the delusion that it is 'alright because the government says so, the law says so'. Moral systems and standards set by man in varying societies vacillate. But God has a standard and God has made statements that relate to men as He intends them to be men, and anything less than that does not qualify. When God brings us into the great realm of grace it does not bring us into a place where we can contravene the great governmental purposes and laws of God. When God brings us into the realm of grace, we can live in the reality of them, and we do not want to reduce them or make them something less than God says they should be.

Nicodemus was perplexed by Jesus' statement and his conversation with Jesus. He should have had knowledge of new birth; it was not a thought unfamiliar to the Jewish mind; but he never comprehended it. He had knowledge in the head about it, but he did not know what it was all about. The concept of being born again was a familiar concept to the Jewish mind; but Nicodemus did not understand. The doctrine and the truths related to this great subject have been familiar to many of us for years - but we have not understood.

"How? How?", he said. That is the question: "How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?".

This is illustrated for us in a most wonderful way in the scripture. There was someone else who asked that same question when confronted with the great original manifestation of the new creation, which starts with birth. That person's name was Mary. Luke 1:34: "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?".

God had just come, manifested in the person of the angel Gabriel, and spoken to her concerning the great first manifestation of the new creation, the beginning of another generation of people; the first one having failed and been disqualified, not even recognized as a generation. God was going to begin things all over again. Jesus was the First, 'the first-born of every creature'. Nothing qualifies, nothing is accepted outside of that context. Therefore our pattern, our norm, our great example, our great picture, the answer to this question, is found in the way in which Jesus was born.

Matthew says, 'the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise', and if you want a prototype of new birth,

there it is for you. Let us observe the way in which Jesus was born. In Luke's Gospel, there are six principles that answer the question, 'How?'.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER ONE

The first one is this: 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women'. There is the first 'secret' - 'thou art highly favoured'. New birth would be an experience remote from your life if you weren't highly favoured. Have you ever said to yourself, 'Why me?' You have looked at all your contemporaries, your own family, you have looked at the school friends that were yours and those amongst whom you moved in college, the folk amongst whom you have worked, the village or town in which you live - and you say, 'Why me?' Mary must have said that. She was just an ordinary young girl in a remote village in that small plot of land we call Israel.

'Thou art highly favoured'. Mary was going to be the means, the vehicle, the person, the body through which God was going to realize His purpose for man all over again: from which, in the fulness of time, the Christ would be born. This is what new birth is all about. God is wanting to reproduce. God is wanting to repeat the great miracle of incarnation again and again in the spirit. And you are as highly favoured as she was. She was the first one to experience it, and she did not understand it fully. It was not until the day of Pentecost that the significance and reality of all that had happened to her so long ago dawned upon her heart, and she realized what had come to pass. She was amongst those in that upper room on that day. Likewise Saul of Tarsus says, 'It pleased God'. It is the same great thought. At that moment he was bent on destroying and eliminating this great new creation of God that had been initiated by Jesus and the sending of the Holy Ghost. He was bent on going to Damascus to destroy and bring bound unto Jerusalem all that called upon the Name of the Lord Jesus and yet he says in his testimony, 'It pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me', in order that there might be a manifestation, a coming forth, of Jesus. Highly favoured. Look at yourself, feel yourself: 'Why me?' We are highly favoured - not because we deserve it, not because we merit it, not that there is anything in our lives that qualifies us to have it - but the sovereign initiative and favour and pleasure of God to give it to us.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER TWO

The second principle that answers the question is this: 'The angel came unto her and said' (verse 30) 'And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God'.

That is the second great principle in answer to 'How?' God speaks.

All that God has ever brought into being has been the result of His speaking. In the beginning God spoke. And that is how He began the great new creation; Hebrews says, 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake ... by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son'. The word 'His' is not there - it actually states 'by Son'. What He spoke into being in the Person of His Son, making His word incarnate - and that is why Jesus is called 'the word made flesh' - all that God spoke took on flesh and became the incarnate Son of God and a Son of man. The way in which a man or woman is born again of the Spirit of God is that God speaks His Son into your life. God fulfils His word. Matthew says, 'it was according to what the prophets had said', and the prophets were only the mouthpieces of God on earth saying, 'Thus saith the Lord'. Jesus was the fulfilment of all that God had ever said, from the beginning of time down through the ages by way of preparation until that last great prophet came and spake and declared His coming, which all the angels of heaven accompanied with songs and praises and hallelujahs. Glory to His name! God spoke.

Are you aware of God speaking? Right deep down into the depths of you? This begins long before you ever realize the significance of new birth. God speaks. Thus in Saul of Tarsus, his conscience spoke: 'You can't resist, you can't kick against the pricks'. God had been speaking to him when he had been standing watching that first great saint of God, Stephen, stoned to death. Saul was consenting unto that action, yet God was speaking to him. Mark's Gospel starts, 'The beginning of the gospel', and then it talks about His messenger and what he had to say. A great prelude in your life - God has been speaking, God has been acting, God has been moving, God has been ordering things down through the ages.

I can look back into my early childhood when God began to speak. I did not understand it, didn't comprehend it. I was about 4 years old; God spoke to me. I heard His word and it set in motion, as far as I was consciously aware, a questing, a longing, a desiring, an aching - to put it in the words of the apostle, 'a travailling within' to realize what it was all about. As I look back in retrospect (I did not understand it then) I see that from that moment there began a process of activity. I sometimes refer to it as pre-natal activity. How long does it take an elephant to bring forth its baby? Ages. I'm sure I must have been of the breed of an elephant! Many things happened in the throes of some twenty six years, and I don't devalue them, I don't underestimate them. I see them all as part of the process of God's original speaking to my heart, that in the fulness of time caused His Son to be revealed in me and brought forth from my life: and I knew that I had been born. Glory to His Name.

Like Cornelius - God said all sorts of things to him. God spoke to him, God listened to his prayers. He wasn't born again. It wasn't until the Holy Ghost came as the result of the preaching of Peter that it happened, (NB Peter only got as far as repentance in his preaching - the Holy Ghost couldn't wait for him

any longer!). That is when Cornelius was saved. That puts the word 'salvation' in a much greater context than most of us interpret it. You read Acts 10 and you would think that Cornelius was a fine Christian man. The scripture makes it abundantly clear that he wasn't. Godly, God-seeking, God-fearing, praying, sacrificial in his giving, consistent in his daily living, he cared and ordered his house to the highest revelation and understanding that he knew; but it was not until Peter came by the revelation of the Spirit of God and ministered Christ unto him in the power of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost came down, that Cornelius and all his house were saved, born again, filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke in tongues, praised the Lord, and were baptized in obedience. No arguments about it, he had not got a head full of theological nonsense that he had to push God through. That's the trouble with us, we know so much, we've learned so much, we think we have so much; and when God really does the thing to us, it won't fit in, and we argue about it. We try to make it fit in to what we've preconceived, instead of being prepared to align our lives with what God says and believe it.

God spoke: and He has continued speaking. Even today. I want to tell you He is speaking to your heart. He does not come to mock us, to draw us on like a donkey with a carrot. He has come to speak us into life. God said. You know what Genesis says - 'and it was done'. When you hear God speak to you it is not just vain utterances, it is Spirit, and it's life.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER THREE

The third great principle that answers this great question 'How?'. Luke 1:26. 'And in the sixth month'. Another of those 'sixes'. We saw that it was the sixth hour for the woman of Samaria; here it is, the sixth month. The number of man again, man's time; God's provision for man's moment in time. 'In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin'. To a virgin. Here is the third great condition that will bring into being the glorious wonder of virgin conception, that we often refer to as the virgin birth. If you do not believe in the virgin birth then you do not believe in anything else that relates to God. Lots of denominational groups have dispensed with the truth of the virgin birth. Leading men who are chairmen of annual conferences of this order and that order have publicly denounced and denied the glorious truth of the virgin birth, the virgin conception of Christ. If you do that, then Jesus is no answer for sin. God will only bring the new creation forth from a virgin condition and state. You say, 'How do I come into that?'

The answer is repentance - when you face up to what you are and allow the precious blood of Jesus to come and wash you and make you clean and pure, to reinstate you into that condition whereby God can bring forth. That is why Peter said, 'Repent, be baptized, and ye shall receive'. The great prelude. Where there is no repentance, there is no salvation. Where there is no genuine repentance, there is no true

new birth. That is why Paul says, 'I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ'. Then he goes on to lament about the fact that there were those who were preaching another gospel, ministering another Jesus and another spirit.

People say, 'Another Jesus, another gospel, another spirit?'. How do you know that you've responded to the Jesus of God, the Jesus of the scripture? How do you know that you've responded to the gospel which is the gospel according to the scripture, the gospel which the apostle was able to say was 'My gospel?'. The gospel that effected in his life that transfiguration, that transfiguration of his whole person, that made him a member of the new creation, one of the generation of Jesus? How do I know that I have THE Holy Spirit?

The only way in which I know, is the life which flows as a result of that encounter; established upon the virginity of that state into which God brings me as a result of the death of Jesus upon the cross. There flows from that life a life that is consistent with the truth as it is recorded in the book. Virgin.

'Thou dost seek a bride all pure and holy,
Those who now belong to Thee alone'.

God is only interested in virginity. He will only function in the context of virginity. He has to come and eliminate and remove all that belongs to the old, and begin a new thing. Old things pass away, behold all things become new. A new creation.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER FOUR

The fourth great principle is this: v 32 - 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever'. Notice that he does not say 'the house of Israel': he says 'the house of Jacob'. Jacob was the name which applied to the natural man. Israel was the name which applied to him as God's spiritual man. 'He will give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever'.

If you and I want to know the answer to our 'How?' and how we can come into that great new birth experience and condition we have got to come to the terms that He has got to reign. Not only reign over some spiritual state and condition of us but reign over the house of Jacob in us. That is why Jesus prayed in John 17, 'Father, thou hast given me power over all flesh'. We talk about being saved, we talk about giving our hearts to Jesus, we talk about having a new heart within; but it is more than that. Mary did not just give her heart to the Lord. That first great new birth came into being because she gave her body. God has to reign and rule in our lives. We cannot just get right with God and have a relationship with Him way up there, but we have to be prepared and come to terms with the fact that if we want to enter into that new creation, if we want to know the reality

of that new birth, then it is going to cost every part of our being - spirit, soul, and body. That is why Paul says, 'I beseech you, give your body ...' He's going to reign. So often we have been taught to get saved and then twenty years later we get sanctified. One recognizes that because we are human beings we have to dissect things for the sake of teaching; but you cannot in the realm of the spirit where God really operates, separate one facet of truth from the other. In fact if you read your Bible you will find you get sanctified before you get saved. You get sanctified before you get justified. You have to read what the scripture says instead of what we think it says.

You have to be made virgin. And that related unto her body. Has God got your body? Are you prepared for a God who says he must reign over you? he must reign. Does He reign in that realm of your life? Paul exhorts us in 1 Thess. 4:4 to 'possess our vessels in sanctification and honour', for He has called us not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness; and to enable us to live in that state he has given us the Holy Spirit.

He must reign. You cannot enter into this great realm of truth unless you are prepared for that; unless you're prepared for God to take every area of your life - your spirit, your soul, your body, your environment, your money, your behaviour, your dress, your eating, your sleeping, your relationships, everything that relates unto you. That is why you do not have to legalize in the Spirit. The person who comes under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ, their life changes. Their life-style changes, the pattern of their behaviour changes, their appearance changes. They stop arguing with God. If He says something to them, they do it. It is sufficient for God to say a thing once. The amazing thing is that often, time and time again, in the scriptures He says the same thing over and over again. The natural man wriggles and twists and tries to get out of it this way or another way. He says, 'Oh well, that was the tradition in their day, that applied to that generation'. It doesn't, they are eternal precepts. When God lays down great truths that relate to the outworking of His reign in your life, they eternally apply. It does not matter which culture you belong to.

One of the things the Lord showed me when I was away in the East was that the Gospel was neither western nor eastern, it's neither Indian nor English, it's not European, it's not Greenlandish. It is a quality, it's a pattern, it's a standard that has been set in heaven and by the Spirit is being interpreted down here on the earth and applied to every tradition, every nationality, every culture, every background. It behoves us to listen if we want our inward, virgin state to be the manifest condition of our life that God can recognize. As to the testimony; yes, Lord, reign over me, rule over me, rule over the house of Jacob; make my heart the throne of David, rule, reign there, Lord - when God finds that heart disposition and that attitude of spirit, then the glorious truth of which he is speaking here - and the answer to your question 'How?' - will begin to clarify unto your experience.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER FIVE

'How?' she says (Luke 1:34) 'seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'.

That is the way that a man is born again. It was the same great word to Nicodemus in John 3. '... By water and the Spirit'. The 'water' of it being man's response in obedience to what God has said to him, on the condition that God has laid down. God responding, if you like, being released unto that person's being in the power of the Spirit. 'God gives the Holy Spirit unto them that obey Him'. If you are not prepared to obey Him then it is a waste of time asking Him to baptize you with the Spirit.

'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'.

For years the Holy Ghost was an 'it' in the Apostles Creed, which I recited daily as a good Anglican, and failed to understand was a part of the Triune Godhead. Yes, doctrinally I had appreciated it. I'd studied the doctrine of the Trinity and worked my way systematically through the Creed and the Thirty-nine Articles and all the other precepts which are the underlying doctrine of the Anglican community. Theologically, intellectually, I understood it. But in reality, in experience, I knew nothing of the reality of the living God as He was manifest in the Third Person of the Trinity.

I had never heard of the baptism of the Spirit. How many times have you read scripture and never seen what it said? And you've said to yourself, 'Why have I read this for so long and never seen it?'. Then suddenly it all comes out, it all dawns and begins to clarify. Nobody had ever told me about these things: I hadn't met anyone who knew anything. I'd had one encounter with a pentecostal when I was in the Royal Marines. I served on a ship and there was a lad who was a pentecostal. I'd never heard of a pentecostal. I thought he was some strange fellow; he was always talking about 'speaking in tongues'. I thought he was completely crazy. I didn't know that there was anything in it. I'd never met anything like that in the Bible; now I wasn't very far on in my Christian search and quest. I thought, 'Well, that's alright for him, if that's what he wants, that's fine'. I'd got an ecumenical heart; I was one of those fellows prepared to accept anyone and everything; 'all things to all men' was my motto. The thing that disillusioned me was when he, along with another young man who was an ordinand for the ministry, went ashore and got drunk. I just could not reconcile that; not that I was in any position to make accusations or make comparison - but one of the amazing things that never ceased to fill my heart with wonder and awe is the way in which God hedged me about and kept me and preserved me, even in those days when the jaws of hell were wide open, just waiting to swallow a young man of 18 away

from home with no restraints any more upon his life. And I thought, 'if that is what his religion is all about, and if that's the outworking of it in daily living, I'm not really interested'. A great blockage came down between me and all that was associated with Pentecost and pentecostalism.

Years and years went by and my heart was shut - not consciously, but deep down, subconsciously, a great reservation had established. I know many people who've had tremendous reservations about the precious things of the Spirit of God because somewhere along the line they've met manifestations which are not the true thing. Many godly, God-fearing, God seeking people, won't touch these things with a barge-pole because they have seen the abuses. There are many godly people who have genuine reservations, and you can understand why they've got them, but that doesn't mean and doesn't justify or qualify the fact that you should reject what is of God. For if we do, we fall into exactly the same error of the opposite extreme. God had to open my eyes and cause me to see that and deal with the prejudice of my heart that held me back for so long, and bring me to a place where I was prepared to listen to what God said. God began to speak to me and I realized it was by the Holy Ghost.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER SIX

The sixth great principle which answered the question of Mary rose up from within her own heart. She realized that she was favoured. God had spoken to her and told her so and unveiled His heart and His intention towards her. By His grace she recognized her virgin state. He declared that He would reign over her whole being, and He wasn't just wanting a part of her. He wanted every atom of her being - spirit, soul and body - and He declared that the Holy Ghost was coming to effect what He had said in her life. As a result of that, the spirit of faith rose within her and this is what she said: 'Be it unto me according to Thy word'. It was the abandonment of her whole being to all that God had said unto her, and she said, 'Lord, reign over me; have me, spirit, soul and body'. And God took her body in response to the heart condition and spirit of that woman. He took her body and revealed the Christ of glory, the first great Man of the new creation on the earth; in her to be manifested to her in the fulness of His time. That answered her question, 'How can this thing be?'.

That is how it comes about in the realm of the Spirit. It answers Nicodemus' question as well. That is the only condition whereby God can effect the great glorious truth and experience of new birth in your life. You may not have seen it analytically like that - 1,2,3 etc. That does not matter. Someone once said you do not need a Bible to find out what you ought to be, you read the Bible to find out what you are.

Why do I need to be born again? Because apart from birth, I am dead. As far as God is concerned, I do not even exist.

How can I be born again? Born after the pattern and figure of the first great glorious Example, Jesus.

NM

IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND

EDITOR

All, no doubt, would have heard of the 'Home Call' of Edgar Parkyns, whilst ministering in the U.S.A. To many of us he was a trusted friend and minister of the grace of our Lord Jesus. We benefited much from his complementary contribution on the preaching platform at the Summer Fellowship Conference, and from his writings over many years. As a memorial of respect and gratitude to God for His faithful servant, we publish this personal testimony, that appeared in Emmaus Christian Fellowship's church magazine.

Thanks be to God.

I was brought up in a Christian home. My father was a moral man, and a nominal Methodist. My mother was undoubtedly a Christian who loved the Lord. She died when I was eleven.

FIRST STEPS

My first steps to the Lord were made when I was about 8 years old. When I was about 16, and leading a young men's Bible class, I thought I was the cat's whiskers. I was deeply religious, and had my sights on the Methodist ministry. I thought I was a dedicated Christian, but I was full of unbelief and modernism. I had no confidence in the Bible, no real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ - just an appreciation of His person and earthly ministry. I was trying to be a preacher and I didn't know Jesus at all. Then the Lord stirred my hungry heart and wrought in me conviction of sin. I found myself totally bankrupt in God's presence, and unable to believe with that simple saving faith on the Lord Jesus. Driven to desperation, I had to cry "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief". And God in His mercy gave me the seed of saving faith. It was born out of a heart cry - not out of intellectualism. It was not the product of my reason, it was God dealing with my heart. In the days of the great depression, my father got me into a job in local government. People envied me my wonderful position, little knowing it was a prolonged purgatory. In the mechanical or scientific world I would have been happy, but pushing a pen was total frustration for me. I worked there for 25 monotonous years.

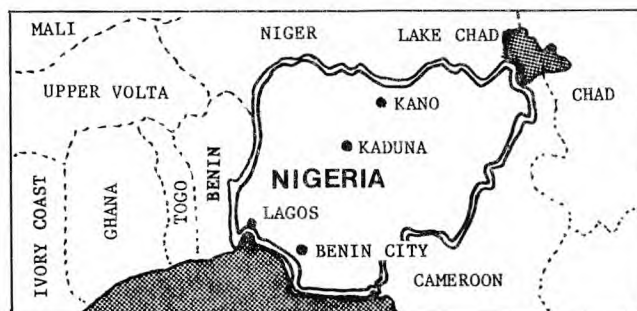
APOSTOLIC VISION

During the war, I was brought into contact with the Apostolic church. I was a conscientious objector and drafted into the non-combatant corps. I was transferred to Newcastle. There I went to an Apostolic convention. I heard ministry such as I had never heard in all my life. I was privileged to hear D.P. Williams, the father of the whole movement, ministering on Romans 8. I had never heard anything like it. He had the whole congregation in tears as he expounded the Word. It was mighty. I felt I'd heard the real truth and couldn't go anywhere else. I thought I saw flaws in their doctrine and construction, but nevertheless had sufficient sympathy with what was being taught to link up with the Apostolic church. As one of them said; "It's true we haven't got the whole thing working, but we have the Apostolic vision!". Later on I became the overseer of the little Exeter assembly, and later still Missionary headquarters asked me to go to Africa. I knew in a moment this was God, and 6 weeks later I was on the high seas with my wife and little daughter. At last the Lord, in mercy, had broken the chains of security and life was becoming an adventure.

My work started in Western Nigeria, under a senior missionary. I was brought in as the functioning Principal of the Apostolic Teacher Training Centre and Bible School. I had never been to Bible College in all my life, and my first experience of a Bible College was when I was Principal!

FAITH AND CONSCIENCE

years because of the climate. You've got to get out and recuperate. So I came back for my furlough and was brought in contact in England with men who had been touched by the 'Latter Rain' revival, especially Fred Poole.



I went back for my next two year period, greatly blessed by the 'Latter Rain' message. In the meantime the committee of the church at home had got to hear about a man of doubtful character in this movement. So they asked us to re-affirm our faith in the apostolic tenets and practices without any reservations whatsoever. I didn't feel that a committee should have total dominion over my faith and conscience. It created such difficulty that I had to resign. That brought me back home from Africa, not knowing where to go or what to do.

RUNNING A BUSINESS

Two of my friends, having left the Apostolic church, had temporarily solved their problems by running a business and using that as a basis for income and then ministering as the Lord opened doors. I thought this was a very good idea and decided to do the same thing. I bought a business in North Devon, where I was pastoring a small independent assembly. The first thing the Holy Spirit said to me after I'd signed the papers and moved in was: "This is no place for you". The message was so clear I was really angry. I said: "Oh, God, why didn't you tell me before?". I suppose I had been too busy listening to other people to listen to God. I put the business back on the market almost immediately, but could not sell it, and was reduced to great extremes. Then the Bank Manager told me he would be calling in the loan in six weeks time. That was when I opened my Bible at Mark 11 and quoted the scripture. I said to the mountain, "Be removed and cast into the sea!". Then I revised it because it was only a couple of miles from the sea, and said to the whole place: "No, what I mean is. get sold tomorrow!".

'JUST LIKE THAT'

The following morning I found an old gentleman outside looking at the premises. He asked how much I wanted for it and we went and signed the papers - just like that!

I was free, and ministered here and there, especially on the word of faith, until one day as I was travelling across London the Holy Spirit said: "Why don't you practice what you preach?". I said, "Lord, that's ridiculous. I want to go back to Africa, and I've got no money, and no missionary society is going to take me this time. So it's impossible". He said: "Why don't you practice what you preach?".

'THAT'S IT LORD'

After this argument I pulled out a piece of paper and wrote down what I wanted. I said 'I want to be back in Africa next year; I want this much money for my fare; this much money for provisions and a second-hand car; this much to set myself up'. I totalled it all up and it came to quite a big sum. I said, "That's it Lord, that's my heart's desire. I believe,

and I receive". I felt I should send out a circular to my friends to tell them what I was going to do and give them a chance to be in on the business, but without making any definite demands. In six months I was on my way - not just on my own, but with my wife and two children.

BENIN CITY - NIGERIA

I told the Lord I wanted to be in an unevangelized area, and so we found ourselves in a deeply heathen village. God had given me my heart's desire - only no money! Weeks went by and we had just enough money to get down to Benin City and send an urgent message to get us out of a mess. So I gathered the family round and told them the situation. I prayed, first thanking the Lord for the trial, which I had begun to enjoy, really, because I thought: "Real missionaries in books used to do things like this". We put the girls to bed and went out. My elder girl cried, "Oh, Jesus, when I was a little girl I promised I'd follow you, but now I decided I wouldn't be a Christian when I grew up, I'll be rich instead. And now all this trouble has come on us, and it's all my fault". And with a breaking heart she turned to the Lord that night. God supplied all our needs from then on.

BENSON IDAHOSA

I linked up with Benson Idahosa and Julius Coker, my 'son in the Lord', and the work was growing and flourishing, when I had a request from Elim, New York State, to come and join the teaching staff. At first I refused, but they were persistent. I was getting long bouts of sickness, and was laid up with a bad back and fever. As I was due to open a Bible School in Benin City, I asked the brethren if we should postpone the Bible school, but they said "No sir! We will pray for you. God will heal you! We will open on time". The following morning they gathered round my camp bed and prayed with me. They said "Tell us what to do, and we will do it". So I said: "Right - you teach the first chapter of John's gospel. You teach the first chapter of Acts, and you (pointing at the third man) teach the first chapter of Romans". They came back at the end of the day. I asked them how they got on, and they lifted their hands to heaven, and said "Wonderful".

HOME

The Holy Spirit said I could go home. I left the work in their hands, going like a prairie fire. The Nigerian work is now over a thousand churches strong. I've been in New York pretty well ever since, teaching various Bible subjects, Bible survey, particular books, homiletics, public speaking and related topics. I have tried to keep away from church government! I teach at a smaller Bible school now, called Pinecrest, and I enjoy it very much. To have a class of forty eager young people is much better than having a church full of five hundred half-enthusiastic adults. EFP

E = ELDER

E = Elder, presbyter (presbuteros)

Strictly an adjective = an older man (older, senior, hence 'an elder')

Usage of word in OLD TESTAMENT

1. Malak = messenger, ambassador, where a senior man is generally in mind (Gen. 32:3; Num. 22:5; 2 Chron. 35:21).

2. Zaqen = old, bearded ('an elder' exercised judicial and administrative functions in Israel, Gen. 50:7; Num. 16:25; 1 Kings 8:1; Ezra 10:8).

In the time of Jesus, members of the sanhedrin and leaders of local synagogues were 'elders' (Matt. 16:21; Luke 22:52).

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Always in the Gospels, sometimes in the book of Acts, of Jewish religious bodies (Matt.15:2 - of the past).

2. In Revelation (4.:4; 7:11; 19:4) those who surround the Throne.

3. Most importantly in Acts pastoral epistles, though never in Pauline Epistles presbuteroi (plural) are officials in the church.

a. associated with Apostles in planting the churches (Acts 15:4; 21:18) appointed in churches founded by Paul (Acts 14:23; 20:17).

b. according to 1 Tim.5:17; James 5:14f, they ruled, taught and did the pastoral care. The commissioning of Timothy in 2 Tim.1:6.

c. relationship of Bishop and Elder is disputed, probably titles were interchangeable (Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet.5:1-2; Tit.1:5-7). Monarchical episcopate is unknown in New Testament.

ED.

THOUGHTS ON FAMILY LIFE

WESLEY

A WIFE'S PRAYER FOR THE CONVERSION OF HER HUSBAND

Searcher of hearts, to Thee I fly,
In doubly deep distress apply
For help to Thee alone.
I want to feel Thy pardoning love;
I want my husband's heart to prove
That mystic peace unknown.

Thy goodness formed and turned his mind;
Thou mad'st him generous, just, and kind;
Yet without Thee he lives.
Thoughtless of all Thy love and care,
His joy, his good, his portion here
Contented he receives.

Saviour, his slumbering spirit call;
Awake, upraise him from his fall,
And show the fountain nigh.
Oh give him now himself to see,
To feel his need of faith and Thee,
And then his need supply.

Till he awakes I cannot rest,
Or bless myself be singly blest,
To him so closely joined;
Flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone,
Thyself of twain hast made us one
In will, and heart, and mind.

Oh may we one become in Thee,
The great mysterious unity
Of sacred wedlock prove,
To Sion hand in hand repair,
And fitted for Thy presence, share
The marriage-feast above.

PARENTS' PRAYERS FOR THEIR CHILDREN

Saviour, I joyfully agree
That children should be brought to Thee;
Myself their infant weakness bear,
And bring them in the arms of prayer.

Hear, Jesus, hear their helpless cry,
Whom now I place beneath Thine eye;
Into Thy kind embraces take,
And subjects of Thy kingdom make.

Thy hand beneficent extend
To bless, and shelter, and defend;
Thy Spirit to my children give
And let them to Thy glory live.

Still let them in Thy footsteps tread,
Till by Thy loving Spirit led
They find the final blessing given,
And triumph with Thy flock in heaven.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

BERNARD HULL

A SIMPLE LOOK AT....:

THE GROUND

A careful examination of the parable of the sower and the seed can be both relevant and helpful at certain times in our lives, perhaps such a time is now. The parable is recorded for us in the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, and only when we bring together all three accounts do we gain the whole content of that which the Lord spoke.

It seems that He spoke the parable on more than one occasion and that this gives rise to the differences in the records. We should not be surprised that the Lord perhaps spoke it more than once because it is such a vital unfolding of truth, foundational to a true understanding of how the Gospel of Grace works in the heart of man.

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

When truth is preached from the scriptures, often it takes a particular form: this is so when hearts receive it by revelation from God and also when learning it from others. Usually this leads to quite a firm 'mould' of doctrine and those who hear and strive to be pleasing to God seek to fit themselves and their experience into this or that 'mould'. This fact can lead to a slavish attitude to a particular form of doctrine, and with it comes a sense of uselessness in the hearts of those who seem to fail to fit into the mould. In conversation with certain people I have often got the sense that they feel themselves irremediably lost and wrong. They are enslaved to an idea of what the new birth is, or the new heart, or the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and having failed to find as yet, they feel that they can never come into that which God wants for them. Some have voiced the opinion that unless this or that demon be cast out from them (whether or not they have a demon may be in doubt), then there is no use in them continuing after the Lord. At such times it does us good to look at things from an entirely different perspective and in non-doctrinal language. This is where this parable can comfort the troubled heart and bring us to faith afresh.

As Jesus moved amongst men and women, He did so in the light of this parable. As He looked upon the hearts of those He met He did not see devils particularly, nor vast and great obstructions that just could not be moved. What He really saw was ground, the ground that lay in each human heart. He knew that in the original intention of God this ground was God's ground. Now, as He looked, He saw that

there were different states into which the ground had fallen but still it belonged to His Father in the last analysis. Our thinking must be brought into line with this outlook and view of the Lord Jesus. It must be lifted out of the realm of demons and wicked powers which obstruct and hold back lives. It is true that this does happen, but let us see beyond these things, and discover what sort of ground we are. Are we yielding to that word already sown in our hearts? If we are not doing so, then what is in the way? What have we to do in order to correct things? It is such a simple parable, and somewhere we all fit into it. If, up to this point in time our life has been unfruitful to God, then the remedy lies here. The reasons for an unsatisfactory Christian life are to be discovered in this parable, and the way to move on from being a 'thirtyfold fruitbearer' to a 'one hundredfold fruitbearer' is contained here too! Thus it is that Jesus in the simplest of ways lets us in to basic secrets of spiritual life. However, as ever, we have to become like children to see and grasp them.

THE PRE-PARABLE

This parable of the Lord is truly 'pre-parable'. In it, Jesus lays the foundations of truth concerning human heart states and thus unfolds keys to spiritual ministry. It is easy for Christian workers to fall into the trap of turning the truth into a fad; that is, they begin to indulge in specialities, maybe the charismatic speciality, or the holiness speciality. Anything at all can be misused in this way. Inadvertently those who do this may have an underlying intention which governs their ministry: it is to bring everybody else into line with their view of things. However, the Lord Jesus did no such thing, instead He sowed the seed of the word of God. That is all He came to do and essentially that is all a preacher should do. The issue of his labours should be left with God and with the heart that hears and receives that word. Let the people of God give freely the word of God which He puts in their hearts. Let them scatter it liberally into the ears that will hear and let them water it by prayer and patient love but it is not for them to say what it shall bring forth. God yearns over human hearts, He works to bring them to fruitfulness but He cannot force them to receive the seed and yield up their increase to Him. So it is with God's workers, they must not pass beyond the limits of their ministry to try to force growth and fruit.

'A sower went forth to sow', and he simply did that. He did not reap, he did not water, but he moved on through the various fields sowing and not considering where the seed fell. A worker for God

must learn to do the same, disregarding the measure of response in those to whom he speaks, for a time of sowing is exactly this. If a man becomes overly concerned with the results of his labours, then it is possible that his sympathies will shift to be more with those who hear the word than with He who gives it. When ground is unfruitful it is not the fault of the seed, nor of the sower. The word of God is sown full of power to bring forth that whereto it is sent. It contains within it all that is needful for its accomplishment providing the ground is good. Essentially it is never God's fault if there is unfruitfulness. If one of God's sowers begins to feel an inordinate sympathy with the ground, then he finds himself in confusion, with no basis of absolutes from God to move by. Such ideas imply that there are certain people outside of the scope of God's redemptive plan, and that there are some conditions that are unreachable. Either God can reach and deal with all, or He is not God at all and redemption is not redemption at all. Spiritual blockages do exist, but they are not outside either the scope of this parable or the power of God to redeem.

FOUR IN ONE!

One of the things to consider is this, that there can be the four types of ground in one person's heart. This may be thought an amazing thing, especially to those who have been analysing themselves knowing that there are four types of ground mentioned by the Lord. 'I must be one or the other, but not all', could be a typical thought. At this point we are not talking about having 'new hearts'. For some of us this terminology has become rather well worn, we love it. However it is good to realize that Jesus thought in terms of wayside, stony, that which was thorn-ridden and good. One heart can be part rocky, part wayside, part already generously sown with sprinklings of the cares of this world and all sorts of thorny, cursed things, whilst part of the heart is good, clear, well ploughed ground. When reading the parable we must not be too rigid in seeking to fit ourselves into it, 'I am this sort of ground or that'. Rather we must see that wayside ground can change, it can be ploughed up and become productive. The ground that is full of stones can be cleaned of these things. It may take some time but these obstructions can be removed. The ground sown with thorns and thistles can be purged of all that offends and can receive and bear fruit of the right kind unto God.

When Jesus spoke this parable it was to the whole multitude but He did not expound its meaning to them. Only later, in answer to the enquiries of His close disciples did He unfold its meaning. He explained the reason for this fact, it was because they had already received from Him and not squandered, and so to them more would be given, but those whose ears were dull had shown themselves unworthy and from them would be taken away even that which they had. Their hearts were in a gross state and as a result their eyes could not see, although they were open and their ears could not hear; they had become thoroughly unproductive.

They did not have a heart for that which Jesus has to share. How different from the prophets and righteous men who in former days had desired to see and hear these things and had not had that privilege. All was at a distance for them, but they went after it with strong desirings and are now the spirits of just men made perfect. They were those who had by faith and to them that had more been given now! Though little be given you, you must give yourself to it. This is what the ground must do, namely, to give up all the energies that exist within it in order to feed that which has been sown into it.

HEAR

Jesus' command is that we may truly 'HEAR' this parable. I think that many of us are all too complicated. Some of us twist ourselves into all sorts of spiritual knots, the bondage that ensues is very often self-inflicted and confusion reigns. 'Am I 'in' or 'out', where am I going, have I begun or not?' These are typical of some of the queries which besiege the troubled mind. Jesus said we are to HEAR this parable, not keep up either a hypocritical facade, nor yet render selfishly introspective. He said that if we really HEAR what He is saying in it, then the heart state shall become 'converted' and apparently, according to Him, the converted heart is healed. There is no doubt in the mind of an honest person that the human heart is a ruin, it is sick and diseased indeed. Jesus states that its conversion from this sick state into productivity of external value begins with HEARING. Now, in Jesus' thought the word 'HEAR' means hearing unto action. To hear the word and do it. It is precisely at this point that so many so-called spiritual blockages have their origin, people hear and do not follow through into action. Sometimes the doing must be done almost cold-bloodedly. Many ache for feelings and experiences that feed the appetites for sensation and do not DO. The word sown from God into our hearts must be done, not just believed. A while back I had a phone call, the caller said 'I knew that this was going to happen'. I said, 'What do you mean?'. He said, 'Well, that we were going to need to accommodate a widow and her children'. Again I asked 'Why?', 'Because God spoke to me concerning that in which pure religion and undefiled consists! God had sowed the word into the heart of this man and his family and now a circumstance arose in which they had to 'do it'. Perhaps you know the children's chorus 'Obedience is the very best way, to show that you believe'? Well, there is a line in the middle of it which says 'Action is the key, do it immediately! We are teaching the children that which must be habit in ourselves.

DO

Would it not be so easy if someone else made us 'do' the word? However, this is just not possible. The preacher cannot, he is only a sower, sowing into the heart. Already other seeds have been sown there. Is it any wonder that the Lord has to purge the ground

of other things sown in it, for He never Himself sows the ground with mixed seed. This was the law in Israel of old as far as the promised land was concerned and its spiritual lesson is obvious to us in the matters of our heart. God does not send His word to us in an untimely way. Naturally speaking mixed seed would grow at different paces, it would come to differing height as it grew, thus causing some to be overshadowed by others, confusion in the field at almost every stage from the blade through to the times of fruit would be the result. God sows a word into a heart in 1950 and then again a similar word in 1955; it may be that He confirms it by further word's sown over the years, but He never sows contradictory words into hearts. He does not send words which vitiate the one against the other, but all He speaks will complement and confirm each the other thus making spiritual life a steady on-going rather than something which zig-zags uncontrollably through various stages.

Checking the spiritual 'pulse' is quite a popular pastime nowadays. 'How am I getting on, how am I performing?' are the kind of questions some ask themselves. Looking at the parable some can wonder, 'where am I in its light?'. Perhaps we suffer from being creatures of our age. There is a lack of 'doing', a tendency to neglect the practical. It is strange that the spiritual should now in many minds be correlated with mystical feelings, and the idea exists that the inward life may be cultivated without the manifestation of outward and moral practical change. I recall that in going to work for the first time the working men mocked and said, 'here is another one, a theory-boy, full of book learning and no practical experience at all, and he has come to tell us what to do!' With the things of God this is not the way. In spiritual life revelation and experience correlate together. God gives revelation to a heart and then somehow the path of life moves through an opportunity to see that truth puts into practice. Sometimes it is the other way about: the practical comes first and then God opens the inward eye to show by revelation that which has been happening. He is the Master of all. He orders these things most wonderfully. We must realize deeply that the obedience of doing is essential to spiritual health, and that to obedience must be added both patience and perseverance.

OBEY

During a series of meetings some years ago in Ibiza, Spain, God spoke most clearly on the subject of obedience. After the message the Spanish brother leading the meeting spoke forth and said to all, 'As I have been listening to this, I have suddenly realized that I cannot think of one of our charismatic choruses which contains the word 'obey'.' Recently, in a second hand book shop I discovered a book by Elisabeth Elliot, 'These Strange Ashes'. It is a book of personal testimony concerning her first year as a missionary in the South American Jungle. I just glanced at it and there she was at the heart of truth; she heard the word and did it. She obeyed, not considering herself. A while back a certain magazine came into my hands. It had an article in it coupled

with a graph. The graph sought to depict something of the processes of church history. It showed how the early church in the first century possessed all spiritual truth and moved in the power of it. Then there was a downward trend, a loss of spiritual truth and power, and down the graph went until it hit an all-time 'low' in what is known as the 'Dark Ages'. However, praise the Lord, there began a restoration, Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, and the 'Reformation', movings of God through various men and women which brought truth to light again. Then the graph had a further rise attributed to the truth of sanctification brought to light through Wesley. Other names had their place and the graph continued to rise ... truth was restored in the Church. There was the movement known as the 'Brethren'. Then the Pentecostal move, and so on ... I am sure I am missing some out, but we get the picture. Then the graph came to its peak again, in our day, in the eighties! The charismatic church has the truth fully restored! Now, I know that there is an aspect of truth set forth in this graph, but we must beware lest we confuse the amount of truth made known in our day with the quality of spiritual life known and enjoyed by men and women of God in centuries gone by. We run the risk of awful spiritual presumption if we are not careful. I quake in the light of the level of outpoured, obedient living characteristic of these ones who have gone before. IS it true that such obedience of life to the truth shown is being manifested in our day? Maybe it is true that some of these men of old did not have all the light of truth which God has been pleased to reveal again in these latter days, but let us fear lest the quality of life be absent, though the level of truth known be present! The heart of truth is obedience to God out of a loving heart. These men and women of old possessed the heart of truth. This is why they brought forth fruit to God. The issue is not how many truths we know in our hearts, but rather that we hear the word of God sown in our hearts and do it. It is to obey in the dark times, to do the word in the bright times, giving ourselves up to the God of the word without reserve. Jesus stated that His true brethren and sisters were those who heard the word and did it.

In the Mark account of the parable, it is recorded that in some hearts the word is received 'immediately'. This word is a favourite of Mark's. Soon however, pressures come because of the word. In this fact is revealed a further spiritual principle. When the word is heard and received it is always with joy. The word causes great happiness in the heart. Truly it is good tidings, the Lord has spoken, we have heard. Yet, we are also told 'when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word'; note the 'when' and not 'if'. There is not a man or woman that will hear and receive the word of God into their heart that will not find themselves tested along the lines of that which has been spoken to them of God. As soon as a person begins to 'do' the word he will be tested on it. Pressures and oppositions arise 'because of the word'. If the word had not come then these difficulties would not have arisen. The obedient person is one who perseveres through these oppositions which in due time will pass away.

PRODUCING WHAT?

As Jesus unfolds the truth of human heart states, He shows something of the ability of the human heart as ground to bear various types of fruit. It is true that the wayside ground was unproductive, but it had potential to be fruitbearing. The stony ground produced a temporary show of greenness at least. Then there was the ground that bore thorns and thistles, a sorry crop this indeed! They are symbols of the curse. Numerous are the examples of this awful truth. Communism is the fruit of hearts into which were sown certain considerations. Marx and Lenin were such hearts bearing awful fruit, which fruit became the seed sown in succeeding generations in many hearts. These hearts who heard, gave themselves up to the philosophy and obeyed the word, thus bearing fruit. Charles Manson is a graphic example of this aspect of truth. He was involved in the Sharon Tate murders. It is on record that he received secret messages which instructed him to kill. When asked where these messages came from, he said that he had heard them in listening to a certain record of the 'Beatles', the 'White Album'. Manson's heart proved receptive ground to those messages. The hearts of those four young men called the 'Beatles' had themselves been receptive ground to the corrupting philosophies of Hinduism and so a chain of seed and fruit had been set up, utilizing the ground of human hearts. Here is the principle and this chain cannot find continuance unless there be the receptive heart which will hear, receive and do the word.

It is vital that we decide which word we will yield up our heart's ground to. We shall certainly bear fruit to that which we are hearing. It is as though Jesus said, 'I am walking around among men, I am the sower, sowing into hearts that seed MY Father has given me to sow. You disciples must see what is happening, see the seed falling upon the hearts of the multitude out there. Some of them are rocky ground, some are shallow, some are wayside, some have other seeds sown in them and some are good ground'. Jesus could have said of Judas, 'you are wayside ground, the ground of your heart becomes the more trodden down as you go along with me'. Judas had been God's ground but he yielded his heart up to another seed. Originally man's heart was God's ground. The appalling consequences of man's fall are revealed in the first mention of 'ground' in scripture - 'cursed shall be the ground, all manner of thorns and thistles shall it bring forth, and in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou till it'. It is true that this scripture speaks of the natural ground of this earth, however, the spiritual lesson is there too. Cursed is the ground of the human heart. It is now scarcely able to be productive unto God unless it undergoes much purging, much preparing, much ploughing. Left to its natural states the heart of man will rapidly produce wild growth which has no other effect than to contaminate. 'The heart of man is deceitful in all things and desperately wicked' is God's pronouncement on the matter. How can such ground become properly receptive

to the seed from the heart of God? He is not in the habit of sowing in a careless way, wasting His words, neither does He sow at an untimely point in a person's life. He sows at the right time for optimum possibility of fruit.

THE GOD WHO PLOUGHS

The first work of God in human hearts is to do all that He can to make the ground good. God will plough the ground, and we must willingly yield to the cuts of His plough. The means He uses in this work of preparation are varied indeed. Circumstances of almost infinite diversity He is able to take and utilize. The loss of a loved one, the loss of a job causing the equilibrium of your life to be upset, some tragedy of bereavement, these often can be God's tools. There is no doubt that the overturning of the soil of the human heart is disturbing indeed. Jesus did not first come to bring peace but a sword. The devil hates this activity of God as indeed he hates all God does. The wicked one would love to keep hearts in false peace lest the heart be disturbed and begin to search. God often engineers circumstances in the lives of men and women so as to upset the evenness of their lives so that the hearts soil is turned, laid bare to the sowing of His seed. Such times of ploughing are dangerous times. There is an enemy at work also. He would work to sow lies, bitterness of attitude and the like in such tenderised hearts. The periods in a life where all is being turned upside down as in the ploughing of soil, are full of possibility to God. Often in those things which seem most wrong, God is at work and there may be in the midst of such events those things which God is doing to ready a heart for blessedness.

A while back a young lady I know did something very foolish. Being somewhat of a rebellious person she went and got herself worse the wear for drink, and in that state she was misused sexually by a man. This tragedy shattered her. She hardly knew what had happened to her. Some weeks later, as she opened her heart about it all, she confessed her foolishness and said that she knew her heart more open to God than than at any previous time in her life. The whole tragic thing which had wounded her had been taken up of God for the reaching of her heart. We are not advocating such horrible and harsh measures to bring a soul to reality, and God does not delight in such things, but He is able to use them. This tragedy was part of God's plough in the heart of that young lady and she has opened up to God. It was not a nice thing, but God reached a formerly hardened heart which then began to yield itself up to the realities of God's claims.

AN HONEST HEART

When Jesus came it was to lay claim to the hearts of those to whom He spoke. He came to say 'you are Mine, you are to bear fruit to me'. The Lord who sees the temporal in the light of the eternal will

most certainly employ what may seem to be the most unfortunate and desperate of means if it means that through them He is able to bring a heart to the state where it is receptive to the seed of His truth. In contrast, the devil will spend all his energies to keep the heart in a state of false peace, keeping things sailing along sweetly lest the knowledge of need should surface to the consciousness and determination to change should rise in the heart. God by many means brings the heart to honesty before Him. Jesus states quite plainly in the parable that good ground is 'a good and honest heart'. A dishonest heart puts the blame upon others. 'It is God who is wrong, or the elders and leaders who are wrong and do not care'. This is an evil heart manifesting its states. The seed of the serpent speaks within it and has the agreement of the dishonest heart. So God permits adversities to come against that person, linking them with manifestations of His tender love, so that the heart becomes softened and broken up before Him. God longs over our hearts. It does not please Him that some of us will only find Him through such crises. Not everybody glides into spiritual blessing, the overturning of settled states in the midst of turmoil are the experience of many. There are times when parents look on helpless as they see their own hearts invested in their children. The rebellions are manifest, but we know a God who is greater and able to save! He ploughs with purpose and precision and always in love.

There is more than one occasion on which the heart is ploughed. Initial ploughing will bring the heart to converted heart states. Such conditions exist where the basic hard rebellion against God is broken up and sods are disintegrated into fertile, rich loam, dampened and softened to receive the sown word. It is needful that the sanctified heart know more of these things. God knows how to keep a heart's ground in right states to be ever fruitful to His speakings. Let not those who are far on in the ways of the Lord be surprised that further ploughings come from time to time; it is no mistake, but meant unto further fruit.

THE WAYSIDE GROUND

Now think a little more deeply concerning the wayside ground. Often I have walked in India, sometimes along a path well trodden by the bare feet of many. It runs between the fields in which the rice or wheat is coming to fruitfulness. The wayside ground is hard as rock but all it needs is some softening showers and the plough to come through it and it will become as productive as the ground through which it passes.

The processes of life often result in hearts being trampled under the feet of others. This hardening process takes place as young lives are giving themselves over to their idols, to

philosophical ideas. Often because their parents have split up, there has been no love in the home and the parents have set an example of materialism which has hardened them in its inevitable way. Multitudes are being used as the footpaths for others. Their hearts are trodden upon and used as ways to self aggrandizement. Jesus is utterly opposed to this behaviour. We recall how He became violent on only two occasions and both were in the temple in Jerusalem. He cast out money changers and their tables, and it is written that He would not allow people to use the temple as a thoroughfare, a kind of path and shortcut. In this He shows His antipathy to this misuse of the temple of man's soul, it is not to be trodden up and down in by others using it for their own convenience. Even a mother can use her child this way and there is a danger that any of us may seek to use another to get somewhere where we ourselves want to go, and the Lord is utterly against it, it is sacrilegious. Jesus said that His Father's house was not to be a house of traffic. It is a terrible misuse of that which is for God, for prayer and worship and fruit to the Father. There is an amazing determination manifest in Jesus as He moves against the interlopers in the temple. Without doubt He moves by His Spirit against wicked spirits which have had a thoroughfare in human hearts. Perhaps on no occasion is the anger of the Lord so overtly declared. The ministers of the Lord know something of this same anger. It is an indication against the despicable presumption of the wicked spirits of darkness which are misusing what for God is to be holy ground. God's temple is holy ground and His temple we are.

THE EVERLASTING MERCY

As God works to have us back for Himself His softening rains will accompany His plough. John Masefield wrote a poem entitled 'The Everlasting Mercy'. In it he speaks of all the shattering which took place in his life, or perhaps we should say, in the life of the man about whom the poem is written, called Soul Kane. He speaks of the way God got hold of him, of how the plough went through his heart:

'O wet red swathe of earth laid bare,
 O truth, O strength, O gleaming share,
 O patient eyes that watch the goal,
 O ploughman of the sinner's soul,
 O Jesus drive the coulter deep,
 To plough my living man from sleep ...'

Evidently this poet laureate of about fifty years ago had some experience of God to know this much, to know that God needed thus to deal with man's soul that it might be like wet, red earth laid bare. We know that this is the graphic language of the poet, yet in it there is much truth. Let us tread both carefully and with gentleness, we should neither speak nor write of these things unless we know His love, for all His dealings with us are filled with infinite tenderness.

BH

It costs to have a vision, but it costs too much to remember only the price.

ANON.

We must learn the meaning of the difference between Consecutive and Concurrent and Comprehensive if we would understand scripture aright. To take an example - 2 Corinthians 3 & 4 are consecutive chapters, but the truth of which they speak is concurrent. The glory into which we are changed is the glory of His image, but we shall not even know what that is unless we grasp the fact that it can only happen as we have within our earthen vessels the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining in our hearts. Now this is only possible if we know the power of bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that His life may be manifest in our fleshly bodies. So we see that chapters 3 & 4 are not consecutive in spiritual experience but only numerically for the mechanics of reading: they are absolutely concurrent. Spoken of

consecutively the things of chapter 4 must not be thought of as further spiritual experiences even though owing to the limitations of the mind, they cannot be thought of at the same time as the mind is occupied with the glories of chapter 3. These things are concurrent. When a man is tried in court for several different crimes, he may be punished with a term of imprisonment for each. If these terms run consecutively the combined sentence may be of many years, but if they run concurrently, just one term, the longest will combine all. It would be possible to define details peculiar to each crime, but that would not alter the concurrence of the sentences. So with this truth - detailed and varied as each may be, the experience is one. Therefore the great comprehensive word is the better for it includes all -
Reconciliation. GWN



STOP PRESS!

New Covenant Sermons

Many of our readers have asked whether some of our articles could be produced in leaflet form, for use in personal ministry.

The following leaflets are now available at a standard charge of 5p each (Quantity orders - price on application):

The King is dying - G.W. North

Man of God - Norman Meeten

What a Price - Edgar Parkyns

The Kingdom Within Your Grasp - G.W. North

Other titles available soon.

new covenant SERMONS

THE DESIRES

'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil' (Eccl. 8:11).

It was said of a great spiritual leader of another century - 'He now began to study human nature as it is. He discovered the necessity of knowing man in his general character, his weakness, depravity and capabilities; of acquainting himself especially with the vulnerable points in the sinner's heart and the various modes of address and modifications of personal feeling by which he might lay hold on the most powerful human passions and prejudices. He became a man of bold and successful experiment in human nature. His estimate of all preaching and all labour was determined by its success - the salvation of souls'.

God has given to us a perfect diagnosis of the human heart in the Scriptures. The diagnosis of the Great Physician. Here we learn what is the material upon which we have to work; what are the strongholds we have to capture; what is the work we have to do; where and how to attack; what is the real condition of heart, mind, will and conscience.

The Word of God presents us with a terrible picture: Jn. 3:19; 2 Tim. 3:4; 2 Tim 3:2; 1 Tim. 6:10; Jn. 12:43; Jer. 7:9; Jer. 13:23; Prov. 28:26; Eccl. 8:11; Mk. 7:21,22.

1. MEN DESIRE NOT GOD (Rom. 1:28)

God has planted within us a capacity for God, but that instinct has been paralysed. The desires of the human heart have been poisoned at their very source. Mere teaching on enlightenment of the understanding will not meet the case. Deep down in the human heart, there is a rebellion and hatred of God.

There is no more convincing evidence of the depravity of human nature than this hatred of God. It seems to be most bitter in the most educated.

**2. MEN DO NOT DESIRE HOLINESS
(Job 21:14,15)**

Men love sin. They do not desire a knowledge of the ways of God. They may not love all sin, but they love it with all their hearts. The drunkard loves his drink; the immoral, their immorality; the

rich, their money; the vain woman, her vanity; the proud man, his pride.

Men are not overwhelmed with a sense of sin. The consciousness of sin for many came to them only after they had become disciples of Jesus and had attained a personal experience.

Some want to be rid of certain sins which are a trial to them, but want to keep the rest.

3. MEN DESIRE NO CONTROL (Lk. 19:14)

Men hate Divine authority. They hate a Holy God and a Divine Master 'enemies in your mind' - man is a rebel, alienated from God by wicked works. His desire and affections prostituted and defiled.

The new thing and the good thing of God's message is that He loves sinners; He died for rebels; He wants to show mercy on all. The prayer of a woman called Caroline Fry 'O God, if Thou art a God, I do not love Thee; I do not want Thee; I do not believe there is any happiness in Thee, but I am miserable as I am. Give me what I do not seek; give me what I do not want. If Thou canst, make me happy. I am miserable as I am; I am tired of this world; if there is anything better, give it me'.

She told Him the truth and that is all God asks. 'Declare thou that thou mayest be justified. Only acknowledge thine iniquity that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God'.

**4. MEN DESIRE NOT CHRIST AS SAVIOUR
(Jn. 5:40, Mt. 23:37)**

By nature, men do not want Christ. 'When we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him'.

Let His claims be pressed upon us, of a WHOLE-HEARTED SURRENDER, and service, and opposition bursts out in a flame. Men may discuss politely about Jesus and the Gospel, but bring them to their need to be born again, and then their opposition is apparent. To come to the Lord in all their need, as they are, confessing their unbelief and God will receive - how many will readily respond to such a call? 'Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life'.

These are four facts concerning the heart of man. It will drive us to our knees, to our Bibles, and out into the city to rescue the perishing.

:THE UNDERSTANDING

Rom. 1:21,22

Gen. 6:5

Man's understanding is darkened. This is true in our country, and even more so with men of other religions. We have to enlighten the understanding before there can be the exercise of any intelligent faith in Christ. Four great fundamentals of which the heart by nature is ignorant:

1. IGNORANCE OF GOD (1 Cor. 1:21)

In a Christian land, there is generally a mental acknowledgement of the existence of God. This knowledge, in an awakened heart, at once produces conviction. Conscience has material on which to work. We can immediately use it as a lever to move the will and heart of the penitent. In heathenism, there is nothing; there is no hope or light, nor has the Gospel been taken to them. And this is true even in our own land, where many nationalities have settled over the last few decades. They are here and they need a preacher to reach them with the Gospel. At times, God intervenes sovereignly, to illuminate the blind heart, but His purpose is to use us to accomplish His purposes. Other religions blind men, deceive and prejudice the heart. The more intellectual have been deceived more readily.

As a natural consequence of man's ignorance of God, is the resistance to the claim of God upon the human soul. There are many claims competing for the attention of men, but the claims of God as creator, Master, Father and Judge are unintelligible - 'There is no fear of God before their eyes' (Isa. 1:3).

The revolt of man is so absolute, the determination to be his own master, the desire to be independent of all control, that the idea of yielding total obedience to God seems unintelligible.

With this ignorance of our responsibility, there is naturally an ignorance of judgement to come. (Jer. 8:6,7).

2.IGNORANCE OF GOD'S GIFT (Jn. 4:10)

God's nature is to give. He cannot help giving. If we will not let Him give us the best in spiritual gifts, He will shower temporal gifts upon us. It is almost impossible for human nature to

comprehend that God desires to give to the unthankful, the unworthy, the unlovely and the evil. Human nature can only conceive in giving to those whom we love.

It is hard for us to rid ourselves of the notion that men have an elementary notion of God's existence. We must extricate ourselves from such notions, or we will be talking above the heads of those we seek to win.

3.IGNORANCE OF MAN'S TRUE CONDITION (Rev.3:17)

The unregenerate heart is entirely incapable of knowing its own state before God by nature. Unaided man is unable to diagnose his own spiritual state before God; at the same time, he may be quite brilliant in his own field - 'thou knowest not'. The mind and understanding of man are dark indeed, our task is to enlighten it.

Nothing is more bewildering and paralysing than this ignorance of their condition. Absolute and utter lack of sense of sin. It is usually only after sin has brought forth its awful consequences of misery and shame that men feel something of the horror of iniquity and even then, not a horror or guilt against a holy God. A man may have a sense of the evil effects of sin or even of moral iniquity, but his sense of guilt in the presence of a holy God is absolutely non-existent. Enlightenment is the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. IGNORANCE OF THE WAY (Rom. 3:17, Lk. 19:42)

The ignorance that hides from a soul the way of mercy, grace and peace.

The eunuch was actually reading Old Testament Scriptures and could not see the way, nor understand.

The natural man knows not the way of redemption, nor of forgiveness through the Blood of the Lord Jesus.

We must study both the Word of God and the ways of men, in order to enlighten them unto salvation.

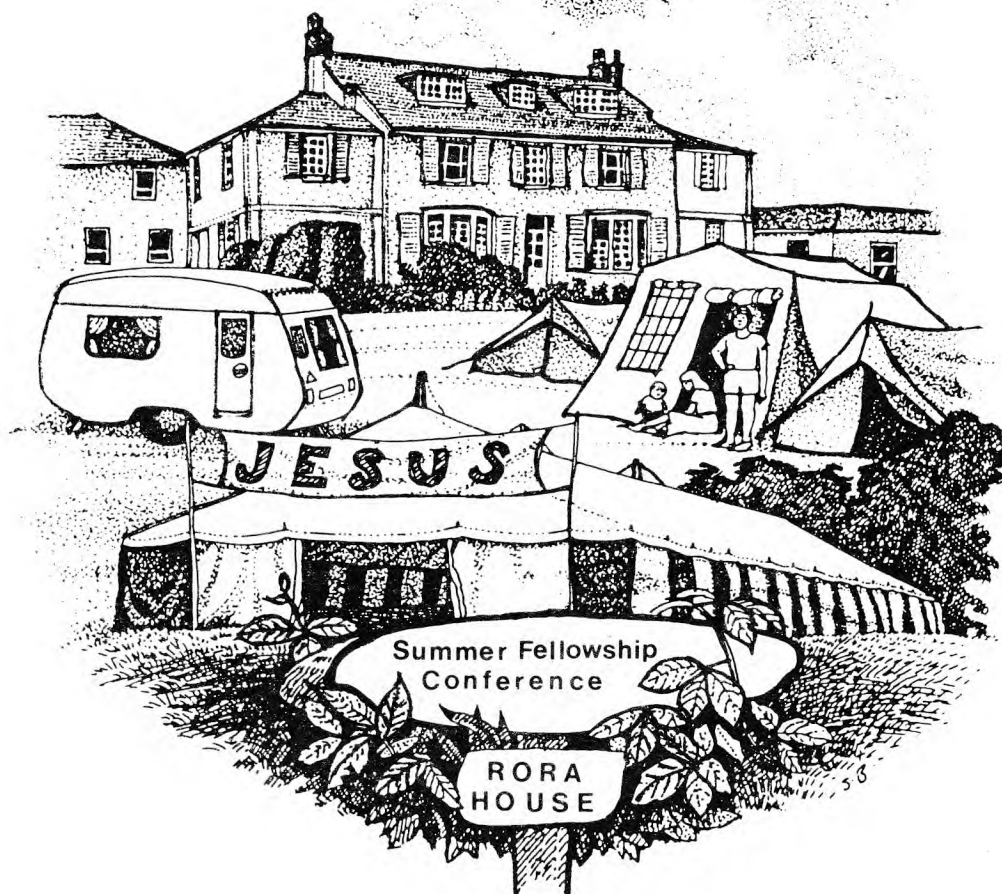
Men are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart.

Men know not God, nor that He is a giver; they know not their own state before Him, nor the way back to Him. DH

If I did not see that the Lord kept watch over the ship, I should long since have abandoned the helm. But I see Him! Through the storm, strengthening the tackling, handling the yards, spreading the sails - aye more, commanding the very winds! Should I not be a coward if I abandoned my post? Let Him go ever, let Him carry us forward, let Him hasten or delay, we will fear nothing!

MARTIN LUTHER

SUMMER FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE



**30th. JULY – 6th. AUGUST
1988**

The Summer Fellowship Conference takes place again this year in the grounds of Rora House on the south-eastern edge of the Dartmoor National Park in Devon.

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