

Scripture Truth



Inside:

Living

Words

Versions

Psalm 116

Buy gold and be rich today!

"A certain man had two sons"

I AM The Way, The Truth and The Life

Of the incomparable Treasure of the holy Scriptures

July – September 2011

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

Editor: Theo Balderston

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is published every three months to expound the teaching of the Scriptures so that we “may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

Annual Subscription 2011

£9.50 Post Free UK – £11.50 Post Free Overseas

Contents

Versions	1	Psalm 116	14
Words	2	Buy gold and be rich today!	17
I AM The Way, The Truth and The Life	7	Living	23
“A certain man had two sons”	9	Of the incomparable Treasure of the holy Scriptures Back Cover	



“Waiting for the Coming”

by J T Mawson (*Scripture Truth's* first editor)

130 pages; paperback

available from STP at £5.00 + p&p

This new edition provides a highly readable exploration of the important subject of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. First published in 1934, based on a series of Bible studies from *Scripture Truth* in 1933, it convincingly shows that this coming again will be in two stages – the coming *for* His saints (the *Rapture*) and *with* them (the *Appearing*); and presents each Christian with the challenge: “Am I waiting for the Coming?”

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Illustrations on pages 9-13 ©Microsoft Corporation or its suppliers

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is the imprint of the Central Bible Hammond Trust

Registered Charity No. 223327

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Versions

One incalculable advantage of the King James Version, first issued 400 years ago (traditionally to the month in which I am writing this), was that after a slowish start it swept the board in Britain. For more than two centuries it was the single, unquestioned standard of appeal in matters of faith in English-speaking countries; and it was an accurate enough translation, made from an accurate enough text. Often adopting the simple and memorable language of Tyndale and Coverdale, men who had lived (and in Tyndale's case died for) the faith of the gospel, the KJV was a fairly literal translation that was fairly faithful to the sentence structure of the original texts. This leaves the understanding of the text more to the careful and prayerful study of the reader; paraphrases are more like priests telling us how to interpret the Bible. The KJV was not entirely up-to-date even in 1611. Already in ordinary speech "thou / thee" tended to be reserved for addressing children and inferiors, whilst "you" had become a respectful *singular* form of address as well as acting as a general *plural*; but the KJV stuck to the simple and older rule that "ye /you" are plural, "thou / thee" singular. Yet it was certainly influential: it moulded the minds of many generations.

Nowadays many Christians prefer readability to accuracy in their translation. In one respect at least they are right. A recently converted friend, without any Christian background, commented to me concerning Cutting's *Safety, Certainty & Enjoyment*, "Well, that was not an easy read, but the author certainly made his point!" The tract seems to have dispelled his doubts about assurance of salvation. But he did find a hard read what I would have thought an easy read! English is changing fast. However young Christians ought quickly to move on to a version that is closer to the original. Paraphrases are more shackled to the translator's interpretative opinions, impede comparison of Scripture with Scripture, and are less respectful of the fact that in Scripture God speaks "in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:13, ESV).

Theo Balderston

Words

Yannick Ford

“In words... which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Corinthians 2:13, NKJV). “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV). “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says” (Hebrews 3:7, NKJV). This article makes us think about words, seeing that the Holy Spirit attaches such importance to them.

What exactly are words, and how do we learn what they mean? It’s a subject that I have been thinking about of late. I really enjoyed it when my children first learned to say words. Babies can be very funny when they try to talk, but it’s actually an enormous step for them as they learn to communicate. I don’t pretend to understand child development, so my comments below on “words” and “things” are simply based on my observations of my children, and professionals in this field may need to correct me. However, it seems reasonable to suppose that in child development “things” come before “words”. We point *things* out to our children, telling them what those things are called, and so they learn the *word*. My youngest daughter Annie’s first properly recognisable word was “cat”!

Words before things

But did “things” come before “words”? According to the Bible, it would seem not. We are told that God *spoke* creation into being. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3, NKJV). In Genesis chapter 1, we read several times, “God *said* ...” – and it was done. Thus what we see in the universe – *things* – were in fact made by the Word of God. Adam and Eve were evidently created with the ability to speak, and we know that God gave Adam the task of naming the animals. It would be fascinating to know what language Adam spoke!

So to go back to our question: what exactly are words? If we look into meanings in depth, we can end up going round in circles! Take the word “kind”, in the sense of “kindness” and “goodness”. I have a small pocket dictionary at home, *The Little Oxford Dictionary*. If I look up “kind”, it says, “friendly, benevolent”. If I then look up “benevolent”, I see, “wishing to do good,” with “kind” among the list of other definitions! Of course I only used a small dictionary, but I expect that with most words and most dictionaries, you would often end up in a similar circle. Words are used to define words, which is why we end up in circles.

Having said all that, most of us would agree that even if it is difficult to define “kindness”, we know what kindness is when we see it. Thus the actual word “kindness” is important because it is used to label and communicate an important thing. Words can communicate truths.

The meaning of words matters

Does any of this actually matter? I believe that this is not just an interesting philosophical discussion (or dull, depending on your point of view!) It can show us something important. Words open our understanding to eternal truths of fundamental importance – words like *holiness*, *justification*, *sanctification*, etc. For example, we read, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). Evidently *holiness* is a vital concept, as we need it if we are to see the Lord. Defining “holiness” is not an easy task, but the Bible tells us clearly that we need holiness. We therefore need to have an understanding of what holiness is. We can do so by seeing where this word is used in the Bible, comparing these verses, studying the context, and of course, asking God to give us understanding.

This leads me to 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, which is a very interesting Scripture. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” The apostle Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit is the One who enables us to understand the things of God. Paul taught these things using *words that the Holy Spirit taught*. The words that the Holy Spirit used to give us the Bible were carefully selected to bring out the truths for



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us. The Holy Spirit did not use *any* words: He used *specific* words that have important meanings.

The true Word

Above all, the Lord Jesus Himself is called *The Word*. He gives expression to all that God is. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3). This is another verse that suggests that words come before things, because *all things* were made by the Word of God. And if words come before things, they will also last longer: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35). They also have eternal consequences: “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:37).

The Word of God is that which the Holy Spirit uses to bring about the new birth.

- “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).
- “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18).
- “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1Peter 1:23).

What a blessing that we have the Word of God in our hands! We can thank God for faithful men and women who made it possible for us to have the Word of God translated into our own language. Some men, like William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536), paid for this with their lives. What a blessing we have obtained from their sacrifice!

The Bible on the Bible

There are many verses in the Word of God that show us how important that Word is. I have selected a few below:

- “The sum of thy word is truth, and every righteous judgment of thine is for ever” (Psalm 119:160, Darby Trans.).
- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16 NKJV).
- “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:1-3)

Recently, STP published a commentary on Psalm 119 by Cor Bruins. I really benefited from reading it because Cor brought out of this interesting psalm practical lessons in Christian living. As he points out, Psalm 119 mentions the word of God in nearly every verse, using different words – for example, *way*, *law*, *testimonies*, *precepts*, *statutes*, *commandments*, *judgments*, *word*. If we consider that the words used in the Bible are important, and that they are used to bring important truths to our attention, then there will be a good reason why all these different words are used in Psalm 119. Cor helpfully defines them at the start of his book (pp 17-20). Many of them are mentioned in the very first eight-verse section. This means that not only can we study what the words mean, for example by using a Bible dictionary, but that the actual context of verses 1-8 will help to explain them. I have emphasised them in the passage below

“ALEPH. Blessed are the undefiled in the **way**, who walk in the **law** of the LORD.

Blessed are those who keep His **testimonies**, who seek Him with the whole heart!

They also do no iniquity; they walk in His **ways**.

You have commanded us to keep Your **precepts** diligently.

Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your **statutes**!

Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your **commandments**.

I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous **judgments**.

I will keep Your **statutes**; oh, do not forsake me utterly!” (Ps 119:1-8 NKJV)

This emphasizes that the Bible is full of *words*! They sum up to a huge revelation of what God is and has done; and, sadly, of what man is and has done. All these *words* sum up to one “*Word of God.*” The Lord Jesus said that the one who loves Him will keep His *word* (John 14:23), and a wonderful promise is given to that person: “My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” But the Lord goes on to say that the person who does not love Him does not keep His *words* [plural] (v.24). The meaning – the truth itself – is in the very words – *all* of them. If we don’t treasure His *words*, we won’t treasure His *word*!

Words need to be taught

These “words” need to be *taught*. I will finish with a passage from Nehemiah:

“Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who *could* hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. ... So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:1,2,8).

Here is an excellent model for Bible teaching! There was a clear reading – *they read distinctly* – so that all could hear the words. Then they *gave the sense*, so that all could understand what the words meant, in their context. Then they *helped them to understand the reading*, so that all could see what application these words had for their lives. God’s Word, and the words in it, are there for our instruction (see 2 Timothy 3:16), so as we take time to study what these words mean, it will help us to “be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”.



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I AM The Way, The Truth and The Life

Tom Albiston

When the Lord Jesus said, “I am the Life...” he connected that Life with what Philip had seen. “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). This further instalment in the series on the “I AMs” of John’s Gospel shows that not just words of teaching, but also words that describe, are integral to Bible revelation.

The Lord takes this title in circumstances quite different from those in which the previous “I Ams” of this Gospel had been brought out. He was now alone with His disciples on the eve of His departure. With the world shut out, and shut in with His own, His words were especially for them. The announcement that He would leave them left the disciples with heavy hearts. The thought of His impending absence brought sorrow. They felt lost, uncertainty clouded their minds, and they were anxious. What would the future be? To their concerns the Lord gives His answer in John 13-17. Having received this knowledge, even though He would be away, they could enjoy by anticipation the glorious future of which He had spoken. Its fulness would be entered into when He comes again to receive them to Himself.

And first of all, in answer to the disciples’ evident anxieties, the Lord calls on them to believe on Him in the same manner as they believed on God (John 14:1). He is to be the object of their faith. To them He is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (14:6).

We have learned in previous articles that the Lord Jesus Christ is the *Bread* of life, the *Light* of life, the *Door* into life, the *Power* to preserve life (as “the Good Shepherd”), the *Character* of the life (as “the Resurrection and the Life”). And here He is the *Object* of the life – life which is received by faith. The person who has it shall never see death (cp. 8:51), but the eternal life he now possesses is far more than just the elimination of death. Christ is the embodiment of it. And what characterizes this life is the knowledge of Himself, as the One in whom the Father is perfectly revealed. “I am the Way... No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.”

Christ is the only possible way to reach the Father. “No-one knows the Father, but the Son” (Matthew 11:27). For the Lord Jesus to be “the Way”, it was necessary that He go to the cross, so that we might



have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and be presented holy, unblameable and irreproachable before His God and Father. As knowing the Son, we have present enjoyment of these blessings.

“I am....the Truth”. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to bear witness of the truth (John 18:37). Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Previously there had been only the shadow, but Christ was the substance, the reality. That which He declared was the truth. To know Him is to know the Father also (John 14:7), and to have seen Him.

Philip seems to catch at the word “seen”, and make his request, “Show us the Father”, etc. (14:8). Knowledge is connected with the truth being revealed, but seeing conveyed the thought of an

object presented for *observation* and contemplation. This is what prompted Philip’s request. The Lord’s answer illuminates the meaning of His declaration, “I am the Life”. “Am I so long a time with you, and thou hast not known me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father, and how sayest thou, Shew us the Father?” (Darby Trans.). Here knowing the Lord Jesus is connected with

what Philip had seen, not simply heard. The disciples had seen the Son living among them, and in this they had seen the Father, for the Father was in Him and He in the Father (v.10). Therefore the Lord could say, “I am the Life.” See also John 1:1, 4, and his first Epistle (e.g. 1:1-4; 5:20). The Son, who is the Word, speaks of the Father as the source and object of His life, and gave perfect manifestation to it. Thus those who saw and perceived it were brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son.

In conclusion, this threefold title presents the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God as:

- The Way – that is, the means of access to the Father.
- The Truth – that is, full revelation in contrast to anything of a partial character.
- The Life – that is, the manifestation in love, grace, and power of the eternally living communion subsisting between the Father and the Son.

How blessed to know Him and live by Him. He is the true God and life eternal!



“A certain man had two sons”

Ian Mears

There is always more to learn. This is true even of the well-known parable of the prodigal son. We normally have the unsaved in mind when we think about this parable, but let us see what it says to us as believers.

A crowd of tax collectors and sinners drew near to hear the words of the Lord Jesus, but the usual crowd of criticizing Pharisees and scribes was there too. So, while there were words of repentance and grace and salvation for those who were the most conscious of their sins, there were also words of warning for those who thought that they were righteous and had no need of repentance, but rather looked down on those that they considered to be spiritually beneath them. And so there is a word for all of us.

“A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me’” (Luke 15:11, NKJV). He couldn’t wait for what was certainly going to be his in the future. Life would have been so much better if his father had been dead, and he had the effrontery to say to his father, “Sort out what I’m going to get when you’re gone, and give it to me now.” He appears not to give any thought to the effect on his father, or on the farm – a third of which, presumably, his father would have to sell off (see Deuteronomy 21:17). That was of no concern to the younger son. It was his life, and he was going to live it as he chose, regardless of the consequences to others.

Then came the inevitable crash as, with unhappy timing, his lack of money coincided with a famine. There had been no thought for the future; no investment, no business venture – a telling picture of modern humanity as it ruins with its greed and short-termism the planet God has provided for us. He had no resources, and no work he could turn his hand to. But all was not lost: there was “a citizen of the country.” And so there is for us also – Satan himself will always provide something for every taste, or lack of it. The miserable combination of the world, the flesh, and the devil can create the illusion that a world without God is tolerable, and even preferable to, a world – a life – with God.

But feeding pigs – what’s a nice Jewish boy doing feeding pigs, the ultimate unclean animal? What they had was not what we normally think of as pig food; it was carob pods – edible but not proper food for humans. What Satan offers is not proper food for us. In our natural state there is nothing else, but it will have to do. What Satan provides is only ever pigs’ food, no matter how civilised, intellectually satisfying, plausible or socially acceptable. And it could be that, as in the case of this young man, we find that we can’t even get the pigs’ food. Either it palls, or our circumstances – our health, or finances – do not permit it.

In fact it was a mercy this young man couldn’t even get pigs’ food, because it caused him to “come to himself” (v.17). He woke up to just where he was, and he remembered his father. Or, more accu-



rately, he remembered his father’s day labourers (v.17). Such labourers were the lowest in the pecking order – they weren’t even slaves; they had no permanent position but even their situation was better than his.

Without any delay, he got up and went with the little speech so familiar to us, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants” (vv. 18, 19). This is serious, realistic repentance. It’s true that, when he actually meets his father, he doesn’t get out the last sentence, but you’ll notice that there are no excuses. He doesn’t blame anybody else. There was no minimising: he doesn’t say, “Er, sorry Dad, it sort of went wrong, you know. These things happen.” He had sinned “against heaven (and he means, of course, against God), and before you.”

How different from when he’d gone off! He had been rich, cocksure, jaunty, he knew how he was going to enjoy himself for ever – and it had all gone wrong. Instead of the fine clothes that he had gone with, there were rags, bare feet, and the smell of pigs. That is how we came back – with wasted potential, foolishness, and so easily deceived by Satan and the world’s allurements.

How is he received? The father sees that figure that he had been looking for – how long, we are not told. He does not wait for his son to arrive, but, “When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him” (v.20). There were no recriminations and no conditions. The son had only been thinking of bread, but the father had long been thinking of the best robe, and of roast beef and all that went with it.

Now let’s think ourselves more precisely into the position of this younger son, although, unlike him, we were born in the far country. Now what made him come back? He wasn’t disgusted himself; he was starving. If he hadn’t run out of money, if there hadn’t been a famine, he would have stayed where he was. What he wanted when he came back was just “bread and to spare.” Whether we had a Christian upbringing or not, we too were the like the younger son, the centres of our own universes (in our own eyes), ungrateful to the God whose creatorial gifts were lavished upon us. Why were we saved? What was it that first drew us to the Saviour? Was it our sense of need – the equivalent of starvation? The fear of hell? A tragedy? A bereavement? Such a change in our circumstances that we were forced to take stock of ourselves in a way we never had to before? These are very good reasons for getting saved, the same as starving to death was a very good reason for this young man to go home.

However, for us, does it just stop there? Are we only content with no more than that we’ll go to heaven when we die, expecting God to look after us during this life, and providing all the things we would like – with no nasty upsets? A good



time will be had by all – me especially? We can just trundle on like that to the grave because we’re not really looking for the Lord’s coming.

For the believer the “far country” is in the mind

He means something but not very much. We are going to heaven. That’s all that matters.

Of course it’s not. Just as the father could not be content with his younger son merely coming back and getting a basic provision, so God is not content with our coming back and just being saved. The father had in mind the fatted calf and the robe and the ring and the slippers, and what they meant. God our Father has the same in mind for us. We are God’s sons, with what that means – the privilege and position, with the responsibility of knowing the eternal purposes of God. However, supposing the younger son had got what he had intended asking for, and had become a hired labourer. He could have worked on the estate with the advantages of bread and to spare, and lived perhaps on the estate or nearby, but not too close to his father.

There may be Christians who don’t want to be too close. We might not admit to it, but our actions speak louder than our words. Supposing the son, once he was back in his proper position, began to remember why he had left home in the first place – that life with father was just a bit tame, and rather tedious? “Oh,” you say, “He shouldn’t have been so ungrateful.” True, but it could happen. He might have just sloped off when no one was looking, and got up to no good.

Of course, he didn’t have the means to return to the far country. For the believer, though, the “far country” is in the mind. Going there requires no effort because it’s all in your thoughts. It needn’t be deliberate; but we may just default to whatever our form of sinful flesh is normally. There were some things the younger son couldn’t do at the father’s table. Nobody wanted to hear about the nonsense he had got up to in the far country. He would also find, very quickly, that even thinking in that way wasn’t really compatible with the position that he’d been put in. Now how fit are we for the Father’s presence? What thoughts are normally in our minds? Are we taking steps to cultivate His presence? Do we care? How would we speak if we were really conscious of God’s presence? Of course, God is everywhere throughout the universe (see Psalm 139:7-12) but He promises His special presence to His people (see Exodus 3:12; 33:14; Psalm 23:4; Matthew 28:20; John 14:16, 21, 23) and it is this that we need.

Do we realise that, when responding to the allure of the world, the temptations that Satan brings before us, and our own automatic sinful tendencies, we’re stepping outside of God’s presence? Outside nearly every office in the country you see the cigarette ends that staff nipping out for a quick smoke have left because



smoking inside is incompatible with the law and with the ethos of their workplace. Now how

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about us – where we go; what we read; what our interests are; the urges which really drive us on, that make us the kind of people that we are?

It matters. If a member of the family is always going off somewhere, we may wonder where they keep going and ask what's wrong with us. What's wrong with God that we prefer other company – sinful and worldly thoughts and attitudes? Do we prefer that easy neglect of self-control to pleasing God? It's sad if God's presence doesn't mean very much to us. We should not be content with “bread and to spare”; there is the Father's “fatted calf”. He wants us to realise more of the position of privilege, responsibility and insight into what God has done in the past, is doing and will do – to be in the good of it and live according to it.

We live in a world where there's a famine, and all that is available is pigs' food. It is rubbish; it is foolish; it is empty, it will not last. God has given us eternal things, which will never perish. Our taste for these things can only grow; it can never fade. We shall never be too old for it; we shall never have to retire from it. We shall be a blessing to others. Our having a desire for what God has provided will give pleasure to Him.

If we don't, we're letting go a great opportunity. What are we going to say to the Lord when we are before His judgment throne, and we're asked why we didn't pursue these things? There'll be nothing but lame excuses. It will all look so foolish in the light of eternity. It will be bad enough for the unsaved person who has wasted the life God has given them. How much worse, then, for a believer who wastes the blessing that God has provided at an expense to Himself beyond our understanding?

I don't think we realise what we mean to Him. A child, especially a small one, knows they're loved, even if they don't know the word, and they know their position with their parents, grandparents and others they are acquainted with. But what they don't know are the emotions that the sight of them and the sound of them, the presence of them arouse in the hearts of the parents. There's no way of knowing that, and similarly we don't know, can't know, what God really feels for us. But

we see so to speak, the marks of sonship, of



*The father who goes out
to welcome in the prodigal is the father who goes out
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belonging, and we see the cross. That tells us more than anything what God was prepared to do to be able to welcome us back in a fit state for His presence.

Supposing we are the kind who's never strayed from the fold; and has always behaved in an acceptable way in both spiritual and secular matters. This is a good thing in itself, unless it makes us like the older son, who thought he was righteous, but had no understanding of his father at all. The Lord came to save sinners (Mark 3:17), and the older brother was anything but that. And yet, what an unhappy man he was! He felt he had slaved away for his father, but he didn't realise that it was all for his benefit because one day it would all be his. And it is not credible that he was never even allowed to have a kid with his friends.

Does anyone ever confess to being a Pharisee? They might confess to being a spectacularly bad prodigal son, but not a Pharisee. It's always someone else. If we're not careful, we can be a person who doesn't understand ourselves, the depths of our own sinfulness, and even our need of salvation. We may think that God owes us something for being good and even better than other people; and when life has its unpleasant moments – and it does for all of us, indeed its tragic moments – we may think it's very unfair and we deserved better; and we can be quite bitter. However, the father who goes out to welcome in the prodigal is the father who goes out and pleads with the older son. God loves Pharisees too.

I once heard a speaker say, “The sweetest thing in life for me is to go down the street telling the Father how much I love Him.” That made me think. God is gracious, and things change – they can even improve. I do think that is an example to follow. All the great preachers, the pioneer missionaries, and people like that had a close relationship with God; they were men and women of prayer. They were holy in their way of life, and they knew the joy of the Lord despite discouraging circumstances, and failure too in their own service. If we want to be useful, if we're taking spiritual things seriously, we really do have to cultivate the presence, the experience of God Himself in reading the Scriptures, in prayer, in the way we live, and in the direction of our thoughts. What we think about, what we daydream about, what we want – the direction that we're going in – all has to be centred on God. And despite our sinfulness, despite our failure, despite the past, despite the mistakes of the future, we can always come back – every day, confessing our need, confessing our unworthiness, and realising afresh that wonderful forgiveness and acceptance, that position that we have with God, won for us through the death of His Son on the cross.



Psalm 116

John Weston

“I love the LORD.” The psalm shares this opening sentiment with Psalm 18. It alone should make us want to read on!

The remarks in this series on the hallel psalms are not intended as commentaries on them, but just as reflections on their relevance to the Passover, and hence to its message to ourselves.

Psalm 116 is sung towards the end of the passover celebration. The fourth cup of wine has been poured out but not yet drunk. This fourth cup is linked by the rabbis to the fourth promise recorded in Exodus 6:7, namely, “I will take you to me for a people.” Such was the glorious outcome of their liberation and redemption by the first passover and the reed sea. In similar vein (and without abrogating the fulfilment to Israel) one can detect an analogy to this glorious promise in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God” (2:19). And to the church at Corinth, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16). In this sense, we too drink our cup of thanksgiving.

The psalm continues to testify joyfully to God’s steadfast faithfulness and mercy, and to the assurance that God does hear and answer prayer. Reading through it, three points stand out:

Love

Passover participants, having eaten the passover meal and recounted the greatness of the power and love of God, could show no greater response than to exclaim, “I love the LORD” (v.1), or, as the translation of this verse in the Jerusalem Bible runs, “I am filled with love when the Lord listens to the sound of my prayer, when he bends down to hear me as I call.” The apostle John, who would have sung this psalm in the upper room, later declared, “We love, because He has first loved us” (1 John 4.19, Darby Trans.).

God heard the prayers of the oppressed in Egypt and delivered them, brought them through the reed sea and on to the victory side. And at our baptism, we too came out of the water on to the victory side in newness of life.

We love, because He has first loved us

Psalm 116 is a firm resolution to walk before the Lord in newness of life

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life. My all.”¹

Life

The bread in the passover ritual has now been broken, the third cup of wine drunk; similarly in our assembly worship, the Lord’s death has been remembered. Now, at this point, we rejoice in the wonderful event of the third day. The mighty stone was rolled away, revealing an empty tomb. We hear the witness of the angels, “He is not here; for He is risen” (Matthew 28:6). We share the joy of Mary Magdalene as she realises that her Lord is alive. Within a very short time, the disciples will have left the upper room, and will be about to face the greatest challenge of their lives. According to history, each one apart from John would endure martyrdom for their faith.

Psalm 116 is not only an outburst of personal gratitude; it is also a firm resolution to walk before the Lord in newness of life (see v.9) – to count one’s blessings and to live a life worthy of those blessings. In doing this, we can have life, “and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10) – “life with a capital L”, as the late A. Lindsay Glegg called it.²

How sad that for the children of Israel, their lack of faith and disobedience blocked much of what God wanted them to enjoy. Sad, too, when a believer’s life becomes joyless through either lack of faith or disobedience in their daily walk.

Worship

The psalm concludes with the express desire to praise and worship the Lord (vv.17-19). Our sins deserved eternal death, but now we have been redeemed and have passed from death into life.

Before leaving the upper room, the Lord spoke of the coming of the Comforter that the Father would send. This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost, and it is by

¹ Isaac Watts (1674-1748).

² A.Lindsay Glegg, *Life with a Capital “L”* (London, 1934).

the Spirit that we can enter into praise and worship. It is so sad when the Spirit is quenched and self takes over.

To be filled with Holy Spirit is a *biblical* instruction (Ephesians 5:18) – and how uplifting this is in the personal sense! In the assembly, complete freedom in the Holy Spirit raises the level of praise and worship, almost to heavenly proportions.

“‘Praise ye the Lord’ – again, again,
The Spirit strikes the chord:
Nor toucheth He our hearts in vain:
We praise, we praise the Lord.
‘Rejoice in Him’ – again, again,
The Spirit speaks the word,
And faith takes up the happy strain;
Our joy is in the Lord.”³

As we meet for the breaking of bread we meet for worship. Supplicatory prayer, such as is characteristic of the prayer meeting, is out of place here, except perhaps in the closing of the meeting.

Now the Passover celebration is drawing to a close. Before it does so, the fourth cup will be drunk. Psalms 117 and 118 will be sung, together with the great hallel, Psalm 136. Following this there will be time of prayer and joyous singing, which I well remember when my wife and I joined in the celebration with a rabbi and his family, in Jerusalem. However, not so in the Upper Room. Here the Lord took the opportunity to share the precious thoughts as recorded for us in John 14.

At just before midnight the Lord said, “Arise, let us go hence” (John 14:31). The small group went out into the moonlit night, the full moon casting deep shadows across the valley of the Kidron. Walking down the valley, they would pass beneath the great second temple whose porch was covered in gold, and above which was spread out a golden vine, its branches hanging down from a great height. Did the disciples glance up towards it? Was it this that prompted the Lord to declare at this stage of their walk, “I am the true vine” (John 15:1)? Coming to the edge of the brook Kidron, we have the precious prayer of the Lord to His Father (John 17). Then within a very short time, they would have crossed over the Kidron and into the Garden of Gethsemane.

The momentous events that were to lead to our redemption were about to commence.

³ Mary [Bowly] Peters (1813-56).

Buy gold and be rich today!

David Anderson

Each of us is a potential Laodicean. So the Lord counsels us all to buy from Him “gold, tried in the fire”(Revelation 3:18). Why “gold”? Read on and find out.

A special word from the Lord to you and to me

We twenty-first century believers are living in the final part of the church age – the part whose church conditions are symbolised by the description of the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22). Christians of every age need to heed the Lord’s directive, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”¹ But it is for us to pay particular attention to His words in verses 18-22, and to become *overcomers* in these lukewarm conditions (3:16) of the Christian profession.

The Lord’s advice to the Laodiceans starts with the words, “I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich” (v.18, ESV).

Why gold?

Why are we advised to “buy *gold*”? Naturally speaking, we think of gold as a metal which is both beautiful and most precious. It is reputed to be the first pure metal ever known to man (and this concurs with its being the first metal mentioned in Scripture: see Genesis 2:12). Its permanence arises from the fact that it is, under normal conditions, chemically inactive (i.e., non-rusting). “Golden” is an adjective sometimes used to describe excellence, e.g., a “golden” age. So the Lord at least means us to obtain from Him something that is valuable, excellent and eternal.

Gold and the tabernacle

“Gold, he saw the *gold!*” exclaimed an older brother to me as I hesitated to reply to his question, “What did Aaron see when he entered the holy places of the tabernacle?” Yes, after entering through the front curtains the high priest saw gold dominating the holy place. When he went through the veil into the most holy place, he again saw gold. The most holy place is where God dwelt between the cherubim to be amongst Israel. Gold speaks to us of God, and of what is divine. Showing his grandson a model of the tabernacle, a Scottish Bible teacher explained, “It all speaks of Jesus!” In a general sense, that is true (and a very good thing to teach the young!) But A. J. Pollock provides a very precise definition of gold: “*Gold*, typical of Deity when in reference to Christ; of divine

¹ Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29 & 3:6, 13, 22.

*Gold,
typical of Deity in reference to Christ;
of divine righteousness in relation to men.*

righteousness when seen in relation to men. In Exodus whenever gold is typical of Deity, it is always ‘pure gold’; when it typifies divine righteousness, the word ‘gold’ is employed without the adjective ‘pure’.²

Gold speaks of Christ

Referring to the resurrection of Christ, Psalm 21:3 exclaims, “You have set a crown of fine gold upon his head.” Concerning His ascension, Hebrews 9:24 states, “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf”.

“‘Tis Jesus fills that holy place
where glory dwells, and Thy deep love
in its own fullness (known through grace)
rests where He lives, in heaven above.”³

Therefore, from a New Testament perspective, gold speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. *First and foremost*, it speaks of His personal glory as Son. *Secondly*, it speaks His present position in the glory of God, consequent upon redemption’s completed work. *Thirdly*, it symbolises all those things which are unique and special to Christianity because of Him and His place now at God’s right hand. To buy from Him “gold refined by fire” is to know Him, the eternal Son and to apprehend the heavenly truths about Him by the Holy Spirit of promise,⁴ which He received from the Father and poured out on His church.

*To buy from Him “gold refined by fire” is
to know Him, the eternal Son and to apprehend
the heavenly truths about Him by the Holy Spirit*

² In his *The Tabernacle’s Typical Teaching*, (Crewe, new edition, 2009), p.16.

³ T.H. Reynolds: Hymn 59 in *Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 1978 edition, available from the publishers of this magazine.

⁴ The Spirit is symbolised in Revelation 3:18 as eye salve: see Ephesians 1:17-18.

“The gold of that land is good” (Genesis 2:12). Truly we can say that the gold of heaven is good! However, *we* are responsible to maintain this heavenly testimony, even in a day of indifference to Christ when His glories and these truths are not valued by Christendom (cp. Lamentations 4:1-2).

What does “gold” mean in Revelation 3:18?

Laodicea is last of the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 1:11). In prophetic terms, the features of these seven churches demonstrate that there has been an overall deterioration in the Christian testimony. It commenced with Ephesus, where the serious condemnation was that they had abandoned their first love (2:4). By the time the final phase of the church is reached, the Lord, instead of being in the midst of the church, is outside (3:20). In 3:18, the Lord is requesting Laodicea to return to the original Ephesian state of first love which characterised the earliest Christians (cp. Jeremiah 2:2). It was so vividly demonstrated by the Ephesians, for whom Christ became everything, following their receipt of the gospel and conversion. Out of pre-eminent love (“first love”) for Him, they abandoned their former ways of life (some at great cost!) to lay hold of the “Way” (Acts 19:10, 17-20 & 20:24-27). To *buy the gold* is to lay hold on the New-Testament truths about the person of the Son of God and all that He has introduced. It is to appreciate the revelation of the Father and the relationship we have with Him through the Son. It is also to appreciate the heavenly nature and destiny of the church. But it is “gold refined by fire” – that is, to “buy” these truths with all the impurities, which man’s teaching about them has introduced over the centuries, removed. (And, in keeping with A.J. Pollock’s definition, it includes a righteous response to these truths in Christian living by adorning the doctrine of God in everything – Titus 2:10.)

How do I buy the gold?

Everything we get from the Lord is “without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). To *buy* from Him “gold refined by fire” means to discover where it is and to make it our own. I have always been curious about Moses’ record in Genesis 2:12 that the gold of Havilah is good, seeing that the antediluvian world perished in the Flood. There is no possibility of any gold prospector ever finding Havilah, due to the change in topography caused by the upheaval of the earth during the Flood. Today the Word of God is the only place we can obtain the true gold that the Lord counselled Laodicea to buy from Him. It is freely available – as suggested from the meaning of Pishon, the river flowing around Havilah. Pishon means “free-flowing” and “increase”, which reminds us of the Lord’s own description of the Holy Spirit in John 7:37-39. But, like natural gold

ore, this gold has to be searched for and dug out. Good advice about any truth is to treat it like gold ore:

- look-it-up (i.e., find all scriptural references)
- dig/work-it-out (i.e., discover its meaning with the help of the Holy Spirit)
- write-it-down (make your own notes)
- pray-it-in
- live-it-out
- speak-it-forth
- pass-it-on!

Search the Scriptures' precious store
as a miner digs for ore;
search and you will surely find,
treasures to enrich the mind.⁵

How to become rich

According to Revelation 3:18, the riches consist not only of gold but also include *white garments* – we must have practical righteousness as well as the knowledge of the Son of God! The Holy Spirit will cause us to realise our own inadequacies in this respect. Therefore, we must give attention to the Lord's demand for repentance: "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent" (v.19). But verse 20 introduces His new appeal, "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking" (Darby Trans.) – the Saviour wants into our hearts and lives. "If any one hear My voice and open the door" – He calls us *as individuals* to respond to what He is saying to all of these churches⁶ and to become overcomers. "I will come in unto him" – He wants a place in *my* heart/life. "And sup with him, and he with Me" – He will fill my heart/life (cp 1 Peter 3:15). "A whole Upper-Room experience for myself!" is what J. S. Blackburn used to say about this last phrase of verse 20. Yes, I will be rich indeed because "in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3).

"Gold for the things of gold"⁷

The origins of the temple project are recorded in 1 Chronicles 28-29. David wanted to build a house for the ark, but God forbade him and appointed

⁵ On *Cheering Words Calendar*, 10 July 2010.

⁶ See note 1.

⁷ See "Gold for the things of gold", J S Blackburn, *Scripture Truth* vol.46, No.9, May 1978.

*To provide “gold for the things of gold”
is a lifetime’s work,
“Gold for the things of gold”
suggests passing on the truth unchanged.*

Solomon to do it instead. However, it was David who made all the preparations for the temple. He gave Solomon the plan and pattern that he had in mind, which, he told him, was in writing as a result of the hand of the LORD being upon him (28:12 & 19). He charged Solomon to do all the work according to the plan. And he provided Solomon with all the necessary materials. A telling phrase is “gold for the things of gold” (29:2 & 5). The things of gold are detailed in 28:14-18. David did all this because “Solomon my son, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, for the palace will not be for man but for the LORD God” (29:1).

The application of the principle “gold for the things of gold” to ourselves in the present house of God, the church, is that the things of God must be maintained as stated in the New Testament. The primary responsibility lies with older brethren to hand down these truths to the following generation, as David did to his son. To provide “gold for the things of gold” is a lifetime’s work, which involves commitment and sacrifice (28:2 & 29:3). “With great pains [afflictions, troubles] I have provided for the house of the LORD”, David said in 22:14. Can we, like David, truly say, “so far as I was able”? (29:3)

Paul urged Timothy not only to “guard the good deposit entrusted to him” but to pass-it-on (2 Timothy 1:14 & 2:2). “Gold for the things of gold” suggests passing on the truth *unchanged* to the next generation. Not like king Rehoboam, who had to replace shields of gold with shields of bronze⁸ when Solomon’s ceremonial gold shields were looted by Shishak of Egypt, (*circa* 925 BC). Shishak of Egypt is a picture of Satan who will use the world to rob us of the things of God (1 John 2:15-17).

What did Jeremiah mean?

Gold is almost unendingly durable. What, then, could Jeremiah have meant when he said in Lamentations 4:1 (KJV), “How the gold is become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the

⁸ Note that God promises Israel to reverse this: “Instead of bronze I will bring gold” (Isaiah 60:17).

top of every street”? Yes, this is how it appeared to this godly person at that time of sacrilege. The gold had not changed, but rather the nation’s departure from God caused it to appear dim (to show this in the quotation, “because of us” should be inserted after the exclamations). This process had started with Rehoboam replacing gold shields with bronze shields, and had gathered pace until the profanities of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. As a result, the crown was removed from his head (Ezekiel 21:24-27). A similar state of affairs is reached in Laodicea. Just as Jeremiah was distressed about the state of the sanctuary, overcomers today must be sensitive to the prevailing indifference to Christ. By buying the gold He offers, they are individually enabled to maintain the honours and glories that are due to Him. They can also do this with others who call on the Lord from a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:20-22). Collectively, they would aim to be Philadelphian in character (Revelation 3:7-13) – though never to make foolish, Laodicean-type claims about possessing that character! (cp. 3:17)

The things of God

In a general sense, we could paraphrase “the things of gold” as “the things of God”, and apply these particularly to New-Testament revelations. I have inherited a Thomas Newberry Bible in which items “*of God*” have been underlined in Romans. So the counsel of the Lord to buy from Him gold refined by fire could be expanded to mean “to get an understanding of all the deep things of God, which are made known by His Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

The city of gold

The final time that the symbol of gold is used in the New Testament is in the description of the church as the New Jerusalem, where both the city and its street are pure gold (Revelation 21:18 & 21). John did not see a temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. Also, the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God and the Lamb lighten it, vv.22-23. An apposite end to our study! Our heavenly destiny is intrinsically *gold*. Eternity is filled with the glory of the Son and His Father!

*Our heavenly destiny is intrinsically gold.
Eternity is filled
with the glory of the Son and His Father!*

Living

Donald Hill

What are you living for? When a street preacher recently asked this question, he got the ribald response, “The weekend!” Too true for many, but showing the emptiness of what they call “life”. Christians have been made alive in Christ to have do with living things. This article details some of them.

The world through which we are passing has the stamp of death upon it. It could not be otherwise because, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23, KJV). But believers are identified with the Living One (Romans 6:8-11), and we have to do with living things. How glad we should be about this! These living things include:

The living Word of God

Peter wrote to scattered and persecuted saints in the first century to say that they were “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). Each time we pick up a Bible, we take into our hands a living Word. By receiving and believing that Word, we are born from above, we have a new life in Christ, we have eternal life. “You must be born again,” were the words addressed by the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus (John 3:1-7; cp. 5:24). We also have the new power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to live out a totally different lifestyle. Think! If everyone believed the gospel, we could do away with all burglar alarms, security lighting, security shutters, etc! Neither police nor prisons would be needed.

And not only is the Word of God living, it is also abiding; it will never pass away.

The living God

What charming words Paul addressed to the Thessalonian believers, when he wrote “You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven... Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, NKJV). In terms of verse 3:

- Their work of faith had been to turn to God from the visible and tangible idols of their time. Faith linked them with the living God; just as faith links us too with the living God.
- Their labour of love was to “serve the living God.”
- Their patience of hope was to await the return of God’s Son from heaven. It is ours too!

“The wrath of a sin-hating God
with us can have nothing to do;
the Saviour’s obedience and blood
hide all our transgressions from view.”¹

A living Saviour and Lord

And what comforting, cheering words the Lord Jesus addressed to John banished to that remote island of Patmos “for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” “I AM... the living one: and I became dead, and behold I AM living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades.” (Revelation 1:9,17-18, Darby Trans.). At the heart of the Christian faith is a living Lord and Saviour. This is what makes our faith unique.

A living hope

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who... has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4, NKJV). The hopes associated with man’s world often come to nothing, but the believer’s inheritance in heaven is not affected by sin, time or death. And meanwhile, each believer is being “kept by the power of God” (v.5).

“A new and living way”

Our way into the holiest is living, for it is by a living high priest. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way...and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near...” (Hebrews 10:19-21, KJV). The sacrifices offered under the law held men and women in a place of distance from God. Only once each year was the high priest of Israel permitted to enter the holy place – on the great day of atonement. It was then that he offered blood not only for the sins of the people at large but also for his own sins (Hebrews 9:7). However, these sacrifices could never “take away sins” (10:4). But now the Lord Jesus has been into death, His side has been pierced and His precious blood has freely flowed. He was buried, but death had no claim upon Him because He was without sin. Now He is risen and ascended – a living high priest (7:8, 16; cp. Romans 6:9) who represents us in the presence of God. And we are invited to “draw near” as worshippers. We can enjoy the company of Divine Persons: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ”! (1 John 1:3)

¹ From “A debtor to mercy alone” by A. Toplady (1740-1778), as printed in *Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (Wooler, 1978) available from the publishers of this magazine.

*We are invited to “draw near” as worshippers.
We can enjoy the company of Divine Persons.*

“So nigh, so very nigh to God,
I cannot nearer be,
for in the person of the Son,
I am as near as He.”²

Living bread

“I AM the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever” (John 6: 51). After having fed the hungry multitude by the shores of Galilee, the Lord Jesus took the opportunity to teach the people “in the synagogue in Capernaum” (v.59), inviting them not to seek for food which perishes but that which endures to eternal life (v.27). He then went on to speak of Himself as the bread of life, the *living Bread*. How many meals do we eat in a week, in a year, in order to sustain our natural life? How important, then, to feed on the word of God in order to sustain our spiritual life! In feeding on the Word, we are feeding on Christ who is central to all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 44). Why is this Bread living? The Lord Jesus explained: “As the living Father has sent me, and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me” (John 6:57, Darby Trans.). And if we are feeding on the Word of God then we shall have something of value to offer in the gatherings as well as every day in our lives in this world.

Living water

In John 4, we read about an appointment which the Lord Jesus had with a sinful woman, an outcast of society. He was on His way to Galilee from Judaea, and, passing through Samaria and “wearied with His journey” (v.6, KJV), He rested at midday by the well of Sychar. Soon after, the woman arrived to collect water, no doubt avoiding others who would draw water in the cool of the morning or evening. Jesus engaged her in conversation by asking for a drink. He was weary and thirsty, reminding us of His humanity, but being God manifest in flesh, He was able to offer this woman, who was “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1), *living water*, which, if she partook of it, would not only

² Catesby Paget (probably 19th century), as printed in *Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (see note 1).

abide in her, but also rise up to God, its Source. The Lord Jesus told the woman that the Father is seeking true worshippers – such as worship Him “in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). And we are:

“Brought to rest within the circle
where love’s treasures are displayed;
there we drink the living waters,
taste the joys that never fade.”³

Living Stone – living stones

“To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also as lively [or, living] stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2: 4-5).

When the Lord Jesus came into this world, the cry of men, and in particular of Jewish leaders was, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). They could not fit Him into their plans and schemes. God the Father, however, had other thoughts! “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD. Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone...” (Isaiah 28:16, cited 1 Peter 2:6). Long before Jacob had foretold, “From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel” (Genesis 49:24). In the verse in Isaiah the church, the bride of Christ which would delight His heart throughout eternity, was in view. He gave Himself for it, and it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; a habitation of God through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:20, 22; 5:25). We are *living* stones, not just because we are animate, in contrast to the lifeless stones of Solomon’s temple, but because we have come to the Living Stone, whom God has raised up from the dead, and given glory to (1 Peter 1:21).

And we are called upon to be priests. As “holy priests”, our service is towards *God*, and as “royal priests” our service is towards *man* (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

A living sacrifice

“I beseech you...to present your bodies a living sacrifice... which is your intelligent service” (Romans 12:1, Darby Trans.).

A living sacrifice...

which is your intelligent service

³ T. Willey (19th century).

Have I presented myself “a living sacrifice”?

In earlier chapters of Romans Paul has vividly portrayed the sinfulness of sin and the only ground on which sin in all its enormity could be righteously dealt with, namely, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now he makes an appeal, not only to believers in Rome but to us to-day. Have I presented myself “a living sacrifice”? To what extent am I committed to the interests of Christ? We have to go out to a place of work and make provision for ourselves and families, but do my business interests have the first place in my life? Am I faithful to the Lord and loyal to the saints? We are instructed, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... and so much the more as ye see the day [of the Saviour’s return] approaching” (Hebrews 10:25, KJV).

“Lord we are Thine, Thy claims we own,
ourselves to Thee we’d wholly give;
reign Thou within our hearts alone,
and let us to Thy glory live.”⁴

When Saul of Tarsus was blinded by the light on the Damascus Road and heard the voice speaking to him, he identified the speaker – “I am Jesus” – and then he immediately addressed Jesus as Lord, asking, “Lord, what do want me to do?” (Acts 9:6, NKJV) He acknowledged the Lordship of Christ and from that time forth sought to do His will.

“Lord may we always own Thy claim,
and overcoming in Thy Name
from earthliness be free.”⁵

Events in the world indicate that the coming of the Lord for His church, His bride, may be near at hand. That will be the day when “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:11, KJV). We too, who belong to Him, will be able to say, “I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15).

A living Redeemer

“Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book... For I know that my redeemer liveth... and that though after my skin worms

⁴ J.G. Deck (1802-1884).

⁵ T. Porter (19th century).

destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself..." (Job 19:23, 25-27).

Job probably lived in the period between the Flood and the calling out of Abram. Though obviously a man of substance, his faith in God was severely tested. He came under attack from Satan, from his wife who called upon him to curse God and die, and from his three friends who accused him of being a hypocrite. But he was an overcomer. What a triumph are his words cited above!

- He didn't have a Bible like us and he longed for a book and a written revelation.
- But he had absolute assurance when he said, "I know."
- He had a personal relationship when he said, "my."
- He understood about the "Redeemer."
- He understood about the resurrection when he said, "liveth."
- He recognised that his earthly body would change to dust but looked on to the resurrection day when he would see God in the person of His Redeemer.

To-day we have the Scriptures in their completeness and we also have the indwelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). We have a living Redeemer who will call us as members of His body, His bride, His church, to be with and like Him in that scene of glory. Job will be there, along with all the Old-Testament saints who died before the cross.

Death marks the world in which we live; it is full of false and lifeless things. How much better, therefore, to be identified and engaged with what is *living*!

"Oh blessed living Lord,
engage our hearts with Thee,
and strike within the answering chord
to love so rich and free."⁶

*Death marks the world in which we live.
How much better
to be engaged with what is living!*

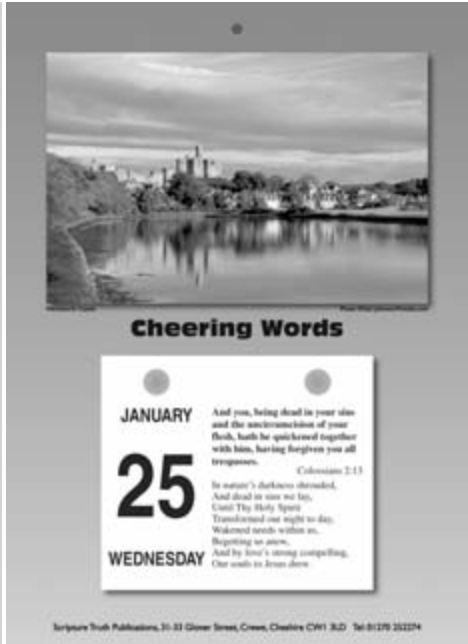
⁶ Hannah K. Burlingham (1842-1901).

Cheering Words Calendar 2012

The 2012 calendar is now available from STP, with two pictures (one on either side of the calendar back):

Bright flowers

Warkworth Castle



Individual calendars are priced at **£6.00** plus postage. Postage and packing for a single calendar to one address costs **£2.50** to the UK and **£5.50** to the rest of the world.

For prices and postage costs for larger quantities, please contact STP at the address inside the front cover, or refer to our web site:

<http://www.scripture-truth.org.uk>

from which a price list and order form may be downloaded.

From the late sixteenth century to the 1640s the most popular English translation was the Puritan Geneva Bible (1560), the first English Bible to include study notes. The poem below was printed in an edition of 1615. It is reproduced with minimal modernisation, but without the prayer appended in the original. Though taken from the King James Version's greatest rival, it is included as *Scripture Truth's* contribution to the KJV quatercentenary!

Of the incomparable Treasure of the holy Scriptures.

Esai 12:3 & 49:10 Here is the Spring whence waters flow
Reve.21:16 & 22:17 To quench our heat of sinne:
Ierem. 33:15, Psal. 119: Here is the Tree where tru[e]th doth grow,
160, Reve. 2:7 & 22:2 to lead our lives therein:
Psal. 119:142,144 Here is the Judge that stints the strife
when men's devices fail;
John 6:35 Here is the Bread that feeds the life
That death cannot assaile.

Luke 2:10 The tidings of Salvation deere
Comes to our eares from hence:
Ephes. 6:16. The fortress of our Faith is heere,
And shield of our defence.
Matth.7:6 Then be not like the hogge, that hath
a pearle at his desire,
2 Pet. 2:22 and takes more pleasure of the trough
and wallowing in the mire.

Matth. 6:22 Reade not this booke, in any case,
but with a single eye:
Psal. 119:27, 73 Reade not, but first desire Gods grace,
to understand thereby.
Jude 20 Pray still in faith, with this respect,
to fructifie therein,
Psal. 119:11 that knowledge may bring this effect,
to mortifie thy sinne.

Joshua 1:8, Psal. 1:1,2 Then happy thou in all thy life,
what so to thee befallles:
Psal. 94:12,13 Yea, double happy shalt thou be
when God by death thee calles.

Copied from a facsimile used as a frontispiece in F.J. Hamilton, *The Best Book of All and How It Came to Us* (London, 1901).