

# Words Of Peace & Truth

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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

In the world around us everything is uncertain; indeed, John reminds us that “the world is passing, and its lust” (1 John 2:17). Institutions of every kind, including governments, are looking increasingly vulnerable; stock markets as I write are again looking shaky, longstanding conventions and practices are being overturned and professedly Christian churches and organisations are publicly embracing what is blatantly contrary to God’s word.

But how good it is to know not only that God is above everything that happens but also that He has foreseen it and, moreover, that He makes everything to serve His will. He can use a Jehu to fulfil his promises but then set his family aside (2 Kings 10:28-31 and 15:8-12); He can use the Babylonians to punish Judah but later execute His judgment on Babylon (2 Chron. 35:11-21 and Isaiah 13:17-22); and in a future (soon coming) day God will use the Assyrian (king of the north) to discipline His people but then execute judgment on him (Isaiah 10:5,6; Joel 2:20; Micah 5:4-6)).

God says through the prophet, “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him” (Ezekiel 21:17). So the kingdoms of this world will soon give way to the kingdom of our God and His Christ (Rev. 11:15). Let us be looking forward to that day, the day of Jesus Christ, when He will be publicly vindicated and – wonderful grace – all those who now suffer with Him during the time of His rejection will share in His glory (Romans 8:17,18). G.S.B.

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## THOUGH ISRAEL BE NOT GATHERED ...”

*Isaiah 49:1-7; John 12:27-34*

I desire to show how the Lord Jesus deeply desires the gathering to Himself of all who truly love Him, whose hearts have been drawn to Him.

As we read in John 1 “He came to his own and his own received him not.” And in Isaiah 49 we see the Lord Jesus doing just that and seeking the gathering of His earthly people. God says in the verses we read, “Thou art my servant, Israel.” Israel was intended by God to be His servant, but they failed to serve God. The Lord Jesus was the true Servant doing all in service for God that Israel failed to do, and thus takes Israel’s place in service. (In the same way Israel was the vine of God’s planting; but the Lord Jesus says, “I am the true vine and ye are the branches.”) Thus as God’s Servant He comes, called from the womb, His mouth made like a sharp sword, as He says Himself, “The Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what I should say and what I should speak.” Coming thus to serve He was concealed, as our scripture says, under the shadow of God’s hand, a polished shaft divinely furnished to do all God’s will. What a contemplation the service of Jesus is, the One in whom God would glorify Himself!

But then He says with the deepest emotion, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain.” Let us pause and contemplate it. After these years of gracious, faithful and untiring service the Lord Jesus says, “It has all been for naught.” And so we read in Luke 19:41, “Seeing the city He wept over it” and in Matthew 23:37, he says, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those that are sent unto her, how often would I have gathered [literally “desired to gather] thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, and ye would not.” What depth of feeling! What depth of sorrow! But then He continues in the prophecy, “nevertheless my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work with my God.” Blessed be our Saviour, He leaves all with His

God – “I praise thee Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to babes. Yea Father, for thus it has been well pleasing in thy sight.”

In our prophecy, the Lord Himself tells us prophetically what the Blessed God says. “Thus saith Jehovah, that formed me from the womb to be his servant, that I should bring Jacob again to him” ... and then the Lord Himself comes in in a parenthesis saying, “(though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God shall be my strength)”. And so He was rejected by Israel, but was glorified in His work upon the cross and is now glorified at the Father’s right hand in heaven; and God has been glorified in Him (John 13:31&32). And then God continues in the prophecy and says of His Son, “And he [Jehovah] saith, It is a small thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the tribes of Israel; I have even given thee for a light of the nations, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth.” What an object of attraction and of gathering our Lord Jesus is for poor gentiles like ourselves – for all who are drawn to Him. “And those of the nations, hearing it, rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord, and believed, as many as were ordained to eternal life” (Acts 13:48).

Now in the verses read in John 12 we have the Lord rejected by Israel and facing His death. He speaks of His being lifted up out of the earth – lifted up to die. He says, “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” God has now nothing more to say to this world that rejected His Son and which now awaits the judgment. It is morally judged already. But the Lord continues, “and I, if I be lifted up out of the earth will draw all to me.” He is really saying, “I am the beginning of another world.” He is now the new centre of gathering and object of attraction for all who are born of God. What a wonderful thing to be drawn to Him who has died and risen again. The Christian now no longer belongs

to the world under judgment, but has passed morally through the death of Christ into another world, has passed from death to life and into the sunshine of the love of God. The Lord Jesus is the One whom man despiseth and the nation abhorreth, but the sun and centre of God's world.

But in a shortly coming day God will see to it that “every knee will bow and every tongue confess ... that Jesus Christ is Lord”, as our prophecy in Isaiah foretells:- “Thus saith Jehovah the Redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to the servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise, princes, and they shall worship, because of Jehovah who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who hath chosen thee.”

Kings shall fall down before Him  
And gold and incense bring:  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all peoples sing.  
Oustretched his wide dominion  
O'er river sea and shore,  
Far as the eagle's pinion  
Or dove's light wing can soar.

But then there is something more – a day is coming when in the purpose of God He will “head up” (or as the KJV puts it – “gather together in one”) “all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth” (Eph. 1:10). In whom? The one whom man despiseth and the nation abhorreth. He is to become the gathering and uniting centre of a vast scene of glory. Let us bow in worship to Him!

What a privilege given to us now to gather to Him in the world where He has been despised and to yield ourselves to Him in true affection. May we all know the reality of it.

*Alex Walker, Papatoetoe, Auckland, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2006 (Revised).*

## LAODICEA

### *Revelation 3:14-22*

Everything which God has entrusted to man in responsibility has utterly failed. Adam in paradise, Noah in the new earth, Israel under law, the priesthood, prophets, and kings – all alike failed in their several positions. The church, alas! is no exception to the general rule; for in Laodicea we behold its final condition as estimated by Him whose eyes, as He walked in the midst of the seven candlesticks, were as a flame of fire. And, again, it should be remembered that the root of the state of this assembly is found in Ephesus – in the loss of her “first love.” It was there the decline commenced, and, whatever the gracious interventions of God to recover His people, this decline continued, expressing itself, as we have seen, in various and widely-different forms, until at length the limits of divine forbearance are reached, and the Lord declares His unalterable purpose of “spueing” the church, as the vessel of testimony, out of His mouth. He finally rejects, as His witness, that which bears His name on the earth.

It is this hopeless, and now irremediable, condition of Laodicea which accounts for the special characters the Lord assumes in His presentation: “*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans\* write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God*” (Rev. 3:14). All these characters express what the church should have been for God in the world; but, [it] having falsified every one of them, and thus become a false witness, the Lord presents Himself as the One in whom they have *all* been verified and secured. God will have His glory maintained. He will permit His people to have the privilege of making it good; but on their failure, He will Himself vindicate His own name.

\* As a great deal has been made of the use of this word, it may be mentioned that the correct reading is *Laodicea*, and not, as in our version, *Laodiceans*.

(1) First, then, Christ is the “Amen.” The key to the meaning of this word may be found in 2 Cor. 1, where we read, “For all the promises of God in Him” (the Son of God, Jesus Christ) “are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (v. 20). That is, in Him is the affirmation, and in Him is the confirmation, of the truth of all that God has spoken. So here the Lord, as the Amen, presents Himself as “the fulfilment and the verifier of all the promises of God.” The church, we repeat, should have been this, but, having forgotten her heavenly calling, and the source of her power and blessing, she has found a home in a scene where the Lord Himself was rejected, and has, in this way, become the denial of, instead of being the Amen to, the promises of God.

(2) Connected with being the Amen, Christ is also the faithful and true witness; and He was that both concerning God and man. Here it is probably in the former aspect He is seen, as God’s faithful and true witness. This, as before noticed, is, from the very figure of the golden candlestick found in the first chapter, what the church was intended to be in this world. The apostle Paul therefore, writing to the Corinthian assembly, says, “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ” (2 Cor. 3:3). But how could an assembly that, in its own estimation, was rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, be the faithful and true witness of Him who, when down here, had not where to lay His head?

(3) He was, moreover, “the beginning of the creation of God.” Adam, the responsible man, was the beginning of the first creation; but in the cross of Christ the first man came to his end before God; he was for ever judged and set aside, and has been once and for all superseded by the Second Man, the Lord from heaven. As soon as Christ came into the world He was the second Man; but He did not take the place until He was risen from the dead, the Head now of a new race, as well as the Head of His body the church. It is Christ, therefore, as risen and glorified, who is the beginning of the creation of God, and it is to Him in this condition that the church,

the church which is His body, is united by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and hence it is that the church “ought to have displayed the power of the new creation by the Holy Ghost; as if any man is in Christ it is a new creation, where all things are of God.” Instead of that, as Laodicea testifies, she has become the expression of her own importance, covetousness, and earthly-mindedness. What an immense consolation then it is, in such a state of things, to look upward and to find that, while everything has slipped from our grasp, to our own shame and confusion of face, God finds the perfect answer to all His own thoughts of grace and has secured all for His own beloved people, in Christ.

The condition and judgment of Laodicea are now given: “*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth*” (vv. 15, 16). Though bearing the name of Christ, and presenting itself in the world as the church, such was its moral condition, the principal feature of which was indifference, springing from the want of heart for Christ, and expressing itself in that spurious charity which regards all “religious” beliefs as alike good, provided there be sincerity. There is consequently lukewarmness, no zeal for Christ, and no hatred of sin; but a mild self-complacent toleration of all, and of all things and connected therewith the substitution of humanity for Christ, and, as a consequence, philanthropy for religion. As has been written long ago, “It would not renounce Christ, would keep up profession, but would sacrifice nothing for Him; it would keep the church’s place and credit, yea, claim it largely on many grounds as a body; but spiritual power, in individual association of heart with Christ or trouble for Him, was gone.”

Such was the condition of Laodicea as discerned, and infallibly discerned, by Christ; and it was nauseous to Him; He abhorred it, and therefore declares irrevocably that He will spue it out of His mouth. He does not say when He will do so; but the



decree has gone forth from His lips, and will never be recalled. Its meaning is, that He will totally, and for ever, reject the assembly (*church*) as His public witness, His responsible light-bearer in the world. This is its primary application; but surely every individual believer may learn, both for instruction and warning, that nothing, no state or condition, is so displeasing to Christ as lukewarmness or indifference.

The Lord, in the next place, exposes the cause of the condition He condemns, and, though He has pronounced judgment, He indicates the remedy: "*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve,\* that thou mayest see*" (vv. 17, 18). As may be gathered from Deut. 8, and other scriptures, the danger in the wilderness for God's people is that of murmuring and unbelief; the danger in the land, when surrounded with blessings, is that of self-sufficiency and self-exaltation. It is into this latter danger that Laodicea has fallen. Possessing all the light of the word of God, and familiar with the spiritual blessings which are the church's acknowledged portion, she forgets the source of her wealth, and ascribes all to herself. It is *she* who is rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing. In other words, she makes everything of man, and nothing of Christ – save to use His name for her own exaltation. "In Laodicea, all that they professed to have, all that man could estimate the value of, was false and human. I do not mean mere outward riches, but all that could give a larger pretension to wisdom and knowledge and learning, perhaps a pretended fuller view of Christianity itself."

\*This should read rather, "And eyesalve to anoint thine eyes." The eyesalve must be "bought" of Christ, equally with the gold and the white raiment.

And what, beloved reader, exists to-day as the counterpart of this description? Nay, what is it that will finally form Laodicea? It is, in one word, *rationalism* – that rationalism which is current under the name of Broad church theology, and which, daily on the increase, occupies a large place in the Anglican establishment, and has almost completely flooded whole fields of Dissent. For the teachers of this school bend all their efforts to eradicate the distinctive truths of Christianity; to rehabilitate the first man, notwithstanding he has for ever been judicially set aside in the cross of Christ; and they are never weary of proclaiming that the light of reason, of their own minds, is all-sufficient to guide them, both in deciding what is the word of God, and also in their journey through the mazes of this world. It is their perpetual boast that they are enriched with all the accumulated treasures of the science, philosophy, and civilization of the nineteenth century. Yea, truly, according to their own estimate, they have need of nothing! \*

But what is the estimate of Christ? He says, “Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and, more than this, He says that Laodicea does not know that she is in this miserable plight. What a difference between the thoughts of Christ and those of this assembly! *She* claims superior knowledge! *He* says she is utterly ignorant! *She* revels in her fancied wealth and possessions! *He* says that she does not possess one single thing. Which estimate then are we to accept? Remember, dear reader, in answering this question, that the Lord had surveyed this assembly with eyes that were as a flame of fire, testing and penetrating into the real character

*\* Now, more than a century later, are we not seeing the **fruits** of rationalism (the mind of man exercised in the things of God, as in the so-called higher criticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) – in the embracing, and even the promotion, by and in “the Church” (including denominations of all kinds) of the grosser exhibitions of the flesh? Because flesh is flesh, and if allowed in its more refined aspects, its coarser features must follow – Editor.*

of everything that met His gaze. Remember, too, that it is He into whose hands all judgment has been committed. Can you doubt then which is the true verdict? When will souls learn that man as man is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked? And this assembly, by its vain self-sufficiency, her self-importance fed with pretended light from human sources, had got “off the ground of Christianity, and on to that of the world or natural man;” and hence her sad and lamentable condition.

Nothing could show out more fully the Lord’s tender grace and long-suffering than the counsel He gives to Laodicea under these circumstances. She has turned wholly away from Christ, except in profession; and yet He would fain draw her attention to Himself as her only source of recovery. Let us then look at what He so graciously proffers. There are three things – “Gold tried in the fire” – a well-known symbol of divine righteousness, which in Christ, as has been remarked by another, is never separated from life; “white raiment,” which, as may be seen from chapter 19, sets forth the righteousnesses of saints, the fruit of the power of the Spirit following upon the possession of, and upon the becoming, God’s righteousness in Christ; and the “eye-salve,” or unction of the Holy One (1 John 2:20), which is the only source of spiritual perception and intelligence. The exhortation “to buy” these things of Christ will be readily understood, in the light of other scriptures. (See Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 25: 9, 10.) It is simply a figure of grace, buying “without money and without price.”

Concerning- the significance of this counsel of the Lord, we transcribe the following words: “They are the divine gifts and power of Christianity *in contrast* with what man possesses as man, with that of which he can say, ‘Gain to *me*’ – man’s conscious possession of that which gives importance and value to man in his own mind ... What was wholly wanting was what was divine and new in man .... They are specifically divine things connected with man’s rejection and acceptance in Christ alone, to be had only in Christ and

from Christ, and nowhere else; not an improvement of man, but what was divine, found in and obtained from Him.” \*

Down to the end of verse 18, the Lord addresses the angel of Laodicea. In verse 19, in view of the possibility of individual believers being found in this corrupt assembly, He announces a general principle of His dealing with His people, and then, as standing outside, appeals for admittance to anyone who should hear His voice. The principle then is, “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent*” (v. 19). That this principle is applicable to those in relationship with Christ (compare Job 5:17, 18; Proverbs 3:11, 12; Amos 3:2; Hebrews 12:5-8, &c.) will scarcely be questioned. It lies indeed at the foundation of God’s governmental ways with His people in this world, and hence the exhortation, “Be zealous therefore, and repent.” The Lord thus warns any of His people, as well as those who were only professors, that His rod was already lifted up, and that, unless there were repentance, He must let it fall for chastening and rebuke. Precisely the same thing is seen in the discipline He exercises at His table. “If,” says the apostle, “we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged;” and again, “When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11: 31, 32.) It is therefore out of the tenderness, out of the love of His own heart, that this warning proceeds. He never afflicts willingly; but if His people continued deaf to His entreaties and appeals, He loves them too well to allow them to pass on unrebuked and without chastening.

In the next verse we have, first, the position which the state of Laodicea has compelled Him to assume: “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.*” The church on earth is God’s habitation through the Spirit, and yet we find in this scripture that Christ is constrained by the condition into which it has fallen to be outside. Judgment is

\* *Collected Writings of J.N.D., Expository No. 2 (Old Series) p. 524; (New Series) p. 349.*

not yet executed; He has not yet spued it out of His mouth; but He has taken His place outside.\* So also we read in the Gospel of Matthew that, immediately on His passing judgment upon the temple, and Judaism, in the words, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,” He “went out, and departed from the temple,” (Matt. 23: 38; 24:1). It is the same with Laodicea; it has become man’s house, not God’s – a testimony therefore, not to Christ; but to man’s own importance .and self-sufficiency. In sorrow, and, as we know from the analogous case of the departure of the glory from the temple (Ezekiel 10, 11), reluctantly, the Lord, unable to bear longer, consistently with what He is, with the moral corruption and perversion of the truth, which had become associated on earth with His holy name, will go forth, and for ever take His place outside the professing church. And let it not be overlooked that, even though Laodicea may not, so far, be fully developed,† the Lord may act in this manner, even now, in respect of individual assemblies. If one of these falls morally into correspondence with Laodicea the Lord could not sanction it by His presence in the midst, for in such a case the saints could no longer be said to be gathered unto His name.

If, however, the Lord has definitely taken His place outside of Laodicea, He has not abandoned any of His own who, failing to discern that the Lord has departed, may still be inside. Hence He

\* Remembering the candlestick character of the assembly here, this interpretation may perhaps be questioned. But while it is true that He is outside the hearts of those addressed, seeking admittance, it is also to be remembered that Christ is not within Laodicea, for in no sense could it now be said to be God’s habitation through the Spirit.

†In fact, though that which will form Laodicea is plainly seen on every hand, the actual time of its full presentation as Laodicea is not stated, nor when it will be spued out of the Lord’s mouth – Author.

*The author lived more than 100 years ago. Alas, the Laodicean state has become much more apparent in recent years – Editor.*

says, "Behold, I stand at the door, *and knock.*" Full of long-suffering and grace, He waits upon any who may have been carried away by the seductions around them, lulled to sleep by the atmosphere in which they have been living, and with urgent appeals seeks to arouse them out of their lethargy. He thus stands at the door, the door closed upon Himself, and knocks, if perchance any true-hearted but slothful saint, like the bride in the Canticles (chap. 5), may respond. Should there be even one such who shall hear His voice and open the door, He says, "*I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*" (v. 20). The order of the possible response is to be observed. There is first hearing His voice – His call to repentance – and then opening the door. Now the bride heard His voice, but lacked the energy to open the door until it was too late. It is not enough, therefore, to hear His voice; many believers, found, alas! in evil associations, do this, but remain where they are; and so it may be with saints in Laodicea, unless, indeed, in His mercy the Lord lays hold of them, as the angels did Lot in Sodom, and compels them to open the door.

The door being opened ("if any man . . . open the door"), how rich the blessing, realized. First, "I will come in to him" – not into Laodicea; its doom is sealed; but in to him, to him who, by grace, had opened the door. And coming in He will manifest all His grace. "I will sup with him"; that is, 'I will come down to where he is, and have fellowship with him in his things.' How wondrous His condescension! But if He first will sup with him who has opened the door, it is that He may lead him up into the higher blessedness of supping with Himself, of having fellowship with Him in His things, in communion with Himself, the most exalted privilege, though intended for every saint, and the most blissful enjoyment, that any can possess whether in time or in eternity; for it is the realization of our perfect association with Christ.

The promise to the overcomer is of a very different character from that in Philadelphia. It is, "*To Him that overcometh will I grant*

*to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne*" (v. 21). Overcoming here would be hearing the voice of Christ, and opening the door to Him; for this involves a judgment of the Laodicean condition, and separation from it morally. Every one then, thus overcoming, should sit with Christ in His throne. He Himself had overcome (see John 12:31, 16:33, though this be not all that He overcame), and was set down with His Father in His throne; and, in like manner, the overcomer in Laodicea should sit with Him in His throne. It is promised association with Himself in the public display of glory in the kingdom. Infinite grace surely, and yet a very different character of blessedness from the intimate and heavenly association with Himself promised to the Philadelphian overcomer. Both alike are the gifts of His grace, but the gifts are manifestly in relation to the path and testimony of each while upon the earth, in the scene of the Lord's rejection.

Finally, as in the three previous communications, the proclamation to him that "*hath an ear*" closes the letter. And this proclamation is still sounded out, with increased energy, among the people of God. Oh! that it might both find and create many an opened ear, that, the hearers rousing themselves from their supineness and indifference, may listen to "*what the Spirit saith unto the churches*" and that, through grace, they may receive strength to judge all they are connected with by the unerring standard of the living Word; so that, taking their place apart from the evil, they may have the girded loins and the burning lights while awaiting the Lord's return.\*

\*It is to be particularly observed that there is no allusion to the coming of Christ in this letter. The reason may be that, while the Lord may morally reject that which will constitute Laodicea at the rapture of the saints, He may not execute His public judgment upon it till after the saints are with Himself, just as Jerusalem was not publicly judged for more than thirty years after Pentecost. He will

then let the world see that He has removed His candlestick – Author.

*In other words, when the Lord Jesus has caught all true believers up to Himself (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17), the ‘carcass’ of mere profession will be left to be judged with the world as part of that represented as Babylon in Revelation 18 – Editor.*

*Reproduced from “The Visions of John in Patmos” by Edward Dennett (1831-1914).*

### **THE FLESH**

I venture to present some thoughts about “the flesh” as spoken of in the Holy Bible, particularly in the New Testament, desiring that we may all be helped to understand better this subject of vital and practical importance. Sometimes we talk about ‘practical Christianity,’ perhaps referring to good works, but surely nothing is more practical than the truth which the apostle Paul brings before us in chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the Epistle to the Romans, in which he addresses our relationship to the world of sin and to the law and shows us how to get the victory over sin working through the flesh.

I am not a Greek scholar but reference to a good concordance (such as “Young’s Analytical Concordance or Wigram’s “Englishman’s Greek Concordance”) confirms that the Greek word translated “flesh” in several versions of the New Testament, especially the older ones, is *sarx*. This word is used whether the reference is to the physical body of flesh, as in “the Word became flesh” (John 1:18) or “the life which I now live in flesh” (Galatians 2:20), or to what is carnal and displeasing to God, as in “the mind of the flesh is enmity against God” (Romans 8:7). I do not subscribe to the school of thought which says that a word in the original language must always be translated the same way in another language. If, for example, I were to translate the English word ‘nice’ into French, I would have to use a different word dependent on whether nice meant tasty (as in “that was a nice bun”), or exact



(as in “that door is a nice fit”), or simply good and decent (as in “he is a nice chap”).

Nevertheless, it seems that the English word “flesh” is fairly equivalent to the Greek word “sarx.” Some translators have endeavoured to help readers of the Bible to distinguish instances where it is the physical condition that is meant from those which refer to the old (sinful) nature. So in the New International Version, for example, Paul says in Galatians 2:20 “The life that I live in the body” but Romans 8:5 reads: “Those who live according to the sinful nature ...” Three questions, however, arise. Firstly, if no verbal distinction is implied in the inspired Scripture we surely need to be careful about introducing one in the English rendering, however helpful this may seem to be. Secondly, the translator making the distinction needs to be very sure that he has correctly grasped the meaning of the passage in question.

Thirdly, while in several instances it is clear whether the physical or moral is meant, it seems that in some cases both elements come close together. In this connection, there is a helpful note in the Darby translation to the word “fleshly” in 1 Corinthians 3:1 (“carnal” in the KJV – the Greek word is *sarkinos*, a derivative of *sarx*) which includes the following comment: “... there are many places where *sarkinos* is used for either [physical or moral], as Romans 15:27, physical; Romans 7:14, moral; 2 Corinthians 3:3, physical. ... 1 Peter 2:11, “fleshly lusts,” shows how in N.T. thoughts ***they run into one another*** ...” (my emphasis). I consider this an important point, because ***it is through the members of my body that the activities of the old nature, if allowed, will act.*** This closeness of the physical and moral elements comes out in Romans 8:13 (KJV): “but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” I hasten to add that this is not death to nature, which is error, but the disallowance, in the Spirit’s power, of our bodies being used as the vehicle for the activities of the flesh – that is to say, the flesh in the sense of man’s fallen condition.

Before we came to faith in Christ, our state was “in the flesh.” “For when we were in the flesh, the motions [*or passions*] of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death” (Romans 7:5). (“By the law,” I am sure, means that it was by the application of the law that sins were exposed for what they were, as the continuation of the chapter shows.) But in the next chapter Paul assures the believers at Rome that “ye are not in flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Rom. 8:9). Thus there has been a change of standing before God.

It is important to appreciate this change of standing in order to understand the difference between the Old and New Testaments. While in O.T. days, as now, a work of the Spirit of God was needed in a person to cause him or her to walk in God’s ways, they were still “in the flesh” and the religion that God gave to His earthly people Israel was suited to man in his natural state. Thus the order of things ushered in by the law given through Moses appealed to man’s five natural senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell). But in 2 Corinthians 5:17 we read, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [*or, there is a new creation*]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Moreover, under the old system, man being in the flesh could not come into the immediate presence of a holy God; apart from Moses, only the high priest could enter the holy of holies within the tabernacle (later, in the temple) and he only once a year in the prescribed manner. Whereas our verse in 2 Corinthians 5 goes on to say, “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” Reconciliation means the removal of the moral distance between us and God; Romans 5:10 tells us that we have been “reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” Thus we are not only forgiven but brought into God’s favour, like the prodigal son welcomed by his father, and we have access to God, known as our Father, through Christ and by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18).

But it is one thing to know that I have a new standing before God, and another to be able to deal with the working of the flesh in me, though the one (if really appreciated) greatly helps in the other. For although (as having faith in Christ and having received the gift of God's Holy Spirit) I am no longer "in the flesh," the flesh is still in me! One elderly servant of the Lord (now with Him) said more than once in my hearing, as to the flesh, "it doesn't get better with the keeping!" We are not told directly why God leaves the flesh (the old nature) in us after conversion but perhaps we get a hint of the reason from what God told His earthly people through Moses: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart ..." (Deuteronomy 8:3). We have to learn our own nothingness and complete dependence on God. The apostle Paul said, "For *we* are the circumcision, who worship by [the] Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh" (Philippians 3:3 – Darby Trans.).

So it was nearly at the end of Israel's wilderness journey that the incident occurred that involved the making of the brazen serpent. They (or their parents) had known escape from judgment in Egypt through the value of the blood of the passover lamb (speaking to us of the price of our redemption [1 Peter 1:19]), had been brought through the Red Sea (speaking to us of Christ's death for us, delivering us from the present evil world), had drunk of the water that flowed from the smitten rock (speaking to us of the Holy Spirit given to us in consequence of the redemptive work of Christ and His ascension into glory), had fed on the manna from heaven (speaking to us of the lowly Man of the Gospels as our daily food) and had proved many mercies from God along the way. Yet, nearing the end of the journey to Canaan, we read of them in Numbers 21 becoming impatient on the way and speaking against God and against Moses. They even said "our soul loathes this light bread" – this said of "angels' food" (Psalm 78:25 KJV), or "the bread of the mighty"

(JND)! This illustrates the incorrigibility of the flesh; it can never be improved and it always detests Christ.

The answer to the state of the people at that time was for Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole; “and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” This serpent had never hurt anyone but was made like the fiery serpents which had. So Paul says, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). We should note that in this part of the Epistle to the Romans it is not *sins*, but *sin* that is under consideration; in other words, not acts of commission or omission, or the guilt that has resulted from them (these matters are dealt with in chapters 1-4 of the epistle), but the *root principle*. The Lord Jesus said (Matthew 12:33) “Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt.” The tree is figurative of the root principle of sin, while its fruit represents the sins which spring from that root, that sinful state. *Sins* can be forgiven but *sin* is condemned. Thus it is in the Gospel of John, which scarcely mentions the forgiveness of sins but concentrates more on our *state*, that the incident of the brazen serpent is recalled: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14). Similarly in 2 Corinthians 5:21 we have (not Christ bearing our sins but) *made sin* for us.

Where do these Scriptures lead us? They teach us that God has judged and set aside in the death of Christ the sinful condition that characterised us as in the flesh. We must emphasise that Christ Himself was ever pure, spotless and holy. Upon His coming into manhood the angel spoke to Mary of “the holy thing which shall be born” (Luke 1:35). John later wrote “in Him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). But in love He not only bore the *sins* of all who believe in Him (Isaiah 53:12; 1 Peter 2:24) but He submitted to the judgment that our sinful *state* deserved, which was condemned and ended for God

there on the cross of Christ. And how do I practically get freedom from the working of sin in the flesh? By looking away to – believing on – the One who, lifted up on the cross, suffered thus in my place. But you may say, ‘I am already a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ; I trusted Him as my Saviour and Lord many years ago.’ But do I by faith see Him as not only bearing my sins and the penalty that they deserved but also as suffering because of God’s condemnation of sin in the flesh? Do I look at Him as the Israelites had to look at the serpent made of brass (brass speaking of divine judgment), counting His death as mine and realising that I am to live in His life? I need continually to look away from myself to Him to experience practically what it means to be delivered from bondage to the world, to the law and to the working of sin in the flesh.

In Romans chapter 6 we learn that as believers on Christ we have through baptism become identified with Him in the likeness of His death (the water of baptism), and that “our old man has been crucified with Him.” This is true in God’s sight and we need to reckon it so in our own minds. Similarly, we read in Galatians 5:24 that “they that [are] of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts.” This is the position we have taken in committing ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and we need to allow it to govern our minds and outlook. But we cannot maintain this in any strength of our own; so the apostle goes on to say, “If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit.”

Reverting to the Epistle to the Romans, Paul says in the opening of chapter 8 (verse 2), “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death.” I am sure he was speaking here from experience, not just stating abstract truth. I cannot pull myself up by my own boot straps; I must disown the flesh that troubles me and look away from myself to Christ, who is alive from among the dead and has imparted His Spirit to me that I may live *to* Him (the new Husband of Romans 7:4) and *in* Him. So it is by the Spirit that I put to death the deeds of the body and enjoy

life according to God (Rom. 8:13). The power comes from the Holy Spirit but it is my responsibility to draw on that power.

But the question faces us all as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, do I really want this, or am I content to continue with the things of the flesh and of the world – the flesh that detests Christ and the world that rejected Him? Has He so captured my heart that I desire to be free of everything that is not according to Him (Colossians 2:8)? If so, let me embrace the fact that I am no longer in Adam but in Christ and look away from myself to Him who died for me and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:15). The Spirit has been given to me – amongst other wonderful services of His – to help me in this.

One last word: let us not be deceived as to how the flesh may exhibit itself. We may easily enough recognise it if one loses one's temper, tells a lie, gets involved in an illicit relationship, defrauds another, etc., but the flesh can be 'nice.' Remember how Simon Peter, not long after he had made a remarkable confession of who Christ is (Matthew 16:16), spoke in apparently kind terms to the Lord, but Jesus, turning round, "said to Peter, Get away behind me, Satan, for thy mind is not on the things that are of God, but on the things that are of men." A list of the works of the flesh is given in Galatians 5:19-21 (not exhaustive, for the apostle adds "and things like these") and this includes not only obviously gross things such as murders and drunkenness but also strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, schools of opinions and envyings. In the next chapter he writes: "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap. For he that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit shall reap life eternal."

May we not only embrace the scriptural truth about the flesh as a matter of doctrine but, like the apostle Paul, know what it is practically to be set free from the law of sin and death by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and to walk by the Spirit day by day. *G.S.B.*

## THE STOCK AND THE BRANCHES

*(Jesus says:) "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman ... I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abides in Me and I in him, **he** bears much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:1,5).*

"In all the vegetable world, there exists no tree which illustrates in a more eloquent manner than the vine the relation of man with God. There is no other of which the fruit and the juice are so invigorating and stimulating. But there is not another which, by itself, may be so fundamentally useless; of which the growth may so quickly produce wood, but wood which serves no purpose other than to be thrown on the fire. Of all plants, no other has need of the scateurs in such a merciless and frequent way. No other is so dependent on the care of the cultivator." (*A. Murray*)

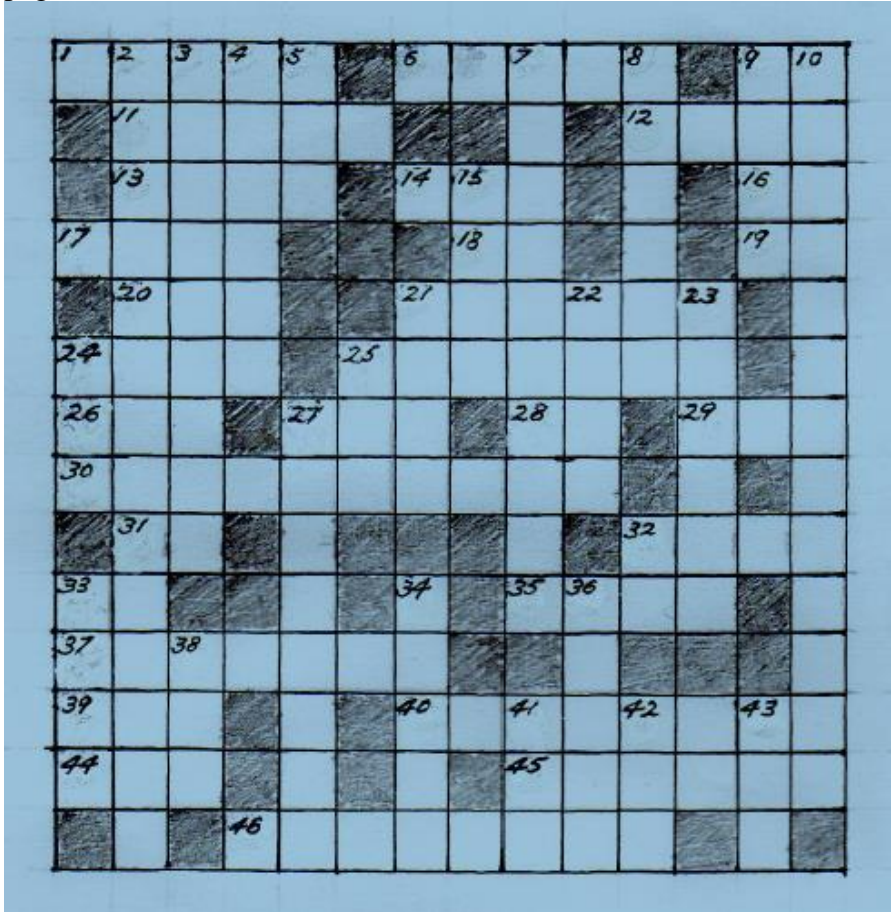
We understand how Jesus might take this image of the vine to teach us in particular a double and important lesson. He designates Himself as the stock, the base of the vine; the believers are the shoots, otherwise called the branches. It goes without saying that a branch of the tree is not alive and cannot produce fruit unless it is linked up to the trunk which bears it and the sap is circulating through it.

"Abide in Me," says Jesus (verse 4) (the branch attached to the stock), "and I in you" (the sap circulating through the branch): this is the first condition for bearing fruit. "For without Me ye can do nothing," the Lord confirms to His disciples.

The second condition: to submit to the competent and attentive pruning of the vine-grower, "the Father," in order to bear more fruit. To bear fruit, more fruit, means to allow the life of Jesus to occupy our thoughts, to fulfil His will, to do what He pleases.

*Translated from "La Bonne Semence" for Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2018.*

This crossword puzzle has been designed to stimulate thinking about things found in the Holy Scriptures. Most of the words to which the clues relate are found in the Bible but some others have been included to make the puzzle work. The answers are found on page 93.



**CLUES. Across:** 1. I get what I don't deserve (5). 6. I don't get what I do deserve (5). 9. Judah's eldest son (2). 11. He wrote a psalm (5). 12. This king of Israel committed worse evil than all who were before him (4). 13. There was one of many colours (4).



14. Naaman had to do this (3). 16. His bed was more than emperor size (2). 17. Our position of favour with God as believers (4). 18. The port of Phoenice *lay* toward the N.W. but *looked* in the opposite direction (Acts 27:12). (2). 19. Be quiet (2). 20. They had to leave it to follow Jesus (3). 21. The priest does this in the laver (6). 24. King Nebuchadnezzar was at the ---- of his power when he was driven from men. 25. To clear the guilty (7). 26. It is appointed unto men once (3). 27. A small flap or mark (3). 28. They knew that Jesus was – the house (Mark 2:1 JND) (2). 29. Sound made by silly bird to which Hosea likened Ephraim (3). 30. John Newton and William Cowper compiled these (5,5). 31. Pronoun, or modern technology (2). 32. Some such were used to bake an oblation (or meat-offering) (4). 33. Alternative rendering of “Woe to” the land beyond the rivers of Cush (or Ethiopia) (2). 35. Arab ruler (4). 37. A successful warrior with a redoubtable uncle and he obtained an agile wife (7). 39. Satan is the father of this (3). 40. He made a return journey but went back different from when he left (8). 44. Over there (3). 45. Will the ships of Tarshish (Isa. 60:9) be as big as these? (6). 46. King of the north (8).

**Down:** 2. Removal of enmity (14). 3. Sin covered (9). 4. Young women should be this, according to Paul’s letter to Titus (6). 5. 5,000 men did, plus women and children (3). 7. No forgiveness without this (10). 8. Arabic version of Joseph (6). 9. Greek god of love (4). 10. No peace without this (13). 15. Egyptian goddess (4). 21. A virtuous woman is priced above this (4). 22. The woman of Revelation does this on seven mountains. 23. A city of Samaria that was greatly blest (6). 24. According to Mark, there was much of this at Jairus’s house. 25. A name of God; praise ye --- (3). 27. Described by Paul in two letters as a beloved brother (8). 32. Greek letter used in formulae for circumference and area (2). 33. “Be ye ----, for I am ----” (4). 34. It shines in the face of Jesus Christ (5). 36. Paul passed by it on his way to Troas (5).

38. Jesus would have gathered them like this (3). 41. Old priest fell off his seat backward (3). 42. The Samaritan took him there (3). 43. He had a wise and skilful son (3).

### **JUDGMENT-SEAT OF GOD AND OF CHRIST \***

I AM not aware that this expression, “the judgment-seat of God” or “the judgment-seat of Christ,” is found anywhere else than in Romans 14 and 2 Corinthians 5: in the first of these two passages with a view to prevent individual judgments; in the second with a view to provoke to do good. The subject in itself is one of the most solemn and at the same time most blessed, and this so much the more as we understand it rightly. I believe that each act of our lives will be manifested then before the tribunal, according as the grace of God and His ways with us in connection with our own acts will be known then. We read (Rom. 14) that “every one of us shall give account of himself to God”; and the word, in this passage, mentions the tribunal in connection with the exhortation to brethren not to judge one another in respect of days, meats, or any other such thing.

I am disposed to think that the *acts* alone will be subject to manifestation; but all the private acts of our life depend so intimately upon our inward feelings, that it is, in a certain sense, difficult to distinguish the acts from the simple thoughts. The acts manifest the power of the thought or of the feeling. I believe that the whole of our acts will be detailed there, before the judgment-seat, not for us however, as if we were in the flesh, and thus to our condemnation, but to make evident to our own eyes the grace that occupied itself with us – regenerate or unregenerate. In the counsels of God I am elect before the foundation of the world; hence I think that my own history will be detailed before the judgment-seat, and, parallel with it, the history of the grace and of

\* The best editions read in Romans 14:10, “judgment-seat of God.”

the mercy of God toward me. The why and the how we did this or that will be manifested then. For us the scene will be declarative, not judicial. We are not in the flesh before God; in His eyes by His grace we are dead. But then, if we have walked according to the flesh, we must see how we lost in blessing thereby, and what loss we have incurred; and, on the other hand, the ways of God towards us, all ways of wisdom, of mercy, and of grace, will be perfectly known and understood by us for the first time. The history of each one will come out in perfect transparency; it will be seen how you yielded and how He preserved you, how your foot slipped and how He raised you up again, how you were drawing near danger and shame and how He by His own arm interposed.

I believe this is the bride making herself ready, and I consider that moment as a wondrous one. There will be no flesh then to be condemned; but the new nature will enter into the full knowledge of the care and of the love, which, in true holiness and in righteousness and even in grace, have followed us step by step all through the running of the race. Some parts of our life, till then entirely unexplained, will be fully disclosed and become altogether plain; some tendencies of our nature, that perhaps we do not judge to be so pernicious and deadly as they are, and for the mortification of which we are perhaps now subjected to a discipline that we may not have interpreted aright, will be then perfectly explained; and, what is more, the very falls that plunge us now into such bitter anguish will be seen then to be that which God used to preserve us from something more terrible. I do not think that until then we shall ever have had a full knowledge of the badness of our flesh.

How blessed for us to know that then it will be not only all over with the flesh in the counsel of God, but that the flesh will no longer be attached to us! On the other side, I doubt not, the manifestation of God's grace toward us individually will be so magnificent that even the sense of the perversity of the flesh that we had, if it could possibly enter there, would be excluded by the greatness of the

sense of divine goodness. Why do we not deny and mortify the flesh when we think of that hour? The Lord grant that we may do so more and more to the glory of His grace. This great subject of the judgment-seat brings the soul to a very full knowledge of our individual standing. *J.N. Darby (1800-82), C.W. [N.S.] Vol. 23.*

*Note: it should be borne in mind that the above article is scarcely concerned with the great white throne before which the wicked dead will be arraigned (Revelation 20:11-15) but more with the judgment-seat before which believers will appear to receive the Lord's assessment of our pathways on earth – Editor.*

### **THE WORLD NOW AND THEN**

This world is not to remain for ever the sporting-place and playground of the devil. That will not be allowed for ever. The Son of David will yet have His place in it, and His glory too, as its ruler, and the world will then be altered. “None shall hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.” There is a time coming when Christ will be the Prince of peace. He has declared positively that this is not at the present time. “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother,” etc. (*Luke 12:51-53*). That is, this is the time when the bringing in the light awakens the passions of men; and until Christ's second coming puts them down, they continue their raging.

And Christians now have to take up the cross and follow Him. Do you think if Christ were reigning, His followers would only have the cross? Why, they would have the crown. We are positively told that our part is the cross. We must now take it up every day. But, when Christ reigns, that will not be the part of His people. He will “come to be glorified in his saints”; and a glorious place they will get, when He comes to reign.

When this time comes to gather together all things in one, the church of God will be the centre of all things in heavenly places, and the Jews the centre of all things on earth, Christ being the Head over all. This is what we find stated in the chapter of Ephesians which we have read – “that ye may know what ... is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” – the time namely of which we are speaking – “and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.”

*Extracted from “Lectures on the Second Coming of Christ” by J.N. Darby; Collected Writings [New Series] pp.229-230.*

**Solution to Crossword. Across:** 1. Grace. 6. Mercy. 9. Er (Gen. 38:3). 11. Ethan (Psa. 89). 12. Omri (1 Kings 16:23-25). 13. Coat (Gen. 37:3). 14. Dip (2 Kings 5:14). 16. Og (Deut. 3:11). 17. Sons (Gal. 3:26). 18. SE. 19. Sh. 19. Sh. 20. Net (Mark. 1:16-18). 21. Rinses (Exod. 40:30). 24. Acme (Dan. 4:28-33). 25. Justify (Rom. 3:26). 26. Die (Heb. 9:27). 27. Tab. 28. At. 29. Coe (Hos. 7:11). 30. Olney Hymns. 31. It. 32. Pans (Lev. 2:5). 33. Ha (Isa. 18:1). 35. Emir. 37. Othniel (Joshua 15:13-19). 39. Lie (John 8:44). 40. Onesimus (Philemon vv. 10-16). 44. Yon. 45. Liners. 46. Assyrian (Isa. 10:5,6 and Dan. 11:40-45).

**Down:** 2. Reconciliation (Rom. 5:10,11; 2 Cor. 5:18). 3. Atonement (Exod. 32:30; Lev. 16:10 etc.). 4. Chaste (Titus 2:5). 5. Eat (John 6:5-13). 7. Repentance (Acts 20:21). 8. Yousef. 9. Eros. 10. Righteousness (Isa. 32:17; Rom. 5:1). 15. Isis. 21. Ruby (Prov. 31:10). 22. Sits. 23. Sychar (John 4:5, 39-42). 24. Ado. 25. Jah (Psalms 68:4 and 147:1). 27. Tycheus

(Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). 32. Pi. 33. Holy (1 Peter 1:16). 34. Glory (2 Cor. 4:6). 36. Mysia (Acts 16:8). 38. Hen (Luke 13:34). 41. Eli (1 Sam. 4:18). 42. Inn (Luke 10:34). 43. Uri (Exod. 35:30).

## POETIC PAGES

### My Reception

*Luke 15: 11-32*

“In the distant land of famine,  
Craving with the swine to feed:  
Oh! how bitter that awakening  
To my sin, and shame, and need.  
Dark and dreary all around me,  
Now no more by sin beguiled,  
I would go and seek my Father,  
Be a bondman, not a child.

“Yet a great way off He saw me,  
Ran to kiss me as I came;  
As I was my Father loved me,  
Loved me in my sin and shame.  
Then in bitter grief I told Him  
Of the evil I had done –  
Sinned in scorn of Him, my Father,  
Was not meet to be His son.

“But I know not if He listened,  
For He spake not of my sin;  
He within His house would have me,  
Make me meet to enter in –  
From the riches of His glory  
Brought His costliest raiment forth;  
Brought the ring that sealed His purpose,  
Shoes to tread His golden courts.

“Put them on me – robes of glory,  
Spotless as the heavens above;  
Not to meet my thoughts of fitness,  
But *His* wondrous thoughts of love.  
Then within His home He led me,  
Brought me where the feast was spread,  
Made me eat with Him, my Father,  
I who begged for bondman’s bread!

“Not a suppliant at His gateway,  
But a son within His home;  
To the love, the joy, the singing,  
To the glory I am come.  
Gathered round that wondrous temple,  
Filled with awe His angels see  
Glory lighting up the Holiest,  
In that glory Him and me.

“There He dwells, in me rejoicing,  
Love resplendent in His face:  
There I dwell, in Him rejoicing,  
None but I can know His grace.  
To that blessed place of nearness –  
Ground no other foot can tread –  
He has brought the lost and found one,  
He who liveth and was dead.”

This the ransomed sinner’s story,  
All the Father’s heart made known;  
All His grace to me the sinner,  
Told by judgment on His Son.  
Told by Him from depths of anguish,  
All the Father’s love for me;  
By the curse, the cross, the darkness,  
Measuring what that love must be.

*Poem on previous pages extracted from “The Streams” (Poetry from “Voice to the Faithful 1867-1872); Author unknown.*

### **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.