

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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We wish All our Readers a very Happy and Prosperous New Year

A PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

JANUS was the ancient Roman deity who kept the gate of heaven: thus he was the guardian of gates and doors. He was represented with two faces, one in front and one behind, and the doors of his temple in Rome were thrown open in times of war and closed in times of peace. The name is used in allusion both with reference to double-facedness and to war.

Thus Milton says of the cherubim:

Four faces each
Had, like a double Janus. (Paradise Lost, 11,129)

While Dante says of the Roman eagle that it:

composed the world to such a peace,
That of his temple Janus barr'd the door. (Paradiso, 6,83)

We have now entered into January of another year, January is the month dedicated by the Romans to Janus, who presided over the doorway to the year, being the guardian of gates and doors, and, having two faces, was able to look back over the year that was past and gone and also able to look forward with anticipation to the year ahead. Each of us can, and do, emulate Janus in this respect. When we reach the first day of a new January we stand upon the threshold of another brand new year and we cannot help ourselves looking back over the year that is passed and contemplate the year that stretches out before us. It is like a climber climbing a steep and rugged mountain — he looks back with satisfaction over the difficult crevases he has overcome and looks forward to the challenge of those yet to come. It is like the ploughman who reaches the end of yet another furrow and looks back, before commencing another one, to see how straight or otherwise the furrow just completed. It is like the accountant studying the Profit and Loss Account after another year's trading and hoping that he will have good news to give at the Annual General Meeting. A time for examination; and time for reflection. Another milestone has been reached; another chapter in the history book of the life of each one of us has been written. Have we made good progress, like the climber, up the mountain; have we ploughed a straight furrow: have we got a healthy Balance sheet — are we in the red or in the black? Indeed a time for reflection and a short 'breather' before we tackle the new year. Like Janus we look back over the past year — retrospection.

We look at ourselves as we are now — introspection. We look forward to the future twelve months — prospection.

Doubtless in retrospection we realise that we have made many mistakes which we will endeavour not to repeat. Things we have done and said of which we are not proud and we shall resolve not to do them again. There is always room for improvement no matter how good we think we are and we shall try to improve upon our record in the year 1975. There are things, however, we have done for the Lord in 1974 of which we can be justly pleased and we hope and trust that our good example will have rubbed-off on others. We often under-estimate the effect our good example has on others and fail to give ourselves a little credit for our efforts in this respect. We are doubtless sure that we can do better.

In introspection we look at ourselves and what do we see? Are we basically better than we were last year at this time? Have we made any progress in our Spiritual development and maturity? Do we seem to have slipped back a little and lost a little ground? If so, what has been the cause? Can we isolate the cause, is it but temporary and are we working on it? Are we losing the battle against the world and are we trying to tackle it solely in our own strength? Have we put on the whole armour of God? I know that self-analysis is a full-time occupation but perhaps January is a good time to take a pulse-reading or a glance at the spiritual thermometer. As at January, 1975, in what sort of Spiritual condition are we? "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith", says Paul (2 Cor. 13:5).

And what of 1975? What is the prospect if, Lord willing, we should live through it, What have we resolved to do for the Lord: what have we determined to accomplish? It is considered by many, with good cause, that the habit of making 'New Year Resolutions' is a bit of a farce seeing that they are usually broken within a few hours or a few days of the making of them and God certainly does not take kindly to men who make vows to Him lightly. Nevertheless shall we quietly and firmly resolve that we shall try to serve the Master better in 1975 than we served Him in 1974, knowing that any such resolution will have our Lord's approval and His support? May it be that this will be our wish for 1975 and that in the coming year we will actively pursue its fulfillment.

Another year is dawning;
Dear Master let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with thee.

Another year of service,
Of witness for thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.

EDITOR.

IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

"It is my Psalm, is it your Psalm?
Psalm Twenty Three.
The Lord is my shepherd
And He leadeth me.

Into the green pastures
Where the still waters be.
It is my Psalm, is it your Psalm?
Psalm Twenty Three.

PERFECT SECURITY — "I SHALL NOT WANT" PSALM 23:1

I would like to pay tribute to my Mother and Father. They had seven children, and how they fed and clothed us in the good old days, I will never know, My Father worked in the coal mine, and as many of you know, the wages in those days were shocking, and thinking of those times, I can understand the term "sweated labour". No Pit Head Baths, and when Father was washing, the marks and scars on his body told its own story. Sick and accident benefit received today, would have been like heaven on earth, and how ever my mother managed, when my father was off sick, or had an accident, again, I will never know. Especially, when those children cried... "Mother, I want... I want... I want... give me... give me..." no doubt from

morning, noon, and night. And how they tried to satisfy those needs, sacrifice and self-denial must have been the order of the day, and now looking back from our vantage point, we marvel at their devotion. You too, can pay tribute to your parents, if you have been brought up in those days of poverty. Why do we discuss these matters:— if our parents watched with such care, our needs, what about our loving Heavenly Father over the needs of His children? Jesus said: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, HOW MUCH MORE shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Matt. 7:11. Again, Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Matt. 6:26. What does Paul say in Philippians 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Our life is a bundle of wants...Food...Drink...Raiment...Homes...Possessions...Work...Wages... It is well for us to remember that THE BIGGEST WANTS ARE NOT THE WANTS OF THE BODY.

Jesus said "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" Luke 12:15. A millionaire can be bankrupt. A man can have possessions without having life, and a man can have life without the abundance of possessions. You cannot satisfy the deep yearnings and longings of the soul with material things, try taking a cheque book to a dying man, if you want to bear out that fact. If it had been possible to get satisfaction, peace, joy, happiness, through the agency of material things, I don't think Nicodemus would have come to Jesus by night... he came because Jesus had something, that he desired to know more about. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" John 3:2. If food, drink, raiment, homes, and possessions can give one complete satisfaction, why did the rich young ruler come to the Lord Jesus, for you remember "He had great possessions" Mark 10:22. He knew what he wanted "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? His great possessions could not give him "eternal life". The nameless lawyer as recorded in Luke 10:25-37 came to put Jesus to the test, not with any thought of hostility, with the same query "Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He too, realised that the Lord Jesus had the secret of life at its full, and he wanted to know more about it. We need to sit at the feet of our Lord, as Mary did, so that we can listen and imbibe the glorious truths He is willing to share with His children. If we do sit at His feet, eager to listen to the world's most marvellous teacher, we shall soon find that Possessions...Money...Fame...Power...Pleasure... will not give us the "abundant life" He offers. Let us take note of the value the Lord Jesus puts on material things: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36.

"I SHALL NOT WANT" ... "WHAT DO I WANT"? "WHAT DO YOU WANT"?

What is the most important "Want" for the child of God? Ask yourself the question...ask the family...ask your brethren! My answer can be written in three words:—

FREEDOM FROM SIN

- 1 **Freedom from Sin** would give us :— A conscience void of offence against God and man. Paul said, "So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men" Acts 24:16 (R.S.V.).
- 2 **Freedom from Sin** would give us :— Power over our Thoughts. Paul said, "We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" 2 Corinthians 10:5 (R.S.V.).
- 3 **Freedom from Sin** would give us :— Power over our tongues. May I quote the Psalmist: I said, "I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will bridle my mouth" Psalm 39:1 (R.S.V.).

- 4 **Freedom from Sin** would give us :- Power over our Actions. James said "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" James 4:7 (R.S.V.).
- 5 **Freedom from Sin** would give us:- Perfect Peace. Isaiah said "Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee" Isaiah 26:3 (R.S.V.).
- 6 **Freedom from Sin** would give us:- Unutterable and Exalted Joy. Peter said, Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy" 1 Peter - 1 : 8 (R.S.V.)
- 7 **Freedom from Sin** would give us:- Abundant Life. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" John 10:10 (R.S.V.).

Freedom from Sin gives: A conscience void of offence.
 Power over our Thoughts.
 Power over our Tongues.
 Power over our Actions.
 Perfect Peace.
 Unutterable and Exalted Joy.
 Abundant Life.

How do I get this Freedom? How do you get this Freedom?
Freedom through Christ - Freedom in Christ

We can thank our loving Heavenly Father, who sent His only begotten Son, to die on Calvary, to set us free from the bondage of sin, which leads us in bondage to the Lord of life. Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" John 8:34-36 (R.S.V.).

Jesus saith unto him, (Thomas) "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" John 14:6.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed in Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed: And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" John 8:31.32.

Paul said: "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. Romans 6:17,18 (R.S.V.).

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" Romans 8:1,2 (R.S.V.).

We can only be free if we are slaves of Christ.

Perfect Security - "I shall not want"

<p>"Make me a captive, Lord, And then I shall be free; Force me to render up my sword, And I shall conquer be.</p>	<p>I sink in life's alarms When by myself I stand; Imprison me within Thine arms, And strong shall be my hand."</p>
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This month's Exercise: Read every day Matt. 6:19-34 and learn by heart v's 33&34.

SINGING THE TRUTH

BIBLE schools, Lord's Day schools, Sunday schools — call them what we may — are, like churches, declining seriously in numbers these days. Many regard these declines as disastrous. They are certainly alarming, and cause religious people great concern. In the attempt to make church gatherings and Bible schools more attractive and bright various methods are tried. Among these is the effort to enliven our singing with rousing, rhythmic tunes, tunes that go "with a swing". Of course we see no reason why any words we sing are made less true and meaningful when sung to such tunes. I remember my own boyhood days in the Bible school, with the harmonious and rousing tunes we sang. Alas!! this singing is largely but memory now — the fine tunes to hymns like 'Come children, march to Immanuel's ground', 'Dare to be a Daniel', and, of the quieter hymns like "O, won't you be a Christian while you're young?" and "The Saviour walked beside the Lake of Galilee".

True Let My Words Be

Yes, we are all for good tunes (and we often find the best tunes are the simplest). But of far more importance than the tune of a hymn are the words. In my view, the first essential of the words we sing is that they should, nay must, be true. To whatever tune sung, that is a very fine hymn which says

"Help me, my God, to speak True words to Thee each day:
True let my voice be when I praise And trustful when I pray.
Thy words are true to me; Let mine to Thee be true:
The speech of my whole heart and soul, However low and few.
True words of faith and hope, Of Godly joy and grief..."

I am sure that when we are speaking or singing to God, or teaching others to pray and sing, we must be true in what we say or sing. But I am concerned at the tendency, among ourselves as well as others, to place first importance upon an attractive, "swingly" tune and not to be so particular about the words. If we are not particular about the words, neither will the children be in our schools, or even the adults in the church. There is a definite tendency to teach our children words which are without meaning to them, which do not apply to them and are therefore untrue of them. I do not suggest that this tendency is a deliberate effort to introduce among us anything which is untrue; but I do suggest that we need to be alert first of all to the truth of the words we sing or teach. My purpose is to call attention to this practice before untrue words get such a place in the hearts (and mouths) of youngsters, unable to discriminate, that they come to be believed, and that to question the words is looked upon as splitting hairs, straining out a gnat, or being fuddy-duddy.

Choruses

Let me give a few instances of such choruses or hymns. These are becoming more and more popular among children in our schools, so that I must call in question their words as being inapplicable to many who sing them. We have a chorus spreading widely in popularity: "I'm happy today; in Jesus Christ I'm happy today: Because He's taken all my sins away..." Another, growing in popularity because of the actions done by the children as they sing the words: "I'm inright, outright, upright, downright happy all the time... Since Jesus Christ came in and took away my sin..." Yet a third similar chorus goes "I'm SAVED; I know I am, I'm sure I am; I'm SAVED." Now, how many children in our Bible schools under the age of, say, ten years can taking away my sin"; by "Jesus Christ came in and took away my sin"; or by being "SAVED"? If children can truthfully sing them, then what further remains for them to be saved. Why should we teach them to be baptised; why be filled with joy when any of our Bible school scholars express their desire to be baptised?

It is not too much to say that if the words of these choruses be true, when we teach them to be baptised we are teaching them something totally unnecessary and irrelevant. Once we have made this dilemma for ourselves (for ourselves — the scriptures do not make it) we are relinquishing the whole gospel, and yielding any justification we may have to maintain a separate existence or bear a distinctive witness.

Hymns

Nor are children alone susceptible to believing and singing untrue sentiments. We adults "ought to give more earnest heed to the things that we sing". Examine some of the most popular hymns and we find that some of the things they say are, although beautiful poetry and soothing words, largely sentiment and have no basis in true experience or in scripture. What a popular hymn, for instance, is "The Old Rugged Cross"!! Yet do we "cling to the old rugged cross", and if so how do we cling to it? The "old rugged cross" was the rough instrument of our Saviour's death. Where is it now, or what is it? We can understand Roman Catholics singing such a hymn, with their belief in and superstition towards "the true crosses", but surely these words have no meaning for those who claim to be New Testament Christians. The apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ placed no faith whatever in "the old rugged cross", but in Him who was crucified upon it. They did not trouble to search out or to cling to that Roman instrument of torture and death.

Consider, too, the hymn loved by so many earnest followers of our Saviour — "I stand in the garden alone". The chorus goes

"And He walks with me And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joys we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known."

What an astounding and arrogant claim is made in those last few words! surely the writer of the hymn did not mean to claim that no other but himself (or herself) had ever experienced the bliss of the presence of Christ as he (or she) had! That of all the millions of Christ's people who ever lived this one alone was favoured with His blessing in this way! Yet such a thought is sung about quite thoughtlessly, oblivious of the contradiction the hymn contains — that if 'no other has ever known' how can the singer know such bliss?

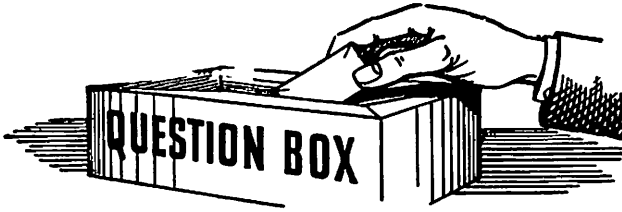
Thus we see that we raise our own difficulties and fallacies when, without thinking, we sing words that are empty of meaning, are purely sentimental and emotional. If we wish to sing these attractive tunes, there is no reason why we should not slightly reword the untrue statements until we can sing the words with truth and conviction. 'May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight' (Psalm 19:14). Carlton Melling.

NOTE FROM EDITOR

ARTICLES are always wanted and very welcome, as are your News Items. These should reach the editor preferably about the 10th of the month and certainly by the 13th of the month. News Items reaching me after the 13th may have to be held over until the following month if the printer already has his type set up, so please bear with us brethren if

late items do not appear the same month.

Just received a very encouraging letter from a very able gospel preacher in Australia who wants to receive the "S.S." and promises to write some articles for it. We look forward to those articles and perhaps, an increase in our readership in Australia and other countries. I hope so, anyway. Editor.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Who were the ‘sons of God’ as mentioned in Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6, and elsewhere in the Bible”.

THIS is a question that takes us right back to the dawn of history. Events took place which we believe but which we do not fully understand, How, for instance, can we conceive of God creating the vastness of the universe out of nothing? What are the constituent parts of the dust of the earth that it could become the instrument of life? These are questions which are posed by the finite mind to which there is no finite answer. We are dealing with the Infinite. God is God and we must believe that with Him all things are possible. It is with this in mind that we approach His word in an attempt to follow some of the guidelines He has laid down.

Its a Matter of Belief

Before we can proceed any further there is one thing which is fundamental to our understanding; we must believe and accept that it is impossible for that which is essentially evil to have emanated from that which is essentially good. The whole of God’s creation is good.

But, you will say, how is it that there is evil in the world if God created everything good, and what about Satan himself and his demon throng? Well, we must look beyond the creation of man and try to envisage something which preceded that event, namely the creation of the heavenly and angelic hosts. Satan must have been part of that heavenly creation, and it would seem that it was his attitude of disobedience to God that God designated as sin and for which Satan and his angels were cast into hell. John Milton depicts Satan as saying,

Here at least we shall be free; the Almighty hath not built
Here for His envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure; and, in my choice,
To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:
Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven”.

(Paradise Lost. Book 1)

This typifies the whole concept of sin, this unwillingness to accept the authority of God. This is precisely how Adam and Eve were tempted and how they fell.

The Sons of God

I think, then, that we must accept that there was a creation other than Adam and Eve; an angelic creation. Cherubims and a flaming sword were placed at the East of Eden when Adam and Eve had been driven out (Gen. 3:24); an angel appeared to Hagar (Gen. 16:7); three came to Abraham in the plains of Mamre (Gen. 18); two angels came to Sodom and met Lot (Gen. 19); and so we could go on. There were angels who were used by God; there were angels who were used by Satan. They were all undoubtedly, in the creative sense, sons of God although Satan and those who followed him were fallen angels. In the Hebrew, son is defined as ‘offspring’, so these we are speaking of were the offspring of God.

So to Genesis 6:2-4. Here we have the scene of men multiplying on the face of the earth, and daughters (descendants) being born unto them. We have seen that the sons of God could assume human guise (we Christians are the sons of God and we

are human, aren't we?) and that they took wives of the daughters of men. I know there is nothing authoritative about Milton but he looked at the scene and wrote,

"These are the product
Of those ill-mated marriages thou sawst;
Where good with bad were matched, who of themselves
Abhor to join, and, by imprudence mixed,
Produce prodigious births of body or mind.
Such were those giants, men of high renown;
For in those days might only shall be admired,
And valour and heroic virtue called". (Paradise Lost. Book 6)

This, then, is a picture of angels who come down to earth, marry earthly women, and produce mighty offspring. Possibly these are angels who have fallen from grace and, having been banished from the presence of God, have in the world been the instigators of the evils that afflict mankind. The Bible is suggesting that we might not fully have appreciated the extent of evil. It is suggesting that there is a poison at work in the human heart and in society which perverts our best intentions. Paul said the same thing when he wrote to Ephesus, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). It is rather significant that it is in the 6th chapter of Genesis that we are told that God has had enough and that He would destroy man from the face of the earth, all except Noah who found favour in His sight.

The Giants

The giants were the mighty men spoken of in Gen. 6 and referred to elsewhere. Nimrod was a mighty hunter (Gen. 10:8), and what about Goliath whom David fought? In Deut. 2:10,11 we read, "The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims" (It is advisable to read on in this chapter).

It would seem that Ar, on the coast of Moab, was accounted a land of giants; giants dwelt therein in old time (Deut. 2:20). The sight of these people must have made the hearts of the children of Israel quake with fear. When the men who had searched out the land reported to Caleb and Moses they said, "All the people that we saw in the land are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:32,33). What sights the children of Israel must have seen. What a race of supermen came from the mating of the sons of God with the daughters of men. But God himself had the last word, and Joshua was able to cut off these mighty men (Josh. 11:21-23). This should be a salutary lesson to us that if God is on our side then no matter what size the odds, victory will be ours.

Conclusion

Well, there it is, the cradle of humanity. What strange and wonderful happenings took place in those early days of creation. Angelic hosts, fallen angels, Satan, God's efforts to control the all-pervading power of sin, giants stalking the earth. Some of our brethren might be tempted to say, "Ssh, don't speak aloud about these things; someone might hear and think we are crazy". Well, let them, I say. God is in control as He always has been. When I look around the world today people seem to be echoing the words of Satan as stated by Milton, "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven". If this is their choice then it is a free one, but in the meantime we must do all we can to help and encourage them to look beyond time and to walk hand-in-hand with the Eternal. All things are then possible.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1975

2—Daniel 9:3-19	Luke 15:11-32
9—1 Kings 3:1-15	Luke 16:1-18
16—Deut 15:1-18	Luke 16:19-31
23—2 Kings 17:24-41	Luke 17:1-19

THE BEST KNOWN PARABLE

MORE must have been said and written about the parable of the Prodigal Son than any other of the parables; and yet it seems to come fresh and clear with each reading. From the fact that all have sinned we are all in the position of the prodigal son even if we have not wasted our substance in riotous living. It comes accordingly as a wonderful comfort that the Father rejoiced to receive his son back again, the main point in the story being of course the return of the prodigal. It is important that we should not miss the very important but perhaps secondary lesson, which comes from the picture of the "righteous" son. He stayed with his father and did not flout his father's authority. He had had all the benefits of his home all the time, and considered himself worthy of more attention than his brother. So he was from standards of justice, but towards his brother there was no sense of the obligation of love. His heart was completely out of tune with his father's.

Here is a rebuke for the Pharisees, who were so critical of Jesus for letting Himself down by consorting with tax-gatherers and notorious sinners! They were sinners themselves of a deeper dye for they had turned obedience to God into a mere formality and failed to obey it themselves in its deeper and weightier matters. They were loving the praise of men more than the praise of God, and instead of seeking the blessing of those who had lower moral standards than their own, despised them — if not hating them. There is always a danger of developing the same attitude when we are conscious of standing by a superior way of life. We must bear in mind that one evil thought

is sin in the sight of God, and the searching requirements of the sermon on the mount indicate His standard. How far we all come short each one knows in the heart. God is love and we must be "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect". Here is the supreme test and that is where in the parable the elder brother completely failed. We must remind ourselves often — and the weekly breaking of bread assures it — we would be without hope apart from the divine love manifested so clearly in the life of our Saviour. "His blood can make the vilest clean, His blood avails for me". Our greatest failure can be where the elder brother failed.

The Unjust Steward

This parable does present an astonishing commendation of deceit and embezzlement, but we cannot attribute the commendation to the Saviour. He is drawing a picture to point a lesson. It is for His disciples primarily (16:1), but the Pharisees were close by (16:14). The steward had a vital responsibility like Eliezer (Gen. 15:2) and Joseph (Gen. 41:41). He was abusing it, and upon realising discovery immediately conceived a plan to cover his future needs. His master was generous enough to acknowledge his far-seeing prudence. The disciples had left all and followed Jesus but they were to face responsibility of all kinds including the use of money (Acts 4:32-37; 6:1:3). I suggest the Saviour is ironical in suggesting friendship with wealth as a means of obtaining "everlasting habitations" (16:9). The story of unfaithfulness must teach faithfulness in the very smallest matters. He has already taught them about the true riches, and both tax-gatherers and Pharisees put store by material resources only, becoming enslaved by them. Disciples of Christ are subject to temptation in the same way, and the warning comes to us also in these days of comparative material prosperity. It is possible for money to become master instead of servant.

The scoffing Pharisees were highly thought of but were hostile to Jesus for the very reason that they trimmed the very law itself to suit their covetous and adulterous purposes. Hence Jesus rebuked

them, pointing out that many were accepting His teaching (pressing to hear it — 15:1), and He was not contradicting the law they claimed to reverence but failed to obey.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Worldly riches and selfishness, already so to speak under fire, are put in their place by this very plain and striking picture of life and death. The respectable and the disreputable rich are about and how much every man and woman needs to face up to the truth. There is one certainty in life, that is death. There is some doubt as to whether our homes are burnt down or bombed accidentally or purposely, and I suppose practically everyone takes care to insure their lives and homes against such possibilities, but there is no doubt whatever about death. How much more important it must be that thought is given to that certainty. The suggestion that when we are dead we are done for has never found acceptance in any measure. Mankind instinctively expects future life. Few can persuade themselves otherwise when they view many of life's inequalities and injustices. The Bible leaves us in no doubt. There is too a kind of satisfaction in feeling that such inequalities as are here pictured must be righted. We cannot get away from the terrifying nature of the rich man's condition in Hades, wrongly translated "hell" in the A.V. Hades is the abode of departed spirits of mankind awaiting the final day of judgement. The sinful dead are shown as being in a place of torment while the righteous dead — as we must regard Lazarus — are being comforted. The dying robber forgiven by Jesus was promised paradise, which would surely be equivalent to "Abraham's bosom". Here are two very striking points. The first that it was too late for any communication to pass to the rich man's brothers. Secondly that if scripture goes unheeded so will the strongest possible evidence.

Lessons to Disciples

We should read 17:1-4 in connection with Matthew 18:15-22 where Jesus gave instructions on how to treat one another.

The plan shortly and plainly indicated involves frank and truthful behaviour. It is recognised that there are bound to be causes of stumbling, but they will be lessened if the stern warning is heeded and care taken to have always the forgiving spirit. I have a thought that there are two points in forgiveness. One is the righting of a wrong mutually, producing "official" forgiveness, and the other is what every christian must always have in his heart regardless of right or wrong, willingness to be wronged without resenting it and with prayer for forgiveness from God for the offender — which of course is conditional on repentance. Stephen said "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" Acts 7:60.

The disciples sought increase of faith. With the teaching they are receiving this is not surprising, and there is no let up to the demands made upon them. When we have done all we should, we shall still be behind. The parable of the mustard seed in relation to faith and that of the master expecting the slaves' service have to be related to ways of expressing truths in striking figures. I understand the Rabbis of Jesus' time used the removal of mountains (or trees as in this passage) to indicate extremely wonderful things. The other figure indicates the impossibility of humankind repaying God in service for all His goodness.

The Grateful One

When we allow our minds to contemplate the work of the Saviour over His three years of service, we are appalled to consider the cry "Crucify Him!" on that darkest and yet brightest day. Here in our concluding reading, we see the one out of ten healed lepers returning to render thanks — and he a stranger! "God so loves."

R.B.SCOTT

WE should work for the Lord as if it all depended on us. We should pray to the Lord as if it all depended on Him (which, of course, it does).

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buckie: The church is delighted to report the Baptism of Roma Flett. Our Sister has been attending the Gospel Meetings quite regularly, and decided to put on Christ, after our Bro. Jack Nisbet preached the gospel. The Baptismal service took place in our Bro. and Sis. William Piries' home after the Gospel service. We pray that our Sister Roma may serve God and his Church, acceptably with reverence and Godly fear.

John Geddes

Bedminster, Bristol: It gives us much joy to report the baptism, on Nov. 20th, of Michael Jones, the son of brother and sister Bill & Jean Jones. We thank the Lord and pray that our young brother will be blessed with a long life of service to the Master.

L. DANIELL

Haddington, East Lothian: The church here again rejoiced in the working of the gospel when a young woman, Ruth Nisbet, obeyed her Lord in baptism on Sunday 17th November. Ruth is the daughter of brother and sister Jack and Alice Nisbet and has been a scholar in the Bible Class for many years. May God bless her and keep her in His way.

The church would like to thank our brethren in Tranent for the kind use of their meeting house and baptistry. Thanks be to the Shepherd who leads His sheep.

We are overjoyed once again to report the baptism of a young man, Thomas Nisbet, who was immersed on Sunday 8th December. Thomas is the brother of sister Ruth Nisbet, subject of our previous report. We pray that the Lord will bless these two young persons abundantly and that they will remain faithful and will be great assets to the church and the Master.

MARY MURDIE

Tranent: The church here rejoiced to see two souls baptised into Christ on Sunday 24th November. They are Mrs Jean Hogg, who has been attending the services for the past month while Bro. P. Jones was the speaker, and Aileen Colgan. Aileen is the daughter of Bro. and Sis. David Colgan. She was a member of the Sunday School and later the Bible Class and has

attended the gospel meetings regularly.

We ask His blessing on them in their new life and pray that we all might be found faithful in His service. **J. Kneller Ulverston, Cumbria:** The church here at Ulverston is pleased to report the baptism of Mrs Cynthia Thistlethwaite on Nov. 24th. We all pray that our new found sister will be very happy in her new found faith. Many thanks to the church for their kind help. Sister Cynthia is the wife of John Thistlethwaite. J.T. (Having met sister Cynthia may I add my congratulations Ed.)

Hayfield Road, Kirkcaldy: The church here has been further encouraged by witnessing brother and sister Pearson (husband and wife) put on their Lord in baptism. They have been studying the scriptures with brother John Wood and we rejoice in the result trusting that they will be long spared to become workers for the Master.

Bro. A Roberts, Sec.

OBITUARY

St. John's Lane, Bristol: Brother Jim Blandford died on Sunday 20th October, at the age of 85 years. The funeral service was conducted by brother Len Daniell on Thurs. 24th October. Brother Blandford was a great character and very zealous in the work of the church. He was a C.O. during the first world war. After the closing of the church in Newport when one of his daughters moved to Bristol he took the opportunity of worshipping with the church in St. John's Lane. For the last 18 months he was living at Bristol and sought every means to be at the meetings.

He will be sadly missed for he had a place in all the hearts of those who came to know him. Len Daniell

Buckie, Scotland: On Monday 2nd Dec. our aged sister, Maggie Bage, fell asleep in Jesus. She came to know Jesus as her Saviour early in life, and has remained faithful. Because of bodily weakness this past seven years she was unable to enjoy the fellowship of the Saints around the Lord's Table. We mourn her passing, but "not as those who have no hope", and earnestly pray

for that day when with those who have gone before, we stand before Him, the Lord of life and glory and hear His "Well done".

The burial took place from her neices home our Sisters Sheila and Margaret Innes, which was conducted by brethren Geddes, Mair, Harper. John Geddes-Bedminster, Bristol: It is with much sorrow that we record the sudden passing of our brother Jim Blandford on Sunday October 20th, at the age of 85.

He became a christian as a young man, and remained very loyal. He was prepared to serve his Lord no matter what the cost. He spent a period in prison for conscience sake. The greater part of his life was spent in South Wales where he served the churches as a speaker. In his latter days he found a spiritual home with the church at Bedminster. He was a source of inspiration to all those who came into contact with him, and it was his joy to speak of his saviour.

To his sons and daughters we commend the love of our Heavenly Father who is able to do more than we ask or think.

L. Daniell.

Blackburn, New Wellington St: It is with deep sorrow that we report the passing

away of our Sister Lily Renshaw, the wife of Brother Roy. Sister Lily had been seriously ill for a few weeks prior to her death; she died on November 17th, late in the night, at her home; she was aged only 48 years.

Sister Lily was a constant worker for her Lord, from being a member of the Lord's church from her teenage years, she was a great example to us all at New Wellington St., as she devoted her life to the service of the Lord. Bro. Roy expresses his thanks for all who visited Lily during her illness, and for the cards, letters and the concern and sympathy shown to him during his time of difficulty, we offer our prays for him at this time; we shall all miss Lily but we know, that she shall receive her just reward, for all those who are faithful servants.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing".

T TYSON (Sec)

(Readers will recall the courage of our sister expressed in the letter sent to the "S.S." and printed last month. 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord' Ed).

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