

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 48. No.8

AUGUST 1980

NEGLECT NOT

England's green and pleasant land is fortunate in having a large number of beautiful Mansion Houses, surrounded by vast estates and gardens. By reason of Death Duties, and other causes, many of these marvellous Stately Homes are now empty and derelict. Once, such houses were bustling with servants and vibrant with life — now they are deserted and derelict; inhabited only by rats and bats. Rarely are they demolished — they are simply left to the certain ravages of time and neglect. If we were to neglect our gardens for a year or two we would be astounded at the effect (assuming, that is, that we do not normally neglect them). 'Neglect' is a sad little latin word usually followed by equally tragic consequences. Most of our troubles and woes can be traced back to neglect in some form. Many of us might have had better jobs, or been more useful to those around us, had we not neglected our lessons at school. Things might be different if we could start again. The lawyer or doctor who neglects his practice (perhaps through addiction to alcohol) will soon find no-one in the waiting room. The parents who neglect their children's teeth, choice of friends, food, pastimes, education and reading matter will soon be confronted with ignorant and undernourished little vandals with toothache but no manners. Our slums, congested roads, inadequate schools, polluted rivers and disappearing wildlife, etc. etc. are all the outcome of years of past neglect. What we neglect today we will pay for tomorrow. Standards of all kinds are falling rapidly and future generations will reap the nasty harvest. Every day countless thousands of men and women go to a Christless grave because of their neglect of God, and God's claims upon them. Such is the pernicious nature and consequences of this little word 'Neglect'.

The Greek words used in the New Testament from which 'neglect' has been translated have three shades of meaning. The first of those three shades of meaning is:—

(1) To View Amiss (or Overlook)

Neglect in this case is occasioned by *unintentional oversight*, albeit that oversight may have serious repercussions. An example of the use of the word in this sense is in Acts 6:1 where we read, "And in those days, when the numbers of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations." The oversight (neglect) was unintentional and quite innocent but yet the consequences were quite serious in that

it caused murmuring amongst the brethren and induced an attitude of segregation as between Grecian widows and Hebrew widows. We ought to be careful that nothing we do would cause factions amongst the brethren. There are brethren who are, perhaps, quick to take offence and thus should we be careful to try not to give any. The oversight or omission might indeed be trivial such as failing to shake hands with everyone, or failing to include *everyone* on a list, or failing to announce an event to *everyone* — and so an occasion for murmuring may be caused. Even sending a holiday post-card to some and not to others may cause a little bit of resentment — it shouldn't but it can. It is, of course, difficult to travel life's great highway without giving offence to someone, but we should try to minimise those occasions. We must try to avoid the thoughtless word, the petty thought, the cheap remark and the mean action. The unintentional oversight illustrated here in the case of the Greek and Hebrew widows, innocent though it was, is a form of neglect to be eschewed.

(2) To Hear Amiss (or Disregard)

This second shade of meaning of the word 'neglect' has to do with the *ears* and not with the eyes. The first meaning was "To view amiss (or overlook) but this has to do with neglect in the way we hear. The word is used in this sense in Matt. 18:15 where Jesus is commenting on the procedure involved in the law of offence. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

There is more to hearing than just listening (and vice versa). Much of what we hear in a day we disregard, but there are some things we must not disregard. The teacher would like to think that the pupils listen to all that she has to say, but that would be expecting a little too much. They 'switch off' when teacher talks and think about something else. The hardened criminal has to 'listen' to the little 'pep-talk' from the judge when sentenced but grins all the way to the cells. 'All-in' wrestlers don't even pretend to listen to the referee, and falling asleep 'in church' 'hear' the church will earn the very serious consequences of being regarded by the church as 'an heathen man and a publican'. Jesus clearly was not simply trying to achieve a startling turn-of-phrase when He said, "He that hath ears, let him hear." Indeed, Jesus while commenting on this same theme said, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes or hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

May it be that we shall not neglect to hear, or be dull of hearing when God speaks. Neglect not what we hear.

(3) To be Careless (Not to Care)

The third shade of meaning of this word 'neglect' is, in effect, 'complete and utter disinterest' — 'Not to care'. The kind of disinterest exhibited in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Priest and the Levite *saw* the wounded man lying on the ground but passed by on the other side. The world today knows that Jesus was scorned, scourged and crucified for the world but it passes by one the other side. The word occurs only two or three times in the N.T. and appears first of all in the 1st Timothy 4:14 where the apostle Paul exhorts Timothy thus, "Till I come give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. *Neglect not the gift* that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and to the doctrine: continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

'Neglect not the gift that is in thee . . .' Sometimes we show little interest in the gifts we have. Everyone has a gift, or talent of some kind, for use in the Master's service. Think how much healthier the church could be if all of us used those latent gifts? Each member of the Lord's body should make himself aware of the gifts he might have and use them in God's service. Neglect of such gifts will condemn us.

The other passage where the word is employed is Heb 2:3, where the writer says, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the words spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we *neglect so great salvation*, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him."

What else can God possibly do for us if we neglect His great salvation? It is the end of the line. We don't necessarily need to *renounce* the faith; just *neglect* it. The Greek word for 'neglect' here means 'Not to care' or 'Not to care less' and reflects a sad spiritual condition. The remedy is in the *versé*, i.e. To give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip, remembering all the time the examples (in the O.T.) of God's retribution on all transgressions. Nothing can be as sad to contemplate as those who have left their First Love and who forsake the assembling of themselves together in Christ's kingdom — the resemblance is rather like those large empty Mansion Houses mentioned earlier, forlorn and destined for ruination, notwithstanding past glories.

May it be that we shall be alert to the dangers of neglect. Neglect is not violent or aggressive, nor is it any form of false doctrine, but who can calculate its effectiveness in bringing churches and individuals to complete and utter ruin.

Editor.

OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION

Read the accounts in the four gospels of the arrest, and judgement of our Saviour. Shall we ever know in this life the depth of infamy and wickedness to which man sank when he murdered God's son? We look at the hearts of those who hounded Jesus to death. They were the spiritual leader's of God's people. They dressed in the holy garments — the High Priest and family — they alone could offer the sacrifices too holy for secular hands, the priests descended from Aaron, the servants from Levi. They were joined by the scribes who really studied God's word, and the Pharisees who separated themselves from the common people, and showed it by extra prayers and public profession. These had all witnessed with their own eyes and ears, the life and teaching of Jesus for three years. His perfect life of love had stirred them — most of them — to deepest resentment. "He followeth not with us". He has no business taking the favour of the common people, "who know not the law". He is taking our authority away. Moreover we cannot find any fault, nor in any way discredit Him.

In fact, He was more than their match in every controversy in which they engaged with Him. He pricked their balloon of pride. "What can we do? Only one thing. Trap Him, discredit Him, murder Him! There is an obstacle, the Roman rule and administration of justice, a procurator with military power. We must have a crime, an accusation of wrong in the eyes of the state. He calls Himself a King. This is blasphemy to us, but treason to Rome.

The entry into Jerusalem as king opened up the way, and the populace, expecting some violent demonstration of power, can be fickle. The prophet showed no signs of national pride nor offer of violent victory over Roman domination — therefore disappointment must develop. If He can be humiliated before the people, His popularity must wane — “for they feared the people”. One of His own followers through disappointment, misunderstanding and covetousness came with an offer at a cheap price — and they would have paid positively anything. “One man must die” said the High Priest, so if it can be done quietly at dead of night without the common people, even still expectant of violent demonstration of power, to be faced with an arrested, apparently powerless and disgraced “messiah”. Guilty fear was there, but overcome by politically motivated rich and influential men. Illegal violence, brutal action against a meek and holy man was successful in destroying the people’s confidence in Him. They did not have power to execute sentence of death. So the Governor must be brow-beaten into **PASSING SENTENCE**. Utterly convinced by true judgement of the “criminal’s” innocence Pilate looked hither and thither to escape the guilt of condemning an innocent person. Could he pass it on to Herod? No! only a further exercise of brutality and vulgar abuse suffered by the prisoner resulted from that effort. Then an offer to beat and release failed. The exhibition of the prisoner in a pitiable condition of outraged humanity excited no pity — “Behold the man!”.

Finally perhaps in bitter irony “Behold your King!” His threefold declaration of **NOT GUILTY** only excited and fixed the determination of his enemies, and they must have laughed at his washing of hands when, driven by fear he gave the order for execution by a death reserved only for the worst offenders. The enemies, of Jesus played their trump card when they said “If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend” and declared their loyalty to Caesar in their retort “We have no king but Caesar”, whose authority they hated.

Spite, hatred and political power combined to defeat justice under pressure from fear of personal consequences. Two guilty consciences would never after be silenced — Judas “I have betrayed innocent blood” and Pilate “I find no fault in Him at all.” To the first there was a heartless response “See thou to that” and to the other “Write not **THE KING OF THE JEWS** but that He claimed the title”. “Set us a guard”. We wonder if Pilate was thinking having noted surely the midday darkness, when he said “Make it as sure as you can!” He certainly must have known afterwards of the gospel message, and have accepted the bribe for his guardsmen.

Did those wicked men who “had the greater sin” enjoy their triumph as they contemplated the heroic Saviour of men hanging helpless agonising on the tree? It seems so from their jeers, and they thought that His claim was false or God would not have allowed them to bring Him to that place. However, conscience is a hard master and we doubt whether even they, hardened as they were could escape its grip. The way of transgressors is hard and we know some little from Josephus of the fatal years from that date until destruction of a most terrible nature overtook Jerusalem in AD70. There was no more comfort and joy among the rulers of the city or country. The family of Annas had its own intrigues to handle. Among the rulers plot followed plot, and bitter sectarian strife divided the nation, while restless zealots practised violence against Roman order and discipline. Peace had gone and only Christians could have any satisfaction in life. Finally, there was open revolt mercilessly suppressed. Jerusalem was surrounded and besieged and the fate which Jesus prophesied came upon it — not one stone left upon another. It is said three massive towers were left amid utter desolation.

When we consider the dreadful nature of the crime of putting to death the only Man Who lived a sinless life in circumstances which really leave no excuse, we do not wonder at the fate of the nation which rejected Him, and it is difficult to think how it can still reject Him against the verdict of history and the Word of God. Unbelief must be obstinate indeed and unforgiveable — no repentance, no confession of guilt, but still there is **AMAZING GRACE** — the grace which still offered and offers forgiveness and eternal life to the crucifiers.

R. B. Scott

GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2: 15

GOD'S "GIFT OF GIFTS"

"**THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.**" So wrote the apostle in a resistless outburst of thanksgiving; such should be the exclamation of every heart as it considers God's "gift of gifts." Many and varied are the gifts of God — life, health, reason, powers of observation and labour. O how manifold is the goodness of the Lord! And yet, alas! how many are there who take daily of God's bountiful providence, happy in the enjoyment of all their faculties, surrounded by comforts, kept by His tender mercy and loving kindness, who never give him glory and probably not a grateful thought! As we look around us, the words are forced from our lips: "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

But it is of his best gift we would speak, the best that heaven could give or man receive; a gift that surpasses, outweighs, overshadows every other: the gift of **GOD'S DEAR SON**.

One of the characteristic features of a gift is that it is **FREE**. If we consider ourselves entitled to it, or if the giver is supposed to be under an obligation, it is not a gift, it is a matter of merit on our part or reward on his.

The gift of God's Son is **FREE** in the most unqualified sense. We had no claim; He was under no obligation. Freely, out of purest love and tenderest compassion, He gave His Son to be our Saviour. Freely Jesus laid aside His glory, assumed our nature, died on the cross for our sins.

A "gift" is an expression of **GOODWILL**. Joy and gladness are associated with the word, friendliness in its highest and best sense. Who is there that has not something of more value than precious gems? A gift from those near and dear, may be, those lost and gone.

Now, all that depth of feeling which is represented by a gift bestowed by one upon another in human life holds good in this case. The gift of God's dear Son represents a feeling of **LOVE AND GOODWILL**, infinitely purer, truer, broader, and deeper than any human heart can ever entertain. A gift, if it means anything at all, indicates that the giver has a kindly feeling towards the receiver, and is desirous of showing this in a practical way.

In Christ Jesus we see the practical proof of God's kindly feeling towards ourselves. His only begotten Son is His "gift" for our salvation. We can easily estimate the value of gifts of houses, fields, trinkets, or such like things; but who will presume to estimate the value of **GOD'S PRICELESS GIFT**? When we accept His Son as our Saviour, we obtain the **PARDON OF SIN**, a possession which fills the soul with a gladness and blessedness that no words can express; **PEACE WITH GOD**, an experience so rich and restful that it passeth all understanding and exceeds

all expression; and the HOPE OF EVERLASTING LIFE; for amid all the trials and temptations of this life we are sustained by the bright, blessed, blooming hope of immortality.

These are only a few of the joys accruing from the acceptance of God's best gift; innumerable are the avenues of blessing which have for their source Divine Love.

If you have not done so, open your heart now and rest not until you can count among your heart's choicest treasures the PRICELESS GIFT.

BETHESDA 1907

YES, GOD IS GOOD

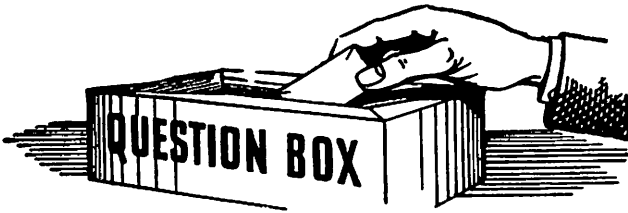
Yes, God is good: in earth and sky,
From ocean depths and spreading wood,
Ten thousand voices seem to cry,
'God made us all, and God is good.'

Yes, God is good, all nature says,
By God's own hand with speech endued;
And man, in louder notes of praise,
Should sing for joy that God is good.

For all Thy gifts we bless Thee, Lord,
But chiefly for our heavenly food;
Thy pardoning grace, Thy quickening word,
These prompt our song that 'God is good.'

J. H. Gurney

Selected by Leonard Morgan.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"EPH 4:11 says that God gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, etc. Paul urged Timothy to do the work of an evangelist, and Philip was an evangelist. Have we evangelists today such as these? It is true to say that ALL MEMBERS of the Church should be evangelists just as all are ministers, priests, and disciples? Is there an establishment in the Church for the evangelist?"

Much has been written and spoken in the not-too-distant past regarding this subject, and not all of it has been edifying. However, if questions are asked then we should do our best to answer them because there may be newcomers in the Church who need some explanation as to how the Body functions. At the present time there are 'evangelists' operating in this and other countries, and it is against this background that we must attempt to say something useful on the subject. Let me say immediately that I know many of these brothers and I have no reason to believe anything other than that they are motivated by the highest principles in their approach to the work. The answer to the question therefore need not be concerned with personalities, but with the function of the evangelist as he now exists and his work in relationship to the Church.

The Context

In the 4th chapter of the Ephesian letter Paul declares the essential unity of the Godhead; one Spirit, one Lord, one God. The acknowledgement of this essential unity should evoke in the believer an equally united response; one faith, one baptism, inclusion in the one body. Paul also expresses the universal sweep and power of God in men's lives; "He is over all, and through all, and in all." Paul will not allow the idea that there should be a separate God for each nation or religion: He is God and Father of all.

Paul then turns to the grace of God as seen in Christ Jesus. Jesus Himself was God's gift to men, and the salvation which He brought with Him as expressed in the Gospel must be received as a gift, or not received at all; there is nothing meritorious about it. Paul then quotes from Psalm 68:18, a Messianic Psalm of victory, which he adopts and interprets for Christ's triumph over death. This takes our minds back to Nazareth when Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah, "he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). In other words, Jesus came to repair the damage done by sin.

Having warred against Satan and achieved the victory, Jesus then ascended into heaven, and from the munificence of His ascended glory He dispensed gifts unto men, "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." These gifts, says Paul, are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ" (viz). "Perfecting" means "to render fit, complete." It signifies right ordering and arrangement; it points out the path of progress. It seems to me that Paul is saying that until the ordering of the Body of Christ is complete then these special gifts and offices will be necessary, but not after this has taken place. Paul writes at length about the Body in his first letter to Corinth and states: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:27, 28). The word "helps" means the functioning of those who devote themselves to ministering to the saints, who support the weak, and probably refers to the work of deacons. Curiously enough, the two offices, pastors and deacons, which are not named specifically are the two that survive today. See Phil. 1:1 for both offices. Incidentally, you will notice the diversities of tongues, which so many claim today, are put *last* in order in Paul's list.

My own view is that as the need for apostles and prophets (in the sense of foretelling God's plans) has disappeared so has the need for evangelists in the same special sense, but we will return to this later. If the argument is used that the Body is still incomplete then obviously the need for *all* the special gifts would still remain.

Qualifications and Offices

So far as I understand it, the only offices remaining in the Church for which qualifications are directly and formally stated are the offices of Elder and Deacon. My views on the functional and operational parts of the Body have crystallised over the years and may not be in accord with what others may believe, but if they coincide with what is taught in the Bible then that is all that really concerns me. I have heard it stated on many occasions, for instance, that the qualifications for Elders and Deacons should be achievable by all Christians; this is not a tenable suggestion nor, I believe, is it scriptural, otherwise the Holy Spirit would not have found it necessary to legislate for the government of the Church.

I do not know of any qualifications stated directly in the Bible for the appointment of evangelists. Timothy was exhorted by Paul to "do the work of an evangelist"

(2 Tim. 4:5). The *work* of an evangelist is to be a messenger of good news; essentially, a preacher of the Gospel. It is true to say that every Christian should be able to *talk* about the Gospel, but I think we all realise that not every Christian will be able to *preach* the good news, therefore, not every christian will be a preacher of the Gospel and capable of doing mission work, which after all is the *essential work* of those now named evangelist.

Furthermore, the absence of scriptural qualifications for evangelical work has resulted in some problems which would have been better avoided. In the past, and indeed at present, those aspiring to evangelical work have selected themselves and sought financial support where they could find it, mainly from overseas. Some have not found preaching easy because they have been ill-prepared for it previously. Others have had to try to deal with acute personal problems from new converts and their training and experience have not equipped them to resolve such problems; the result has been trauma either on one side or the other, but principally the Body has suffered.

Some have become "the evangelist" with previously established congregations. In past years I believe that this has tended to retard the appointment of a scriptural government of Elders and Deacons, but happily there are now signs that this particular problem is being corrected to some extent. It seems to me that the scriptural pattern for the operational efficiency of the Body is clearly set forth in the Bible and should be re-examined.

The Scriptural Pattern

The scripturally revealed operational arm of God here upon earth is the Church in its several localities. That Church, under the guidance and leadership of its scriptural oversights has a functional responsibility to worship God and to promote the Gospel. If any local community considers that it can best fulfil its function of promoting the Gospel by the use of a full-time preacher then in my opinion it is perfectly entitled to do so, but the thrust and direction of the effort should be agreed with the Oversight and should be under its control. It is quite possible that the preacher may also have qualities of leadership, but leadership is not his prime function; preaching the Gospel to *unbelievers* is.

It would also be better if the local community could give the preacher financial support. If this is not possible on a full-time basis, then the feasibility of evangelical work on a *part-time* basis should be studied. The local community cannot be looked upon in the strict sense as an employer, nor should this be expected of it. The preacher should be a member of the community with a special and distinctive ability to preach, but nevertheless a member just as the Elders and Deacons are.

The preacher, from his base of the local community and with the help of his fellow-Christians should be attempting to break new ground and endeavouring to establish new communities of Christians in new localities. The intermittent use of itinerant preachers by local communities of Christians is, in my opinion, extremely wasteful of effort and resources, and is usually counter-productive in the sense that the thrust is lost when the preacher departs, and the community languishes in some sort of retrospective euphoria over what they think they have accomplished. The effort should be sustained and should be looked upon as a function of the overall work of the community; to achieve this, the preacher should be an integral part of the local community, working under the leadership of the Oversight.

Well, we could go on discussing this question, but I must now try to summate the main points of the argument.

1) I do not equate "the evangelist" as an office of the Church alongside the offices of Elder and Deacon; I think the Bible supports this view.

- 2, I think the title "the evangelist" should be by definition replaced by "the preacher."
- 3) There is certainly a great need for preachers of the Gospel, but they should be an integral part of some local community working under the guidance of a scriptural Oversight and supported by the community either on a full-time or a part-time basis.
- 4) All christians should be able to *talk* about the Gospel but I am persuaded that not all members can be preachers of the Gospel.
- 5) I believe that the N.T. idea of "the evangelist" as a gift-given person ceased when apostles and prophets ceased.

Let me re-iterate that what I have said in no way detracts from the excellent work done by evangelists in this country (I should, of course, say the British Isles and Eire). They have borne the burden and heat of the day, often misrepresented, often at a great personal sacrifice to themselves and their families, but perhaps it is now time to take a cool look at the situation, and if possible, to put the promotion of the Gospel on a more sure footing. I pray that this will happen in the future.

All questions please to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.

OUR NEED AND GOD'S SUPPLY

"But my God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in Glory, by Christ Jesus." — Philippians IV. 19.

THE Apostle Paul's words in the above quotation are rich in faith and confidence in God. They are full of promise and blessing. As the expression of an unwavering belief in God's power to meet the ever - returning needs of His children, they must have been to the Church at Philippi what they are today with us — a source of much added joy and spiritual strength. It is helpful to a degree which is incalculable when we can come into living fellowship with men who have put to the test God's many precious promises and found Him never to fail. That is what we feel when we read the Apostle's declaration of faith. They are the words of One who speaks out of a large and varied experience. It is the fact that God *has already done for him* that which he assures his brethren God *will do for them*, that gives an increased emphasis and force to his words.

This verse seems to fall naturally into four divisions, each in turn bearing upon the other, yet each suggesting different lines of thought. For the sake of convenience we may describe them as, firstly, *the Giver*, secondly, *the unfailing and all-sufficient supply*, thirdly, *the means*, and lastly, *the inexhaustible source*.

1. The Giver

The Apostle Paul writes, "My God shall supply all your need," etc. That word "my" makes all the difference. What a contrast between the God of Paul and the deities worshipped in some of the cities in which Paul had preached! No response no glad experience of renewed strength; no answer whatever to the heart's most urgent appeals; no satisfaction for the soul's deepest yearnings! Only a tremendous and awful delusion. But not so with God whom Paul loved and served and trusted. He *could and would "fulfil"* of fill-full "every need."

We may observe, too, that the word "my" often suggests a close and loving relationship. It is the son whose heart is full of filial love who can say, "My father, in a way and with a meaning only understood by him. If we say, "my friend," or "my brother," it carries with it the thought of possession — personal possession together with a bond of union and closeness of relationship not enjoyed by all. So far

as persons are concerned we only use the word "my" under the most exceptional circumstances. It must have been with something like this in mind that the Apostle Paul said, "My God shall supply your every need," etc. God *was* the God of Paul. God was his in a way that He becomes the possession of all who walk with Him as Paul walked. There were many reasons why the Apostle could say "My God." He had felt God to be his "in perils of waters, in perils of his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." Out of them all the Lord had brought him. He spake of that which He knew. He was not giving expression to a truth which had not found its way into his own experience. To the Apostle Paul, God was able to meet all emergencies and to answer the needs of all conditions.

2. The unfailing and all-sufficient supply

"God shall supply all your need." The Revised Version gives a slightly different rendering. "God shall fulfil every need of yours." The thought suggested seems to be that God supplies each separate need as it comes along. We do not live the whole of our life at once. It comes to us by years and months and weeks and days. And God meets the need of every day, and He meets that need completely. He fills it full.

How numerous and how varied are our needs, and God meets every one of them! There are needs in the Church and needs in the home. There are the needs of the sinner and the needs of the saint. And God responds to them all. Not one has been overlooked. God has anticipated them even though changing needs have come with changing times.

Does it not make a difference to one's whole outlook where this truth has taken root in the mind and heart to know that in the record of His revealed will God has unfolded those divine arrangements and means through which he answers the deepest longings of the human race? If we believe the statement the Apostle Paul has made, it will lead us inevitably to the conclusion that the problems which relate to the moral and spiritual well-being of our fellows can only be solved by the application of the means that God has placed at our disposal.

Our Church life, too, cannot fail to be profoundly influenced by this conviction. It is surely right to assume that all that is required for the peace and prosperity of the Church of God; all that makes for growth and expansion and development in the divine life has been placed in our hands, and within our reach. It only needs that, with humble spirits and with grateful hearts, we make ourselves familiar with the means through which the supply will come. "God shall supply our *every need*."

Then there are the needs of the individual. There are trouble and loss and pain and suffering and sorrow. A hundred and one things come into our life where we feel that God alone can be our Helper and Guide and Friend. It is then that God comes to us with such healing balm and blessed consolation. And we feel the joy of His presence most when we need Him most. That has always been so. It was when in direst straits that the children of Israel knew Jehovah was near. He failed them not at any time; but was gloriously present as Helper and Deliverer in their hours of extremity. "The Lord was their strength in time of trouble." "Truly in the Lord is the salvation of Israel."

Nor is it alone in the crises of life that the Lord richly and abundantly supplies our wants. He gives daily strength for daily living. He fills the need of every hour. The common round and the common task are blessed of Him. Their fulfilment is accomplished through the strength which He gives, "My God shall supply *all* your need." The promise covers every one of them, and for all time. We may ever rejoice in His abiding presence and strength.

*"I need Thy presence every passing hour;
 What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
 Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
 Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!"*

3. The Means

The Apostle's promise contains the statement that our need will be supplied through Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ is the means through which the blessings come. This is quite in harmony with other Scriptures and with the teaching of Jesus Himself. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, *in Christ*." It is through Christ we are able to enjoy every spiritual blessing. Nothing comes to us apart from Him. Our re-union with God, our approach to the Father, our enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins, our hope here and in the life to come, are all made possible through Jesus Christ. God conveys the knowledge of His will through Him, and through Him life and hope and peace are brought to a sin-stained and sorrow-stricken world.

Life, rest and peace, the flowers of deathless bloom,

The Saviour gives us, not beyond the tomb;

But here and now, on earth some glimpse is given,

Of joys which wait us through the gate of Heaven.

At every point we are met by Jesus Christ. There is no situation in life in which we may not be under obligation to Him. We discover that all that we have that is worth having, and all we may be that is worth being, is through Him. As sinners, and as sinners saved by grace, Jesus is all in all. He is ever the channel of blessing. He is our Prophet, Priest and King.

4. The inexhaustible source.

The source from whence our help cometh is inexhaustible, because it is "according to His riches in glory." The supply is greater than the need. We can never go to God and learn that His storehouse is empty and that the fountain of life is exhausted. We may draw upon Him again, and yet again, and be assured there is enough for all and enough for each. "In My Father's house there is bread enough and to spare." What a reserve of blessing waits to be ours! What a joy to all struggling souls, finding life's conflict hard and life's burden heavy, to know that all they need is there! It leaves no room for doubt and anxious care. There are riches which are immeasurable. There is no arithmetic which can state their value. They are God's riches, and God wants to make them ours, — ours to use them and apply them for our spiritual advancement in His Kingdom, and to His glory and honour.

Sent to the "S.S." by brother Hill, New Zealand.

E. Hicken.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

September 7 — Psalm 37,1-17; Col. 3,1-17.

September 14 — Daniel 6; Col. 3,18 to 4,18.

September 21 — Ruth 1; Philemon.

September 28 — I Kings 8,33-53; I John 1,1 to 2,6.

The Heaven-Centered Life

Those to whom Paul writes had been

heathen in worship and living. A great change had taken place. A new object of worship replaced idols. It was to a holy and righteous God, Who hated sin, the sinful life they had perhaps enjoyed before, or at least regarded as normal behaviour. This was not a change easily made, and they might well be open to subtle persuasion. The significance of their baptism was very important. Hence Paul's emphatic reference to it in 2,12 followed up in verse 20. Whereas circumcision was the cutting off of a part

of the body, baptism was the burial of the old life and the beginning of a new one. The rising from the water represents that beginning, a birth of water and the spirit. Whereas circumcision was a physical benefit to the body, baptism signified a spiritual birth with eternal consequences. From chapter 2,20 to the end of the letter we have the concern and instruction of the apostle for living in the body the new life which is Christ in us the hope of Glory. That life in its essence is not visible except in its effects on behaviour. It is hidden with Christ in God. There are the negative and positive aspects. The old life has to be abandoned, put to death but it does live on in the body though its works must be avoided at all costs. Some of its works are so obvious there can be no mistake about them (3,5-7). We might regard these as the grosser sins, but there are others just as hateful to God and just as much sin. The Christ-filled life has to develop into a purer state because its birth must be followed by growth and things thought harmless may have to be given up as well. Jesus gave in the sermon on the mount the instruction to set our hearts upon heavenly things (Matt. 6,19-21), by which is meant the virtues of a selfless life. This is illustrated by the description of the judgement in Matt. 25. This development is set out in chapter 3 from verse 12 with a list of characteristics of the new life — compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, all surmounted and motivated by love. When we have developed all this, we come near to the likeness of the Saviour. The persistent and continuous study of His life as given by the Holy Spirit in the gospels is surely a necessity.

Private and personal

"So-and-so ought to do so-and-so!"
NO!

Wives obey your husbands! Husbands love your wives! Children obey your parents! Parents do not discourage your children! Slaves obey your masters!

Masters treat your slaves well! Here are personal and individual instructions which true following of the Saviour involves. If the description fits you or me it is our primary business to do what is commanded. We are inclined to judge our brothers and sisters by whether they attend meetings regularly or not. We are it is true required not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together but how much more important is it for us and for the church that we follow distinct and specific commands like the above, and how much more difficult it is to follow them in truth and sincerity. The instructions are more detailed in Ephesians especially in relation to wives and husbands, where this earthly relationship is taken as a picture of our Saviour's relationship to His church. The impact of the gospel upon society depends upon the development in the character of the individual member, and this means a struggle between flesh and spirit as long as life lasts. Paul deals with it in his letter to Romans chapter 8,14-25. Our human nature seems to lead the wife to tell her husband what he ought to do, the husband to tell his wife, the children to say what their parents ought to do and so on through our list. Some positive criticism can be useful but "each man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6,5). It is indeed fitting that the instruction to be persistent in prayer follows immediately on the detailed instructions as that exercise is a "sine qua non" if those concerned are to be even moderately successful. May the Lord enable us to bear the helpful part in our daily lives which is here set forth!

Wisdom from above is required by the further requirements of dealing with those who are not believers and guarding thought and word for their enlightenment.

Final greetings

We comment again on the exercise of christian courtesy by the apostle. What a close and happy relationship he had with those who served with him. Tychicus was with the company (Acts

20, 4 & 5) that travelled with Paul on his final journey to Jerusalem having apparently joined him from Ephesus and worked with him. The list which includes also Aristarchus and Luke would indicate that Tychicus went to Jerusalem but it must have been at least 4 years before he met Paul again — at Rome. He is perhaps only a name to us save that we know him to have been a dear brother, a faithful worker and fellow-servant to Paul, and to be so trusted that he conveyed the greetings and gave the news from Rome, and took Onesimus with him. We would be justified in thinking of him as a travelling evangelist or messenger among the churches. How much may be hidden in that of heroic journeying amidst dangerous places and people. Aristarchus was a Jew from Thessalonica, a prisoner with Paul in the shipwreck. Mark we are pleased to know was now serving with Paul and also journeying like Tychicus. Jesus Justus made up the number of Jewish helpers to three and were identified with Paul. There is of course a close connection between this letter and that to Philemon, who seems to have been a member of the church, if not also its host. We think it possible that Apphia was the wife of Philemon. Archippus was closely connected with them and had responsibility for work in that area. We can only speculate about the circumstances but it is of interest to note that assemblies (churches of course) met in the homes of individual members, indicating that some were comparatively well-to-do and were thus able to give room for the gatherings. Nympha and Philemon were in that position and had the privilege. Of those mentioned by name we regret Demas forsook Paul later (2 Tim. 4,10), "having loved this present world." Tradition says of Aristarchus that he was beheaded in Rome. He must have just escaped death at Ephesus (acts 19,29) and must have shared many experiences with Paul —

thinking in particular of the shipwreck but also the fact of his being likewise a prisoner with him. We do not know whether he shared Paul's lodging, probably not. It does seem clear his being a Jew gave Paul special pleasure. Epaphras had evidently been instrumental in bringing the gospel to Colosse, and had become a prisoner in Rome. He was the connecting link with both Colosse and Philemon.

R. B. Scott

AMBITION

It may be, brethren, that ambition is the downfall of many. If ambition goes with vanity, then self-will be its aim and end. It is, then, suggested that ambition may be good or bad.

To exalt self; to be someone; to win applause; a place of honour, or make a name for oneself is an unworthy position to be in. It is against God's will. Usually in context with these we find vanity.

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." Jer. 45:5.

Let God exalt you to honour, if He will, but do not exalt self. God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the lowly. Brethren what is the measure of our grace? Do we lack something? Do we miss out?

Be ambitious however, to exalt the name of Christ. We are exhorted to be humble. To have humility is indeed a gift of God. If we have, and encourage this gift, we then cast off vanity in its many forms.

I am told the word 'Philotimeomai' in Greek means to 'desire the honour' or 'to be ambitious'. It is a word the Christian is advised to keep from his characteristics. Nevertheless the word is to be found in the New Testament. In fact only three times:

Rom. 15:20 "Yea so have I strived (or been ambitious) to preach the gospel."

2 Cor. 5:9 (RV) Wherefore we labour (are ambitious) that — we may be acceptable to him."

1 Thess. 4:11 "Study (be ambitious) to be quiet."

These three part texts help us to understand the true ambition of the child of God, namely, to be quiet (humble) to preach the gospel and to praise the Lord.

Brethren there is no safety nor rest in the vain and ambitious heart. Beware of pride for it leads to all sin and is an abomination unto the Lord.

Vanity is the opposite of humility. True humility does not think highly of itself nor meanly; in fact it does not think of itself at all.

We are bidden not to think more highly of ourselves than we should. We have to think soberly according as God has given us grace.

Brethren let our ambition be to exalt Christ.

A. P. Sharp. Newtongrange.

PROGRESS — 1980's

Since the appearance of my Editorial of Feb. last with the above title I have received one or two letters from which I gather that there are many brethren who are actively seeking ways of preaching the gospel. Brother Derek Daniel for instance writes enthusiastically about the good that can come from enrolling people with Correspondence Courses on the Bible and perhaps many other congregations could profit from similar efforts. Brother Ashurst is busy getting gospel literature to the Islamic races and who knows where that may lead. Brother Severson, from Burnaby B.C., has been teaching the Bible in weekly courses to retired people and senior citizens, with a request from another retirement home to do the same there. There may be many pensioners in this country who would enjoy a weekly Bible Study. Brother Bell, from Sydney, writes about a brother who advertised to study the Bible and has baptised 5 in a few weeks. He is retired but spends hours on the telephone and driving people back and forth to his meetings. Hard work but very fruitful and well worth while. If any of the brethren have any other ideas it might be an idea to publish them in the "S.S."

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

CHURCHES OF CHRIST EVANGELISM REPORT 1979-80

Buckie, Scotland: It was a beautiful sunny day and a day that will long be remembered — the 7th June the date, and the Buckie church Social the event. About 230 brethren and children filled the meeting-house. Our chairman for the occasion, bro. William Mair, welcomed the brethren who had come from all over Scotland and our speaker and his family, who had come all the way from Wigan. After the opening hymn, and after prayer had been led by brother Alex Harper, we made our way to the Town Hall where tea was made by brother James Geddes and served beautifully by the sisters.

The Social proper started at 5 p.m. with a hymn, and a prayer led by brother Hunter Pirie. Exhortations in song came from members from the Slamannan District, Kirkcaldy, Peterhead, and Buckie.

Brother James Anderson read the lesson, and brother Jack Parker gave a very stirring message to the gathering.

The Social was a great spiritual uplift to all and the chairman expressed the intention for the social to be an annual event (D.V. on the first Saturday of June).

Brother William Pirie gave the vote of thanks, and after the singing of "In the Land of Fadeless Day" brother James G. Addison closed the social with prayer. Tea was again served before all the brethren left for home.

Brother Jack Parker served the church on Lord's Day.

John Geddes (Sec.)

Copperbelt Province. There continues to be new Church planting, evangelism and camp meetings in the Mufulira district which is becoming a very strong district for Churches of Christ. Efforts are being made to

establish a further congregation in Ndola. In Luanshya a new Church planting has resulted in a third Luanshya congregation. In Kitwe there are congregations throughout the city and a camp meeting is scheduled for May, 1980. A new congregation has been organised at Kalulushi. John Mwansa is responsible for much of the evangelistic outreach in Kitwe district, Harrison Yabe recently conducted a personal work campaign in Chimwemwe. Church planting is being undertaken in Kamfinca area by Joseph Hamugande. From: C. & A. Woodhall, P.O. Box 2297 Kitwe, Zambia.

Luapula Province. Preaching tours by Daniel Zulu and S. Chisebwe (both of Mufulira) throughout Luapula.

Lusaka Province. A large and successful preaching convention was held in Lusaka over Easter 1980. A preacher from Blantyre, Malawi shared in the ministry at the convention and they spent a week in evangelistic preaching all over Lusaka — in the open air, in markets, in Church meeting places.

Manchester: We have not yet had any direct response to our issue of 1,800 Muslim tracts already distributed but we know that they are being read and are provoking interest. Complaints have been made in one city to the Community Relations Dept. by Muslims saying, "Look what infidels are putting through our doors. What will they be doing next." Praise the Lord, they are reading that Jesus is the Messiah and the glorious word of God.

One of my contacts has asked me for a Persian Bible so that he can read the references in his own language. I am having difficulty in getting one and although I have ordered one through the 'Scripture Union' they are very slow. Therefore if anyone can help me in acquiring a Persian Bible I shall be most grateful. This particular Muslim calls himself a Christian but he knows so little about Jesus.

A. Ashurst

Northern Province. Preaching tour by Harrison Yabe (Chimwemwe, Kitwe) at Luwingu District.

North-Western Province. Special preaching campaign in Zambezi by Charles Omete (Kenyan evangelist). Preaching tours in Solwezi by O. Kadyatta (Lusaka) and John Mwansa (Itimpi).

Slough, Berks. Five Christians who meet with the church at Reading live in Slough and are meeting for Bible Study on Wednesday evenings at the home of Bro. and Sis. Wicks, 258, Parlant Road, Langley, Slough. Some non-members have already joined in the studies.

(Miss) R. M. Payne.

Southern Province. A new and growing congregation has been established in Livingstone, already a stronghold for Churches of Christ.

OBITUARY

Tranent: Sister Jane Forrest departed this life on 5th July at the age of 53 years, just one day after her twenty-first wedding anniversary. Jane put on her Lord in baptism twelve years ago and has kept faithful to Him ever since. She suffered from an infirmity for eighteen months which she endured with courage, long-suffering and love.

How very appreciative she was when we read portions of the Bible together and went to the throne of grace with her. This brought her much comfort, consolation and happiness. Truly the peace of God reigned in Jane's heart. The funeral service was conducted by Bro. Edward Jess assisted by Bro. Tom Nisbet. We commend her husband, family and brothers and sisters to the grace of our Heavenly Father.

"After the pilgrim journey,
Rapture that ne'er shall cease,
Over the silent river,
Rest in the land of peace."

T. Nisbet.

COMING EVENTS

The church at Tranent intend, God Willing, to hold a weekend MISSION on Sept. 26th, 27th and 28th, 1980, in the Church Meeting-house, with brother John Dodsley doing the preaching.

Meetings will commence at 7.30 p.m. except for the 27th when it will begin 6 p.m. we look forward to your support.

J. Colgan.

ARTICLES FOR PUBLICATION

A church magazine can't function for long without a fairly steady stream of articles and material being forthcoming from readers. Many months ago a number of good brethren very kindly accepted the commitment of providing one article per year for the 'S.S.' I realise that time flashes by and that most brethren have many church commitments but I do look forward to receiving those articles — even just one every twelve months would be fine. It's for a good cause.

Editor

A PRAYER FOR THE OLD

"Blessed are they who understand,
My faltering step and shaking hand,
Blessed who know my ears today
Strain to catch the things they say,

Blessed are they who seem to know
My eyes are dim and my mind is slow,
Blessed are they with cheery smile
Who stop to chat for a little while,
Blessed are they who make it known
That I'm loved and respected and not alone.

TRACTS FOR MUSLIM RACES

Brother Allan Ashurst writes again with a price list for the tracts mentioned in last month's "S.S."

(1) Those with blank space for address of church 50 leaflets for 75p plus postage while stocks last — black print on buff paper.

(2) Those with address of A. Ashurst on them 50 leaflets for 49p plus postage.

(3) Should a church want large quantities with their own address: Artwork by us free, Printer's plates £12.27 (Both Tracts included).

Both tracts occur on the one set of plates so that they are produced in equal numbers, as follows: 2,000 (i.e. 1,000 of each tract) £19.60. 4,000 (i.e. 2,000 of each tract) £30.53. 6,000 (i.e. 3,000 of each tract) £39.87. (These prices for coloured ink on coloured paper.) Postage extra.

Samples of Tracts from brother Ashurst, 60 Kenwood Road, Stretford, Manchester.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	....	....	....	....	£3.00
CANADA & U.S.A.	....	....	....	....	\$6.00

AIR MAIL please add £1.00 or \$2.00 to above surface mail rates

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. 07737 (Langley Mill) 2266