

# Words Of Peace & Truth

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**WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH**  
*(Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19)*  
**No. 99: September – December 2016**  
**Editorial**

We live in a world in which people often express surprise at the turn of events. Political upsets confound the pundits and economic trends veer away from the forecasts. Alas, many will be surprised when the day of the Lord comes “as a thief by night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 3:3). This should not be the case with the believer in the Lord Jesus; we should be ready, waiting and watching.

But God is utterly just and fair and in His word – the Holy Scriptures – has given ample warning as to what will be the result of going down this path or that. We find this illustrated in His dealings with Israel, His earthly people. The carrying away of the northern tribes to Assyria *circa* 720 B.C. and of Judah to Babylon *circa* 600 B.C. fulfilled faithful prophecy given by Moses *circa* 1400 B.C. (see Leviticus 26). Such warnings were repeated right up to the time of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 16:10-13). How it must have grieved God to say that they had refused to hear His words and had forsaken Him (Jer. 13:10 and 15:6)!

But God remained faithful to His word and in Haggai’s day was still recalling His people to the covenant He had made with His people on bringing them out of Egypt nearly 1,000 years before (ch. 2, v. 5). Let us in our day cling to “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude, v. 3) and be approved by the Lord Jesus as those who keep His word (Revelation 3:8,10). So shall we be kept near to Him and be given understanding of the times in which we live (see 1 Chronicles 12:32). G.S.B.

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## IN MY NAME

*“And in that day ye shall demand nothing of Me: verily, verily, I say to you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give you ... ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” – John 16:23, 24.*

What does it mean: to ask in the name of Jesus (John 14:13, 14)? It is much more than mentioning His name in our prayer. To be able to pray in His name, he who is praying needs personally to know the Lord and to pray on His behalf, as if the Lord Himself made the request to God. The expression ‘in the name of’ signifies that one speaks or acts on behalf of such a person; one acts in his place, to accomplish his will.

When Jesus was on earth, the disciples prayed to God without mentioning the Lord’s name. Then the Lord Jesus taught a new way of praying: prayer in His name. This prayer high-lighted the close, intimate relationship of the Lord with the believers. The Lord Jesus always did the will of the Father. In praying to the Father in the name of Jesus, we associate the Lord with our request, as having His agreement. We pray to thank God, to seek His will, to receive the strength to obey and honour Him.

To mention the name of the Lord is not a constraint; it is a privilege, because we know that we receive everything on behalf of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To seek His will, and to apply it in doing that which pleases Him should characterise our conduct if we are to pray sincerely in the name of the Lord.

One of the keys to prayer is also to understand that we have common interests with the Father and His Beloved Son, while awaiting His return: the advancement of the gospel, the comfort and instruction of believers and the well-being of His church.

*Translated from an article in La Bonne Semence [the Good Seed], 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016.*

## Love for one another

*1 John 3:10-18; 4:7-14; 20,21.*

I would like to say a few words, dear brethren, about love among the brethren. We talk about John's simple page; what John says here is easy to understand and I don't feel that I can add much to what I have read from the Scriptures. But I just wanted to highlight a few things that John speaks of.

It is interesting that he keeps coming back to this subject of love among the brethren and the possibility that there may be one who hates his brother. "This is the message," he says, "which ye have heard from the beginning," and in that, I suppose, he is referring to what the Lord said at the supper table – that we should love one another "as I have loved you." That is the standard and I think it is worked out among us as we work together in love, love for the Lord and love for one another – those who are His. "Do not wonder, brethren," John says, "if the world hate you" – hatred from outside; the Lord spoke about that too, and this is what we expect from the world that crucified Him. But "Cain was of the wicked one, and slew his brother." What a terrible thing that is; of the first two brothers one was a murderer "and slew his brother" because Abel's works were righteous and Cain's works were wicked. So he says, "Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hate you. *We* know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." That's a lovely expression, isn't it? He speaks about brethren here, and I believe John is writing about brethren in the widest possible sense. We come together on Lord's Day morning and there is the loaf on the table and it speaks to us, of course, of the body of Christ which he gave for us, but it also speaks of all those who are His, one body in Him, and our love should be no narrower than that. The loaf reminds us week by week that we are one in Him. So he says – and John is very definite and specific – "He who does not love his brother abides in death" and "is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer has

eternal life abiding in him.” And then he speaks about the Lord and how He has laid down His life for us in love: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” And that is what the Lord did; He laid down His life for us. “And *we* ought for the brethren to lay down our lives.” I don’t think John is speaking there about martyrdom – it *might* be martyrdom, of course (many of our brethren in other lands have to face that) – but he is speaking about giving to those who have need, that our lives are orientated in that direction; we lay down our lives for the brethren. But he says, if we do not do this, “how abides the love of God in him?” So he says, “Children, let us not love with word, nor with tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

Where I read in chapter 4 John comes back to it and he says, “Let us love one another; because love is of God, and every one that loves has been begotten of God, and knows God.” It’s as wide as that: “Every one that loves has been begotten of God, and knows God.” We love those who are begotten of God. Then he says, “God is love” and God’s love has been manifested in the sending of His Son into the world “that we might live through Him.” And if we live through Him our lives are to be expressed in this love. “Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us;” the love of God, the boundless love of God, that gave His Son “a propitiation for our sins.” And “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” And “if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us” for “He has given to us of His Spirit.”

And so, finally, (verse 20) “If any one say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar.” John is very definite and specific, isn’t he? Hatred doesn’t come out in that one says that he hates a certain person, or something like that; it comes out in his actions, what he does. “He that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” And so John comes back to that original commandment from the Lord: “That he that

loves God love also his brother.” It’s very specific; it’s not “the brethren;” it’s not all those who have been begotten of God, but “his brother.” Do we love each brother, each sister, with that love that comes from God? I think this is what John is writing about. It was obviously something very necessary in his day; it’s necessary in our day too. So may we walk here in love; love for the Lord, love for those who are His, love for each one of the brethren, for His Name’s sake.

*Word given by Tony Sheldrake, Croydon, 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2016.*

## **THE CHARACTER OF GOD’S HOUSE.**

*Luke 14*

IN the last chapter we had the synagogue, in this chapter a Pharisee’s house. It is surely not without intent that we have the idea of a house brought before us. A house is a place of abode, but also a place where hospitality is exercised. God not only dwelt in His house of old, but approach was invited. Then it is a place where the character of the owner is seen. Of old God manifested Himself in the details and arrangement of His house. It is also a place where the Master has rights which have to be respected. In chapter 13, verse 25, the Master exercises his rights and shuts the door, and in verse 35 the temple where God had invited approach is no longer owned as His house. “Behold,” said our Lord, “**your** house is left to you desolate.” “**My** house” is found in chapter 14 and its blessed character is brought before us. The chapter begins with a Pharisee’s house, the sabbath, and a certain man with a dropsy. The Pharisee’s house is brought into marked contrast with God’s house; its character and tone were different. Jesus, in whom the riches of divine grace that characterise God’s house are treasured up, was an object of suspicion in the Pharisee’s house, “they watched him.” They would keep the sabbath, but had no heart for grace. For the moment, in His passage through this world, Jesus was in the house of legal

observance, where the elements of the world had their place (see ver. 7), but *need* was there, and He would devote Himself to that. The healing of the man with the dropsy led the Lord to use an illustration which plainly shewed where sin had plunged man; he was really in the pit, and it was in the heart of the Lord to pull him out. Further, we see the blessed character of grace which went out from God's house: the outcasts in highways and hedges are *compelled* to come in; they are pulled out of the pit of this sinful world.

In the Pharisee's house, things went on principles of this world; they held to the sabbath, the sign of God's covenant with Israel, but self-exaltation and worldly importance governed their conduct. That Israel had been given a place with God, and the sabbath as a sign of it, was entirely of grace, and the sense of grace makes us humble. We come to God's house entirely debtors to grace, and then God can shew in us the exceeding riches of His grace (*Ephesians 2:7*). The Jew with all the pretension of legal observance has to give place to the new company, who are gathered into God's house on the pure ground of grace. The Pharisee and his guests valued the opinion of men, but the light of another world shone out in the words of the Lord. We have said, He was for the moment in the Pharisee's house, but He was really on the journey to Jerusalem to suffer and depart out of this world. He took flesh that He might suffer in the flesh. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; but while He was here, Judaism was tested, the thoughts of men's hearts were discovered, but the grace of God was made known. Jesus brought in the light of another world, He looked at things as they will appear there. Man can recompense his fellow in this world, but *resurrection* brings with it a recompense for the just. What the Lord said, He was; if He said, "Call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours .... call the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind" –

He spoke that which was true in His own heart of love, save that He goes further, for He does not tell the servant to invite, but “to *bring in* hither the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind.” We may say again how different were the tone and character of the Pharisee’s house from God’s house. We do well to take it to heart, when we see that which should have carried the impress of Jehovah’s character, the house of a Jew, had sunk down to be governed by the elements of the world. Psalms 111 and 112 shew us the effect of Jehovah’s character upon a God-fearing man. Psalm 111 is a hallelujah to Jehovah because of what *He* is, while Psalm 112 is a hallelujah not merely with the lip, but caused by the conduct of one who fears Jehovah and delights greatly in His commandments; it brings praise to God. A Christian’s house should take its character from what he learns in God’s house. See how Peter leads those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious to come to the Living Stone, that they may be built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices; and after speaking of our conduct externally, he comes to domestic relations, servants, wives and husbands. So also in Colossians and Ephesians. The believer’s character is formed in the house of God, and then he carries himself in his own house in ways of grace and holiness and righteousness. I speak of what we get in scripture, and of what it is our privilege to be set for, not of how far it is realised in the ways of Christians. Would that all our houses bore the impress of God’s ways in His own house!

As yet Judaism and its temple stood before the eyes of men as the house of God, but His character was falsified in it. Instead of its being a place where man in need could approach to God in prayer, it had become a den of thieves (chap. 19: 46) It was the Builder of God’s house (*see Hebrews 3:3,4*) who said, “A certain man made a great supper and bade many.” He alone could speak of its true character, of its extent, and of its

boundless resources of grace. The supper is really the setting forth of God's boundless grace in Christ. "***God was in Christ*** reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . ***full of grace and truth.***" Thus God approached man; He spread out before him the riches of His grace in Christ. He was not requiring of man, but making Himself known to man in Christ. It was in the heart of God to pull man out of the pit into which he had fallen, and to bring him to enjoy the feast of grace, and man's heart was tested by Christ. It is remarkable in this gospel how often some remark is the occasion both of discovering the thoughts of men's hearts, and also of bringing out the thoughts of God as expressed in Christ. This seems to be in fulfilment of the utterance of Simeon (chap. 2, v.35) that the child Jesus was set for a sign "that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." What the Lord had been saying as to inviting the needy to a feast, and looking for recompense at the resurrection of the just, drew out the remark from one of those who sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." It was a remark of such a kind as is often uttered by people who have no idea of taking their place among the needy and outcast – a mere pious expression, for the Lord answers with a parable which shews that the well-to-do in this world did not respond to the invitation to taste the grace of God in Jesus. They found their way to the Pharisee's house, but excused themselves from partaking of grace. The advantage of the Jew is owned, he held the place of privilege. Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to fulfil the faithfulness and truth of God, but the possession of privilege and of the mercies of God prevented his response to grace. It is easy to utter a pious expression as to the happiness of those who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, but the heart of man is tested by Christ. He was in their midst full of grace and they had no heart for it.

But that does not alter what is in the heart of God. He has not spread a feast, and no guests to partake of it. Truth had been kept with those bidden, but it is no longer a question of inviting. The Master of the house does not say, *Invite* the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind to come in, but “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and *bring in* hither” those whom we have named. There is an urgent necessity in the grace of God, “Go out *quickly*.” There is the consideration of the needy condition of those sought by grace, “Bring in hither.” There is the going out after outcasts and wanderers, “Go out into the highways and hedges;” and there is the compulsion of grace, “Compel them to come in.” Finally, there is largeness of grace, “that my house may be filled.” Such is the way in which the blessed God makes a feast and gathers to Himself in His own house.

The conclusion of the chapter is instructive for us. Apparently a great multitude were making the Lord their Object, and following Him; but had they calculated the cost? It meant breaking with every other relation for Him. It is not a question here of grace gathering the needy into its embrace, but of following the Lord in the pathway He was taking. “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth” (*Romans 9:16*) but of the constraining power of God’s love which has been made known to us in Christ, and by which we are held to Him. “Will ye also go away?” said the Lord to His disciples. The answer was the effect of grace, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” The will of man had no place there, but the constraining power of love which attached Peter’s heart to Christ. To break with earthly ties and hate one’s own life must be a hard saying to nature, and yet how blessedly can Christ, by the force of attachment to Himself, lead us into the fellowship of His death, that we may follow Him in the path of association with Himself. The multitude were following as in the effort of the natural mind;

they had not counted the cost, but Christ has put everything on a different footing. To Peter He said, "Thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me hereafter." Christ has gone into death, and now we can say "dead *with Him*." The love that has gone into death is that which draws us into His path, and grace has made it a path of liberty. The secret of it lies in association with Himself.

*T.H. Reynolds (1830-1930). Reproduced from "Food for the Faithful," Vol. 5 (1902).*

### **MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY – GOD'S PURPOSE.**

MAN as a creature was made to be entirely dependent on God, and as such is responsible to Him. On the one hand God has made known what He requires of man, and if man fail to fulfil these obligations, he necessarily comes under God's displeasure, and indeed forfeits his right to live. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (*Ezekiel 18:4*). On the other hand, God has purposes of His own in regard of man – purposes of blessing which He intends and will accomplish; but while doing so, He in no sense surrenders His rights, but maintains and asserts them. If otherwise, it would be a reflection on the character of God and this could not be. How God could be righteous and yet carry out His blessed intentions, is a question which remained without a solution for four thousand years of this world's history. It is true there were indications by types and sacrifices that a righteous basis would be found, but now that has been secured; the question *has* been solved, blessed be God, by the only One who could do it.

The "Son," co-equal with God, who is God, came down to earth, becoming Man in order to accomplish the will of God.

The question of sin had to be settled; the consequences

of sin had to be removed; divine purposes had to be accomplished; but everything was and is secure in the hand of Christ.

A partial knowledge of what He has done brings relief; but the more we apprehend the greatness of what He has effected, the more our joy and peace increase.

The Spirit of God delights to unfold the preciousness of His Person and the greatness of what He has wrought and will yet accomplish.

Every Christian has tasted the joy and relief experienced in knowing that through the work of redemption he has been absolutely and eternally forgiven, not because God has surrendered His righteous claims, but because every claim has been met by His blessed Son.

The answer to every charge which might be laid against the believer, and for which the penalty of death and judgment has been borne, is contained in that sweet and blessed statement, "It is Christ that died" (Romans 8:34). Many a Christian through an imperfect knowledge of the work of Christ lives in continual perplexity.

We are not now speaking of actual sin, which has to be judged and confessed, but a state of soul which in self-occupation finds the flesh a source of sorrow, and for which the believer bitterly, though wrongly, blames himself.

Such a state is described in Romans 7:19, 20, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

Deliverance from this unhappy state lies in a fuller apprehension of Christ and His work. The real difficulty is not so much what we have done, but what scripture calls, "sin in the

flesh,” so we read, “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3.) “Sin in the flesh” is therefore condemned in the cross of Christ, and has come to an end in judgment there.

This answers to the type of the brazen serpent in Numbers 21, of which it is said, “It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (verse 9).

The believer today, instead of looking in, looks to Christ as having been made sin, and as he looks, he lives, that is, he tastes true joy; the Spirit of God conducts him into new occupations, for “the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.”

The brazen serpent typically set forth how Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us; whoever looked, lived; note, it does not say was *forgiven*, but *lived*, and if we are to live in the enjoyment of the love of God, it can only be in the light of how fully all that would occupy us with what we find in ourselves has been sacrificially removed in the cross of Christ.

The song of early days is renewed in the Spirit’s power.

There is more, however, than deliverance in view, for as we have already noted, God has purposes of His own to be effected; many *sons* are to be brought to glory (Heb. 2:10). The relationship spoken of here has to be distinguished from what is spoken of in Matthew 6, “your heavenly Father.” There it is connected with earthly need – “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Ver. 32).” Whereas the Lord Jesus indicated in John 20 that we were to stand in the same relationship to the Father as that in which He as Man stood, “My Father, and your Father ... my God, and your God.”

How wonderful the grace! How far beyond what the heart of man could have conceived! And in Hebrews 2:10 we read, “It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” God is to have *sons*, and will have them. The fact that Christ is the One who gives effect to it, the One into whose hands the Father has committed all things, is the pledge that it is and will be fully accomplished. And not only so, but the affections which belong to that relationship are even *now* begotten in us by the Holy Spirit, “Because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). Oh! what happy relations to be in with God! Do we enjoy these, dear christian reader? Soon we shall enjoy them without hindrance in that eternal day of glory, but the relationship and the affections belonging to it may be known and enjoyed now in the power of the Spirit. If we are occupied with what we find in ourselves, it will greatly hinder our joy; it may appear like humility to do so, but it is really a dishonour to Christ to give place in our minds to that which has been completely removed in His death.

May we be enabled to move forward in our souls into the light and enjoyment by the Holy Spirit of *sonship* – our proper birthright. If we have been hitherto hindered from doing so by occupation with our poor unworthy selves, may we in the light of what has been effected by Christ move into liberty; “For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). “The Spirit is life on account of righteousness” (verse 10). A. N.

Sorrow looks back; worry looks around; faith looks up. (*Anon.*)

## KNOWN OF HIM

*John 10:10-17 and 22-30; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Genesis 18:16-19;  
Nahum 1:7.*

We have been considering as we have read through John's Gospel together these days the instances where it is recorded that the Lord Jesus *knew*: He knew what He was going to do; He knew all things that were coming upon Him. Here in chapter 10 of that Gospel we have what I believe is very intimate: the knowledge which the Lord Jesus has of His sheep.

It is a wonderful thing to belong to the Lord Jesus; I am sure we will all agree with that. There is a verse I love in 1 Corinthians 15, speaking of the resurrection: "the firstfruits, Christ; then those that are the Christ's at His coming." When I read that I think, what a wonderful thing to be amongst those who are "the Christ's"! As Peter said in his preaching to Cornelius, "Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all things" (Acts 10:36). There is a sense in which He is Lord of all. He is above all and will soon be revealed as such, like Joseph in his elevation in Egypt, when they cried "Bow the knee" (Genesis 41:43) and we know that very soon every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue will confess Him Lord; that is of heavenly, earthly and infernal beings.

But there is a special relationship between the Lord Jesus and His own, those for whom He gave His life. He came that we might have life. I don't want to be picky but I prefer Darby's translation of verse 10: "I am come that they might have life, and have it abundantly." In the excellent King James Version it says "that they might have it more abundantly," but that might suggest that it is the same kind of life that we had before, but more of it. It isn't that; it is a new life. Although this was said before the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, I believe the teaching of the gospel looks on to the time when Jesus would be risen from among the dead. We couldn't have any part with Him

in His earthly life but He has brought eternal life from heaven; 1 John chapter 1: “the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us.” Through His death we are brought into the good of that, and eternal life isn’t simply life that goes on and on and on; it’s a new kind of life – different motives, different objects, different relationships. We are brought into a different sphere, as it were, and that is what the Lord Jesus Christ came for: “I am come that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” But that involved the laying down of His own life, or else we could never have part in His risen life. “I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (v.11).

Further down, He repeats “I am the good Shepherd” (v.14) and He goes on to say “and I know those that are Mine.” You may say, the Lord Jesus knows everyone; so He does – in Himself He “is over all, God blessed for ever” (Romans 9:5). We read in Proverbs “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (15:3). We read in Psalm 94, “He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?” God is aware of everything and the Lord Jesus has universal knowledge. Elihu, speaking to Job, said “Dost thou know about the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him that is perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16).

But here in our chapter we are not speaking of God’s omniscience, His knowledge of everything and everyone; we are speaking of a link that the Good Shepherd has with His sheep, those for whom He laid down His life. Isn’t it a wonderful privilege to be amongst those of whom the Lord Jesus says, “My sheep”?

Now there are those who are not His sheep; that is very serious. It says in verse 26, “for ye are not of My sheep, as I told you.” We have spoken in these meetings of the division that emerges through John’s Gospel between that which is of God and that which is of the wicked one; that which is of light and that

which is of darkness. We can see this division, I think, more plainly in the world around us today; the situation is being sifted and sorted and we need to be clear that we are amongst those whom the Lord Jesus speaks of as “My sheep.” In Luke’s Gospel the Lord speaks warningly of those who would come to Him claiming an affiliation with Him. He says, “From the time that the master of the house shall have risen up and shall have shut the door, and ye shall begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord open to us; and he answering shall say to you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten in Thy presence and drunk, and Thou hast taught in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I do not know you whence ye are; depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity” (Luke 13:25-27). That is solemn. To bring it into our own days, we can relate it to people who are in the Christian profession; they profess faith in Christ; they go to church (perhaps sometimes); maybe they engage in various activities; but they are not amongst Christ’s sheep. “I know you not,” says the Lord. And the Lord was surrounded by such here. It says, “it was winter” (v.22). I think we can take that in a metaphorical sense; the Lord felt the coldness, the rejection, and yet He was committed to “My sheep.”

And the knowledge between Himself and these is very wonderful. Going back to that earlier section which we read, He says, “I know those that are Mine, and am known of those that are Mine, as the Father knows Me and I know the Father” (v.14,15). That is almost incredible – that that kind of intimate knowledge that is between the Father and the Son is also between the Lord Jesus and His own. I think this is an aspect of eternal life. What does the Lord say in the opening of His prayer to the Father, recorded in John 17? “This is the eternal life, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” – coming into a sphere of intimate knowledge with the Father and the Son. It is very precious. Who wants the things of the world out there when this is what is on offer? – this close and

intimate relationship with the One who has laid down His life for us.

But there is another thing I want to touch on. He says in verse 27: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Do you know, there is no other recipe for being kept right, being preserved in the path of faith and of the will of God, out of the clutches of the evil one, than hearing the voice of the Lord Jesus and following Him. It sounds very simple but it is absolutely essential. We were considering yesterday the voice of the Son of God, spoken of in chapter 5, a quickening voice, making us to live – live in relation to the Father, live in relation to the things of God; and here is that same voice but put in a tender way as the voice of a Shepherd. I believe there is that in every true believer that can register the voice of the Lord Jesus. He says earlier (verse 5) that “they will not follow a stranger, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers.” But we get people coming along who would overpower that, if they can, with human wisdom and persuasive speech, so that the sheep get drawn off course. We need to be sure that we are listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

I think there is something in the ‘voice’ that is beyond ‘word.’ We may receive words and they make a kind of sense to us but to recognise the voice that is speaking is something else. It says of the angels in Psalm 103 that they hearken to the voice of His word. That is very interesting. “Bless Jehovah, ye His angels, mighty in strength, that execute His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (verse 20). You see, we are brought into a very close relationship (let me say again) with the Lord Jesus and with our God and Father. God says in Psalm 32, “I will guide thee with Mine eye.” Now we often need divine guidance: do I go here or do I not? Do I take this job or do I not? Do I go among these believers or not? The will of God cannot just be dialled up in an instant like going to the telephone and pressing the buttons and –

ah – here is the answer. It involves a known relationship with God as Father. “I will guide thee with Mine eye” means that you can see the way the person is looking. If I am looking at my wife, or she at me, we can register in each other’s eyes what we are thinking. And that’s the kind of relationship that is safe, a relationship with God known as Father.

I think it is similar with the voice. You hear the voice and you know whose it is. I expect we have all witnessed, or seen a video of, strange people trying to call sheep to themselves. They just do not come! The true shepherd gives out a few noises and the sheep come running. That is how it needs to be with us, especially in these days of falling away, days of confusion in Christendom, days when God’s word is being so much rejected. So let us seek to hear and follow the voice of the Lord Jesus.

It reminds me of what John says in his first epistle to the little children, those young in faith. He warns about those who lead astray: “These things have I written to you concerning those who lead you astray: and yourselves, the unction which ye have received from Him” – that is, from Christ – “abides in you, and ye have not need that any one should teach you;” – that doesn’t mean that they didn’t need to learn anything, but they didn’t need to be taught what was right and what was wrong, because they had the unction – “but as the same unction teaches you as to all things, and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in Him” (1 John 2:26,27). We follow the unction; we abide in Christ; we hear His voice and follow Him.

That is the path of safety in the present day. But it is in the knowledge that He knows us. He says (verse 27): “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Isn’t it a wonderful thing to be known by the Lord in this way?

I read in 1 Corinthians 8 because I thought it would be profitable to consider what it means to be known by God the

Father. In passing – because it comes in the subsequent verses (5 and 6) – while we do not want to criticise anyone, Paul brings out here the distinction between the Father and the Lord: “To us there is one God, the Father; ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ ...” Lordship in the New Testament is generally connected with Christ. There are some exceptions. For example, we read in Acts 4 of that prayer meeting when they said, “Lord, look upon their threatenings.” I think that there they were addressing God as the all-powerful, supreme Being. You remember the occasion when the place where they were met shook, so effective was that prayer meeting. You get the odd occasion where God as such is addressed as Lord but generally in the New Testament the title Lord is connected with the Lord Jesus and we have Scripture for it here: “To us there is one God, the Father, ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ.” I say that in passing.

But in verse three it says, “If anyone love God, he is known of Him.” That was the first commandment, as the Lord reinforced it: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy understanding” (Matthew 22:37). I sometimes ask myself, how much do I love God? Can you say, I love God? John says in his first epistle, “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). If I don’t feel that I love God very much, let me get into the enjoyment of that love which He showed in giving us His Son, that love which He has shown by making us His children: “See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God” (1 John 3:1). John says “We have known and have believed the love which God has to us” (1 John 4:16). F----- quoted earlier from Jude: “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (verse 21) and I think that if we lived more in the love of God there would be more of a return of love from our hearts to God. This verse says that if I am like that, if I love God, God *knows* me. Again, this is not the general knowledge of the omniscient God, but if you love God, God has a special knowledge of you. I think that is lovely. When you think who God is, the

eternal, omnipotent, invisible, infinite God, and I am just a pin-prick, or less, on a planet which is just a pin-prick in a galaxy which (it seems from what they are saying now) is just a pin-prick itself in the universe; and *that* God, revealed in Jesus, has a particular knowledge of me as one who loves Him. That is a very delightful relationship to be in. How it would encourage us to walk more as the sons and daughters of the living God, if we knew that He takes this cognisance of us.

Well, He took cognisance of Abraham. Abraham was a man who is on record for his faith – “the father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11). He was a man who waited for a heavenly city, a city “which has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor” (Hebrews 11:10). He could let things go in this scene, hold them lightly. You remember that when his flocks and the flocks of his nephew Lot were such that the place where they were was insufficient to graze them all, he gave Lot the choice: if you go to the left, I will go to the right, or *vice versa* (see Genesis 13:9). He wasn’t that troubled. Lot chose for himself and his was a downward path.

But Abraham was a heavenly man. Even the people in the land where he sojourned said, “thou art a prince of God among us” (Genesis 23:6). It is a good thing to have a good testimony from those without. Sometimes it is not like that. I have heard people out in the world speak of those I have known and I have been so pleased when they have spoken well of their testimony. In another case, many years ago, I knew a man who was a professing Christian; he had been in a gathering rather like our own, although I didn’t know him well. I was on the point of saying to my colleague, ‘I know this man; he is a Christian,’ but I am glad I didn’t, because before I could say that, he said, ‘that man, I wouldn’t trust him as far as I could throw him.’ He had had business dealings with him before and found him a slippery customer. Oh dear! But then in another case I heard a much better

story. I remember speaking to an aristocrat who had a large estate. I knew that a brother in the Lord was one of his tenant farmers and, by way of conversation, I said that I knew this man. He responded warmly and said, ‘he is one of those Christians of an evangelical kind who is utterly trustworthy.’ It is necessary to have a good testimony from those without (*see 1 Timothy 3:7*). Abraham had a good testimony although he was just a sojourner. We read in Hebrews (ch.11) that “By faith he sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise as a foreign country.” He was prepared to wait for what God was preparing.

God appreciated this man of faith. He says, “I know him.” I would love God to know me like that; wouldn’t you? ‘I know him. He walks straightforwardly in a right way. He is going on in the path of faith.’ God says, “I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah” and so on. So what was the result? The Almighty God shared with Abraham what He was about to do. Do I want understanding in the things of God? Do I want the enjoyment of fellowship with God? This is the way into it. God had said beforehand, “walk before My face, and be perfect” (Genesis 17:1) and Abraham – not without failure, but characteristically – did that; and God said, “I know him” and shared things with him. Psalm 25 tells us that “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” Abraham was a man who feared God; God knew him and imparted to him the secret of what He was about.

Lastly in the book of Nahum: we all get into trouble of one sort or another from time to time, don’t we? Life isn’t plain sailing and the Lord never promised to us that it would be. He said, “In the world ye have tribulation.” Besides the tribulation that we get from the world in varying degrees there is the Father’s discipline, always exercised in love, although we may find it irritating when we are going through it. We may have troubles in our health, our family, our finances and in other ways. It is a good

thing, as James says, to exercise patience when we are tried: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for, having been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which He has promised to them that love Him” (James 1:12). The writer to the Hebrews speaks of the Father chastening everyone whom He loves (ch.12, vv. 5-11).

There are religions, I understand, in India and elsewhere, where if a person is suffering, that is *karma* – he brought it on himself. That is very cruel. The fact that troubles are in the world – sickness and so on – is due to the incoming of sin, but we cannot point to someone who is going through trouble and say, what is his sin? That is how they regarded the blind man in John 9: “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifested in him.” Our Father is tender, wise and loving in the way that He disciplines His children, and it is with a view to our partaking of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10). For us to be holy (you could describe it in other ways) means that I love what God loves and hate what He hates; I partake of His holiness. So trouble is used of God to this end, and for other purposes too; we learn all sorts of things when we go through trouble. We learn what the Lord Jesus can be to us – the One who saves to the uttermost “those who approach by Him to God” (Hebrews 7:25). We learn the value of His intercession, and that of the Holy Spirit, who “makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered” from within us (Romans 8:26). There is a wonderful system of help in Christianity.

But coming back to Nahum, he puts it like this: “Jehovah is good, a stronghold in a day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.” Did Joseph feel forgotten in that prison in Egypt? God knew him and He brought him out. I am sure Job felt cast off amidst all his troubles, grievous as they were, but God knew him and brought him out of his troubles; his latter end was more blest

than the beginning. Think of David's troubles. He says he was hunted (by Saul) as "a single flea" and as "a partridge on the mountains" (1 Samuel 26:20). But God knew him and brought him out of his troubles. There is a psalm (18) which he composed "in the day that Jehovah had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul." And so we could go through the Scriptures and come right up to our own day. If you are among Christ's sheep, not only does the Good Shepherd know you but our God and Father knows you. He has His eye on us and His hand on us; and He will bring us out of our troubles. "He knoweth them that trust in Him." I wish my trust in God, and in the Lord Jesus, was simpler and deeper. It is a wonderful thing quietly to trust in God. We need to do that as troubles multiply around us. "Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed on Thee, for He confideth in Thee" (Isaiah 26). It is only a slight difference in translation but someone has pointed out that the original does not actually say "Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the *Man*" (although that is not wrong) but "the *mind*." Our minds can kick up a lot of trouble for us. Does yours do that sometimes? You get hold of something and your mind spins round and round and you have a job to put it aside. It doesn't profit you; you are not doing yourself any good, nor anybody else, but still, like a dog gnawing at a bone, you cannot leave this trouble aside. It's the mind that needs help. "Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed on Thee, for he confideth in Thee."

I think that is enough for now. I hope that some at least of these remarks will be helpful to us – what it means to be *known* specially by the Good Shepherd, and *known* of God our Father and to enjoy through all that happens in life this intimate, trusting relationship with the Persons of the Godhead. May God bless the word.

*Word given at Santa Barbara, California, 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2016, by G.S.B. Included by request.*

## THE LOVE OF JESUS

IN looking at Revelation 1: 5, 6, we can trace the following actings of love: first, love *thinks* of its objects. This marks the motive in operation to be unaffectedly pure, for when the heart regales itself by meditating on its object, it seeks not to be noticed, to be praised or exalted for thinking of its object; its reward is found in the very thought itself – a reward, a pleasure with which nothing can compare.

Secondly, love *visits* its object. It could not be content with merely thinking: the same principle that leads love to *think* with pleasure, induces it to *visit* its object; and, moreover, we can trace the same purity, elevation, and disinterestedness, in the *visit* as in the *thought*. It does not *think* upon its object in order to please or attract the attention of any one, neither does it *visit* in order to effect such ends; it has *its own real, substantial* enjoyment, both in thinking of and visiting *its object*.

Thirdly, love *suffers* for its object. It rests not satisfied with merely *thinking* of, or *visiting* its object – *it must suffer*. In order to exhibit itself in all its reality and intensity, love must put itself to cost for its object; it must spend and be spent, not because it expects a return, but simply because *it will* express itself in a way not to be mistaken. Love never thinks of what it may reap for itself in thus suffering. No: it simply contemplates *its object*, in thinking of, visiting, and suffering for it.

Fourthly, love *exalts* its object. This is the highest point. In the exaltation of its object, love sees the fruit of previous thought, visitation, and suffering. Hence, love feels exquisite happiness in exalting its object, for in so doing, it reaps the wished-for harvest.

Let us now apply the above blessed characteristics of love to the Lord Jesus, and see how His love exhibited all of them. Did not He ponder in His own eternal mind His much-loved Church before the foundation of the world? Yes, truly, “His gracious eye

surveyed us ere stars were seen above.” Did He rest satisfied with merely thinking about us? No: He laid aside His glory; He came down into this cold, heartless world, as into a vast quarry, from whence He hoped to hew out stones for the temple. He made His way down into this “*rough valley*” of ours, which had been “neither eared nor sown” (*Deuteronomy 21:4*). “The day-spring from *on high* hath *visited* us;” but He did not rest satisfied with coming down to look at us in our misery and degradation; He determined to *suffer* for us, to groan, to bleed, to die for us; He hath washed us in “*His own blood*,” which marks the intensity of His suffering for us. What, then, was all this for? Why those ineffable sufferings of Jesus? Why the groans and bloody sweat in the garden? Why the mysterious hour of profound darkness, together with the cry, “Why hast Thou forsaken me?” Simply that the love of Jesus might *exalt* its object. And He has exalted His object, yea, to the highest point of elevation: “He hath made us kings and priests unto God.”

Thus we have seen how the love of Jesus has *thought* of, *visited*, *suffered* for, and *exalted* its object: this is for our comfort. But then we should remember that if we love Jesus, *we too* will often like to *think* of Him, to contemplate His grace, ponder over His perfections; moreover, we will pay frequent *visits* to the secret of His sanctuary, not to gain a name as persons of much prayer, but simply to indulge the desires of our hearts after Him “who is the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” Again, we shall be ready to *suffer* for Him, not in order to commend ourselves to our brethren as persons of great energy and zeal, but to express the high estimation in which we hold His blessed Person. Finally, it will be our constant effort to *exalt* Him in every place; our constant cry will be, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.” Let us earnestly pray for such a deep tide of Divine love in our poor, cold, narrow, selfish hearts, as will make our service not the mere spurt of imperfect zeal, kindled by the unhallowed spark of human

opinion, but the calm, steady, constant flow of unalterable affection for Jesus – that affection which has its primary joy in *pondering* over its object, ere it comes forth as an *actor* or a *sufferer* in *His cause*.

*C.H. Mackintosh (1820-96)*

“Come, saints, praise the Lamb, His mercies proclaim,  
And lift up your heads and sing of His name;  
His love to the Church, which He purchased with blood,  
To make her His bride and the temple of God.”

### **Discipline and Mercy**

*Letter from Lady Powerscourt*

Paris, May, 1830.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND, – Truly I feel for your fresh trial, one particularly trying to you. How graciously He has taught you to bend under it! One sermon from himself is worth a thousand from any man. Never so sweet is it to be raised up, as when He has cast down. Are we not given to drink largely of refreshment and consolation from the Comforter? even in the desert to lie down in our field of promise? “When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble” (*Job 34:29*). Enemies may surround, but our shepherd is near; enemies may be in ambush, but the shepherd is on the watch. But could we only recount our repose and refreshment, should we not “leave half untold the donation of bliss?” Is it not blessed to be able to sing of judgment as well as mercy? Surely it is among our chiefest blessings, that it has never yet been said of us, “*Let them alone*” (see *Hosea 4:17; Matt. 15:14*). Israel was blessed while God brought down their heart through heaviness; for they cried unto the Lord in their trouble. Israel was blessed, while they slew them; then they sought Him, and remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. The sorest word ever spoken to them, I think, was,

“Why should ye be stricken *any more*? ye will revolt more and more” (*Isaiah 1:5*). But, though silly sheep still, though still straying, counting the cost, we can say, “Seek thy servant.” Cannot we testify that love has rebuked and chastened again and again, when we have turned aside? Has He not been unwearied in preserving our faith? Though Satan has been permitted to sift, his grain of wheat has not fallen to the ground; though cast into the furnace, the refiner has sat over his treasure, because to Him the trial was precious. When sin has separated between Him and us, when idols have scattered our thoughts here and there, has He not been *bent* on restoring? has He not yearned over his Ephraim? Sometimes He almost breaks the heart with such a look as He gave Peter; sometimes He overcomes by passing by iniquities; sometimes by feeding with the rod and judgments. But of this we may rest assured, – blessed thought! – He *will* restore, till we can say, in the Spirit of Him who was dumb before his shearers, “*any* thing *with* thy smile, *any* thing *but* thy frown!” I think at other times, the soul feels so unconscious of ingratitude and baseness, that its own convictions suppose displeasure in the Friend of sinners, which need a strong expression to prove it otherwise. At such times it is not sufficient to know that He is a friend; we need a smile to infuse confidence. The conscious prodigal expects a rod; his father runs, “falls on his neck, and kisses him.” We cannot long read the volume of his providence, it appears to me, without experiencing this dealing; for He delights to *expose* the soul’s proneness to expect dealing according to desert, by sparing when we deserve punishment, and in the midst of judgment remembering mercy. Alas! how slow we are in learning not to turn *from*, but flee *to* Jesus in our extremities, as our hiding-place and guide. Satan’s constant aim, I think, seems to be, to lead *from* the simplicity which is in Christ – Christ’s to restore us *to* it, and lead us in it. I believe we are only wise in giving ourselves up to his guidance, and in

following *whithersoever* He leads. Followers of a crucified One, we must expect a thorny, though a trodden path; but He will not leave till He has satisfied, yea, *satisfied* the hungry soul with goodness. His glory is bound up in us! *His name is in us!* I suppose you have seen ----- since his return, who has told you all about this place. Infidelity is horrible in the world – more boldly avowed, I should think, than formerly. Much good here, and nice preaching; simple, joyful, marrow of the Gospel, though not much deep experience. We need to have the enemy met in the avenues within, and overcome with a text. This is where Mr. Rowels excels. Tell me some things he has said of late in his sermons.

Yours, in truth and faithfulness,

Theodosia A. Powerscourt

## POETIC PAGES

### Christ's Return

Hear the sequel of the story  
Of the Saviour's faithful fight:  
Jesus shall return in glory  
With redeemed hosts of light.

Hail with joy His blest appearing,  
God's Belovèd manifest!  
Swiftly His great day is nearing  
When in love God's heart shall rest.

Christ is coming, quickly coming;  
All shall fear before His Name;  
First His saints, no longer roaming,  
Gathered home, shall chant His fame.

Christ, through gates with heads uplifted,  
Everlasting opened doors,  
Comes to reign, God's King all-gifted,  
Blessing rich and wide outpours.

'Tis the Lord, the King of glory,  
Mighty Monarch, warrior-clad,  
Coming thus to close sin's story,  
And to end earth's histr'y sad.

Lord of heavenly hosts, in power  
He shall come with justice rod,  
King of kings, in that great hour,  
Reconciling things to God.

Angel myriads surrounding,  
Loud with joy their voices raise;  
All the universe resounding  
With the strains of heartfelt praise.

*Edward H. Chater (1907)*

### **The Lord of the Book**

I find my Lord in the Bible  
Wherever I chance to look;  
He is the theme of the Bible,  
The Centre and heart of the Book.  
He is the Rose of Sharon,\*  
He is the Lily fair;\*  
Wherever I open my Bible  
The Lord of the Book is there.

*\* See Song of Songs 2:1. The descriptions "Rose of Sharon" and "Lily of the valleys" are by the female speaker about herself and "Rose" (or narcissus) is feminine – but we may allow some poetic licence! After all, the beauty of the church is reflective of Christ.*

He, at the Book's beginning,  
Gave to the earth its form;  
He is the Ark of shelter,  
Bearing the brunt of the storm,  
The burning bush of the desert,  
The budding of Aaron's rod.  
Wherever I look in the Bible  
I see the Son of God.

The ram upon Mount Moriah,  
The ladder from earth to sky,  
The scarlet cord in the window  
And the serpent lifted high,  
The smitten rock in the desert,  
The Shepherd with staff and crook;  
The face of my Lord I discover  
Wherever I open the Book.

He is the Seed of the woman,  
The Saviour virgin-born;  
He is the Son of David  
Whom men rejected with scorn.  
His garments of grace and beauty  
The stately Aaron deck,  
Yet HE is the Priest forever,  
The order of Melchisedec.

Lord of eternal glory,  
Whom John the Apostle saw.  
Light of the Golden City,  
Lamb without spot or flaw,  
Bridegroom coming at midnight,  
For whom the virgins look;  
Wherever I open my Bible  
I find my Lord in the Book. *Author unknown.*

Jesus is our Shepherd,  
For the sheep He bled;  
Every lamb is sprinkled  
With the blood He shed.

Then on each He setteth  
His own secret sign;  
They that have My Spirit,  
“These,” saith He, “are Mine.”

*Extracted from “Little Pillows” by Frances Ridley Havergal.*

#### **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.