

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 43. No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1975

## THE QUALITY OF MERCY

SOCIOLOGISTS, these days, go off at a tangent on subjects like 'our present lifestyle' or 'the quality of life'. I'm sure there must exist much room for improvement in the spiritual lifestyle of each one of us and a lot that could be done to enhance the quality of our Spiritual lives. It is said that the church is the family of God and that therefore, members of the church should exist as a large happy family. Sometimes the family is not as happy as perhaps it could or should be. Friction sometimes arises because of what someone said, or is reputed to have said, about someone else. Someone else is offended because of some slight or discourtesy received at the hands of one of the brothers or sisters. Very often, when all the facts emerge, the offence and discourtesy was a figment of someone's imagination, or at best was an exaggeration of the intention of the words spoken. Incredible though it may seem it is not unknown to hear someone say that they are not coming back to the gatherings of the church because of some alleged cold-shoulder received from one of the church members. Thus we try to take our displeasure out on God, for some matter that should be resolved between people. God must surely look down upon us occasionally and wonder why we are still behaving like little children. It is moreso sad when *small* congregations are divided up due to personal differences amongst the few members. The churches are too small in Britian to afford us the luxury of frustrating the work of the Lord by the interference of any small petty personal differences. It is said that Lord Nelson, (I think it was Lord Nelson), heard, in the middle of a battle, that two of his officers were not on speaking terms because of some personal tiff. He got hold of the two men and made them shake hands and pointed across the sea to the enemy ships and said, "*There is the enemy, gentlemen.*" *Satan* is the enemy, brethren. We should be fighting Satan not one-another.

A great deal of animosity could be avoided if we exercised a little more 'give and take'. We should not be easily offended. We should also not easily give offence. My own mother used to say that if we could treat each insult we received as if it were a compliment we would get through life much easier. Think of the insults and abuse that Jesus endured, and the apostles. Think of the suffering and torture that the martyrs endured for their faith. And do we take offence at a few words, albeit clumsily spoken? Some have built up a reputation for being easily offended and huffed. No doubt we are all guilty from time to time of passing an untimely and hurtful word but if we were all to be equally forgiving towards such indiscretions then the church would be the better for it, would it not? Our day to day relationships with one

another should be seasoned and salted with large helpings of forgiveness and mercy. Our forgiveness should be generous and unstinted. Shakespeare, as a poet, was almost as good as the Scottish bard Robert Burns and he penned some truly immortal words (and I hope that that typical Scottish prejudice won't offend too many of my friends south of the border). He had some wonderful things to say about the quality of mercy and I refer, of course, to Portia's entreaty to Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice", the words of which we were obliged, at school, to commit to memory.

"The quality of mercy is not strained;  
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
 Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:  
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.  
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; It becomes  
 The throned monarch better than his crown;  
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
 The attribute to awe and majesty,  
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway,  
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
 It is an attribute to God himself;  
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
 When mercy seasons justice.

Solomon said, in Proverbs 18:19 that "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle". This need not be if our forgiveness falls as gently and freely as the gentle rain from heaven. Are we harder to be won than a strong city? How is the quality of your mercy?

Very often we pray to God hopefully that He might forgive us our trespasses and yet at the same time we might be very reluctant to forgive our brother some trivial matter. We don't have to wonder what God thinks of that situation. Jesus told a parable on one occasion to illustrate the point. It was when Peter came and asked how often he should forgive his brethren their trespasses against him and suggested that it might fairly be seven times, but Jesus said, "Seventy times seven". The Lord then went on to describe a king reckoning with his servants. One was brought before him who owed him ten thousand talents and when it was found that he could not pay was sentenced to be sold, together with his wife and children. The man's pleadings and grovelling so evinced the king's compassion and pity that he cancelled the whole debt. But that same servant went out and encountered a fellow-servant who owed him but a hundred pence and took him by the throat, and in spite of all entreaties from the wretched man, had him cast into prison. Word came of this to the king and he was consumed with wrath and confronted the wicked servant with these words, "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant even as I had pity on thee?" "And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father also do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt. 18:21-35).

How is the quality of our mercy? Do we pray to God for forgiveness and withhold it from our brethren? If God was to "forgive us as we forgive our debtors" would He be able to forgive us at all?

May it be brethren as we enter into 1975 that we shall endeavour to be more forbearing to one another. Let us, as Paul puts it in Eph. 4:1-3 "...walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". and at the end of the same chapter, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you".

EDITOR

## THE PRUNING KNIFE

"TO prune" according to the dictionary means to cut back excessive growth in branches and to remove dead wood.

We hear a lot about pruning at this time of the year and those of us who are keen on gardening are to be found busily in the garden hacking away with the secateurs. However, how many of us do a thorough job of pruning in the garden? "Oh yes", I hear you say, "I do the roses every year" but what about the shrubs and trees, do you do them? No, I feel sure that we neglect to prune many things in the garden and we promise ourselves that we shall do them next year, perhaps. If our conscience pricks us we may snip off a few little shoots and consider it a job well done.

Of course we all like to see a nice garden. If we are really keen we feed the plants in the spring, keep them carefully weeded and when we are lucky enough not to have rain for a few days we rush out to 'Give the poor things some water'. We try and make sure that our precious blooms have the best of everything. But plants need more than food and water - they need to be cut back and pruned. By cutting them back we are not stunting their growth; we are actually promoting it. We are doing the plants a favour. Just consider how much better off your garden would have been this year if you had used the secateurs last year. The flowers would have been bigger this year and certainly the branches would have been stronger (with no little 'straggly' ones hanging down and disfiguring the shrub) 'Take the apple tree, for instance, and think of what becomes of it if we neglect to prune it. We get a multitude of tiny little apples of little value whereas if we had reduced the actual number of branches we would have allowed the tree to concentrate all its strength into the production of several lovely big apples. Sometimes we must be quite ruthless in our use of the pruning knife and nothing is to be gained by merely clipping off the tips of the branches. All that we shall accomplish is the production of many more tips to be clipped off the following year. The rose bush is surely a classic example of this. If we want nice big beautiful blooms on the roses we must be quite vicious with the knife.

Is there not a lesson for us to learn from this and perhaps for the church to learn, as far as our lives and characters are concerned? How often, for instance, do we *really* prune our lives? Oh yes, we may do a little weeding here and there, getting rid of some of the little irritations that enter into our lives, but do we ever embark on real pruning and cut back the things which threaten to completely choke our spiritual lives? Like the plants we get plenty of food and water - we feed well on a diet of the word of God and soak up nourishment in the church in worship and fellowship, but when last were we severely pruned? Perhaps we think that we look alright and that any stunting of growth will eventually outgrow itself. Could our lives, like the apple tree, be more fruitful, and like the rose, more beautiful, if we were to use the spiritual secateurs? Have we ever thought that we may have branches in our lives which are holding us back; the little things that we drag along day after day. Think of all the bad habits that we may have. How bad are they? Are they keeping us back? If they are keeping us back they must also be keeping the church back? Perhaps we have grown used to them and don't notice them any more. Perhaps we think that they are only little faults and only need pricked off like the shoots on the shrub - rest assured that they will be back again soon. We must attack them seriously and properly and cut them back to the root - we must put 'the axe to the root'.

God gave us the plants, trees and flowers but we have to tend to them and cultivate them. Every garden needs a husbandman. We all know what a neglected garden looks like. We all know what neglected lives and characters look like. I sometimes think of us as being, in many respects, like plants in a garden and the garden is the church. To keep the garden (church) clean, tidy and attractive we need to weed it and prune. Consider for a moment the congregation of which you are a member - what are the plants in that garden like? Is it perhaps a small, but beautiful, garden? Does it present a pretty sight to passers-by? or does it look a bit neglected? If we

consider for a minute that people might be like insects, bees and butterflies can it be said that our garden (our congregation) attracts them and has something to offer them? Or is it so that when they see a neglected garden, overgrown somewhat with weeds, that they fly off somewhere else? I have personally come across people who are unattracted to the church of our Lord, not because of what it preaches and teaches, but because of the unattractiveness of individual members, no doubt myself included. Do we attract or repel those around us?

In conclusion may I suggest that we get around to giving ourselves a good pruning and I know full well that that is not an easy thing to do. Wouldn't it be lovely if we were all humble enough to allow other members of the church to prune us; if we could just permit them to point out our faults and weaknesses and help us to do something about it. Perhaps we are too proud and we don't want anyone to see into our private lives; not even our brethren, which is a pity. We can go to our doctor and say, "Something is not quite right with me, and can you help me", but we apparently cannot do this with our brethren. We would have a very healthy church if we could all do that. Shall we all try and learn to be able to do this and this time next year we can look back and see if we, as a church, have grown healthier and stronger and are more beautiful. The rose expert cuts back to the last *outward* pointing bud so that the coming growth will not be inwards but *outwards* and *upwards*. May it be that we shall attempt to do the same, spiritually speaking, and may we too blossom forth *outwards*, towards our fellow men, and *upwards* towards our Father in heaven. Happy gardening.

Sister A. Birch (Una), Hull (late Hindley).

## IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

PERFECT REST—"HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES" Psalm 23:2

Margin: "Pastures of tender grass".

"And shall go in and out, and find pasture" John 10:9.

The Lord Jesus knew how vital and necessary it was for His disciples, to "rest awhile". And He said unto them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" Mark 6:31.

E.H. Bickersteth in that lovely hymn says:—

"Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile,  
Weary, I know it, of the press and throng,  
Wipe from your brow the sweat and dust of toil,  
And in My quiet strength again be strong.

Come ye, and rest: the journey is too great,  
And ye will faint beside the way and sink,  
The bread of life is here for you to eat,  
And here for you the wine of love to drink."

Weary...the press and throng...the sweat and dust of toil.

"Come apart...and rest a while."

"Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

"Their strength is to sit still". Isaiah 30:7

Oh, how I have neglected this ministry of coming apart, too busy at times, to follow the example of Mary "which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word" Luke 10:39. I have like Martha been "cumbered about much serving" Luke 10:40.

"He Maketh Me to Lie Down"

Let us remember that we do not lie down to feed but to rest. We can have no doubt that the shepherd would have led his sheep to feed first on those pastures of tender grass, and after partaking would be glad to see them lie down and rest.

"He maketh me to lie down:—

Not standing that could speak of service.

Not walking that would tell of journeying.

Not sitting that could be to learn.  
Lie down - happy - contented - calm - quiet.

How marvellous is this Psalm of ours, how thankful we should be to our loving Heavenly Father, for words which create so many beautiful pictures. The Chinese say one picture is worth ten thousand words, if that is correct, let us read our own Psalm again, and see how many pictures come to our minds. Certainly the pastoral people of that day would well understand these words which brought so many pictures before them. Shepherd...Sheep...Green Pastures... Still Waters...Restoration...Paths of Righteousness...Walking through the Valley...The Rod and the Staff...the Table prepared...the Anointing with Oil...the Cup running over...Goodness and Mercy...Dwelling in the House of the Lord for ever. Maybe our minds wander to the Lake District, to the Lowlands of Scotland, to the Highlands of Scotland, to the valleys and mountains of Wales, to the counties of Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Dorset, and many other places where we may have had the joy of seeing so many of these pictures.

“In pastures green: He leadeth me.”  
“And where the verdant pastures grow  
With food celestial feedeth.”

PERFECT REST – “HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES”.

“Green Pastures”

Green is a beautiful colour. One of the most pleasant of all colours for the eye to rest upon, but do you know why the grass is green in the gardens and meadows? Dale Carnegie quotes:- Charles F. Kettering, the guiding genius of General Motors Research Laboratories, has been giving Antioch College thirty thousand dollars a year out of his own pocket to try to discover why grass is green. He declares that if we knew how grass is able to transform sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide into food sugar, we could transform civilisation. We cannot understand why, as Joseph Parker once said:- “No man can define God, or Truth, or Life, or Love. They are original and indefinable terms. We know many things without being able to define them”. Of course there are many things we cannot understand, I don't know how a Red Cow, eats green grass, gives white milk, which is turned into yellow butter, but I am thankful to our loving Heavenly Father who knows all the answers, and provides those things that are beneficial to countless millions of people in the world. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth” Psalm 104:14. There is also a lovely thought in Psalm 147:8, take a little time to “come aside” for a few moments of quiet meditation on these inspired words. “Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.” Well might John McNeill remind us: “A blade of grass is very simple, and there are millions of them in the fields. But all the scientists in the world couldn't make one blade of grass”. With the Psalmist we say: “All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee” Psalm 145:10. “AND SHALL GO IN AND OUT AND FIND PASTURE” John 10:9.

Our loving Heavenly Father never intended that we should keep feeding and lying down in green pastures, by all means have a good feed, and have a good rest, but remember the three words “IN AND OUT”. “And shall go in and out, and find pasture”.

- IN FOR PRAYER ..... OUT FOR PREACHING.
- IN FOR SANCTIFICATION .... OUT FOR DEDICATION
- IN FOR STRENGTH ..... OUT FOR BATTLE
- IN FOR REST ..... OUT FOR LABOUR
- IN FOR GETTING ..... OUT FOR GIVING
- IN FOR PEACE ..... OUT FOR SERVICE
- IN FOR FELLOWSHIP ..... OUT FOR SUFFERING

We quote C.H. Spurgeon:-  
“HE SHALL GO IN”

He shall be privileged to go in among the divine family, sharing the children's bread, and participating in all their honours and enjoyments. He shall go in to the chambers of communion,

to the banquets of love, to the treasures of the covenant, to the storehouses of the promises. He shall go in unto the King of kings in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the secret of the Lord shall be with him".

### "HE SHALL GO OUT"

"This blessing is much forgotten, We go out into the world to labour and suffer, but what a mercy to go in the name and power of Jesus! We are called to bear witness to the truth, to cheer the disconsolate, to warn the careless, to win souls, and to glorify God; and as the angel said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might", even thus the Lord would have us proceed as His messengers in His name and strength", The secret of having "Perfect Rest", will only be found in its fulness, if we allow the victorious Christ, to take possession of our lives. He slew death by dying, and if we want the radiant life, the abundant life, the Lord Jesus can give, we must follow His example by dying daily"..

PERFECT REST - "HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES".

This month's exercise: Learn by heart the Seven In's and Out's and Mark 6:31, and may the Lord's richest blessing be your portion. Leonard Morgan

### THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD BALANCE SHEET 1974

INCOME	£ p	EXPENDITURE	£ p	£ p
Cash in Hand at 1.1.74	268.00	By Walter Barker for Printing		691.47
Cash at Bank at 1.1.74	486.67	Postage. By Printer's Postage	37.65	
Subscriptions	516.76	By Distribution	55.16	
Gifts	295.72	By Treasurer	9.08	
				<hr/>
				101.89
		Sundries By Reading Cards	17.94	
		By Wrappers & Stationary	9.90	
		By Telephone	3.28	
				<hr/>
				31.12
		Total Expenditure		<u>824.48</u>
		Cash in Bank 31.12.74	655.07	
		Cash in Hand 31.12.74	87.60	
				<hr/>
		Total Cash Balance		742.67
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<u>1567.15</u>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<u>1567.15</u>
		Audited and found correct A SCOBIE	10.1.75	

### FROM THE TREASURER

A comparison between our balance in hand this year and that of last year shows a drop of exactly twelve pounds. That is a good sign but if it was £12.00 up it would be far better. The generosity of the response to our last appeal was excellent, I am hopeful that Churches and individuals will remember their promises and that I shall hear from them in the near future. I have received one donation of £50.00 from among the many who promised.

The cost of printing the Scripture Standard is now £2.60. per month up on this time last year, over the year that alone is £31.20. Steep rises in postal charges are expected, this year our bill is higher by £10.00 over 1973.

Three ways to help. Please send your subscription NOW. If you can be generous, please help NOW. Try and get a new subscriber, doubling our number of subscribers would solve the problem 'at a stroke'. In all things ask the Lord's blessing, Paul Jones, (Treasurer).

## OPEN WINDOWS

"BRING ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith", saith the Lord of Hosts, "if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to contain it". Malachi 3:10.

"There are windows in Heaven,  
So the Bible tells;  
All good gifts come from Heaven  
Where our Father dwells."

We can be sure that the windows of Heaven are open for God to hear His children's cries, and to supply their every need. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" James 1:17.

Rain and sunshine fall alike on the just and the unjust, Matt. 5:45. In this much God is impartial, but His spiritual blessings of Love, Joy, Peace and such like belong only to those who obey His word, for these come through active faith on the part of the believer.

Israel was not receiving God's blessing for they refused to obey His commandments and served other Gods. If they would return to God, giving to Him His dues, then greater benefits would be given to them - overflowing blessings. Such also may come to us when we obey from the heart God's teaching.

"Jesus came down from Heaven,  
To suffer, bleed, and die,  
That we might be forgiven  
And live with Him on high."

God's greatest gift from above must be the giving of His only beloved Son. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" John 3:16. The greatest gift of Jesus, was Himself. He divested Himself of divine glory, took upon Himself our nature, was made in the likeness of sinful man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him Phil. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:21. Because of this, God hath highly exalted Him, giving Him a name above others, at which, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God.

Through His offering He is able to save those who come unto God by Him, Heb. 7:25; Through His Name we receive forgiveness of sins. By His blood we are cleansed. In Him we have Peace with God and are reconciled.

"If we walk with the Saviour  
Faithfully below,  
We His grace and favour  
Eternally shall know."

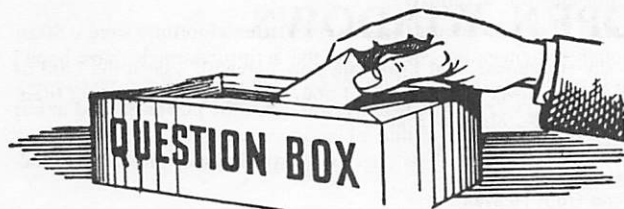
Let us notice God's "if". "If I will not open to you the windows of Heaven". Why if on God's part? Because man is a free agent with power to accept or reject the will of God. God's promises are all conditional. To Israel He said, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people" Exodus 19:5. God has not changed, He is still the same today. Hear, believe, and obey is still the way to God's promises and blessings. If we would enjoy the fulness of God's promised blessings we must walk faithfully the path that Jesus trod. If we would share God's fellowship in the future, we must walk in His fellowship now. If we would receive from Heaven, through His open windows, the overflowing and satisfying gifts of God then we should give our all to Him, that we might give praise and glory to His high and Holy Name.

Let our prayer be,

"So, open Thy windows, O Lord, to me,  
Send me a blessing, so lovingly;  
Open Thy windows, dear Lord, I pray,  
Pour out a blessing, O Lord, to-day.

TOM KEMP






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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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"In times of grief and adversity Christians are supposed to be comforted by their faith. How does this comfort come?"

I have chosen this question because there are times in our lives when we all need to be comforted. Our loved ones die and leave us grief-stricken and desolate. We see the emaciated bodies of our brethren and friends and our hearts bleed because of the suffering they have to endure. Lines are etched on faces by anxiety and concern for those of our loved ones who may be passing through some of the traumatic experiences of life. The Christian religion may very well be fertile soil for skilled and informed debate and discussion, but surely, it is in the dark and inhospitable days that the balm of God needs to be administered; when the scoring of debating points seems not to matter, and the fervent longing for love, compassion, and companionship seem to be all-important. Our God DOES administer the balm. We must present the wound to him.

#### Comfort through Christ

Comfort, by definition, means 'relief in affliction', 'consolation', 'conscious well-being'. Simeon, says the scripture 'was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel' (Luke 2:25) For what, or whom, was Simeon waiting? Well, the Holy Spirit told him 'that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ' (v 26). Is Jesus our consolation? It was he who said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

Have you ever, in your mind's eye, seen Jesus bowed beneath the weight of the cross, bearing it to the place of crucifixion? When those languid eyes were turned upon his tormentors did they see the love and compassion there, yes, even for them? The sufferings that we have to endure are very real, acute, and painful, and we should never try to minimise them. But surely Jesus can help us? He can console and comfort. He did to Paul and his companions, because Paul was able to say, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. 1:5).

#### Comfort through the Holy Spirit

Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). This Comforter is the Holy Spirit. In John 14:16 Jesus said "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever". You will notice the word 'another'. This reiterates what we have said, that Jesus is our comforter as well.

When translating for Holy Spirit, the translators have given us such translations as, 'helper', 'advocate'. From the word PARAKLEETOS we have the word 'Comforter'. Perhaps the thought is; 'one to help, like an advocate'. That being true, we understand that the Spirit stays by our side to assist us in life's struggles. He helps us in our weaknesses, said Paul when he wrote to the church at Rome, because we many times don't know what to pray for, but He takes our prayers and presents them to God in a way which is favourable to us. When Paul wrote to Ephesus he said, "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph 3:16-19). That is help indeed. Out of weakness into strength because of the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit.



### Comfort through the Scriptures

Paul, in his Roman letter, said, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4) It is obvious that if we do not read the Word of God then we shall not receive any comfort from that direction. Isn't it very true that it is we who limit the power of God in our lives. Many faithful christians will testify to the fact that when depressed and disconsolate, they have turned to the Word, and there, leaping from its pages with steady light, they have found hope and encouragement.

Brethren, let us not be tempted to use the Bible as a textbook. It is the mine wherein are found jewels precious and rare. It is the bridge over troubled waters. It is the ratified treaty of God with man. It is divine in concept, precept, and culmination. It is hope and encouragement, and therefore, it is comfort.

### Comfort through the Brethren

When Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Thessalonica he gave us some teaching on fellowship. He said, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (1 Thess. 5:9-11).

Why does it take distress, adversity, and grief to bring out the best aspects of fellowship? There is not a brother or sister that I know who would not compassionately help his or her fellow brethren in their hour of need. Their concern would be genuine and their desire to comfort absolute. Yet the tragedy of our days is that at other times these same brethren exhibit bitterness and rancour because of so-called doctrinal disputes.

Why do we have to wait until it is too late before we show our true feelings of love and concern? Why do the tears have to wet the coffin when that same emotion could evoke a similar response from someone while they are still living? In a hard and unrelenting world aren't the brethren the only ones we have to hang on to in times of trouble? God hath not appointed us to wrath but to SALVATION! Therefore, let us comfort ourselves together. Let it be said today, 'See how these christians love each other'.

### Conclusion

God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Word, the brethren. Was there ever a more formidable array of sources of comfort than these? The great thing is that they are all available to the individual christian. Let us turn the putrefying sores of distress into wounds which are cleanly healed by comfort and love. And if we turn to the Church and do not find there the balm, peace and comfort that we expect, then let us work within the Church to produce these, because by God's grace, the comfort and peace that we can generate might be the means of motivating our brethren to do the same.

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

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

MARCH 1975

2-Isaiah 2:1-19	Luke 17:20-37
9-Proverbs 30:1-14	Luke 18:1-17
16-Isaiah 53	Luke 18:18-34
23-2 Kings 6:8-23	Luke 18:35 to 19:10
30-Ezekiel 24:1-24	Luke 19:11-28

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THERE is much controversy on this subject

but a few scriptures seem to settle some points without being merely "proof texts". We do not want to quote texts to prove an idea. We want to take a plain view of them and follow them through to a logical conclusion. Jesus is asked to say when the kingdom will appear. He is expected to give some 'sign' - an outward visible and miraculous demonstration of power. We bear in mind that His works of healing, calming the storm and feeding the multitudes had already given obvious evidence of His divine power, and



His work and teaching compelled the comments - "We never saw it on this wise" (Mark 2:12) and "as One having authority and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29). So His answer was in line with earlier replies (Luke 11:16 & 29:32). It is turned upon the questioners. They are not among those who want to press into the kingdom (Luke 16:16). John Baptist and Jesus consistently preached "The kingdom of God is at Hand" - so did the disciples. Jesus also said "There be some of them who stand here who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). We cannot but think this is a reference to Pentecost, to the church which is the kingdom of which Peter is given the keys and authority to bind and loose (Matt. 16:18 & 19). In this passage however Jesus is dealing with a vital aspect of His kingdom in direct contrast to the thoughts of those asking the question. They must have been surprised and puzzled to hear that the kingdom was among them, or within them - either translation seems correct to me for if it were within them it must certainly be among them. The Spirit of God through the Word of God works silently in the heart. Wherever He is accepted by obedience there is a change in thought, in expression and in behaviour. Does God reign in your heart, brother and sister, and in mine?

#### The Days of the Son of Man

Here is a contrast between the invisible working of the Spirit in the hearts and lives of men, and the physical demonstration of the power of God through cataclysmic events in the natural world. Do not the people of God under fearful persecution long for God to act? There is the cry from the altar of sacrifice "How Long, O Lord, how long?" He released Peter from the sword of Herod (Acts 12:11) but undoubtedly Peter had to suffer martyrdom. It was useless for the Pharisees and others to demand a sign, but they will or did see it one day when least expected, just as the world in the days of Noah no doubt asked for proof that the building of the ark had some sense, and the word of Noah certain fulfilment. Yes, and "for every man upon this earth, death cometh soon or late". Jesus bids us remember the flood, Sodom and Lot's wife. Before the final stroke of divine justice fell upon Jerusalem, the signs had been gathering too plainly to need explanation - internal political and sectarian strife, external gathering of the forces of

the Empire with the eagle standard at their head. "In an hour when ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Luke 12:40) There have been, are and will be days of disaster. Those who are ready will not be taken unawares.

#### Prayer and Humility

When our prayers seem to be unanswered we may feel that God is not interested. Jesus has taught us not to think so. If persistence of the widow moved the unjust judge, God is so different, knowing our needs before we express them, and knowing them better than we do ourselves, so do not ever think real prayer is unheard. Prayers merely said are perhaps better not answered like that of the Pharisee telling the Lord how good he was. The Lord knew otherwise, and probably for the hundredth time taught the disciples a lesson on humility, when they thought He would not want interruption on behalf of babes. Respect of persons must never influence a christian. The rich young ruler was received with no less love than the babes though his treatment was different, and blind Bartimaeus, the beggar by the wayside received the same compassion. Note the attitude of the disciples. They rebuked the mothers who brought their children and the beggar, but they were astonished when Jesus told the truth about riches (18:24). What commended the young man to Jesus was his obvious sincerity and godliness. Mark tells us He loved him (10:21), and reports his humble approach. Men can be rich and acceptable (1 Tim. 6:17-19) but riches can become as in the case we are considering a tremendous power for the devil - a snare or trap. The church at Laodicea is the classical example. Peter is realising that he and the other apostles, chosen out of others (there were 120 together - Acts 1:15) had in fact given up their earthly ties and possessions, "ALL" A.V. is "our own homes" R.V. margin. Jesus assures them of abundant reward here and hereafter, but it would seem straightway warned them again of further trials, which they did not and could not then have any real conception of (18:34). All his teaching and his fellowship was preparation for lives of holiness, consecration and continuous witness for Christ, and for setting up the church. We can hardly realise the greatness of the responsibility, but Jesus chose them and empowered them. It is significant that the case of Zaccharus follows here. He was rich, he was hated, he was



keen to see the prophet from Galilee. Little did he realise he was to entertain Him that day, and receive approval and blessing. He was used to hatred and abuse. Good people despised him. "They all murmured" at Jesus because they completely misunderstood Him, and allowed prejudice to rule their thoughts. Let us never do it.

#### The Parable of the Pounds

Many were travelling with Jesus. He was leading them, and their expectations were reaching fever pitch. They anticipated some astounding "sign". Some would in the future understand the parable - His apostles certainly. What a picture it is of His fatal rejection by His own people, and the divine retribution which followed, but how instructive to us. We all have some abilities to work with. They may vary but all can be used for our Saviour, and the fatal mistake is to think that we have a hard taskmaster and nothing will satisfy Him. "Let none hear you idly saying there is nothing I can do".

R.B. SCOTT

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Blackburn, Mill Hill:** We were pleased to receive back into fellowship on December 22nd our sister Lucy Armstrong; our sister had been away for about a year, and decided to return to the Lord's church. We are pleased to receive her "Back into the Fold" and trust that she will learn more about her Lord, as she grows in Christ;

T.T.

**Hayfield Road, Kirkcaldy:** We are further encouraged in our labours here by the baptism of two young ladies - Mrs. Bowman and Miss June Black on Sunday 15th December and we trust that our new sisters will be long spared to serve the Lord and Master we all love.

A ROBERTS Sec

## OBITUARY

**Blackburn, Lincs:** It is with deep sorrow that we report the death of our brother Walter Forrest, who died on December 30th 1974 in hospital. Brother Walter had been a long standing brother in the church, being a servant for the Lord for many years. We know too

that he will be waiting for that great day when the Lord will return, to reward all those who are faithful servants for Him. T.T.

**Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan:** The church has recently suffered the loss of two long serving and faithful brethren. On 20th December 1974 the death occurred in Wigan Infirmary of our brother Richard Ratcliffe. For the past few years he had suffered from heart trouble, and it was after another attack that he was taken into hospital only a few days before he died. Brother Richard had served the congregation at Scholes for many years in preaching and teaching, and also held the office of elder. It was only ill health towards the end of his life that prevented him from continuing serving his Master as he would have liked.

On 30th December 1974 we were further saddened by the death of brother John McGrath. John had also suffered for several years from a chest complaint, the effect being that any slight exertion, even walking around his room at home, left him breathless. He was a faithful servant of the church, and had been a deacon for many years.

Both Richard and John delighted in meeting with their brethren, especially during the last few years when ill health prevented them attending regularly. Nevertheless, whenever it was possible they attended the breaking of bread, and it was obvious that the physical effort needed for them to be there was very great.

We shall miss both of our brethren greatly, but we look forward to that time when we will all meet again and hear His "Well done, good and faithful servant"

We commend the families of our late brethren to Jesus, knowing that in Him we can find true peace and comfort in times of greatest need.

D. MELLING

**Wallacestone, Stirlingshire:** It is with deep regret that we record the death of Sister Annie White on December 4th.

She passed peacefully away in her sleep, and for this we are thankful, even though her passing was a shock as she had not been ill.

She was a member of the church for over 30 years having come to the district from Clydebank during the war. She was laid to rest on Saturday December 7th. James Grant

## AN APPRECIATION

Sister Annie Bradley (Ilkeston & Doncaster)  
I have been asked to write for the S.S. some remembrances of Sister Annie Bradley, of Bawtry, Doncaster, who 'fell asleep' in Jesus on Monday December 30th 1974. This I do with deep sorrow at the death of such a beloved sister in Christ, and with sympathy and grief which our Bro. Bill Bradley has suffered.

I have happy memories of the years of fellowship I spent with the Bradleys in the congregation in Doncaster and in their home during the period 1951 to 1957. Bro. and Sister Bradley were among the congregation who gave to me and my family so warm and loving a welcome when we moved into Yorkshire. Immediately we found "those of like precious faith". With the Bradleys especially we were kindred spirits both in the work of the church and in enjoying hospitality and fellowship in their home. In the years since our return we have from time to time renewed their hospitality, and have been privileged to share our home with them since our return to Wigan, and to hear Bro. Bradley teach and preach in the congregation in Scholes, Wigan.

Sister Bradley was a devoted servant of Christ, regular in attendance and reliable in what she undertook for the Master. She was gentle and compassionate, quiet and faithful. Until the time when the church's building in The Holmes, Doncaster came under Demolition Order she and Bill contributed their strength, service and money to the maintaining of the cause of Christ, and even when the church ceased to meet they travelled often to other parts of Yorkshire to enjoy fellowship among other churches of Christ.

Sister Bradley was an absolutely loyal wife and a great lover of children, although she herself never experienced the joy of children of her own. In the spiritual sense, nevertheless, she was "a mother in Israel". "Blest be her memory and blest her bright example be".

CARLTON MELLING

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