

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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***"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking  
unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"***

## *Editorial* **Equality in Christ**

### RACE & TERRITORY

One of the hot stories over the last couple of weeks has been the fall-out from the BBC television programme, produced by an undercover journalist, into alleged racist attitudes within the police service. Though the racist views expressed have received the condemnation that they deserved, in one sense

I thought that the programme was unfair and intrusive in that the journalist deliberately (and illegally) set out to catch the unguarded thoughts of the people who were filmed. Maybe that's a legitimate way to establish the true feelings that people have, but I suspect that many of us would not like some of our thoughts, expressed in the privacy of our homes, to be broadcast on national television! (although it will be far more uncomfortable for us to be reminded of them by God). However that is by no means meant to excuse the attitudes expressed by those police recruits who were training for that unique role in public service where fairness and equitable treatment of all citizens, irrespective of colour, creed, social status, class or any other 'differentiation' should be an essential characteristic of the performance of duties.

Racism, defined as discriminatory treatment based on belief in the superiority of one race over another, is abhorrent to the Christian. A 'race' includes all the descendants of a common ancestor. Those of us, then, who believe in the common ancestry of all humankind, from Adam and Eve onwards, must accept that there is only one race on the earth. It is only the compartmentalization of the human race into 'nation states' and the passage of time that gives us any sense of different ancestry.

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It's quite obsessive the way that all kinds of institutions and individuals claim "their territory". Perhaps this is a natural part of creation because it seems to be a characteristic of the animal kingdom as well of mankind. It's not uncommon on the nature programmes that are shown on television to see animals staking out their territory and then protecting and defending it at all costs. In the human context we have international, national, local and individual territories. When Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982, troops were sent half way around the world to reclaim the United Kingdom's patch of land. The United Kingdom and Spain have an ongoing dispute about the sovereignty of Gibraltar. All around the globe there are disputes over land. When we fly we pass through the 'airspace' of different countries and on the sea the scope of activity is determined by a nation's territorial waters. Closer to home, woe betide the householder who builds a wall or fence that encroaches onto a neighbour's land. It seems that every time we create a differentiation or boundary, either physical or by 'association', whether it be of territory, race, gender, religion, social class, we create the potential for conflict and division.

## UTOPIAN IDEALS

It is very Utopian, but is it possible to conceive of an Olympic Games in which the focus was on the excellence of the individual performance rather than the country by country medal table; a government of skilled individuals, experts in their field, who truly acted in the interests of the public who elected them rather than on behalf of partisan political groups; a world in which individuals were respected for their inherent worth rather than one in which some are despised because they happened to be born in one country rather than other, and maybe one colour rather than another. It is Utopian, and it is not about to happen. In fact as travel becomes easier and cheaper, and the world becomes 'smaller' it often seems that far from this leading to an acceptance of cultural diversity, stereotypes become more firmly entrenched. And so in the 'enlightened' world of the late 20th and early 21st centuries we have seen and continue to see religious hatred, large scale 'ethnic cleansing', territorial disputes, racial abuse, vindictiveness towards those who seek asylum etc, etc. This is not God's way.

Which brings us back to the wonderful and infinite wisdom of God and if anything persuades me of the certainty of a higher and superior creative power it is the fact that the God-inspired teaching of the Bible actually works. The New Testament speaks eloquently and decisively about the new era that was ushered in by the death of Jesus. There is no place in that new order for any of the attitudes that would support racism or that would give credibility to the type of territorialism described above.

## WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

In the lead up to Jesus' teaching which is commonly referred to as the parable of the good Samaritan, a lawyer questions Jesus, "**Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**" When Jesus invited him to reveal what the Jewish Law said about this, the lawyer responded, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.**" (Luke 10:27) Perhaps sensing that he might have begun to dig a hole for

himself, the lawyer seeks to justify his own attitudes to non-Jews by asking a supplementary question, **"And who is my neighbour?"** It is in response to that enquiry that Jesus taught about the selflessness and neighbourliness of the Samaritan, who though despised by the Jews, was nevertheless the one who stooped to assist a fellow man in need of help. The real point that I want us to grasp here is that we are not talking about a matter of expediency or social nicety. The question that had been asked was about requirements for inheriting eternal life; and the answer is clear – you must love the Lord your God with all your heart... and your neighbour as yourself. I think we can go so far as to conclude that loving our neighbour is an essential demonstration of our love for God.

The overwhelming importance of this principle is shown by the fact that both Matthew and Mark record the same incident as Luke; that Paul repeats the injunction to the Christians at Rome and at Galatia; that James writes in the same vein to the widespread readers of his letter. We learn that:

- Love for our neighbours is the fulfilling of the law;
- All commandments are summed up within the sentence, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."
- To fulfil the royal law of love for neighbours is to do well; to show partiality is to commit sin.

These are serious matters that weigh upon our very salvation, and whilst the context of these statements may allow for a relatively narrow interpretation of neighbour (those living in our own land), my own view is that the essential principle at stake is that all humankind should be treated with respect and without discrimination.

## CHRIST IS ALL; AND IN ALL

When Paul wrote to the Church at Colossae he described some of the characteristics of the Christian's manner of life. These characteristics are to be representative of the **"new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator"**. Within this new nature there is to be a new understanding of the equality and justice that applies to humankind. Partiality and distinction have no place in this new order; our own desires are anyway being subordinated to those of God (your life is hid with Christ in God) as we progressively grow to become more like Jesus. Paul says, **"Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian (non-Hellenists), Scythian (originally natives of Scythia, to the north of the Black Sea), slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all."** (Col 3:11) The only distinction that is to be recognised is the presence of Christ, and if Christ is present then all other distinctions become irrelevant.

During his ministry Paul was deeply offended and dismayed by the factionalism within the Church that threatened to undermine his teaching and his work for Christ. His letters to Corinth are spiced with his anger and frustration at those who sought to misrepresent his motives and draw people away to their own factions. He expressed himself astonished at the fickleness of the Galatian Christians that they were so quickly led astray by the Judaisers, amongst others. It is in this context that he exhorts them to move on from the adherence to the Law which having left behind,

some were trying to draw them back to; to understand that in Christ, through faith, the old distinctions have been set aside and that there is now but one essential grouping, those who are **"sons of God"**. This is the only meaningful denomination for Christians. **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."** (Gal. 3:28,29) What a glorious promise it is that we are called into the family of God, that we are numbered amongst the saints, that we are his children, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

## DIVISIONS HEALED

Readers are no doubt aware of the divisions that were represented by Herod's Temple in Jerusalem with respectively its Courts of the Gentiles, Women, Israel and Priests and that a triple wall of partition separated the Court of the Gentiles from those areas into which only those of the commonwealth of Israel were permitted to pass. The Greek inscriptions around the sanctuary declared that death would follow to any 'foreigner' entering into the sanctuary. But as Paul taught the Ephesians (2:14), Christ broke down that 'dividing wall of hostility' and has opened up to Gentiles as well as Jews the opportunity to be **"no longer strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."** Through Christ all have access to God and as those climactic events unfolded as Christ's redemptive work was completed and the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, yet another division of the Jewish tradition was set aside. Most wondrously of all the division between mankind and God was healed by the redemptive, atoning work of the Son of God.

I don't know whether it is fair to trace the origins of 'nationhood' back to the confusion of languages and dispersion of people over the face of all the earth after the events at Babel. However a world has evolved in which all kinds of complex relationship structures have emerged, and as people have organised themselves by creed, race, colour, allegiance, gender, common cause or other kind of shared interest, the potential for divisiveness and conflict has escalated. We can all identify examples of the reality that we live in a divided world, or nation, or city or street. The religious world is divided; families are divided; neighbours are often in conflict. We started by reflecting on the racial intolerance that permeates some parts of our society and the 'territorialism' that is the basis of so much conflict.

What I hope we have been able to demonstrate is that in Christ, those attitudes which foster and promote such divisiveness are wholly inappropriate. That the new creation that we have become and the transformation that has been, and is being, wrought in us, enables us to see that there is only one 'belonging', one citizenship that is relevant to the Christian - that heavenly commonwealth from which one day Christ will come to take us home. Thanks be to God that he has made us to be **"fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone..."** My Utopian world, very briefly referred to above, is going to have to wait because it isn't going to happen this side of eternity. But the waiting will be worth it.

# Word Study ABBA

Ian Davidson (Motherwell)

*Abba* is an Aramaic word. Aramaic is, like Hebrew, a member of the Semitic family of languages. It was the language commonly spoken in Palestine in New Testament times. Therefore, it was the customary language of Jesus and the apostles.

## ABBA, FATHER

The word *abba* is found but three times in the whole of the New Testament – Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6. W.E.Vine writes: “In the Gemara (a Rabbinical commentary on the Mishna, the traditional teaching of the Jews) it is stated that slaves were forbidden to address the head of the family by this title. It approximates to a personal name, in contrast to ‘Father’, with which it always joined in the N.T.. ‘Abba’ is the word framed by the lips of infants, and betokens unreasoning trust; ‘father’ expresses an intelligent apprehension of the relationship. The two together express the love and intelligent confidence of the child.” William Barclay has written: “*Abba* is the name by which a little child addressed his father in the home circle in the time of Jesus, as *jaba* still is in Arabic today. In any secular context it would be translated simply as Daddy. Nothing shows so well the intimate fellowship of the Christian with God. Here is no God transcendent in infinite might and majesty, unapproachable, different and separate; here is no God who is an abstraction or a philosophic idea, or a grudging or a passionless deity. Here is a God who is as near to us as a father is to a little child.” Adam Clarke has commented: “It has been remarked that slaves were not permitted to use the term *Abba*, father, or *Imma*, mother, in accosting their masters and mistresses.. And from this some suppose that the apostle intimates that being now brought from under the spirit of bondage, in which they durst not call God their Father, they are not only brought into a new state, but have got that language which is peculiar to that state.”

## ADOPTION

Paul knew all about Roman slavery and the process of adoption in the Roman world. After all, he was a Roman citizen. The Roman Empire was built on slavery and I have read of a figure of sixty-five million slaves in the Empire when the Gospel was first proclaimed. The thing is that a Roman slave could be adopted into a family and have his circumstances changed forever. The ceremony of adoption was very exacting, but suffice to say that the one adopted was virtually born again. He became a full member of the family; was given a new name; was permitted to eat at the father’s table; became an heir of the father’s estate; and had his past life blotted out, which included the cancellation of all debts and the deletion of all obligations. Moreover, adoption led to the ex-slave, now a son, being able to call his master, “*Abba*, Father.” Another commentator has written: “Paul well knew that the Jews had a strict law forbidding a slave to use the word ‘*abba*’ in addressing a master or the head of a

household. So when he wants to show that we are sons, not slaves, he makes it clear that the indwelling Spirit identifies us as children of God and makes it possible for us to speak to the Father in a fashion that slaves were not allowed to use."

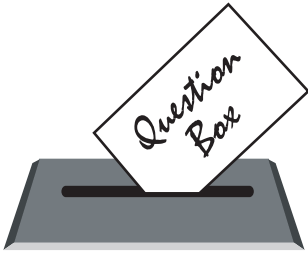
The ceremony of adoption normally required at least five witnesses. Any of these witnesses could be called to confirm the adoption, if others challenged the status of the new son following, for example, the death of the father and the winding up of the estate. The ex-slave and new son had a rightful claim to his inheritance. He had legal rights in law. The witness would say: "I was present at the ceremony. I confirm that the transaction was not a sale into slavery, but was one of adoption. The person was claimed by the deceased not as a slave, but as a son." What does Paul say of the Holy Spirit in the Roman letter? "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Romans 8; 16, 17) So the Holy Spirit is our witness that we belong to Christ. He will always stand by us no matter what comes our way. But, of course, we must remain faithful.

## THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

The Fatherhood of God is worth meditating upon. It is staggering to think that Almighty God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, is also my Father. Is there a higher privilege on earth than to be in God's wonderful family, brothers and sisters together in Christ Jesus? The fellowship we enjoy now is a foretaste of the everlasting communion in heaven.

Jesus said at the beginning of the so-called Lord's Prayer: "**Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name...**" (Matthew 6:9b; Luke 11:2a) Here, the Fatherhood of God is declared by the Messiah. The belief in God as Father assures me of His nearness; His watchfulness; His care; His forgiveness; His love; etc. I think of my own relationship with my father and all that he did for me. He kept me, as we say, "on the straight and narrow." If I am true to God, then He too will keep me on the straight and narrow way that leads to heaven's glory.

Fathers have responsibilities, but so do children. The Bible says: "**The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.**" (Proverbs 10:1) "**Hearken unto your father who begat you, and despise not your mother when she is old.**" (Proverbs 23:22). "**For Moses said, Honour your father and your mother; and, Whoso curses father or mother, let him die the death...**" (Mark 7:10) "**Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour your father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth.**" (Ephesians 6:1-3) Each of us should strive to be a good son or daughter to our parents, and, above all, to be a good and faithful child to our heavenly Father. A warm and loving relationship with all our brothers and sisters in the Lord will inevitably follow.



## THE QUESTION

**"It is recorded in John 6:48 that Jesus said, 'Not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.' Yet, a little while later, when Philip asks, 'Show us the Father', Jesus responds, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father'. Could you comment on the different statements?"**

## ON 'SEEING' THE FATHER.

The operative word here is the word 'seen' and we need to know in what sense the Lord Jesus used it. Clearly, he did not mean that the disciples had 'seen' the Father in the same sense as he himself had 'seen' Him. What, then, was the difference?

We must first notice that in the Old and New Testaments there are no fewer than 20 different Hebrew and Greek words that are translated 'see', all expressing the various shades of meaning carried by the word. For example, leaving aside those in the Old Testament, in the New Testament alone we find: -

- The word 'blepo', which is the usual word for 'see', as in (John 9:15).
- Then, there is 'theoreo', which means 'to view', or 'behold' (Matt.28: 1).
- And then we have 'kathorao', meaning 'see clearly' (Rom.1: 29).
- There is 'horao', which means 'to perceive' or 'understand' (John 20:8).

And there are also about six other words that are also rendered 'see', but I think the point has been made!

## WHAT HAD THE DISCIPLES ALREADY 'SEEN'?

This conversation between Jesus and his disciples occurred on the night of his betrayal, when he told them, **"The hour has come"** (John 16:32). Thus, it was near the *close* of his earthly ministry and by that time the chosen apostles had been his constant companions for about three years, and had enjoyed the unique privilege of hearing his teaching and seeing his miracles.

Matt. 16:16 records that earlier, through Peter at Caesarea Philippi, they had declared that they believed him to be **"the Christ, the Son of the Living God"**, and even if we accept that they did not fully appreciate the profound significance of this affirmation of faith, I suggest that they should have had no difficulty in understanding him when he said, **"If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him."** (John 14:7).

This statement was followed by Philip's request and the Lord's familiar reply: **"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."** (v.8).

## BUT, IN WHAT SENSE HAD THEY 'SEEN' THE FATHER?

Obviously, not in a physical sense; not as they 'saw' Jesus at that moment. 'Mormon' doctrine claims that 'The Father' lives on a planet called 'Kolob' and has a physical body which may be seen and touched, but such a doctrine is so ludicrous as not to merit serious consideration.

It is sufficient to say here, that the notion of a physically embodied God, presents us with a God who is limited in time and space, and who, therefore, does not possess the quality of omni-presence, which, along with omnipotence, omniscience and immortality, is one of the essential characteristics of deity.

Jesus himself said, **"God is spirit"** (John 4:24), and after his resurrection he reminded his terrified disciples that, **"A spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see me have"** (Luk.24: 39).

Since, then, God is spirit and essentially invisible (1st Tim.1: 17), we can accept that **"No man has 'seen' God at any time."** (John 1:18). The 'Revised Standard Version' renders the rest of this verse beautifully, when it continues; **'It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known'**. The Greek word here rendered 'known' gives us the word 'exegeted'. He has 'exegeted' Him. Exegesis is exposition, explanation. Jesus has declared the Father; revealed Him to mankind. That is why, in Col.1: 15, Paul is able to describe Jesus as **'the image ('eikon') of the invisible God.'**

He is the visible manifestation, expression and representation of the One who, in His very nature, is invisible. Therefore, in acknowledging Jesus to be *'the Son of God'*, the apostles had recognized him to be the visible manifestation of the Father, and John was later able to write that the One who, in the beginning existed with God, who was himself Deity, and who was known as 'the Word', became Man and came to live among men. **"And we have seen ('theomai' = inspected, beheld attentively) his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."** (John 1:14).

He was 'God incarnate - Deity in human form. In him was revealed as much of Deity as mortal man could stand - or understand. Hence, Paul wrote, **"In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell."** (Col.1; 19). This was the revelation of God for which the ages had been waiting, and for which biblical history had been preparing mankind. It was God's fullest, and therefore his final manifestaton of Himself in human form, in the person of the Son.

**"SEEING" GOD.**

In the course of biblical history there had been other 'Theophanies'; other appearances of Deity in human form - too many to be discussed here in detail, but consider the following.

1. As early as Gen.18: 1, 'The LORD' -('Yahveh') - 'the Becoming One' - appeared to Abraham in what must obviously have been a form that did not terrify him. Not only was He *seen* by Abraham, He even *ate* the meal that the patriarch prepared for Him, and the passage closes with Abraham *'standing before the LORD'*. Yahweh said, **"Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I am about to do?"** And there followed the familiar account of Abraham's audacious plea for the wicked city of Sodom.
2. In Exodus 24: 9-11 we read that Moses, Aaron and his two sons Nadab and Abihu, accompanied by the Seventy Elders of Israel, went up Mt. Sinai **"and they saw the God of Israel."** (v.10). What did they see? That verse also tells us, **"there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the very body of heaven in clearness"**. Beyond this, there is no attempt to describe the One whom they saw, but these 75 men were granted what can only be described as an amazing, inexplicable and, I repeat, indescribable experience. Notice that the phrase *'as it were'* occurs twice in verse 9, because it throws light on the event.



On Mt. Sinai, there was the manifestation of a Presence, the appearance of which was beyond their ability to express in human language. The Invisible God made Himself visible to them, in what must surely have been a form familiar to them, and, as far as it was possible for human eyes to see, His glory was revealed to them. They were not afraid and they were unharmed: **"God did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel. They beheld God."** (v.11) They felt so secure that *'they ate and drank in His presence'*.

3. The next account of an event of a similar nature is in Ex.33: 18-23. This time it involved Moses alone, after he had begged God, **"I beseech thee, show me thy glory"**. (Could it be, I wonder, that Philip had this event in mind when he made his own request?).

To strengthen the over-burdened leader of Israel, God said, **"I will make all my goodness pass before thee...."**, and to this He added, **"Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see my face, and live."** The last phrase in the chapter is clear, **"but my face shall not be seen."** Once again there was a visible manifestation and a presence, but no attempt to describe it.

4. There is also the most familiar description of the experience of the prophet Isaiah, in Isa.6, when, on the occasion of the death of Judah's King Uzziah, the prophet saw the King who never dies, the Yahweh, sitting on His elevated throne in His Temple. The Hebrew word here translated 'temple' is *'heiron'*, which means 'palace' Isaiah was overwhelmed – not by the sight of the glory, the smoke and the shaking of the Temple, all of which may have made him think of Sinai – but with a sense of his own unworthiness. But, when he had been 'cleansed' he was able to speak to God; "Here am I, send me" (v.8).
5. In Ezek.1, the prophet Ezekiel himself records seeing the Throne and the One who is seated on it. Read the chapter and notice how often such words as *'like'* and *'likeness'* occurs. Here, too, Ezekiel makes no attempt to describe God. That these events were Theophanies cannot be doubted or denied, but the men of the Old Testament who experienced them could no more describe them than could John, when, in Rev.1, he reports his vision of the glorified Christ. John also uses the word *'like'* five times.

## IN CONCLUSION.

There is a most significant passage in John 12:37-41, in which the inspired writer explains why the Jews did not believe in Jesus. John quotes the 10th verse of Isaiah 6, the passage recording the vision of Isaiah already mentioned. Beginning at that 37th verse notice that the personal pronouns used by John refer to the Lord Jesus. He is clearly the subject of the passage. John tells us **"Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke of him"**. In other words, the glory that Isaiah saw was the glory of the pre-incarnate Word, who was in the beginning with God and was himself Deity.

What Philip and his fellow-apostles saw in the flesh, and what you and I see today in the inspired record, is one who in his words and deeds, and in his unblemished and perfect life, revealed to mankind the goodness and grace of a loving God, who stooped to Earth to lift us to Heaven.

**Questions for 'The Question Box' to: - Frank Worgan, 11, Stanier Road, Corby, Northants. NN17 1XP**

# Worthy the Lamb

(Sister Bethia Davidson)

At the crucifixion of Jesus, God's only begotten Son, Satan was amongst those who sat and watched him. This was the most horrendous and inhuman act in world history. Satan was the instigator of this heart-rending scene from the beginning – the mock trial, the false witnesses and the condemning shout, "Crucify him, Crucify him."

The victory of Satan seemed apparent when Jesus cried with a loud voice, "It is finished," and gave up His spirit to the Father. Jesus was dead; but by the third day Jesus was alive again, having risen from the grave, taking from Satan his power over death and hell. When Jesus cried, "It is finished," this signified the ransom price for the sin of the world fully paid by a merciful God's sacrificial Lamb (1 John 2:2)

Jesus is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. (Rev 1:8) **"I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and I have the keys of death and hell."** (Rev. 1:18)

The origins of sin go back to the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve rejected God's word by succumbing to the lies of Satan. Everyone who rejects God's word dies, as the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) Why must we all die, physically? Because of sin. But by the grace of God we all have the opportunity to be freed from spiritual death through faith in Jesus.

When Jesus returned to heaven he was received with exultant joy and praise by the host of heaven, all proclaiming with a loud voice, **"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength, honour and glory and blessing unto him that sitteth upon the throne for ever and ever."** He was crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords. How many make up this heavenly host? Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. (Rev 5:11) What a wonderful acclaim for the Son of God.

Before his return to heaven Jesus had promised his apostles that he would not leave them comfortless. **"I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter whom the Father will send in my name. He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."** This was the life-line given to his apostles and he charged them with the duty: **"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."** That was the lifeline then and it is the lifeline now and it will continue to be until the end of the world. We may well ask why people live day after day in 'death row' when they can so easily be relieved.

Acts Chapter 2 records the establishment of the Church. This Church is not built of bricks and mortar but is the spiritual body of Christ, made up of living, spiritual stones. This Church is built upon the foundations of the apostles with Christ as the chief corner stone. He promised that the Church that He built would be strong and that even the 'gates of Hades' would not prevail against it. It is a Church that was bought with the precious blood of Christ at Calvary. On the day of Pentecost, three thousand souls were saved and there was joy in heaven.

Surely the aim of every Christian must be to help someone find Jesus and through him, salvation in accordance with God's own appeal. **"This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him."**

*(Sis. Bethia writes that this article is likely to be her last contribution to the SS due to the difficulty she has in gathering her thoughts and physically writing them down. Our sister's desire that many would come to understand the Gospel is evident in her writing. I'm sure you'll all join with me in wishing our Sister a long 'retirement'. Editor)*

A  
PRIESTLY  
PENITENTIAL  
PAEAN  
OF  
PENITENTIAL  
PAEAN  
PRAISE 4



**Ernest Makin (Wigan)**

The ninth chapters of Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel each describe a national confession of spiritual inadequacy and show a people praying for the GRACE of God. Nehemiah 9 vv5-37 is one of the most beautiful psalms/poems outside the Book of Psalms. Nevertheless it reflects the deep emotional feelings to be observed in the Book of Psalms. These verses review the GRACE and the POWER of God. The chapter demonstrates how this grace and power was exercised in creation and the preservation of the universe; during the time of the Jews in Egypt; at the crossing of the Red Sea; in the wanderings in the desert and the climactic giving of the Decalogue at Sinai; during the conquest of Canaan and the claiming of the promised land; through the history of the judges of Israel and the prophets and into the post exilic period as described by Ezra and Nehemiah.

This grace is foundational to an understanding of the relationship between an omnipotent and loving God and an erring, unreliable people of God. Such grace is a major attribute of the divine nature and is available as a free gift to those who believe. **"Thou art a God**

**ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."**

**"I (God) will make My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you My Name, 'The Lord', and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."**

**"The God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in the Christ, will Himself restore, establish and strengthen you."**

DIVINE GRACE

Mercy and grace, while not precisely interchangeable in meaning, are elements in the "exceedingly great grace" and are communicated to sinful humanity through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit motivated by the love of God and based on the surety of the resurrection of the Christ. It then follows that the supreme element of the grace of God is the incarnation and the substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The characteristic that makes this grace so wonderful is that it was **"in the definite plan and foreknowledge of God"** before the foundation of the world and that Jesus the innocent substitute should be killed by the hands of lawless and wicked men; further that this redemptive action should be made available while 'we were yet in our sins'.

Like 'faith', grace is continuous until Jesus reappears and it gives joyful meaning to the hope of the Christian. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith for salvation ready to be revealed at the last time."** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Divine grace (favour and mercy) throughout time has been, and is, the free and undeserved gift of love from God to sinful humanity. This spontaneous and unmerited almighty gift is the whole of the redemptive work of God through Jesus - **"Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."** John further

underlines this when he writes, **“for the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus, the Christ.”**

A statement, included below, by a theologian named Stebbins, reflects the wretchedness felt by Paul as described in Romans 7:24. This feeling was the basis of the conviction and repentance of the post-exilic Jews. This quotation, while not inspired, also defines the feeling of the penitent believer before surrendering to Jesus as his Lord and Saviour:-

*I have never known the time when I have felt for a moment free from a sense of unworthiness, or free from a consciousness of imperfections and of a sinful nature; but since I have come to understand that I am accepted of God on the ground of the righteousness of the Christ and not my own, and therefore my standing is within Him and His righteousness and not my own, I have ceased even to question the fact of my present salvation.*

Paul puts it more succinctly: **“Wretched man that I am, who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord!... Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 7:24,25; 8:1)**

The hymn writer, Moody, also has his say:

‘It may not be an easy thing to live in sweet fellowship with everyone but that is what the grace of God is for. The law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out.’

Grace in man, as in Jesus, is all of true holiness. **“and the child grew and waxed strong in the spirit filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him,”** and **“and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us,(and we beheld His glory, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”**

#### THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

The source of grace since creation can only be a loving God, affronted by man’s disobedience, communicating via the Gospel of Jesus in these latter days. Note well that the gospel was preached to Abraham four hundred and some years before the revelation of the Law, via Moses. This was the grace granted to chosen people in exile and prompted their return to a ruined city. It was grace that empowered them for service in rebuilding the temple, the city and its walls while committing to an obedient return to the Covenant and the Book of the Law. It was grace freely given that empowered Paul to labour in the gospel, **“according to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation and another builds thereon. But let everyone take heed how he builds thereon.”** And, **“By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I but the grace of God which was with me.”**

All the fruits of grace and its consequential blessings find their source in the God of all grace, whose throne is described as the throne of grace. **“The God of all grace who has called you to His eternal glory in the Christ, will Himself restore, establish and strengthen you.”** For an elevating thought I humbly suggest you read, at this juncture, Hebrews 4 vv14-16.

Justification, regeneration, pardon freely given, righteousness, holiness, salvation, election, faith, comfort, hope, spiritual strength, et.al, are all born of grace; just as are miraculous, official and prophetic gifts. All the peculiar (valuable) traits of the character of a Christian and child of God, including everlasting salvation, spring from the grace of God. Grace informs us that redemption and salvation is by His gracious mercy and not by our works. You may at this point wish to turn up and browse the following scriptures; Romans 3:24; 3:21-26;

Titus 3:3-7; Ephesians 1:7-10; Romans 11:5-6 and Ephesians 2:8-9 with Romans 12:6 and 2 Thess 2:16-17.

## GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES

When Peter wrote to "the exiles of the diaspora" throughout the Roman Empire he said that they had been "**chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus, the Christ, and for sprinkling with His blood.**" Here is the grace of God working His redemptive gift through His Only Begotten Son. Just as the sprinkling of the blood on doorposts and lintels in Egypt gave protection, so the sprinkled blood on the heart and mind of the believer brings salvation. The sprinkled blood of the Lord Jesus is a guarantee of special, great and gracious promises both now in this alien land, which we inhabit for a season, and in the eternal city which God has prepared for those who are faithful. True to the Old Testament pattern and consistent with the justice of God, whenever the blood of the sacrificial animal was sprinkled it produced a cleansing. So with the shed blood of the innocent substitute for our sins, "**How much more then, shall the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.**" And, "**These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**"

These and many other revelatory statements attest to the efficacy of the shed and sprinkled blood of the innocent Jesus. A short statement from the writings of the Apostle John brings even greater encouragement to those of 'like faith'. "**If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness we lie, and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship with one another, AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS HIS SON CLEANSSES (is cleansing/ present continuous) FROM ALL SIN.**"

There is much more to be said and written of the marvellous grace of a loving heavenly Father for His children, who are "**heirs together of the grace of life**". John records that "**the Spirit Himself, bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with the Christ; if indeed we suffer with Him, then we may also be glorified together.**" We have received of "all His fullness"; and that is "grace for grace", which literally means gracious gift after gracious gift has been and will be piled up for those who are faithful.

The surface of Nehemiah 9 and the manner in which it creates burgeoning thought in those who love God has hardly been touched in these few articles. There is a whole continuing series of lessons to be learned from our ancestors in the faith, which have relevance to our present situation, attitudes, behaviour, belief and theology. These may be broached later. In the meantime:

**"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought unto you at the redemption of Jesus the Christ."**

THE LORD OUR GOD IS A SUN AND SHIELD; THE LORD WILL GIVE GRACE AND GLORY;  
NO GOOD THING WILL HE WITHHOLD FROM THEM THAT WALK UPRIGHTLY.

GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE ALL GRACE ABOUT TOWARD YOU; THAT YOU HAVING ALL  
SUFFICIENCY MAY ABOUT TO EVERY GOOD WORK.

To all readers,

**"BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS." And I pray that, "YOUR HEART BE ESTABLISHED WITH GRACE. GROW IN THE GRACE AND IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS THE CHRIST."**

# EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

When in sorrow, call John 14.

**When men fail you, call Psalm 27**

If you want to be fruitful, call John 15

**When you have sinned, call Psalm 51**

When you worry, call Matthew 6:19 – 34

**When you are in danger, call Psalm 91**

When God seems far away, call Psalm 139

**When your faith needs stirring, call Hebrews 11**

When you are lonely and fearful, call Psalm 23

**When you grow bitter and critical, call 1 Cor. 13**

For Paul's secret to happiness, call Colossians 3:12 – 17

**For an idea of Christianity, call 2 Cor. 5:15 – 19**

When you feel down and out, call Romans 8:31

**When you want peace and rest, call Matthew 11:25 – 30**

When the world seems bigger than God, call Psalm 90

**When you leave home for labour or travel, call Psalm 121**

When your prayers grow narrow and selfish, call Psalm 67

**For a great invention/opportunity, call Isaiah 55**

When you want courage for a task, call Joshua 1

**When you want to know how to get along with fellow men, call Romans 12**

When you think about investments/returns, call Mark 10

**If you are depressed, call Psalm 27**

If your pocketbook is empty, call Psalm 37

**If you are losing confidence in people, call 1 Cor. 13**

If people seem unkind, call John 15

**If you are discouraged about your work, call Psalm 126**

If you find the world growing small and yourself great, call Psalm 19

**NOTE: THESE EMERGENCY NUMBERS may be DIALLED DIRECT.**

**No operator assistance is necessary.**

**ALL LINES ARE OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK.**

**Pass these important numbers to everyone you know and make sure no-one is left alone in an emergency**

(Selected)

## **News and Information**

### ***Ghana Appeal***

Again we sincerely thank those who have contributed to the extension of the Lord's kingdom in Ghana and the medical treatment of our brethren there.

As we have mentioned so often, they have a great zeal to learn and understand the scriptures and to use this in passing the word to others, which is the main reason for church growth in that country. Your contributions have not only helped to project this further but also to relieve sickness and in some case to prevent death.

The planned seminar took place recently in Accra. This consisted of one week of teaching and Bible study and was attended by 120 brethren from 65 congregations. They have now returned to their respective towns and villages better able to teach others and are greatly encouraged by the experience.

Our sisters who have been planning a co-operative venture in which they share their respective knowledge, experience and skills, have now begun this enterprise. Let us pray for their encouragement, guidance and success in this.

The brother who was re-admitted to hospital after working on his farm too soon after a hernia operation has now returned home after remedial surgery. He must refrain from any such activity now for a very long time. Unfortunately the condition of our sister with hypertension has worsened following the collapse of her business.

We are happy to report that the young lady who was put out of her family home on becoming a Christian has been able to put her knowledge to good use. She has established her own business dyeing and selling cloth and is now self-sustaining.

Unfortunately we understand that she is suffering from epilepsy.

Those wishing to contribute, please make cheques payable to: Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer, **Mrs. Janet Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB. Tel: 01324 562480**

## **Engagement**

Bro. and Sis. Peter & Glenys Snedden (Dennyloanhead, Scotland) would like to share with you the wonderful news of the engagement of their daughter Clare Louise to Dale Robert Meikle (Mutare, Zimbabwe). They are both committed to God in Christ and will commit themselves to each other as husband and wife on 16 April 2004.

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecc. 4:12)

## **Change of Address**

**Geoff & Marion Ellis,  
Kirkby-in-Ashfield.**

*Change of address:*

Forest Cottage

30, Forest Street, Kirkby-in-Ashfield  
Notts. NG17 7DT

*Telephone:* 01623 752145

## **Church of Christ, Afikpo Town, Nigeria.**

I have recently received correspondence from Dickson Emmanuel Eni, who is the evangelist at the above Church in Nigeria. He informs that through the SS he has learned that there are Churches of Christ in the United Kingdom, having previously only had contact with Churches in USA.

Our brother has been an evangelist for 17 years and now works with at a fairly new congregation which is unable to support him in his work. He appeals for financial help to support his work and his family and states that the work in Nigeria is suffering because of lack of funds.

I have no personal knowledge of our brother or the Church in Nigeria. However he has authorized me to print his address and assures me that references are available for anyone who may be willing to offer support. Does anyone have any information on the work in Nigeria that can be passed on to readers?

Our brothers contact details are:  
**Dickson Emmanuel Eni, Evangelist**  
**Church of Christ Afikpo Town**  
**PO Box 365**  
**Afikpo North L.G.A.**  
**Ebonyi State, Nigeria.**

## Coming Events

### Stretford, Manchester Gospel Meetings

**Saturday, 22nd November 2003 at  
7.00 pm**

Speaker: Vince O'Donovan, Brandon

There will be refreshments and discussion at 8.00 pm on each of the above occasions.

Vince O'Donovan will also speak on following 23rd November at 11.00 am.

**A warm welcome is extended to all**

## Longshoot, Wigan

**May 2004**

Bi-ennial Fellowship Weekend is to be held over weekend of Friday, April 30th to Monday, May 3rd 2004. A full programme of events will be announced in due course. But you can be assured of a weekend of excellent teaching and fellowship.

## Cold Harbour Road Lectureship, USA

**October 30th – November 2nd 2003**

We have received notice of the above lectureship which is to be held in (I think) Virginia, USA. The lectureship will cover some of the problematical experiences in life such as pain and suffering, chronic illness, God's promises to the hurting, divorce, death, when bad things happen etc. There are also studies in 1 Peter and Habakkuk. A hardcover lectureship book will be available at \$12 each (including postage). Contacts:

Email: [CHRCOC@AOL.COM](mailto:CHRCOC@AOL.COM)

Web: [WWW.COLD-HARBOR-ROAD.ORG](http://WWW.COLD-HARBOR-ROAD.ORG)

Tel: (804)746-8224

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