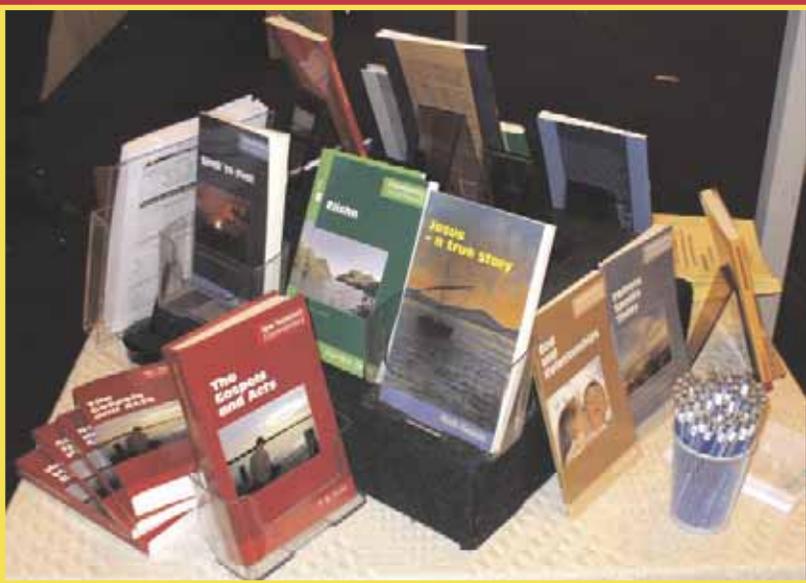


Centenary
1909 – 2009

Scripture Truth



Inside:

Prayer

The unexpected opportunity

My father gives; he does not sell

The Dispensation of Conscience alone

Is it necessary to believe in Biblical creation?

The vein of love in the Letter to the Ephesians

July – September 2009

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

Editor: Theo Balderston

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is published every three months to expound the teaching of the Scriptures so that we “may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

Annual Subscription 2009

£9.50 Post Free UK – £11.50 Post Free Overseas

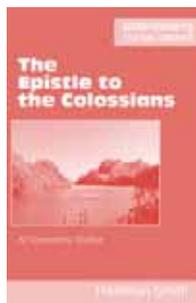
Contents

“My father <i>gives</i> ; he does not sell.”	1	The unexpected opportunity	14
Is it necessary to believe in Biblical creation?	2	Prayer	17
The vein of love in the Letter to the Ephesians	9	The Dispensation of Conscience alone	23
		This, this is the God we adore	Back cover

From an early contributor to Scripture Truth:

The Epistle to the Colossians

by Hamilton Smith



Paperback; 68 pages; available from STP at £4.50 + p&p

We are pleased to make available, **for the first time in print**, a commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians by the well-loved writer, Hamilton Smith. With his characteristic brevity and clarity of expression, he takes his readers through the Epistle verse-by-verse, expounding the many practical instructions it contains for Christians, as we operate as the body of Christ on earth, connected to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Head in heaven.

Front cover photograph of STP bookstall at CBC 2008

Illustration of the Negev desert near Arad on page 7 ©iStockphoto.com/OrenSarid

Illustration on page 22 ©CC-Art.com

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is the imprint of the Central Bible Hammond Trust

Registered Charity No. 223327

All correspondence should be addressed to:

SCRIPTURE TRUTH Publications

31-33 Glover Street, CREWE, Cheshire CW1 3LD

Tel: 01270 252274

Fax: 01477 587454

“My father gives; he does not sell.”

A mother lay dying – her parched lips yearning for something refreshing. By her bedside stood her daughter, about fourteen years old. Suddenly, the thought struck the young girl, “There are such beautiful grapes in the hot-houses of the Court gardens; I’ll go and ask how much just one bunch would cost.” Away she slipped with all haste, and soon she reached the first lodge. A sentry blocked the way.



“Please could I speak to a gardener,” she asked him, “about how much one bunch of grapes would cost?” “Impossible,” answered the sentry, “No-one is admitted, and the fruit is not for sale.” “But mother is dying,” pleaded the girl. “I can let no-one through these gates,” was the reply.

The poor child’s heart sank and she burst into tears.



Just at that moment the king’s son himself rode up, and, touched by the child’s grief, asked the reason. Turning to her he said, “Then what is your request?”



“Please, sir, mother is dying, and I wanted to know what I could buy one bunch of grapes for? Mother’s so thirsty” – and the tears flowed faster.

Telling her to follow him, the king’s son led her to one of the vineries, and cutting with his own hand the finest bunch of grapes, he said, “My father does not sell: he gives.”



We are *far too poor* to buy salvation, and God is *far too rich* to sell. He “so loved the world, that He GAVE His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).



Adapted from *The Traveller’s Guide from Death to Life* ed. Mrs Stephen Menzies.

Is it necessary to believe in biblical creation?

David Anderson

Creation is a bedrock under the whole of Bible truth. Deny it, and these truths are undermined, as this timely article shows.

Sorry, but this is important!

Sorry! This article is *not* about the “science versus the Bible” debate, important as that is. It is about the more important matter of what the Bible, the *Word of God*, teaches about creation, and why we must hold to this in an increasingly hostile, aggressively atheist, secularist, and materialistic world.

“Science, at its best, is only relative truth for today and may be proved wrong tomorrow; but Scripture is absolute truth which abides forever.” Words to this effect were once said to me by J. S. Blackburn, a former editor of *Scripture Truth*. As a teenager I personally experienced the penetrating effect of God’s Word – as a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). After forty-eight years, I remain as convinced as then of its accuracy and inerrancy. *The Scriptures are the only reliable source of truth about all matters of the Christian faith, including those relating to the origins of the universe and the world; and to life itself.*

So what must I believe about creation? This *apologia* for the biblical view attempts to answer that question.

What does the Scripture say?

Scripture has very much to say about creation. It runs like bedrock under the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Throughout it we find, as we would expect, the basic truths about God and creation, and Christ and creation. But, perhaps less familiarly, we also find that the gospel and creation are intrinsically related, as are Christian doctrine and creation, “things to come” and creation, and judgment and creation. These six topics form the structure of this article, which uses mainly the ESV (English Standard Version).

I. God and creation

1 Corinthians 8:6 is almost a statement of faith about creation. “For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things

and through whom we exist.” God is the Source of everything, our omniscient Creator, our Maker who framed and made the world we live in and gave all animals and human beings their natural life. The following examples illustrate how this truth runs through the Scriptures.

- God is the self-existent One, “the Same,” in Deuteronomy 32:39, Psalm 102:27 (quoted in Hebrews 1:12), Isaiah 41:4, etc. See especially the Darby Trans. and its footnote to the first of these references. God is eternal, outside of all of His creation.
- God the Creator brought man and everything else into existence. Hebrew has a word mainly reserved for this divine act: it occurs, for example, in Genesis 1:1,21,27; 2:3-4; Ecclesiastes

12:1; Isaiah 40:26,28; 45:18; Malachi 2:10. So does the Greek, and this word occurs, for example, in Mark 13:19; Romans 1:25; Revelation 4:11; 10:6.

- God made and fashioned all that He brought into existence. He didn’t leave the fashioning of it to chance! Various more general words in Scripture frequently speak of this. See e.g. Psalms 33:6; 74:17; 94:9; 95:6; Zechariah 12:1; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24,26; Revelation 14:7.
- God decreed and laid the foundations of the earth, as many Scriptures confirm (e.g. Job 38:4; Psalm 104:5; Proverbs 8:29; Hebrews 1:10.)
- God is the One on whom all creatures rely for life, practical care and protection. (Psalms 36:5-9; 104:27; 145:15-16; Isaiah 40:26-31; Acts 14:15; 17:24 & 26.)
- And God is the Judge, who demands an answer from all of his creatures. (Genesis 14:19; Romans 14:11-12 [quoting from Isaiah 45:22-23]; Revelation 20:12.)

‘Creator’ is a fundamental name of God in Scripture. Essential attributes of His nature and character are displayed in His creatorial actions.

*‘Creator’ is a
fundamental name of
God in Scripture.
Essential attributes
of His nature and
character are
displayed in His
creatorial actions*

The following examples are worth checking out:

- His eternal nature (Psalm 90:1-2, Revelation 4:8 & 11).
- His omniscience (Job 38; Psalm 33:6 & 9; Isaiah 40:12-14; 25-28).
- His omnipotence (Job 42:1-2).
- His transcendence (Job 37:14ff, esp. 23; Psalm 97:9).
- His sovereignty (Psalm 135:5-7).
- His righteousness (Psalm 97:6).
- His fulness of wisdom and mercy (Psalm 136:1-9).
- His care for His people (Psalm 121:1-2).

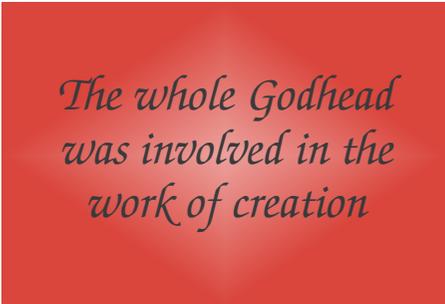
2. Christ and creation

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). But the word translated “God” is *Elohim*, which is a Hebrew plural (in fact denoting more than two). So, in v.26, *Elohim* said, “Let us make man in our image.” The whole Godhead was involved in the work of creation (Ephesians 3:9). But the New Testament teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ was the primary Agent of the Godhead in this work. Each of the three great New-Testament passages delineating the glories of His Person says this:

- *John 1:3* says, concerning “the Word,” that “All things were

made through him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” “The Word,” essentially God and yet a distinct Personality in God, is the One who alone is able to fully declare God (1:1,2,18). “The Word” first expressed God *in creation*. (Psalm 19:1-4 & Romans 1:19-20 confirm that creation is a declaration of God.) When John 3:35 tell us that “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand,” these “all things” include the work of creation, as well the works of redemption and judgment. Whatever the Father wills, the Son is able to carry out to completion.

- *Hebrews 1* presents the greatness of the Son. Verses 1-2 underline the greatness of God speaking “in Son,” and no longer in the Old-Testament prophets, by identifying the Son as the One “through whom also [God] made the worlds” (NKJV).



*The whole Godhead
was involved in the
work of creation*

Verse 3 further states that the Son continuously upholds “all things by the word of his power” – the same “word” by which He brought creation into existence. Then verses 10-12 state that one day “the Son” will dispose of the earth and the heavens by folding them up like a garment. But *He* remains eternally “the Same.”

- *Colossians 1:15-17* begins a flowing description of the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ by declaring His majesty as Creator. He is the Son (cp. v.13), and these verses show His transcendence, as existing before, above and beyond creation, altogether outside of it (esp.v.17). When verse 15 describes Him as “the firstborn of all creation,” “firstborn” carries the non-literal sense of “status in relation to others” (cp Psalm 89:27 & Jeremiah 31:9), and does not contradict verse 17. “Firstborn” sets Him high above and over all of it as its Creator.

The “by him” at the start of verse 16 should read “in Him,” and implies the Lord’s intrinsic power and ability to design, as well as to carry out, the work of creation. He is its Author and its Cause. The rest of the verse declares His involvement in

every aspect of creating – “the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or principalities, or authorities” (Darby Trans.). The last clause of verse 16 should read, “all things have been created through him and unto him”.¹ “Through him” defines Christ as God’s Agent in the every act of creating. “Unto him” signifies that He is the ultimate reason for creation – its goal – and that He answers the question, “Why?” Verse 17 states that “in him all things consist,” and echoes the truths of Hebrews 1:3, 10-12.

3. The Gospel and creation

Why does the gospel need to be proclaimed? Because mankind *should* know God through His creation, and yet has not worshipped Him as God. This is how Paul’s great exposition of the gospel in Romans opens. God’s wrath, he says, is deservedly “revealed... against all ungodliness” (Romans 1:18). Why? Because “what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever

¹ See footnote in the Darby Trans.

since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (1:19-20, ESV). People *choose* to ignore God their Creator, and have “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (1:21-23, 25). Both conscience and commandment (2:15 & 23) witness to the fact that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). But primarily it is the testimony of creation that proves the case against them. We should confidently base our gospel proclamation on this analysis.

Paul did. In Lystra, where the people wished to turn Barnabas and himself into gods, he immediately proclaimed their Creator. “We bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14: 15). He did this again in Athens when he was provoked by the sight of all their idols (Acts 17:16, 22-31). In both places he preached the obligation of every human being to acknowledge and repent towards the Creator.

4. New-Testament teaching and creation

The Creatorship of God, even in its details (Genesis 1-3), is fundamental to many other vital matters of

Christian faith and conduct. For example:

- The universality of sin and death (Romans 5:12).
- Suffering and its solution (Romans 8:19-22; 1 Peter 4:12,19).
- Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 & 35-54).
- Marriage (Mark 10:6).
- Headship (1 Corinthians 11:2-16).
- God’s providential care (Matthew 6:26-30).
- Diet (1 Timothy 4:3-5).

By “wobbling” on the matter of creation, we undermine the Bible’s teaching on these other basics too!

5. Creation and “things to come”

Many Old-Testament writers demonstrate Israel’s specific appreciation, as God’s chosen people, that He is their Creator. For example, “Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psalm 100:3). The immeasurable vastness and fixed order of the creation guarantees Israel’s future new-covenant blessings (Jeremiah 31:35-37). All the prophets project forward to the coming kingdom of Messiah, which will witness a restoration of God’s original creatorial purpose. Of many Scriptures that show this, per-

haps the climax of the books of Psalms does it best. Everything that has breath will praise the LORD! (Psalm 150:6) Psalm 148 explains this “everything” as “everything which God has created.” Psalm 8, the psalm which announces the prophetic intent of the Psalms, starts with a contemplation of Adam’s original dominion over God’s creation before the Fall, but points forward to the millennial reign of the true “Son of man” who will bring harmony back into creation (see verses 4-8 with Hebrews 2:5-9). Then the lion and lamb will lie down together; a revitalised earth will give of its bounty and the desert blossom as a rose; and there will be peace and security for mankind, when each sits under his vine and none makes him afraid. See Isaiah

32:17-18; 35:1 (NKJV); 65:25; Micah 4:4.

The New Testament describes “the world to come” more fully. The “God who created all things” has made known to us the secret of His will, namely, His purpose in the fullness of times to head up all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:9,10, 22; 3:9). God’s right to ultimate and eternal glory from His creation is succinctly summarized in Revelation 4:11, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” And when Christ has, by purchase, been able to take the title deeds to the kingdom (5:7), causing the redeemed in heaven to exclaim,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power...,” *then* John hears “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to



the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!” (5:12-13)

6. Judgment and creation

As already stated, Romans 1:19-20 indicts mankind before the judgment of God for having flouted the witness of creation. Its wilful neglect of God has *already* resulted in His governmental judgment on them, in which He has given them over to the depravity of their sinful ways (1:21-28). Verse 32 concludes that they have qualified themselves for the coming judgment of God, and 2:1-16 elaborates on this.

Adam and Eve failed in the simple test of obedience to their Creator. But under the gospel everyone is also placed under the requirement of obedience – the obedience of *faith*. This is the command of the eternal God (Romans 1:5; 6:17; 16:26). But “faith comes by hearing,” and so in 10:18 Paul asks (rhetorically) whether all have, in fact, heard? Quoting Psalm 19:4,

*Under the gospel
everyone is also placed
under the requirement
of obedience – the
obedience of faith*

that great “gospel of creation in song,” he replies, “Indeed they have, for ‘their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.’” Creation witnesses against them if they claim not to have heard! And yet, God is reluctant to judge. Even in the last hour, just before the awful vial-judgments are executed, He sends his messenger to reiterate the message of creation. “Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water’” (Revelation 14:6-7).

A doxology to the Creator

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?’ ‘Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33-36).

The vein of love in the Letter to the Ephesians

David Ross

The letter to the Ephesians is a worked example of Paul's instruction to Timothy, to "hold fast the pattern of sound words... in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus' (2 Timothy 2:13). This is attractively brought out by this edited address which David Ross [1883 -1949], a much-loved Bible teacher both in this country and in Germany, gave at New Gallery, Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, on 3rd November 1938. It was generously made available by Dr Alastair Durie.

The gold mine

Just before I came out tonight, I read through Ephesians. It took exactly ten minutes, and it was like walking through a gold mine. A light in a gold mine makes one vein of gold gleam, then another. Tonight I propose to follow up a vein of gold in this letter. It is the vein of love.

Some people do not like this epistle. They say it is far too high! They like something "more practical." Actually, my dear friend, if you want something practical, read this letter, because I don't know any other which gives you more practical advice!

The word "love" occurs in it round about twenty-two times. Half of these refer to the love of God, and the other half to your love and mine. Half of the epistle takes us up into the heights, and the other

brings us down to stand on our own two feet. It tells us of the love of God in order that His love might be seen in you and me.

Love's purpose

The first chapter admits us into the Counsel Chambers of eternity; there we see *love's purpose* (Ephesians 1:3-6). Now, if you and I begin to ponder the sovereignty of God – predestination, fore-ordination, etc. – we shall soon get lost. But, as I read the chapter, I find that this wonderful predestination, fore-knowledge, choosing, is not the result of caprice or arbitrariness, as some folks say. It is all the fruit of divine love. What is God's purpose for us? That we should be in Christ "holy and without blame before [God] in love" (1:4, KJV).

Think of that! In Christ before God! The thought of God, the Holy One, makes you tremble, but God's pur-

pose is that you should be absolutely “at home” in His presence, and able to look to Him and say, “Father”! And in order that we might be “at home,” we read that we have been “taken into favour” (1:6, Darby Trans.) – *graced*, if you like. Mary was “favoured” indeed (the only other NT occurrence of this word) to be the mother of the Lord; but you and I are also “favoured” in God’s Beloved, so that the very love with which the Father loves the Son is the love which He has for you and me!

Can you take it in? What are we now? Beloved children, belonging to God’s family – accepted in God’s Beloved. That is what took place in the Counsel Chambers – love’s purpose. I am sure we have often bowed before God in the consciousness of our unworthiness and in the knowledge that we have failed and failed again!

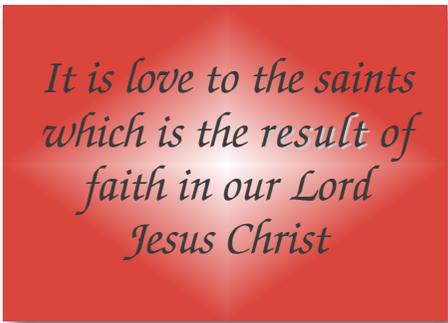
But if we are to understand love’s purpose, there is a condition. When in the second half of the first chap-

ter, Paul prays that they might inwardly understand love’s purpose, his incentive for so praying was two things he had heard about these Ephesians – “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all the saints” (1:15). People often reverse it! They say, “I love the Lord Jesus Christ, but I have not much faith in the saints.” I would say, “Friends, you are putting the horse behind the cart. It is love to the saints which is the *result* of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is no use your saying that you love the Lord if there is no fruit of love in your life.”

However, there is a narrowed-up love that is not Christian love. This is the love of the man who prayed,

“Lord bless me and my wife,
my son John and his wife,
us four,
no more, evermore
Amen”!

Of course our love must begin with our family circle, but it should not stop there. It is love to *all* the saints. Now, don’t run to the other extreme. There is another love which is far too dissipated. You find people who are a perfect nuisance to the others in their home, but most affectionate to those outside. You also find folks making themselves a nuisance to the Christians with whom they associate, and showing an intense love for Christians



*It is love to the saints
which is the result of
faith in our Lord
Jesus Christ*

abroad whom they have *never* seen. It is a kind of sickly sentimentality. Our love is to be a balanced love. You may never have the chance of showing your love to the Christians in China; but you should have a heart wide enough to take both them in, and the circle of Christians to whom you are immediately attached. The kind of love which God desires is a loving sympathy for *all* God's saints. Yes! We want to see a manifestation of it here and now.

Love's plenitude

A famous writer met a Quaker friend and said to him, "I hear you have changed your address. Where are you living now?" And this quaint old Christian replied, "I am living in the epistle to the Ephesians"!

"Plenitude" means "fulness." How many Christians are living in the sense of the fulness of God's love? This is Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. It brings you into something infinitely bigger than yourself – and it gives you the greatest deliverance you can get! What is that? Deliverance from that *big inflated self*, and that *miserable dejected self*! The great ambition of a wonderful man of God in Cambridge, who influenced countless lives, was to know, to comprehend, the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ which passes

*The kind of love
which God desires is a
loving sympathy for
all God's saints*

knowledge. A ministerial friend wrote to him about all his personal and church difficulties, and ended his letter with "etc., etc., etc." The man of God's advice was, "Seek to be able to comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Jesus Christ which passeth all knowledge; and all your 'etc.' will be covered up"!

I like crowded meetings and wide open hillsides. I have just come from a weekend in Manchester, where, on Monday morning, a brother said to me, "Shall we go into Manchester?" I said, "No! Let us get to the lonely places." Perhaps there is a wife here. You have only a two-roomed house, and a great deal of your day is spent in the kitchen and on the details of everyday life. Well, the apostle's prayer is that you might get out into the wide open spaces. A Roman catholic saint once said that this love of God, this sphere of blessing into which we are brought, is as wide as the universe itself – and I don't think even

Professor Jeans¹ can tell us how wide and long the universe is.

The love of God is as long as eternity. Throughout all eternity you will be learning to know the love of Christ which is as deep as the pit out of which the mercy of God has taken you, indeed as deep as the “deep mire, where there is no standing” (Psalm 69:2) where Christ went for love of you. And it is as high as the throne of God. Think of the blessing into which God has brought sinners like you and me! Yes! We can know that which is beyond knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God (Ephesians 3:19)! All the fulness of God is not in us; but we can be filled with it to the fullest extent of our capacity. This is the plenitude, the magnitude of God’s blessing revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord! I am ashamed of being so small, so petty-minded, so narrowed-up in my horizon, when there are these wide-open spaces of the love of God.

Love’s practice

Love’s purpose and *love’s plenitude* motivate us towards *love’s practice*. The practice of love operates in three connections:

¹ J.H.Jeans (1877-1946), British physicist, astronomer and mathematician with a high public profile between the wars.

In relation to individuals. Paul started chapter four by beseeching his readers “that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” I came down to this meeting with a stain on my conscience. Today I was guilty of a little meanness. A sensitive conscience about being worthy of our calling will save us from falling into little meannesses. And, in coming here, you are not meeting perfect people; and they are certainly not meeting perfect people when they meet us. We should exhibit humility in relation to ourselves and meekness in relation to others.

And not only Christians. A lady said to me, “My niece wanted me to ask you how long a Christian should allow herself ‘to be made a mug of.’” The niece was a school-teacher, who felt she was being imposed upon because she was a Christian. I gave the aunt this answer (I’m afraid I don’t always carry it out myself), “The Lord said, ‘Until seventy times seven’” (Matthew 18:22). Whether Christian or unbeliever, we sometimes say, “But so-and-so is an awfully difficult person to get on with.” “Forbearing one another in love,” is what Paul said (Ephesians 4:2). If we could only see how difficult it may be for people to get on with us, then there would be this forbearing, *done in love*.

In relation to the truth of God. And then Paul goes on to speak about “systematised error” (4:14, Darby Trans.). The word in 4:15 should not exactly be “speaking;” it should be “holding the truth in love.” The Christian is to hold the truth in the face of error – but how? In love! You know, that is my grumble with some of these good old teachers who lived a hundred years ago! When it came to controversy they ceased to be gentlemen, let alone Christians! We are to hate the error, but we are to love the one who has gone astray. I was telling some people how in Germany a particular sect called the Millennial Dawnists² are at present being hunted down like wild beasts. Now, personally, I hate that doctrine, but I was shocked when these nice people said that holders of such a heresy merited this judgment.

In relation to the whole church of God. There are some people of the “sloppy” type who are always talking about “showing love,” and then there are others who are all for holding the truth rigidly. But Christianity is a marvellously *balanced* thing. There is no discord between truth and love. In chapter 4 the apostle tells us about the church being a Body, and about all the members being built up together

² Now “Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

The Christian is to hold the truth in the face of error – but how? In love!

(4:16). It is self-edifying! We need to guard against clericalism, brethren! We like eloquent preachers, and thank God for all the gifts, but every member should be exercised, because the whole church is building itself up. And how is it doing that? Which is the spirit permeating the Body? Love!

So, then, we have *love’s practice* – forbearing with difficult individuals; holding the truth against error but in love; and this wonderful love permeating every individual, so that the church is built up.

Love’s pattern

Paul starts chapter 5 with “Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love.” Sometimes when I look in the mirror I see my father’s face, and I get a shock! I wonder if we look like our Father? Nature and company secure assimilation. Are you so in communion with the Father and the Son, that men are startled to see the likeness of the Father? What was the

Love which is not prepared for sacrifice is not worth a snap of the fingers!

proof of that love? “Even as the Christ also loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God...” (5:2). My dear brethren, love which is not *prepared* for sacrifice is not worth a snap of the fingers! The measure is nothing less than the love of Christ towards us, and that is particularly emphasised when we come to the love of Christ for the church (5:25-26). He loved His church and gave Himself for it.

Husbands and wives, fathers and children, masters and servants: you and I are exhorted to translate the truth of God revealed in this epistle

into *practice* in these relationships (5:21 – 6:9), according to the *pattern* of Christ’s love to us and Christ’s love for the church.

The last chapter is a chapter of conflict. But it has a glorious climax! Its last verse can be paraphrased, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in a life that will never end.” “Sincerity” in that verse can be translated “incorruptibility,” and it has the thought of perpetuity.

Oh! brethren, may we be of those for whom Paul wishes this grace! “Life’s little day” is just a short space of time, in which you and I are to be influenced in all its relationships by the unseen and the eternal, and by the mighty purposes of His love which came down into the pit of sin, and lifted us up to take us into its plenitude, so that His love in its purity might be manifested in us who are the pledges of it.

The unexpected opportunity

Ernie Bartlett

On 26th March the CheeringWords calendar text included the words “Blessed are you who sow beside all waters” (Isaiah 32:20). Walking down a road near home that day, I was unexpectedly asked for directions by two separate groups of people. But I didn’t have a tract with me to offer them directions to heaven, in the way that would have been appropriate and courteous in the circumstances. Re-reading this article the next day was therefore a timely experience.[Ed.]

We all have to plan, whether in private life or in assembly life. We have conferences to arrange, speakers to book, meetings to advertise.

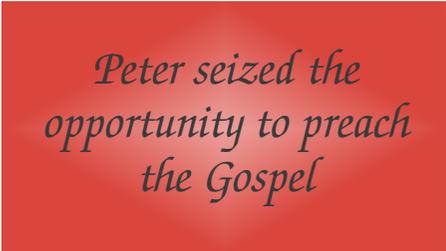
And in New-Testament times, Paul had his plans. He planned his journeys, such as to visit Rome on the way to Spain after first visiting Jerusalem (Romans 15:24-5); and to visit Corinth twice, the first time *en route* to Macedonia, and then back again, *en route* to Judaea (2 Corinthians 1:15-16). He also had fairly fixed “plans of campaign” for the cities he visited with the gospel: he sought out the local synagogue as a springboard for his evangelisation.

But in the early chapters of Acts, it seems as if no such plans were made. After waiting in “the upper room” for “the promise of the Father,” and receiving the Holy Spirit with extraordinary signs attending, Peter did not preach according to some pre-planned schedule, but in reply to the crowd’s amazed question, “What meaneth this?” (Acts 2:12, KJV) His preaching produced another question from the crowd, “What shall we do?” (2:37) Peter used this question to make “the way of salvation” clear to his listeners.

And when Peter and John decided to go to the temple “at the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1), it seems as if they had no other intention in mind.

They would no doubt have asked the Lord to bless their visit, but would not have expected to meet the lame man at the Beautiful Gate. It was from his request, and resultant healing, that Peter seized the opportunity to preach the Gospel. This resulted in their arraignment before the chief priests, and Peter’s powerful, personal gospel witness to them (chapter 4).

In Acts 8:26 Philip had his hands full with pastoring the new converts in Samaria, when the angel of the Lord told him to “Arise and go toward the south...” Reaching the Jerusalem-Gaza road, he soon found himself, under the Spirit’s direction, in conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch, and preaching Jesus to him. In Acts 10:9 Peter is praying in the quiet of a house-top in Joppa without thought of visiting Caesarea. He has a vision instructing him to do something he definitely has never thought of – eating every sort of animal, including the unclean. Repeated three times, the vision is his instruction to make an equally



*Peter seized the
opportunity to preach
the Gospel*

unthought-of visit to a God-fearing Gentile in Caesarea. This led to his opening the door of faith to the Gentiles.

The Lord is able to direct us in the ordinary things of life: when we are out shopping, taking the children to school, taking a stroll in the park or in the country. We may be able to speak a needed gospel word to someone, or be able to help him or her in some way. The Lord often gives us opportunities, and we must hang our heads in shame when we let these chances slip by. Often we speak in the flesh when we should be silent, and are silent when we should say something in the Spirit.

Let me pass on something that happened to me. At the office where I worked I sat opposite a colleague, and from time to time I was able to pass on to him the things of the Lord. Then he retired, being a few years older than me. We still kept in contact by Christmas cards. After I retired, we used to arrange to meet for a meal in a restaurant; by then we lived about seventy miles apart. The last time this happened he asked me again about my faith in Christ. But it was getting late, and I had to get home; so I gave him a tract. The following Christmas I sent my customary card, but didn't receive one in return. I thought this strange, so after a couple of weeks I

tried unsuccessfully to make contact. I was given his brother's phone number, and he told me that my colleague had passed away whilst in a hotel with fellow club members. They had called him to come down to dinner from his bedroom, but found him dead on his bed.

One never knows the results of the tract and of earlier witness, but I do feel that I should have taken time to speak to him on that last occasion. It acts as a warning to us not to miss opportunities to help anyone – just as those mentioned in Acts took their opportunities.

We have to plan, but the striking things about Paul's plans regarding visiting Rome, Spain and Corinth, is that none of them worked out as he expected. And whatever else the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us, it teaches us to be ready for the unexpected, even unwelcome, opportunity.



*The parable of the
Good Samaritan
teaches us to be ready
for the unexpected
opportunity*

Prayer

Source of unlimited and unfailing power

Donald Hill

We never don't need reminders about being real in our prayer lives! Here is some welcome "encouragement of the Scriptures" on this vital topic.

However many electrical appliances you possess, all of them are useless in a power cut. But every believer is able to draw on an unlimited and unfailing source of power. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28: 18 KJV). He also said, "Without me, ye can do nothing" (John 15: 5). The power is there! The resource is there! Am I drawing on it? The means is *prayer*.

"Men [not excluding women!] ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). So the Lord recognised that believers could "faint" on the Christian journey. He went on to illustrate the point in the parable of the widow and the unjust judge. The widow continued to plead her cause when there was no response from the judge. However, because of her persistence, the judge finally intervened on her behalf. This suggests that we need to be both insistent and persistent in our prayer life. Isaiah says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with

wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40: 31).

The Scriptures are full of examples of men and women who prayed specifically about all manner of concerns, received answers, and responded to God in worship. Here are some of them.

A prayer for guidance (Genesis 24:12-14)

Abraham sent his trusted servant (probably the Eliezer of Genesis 15:2) to Mesopotamia to bring back a bride for Isaac his son. Reaching the destination, He stopped by a well. At this point he prayed for guidance. Almost immediately Rebekah appeared, fulfilling all the requests he had made. The ready response from Eliezer was that he bowed his head and worshipped the God who had answered his prayer (24:15-26). Our God is a guidance-giving God. Do we ask for it, and do we respond with "Thank you" when we receive it?

A prayer for confirmation
(Judges 6:36-40)

Gideon's famous "fleece" was not so much a prayer for guidance (as often understood), as a prayer for confirmation – of the daunting calling he had received from God to deliver Israel from the powerful Midianites who had plagued them for seven years (see vv.14-24). Twice God confirmed that Gideon was His appointed leader – once by the dew being on the fleece and the ground around being dry, and once by the opposite. By faith he heeded the confirmation (Hebrews 11:32), and *the Lord* defeated the far stronger Midianites. Our God is a God who confirms His guidance to His feeble people. Do we ask that God will clearly show His will for us?

A prayer in line with the will of
God (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17)

James says that Elijah was a man of like passions to us. He knew what it was to be flush with victory on Mt. Carmel, what it was to be in the

valley of despair when queen Jezebel threatened his life – and all points in between. But he was a man of prayer. He prayed for a drought in the land, and it happened.

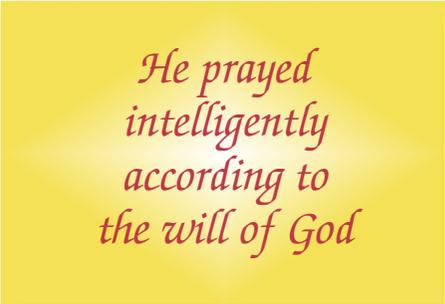
Why was his prayer answered? *Because he prayed intelligently according to the will of God.*

In what way? The early and latter rains were God's reward to Israel *for their obedience*, and drought His punishment for disobedience (Deuteronomy 11:13-17). And, though God had commanded, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3), Ahab and Jezebel had filled Israel with the worship of Baal. Elijah's prayer for drought was therefore in line with the will of God. But, similarly, once he had destroyed the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel and Israel had acknowledged the true God, Elijah could pray for rain. This prayer was also answered (1 Kings 19:41-5).

Many of our prayers have never sought God's mind first about our request! Let us try to be Elijahs!

A "Mayday call"
(Nehemiah 2: 4)

Nehemiah's face betrayed his inner feelings! He had received a most disheartening report about the continuing disrepair of Jerusalem. And so king Artaxerxes asked what was wrong? When Nehemiah



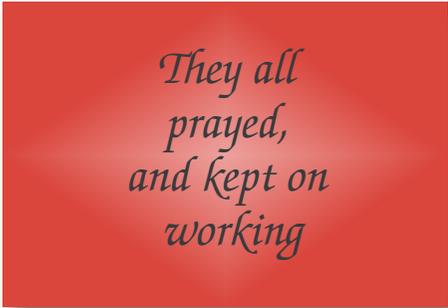
*He prayed
intelligently
according to
the will of God*

explained, the king replied, “For what dost thou make request?” Nehemiah had to answer on the spot! He sent up his “Mayday call.” As a result God caused Artaxerxes to let Nehemiah return to Jerusalem and carry out a rebuilding programme. The king even gave instructions for building timber to be provided (2:8). God answers our Mayday calls!

Nehemiah needed to keep praying, because of the enemies who made threats to himself and his workers during the rebuilding programme. Did he give up? No! they all prayed, and kept on working, with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other (4:4,17). We too must be both workers and warriors. *The whole armour of God* is readily available, as described in Ephesians 6: 13-18; and prayer is an essential part of the armour. The exhortation is, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to... stand... praying with all prayer.”

A cry for help (Jonah 2:1)

Jonah’s prayer was unique! He disobeyed God; he found himself caught up in a violent storm at sea; he admitted to the crew that he was the cause of the problem; and he was thrown overboard. Swallowed by a great fish, he prayed as never before. But he prayed in faith, saying “Salvation is of the Lord” (2:9).



*They all
prayed,
and kept on
working*

The fish spat him out on dry land, and the experience taught him a lesson. “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” We can call upon God in the extreme circumstances of our lives. See Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, 28.

A prayer when provoked (1 Samuel 1:10)

Hannah’s prayer was from her heart! Her husband’s other wife taunted her unmercifully about her childlessness (v.6). She prayed “in bitterness of soul” that God would give her a son, promising that she in turn would give him back for the service of the Lord. Her prayer was answered, and in due time Samuel (meaning, “Asked of God”) was born. He was handed back as a small boy to God, to serve Him in the tabernacle at Shiloh. There he proved to be a faithful servant and prophet of God at a time when the priesthood failed under Eli and his sons.

*We are told to
“watch with
thanksgiving”
when we pray*

And when Hannah handed Samuel back to the LORD, there was a wonderful response from her heart, of rejoicing in God’s salvation (1 Samuel 2:1-10). This was prayer in the Spirit! And *we* are told to pray “in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18).

We are also told to “watch with thanksgiving” when we pray (Colossians 4:2). Do we?

A prayer of confession (Psalm 51)

While David was taking his ease in the palace at Jerusalem, his eyes lighted on fair Bathsheba. Her husband, Uriah, was away in the army fighting Israel’s battles under the generalship of Joab. King David ought to have been at the head of this army! Beware when we are taking our ease, for “Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do.” David stole Uriah’s wife and arranged for Uriah’s death on the battlefield (2 Samuel 11:1-12). God sent the prophet Nathan to call the

king to account. “You are the man!” (12:7, NKJV)

But in Psalm 51, David confesses his sin before God, and requests that the joy of God’s salvation might be restored to him.

We also all fail on our Christian pathway. Perfection alone was found in Jesus, and of Him the Father could say, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Every thought, every word, every action of the Lord Jesus gave delight to God the Father’s heart. But all of Adam’s fallen race are marked by failure. Peter failed, denying His Lord with oaths and curses – and immediately the cock crowed! (Matthew 26:74). But Peter was restored by the shore of Galilee (John 21: 15-17).

Do we, like David, admit when we fail? Do we also “keep short accounts” with God? Do we immediately act on the promise, that “If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”? For what was true for David is true for us: “The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7,9).

United prayer underpinned the apostles’ mission

After receiving the Holy Spirit in power at Pentecost, the disciples

began to carry out “the great commission” of Matthew 28:19. Almost immediately they met opposition. The religious leaders in Jerusalem had them arrested, and commanded them not to preach in the Name of Jesus. But they kept preaching – *and the church prayed* (Acts 4:20, 24). Later on, Herod ordered James to be beheaded, and Peter to be imprisoned, with a view to execution. *But the church was united in ceaseless prayer* (12:5). God sent an angel to rescue Peter from the prison. Do we believe in the power of united, imploring prayer?

In Acts 10: 2,9 we meet a Roman centurion called Cornelius who prayed, and an apostle, Peter, who was praying at the same time. Their prayers met – in the blessing of salvation for Cornelius, his household and friends!

*They kept
preaching – and
the church prayed.
The church was
united in ceaseless
prayer*

If we pray, we too may be part of an unconscious “prayer chain.”

With prayer, the church was growing. In Philippi women were praying at a riverside (16:13). God answered their prayers, and sent Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke to the city with the message of salvation. Lydia and her family were brought into blessing; a gaoler and his family also. A church was planted.

So much can be accomplished by sisters who devote themselves to prayer!

Prayers for the development of believers' faith

Through more than two years' labour by Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:10), and in spite of much opposition, many people abandoned their idol-worship and became servants of the true and living God. Paul didn't forget them when he moved on to work elsewhere. He wrote them a letter – the Epistle to the Ephesians. It contains two prayers showing Paul's concern for their spiritual growth and prosperity.

The first is in Ephesians 1: 15-23. His prayer was that they might know something of the greatness of the person of Christ risen, exalted, glorified, and the Head of His church; and about themselves

being, along with all other believers, His body. The second is in Ephesians 3: 14-21. Here we find Paul on his knees and praying on their behalf, that they might know “the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” This would require the deep work in them described in verses 16-17.

It’s a high standard for our prayers for fellow-believers.

The Lord Jesus – very God, but a dependent man in this world

The four Gospels repeatedly remind us how often the Lord Jesus resorted to prayer (e.g. Luke 11:1). He prayed at His baptism (3: 21); after healing crowds of ill people in Capernaum (Mark 1:35); all night, before choosing the twelve disciples (Luke 6:12); at the graveside of Lazarus (John 11: 41); and in Gethsemane – “Not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:39-46). He also prayed for his disciples because He was soon leaving them (John 17:6-19). And He prayed for *you* in this prayer, as someone who believed, ultimately because of the apostles’ preaching (John 17:20-24).

The lesson to us is in Samuel’s words: “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23).

Consistency in prayer life

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Daniel 6:10, KJV).

The den of lions held no fear for Daniel. His prayer schedule was unaffected. He had implicit trust in His God – the living God. Evil men had plotted for him to be thrown to the lions, but the lions’ Creator closed their mouths. As a result, king Darius, who had been tricked into signing the deadly decree, recognised Daniel’s God as truly the living God, and required all his subjects throughout his wide empire to revere Daniel’s God. What a testimony through a man who had been taken captive as a youth to Babylon, but remained faithful in prayer for the remainder of his days!



The Dispensation of Conscience alone

Humanity from the Fall to the Flood

Theo Balderston.

The various dispensations of God's dealings with mankind have proved, under diverse regimes of testing, its total failure to meet His glorious standards. The epoch from the Fall to the Flood demonstrated what happened when mankind was left to its own devices.

Anarchy!

The period from the Fall to the Flood is the only epoch of human history up till now to end in universal judgment. In that epoch, very clearly, the whole of humanity was tried in the balances – and found wanting.

The defining distinction between the epoch before the Flood and the long epoch after it is the *absence of government* in the former, and the *existence of government* in the latter. In every age, the primary purpose of government is the forcible, societal restraint of wrong. This was divinely instituted in Genesis 9:6, when God decreed the death penalty for murderers; but not earlier.

Restraint of wrong becomes relevant when wrong has occurred. This happened when Cain murdered his brother. Cain feared that every man he met would try to avenge Abel's murder, since every man would be

Abel's relative (4:14¹). The impulse for family-revenge is a very strong one: we regularly see it in people commenting outside lawcourts on the sentencing of their relatives' murderers. But God put a mark on Cain (or perhaps, appointed a sign for him) that deterred them from attacking him. Certainly, God punished Cain himself, by causing the (cursed) ground to curse *him*, and no longer yield to his toil the produce which he had brought as his unacceptable gift. Instead of being a farmer, he would be a fugitive on the earth, banished from the face of God (4:12,16).

But God instituted a world order without *human* penalty for crime or sin. He put *nothing* in the place of the revenge He had forbidden. Attempts of commentators to

¹ In references in this article that do not state the book of the Bible, Genesis is intended.

explain why Cain was spared the death penalty, by calling his crime unpremeditated manslaughter, are feeble and fall foul of 1 John 3:12. This was to be a society without *external restraint* – a divinely instituted anarchy.

Conscience the only control

Furthermore, in this initial testing of fallen man, God gave no *external instructions* as to what the wrongs were that man was to avoid – other than through His punishment of Cain. This epoch was not one of *training*, but of *testing*. He gave no law (Romans 5:12-13). However God *had* inscribed inwardly on every human heart and conscience a moral sense, as Paul explains in Romans 2:14-15. People have in their consciences a witness by which they *ought* to be able to “by nature do the things contained in the law,” and to “show the work of the law written in their hearts” (NKJV).

This was therefore a regime of *conscience alone*. Conscience has been a

God had inscribed inwardly on every human heart and conscience a moral sense

vital element of God’s government of the world ever since; in this sense the “dispensation of conscience” continues until now. But as a regime of “conscience alone,” the era between the Fall and Flood was unique. How would mankind shape out under it?

Badly. As already stated, the regime that began when Adam and Eve left Eden had scarcely got going when Cain murdered his brother. Cain’s surly answer to the LORD – “Am I my brother’s keeper” (4:9) – shows that he knew he had done wrong even though he had never heard of the sixth commandment. But it also shows that he had no intention of admitting it.

Cain and his descendants did not improve with keeping. Cain did not submit to his punishment. Defying his sentence of vagabondage, he built a city to give his descendants a settled place on the earth. His descendants could live comfortably without the presence of the LORD (4:16). One of them, Lamech, ignored the example of Adam and Eve, and took two wives. He swaggered that God would afford him even more protection from revenge attacks for his murderous crime than He had afforded Cain. “If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-seven fold” (4:24; cp.v.15). The inheritance of a

sinful nature, that Cain had angrily refused to acknowledge when his gift was rejected, was all too obvious in Lamech. And whereas God had meted out direct punishment to Cain, He did not do even this to Lamech.

But how about Seth's family? The knowledge of God was in some sense in the family: for in Seth's time "men began to call on the name of the LORD" (4:26). But, sadly, so was something more deep-rooted: Seth was born in the image of his fallen father, Adam (5:3). No doubt Abel and Cain also inherited that fallen image; but the former had no descendants, and the latter's descendants evidently perished at the Flood. This image of corruption is mentioned specifically with Seth to show that it marks us all: all of us are Seth's descendants.

By the time of Genesis 6 the absence of any sanction against Lamech had shown fallen humanity what it could "get away with." Any moral difference between the line of Seth and the line of Cain was now obliterated, for we read (v.5), that "the LORD saw the wickedness of man." This condemns Seth's as well as Cain's line. It teaches, so early, the vital lesson, that "those who believe in His name... are born, not of [lit.] bloods... but of God" (John 1:12-13). We are not children of God

*Today humanity
proudly obliterates
certain creatorial
boundaries as
a mark of its revolt
against the divinely
prescribed rules*

because we belong to a particular tribe.

The statement that "the LORD saw the wickedness of man" comes specifically after the curious account of the mating of the "sons of God," who were probably fallen angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), with human women. This act flagrantly transgressed the divinely ordained creatorial boundaries. And whilst the angels seem to have taken the initiative, there is no hint that the women were unwilling. Today humanity proudly obliterates certain creatorial boundaries as a mark of its revolt against the divinely prescribed rules. If what happened in Genesis 6:1-3 is being compared in Jude 6,7 with the sin of Sodom (as seems to be the intention), this

shows this spirit originated in that dispensation of “conscience alone.”

A time-limited test

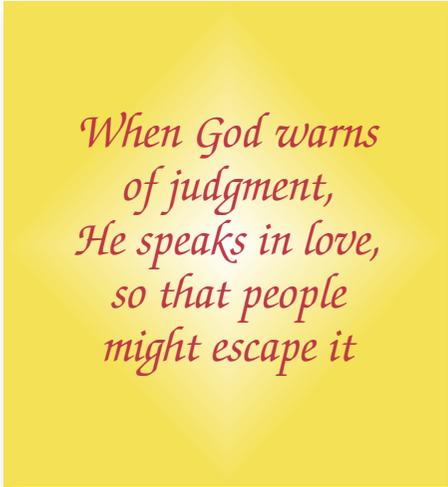
These unnatural unions brought to a head the problem of that dispensation. God had spared the lives of Adam and Eve to have children. Each individual’s career in sin was terminated by death. But every human pair had produced numerous sinners. And there was, after Cain, *no sanction*, human or divine, against sin. So was the grace of God in sparing the sinners of Eden just going to “let sin abound” in ever-worsening profusion? Would a holy God support the existence of such a creation indefinitely? The rest of Genesis 6 answers these questions.

In Genesis 6:3 God reacted to the offence of vv.1-2 against Himself as Creator by a pronouncement which can be read in two ways. *Either* it reads, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” This would mean that both the external witness of God – contained in His dealings in the Garden and with Cain – and His internal witness in human consciences, would not wait indefinitely for man to listen to them. *Or* it reads, “My spirit shall not always abide in man.” This would mean that the gift of life from the divine breath (2:7) would end, and man be exterminated. The period of testing, to demonstrate

how man after the Fall would shape out, was going to end after ten generations (ch.5). The LORD determined to destroy man, for He was sorry that He had made him. And yet, even at that point grace was extended for a defined period. One hundred and twenty years more would be given, it seems, for man to repent (6:3, 6-7). And in that period the voice of God would again, after so long a silence, be heard. Noah would be “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), warning of “the wrath to come.” When God warns of judgment, He speaks in love, so that people might escape it.

But grace before all

But one of God’s main purposes in His dispensational ways has been to demonstrate that the human race can rely on *nothing but grace*. A very



*When God warns
of judgment,
He speaks in love,
so that people
might escape it*

big part of the story has been missed out up to this point. Grace enters the Bible narrative at its beginning. Though Adam and Eve incurred God's death-sentence by eating the forbidden fruit, and were expelled from Eden, God did not end their lives for another nine hundred years or so. He gave them coats of skin instead. He had a future for humanity; He gave Adam and Eve time to have children, who had the opportunity to approach Him. Cain and Abel both attempted this (Genesis 2:17; 3:20-21; 4:1ff).

Abel's was the right way; Cain's the wrong. "The LORD respected Abel and His offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering" (4:4,5). This was initially an instructional, not a condemnatory, moment for Cain (4:6-7). Being a "tiller of the ground," he perhaps naturally brought his crops. But the fact that he was angry, rather than apologetic, when his gift was refused reveals the self-righteousness of his heart. *He* deserved to be accepted, in his opinion. Equally, he never recognised that his parents' exclusion from Eden might affect his right to approach God *now*. He treated the by-gones as by-gones, and brought to God the best of what he could do *as of now*. This is the natural man's reaction to the narrative of the Fall. "Well, if I inherited sin

from my parents and ancestors, God cannot hold me responsible for it."

But when Abel presented the gift he had to hand as a "keeper of sheep," he did not just bring live animals; he offered *dead* animals (or else he could not separately have offered their fat – 4:4). He seems thereby to have connected his own very existence with the deaths involved in those coats of skins. Moreover, he presented "of the *firstlings* of his flock" to God, and "their fat" – which symbolises their excellence.² This showed that by faith he grasped that God had to be *glorified* in respect of the sin that had corrupted His creation, and that the death of a *perfect* creature was the nearest he could approximate to this glorification. Faith intuitively grasps this truth: to unbelief it is baffling. Abel had that faith. His sacrifice pointed on to the only sacrifice which *fully* glorified God, the death of "God's Lamb" (John 1:29; 17:4).

Moreover Hebrews 11:6 implies that Abel believed that God "is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Abel asked for *blessing* by offering a sacrifice that sought to glorify God in respect of sin! What

² For this symbolism, see Leviticus 17:6, and the metaphorical use of the relevant Hebrew word for "fat" in Numbers 18:12, Psalm 81:16, etc.

blessing did he expect? We only know what he received. He was accepted by God (4:4). He had “peace with God.” Christ, who was “set forth as a propitiation” to demonstrate God’s righteousness in respect of sins committed before the cross, made peace for him (Romans 3:25). And thus, by accepting Abel’s sacrifice *and Abel’s person* (4:4), God revealed, at the very start of His dispensational dealings, that there is a way, but only *one* way, by which sinners can return to Him.

Even in that remote epoch, the “one way of salvation” *did* bring some men and women into relationship to a holy God. As already stated, from the time that Seth’s firstborn arrived, “men began to call on the name of the LORD” (4:26). Some of them must have done this “out of a pure heart.” “Enosh” means “frail”; and perhaps when Seth saw his own image stamped on his baby son he realised the fallenness of man and was “saved,” as we should say.

And grace after all

The “dispensation” in which the conduct of humanity was regulated only by conscience began with murder, and developed into a world filled with violence (6:11). It began with a man, Cain, who refused to recognise the fact of the Fall, and developed into a humanity where every intent of the thoughts of the

heart was only evil continually (6:5). The regime of anarchy exposed the human *heart* – as “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). “Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD” (Isaiah 26:10). The history of mankind from the Fall to the Flood completely exemplifies this verse.

The dispensation without government and of the greatest tolerance of sin ended with the greatest judgment (to date). But God had more in His heart than demonstrating the truth of Isaiah 26:9-11. Therefore one man “found *grace* in the eyes of the LORD” (6:8) – Noah. God had Christ in view, as the true meaning of Abel’s sacrifice. For this, one family needed to survive.

God revealed, at the very start of His dispensational dealings, that there is a way, but only one way, by which sinners can return to Him

Written by the late Ron Mahers and now back in print
in an attractive new pocket-sized format from Scripture
Truth Publications:

What Does The Bible Teach?

16 pages; ISBN: 978-0-901860-89-7; published 31 March 2009

A6 (105mm wide x 148.5mm high) pocket-sized paperback

This little tract is designed as an evangelistic tool when working with Jehovah's Witnesses. Have one ready to hand out when that knock comes at the door.

Their Bible study textbook is entitled "What Does The Bible Really Teach?", but a close examination of the Bible itself reveals that what *it* truly teaches is significantly at odds with *their* textbook's explanations.

Addressed to a Jehovah's Witness, this booklet compares and contrasts the teaching they receive with that of the Bible in relation to: who Jesus really is, what Jesus has done and will do, and what the future holds for the Christian. Writing in a polite, clear style, the author challenges the Jehovah's Witness reader to take up the Bible without prejudice, examine what it truly says on these vital issues and consider the consequences of accepting or rejecting the truth of its words.

The booklet's sections cover: The Deity of Christ; The Death of Christ; The Lord's Resurrection; The Triune God and The Person of The Holy Spirit; Eternal Punishment and Annihilation; The Return of Christ; What is Your Hope?; What is The Christian's Hope?

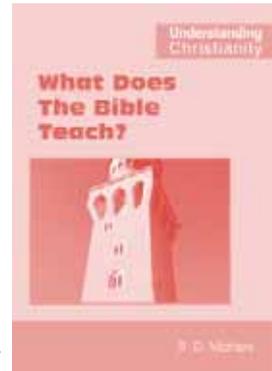
Special prices:

R.R.P. 60p each; **STP retail: 50p each**

Keep a few handy by the door! Multiple purchases:

Packs of 10 for £4.50; Packs of 100 for £40.00

The above prices exclude postage and packing,
which will be added to your invoice.



This, this is the God we adore

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams...” (Deuteronomy 13:1).

No prophet, nor dreamer of dreams,
no master of plausible speech,
to live like an angel who seems,
or like an apostle to preach;
no temptor, without or within,
no spirit, tho' ever so bright,
that comes crying out against sin,
and looks like an angel of light;

tho' reason, though fitness he urge,
or plead with the words of a friend,
or wonders of argument forge,
or deep revelations pretend,
should meet with a moment's regard,
but rather be boldly withstood,
if anything, easy or hard,
he teach, save the Lamb and His Blood.

But what says our Shepherd divine?
(for His blessed Word we should keep)
“This flock has My Father made Mine:
I lay down My life for My sheep.
'Tis life everlasting I give:
My Blood was the price that it cost,
not one that on Me shall believe
shall ever be finally lost.”

This, this is the God we adore,
our faithful, unchangeable Friend,
whose love is as large as His power,
and neither know measure nor end.
'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
whose Spirit shall guide us safe home.
we'll praise Him for all that is past,
and trust Him for all that's to come.

From *Hymns composed on various subjects by the Rev. Joseph Hart* [1759?]. New Edition, 1820.