

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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PAINLESS CHRISTIANITY

THE entrance of pain into the world, like the coming into the world of illness and disease, is regarded by many as being shrouded in mystery but there is certainly nothing uncertain about pain itself. If we have it we certainly know about it. Few individuals would claim to relish pain and not many more would say that they are able to bear extreme pain for any length of time. It is even painful to talk about it. Pain is such an unpleasant experience that most of us take precautions against it coming upon us, and if it should assail us we are quick to secure a remedy for it. Thus man fears pain and avoids it. It can take many forms and is not confined to the physical body but can come in the form of mental anguish.

We are truly fortunate to be living in these days of sophisticated anaesthetics and we shudder when we contemplate the rough surgery of even only a few years ago. We think of the hapless individual having a limb amputated, strapped to the table, fully conscious apart perhaps from the effects of a few swigs of alcohol, sawdust round the table to absorb the blood, surgeon's hacksaw and knives on view. Few survived the surgical shock, or the cauterising of the stump with a hot iron, and perhaps most died slow, lingering painful deaths. We should never cease to give thanks for the advances in the medical sciences and for the men and women of medicine and surgery. We naturally try and avoid pain and even a visit to the dentist is made all the more easy in these days of virtually painless dentistry. 'Discomfort' is a close cousin to pain and we shun both with equal diligence. We go to great lengths in the material world to avoid any form of discomfort and end up with our central heating, electric blankets, brushless shaving cream, fur-lined boots and insulated walls. Why not indeed. There is nothing at all wrong with such things except perhaps that we become 'softies' and weaklings. There is certainly no virtue in manufacturing discomfort or, like the monks in some places, of wearing course hairy shirts so that we might be perpetually wretched. The danger is, however, of us carrying our desire for comfort out of the material world and over into the spiritual.

Some of us are 'arm-chair evangelists'. The modern, comfortable, deeply-sprung and well upholstered armchair has probably done more damage to the progress of preaching the gospel than anything else. Once we get down there who can stir us? We have, perhaps great ideas for reaching the lost and we think it all up - sitting in our arm-chair. Someone suggests an intensive and extensive programme of house

visitation and preaching and so we have to calm him down and tell that we shall all think about it for a while — in our armchair. We like painless ideas that won't involve us in too much activity and discomfort, or upset our steady rhythm of life. Is that how it is brethren, where you are?

Some of us like painless preaching. I honestly do not believe that there are many in the churches of Christ who want painless preaching but there are possibly some. Anyone who listens to the Sunday morning service on the radio will know what I mean by painless preaching. 'Sin' is a nasty word and therefore rarely mentioned and sins are regarded 'indiscretions', 'weaknesses' or 'problems'. Many of the clergy can't afford to be too strong in their preaching, otherwise they will empty their pews and get themselves a free transfer. Is this how it is with some of us? Do we make enemies of those who tell us the truth? I remember a brother, south of the border, telling me that one Sunday morning after he had exhorted the church, a visitor in the congregation from another country, (I won't say which) asked him if he was a full time evangelist and said, when reply was made in the negative, "From what you were saying, I took it that you weren't." Do we like preachers who soft-pedal us? Peter pricked his hearers to the heart. Stephen was stoned for the things he said. New Testament preachers were generally maltreated for the discomfort they gave to their hearers, Unlike some modern missionaries Paul, when he went to a new town didn't say, "What are the hotels like here": he was more likely to say, "What are the prisons like here."

Some of us indulge in painless giving. Giving is, of course, a personal matter and each person has differing circumstances but, as a whole, does the church indulge in painless giving? We have difficulty in financing many ventures and yet individually we seem to be well enough off. Perhaps some of us spend more on a hobby than we give to the Lord, or spend more on petrol for a joyride, or on a meal in a restaurant, than we give to the Lord? Is this possible? A clergyman is reputed to have commented before the offering bag was passed round that he wondered where all the poor members of the congregation were (all looked so affluent) and after counting the contents of the offering bag he wondered where all the prosperous members of his congregation were. Brother Crosthwaite used to say that we should give until it hurts but that the trouble was that some of us were hurt so easily. The Mormon church is reputed by some to be perhaps the richest religious body, per head of membership, and this because they tithe as the Jews did. Is there a lesson here for us, brethren, or even an accusation?

Some of us like painless living. It may be that we as congregations or as individuals have settled into a nice little niche or rut and we don't want to be disturbed. We clamp down on anyone who rocks the boat. We seem sometimes rather to want to spectate than to serve. Could your congregation quite easily have a sign on the door, "Please do not disturb"? or do you as an individual try to show the way, and get things going? Sometimes our painless living takes the form of complete avoidance of any conflict with the world or our neighbours — we avoid a discussion with our workmates on a religious question which has arisen — we try and avoid anyone finding out what we really believe or stand for. There is the story of the man who went to work with some rough and tough lumberjacks in the outback and who, when he returned said that everything had gone fine and that none of his workmates had found out that he was a member of the church. This is not surely what Jesus had in mind when He said that we must take up our cross and follow Him. Jesus had no anaesthetics on the cross. The cross had no shock absorbers and Jesus was never insulated from trial and tribulation. Jesus suffered and endured and said that the servant is not above his Master. The New Testament certainly seems a stranger to the concept of painless Christianity (for want of a

better word) and seems rather to suggest that we might be called upon to suffer. Do we suffer as Christians or do we steer well clear of any such possibility? James says, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering affliction, and of patience". Paul in telling the disciples at Rome that they were the children of God, said, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:36). Paul seemed to think that our being glorified together with Christ was contingent upon our also suffering with Him. The hymnwriter put it thus:..

Take up thy cross and follow on,
Nor think till death to lay it down,
For only he who bears the cross
May hope to wear the glorious crown.

Shall we think on these things, brethren, and try and push things a little harder in our congregations for the Lord?
EDITOR

AND THE WALLS FELL

THE narrative of the fall of Jericho, like the story of the crossing of the river Jordan shows unmistakable signs of formation by a combination of originally separate written sources or oral traditions.

The story of the fall of the city of Jericho is so well known and so needs no retelling here, however a few points of interest may be commented upon.

The use of the number Seven in the story is striking indeed seven priests, seven ram's horn trumpets, seven days, and seven circuits of the city walls.

These seven are mentioned again and again in the narrative, and even in the story itself is mentioned fourteen times.

The number seven was a sacred number among the peoples of the East, and we have many examples of its sacral use among the Egyptians and the peoples of Mesopotamia.

In the Old Testament there are mentioned Seven days of the week, and various seven day festivals, seven day periods for the ordination of priests, and for consecrations of altars, seven sprinklings of sacrificial blood, the seven branched lampstand, seven year fanines, seven eyes of the Lord, seven baths in the river Jordan by Naaman, seven years of tribulation periods and the like.

Even the New Testament abounds in the number seven and it seems the number itself signifies a completeness, perfection, and a consummation.

It therefore appears to be a clearly conceived number sacred to God, for whenever things exist or are in sevens, they are characterized by a perfection.

So the story tells us the walls fell flat after the seven fold march together with the mighty shout on the seventh day.

Faith plus obedience was the prerequisite to the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites.

Both Faith and Obedience have always been prerequisites to acceptability, for there has never been an age in the history of the world, when man could please God without faith.

And likewise there has never been an age in which man could please God until that faith had moved him to obedience.

These Israelites by faith marched around the walls of Jericho, here the New Testament tells us that it was by faith the walls fell, so then without this faith coupled with implicit obedience to the commands of God they would never have possessed the city of Jericho.

The apostle Paul tells us that it is through the "Obedience of Faith" that we have access into the grace of God.

Here I feel sure that if any one of us ever cross over Jordan to inherit the land promised to us from the foundation of the world, it will be because our own faith has been sufficient to combat whatever battles God has commanded.

On that great day the Israelites knew their human might to be insufficient for the task that awaited them.

But they trusted in the fact that God who had led them thus far was well able to give them the City.

And likewise in our present-day world the possession of our eternal inheritance there stands obstacles, just as great and just as far beyond our human power to conquer as Jericho was.

Our puny power and might has proven itself insufficient to tear down the strongholds of evil many times, and unless the plan is God's plan there will be no conquest over sin.

Israel's complete obedience to God was necessary when they began the journey to this city, the walls were still standing, on the seventh day they were still standing, when they had marched around the city walls they were still standing.

And they still stood until they had blown the Ram's horns, and shouted in fulfillment of all the requirements of the Lord; then did the walls fall.

And so likewise it takes complete obedience to the laws of God to save mankind to-day from sin.

For when the obedience is commenced the bulwarks of sin still stand before us, and as that obedience continues they still stand upright, and not until that obedience has been completed, and that we as children of God have proved ourselves acceptable and faithful one hundred-per-cent of the way, do we find that God extends to us that which we seek to conquer.

Let us then as Christians seek to realise that no one should feel by their own works, that he or she has merited salvation.

We know that we have been saved by the Grace of God, alone, and that our salvation is freely given us by the hand of Him who gave Jericho to Israel.

W.S. BRADLEY, Doncaster.

MESSAGES FROM THE PAST — 1957

Selected from Quo Warranto?

Editor David King.

Prepared by Leonard Morgan.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

"FOR ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord : walk as children of light : (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth) : proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame to speak of those things that are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are

made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light. Wherefore, he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light”.

1 “Children of light”. This language expands and refreshes the spirit. Light is the purest, brightest, and most pervading of the elements. It is therefore strikingly adapted to shew forth the spotless purity of God. He is “the Father of lights”. He is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1).

2 “Children of light”. Offspring of the Father of lights — are fruitful. Planted in heavenly soil, and lighted from the Sun of Righteousness — the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ — they bring forth the “fruit of the Spirit” — goodness, righteousness, and truth. That which is according to love, in goodness; that which is according to law, in righteousness; that which is according to fact, in truth; they bear in abundance and in beauty. Branches of a living vine, they are laden with the grapes of heaven.

3 “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”. Not so much reproof by speech — very few men are qualified for such a task. They generally make wounds that never heal. But though few Christians can rebuke by speech, all pure men can rebuke and reprove by the purity of their conduct. “Whatsoever doth make manifest is light”. We all know the revealing power of light, manifesting things in their true relations. When the Sun ascends his visible throne, and pours down upon earth the brightening influences — the features and aspects of nature are distinctly revealed in bleak sternness, or luxuriant beauty. The blue mountain and the sombre forest — the savage glen and the golden cornfield, stand out before us rightly defined in the landscape. Such a revealing, manifesting power have the “children of light” in the darkness of the world; they continually reprove the unfruitful works of darkness by the consecration of their conduct. Their holiness unto the Lord is a perpetual rebuke to the sin and selfishness of those who are living without God.

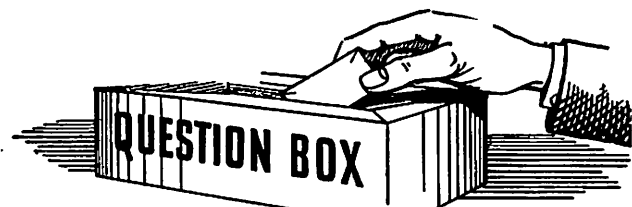
The children of light shine in heavenly lustre, that the slaves of midnight may be attracted from their desolate dungeon, and flee to that city on the hill, where the countenance of God sheds continual illumination. “Wherefore he saith, awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light”. But who or what is it that says, “Awake thou,” etc.? The Greek reads, “Wherefore IT says,” by which we understand the light. The light speaks through the elevated conduct of those who are bringing forth “the fruit of the Spirit” — by the people who are manifesting in life the divinity of their principles, and flinging their searching light and fire over the pollutions of general society. By the “children of light” it discovers, condemns, warns, awakens, and calls to Reformation. Wherever there is a pure devoted child of God, walking in the light of the Father, and rejoicing in the hope of coming glory — by him, and through him the light cries to the man of the world. “Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light”. Here the grandeur of the church’s moral agency dilates before us, and the nature of its responsibility to God grows sublime and fearful. The church may then say, the condition and destiny of the world, in some measure, depends upon us. If we blow not the trumpet, the people indeed perish in their sleep of selfishness, and death of sin; but their blood will deeply stain our own souls, and will surely be required at our hands. It is our mission to demonstrate a saving power of divine truth by the continual manifestation of its purifying influence. We have been appointed to supply the moral evidence which may convince the world, that Jesus

the Christ is the only Saviour of the human race. And certainly if such evidence is not provided in richness and abundance, the men around us will live without God, and die without hope. Woe unto us! if such power is employed for evil, or slumbering in disease. We leave men tossing on a dark sea of tempest and despair, without holding forth the lamp of life, which would reveal the road to a serene and quiet shore, where the waves dash in vain.

Dear Editor,

Will you kindly allow me to make a correction, the Editor of the British Millennial Harbinger, as quoted in the August issue of the Scripture Standard was not J.B. Rotherham, he was the writer of the article I took selections from. By way of interest James Wallis was the Editor.

Yours fraternally, Leonard Morgan.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I have some good christian friends who believe they are saved by faith only. They contend that they are sealed by the Holy Spirit and cannot be lost, and they appeal to the scripture which is found in Ephesians 4:30. Would you please attempt to shed some light on this passage of scripture?"

IN order to answer this question it seems to me that we shall have to explore (1) what it means to be justified by faith, (2) whether or not a person can reach a state whereby they cannot be lost, and (3) what Paul is teaching when he refers to being sealed by the Holy Spirit. If we can find satisfactory answers in the Bible to these questions then I feel that we shall clear some confusion in the minds of those sincere souls who want to do the will of God.

Justification by Faith

It is clearly evident from the teaching of the Bible that man cannot be self-effecting regarding his being cleansed from sin. He has no standard of righteousness of his own that God will accept. It was necessary therefore, that God should reveal His own standard of righteousness and He did this by what He effected through Christ Jesus, as Paul put it, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law..... the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all who believe" Rom. 3:21,22. So Christ is the promise; Christ is the hope; and Christ is the way. As Paul asserts, "He (Christ) was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification Rom. 4:25.

So Christ is the way. It was He who said that they who would come to the Father must come by Him. The blood of Christ was shed FOR (with a view to) the remission of sins and had to be received by faith. The sacrifice of Christ had been promised for a long time but had remained a secret even to the ones who had prophesied concerning it, but Paul explained that the secret of the good news (the gospel) was now made known to all nations, for he teaches, "The mystery (the gospel) which was kept secret for long ages, is now made known to all nations,

according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about OBEEDIENCE to the faith" Rom. 16:25,26. You see, belief in Christ must not be thought of as merely an act of the mind or heart reception only, but rather as a principle of action. Concerning faith, the writer to the Hebrews says, "By faith Abraham OBEYED; and he went outBy faith Noah PREPARED an ark By faith Abraham, when he was tested, OFFERED UP Isaac" Heb. 11. So we could go on. It was not, then, by faith alone, but by faith with its concurrent acts. Faith alone is dead, but faith, working by love, and resulting in repentance, confession, and immersion, brings one into the state in which God declares one justified. As Paul further teaches, "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become OBEEDIENT from the heart to the STANDARD (or FORM) of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" Rom. 6:17,18. When are we set free from sin? When we OBEY the gospel.

When do we OBEY the gospel? When we ACT on our faith.

What did Peter tell his hearers on the Day of Pentecost? He told them what to DO. What did they DO? They repented, confessed, and were baptised.

According to the teaching of God's Word we are not saved by faith ONLY. Our faith should make us say, "Lord, what will Thou have me DO". It is then that we shall OBEY God. What message did Jesus give to His disciples? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth *and is baptised* shall be saved" Mark 16:16.

Sealing with Holy Spirit

It is in the Ephesian letter that Paul teaches about the sealing of believers by the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Eph. 1 Paul teaches that God has revealed His will in Christ Jesus, and that all things will be finally consummated in Jesus (Eph. 1:10). He then goes on, "In whom (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance" (v11), and then in verse 13, "In whom also ye trusted, AFTER that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also AFTER that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise". It seems from this scripture that we trust in Christ after hearing the gospel, and that we are sealed IN HIM by the Holy Spirit of promise. The essence of the gospel was preached by Peter at Pentecost when his hearers asked what they should DO to be saved, "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" Acts 2:38. The blessings are IN Christ, and therefore Paul teaches, "If any man be IN Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" 2Cor. 5:17. When Paul wrote his letter to Rome he said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised INTO Jesus Christ were baptised INTO His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" Rom. 6:3,4.

The metaphor of the sealing of believers by the Holy Spirit implies ownership, security, and destination. We are not our own, we have been bought with a price—the blood of Christ; we are secure IN HIM, and "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" Rom. 6:5. Therefore, Eph. 4:30 becomes clear. We would not want to grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells within us: He is the earnest until we come to the greater glory. So if you want to be sealed by the Holy Spirit, then come INTO Christ in the way He has taught.

Can we be lost?

God has never been loath to deal summarily with those who were unrepentant and went their own way. He did this with the nation of Israel, and when Jesus contrasted the faith of the centurion with the faith of the children of Israel, he said, "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" Matt. 8:12. In John's gospel, Jesus refers to himself as the true vine, and then goes on, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away" John 15:1,3. There is implicit rejection in the words of Jesus as recorded in Luke 9:62 "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God". In the early days of the Church, Ananias and Saphira were among the christian community but God dealt with them because of their sin against the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul himself, when surveying his Christian life had to say, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" 1 Cor. 9:27.

Yes, we can be lost, even after accepting Christ. If this were not so then it would mean that we could go on sinning in the certain knowledge that all would be well ultimately. I am quite sure that the Bible does not teach this, and that such a view would be inconsistent with all the available evidence. As Peter says, "We must strive to make our calling and election SURE" 2 Peter 1:10.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SEPTEMBER 1974

- 1—Psalm 107:1-16 2 Cor. 1:23 to 2:17
 8—Exodus 34:21-35 2 Cor. 3
 15—Jeremiah 38:1-13 2 Cor. 4:1-15
 22—2 Kings 2:1-15 2 Cor. 4:16 to 5:10
 29—Isaiah 49:1-13 2 Cor. 5:11 to 6:10

TRUE LOVE (2 Cor. 2:4)

IN Paul's first letter to Corinth, we have revealed rebuke for failure on the part of the church to exercise proper discipline upon a member. Even heathens would have reacted more correctly than this church of Christ to the disgraceful behaviour of one who was supposed to have begun the new life in Christ (1 Cor. 5:1), and would have avoided lawsuit by compromise (6:7). There was no question of passing this over or making excuses for these sins. It is no pleasure to a lover to denounce sin in the beloved, but Paul would have been unfaithful to God

and unkind to the church if he had minimised the seriousness of these troubles.

We read in Paul a great depth of longing for peace, friendship and fellowship with all his brethren. It is their enjoyment of these that gives him greatest pleasure, and his deepest grief would be to cause offence. But true love drove him to risk this, and he did so without hesitation. Some think that he paid a hasty visit between the letters or wrote one which is lost. Whether he did so or not, his rebuke took effect and was respected. We can understand why he felt "much affliction and anguish of heart" (2:4) while in doubt as to the reaction, and his great joy when the good news arrived (7:6-11).

Had Paul passed over the sins of his brethren he would have been as guilty as in ceasing to preach Christ. Jesus in His great commission to make disciples of all nations, included in it the "teaching to observe all things whatsoever I

have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). We may easily become guilty of failure to exercise true love for one another in this way. It is so possible for the church to lose her purity, and to bring Christ into disrepute through her members not being sufficiently instructed about their obligation to behave in accordance with His example and precepts. It may be so much easier to "win" men and women for Christ than to keep them growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 3:18). The new birth must be followed by the new life (2 Cor. 5:17).

TRUE SERVICE (2Cor. 4:1 & 2)

The words "ministry" and "minister" have through centuries of a modified use, acquired a kind of official flavour. It is good that service should be honoured for our Saviour is the greatest of all because He has given the greatest service to mankind. His astonishing and superb humility gives encouragement to the most menial servants. The lesson is indeed needed today. Inflation is our enemy we are assured — it can be immediately cured if all will give gladly their maximum effort in service to others. The reward is in the working, the doing, the action, not in the pay. We see in Paul the tireless worker with one supreme desire at heart, the setting forth of the gospel and the development of the new life in Christ. As he moves from place to place he sees the evidence of the triumph of Christ in human lives (2:14) brought to know Him by his labours. The churches of Christ are like letters written by Paul in their manifestation of divine life to a dark world. His service to God and to them is the ministration (the serving out) with absolute honesty and without charge, of God's grace in the gospel of His Son. He feels his own insufficiency in conveying so wonderful a message bringing such power and glory (2:16; 3:5; 4:1). but his conscience is clear because his message has been delivered without ulterior motive and without change (2:17; 4:2).

The service is not rendered to please men. It can perhaps be explained by the difference between giving a beggar

money on the spur of the moment, and providing him with a motive for getting on his feet to start a useful life. This service by Paul is the passing on of what he had himself received — "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (4:6). Every christian receives this for his own development, but it is not complete unless the same light shines in him and is made visible to others. This is where so many of us have failed. There can be no truer service than this.

TRUE HOPE (2 Cor. 5:1)

In his earlier letter Paul wrote of the resurrection (c.4:15) that "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied". The futility of life oppresses all intelligent folk from time to time. Even when people are engaged in the most interesting work, or having the greatest happiness in this world, the time comes when they realise with Solomon of old that "all is vanity". Death stares them in the face, and in spite of the wonderful joys which all share at times, life appears as a "rat-race". Adelaide Procter has expressed our thoughts in the hymn "My God, I thank Thee", but we have in our month's readings Paul's hopes beautifully expressed. His true love and true service have the most wonderful culmination, and it is every christian's too.

It is written of Jesus that "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross"; and Paul endured much affliction in following his Lord. He sets some of it out in chapters 4 and 6 but even more fully in 11, and calls it 'light affliction' (4:17) regarding it in comparison with "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". Do we now sufficiently consider this hope? Are we too earth-bound? How much are we enduring for our Saviour?

We should certainly be remembering those christians in the world today, who are suffering untold hardship for their faith. To them how real the true hope must be!

R.B.SCOTT

AN ABSENT DISCIPLE**John 20:19-29**

THIS was the first Lord's day evening meeting and two disciples were absent. One of them was Judas who had been buried in a suicide's dishonoured grave. The other was Thomas. Where he was we cannot say. He did not appear until eight days later.

1 Why was Thomas absent?

By nature he seemed to be despondent. Thrice in John's gospel he speaks, each time with a doleful sound (11:16; 14:5; 20:25). Weighted down by disappointment, perhaps he secluded himself.

2 What did he miss by reason of his absence?

a. The presence of the risen Lord and the attendant peace and gladness. It was the privilege of others to see him on that day and be glad (Verses 19,20).

b. The Lord's appointment (Verse 21). This was an opportunity for service, for doing good.

c. The Spirit of the Lord (Verses 22,23). This was to qualify them for their mission. Because of his absence, Thomas deprived himself of this gift.

d. Fellowship with the brethren, a blessing we cannot define! No joy apart from kindred spirits.

3 What did he suffer by reason of his absence?

a. Skepticism. For eight days he was an unbeliever. He challenged the testimony of his brethren (Verse 25). Between his absence and unbelief there was a relationship.

b. Prolonged despondency. During these days he walked about with a drooped head and heavy heart, thinking that his Lord was sleeping in the silent tomb. The ten were happy and hopeful during the time because they had seen the risen Lord.

4 What blessings came, a week later, by reason of his presence?

He saw the living Lord and received the gift of peace. He became a believer and made a jubilant confession (verses 26-29). "The Lord of life, the God whom I worship and adore!"

Now let us ask:

1 Why are disciples absent from the meetings of the church?

Like Thomas, some allow sorrow to overwhelm them. Some are kept away by reason of bodily infirmities. Some are over-sensitive and stumble over slights and injuries. Some are entangled in the cares of this world and lose interest (Heb. 10:25). Some have sinned and are ashamed to attend.

2 What do they miss by reason of their absence?

The nearness of the Lord (Matt. 18:20). nourishment for the inward man; opportunities for doing good; the fellowship of kindred spirits.

3 What do they suffer by reason of their absence?

a. Skepticism. Absence from the Lord's day meetings often makes men critical and embitters them toward the ones who do attend.

b. Despondency. Absence contributes to unbelief, unbelief to despondency.

4 What blessings come by reason of our presence?

Wholehearted participation in the meetings of the church makes a wonderful contribution to life. It adds firmness to faith, warmth to love, power to hope. It serves as a tonic for the depressed soul. We should be glad when brethren say unto us, "Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1).

F.L. Cox. (adapted from Gospel Advocate)

POWER FOR THIS DAY

Father, do Thou this day free me....

From fear of the future;
 From anxiety for the morrow;
 From bitterness toward anyone;
 From cowardice in face of danger;
 From laziness in face of work;
 From failure before opportunity;
 From weakness when thy **POWER** is
 at hand.

But fill me, I beseech Thee with...

Love that knows no barriers;
 Courage that cannot be shaken;
 Faith strong enough for the darkness;
 Strength sufficient for my tasks;
 Loyalty to thy kingdom's goal;
 Wisdom to meet life's complexities;
 Grace to meet life's perplexities;
POWER to lift men unto Thee.

Selected from

"Power For Today"

THE RESURRECTION

THERE are many historical facts in the world that were not attended by one-tenth as many witnesses as was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As examples I might speak of the birth of princes, the signing of treaties, the remarks of cabinet officers and the deeds of assassins. I say these great events that men receive upon testimony and accept as facts; these have not had one-tenth the number of witnesses as had the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore I need not beg anyone's pardon for what I believe. I believe with all my heart that Jesus, the Christ, is risen indeed. I believe that he was seen after his resurrection by at least 641 eye witnesses. During those forty days, Jesus appeared to different men under different circumstances at various places. He ate with them, walked with them, and talked with them. They positively could not have been deceived. Such deception would be without parallel in history and without an analogy in the annals of men. Christ's enemies became the charter members of his church in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Account for that fact if you deny the resurrection.

Selected

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Nelson Lincs: The new church secretary is Mrs J. Grooters, 14 Holbeck Street, Burnley, to whom all communications for the church should be sent.

COMING EVENTS

Blackburn. New Wellington Street: The assembly at Mill Hill, B'burn plan, God willing, to hold a short series of meetings as follows:—

SATURDAY Oct 19th, 1974. Tea at 6p.m.
 followed by meeting at 7.30p.m.

LORD'S DAY Oct 20th:
 Gospel meeting at 6 p.m.

TUESDAY Oct 22nd: **WEDNESDAY** 23rd;
THURSDAY 24th: and **SATURDAY** 26th.,
 All meetings to begin at 7.30 p.m..

LORD'S DAY Oct 27th:
 Gospel meeting at 6 p.m.

Bro Paul Jones (Scotland) will be the speaker.

Brethren and friends everywhere are invited to spend a rich time of fellowship with the church here.

Blackburn Lincs: On September 28th at Mill Hill, Blackburn, three young brothers are to speak on:
 What is A Church?

(I. Parker, Newtown, Wigan)

What is the Church?

(J. Morgan Hindley)

Why I am a member of the Church of Christ?

(D. Melling Wigan)

Meeting starts at 7.30 p.m. Refreshments all invited for a rich time of fellowship.

Kentish Town, London:

Anniversary Meetings (103)

Saturday Oct. 5th 3 & 6.30 p.m. Tea 5pm
Mission with Paul Jones

October 5th to 16th.

Films on Saturdays 12th and 19th Oct.

Visitors very welcome.

R.B. SCOTT

ARTICLES WANTED

ANOTHER brother has responded to our plea for material for our own magazine, and I am extremely grateful. Keep up the momentum brethren and get pens to paper. Share your thoughts on a bible theme with the rest of us. Don't do it next month but please do it now. Thank you.

Editor

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