

Scripture Truth



Inside:

"He delights in me"

The glory of the cross

The burdensome stone

The life of faith and the lack of it

Paul's neglected letter: Galatians

The parable of the unjust steward

Volume 60 No.11

July – September 2021

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

Editor: Theo Balderston

Editor's e-mail: editor@scripturetruth.org.uk

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 2021

£13.00 Post Free UK – £17.50 Post Free Overseas

Contents

The burdensome stone	T. Balderston	281
“He delights in me”	Author unknown	282
The parable of the unjust steward	David Anderson	286
Paul’s neglected letter: Galatians 3:1-14	Theo Balderston	292
The glory of the cross	James McBroom	298
Heaven is our home (poem)	After T. R. Taylor	302
The life of faith and the lack of it: Genesis 25, 26	F. B. Hole	303
Ashamed of Jesus? (poem)	Joseph Grigg	Back cover

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Authorized (King James) Version (KJV). Rights in the Authorized Version are vested in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the Crown’s patentee, Cambridge University Press.

Scripture quotations marked (Darby Tr.) are taken from “The Holy Scriptures, a New Translation from the Original Languages” by J. N. Darby (G Morrish, 1890).

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Front cover: Arabic Horened-Poppy spring blossom in Negev Desert, Israel@iStock.com/leospek

SCRIPTURE TRUTH is the imprint of the Central Bible Hammond Trust
Registered Charity No. 223327

All business correspondence and orders should be addressed to:

SCRIPTURE TRUTH Publications

31-33 Glover Street, CREWE, Cheshire CW1 3LD

Tel: 01270 252274

The burdensome stone

In Zechariah 12:3 we read that, “and it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy (“burdensome” – KJV) stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces though all the nations of the earth are gathered against it” [NKJV]. As of 13th May, when this was written, Jerusalem again commands international headlines.

Jerusalem is certainly already a “burdensome stone” for all peoples. It was so in 1947, when the resolution of the United Nations needed to create the state of Israel succeeded only because of a rare conjuncture of interests between the United States and the USSR, despite the “Cold War”. But huge behind-the-scenes lobbying was needed to secure the required two-thirds majority. The burdensomeness of the state of Israel, and of Jerusalem in particular, to all nations has only increased since then.

The burdensomeness of Jerusalem at the present is caused by the keen *division* between nations regarding it (and we should take no sides regarding that division). We are not yet in the era of prophetic fulfilment. But in the time of that fulfilment “*all* the nations of the earth” will rendezvous in the Land against God’s “beloved” city, without knowing that “the LORD’s Anointed” will suddenly appear (Psalm 2:2f; Zechariah 12:8ff; Revelation 20:9).

Since these things have already begun to happen, we can certainly “look up”, for our redemption draws near (cp. Luke 21:28). The Lord is of course always “coming quickly” (Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20), and He could well have chosen to come for us before any of this happened. But we have lived to see it.

Not only unbelievers, but even most Christians see no special future significance for Jerusalem. But “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29). Concerning this city the prophet Isaiah said, “The gentiles shall see your righteousness [i.e., vindication by God] and all kings your glory...” (Isaiah 62:2). Our place is with Christ in the heavenlies (Ephesians 1:22f), but God reveals to us how He is going to head up things earthly as well as heavenly in Christ, so that we might marvel at His unsearchable judgments and ways (Ephesians 1:10; Romans 11:33).

T. BALDERSTON

“He delights in me”

An antidote to discouragement

“Then they told [Moses], and said, ‘We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong: the cities are fortified and very large. Moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there...

If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us...” (Numbers 13:27f;14:8, NKJV).

The Lord does not conceal from us the difficulties besetting the way ahead, but rather instructs us to count the cost. Our eyes are prone either to fixate on the difficulties and forget the blessings, or to see only the blessings and be blind to the difficulties. But God wants us to see both.

The twelve spies that Moses had sent ahead into the land faithfully reported the difficulties ahead as well as the blessings (Numbers 13). If they had not done so, they would not have given a truthful report. They reported the giants and the walled cities as well as the fruits, the milk, and the honey. Two of them carried back to the camp a great cluster of grapes – magnificent evidence of the plenteous blessing ahead.

But to the children of Israel this visual evidence did not outweigh the dangers involved in taking the land. They “lifted up their voices and wept” (Numbers 14:1). In one sense it was right that they should be alive to the danger. Their error arose because they evaluated these difficulties according to their unbelief; and this led them into sin. They wanted to return to Egypt (14:4).

Two men – Joshua and Caleb – sought to quieten the people’s panic, urging them not to rebel against the Lord. By what argument did they try to persuade the people? “If the Lord delights in us...” (14:6-9). Applying this to ourselves: all our blessings are laid up for us in heavenly places; but how are we to overcome the “strong and walled cities”? The whole question – both for these ancient Israelites and for us – boils down to whether we believe that the Lord delights in us, or not.

*The whole question boils down to
whether we believe that the Lord delights in us, or not.
And we may say that the Lord does delight in us.*

*The more a soul feels the Lord dealing with it
– even in discipline –
the more assured that soul may be that He delights in it.*

And we may say that the Lord does delight in us. And how much our blessings and deliverances depend on the fact that He delights in us! Psalm 16:3 tells us that the Lord Jesus – here personified in king David¹ – finds in the saints “all [His] delight”. We are those saints.

Isn't this as honey to our souls? The Lord Jesus, the Holy One of God, takes pleasure in us! Why? For three reasons:

- Because we belong to Him. We are “His own”.
- Because of the great cost at which He has gained us.
- Because of His sympathy.

Now to consider each of these in turn:

1. *We belong to Him.* “No-one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” (Ephesians 5:29f).
2. It cost Him so much to gain us. Yes: He “loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). As with the pearl of great price, He sold all that He had in order to possess it (Matthew 13:46). The more we expend on any object, the more we love it. There is not a parent who does not love that child most, who most needs its care. And so Christ, having already possessed Himself of us, still by His continual service for us works out His own love for us – and wins ours to Him, for the one that is forgiven much loves much (cp. Luke 7:47). And the more a soul feels the Lord dealing with it – even though that “dealing” may be in discipline – the more assured that soul may be that He delights in it. Can't our souls rejoice in the consciousness of this? It is a wonderful thing; yet it is so.

In 2 Samuel 15:25,26, in the midst of the account of David's flight from his son Absalom, there occurs a remarkable instance of how the soul grasps this idea even when under severe discipline, i.e., even in a time when nature would say, “Now He does *not* delight in me”. The sword of discipline is falling on David in

¹ See Acts 2:25-28, where this psalm is quoted.

*Caleb had said, “And He will bring us in”;
and far more assuredly we may say the same.*

a most painful way; he has been stripped of everything that should belong to his royal exaltation, for he is experiencing divine judgment for his adultery. “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7)

David’s restoration depended entirely upon the LORD’s favour. His words were, “But if he says thus, ‘I have no delight in you, here I am. Let Him do to me as seems good to Him’” (2 Samuel 15:26).

And yet David still *did* have the LORD’s favour. For, afterwards, when recounting the mercies of the LORD, he said, “He delivered *because* he delighted in me” (2 Samuel 22:20). If this thought could sustain David’s heart, how much more should it sustain our hearts! For with us the Lord’s favour is not on any conditional ground, but on the ground of firm assurance: His dealings with us are all the *result* of His delight in us.

Later, the queen of Sheba said to Solomon, “The LORD, who delighted in you” (2 Chronicles 9:8). If your soul is travelling in a dark and lonely path of discipline, what is to bear you up? Just these very words: “The Lord delights in you”! If we are going to inherit the glory and all that the redeemed heart could wish for (and we are), it is because “the Lord delights in us”. God has raised us up and caused us to sit together in heavenly places with Christ – not only virtually, but, one day, actually, that “in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace towards us in Christ Jesus”. This is because He is “rich in mercy,” and because of “His great love with which He loved us...” (Ephesians 2:4-8). *His mercy is the result of His love, not the cause of it.*

3. *The Lord Jesus takes pleasure in us because of His sympathy.* With whom else could He have sympathy? With angels? No. What does an angel know about the exercises of a Job, or of the various psalm-writers? The voice of the sufferer down here, in this sin-stained world, touches a chord in the heart of Christ which no other voice can, because He too once travelled through such a world. He had known the hour when the disciples would all scatter and leave Him alone (John 16:32); it had been His bitterest sorrow from man. Where would all our doubts and fears be if we realised that the sympathies of the Lord are entirely with those who travel through this sin-stained world, because He has delight in them?

In Exodus 6:8 God had already said to Moses, “I will bring you into the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. In the light of this, *and as regards the nation as a whole*, Caleb’s “if” in Numbers 14:8 was the “if” of argument and not the “if” of doubt. However, in the event, the certainty pertained only to the children of the backsliding adults whom Caleb was addressing (Numbers 14:26-31). By contrast, *each one of us* who has truly believed in Jesus shall appear before God in our heavenly Zion (cp. Psalm 84:7). Our Great Forerunner has already entered for us into what is behind the veil (Hebrews 6:19f), and even now appears as High Priest before the face of God for all who are labouring to take possession of the heavens (4:11; 9:24). The Lord Jesus can, and does, lift the saint up and deliver him from the difficulties with which he is beset. Caleb had said, “And He will bring us in” (Numbers 14:8); and far more assuredly we may say the same, in spite of all the discouragements.

There is nothing that can really establish the heart like this word, “The Lord delights in me”! What confidence! What calmness it gives! It was the hope of David when fleeing from Absalom, and the ground of his song of praise when he was delivered from his enemies. And as we travel on to the realization of our possessions, we can say to each other, “Go on, for He will *certainly* bring us in”. He will indeed teach us the folly of our corrupt hearts, but at the same time He will sustain them through the trouble, with the assurance that He delights in us.

This, and not the blessings that He permits along the way, is the true counterpoise to our troubles. We have to learn not only that He “will surely bring us in”, but also that He will do it *because* He delights in us. May the Lord teach us to know His grace and His love more practically, through a deeper intimacy with His heart.

Based on an article in Things New and Old. A Monthly Magazine for the Lambs and Sheep of the Flock of Christ [ed. C.H.Mackintosh], London, vol.1 (1858), pp. 65-9; author unknown.

There is nothing that can really establish the heart like this word, “The Lord delights in me”.



This, and not the blessings that He permits along the way, is the true counterpoise to our troubles.

The parable of the unjust steward

David Anderson

All readers will gain by this study of a challenging parable.

Please read Luke 16:1-13 in the NKJV.

Look for the main message

My spiritual fathers taught me to always look for the overall message that the Lord was conveying in any parable; and not to try to interpret every detail in the story. This is especially true of the parable of the unjust steward, and many Christians do have difficulties over this parable because they do not appreciate this general rule for interpreting all parables.

The main message of the parable of the unjust steward is that Christian disciples must faithfully serve their Master with their long-term future in mind. That will ensure they will receive heavenly rewards and blessings rather than any present selfish material gain that at best is only temporal.

The context

In the context of Luke's Gospel, this parable is the last in a trilogy of parables in chapters 14-16, that commenced with the parable of the great supper (or, feast) in 14:12-24, continued with the threefold parable of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son (chapter 15); and concludes with this parable of the unjust steward.

The parable of the great supper is a picture of God, who has prepared great blessing, resulting in great joy, for anyone willing to receive the gospel. The second parable – of the lost sheep, coin, and son – tells what God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and God the Father have done, and are doing, to provide these gospel blessings for all who respond to the invitation issued in the first parable, “Come, for all things are now ready” (14:17). This second parable clearly indicates that everyone must first repent in order to receive God's forgiveness and blessing (see 15:7 & 10).

And in chapter 16 this third parable – concerning “the unjust steward” – teaches Christian discipleship as the manner of life that should flow out of repentance and belief. God expects every believer to serve Him faithfully in appreciation of all that He has done for him or her. It's the only proper response to His mercy and His love. The Master *commands*, “Engage in [My] business till I come” (Luke 19:13, ESV).

We must take note of the contrasting audiences targeted by these parables. In the “gospel parable” of chapter 14 the Lord addressed the mixed company at table

*The master did not commend him for his mismanagement,
but rather for his promptness in taking action*

with Him; in chapter 15 He addressed the Pharisees and the scribes (see vv.1-3); but in 16:1ff He turned to teach His disciples.

The story itself

The actual story (Luke 16:1-8) concerned a wealthy man's household steward.¹ In those days, stewards were entrusted with the full responsibility of managing their master's entire estate on his behalf. However this steward was dishonest: he was fiddling his master's accounts. In modern-day parlance, he was diverting his master's income into his own bank account. It was fraud. He was found out and the matter was reported to his master, who immediately terminated his employment, and demanded a full set of accounts from his stewardship. The steward now had nothing to lose by dishonestly reducing the sums owed by his master's debtors, and so putting these relieved debtors under obligation to support him when his own income stopped (v.5-7).

The correct interpretation

Some people puzzle over the fact that when the unjust steward was "carpeted", his master actually commended him for his swift precautionary actions. Why should he have any pluses on his appraisal (as it were) when he had swindled his master throughout his stewardship and compounded matters by writing down the debts owed his master by twenty or even fifty percent? The master *did not* commend him for his mismanagement, but rather for his promptness in taking action to meet his impending financial calamity.

The clue is found in the words used in verse 8. The adjective "unjust" (or "unrighteous") describes the *character* of the steward; and the adverb "shrewdly" (NKJV) / "wisely" (KJV) / "prudently" (Darby Tr.) describes his *actions* when he found himself faced with disaster. The master did not commend the steward for his thoroughly corrupt and dishonest stewardship both before and when he was dismissed. But he *did* commend the steward for his adroit reaction to his own sudden financial crisis. The Lord Jesus said that people of the world always act in this way – they ensure they have a pension-pot, so to speak, so that their future well-being on earth is securely funded (verse 9).

¹ Some translations, such as ESV, translate "steward" as "manager". But in modern terms a manager within an organisation rarely means having overall responsibility.

The application of the parable by the Lord to His disciples

Therefore the main lesson of this parable is that the Lord Jesus wants his disciples to have the same wholeheartedness in attending to their eternal futures as the dishonest steward exercised in relation to his future. That is, we should make it our decision to live lives of faithful service to our Master during this present time of His rejection and absence, thus ensuring our future rewards and blessings.

What constitutes Christian stewardship?

Christian stewardship is the way we use the gifts that the Lord has bestowed upon us so as to serve Him fully in our lives. 1 Peter 4:10 exhorts believers:

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” [ESV]

This verse teaches two things about stewardship: (i) that every Christian has been given a gift by God; and (ii) that every Christian also has been given the ability, or the grace, to use his or her gift. This grace comes directly from the risen Lord himself:

“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men’ ...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7 & 12, ESV).

For example, the apostle Paul was given the responsibility of pioneering the gospel to the Gentile nations:

“For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship” (1 Corinthians 9:16-17, ESV).

As regards money, Paul’s desires were at the other extreme from the unjust steward’s. He took his stewardship so seriously that in vv. 18-19 of the same chapter he continued:

“What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them” (ESV).

“What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge”

Our lifestyle must back-up our service

What is required of Christian stewards?

Paul makes it clear that Christian stewards are obliged to use their gifts:

“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required² of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, ESV).

In Luke 12:42-47 the Lord had already outlined the basic operating principles of stewardship:

“Who then is the faithful and wise [steward], whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.” [ESV]

Furthermore, our lifestyle must back-up our service. Consider church elders for example. According to Titus 1:7-9, overseers are God’s stewards of the flock of God. They must live in ways which are beyond reproach – as well as being sound Bible teachers. Indeed each one of us, whether elder or not, must be faithful to our Master in whatever service He has committed to us.

Why must we be faithful stewards?

Immediately after the Lord told the parable of the unjust steward, He spoke about faithfulness (Luke 16:13). First and foremost He holds us responsible for doing His work during His absence. As He stated in 19:13, He expects us to fill our lives with engagement in the furtherance of His interests – namely, the spreading of the gospel and the edification and care of His people – until He comes again. Second, His love should motivate us:

“For the love of Christ [constrains] us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised [from the dead]” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, ESV).

² The preceding chapter should be read for context, where the Corinthian’s carnality contrasts with the apostles’ spirituality.

But we also should aim to please Him because “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,” to give an account of our stewardship (2 Corinthians 5:9-10 with Luke 19:15-26 & Romans 14:10-12). This will primarily be an assessment of our faithfulness: “It is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2, ESV).

The big issue

The real issue is that of giving the Lord the first place in our lives. His service must be of first priority to us. Daily we must “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

This crucial issue is brought out by the Lord in the words with which he concludes the parable of the unjust steward:

“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13).

“Mammon” is a transliteration of an Aramaic word for riches, i.e., money and possessions – what nowadays we call “wealth”. The prevailing Jewish culture in the Lord’s time was that mammon was a sign of God’s blessing. That’s why when the Pharisees heard Him say this, they sneered at him (v.14). But verse 14 also reveals their hearts: “...they were lovers of money”! Twice over (in vv.9 & 13) the Lord personified mammon. Strong’s *Dictionary of Bible Words* suggests that it was deified by those Jews, and this brings into focus the Lord’s warning of v.13 that it is either God or mammon that we serve as slaves! It is *impossible* for His disciples to do both! And this is a huge issue for believers in today’s western world, where materialism abounds – it can so easily become our god and displace the true God!

The puzzle of verse 9

Why is it, then, that in verse 9 the Lord encourages His disciples to make friends by means of unrighteous “mammon”? It is because wealth itself is not intrinsically evil. After all, the whole earth is the Lord’s! (Psalm 24:1) The Lord called mammon “unrighteous” because the sinfulness of mankind is so often manifested through its corrupt use, even amongst believers:

“Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:9-10, ESV).

However, if you and I use this resource properly and generously as a gift from God, then we will gain eternal rewards. Paul follows his warning with this advice:

“As for [rich believers] in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19, ESV).

Faithfulness

In Luke 16:10-13 the Lord emphasised that everyone of us has received material blessings from God, whether little or much. Each of us must be good stewards of whatever has been entrusted to us. Faithfulness in our use of material wealth means our Master can confidently add “the true riches” to our stewardship. These “riches” are the spiritual truths of Christianity, especially the gospel. And notice that it’s faithfulness in service, not necessarily success, that He wants from us as we strive to maintain “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

The personal challenge

If we are faithful stewards of the material and spiritual blessings which the Lord has graciously committed to us, then we will receive those eternal rewards He has promised. At His judgement seat, He will be able to say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 25:21).

Therefore the challenge is: am I, are you, actually faithfully committed to the Master’s service? Although the parable was spoken to the disciples, Luke 16:14 states that the Pharisees were listening in. On hearing His teaching, they ridiculed Him because they were lovers of money – that is, covetous (cp. 2 Timothy 3:2). But He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

Their major sin was hypocrisy (12:1). In this respect, we need to be thoroughly honest with ourselves. Are we truly serving the Lord, or are we merely play-acting?

*Am I, are you, actually faithfully committed
to the Master’s service?*

Paul's neglected letter

Not under Law: Galatians 3:1-14

T. Balderston

Chapter 3 might be a good part of the reason for the neglect of Galatians.

This article tries to supply an accessible way through the first part of it.

Not long (it seems) after Paul had evangelised the Galatians, certain Jews, professing faith in Jesus, had gained the ear of his converts and were persuading them that Paul had taught them only half a gospel. The other half (according to these interlopers) was that, as well as believing in Jesus, the converts also needed to be circumcised in order to be saved (Galatians 5:2). They claimed that Paul had misrepresented the gospel that the twelve apostles had commissioned him to preach. They may not have been trying to force observance of the entire Law on gentile believers (5:3), though they maybe tried to subject them to its dietary stipulations (? 2:12ff).

In reply Paul spelt out to his addressees that a “gospel” which put something else alongside faith in Christ crucified and risen, as necessary for salvation, was “a different gospel,” one that nullified the grace of God (2:21, ESV), so that acceptance of this “other gospel” imperilled the salvation of those who trusted in it (1:6-9; 5:2).

Paul also told them that his commissioning for proclaiming the gospel was not from the twelve, but directly from the ascended Lord Jesus Christ (1:11-23). Nevertheless he had been proclaiming “his” gospel in full fellowship with, and with the support of, these apostles (2:1-10). True, Peter, the apostle who had “opened the door” to the gentiles (Acts 10, 11), had indeed “drawn back” in Antioch (Galatians 2:12, Darby Tr.), and Paul repeated to the Galatians what he had said to Peter on that occasion, regarding the gospel of our salvation. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, and not at all by works of law; and the ongoing life of the believer is not to be lived by observing the law, but by recognising that he or she has been “crucified with Christ”, and now lives their life, not by law-keeping, but “by faith in the Son of God who loved [him] and gave Himself for [him] (2:16, 20, NKJV).

With that clear and simple statement of what the gospel is, Paul now asks the Galatians to consider their own history (3:1ff). How had they been saved? Not by the Judaizers’ message, but by hearing Paul proclaim, as clearly as in an announcement on a public bulletin-board, the simple gospel of Christ crucified. Notice the phrase, “Christ crucified”. Paul’s preaching had not focussed on the

*Now Paul is going to place their faith
on a stronger basis than experience –
the basis of the Word of God*

perfect earthly life of the Lord Jesus (there is scarcely anything about this in any of Paul's epistles), but simply on a perfect Person who had given His life on a cross, thus making atonement.

The wording, "Christ crucified," in 3:1 also implies that Paul had preached Christ as the One who *had been* crucified, and who, as now risen and ascended, was by faith the power of their ongoing life as Christians. In that ongoing life they were to be finished with their former, sinful life in the flesh, just as Christ had, on the cross, relinquished His former sinless life in the flesh (2:19-20). This is an important element of the Letter: see also 3:27f; 4:9; 6:15.

In consequence of receiving "Paul's gospel" by "the hearing of faith" these Galatians had received the Spirit (3:2), and worked miracles (3:5). Would God have done these things on the basis of a defective gospel? And they had suffered persecution (3:4). Had that been pointless? (Presumably the Judaizers' gospel would have spared them persecution, by granting them the respect paid to Jews by pagans.)

In summary, the Galatians' *experience* of believing the gospel that Paul proclaimed should have convinced them of its completeness, and of the wrongness of the circumcision-based gospel of the Judaizers. But now Paul is going to place their faith on a stronger basis than even the experience of his converts – the basis of the Word of God in the Old Testament. This Bible-based argument of Paul's extends to the end of the chapter. We should make an effort to understand it.

Twice Paul has used the phrase, "the hearing of faith" (otherwise translated, "believing what they had heard"). Simple *believing* had done all the things in them and for them that have been summarised in 3:2-5. Now (in 3:6) Paul connects this "hearing of faith" with what is written in Genesis 15:6, "And [Abraham] believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness" (ESV; cp. Darby Tr.). The circumcisionists had no doubt made much of becoming the "seed" of "father Abraham" by being circumcised. Now Paul tells the Galatians what the true lesson from Abraham's life is.

What Abraham had believed on that occasion was the LORD's assurance that he would indeed have a son of his own, through whom would come an innumerable descent blessed by God. Abraham had simply believed this at a time when his age and Sarah's made such a thing naturally impossible (cp. 15:2-5). Nor had God said that, because Abraham had believed this promise, He would reckon to him his *good works* as righteousness. God counted simply his *believing* as righteousness. The Judaizers might well have claimed that the promise was "proleptic", i.e., that Abraham needed to be circumcised before He could actually be "counted righteous." And indeed Abraham did receive circumcision some years later (Genesis 17). But the text says that righteousness was already accounted to him simply because he had *believed the LORD*. Others might conceivably have argued that Abraham's was a temporary case, but that his successors who were given the Law would have also to keep the Law to be counted righteous. Paul has an answer to this in 3:11 & 12 (see below).

And so, says Paul, to be a son of Abraham is simply to have the same faith as Abraham had (3:7). And this is why the promise could be given, "In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). These promises contained nothing concerning circumcision. Gentiles could be blessed *as gentiles* by believing as Abraham believed; they did not need first to become law-keeping Israelites. The promises of Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18, etc., in themselves show that law-keeping is not integral to receiving "the blessing of Abraham".

But is there any harm in regarding circumcision as essential to salvation? Yes, says Paul. Circumcision was a requirement of the Law (see Leviticus 12:3), and this obligated those circumcised to place themselves under the whole Law (Galatians 5:3). The implications of this, says Paul, are bleak. "As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse" (3:10). Paul cites an important and grim Scripture to support his claim. Towards the end of Moses's great resumé of

*Is there any harm in regarding circumcision
as essential to salvation? Yes*

*"As many as are of the works of the Law
are under the curse"*

*What about sin offerings?
Could they not undo the curses of Deuteronomy 27?*

the Law on the plains of Moab, and not long before his death, he had instructed the children of Israel, once they had taken possession of the Land, to position themselves, six tribes on Mount Ebal, and six tribes on Mount Gerizim, whilst the Levites pronounced curses on all who transgressed various major commandments. The final curse was a general one (Deuteronomy 27:26). “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” Paul cites this in Galatians 3:10.¹

What about sin offerings? Could they not undo the curses of Deuteronomy 27? Paul doesn't mention them. But they only atoned for unintentional sins – see Numbers 15:22-31. And yet every sinner must know that they have committed sins which they fully intended to commit. David could not claim that he sinned unintentionally with Bathsheba! (2 Samuel 11:1ff) Therefore, as regards Deuteronomy 27:26, every honest law-keeper must admit that he or she, too, has committed presumptuous sins, and therefore comes under the curse of that verse.

How then could David, and others like him in Israel, be saved? Did he perhaps keep the Law *enough*, even if imperfectly? No: see Deuteronomy 27:26 again. The answer lies on a different line. Paul cites Habakkuk 2:4 to meet this point (Galatians 3:11). “But the just shall live by his faith”.

There is some debate as to whether this text in Habakkuk should be interpreted to mean “the just shall live by his faithfulness” or “by his faith” “Faithfulness” would mean that “the just” should continue with his faithful observance of the Law despite the terrible punishments about to fall on Israel. However the rest of Habakkuk 2 & 3 hint nothing about faithfulness of Law-observance. But they do illustrate faith.

Habakkuk prophesied at a time when Judah, due to her disregard of the Law, was menaced by the might of Babylon (chapter 1). This threat was in line with the covenant warnings in Leviticus 26:27ff and Deuteronomy 28:15ff. And at this dreadful point in Judah's history God did not promise life (i.e., salvation) to the godly Jew on the basis of his or her personal observance of the Law, but simply

¹ The “all” doesn't seem to be in the Hebrew, to judge by the translations, but the sense is the same.

of their faith in God. God was putting the granting of life on a different basis. Most of the Prophets balance prophecies of woe with promises of the restoration of Israel after it (e.g., Jeremiah 30 – 33; Ezekiel 20:3ff), but not Habakkuk. He simply had to put his faith in the God he knew. And on account of that faith God would give him “life”. See especially Habakkuk 3:17-19.

On the other hand, the life which the Law promised was promised solely on the basis of performance of it. In Galatians 3:12 Paul cites Leviticus 18:5 to show this: “You shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which, if a man does, he shall live in them”. The same words are found in Ezekiel 20:11,13,21 and in Nehemiah 9:29. But the life promised in Habakkuk 2:4 is on a different basis – simply on the basis of faith. That is Paul’s argument That someone living by faith would seek to lead a godly life can be assumed, but their godly life would contribute nothing to their salvation.

Old-Testament believers recognised that the Law could not save them. The clearest example of such believers is David, about whose inner life with God we know more than about any other’s, due to his psalms. True, he rejoices at times in the temporal blessings promised by the Law for honest if imperfect covenant-faithfulness (e.g. Psalm 18:20ff; 25:10). But when he confesses his sins, he recognises that the Law could not save him. In Psalm 32 he records that he had simply confessed his sins and the LORD had forgiven him his iniquity (vv.3-5). His hope rested on the LORD not imputing iniquity, in an exercise of grace quite outside of the Law. Similarly in Psalm 51:1,2. And in Psalm 143:2 David says, “Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for in your sight no one living is justified.” A clearer statement that no-one can be justified on the basis of his or her own works could not be made. Thus we must conclude that all true OT saints believed they had life on the basis of God’s forgiveness, not on the basis of their law-keeping. (These saints did of course seek to observe the Law, as they were still under the Old Covenant).

*Old-Testament believers recognised
that the Law could not save them.*

*“Do not enter into judgment with your servant,
for in your sight no one living is justified.”*

*The flawless Saviour took on Himself
the curse of the Law by being crucified*

But there is another side to this. On what *righteous* basis could God simply forgive the godly Israelite (Habakkuk or any other) for his deliberate floutings of the Law? Paul answers this in 3:13-14. (The interpretation of the “us” in Galatians 3:13 as meaning “us Jews” is implied by “the gentiles” in verse 14, who are evidently different from the “us” of v.13.)

Believing Israelites could be redeemed out of the curse of the Law (see 3:13, Darby Tr.). This means a bit more than just that every curse the Law pronounced on them for transgressing this and that commandment would be voided. The verb translated “redeemed” could be used for buying a slave out of servitude.² Therefore Paul means here that by becoming a curse for them Christ redeemed believing Jews from their servitude under God to a Law that only condemned them.

How did this happen? Paul cites a remarkable case in Deuteronomy 21:23 of a curse being pronounced on someone, not on account of their own transgression, but on account of the exposure of their corpses by others. True, the case supposed in that passage is of someone who had deservedly incurred the death penalty. However, serious transgressors were already cursed for their crimes independently of whether or not their corpses were hanged on trees – compare, e.g., Leviticus 20:11 with Deuteronomy 27:20; Deuteronomy 17:5 with 27:15. The exposure on a tree attracted an additional curse, and therefore applied as well to our sinless Lord as to the two criminals hanging by His side. The flawless Saviour was alone exempt from Deuteronomy 27:26, yet He took on Himself the curse of the Law by being crucified, and bore it on behalf of every Israelite who believed in Him; and so He redeemed them from the position where the Law that condemned them constituted their relationship with God. As a result, “the blessing of Abraham” could also come upon believing gentiles without the Law having to become their relationship with God (3:14). As we shall see, the new relationship of believers with God is by the Spirit (4:6).

Some more remains to be said about this (3:15-29), but must be deferred to a future article, God willing.

² See Vine's *Expository Dictionary*.

The glory of the cross

James McBroom

To attempt a few words on the cross in the light of the complete glorification of God in His nature, character, and Being, and in relation to the whole sin-question, as well as the solution of all moral questions for all time, right down into eternity, is no light matter.

The offerings and their laws are given in Leviticus 1 – 7, as pointing forwards to Christ in relation to His work upon the cross. They fall into two classes, the voluntary and the compulsory. To offer a sacrifice for sin could never be voluntary, since justice demanded it. This is that aspect of the cross which shows the obedience of our Lord to all the rights of God against sin. But in the burnt offering there was something more. In this character He freely offered Himself, and the fire could demonstrate the holy excellence of His person.

As sin-offering, He was bearing judgment. What was called for was for One who could meet the unmitigated claims of the Judge. This He did, perfectly, for unlike the type which was consumed by the fire, He exhausted the judgment. But we are led far beyond just a sacrifice that was necessary, and pass to the burnt-offering-character of his death, that is, to the moral excellence of the Sacrifice, which went far beyond the claims of the Judge, and delighted the Judge's heart with its own innate excellence.

Whilst both sin offering and burnt offering had sin in view,¹ judgment was more directly connected with the sin offering. The day of atonement, to which the sin offering was central (see Leviticus 16), prefigures the work of the cross as meeting the righteous requirements of God concerning sin – all sin in the whole creation, from the moment of its entrance (see Genesis 3) till its final relegation to the lake of fire for eternity.

On the day of atonement the blood of the sin-offering was carried inside the tabernacle and sprinkled before the Throne, i.e., before the mercy-seat (Leviticus 16:15f). But the carcase was taken outside the camp, where (with the exception of the fat that had been burnt on the altar – 16:25,27), it was entirely burnt – outside the camp. But when burnt offerings were made, neither the blood was taken within the veil, nor the carcase taken outside the camp. It was of course entirely consumed on the altar of burnt offering (see 1:9; 16:24ff).

When we consider our Lord being “made sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21), we consider Him as the sin offering. He was “bruised for our iniquities”, and His soul was made an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:5, 10). It is His holy subjection to

¹ See Leviticus 1:4. [Ed.]

what was done to Him that we consider when we regard our Lord as the sin-offering.

But when we consider our Lord as the burnt offering, we consider *what He did*. “He gave Himself”, and offered Himself without spot to God (Galatians 1:4; 2:20, etc.; Hebrews 9:14). He said, “Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I laid down my life that I might take it again”, and “Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do Thy will, O God” (John 10:17; Hebrews 10:7, KJV). All here is His own doing, and all is a delight to the heart of His God. “Even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Ephesians 5:2; see also Isaiah 53, Psalm 40, Hebrews 10). The perfection of our Lord’s self-giving combines beautifully with the Spirit’s presentation of Him in the Scriptures. Indeed He delighted to do the will of God, and went on in it right to death itself.

But He could not delight in the unmingled sorrow of being forsaken by His God in that dark hour. That was the cup He had to drink in all its bitterness, and that was what drew the cry of anguish from His holy lips, the meaning of which no creature shall ever fathom (Matthew 27:46). Linger for a moment here. Could anything enhance the glory of the cross like this? At the cross there happened the judgment of God against sin in all its stern necessity and terrifying force, a judgment that only a sacrifice of infinite worth could meet. Sin had deluged God’s fair creation with suffering, sorrow and woe; it was utterly antagonistic to God, rebellious against God; and it set out to dethrone Him (See Isaiah 14:13ff). It must be punished, it must be met judicially, and God’s holy wrath must be appeased. Christ, the Son of God, became the Victim, i.e. the true “Antitype” of the sin offering of the Old Testament, and God in all the claims of His holiness was perfectly met.

But – and here we reach the greatness of our Lord’s glory – the payment exceeded the demand, so that when the wrath was borne and Justice had been satisfied, there still remained an “excess” that formed the eternal guarantee of glory! In holy submission our Lord had become the willing Victim, the anti-type of the sin offering, and met every claim that the holiness of God could justly demand, but in the same transaction, He offered Himself “without spot to God” (Hebrews 9:14), and, being accepted, was so morally acceptable – so morally excellent – as to fill God’s heart with delight. The same death that fully met the obligation of the sinner to God – an obligation that would, for the sinner, have meant everlasting condemnation – was also and at the same time the true Burnt Offering that brought such a revenue of glory to God as to supply the basis for filling creation with the same glory. Truly our Lord’s death

*Our Lord's dying on the cross opened heaven to men;
it supplied the power to deal with moral questions;
it solves every problem.*

formed the righteous basis for everlasting bliss! It glorified God, adding lustre to all His ways with man throughout all time, and showed why it was both necessary, and also the perfect summit of these ways. Thus the glory of the cross radiates backwards and forwards through all eternity.

Our Lord's dying on the cross opened heaven with all its resources to men; it supplied the power to deal with moral questions and unravel every tangle; it solves every problem and explains all mysteries. It provides the only standpoint from which all Scripture can be elucidated, putting everything in its proper moral order. It is the centre of all the dispensations, and, by it, chaos is turned into cosmos and creation in all its departments is glorified.

But there is something in our Lord's work on the cross that goes beyond even glorifying God. It has displayed to the Spirit-taught heart the God who is love. Whilst by condemning sin it maintained the character of God in its majesty, integrity, and honour, it made room for the sinner, so that God might have His creature in right relations with Himself – relations that are beyond the possibility of breakdown. That is to say, it made the God of glory (Acts 7:2) more glorious.

Needless to say, our God is for ever and ever glorious. Nevertheless, sin had invaded His glorious realm, and the work that "put away sin" (Hebrews 9:26)

*The cross provides the only standpoint
from which all Scripture can be elucidated*

*Oh! the depth of it!, the wonder, the magnitude,
and the grandeur of the cross!*

God alone can comprehend it.

brought in another glory, one, indeed infinitely more glorious than the original state of sinlessness could have been. This “greater glory” than creation itself has filled the heart of God with delight, covering the Name, the throne, the majesty, the character, indeed the very Being of God with such a lustre as could never have been conceived; and it will supply a motive for universal and never-ending praise in all creation!

Oh! the depth of it!, the wonder, the magnitude, and the grandeur of it! Indescribable, fathomless, measureless, standing in a dignity all its own, time cannot tarnish it nor evil diminish it! Surpassing human capacity to comprehend it, it nevertheless supplies a continual theme for meditation and an everlasting cause for praise. God alone can comprehend it, and it is by our Lord’s work on the cross that He works out all the counsel of His will (cp. Ephesians 1:11).

Jesus, Jesus, holy Lord! what can we say? We worship and adore. We see You on the cross, the epitome of ignominy and shame, the target for all the accumulated malice of an apostate creation; and beyond that, we see You a suffering Victim bearing God’s judgment. We worship, we wonder, we gaze, and we adore. But, beyond that, we see You in Your excellence exhausting the judgment and clearing the ground of everything offensive, that You might fill all things. It amazes and entrances us, and we are left in motionless and speechless adoration of the wonders of Your death. It is beyond us, beyond all creatures, but in measureless grace You give us to share with You in its results. It has put us – indeed, the whole creation – under a debt which shall never be paid. “We triumph in Your triumphs, Lord; Your joys our deepest joy afford.”

From James McBroom, The Glories of Christ as Seen in the Ephod (W.S.Penfold, Bicester, n.d. but after 1971), pp.276, 279-82; edited and slightly updated in language by T. Balderston.

Heaven is our home

We are but strangers here,
heaven is our home;
Christless, this world is drear,
heaven is our home.

Dangers and sorrows stand
round us on every hand:
heaven's our allotted land,
heaven is our home!

Satan's intense attack
on God's good rules
holds not its venom back
even from schools!
Scary though Satan's power,
God still commands the hour,
He can His child secure
'gainst devil's wiles.

What though the tempest rage,
godlessness, gloom?
short is our pilgrimage,
soon Christ will come!
This world's wild, wintry blast
soon will be overpast:
we'll recognise *how* fast,
once we're at home!

There, with the Crucified
high on His throne,
there, with the justified
by blood alone;
there, with the dying thief,
there, with Rome's death-squad chief:
such are Christ's harvest-sheaf!
With them's my home!

Therefore we'll not complain
if troubles loom;
lift we the head again,
our Lord shall come!
Abraham sought that land,
grace it forever planned;
Christ is at God's right hand.
Heaven is our home.

After T.R.Taylor, 1807-35.

The life of faith and the lack of it

Genesis 25, 26

F.B.Hole

An insightful exposition, mainly of the life of Isaac. Continuing a series that has appeared in every issue of Scripture Truth since July 2017.

As we commence Genesis 25 the history of Abraham ceases to furnish typological foreshadowings of “things to come”. We are permitted to know that Abraham had other wives and many sons, none of whom had anything like the importance of Isaac, or even of Ishmael who had much earlier been dismissed. All these other sons were sent away into the east country, the place that Abraham had been called out of. Evidently Abraham realized that the call of God had been to himself and to his seed after him, and did not extend to his other children. All he possessed, other than gifts to these other sons, was given to Isaac as the son of promise (25:5,6).

Beyond this fact we are not told anything of Abraham’s closing years. In this he stands in contradistinction to Jacob, as we see in Hebrews 11:20-21. The man whose life was poor and chequered ends with a striking display of faith on his deathbed. The man who had walked habitually with God testified by his life, and needed no such bright display at the finish. We only know that Abraham lived 175 years (25:7), and that he was buried in the cave in the field at Mamre which he had purchased years before to bury Sarah in (23:17-20; 25:9). The line of faith continued in Isaac, and we are told that upon him the blessing of God rested (25:11).

Another of the divisions of Genesis begins at chapter 25:12. The “generations” of Terah began in verse 27 of chapter 11, and have continued to this point. Now we commence a brief section concerning “the generations of Ishmael.” Ishmael’s was the rejected line (see 21:8ff), and his “generations” are related with great brevity before the history moves on to “the generations of Isaac”, starting with 25:19. Ishmael’s years were 137, and his sons became men of some renown (see also 1 Chronicles 1:29ff). Yet eight verses suffice for his story, since he typifies the first man, who has to be removed for the introduction of the Second. We shall notice the same feature when we come to Esau and Jacob.

The main line of the history is resumed when we come to the generations of Isaac (25:19). He was not nearly so striking a character as Abraham, yet he knew the LORD for himself, and when Rebekah proved to be barren he

*The great principle that characterizes God's purpose,
and which runs all through Scripture,
is that of election.*

entreated the LORD for her and was answered in the birth of twin sons. Rebekah also had learned to turn to the Lord for an answer to her question (25:21-23).

In the reply that the LORD gave her we find enunciated another great principle that characterizes God's purpose, and which runs all through Scripture. It is that of election. The principle had operated from the outset, but here it comes fully to light. God declares His choice before the children were born, or had had any opportunity of doing either good or evil, as is so plainly set out in Romans 9:10-12. Esau and Jacob, not yet born, were declared to be two nations and also "two manner of people,"¹ and the elder was to serve the younger (Genesis 25:23).

At their birth the prediction was clearly verified. They were entirely different in physical appearance, in habits, and in mental make-up. The one was a skilful hunter, a lover of the open air; the other a plain, or homely, man, fond of tent life. All this would have been obvious to the ordinary onlooker, but it is the incident at the end of the chapter that discloses the real rift between them, something the onlooker might never have discerned (25:27-28).

Of the two, Esau was the elder by a mere matter of a few minutes; still the birthright would naturally have been his. The birthright became the great test, and in their attitude to it we can see they were indeed two types of people. Jacob coveted it and Esau despised it.

What was involved in the birthright? The one who possessed it was in the direct line moving on toward that "Seed," in whom all nations were to be blessed. The birthright led to CHRIST.

So here we have in typical form the first intimation of the truth expressed in the well-known lines,

¹ See KJV [Ed.].

*Esau despised his birthright and lost it.
But even on Jacob's side
the deal was not a creditable one.*

“‘What think ye of Christ’ is the test,
to try both your state and your scheme.”²

– though we must not suppose that either of the two young men fully realized what the birthright meant.

Still, they knew that it carried with it a blessing from God. This Jacob greatly desired, whilst to Esau it signified practically nothing. He was willing to barter it for the transient satisfaction produced in a hungry man when he has devoured a good meal of pottage. The bargain was struck, and thus Esau despised his birthright and lost it (25:29ff). But even on Jacob's side the deal was not a creditable one. It was a case of seeking a right thing in a wrong way. He did not get the blessing then. Later he did get it from his father (27:28f), but he only got it from God when subsequently he was brought face to face with Him, as recorded in chapter 32:29.

In a word, Esau despised the spiritual and chose the material. Jacob desired the spiritual. The majority of the men of the world agree with Esau and follow him. Real Christians agree with Jacob in desiring the spiritual.



Where faith exists in any of us, it is always God's way to test it, as we have seen very clearly in the case of Abraham. The faith of Isaac, though less robust than

*Where faith exists in any of us,
it is always God's way to test it*

² John Newton, *Olney Hymns* [1779], no 89. [Ed.]

that of his father, must now be subjected to a test. Canaan was watered with rain from heaven, and if the rain was withheld famine supervened. Egypt was watered by its famous river, and was usually the land of plenty. So when famine again descended on Canaan, Isaac's steps would naturally turn towards Egypt. But the word of the LORD to him was that Egypt was forbidden. He was to stay in the land and in spite of appearances God would bless him there and fulfil all that had been promised to Abraham (26:2ff). Isaac obeyed, but descended to Gerar on the coastal plain, inhabited by the Philistines; and there for a time he dwelt (26:6).

But settling down amongst these people brought the same test as had confronted his father (see ch.20), and he met it in the same way – by subterfuge. Now subterfuge, practised by men of the world, may have considerable success; practised by a saint of God it always ends in failure, sooner or later.

In Isaac's case it seemed to work for a considerable time, but at length the Abimelech of those days discovered the truth (26:8). Consequently we find again a man of the world, marked by a considerable measure of uprightness, rebuking the saint of God: a sorrowful sight, but one which has often been repeated from that day to this. Let each of us be careful lest it be repeated in our own history.

Nevertheless God did not forsake Isaac because of this lapse on his part. Isaac had obeyed the instruction not to descend into Egypt and hence, in spite of the famine, God blessed him abundantly in his sowing, his flocks and herds, and his servants, so much so that he had to depart from the Philistine's land (26:13, 18). In those days the Philistines were not numerous, as we learn from the fact that Abimelech, their king, had to confess that Isaac's large household had become mightier than they were.

But they had done one thing to Isaac's disadvantage, as verse 15 records: they had filled the wells with earth. In that land everything depended upon the well-springs that made the rain of heaven available; hence the well becomes

*Subterfuge, practised by a saint of God,
always ends in failure, sooner or later.*

symbolic of the source of life and fertility, and ultimately of the Holy Spirit, springing up into life and blessing. The wells had been dug by Abraham, the man of faith, but the Philistines had stopped them with earth. Presently in Scripture we shall hear a great deal about the Philistines, who became numerous and powerful, and they have undoubtedly a typological significance. In these earliest mentions of them this significance becomes manifest.

They were a people who got into the land of promise without being called into it by God. They were not like the Amorites, the old inhabitants of the land, mentioned in chapter 15:16; rather they were a people who had got into God's land without being God's people, and therefore typical of the religious world rather than of the worldly and irreligious world. Now the religious world, whether nominally Jewish or Christian, has always concentrated on a purely earthly order of things. Stopping the wellsprings of divine and heavenly blessing has always been a favourite occupation of the Philistine, whether literal or typical; and earth and its things have always been the material they have handled. The apostle Paul had the Philistine, typologically considered, in view when he penned Philippians 3:19, and even when he wrote Colossians 3:2. Isaac had to dig again the old wells, and he called them by their original names, for they had not changed their characters (26:18). He also dug new wells, and some of these the Philistines claimed. The well Rehoboth, however, he retained, for he left his case in the hands of the LORD, who made room for him (v.22). We may see an analogy to this in church history. Many a well of apostolic days became filled with earth as the centuries passed, and has had to be dug again. But when dug, it has the same old name. Luther and his co-workers in other lands dug again an important well. It had the old name of "Justification by faith" (cp. Romans 5:1). Isaac connected the thought of fruitfulness with the well Rehoboth, as we see in verse 22. This fits in with its spiritual significance. We are only fruitful as we abide in Christ and He in us, as stated in John 15:5, and of this we have knowledge, "by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24, KJV).

Isaac then returned to Beersheba, "the well of the oath" where his father had dwelt (cp. 21:31ff), and there again God appeared to him and renewed His promises.

And there we see Isaac at his best, for there he pitched the tent of his pilgrimage, and there he had his altar of sacrifice and communion, in addition to the well (26:25). There too the Philistine king and his servants approached him, and confessed that they had seen that the LORD was with him, doing this in spite of the fact - of which Isaac reminded them - that they had disliked him

Isaac had not recompensed evil for evil.

*May the same spirit be ours
as we go through the world.*

because of his prosperity and had sent him away. They now wished that there should be an oath and a covenant of peace between them, and this was established (26:26-28). Isaac could now pursue his pilgrim way without further interference from the Philistines, and we can see how his course illustrates the injunctions of Romans 12:17-19. Isaac had not recompensed evil for evil, nor sought to avenge himself, but as much as lay in his power he had lived peaceably with all men. May the same spirit be ours as we go through the world.

The two verses that close chapter 26 revert to the life of Esau, and show us that at the age of forty he had developed a mind altogether opposed to that of both Abraham and Isaac. They had made no alliance with the Canaanites. But Esau established the most intimate connection, that of marriage, with two Hittite women. He thus brushed aside the thought of taking a wife from the kindred of Abraham, as had been arranged for Isaac, his father, and linked himself with the people of the land whose iniquity was rising until their judgment fell some three to four hundred years later (see 15:16). Previously he had despised the birthright; now he despised a restriction that had Divine sanction. The call of God was nothing to him. But his act was a grief of mind to his parents and a challenging of the purpose of God (15:35).

An edited version of an article in Scripture Truth 48 (1948-50), pp. 207-208, 220 -222.

Rebuilding Zion:

An Exposition of the Books of the Exile

by F B Hole

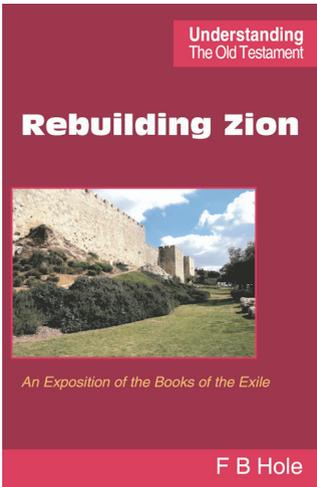
ISBN: 978-0-901860-71-2 paperback; 220 pages

R.R.P. £11.00; STP price: £8.25 + P&P

Published 30 June 2021

An e-book edition is available for the Amazon Kindle.

Frank Binford Hole (1874-1964), evangelist, teacher and author, for many years edited and contributed to two periodicals: *Edification* and later *Scripture Truth*.



Between 1959 and 1961 he wrote a series of Bible studies for *Scripture Truth* in which he worked systematically, chapter by chapter, through the books of the Old Testament prophets of the Exile: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

First published in book form in 1972, *Rebuilding Zion* has been out of print for several years. We are pleased to bring this valuable introduction to Bible prophecy back into print in a completely re-typeset edition.

Today, in the twenty-first century, it provides as valuable an aid to the application of scriptural principles to Old Testament interpretation as when it was first written. In his straightforward style, the writer examines these prophecies concerning Jesus Christ and God's past and future plans for Israel. Difficulties in interpretation are not avoided, nor the need to examine the practical response which understanding truth requires from Christians today.

Readers purchasing this book may also be interested in Ted Murray's books on two of the prophets considered in *Rebuilding Zion: Lessons from Ezra* and *Lessons from Nehemiah*, both available from STP.

Ashamed of Jesus?

Jesus, and shall it ever be,
a mortal man, ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
whose glories shine through endless days?

Ashamed of Jesus! Sooner far
let evening blush to own a star!
Ashamed of Jesus! Just as soon
let midnight blush to own the moon.

Ashamed of Jesus! That dear Friend
on whom my hopes of heaven depend:
No! when I blush, be this my shame
that I no more revere His name.

Ashamed of Jesus! Shall yon field
blush when it thinks who bids it yield?
Yet blush must I, while I adore
– I blush to think I yield no more.

'Tis evening with my soul till He –
that Morning Star – bids darkness flee;
He sheds the beam of noon divine
o'er all this midnight soul of mine.

Ashamed of Jesus! Empty pride!
I'll boast a Saviour crucified;
And, oh! may this my portion be
– a Saviour not ashamed of me.

Joseph Grigg (1728 [1720?]- 1768).