

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

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SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSING

“EXCEPT your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

It is always an embarrassment when the professional comes across the casual amateur who outshines him. We have all, no doubt, seen or heard of such instances. Perhaps the regular pianist goes sick after the first item on the programme and an appeal is made to the audience for someone who might possibly fill in. Up comes a blushing young boy and astounds the audience with his ability. The professional now feels twice as sick as he did before. The art teacher is showing the novice how to grasp the brush and grapple with colour-mixing and tones. A few months later the student is embarrassing the teacher with the pictures he is producing. There must be hundreds around like ‘Granma’ Moses. Years ago when the boxing booths were popular and the professional boxers travelled from village to village it was their occasional misfortune to encounter, in some little town or other, the local ‘hardman’ and come off second best in the ensuing encounter. In the little village of Roslin, where I was born, there is a fine old castle and chapel (I notice that they get a mention in ‘Encyclopaedia Britannica’). The chapel though small is well worth a visit. It was founded in 1446 by William StClair and is believed to be but the chancel of what was intended to be a larger church building. It was ‘vandalised’ by revolutionaries in 1688 but is still fairly intact and all the fine stone carving is still to be seen. Particularly famous, (almost world-famous) is the ‘Prentice Pillar’. Briefly, the story surrounding this pillar concerns the embarrassment of the professional at the skill of the amateur. The master carver, when the chapel was being built, went off to Europe to get some new ideas for the designs and patterns of the carving to be employed on the one remaining pillar to be carved. On returning, he found that the small apprentice had carved the pillar, in his absence, and had made a magnificent job of it (as you can see for yourself today). He was so angry, outraged and perhaps jealous that he chased the apprentice and murdered him. Artisans have a certain pride in their skills and don’t like to be bettered by the uninitiated, and this is very understandable. Nobody likes to be told how he should do his job.

It perhaps also comes as an embarrassment to us when, as members of the Lord’s church, we encounter people who make no claim to any part of discipleship with Christ yet outshine us in good works. Sometimes we have every right to be embarrassed.

Sometimes we hear of people whose faith in what they believe, though not founded on a rock like Christ, is vastly deeper than the one we display in Christ. Some travel on foot for hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of miles to worship their deity while we might be put off by a shower of rain or a running nose. In India some of the starving millions are found dead beside vast quantities of food — food which could have kept them alive but prohibited to them by their religious beliefs. They chose to die rather than contravene one of their rules of faith. One can but admire faith⁴ such as this. Is this the kind of faith Jesus is expecting in His followers, and if so, will He get it? Mahatma Gandhi of India, who was a Hindu, was once asked what put him off becoming a Christian and answered, "Christians". Apparently he reckoned that Christians did not live up to their religious obligations in anything like the fashion that those of the Hindu faith did. What must Jesus have thought of that remark, especially if it was true? I am sure many of us feel not a little embarrassed when we see the amount of road-work that members of the 'Jehovah Witness' sect put in in a week. Perhaps this embarrassment turns a little to shame when we see them adding people to their numbers that we could have been adding to the Lord's church had we been as diligent in calling at doors as they were. Then there are those organizations and individuals who do more for the poor and the infirm than we do, or seem to. Then there are those religious groups who seem to give more time, money and other resources than we seem to. I am generalising, of course, knowing full well that a great many individuals in the country can stand comparison with any other fellow humans, but as a church we must try and have a greater impact on the world. The concerted efforts of all can achieve, I believe, more than the isolated efforts of individuals. As the church of the Lord Jesus Christ we should not be outshone by any other, and our standards should not be lower than any others.

My original intention in this article was to show that it is possible but unfortunate for those who profess a faith to be outshone by those who make no such profession and perhaps I have digressed slightly. I intended to make mention of the 'thief on the cross' and show what great faith his words implied. Usually the thief on the cross receives little mention except it be in refutation that he was 'saved' in the generally accepted sense on the term. Surely one of the most remarkable speeches on record is that of the dying robber, addressed partly to his fellow-robber and partly to Jesus. To his fellow robber he said, "Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly: for we receive due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss". There certainly was a better side to this thief. I wonder how he knew that Jesus had done nothing amiss? Surely he must have come to this conclusion before he was imprisoned. It is just possible that he had seen Jesus, or heard Him, before imprisonment. Men dying the slow death of crucifixion are unlikely to prevaricate or exaggerate. As he approached the point of meeting his Maker he felt ashamed of reproaching One whose life had been free from misdeeds and so he spoke out in His defence. More strange still was the next statement he made "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom". How could he possibly believe that Jesus would come in His kingdom when he saw Him there on the cross, and about to die? This confidence expressed by the thief certainly outshone Christ's own disciples. They did not seem to share the confidence of the thief. Belief in the resurrection of our Lord, and the later ability to establish any kind of kingdom, certainly seemed to have perished in the hearts of the immediate disciples and they were soon to be in hiding, frozen with fear. Thomas was later to demand the actual sighting and handling of Christ before he would even begin to try and believe that Jesus had risen from the grave. Judas had, in a fit of remorse and despair, committed suicide. Thus the faith of the thief on the cross was all the more remarkable. Even as life ebbed away from Jesus on the cross, the thief believed that in time, he knew not when, in some place, he knew not where, in some form, he

knew not what, the kingdom would appear. What a rebuke to the faith of the close disciples of Jesus. What a rebuke to the faith of thousands today who stagger at little obstacles; falter and hesitate in the face of apparently obscure passages of scripture; and who fall into the rut of inactivity as others; who wilt under the fire of even slight opposition, and who would prefer to warm their hands at the fire of the enemy rather than share the cold and loneliness of their suffering Lord. "Lord, remember me", murmured the dying thief and what poignancy in his words. In His reply Jesus seemed to imply that the faith of the thief was such that He would certainly not be likely to forget him.

Let us try and make sure that what we do for the Lord will be worth remembering and that we shall see to it that we shall not easily be outshone by society at large in the doing of the work of the Lord.

EDITOR.

IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

PERFECT SALVATION — "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD" PSALM 23:1

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" John 10:11
 "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" John 10:9 (R.V.)

It is said that the simplest words carry the deepest meaning. Shall we read these words slowly "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep". "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved". We can but marvel at the simplicity of these words of the Lord Jesus. They are simple but profound! And why? surely the answer is to be found in the words of Nicodemus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him" John 3:2. A teacher come from God, He is the one who can bring us, in all fulness to God, for He has the knowledge of the ultimate purposes of His Father for us, and is well able to bring us to the paths of life, which will be a source of rich blessing, if we listen and follow.

"Never man spake like this man" John 7:46.

"This man", came into the world for a purpose, "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" 1 Tim. 1:15 (R.S.V.). "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" Mark 2:17 (R.S.V.). Paul says in Romans 5:12,18 and 19 (R.S.V.) "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned," Verse 12 "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men" verse 18. "For as by one Man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" verse 19 "SO ONE'S ACT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS LEADS TO ACQUITTAL AND LIFE FOR ALL MEN". "SO BY ONE MAN'S OBEDIENCE MANY WILL BE MADE RIGHTEOUS". So the price was paid, "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep". It is well that we remind ourselves, we are not saved by our own righteousness, indeed, if we turn the searchlight of God's word inward, we shall conclude our examination, with the words of the prophet, "All we like sheep have gone astray" Isaiah 53:6. After a period of self-examination that mighty man of God, the Apostle Paul said: "We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" Romans 7:14 (R.S.V.).

In the light of God's most precious word, who can stand, who dare stand, before God with his own goodness, with his own righteousness? Not me! Isaiah said: "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a

polluted garment" Isaiah 64:6. Let us also remind ourselves that our silver and gold cannot and will not save us, the Apostle Peter said: "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" 1 Peter 1:18,19. Where can we go? again the Apostle Peter gives us the answer: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" John 6:68, 69.

**"I AM THE DOOR: BY ME IF ANY MAN ENTER IN, HE SHALL BE SAVED"
"BY ME.....BY ME.....BY ME"**

"One door and only one : and yet its sides are two,
the inside and outside : on which side are you?
One door and only one : and yet its sides are two
The best side is inside : on which side are you?"

THE DOOR: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."
John 10:9

AN OPEN DOOR: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".
Matthew 11:28

A WIDE DOOR: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
Revelation 22:17

A SAFE DOOR: "All that the father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out".
John 6:37

Perfect Salvation – We Are Saved By:–

HIS LIFE: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life". Romans 5:9,10.

GRACE: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" Ephesians 2:4,5

THE GOSPEL: "MOREOVER, Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." 1 Cor. 15:1,2.

FAITH: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
Ephesians 2:8,9.

BAPTISM: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
1 Peter 3:21

WASHING OF REGENERATION: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration".
Titus 3:5

RENEWAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Titus 3:5

CALLING ON HIS NAME: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:21

THE WORD: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls". James 1:21

Perfect Salvation – "The Lord Is My Shepherd"

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep".

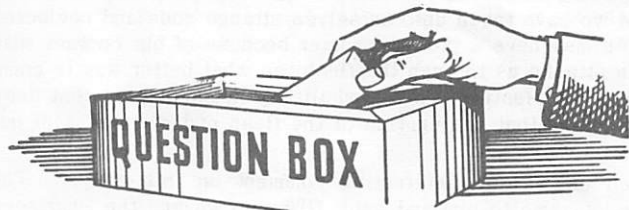
"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved".

"He lay down His life for His sheep;
He lay down His life for His sheep;
The shepherd so kind had me in His mind
When He lay down His life for His sheep."

This Month's Exercise:

Read every day John 10:1-18, and learn by heart verses 9 & 11.

Leonard Morgan.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

Should fasting have a place in the Christian's life today?"

To fast, means to abstain from eating. Fasting was a well-established and common practice among the Jews, and was continued among christians. There is no evidence to suggest that the church was specifically enjoined, as part of its doctrine, to practice fasting. This does not, however, mean that fasting has no place in the life of a christian today, and if we examine some of the incidents when fasting took place we might see the relevance in the practice for us today. There are examples in the Bible of both voluntary and involuntary fasting and we shall examine them to see if any lessons can be learned.

Voluntary Fasting

1. There are two instances of fasts lasting for a period of forty days and forty nights. The first one was by Moses when he was given the commandments by God (Exodus 34:28); the second one was by Jesus when He was in the wilderness (Math. 4:2). What similarities are there other than the period of time? Well, in both instances it would seem that God was making preparation for His message to be made known to people. But what about the two people involved? They were both flesh and blood and forty days and nights is a long time, in fact, the Matthew passage says that Jesus was hungry, and can we wonder at that. Could it be that both Moses and Jesus were dwelling so intently on God that they were able to subdue the pangs of hunger? Did the absence of food sharpen their spiritual perception and increase their sensitivity to God? If this is so, what of us today? After having filled our time-controlled and regulated cookers does the vision of stuffed chicken or succulent roast permeate our minds during the breaking of bread service, and make a period of three hours or so seem like eternity? Maybe our spiritual perceptions need to be sharpened. Maybe a fast on the Lord's Day would do us good.

2. There is some evidence of fasting taking place when important decisions had to be made. Such fasting was invariably accompanied by prayer. The brethren fasted and prayed when Barnabas and Paul were separated for the work of proclaiming the gospel (Acts 13;2,3). Have we important decisions to make today? Well, of course we have. How shall we present the gospel to an apathetic society? Where is the church going? These are important questions that demand answers. The consideration that we give to them is sometimes, to say the least, somewhat sketchy. I have thought for some time now that we ought to have a week—end retreat in some quiet spot where we could give ourselves over to prayerful consideration of these important issues, earnestly desiring to find God's way. Perhaps our minds would be so elevated that the most frugal fare would suffice for the body. I wonder what it feels like to be transported by spiritual ecstasy, desiring only spiritual food instead of the gross excesses which we consider to be necessary for what we call 'our physical well-being'?

3. Sometimes people feel sorry for their contact with sin and their consequent neglect of God. In the first book of Samuel we read of how the children of Israel were sorry because of their worship of Baalim and Asharoth, and on the advice of Samuel were willing to put away these strange gods. So they gathered together they confessed their sins, they fasted, and Samuel prayed for them (1 Sam. 7;1—6). It may very well be that we today feel that we have taken unto ourselves strange gods and neglected the true and living God. We may have a profound regret because of our contact with sin. We are aware that sin attacks us through the flesh, so what better way to come before God than with prayer and fasting, thus symbolising in our bodies that deep contrition for sin and expressing that subjugation of the flesh and awakening of our spiritual desires.

4. Jesus himself provides us with an interesting comment on this subject. The disciples of John the Baptist came to him and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not"? In reply, Jesus said, "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the day will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast". (Math. 9;14,15). It seems to me that Jesus here is,

(i) by his reference to himself as the bridegroom, indicating his Messiahship to John's disciples. (ii) in some way, relating his physical presence with his children as a reason for their non—fasting. We shall not concern ourselves with (i) just now, but (ii) needs a little explanation. Now we know that when a person whom we love dearly is with us then all seems to be well. But when that person is taken away, by death, perhaps, then as regards our intake of food, two things can happen. Either food could make us physically sick, or our spirits could grieve so much for the one who had gone that the thought of sustenance for the body would seem to be an offence against the grieving spirit this, of course, is a form of reactive depression. I believe that Jesus was teaching the important lesson that when his bodily presence was no longer with his children then they would need to seek him in faith through meditation and prayer, and that the concentrated intensity of that search could far exceed any physical desire for regulated feeding times; hence, fasting. Perhaps our over—participation in the gastronomically god life limits our spiritual involvement in the better life.

Involuntary Fasting

This type of fasting is, as the term implies, not self-imposed. It is a situation that occurs when there is no food available. But because it is involuntary this does not mean that it is unacceptable. Paul said, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). In 2 Cor. 6 he catalogues the whole spectrum of human and spiritual experiences in the world, and involuntary fasting is one of those experiences (v5). It is worthy of note that in verse 4 he makes the statement that in these things they were "approving themselves as ministers of God".

We in the western world today may not have to experience this type of fasting, but our television screens indicate quite horribly that this is not so in many other parts of the world. Perhaps the extent of involuntary fasting that people have to endure might encourage us to fast voluntarily so that some of our surplus could be used to meet their necessity.

Conclusion

You will by now have noticed, no doubt, that I am suggesting that fasting could be useful in order to sharpen our spiritual perception. I have tutored many groups of people and have seen what the effects of a good lunch can be. Post-lunch sessions have been notable not for the knowledge that one can impart, but for the success one has in keeping some people awake. Medium to heavy meals have a soporific effect on people, particularly if there is nothing happening to excite the interest. People will tend to "nod off".

What shall we say, then? Well, if fasting can help us in the ways that I have indicated, then I would say unhesitatingly, "Yes, fasting HAS a place in the life of the christian today, and it is up to each individual christian to prove its worth, because it is certainly a well-attested scriptural principle".

(All questions please to Alf Marsden, 66 Mitchell Street, Newtown, Wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

DECEMBER 1974

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1—Isaiah 6 | 2 Cor. 12 |
| 8—Deut. 19:14-21 | 2 Cor. 13 |
| 15—Ecc. 7:1-20 | Luke 12:1-21 |
| 22—1 Kings 10:1-22 | Luke 12:22-48 |
| 29—Ecc. 11:1 to 12:8 | Luke 12:49 to 13:5 |

THE THORN IN THE FLESH

MANY have set out to explain just what this hindrance in the Apostle Paul's life actually was. It is safe to say that we do not know, and it is more important that his own words about it should be understood. Even one of these is in doubt owing to differences in the most ancient manuscripts. Is the description of the affliction "thorn" or "stake"? The latter would represent a more grievous trouble to bear. It must suffice us to appreciate the fact of a burden so great that three fervent and distinct appeals to the Lord were made for its removal.

We begin at the beginning by observing that we are reading of things which Paul received as a most exceptionally favoured person. He resigned at the call of God

every advantage he had originally as an eminent Jew. The fact that he had a vote tells us this (Acts 26:10). His severance from all former ties must have been an earthquake experience. The sacrifice he then made was continued with additional and growing stress all the time of his labours. God made choice of him before his birth (Gal. 1:15), and called him to this tremendous privilege and responsibility. His importance in the development of the church cannot be exaggerated. There could have been no proper understanding of the gospel without the removal of the division between Jewish and Gentile converts. "God made choice of Peter at the first" (Acts 15:7) to open the eyes of the apostles to the universality of the message they had received, but it was left to Paul to lead and press home the outcome into the wide world.

One of the great faults of the Pharisees among whom Paul was trained was their conceit and self-righteousness (Luke 18:11). What a temptation to personal pride the supreme honour could have been! Our readings have revealed the possibilities of boasting. Yet it has been merely the statement of facts in defence against "false apostles" working against truth with deceit. The account

of the sufferings and humiliations through which Paul had passed is now followed by a brief account of the altogether miraculous revelations he received from God Himself. Can we wonder in these circumstances that a deterrent to pride was needed? Paul recognised his greatness as a gift from God not something he earned or deserved. So in telling the truth about it he is careful to attribute the glory where it belonged. The answer to his prayers was sufficient (12:9). The messenger of Satan became to him a messenger from God designed for his eternal welfare, so easily could he have been "exalted above measure", but instead he "took pleasure", or perhaps better 'was content' with weaknesses and insults (R.S.V.).

It may be helpful to suggest what we suppose to be the likeliest explanations of the apostle's affliction.

1 Trouble with eyesight. Passages for study: Acts 13:9 and 23:1 & 5; Gal. 4:14 & 15; 6:11 ("with how large letters" R.V.).

2 Trouble with temper. Acts 7:58; 8:1/3; 11:4; 15:37-39; 23:2-5; 2 Cor. 12:20 & 21. The tenor of these closing chapters of 2 Cor. seems to show a fear of an outbreak of wrath — yet not necessarily so.

Our private opinion favours No 1, and consideration of both is instructive as showing both the spiritual strength and possible weakness of this man of God. For us "Who is sufficient?" Says Paul himself "Be imitators of me as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

True Wisdom

Turning back to Luke, we find the Saviour defying the wicked and unprovoked hostility of the religious leaders, and actually warning the public against their special sin. What they placed importance upon was appearances. We perhaps too often do this unconsciously. While we must provide things honest in the sight of all men, the important thing is our inward condition of heart. Ultimately everything will be shown up, and if our goodness is only a show, it

is worse than useless, much worse for judgement is around the corner.

But with the warning comes the assurance of God's care for His people. The immediate disciples were shortly to experience such a shock that they needed desperately to know both their responsibility and their unfailing support. Jesus warns them to fear God because of man's ultimate destiny but assures them of their destiny as possessors of His kingdom (12:5 and 12:32). They are to face opposition and persecution which will test their endurance but they need not fear for finally truth will triumph. Their preaching of it will bring them into trouble — "not peace but a sword". By seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness they will be exercising the true wisdom. All who by selfishness or being tied to this world and its goods are foolish will ultimately find it out. The call to self-denial and suffering (12:33) to the worldly soul appears against our interest, but when the whole picture is viewed how obviously it becomes the highest and greatest good. All pretence, deceit and refusal to face the truth is the height of folly.

We sadly reflect upon obstinate acceptance of present pleasure rather than true and final happiness, and trust we will be given grace to 'endure to the end' (Matt. 24:13). R.B. SCOTT

JANUARY 1975

5—Isaiah 1:1-20 Luke 13:6-21
 12—Isaiah 63:7-19 Luke 13:22-35
 19—Prov. 23:1-14 Luke 14:1-24
 26—Isaiah 58 Luke 14:25 to 15:10

THE SABBATH QUESTION

IT appears that Jesus was able to continue teaching in the synagogues in spite of the dislike and opposition of the 'rulers'. Surely this was because "the common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37), and the rulers feared to oppose Him openly (Luke 20:19). As the time for the consummation of His work drew on He used very plain words against His opponents. Their insistence upon obedience to the law of Moses as illustrated in observance of the Sabbath

had become a matter of sheer formality. They had elevated their interpretation of it to a word of God Himself. So, in our readings the ruler thought the order of the meeting more important than a kind act of healing. He was horrified at such an interruption. It may be at times we need the warning not to allow habits of worship to interfere with kind actions. In the case of this "ruler" however he was hiding hostility to Jesus under supposed zeal for obedience to God.

We suspect that the invitation to dine with a chief Pharisee 'had strings' (14:1-24). We note "they watched Him" It was on the Sabbath and a man suffering with dropsy was there. Jesus challenged the company, healed the man and gave the lesson — the same lesson again! The Sabbath law had been hedged about with foolish restrictions, never imposed by the law itself, and Jesus exposed the error and the folly.

PARABLES

In the compass of our month's readings we have six. We will look at them briefly in order. The picture of the unfruitful fig tree follows warnings about the faithfulness of stewards, the divisive nature of the kingdom, the signs of the times and the need for repentance. It emphasises the critical position of those who heard Jesus's teachings. Obviously the nation of Israel is in view. Those who had knowledge of the history would see and heed the warning if they chose. The mustard seed and the leaven are of course pictures of the quiet yet penetrating influence of the gospel. The master of the house (13:25) again gives warning to those who were so near to the influence and teaching of Jesus, but had not realised the personal responsibility this imposed upon them. Too many Jews were satisfied they had God's favour without accepting His way. The Great Supper again points the same lesson, and would fit those who shared in the meal at the Pharisee's table. They considered themselves particularly fit for the blessings of God, but like Nicodemus needed the New Birth, only available upon humble

acceptance of the new and living way. Finally there is the lost sheep, showing the mercy and love of God for those who need it most. Was it possible that this picture would soften the self-righteous hearts of the religious leaders, or would they still look down with contemptuous dislike on the sinners and tax gatherers? "The people rejoiced for all the glorious things which were done by HIM". So do we.

WARNINGS OF DOOM

We recall that we are reading words said at the time when the final journey to Jerusalem is being undertaken (13:22). The parable of the fig tree has an obvious reference to the "last chance" of the Jewish nation. The mustard seed and the leaven indicate the infiltration of a power which was to spread over the world in a generation, bringing new life to countless souls. The door to salvation was closing for so many, resulting in weeping and gnashing of teeth by those who thought themselves first but would seal their own rejection (13:30). The Saviour's lament doubtless repeated and often deeply felt (Luke 19: 41-44) was excited by the reply He gave to those who warned Him of Herod's enmity. Herod was the ruler of Galilee and Idumea. It may be the Pharisees only wanted to see Jesus out of their way, but His reply tells us He will not hurry but is on the way into Pilate's territory. Jerusalem did not receive Him although His disciples shouted the words. Every Jew who accepts the gospel sees Him in a personal sense. Some hold that the Saviour is coming again to Jerusalem in a physical sense when it is supposed the whole Jewish nation will accept Him, but this does not harmonise with so many scriptures that we do not accept it as an explanation of the statement, Jerusalem finally rejected the Son of God, and He wept over it on that account. She is left desolate, and rejected.

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

The words and works of Jesus were irresistible. The minds and consciences of the crowds accepted Him as a great

prophet and leader, and as He journeyed towards their capital city, the focal point of national pride and patriotism, they gathered about Him. As He got nearer (see 19:11) excitement grew. They expected some great miraculous material sign to come. It was perhaps their disappointment partially which enabled the Rulers to reverse their veneration into hatred, when viewing His humiliation before His captors, they cried "Crucify Him; crucify Him" (23:21). So sadly but firmly He turned to them and spoke words which down the ages need to be taken to heart by all who take His yoke, Perhaps too often we make christianity attractive by making it easy. The Saviour did say with tender love "Come unto Me" (Matt. 11:28), but he also added "Take My yoke and learn". The adoption has to be whole-hearted and there is no going back. It has to be a final decision to put Him first in the life. We know of course that Jesus does not teach us to hate anyone, least of all those to whom we have a responsibility, but when there is a choice through temptation to turn aside from the main purpose of life, the choice has to be obedience to Jesus. He chose to speak of the closest obligations for emphasis, and the most terrible suffering, the cross, to bring home to any light-hearted disciples, what following Him really meant. The obvious lessons for foresight are there too, and lastly the illustration of salt — so utterly useless unless good. Surely when those humble apostles had their first brush with the authorities, His words brought comfort and encouragement. They had indeed made a life-time choice.

Brothers and sisters, have we too?

R.B.SCOTT

('SCRIPTURE READINGS' for both December and January 1975, have been printed in this issue so that in future brother Scott will be giving us his fine thoughts on the weekly scripture readings in advance. This will make them more valuable to us. I am sure that all the readers of the 'Scripture Standard' would join with me in thanking our dear brother Scott for all the hard work he puts into this feature and how much it

is appreciated. As editor I have real cause to thank brother Scott for the unerring regularity of his articles through my letterbox. We are also greatly indebted to brother Scott for the reading cards, which he has to prepare for us annually, and I am told that he has again rendered us this very valuable service and the cards are now in the hands of the printers.)

82, Carlinghurst Road,
Blackburn, Lancs. BB2 1PN.

October 1974

To Readers of the 'S.S.'

Dear Brethren,

I am in hospital, and Bro. Paul Jones, who is assisting the church at Mill Hill, Blackburn, has just been along to visit me, along with Sister Brunton.

I was explaining how the many long hours here are spent in reading and writing letters, to which Paul responded, "then why not write to the 'S.S.'."

Well, brethren, all I seem to want to say is, 'How happy are they who their Saviour obey'. I realise more and more every day how the Lord keeps His promises, and when one is here in hospital it is a real testing time. Never for one moment have I been alone, and pain is so much easier to bear when you lay your burdens at the feet of the Lord. We have two old ladies in the ward who are extremely noisy. Both are nearly 90 years old, and have lost their reasoning abilities. One night I awoke with some pain, but soon found myself smiling when one of them in a 'mixed-up' sort of way began to sing 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide; Count your blessings, name them one by one; When through the deep waters He bids you to go; I lift my heart to thee, Saviour Divine.' The tune was all mixed up, too, but she made me realise such a lot. I HAVE asked the Lord to 'abide with me', and HAVE 'counted the many blessings' He has given me, as I HAVE 'come through the deep waters'. So there is nothing for me but to sing with gratitude, 'I lift my heart to thee, Saviour Divine'.

My only wish is that I could get some of the patients in here to realise that if they would give their hearts to the Lord, pain and sorrow would have no strength—he lightens every burden, and makes the darkness bright.

Yours Sister in Christ Jesus

Lily Renshaw.

(I received this letter a few days ago and am happy to print it. Sister Renshaw is coping with a painful illness and showing great courage and an indomitable spirit. We thank her for her example and we, in turn, will pray for her. Please remember her in your prayers, brethren.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Blackburn, New Wellington Street: Well over 70 brethren and friends packed our small meeting house on Saturday 28th September to hear our three young brethren give short talks on "Why I am a member of the Church of Christ" by Bro. D. Melling (Longshoot, Wigan). "What is A Church?" Bro. I. Parker (Newtown, Wigan). "What is THE Church" Bro. J. Morgan (Hindley). These three young brothers gave excellent talks on the subjects given to them, and all the brethren and friends were encouraged and enlightened on these subjects. We thank our three servants for the Lord, and for the support we received from fellow christians from all over Lancashire.

On October 19-27th our series of meetings with Bro. Paul Jones were again both helpful and uplifting to all. Bro. Paul preached the gospel on seven nights, and many brethren and friends were present again. We appreciated their support. Bro. Paul spoke on the theme 'We would See Jesus'. All the messages were first class. We are grateful for Paul and for all his services to us during his short week. We were pleased to receive Sister Violet Cunliffe back into fellowship with us, and thank all for their support and look forward to our next series, God willing.

T. TYSON, Sec.

Haddington, East Lothian: The church at Haddington are delighted to report the immersion of James Blair, husband of sister Annie Blair who was immersed a few weeks ago. We are greatly encouraged by this and very happy to know that brother and sister Blair are now united in every sense of the word. We are grateful to the brethren at Tranent for the use of their meeting house and baptistry—they always come to our assistance even on very short notice. We pray that our new brother will remain faithful and be a great asset to the Lord and His church. To God be the glory.

Miss M. Murdie Sec.

Kentish Town: By the kindness of the Slamannan church we enjoyed the services of our brother Paul Jones for ten days in October. He joined us for the Anniversary gatherings on October 5th, and continued to the evening of Wednesday, 16th, when he left for a mission at Blackburn.

Some 3,000 leaflets were distributed and a few new visitors joined us at some of the meetings. We appreciated support from Brighton, Reading and Tunbridge Wells at the Anniversary, and letters from other churches and brethren unable to be present. Brother Jones gave effective and instructive addresses and a study on Wednesdays of the Creation and Fall with illustrative chart. We thank God for encouragement and by His grace will continue in the Faith once and for all delivered.

OBITUARY

Burleson, Texas: We are sad to intimate the passing of brother Frank B. Shepherd in Fort Worth, Texas, on 28th August, 1974. Brother Shepherd was born in London 88 years ago and was a preacher of the gospel for sixty years. Brother Shepherd was also a great friend to the 'Scripture Standard' and took a great interest in its welfare. We offer our sympathy and condolences to sister Mrs. Maurice F. Shepherd and all his relatives and friends. We pray for God's blessings upon you all.

EDITOR

COMING EVENTS

Haddington, East Lothian:**VACATION BIBLESCHOOL WEEK-END**

The church at Haddington propose (God willing) to hold a week-end bible school at Carberry Towers, Musselburgh, Midlothian (near Edinburgh) during the Easter week-end 16th-19th APRIL 1976.

In order that the church can gauge the interest in such a venture all those who would be interested should contact the church secretary, Miss Mary Murdie, C/O Moncrieff, 14 Somnerfield Avenue, Haddington, by the end of December, 1974. April, 1976, is the first available booking at Carberry Towers.

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan: The church meeting at Longshoot give a warm invitation to all to join them in a meeting to be held on SATURDAY 14th December, at 7 p.m The meeting will be addressed by three well known local brethren who will give their thoughts on Jesus as:—
 'THE WAY' (Bro. Jack Parker)
 'THE TRUTH' (Bro. Alf Marsden)
 'THE LIFE' (Bro. Leonard Morgan)

We are looking forward to a rich time of fellowship around the word of God.

D. MELLING

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Brother and Sister Willie and Lizzie Black now stay at 17 Bellsbank Cres., Dalmellington, Ayrshire. Those who know the Blacks will be very pleased to hear that Lizzie is keeping better.

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