

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

VOL. 27. NO. 2

FEBRUARY 1961

“FLOWERY BEDS OF EASE.”

IN Luke 16:1-9 is recorded a parable of Christ's which has puzzled many Christians and followers of His teaching: the Parable of the Unjust Steward. What has needed explanation is that the master of the estate commended his steward, although the steward was dishonest in his dealings with his master's property, both before and after he had been called to give account. Everything in the words of Christ shows the man to be a complete rascal, determined to save his own neck at whatever cost.

Why then did Christ hold up the man as an example? Certainly not for his knavery and dishonesty. Jesus Himself tells us why: “The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence; for the sons of this world are wiser in their generation than the sons of light” (verse 8). The steward was praised for his prudence, shrewdness, foresight. And, arising from that, Jesus says that in their own generation, for their own purposes, to attain their own objects, the sons of this world show more initiative and zeal than the sons of light.

Who are “the sons of this world”? The Pharisees and scribes were part of Christ's audience (Luke 15:3-4; 16:14). They were “lovers of money”: a lover of money is a lover of self—selfish, materialistic—finding all he wants in this life. Of the Pharisees Jesus said (Matt. 6:2, 16), “they have their reward”—the praise of men. Sadducees and Pharisees grew rich on the toil, pain and poverty of others. They were “the sons of this world.” And, Jesus said, they are far more assiduous in forwarding their ends than are the sons of light.

Who are “the sons of light”? As well as the scribes and Pharisees, Christ's disciples were listening to Him (16:11). Jesus institutes a contrast between the two. The apostles were to go out to represent Him, as ambassadors, and do His work in the world. Their Master shows them that they must, in their enterprises, work with the zeal and acumen that worldly men show in their undertakings.

If a lesson is here for the apostles, how much more for us? Often Jesus suggested that His followers would flag and fail in their endeavours for Him: “most men's love will grow cold”; “When the Son of man comes will he find faith on the earth?” In Gal. 6:9 and 2 Thes. 3:13, Paul exhorts Christians “not to be weary in well-doing, for we shall reap if we do not faint.” The former passage is particularly interesting, for the Galatians were notoriously changeable, quixotic. “I am astonished,” writes Paul (1:6) “that you are so quickly deserting him who has called you in the grace of God and turned to a different gospel.” In other passages Paul and the rest of the inspired writers warn against lack of zeal and urge to remain faithful. All is summed up in the words of the Christ: “Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10).

Unholy Zeal

Can it be said today that we as Christians are going about our calling with nearly the same zeal as the world about its business? You cannot be with a man of the world long before you know from his own telling his interests and enthusiasms, his job, his hopes and ambitions. To realise these he is prepared to sacrifice and devote his time and money and whatever he has and is. For good ends, it is true, but only for time and this life and world. Read Douglas Hyde's "I Believed" to know what Communists will endure gladly for the sake of their cause.

Evildoers are diligent in carrying out their business. They do not rest day or night; they never slacken in determination to achieve their ends. A few weeks ago we read for our Old Testament portion Proverbs 4. There the zeal of the wicked is vividly described (verse 16): "They cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble." Our great cities are centres of nameless vice, specially in the night, for "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19). Certainly the servants of Christ are not so diligent usually as to work through the night to accomplish God's purposes through them!

"Woe to them that sit at ease!"

Let us frankly examine our state in the church of Jesus Christ. Is it not true that the great majority of us are content to show our Christianity by simply attending meetings, and not too many at that? Judging by our attendance, do not many of us think that to break bread on the Lord's Day constitutes all that we can be expected to do? Does not this show that we regard that as all the service God requires of us? Should not we be ashamed that so many, after breaking bread, are not seen again, if then, until the following Lord's Day? As for attendance at midweek meetings, it is disgraceful that about a quarter, often fewer, of the church's members are present. I have heard it said that in a way the strength of a church can be measured by its midweek meetings. If that be so, we are weak indeed and ready to die. In both Lord's Day and midweek meetings, and the whole work of the church, too much is left by too many to too few. While the many sit at ease, the few are taken for granted: they are sure to be there and see that things are right and orderly. It is the prerogative of the many to criticise and to take offence at mostly non-existent wrongs.

What sort of Christians are we if we come week by week to be spoonfed with teaching, constantly taking in, but never realising our responsibility to give out God's word? How many are really growing on the spiritual food we are receiving from God's word? We have recently read from Heb. 5:11-14 the rebuke of those who have been in the church for years yet still need to be fed on baby-food, milk, and are not able to receive strong meat. As in the time that epistle was written there are brothers and sisters among us who constantly need this elementary teaching when, by their years and experience they should be teaching others in daily life and Lord's Day school. In medical circles such diet and lack of growth would warrant serious alarm. Are we so concerned in the infinitely more important matter of spiritual growth?

if not we — who ?

What impact do we expect to have upon the world with such half-hearted, lackadaisical trifling with the things of God? How can we expect that men and women be saved and God's will be done, except through us? It is true to say that for all some Christians contribute to the cause of Christ in time, abilities, money or work our meeting-houses would be closed, meetings abandoned, the gospel silenced and the word of God unknown.

This is playing at Christianity, what Bunyan termed in "Pilgrim's Progress": "religion in carpet slippers." In many of its benevolent and social undertakings the world sets a higher standard than many Christians attain to in their service of Jesus Christ. I was impressed a few weeks ago in reading a leaflet on Rotarianism and in hearing some Rotarians outline the aims and stands of their society. Prospective members are left in no doubt of what is expected of them — generous giving to their international, national, and local movements, to help the needy and other causes; at least sixty per cent attendance at the weekly luncheons of their

clubs, one hundred per cent urged; service on various sub-committees and regular attendance on at least two nights a week at these committee meetings. If such a standard were set before Christians how many would reach it? And this service is carried out gladly and in warm fellowship that puts to shame the spirit often showed by Christians.

"The sons of this world . . ." If the church would show the same zeal as the sons of this world in their generation what a different picture the world would present. The fault is largely ours that the kingdoms of this world have not yet become the Kingdom of God and of Christ. We must not regard the work of conversion as being the responsibility of a few specially qualified and interested brethren. It is no more theirs than ours, "to each according to his ability." Each of us is vitally involved in this great task.

"Christ for the world, we sing!
The world to Christ we bring
With loving zeal."

But we shall not bring the world to Christ until and unless each realises that he fills a necessary place in God's plan and will. "Waft, waft, ye winds, His story," writes Heber in his great missionary hymn. But the winds will never waft the story: we must take it wherever we go, in works, mine, office, shop, home, school.

Faced with the appalling need of the world for the gospel we may say, like Andrew, "What are we among so many?" Yet Jesus took that which was yielded to Him, nothing more and nothing less, and in His hands it became a mighty blessing to the thousands. So with us, if we give to Jesus what we have and are, of ability, character, time, money, self, these in His hands and service will be transformed and multiplied to the feeding of the hungry and the satisfaction of spiritual needs.

It is all a matter of "I." It depends upon me. Let us go to it.

EDITOR.

HOW LONG DID THE BODY OF JESUS LIE IN THE GRAVE?

THE answer to this question is more properly a matter of evidence than of argument about words and their definitions. That Jesus died on the cross and was buried and rose again from the tomb are indisputable facts. These facts are related in the four gospels in clear and simple statements, so that our faith need never waver. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19:7).

Fulfilment of Scripture

In the nature of the case, those prophecies of old time, and the intimations that Jesus gave concerning His death, burial and resurrection may seem hard to be understood. At least His disciples did not understand Him. To them His statements were ambiguous and enigmatic yet it appears that the priests and elders of the Jews were not so dull. (See Matt. 27:63). The disciples trusted that He would redeem Israel; so, when He was killed and buried their hopes were disappointed and they were in despair. The prophecies in the Old Testament and the forecasts by Jesus were no help to them. Either they did not know the prophecies or did not understand. It needed the great fact of His resurrection to renew their faith and hope in Jesus. It was following His resurrection that they received an understanding in all things.

As we read the records, we are forcibly struck with the devilish and inexcusable haste that the chief priests and elders displayed to destroy the Lord Jesus. He was arrested in the night and "as soon as it was day" Luke says (22:66), was led into the council." They soon hurried Him off to Pilate, who, after a formal inquiry, sent Him to King Herod. Herod being greatly curious about Jesus, asked more particularly concerning Him, but Jesus answered him nothing. "The soldiers set Jesus at naught and mocked him and sent him again to Pilate."

His second appearance before Pilate, although longer than the first, could not have been of long duration, for "they were instant with loud voices requiring

that He might be crucified, and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed." (Luke 23:23).

Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. Mark tells us He was crucified as early as 9 o'clock in the morning, the third hour (15:25). Then in verse 33, we are told that when the sixth hour [12 mid-day] was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." (3 p.m.). Soon after "the Lord gave up the ghost."

Just as haste was dominant in the condemnation and crucifixion of the Lord, so the Jews were just as hasty to bury the bodies before the sabbath. (John 19:31). In the case of Jesus this was soon done, because His body was put in a sepulchre "which was nigh at hand." All these things—His arrest, trial, condemnation, crucifixion and burial took place in one day—the day of preparation.

Luke 23 : 54-56 says, "And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women . . . beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment." (See also Mark 15:42 and John 19:14, 31, 42).

"Three days and three nights"

The four gospel writers state that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave on the first day of the week. Agreeably to all here noted, Jesus was buried near the end of the preparation day. His body lay all the next day—the sabbath, and was raised early on the morning of the first day of the week.

Some brethren are puzzled about the expression found in Matt. 12:40. "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." They think that this expression is a contradiction of the facts by the writers of the gospels. It is no contradiction. This expression is peculiar to the Hebrew way of thinking, speaking and writing. It is known in literature as a "Hebraism." And good dictionary says that this is in "the manner or idiom" of the Hebrew.

In the long history of the Jews we find that they did not have a perfected system of measuring time as we modern people have. Their method was loose and variable. The references to Jesus' lying in the grave prove this. John 2-19: "Destroy this temple and in *three days* I will raise it up." Matt. 16:21: "He must suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again *the third day.*"

Consider also our Lord's cryptic answer to those who told Him that Herod would kill Him, "I do cures *today* and *tomorrow* and *the third day* I shall be perfected." (Luke 13:32). This figure of speech was literally fulfilled in the time He lay in the tomb. Now look at Matt. 27:63, 64: In one breath, the chief priests refer to Jesus' burial by two different expressions: "*After three days* I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until *the third day.*"

Two references to the Old Testament will give further illustration of the Hebrew way of reckoning time. In 1 Sam. 30:12, it is said that a certain Egyptian had not eaten bread or drunk water for "three days and the three nights," and yet it was only three days since he fell sick (v. 13), not four days.

In Esther 4:16, the Queen and her maidens fasted—"they would neither eat nor drink *three days, night or day.*" (See also Chap. 5:1). Yet it was on *the third day* that Esther went in to the king; *not the fourth day* which it would have been if the command was to be literally understood. The general practice among the Jews was to reckon a part of a day or year as a whole.

Another query sometimes brought forward is concerning John 19:31, where John says, "for that sabbath day was a high day." This is quite easy to understand.

In Exodus 12:16, the first day of unleavened bread was a holy convocation; no manner of work was to be done. This was always on the 15th day of the month, Abib. The 15th day of the month did not always fall on the same day of the week, but varied each year. The day following our Lord's crucifixion was the sabbath. It was also the feast day—the 15th day—the day of holy convocation; thus, it is described as "a high day." It was a very special day to the religious Jews. (See John 19:31).

This was the reason given for their haste to destroy Jesus. A perfect analogy occurs on 25th December, 1960. Christmas is observed with much solemnity by many professed Christians. This last Christmas fell on a Sunday (Lord's day); to be celebrated as a very special day (a sort of high day), for it meant that both the birth and death of Jesus are called to remembrance on the one day. To the pious Jew the sabbath was and is a holy day; when the first day of unleavened bread coincides with it, it becomes a high sabbath.

SAMUEL WILSON.

WHERE DID THEY GO

THOSE PEOPLE AFTER THEY ROSE FROM THE DEAD ?

Matthew 27: 50. "and Jesus again cried with a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom. And the earth did shake, and the rocks were rent: and the sepulchres were opened, and many bodies of the saints that slept, arose. And they came out of their sepulchres after his resurrection, and entered the holy city, and appeared to many."

I WAS much interested by the question posed in last month's "Question Box" — repeated as the title of this article, written because of the interest thus created. The interest lay in the question itself, the reply given to it, and also because, in an argument in the *S.S.* some months ago, I made reference to the incident out of which the question arises and was accused of a mistake in what I wrote.

It should be made clear at once that there is no intention of calling in question anything that Bro. Channing wrote in his reply. When he writes: "It [the incident referred to—printed at the head of this article] lies in the realm of things that are beyond human knowledge, and the limits of revelation," I agree. But a question does spring to mind: "What are the limits of revelation?" Do they not extend to the legitimate use of inference? I believe there is a great deal of revelation through scripture which is incidental rather than particular. Knowledge that grows—develops—within us from what is read.

A Sign

When, at a critical moment, many years ago, these words of Matthew first came to my notice, I disbelieved them. I have said and written that this incident is one of the most astonishing things in the whole of the Bible. That not only should dead people be raised to new life in the manner so plainly stated, but that they should remain alive in their tombs for several days was rather too much. However, disbelief in God's Word was—and is—as foreign to my mind as anything could be, and I reconciled myself to its acceptance in a similar way to that mentioned by Bro. Channing, as something that lay beyond human understanding. I do not think that now. Except for the ultimate incomprehensible—the renewing of mortal life in the physically dead—there is a reading of this so-short story that, to me, is completely satisfying.

As it stands recorded—if accepted—the incident reads like a unique display of divine power: something to marvel at, and then pass on. But power for power's sake is not God's way of working. As we have so often read, "the Lord was not in the wind," was not in the earthquake, not in the fire. Belief in that sort of thing belongs to witchcraft and Satanism. Jesus, in His temptation, would have none of it.

When writing some months ago of the raising of Lazarus, these words were used: "Someone has pointed out that the N.T. refers to the miracles sometimes as 'signs and wonders,' and sometimes as 'signs,' but the word 'wonder,' standing alone, is never used. This is taken to imply that the display of power exercised is of less importance than the sign it was intended to convey." To me, that has proved a useful key to unlock some of the doors that there are, admittedly, in God's word.

The incident, in its recording, is as matter-of-fact and unremarkable as anything could be. Nothing is stressed to draw attention to it. It is when we begin to search into the significance of what occurred, when it happened, and to whom, that we get answers which, I believe, gradually bring enlightenment.

Who were they ?

Who were these people (men and women?) to whom these strange things happened. We are told just enough to broadly describe and locate them. They were "saints." This is the one—only—use of this word in the four Gospels. It is used time and again in the "Acts" and the Epistles. I have a translation of the Gospels by "Monsignor" Ronald Knox—a dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church,

who, using the word correctly, describes these saints as "holy people." Knowing the idea of saints the Romanists entertain—and that commonly held—that saints are holy people who are dead, and have been dead a long time, so as to be esteemed worthy of exaltation into the Calendar of Saintship by a Council of Cardinals—the difficulty of saying, or even of hinting, who these saints were that Matthew wrote about is apparent.

If we think of the word as used in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles—remembering also that Matthew lived and wrote his record about the time the epistles were being written—we shall see that he used language which was in the common speech of those who were "called to be saints" because of their belief in and association with Jesus Christ. These saints were living people, but is it not obvious that those saints who had died and rose again belonged to the same company? They and the Saviour had been alive together in the flesh, and they rose together because God wanted them. This latter remark must be true, or they would have remained in their tombs.

Bro. Channing's questioner asks: "Where did these people go after their raising from the dead?" Is not the answer to that obvious? As was natural, they went home (as we might say): Scripture is careful to tell us, "they went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." They went to the place where the people were who had put Christ to death, and where the friends of Jesus were gathered, as sheep without a shepherd.

An evidence of Christ's Resurrection

When we think of the tremendous exercise of power involved in the work of the Holy Spirit, from Pentecost onwards, so that the Church should be established and preserved in the purity of faith in its early years, is it something to wonder at that God should take extraordinary steps to establish the fact that Christ had risen? That He did rise is the one great event of history. Many wonders had been performed to bring it about. God works through people, and these nameless saints were raised to be His instruments of testimony at this supreme moment in time, and at the place where it was most needed.

Belief in the resurrection—true as it was—nevertheless hung on very slender threads at the first. Christ, in prayer before He died, had thanked God for the men given to Him, but these were the very people who faltered. What could be more reassuring for them—doubtful disciples that they were—than to walk side by side with people who had tasted death and had returned? I believe that to be a true reading of what occurred.

Which brings us to the strangest part of the incident before us: that these saints, having been awakened from the sleep of death, should be kept within their tombs for several days. There they were, and if we ask ourselves why, does not an answer come straightway to mind? For these people to have risen and appeared before the raising of Christ would have nullified the effect intended to be produced: that is, the assurance amongst the people who most mattered that Christ had risen. The Lord's appearances after His resurrection were not constant, but their's would be and there were "many" of them, to be seen and recognised, and having a story to tell.

However, there is, we think, another explanation of this incident which goes deeper, and reveals a real reason for that strange lapse of time between the moment when life was renewed in the bodies of these dead and their actual leaving of their tombs. Those days of waiting may carry a message for us to the fuller understanding of what the Gospel stories reveal about their resurrection.

The several instances of resurrection in the N.T. were not isolated demonstrations of the power of God, but were in the nature of preludes to the resurrection of Christ, which was coming. It is noticeable that the death of each person raised is quietly but definitely insisted upon. When Jesus came to the home of Jairus, and saw the weeping people, He said of the daughter, "weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead." When the widow's son was raised, Jesus said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak."

Of Lazarus, there is the forthright speech of Martha, as she and Jesus stood at the mouth of the tomb, when she would have restrained Him, saying, "He hath been dead four days." Of Christ, the record says, "the soldiers . . . came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already." As for these saints, the fact that they had been entombed is evidence of their death.

No Corruption (?)

The point about all this is that statement which Martha, in pitiful language, was compelled to utter: "He stinketh." The consciousness of what follows death is deeply inscribed into the hearts and lives of every person who has lived since the beginning of time (except for the very young). The dissolution of the body after death is nature's great law—and the law of nature is the law of God.

It is here that those days of waiting may be seen to be necessary to God in the honouring of His own law. Applying this to the stories of the maid and of the widow's son, the time between death and the hour of burying of the young man was so short as not to allow of much deterioration in the state of the body, but with Lazarus it was different. The answer which Martha received from Jesus, when she demurred at the opening of the tomb, was, "Did I not tell you that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?" And then we read (Lazarus still being within his tomb) that Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me . . . and when he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth."

What others have thought or think about this, I do not know. But before this article came to be written I had supposed the renewed life of Lazarus to begin at the moment of that call to him. We do not know. But the raising of the many dead, and those dead remaining in their tombs, may be a clue to the right answer to that question. It would also apply to the resurrection of Christ. At the raising of the maid the arresting word used was "Arise!" To the young man, it was, "I say unto you, Arise!" But to Lazarus, Jesus called, "Come forth!" As though he was already in a state of life. This may mean—and it is suggested it does mean—that Lazarus, his life renewed, had remained alive in his tomb, and so also Christ. The exultant words of Peter at Pentecost, quoting the prophecy of David concerning Christ, appear to bear this out: "his soul was not left in hell [a state of death], neither did his flesh see corruption."

It is as though God, being challenged by His own inexorable law—the natural law of the dissolution of the body—acted instantly the necessity arose to combat it, and invoked natural law with which to do it.

My scientific knowledge—medical or otherwise—is of the feeblest. There is a theory, I believe, that the living body is in a constant state of flux—all the time there is a discarding of the worn-out, and a replacing by new cells, and this continues while life lasts. When life departs then dissolution has free course. In accordance with the economy of power characteristic of God, the moment for Him to act in the renewal of life is the precise moment when it becomes needful—even to God—to use a Bible term, to act "in the fullness of time." This means that those holy people who, in God's mind were needed to be raised, died only a short while before Christ Himself died, and also that the renewal of their lives must have taken place very soon after they died.

"Christ the First Fruits"

It was necessary that they should die before Christ died, so that their awakening at that precise time and in that manner might establish the connection between their raising and His death—as the incident shows—and thus it became also necessary that they should remain in their tombs so that their re-appearance should coincide more or less with Christ's resurrection. That is our understanding of this incident, and Cowper's words come to mind with added force, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform," and that "He is His own interpreter," revealing Himself through His word.

If the question "Where did these people go after they were raised from the dead" is intended to be extended to the end of their days on earth, there is no answer but one: we do not know. There is an idea that it ended in their exaltation

into heaven, but I cannot believe it. Of Enoch, the scriptures are careful to tell us, "he was not, for God took him." Of Moses, that he died and God buried him. Of Elijah, that "he went up to heaven in a whirlwind." But not a word do we have about these saints, that anything so remarkable attended their departure. If their passing had been of that kind, I do not believe that God would have left us without witness of the fact. My answer—for what it is worth—is that the same happened to these many saints as happened to the maid, the young man, and to Lazarus. Being risen again to mortal life they died again mortal at the end of their days. They rose in the same relationship to Christ as did the others. They all died before Christ died, and they all had their lives renewed before Christ rose. It seems to me that is the better answer than to spend time guessing as to what their end was.

W. BARKER.

A FOOTNOTE.—What is written in the foregoing article is just my answer. It has not been culled from some modernist book—as some vainly imagined when I wrote on another subject. The question having been asked and my having found an answer satisfactory to myself, it did seem incumbent upon me to reply. There can be no discussion upon it in the S.S. Anyone wishing to write to me personally may do so, and I will acknowledge receipt, and read what is written, but can offer nothing beyond that.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FOR FEBRUARY, 1961

5—Isaiah 44:9-28.	Hebrews 9.
12— " 55.	" 10.
19— " 64.	" 11:1-21.
26—Jeremiah 1.	" 11:22-39.

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. 10:36).

YOU, certainly, dear Reader, and I equally, need patience. It is an essential if we are to receive what is promised. The R.S.V. translates a little more clearly. "You have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God, and receive what is promised." The thought is of course continuing to do that will, so as not to fail to receive its fulfilment. We must of course recognise that we do not merit the reward. When we have done all we are commanded (and none has ever done that), we are still unprofitable servants: the obligation of the creature to the Creator was there in any case, and the reward is "of grace." How wonderful this is we shall perhaps only realise fully when we "know as we are known." Three words can more fully explain what this need is—patience, endurance, perseverance. "Receiving a promise" can mean either having a promise given to us or having it fulfilled to us. Thus there is no contradiction in our passage

development—faith, virtue self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly affection, love.

Jesus, speaking of such persecutions as the Hebrew Christians had already experienced, told his disciples: "In your patience you shall win your souls" (Luke 21:19, R.V.). So far the first readers of this letter had indeed endured probably far more than any readers of this paper. They had not only been publicly exposed and ch. 11:13, 17 and 39. We all know what patience is, however, and we know too that ours can get exhausted, sometimes quite easily and unjustifiably. The Saviour, of course, is our perfect example of it, and exercised it in a degree we cannot measure because of His complete holiness, and man's sinfulness. From the date of our submission in baptism this virtue should grow. Peter sets out (2 Peter 1:5) an order of to abuse and affliction, but had accepted joyfully (note this point particularly) the plundering of their property. They had so openly helped and supported other Christians that they had brought trouble on themselves additionally—true fellowship this! This all happened to them because they were enlightened by the gospel, through which they knew in their hearts they had something much more precious than any earthly property. They had experienced the ecstatic joy, commanded and available—"Blessed are ye when all men shall reproach you, and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven . . ." (Matt. 5:11). The apostles experi-

enced this in very early days (Acts 5:41). They might have been smarting under the gross injustice of their treatment, but that thought (so common and natural) disappeared, eclipsed by the joy of suffering for Jesus' sake. There was also the realisation that their Lord was with them, and the heavenly reward quite certain.

The contents of this letter show that even those who did thus greatly endure for a time are liable to fall away. Did not Elijah, after the astonishing demonstration and outstanding victory for truth on the mountain, run away from an idolatrous woman? Peter, enthralled by the glory on the mount of transfiguration and the human love and beauty of his Lord, forsake and deny Him in a critical time? Alas for human weakness, from which we all suffer! It is our confidence in God to which we must cling, that His power may sustain us in hours of trial and weakness. Thus the writer—"Do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward!" (10:35). It may well be that there is a reference to the imminent destruction of the Jewish state and Temple (which took place in 70 A.D.) in verses 25 and 37 in this chapter. That did remove the possibility of sustaining the old covenant worship, but not the temptation to avoid persecution and relapse into comparative ease.

These Hebrew Christians had very literally "taken up the cross" and were following in the footsteps of their Lord, but they were not progressing spiritually as they should (Heb. 4:11-14) and were therefore losing the patience and perseverance essential to their continuance in "the narrow way." We do know it was and is always true that to lose all one's possessions is a trifling matter in comparison with "casting away our confidence" in the eternal realities. We are living in an age when all the emphasis is on material things. Their acquisition and maintenance are regarded as of supreme importance. It is indeed good that poverty is recognised as a disgrace to any society, and much thought is given to its abolition in all countries. Finally, however, it will have to be realised that spiritual poverty can go hand in hand with material prosperity, if not actually encouraged by it, and ungodliness must ultimately destroy mankind. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (11:6), and "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness" (Rom. 1:18).

Faith is the basic principle of Christian living but it must be continued with patience. It must be built upon for development or it will fail. The supreme importance of faith is put before us in ch. 11 in precept, but even more forcibly by example. The danger and the fearful results of apostasy could hardly be expressed more emphatically than they are in ch. 10:26-31. The greatness and the certainty of the reward are before us, so let us "hold fast the confession of our hope" (10:23), "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (24), and "not neglect to meet together" (25). The time when "we have never had it so good" is the time when we may well be led away from the patient continuance and perseverance in self-denial, necessary if we are to receive the reward. Our brethren in those far-away days were tempted by the persecution they endured—"Calm seas have their dangers; mariner beware!"

We do have need of patience, "as seeing him who is invisible."

R. B. SCOTT.

WHERE IS HAPPINESS?

Not in unbelief. Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."

Not in pleasure. Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure and ease. But he wrote: "The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

Not in money. Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had an enormous fortune. Yet when dying he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Not in position and fame. Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both but he said: "Youth is a mistake, manhood a struggle, and old age a regret."

Not in military renown. Alexander of Macedon conquered the known world in his day. Yet he died, weeping because "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Not in power and achievement. Solomon was a great lover, a writer, a builder and diplomat. His conclusion: "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Where, then is happiness found?

In Christ alone. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Lesson Outlines.

Series 1—Lesson 19

Conversion: Lydia—a seller of purple.

Lesson Verses: Acts 16.6-15.

Memory Verse: Acts 16:9.

Objective: The message of the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ is accepted by the individual who worships God.

Date: A.D. 49.

Places: Asia Bithynia, Galatia, Macedonia, Mysia, Neapolis, Philippi, Phrygia, Samothrace, Thyatira, Troas.

Asia, a province of what is now Asia Minor bordering the Ægean Sea. Bithynia: province of Asia Minor on the Black Sea. Galatia: south of Bithynia. Macedonia: northern part of Grecian peninsula. Cities of Macedonia include Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea. Mysia: part of the province of Asia. Neapolis: port of Philippi. Philippi: modern Filibedjek, city of the first rank in Macedonia, a Roman colony, the first thoroughly Roman city visited by Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. Phrygia: province of Asia Minor, south of Bithynia, west of Galatia. Samothrace: island in the Ægean, midway between Troas and Neapolis. Thyatira: a city of Lydian Asia, 56 miles north-east of Smyrna, now called Ak-Hissar. It was famous for the art of dyeing purple. Troas: city of Mysia on the Ægean coast, present day Eski-Stamboul.

Persons: "They" of v.6, Paul and companions, Silas and Timothy. Luke is included from v.10.

The man of Macedonia appeared to Paul in Troas in a vision during the night. "Come over into Macedonia and help us." The missionary party had been guided due west from Galatia across Asia to Troas. They were forbidden by the holy Spirit to turn south into Asia (v.6) and the Spirit did not allow them to turn north into Bithynia (v.7). In answer to the call they took ship from Troas across the Ægean to Neapolis in Macedonia, touching Samothrace *en route*, and entered Philippi.

Message: There being no synagogue, Paul went on the Sabbath day to the oratory at the riverside and gave the message to the women assembled there for prayer. Lydia, the seller of purple, worshipped God along with these women.

Results: Lydia, disposed to eternal life—to spiritual things—gave heed to the message. She was immersed and her household; then she provided hospitality for the heralds of the good news. "If you are satisfied of my loyalty to the Master, you must come and stay with me" (v.15, Auth. N.T.). After the imprisonment and release of Paul and Silas, they again enjoyed the hospitality of Lydia before passing on to Amphipolis and Thessalonica.

Emphasis: To the church at Philippi, "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the overseers and those who serve; grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:1, 2).

No man can tell what the future may bring forth, and small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.

Tucked away amid the news items in a metropolitan newspaper was this brief comment on the passing of an unknown actor—"He played minor parts like a master." What more do we need to know about a man?

Pray not for great opportunities. Pray, rather, for willingness to do little things in a great way.—From *The Open Door*.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dalmellington.—It is with joy we report another addition to Christ's family: Marion Jess, daughter of Bro. and Sis. Ed Jess, a scholar of our Lord's Day school, obeyed the Lord in the waters of baptism on Tuesday, November 29th, proving again the power of the gospel unto salvation to everyone that believeth. May the Lord Jesus bless and keep our young sister faithful until the end.

W. BLACK.

Newtongrange.—Our month's mission with Bro. A. E. Winstanley began on Saturday, January 7th. On January 11th we witnessed the immersion into Christ of three young ladies and one married woman. They are Maida Allan, Anne Robertson, Myra Cook and Mrs. May Dixon. Praise be to God! We rejoice

to see many coming to hear the gospel, and pray for further decision for Jesus the Lord.

W. H. ALLAN.

Slamannan District.—The New Year social gathering was held in the Slamannan church's meeting-house on Jan. 2nd, 1961, under the presidency of Bro. E. Jess, Dalmellington. There was a good attendance and our thanks are due to the Slamannan brethren for their fine effort and service given. Bro. Jess, wishing one and all a happy and prosperous New Year, exhorted all to keep up the work of serving the Lord, for we have the confidence that God will be with us.

Bro. Thos. Nisbet, our first speaker, spoke on Paul's use of the word "know" giving as his text 1 Corinthians 5:1.

Bro. D. Dougall, the other speaker, exhorted that we must attend to all the things that God has given us to do, basing his remarks on 1 Peter 1:13.

We were favoured with singing pieces from the Motherwell choir and duets and solos by members of the Slamannan, Dalmellington and Motherwell churches, which were much appreciated.

We look forward to a happy and prosperous year in the work of the Lord.

H. DAVIDSON.

Wigan: Scholes.—On Tuesday December 27th, 1960, we were privileged to hear the good confession and witness the baptism of James Parr, after attending our gospel meetings for only a few weeks. Our brother Parr came to us with an unpromising future but with the help of the brethren he has found love, understanding and guidance, and we trust that he will enter his new life with courage and Christian endeavour. We pray too that he may grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and continue steadfastly with us in His service.

J. ASPINALL.

OBITUARY

Birmingham, Summer Lane.—We have recently lost two of our older members by the passing of Sisters Miss Kemshead, on November 23rd last, and our Sister Mrs. Lily Horton, on January 11th. The former was immersed in 1919 and had passed the four-score years when she died. The latter as a girl went through the Bible school and became a

Christian in 1903, and had reached her 78th year when she died. She had been a widow for nearly fifty years and leaves a daughter to mourn her loss. We commend to our Heavenly Father's love and care those who have thus been bereaved, knowing that they sorrow not as those that have no hope, for in Christ death no longer holds any terrors.

F. C. DAY.

Blackburn.—It is with sorrow that we record the passing of Sister Emily Haworth at the age of 71 years, yet we rejoice that she lived and died in the one hope, the glorious appearing of our Saviour on the resurrection morn. Our sister had been with us for nine years, and was faithful and constant around the Lord's Table until her serious sickness. She was beloved by all. Our deepest sympathy and prayers are for her daughter and son.

Also we are sad to record the passing of Sister Jane Alice Woods, the sister of the Walton family, who were all faithful members of the former church in Anvil Street, Blackburn. For all her sisters, our Christian sympathy and prayers go out, but not without hope, for she along with them knew Christ as their Saviour. Bro. H. Davenport officiated at the funeral.

H.W.

Blackburn.—The church has suffered another great loss in the passing of Sister Clara Walton on December 23rd, 1960, at the age of 69. She was amongst the oldest of our assembly as regards membership: fifty years ago she was baptised; Lord's Day school teacher for forty years and was faithful to the last to her calling and the Master. It is very fitting to say of her, "She hath done what she could," for she was both Mary and Martha: she cumbered herself about with many things to help others. Her sisters know this best, for she loved them and did her best for them all; and it was made known at her funeral that she carried their door keys in her bag to do for them in sickness and in health. Though they sorrow greatly at the broken earthly ties, they rejoice in the knowledge that they will be joined again with heavenly ties which can never be severed. All her sisters and brother we commend to the Redeemer and Saviour and to God for help and comfort. With the church's dear love and sympathy. Brother John Pritt officiated at the funeral.

H.W.

COMING EVENTS

Morley. Anniversary week-end, February 25th and 26th, 1961. **Saturday**, 25th, tea 4.15 p.m., meeting 6 p.m. Speakers: Brethren L. Morgan (Hindley), T. McDonald (Dewsbury); chairman, Bro. E. Pickersgill (East Ardsley).

Bro. Morgan will serve the church on the Lord's Day; breaking of bread 2.30 p.m., gospel meeting 6 p.m. Come and enjoy the fellowship of the brethren and help us to spread the gospel in this part of His vineyard. Communications to T. Gaunt, 58 King Street, Drighlington, nr. Bradford (Phone Drighlington 38).

Blackburn. A special short mission will be held in the meeting-place of the Church of Christ, Hamilton Street, Blackburn, conducted by A. E. Winstanley (Tunbridge Wells). Meetings commence Saturday, April 1st, and end Sunday, April 9th, 1961. Details later. Book the dates.

Ince-in-Makerfield (Lancashire). Meetings to commemorate the opening of our new meeting-place will be held on Saturday and Sunday, March 4th and 5th, 1961 (D.V.). **Saturday**, 2.30 p.m., meeting to be addressed by Bro. Will Steele (Edinburgh). After this meeting tea will be provided. At 6.30 p.m., meeting to be addressed by Bro. Geoffrey Lodge (Dewsbury) and Bro. Tom Kemp (Hindley). **Sunday**, Breaking of Bread, 11 a.m.; Bible School 2.30 p.m.; Gospel meeting at 7.30 p.m., to be addressed by Bro. Frank Worgan.

A warm invitation is extended to all brethren to meet with us on this occasion. Accommodation will be provided for week-end visitors.

Important: It will greatly help us with catering arrangements and also in deciding whether our meeting-place will be large enough to house all the meetings, if all who intend to be present will notify our secretary as soon as possible. (Philip Partington, 636 Atherton Rd., Hindley Green, Wigan, Lancashire.)

The address of our new meeting-place is Petticoat Lane, Ince-in-Makerfield, Wigan. Petticoat Lane is off the main Wigan-Manchester road (A 577), opposite Ince Park, and lies between Wigan and Hindley. Hindley buses leave Library Street, Wigan, and stop at Petticoat Lane.

Spring Conference, Sat., April 1st, 1961

Will any church desirous of entertaining the conference please write the conference secretary, A. Hood, 45 Park Road, Hindley, Wigan, Lancs., so that arrangements may be put in hand as soon as possible. It has been suggested by many brethren that meetings be held on the following Monday, as at Tranent this year.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Peterhead.—Jim Buchan, 16 Longate, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire.

Ilkeston.—Fred Gregory, 'Glen Dower', 204 Heanor Road, Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

THANKS

Bro. Alexander Strachan, Peterhead, thanks brethren for their kind thoughts and remembrances during his recent illness. He is slowly improving.

If we keep to ourselves things that hurt others we not only keep them but gain self-respect.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly. Prices: Home, one copy for one year, 8/-; two copies 15/6; three copies 22/- post free. Canada and U.S.A.: one copy, one dollar; Africa, Australia, New Zealand: One copy, 7/6; two 14/-; three 20/6. All orders and payments to the 'S.S.' Agent and Treasurer: PAUL JONES, 41 Pendragon Road, Birmingham 22B.

All matter for insertion must be sent before the 10th of the month (news items the 15th) to the Editor: C. MELLING, 133 Long Lane, Hindley, Wigan, Lancs.

Forthcoming events and personal notices: 3/- for three lines minimum; 8d. per line over three lines.

EVANGELIST FUND: Contributions to R. McDONALD, "Aldersyde," 10 Mardale Road, Bennett Lane, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Secretary of Conference Committee: A. HOOD, 45 Park Road, Hindley, nr. Wigan.

NYASALAND Mission: Contributions to W. STEELE, 31 Niddrie Road, Portobello, Edinburgh, Mid Lothian.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is printed for the publishers by
Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm.