

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE FAIRY FLAG

SKYE is the largest island of the Inner Hebrides off the north of Scotland and is well worth a visit. It is remarkable for its romantic and haunting beauty and in good weather must, perhaps be unsurpassed for its rugged scenery. It has many places of general and historical interest not least of which are some of its old keeps and castles. After all, it is "Bonnie Prince Charlie" country. One of the most attractive castles is Dunvegan, built in the 9th century, and the present and ancestral home of the Macleods. Visitors to the castle (always welcome) will doubtless notice in a frame, and behind a pane of glass, an old flag. Legend has it that the flag has magical and miraculous powers and that when the clan Macleod is in danger the glass is to be broken and the flag waved. The special powers associated with the waving of the flag are such that twice already the clan have been saved from catastrophe by its help. Apparently the flag carries its special attributes only to the extent of it being able to help a total of three times and therefore, although it is now a great many years since its help was last invoked, it can still, theoretically, come to the aid of the clan one more time. However the flag now looks so frail and worn, tattered and torn, that one wonders if it would be possible ever to wave it again. I did say that Skye was a romantic island.

Is this not how man treats God sometimes? When trouble breaks we break the glass and bring God out of the case. When things go well we push God back into the background again. We read on occasions of mariners being in danger of imminent death in storms at sea, kneeling down and praying fervently to God to save them. We hear of miners trapped in the bowels of the earth, in situations where rescue was unlikely, praying continuously to their Maker. In Britain we are not strangers to the kind of scenes at Pitheads of collieries where a disaster has taken place and where relatives and friends stand praying, and silently crying, as the bodies of dead miners are brought to the surface. Men and women not known to have much regard for God, or Christ, are suddenly found praying to Him most fervently in the face of personal crisis or disaster. Not unlike the fire alarm knob behind the small glass window with the accompanying words, "To be used only in case of emergency". Is this how God is to be regarded? When the crisis is over then men lapse back into forgetfulness about God once again. To a lesser degree some men seem to believe that God only requires their attention on *certain occasions* and so we see crowds flocking to places of worship at 'Easter' and 'Christmas' and the like. At all other times God has to make do without them. I suppose that some think it a very convenient arrangement but I wonder what God thinks of it?

Prosperity in the material things of life is probably the factor most obviously conducive to this casual and lackadaisical attitude to God. The 'self-made' man is not likely to feel much dependence upon His Maker. The hard-bitten business man is not likely to spend too much time thinking in terms of spiritual things or thinking that 'this night thy soul shall be required

of thee'. Attendance at the occasional funeral is about the only thing that, for a brief moment, confronts man with the reality that the line between living and dying is a narrow one and that all the business acumen in the world can't manipulate it or avert it. History shows that nations emerge from hard times all the better for it and that conversely, material prosperity provides ideal conditions for the moral and spiritual rot of the masses. It may well be that we can see evidence of this even today in the nations around us. Ironically the more God blesses man the more man is likely to forget his Benefactor. It was so in the days of physical Israel and doubtless true of spiritual Israel. Moses warned the children of Israel thus, in Deut. 6:10-12 "And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not. And houses full of all good things which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not: when thou shalt have eaten and be full. THEN beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage". The Israelites were going to have all kinds of material blessings bestowed upon them and Moses urges them not to let such things turn their heads or harden their hearts and says, When you *have eaten and be full* (i.e. had all your material desires satisfied) *then beware* lest thou forget the Lord. Material prosperity is so dangerous to the spiritual lives of men and women that rich men will find it almost impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven. A brother feels that if only he had a car he could do so much more for the Lord and when, after much striving, he gets the car he finds that it takes him to the beach on Sunday instead of the assembly. We can spend more money on a hobby in a year than we give to the Lord. In the same chapter (Deut.6) Moses advises how we can try and avoid the pitfall of forgetting our God (v.6-9), "And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates".

Thus God's word should be enshrined in our hearts and we should talk about it in our houses, as we walk by the way, when we lie down and when we get up. The binding of God's word upon the hand and wearing it as frontlets between the eyes was taken literally by the majority of the Jews and resulted in the wearing of phylacteries but the figurative application of the words should not be lost upon us. Many houses and tenement buildings in Old Edinburgh literally have God's word written on the lintels and posts of them. The house of John Knox still standing in Edinburgh's historical 'Royal Mile' is a beautiful example of this and has some lovely scriptures carved on the walls. The great reformer seemed to lean to the literal application of these words too but the important thing, surely, is to try and implement the spirit, and force of meaning, of the words and that we shall strive not to let prosperity cause us to forget our God. *Prosperity* is, of course, a relative term and it all depends upon our starting point but whatever our conceptions of it be let us learn to deal with it sensibly, prevent it from gaining any mastery over us, and even harness it in the service of the Lord.

Many fairly rich brethren have proved that this can certainly be done.

EDITOR

IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

"He leadeth me! O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

He leadeth me! He leadeth me!
By His own hand He leadeth me;
His faithful follower I would be,
For by His hand He leadeth me."

PERFECT REFRESHMENT "HE LEADETH ME BESIDES THE STILL WATERS" Psalm 23:2 HE LEADETH ME. He leads with a shepherd's care. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" John 10:14. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" John 10:27. "I KNOW THEM". Affection on the shepherd's side. He loves them. "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" John 10:3.

J.H. Jowett said, "The unit is not lost in the indiscriminate mass. The colour of a personality is not merged in the monotonous grey of the multitude. The personalities are distinguished. "He calleth His own sheep by name". He never mistakes one for another. We are not so much alike that we are treated as crowds. We are not repetitions of a type, uniform articles cast in a common and unvarying mould. We are individualities, every one original and unique, and bearing individual characteristics and name. "He calleth His own sheep by name". He never confounds Thomas and John, or Peter and Nathaniel, or Mary and Martha. Each name suggests its special problem, and requires peculiar ministry".

A missionary, meeting a shepherd on one of the wildest parts of Lebanon, asked him if he knew all the sheep. He replied, "Master, if you were to put a cloth over my eyes, and bring me any sheep, and only let me put my hands on its face, I could tell in a minute if it was mine or not".

May I quote:— "the well known anecdote of a Scotch traveller who, meeting under the walls of Jerusalem a Shepherd bringing home his flock, changed garments with him, and thus disguised proceeded to call the sheep. They, however, remained motionless. The true shepherd then raised his voice, when they all hastened towards him, in spite of his strange garments." W.M. Thomson in the Land and the Book shows a Photograph of a sheepfold with one door leading into an enclosure and in ordinary weather they are kept within the yard... The sheep are brought into the sheepfold in the evening, several flocks committed to the care of the common keeper or porter for the night. In the morning the shepherds return and knock at the closely barred door of the enclosure, which the porter opens from within. Each separates his own sheep by calling to them; and the sheep respond, coming away from the rest, and when collected they follow their own shepherd, wherever he may lead.

"THEY FOLLOW ME" Affection on the sheep's side. They love Him.

May I quote W.M. Thomson again:—"Our Saviour says that the good shepherd, when he putteth forth his own sheep, goeth before them, and they follow. This is true to the letter. They are so tame and so trained that they follow their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold, or from their houses in the villages, just where he pleases. As there are many flocks in such a place as this, each one takes a different path, and it is his business to find pasture for them. It is necessary, therefore, that they should be taught to follow, and not to stray away into the unfenced fields of corn which lie so temptingly on either side. Any one that thus wanders is sure to get into trouble. The shepherd calls sharply from time to time, to remind them of his presence. They know his voice, and follow on; but, if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and, if it is repeated, they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. This is not the fanciful costume of a parable; it is simple fact. I have made the experiment repeatedly. The shepherd goes before, not merely to point out the way, but to see that it is practicable and safe".

"MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE"

"Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait on Thee;
Hushed my heart to listen
In expectancy.

Speak, O blessed Master,
In this quiet hour;
Let me see Thy face, Lord,
Feel Thy touch of power.

For the words Thou speakest,
They are life indeed;
Living bread from Heaven,
Now my spirit feed."

A Scottish preacher, prayed a prayer which may well be repeated. It was:- "Oh God, when we read Thy word, may we listen; when we listen, may we hear Thy voice; when we hear it, may we know; and when we know, may we follow. Amen". To this Word we must turn our attention, listen to the only voice that matters, which will satisfy the deep yearnings and longings of the soul, and which will bring us to a state of blessedness. The Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, is God's final message to the world. It is vital that they and we listen, and not only listen but follow. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" Heb. 1:1,2. On the mount of transfiguration God said:- "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" Matthew 17:5.

"My Sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"

That voice calls "MY SHEEP" to the still waters for refreshment, for HE knows that the still waters make ideal conditions for the sheep to drink. J.H. Jowett said:- "God has made the grass very juicy for the kine, but the juices of the grass do not make the kine independent of the water brooks. Even amid the luscious pastures they thirst for the still waters, and they make their way to the brink, and, standing knee-deep, bathe and refresh themselves in the gracious stream". So we need to come to the waters of refreshment. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" Isaiah 55:1. What a wonderful invitation for the child of God.

Are you still "heavy laden?" Are you still "full of care?"
Are you still "worried to death?" Are you still "at Wit's End Corner?"
Are you still "Tense"? "Nervous"? "Frustrated"? "Perplexed"?
Are you still lacking in self-confidence?
Are you still afraid of "tomorrow"?

"Come ye to the Waters"

The Psalmist knew that the desires of the soul, could not be satisfied with material things; so he turned his eyes heavenward. "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul, after thee, O God" Psalm 42:1.

"Be still, my soul, allow no doubt to rise,
But keep thine eyes uplifted to the skies
Where sits Thy Lord;
His hand is on the helm to guide thy life;
His love is sure through sorrow, tempest strife;
So trust His word."

We do not realize enough how vital it is for us to come apart and rest awhile, Jesus took advantage of "getting away from things for awhile", going into the desert place, up into the mountain, out into the garden of Gethsemane, for that fellowship with His Father. "He leadeth me besides the still waters, in the margin of my Bible it says:- "waters of quietness". Our Lord Jesus is waiting "Besides the still waters", by the "waters of quietness", in fact He takes us there. Why does He lead us? because He knows our need is for "living water". To the Samaritan woman who came to draw water from the well, Jesus said:- "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" John 4:10. Campbell Morgan said:- "Whenever the thirst comes, go to Him He will quench it. You will never come to Him with an honest thirst that He cannot quench; and when He quenches thirst, it will not be simply the satisfaction of the present moment, but, filling and flooding you, the river will rush to bless someone else". Jesus surely gives us that thought, when He stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of

living water" John 7:37,38. Again in John 4:13,14 He said:- "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life". Shall we respond "beside the still waters" by the "waters of quietness" with the words of the woman at the well:- "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not" John 4:15. "Rivers of living water".

"PERFECT REFRESHMENT"-"HE LEADETH ME BESIDES THE STILL WATERS" Psalm 23:2

This month's exercise: Learn by heart John 4:13, 14, also John 7: 37,38, and may the Lord's riches blessing be your portion. LEONARD MORGAN.

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST

BLOOD from the beginning of creation has been regarded by God as a most precious thing. God hedged about this fountain of vitality with the most solemn sanctions. God thus commanded Noah and his descendants, "Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat". Man had every moving thing that liveth, given him for meat, but they were by no means to eat the blood with the flesh. Things strangled were to be considered unfit for food, since God then would not have man become too familiar with blood by eating or drinking it in any shape or form. Even the blood of both Bulls and Goats thus had a sacredness placed upon them by the decrees of God. The Bible tells us of God's threatening action and His law when He said "And surely your blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of Man". Whosoever sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man.

The first murderer did not have his blood shed by man, but then the crime was indeed new, the penalty had not then been settled or proclaimed, therefore the case was clearly exceptional. Still, Cain's doom was probably far more terrible than if he had been slain upon the spot, for he was permitted by God to fill up his measure of wickedness. to be a wanderer and a vagabond upon the face of the earth, then to enter into the dreadful heritage of wrath which his life had doubtless greatly increased. Under the theocratic dispensation, in which God was the King and controlled Israel, murder was always punished in the most exemplary manner, so therefore there was never any toleration or excuse for it. Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth, Life for Life, was the stern inexorable law. We then find it written as a law, "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death, but that he shall surely be put to death". So it becomes very clear that blood was ever precious in God's sight, and He would have it so in ours.

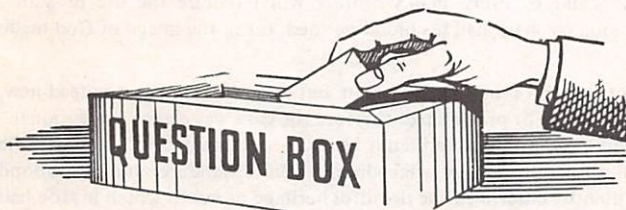
Now, if in ordinary cases, the shedding of life's blood be thus precious can we understand just how fully God utters His heart's meaning when He said, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints?" If then the death of a rebel be precious, what must be the death of one of His children? If God will not contemplate the shedding of the blood of His own enemies together with those who spurn Him, what then think we concerning His own elect, of whom God says, "Precious shall their blood be in His sight". Will he not then avenge them, though He bear long with them? Shall the cup which the harlot of Rome filled with the blood of the saints, long remain unavenged?

Having given some thought to the blood of Man and beast there is another step to our thoughts. It is the blood of Jesus Christ. Here all power of speech would fail to convey human idea's of the term 'Preciousness'. Behold here a person innocent without taint within, or flaw without, a Person meritorious, who magnified the law and made it honourable, a Person who made it possible and served both God and man even unto death. Angels then must have seen that matchless bloodshedding with wonder and amazement, and even Almighty God Himself saw what was never seen either in creation or in providence. For God here saw Himself more gloriously displayed than in the whole universe itself. So then we see plainly that the blood of Christ is the prevailing power of God able to save sinners and all who come to him in repentance

of Sin. Now the precious blood of Jesus Christ has a cleansing power, as John tells us in his first epistle, the first chapter, and the seventh verse, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". Sin then has a directly defiling effect upon the sinner, hence the need for cleansing from that sin. Sin is a plague to the person who has it. We see the connection in the O.T. of sin and blood, and we remember the story of the dreadful night in Egypt, when the destroying Angel was sent abroad to slay God's enemies. The Angel of God sped with noiseless wing, throughout every street of the city. Still, there were many houses in which the Angel could not enter, and with these the Angel sheathed His sword, and breathed no malediction upon them. What then was it that preserved these very houses we ask? Nothing apart from the bloodstain on the lintel and on the two side posts. For it was written, "When I see the blood I will pass over you". Here I am sure as Christians we see how we are preserved in Christ Jesus, for did not God see the blood before either of us ever saw it and was not this the reason why He spared our forfeited lives, when like barren fig trees we brought forth no fruit for Him? For when we saw the blood it was not our seeing it that saved us, but rather God's seeing it that saved us. "When I see the blood I will pass over you". IN view of the precious blood of Christ let us each one look to the teaching of the Apostle Paul who says that a testament is not in force unless the testator be dead. So likewise the blood is a proof that the testator Died on Calvary's cross, and when Christ signed this Testament with his own shed blood.

"Now freed from Sin I walk at large,
The Saviour's blood my full discharge,
At His dear feet my soul I'll lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay"

W.S.BRADLEY, Bawtry, Doncaster.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Some of my friends have said to me that the church should be the servant of the community. I am not quite sure what they mean. Would you please comment on this and perhaps indicate what you think the church is for so that I can give an answer?"

THIS reader poses a problem. So much teaching is given concerning the church that it would be easy to travel many ways in answering and still not satisfy the questioner. However, I am asked to indicate what I think "the church is for" and I take this to mean that the questioner is asking 'what is the function of the church', or 'what does the church do'.

The Popular View

The 'in' phrase today is 'community care'. Sociologists have taught us about ourselves, our culture, the society in which we live and the communities of which we are members. Social services exist and give help to the sick, the lonely, the destitute, the aged. We are now conditioned to seeking these services when we have a specific need and we expect them to be available when we do seek them.

It seems to me that organised religion is being viewed as a service also, similar to the ones we have mentioned. As with the social services, people expect the church to be there when they want to make use of it. Such times would be christenings, weddings, and funerals. The church would then be expected to baptise babies for sins which didn't exist; tie knots that the state will undertake to untie when convenient; and bury in hope when there is no hope. Small wonder that clergymen are objecting to their churches being used as clearing houses for the service of the community.

The Unpopular View

The above presupposes that organised religion, in all of its denominational aspects, constitutes 'the church'. The vast majority of people believe this to be the case and they resent being told that they may have believed something which is not quite true. I believe that before we can tell people what the church *is for* we must tell them *what it is*. We must point out to them that it is the Body of Christ and that He is its Head. We must tell them that it is a called-out community of those who have heard the gospel, believed it, repented, confessed Christ as Saviour, and have been immersed in water for the remission of sins. They must then realise that they are part of the church; that the church is not a service organisation but that they are participants with Christ IN HIS CHURCH. Then they will understand that the church's function is their function, and that their question should be, "what wilt thou have me to do?"

Paul's View

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, so he said, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). A household suggests a family, and the household of God would suggest the family of God. This is precisely what the Church is, the family of God, and we are born into that family by our obedience to the gospel; this is the new birth (see John 3:3; 1 Cor. 4:15).

The church is also the pillar and ground of the truth. This is indicative of a pillar sunk deep into the ground and holding up a building; so the church, bedded deep on the firm foundation of the gospel of Christ, upholds that gospel like a beacon to the world. It is this work which is precious and important to the church. The great work of the church is not to act as a benevolent institution, nor is it to become a social community centre. Christ came primarily to save men's souls, not their bodies. Whatever else the church may do must be seconded to this great objective — the salvation of men's souls through obedience to the gospel. Now we are in a position to say what the church should do.

Maintenance

One meaning of maintenance is 'to keep something in the same condition as it was when it first started'. The church has a clear objective; it is to maintain the purity of the church as Christ gave it. Writing to Ephesus Paul said that Christ had cleansed and sanctified the church, "that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26,27). In industry many people pay lip service to planned maintenance, that is, a systematic examination of machinery and buildings, etc., but it seldom works; too many other things get in the way. Isn't this true of our maintenance of the church also? Too many other things get in the way and we neglect that for which Christ died. But nevertheless, to maintain the church is the responsibility of the Christians who comprise it and we shall have to give an account of our stewardship to God one day.

Preservation

The act of preservation is very clearly demonstrated by God. Peter says concerning God, "And spared not the old world, but saved (preserved) Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). This preservation teaching is continued in Christ, for Jude says, "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ" (Jude 1). The continuous preservation of the believer is indicated without any reference to time.

If, therefore, preservation is in Christ, and Christ is the Head of the church, then it follows that the church should be preserving the message of salvation for which Christ died. "This treasure" (the gospel), says Paul, "is contained in earthen vessels". He reinforces this when he writes to Timothy. "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust" (1 Tim. 6:20). Well, the gospel is still committed to the church, and it is the function of the church to preserve it.

Contention

Jude says, "it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The word here signifies to contend about a thing as a combatant does; to see the contention as an intensive contest. It is still necessary to earnestly contend for the faith. We are in a life and death struggle with the forces of evil, against spiritual wickedness in high places. The church should not dissipate its energies on internecine struggles when the enemy is at the gates. The function of the church is to contend earnestly for the faith.

So what should the church do?

It should take the gospel of Christ and maintain, preserve, and contend for it. It should proclaim that gospel from the housetops so that none should misunderstand it. This is why it exists and this is what it should do. We should present it in such a way that people would not just want to come to it on three occasions during their lives, but would want to make the church their way of life because that life would be hid with Him who bought the church with His blood, and sanctified it for maximum use in the world.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

APRIL 1975

6-Zechariah 9:9-17	Luke 19:29-48
13-Job 5:1-16	Luke 20:1-18
20-Exodus 25:1-10	Luke 20:19-40
27-Psalms 110	Luke 20:41 to 21:4

SHORT-LIVED TRIUMPH

WE must realise the entry into Jerusalem was on the Sunday of the week in which our Saviour was crucified. On Sunday He rode in triumph into the city, but on either Wednesday or Thursday evening He was eating His last meal with His disciples in the upper room, going thence at or about midnight to His arrest in the garden of Gethsemane. The anticipation of the agonizing hours must have burdened His soul but all that He said and did was with complete self-control. "He had set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). His steps never faltered. No man ever carried such a burden before or since.

He rode upon the colt on which never man had sat, the uproarious crowd shouted and flung down leaves and garments in the path. The enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They acclaimed Him as their Messiah, nothing could damp their ardour. Their King had come to lead them to victory over all their foes.

Stubbornly believing otherwise the Pharisees told Him to rebuke them and were themselves rebuked. Even the children greeted Him as Messiah in the Temple courts (Matt. 21:15-16) exciting the hatred and jealousy of the priests and scribes, and there also He brought healing to the blind and lame. That evening He returned to Bethany with the twelve.

The Overwhelming Sorrow

The Temple was at that time magnificent with gilding and white marble, a dazzling sight as it came into view from the mount of Olives. The most hardened traveller would stand and gasp with admiration, but Jesus wept! This was not the silent tears at the grave of Lazarus, but He wept aloud. No doubt Jesus had come many times to the city. All Jewish men by law attended three feasts in the year after the age of twelve. This time the full significance of this final visit oppressed His soul. He must have rejoiced at the simple-rejoicing of the disciples but He had no illusions. This wonderful city more greatly honoured than any other on earth was to reject Him and bring upon itself all the curses pronounced nearly two thousand years before. All the prolonged patience of a pardoning God was to culminate in a few days in final rejection. The Lord of light and glory was to be hounded to torture and death by those in religious authority. It was to become the haunt of evil-disposed and fractious elements of effete Judaism, fighting one another to the death to perish miserably in the ruins with millions of

their own people. In Jesus, who perfectly represents God Himself, there must have been so profound a grief that nothing could assuage the incomprehensible burden of sin.

Last Days of Teaching

It would be on Monday of this week that He went into the Temple and as at the first time recorded only by John (2:13-22), He drove out the money-changers and traders from the precincts, and forbade the carrying of vessels there. In doing so He must have defied the authority of the chief priests who must have authorised or allowed the desecration of the Holy place. They however dared not interfere for the people heard Him gladly. We place the miracle of the barren fig tree on this morning (Mark 11:20-26). Luke gives the general plan of the week (21:37 & 38), and we can well understand the secret rage of the rulers as the people came early in the morning and "hung upon His words". Their opposition took the form of questions intended to deflate Him in the eyes of the people. Their determination to destroy Him was only confirmed by His consummate skill in answering them. The truth He taught they did not want but it was there as plain to see. How true it is "There are none so blind as will not see". We wonder if some of His questioners were affected by His replies. They demanded "authority". His answer was not simply "to stump them". It could teach them their fearful mistake and sin. They did know as well as the people did that John Baptist was a prophet of God. No one could possibly be the bearer of his message otherwise. They must have known, and Jesus made them face up to it. They were wilfully blind. They were under no delusion about the parable of the wicked husbandmen. When He looked upon them (straight at them: N.E.B.), picture this earnest gaze, how they must have felt.

Closing In

Hope of destruction by questioning is to be carried further for sentence of death must be by Roman not Jewish authority (John 18:31). Hence the next question we consider is one which would if it succeeded bring either disfavour with the zealous Jews, or into political conflict with "Caesar". With what wasted ingenuity they flattered Jesus (20:21), who read their thoughts and knew their designs. Flattery is offensive to good men, and only rouses

suspicion. How skilfully Jesus turned the question back upon themselves! They hated Rome but they accepted what advantages its rule offered, which included for many of them comparative prosperity and peace. We note that the "chief priests" now seem to be taking over opposition to Jesus from their enemies the Pharisees. The reason for this would be the "take-over" of the Temple by Him, which was their place as priests. They were jealous of their authority. Hence probably the next question in our readings. It was doctrinal in scope, and thought to be quite unanswerable—doubtless one of their arguments with the Pharisees. How trivial and inappropriate it seems to us but we view from a very much enlightened standpoint. References to life after death are not clearly given in the Old Testament scriptures. Here again Jesus takes up the challenge and turns it back upon His opponents forcibly from the scriptures they claim to venerate and obey.

Back to Scripture

Jesus always shows complete respect for the scriptures - of course the Old Testament as we have it. It is the weapon which can pierce the heart and conscience. Some at least of the scribes were convinced (20:39). The final question He puts - and which they cannot answer without condemning themselves - draws attention to a fact they are facing, and yet not facing. The Christ is David's descendant but also David's Lord. As though finally to antagonise the scribes He gives a public warning against them. We should read Matthew 23 for the fuller version. Luke records fittingly God's estimate of giving - not as the scribes. R.B. SCOTT.

STAMP FUND

45lbs. of used postage stamps have been received and, together with other donations, over £150 used to send Bibles to India and Africa. Each pound will buy two or more complete Bibles, and each Bible may be read by a whole family. Special Christmas issues of stamps would be very welcome, as well as ordinary kinds, to help keep the work going. (Miss) R.M. Payne,
1 Kenilworth Avenue,
Reading, Berks.

DRIVING OR DRAWING

Electrical workmen in Santa Ana, California found it unusually difficult to get some wire through about 300 feet of conduit that was embedded in concrete. They could not push it through nor could they push a small pilot wire through. With 100 pounds of air pressure they unsuccessfully tried to blow through the pipe a small plastic ball, to which was tied a fine thread. A different approach was tried — drawing the ball through by creating a vacuum at the opposite end. With a drawing force of only 5 pounds, they succeeded and were able to draw the wire through.*

Five pounds of drawing power did what one hundred pounds of driving power could not do.

There is a lesson in this for us. Jesus said: "I will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32). God does not drive men to Jesus, He draws them (John 6:45).

Fear has its use. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" and "tendeth to life" (Prov. 9:10; 19:23). But it is limited. It has driving power but not drawing power.

Fear will drive one far enough to make him feel out of danger — but no farther. Fear is strong, but love is stronger. "Indeed fully developed love expells every particle of fear" (1 John 4:18 Phillips). Love will draw a person across the sea, across battlefields, through every kind of danger, through trouble, hunger, and even through fear, to reach his heart's desire.

Elders can lead the flock by example but they cannot successfully drive a congregation anywhere but away. Preachers can magnify God's love as manifested in Jesus and persuade many to come to Jesus. All Christians can show the love of Jesus in their lives and

WHO IS SPEAKING?

In the study of the Bible, we must follow some simple rules if we hope to understand and profit from our study. Notice two such rules.

Who is Speaking?

Is it God, Christ, Satan, or enemies of Christ speaking? Was the statement made by an inspired apostle or by one who was speaking of his own will? The Bible is a true report of all which is recorded therein, but not every statement in the Bible is true. When the Devil said to Eve, "Thou shalt not die," he did not speak the truth. When the Pharisees told Christ, "Thou hast a devil," they falsely accused Him.

It does not take long to determine by a study of the context who is speaking. Who made a particular statement will determine how we are to react to that statement.

To Whom Is It Spoken?

"Make thee an ark of gopher wood" is a command given by God; yet, how are we to react to this command? By determining to whom God is speaking will further determine our reaction. In the above instance we know God was speaking to Noah. When we study the Old Testament we learn by applying this simple rule that God is speaking to Jews. Whether it be remembering the sabbath day to keep it holy, offering animal sacrifices, or observing the feasts in Jerusalem, these commandments and ordinances of God found in the Law were given to the Jews only.

When we study the New Testament we will also be confused unless we follow this simple rule. We find the Lord saying, "Go and sell all thou hast and give to the poor and come follow me." Is this a requirement of all who would follow Christ today? It is clear that this is not, for Christ is speaking to the rich young ruler only. "But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence is a promise given to the apostles of Christ only as the context clearly shows and which the next chapter reveals that they received (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4).

All Bible truths must be interpreted in the light of their context. To take a passage out of its setting and make it say what the writer never intended, is to pervert the pure word of God.

-Selected-

UNFAILING FOUNTAINS

SOULS seek joy as the thirsty seek water, yet some are never able to find the gladness that they want. It may be that they expect it to be blown in on the winds of the morning instead of being drawn from the fountains that are provided, but they flit from one area to another and never seem to light for very long in one place. Viewing the fountains from which happiness may be drawn is certainly in order.

1. **Someone to Love.** Perhaps the most unhappy ones are those who have only themselves to think about and to wait upon. They lavish affection on themselves by going, by spending, by adorning, by petting, yet are on a one-way street to loneliness. Oh, that all could realize the futility of selfishness before it gets such a hold on them that they know not how to love others. Love shows itself in sacrifice, and when this is for God first, neighbour second and self third it will be found to be an unending fountain of gladness (Matt. 22:37-40).

2. **Something Good to do.** Activity may make the body tired and weary, but inactivity is the special domain of boredom. A great trouble with having nothing to do is that one can not stop and rest – it is a great burden to be borne – it is a long road that never turns, and whose scenery never changes. In Galatians 6:7-10, the fountain that offers true and lasting pleasure is that of doing good unto all. The Master drew from this source for his own enjoyment as well as for an example unto his people. Peter said, "he went about doing good". (Acts 10:38).

3. **Something Wonderful to Anticipate.** This may be that which one hopes to become or that which he hopes to possess or both. Paul was drawing from this fountain when he saw himself fighting sin (1 Cor. 9:27), and stretching toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:8-15). What more wonderful could be imagined than striving to be christians in this world that needs them so badly and of enjoying glory in the future that is fraught with such dire consequences if one is not a christian. What one has already he does not yet hope for (Rom. 8:24,25), but what he desires and expects through faithfulness is a living fountain from which he continually draws refreshing strength.

From "Christian Worker"

TASTE YOUR WORDS

AN elderly coloured woman was asked her secret for having so many friends. Her answer contains a lesson everyone should learn. She said, "I'se allus mighty careful to stop and taste my words 'fore I let them pass my teeth". Had you ever thought of words as having taste? They have. Some are sweet, some are sour, some are bitter, some are salty, some are spicy, or some are even flat. Their effect on the hearer may be controlled if you "taste" them before you release them from your mouth.

Words do not originate in the mouth but in one's heart, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh". A heart filled with kind regard for others will not prompt the mouth to utter sarcastic, bitter or cruel words. Many people delight in gossip, and unfounded stories that are calculated to belittle someone's character. Gossip, once started on its ugly way, spreads like a plague, gaining in destructive force each time it is repeated, and if continued may do irreparable harm.

Weigh your words carefully and taste them before uttering them. Entertain only uplifting, constructive thoughts. Your mission is to help not to hinder. From "The Truth"

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Newtongrange, Midlothian: On Sunday 19th January, the brethren here had the wonderful pleasure of seeing the immersion of two young people. Colin Currie, son of brother and sister Joe Currie, and his girl friend Miss Dorothy Muir made the good confession and were baptised into their Lord, by brother Jim Morris. Colin is a University student and Dorothy is training for the nursing profession and we pray for them that they may ever be faithful to their new Master and we have hopes that they will prove great assets to the church. Rejoice with us and to God be the glory

W.H. Allan

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

THE new church secretary at Peterhead is Bro. ANDREW BROWN, 70 Catto Drive, Peterhead, to whom all communications for the church should be sent.

OBITUARY

Ulverston: The church here is sad to report the passing of Bro. James Black on the 13th January at the age of 75 years. Bro. Black came to Ulverston in 1957 and had previously lived in Birmingham, London, and of course his home town Dalmellington. Our Brother worked hard to keep the church together, most of the time he was the only brother in this small gathering even to the last he served us both exhorting and presiding at the morning meetings.

He so loved the Lord that often he waived his ailments, in order to remember the Saviour.

The contribution he made to the Lord's body is not ended by his death, for his example in humility and kindness through pure love for Jesus is a great inspiration to us all.

We offer our sympathy and condolences to Sister Black and relatives.. Our thanks to Bro. E. Jess for officiating, for those kind and comforting words. Our Brother did indeed walk with God. John Thistlethwaite.

AN APPRECIATION

The late James Black, Ulverston

Bro. James Black, Ulverston gave himself to Christ when the New Testament Church in Pennyvenie started. He was a diligent student and an acceptable preacher of the Word. We remember with pleasure the times of study we had together and from which we all profited in those early days.

He moved to Birmingham where he continued fellowship with the Church there. Some time later he moved to London and was with the Kentish Town congregation until he came to Ulverston and shared the fellowship there with Bro. Crosthwaite. For some 40 years his Christian life has extended in faithful stewardship and his presence and friendly guidance will be sadly missed in the small assembly in Ulverston.

We sorrow "not as those who have no hope", but rejoice for the steadfast faith and the inspiration he has given to all of us to be faithful unto death.

We commend our Sis. Nan and Esther, and the other members of his own family to our heavenly Father who is able to do more than we ask or think. E. Jess, Tranent.

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