

Prepare *the* Way

Issue No. 129

PREPARING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST FOR THE RETURN OF CHRIST



Peter Pollock:
**God is
sovereign**

**Should
Christians
support
Israel?**

**The glory
of Christ
beheld**

**The rage of
my enemies**

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Watch!

by J. C. Ryle

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come (Matthew 24:42).”

WATCH against the leaven of false doctrine. Remember that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. Remember that counterfeit money is never marked bad, or else it would never pass.

Be very jealous for the whole truth as it is in Jesus. Do not put up with a grain of error merely for the sake of a pound of truth. Do not tolerate a little false doctrine one bit more than you would tolerate a little sin. **WATCH AND PRAY!** (Matthew 16:12).

WATCH against slothfulness about Bible study and private prayer. There is nothing so spiritual but we may at last do it formally. Most backslidings began in the closet. When a tree is snapped in two by a high wind, we generally find there had been some hidden decay. **WATCH AND PRAY!** (Matthew 26:41; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20).

WATCH against bitterness and uncharitableness toward others. A little love is more valuable than many gifts. Be eagle-eyed in seeing the good that is in your brethren and dim-sighted as the mole about evil. Let your memory be a strong box for their graces, but a sieve for their faults. **WATCH AND PRAY!** (Ephesians 4:31-32; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 3; Proverbs 10:12).

WATCH against pride and self-conceit. Peter said at first, “Although all shall be offended, yet will not I... I will not deny Thee in any wise (Mark 14:29-31).” Presently he fell. Pride is the high road to fall. **WATCH AND PRAY!**

WATCH against the sins of Galatia, Ephesus and Laodicea. Believers may run well for a season and lose their first love, and then become lukewarm. **WATCH AND PRAY!** (Revelation 2 and 3).

WATCH not least against the sin of Jehu. A man may have great zeal to all appearance, and yet have very bad motives. It is quite another thing to love the truth. **WATCH AND PRAY!** (2 Kings 9).

Let us watch for the world's sake. We are the books they chiefly read. They mark our ways far more than we think. Let us aim to be living epistles of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:2&3).

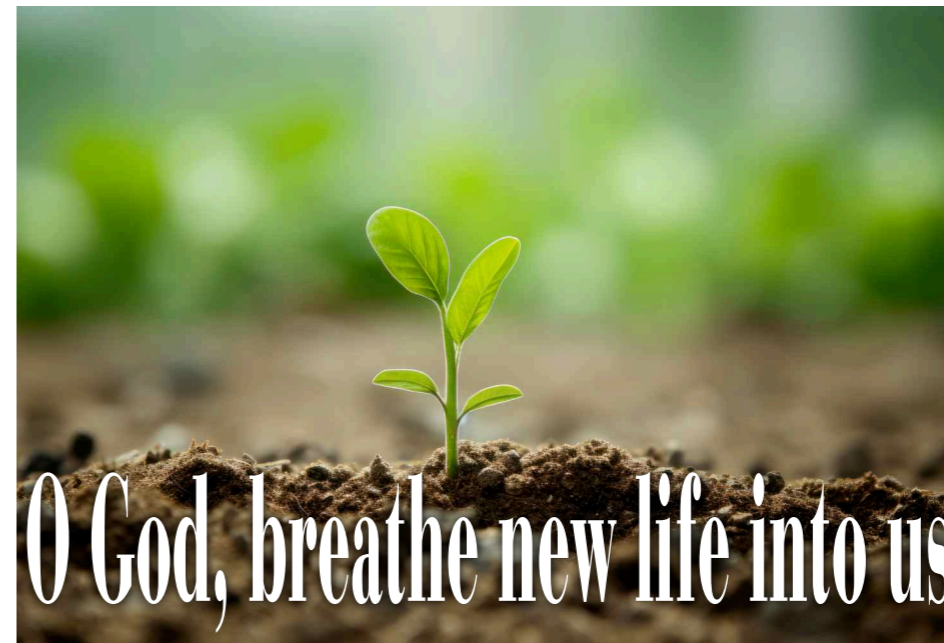
Let us watch for our own sakes. As our walk is, so will be our peace.

Above all, let us watch for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Let us live as though His glory was concerned in our behaviour. Let us live as though every slip and fall was a reflection on the honour of our Lord. Let us live as though every allowed sin was one more thorn in His head – one more nail in His feet (Jude 20, 21; Colossians 3:17).

O, let us exercise godly jealousy over thoughts, words and actions, over motives, manners and walk! Never, never let us fear being too strict. Never, never let us think we can watch too much. “None of us is more than half awake!” (1 Peter 1:15; Colossians 3:1; Romans 14:12).



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by W. C. Moore

A MIGHTY revival in the midst of impossible surroundings, and with the most unlikely material to work with – this is the picture given in the form of a parable in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel (verses 1-14).

In Isaiah 55:8 God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways;” “God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty (1 Corinthians 1:27);” “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God (Luke 18:27).”

All these facts are illustrated in Ezekiel's revival in a graveyard.

Men have a very important part to play in connection with the bringing in of a great spiritual awakening, but the awakening itself, the revival in its essence, is the work of God. “And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves (Ezekiel 37:13).”

The prophet is not told to imagine that conditions are not so bad after all. No! Ezekiel is set down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. He was caused to pass by them round about.

There were many bones in the open valley and they were very dry. The less likelihood there is for having a revival from a natural standpoint – so much the more glory shall come to the name of the Lord as He overrules all conditions and pours out His Spirit in life-giving, reviving power.

The Lord asks Ezekiel what he thinks about the situation: “Son of man, can these bones live?” The prophet kept his eyes on God and put the question up to Him: “O Lord God, You know (Ezekiel 37:3).”

It was then that the mighty Spirit of God began to operate through the obedient servant. Ezekiel is told to prophesy upon the bones, and as he carries out his orders, there is a shaking, a uniting, a coming together of bone to his bone.

Flesh and sinews were formed but as yet no breath was in them. Step by step the Almighty was getting things underway for this mighty revival in the nation of Israel.

A great company of dead people

Continuously must the prophet look to the Lord for directions. Here Ezekiel has on his hands a great company of dead people. They were not looking quite so impossible as had the dry, scattered bones – but in effect they were just as useless, just as absolutely lifeless.

The machinery of revival was here working – but there was more, much more yet to be done.

God had set the prophet out there for a purpose. That purpose was that a revival should materialise. And so we find that when Ezekiel needed further orders, and as he kept looking to God, the orders came: “Prophesy to the wind, and say to the wind, thus says the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain,

that they may live (verse 9).”

The prophet obeyed this peculiar command – and the mighty awakening, the heaven-sent revival was on: “So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army (Ezekiel 37:10).” This was the revival among a nation who were saying, “Our hope is lost (verse 11).”

A mighty harvest of souls

God is calling today for a group of people who will stand in the gap that the Spirit of the Lord may move through them and “an exceeding great army” of Christians may be put on the field for these last days to gather in the mighty harvest of souls before the harvest days are over forever.

Do we sometimes feel that God has set us in a graveyard – in a valley of very dry bones? Well, that is the proper setting for a most glorious revival if we will believe and obey God. Jesus says distinctly, “According to your faith be it unto you (Matthew 9:29).” In a Philippian jail at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God – and a revival started right there. The harder the situation, the more impossible the conditions from a human standpoint – so much the more need of revival.

Let us in these days *believe* God to send a mighty flood tide of resurrection power flooding into the church that from valleys of very dry bones, spiritually speaking, shall come forth armies of Christian soldiers, overcoming by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and winning sheaves to lay at the nail-pierced feet of Jesus, the blessed Son of God.

The time is short! Let us unite in faith that the Spirit of God shall be speedily outpoured in revival power. “It is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you (Hosea 10:12).”

Oh, for a mighty crying out to God day and night until He answers!

Jesus says, “And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily (Luke 18:7&8)...”



God is sovereign

by Peter Pollock

NOT children of the Flesh but of the Promise. The Older shall serve the Younger. Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated. Oh man, who are you to reply against God? Does not the Potter have power over the clay?

These are all powerful and profound statements of God, as listed by Paul in Romans 9:6-20. And a summing up would be verse 15, where God said to Moses “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whomsoever I will have compassion.”

The simple bottom line: If God says so, it is so.

And it is NOT up for debate or analysis. God is sovereign! It does not depend on man’s will or his efforts. Who are we to question God, His discipline, His judgement, His Love or His compassion?

It is not up for discussion. It is not on the agenda. It is so, and it’s something the Bible highlights from beginning to end – and it does not appeal to mankind!

In this passage from Romans, Paul is not silencing questioning but he is speaking to impenitent, God-defying people who want to make God answerable to man.

The intellect is a gift God gave to man, but intellectualism is when man attempts to make God answer to our selfish reasoning. Jesus always had a

problem with the Pharisees for that reason – they were hypocrites in believing themselves to be so wise.

Scripture promises “they had become fools.” Indeed, thinking ourselves so wise in terms of what we regard as wisdom, we have become fools in terms of true spiritual wisdom. We play around with the meaning of words – semantics – as we try to justify ourselves and our sinful pride.

Even in the understanding of the word “compassion” we have conveniently concluded that it’s a sort of doting father’s love that God has for mankind. Compassion defined by the dictionary is sympathy, pity and concern for others. Most certainly it’s not a doting father, a compromiser or a sin-tolerator!

“They defame God by their attitude, arrogance and the questions they ask.” That’s Paul’s inflection here, suggesting that the motive for their questions and queries is self-justifying and God-erasing.

Moral and ethical chaos

And, sadly, this attitude is rife in the modern church. It’s subtle the way it has crept in, and even leaders are unknowingly become promoters of this unacceptable attitude. It’s a huge problem and a massive deception – all part of the end times and the moral and ethical chaos that is going to prevail.

Romans 11:33: “How unsearchable His judgement, how unfathomable His ways.” That means that they are unsearchable and unfathomable. They

are past finding out!

Isaiah 8: 9: Your thoughts, my thoughts... Your ways, my ways... As heaven is above the earth are Gods ways so far, far beyond our ways. When are we going to finally believe, teach, preach and accept that. The sovereignty of God!

Let’s take a look at Job. God boasted about Job’s testimony to the devil. The devil responded that it was only because God had blessed him so materially. So, God allowed Job to be struck materially and his family physically.

Along came the counsellors, and they did their most profound work when, for the first seven days, they kept quiet. Then they erupted with chapters and chapters of advice whose origin God questioned. Job had not got into trouble because of anything he had done.

In fact, it was God’s decision to hand him over, so one might have expected an apology or even an explanation. But nothing. Just Job, who are you? And what do you know? Nothing. He knew nothing.

And Job even repented for thinking that he knew something. Job was only the richest, wisest most successful man on earth. What a revelation!

“Where can wisdom be found. Where is the place of understanding. Man does not know its value. Nor is it found in the land of the living (Job 28:12&13).” “He stands alone... Who can oppose Him... He does whatever He pleases (Job 23:13).”

God is sovereign. God is supreme. God is ultimate. And for that reason, He hates pharisee hypocrisy and arrogance.

A famous evangelist said: “You don’t have to understand, you only have to hold His hand.” Mother Teresa said: “You will never know that Jesus is all you need until Jesus Christ is all you’ve got.”

The declaring of truth

God declares His truth. God does not submit His truth to leaders and elders, for them to consider and debate and fit it into cultures, philosophies and value systems. God submits His truth to be listened to, heard and obeyed.

Habakkuk came to God distraught at what was going on all around him – such wretchedness and evil. God’s response? “Habakkuk, you ain’t seen nothing yet.” The prophet was God-smacked.

“When I heard, my body trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered my bones and I trembled in myself.” An awesome, sovereign God had spoken and been heard. And produced an outstanding statement of faith. No figs. No grapes. No olives. No Cattle. No sheep. Yes, no nothing! Yet will I praise the Lord.

Joseph was thrown into a pit, slavery and jail (for three years at least) – and the bottom line was that a sovereign God had sent him to open the way into Egypt for His people.

No explanations. Not even any invitations. And no discussions. God ordained so, and it became so!

John the Baptist lost his head. Sent as a herald for Jesus Christ, his work was done, he had told the people to behold the lamb of God, that he must decrease so that Jesus might increase, and then affirmed that he was not even worthy to tie the Lord’s shoelaces. Then off he went in the most inglorious of ways – beheaded!

God is sovereign. He is control and He has not lost charge for a single second. God makes all things turn out to the good for those who love Him. God knows what He is doing and needs to be trusted implicitly, even when you don’t understand.

God cannot, and must not, be denied or refuted, disdained or ignored in any

shape or form or to any degree. It all has severe consequences, whether we want to believe it or not.

Everybody one day will stand before God on this truth – the truth being that while we are here on earth there was only one issue of any importance or eternal consequence – and that is God. And the only access to Him is His Son Jesus the Christ!

God’s sovereignty is an absolute doctrinal truth. It all started out with Abraham, called out from his land and family. He believed, and it was counted to him as righteousness. He became the Father of all believers, and we became the children of the promise, the only true children of God.

God’s children are not of the flesh or of man’s will, but “born from above” by the spiritual hand of Almighty God. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – that’s the line of our spiritual heritage.

Isaac was born of a barren mother, Sarah, and his birth was foretold. Jacob also had a barren mother, Rebecca – and twins were prophesied with “the older to serve the younger,” which all had to do with birthrights. Joseph had a barren mother, Rachel, and scripture also records that Samuel, Samson, and John the Baptist also all had barren mothers.

Their births were also foretold, just underlining God’s mighty sovereign Hand.

The Bible is, in fact, the “Revelation” of God Himself. Jesus often reminds us that He came to reveal His Father – the major purpose of His trip.

Even on the other side – the wrong side – God is there! We read all about Hagar and Ishmael, man’s effort as the slave wife produces the “flesh” children and there were promises and prophecies

The prophecy over Ishmael: “You are now with child and you will have a son. Name him Ishmael. He will be a wild donkey of a man and his hand will be against everyone’s hand and everyone’s hand will be against him. He will live in hostility towards his brothers Genesis 16:11&12.” Later Hagar was sobbing “Don’t be afraid, God has heard. I will make him into a great nation (Genesis 21:17&18).”

Sovereign God was there. The blessing of worldly wealth lay before them –

because there was oil below. A Moslem faith awaited them. It was a flesh faith, a law of their own!

“If you will bow down and worship me, I will give you the world...” A promise Satan made to Jesus that’s always available and accessible to those who will bow down and worship the devil in the splendour of this world!

Look and see, it’s all around. In the splendour of the world, the “god of this age” gave us the best World Cup Soccer event ever...

Jacob I love, Esau I hate – that truly stamps God in His sovereignty and awesomeness!

God knew when twins Jacob and Esau were born, the paths they would choose. He knew there would be no repentance, just remorse, by Esau and that he would count for nothing his birthright.

No matter what he does


And in Malachi, Awesome God says that it doesn’t matter what Esau does – he will remain a testimony of His judgement.

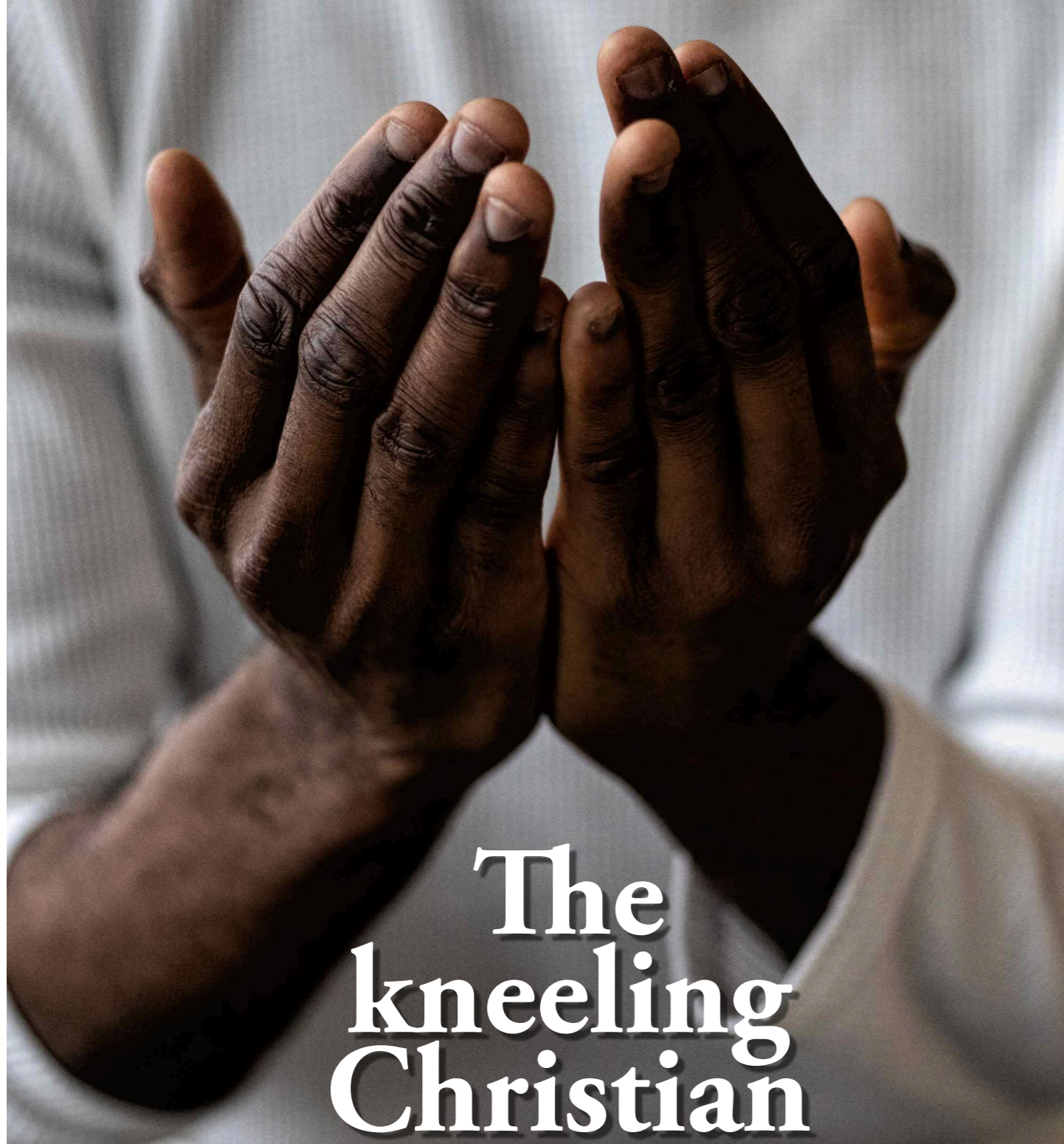
God is the potter, we are the clay. We are all different – looks, thoughts, perceptions, talents and fingerprints – but by the Holy Spirit there is a unity in that diversity.

Human unity comes through agreement and common cause, but the unity that is in the Spirit declares is the fruit of changed lives.

God didn’t make us robots. God calls, He cleanses, redeems, designates, prepares and sanctifies by the Holy Spirit! All by His grace and His grace alone, because we earn and deserve absolutely nothing.

Finally, concerning God’s sovereignty, it is vital to know that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, as stated in Proverbs 9:10. And that this “fear” is only possible as a true fruit of the Holy Spirit, and is *only* possible through the Holy Spirit.

The man without the Spirit will not understand and cannot understand. God has ordained it so. And doesn’t it make sense that if God has created everything, He has made it impossible to find peace and fulfilment any other way but *His* way – Jesus Christ? 



The kneeling Christian

Everything Depends upon Prayer

Why are many Christians so often defeated? Because they pray so little. Why are many church workers so often discouraged and disheartened? Because they pray so little.

Why do most men see so few brought “out of darkness to light” by their ministry? Because they pray so little.

Why are not our churches simply on fire for God? Because there is so little real prayer.

The Lord Jesus is as powerful today as ever before. The Lord Jesus is as anxious for men to be saved as ever before. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save: but He cannot stretch forth His arm unless we pray more – and more really.

We may be assured of this – the secret of all failure is our failure in secret prayer.

Prayer Is Omnipotent

Do we realise that there is nothing the devil dreads so much as prayer?

His great concern is to keep us from praying. He loves to see us “up to our eyes” in work provided we do not pray. He does not fear because we are eager and earnest Bible students – provided we are little in prayer.

Someone has wisely said, “Satan laughs at our toiling, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.” All this is so familiar to us, but do we really pray? If not, then failure must dog our footsteps, whatever signs of apparent success there may be.

Let us never forget that the greatest thing we can do for God or for man is to pray. For we can accomplish far

more by our prayers than by our work. Prayer is omnipotent; it can do anything that God can do!

When we pray, God works.

All fruitfulness in service is the outcome of prayer – of the worker’s prayers, or of those who are holding up holy hands on his behalf. We all know how to pray, but perhaps many of us need to cry as the disciples did of old, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

It would seem an undoubted fact that with God’s saints in all ages nights of prayer with God have been followed by days of power with men.

Nothing Effective Without Prayer

We may rest fully assured of this – man’s influence in the world can be gauged not by his eloquence, or his zeal, or his orthodoxy, or his energy, but by his prayers. Yes, and we will go farther and maintain that no man can live aright who does not pray aright.

We may work for Christ from morn till night; we may spend much time in Bible study; we may be most earnest and faithful and “acceptable” in our preaching and in our individual dealing, but none of these things can be truly effective unless we are much in prayer.

We shall only be full of good works; and not “bearing fruit in every good work (Colossians 1:10).” To be little with God in prayer is to be little for God in service. Much secret prayer means much public power. Yet is it not a fact that whilst our organising is well-nigh perfect, our agonising in prayer is well-nigh lost?

Men are wondering why revival delays its coming. There is only one thing that can delay it, and that is lack of prayer. All revivals have been the outcome of prayer.

God wants me to pray, to be much in prayer because all success in spiritual work is dependent on prayer.

True Prayer Seeks God Himself

What do we mean by prayer? I

believe the vast majority of Christians would say, “Prayer is asking things from God.” But surely prayer is much more than merely “getting God to run our errands for us,” as someone puts it. It is a higher thing than the beggar knocking at the rich man’s door.

All that true prayer seeks is God Himself – for with Him we get all we need. Prayer is simply “the turning of the soul to God.” David describes it as the lifting up of the living soul to the living God. “Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul (Psalm 25:1).” What a beautiful description of prayer that is!

When we desire the Lord Jesus to behold our souls, we also desire that the beauty of holiness may be upon us. When we lift up our souls to God in prayer it gives God an opportunity to do what He will in us and with us. It is putting ourselves at God’s disposal. God is always on our side, but we are not always on His side. When man prays, it is God’s opportunity.

“Prayer,” said an old Jewish mystic, “is the moment when heaven and earth kiss each other.”

Prayer, then, is certainly not persuading God to do what we want Him to do. It is not bending the will of a reluctant God to our will. It does not change His purpose, although it may release His power.

“We must not conceive of prayer as overcoming God’s reluctance,” says Archbishop Trench, “but as laying hold of His highest willingness.”

Concentrate on God

There is no doubt whatever that the devil opposes our approach to God in prayer, and does all he can to prevent the prayer of faith. His chief way of hindering us is to try to fill our minds with the thought of our needs, so that they shall not be occupied with thoughts of God, our loving Father, to whom we pray. He wants us to think more of the gift than of the Giver. The Holy Spirit leads us to pray for a brother. We get as far as “O God, bless my brother” – and away go our thoughts to the brother, and his

affairs, and his difficulties, his hopes and his fears, and away goes prayer!

How hard the devil makes it for us to concentrate our thoughts upon God! This is why we urge people to get a realisation of the glory of God, and the power of God, and the presence of God, before offering up any petition.

Agonising in Prayer

I question if any believer can have the burden of souls upon him – a passion for souls – and not agonise in prayer.


Can we help crying out, like John Knox, “O God, give me Scotland or I die?”

Here again the Bible helps us. Was there no travail of soul and agonising in prayer when Moses cried out to God, “O this people have sinned a great sin, and have made gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book (Exodus 32:32)?”

We may, at all events, be quite sure that our Lord, who wept over Jerusalem, and who “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears (Hebrews 5:7),” will not be grieved if He sees us weeping over erring ones. Nay, will it not rather gladden His heart to see us agonising over the sin which grieves Him? In fact, may not the paucity of conversions in so many a ministry be due to lack of agonising in prayer?

In Jesus’ Name

To pray “in His name” is to pray in His character, as His representative sent by Him: it is to pray by His Spirit and according to His will; to have His approval in our asking, to seek what He seeks, to ask help to do what He Himself would wish to be done, and to desire to do it not for our own glory alone.

To pray in His name we must have identity of interests and purpose. Self and its aims and desires must be entirely controlled by the Holy Spirit, so that our wills are in complete harmony with Christ’s will. 



by A. B. Simpson (1843-1919)

IN a post-resurrection appearance to His disciples, Jesus asked Peter a pointed question that suggests and recalls Peter's failure on the night of our Lord's betrayal:

"Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me more than these?... And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You (John 21:15, 17)."

It was suggestive and significant that Christ should have to ask him at all, "Do you love Me?" There is nothing that more keenly wounds than to have our friends doubt our loyalty and affection. Then the form of the question was emphatic, for Christ asked Peter three times, in evident allusion to his threefold denial.

And so He is asking us this question in the light of our failures. Not harshly, but with exquisite tenderness does He remind us of our unfaithfulness and presses home the question again and

again until it reaches the very core of our conscience and heart.

After all, have not our failures been chiefly failures of love? Is not this the supreme test of life and character, and may not all our faults and failures be resolved into a lack of love to Jesus Christ, a spirit of selfishness, a consideration for something less than the supreme claims of His love and His will?

How often has He forgiven us?

And yet our very failures are but the occasions that should make us love Him more. How often He has forgiven us, how long He has forborne with us, how patiently He has waited for us to learn the lessons He has sought to teach us, and to rise to meet His thought and will by the memory of His own suffering and infinite mercy, by the love that has covered all our imperfections and loved through all our ingratitude, inconsiderateness and nothingness.

This is Who is asking us today, "Do you love Me?"

This question suggests His claim upon our love. This great "ME" stands before us with the right to claim our supreme devotion.

He is the only One who can speak of Himself without being egotistical and can present His claims to our affection without a display of exaggeration. How much He is, and how much He is to us, He who left His Father's throne and stooped to the lowest place, descending even to the shame and agony of the Cross "for love of you!"

He who thought of you and died for you before your being began; He who created you and called you to know Him and to receive His grace; He who has taught you, led you, loved you, so often delivered, so often restored you, brought you into all the fullness of His blessing, given you the treasures of His grace, come to live within your heart, healed your diseases, and your pains,

sustained your sorrows; and He who today is preparing for you the unspeakable riches of His glory, and honouring you with the partnership of His service and His kingdom... He it is who asks you, "Do you love Me?"

He who is the beautiful, the glorious, the perfect, the altogether lovely. Oh, why should He have to ask of any to whom He has made known His glory and His grace, "Do you love Me?"

Why should He have to ask of you, whom He has brought into His more intimate fellowship and to whom He has made known the very secrets of His love, "Do you love Me?"

It would almost break our hearts

Little wonder that it would almost break our hearts, as it did Peter's to have Him ask the question, "My precious child, do you love Me?"

"Do you love Me more than these?" This question suggests the things that compete with His claims and divide our hearts from His supreme love.

"More than these" may mean all other friends, or all other disciples, for Peter had boasted that he would be true if all others failed. But more truly it means all the things that Peter loved, and it brings them all into competition with the claims and love of Christ.

There was his business and his fishing nets, which he had recently taken up again, and to which, perhaps, the Master pointed as He asked the question. To how many of us the secular occupations of life become so absorbing that we have neither thought nor time for the love of Christ.

The pursuit of wealth, ambition, success, or the reverse side of life's occupations, and the anxieties, cares and fears of loss, disaster and the struggle of business – these things distract the hearts of men from fellowship with the Master and the supreme possibilities from which He claims our lives and our hearts.

With some it is the absorbing ties of personal friendship, family affection and social life. When the adversary wants to turn our hearts aside from some supreme call of the Master, he is apt to get us preoccupied with some inordinate affection, some idolatrous

and earthly love, some counterfeit of the Holy Spirit, by which he deceives.

And if he cannot lead us into sin, he at least preoccupies us and distracts us even as the compass is turned and the ship is often distracted from her course by some little piece of iron on the deck of the vessel deflecting the magnetic current from the true direction of the pole.

Sometimes we are turned aside from our supreme love to Christ and the claims of His higher service by the tastes and refinements of life. Thousands of Christians are spending their money for fine art, luxurious taste, splendid homes, costly furniture, expensive cars and even for needless ecclesiastical decorations, music and religious entertainment.

The cause of foreign missions today is hindered more by the waste of God's children who have turned aside to these secondary things than by all that the devil throws away upon the enjoyments and pleasures of the world.

God expects the world to do these things, but He asks His children who are spending thousands on life's luxuries, "Do you love Me more than these?"

Can He really believe in our love at all?

The one imperative question that Christ asks of every soul is, "Do you love Me?" Without this we can be nothing to Christ, and in the final day the test will be, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema" when the Lord shall come (1 Corinthians 16:22).

A lack of love

The first mark of declension is the same lack of love. The church at Ephesus had lost its first love and was about to be rejected. The church of Laodicea became lukewarm and had become disgusting to the Master.

Our talk, our work, our promises, our professions are offensive and abhorrent to His true heart if He does not see below them all the pulsation of a heart of true and single devotion to His person. He will press the question home until He searches you to the very innermost depths of your life, "Do you love Me?"

He is asking in these last days not merely for followers, but for followers who will "follow the Lamb wherever He

goes (Revelation 14:4)" – not only for friends, but for friends who will do whatsoever He "commands" them (John 15:14); not only for guests who will sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, but for a holy and separated Bride who shall love Him with an exclusive affection that none other shares.

Who will answer, "Lord, let me have nothing farther than Your nearest, nothing lower than Your dearest, nothing less than Your very best?"

"Lord, You know that I love You dearly, and I take all and give all and cry, 'Thou knowest, Lord, I love Thee, And all my heart is Thine, For I am Thine forever, And Thou art mine.'"

But this passage also suggests to us that love must be more than sentiment, more than protestations, more than the strongest, warmest speech. It must be practical. It must be proved by sacrifice, by obedience to the very test which He imposes and the very service which He commands.

Feed My lambs...

Every one of Peter's answers was punctuated by a special commission from the lips of his Lord: "Feed My lambs... Feed My sheep."

It is not enough to live up in the air and talk about our devotion to our Lord. It is not enough to sing fervent hymns and write even glowing poems to God, but the test of love which He demands is, how much do we care for His needy, lost and suffering children, and how much we do to seek them, find them and minister to them "even as He."

When His love was to be proved He commended it, we are told, not by talking about it, but by giving His very life for us, for "God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)."

This is God's way of showing His love for us, and He will take no less from us. In the beautiful Chinese language, John 3:16 translated, "He loved us all the way up to the giving of His only begotten Son."

Our love must lead up to giving – and to giving our very best. 🐔



The glory of Christ beheld

by Charles H. Spurgeon (1834–1892)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).”

OH! to behold Christ’s glory! This is soul work, saving work, blessed work, everlasting work: have you any interest in it? But you answer, “How can we behold His glory?” Why, faith sees it.

My brethren, what a glory have we beheld by faith! By faith, in the first place, we have beheld the glory of His complex person. We have known and believed that He is the everlasting Word, the veritable Son of the Father, we have beheld Him by faith, as dwelling with the Father or ever the world was, the beloved of His Father’s soul; we have seen Him and we have marked that His goings-forth are of old, even from everlasting, we have seen Him weighing the clouds, measuring the channels of the great deep, planning the heavens, and meting out the sea, we have seen

Him with the line and with the plummet, making all things according to His wisdom, and the purpose of the counsel of His will, for “without Him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:3).”

We have seen Him as God, seated upon the throne of His Father, and we have believed that the sea roareth only as He bids it, that the earth with all the creatures that are therein obeys His glorious will. Lo, in His hands today the keys of heaven and death, and hell! We have had no doubts whatever as to His divinity, for we have seen and known that He is “very God of very God.” “Christ... who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (Romans 9:5).”

The immaculate Lamb of God

We have seen Him too as man. We have perceived that He is of the substance of His mother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; man in all infirmities, but not man in any

guiltiness of His own; man weak, suffering, hungry, thirsty, dying, but without spot or wrinkle – pure, the immaculate Lamb of God.

We have beheld Him in the glory of this complex person – not God deteriorated to man, not man deified to God, but God, very God, and very man; God in all that is God-like, man in all that is manlike, and we have adored Him as such.

We have seen in Him the lustre of a beauty which far outshines all that earth can present us, or all that heaven can offer. Whom have we on earth but Jesus? Who is there in heaven that we can desire beside Him?

Next, we have beheld His glory, not merely in His person, but in the motive for which He undertook His great work. That motive was love – love to worthless creatures, love to those who could never repay His love, love to men who crucified the

Lord of glory, and we have said as we have seen this love sparkling like a jewel in a black setting: “There is a glory here in this love that is never to be found elsewhere.”

Then, we have beheld the glory of His self-sacrifice. We have looked upon Him giving up everything for us, renouncing His crown and sceptre, laying aside His royal robes and splendour, leaving His Father’s house, and palaces, and honour, becoming man, nay, a poor man, a despised afflicted man; nay, becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.

In Him selfishness never lived

We have read history through, but we never saw a self-sacrifice that could equal His. In Him selfishness never lived, and therefore, never needed to be kept in check. He was not His own; His whole history could be written in this: “He saved others, Himself He cannot save (Matthew 27:42).”

Glorious Christ, in this whilst Thou was rejected of men, we have beheld Thy glory.

We have beheld, moreover, the glory of His endurance. He is tempted in every point, yet fails in none. The world’s glory lies at His feet, He chooses rather our salvation than the glories of earth. He counted the reproach that He should bear for us greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

We see Him mocked, yet never reviling, spit upon, yet never spitting back again even so much as a word of venom. We see Him despised, yet never attempting to clear Himself; accused, yet silent before the judgement seat; so giving up Himself that He can bear all things, whatsoever they may be.

Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it. Though all the substance of the world’s house was offered Him that He might renounce His love, yet did He utterly despise the world. Who was ever such a martyr as the Saviour? Who endured as He did? Who bore such contradiction of sinners against Himself?

Great God, O Jesu, – for such Thou art – Great God, there is none like Thee in the omnipotence of Thine endurance. We have seen Thy glory, even when Thou didst tabernacle among men.

And we have seen His glory also in His great and blessed perseverance even to the end, having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end: having undertaken He went through, He never paused till He could say, “It is finished (John 19:30).”

Then He died, but not till then. Now today behold His perseverance. For Zion’s sake He does not rest, and for Jerusalem’s sake He never holds His peace, day nor night, until God shall be pleased to make her glory come forth as the brightness, and her righteousness as a lamp that burneth.

And then, we have beheld His glory in His final triumph. Yes, brethren, by faith we have seen in the very moment when the sun was darkened, and when the earth was shaken, and the rocks rent asunder, we have seen Christ darkening the world’s glories, we have seen Him rending rocky hearts, and bidding the dead arise.

We have seen Him in the very instant when He died, pursuing with thunderbolts the prince of hell, and driving him to darker shades below, we have seen Him grasping at last the tyrant in His hands, and chaining him to His chariot wheel.

Our faith has beheld Him riding up the everlasting hills, leading captivity captive, we have seen the gates wide open flung while angels said, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in (Psalm 24:7).”

The spirits of the just made perfect

We have joined by faith the triumph and have swelled the train; we have heard the acclamation of the spirits of the just made perfect; we have heard above all the voice of God, “Well done, Thou hast finished Thy Father’s will.”

We have seen Him ascend in august majesty the throne which is His resting place, and we have seen Him sit down on the right hand of the Father, while from heaven and earth there went up one prolonged note of praise, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

Nay, our faith has gone beyond the mere matters of the past. We have beheld His glory, we have seen Him as one by one His sheep are brought, and

His prayer is heard, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am (John 17:24).”

We have seen Him going forth day after day in the chariot of salvation scattering with both His hands His mercies among the poverty-stricken sons of men, and we have cried unto Him, “Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty (Psalm 45:3).”

Often has our prayer been: *Come forth, O Jesus, heaven obeys Thee, earth shakes at Thy presence, hell trembles at Thee, devils are dismayed. Come forth, put Thine arrow to the string, and lift up Thy glittering spear. Who, who shall stay Thy course, or in Thy presence stand? Like chaff before the wind so shall they be driven and as stubble before the flame so shall they be utterly consumed.*

We have beheld His glory

We have been helped to fly even to the great end of all things, and by faith have seen His second advent. We have beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. We have seen Him come:

*“But not the same
As once in lowliness He came,
A silent Lamb before His foes,
A weary man, and full of woes.”*

*We have seen Him come –
“With dreadful form,
With rainbow-wreath and robes of storm;
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind.”*

And then we have seen the judgement; we have beheld the reeling earth unable to bear the splendour of His triumph; we have heard the wailings of His enemies; we have seen them melt as wax before the flame, utterly consumed like the fat of rams upon His altar.

We have at last, by faith, seen the end, when He shall give up the kingdom to God, even our Father; we have heard, I say, the last word of the whole history in the shout of complete victory:

*“Lo, Jehovah’s banners furled,
Sheathed His sword: He speaks – ‘tis done!
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son.*

*“Then the end, – beneath His rod,
Man’s last enemy shall fall;
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is all in all.”* 🐟

The rage of my adversaries

by Tim Moore

IN the classic musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye looks to heaven and exclaims, “I know, I know. we are Your chosen people. But, once in a while, can’t You choose someone else?”

Most of us have never been viscerally hated for who we are. We have not lived alongside people indoctrinated to proclaim their greatest aspiration is to eradicate our nation and our families. Welcome to the reality of Israeli Jews.

On October 7 last year, the long-declared intention of Hamas was carried out with murderous results. For several horrifying hours, Hamas terrorists and other Palestinian opportunists rampaged in southern Israel. They massacred more than 1 400 innocent lives. Scores of men, women and children were set afire, wounded, raped, and kidnapped. They dragged them back to Gaza, imprisoning them in an underground labyrinth of terror tunnels. At the time of writing, the lives of more than 100 hostages still hangs in the balance.

To understand the biblical and prophetic implications of this attack – and the ensuing War in Gaza – we need to consider the who, what, when, where, and why.

Who

The terror organisation behind this most recent atrocity is Hamas. The word “Hamas” is an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Isamiya (Islamic Resistance Movement). It emerged in the 1980s as a spin-off of the Muslim Brotherhood. Palestinian cleric Sheikh Ahmed Yassin brought the militant activism of the Muslim Brotherhood from Egypt to the West Bank and Gaza after the Six Day War in 1967.

Following the first Intifada (launched in 1987 by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat), Sheikh Yassin asserted Hamas’ political influence. He initially stood in opposition to both Arafat’s Palestinian

Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, but demonstrating a willingness to engage in dramatically more violent attacks against Israel.

In 1988, Hamas published its charter promising a “very great and very serious” struggle against the Jews. It committed itself to vanquishing the enemy in order to “raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.”

The single-minded fixation of Hamas – along with Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Islamic State (or ISIS) – to annihilate the Jews has, at times, led to pitched rivalries with their fellow Muslims. That is why Hamas competed with Fatah (the political wing of the Palestinian Authority) for control of the Gaza Strip in 2005, when Israel unilaterally withdrew its military under pressure from the Bush Administration. Following Arafat’s death, the PA was no competition for Hamas’ more extreme ideology.

As it consolidated power, Hamas militants murdered Fatah leaders. Tellingly, a majority of Palestinians in Gaza affirmed Hamas’ radical leadership, handing Hamas 56% of the seats in their Gazan parliament. Almost immediately, Hamas demonstrated its intention to incite more violence against Israel. It quickly drew the ire of even Arab countries, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.

Egypt had first-hand knowledge of the radical Muslim Brotherhood and its destabilising influence in its own country, and did not want any part of an even more dangerous organisation.

Fast-forward to this past October. Some in the West expressed shock that Hamas had squandered millions in aid intended to benefit the people of Gaza in pursuit of its war against Israel. While the Gazans continue to live in squalor, Hamas militants amassed thousands of rockets, built 500 kilometres of terror tunnels, and prepared to launch its all-out attack on



Israel. But Hamas spokesman Taher El-Nounou was quite candid when he confessed, “Hamas’s goal is not to run Gaza and to bring it water and electricity and such. I hope that the state of war with Israel will become permanent on all the borders, and that the Arab world will stand with us.”

Although fraught with internal divisions of their own, the major Arab nations around Israel have declined to adopt the radical position of Hamas. In fact, they have made it rather clear that they would like to see Israel excise this infectious cancer. Exceptions have included Syria – a long-standing and rabid foe of Israel, Yemen, and Qatar.

Qatar has been particularly duplicitous throughout, because they allow the string-pulling heads of Hamas – Ismail Haniyeh, Moussa Abu Marzuk, and Khaled Mashal – to live in luxury and security. American news outlets have reported that those three Hamas leaders are worth over \$11 Billion! They have enriched themselves while relegating the

Palestinian people to refugee camps and poverty, even as they funnel millions toward terror against Israel and the West.

But as evil as Hamas is, it is not alone. Hezbollah has overrun south Lebanon and has even more weapons, more fighters, and more support from the financier of most Middle Eastern terrorism today: Iran.

From a biblical perspective, Hamas and Hezbollah would consider themselves Arab organisations. As such, they trace their lineage back to Abraham’s son Ishmael. In Genesis 16:11&12, God told Hagar that her son would be a “wild donkey of a man” and that “his hand will be against everyone.” To this day, that prophetic word lives on in an oft-quoted Arab proverb: Me against my brother. “Me and my brothers against my cousins. Me and my family against the tribe. Me and my tribe against the world.”

What

Many of the details of October 7 are

well-established. In a surprisingly coordinated attack, Hamas militants pierced the security fence separating Israel from Gaza and rampaged through several Israeli towns and villages.

They quickly overwhelmed a local military outpost and police station, rendering the civilian population defenceless. Many people have speculated on how Hamas could plan such a complicated mission without the vaunted Israeli intelligence organisations getting wind of the plan. But Hamas’ operational security was exceeded only by their audacity and blood-lust.

Utilising drone technology, paragliders, sea-borne craft, and motorcycle-mounted gunmen, Hamas terrorists first blinded the electronic monitoring equipment and then began their murderous rampage.

An inevitable Israeli investigation will determine just how such an intelligence failure occurred. From a military perspective, it is obvious that Israel’s reliance on high-tech gear and smug self-confidence in the face of constant boastful but unfulfilled threats led them to gradual complacency.

However, there is another uniquely Western attitude that was certainly at play: an inability to recognise that the enemy is as ruthless as their words indicate.

So, when the first wave of militants blinded the IDF’s local surveillance equipment (and reports are being circulated that women IDF soldiers monitoring that equipment warned of a possible attack but were ignored), following waves were able to range throughout the region of Israel surrounding Gaza with no resistance.

What has also become obvious is that scores of Palestinian civilians streamed through breaches in the border fence to engage in atrocities. Some of the most horrific mutilations of dead Israelis was at the hands of those radicalised Gazan civilians.

Once again, it is difficult to understand hatred that is incited from birth. We cannot conceive of teaching our children that their greatest aspiration should be to die while killing Jews. But that is the undeniable ideology of those who cheered when Hamas terrorists brought dead,

wounded, and helpless people back to Gaza from their assault into Israel.

When

The Israel-Hamas war began on October 7 – exactly 50 years and a day after Egyptian and Syrian forces launched the Yom Kippur War – but the reverberations continue to this day. It is likely that the War in Gaza will continue for some time. For its part, Israel has been clear about its intention to destroy Hamas – a feat that will take months or years to accomplish (if it can be done at all).

What complicates every war Israel has fought is the pressure that is brought to bear by the world at large.

In 1948, the world did not intervene when Israel was threatened with annihilation by five Arab armies. In 1956, Great Britain and France did not keep Israel from bearing the brunt of Egypt’s attacks, even though the two countries themselves instigated the war in a secret pact with Israel.

Again in 1967, the world did not feel any compulsion to intervene when Abdel Nasser was falsely claiming to be devastating the Jewish nation. However, when it became obvious that Israel had gained the upper hand over the forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan, the United Nations got involved, insisting on a cessation of hostilities.

Even in 1973, the United States only intervened once it became apparent that Israel was in such dire straits that it was considering a nuclear option. And the rest of the world only became concerned and demanded a ceasefire when Israel turned the tide against Egypt and Syria, and was driving toward Cairo and Damascus.

This war is no different. The outpouring of support for Israel from the West has already waned dramatically. America and its European allies are alarmed at the possibility of this conflict widening to encompass the entire Middle East.

And they are all mired in internal protests from loud and violent Muslim and Progressive agitators. President Biden, who declared “America stands with Israel” when they began their own just war, has wavered in his support due

Continued...

The rage of my adversaries

to political pressure from Leftists in the Democratic party. He has even apologised for calling out Hamas' lies.

By mid-November, I became personally aware that the Biden Administration is actively blocking the transfer of defensive gear like bulletproof vests and helmets to Israeli civilians. So much for President Biden's pledge to stand with Israel.

Prophetically, we know that the remaining Jewish Diaspora will be motivated to return home to Israel. This war may spark a mass Aliyah. We also know all the nations of the world will come against Israel in the End Times.

Rising Antisemitism in the West is providing the motivation for the Diaspora to return, and the rapidly shifting sands of political expediency demonstrates why the nations will turn against God's Chosen People when they are fully regathered to their ancient Homeland.

The accelerating pace of world events is yet another sign that we are living in the End Times. The wars forecast in Scripture may materialize very soon – and in rapid succession. But these events also demonstrate that the ramifications of this war extend far beyond the borders of Gaza or Israel.

Where

We Americans often tell people that Israel is about the size of New Jersey (or, in South African terms, about the size of the Kruger National Park). Compared even to Israel, Gaza is tiny. In terms of population, Gaza is home to just over 2 million Palestinian Arabs.

The fact that the world's attention is focused on Israel and Gaza is a fulfilment of Bible prophecy. Zechariah foresaw that the nations of the world would become fixated on the land around Jerusalem – and that they would come against Jewish people regathered there (Zechariah 12:2&3; 14:14-16).

Today, billions of dollars in US

military assets and thousands of American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines are arrayed around Israel, offering demonstrable proof that Israel is once again at the centre of the world's attention. The war raging in Gaza and threatening to escalate into a regional conflict is already causing skirmishes around the globe.

In every nation where Jews and Muslims have emigrated, protests and riots have ensued in recent weeks. What began as an initial outpouring of support for Israel and solidarity with the Jewish people quickly turned into Antisemitic outrage. And in places where sizeable Muslim populations are located, the rage of Hamas has been echoed in the frenzy of its unapologetic supporters and their fellow travellers.

Here in America, security experts have warned that terrorist sleeper cells, Palestinian agitators, and radicalised individuals are poised to spark their own Intifada (violent uprising). Unlike past wars that largely took place “over there” in distant lands, the war on Jews and those who support the Jewish state will ensue wherever masses stoked to hate God's chosen people live.

Regardless of the turmoil that lies ahead, we can be certain that the satanic effort to destroy Israel will fail. God promised to “assemble the banished ones of Israel, and (gather) the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12).”

And having regathered them, He promised, “I will also plant them on their own land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them (Amos 9:15).”

Despite Palestinian propaganda and lies, the Jewish people will continue to live and thrive in their Land – the Land God gave them.

Why

In addition to God's prophetic word regarding Ishmael and his descendants, there is another tragic prophetic passage that explains the unceasing animosity of the “Arab” people living in and near Israel. When the Hebrew nation entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, they were told to act as agents of God's judgement against the sin of

the Amorites. Those pagan people had offended God by horrifically sacrificing their children to false gods (America take note!).

The Children of Israel started strong as God's agents to purify the Land, but soon grew weary of their task and became intermingled with those idol-worshipping Canaanites. So God declared, “I will not drive them out before you; but they will become as thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you (Judges 2:3).” The people wept when they heard that pronouncement, and more than 3 000 years later, their descendants are still beset by thorns close at hand.

Much of the ancient animosity between the children of Israel (Jacob) and Esau (let alone Ishmael) is based on resentment and jealousy. Because God blessed Isaac instead of Ishmael, and bestowed a blessing on Jacob instead of Esau, the unchosen Arabs have been jealous of the Chosen Jews.

Islam merely added fuel to the fire. Mohammed sanctioned killing Jews because they rejected his new religion of worshipping Allah.

Palestinians take that animosity to new heights. They consider the modern state of Israel to be a catastrophe (called the Nakba in Arabic). Outcast by the rest of the Muslim world and used as pawns in the 75-year struggle against the “Zionist Entity,” the Palestinians have focused their anger on the Jews instead of their Arab kin – even when Arab states like Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon have abandoned and persecuted them dramatically.

Ironically, in spite of exporting unrest and terror for generations, the Palestinians have become a cause célèbre in many parts of the world, while the Jews have become despised and hated.

Thomas Sowell provided insight to this trend when he responded to a Jewish friend's inquiry on why the Jews have become so hated. Sowell responded that the Jews “not only succeed, they succeed in a way which is a threat to the egos of other people.” Sowell's advice to his friend seeking to minimise hostility to the Jews? “Fail. Because as long as you succeed, you're going to be hated.”

The mindset of people so consumed by hate is beyond the comprehension of

most Westerners. Witnessing the self-destructive ideology of those determined to destroy Israel, Golda Meir said “Peace will come when the Arabs will love their children more than they hate us.”

Waiting for the Prince of Peace

While the word “Hamas” is an acronym for the terrorist organization that controls Gaza, it is also a word in both Arabic and Hebrew. In Arabic the word means “zeal that is manifest in exuberant rage.” In Hebrew the word means “violence.” Many Gentile Christians would be surprised to learn that the word actually appears in Scripture. Genesis 6:11 says, “Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with hama (violence).”

Jesus said in Matthew 24:37 that the coming of the Son of Man will be “just

like the days of Noah.” Corrupt and filled with violence – sounds like a fitting description of our sin-weary world.

Many centuries ago, King David also found himself surrounded by enemies seeking his life. He understood the sting of animosity and hate, and prayed, “deliver me from those who do iniquity and save me from men of bloodshed. For behold, they have set an ambush for my life; fierce men launch an attack against me (Psalm 59:1-3).”

In Psalm 7 (a fitting Psalm I read on the morning of the Hamas attacks), David began, “O Lord my God, in You I have taken refuge; save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me, lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending me in pieces, while there is none to deliver (verses 1&2). In verse 6 he cried out, “Arise, O Lord, in Your anger; lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries, and arouse Yourself for me;

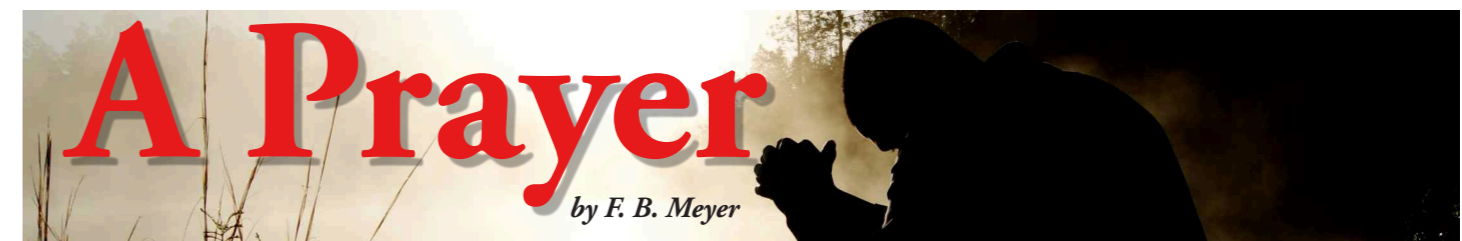
You have appointed judgment.” And in verses 9&10, he says, “O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; for the righteous God tests the hearts and minds. My shield is with God, Who saves the upright in heart.”

In another great testimony of faith in the “Lord my salvation,” David declared, “Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear; though war arise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident (Psalm 27:3).” He concludes that Psalm in a way that resonates in the hearts of all of us who await Jesus' soon return!

“Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord (Psalm 27:14).”

We will be strong and courageous – while we wait... 

With grateful thanks to Lamb & Lion Ministries



In my inner life, I desire to be kept absolutely pure and lovely.

O Holy and Spotless One, be in me the crystal fountain of purity. O Lamb of God, be in me the source of absolute meekness and humility. O Lover of men, be in me a fire of unwaning, all-subduing tenderness.

Make me instantly sensitive to the least taint of impurity and uncharity. Before ever the suggestion has assumed a tangible shape, may I detect it and shelter in Thee.

In my home life, may I be made a blessing; its sunbeam when the days are dark; its inspiration when the days are sad and hopeless; its tender comfort when the days are full of pain and tears. Always thinking of others before myself; never imposing my private sorrows or moods; ever with the girt loin and the lighted torch; washing my face, and anointing my head and confiding my griefs to Thee only, that I may ever have “a heart at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathise.”

In my religious life, may the neglect of prayer and Thy Holy Word be things of the past. Wake me morning by morning to hear as a disciple! Enable me to spring up at Thy call, and, like all Thy true servants, to rise up early in the morning to gather the manna ere the dew be gone from it.

May my fellowship with Thee be unbroken through the day that I may often look up into Thy face, even if I have not time to speak. Draw me, and I will run after Thee!

In my daily calling, make me diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. May I do my work, not for the wages I may get, not to secure an advance, but so as to please Thee!

May it be the one object of my daily striving to do all to the glory of God – not with eye-service, as pleasing men, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord, doing the will of God as it is indicated in the circumstances of my life, and looking for my reward from Thy hand, O Divine Master!

In my use of money, I would not be anxious about the future, nor hoard up and keep for myself of that which Thou hast given me: I want to be Thy very slave, counting myself and all I have as Thy purchased property, and using all things as Thy representative and steward.

In my use of time and health and all the opportunities of life, I desire to act with reverent care, redeeming the time, buying up each opportunity, conserving my body as the pure temple of the Holy Ghost, so partaking of recreation, food, natural scenery, travel, and all lawful pastimes, that I may the better serve Thy purpose in my creation and redemption. Show me what Thy talents are which Thou hast entrusted to me, and help me to make the two four, and the five ten.

Now bless me, even me, O Lord; I am Thine; Thou didst purchase me for Thyself by Thy most precious blood; Thou hast begun a good work within me by Thy Holy Spirit; and now afresh take me to Thine heart, and seal me with Thy Spirit.

May He enlighten, comfort, and sanctify me, teaching me to pray, and opening the eyes of my heart that I may know Thee and the power of Thy resurrection, that as Thou hast ascended into the heavens so I may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Thee continually dwell, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Should Christians support Israel?



by Nathan E. Jones

SINCE early in the 20th Century, God has been fulfilling promises today that were made to the Jewish people thousands of years ago. These promises rest on a series of legal agreements called covenants. The covenants were made between God and the Jewish people, and centre on the land of Israel.

The cornerstone covenant – the Abrahamic Covenant – grants the title deed to the land of Israel to the descendants of the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This unconditional, irrevocable, and everlasting promise was literally sealed in blood (Genesis 12:1-7; 13:14-18; 17:7; 1 Chronicles 16:17-18; Psalm 105:8-11; Romans 9:4).

God's Land Covenant promises that Israel will one day become the prime nation of the world, that is, as long as the Jewish people remain obedient to God (Deuteronomy 28:1,13).

The Davidic Covenant promises an eternal King who will descend from the line of King David. One day this Messiah will rule over the entire world from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 7:10-16).

These covenants are why for hundreds of years, Christians have believed, just because God said so, that we should naturally support the nation of Israel.

Well, "Not so!" says a particular group of Christians, Christians who meet at conferences with names like "Christ at

the Checkpoint." They question the legitimacy of these covenants and whether Christians should support Israel at all.

Myths Busted

Let's debunk seven of these naysayers' most popular myths for why Christians should not support the nation of Israel.

Myth 1:

"The Jews killed Jesus!"

Those who accuse the Jews of killing Jesus seem to have purposefully forgotten that the Bible says, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel (Acts 4:27&28)."

So, not only did both Jews and Gentiles participate in murdering Jesus, but in truth, we are all sinners, and therefore all of us are responsible for Jesus dying on the cross. But, reality check, Jesus Himself clearly stated that He alone laid down His life and that no one took it from Him (John 10:15-18).

Myth 2:

"The Jews have been disinherited because of their unbelief."

The Jews may have been evicted from their land – twice – due to their rebellion against God. But, as Psalm 105 explains, God guaranteed in His Abrahamic Covenant that the land of Israel unconditionally and forever belongs to the children of Jacob.

And, as the Apostle Paul argued in Romans 9-11, "Has God rejected His people? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite... God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew." And so, no, God has neither disinherited the Jewish people nor revoked His land covenants.

Myth 3:

"The Church has replaced Israel and now receives her inheritance."

Not according to the Apostle Paul! He tells the story of an olive tree whose branches were pruned off due to unbelief, and wild vines grafted on (Romans 11). But, when the natural branches began believing again, they would be grafted back on the tree. Salvation may have come to the wild olive vines – the Church – but God still has salvation planned for the natural branches – a believing Israel who will call Jesus Saviour.

Myth 4:

"The Jews regathering back to the land of Israel cannot be from God because they haven't repented and accepted Jesus as their Messiah."

The Jews returning to Israel in unbelief is precisely what God foretold would happen. Isaiah prophesied the Jews would be regathered a second time from the nations of the world, and Ezekiel made it clear that the Jews would regather in unbelief for God Himself

to give them a new heart for Him (Isaiah 11:10-12; Ezekiel 36:22-28).

It's no accident of history that a people dispossessed from their country for 1900 years could ever have kept their ethnic identity and rebirthed their nation two millennia later. Such a thing has never happened! And this is the nation of the Bible we're talking about. Therefore, the regathering of the Jews can only be a miracle from God.

Myth 5:

"To support Israel is to support every action of the Israeli government."

Nobody supports every action of any government, even their own. Supporting Israel is to support God's redemptive work in bringing a remnant of the Jewish people to salvation in Christ and ultimately into the fulfilment of His covenants.

Myth 6:

"The Jews stole the Palestinians' land and live there illegally."

First off, the Abrahamic Covenant grants the Jewish people the eternal deed to the land of Israel.

Second, when the Jews began returning in the early 20th Century, there was no such thing as a Palestinian. The handful of Arabs living in that wasteland sold the land back to the Jews at exorbitant prices.

Third, Israel was created legally in response to a United Nations declaration passed in November, 1947 which authorised the establishment of a Jewish state in the land the Romans had renamed Palestine. You can't steal land that's already legally yours.

Myth 7:

"To support Israel is to hate the Palestinian people."

Contrary to Arab propaganda, those who call themselves Palestinians enjoy more freedoms and rights in Israel than if they lived in any Muslim nation. It's not the Jews who hate and abuse the Palestinians, but their own terrorist leaders who steal billions of their foreign aid and deny refugees access back to their home countries of Syria and Jordan. The Palestinians have been afforded several opportunities since 1948 to create another Palestinian state besides Jordan, but each time they have rejected those offers and instead responded with violence. Why? Because

their ultimate goal is the annihilation of Israel.

So, who exactly hates who here?

Should Christians Support Israel?

With those myths busted, let's look at some of the reasons why Christians should support Israel.

1. Democracy

The nation of Israel is the only Western-style democracy in a sea of Islamic tyranny. Supporting Israel is to support the only nation in the Middle East that offers religious freedom and human rights to women.

2. Defence

Israel protects the West and Christianity by standing as the first line of defence against violent, radical Islam.

3. Economics

Israel contributes to the world a mind-boggling amount of food, medicines, and cutting-edge technologies that raise the standard of living around the world.

4. Blessing

When it comes to supporting the nation of Israel, God promised in

Genesis 12, "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse." Supporting Israel incurs God's blessing.

5. Biblical

It should go without saying that it is biblically correct for Christians to support God. Since God loves the Jewish people and wants them to return to Him, shouldn't Christians want this as well? Loving Israel expresses our love for God.

6. Prophetic

And finally, whether you love or hate the nation of Israel, or even the Jewish people, regardless of what we mere mortals think – Bible prophecy will be fulfilled. God's will shall be done, and there's just no stopping it. After all, who could ever stand against the Living God and expect to win (Psalm 76:7; Hebrews 10:31)?

So, in conclusion, it's not "Should Christians support Israel?" but rather, "Christians *must* support Israel!"

With grateful thanks to Lamb & Lion Ministries

Faith in the Promise-Giver

by Charles H. Spurgeon

"Please tell me where your great strength lies (Judges 16:6)..."

WHERE lies the secret strength of faith? It lies in the food it feeds on. Faith studies what the promise is – a release of divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God – and faith says, "My God could not have given this promise, except from love and grace; therefore it is quite certain His Word will be fulfilled."

Then faith thinks, "WHO gave this promise?" It considers not so much its greatness, as, "Who is the author of it?" Faith remembers that it is God who cannot lie – God omnipotent, God immutable; and therefore concludes that the promise must be fulfilled; and forward it advances in this firm conviction.

Faith remembers, WHY the promise was given – namely, for God's glory, and it feels perfectly sure that God's glory is safe, that He will never stain His own honour, nor mar the lustre of His own crown – and therefore the promise must, and will, stand.

Then faith also considers the amazing work of Christ as being a clear proof of the Father's intention to fulfil His Word. "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things (Romans 8:32)?"

Moreover faith looks back upon the past, for its battles have strengthened it, and its victories have given it courage. It remembers that God never has failed; no, that He never did once fail any of His children.

Faith recollects times of great peril, when deliverance came; hours of awful need, when strength was found, and it cries, "No, I never will be led to think that He can change and leave His servant now. Hitherto the Lord has helped me – and He will help me still."

So, faith views each promise in its connection with the Promise-giver, and because it does so, can with assurance say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!"



Helen Ewan... a fragrant life

by James A. Stewart (1910 – 1975)

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (2 Corinthians 4:5-7).”

At the same time that I was saved during a mighty movement of God in my city of Glasgow, Scotland, a girl about the same age was also saved. Her name was Helen Ewan. She was just a slip of a girl, but at the very threshold of her new life in Christ, she crowned Him as absolute Lord and was thus filled with the Holy Spirit.

She had accepted the invitation of her Lord to “drink abundantly (Song 5:1).” “If anyone thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive...) (John 7:37-39).” The torrents of living water simply began to flow from Helen’s life.

Helen Ewan was born around 1910

into an ordinary working-class family and was the only child. Both her parents loved Christ supremely. The blessed Son of God was the centre around which the whole household revolved. They lived for only one thing and that was to please God in every detail of their lives. Three well-marked Bibles were always conspicuous in their living room when I visited them.

After her conversion at the age of 14, Helen’s whole personality was radiant with the glory of the Lord. God, in His sovereign grace, had shone into her darkened soul in order that through this ordinary “earthen vessel” might be magnified the surpassing majesty of the power of the Gospel.

Lit up with the glory of God

Hers was only a common life, but it was lit up with the glory of God. Being full of the Holy Spirit, she was full of Christ. As she studied the Word of God, under the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit, He took of the treasures of the Lord Jesus and revealed them unto her (John 16:13-15). This made her heart dance for joy.

Many times she would stop Christians on the street and, with radiant face, tell of some choice portion of Scripture

where she had found some new picture of her blessed Redeemer. These friends often left her presence weeping saying, “We have seen Jesus; we have looked into His glorious face.”

Helen rose each morning around five o’clock to commune with her Lord. She would not put on the heat in her cold little room or seek to make herself comfortable in any way, feeling she could be more alert in the cold. And besides, those for whom she would be praying in foreign lands were not sitting in comfort.

She would begin her communion with praise and worship. She then read the Word of God to warm her heart. She remembered the words of her fellow-Scot, R. Murray McCheyne, “It is the look that saves, but it is the gaze that sanctifies.” Helen gazed with rapture into the face of her Lord.

Then would follow her ministry of intercession for her friends and family, for her assembly, for hundreds of missionaries, and for the list of unsaved persons to whom she had testified and for whom she prayed daily until they were born again. There was nothing vague or general about her pleas. After Helen’s Home-going, her mother kindly allowed me to go over Helen’s diaries and there I saw that the petitions expressed in them were strong and

definite. She gave the date when she began to pray for a person and the date when the prayer was answered.

These diaries revealed a prayer life that moved God and man.

I have been out on the streets of Glasgow near midnight with my tracts on many occasions when I would see Helen busy in her own method of personal soul winning. I have seen her on a cold winter’s evening with her arms around a poor prostitute, telling her of Jesus and His love. On other occasions she would be dealing with drunken men, seeking to lead them to her Saviour.

On the alert for lost souls

In the evangelistic meetings she was always on the alert for lost souls. Sitting near the rear of the building, she would see a woman sitting alone, sorrow written on her face and weariness in her eyes. Under the guidance of the Spirit, Helen would slip over and sit beside her, praying inwardly during the whole of the service.

When the lady arose to leave, Helen would leave with her, talking about the message and encouraging the lady to unburden her heart. In this way, more than one soul who was burdened with the cares of this life and bowed down with the weight of sin and despair was led to know the Saviour – as Helen pointed her to the Lamb of God under the lamp post or while waiting at the streetcar stop.

When she entered the University of Glasgow, she used to walk several miles from her home to campus each day so that she could distribute tracts along the way. Needless to say, she had the joy of leading many students to Christ on the campus.

Helen carried the fragrance of Christ with her and manifested the power of the Spirit which so few have ever possessed. Her body was a walking temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19&20). Thus, wherever she went the power of God was manifested.

I was talking one day with two professors from the University of London. They were believers. We were talking about dynamic Christianity when one of them suddenly said, “Brother Stewart, I want to tell you a

story.” Then he went on to tell of a remarkable young lady on the campus of Glasgow University when he was lecturing there. Wherever she went on the campus, he said, the fragrance of Christ followed her.

For example, a group of unconverted students would be jesting and telling dirty stories when someone would suddenly say, “Shh! Here she comes! Quiet!” and this young lady would walk by, unconsciously leaving the power and the awe of the presence of God behind her.

He said that in the university prayer meetings they could always tell if this young student was present whether she prayed aloud or not... they sensed the presence of God in their midst. I said, “Sir, that could be only one person; that was Helen Ewan!” “Yes,” he answered, “that was her name. She was a remarkable soul winner.”

Another feature of Helen’s life was her deep appetite for the Word of God and a deep spiritual penetration into divine truth. She did not just leaf through her Bible for palatable portions which suited her fancy at the moment; she studied the whole Book from Genesis to Revelation. Thus, she became a deeply intelligent child of God, even at the age of 16 and 17.

Her feet were firmly placed on the solid rock of the Holy Scriptures. Even when she was a hard-working student in her secular studies in the university, seeking to make good grades for His glory, she still gave time to Bible study and meditation.

This made her a well-balanced Christian. Though there was no time or place in her life for idle gossip or foolish talk, she bubbled over with clean humour and a zest for life. And yet because Christ filled the whole of her horizon, she sought to magnify Him through a holy life and sacrificial service.

At the university, Helen was preparing herself for missionary service among the Russian people of Eastern Europe where I, myself, was later to labour. Already she was learning the Russian language in preparation for her life’s ministry. But God, in His wisdom and love, called her Home at the age of 22.

She had been spending her vacation with an aunt in the county of Fife and while there was continually about her

Master’s business. She was taken ill suddenly and as suddenly was called Home. It was so unexpected that it shocked us all.

I was labouring at the time in an evangelistic campaign in a city in northern England. When the news reached me of Helen’s home-going, I was stunned. I could neither eat nor sleep. I was not alone in my sorrow. Thousands wept throughout Scotland and Great Britain. On far-off mission stations, British missionaries grieved at the news. Alas, who would bear them up so faithfully at the Throne of Grace now. Who would step into the gap and take her place?

Filled with the Holy Spirit

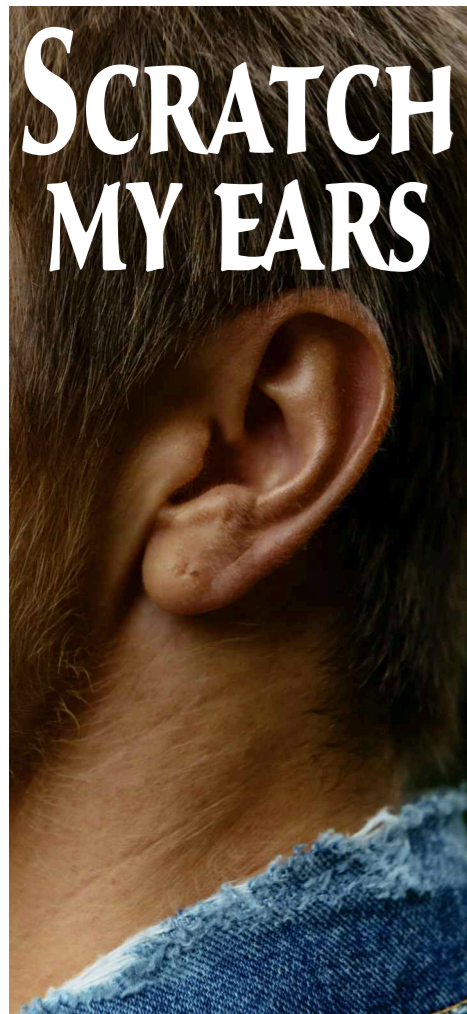
How could a young lady, still pursuing her studies, never having preached a sermon or sung a solo, never having travelled more than 200 miles away from her home – how could her life so affect people in all parts of the world that they felt a mighty general had fallen? There is only one explanation: She was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Helen, who was an ordinary young woman, became extraordinary simply because she surrendered all to Christ and appropriated for herself all that was hers in Him. She, with unveiled face, took time to receive, and thus reflected, the glory of the Lord.

May you, dear reader, be so fully surrendered to your Lord that you will, like Helen Ewan, fully reflect the glory of the Lord. Let this be your prayer, with Francis Ridley Havergal:

*In full and glad surrender
I give myself to Thee,
Thine utterly and only,
And evermore to be.
O Son of God who love’st me
I will be Thine alone;
And all I have, and all I can,
Shall henceforth be Thine own.
Reign over me, Lord Jesus!
O make my heart Thy throne
It shall be Thine, dear Saviour,
It shall be Thine alone.
Oh! come and reign, Lord Jesus;
Rule over everything!
And keep me always loyal,
And true to Thee, my King!*

Condensed from the booklet, *She Was Only 22*, by James A. Stewart.



by Chuck McLean

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear (2 Timothy 4:2-5).”

In recent weeks, I have become more and more aware of the truth of Paul's warning to Timothy. Growing up, I was taught that people who would not “endure sound doctrine” were people who didn't want to hear the Bible any more. But many of the folks I see today who will not endure sound doctrine are avid Bible readers and religious TV viewers. They are attending all the conferences, filling notebooks full of sermon notes. They are some of the most religious people I know.

Some have become quasi-experts in Jewish tradition. They are observing the feasts and wearing yarmulkes and prayer shawls. They follow after rabbis and eschew the name “Jesus” for the more

Hebraic “Yeshua”. There are rapidly-growing cadres of kosher charismatics and wannabe Israelites.

Others have become end-time prophecy wizards. They follow Israeli current events in the newspaper as Holy Writ. They chart the current geopolitical winds, divining Israel's past and present to find the Christian's place in the Last Days. They measure every rising world leader to ferret out the Antichrist.

Then, there are the new “Freedom Riders” who have shaken off the shackles of their religious past to such an extent that their freedom is their new Promised Land. These are the modern Corinthians: so free and open-minded that even gross sin and heresy are simply marks of shedding religious bondage.

So, what am I on my soapbox about? It is about Paul's idea of “enduring sound doctrine.” I am seeing so many today whose endurance is running out, causing them to become sidetracked on their spiritual journey. For to “endure” sound doctrine is to bear up under the changes in our lives and in our hearts that come with the formation of the character of Christ. It is to remain still as the truth re-forms us in Christ's image. And make no mistake, there is endurance involved.

Who wants to be corrected?

Paul tells Timothy to “correct, rebuke, and encourage; with great patience and careful instruction.” But this is not always a pleasant process. Who wants to be corrected and rebuked? Who wants their ideas or interpretations challenged? Who wants their life examined and the unregenerate parts brought to light? No chastisement is pleasant at the time, and many have decided that they no longer wish to endure it.

But Paul does not warn Timothy that these folks will drop their Christian identity and go back to the world. In fact, the opposite phenomenon takes place. They get more religious yet. They get more teachers, more sermons, more books and tapes. Rather than have the character of Christ formed in them, they seek to gain sufficient “spiritual” or “mystical” knowledge that such a thing as crucifying the flesh becomes a distant memory. They seek advancement in the Kingdom by the acquisition of

mysteries. They have “itching ears,” the desire to hear just one more piece of information that will bring them spiritual stature.

Enter the teachers, the knowledge vendors, the hawkers of “hidden revelations.” Highly in demand, they generally ply their trade at long distance, far from personal accountability. These teachers proudly display their resumes in order to establish their credibility, telling of the organisations they have built or the degrees they have earned.

Christians gather their books and tapes by the carload, but know almost nothing of the character of these men on a personal basis. When the King James Version says “they will ‘heap’ to themselves teachers,” I can't help but visualise a heap of books and tapes!

Easier to learn new things than to be crucified...

The stock and trade of such teachers is “hidden” knowledge. The simplicity of the Gospel is scorned and replaced by ethereal mysteries. “If they only knew what I have discovered, then they would understand the mind of God.” “If only other men had what I have (my wisdom, dreams, visions, PhD in Attic Greek, Jewish bloodlines, etc.) what spiritual giants they would be!”

And Christians flock to this, as they have since the first century, hoping to draw near to God by their knowledge rather than by the ongoing work of Christ.

It is far easier to learn “new things” than it is to be crucified and remade in the likeness of the Son of God.

Such soulish desires lead to the next stage of Paul's warning, that these men “will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” This is not an intentional step, but a mark of the inherent deception in the process. No one consciously decides, “Enough of this reality, I'm going to Fantasyland for the rest of my life!” But they do, indeed, take that path.

It is the seduction of Eve all over again, only with new music and choreography. Satan, although he is the Father of Lies, has a limited repertoire. That is, he knows only a few deceptive tunes, which he dusts off and rearranges for

every new generation of men. The folly of knowledge that turns men from truth to myths is directly from the Garden of Eden.

Here's a replay of one of Satan's Golden Oldies:

“Dear, dear Eve! All you do all day is take care of this silly garden. Don't you ever get tired of being second banana to that clod Adam? If you only had that added revelation, that God-knowledge, you would be somebody! The only thing that stands between being like you and being like God is that special secret knowledge! It's hanging there on that big green tree. Don't you want it? I know God's been withholding it from you, but I have access to it. Let me pick one for you. Just take a big bite of this juicy mystery knowledge. Tastes good, hmm? Opens your eyes, doesn't it? You know things God knows, like good and

evil.

“See, you're already wiser than anyone you know. Well, wiser than anyone except me... your friend, the serpent. Why don't you see if Adam wants a bite?”

The modern parallel is easily seen. Men seek someone to improve their minds, rather than change their hearts. We seek to be like God by our knowledge, rather than to know Christ through his sufferings.

And there are always men available to guide us in this path. It is the man-road to godhood... and it leads to death. Always has, always will.

If you see these things, please understand the next encouragement Paul gives Timothy. “Keep your head in all things, endure hardship...”

When you face off with the mystery sellers, you will find that what they are

offering is much more attractive to the carnal man than is “take up your cross and follow Me.”

You will see deceptions from the most blatant to the most subtle. You will find real Christians swallowing real myths – hook, line, and sinker. Keep your head. God is not panicked, nor does he write off his children. Speak the truth in love and intercede faithfully for the brothers.

Be prepared to endure hardship. The fundamentals of Christianity will become foolishness to some, and you will be called a fool for choosing it over certain “new revelations.” You may lose your accustomed influence. You may be considered old-fashioned or backward if you hang on to the simple truth of God's word. But that is of no consequence. God will give you the grace to walk without judgement, neither judging nor being subject to. ☞

Love is the sign

by John Matthews

LOVE is a sign. More, love is the sign. He who has been born of God has it. It is the sign of the new birth.

Whoever loves is born of God. He who does not love does not know God. We know we have passed from death to life because we love.

Marvels and miracles are not the sign; neither human nor angelic eloquence is the sign; nor yet faith that moves mountains, nor benevolence that feeds the hungry, nor the martyr's stake where men bleed and burn and die for their faith – these have their value and their place – but these are not *the* sign.

It is something else; it is the burning, blazing, holy, heavenly love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit!

There are three classes of people we are to love.

First, our neighbour. But, who is my neighbour? This question is as old as time; it was ancient in the days of Jesus.

When that lawyer asked Jesus, Who is my neighbour, He replied by giving us the parable of the Good Samaritan. Read it again (Luke 10:25-37).

The man from Samaria, whom the Jew so ardently hated, finds, on the Jericho road, a Jew left by his own countrymen



to die from the wounds inflicted by the robber who well nigh became a murderer. This enemy, after his brother priest and brother Levite had given him a look and passed on, had mercy and bound up his wounds and took him upon his own beast to the inn and cared for him, promising to pay what more was required to make him safe and sound.

An enemy did this. This is the love of God. Your neighbour is anyone, whatever his colour, clime or condition, that is in need – in a plight, in misery in sorrow or woe. They are all around us – these neighbours whom we are to love.

Secondly, we are to love our brothers. Who is my brother? Any one born of God. The new birth makes him a member of the family of God, for we are born into the kingdom of God.

This makes all men who are born the second time, brothers. Whatever difference of place or training or nationality, each and every man who is born from above is in the brotherhood of Jesus Christ. I must love him. He is my brother.

“If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar... He who loves God loves his brother also (1 John 4:20&21).”

We are in danger of regarding our brother too lightly. We fail so frequently to express this love for our brother that ought to mark us out from the world.

Thirdly, we are to love our enemies. Love encircles itself around our brother, our neighbour – and our enemy. To love the brother in Christ should be a pleasure; to love the neighbour in need should spring from our compassion; but, to love our enemy, may be a matter of compulsion, if done at all – unless we have hearts filled with the love of God.

Loving our enemy is not to be a matter of sentiment, but we are to have the warmth of a holy love for him in our hearts, like that which was manifested toward us from the heart of God. Not a passive indifference, but active, energetic love that provides blessings for those who hate us.

How far are we to carry this matter? We are to lift the cup of cold water to his lips and give him bread if he be hungry; not stale bread, but good, fresh bread, hot from the oven. The Bible reads plainly here: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink (Romans 12:20)...” ☞



Jesus the keeper

by Andrew Murray (1828-1917)

"The Lord is your keeper... The Lord shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul (Psalm 121:5&7)."

"I know Him whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day (2 Timothy 1:12)."

THE Lord has not only received you – but He will also keep you. For disciples of Christ who are still weak, there is no lesson that is more necessary than this. The lovely name, "the Lord your keeper," must be carried in the heart until the assurance of an Almighty keeping becomes as strong with us as it was with Paul, when he spoke that glorious word, "I know Him in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed to Him against that day."

Come and learn this lesson from him.

Learn from Paul to deposit your pledge with Jesus. Paul had surrendered himself, body and soul, to the Lord Jesus; that was his pledge which he had deposited with the Lord. You have also surrendered yourselves to the Lord, but perhaps not with the clear understanding that it is in order to be kept every day.

Do this now daily. Deposit your soul with Jesus as a dear pledge that He will keep it secure. Do this same thing with every part of your life.

Is there something that you cannot properly hold? Your heart, because it is too worldly? Your tongue, because it is too idle? Your temper, because it is too passionate? Your calling to confess the Lord, because you are too weak?

Learn, then, to deposit it as a pledge to be kept with Jesus, so that He may fulfil in you the promise of God concerning it. You often pray and strive against a sin in vain. It is because, although this, too, is done with God's help, you want to be the person who overcomes.

No, entrust the matter wholly to Jesus, "the battle is not yours, but God's." Leave it in His hands. Believe in Him to do it for you. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith." But you must first place it wholly out of your hands and into His.

Learn from Paul to set your confidence only on the power of Jesus. I am persuaded that He is able to keep my pledge. You have an Almighty Jesus to keep you. Faith keeps itself occupied only with His omnipotence.

Let your faith be especially strengthened in what God is able to do for you. Expect, with certainty, that He will do great and glorious things for you, entirely above your own strength.

See in the Holy Scriptures how constantly the power of God was the foundation for the trust of His people. Take these words and hide them in your heart. Let the power of Jesus fill your soul. Ask only, "What is my Jesus able

to do?" What you really trust Him with, He is able to keep.

And learn also from Paul where he obtained the assurance that this power would keep his pledge. He found it in his knowledge of Jesus. "I know Him whom I have believed," therefore I am assured.

You can trust the power of Jesus, if you know that He is yours, if you converse with Him as your Friend. Then you can say, "I know whom I have believed. I know that He holds me very dear. I know and am assured that He is able to keep my pledge."

This is the sure way to the full assurance of faith. Deposit your pledge with Jesus, and give yourselves wholly into His hands. Think much on His might, and rely upon Him. Live with Him so that you may always know in whom you have believed.

Disciples of Christ, please receive this word, "The Lord is your keeper." For every weakness, every temptation, learn to deposit your soul with Him as a pledge. You can depend on it, you can shout joyfully over it. "The Lord shall keep you from all evil."

Holy Jesus, I take You as my Keeper. Let Your name, "The Lord your keeper," sound as a song in my heart the whole day. Teach me to deposit my case as a pledge with You in every need, and to be assured that You are able to keep it. Amen. 🐟

WATCH & PRAY

SINCE the first issue of *Prepare the Way*, we have been very blessed to make free use of Elizabeth Kendal's updates on the Persecuted Church around the world. Elizabeth has now announced that, due to a number of health issues, she will no longer be able to produce these updates. We would like to thank and honour and this faithful servant for her valuable work for the Lord over many years. Here is her final article:

Blaise Pascal is mostly remembered as a 17th Century French child prodigy; a genius in mathematics and physics. But Pascal was also an extraordinary theologian and apologist of grace. Though he remained in the Catholic Church, he was beloved of Protestants.

Pascal is the author of one of my favourite quotes on prayer: "God has instituted prayer in order to lend his creatures the dignity of causality..." Causality is the principle that every effect has a cause.

As Pascal understood, God instituted prayer for our benefit!

God can work without us. He is not dependent on our intelligence. He does not need our advice. And unlike us, He knows what is best. God is perfectly capable of fulfilling all His plans without our involvement – except, that is not the way He has chosen to work in the world.

Because God wants to work with us – in a way that both engages and dignifies us – he established prayer as the means (cause) by which we receive His supernatural help (effect).

I think most of us understand this... at least to some degree.

The issue that really seizes my mind, is the flip side of the "dignity of causality" – and that is, the responsibility of causality: What happens when we do not pray?

I believe the answer is found in Isaiah 30:15-19, where we read that because God's people refused to "return and rest" – i.e. trust – in their covenant God (verse 15), preferring instead to save themselves (verse 16), "therefore" they would fail (verse 17) (also see

Deuteronomy 8:11-20).

"Therefore, the Lord waits to be gracious to you (verse 18)."

And so it was that in 701BC, as the armies of Assyria's King Sennacherib rampaged across Judah sacking town after town, looting, destroying, killing, abducting... the Lord waited to be gracious.

Only after the enemy had arrived at the gates of Jerusalem (Isaiah 36) did Judah's King Hezekiah return/repent and rest/wait on the Lord (Isaiah 37). As French academic and lay theologian Jacques Ellul notes, King Hezekiah's withdrawal into the house of the Lord and his crying to him was a political act whereby the truth that God is the Lord was reaffirmed.

And Hezekiah's prayer (37:16-20) changed everything. As foretold in Isaiah 28:5&6, as soon as the people returned to the way of faith, the battle was turned back at the gate.

"Thus," affirms Isaiah commentator Alec Motyer, "the way of believing prayer is the truly practical way of dealing with the harsh realities of this world. What neither armaments (36:9) nor diplomacy (30:1,2) nor money (2 Kings 18:13,14) could achieve, prayer has done."

"The Lord *waits* to be gracious to you... Blessed are those who wait for him... How gracious He will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, He will answer you (from Isaiah 30:18&19 ESV)."

I must confess, the thought of God *waiting* horrifies me. But I also know that God is never inactive, and that as God waits He is seizing the day and redeeming the times to do another great new work in which we are integral!

Never before in the history of the Church, has the Church been in the position that we are in today, where, thanks to today's globalised networks and information systems, satellites and digital communication technologies, the Church can now know about and respond to a crisis – even on the other



side of the world, even as it is unfolding, sometimes even before it unfolds – for the saving of many lives. This is new and totally unprecedented.

I believe that as the Church responds to the issue of persecution – through speaking, praying, and giving – three effects will become evident.

I believe a serious and passionate response from the Church will:

- (1) enable the saving of many lives; even the preservation and restoration of whole Christian communities;
- (2) facilitate the sanctification of the Church, as the Church becomes in practice what the Church is in theory/reality i.e. the Body of Christ;
- (3) present the watching world with a vision of sacrificial Christian love – reflecting the image and sacrificial love of Christ – "that the world may believe," which is precisely what Jesus prayed for in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night he was betrayed.

"I do not ask for these only (His current disciples), but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and You in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as you loved Me."

I believe that the 21st Century could go down in Christian history as the century in which God knitted together an increasingly global Church, using chords of love forged in the flames of persecution, that the world may believe.

Pray that the Church will seize the day!

Elizabeth Kendal
December 6, 2023



Via Calvary

by Brother Charles

A CROSS of wood, ancient instrument of shame and punishment on which our Lord Jesus died, is the emblem of Christianity.

The cross is the world's greatest monument. Between life and death and between heaven and hell "The Old Rugged Cross" stands today – and it speaks of pardon and peace to the penitent sinner.

"The preaching of the cross," the shedding of the Saviour's blood for the redemption of mankind – that is the Bible story. And we may spurn as fraudulent any "other gospel" which repudiates as its central theme the vital message of the Cross of Christ.

Symbolically, the cross is identified with self-denial. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Resurrected with Him, they henceforth walk in newness of life.

Scriptural emphasis is not on self-expression, but on self-renunciation through the power of the cross. Paradoxically, a believer rises and reigns with Christ in proportion to his self-abasement.

For a follower of Jesus to "take up his cross" and to "bear his cross" does not mean to perform uncongenial tasks and to shoulder unpleasant burdens. Nor are petty annoyances and personal grievances, brought about by one's own faults and blunders, to be considered as

crosses. But those crucial tests, fiery trials and chastenings of the Lord which correct, discipline and refine and which promote Christian virtues – are truly "crosses" of merit, and the disciple is enjoined to embrace them in faith and to endure them with patience.

To the overcomer, ransomed by the precious blood of the Slain Lamb, the Way of the Cross – that of vilification, reproach, ignominy, humiliation, suffering, sacrifice for the dear Redeemer's sake – is the High Way of Life, of Triumph, and of Glory. It is Victory plus.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." 