

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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NUMBERING OUR DAYS

ONE of my teeth disintegrated the other day and I had to have the root removed. It was a tooth which, like most of my teeth, had been filled many times but, alas, it had reached the end of its useful life and I had to lose it. Time takes her toll. Every so often we get little reminders of this kind that we are not getting any younger and that time passes inexorably. As the poet Burns so aptly put it, "Nae man can tether time nor tide", or as the hymnwriter expressed it:—

Time like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away,
They fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

It is not my purpose to try and write a little homily on 'Time' but merely to direct our attention to the fact that it is swiftly passing. Time is precious and we should not waste a second of it. Often however we find ourselves unwisely squandering this limited commodity and we might even hear people say, "I'm bored". It is understandable in those who do not believe in God or in a life hereafter, for they, after all, must 'enjoy' and try and extract pleasure from every moment of time seeing that this present life is all that there is for them. Those who would be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ however will regard time rather differently. Time to them is a probationary period during which they must work for the Master and prepare themselves for a better time to come, and a better life to come. Thus they are not pleasure-seekers but rather are seeking to do the pleasure of their Lord. Their time should therefore be time of seething activity as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. How do you spend your time, my brother, my sister? What proportion is spent in the service of your Lord and Master? Do you squander it or do you try and make every second of it count? Are you bored and have nothing to do? — the Lord has much for you to do. The busy man is always the man who seems able to do even more. The late W. Steele when he was with the church in Tranent was always overwhelmed with work for the Lord and yet he could always find a way and time to do even more.

Let none hear you idly saying,
There is nothing I can do:
While the souls of men are dying,
And the Master calls for you.

We are creatures of time and cannot, understandably, imagine a situation where it would not be necessary to reckon in terms of time. We talk in terms of seconds; minutes; hours; days; weeks; months; years, and so on, which is the language of time and space but this is but

temporary and confined to our earthly sojourn for the Master. Eternity, and Life Eternal, knows of no such demarcations and in that realm clocks and watches will be but museum pieces. Professor William Barclay in his 'New Testament Words' strongly brings this out when he considers the word 'aionios' and distinguishes the enormity of the difference between eternity and the life-span of a human being. Recently there appeared in the 'Light', published in Texas, a fine article entitled the 'Clock of Life' and in it the writer, brother M.J. Buffington, pointed to the transiency of time and the various points in time in a man's life. Solomon said that "To everything there is a season, and a *time to every purpose under the heaven*: a time to be born, and a time to die: a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted..." (Ecc. 3:1-2).

It is a sobering thought, if perhaps a rather cynical one, that one begins to die as soon as one is born and that the human frame, like the modern car, has built-in obsolescence. To everything there is a time and a season. Once born we grow up to responsibilities..A time to be born and then at the age of understanding a time to hear God's word and obey. During life there are times of temptation as Jesus said there would be (in the parable of the sower) "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no root, which for a while believe, and *in time of temptation* fall away". Then there may be *perilous times* such as Paul had in mind when he addressed the brethren (in 2 Tim. 3:1-5) thus, "This know also, that in the last days *perilous times will come...*" There will also be times when men will not endure sound doctrine and surely this time is always. Paul says again to Timothy "Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. *For the time will come* when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables..." (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Some of us are inclined to be like Felix, the governor, and postpone things until a more convenient time, or season. Things are not always convenient for us, as our Lord and His apostles discovered, and we must do necessary things whether the time be convenient or otherwise. When, for instance, is it ever *convenient* to be scourged and then crucified on a cruel cross? Solomon certainly said that there was a time to die, but it certainly is never convenient. Yes, there is a time to die and it comes to all, some sooner, some later. May it be that we shall use our valuable time wisely that when it is time to die we can feel that we have served the Lord to our utmost. The apostle Paul, when he neared the end of his sojourn on this earth, could, with great justification, lay claim to having fought a good fight and to having kept the faith. He said, "For I am now ready to be offered, and *the time of my departure is at hand*..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 also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

There are different ways of looking at time, there is the *past*, the *present* and there is the *future*. While learning from the past it is foolish to try and live in the past or dwell too much about. The future will take care of itself and is, contingent upon how we spend the time now present. Therefore the present time is the most important time and we should spend it wisely. Time is too valuable to waste and we must try and make as much of it as we can — there is so much to be done in God's service and so few to do it. (The exhortation is suitable to us all no matter how little spare time we think we have).

In the article, previously referred to, by brother Buffington, he closes with a reference to a song he wrote some thirty years ago entitled 'The Clock of Life' the words taken from a writer unknown:—

The clock of Life is wound but once,
and no-one has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
at late or early hour.
Now is the only time we have to live,
to love and toil with a will,
Place no faith in to-morrow.
for the clock may then be still.

EDITOR'

THE RIVER OF LIFE

(GENESIS 2 : 10 - 14)

THE BIBLE is a wonderful book of allegories and parables brought to us by the Holy Spirit from the most High God, and could be described as a 'River of Life'. This river had its source in Eden for we read that, 'a river went out of Eden to water the garden and from thence it was parted and became four heads (I would like to regard it as four *headings*).

The name of the first is 'Pison' which means '*changing*', that is it which compasseth, the land of Havilah, which suggests an area where there is gold, and the gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and onyx stone, a rare and precious mixture.

The name of the second river is 'Gihon', which means the '*Valley of Grace*'; the same it is which compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia (Cush).

The name of the third river is 'Hiddekel', meaning a '*Sharp Voice*', that is it which goeth eastward toward Assyria.

The fourth is the river 'Euphrates', meaning '*Fruitful*'.

Are there not mentioned here many precious things caused through The River of Eternal Life. The first '*changing*' to '*lasting preciousness and goodness*'. The second is '*Valley of Grace*' meaning '*God's favour*'. The third; a '*Sharp Voice*' - "For the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart". The fourth river meant '*Fruitful*' - the fruitfulness of the Christian system.

All rivers start in a small way and broaden and deepen as they progress to their ultimate destination.

The River of Life is a blessing firstly to *individuals*. The Psalmist says, regarding those who walk in the counsel of God, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither: and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3). And again, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Psalm 46:4), and we know that God tabernacles with men - with *individuals*. With ever broadening application the river embraces *the nations* as described in Psalm 65:9, "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it". Isaiah adds to the ingredients *the gentiles* thus, "For thus sayeth the Lord; Behold I will extend peace to her (the holy city) like a river, and the glory of the gentiles like a flowing stream..." (Is. 66:12). Spiritual growth and development indeed.

When Jesus came amongst men He commended men to this River of Life. We read that on one occasion He stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water..." (John 7:38). In the last book of the scriptures (Rev. 22:1-2 - John on the Isle of Patmos relates how that the angel showed him the river of life, "And he (the angel) showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruits every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations". Truly a wonderful river. In the same chapter, at verse 17, comes the equally wonderful invitation from the Saviour, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. *And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*".

Friends, and brethren, may we all hearken to God's open and gracious invitation to come and serve Jesus the Christ and enjoy the blessings of the River of Everlasting Life.

WILLIAM WARDROP, Motherwell.

IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
 In the shelter of the fold,
 But one was out on the hills away,
 Far off from the gates of gold —
 Away on the mountains wild and bare,
 Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
 Are they not enough for Thee?"

But the Shepherd made answer:

"This of Mine

Has wandered away from Me:
 And although the road be rough and steep,
 I go to the desert to find My sheep."

PERFECT RESTORATION — "HE RESTORETH MY SOUL" Psalm 23:3

AND he (Jesus) spake this parable unto them, saying, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance". Luke 15:3-7.

"On such love, my soul, still ponder,
 Love so great, so rich, so free!
 Say, while lost in holy wonder,
 "Why, O Lord, such love to me!"

The Psalmist said:- "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments" Psalm 119:176. Isaiah said:- "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" Isaiah 53:6. Someone has said "We can defile ourselves, but we can never cleanse ourselves. The sheep can go astray alone, but can never return to the fold without assistance from the shepherd. Till we taste the bitterness of our own misery, we shall never relish the sweetness of God's mercy. Till we see how foul our sins have made us, we shall never pay our tribute of praise to Christ for washing us". May I quote again from the Land and the Book by W.M. Thomson:- "Some sheep always keep near the shepherd, and are his special favourites. Each of them has a name, to which it answers joyfully; and the kind shepherd is ever distributing to such choice portions which he gathers for that purpose. These are the contented and happy ones. They are in no danger of getting lost or into mischief, nor do wild beasts or thieves come near them. The great body, however, are mere worldings, intent upon their own pleasures or selfish interests. They run from bush to bush, searching for variety or delicacies, and only now and then lift their heads to see where the shepherd is, or, rather, where the general flock is, lest they get so far away as to occasion remark in their little community, or rebuke from their keeper. Others, again, are restless and discontented, jumping into everybody's field, climbing into bushes, and even into leaning trees, whence they often fall and break their limbs. These cost the good shepherd incessant trouble. Then there are others incurably reckless, who stray far away, and are often utterly lost. I have repeatedly seen a silly goat or sheep running hither and thither, and bleating piteously after the lost flock, only to call forth from their dens the beasts of prey, or bring up the lurking thief, who quickly quiets it cries in death".

Perfect Restoration — "He Restoerth My Soul"

Restoerth a present tense, He can do it for us each day. Moffat puts it like this — "He revives life in me". Jehovah — Rophi; "I am the Lord that healeth thee". "And the Lord hath

laid on Him the iniquity of us all" Isaiah 53:6. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" Isaiah 53:7. Peter said:- "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" 1 Peter 2:25. The Psalmist knew that the diseases and accidents of the flock could be endless, and no doubt had restored many of the wayward among his sheep, being patient, tender, ever watchful, using his skill to make them better. We can imagine the shepherd, on the plain, or the mountain, or the valley, musing, as I am to my sheep, so the Lord is to me, as I restore my sheep, so, "He restoreth my soul". David was not a perfect man, his life was marred by failure, but he had the sense to submit himself to a ruthless examination, turning the searchlight of God inward, he realized the hideousness of his sin, and sought the one who could deal with that sin. No covering up of the true facts, by this wayward sheep, read Psalm 51 and hear David's cry for restoration. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" Verses 1-4

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean"

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"

Verse 7

"Make me to hear joy and gladness"

Verse 8

"Hide thy face from my sins"

Verse 9

"Create in me a clean heart, O God"

Verse 10

"Cast me not away from thy presence"

Verse 11

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation"

Verse 12

"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness"

Verse 14

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"

Verse 17

"He did not cry in vain, the glorious message came to David: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die". So he could say "HE RESTORETH MY SOUL". What of ourselves? What are the Soul's Diseases?

Jesus said: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man" Matt. 15:18-20. Paul said: "But now ye put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" Colossians 3:8-9. What is the answer?

Restoration By Repentance

Paul said: "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret" 2 Corinthians 7:10 RSV. J.W. McGarvey said: "Repentance, fully defined, is a change of will caused by sorrow for sin, and leading to a reformation of life". Repentance is often defined as sorrow for sin. This is an accompaniment, but not repentance itself. Nor can repentance be defined as reformation of life; that is a fruit of repentance (see Matthew 3:8). There is, in genuine repentance, sorrow for sin: a change of will, and newness of life.

"Tis not enough to say

I'm sorry and repent;

And yet go on from day to day,

Just as I always went".

David had the joy of knowing that God had forgiven him of his sin, so we, who are His children, can experience His graciousness and mercy, if we are truly penitent.

"There's a wideness in God's mercy

Like the wideness of the sea;

There's a kindness in His justice

Which is more than liberty".

So we say with Paul:- "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" Romans 6:17,18 See also same chapter verses 1-16. Have you failed the Lord since that happy day, when Jesus washed your sins away? Acts 22:16.

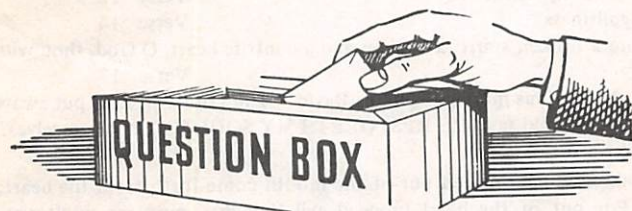
If so! there is a way back :- "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" 1 John 1:5-10. COME.... and may the Lord bless you.

This month's Exercise:- Read:- Luke 15:3-7; Psalm 51:1 John 1 and learn by heart Isaiah 53: verses 4-7.

LEONARD MORGAN

"The chimes and times ring out the news,
Another day is through;
Someone slipped and fell,
Was that someone you?
You may have longed for added strength,
Your courage to renew;
Do not be disheartened;
I have news for you.

It is no secret what God can do,
What He's done for others;
He'll do for you.
With arms wide open;
He'll pardon you,
It is no secret what God can do".



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"In view of the fact that marriage, so far as the world is concerned, is looked upon as a matter of convenience, why is so much importance placed on marriage by the church?"

IT is undoubtedly true that marriage has been degraded in the world, so much so, in fact, that some people are saying that it is an out-of-date institution and should be abolished. I personally have little doubt that if the voices which are raised should prevail then we shall see a further denegation of this God-given tie; one can only say that should this take place then it would be a great detriment to the society in which we live. It is quite true to say that marriage was made by God for man. There are deep purposes of God for man, which find their realisation in the life-long union of one man and one woman in marriage.

A Popular View

There are some people who view man, and try to explain his existence, from a purely animal level. Unfortunately, they do great harm when they attempt to explain, especially to the young, the significance of the sex-life of man and woman from the level of its manifestation in the animal world. It seems to me, although modern human behaviour would seem to disprove it, that man's ideals and achievements are not the result of a blind struggle from the animal level, but are the responses of the spiritual part of his make-up to the guidance and promptings from the spiritual source of his creation. If we persist in attempting to explain the sexual relationship inherent in marriage from the purely animal standpoint, then we must not be surprised if some of the responses result in animal-like behaviour.

The Christian View

How must the christian view marriage? Well, I believe that he must always have that regard for the sanctity of marriage as related to man's spiritual nature. He must believe, as the Bible teaches, that man was created body, soul and spirit, and that the sanctity of the manifold relationships into which he enters is determined by his responses to the guidance from the highest-order spiritual source, namely, God Himself. Nothing less than this conception will suffice for the christian.

Why do I say this? Well, it seems to me that the teaching of Jesus emphasises this spiritual concept of marriage. He does not point to some ideal which lies in a future state of evolution, but He speaks of a purpose and a design of God which has existed from the beginning. He goes back beyond Moses when he said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: *but from the beginning it was not so*" (Matt. 19:8). He emphasises this divinely directed relationship in the same passage of scripture when he says, "Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?" (19:4). Jesus here indicates that God deliberately created this polarity of sex in human nature, with its tremendous urge upon each to come into union with the other; drawn together by the sex instinct in their physical make-up and the love instinct in their souls, into the most intimate relationship of body and soul.

This, as you will appreciate, goes far beyond the conception of a relationship at animal level. It is God's intention that the man and the woman shall be joined together in body, soul and spirit into a relationship which is more than transitory.

One Man and One Woman

Many people say to me, "Well, why does the church teach that it should be between one man and one woman only? I suppose that such people have in mind the modern idea that you can try marriage and if it doesn't work out then you can separate and try again at some later date with another person. It is as well to remind such that Jesus said, "I came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister". This statement leads our thoughts to the selflessness as demonstrated in Jesus and the selflessness often found in man, and is the basis of the contrast between free love and true love,

Free love is, quite simply, self-fulfilment. In the modern idiom one is 'with it' if one thinks and acts like this, but when free love is strictly analysed it simply means that one is determined to satisfy oneself come what may, and with scant regard for the feelings and emotions of the other, not worrying too much of the ultimate consequences. Needless to say, such a conception of love often ends in disillusionment.

In contrast true love is the offering of oneself, both physically and spiritually *for the fulfilment of another*, and in it there awakens more clearly the sense of personal fulfilment. This is the type of love that Jesus showed us; this is the AGAPE love. Applied to the married state, each becomes part of the others very being. As Jesus taught, "They are no more twain, but one". To break such a relationship is to tear away part of the other's very being. The finest testimony to the divine purpose in marriage is a love relationship maintained undiminished in old age. It takes a lifetime together to attain it, but when seen it is extremely beautiful to behold.

Why is Marriage Permanent?

Marriage is permanent because there are others besides the married couple involved in it. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife". This is the basis out of which human society was in the end to be fashioned, the unit of the freely chosen union of two persons in mutual love. This relationship, under normal circumstances, produces children who add to and deepen the relationship. It is, I believe, the permanency, of the family unit in trust and love which stabilises our society; when these units fail then the structure of society is in jeopardy..

The only relationship which passes beyond the possibilities of marriage is the relationship of the soul to God. Paul contrasts the relationship between husband and wife with that between Christ and the church (Eph. 5); the church being composed of those souls who in faith seek to

know Christ in the intimacy of love towards Him. This love cements the relationship and makes it permanent so long as the individual soul is willing to continue in faith and love; in this way the church upbuilds itself in love.

Guidelines to Marriage

From the foregoing we can see that the marriage which ought to have the greatest hope of success is the marriage between two people who have the greater relationship in the Spirit between themselves and God, activated through faith in Christ. The intimacy which exists between God and man ought to project itself into the complete fusion of those who marry in the Lord. (See 1 Cor. 7:39; also 2 Cor. 6:14).

But even when we appreciate this, there must be no marriage of convenience even between christians. There is no automatic success simply because two people happen to be in the church. There is no automatic success in relationship with Christ simply because one has been immersed. Salvation has to be worked at with fear and trembling; a marriage has to be worked at or it will founder on the rocks. Joys and sorrows must be shared, as must be work and responsibility. There must be mutual esteem, and complete communication and understanding. There must be times when each must support the other; the ecstasy of love must survive the burdens that each or both may have to bear; the thrill of riding on the cloud must be tempered by the realisation that one may have to call on hidden resources in order to pick oneself up off the floor. If these things can be appreciated and worked on, then by God's help the marriage may be successful.

Conclusion

Yes, so far as the church is concerned, the permanency of successful marriage is extremely important. We *must* acknowledge that God had important reasons for initiating it and is desirous that it should continue undiluted. We must also realise that Satan, through his agencies, is trying to destroy that which God set up. Let us, then, see that our marriages conform to the deep purposes of God so that they may be examples to future generations perhaps, as yet, unborn. (All questions please to Alf Marsden, 66 Mitchell Street, Newtown, Wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JUNE 1975

1-1 Kings 19:1-8	Luke 22:35-53
8-Daniel 7:1-18	Luke 22:54-71
15-Psalm 22:1-11	Luke 23:1-25
22-Isaiah 50	Luke 23:26-49
29-Job 19:14-29	Luke 23:50 to 24:12

THE TWO SWORDS

IT will be seen that four verses were omitted from the Readings Cards. Those give us the Saviour's warning to His closest disciples. In their various missions He had given them power and protection without material provision. They had returned to Him rejoicing because even the greatest power of evil had been powerless against them (Luke 10:17-20). Then He told them it was more important that their names were written in heaven. Now the protection they had enjoyed was to be withdrawn as it was to be from Him - because He MUST

suffer though utterly innocent. They must now expect and face up to the same cruelty He would experience. They failed to understand His warning, and mistook His figurative reference to weapons. Two lethal swords were enough for twelve men against a multitude armed to the teeth!

Gethsemane

This month's readings bring us the last few hours of our Saviour's earthly life. All the gospel writers cover this short time fully. They form the world's most solemn and important news, having an influence of untold blessing for all mankind. Luke omits reference to the three phases of the agonising prayers, but exclusively mentions the extreme of physical exhaustion and the angelic help. We are reminded that Jesus experienced angelic ministry when tempted after forty days in the wilderness when human strength had reached its limit of endurance (Matt. 4:11). We may be sure that angelic help is available whether realised or not, so that we are never tempted more than we are able to bear (Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14). We would wish to realise for our edification

the fear that Jesus suffered and overcame in the garden. He was not just bearing the anticipation of mental and physical agonies, but also a burden of divine measure – the knowledge of “the exceeding sinfulness of sin”. We can perhaps think of the terrible world-wide consequences of sin, but the grief of a God who is LOVE, Who has made all provision for complete happiness of His creatures. Who is being always rejected by most of them, this is surely beyond our grasp. In some mysterious way Jesus took upon Himself to pay the price of sin so that He could be just, and yet the justifier of sinners. The price could only be agreed between the Father and the Son, each sharing in the plan by sharing human life on our level. Heavenly help was necessary that physical strength could bear the burden without breaking. “Was ever love like this?”.

Betrayal and Arrest

There are some things almost too painful to express in words. One of these is the strain imposed on our human nature when our dearest friends turn against us, especially when we have lavished love and benefits upon them. Jesus had a deep compassion and love for Judas. He had used all the powers of kindness to save him from his own evil disposition, even to the washing of his feet (John 13:2 & 27). Can we think of a bitterer disappointment than what Jesus suffered when the “much” kissing indicated in the gospels was the kiss of betrayal? (Matt. 26:49; Mark 14:45 R.V. margin). Reverting to John’s account (18:5) it would seem that the identification by the kiss was almost unnoticed as Jesus went forward to meet His enemies, and to ensure safe withdrawal of the disciples. We observe that Peter bravely struck out for his Master thus risking his life as he had resolved, and he did follow though at a distance. Whereas John was known at the High Priest’s house, thus escaping enquiry, Peter had to sit among the servants. He had struck out, but was rebuked. The words of Jesus for ever condemn violence as a defence of the faith.

Denial

Jesus submitted to the indignity and humiliation of arrest. He appeared as a defeated man before the august Elders. He who had stilled the storm at a word, and worked innumerable impossible cures, meekly bore injustice and cruelty. His power in the minds

of the onlookers had failed. He stood before His captors disgraced, humiliated and despised. Peter did have sufficient concern and courage to follow but his hopes in his Master were dashed by what appeared to be weakness. Identification with Him was no longer what it had been. He shared so to speak his Master’s disgrace. Surrounded by the servile lackeys of the palace he denied any connection with the prisoner. Three times it happened, and at the last a look from Jesus, the sound of the cock crowing (heard for the second time), and the remembrance of his boast and the warning which followed, came home to his heart. If we have the capacity to estimate Peter’s condition of heart all through the crucifixion, the sabbath, the race to the empty tomb, and finally the Saviour’s special appearance to him personally, we view a broken heart and a contrite spirit indeed (Psa. 51:17). If ever weeping were justified, it was then, and did not Jesus press home the lesson? (John 21:15-17).

The Trials

Jesus was apparently taken first to the house of Annas (John 18:12) then to Caiaphas, his son-in-law, and finally when day came brought before the whole Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66). The procedure was hastened against all proper limits. Jesus was subjected to injury and insult before any judgement or verdict could be sustained. The result was a foregone conclusion decided beforehand, and unscrupulously pressed. They feared the multitude, darkness covered their deeds until it seems even the multitude sided with them, seeing that to them He appeared to be a pretender. They had expected their hero to act with violence. He is now a helpless prisoner before them. The crowd too often sides with the strong. Before the Sanhedrin Jesus is condemned (falsely of course) under the law of Moses. Brought to Pilate He is condemned for the political crime of claiming kingship. Obviously Pilate knows Him to be innocent. He makes efforts to be allowed to release Jesus. He would have done anything to avoid passing and executing sentence as he did finally. He tried to pass responsibility to Herod, but Herod regarded Jesus with contempt. Pilate’s conscience, all he knew of the prisoner, his wife’s warning (Matt. 27:19), his knowledge of the Jews (Matt. 27:18) moved him against condemnation, but alas they knew his weakness. So faced with a threat of report to

the Emperor for not regarding a rival king as a rival to Caesar, he capitulated to their thirst for blood.

Crucifixion

Many of us would faint at the sight of such a death. Even the thought of it fills us with horror, and we cannot imagine a human being willing to carry it out. It was almost a daily event in those times, and we do know there are sadists today ("Tortured for Christ" R. Wurmbbrand; Hodder and Stoughton.) The desperate criminals cursed and swore at their tormentors, not surprisingly, if they survived the scourging. Jesus prayed for forgiveness of them. That a man of Jesus's character should suffer in this way is the most unreasonable and the most wicked crime. The martyrs of other times have suffered similarly "following in His steps". May our study of this impress upon us the greatness of divine love, and win our responsive love and service. How terribly those loving women must have suffered in sympathy — and His mother — "a sword shall pierce through thine own soul" (Luke 2:35). Those disciples also who watched, and whose despair could not find relief until — transcendent joy — they saw, heard and felt Him again. Our readings do indeed lift the gloom with the glorious news of resurrection.

"Clouds and conflicts round us press;
Would we have one sorrow less;
Lo, the sharpness of the cross,
All the pain and all the loss,
Death and darkness and the tomb,
Only whisper 'Till He come'."

R.B. SCOTT

WHAT I NEED

I need a strength to keep me true
And straight in everything I do;
I need power to keep me strong
When I am tempted to do wrong;
I need a grace to keep me pure
When passion tries its deadly lure;
I need a love to keep me sweet
When hardness and mistrust I meet;
I need an arm to be my stay
When dark with trouble grows my day.

YOU are a Christian because someone taught you the gospel. Whom are you now teaching? Selected

'ALL the water in the world, however hard it tried, could never, never sink a ship, unless it got inside.

All the evil in the world, the wickedness and sin can never sink your soul's fair craft, unless you let it in."

COMMEND THE WORTHY

"WELL done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21).

Though numerous had been your noble deeds over the years, no words of any kind came from an acquaintance until you made a mistake. Deeper was his horror for a mistake than his appreciation for noble deeds. More eager was he to expose and to denounce error than he was to exalt and to glorify the truth. He expressed abhorrence for the darkness of night, but no gratitude for the light of day. Poor fellow! His mental powers were unbalanced.

There lies latent in the heart of every normal person two elements that should be exercised and developed - the negative element and the positive; an aversion for vice and an appreciation for virtue; a hatred for falsehood and a passion for the truth. When we take a stand against error, we develop the negative; when we praise the praiseworthy, we develop the positive. We should abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good. We never attain maturity of manhood until both the negative and the positive elements are developed in our own personality.

During his days on this earth, the Son of God condemned vice wherever it was found; he also praised people for their virtues and worthy works: Nathanael for his guilelessness (John 1:47); the Roman soldier for his superior faith (Matt. 8:5-9); Simon Peter for his brave confession (Matt. 16:13-17); a poor widow for her liberality (Matt. 12:41-44); and a woman in Simon's house for doing "what she could" (Matt. 26:6-18). At the last day he will commend the faithful: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The Master has left us an example that we should follow his steps. One man speaks only to condemn evil. Another speaks only to

commend the good. Both occupy hurtful extremes. Let us expose and condemn error wherever it is found. Let us also uncover and commend that which is good. Doubtless, we can accomplish as much good in this old world of sin and sorrow by commending men for their noble deeds as we can by reproving them for their ignoble deeds.

"If with pleasure you are viewing
Any work a man is doing;
If you like him or you love him,
tell him now.

Don't withhold your approbation,
Till the preacher makes oration
And he lies with snowy lilies
o're his brow.

If he earns your praise, bestow it.
If you like him, let him know it.
Let the word of true encouragement
be said;

Do not wait till life is over,
And he's underneath the clover,
For he cannot read the tombstone
when he's dead!"

So, let us—

"Withhold not good from them to whom it
is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to
do it". Proverbs 3:27. Selected

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buckie, Scotland: Our hearts were gladdened when we witnessed the Baptism of a young teenager, Chrissana, daughter of brother and Sister Don Shackelford. She travelled alone from London to be baptized in Buckie, where she has spent quite a number of holidays with Bro. and Sis Pirie. We thank the Lord and pray that our young sister will be blessed in her service to her Lord and his Church.

JOHN GEDDES

OBITUARY

Hamilton St., Blackburn: It is with deep sorrow that we record the passing of Bro. John Pritt on Monday 10th March at the age of 71. As a young man he gave his life to the Lord Jesus Christ soon to embark on a life of Christian

service, which he rendered faithfully and well, even unto death. Many will remember him in the brotherhood, for in his early life he preached the Gospel in many assemblies scattered throughout the land. He was a brother who loved his Master, finding his greatest joy in life, preaching the greatest story, the story of Jesus and his love. He was admitted into Withnell hospital near Chorley on Monday 20th January, he was most cheerful and uncomplaining, he was visited during his stay in hospital by many brethren and friends. As the weeks went by his condition began to deteriorate till on Monday 10th March he passed to his rest. We shall greatly miss him in the assembly here at Hamilton St. but as our beloved Bro. could say with the Apostle Paul, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that neither life nor death, nor principalities nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus". We take courage from the example he has left us, that those who believe and trust in Jesus, who die in the Lord shall because of the redemptive power and finished work of Christ, as He rose triumphant from the grave, we also shall rise with a glorified body to be forever with the Lord. The funeral service in the meeting house was conducted by Bro. Jim Pritt where many brethren and friends gathered to pay their last respects to our beloved Bro. The Committal service at the graveside was also conducted by Bro. J. Pritt. To our sorrowing sister we offer our heartfelt condolence. Knowing that in that day we shall be like HIM, "Till the day dawn, and the shadows flee away". Jim Pritt

Motherwell, Scotland: The church has lost in the person of Bro. Robert Longmuir, who passed to his rest on Tuesday, 25th March, a very faithful member. He was a member of the church for almost fortythree years and for some time he was treasurer and precentor. He carried out his duties right to the night before he died. We shall miss our brother but we rejoice that he was faithful to the end.

Bro. Paul Jones officiated at home and the graveside. L. PURCELL

WE must apologise for the mix-up in the headings of two articles in last months issue of the 'Scripture Standard', due entirely to an error in typesetting. PRINTER

OFFER OF SERVICES

"I am a young Christian and anticipate graduating from Nottingham University in June 1975. In July I plan to commence full time work in the service of Jesus for a trial period of three months. At the close of this period I will decide whether to continue in the work or to pursue my studies further.

If any group of saints are willing to invite me to work with them I would be pleased to hear from you".

IAN K. PARKER
19 MARUS AVENUE, MARUS BRIDGE,
WIGAN . LANCS.

COMING EVENTS

SPECIAL MISSION

A special mission at Blackburn (Mill Hill, New Wellington Street) will be held (D.V.), on Oct. 25th to November 2nd. The mission will be conducted by brother L. Daniels.

More details will be announced later.

TONY TYSON

SINS OF SOCIETY

Someone has said that the seven deadly sins of society are these: Policies without principles: wealth without work: pleasure without conscience: knowledge without character; commerce and industry without morality; science without humanity; worship without sacrifice.

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