

Words
Of
Peace
&
Truth

No. 100: January – April 2017
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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

(*Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19 and Jeremiah 33:6*)

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Editorial

There can be no doubt that we live in remarkable times when rapid changes are occurring in moral, social, political, religious and technological contexts. Perhaps the stage is being prepared on which those events which have long been prophesied in the Bible but which have not yet taken place will be acted out. It is written of the men of Issachar that they “had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chronicles 12:32). May the Lord help us to be like that in our day.

The first article addresses the question of how God uses time. It appeared in WPT No. 27 in 1993 but the readership of the magazine has changed considerably since then and on re-reading the article recently I was freshly impressed with its relevance to us today.

Aware that many readers have the Collected Writings of J.N. Darby on their bookshelves I do not often reproduce his ministry to any length in this magazine but – again bearing in mind the trends and influences which are around us today – I thought it would be profitable to include a piece by him on the armour of Ephesians 6. There are in fact two articles by him on this subject (in C.W. Volumes 16 and 17) and I have selected the shorter one.

I trust that the article from “*La Bonne Semence*” will encourage all those who distribute gospel tracts – a good work. To all readers I would say, may the Lord “encourage your hearts, and establish you in every good work and word” (2 Thessalonians 2:17). *G.S.B.*

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DIVINE MEASUREMENT

Genesis 1:14-19; Revelation 20:1-8

THERE is one attribute of God that I have enjoyed in recent times, namely, that He is “the God of measure” (2 Cor. 10:13 – Darby Trans). His ability to measure things is one of His attributes. He has many other attributes, all contributing to His glory. He is the God of glory, the God of patience, the God of hope, the God of recompences.* He is also the God of measure, and we cannot challenge His measurements. He measures by distance; He measures by weight; He measures by time. His ability to measure distances baffles the human mind, as seen in the physical universe, and all such measurements are perfect. His ability to measure by weight is perfect. He is said to have weighed the mountains, and to have measured the waters in the hollow of His hand (Isa. 40:12); He measured how much water would be suitable on this globe. He weighs actions on His balances (1 Sam. 2:3). He even weighs the spirits of men (Proverbs 16:2), so perfect are His balances.

I refer now to God’s ability to measure time, for I believe that if we receive this feature of His glory into our hearts, we shall be calm in view of what confronts us. God’s glory is seen, amongst many other ways, in His wonderful ability to measure time. These scriptures begin the subject and end it, but I want to draw upon our knowledge of the Scriptures to refer to others as we proceed.

The first scripture indicates that God measures the seasons and the days and the years. In establishing the great luminaries that rule above, God said, “Let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.” God has

**Jeremiah 51:56 – and, of course, He is the God of peace (Phil. 4:9 and Heb. 13:20) – Editor.*

determined how long a day will be, how long a night will be, how long a month will be, how long a season will be, and how long a year will be. All are fixed from heaven and are outside man's range to alter. God measured them and no one could challenge the perfection of such measurements. The ordinances of the heavens whereby they rule over the earth have fixed the day. We cannot shorten or lengthen it. They have fixed the month – the moon determining the month – they have fixed the seasons and they have fixed the year.

I mention this to show that God has power and uses it to control time and measure it. Now if He has done that in the physical universe, will He stand aside and ignore time in the working out of things here on earth? Never! If He has controlled time in establishing the creation as we now have it, do you think He stands back and has no say in the times that pass over us? He took account of the times that passed over David and the times that passed over Israel (1 Chron. 12:30) and He controls and takes cognisance of the times that pass over His people now. We see this in relation to man in his departure from God in the days of Noah. There was a world in defiance of God, filled with corruption and violence. God fixes the time for that world at 120 years. He says to Noah, "My spirit shall not always strive with man ... but his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3). God measures the time that He will allow such a world to continue, one hundred and twenty years. Will He not do that now? He certainly will. Let us not think that things will go on and on. God has fixed the time for the end. Here in Genesis He fixed, not only the year, but the day. The day Noah went into the ark was the seventeenth of the second month of the six hundredth year of Noah's life. It was fixed, and on that same day the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep broken up. It is all so determined from heaven.

We see that working out again in another way; the period of the persecution of God's people in Egypt is fixed. God told Abraham that his seed would go down into a land not theirs and be persecuted four hundred years, Gen. 15: 13. The period that He would permit His people to be afflicted in the world was fixed by God. He determined that. Will He not do that now? He certainly will. He will fix the time He will permit the world to afflict His people, as He did then. Four hundred years, He says, and you can trace it out.* When the four hundred years are up, the power of Egypt is broken and His people are delivered. All is in His hands as to time. The same principle operates as to the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine in Joseph's day. God in His wisdom measures the time of plenty, and then He measures the time of famine. All is controlled by Him. The dreams that Pharaoh received indicate what God is doing. God makes known to Pharaoh what He is doing during a defined period of plenty and then a defined period of famine. I do not touch on what these things represent, but I point them out to help us to see how time is controlled by God.

I pass on to Numbers, and we find there that the period allotted in the wilderness is fixed by God – forty years, a year for a day (Num. 14:33, 34). Forty days were spent spying out the land; now they were to be in the wilderness forty years. It is clear that the period in which His people are in wilderness conditions, with all it brings upon them, is fixed by God. It is not accidental; it is not casual. It is defined from heaven.

Another matter that God fixes as to time is the space for repentance – a very grave matter for every heart. I refer to Jezebel. Scripture says, “that woman Jezebel” (Rev. 2:20) –

** It is evident that the 400 years ran from when God spoke with Abraham – Editor.*

the most wicked queen that has reigned. But the Lord says, “I gave her time that she should repent” (Rev. 2:21). The Lord allotted to her a period for repentance, known to Him as to its length, but defined. She repented not. This matter has tested me and I hope it will come home to all, that heaven allots a period for repentance. We cannot say on our side exactly how long it is, but heaven fixes it. If repentance is reached within that period, thank God; but if it is not, the period is passed over to our loss. I am not speaking primarily to unbelievers. I am including each one of us in relation to any matters that need adjusting, that need repentance. There is a period in the mind of God, and if we miss it, then we may miss it for the rest of the journey. The Lord controls the time for it to be done. It is in His hands. Even be we such as Jezebel, there is space for repentance. If we pass that space, the matter is settled.

We see this principle working beautifully as to Nineveh. The prophet comes there and says, “Yet forty days” (Jonah 3:4). God granted that space for repentance. We cannot tell how long the forty days literally may be to any one of us, but there is space for adjusting matters that are wrong. If, like the king of Nineveh, we humbly face the thing in the forty days, that is our deliverance, but if we pass over the forty days then we are as Jezebel. They went out to look for her but could not find her, for the dogs had eaten her (2 Kings 9: 35). She fell into the hands of the unclean. I commend this matter to each of us. Each knows his own history. Why not put things right while there is time? Let it come home to our consciences and hearts. Why not put it right in the period allotted by heaven? “I gave her space for repentance,” the Lord says.

I pass on to Hezekiah, and would show that God allots us the period of our life here, a most comforting thought. The length of life of one of God’s people is not accidental; the matter is in the hands of God. God, speaking to Hezekiah, says, “Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live” (2 Kings 20:1). The time had come in God’s mind to close

this life. Hezekiah weeps and prays, and God grants him fifteen years. He fixes another period. He measures the extended period of Hezekiah's life. That ought to quieten our spirits whatever comes. Whatever lies before us, our lives – the length of them here – are in the hands of God. Let us not be dismayed, nor filled with undue fear. Let us not fear, for our breath is in the hands of God. Paul says, “the time of my release is come.” This is a great solace to us all. The time is fixed by God. He can in His wisdom extend it, for in the working out of His ways, God takes account of the desires and prayers of His people, whether in lengthening a period of blessing, shortening a time of severe pressure, or deferring the moment of judgment. It is *God*, however, who measures and fixes the time.

I pass on. The period of the captivity is fixed by God – seventy years. God determined the period His people would be in captivity. The end is fixed, and after seventy years, God says, “I will visit you” (Jer. 29:10). The period we have to go through in discipline because of our failures individually or collectively, is fixed by God. Let us humbly accept it. That is what Daniel did. He did not resist, but bowing to it accepted it humbly. He understood by the books when the time was drawing near for the release of Israel. He understood what was written in Jeremiah the prophet about the seventy years.

I come now to the New Testament, where we come to this thought in a most glorious way. The day of the entrance of Christ to this earth is fixed by heaven. The angelic hosts say “this day” (Luke 2:11). Multitudes of the heavenly hosts join in the celebrations of that day. “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born *this day* in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” The day and the place were designed by heaven, God's hand overruling even the Roman census that it should

be in the place, as well as on the day, of His determining – all ordered by heaven, all measured by God.

Then, referring to the public service of Christ, we read, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal. 4:4). Oh, what a time! the *fulness* of the time. One cannot convey much of what this means, but the great outgoing of time was the public appearance of Jesus as sent here as the Son. “God sent forth his Son.” The time for this was measured. “God, having raised up his servant, has sent him, blessing you” (Acts 3:26). Then the duration of the Lord’s public service was measured. It was all ordered from heaven. Again and again they would terminate His life, but could not. They may take Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him down headlong, but He goes His way. They may take stones to stone Him, but His hour was not yet come. The day of the death of Jesus is also fixed by heaven – the “due time” (Rom. 5:6). I could not tell you all that enters into that word “due” – the time measured according to the divine calendar for the great Sacrifice. They say, “Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people” (Mark 14:2). It was the day that the Passover must be killed, like the passover of which it says, “It is a night much observed” (Exod. 12:42). The month of the passover was the beginning of months, but the “night” of the passover sacrifice was to be much remembered. So it was in due time that Christ died for the ungodly – the time due according to divine measurements. If God had His hand over the situation at Calvary, will He not have it over the situation to-day? There never was anything like Calvary for lawlessness in man and for the power of the devil, but God had His hand over the whole situation, and measured it.

I now refer to several passages in the Revelation of kindred import. The Lord says to the church at Smyrna that they would have tribulation ten days. They were going to pass

through a period when some would die, the Lord saying to such “be thou faithful to death, and I will give thee a crown of life ... He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:10, 11). The Lord measures the period of tribulation, more intense perhaps than ever in Christian history, but measured by the Lord – ten days. He fixes the period. Let us face what is ahead of us, realising that He will fix the days. He will fix the ten days. He will know how long to let it go on; He will determine when it begins and when it ends. It is not in other hands. Whoever may be the instrument causing the suffering, the period is controlled by the Lord. “Ye shall have tribulation ten days.”

I refer to Revelation 9, where out of the smoke of the pit come locusts; they are like horses; they have hair like women, teeth like lions. Their noise is like many horses and chariots running to battle. They have a sting like a scorpion, and they hurt men *five months*. This awful scourge that comes from the pit has to be gone through, but the period is determined by God – five months. They cannot shorten it. They look for death, but cannot find it, and the five months have to be gone through.

Then in ch. 11 the prophetic period is fixed in days, not months. There are the two prophets, and it says, “they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Rev.11:3). Nobody can touch them till they have finished their testimony. The period in which the prophetic word is available is fixed by God, even to days. That is a great matter for us to see. We cannot lend our ear to it as we like, assuming it is always to go on. The period of the prophetic word is fixed. They are slain and their bodies lie on the street of the great city three and a half days – the expression of the hatred of the then world for divine testimony. Its contempt for the witnesses is seen in that their bodies lie there three and a half

days; the period is fixed. They cannot leave those bodies there indefinitely. God may permit His testimony to be under reproach and scorn for a period, but the period is fixed. Three and a half days, no longer, and after the three and a half days they stand up on their feet. I call attention to the fixing of the time of reproach and contempt of the saints. God knows how long He is going to allow it.

In ch. 13 the beast is seen arising out of the sea. It has a mouth like a lion, devouring; with feet like a bear, rending in pieces with unspeakable cruelty. It is like a leopard, another evidence of ferocity. It has authority to continue forty-two months, no more. The period of its power is defined, but this period is to be gone through in divine government. For forty-two months the Lamb of God moved amongst men in profound grace and blessing, only to be crucified. The world that refused Him must have forty-two months of the beast the same period as that wherein Jesus moved as the Lamb. “Behold the Lamb of God,” said John when looking on Jesus as He walked – no lion-like character, no bear-like character, no leopard-like character, but the Lamb. The God of recompences recompenses the world with forty-two months of the beast’s authority, but it is limited; that is my point. It is restricted, but it continues that period and then it terminates for ever, the beast going into the lake of fire. We see that what God may permit is not out of His control. If the beast is on earth controlling the minds and hands of man, his power is restricted by heaven; forty-two months, no more and no less.

I close with the final scripture, in which there is frequent reference to one thousand years. God controls an hour or three hours – what hours they were at Calvary, all under the divine control! He controls one hundred and twenty years; He controls four hundred years; He adds fifteen years to a man’s life; He controls ten days of tribulation; three and a half years

of the beast's kingdom is limited by Him, but He is equally able perfectly to control one thousand years. One angel comes down with a great chain. The activities of evil do not mean that God has lost control. He has His angels. One of them can bind the devil; He has His chains, eternal chains indeed, not temporary ones. The angel has a great chain and it is used to bind the devil and put him in the bottomless pit for one thousand years. Year by year, one thousand years, he cannot come out. There is no weakness in the control of that time from the first year to the last. When the thousand years are completed, he must be *loosed* a little by divine order. Not that he breaks through, not that he breaks the chain, but in divine wisdom he must be loosed a little.

Then the prophet sees thrones, and those who sat upon them, who lived and reigned with Christ one thousand years. Those who have part in the first resurrection will live and reign and be priests for one thousand years. The time is allotted by God and under His control. He can allot one thousand as easily as fifteen years. He can control things for one thousand years, as He can control them for one hour. It says of Babylon, "in one hour is thy judgment come" (Rev. 18:10). God can use one hour and one thousand years.

We pass from the thousand years into a scene to which time does not apply. Time is a creature, controlled by God from a moment to one thousand years, but when what God has in mind to do during time is finished, He brings in the new heaven and the new earth and a condition that has no need of the sun or the moon, no need for the gradations of time, be they days or months or years. We shall then have part in a condition that is eternal, abiding for the divine pleasure for ever.

I do not profess to know what God is going to permit, but I am assured of this, that the length of it remains controlled by

Him, whether it be hours or days or months or years, or three and a half years, or fifteen years, or one thousand years. The matter of time is measured by God to accomplish His own purpose. May the Lord help us to be so in the acceptance of it in reality and faith that we may not be overwhelmed with care at this time!

Address given by W.J. House at Ashfield, Sydney, Australia on June 6th, 1940.

CHRIST OUR HOPE

To see Christ – to have the salvation which He wrought out on the cross applied to our bodies as well as to our souls – to have it perfected in our experience even as respects our souls – to have it consummated thus in all who are fellow-partakers with us of Christ – to be with Him, and with them, in our Father’s house – to behold His glory which His Father has given Him – to appear with Him in glory when He appears – to reign with Him over a ransomed and redeemed and happy creation – to fulfil our part in the universal harmony of all in heaven, and all in earth, when all shall bow the knee to Jesus, when every tongue shall own Him Lord, and all voices join to celebrate his praise; this, and far more than this – far more than heart can conceive or tongue explain, is what we wait for; and, above all, we wait for Him whose return shall introduce us to all this perfect blessedness – “we wait for God’s Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (*1 Thessalonians 1:10*). **He is our Hope.** We know Him now by faith as our Saviour, our Lord, our life, our peace, our joy, our all. **And He is our Hope.** He is plainly said to be so in 1 Timothy 1:1, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is **our Hope**. And what He is thus in so many plain words expressly declared to be in this passage,

He is shown to be by the uniform, unvarying testimony of Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Revelation. On few subjects is Scripture testimony more copious; on none is it more uniform and express than on this. *From "Plain Papers on Prophetic Subjects" by W. Trotter (1818-65).*

FAITH FURNISHED FOR THE EVIL DAY

Ephesians 6:10-24

THE very blessings of the church set us in a sort of conflict, that, without such blessings, we should not have. Thus we are subject to more of failure and evil. A Jew might do many things that would be monstrous in a Christian, and find no defilement of conscience. The veil being rent, the light shines out, and the consequence is, that the light coming from the holiest cannot tolerate evil. Blessed be God! we have power to meet the difficulties of our position; and this epistle brings out the provision which God has made for the saints.

The church is seated "in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 2:6) – blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; chap. 1:3. So also are we said to contend with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places (6:12). We are carried into conflict in the very place of strength; for the nearer we are to God, the more we want strength to walk there.

Israel, when they got into the land, found the consequences of sin desperate. What a terrible slaughter at Ai, for the sin of Achan! (Josh. 7). And again, the consequences of neglecting to ask counsel of the Lord about the men of Gibeon went on for generations, even to Saul's time (2 Sam. 21). In the land, where God was and took His place, the consequences of sin were proportionate.

By virtue of our privileges we get this conflict. Moreover, if you and I have more knowledge than many other Christians, there will be more dishonour and failure amongst us than amongst other Christians, unless we are walking according to the light.

“Be strong in the Lord,” (v. 10). Here is the place of strength – strength found only in Him. Whatever instrumentality He may be pleased to use, there is no object of faith but the Lord Himself. Whilst there is nothing more blessed than the ministry of the word, and also, if I have been instrumental in the conversion of a soul, through God’s blessing, that soul will cleave to me, and rightly so, it is of God and God owns it (for if He breaks that which is of the flesh, He creates that which is of the Spirit: God gives it – it may be abused, yet God makes the link between the one blessed and the instrument), yet you cannot exercise faith in man, you cannot put your dependence on man. It is true, there is that link; but it is because the soul is brought to Christ. This alone is conversion. And here is the place of strength. There is no strength but in Christ. I have none, at any time, except as my soul is in secret communion with Him, and (through Him) with God the Father. Now the direct power of Satan is towards this point to keep our souls from living on Christ.

What we call duties, but what God calls “cares,” often separate from Christ. They fatigue and oppress the soul: and if the saints do not cast all this on Christ, they unnerve themselves by things which distract the mind. The person says, I do not enjoy Christ; he knows not how it is, but thinks it is from the pressure of unavoidable care; whilst, in truth, it is the effect and result of having sought his resource elsewhere than in Christ. The soul has got distressed because it has not found Christ in the suffering, and this has thrown it toward something that is not Christ, something that (to human sight) promised fair. Thus it gets a taste for mere idle things. What we are led to by the Spirit is to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” It is no good talking of cares: Satan is behind them all; it is no good talking of difficulties: Satan is behind the difficulties, thrusting them on to shake the power of the word in us; and we may be quite sure of this that, if not in communion, Satan will have the advantage of us, because these cares, etc., are not about Christ. I have all to do to, and for, Christ. He will make us feel our dependence, but it is never falsified.

Whilst thus oppressed with the turmoils of life, it is ever a truth, that we are not in the strength of Christ, for He is stronger than the shop or the family or any other care. It may be I am occupied with something I ought not to be; if I cannot do it, “to the Lord,” I ought not to do it. It is quite certain that Christ’s strength does carry us through everything, no matter what the difficulties are: we shall feel them, we may groan under them; but when I can say, with David, “It is God that girdeth me with strength” (Psa. 18), the enemy may come against me – “a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.” The Lord made him triumph over all.

It is in difficulties that we learn this strength. Hence in little things. the believer is apt to forget, that our whole dependence is to be “strong in the Lord;” that is, not being taken out of the place of conscious weakness. Paul says, “I was with you in weakness,” etc. (1 Cor. 2:3); so again: “without were fightings, within were fears,” 2 Cor. 7:5. It is not that the saint will be able to say, I am strong, when put into difficulties: these make us lean on Christ, when in them, and strength is always there – “strength made perfect in weakness” (a consciousness of weakness). The whole truth of it is in the spirit of dependence, whether we see bright light or not. Paul said, “I glory in mine infirmities” – why? Because they made him lean on Christ. Faith, in exercise, is strengthened, and Christ giveth light to him that wakes up (*see Ephesians 5:14*): “unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness” (*Psalms 112:4*). The reason why a saint, who has had a great deal of joy, often gets into failure is, because it has taken him away from the present consciousness of dependence; the very goodness of the Lord has made him enjoy himself. There is always a tendency for the flesh to slip in.

After showing the place of the Christian’s strength, the apostle says, “Put on the whole armour of God” (v. 11). The great thing is, that it is God’s armour. There is no standing against Satan without this. What is not of God fails. If ever so skilful in argument, and able to confute an opposer with the truth, I have nevertheless done him no

good and myself much harm, because I was acting in the flesh; Satan was working on me, and not God. Whenever it is God's armour, it must be by faith, and in secret communion with God. There is the departure from all strength, when we lose this; not anything we know will be of use – the word of God even, for it is the “sword of the Spirit,” and it is shut up. Strength is always the effect of having to do with God in the spirit of dependence. In the exercise of this dependence, I may have such a blessed sense of His power, that I may triumph over all; but whether in trial or in triumph, I shall be strong in a sense of dependence. If Moses' hands were not upheld, Amalek prevailed; Ex. 17. One who looked on might have been astonished at seeing Amalek prevail at certain times, and would be calculating about the array (the advantages or disadvantages of the array) in which Israel were set; but the secret was, when Amalek prevailed, Moses' hands were down. It was not because Joshua was not in the blessed place of doing God's work, but because the act of dependence on God was stayed. If my mind has been exercised about a brother, and in walking along the streets, on my way to him, I get apart from God, I shall do him no good, though I say ever so much to him.

See the contrast between Jonathan and Saul (1 Sam. 14) – between confidence in God overcoming difficulties, and self failing, with all the resources of royalty. Jonathan clammers up upon his hands and feet, confident in God, and the enemy falls before him. Saul, when he sees the Lord's work going on, not knowing the Lord's mind, calls for the priest. It may be that he had a right intention, but certainly not simplicity of dependence on God (when inquiring what he should do), and he spoils all by his foolish oath. It was said of Jonathan, “He hath wrought with God this day.” God was with him, and he had strength and liberty. When we are walking in dependence upon God, there will always be liberty before God. Jonathan knew what he should do, and took some honey, because he went on in liberty, for God was with him; whilst Saul, in legality, put himself and the people into bondage. Unless we are dependent on God, the very things that would be our armour will be weapons against us,

striking friends instead of enemies, or injuring ourselves.

Observe it is said, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” – “Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may withstand in the evil day,” etc. (v. 13). If I saw a person going into battle without a shield, and without his helmet, etc., I should say he was mad. One living in theory might not have it; but, if we live near enough to God, to be practically in conflict, we shall need “the whole armour.” If we pray without searching the word, or read the word without prayer, we may get no guidance. Jesus said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,” John 15: 7. Without this, I may be asking some foolish thing that will not be given.

Conscious weakness causes a saint not to dare to move without God. I cannot go to meet an enemy with the word and without prayer. If I felt as a sheep in the midst of wolves (Matt. 11: 16), I should be aware of my weakness. I may be, like an antiquary, occupied with the theory of the armour, and not putting it on, not having any real dependence on God.

We have to stand against the wiles of the devil (it is not said his power). As soon as I see them I can avoid them. But after all it is not knowing Satan that keeps us intelligent of and able in discovering his “wiles,” but keeping in God’s presence. It was always so with Christ. Even Peter’s affection tried to make the cross ugly to Him; Matt.16:22. Jesus resisted Satan and discovered his wiles. He not only always received things from above, but in the spirit of dependence on God. The moment we know the thing to be of Satan, the temptation is over if we are walking with God. When the devil came to our Lord (Matt. 4), Christ did not at once say to him, Thou art Satan; that would have been only showing His power. He acted as the obedient Man, and thus foiled the tempter. When the devil claims worship, He then says, “Get thee hence, Satan.” To discern his wiles, we should see whether the thing proposed leads away from obedience

to Christ. If it does, no matter who proposes, I must reject it. The devil has this character of subtilty (not always of open opposition) as the serpent (see 2 Cor. 11: 3); but the place of obedience to God will always upset him.

This is a remarkable expression – “the evil day” (v. 13). It supposes, in a general way, all this present time, for it is the time of Satan’s temptations; but then there are certain circumstances which cause Satan’s power to be more exercised at one season than another. There is a time when the soul will be put to it. It is different to be going on in energy against Satan, and exercising the triumphs of victory, enjoying the triumphs; we may be walking in an energy that overcomes all opposition, or in the conscious weakness of being hardly able to stand. A soul often gets an “evil day” after triumphing through Christ. There may be exaltation in the remembrance of the triumph, and a new source of trial and dependence comes. I may give up the world and be so very happy in the esteem and love of Christians as may bring out a bit of the flesh lower down. A saint often gets into this state, having gone on for a while in the strength of former conquests. A fresh battle comes; and, if he is not prepared for this, he is overcome for a season. The place of strength is always that of being forced to lean on God. As noticed before, respecting David, * what a contrast between his songs of deliverance and thanksgiving to God, and the mournful words, “My house is not so with God” (2 Sam. 22 and 23).

The saint that always fears God, is always strong, for God is always with him; the secret of his strength is, he has God on his side. We are apt to look at means, even right means, and forget God. The most important victory has often come, when we have been most afraid of being beaten – the brightest songs, when an evil day has forced us to lean on God. The soul fearing, and in dependence, difficulties fall before us. We might not be able to

**A reference to another article, “The Last Words of David.”*

explain why success was there, but the secret is, the hands were lifted up. The Lord is always working out His own plans.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” Truth is never really ours but as the affections are kept in order by it. I might preach beautiful truth, and many delight in the truth, but the soul not having been in communion with God in the truth spoken, the loins would not be girt with it.

“And having on the breastplate of righteousness.” A person not having a clean conscience, Satan crows him in his walk; but if the conscience is good, he has on the “breastplate,” and so is not continually thinking of attacks there. If Satan accuse me, I say, Christ is my righteousness. But here it is Satan troubling me as to conscience. If I am not honest in my confessions before God, I am without the “breastplate.” If I have it, there is no need that I should keep looking at my own breast, I can go on in the confidence that I am hiding nothing from God, but am walking in all good conscience before Him. The Lord may shield us in the battle, but we cannot go on in conflict unless we have on this part of the “whole armour.” There is a resource, doubtless, in God’s grace, in all our failure; but the right place is to have a good conscience. And it is the place of liberty and strength.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” The gospel of peace is ours in Christ; but I must have the spirit of peace in my heart. Peace has been made for us that we may dwell in peace. It is the peace that “passeth all understanding” – “the peace of God” that is to keep our hearts and minds. There is no place so full of peace as heaven – no jar there: myriads of worshippers all in concord, while there are a thousand harmonies round the centre of God’s glory. The soul in communion with God will live in the spirit of peace. There is nothing more important, to meet the turmoil of the world, than getting into this spirit of peace. When the spirit of peace does not rule in the heart, how can the saint walk as having always peace?

There may be uncompromising faithfulness in such a man, but he cannot walk as Jesus walked. Nothing keeps the soul in such peace as a settled confidence in God. Without this a man will be continually excited, in haste, and full of anxiety. If the peace of God keep your hearts, you will have the triumph of it; nothing can be heard that is distinctive from it, that does not perfectly harmonise with it. Uncompromising firmness becomes us, yet calmness; and nothing keeps the soul so calm as a sense of grace. This is a sign of power, and, moreover, connected with humbleness. All grace has come to us. A sense of nothingness, with the spirit of peace, gives a power to surmount all things.

“Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” Every “fiery dart” is quenched by confidence in God. A Christian need not be afraid to hold up his head in the day of battle, because God is with and for him. This is not shaken by whatever abominable thought Satan puts into the mind. All is quenched by this confidence. “And take the helmet of salvation.” I hold up my head because I am safe. Salvation is mine.

Strength begins from within. We first have the loins girded about with truth, the breast covered with righteousness, the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, etc., and then we can take (our only offensive weapon) “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” There is nothing more dangerous than to use the word when it has not touched my conscience. I put myself into Satan’s hands if I go beyond what I have from God, what is in possession of my soul, and use it in ministry or privately. There is nothing more dangerous than the handling of the word apart from the guidance of the Spirit. To talk with saints on the things of God beyond what I hold in communion is most pernicious. There would be a great deal not said that is said, were we watchful as to this, and the word not so used in an unclean way. I know of nothing that more separates from God than truth spoken out of communion with God; there is uncommon danger in it.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints,” etc. The word “always” is not used in reference to some other things; prayer is the expression and exercise of dependence. If a person asks me a question, and I answer, without speaking to God about it, it will be more likely to lead from God than to God. Just as with Hezekiah (Isaiah 39) when the ambassadors came and he turned them to his treasures instead of to the Lord who had healed him. When a question or a difficulty comes, do we turn to God? We may have turned to God before, and the thing is answered; and we ought to have that power of prayer that there would be no difficulty when any circumstance arises – this continual supplication; we ought to be furnished unto every good word and work. Thus it was with Jesus. He had prayed before, so when the cup came He was quite ready to drink it.

A wish or a desire expressed to God, in the confidence of a child to its father, is heard; but this is not necessarily prayer “in the Spirit.” When living really in the power of communion, we have that energy of supplication that looks for answers (1 John 3:21, 22; chap. 5: 14, 15), and the apostle, here, speaks of one who is in communion. Thus should it be with us; we should be so walking in the liberty of Christ, as not to be tripped, or thrown out of communion, by the cares, lusts, and anxieties of this life, though it may be an “evil day.”

Suppose you begin the day with a sweet spirit of prayer and confidence in God; in the course of the day, in this wicked world, you will find a thousand causes of agitation; but, if you are spiritually exercised, alive to see the things God is exercised in, everything will become a matter of prayer and intercession according to the mind of God. Thus humbleness and dependence should be marked on all a saint’s actions. Instead of being full of regrets at what we meet with, if walking with Christ, we shall see His interests in a brother or the church. What a blessed thing to carry everything to God! to take all to Him, instead of constantly murmuring over failure! This is our

position – to have on the whole armour of God, and not to be tripped up of Satan. Unless right ourselves, we cannot make intercession for others. The words in verse 18 refer to a man who is walking in “the whole armour.”

The apostle could pray for everybody, and yet he the more needed the prayers of the saints, because he had more cares than others; vv. 19, 20. He always wanted their prayers, as we see; v. 19. Walking in full affection himself, he reckoned on people caring for him; walking as Paul did, this is taken for granted. Here too (vv. 21, 22), and to the saints at Colosse, he speaks of having sent Tychicus, to declare his state – “that ye may know my affairs, and how I do.” He takes their love for granted. We also, if walking in the love of the Spirit, can always count upon others being interested in our “affairs.” In the world it would be pride to suppose others anxious about our concerns; but the saint knows, and counts on, the love of the Spirit in the saints.

To come back to the first great principle – “Be strong in the Lord,” etc. Spite of Satan, and of all he may do to hinder, we have the privilege of individual dependence upon God. Everything may look dark, but the Lord tells us “to be strong.” This is always accompanied with lowliness of heart. Come what will, when the Lord is rested on, we are strong. But our dependence must be simply, and singly, on God.

From “The Collected Writings of J.N. Darby,” (1800-82) Volume 6.

WHAT MANNER OF MAN?

2 Samuel 7: 18-22; Isaiah 57: 15; Matthew 3:16-17.

Most of us here have come to the Lord Jesus and so I would like to speak about what comes after this in our daily walk. When we come to understand the amazing love of God and learn how He has brought about the work of salvation so that we can be in His presence without any fear, we want to understand how we can be pleasing to

Him in our daily walk and in everything that we do. So what pleases God? How can we be pleasing to the Lord who so loved us that He gave Himself for us so that we might receive the gift of eternal life? What kind of a life is pleasing to God?

God had been speaking to King David about many things and we have read of David going into the presence of God and asking certain questions. In the Old Testament days, God set out in the law given to Moses, things which the children of Israel were to do in order to be pleasing to God in their daily life.

Even before that time, God communicated with certain people and gave them directions in their daily walk so that they might be pleasing to Him. So it raises the question with us: “What kind of man is it that pleases God?” That is the question that King David asked, when he went in to sit before the Lord when he said: “**And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?**” God had spoken to him about great and long-lasting blessings with which He was going to bless David’s household but David himself felt unworthy of these – he had not deserved them. So he asks: “**Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto?**”

So it is with us too. When we read in the Bible of the great blessings that God has in store for those that put their trust in Him, we too may ask why it is that God has been pleased to bless those who come to the Lord Jesus with such rich and eternal blessings. We know that we have not deserved them.

We read in Psalm 40 of a conversation which took place in heaven, later quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews 10: 7-10. Having said that God did not desire burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, although God had originally instituted them, it goes on: “**Then said I: 'Lo I come to do Thy will, O God'.**” It was God that had established the system of sacrifices – burnt offerings, sin offerings, peace offerings, offerings of fine flour etc. but these were only figures and pictures. In themselves, as it tells us in the first few verses of the

same chapter in Hebrews, these could never purify the hearts and consciences of those who approached God. So Christ came to take on the whole sin question and make a way in which we could actually be cleansed from sin in the sight of God and that God could righteously forgive us our sins. Paul also speaks of the wonderful blessings we have received in Christ in these words when writing to the Ephesians in Chapter 1: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.”**

Why should God do this? Do we deserve it? The answer of course is No! We do not deserve it at all. David came to a conclusion as to why it was. He says: **“For thy word’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee.”**

God loves to bless, yet the coming in of sin into His universe, prevented Him from unfolding the fulness of His thoughts and purposes of blessing for those who belong to Him until He had dealt with the question of sin. It necessitated God acting from His own side because we could do nothing, being ourselves stained with sin, lost and undone.

Jesus died for us that through the offering of Himself we might be washed clean from our sins and might be welcomed into the presence of God. He took our sins from us and suffered and died, bearing the punishment which we deserved, so that we might go free. He offered Himself to God. So what was the manner of that offering? What was the “manner of man” that was offered to God which was so acceptable to Him? The answer to that question for us is found in the Person of the Lord Jesus – God’s only begotten Son. For thirty years, He had lived in Nazareth almost unnoticed by man. Of those thirty years we know nearly nothing except for a few verses in Luke’s Gospel. It was a life lived amongst men, unremarked, unnoticed and undocumented, yet a life which gave God unbroken pleasure every

day. His **“meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him”** as He tells us in John 4 and no thought or action of His ever deviated from the will of God. During those thirty years, it was not God’s will that He should do great signs and wonders in public, but to remain in obscurity unnoticed by man but every day giving pleasure to God.

During this time, however, there was no restlessness, no attempt to gain publicity for Himself; it was only God’s will that governed all that He did and so He remained in obscurity. Those years were not for us to know about; they were years spent for the pleasure and delight of His Father and for His eye only.

That was the “manner of man” but at the end of those years, God opened the heavens upon Him and proclaimed this time TO US: **“This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”** In Mark’s and Luke’s Gospels God was addressing His Son directly saying: **“Thou art ...”** but in Matthew it is to us, saying: **“This is ...”** It is as if God was saying to us now, “That is the manner of man in whom I am well pleased.”

So for us, if we ask David’s question, “With what kind of man is God pleased?” His answer to us is – “Look at My Beloved Son.” It is in Him that we are blessed. It has nothing to do with our deserving anything at all – it is because of God’s delight in blessing, and He will bless us in Christ. It is as David said: **“For thy word’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them.”** God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ and it is His delight that we should be there on one basis only – that we should be **“to the praise of the glory of His grace.”**

God has acted according to the delight of His heart in pure grace – as the scripture describes it, grace reigning through righteousness, because of the offering of the body of Christ – that offering which was wholly acceptable to God because of what Christ was to Him. You may remember that God had instructed Moses as to the various

sacrifices that they were always to be of **“a lamb without spot or blemish.”** That was probably impossible literally because every animal has some blemish, but God was looking forward, thinking of His Son and certainly in Him, there was no “spot or blemish.” So Jesus became the fulfilment of what every sacrifice in those far-off days meant in types and figures.

If we just pause for a moment to think of the variety of God’s grace shining out in those who will be there in heaven, we can compare the utmost extremes. We can see that His grace has touched every kind of person. At the one extreme, we have those who were once the most hardened in rebellion against Him, the most immoral, the most careless and thoughtless, the most wicked – but all of whom had come to Christ in repentance and had been righteously forgiven because of Christ’s work. At the other extreme, we have those, for example, as in babies who died very early on in their lives, who lived a life so short that they had had little time to do anything good or evil, yet who had still been born in sin as David says in Psalm 51, **“Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”** At both extremes, every one there will be in heaven simply because of the fulness of God’s grace.

When he wrote that psalm, David had sinned very grievously in committing adultery with Bathsheba. His own sin was so gross as to have been worthy of death, yet he knew that with God there was mercy and righteous forgiveness, for he says in Psalm 51:7: **“Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”**

On the other hand, even if there are those in heaven whose life on earth was terminated as a babe – those who have had no time to DO anything good or bad – yet they likewise cannot be accepted by God on any other basis than that of the saving power and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Every one there in heaven will have come the same way – as deserving nothing, but they are there on the basis of God’s grace

alone and because they **are** there, they will be **“to the praise of the glory of God's grace”** as the Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians.

What then is the becoming attitude of our hearts towards God, of those living now in the understanding of such grace?

We find the answer in our second scripture in Isaiah 57. It is that we should be of a humble and contrite heart. That is the constant state of heart that is to mark us.

The Lord Jesus said that if we love Him and keep His commandments, then both He and His Father would come and that they would make their home with such a one (*John 14:23*). In Isaiah we have the same idea. God is called there **“The High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity.”** But He also goes on to say that He dwells somewhere else too! **“I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”**

How beautiful that is! We have seen such a spirit as this in our Blessed Lord Jesus – humility in all its attractiveness. God works in us by His Holy Spirit so that our own spirits may be formed after the likeness of the “manner of man” seen in Christ. We love Him and our desire is to be like Him.

God loves Him and it is His purpose that we should be **“conformed to the image of His Son.”** Such is the wonder of God’s blessings purposed for us in Christ! We can join with David in worship to such a God: **“Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee.”**

That is what I just wanted to convey to you this evening. God is not looking for religiousness with us and certainly will not look upon the proud. Many times in the Bible God speaks against the proud. In Psalm 138 He says that **“He has respect to the lowly but the proud He knows afar off.”** In Proverbs 16 it is said: **“Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.”** Both the Apostles

Peter and James speak of God **“resisting the proud but giving grace to the lowly.”** So it is not this kind of person that gives pleasure to God. What kind of person is it then that gives pleasure to God? It is the kind of spirit that takes after His Son, the Lord Jesus.

We may refer to our third scripture: **“Lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice out of heaven saying ‘This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” (Matthew 3:16,17).** That then is the kind of manhood that God loves. It shone out in all its fulness and perfection in the Lord Jesus, His Beloved Son, and that it what God has in His purposes for us – that we should be conformed to the image of His Son.

May our hearts be more submissive to our blessed God as He works in us to produce such a result! He does not use what we are by human nature, but causes us to become **“partakers of the divine nature.”** He has begun again in new birth and works with that which is completely of Himself – begotten of Him. It is of that work that it is said of the Lord Jesus: **“He is not ashamed to call us brethren saying ‘I will declare Thy name to My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.’”**

Summary of a Preaching by David E. Wells at Selsdon, Croydon, on 5th February, 2017.

He Heard my Cry

Psalm 86:5

At the factory gate a young man from time to time distributed to his colleagues leaflets about the Christian faith. One of the employees was very against him and did all he could to cause trouble for him. When war started in 1939 they were all dispersed.

In 1965, on a station platform, a group of children going to a holiday camp began to sing a Christian song. Nearby, a man listened

to them. Then, approaching them, he turned towards the supervisor and asked him, “Do you recognise me? It is I who caused you such annoyance at the factory, some years back, because of the evangelical tracts that you gave us.

“You know, I was a prisoner of war and I had to work as a wood-cutter in very hard conditions. I was so ill-treated that one evening I gathered my things together with the intention of ending my life. But there at the bottom of my bag I put my hand on a bit of paper, dirty and crumpled, where I could read, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved” (*Acts 16:31*). It was a piece of one of your tracts. I cried out immediately, O God, if you exist, give me news of my family!

“Two days later, I was summoned by the warders. I was given a bundle of papers and a packet from the Red Cross. A few months later, I returned home and everyone acknowledged that I was not the same person. I had found the source of true joy; the Lord Jesus Christ was my Saviour, my peace and my hope.” *Anon.*

Translated from an article in “La Bonne Semence” for 04.02.2017.

POETIC PAGES

Ittai

2 Samuel 15:19-22; John 12:26

“WHEREFORE goest thou with me?”

Said the king disowned –
Said the king despised, rejected,
Disenthroned.

“Go, return unto thy place,
To thy king of yore
Here a pilgrim and a stranger,
Nothing more.

“Not for thee the cities fair,
Hills of corn and wine,
All was portioned ere thou camest –
Nought is thine.

“I am driven where I may,
Banished from my own –
Shame, rejection, I can grant thee,
That alone.

“Turn and take thy brethren back,
With thy people dwell,
I have loved thee, I, the Outcast;
Fare thee well.”

Then unto the crownless king,
On the Kedron’s shore,
All the wilderness before him,
Ittai swore,

“As the Lord lives, and the King,
Ever lord to me,
Where in death or life he dwelleth,
I will be.”

“Go, pass over,” spake the king,
Then passed Ittai o’er;
Passed into the place of exile,
From the shore.

He, and all his little ones,
Granted by that word,
Shame, rejection, homeless wandering
With their lord.

“Go – pass over;” words of grace,
Spoken, Lord, to me:
That in death or life, where Thou art,
I might be.

Dead, and crucified with Thee,
Passed beyond my doom;
Sin and law for ever silenced
In Thy tomb.

Passed beyond the mighty curse,
Dead, from sin set free,
Not for Thee earth’s joy and glitter;
Not for me.

Dead, the sinner past and gone,
Not the sin alone,
Living – where Thou art in glory,
On the throne.

Hidden there with Christ in God,
That blest life I share;
Christ it is who liveth in me –
Liveth *there*.

“He who serves Me,” spake His lips,
“Let him follow Me,
And where I am, shall My servant
Ever be.”

Follow, where His steps lead on
Through the golden street;
Far into the depths of glory
Track His feet. / *P.T.O.*

Till unto the throne of God,
Of the Lamb, I come;
There to share the blessed welcome,
Welcome home!

There with Him whom man despised
In the light above,
Those whom God His Father honours,
Such His love.

Attributed to Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676)

NOTE

The Editor trusts that the selection and composition of material for this magazine has been undertaken with the Lord's guidance and that the contents are of moral and spiritual value and appropriate to present needs. The only infallible statement of truth, however, is found in the Holy Bible and the reader is, therefore, urged to follow the practice of the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). The Editor is always happy to receive comments and inquiries, and to consider suggested articles for inclusion in future issues.