

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 87: September – December 2012 CONTENTS

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH
(Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19)
NO. 87: SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2012

Editorial

The first item in this issue is the (lightly edited) transcript of a conversational Bible reading. The reason for presenting this in a near-verbatim form is twofold. Firstly, there may be a number of readers who have in the past enjoyed conversational Bible readings but who now, whether through infirmity or isolation, are unable to be present at such meetings; I hope that in this format something of the spirit of the occasion will come through. Secondly, presenting the reader with a conversation rather than a dogmatic statement does, I think, allow him (or her) more scope to evaluate the various contributions. It so happens that the extract from the ministry of C.A. Coates is in a similar format.

I am grateful for the responses of a few readers to the query raised in the last issue as to “the seven days of Pentecost.” From these and my own inquiries there seems to be some evidence that although Pentecost (*‘Shavuot’* – the feast of weeks) was instituted by God as a one-day feast (and the religious rites were confined to that day), the practice developed, and lasted while the temple remained standing, of continuing the festivities through seven days. Whether T.H.R., the author of the article which appeared in the last number, had this in mind I do not know. It also appears that at Pentecost the children of Israel celebrated not only the bringing in of the harvest but also the giving of the law (the *Torah*) at Sinai, which was believed to have taken place at that same point in the year. These things are perhaps of some interest but of course the really important thing is to understand what we are actually told in the Holy Scriptures, including the typical teaching of things in the Old Testament. G.S.B.

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JOY

Psalm 16:10, 11; Psalm 43:3-5; John 15:9-13; Habakkuk 3:17-19.

D.J.R. I don't profess to be an exponent of what we have in mind but I have been thinking about joy. It's something that I don't think is known outside the Christian circle. Happiness is something that is pursued but I think it has been well said that happiness is not joy; it has to do with what is congenial, pleasant, but I think joy specially belongs to Christianity. It's not that you go around smiling all the time; in fact, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6, "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Rejoicing, of course, is the verb; joy is the noun. And I just thought very simply we might look at the source of joy. Eternity is going to be eternal joy – it is difficult really to enter into it: no sorrow, no disappointment, no pain, nothing of the things that we know here. The wonder of it in Christianity is that in the presence of these things – frustration, sorrow, difficulties, pain adversity – there is something within, and I would press that point: it's something within. Its Source is God; the Object is God. It would be a question I have to ask myself, how much do I know of joy?

So I thought we might perhaps look at the Lord Jesus in this psalm; as we know, it is a prophetic, messianic psalm and it looks on to the death of Christ and to the resurrection. Perhaps it gives us something of the feelings and anticipation of the Lord Jesus prophetically. In the next Psalm we have God "the gladness of my joy;" the great source and object of the joy of the psalmist. We may speak of other things, of course, as we go along. For example, there is the joy of our salvation. David lost it, though he didn't lose his salvation. It speaks in Romans 5:11 about boasting, or joying, in God, as the A.V. puts it, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation." I think that the joy of conversion should deepen, should increase. I thought of the Lord Jesus in John, and His joy, His concern that we should have it. That lovely chapter 15 speaks of the vine, abiding

in Him, keeping His commandments, having His joy fulfilled in us. Wonderful to think, isn't it, of the life of Jesus; we think of Him as the Man of sorrows, but think of the joy that He had every day in God. "I have set Jehovah," as we have in Psalm 16, "continually before Me." But then I am thinking also of the day in which we live, with things that we don't understand, as Habakkuk didn't understand the wickedness in the conduct of the people of God, and the way that God was going to use Nebuchadnezzar and others to bring in His judgment. We have these wonderful words as to faith; Habakkuk comes to that as he watches, trusting God, that He knows what He is doing. We think about our own day, you know – the decline, the declension within the Christian profession. Look at the way things are going publicly in our own nation. But as he comes to the end of the book, it's Himself. Whatever happens, he is going to joy in the God of his salvation. And I think we increasingly come back to what *we* have in our souls in God – not what we know, not what's correct (I am not belittling that, of course, you understand that) – but the believer's personal joy in God, in the presence, as I say, of what is adverse and corrupt, and God's government, what He may use that so puzzled the prophet. I hope the brethren will be able to help me. There are many other matters of joy, you know. I thought of Jeremiah 15: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." I think of the situation Jeremiah was in, faced again with the prospect of the Babylonian conquest; what he found in God's word. You know, there are those things that contribute to our joy, God the source, as we have been saying, but His word too to encourage, something to 'eat.' We eat physically every day but we need to feed on that word for spiritual sustenance, daily. I have thought of other things that give us joy. "Rejoice with me," says the shepherd, "for I have found my lost sheep." He got together the friends and the neighbours, and then of course with the lost son the Father says "it was right to make merry." I don't think the word joy is used but

that is the idea; the son who was dead is now alive. And so there are those features and elements which contribute to the joy of the believer. Well, there is much more, but I am sure the brethren can help me. But I just thought we might just think especially about God the wonderful Source of joy, and how the Lord Jesus knew it, how it is connected, I suppose, with the resurrection of Christ. I hope this isn't too confused; these are just a few thoughts I have been having and praying about.

G.S.B. I am sure it's something we could well be helped about. I was just thinking as you were speaking – and this verse was probably also in your mind – in Nehemiah 8 it says: “the joy of the Lord shall be your strength” – which suggests, doesn't it, that joy isn't simply some icing which it is nice to have on the cake, so to speak, but we *need* it; it's a necessary ingredient in our Christian life.

D.J.R. Thank you for that, yes, the joy of the Lord, your strength. It produces something, doesn't it? It enables us to go on and no doubt it would enable Habakkuk to go on, and Paul to go on. You can hardly think of it, when you read that list of things in 2 Corinthians 6, what he had to go through and endure, and yet he says, “sorrowful, but always rejoicing.”

G.S.B. Isn't it amazing, when you think of who He was and ever is, that the Bible should speak of the Lord Jesus – I hope I speak reverently – needing a joy before Him to help Him endure, as it says in Hebrews 12, “who for the joy lying before Him endured the cross.” If He needed a joy set before Him, how much more do we.

D.J.R. It's very interesting to think about, isn't it?

G.S.B. I wondered if that Scripture in Hebrews fits with what we read from Psalm 16, because this is very much (in the psalm) the path of the Lord Jesus, as you have said, looking on to His return to the presence of His God and Father.

D.J.R. Yes, I think that's good. You think the joy that was set before Him was particularly His going into the presence of the Father, the work completed?

G.S.B. Just so; and earlier in Psalm 16 we have, "to the saints that are on the earth, to the excellent, Thou hast said, In them is all my delight," and in Hebrews doesn't the joy of the Lord include that God was bringing many sons to glory by Him?

D.J.R. Yes, I am sure it does, yes. He would have the whole plan and purpose of God in mind, wouldn't He? – that though the cross was so tremendous and awful, dreadful, yet He would go through it because He could look beyond it to the joy. Many sons coming to glory, as you say, was included in it. The Darby Translation says "Thy countenance is fulness of joy;" the A.V. says "Thy presence" – I am not sure which is right; they probably both are – but if joy is to become an increasing experience and reality in our lives, we need to frequent the presence of God.

G.S.B. Amen.

D.J.R. Joy is very much connected with the Spirit of God, isn't it? It's part of the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace ..." (Galatians 5:22). "The kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17). These things are very much connected with God Himself and, as I have said, you don't find it in the world and it's nothing to do, in a sense, with happiness. What a pursuit there is, you know, of people trying to find joy, wanting happiness; they don't find it, but the Christian, not just when we are in glory (though that is there and yet to be, when there will be nothing to spoil) but in the presence of what is contrary and difficult, maybe reproach and so on, has something in the soul and, as you say, it becomes a source of strength – it's the joy of the Lord.

A.J.S. Is that joy secured for us in His resurrection?

D.J.R. It is.

A.J.S. We have that here, don't we – “Thou wilt not leave My soul to Sheol, neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see corruption.” The Lord said, “I will see you again, ... and your joy no one takes from you” (John 16:22). We were reading this morning in John 20 that the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. The resurrection transforms everything, doesn't it?

D.J.R. It does. How unique and unparalleled Christianity is, because it is not a religion – and I am using that in the common parlance; it all centres in a living, wonderful Person. And that's the source of our joy, isn't it?

A.J.S. It is, yes. We used to have an old brother in Croydon who used to be very fond of saying, ‘Christianity is a Person.’

D.J.R. That's right; it is, yes. So we want to know Him a little more, don't we, as we go on, get older. Time is short. I am sure whatever measure of joy – and I would have to be pretty humbled about it – it can increase, can't it? As I say, it is not going around with a great grin on your face all the time – far from that – but it's something that's there: “your joy ...” – that's John 16, isn't it?

A.J.S. “... no one takes from you.”

D.J.R. I wondered whether we should have read that: “your joy no man taketh from you.” It something that can't be taken.

A.J.S. I think it should be seen in our gatherings, don't you, and in our daily life?

D.J.R. Well, this was one of my concerns. That's right. I mean, what do people see? If it's a source of strength, it's going to infect the way we live, isn't it?

A.J.S. Yes.

D.J.R. And in our gatherings, Christianity should be a manifestation, among other things, of joy, shouldn't it? – not going to a meeting just because it's correct and going through the right rituals and ceremony, or having somebody up in the pulpit saying

all the right things, but a company of persons who have a tremendous joy in the Lord Jesus.

A.J.S. Yes.

N.E.W. Was the Philippian jailer converted by joy?

D.J.R. Yes.

N.E.W. Wasn't it that that caused those songs from Paul and Silas?

D.J.R. Yes.

N.E.W. It was such a witness.

D.J.R. Very good. He was impressed by that. It wasn't that they preached at him, was it, actually? – though they did tell him the way to be saved. The prisoners listened; I expect the jailer did as well, don't you?

N.E.W. Well, I imagine it was their joy in singing that held the prisoners; perhaps holding the prisoners impressed the jailer.

D.J.R. That's right.

N.E.W. And he rejoiced with all his house.

D.J.R. He did, *he* rejoiced, yes; very good.

A.J.S. I think there is something in that. At the Missions Day at the beginning of the month someone was telling us about the work in Turkey. Three young men were arrested some years ago and put in prison. Being in prison they spoke among themselves as to what they should do and they thought they should do the same as Paul and Silas. So they sang hymns and a young man was converted through it, and he is now one of the leaders of the Lord's work in Turkey.

D.J.R. Very good.

G.S.B. Was the Lord's joy bound up with His singleness of mind?

D.J.R. Yes.

G.S.B. I feel I have lost joy through having my heart and mind on a number of things; but the Lord, here in the days of His flesh, had His Father only before Him, nothing else. Verse 1: “I trust in Thee;” and verse 5: “Jehovah is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup” and so on; verse 8 you have quoted: “I have set Jehovah continually before Me.” I just wonder whether that is the key to joy, not being double-minded but having one thing before us.

D.J.R. Yes, I am thankful to be reminded of that. Of course, we have all sorts of things to attend to and so on, but what is the *prime* objective? – is that what you have in mind?

G.S.B. Just so. Even the things of ordinary life we can take up in relation to the will of God, can't we?

D.J.R. Yes, quite so. “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:6). I feel challenged about that. Yes, I am sure that's right. In Psalm 43 I was just thinking of the way God's truth and light would bring us, as the Psalmist says in verse 3, to the divine dwelling. We love to be together, don't we, where God is, where He is with His people. But I just particularly thought (verse 4), having come together, “then will I go unto the altar of God, unto the God of the gladness of my joy.” Now I don't understand that rendering. The Authorised says, “God my exceeding joy.” In my simple mind I can understand that a little more. But how much it meant to the psalmist!

A.J.S. The outcome is that he praises God – his joyfulness is expressed in praise.

D.J.R. Yes, that's right. You know, when we are together to remember the Lord or for whatever purpose I am sure if there is more joy there will be more response. Do you think that's right?

A.J.S. I think so. When we remember the Lord, we look back to His sufferings and death but we also look on, don't we? We show forth His death until He comes. We are celebrating a finished work; we are celebrating One who has not only died but risen again and One who is coming again. That should bring a joy into our gatherings, shouldn't it?

D.J.R. That's right. Yes, I was thinking of just that. We have had the matter of strength, joy being one of the sources of strength spiritually to be here for God in some little measure (not just because it's correct to be so or because I believe the Bible – and I do – but because of the joy in my heart); but then the other side also is what goes up to God, what returns to Him, the praise. We are glad to be in the habitations where God dwells, glad to come to the altar to serve Him, and the praise goes up to Him, God my exceeding joy. I had in mind not being diverted by other things; there is only one Source of real joy and God is the Object of it. And when I say 'God' of course I am including the glorious Trinity, the Lord Jesus and the blessed Spirit of God and the Father.

B.J.R. I was wondering about the way into it, how to be maintained in it. Is that in verse 3? – “Thy light and Thy truth, they shall lead me, they shall bring me to Thy holy mount, and unto Thy habitations.” It's individual, isn't it, initially?

D.J.R. I think the whole matter, in one sense, is individual. I was thinking just of that verse, as to what you said – the light and truth of God: where would it lead? Where would it lead my feet, my interests, my desires? – to God's habitation. Then I think joy is very much personal and individual. And in a day when things are increasingly on the decline publicly, it comes back to how real are these things to me.

A.J.S. Is that why he speaks about being cast down in his soul?

D.J.R. Say some more.

A.J.S. Well, because of what we are I don't think we can exist on a note of continual joy. Sometimes I feel very down about things.

D.J.R. So do I.

A.J.S. And the psalmist obviously did here too, didn't he? "Why art thou cast down, my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?" But there was a remedy.

D.J.R. Yes, that's right. I wanted to get away from any sort of sanctimonious idea, you know, that you are living up in the clouds all the time. You are not, are you? Paul wasn't – he was sorrowful, but he was always rejoicing; that may be an anomaly. But there is that there in the Lord and in our relations with the Father that is a source of joy, irrespective of what may come in otherwise – and things do.

A.J.S. And we have an unchanging hope: "hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, [who is] the health of my countenance, and my God."

D.J.R. Yes.

A.J.S. It's a very wonderful thing that we have a hope. You talk to people in the world and they really have no hope at all.

D.J.R. No; they haven't. It's absolutely terrible, isn't it? You think of it – and no concern about the fact that they haven't got one. The obsession with the here and now is utterly incredible. Yet, thank God, you come across people in whom the Spirit of God is working and you realise more and more that unless the Spirit of God is convicting and awakening, you may as well, as they say, speak to a brick wall. It has to be a divine work, and surely that should contribute to our joy, you know, that God chose me. He had a plan and a purpose and I was included. Why me, Lord? Why me?

A.J.S. And it's going to be fulfilled, too, when the Lord comes.

D.J.R. That's the hope, isn't it?

A.J.S. Yes.

G.S.B. Do you think the godly remnant will experience this?

D.J.R. Oh, yes.

G.S.B. “Send out Thy light and Thy truth: they shall lead me.” I notice the alternative for ‘habitations’ is ‘tabernacles’ – “unto Thy habitations” – and the feast of tabernacles has yet to take place, hasn’t it?

D.J.R. Yes, it has.

G.S.B. We are between the feast of Pentecost, and the time of blowing of trumpets and the feast of tabernacles, and that will be in an earthly setting but it can be used, can it not, as an illustration of what lies ahead for us?

D.J.R. As we look on to the day of the Lord, it is wonderful to think of those verses in Zephaniah, where it says that God joys: “He will joy over thee.” He is joying over the godly remnant, isn’t He, restored, recovered?

G.S.B. Yes.

D.J.R. “He will joy over thee with singing.” Think of God singing with His joy! If it wasn’t in Scripture I would think it was too much to say, but there it is in the word of God.

G.S.B. We were impressed this morning, amongst other things with this: God has been abundant in His blessings toward us, but it’s all in view of what returns to Him.

D.J.R. Yes, of course it is. I am sure of that; the more these things are real in the sense of the joy that we have, the more there will be for God. I am sure there will.

G.S.B. Yes. “I rejoiced,” the psalmist says, “when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah” (Psalm 122:1). Is that in line with what you are thinking?

D.J.R. Yes, exactly. It would all tend to make us gravitate to the divine dwelling – not because it’s the right time and I’ve got to go, oh dear! Not that.

M.A.G. At the time that the psalmist wrote this psalm, he was feeling very depressed.

D.J.R. Yes, he probably was.

M.A.G. He is clutching at the Lord’s promise that there will be joy in the presence of the Lord, the house of the Lord; but for the moment he is feeling really down; and, although we are grateful for medication for severe and acute depression, there is something a believer has that is special; we can turn to the Saviour. In Jeremiah, *he’s* feeling dreadful too, wishing he hadn’t been born (*see ch. 20, v. 14*). And here the psalmist is saying, ‘I am in the middle of a deceitful, ungodly nation’ (verse 1). He is thinking, ‘everything has gone wrong.’ And you can relate to that; you think, ‘Well, does the Lord know what’s happening; does He understand?’ He does.

D.J.R. He certainly does.

M.A.G. When the Lord was here on earth things for the land of Israel were in a dreadful state. I was thinking of Isaac’s name, meaning laughter, which is a similar thought to joy, but he was a well-digger, wasn’t he. You start with what’s deep and may not be seen but it’s there, and then it wells up, like the Lord said about the well of water to eternal life in John 4, and the testimony is there when the water bursts over the top and it’s so visible.

D.J.R. I wonder if we do eat those words: “Thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. 15:16). Sometimes, perhaps, you read the Bible and it doesn’t mean much. At other times you just get something from a verse that you have read many times and you feel that God is speaking to you through it.

A.J.S. Jeremiah was saying this after the book of the law had been found. It had been lost, hadn't it, for a long time and it was found and Jeremiah drew that joy from it.

D.J.R. Yes.

M.A.G. We know what the – let's say – indigenous experts in Herod's day were like; they knew that the promise was that the ruler would come from Bethlehem. They knew their Bible verses but they didn't know the Lord. And in Jeremiah and this psalm the joy is in knowing the Lord through His word; it's the two together, isn't it? It's knowing the Saviour *and* knowing what He says.

D.J.R. Quite so.

M.A.G. If you love somebody, you hang on what they say.

D.J.R. That's good. Yes, that's right. So we have what the Saviour says, don't we, in John 15 and John 16 too. "Your joy no man takes from you," in John 16. If we think of what He says I suppose we may connect it with John's First Epistle: "These things we write to you that your joy may be full." One reason why he wrote that letter, a letter that begins with the Lord Jesus and our fellowship with God and with His Son, was that our joy might be full.

A.J.S. What does it mean, "that your joy may be full"? I mean, I find joy comes and goes.

D.J.R. Well, I do, very much. I don't want us to pretend otherwise; we just have to speak as we find, but I am sure that to feed on the word, the words of Jesus, is a great contributor to joy.

A.J.S. It's a very interesting expression, isn't it – as though you are joyful and in a sense you cannot be any more joyful, because your joy is full.

D.J.R. Quite, yes.

M.A.G. As the Lord in John, He is concerned, because He is a sharing God and He wants us to be in on His joy, to partake of it. Equally, don't you think there is a joy attached to the gospel work? We are praying that people will be saved today, that they will hear the word tonight, and we are told there's joy amongst the angels in heaven over one sinner who repents.

A.J.S. This is *My* joy, the Lord says.

M.A.G. Go on.

A.J.S. In a sense, was it His personal joy in His relationship with the Father?

D.J.R. I would think so, yes.

A.J.S. "That My joy may be in you, and your joy be full." It's very wonderful, isn't it,?

D.J.R. We wouldn't want to get away from the uniqueness of the joy that the Lord Jesus had with the Father, would we, every day doing His will; but then, "that your joy may be full."

A.J.S. Yes.

G.S.B. Don't those verses show the connection between fellowship and joy? The joy is in an enjoyed relationship.

A.J.S. Yes.

M.A.G. There is a children's hymn – very simple one – which we tend to use in the gospel, but I think it applies right through the believer's life: "If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy, let Jesus come into your heart." Simple, but it's the answer.

G.S.B. Just so.

D.J.R. Do you think loving one another would be included in this matter of fellowship? Where else in this poor world do you find a circle where people really love one another?

G.S.B. Just so; and if I shun fellowship with those who are of the one body, my own joy is going to be impeded, I fear. Isn't it?

D.J.R. Yes.

G.S.B. I was thinking of the verses to which you have referred at the beginning of the First Epistle, "that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." But we have the same here, haven't we, in chapter 15: "if ye shall keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love." Isn't the idea of abiding close to fellowship? It means that I am in the joy of unbroken communion with the Lord, doesn't it? – and then, as you say, also with others who love Him.

D.J.R. I am sure that is so.

A.J.S. We had an experience of that this morning – nine brethren with us from another gathering – and I think we felt we were one with them.

N.E.W. Yes; it contributed to the meeting.

M.A.G. So in one sense we are each individually dependent on the Lord but in another sense in fellowship there is an interdependence, so the eye doesn't say to the hand, 'I don't have need of you' (*see 1 Cor. 12:21*). God's got some little thing that He wants each brother and each sister to be part of. Thomas missed out, didn't he, on that first occasion when the Lord came, but of course the Lord brought him back afterwards.

A.J.S. Yes, we were speaking about that too this morning and the wonderful confession that Thomas made: "My Lord and My God."

N.E.W. Just on the subject of fellowship, the Lord Jesus in the in the earlier part of John chapter 15 has been talking about the vine and the branches. He says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches" and then "if ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you ..." and so on; and we get then following after that "that My joy may be in

you, and your joy be full” so does it all stem initially from fellowship with the Lord Jesus, abiding in Him?

D.J.R. Yes. I am sure it’s absolutely essential.

B.J.R. I was going to refer to John 11. The Lord groaned and even wept when a link was broken with one He loved, but that was restored in resurrection, wasn’t it? When Lazarus was raised they then made the Lord a supper.

D.J.R. Yes.

B.J.R. Do we not experience that sort of thing in our own lives, that there are times when it seems that things are broken, but if we get back to the love of the Father for the Lord and the Lord for us, is that the way it’s restored?

D.J.R. Yes, I should think so. Yes.

A.J.S. Things were broken in Habakkuk’s day.

D.J.R. Yes, they were. Before we get on to that, I wonder if we could just think about something else and that is, faithfulness and its rewards, and the word of the Lord to the two who had received the talents: “enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” I was just thinking about the judgment seat of Christ. Along with what we are saying, the Lord is looking for faithfulness, isn’t He? I have no doubt if there is that joy within in Him, there will be a concern to be true. I’ll tell you what I have been thinking of: Paul speaks in the end of Romans about “Phoebe, our sister ... a helper of many.” I submit she had a gift. You say, what was her gift? A help. Am I a help? She used what she had, and it was an amazing thing that she could be a helper of the apostle Paul – “of many, and of myself.” Those two that are referred to in Matthew 25 were entrusted with something, and I can say to everyone in this room, really every genuine Christian, ‘It’s no good you saying, well, I haven’t got anything.’ You may be a help. You may be a sister; you may be young or you may be old; there is something you can

do to help. And when the time comes, at the judgment seat of Christ, you will hear the word, Well done! He says that to both of them. Sometimes you think, ‘Well, I don’t know, I haven’t got his gift; I wish I could do what he is doing; I wish I had gone out on the mission field 50 years ago and done work for the Lord.’ No; you can help where you are, as you are, whatever the situation.

A.J.S. The Lord spoke about giving a cup of cold water to someone “in My Name.” “He shall in no wise lose his reward.”

D.J.R. Yes, He did. The reward – joy! “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” I didn’t want to interrupt but it was just something that I have thought about. You know, there is something yet to be: “enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Well, perhaps we ought to think just for a moment about Habakkuk. He is a remarkable prophet really, isn’t he? – a man who just can’t understand. “How long?” he says at the beginning? “Why?” – verse 3 of chapter 1. But he gets the answer, doesn’t he? God is in control. “The just shall live by his faith.” God knows all about this wickedness; He is going to deal with it and He is going to use another nation that you might say is more wicked than Israel (although of course they hadn’t had the light that Israel had); He is going to use them to discipline His people because He is God. And at the end of the epistle you have this prophet saying, Well, everything has gone; things are so bad – “though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive-tree shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:” – you can’t think of anything much worse than that, can you, *everything* gone – “Yet will I rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in” myself? – no, not myself – “I will joy in the God of my salvation.” He didn’t lose that. You know, there is something in the presence of departure and failure and brokenness that can’t be taken from you. Singleness of purpose; I need it – one Object.

G.S.B. The reference to faith, to which you have referred, is actually “the just shall live by *his* faith” and here it is “the God of *my* salvation. We have been speaking about the importance of fellowship but we cannot rest on others, can we?”

D.J.R. No.

G.S.B. Particularly in a day of brokenness, I need my own strong link with the Lord don’t I?

D.J.R. I am sure that is vital. You will never have joy where there is no faith; I need my own personal link with and trust in the Lord. However bad things may seem, God is in control; He knows what He is doing. We don’t understand –

“We comprehend Him not
Yet earth and heaven tell
God sits as sovereign on the throne
And ruleth all things well.”

He can use a terrible nation like the Babylonians, with all their pride and military prowess and ability, to discipline His people if need be, and He will. And here is Habakkuk rejoicing, in himself? – no, in God.

G.S.B. Do you not think the Lord’s ways with us at the present time are plainly directed to ensuring that each one of us has a sense of direct reliance upon and responsibility to the Lord?

D.J.R. Yes, I think you can get lost in numbers where everything is going swimmingly, as they might say, and we are getting conversions and having wonderful meetings, but what about when things go the other way? It comes down to *you*, doesn’t it, and your link with God.

A.J.S. Is that why it says “to the chief musician on *my* stringed instruments”?

D.J.R. Go on.

A.J.S. Well, the stringed instruments speak of one's feeling, don't they?

D.J.R. They do, yes.

A.J.S. It wasn't that Habakkuk didn't feel all this, the whole thing going (it seems), but he had his personal resource in the Lord; He was really the chief musician and he committed it to Him.

D.J.R. Very good. Yes, it's not that he was indifferent and unfeeling about things – far from it.

A.J.S. I had never thought of it before, but the three trees in verse 17 – the fig-tree, the vine and the olive-tree – are the three trees that speak of Israel, the three trees in Jotham's parable that had more important things to do than to wave over the trees.

D.J.R. Yes, that's right. And, of course, in his soul he has got the light of the fact that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." That would be his faith, wouldn't it?

A.J.S. It would, yes.

D.J.R. But here we have his present joy – in God, nothing else.

M.A.G. It's quite a challenge that Habakkuk is saying that even if everything goes wrong, I am still going to rejoice in the Lord.

D.J.R. Yes.

M.A.G. It reminds me of the people in the book of Daniel saying, "Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace ... but if not ..." It's a challenge, isn't it?

D.J.R. Yes; that's good. It isn't human determination, is it? It's not sticking the jaw out and saying, 'I don't mind; whatever happens, I am going on.' It's not that at all.

A.J.S. "**He** maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and **he** will make me to walk upon my high places." A hind can stand on rocky and

unstable places and God makes him like that and He makes him to walk “upon my high places.” It’s not what he has done by his own effort.

D.J.R. No, not a bit. I am sure that is important. Well, I feel very challenged about this matter of joy and I expect we all do; but I am also thankful for the wonderful grace that we know a little of it. God wants us to know more.

G.S.B. Perhaps we could finish with Jude’s doxology: “But to Him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before His glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen.”

D.J.R. Very good; He can do that – keep us.

A Bible reading with David Robins at Coulsdon, Croydon, on 22nd July 2012.

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The following article appeared in this magazine 25 years ago (albeit in a somewhat abbreviated form), but in view of the changes in readership since then, and the continuing relevance of what is said, it is now reproduced again.

Meekness and Lowliness

Do we value meekness and lowliness as moral features that should characterize us? The Lord Jesus said “I am meek and lowly in heart”. They characterized Him in all His life of testimony and administration here. Yet withal there was dignity, authority and power but dignity without pride, authority without arrogance, power without assumption.

Lowliness is connected with *service*, meekness with *suffering*. An outstanding example of lowliness is seen when the Lord washed His disciples’ feet although He was the greatest among

them. The outstanding examples of meekness were, first at Gethsemane, when He received the cup from His Father's hand, and then in receiving from the hands of men when before Pilate and Herod. How Jesus shone there in the glory of meekness! What moral majesty was there! What moral power, for meekness is not weakness! What moral perfection, for the Lord bore all without a sign of resentment, no gesture of retaliation, no threatening look or haughty mien! Had there been any He would not have been the Lamb without spot and without blemish; He could not have offered Himself without spot to God for a propitiation; nor could Peter have referred to Him as our example, saying, "when reviled, reviled not again; and when suffering, threatened not". How short we come of our Lord and Teacher! Meekness is the supreme test. If we fail in meekness it proves we have not been truly lowly, and that the leaven of pride has been working, hidden and perhaps unsuspected by us.

We need to be kept at the feet of the One Who was meek and lowly in heart, and to learn from Him.

Low at thy feet, Lord Jesus,
This is the place for me;
Here have I learned deep lessons,
Truth that has set me free,
Free from myself, Lord Jesus
Free from my wayward will;
But for thy love constraining,
I had been wayward still.

Lowliness is the spirit in which we *give* a word. Meekness is the spirit in which we *receive* a word. Lowliness means that I do not exalt myself. Meekness means that I do not defend myself. Meekness makes me bold in conflict in face of the enemy. Lowliness marks me among friends in peace and restfulness. Meekness is needed when men speak ill of you. Lowliness is needed when men speak well of you. Meekness shines when you

are abased. Lowliness shines when you are promoted. Paul received the thorn in meekness. It was given to preserve him in lowliness. In meekness we do not rebel under God's chastening hands, nor retaliate when suffering under men's hands, but continue to serve both God and men in lowliness, the spirit of Christ.

The exercise of these two moral excellencies is a lifelong matter. It is the service of the Holy Spirit as figured in that rendered to Esther, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and other things – one whole year, representing a lifetime. We are anything but meek and lowly naturally, and it is the service of the Holy Spirit to form us in the moral beauties of Christ that we might be pleasurable to God in a scene so opposite in character to the blessed Man in whom God's soul delighted.

May we have an increasing desire to submit to the delicate service of the Holy Spirit. He would garnish us, as He did the heavens, with the glory and beauty of Christ.

W. H. Priestley

COMPLETE IN CHRIST AND CIRCUMCISED IN HEART

Colossians chapter 2

C.A.C. The first chapter brings before us the greatness of the Head; and holding the Head is to preserve a firm grasp of all Christ is as presented in this epistle. We have a firm grip on it, and constantly look up to Him with reverence and affection as the Source of supply to the body. There is no source of supply to the body but the Head; He is the source of all nourishment and direction for the body. To hold the Head is to hold that in our affections all the time. Think of the statement here – “the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily.” What a marvellous statement! – all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in a Man with a human body at the right hand of God. All the fulness of the

Godhead is in that Man; nothing will ever be discovered about the Godhead through all eternity which is not expressed in that Man. What a wonderful Person to get before the soul! Think of all the blessedness of the Father, Son and Spirit – all that is adequate to set forth the Godhead – subsisting in that glorified Man in a body. It takes away from any vague thought of a spirit – it is a Man with a body.

Then we are filled full in Him who is the Head. What can saints who are filled full in Him want from any other source! There is no knowledge of God outside Christ; there is no expression of God in His universe outside Christ – the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. You cannot add anything on that line: there is no addition to Christ. On the other hand, how are we set up in presence of the Godhead? “Filled full in Him, who is the Head of all principality and authority.” The Head is an infinite ocean of blessedness, and the saints are put into it and filled full in Him. We have to learn that fulness; it is all there for our appropriation. It does not say He is Head merely for us but Head of all principality and authority. There is not a dignity in the moral universe which will not derive everything from Christ; and He is our Head. God’s universe is an ordered system; it is marked by rule, authority, and various dignities. All this is for the pleasure of God, and Christ is Head of all. The most exalted dignities in the universe will take character from Christ – all will have to draw their dignity and character from Christ. He is going to fill everything so that it will be fully for the pleasure of God. He is great enough to do it. It is striking that this aspect of His Headship should be brought in here. It is to give the illimitable scope of His fulness as that in which the saints are filled full, and it is brought in to prepare us to accept circumcision – the complete cutting off of the flesh. No one will accept circumcision if he does not know what it is to be filled full in Christ. Circumcision means the putting off the body of the flesh: that is, everything that belongs to me as a man in the flesh living in this world has to be put off – not actually, but in mind and spirit.

All has to be cut off that has been cut off in the death of Christ. It is very blessed to see that we come at it from the side of being full in Christ. If I have a sense of that I do not want a single thing connected with myself. If filled full in the glorious Man at God's right hand, what do I want with the things belonging to a man down here, the wisdom and abilities of a man in the flesh?

Question. We can sit at His feet and drink it in as Mary did?

C.A.C. Yes, and we are welcome to it; it is for the whole church, and for the world if they would have it. The fulness of Christ is for everybody if they will have it. "Whom we preach, warning every man that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." That shows the scope of it; it is for every man.

Question. As to the order here, Gilgal (*see Joshua 5*) is put first, but it was the other side of Jordan?

C.A.C. Yes. We should have perhaps expected baptism to be put first, but Paul puts circumcision first and then burial with Christ in baptism. When we have learned that we can do without the flesh – that it is a hindrance to be cut off, and that it has been cut off in the death of Christ – then we can enter into what it is to be buried with Him in baptism. It is that we go in mind out of the world as completely as if we were buried, in view of being raised with Him. I think we only get the full spiritual import of baptism in the light of circumcision. It is striking that not till the people were circumcised at Gilgal was the reproach of Egypt rolled off. It suggests they were not clear of Egypt till they were circumcised; and if so they had not entered into the import of being baptised to Moses in the Red Sea. When God brought His people out, what He had in mind was to bring them in. The Red Sea is what answers to baptism, and Jordan is connected with their going in.

In Romans baptism has to do with the new place which we take up in relation to this world; it is in view of being dead to sin and walking here in newness of life; we are to walk in a new kind of

life morally in the old place. But in Colossians it is not that; it is in view of living with Christ in a new place as risen with Him.

It was when Israel got to Gilgal that the reproach of Egypt was rolled off. In circumcision they accepted the truth of baptism. The people had to follow the ark of the covenant over Jordan; it was a question of the attraction of the ark. In Colossians it is a question of the attraction of Christ. We have received a Person who is so known and precious that we are prepared to follow Him in order to live with Him, and that is outside human life here altogether. Everything is to be taken up here in the light of Christ known in the heart. One gets a sense that everything I could boast in as a man in the flesh has been cut off in the death of Christ. If we see that, we are prepared to enter into what baptism is. As a matter of fact very few of us had any knowledge of what our baptism meant till long after we were baptised. We were baptised at the start but we have to come to it in mind, to realise that in our baptism we were buried with Christ. We are not actually buried, but we have to come to it in mind. If I come to that my mind is not to live in this world, but to live morally and spiritually with Christ. He lives as a risen man; God operated and raised Him from the dead, and we are risen with Him “through faith in the operation of God who raised Him from the dead.” It is a question of faith.

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Question. You spoke last week of ‘over Jordan’ referring to the forty days – will you explain that?

C.A.C. I was referring to the forty days when the Lord was seen by His disciples as risen, before His ascension; it was not heaven but an entirely new sphere of life.

All this part of the chapter hangs on being complete in Him; it can only be taken up spiritually as we have the sense of being complete in Him. If we are filled full in Christ we are independent of everything that is not Christ. But then the Christ in whom we

are complete is a Christ who is not alive in this world at all. He was once alive here but His life here was terminated by death, and He has been raised by the working of God; it is in that One that we are as saints filled full. Being in the sense of that prepares one to accept circumcision, and to be really in the true value of baptism, and to come in faith to being raised with Christ.

Question. Being in the sense of ‘complete in Christ’ we can touch the truth of baptism?

C.A.C. I think so, in the Colossian sense. In Romans baptism does not quite suggest being raised with Christ; Christ’s resurrection is in view, but not ours. “We shall be of His resurrection;” “We shall also live with Him.” It is all involved, but viewed as in prospect rather than as present. But in Colossians baptism is regarded from the standpoint of being complete in Christ, and of being circumcised in Him. His death is seen as “the circumcision of the Christ.” In Romans we are buried with Him in order that we may be found living a new kind of life here. “Walking in newness of life” is a new kind of life, not a new sphere. Instead of doing one’s own will one does God’s will – that is Romans. I hope we understand a little of that; we have all heard of the little servant maid who knew she was converted because she swept under the mats; now that is a new *kind* of life. But in Colossians what is in view is a new *sphere* of life, and it is the privilege of the saints to live in that new sphere for the pleasure of God. We have to reach that sphere spiritually, and to leave behind everything connected with what we are as alive in this world. If the saints are filled full in a Man who is no longer alive in the world they do not need to carry with them into God’s presence one jot or tittle that is connected with them as alive in the world. They can dispense with it all as being without value. If I were the best man alive in the world, or if I had the purest genealogy from the most distinguished or august ancestors, if I had royal blood in my veins, or could claim the pedigree of a Saul of Tarsus, of what value is it if I am filled full in a risen and glorified Christ? It is only, at best, a

useless encumbrance; however good it might be, or desirable, if measured by human standards, it is absolutely without value to me. I am independent of it; I can do without it. To retain it would be only to retain a competitor or a rival to Christ. I am willing to be circumcised though it involves suffering in the flesh – because it is in Him that I am circumcised, and in His circumcision. It is a positive relief and satisfaction to see it all go in the death of Christ, because until it is gone the reproach of Egypt is not rolled away. Until that moment is reached there is an element left in the soul of being “alive in the world.”

When we speak of circumcision, we are not referring to anything outward such as conduct before men, but to something which is true inwardly in the heart and spirit – something under the eye of God; see Romans 2:28, 29. You come to it in your spirit; circumcision is of the heart and spirit. The only One – Christ – who had a title to live on earth has gone into death. There was a most wonderful circumcision in His death; the only Person who had a title to live is dead – that is the circumcision of Christ. The body of the flesh has been cut off in His death. When that is apprehended in our spirits we are glad to be severed from things we might have boasted in and which would have given credit or place to us as alive in the world. Till we come to circumcision we have not done with Egypt. No one has done with Egypt until he is circumcised. The children of Israel had been 40 years in the wilderness under divine education with all kinds of discipline but they had not known circumcision, and they had not done with Egypt till they got to Gilgal; the reproach of Egypt hung about them until then. And it hangs about a good many of us! Even after reaching Gilgal we have continually to return there; the camp was there; it is the place of power for victory and for taking possession.

Question. Why is the Head of all principality and power brought in there?

C.A.C. It is to show the wonderful character and greatness of the Person in whom we are complete. He is not only Head of the assembly but of all principality and power. He is so great that every position of dignity in the universe of God is going to be filled out of Him. There is not a dignity or splendour in God's universe that will not draw its dignity and blessedness out of Christ; and we are filled full in Him! It is just the simple truth of Christianity, and we have to come to it and learn what it means. It was once illustrated by a boy being sent to school with a box in which everything was put that he could possibly want until he came home again. If he wanted a pencil, it was in the box; if he wanted a book, it was there; or an article of clothing, or anything, he had only to look in the box. It might take him all the term to learn what was in the box, but it was all there for him. Thus everything the saints can ever need or desire in regard to spiritual needs and in relation to God, is all there in Christ; we are complete, filled full in Christ. It will take eternity to learn what is in Christ.

It has often been pointed out what serious error has got into the text in v. 11 by the word sins being put in; it is not sins but the man, the body of flesh that is put off, "the putting off of the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ."

The exercise of Gilgal needs to be maintained in the soul; we never reach a point when we do not need to keep up the character of Gilgal. Here it is in view of a new sphere of life, being raised with Christ. Faith comes in in connection with that, we are risen with Christ by faith.

Question. How do you connect faith with the operation of God in raising Christ from the dead?

C.A.C. I thought it was the soul's apprehension of the sphere and character of the working of God. The sphere where God is operating is the sphere of resurrection; the soul has to come to the apprehension of it. It is the mind of God for all the saints to be

risen with Christ, just as much as it is His mind for them to be justified. In Romans faith is connected with justification – faith in God as having raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. But in Colossians faith is in the working of God; He is working in the sphere of resurrection, and that takes one entirely outside all connected with life in this world. He has raised Christ from the dead, and every one who has the faith of that working is raised with Christ.

Extracted from “Notes of Readings on Colossians with C.A. Coates (1862-1945)

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Christ our Object

If you do not keep your eyes very simply fixed on Christ in heaven, your ways will not be like the ways of a people who have a heavenly portion. When that portion gets a place in the heart, oh, it is very bright and attractive, not because of the glory, but because of Christ being there. If you are occupied with this Christ you will find blessing dropping from Him into your souls that will make heaven your home, heaven not far off, but near. Christ is there, your citizenship there. Has Christ been set before you an open door, a fountain unsealed? Can you look at Him and say, “All that this Christ is, and all that He has is mine,” and not rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Oh, if you loose your heart from things on earth, and get apart *with Christ*, you will find such a volume not only about Him but in Him! Is it joy to you when you think that Christ has apprehended you? That there is something personal towards you in His heart which He has apprehended you for? The early Christians had this joy unspeakable and full of glory. Have you it? Have I it? Does God see my heart going round and round Christ as the one object of my life? – “To me to live is Christ.”

From “Gleanings from the Teaching of G.V. Wigram (1805-1879)

POETIC PAGES

Peace

- Luke 2:14. “Glory to God in the highest”
The Saviour now has come;
And “PEACE on earth” the message is,
Through Jesus Christ the Son.
- Col. 1:20. This “PEACE He made” when on the Cross
His precious blood He shed;
He bore the judgment due for sin;
He suffered in my stead!
- John 14:27. How sweet indeed, those blessed words
Said to the faithful few:
“My PEACE I give to you,” My friends,
Yea “ PEACE I leave with you !”
- John 16:33. Though tribulation here we have,
Yet “PEACE in Him” is ours
And goodly cheer, for He is near
Who overcame Hell’s powers!
- Isaiah 26:3. For “Thou wilt keep in perfect PEACE
The mind that’s stayed on Thee;
Because he trusts,” nor is afraid
Whate’er the present be!
- Col. 3:15. Help me, O Lord, that I may let
Throughout life’s little day
“The PEACE of God rule” in my heart,
And there have fullest sway!
- Phil. 4:7. “The PEACE of God that doth surpass
All understanding” will,
The heart and mind, through Jesus Christ,
Both guard, and keep, and still! */P.T.O.*

- Phil. 4:9. Yea, more than this: for I shall know
 The height of bliss divine;
 “The God of PEACE shall be with me,”
 No greater blessing mine
- 2 Peter 3:14. And when the time of Judgment comes,
 Foretold in Holy Writ –
 Then “found of Him in PEACE” I’ll be,
 In heaven – clean every whit.
- Heb. 7:2. Blest “King of Salem, King of PEACE!”
 All glory be to Thee
 For coming, dying, to secure
 This PEACE, Thou giv’st to me!

Composed by C.W.C. – “One of the late Francis Ridley Havergal’s Bible Class Boys.”

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.