

NEW ZEALAND
FREE PRESBYTERIAN
PULPIT

*Sermons preached in New Zealand
by ministers of the
Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*

First Collected Edition 2018
Reprinted 2021

AVAILABLE FROM
WESTMINSTER STANDARD
P.O. Box 740 - Gisborne 4010
New Zealand

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ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

—Jeremiah 6:16

We shall now consider for a short time as enabled a verse you will find in the chapter of God’s word we have read in the Prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 6 verse 16. “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

In endeavouring to consider this portion of God’s word we may make a few remarks

- In the first place about the persons addressed. It was the Lord who was speaking to them.
- In the second place we shall notice a few things the Lord is bringing before them.

The Lord says to them “stand ye in the ways, and see, and asked for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls”.

Then we have their reply to such a gracious invitation—they rejected the overtures of His mercy. They said “we will not walk therein.” In other words ‘we will go our own way’. How solemn!

Well, all such will find out that God is not mocked. It is a solemn thing to reject what the Lord says and reject the salvation which He is setting before us in His Truth. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation”—a salvation wrought out at so great a cost—at the expense of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In rejecting the word of the Lord we are trampling underfoot the precious blood of Christ. We have the solemn end of all such who reject the word of Lord in what we have brought before us in verse 19. He says, “hear O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts. Because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it.”

Firstly we shall make a few remarks about the persons addressed. The Lord is addressing them through His prophet—“thus saith the Lord.” And we see that they are persons to whom the Lord had given watchmen. By ‘Watchmen’ we are to understand the prophets and teachers whom the *Lord* raised. They are called watchmen. We see that clearly bought before us in the prophecy of Ezekiel (33:7-9) where the Lord says, “I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word of My mouth, and warn them from me.” This was the trumpet he was to blow—the word of the Lord. He was to warn sinners. “When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”

The Lord is there bringing before the prophet Ezekiel his duty as a watchman. He was to hear the word from the mouth of the Lord. It

was not his own ideas that he was to preach. As the apostle Paul said to Timothy “preach the word.” The Lord is not going to bless, to the eternal salvation of sinners, anything but His own word. If you are to be saved for eternity it is through the word of God being blessed to you, and you’re soul being brought to give the obedience of faith to that word. Christ is the eternal Word. You cannot separate Christ and the word. He was the Word made flesh. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and Word was God, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth.” John 1:1, 14. You cannot separate the written word from the incarnate Word. It is through the written word that God says in His Truth that we can come to a saving knowledge of Him who is the incarnate Word—The Lord Jesus Christ. In rejecting the word of God or the doctrines of God’s word we are just rejecting Christ. It is Christ that is here speaking. The Lord is speaking in mercy through Christ. It is in Christ that He is revealing Himself as a reconciled God, long suffering, merciful, and slow to wrath, in mercy plentiful. (Ps 86:15). It is in Christ that He is revealing Himself as a Saviour. It is the Lord who is speaking here and the word LORD is in capital letters. In the Hebrew that word is “Jehovah.” And that word is applied to Christ. He is “Jehovah.” He is the One who is “the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person.” (Heb 1:3). It is through Christ that God is speaking in mercy to sinners.

Now the persons addressed here were persons who had the word of the Lord. Not only had they the word of the Lord but the Lord had set watchmen over them—His own watchmen to preach His word. But the prophet makes it clear in connection with these people that they were turning away their ears from the word of the Lord. There were many false prophets in the time of Jeremiah that professed to be the prophets of the Lord, but as we read in this chapter itself they were crying “peace, peace when there is no

peace.” (v 14). The Lord never sent them and because the Lord had not sent them, therefore they would not profit the people, as the Lord declares.

Now if that was true in the days of the prophet Jeremiah the same is true in our own day. There were many false prophets who professed to preach in the name of the Lord, and who were crying peace peace, but they were only deceiving sinners for eternity. The true Ambassadors of Christ, whom the Lord has sent are few and far between. But the great majority who go in for the ministry today just take up the ministry as they would any other profession—as if they were going in for medicine or for science. This is the calamity in our day. They therefore preach smooth things to please the people, saying ‘peace, peace’ when there is no peace. They deal deceitfully with the word of the Lord. “From the prophet even unto the priest everyone dealeth falsely” (v 13). They are dealing falsely with the souls of sinners and they are dealing falsely with the word of God. They preach peace. They say, “Yes all shall be well. God is merciful. You do your best and all shall be well.” People are taken in by this false peace, this falsehood; but the Lord says “there is no peace.” There can be no peace for any sinner apart from a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. “There Is no peace saith my God to the wicked.” This is the only way in which the wicked can have peace. As God declares, “let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts”—his ideas—his opinions—“let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Is. 55:7.

Now the persons here addressed had this privilege of having the word of the Lord and watchmen—that is truly sent ambassadors—to teach them and warn them, who rightly divided the word of truth and who were not dealing deceitfully with the word of God or with the souls of sinners. But as in Jeremiah’s day the great majority of the people turned away from the truth and were giving heed to these

false prophets or false preachers who were preaching ‘peace, peace’ when there was no peace. We find these people saying, ‘O but we have the word of the Lord.’ We have that in chapter 8:8. They were saying, “we are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us.” ‘Think of the education we have, the [University] Degrees which we have, and so on. We are wise and the law of the Lord is with us.’ But the Lord says, “lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?” They may claim they have the word of the Lord and preach ‘peace, peace’ to sinners when there is no peace but a false peace. How can they be wise—wise for eternity—when they have rejected the word of the Lord and when they are dealing falsely with the word of the Lord. And what was true in the days of Jeremiah is true almost in every age since then.

In every age and generation you see people have not an ear for the truth. They want smooth things. “Preach to us smooth things.” Is 30:10. They don’t want to hear the truth—the truth about themselves. The Lord says they are ruined and depraved in their nature, hell deserving and self-destroyed. The truth says, “O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help” Hos 13:9—in Me is thine help. Now those who are false teachers do not preach that man is self-destroyed. No, they say he can help himself to a certain extent. But if you are to be saved for eternity you will discover the truth of what the Lord says—you have no help of your own. No power against sin. You are as unstable as water, in yourself. (When I say ‘yourself,’ I refer to myself also). In ourselves we are as unstable as water—powerless against the power of sin. Those who are true teachers—they declare that to be true concerning man, “thou hast destroyed thyself—and only in Me is thy help”—not in yourself. Those who are the Lord’s people have this confession. Like the Psalmist they say, “I looked on my right hand, and viewed but none to know me were.”—none could help me. My case was beyond the skill of man—beyond the power of man.

“I looked on my right hand and viewed,
but none to know me were;
All refuge failed me, no man”—no man—
“did for my soul take care.”

What did he say after that?

“I cry’d to Thee; I said, Thou art
my refuge Lord, alone.” Ps 142:4,5 (Metrical).

What a blessing to have that confession which the Psalmist had. That we would see that there was no help for us in any created being—in man or in angel. Our cry should be unto Him in whom there *is* help and in whom there *is* salvation for lost and hell deserving sinners. “O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help.” That is what the true teachers preach. Salvation is of the Lord. Its not like some patchwork—‘O you’re a sinner and gone astray. You will patch it up in some way. You will turn over a new leaf and, let bye-gones be bye-gones, and so on.’ That may suffice for a time in this world, but will not stand for eternity. That will not bring you to heaven. Reformation is not regeneration. As we saw this morning, Christ said to Nicodemus, “verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Christ did not say this to a man that was profligate, but to a religious man who was circumspect and moral in his life and conversation. But he was a stranger to the new birth. So Christ, in faithfulness to his soul declares to him, “verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Well, these great doctrines of the new birth, justification by faith, Christ being our righteousness, how man was created in the image of God and how he fell from the estate in which he was created by sinning against God—all these doctrines—they are proclaimed by those who are the sent ambassadors of the Lord. But we see the false

teachers were saying ‘peace, peace’ when there was no peace. The majority were following these false teachers, thinking all will be well. They were persons therefore who were sinning against light; who had turned their backs on what they had heard and what they once knew. They were saying, ‘the Lord is merciful—I will do my best—and all shall be well.’ Yes, the Lord is merciful. The Lord our God is merciful, but He is only merciful in Christ. You will never taste one drop of the mercy of God apart from Christ. It is in Christ that you can find mercy. “In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.” The poor sinner finds himself like an orphan in this world, without anybody to care for his soul. But this is in the Truth, “In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.” “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself but in Me”—in Me “is thy help” and not in yourself or in any created being.

Now we shall notice in the second place what the Lord is saying to them, “Thus saith the Lord” to these persons. He is not, in this place speaking to persons who have not heard the truth, but to persons who heard the truth and departed from the truth; to those who were giving an ear to these false teachers. The Lord is saying to them “stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Now He says “stand ye in the ways.” Yes, you are going on in your own ways therefore you must be expecting that way to be good. When a person goes on in any way, he naturally thinks it is the right way. He does not take to heart that eternal death, hell and damnation, is at the end of that way. If the sinner believed that then he would turn from it. The truth says, “there is a way that seemeth right unto a man,”—it is right in their eyes—“but the end of that way is death.” Prov 16:25. Now the Lord is here saying, “stand ye in the ways.” You have been going on all these months and years in your own ways but now stand and consider what is going to be the end of the way you are pursuing. It is only a reasonable thing to stand and consider what is to be the end. “Stand ye in the ways and see.”

Take stock of matters and ask for the old paths. Consider the ways you are walking in which appear to be pleasing to you. Whether they are the old ways—the ways of truth—the way of righteousness, the ways I am setting before you; “stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Stand and see, consider, compare your present way with the old paths—with the old ways—with the good way. If you will consider and examine matters, if you will be honest with yourself, you will see that your ways are contrary to the ways of the Lord. You are persuing your own ways saying ‘peace, peace’ to yourself because those false teachers are saying ‘peace, peace’ to you telling you all shall be well; but there is no peace saith my God to the wicked.

There are but two classes, the righteous and the wicked. The righteous are those who have peace with God. All who are righteous in God’s sight—all who have the pardon of their sins and have found salvation in Christ, are seeking to walk in the Lord’s ways—in the good way. What the Lord calls the good way or the old ways. It is the ways in which the church of God walked in. The Lord’s people do not require new fangled ideas or new fangled ways. They do not adapt the Gospel to teenagers or to the modern age. It is the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Saviour—the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the unchanging gospel. “His truth at all times firmly stood and shall from age to age endure.” And it is the gospel—the old ways—the old paths that is the power of God unto salvation. The Lord will *not* manifest His power in new ways or with new doctrines. Therefore, the Lord is saying to them “Stand and ask for the old ways.” If you have any doubt as to the ways you are pursuing, well, you can ask, you can make inquiry. You can go to the Lord in prayer, asking the Lord to give you light; you can be searching His truth and comparing the modern ways with the old ways.

Now it is true that those that walk in the new ways—which are

not the ways of the Lord—that give false peace and a false hope, that they are the popular way. It is the way that the multitude walk in. We see that, in the time of the prophet Elijah. How the great majority of the people were following the worship of Baal. Now the worship of Baal was just the worship of the Lord adulterated with false doctrines and false practices. They say, ‘it is far too strict to keep to the worship of the Lord—too strict! That was good enough for our forefathers of old but we must bring in something modern to brighten the services and brighten worship. Something that will appeal to the flesh and to keep people following the Lord, as it were.’ Well, it was just the worship of Baal. They were professing to worship the Lord, but not in accordance with His word. They introduced Doctrines and forms of worship which He never authorised. There we find the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal—you could count them by the hundreds—and there was Elijah—the prophet of the Lord—on Mount Carmel. He was addressing the people of Israel. They had gone astray. They had followed their own ways and they had followed the false prophets who were crying peace, peace. But they discovered in the providence of the Lord that things were not going so well with them as they thought. For a time things seemed to go well, but then the Lord in his providence began to knock at their doors. There was drought for three and a half years. They then began to realise that the Lord had a controversy with them. Famine and drought are judgements of the Lord, and now the Lord has sent famine and drought upon them. They begin to realise that the Lord had a controversy with them. And there on Mount Carmel we find the prophet saying to the people of Israel “how long halt ye between two opinions or how long hesitate ye between two opinions. If the Lord be God then follow Him, but if Baal then follow him. You cannot serve two Masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot serve God and Baal” (Matt 6:24). He says to them “how long are you to hesitate between two opinions.” You see they knew

what they had forsaken and they were uncomfortable in their minds. The Lord was speaking loudly to them in His providence and they realised that matters were not as they should be. And the prophet puts the question straight to their consciences, “how long halt ye between two opinions”—or hesitate ye between two opinions. If the Lord be God then follow Him—and follow Him in the old ways. Follow Him in the good ways, in the ways that He is setting forth in His truth, and you shall find rest unto your souls. “Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the old ways, and see, and ask for the older paths.” This requires a solemn effort. Your eternity depends upon it. The salvation of your soul depends upon it. If you are to have peace with God and a good hope for eternity then “stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, and where is the good way and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls”.

Now these new ways were causing the people to be careless and indifferent. There was a great profession of religion but there was no regard for the law of the Lord. As we find the Lord saying here, “ye have not harkened unto my word”—not to my law “but rejected it.” You will find in modernism and all the other false doctrines that are abroad a great profession of religion, but there is no regard for the law of the Lord. There has never been a generation when the law of the Lord was so trampled under-foot as in this generation. People can go to church and can go to the Lord’s table, and as long as they put in one service in the morning, then they can go and work in their gardens or amuse themselves as they think best for the rest of the day. As to God’s Holy Day which commemorates Christ’s resurrection from the dead, it is just trampled under-foot. Christ says “if ye love Me keep My commandments”. Those who are the followers of Christ and who are walking in the old ways, they have a love and a great regard for God’s Holy Day.

Now the “good way” is the old way. This is the way followed by the martyrs and by the saints in every age and generation. They are

found walking in the narrow way—the good way is the narrow way. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it, but wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction” (Matt 7:13-14) and many there are who are going down the broad road to eternal destruction. The broad way is the popular way. It is the way of carelessness. It is the way of indifference to the claims of Gods holy law, yet they say peace, peace when there is no peace. It is the way of delusion and the end of that way is eternal death. The Lord is here calling upon us “stand ye in the way and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein”. That we would turn from every evil way and strive, as Christ says, “to enter in by the strait gate for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life and few there be that find it.” The old way is the way of holiness “without which no man shall see the Lord.” The old way is the way of truth that is foursquare with God’s holy word—it is the way of life. Now if we are to be found in that way we are to be found in Christ. He is the way. He is the door. He is the gate. As He Himself says, “I am the way, by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved”. We can have no peace apart from Christ. He is the one who made peace by the blood of His cross-reconciliation with God. And it’s through being found in Christ that we can have peace with God. All who have been found in Christ are made new creatures in Him, whatever they were at one time before then. It matters not where you go—New Zealand, Australia, Europe or Asia—you will find the Lord’s people there who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. They are found walking in the narrow way. In the way which the Lord declares to be the good way which are the old paths of the Church of God; those who are now through faith and patience inheriting the promises of God. You will find all who are truly the Lord’s walking in His way. It’s through finding peace with Christ; and there is no peace apart from Christ but eternal death and eternal damnation.

Now Christ is the way, as he says, “I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” No man can come to the Father—or come to heaven—but by Christ. Every other way, no matter what feelings of peace we may have—whatever help it may give us, will not save us. It may be quite good for time and helpful for various matters in connection with our life here, but as far as the salvation of our soul is concerned, and our hope for heaven, we must be found in Christ.

Now when Christ sent forth His apostles to preach, He said to them to preach the gospel to every creature. And Christ is the sum and substance of the gospel. There is no gospel apart from Christ—apart from the Saviour. Christ comes to every sinner to whom the Gospel is preached. Christ is set before you as the Saviour, in all His fullness. He is offered to you as a sinner. Christ said to preach the gospel to every creature. He did not say to preach the gospel to some persons who are somewhat respectable. No! The servants were to invite all sinners to the marriage feast—to the gospel feast. They were to go out to the highways and byways and gather in the outcasts. All classes. And to declare to them “all things are now ready. Come ye to the feast.” And yet there is room—and yet there is room!

Now it would be a blessing if we just take hold of Christ, where peace is to be found. There are many quack spiritual physicians in the pulpit (and out of the pulpit) who cry ‘peace, peace’ where there is no peace, deceiving the poor people to think that all will be well, but all is not well. True peace is only to be found in Christ. Christ in all His fullness as a Saviour is offered to you as a sinner. And He is offered to you freely—that is, without any qualifications on your part. He Himself says, “I came not to you call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. It is so natural for us to think that if I could reform myself a bit and qualify myself in some way by an amount of reformation

and give up this and give up that, perhaps then there would be a hope of Christ receiving me. But you are not called upon to save yourself. You cannot save yourself to the extent of one hair-breadth. If you are to be saved you will be brought to see that you must give all the glory of your salvation to the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ is offered to you free, that is Christ is offered to you as you are. He comes to you in the depth of your depravity. Suppose you could whitewash yourself and turn over a hundred new pages, what about your nature? You can lop off a few branches of a tree but the tree is still there in all it's strength, in all it's virility. To make the tree good and the fruit good the whole tree must be transplanted if it is to be renewed. As you are in all your sins with all the crimson and scarlet sins that are to your account, you cannot atone for any of them. You are to look, and if you are to be saved you will be brought to look away from anything of your own because any reformation outside of Christ will not stand you for eternity. Any repentance outside of Christ will not stand you for eternity. It is but a legal repentance. It is in Christ you can have true and saving repentance. He is exalted "to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31—and that repentance is bound up through faith in Christ. The person who looks to Christ for salvation, in that look there is repentance. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him."

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."—the Lord alone knows how far we have fallen. The day in which Adam sinned he brought the whole human race into a state of sin and misery. Nothing can deliver you out of that abyss of degradation and depravity into which you are born in this world but only Christ, who declares "I am the way the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." He is the One that says look unto Me and be ye saved"—look onto me and be saved. Look is just to trust. Look to Him for salvation from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin. You

may be fighting against the power of sin but you will find that Christ alone can save you from the power and the love of sin. Your heart and my heart, as we are by nature, is full of the love of sin and full of the power of sin. Nothing can save our souls from the power of sin and the love of sin but the Lord Jesus Christ. Look to Him and commit the saving of your soul to Him as unto a faithful creator—and you will not look in vain.

You will meet with plenty of opposition if you begin looking to the Saviour—from sin within and sin without and from the devil—but look to Him and cast yourself upon Him as a poor lost sinner. He says “whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise—I will in no wise—I will in no wise cast out.” And you will find rest for your soul. That is what the Lord is here saying. This is the way in which we will find rest. Those who are in Christ will be found in the narrow way and they will be found in the way of holiness, in the way of obedience to God’s commandments—“if you love Me keep my commandments”. Out of gratitude to the Lord for what he did for your soul you will be seeking to walk worthy of the Lord for the rest of your days in this world. Your confession shall be “what shall I render to the Lord for all His gifts to me”.

Now it is solemn that any sinner having this rest set before their souls, would say “we will not walk therein.”—‘We have our own ideas. These old ways may have been suitable for others and our fathers but we will have our own ideas. We will not walk therein. We will go our own ways, whatever you may say. You may back it up with the word of God, but we will go our own ways.’ But the Lord says, “hear O earth, behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts because they have not harkened unto My words nor to My law, but rejected it.” (v 19) How solemn, when Christ is offered to you freely, that you will reject the Saviour. That is the greatest sin you can be guilty of; that is the sin that is going to seal the damnation of all those sinners who heard the gospel.

Those who have not heard the gospel shall not be charged with the sin of rejecting the Saviour. That is a sin that will not be laid to their charge. That is a sin that shall not be laid to the charge of the devil or the lost angels, because Christ as a Saviour was never offered to them. This is a sin that only those to whom the gospel comes can be guilty of. That's the crowning sin—that the sinner rejects the remedy. Rejects the Saviour!

Whatever fears the sinner may have the Lord says “come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Is 1:18—no matter what scarlet and crimson sins may be to your account. Scarlet and crimson are conspicuous colours. Persons dressed in scarlet become conspicuous by their dress. Well no matter how conspicuous your sins may be, though they are scarlet and deep dyed as crimson, the Lord says “come now, and let us reason together saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”. No matter what paltry works of your reformation or what false teachers and quack doctors may say or put before you, in connection with the healing of your soul this is where the infinite efficacy—an ocean, a fathomless ocean, a shoreless ocean—of merit and efficacy in Christ's precious blood and sacrifice is offered. Supposing your sins were as high as the Himalayas and reach into heaven they would be lost in the shoreless depths of the infinite merits of Christ's precious blood. It is to Him you are to look. The Lord sets Him forth as a propitiation for our sins and it is to Him we are to look and to Him we are to trust, to teach us. We are blind and we are ignorant. We are prayerless and everything we should not be, but He is the one that has compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way.

Therefore you look to Him, you trust to Him, cry to Him and you will not seek Him in vain—you will not seek Him in vain. “For He

never said to the seed of Jacob to seek His face in vain.” Therefore we shall read the text and then conclude. “Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls”. The Lord forbid that any within this assembly should say what these persons said, “We will not walk therein.” We should be praying just like the dying thief, (and what crimson sins and scarlet sins he had to his account). He was there blaspheming the Saviour, as surely as the other thief. Blaspheming Christ in the depths of His agony, with the very language of hell in his mouth. Yet, before he died, we find him saying “Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” Christ said “Verily, I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with Me in paradise.” The Dying thief found rest and the dying thief is now in glory. There are thousands of poor, hell deserving, sinners that have destroyed themselves and they are now in glory and you will be in glory and yet be as white as though you had never sinned, eternally praising the Lord Jesus Christ who saved your soul with an everlasting salvation. This will be true concerning you, and with every sinner that trusts himself to the Lord Jesus Christ, for none perish—none perish that Him trust.

May He bless His truth.

Let us call upon His name.

*Preached by Rev. William MacLean at Auckland
Sabbath afternoon 10th October 1965*

GIVE ME UNDERSTANDING

“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments. They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy Word”.

Psalm 119:73-74

The Psalmist here acknowledges that God is his Creator. That is one of the things we must all come to acknowledge. He is the Creator of the ends of the earth who fainteth not, neither is weary. God is our Creator and our Lawgiver, and will be our ultimate Judge. The Psalmist is acknowledging that God created him, and, because God created him, he as a creature is dependent upon Him, “for in Him we live and move and have our being”. He is the one who upholds us, as the Scripture declares, “by the word of His power”.

We do not acknowledge this as we are by nature. Though we may acknowledge it with our lips, we do not acknowledge it in our hearts. We are altogether dependent upon God, and until we come to the knowledge that we are altogether dependent upon Him, that in Him we live and move and have our being, we do not truly believe that God is our Creator.

The Psalmist is doing more than merely referring to the Creatorship of God, because he goes on to speak of the desire he had,

“Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments”. This embraces the fact that David knew and laid to heart that he did not have this understanding as he was by nature. While man did have an understanding of this kind as he came forth from the hand of God in a state of innocency, yet on account of sin he has become brutish in his understanding. It was necessary, therefore, that God would form and fashion him according to the new creation. Until the new creation took place in the spiritual experience of the Psalmist, and takes place in your experience and mine, he would not, and we will not, have this understanding. We will not have a desire to get understanding that we may learn God’s commandments.

The only way in which we will realise this, and lay it to heart, is by the Holy Spirit beginning the good work in our hearts, and performing it until the day of Jesus Christ. As surely as we, coming forth from the hand of God, are formed by the word of His power, so it is true of the new creation, the forming and fashioning of which the Lord speaks concerning others, “This people have I formed for Myself, and they shall show forth my praise”. They were formed by the creative power of God through the Holy Ghost in the faculties of their souls. Until then they were sinners before God, without understanding, brutish men who knew not the mind of God, the ways of God, or the commandments of God. They were defying their Creator, their Lawgiver. They were at heart enmity with the heart of God, and determined that their will was the will which was to reign and to be carried out.

What the Psalmist mentions here “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me”, in connection with the new creation, brings in the fact that David felt his need of this, and was acknowledging the hand of God in the work that He performed in his soul. As the Scriptures tell us in connection with the first creation there was a movement of the Spirit of God—“the Spirit moved upon the face of the deep”. There was the word of power that said, “Let there be light, and there was

light". In the forming and fashioning of the new creation of the soul, these two things must still take place. In your soul and mine is a great deep, which we cannot fully comprehend or understand. It is a great deep with respect to the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of our hearts. There is no power but the Spirit of God, which can bring order that will be to the glory of God in the experience of our souls. The power of men, the earnestness of men, the exhortations of men, and the advices, commandments and requirements which they may set before us, are ineffectual in themselves to effect the forming and fashioning of that new creation in the soul which is to praise God world without end.

There must be this movement of the Spirit of God upon the faculties of the soul, and bound up with that movement of the Spirit there must be the word of power. "And God said, let there be light and there was light." This is what we have brought before us here, "Thy hands have fashioned me". The hand of God, the power of the Holy Spirit moving upon the faculties of the soul of a sinner, is bound up with the word of power. It is bound up with God saying to this soul who is in darkness and the shadow of death as he is by nature, "Let there be light and there was light". That is what the soul experiences.

The sinner is not conscious of the Spirit moving upon the faculties of his soul. What he is conscious of is the word of *power* we have just mentioned. God saying, "Let there be light and there was light". He is conscious of the Word of God coming to him in a way that it never came before. Whether it be by particular passages of the Word of God, whether it be by a sermon, whether it be at family worship, wherever or whenever or however it may be, this is what the sinner feels and experiences, as the Spirit moves upon the face of his soul—the Word of Power becomes effectual. He is conscious of the Word of God as a Word of Power, giving him light and understanding, to understand what the Scripture declares,

“that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”. It gives him to understand, in the measure that God is pleased to reveal it to him, that God is his Creator, that he is dependent upon God, that God is his Lawgiver, and that God is angry with the wicked every day.

Now this is bound up with the Lord forming and fashioning the new creation. “God said, Let there be light and there was light”. There is no new creation apart from this light—the light of God’s word, and apart from this spiritual illumination, when the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the soul, giving the sinner light from the Word of God, so that he sees sins where he never saw them before. Things that he was doing with an easy conscience he cannot do now, because he sees them as sins condemned in the Word of God, worthy of eternal death. The multitude of thoughts in his heart thus fight, as the light of God’s Word, dealing with him, and meeting with him in his spiritual experience, makes known to him his state and condition before God, as one who has sinned against heaven and in God’s sight.

Whatever God’s people may have doubts about, there is one thing they have absolutely no doubt whatsoever about, that is—that they have sinned against God. The light of God’s Word makes this evident and clear to them—that their sins are more than can be numbered. They have crimson and scarlet sins, which, like the sins of Judah are written with the point of a diamond and engraven in the rock for ever, for in their own strength they have no power to remove them. They may have doubts as to whether they have been truly convinced of sin, and as to whether the work that went on within them was the work of the Spirit of God or not. They may have many a doubt about that, and many a fear and concern in connection with it. But one thing they have no doubt whatsoever about is, “We with our fathers sinned have, and of iniquity too long we have the workers been, we have done wickedly”. The soul that

has no doubt about that, is a soul that has been convinced of sin, and has experienced what we have here, God saying with regard to that soul, "Let there be light and there was light". All the darkness of the soul could not stand against it, all the enmity of hell could not stand against it, and all the persecution of the world could not stand against it. This light brought the sinner to see and to understand that he had sinned against heaven and in God's sight, and he was prepared to acknowledge it and to confess it before the throne of God.

As I said already, one of the great truths as far as the Creatorship of God is concerned, is that all His creatures are dependent upon Him. One of the fruits of this light in the soul is to create in it what is the very element of the new creation—a dependence upon God. He says here, "They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in Thy Word". Where this light is, its effect is to bring the soul to complete dependence upon God. In order to do so, it brings him to understand his sins, and that he is closed out from God's favour by reason of these sins. If God dealt with him as he had sinned, "O Lord, who could stand?" said the psalmist. He understands that he is dependent upon the very God against whom he has sinned, for being spared in the room of mercy.

This involves also, that the Word of God, giving light in the spiritual experience of the sinner, convinces him that he has no faith of his own. Not only is he dependent upon God for sparing him, but also for his believing the everlasting Gospel which sets before him the very Saviour he needs. A Saviour who can save from sin, a Saviour who has paid the ransom price for sin, a Saviour of whom it is true that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin", a Saviour who glorified the Father on the earth by finishing the work He gave Him to do, a Saviour of whom we read "the Lord our God is a sun and shield, and He will grace and

glory give”—this Saviour is set before him in the Word of God in all His fullness. The Word of God tells him this is the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the salvation of God to the ends of the earth, “whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life”.

He now comes to understand, under the light of the teaching of God the Holy Spirit, that he cannot believe, that faith is the gift of God, and that his dependence upon God must extend to this—to depend on Him for the very faith by which he can believe in Christ. It is the hand of God from beginning to end, and the sinner, under the light of God’s Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, comes to realize this.

Surely there is no time when the sinner feels himself so lost as he does when he realizes that he is lost on account of his sins. “This is my son”, said the father, with regard to the prodigal son, “that was lost”. Although Christ and all His fullness is set before him in the everlasting Gospel—the Gospel call encouraging him to come, and to taste and see that God is good, and Christ addressing him thus—“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”, he realises that he does not know what faith is, or what it means to believe in Christ. He does not know how this can be accomplished in a sinner finding himself thus in the miry clay of his own corruptions and inability. How impossible it is for him to believe in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! If he could do that in his own strength he would cease to be dependent upon God.

That is where the Arminianism of the present day is just the Covenant of Works—the finished work of Christ plus my ability to believe. Instead of the soul being dependent upon God, God is dependent upon man to believe, before he can be saved. If that is the light which you and I have then the light that is in us is darkness.

The sinner must therefore become dependent in this way—

“I waited for the Lord my God
And patiently did bear;
At length to me He did incline
My voice and cry to hear.”

(Metrical Version Psalm 40:1)

The Word of God was requiring him to believe, and he felt the sinfulness of rejecting the glorious Saviour whom God had provided, yet at the same time, through this light he realised that he was just as dependent upon the Lord to work faith in his heart and mind as he was dependent upon Him for the breath of his nostrils. Now he is disposed to look outside of himself. Some spend many a day seeking faith within their own hearts and mind. But the sinner must be brought to this—to seek Christ, to seek Christ in the Word of God, to seek Christ at the throne of grace, to seek Christ in the house of God. This is now his desire in coming—“Sir, we would see Jesus”, asking the Lord to reveal Himself to him in another way than He does unto the world.

This is the light of which Paul speaks in these words, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. Not merely shined out of darkness, but shined in our hearts, giving, by a secret, powerful working, the grace of faith, so that the sinner beholds Christ in the word of God. As the Redeemer says with regard to the Father—“This is the will of Him that sent Me, that whosoever seeth the Son and believeth in Him”, whosoever has such a sight of Christ as to bring him to depend upon Him for time and for eternity—“shall have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day”. You see, we may be hearing about Christ and seeing Him in many ways in the preaching of the

everlasting Gospel, but where this new creation is, where this saving work is, where the Holy Spirit is moving upon the depths of the soul by the Word of His Power and in the light of His Truth, He gives the sinner to see Christ in such a way that he believes in Him, that he trusts in Him.

Here we have one of the greatest evidences of faith, this soul dependence on Christ. He is seen in such a way that the soul, although feeling laden with iniquity more than he can describe, sees such a divine and glorious fullness in Him, such a suitability, and such infinite merit in His blood of atonement, that he believes in, and trusts in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The definition of faith nowadays is “a leap in the dark”. Well, if your faith is a leap in the dark, you will leap into the blackness of darkness for ever. That is where modern religionists are going. Where there is faith there is understanding, understanding that I am a sinner, a helpless sinner unable to deliver myself, but also an understanding of the fullness that is in Christ to save to the very uttermost, and that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish. There the sinner is content, assenting to that as the way of salvation, but also there is a trusting, an embracing of the Redeemer as his glorious Saviour, for time and for eternity, a soul dependence upon the infinite merits of His precious blood, upon His love, and upon His faithfulness to His promise.

When the sinner does come to this, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “resting upon Christ alone for salvation”, it is very important for us to remember that at that particular time Christ is the object of the soul’s faith, not faith itself, which of course could not be. This is very important if you look at it, for the sake of illustration, from the point of view of the body which God has formed and fashioned. If we are weary, tired, hungry and thirsty, when we come to a table spread before us and partake of food and drink, we feel the refreshing, strengthening and reviving due to our

partaking. We say with regard to the food, “this food is reviving and strengthening me; I am relishing it, and it is sweet to my taste”. That is what we say. We do not say; “it is a good thing that I have a mouth to partake of this food, and a good thing that I have teeth to masticate it”. Neither do we say, when we are feeding upon Christ by faith, “It is a good thing to have faith”. No, but we say, “Christ is good, Christ is glorious, He is all my salvation and all my desire”. At the time of feeding upon Christ He is the object of faith. He is before the eye of the soul, and it is of Him the soul is saying, “His mouth is most sweet, yea He is altogether lovely, and I am trusting Him”, because that is what faith is, an exercise of soul.

We are very apt to think of faith, love, hope and patience—these graces of the Spirit—as if they were different compartments within our souls, but they are not. They are exercises of the same soul. The soul that is exercising the grace of faith is, from an understanding view of the Redeemer in the Word of God, trusting Him for ever—“for in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of ages”, with a dependence which means just this that I am done with my own righteousness, and with everything that belongs to myself. I am done with promising God this, that and the next thing. My soul goes out in dependence, for time and eternity, upon the One who came in God’s great name to save, whose blood was shed for the sins of many, and whom I now see in the Word of God as I never saw Him before. I am feeling the cords of His love going round the faculties of my soul and drawing me sweetly and powerfully into union with Himself. Where this is, you have the new creation—“Thou hast formed and fashioned me, O Lord”.

The Redeemer uses certain language in connection with His abiding in His people, and they abiding in Him. They abide in Him by virtue of the faith wrought in the new creation, and He abides in them by virtue of His Holy Spirit. What does He say with regard to the new creation in the soul? “Without Me,” He says, “you can

do nothing”. Now there is that soul dependence which is the very life, the very frame and element of the new creation, which has been fashioned by the hand of God in the depths of the soul. In the souls first closing in with Christ there is dependence and also hope. Faith looks to this—“Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life”. Hope looks to the expectation of enjoying the fulfillment of that promise.

Now faith and hope are not the same thing, and we may bring ourselves into darkness and difficulty with regard to this matter if we do not understand it as we should. Faith looks to the promise. One of the best illustrations of this is the case of Abraham, and God’s promise with regard to Isaac. Abraham believed God, and exercised faith in the promise, and as far as his faith was concerned it was satisfied with the promise of God, and the faithfulness that was in the promise. But as far as Abraham’s hope was concerned—his hope was waiting for Isaac. Abraham’s hope could never be satisfied until Isaac was born. Ishmael could not satisfy the hope of Abraham, but the coming of Isaac did. The soul that closes in with Christ in the everlasting Gospel for the forgiveness of sin is satisfied with the promise, and hopes that that promise will be fulfilled with regard to the pardon and everlasting life which the soul is to enjoy world without end.

The next thing we see is that, as the soul, closing in with Christ in the everlasting Gospel, is wholly dependent upon the Lord in that exercise of faith, so God’s people continue in that frame all their days in the world. They do not become so strong that they can do without God. They do not become so well-exercised in the graces of the Spirit that they can dispense with the help of God. They do not become so proficient in the knowledge of God’s Word that they can dispense with God—far from it. We therefore find the psalmist saying here, “Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments”. Though his understanding was enlightened by the light of God’s

truth to embrace Christ in the everlasting Gospel, the child of God is still conscious of this—"I am rude and ignorant, and in Thy sight a beast". He is still conscious of darkness, ignorance and blindness, as David himself was after years of following the Lamb, and of tasting that the Lord was gracious, when he says—"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law". Here he is saying "Thou mad'st and fashioned me, O Lord", not only as my Creator, but as the author of the new creation in the faculties of my soul. "Now give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments, that I may walk in the way of Thy Truth".

God's people are going on in this world learning His mind, and that is part of their spiritual history. Whatever situations they are brought into, whether prosperous or full of adversity, they are brought into these situations in order to learn the mind of God with regard to them there. They need to learn His commandments, and what He would have them to do, whether in the den of lions or in the courts of God's own house. "Give me understanding", is a thirst that God's people have, a thirst after the light that they received in the days of their effectual calling. Whatever darkness they may feel now, there is left a thirst in the soul after more light. "O send thy light forth, and thy truth, let them be guides to me".

They need this light in many ways, for instance, with regard to the commandment that confronts them in connection with the Lord's Supper, "This do in remembrance of Me". Christ is saying this to His people, to those whom He has redeemed with His own precious blood, and to whom He has revealed Himself by His Spirit. Yet what difficulties they have in obeying this command when they are brought face to face with it. They need the prayer brought before us here, "Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments". Although they have the grace of faith to discern the Lord's body, although they have the desire to obey this command of Christ, yet how their darkness of mind,

the temptations of the Devil and the evil work of unbelief cloud the understanding of God's people with regard to keeping in remembrance the death of Christ. Although the Saviour says "Do this in remembrance of Me" by a direct command, a command that has the same weight, and more weight, from the point of view of the Redeemer's love, than the other commandments, yet how dark this may be to them, that it is their place to be at the Lord's Table. It is their place to commemorate the death of Christ, but when they think of the darkness they feel within, the darkness that embraces them, and how they are tempest-tossed each one is ready to conclude—"Whoever is fit for the Lord's Table I am not. Although I have a hope that the Lord formed and fashioned me, and a hope that I praised Him for the Saviour He provided, and the salvation I found in Him, yet I feel too dark and ignorant to engage in commemorating the death of the Divine Redeemer, to obey this command—'Do this in remembrance of Me'."

The Devil and unbelief say to you—"Never was one of God's people in such a dark and ignorant frame of mind as you are in: why should you mingle with them? You will only bring death and darkness upon their souls by sitting beside them at the Lord's Table". But David said this, and he was a man after God's own heart—"Give me understanding". Although the Lord had formed and fashioned him in the new creation, he still felt the need of this—"Give me understanding". Even if you have been to the Lord's Table more times than you can remember, you still need this prayer, that the Lord would shine the light of His Word into your heart, and give you a refreshing understanding of what this means "This do in remembrance of Me".

David is saying also "I hoped in Thy Word". "Who is there among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of His servant?"—mark that—*obeyeth* the voice of His servant, "that walketh in darkness and hath no light. Let him trust in the name of the Lord,

and stay himself upon his God”. That is what David is saying here—“I hoped in thy Word”. It is not in turning away from God’s command to remember the Lord’s death, that light, comfort and consolation are to be found at all, but by hoping in God’s Word—hoping that His light will break in upon your soul as you set your face upon this command.

We read here “They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me”. This is the very opposite of what the Devil and unbelief were telling you, that God’s people would have no joy in seeing such a dark, ignorant sinner as you are, at the Lord’s Table. It is the very opposite—“They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me, because I hoped in Thy Word”, because I am dependent, altogether dependent, whether it be in professing Christ ten or twenty years or ten or twenty months. The fact is that God’s people are all still dependent, whether in the pulpit or in the pew—“My hope is in His Word”.

Is not this the very thing that David had when he was looking for light? What does he say in Psalm 130, in connection with this light which he was looking for to break into his heart and mind—

“I wait for God, my soul doth wait”, what else?—

“My hope is in His word.

More than they that for morning watch,

My soul waits for the Lord;

I say, more than they that do watch

The morning light to see.

Let Israel hope in the Lord,

For with Him mercies be;

And plenteous redemption

Is ever found with Him.

And from all his iniquities

He Isr’el shall redeem.”

(Metrical Version)

It is a promising frame of soul to be in when approaching the Lord's Supper, to be saying "I poor and needy am", and still there is the hope, "yet of me the Lord a care doth take". It is good to be praying to get a better understanding of what it means to keep in remembrance the death of Christ than we ever had before, with such a prayer—"Give me understanding, and I will keep thy commandments". May we get a deeper and fuller understanding of the gracious and glorious privilege Christ is giving His people when He says—"This do in remembrance of Me".

Preached by Rev. Donald Maclean at Gisborne 1965.

A NEW YEAR'S DAY ADDRESS

"I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. The earth, O LORD is full of thy mercy; teach me thy statutes."

Psalm 119:63-64

We may endeavour to meditate for a time as enabled on this portion of the Word of God in Psalm 119. We shall read again at verses 63 and 64—"I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy; teach me thy statutes."

We see that the writer of the Psalm, King David, expresses many precious thoughts and we see that he is "a companion of all them that fear thee," that fear God, "and of them that keep thy precepts," the precepts of God, or the statutes of God, or in other words, everything that God has enjoined in His Holy Word for us to keep. We see how he acknowledges that "the earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy" and that he expresses a desire "teach me thy statutes." The Psalmist holds a distinct position and this distinct position is evident here. Of course it is evident in many ways but when we are endeavouring to meditate on this portion of the truth it is evident here in his acknowledgement of the mercy of God, in the circle of friends he has as his companions and also in the desire he expresses—teach me thy statutes Lord. Therefore we shall endeavour to notice three things:

His acknowledgement of the mercy of God, the circle of friends he has and his desire "teach me thy statutes."

We see that the Psalmist has occasion to acknowledge the mercy of God. "The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy." That is something he desires to acknowledge; the Lord should be acknowledged for the mercy He bestows upon us. Surely it is a good thing we should do so at the commencement of a new year. We should acknowledge His mercy and acknowledge that the earth is full of God's mercy. Mercy is something that is undeserved; we have to acknowledge that the mercies that God bestows upon us are undeserved mercies, undeserved favours. We do not deserve these mercies. If we take a line of thinking that is of our own making and which is bound to be not in accordance with the Bible, then we take these things for granted. That is what people are doing all the time, they are taking these things for granted and often think that they enjoy these mercies because they made them themselves. When people are engaged in business and work hard and get on, they say, or tend to say, "well, it is my strength and my wisdom that has gotten me these things. I have these things because I work hard or because I am prudent in business." But if a person has an understanding of the word of God and frames his thinking in accordance with the word of God, he immediately acknowledges and knows that it is God who gives him strength, it is God who gives him wisdom. God favours and prospers him in this thing or that thing. It is right and proper that we should acknowledge God, the giver of all good. The Psalmist is acknowledging this and when we can look back, at the commencement of a new year we have to acknowledge God's mercy. If he had dealt with us in accordance with our sins, if God should enter into judgement with us we could not stand before Him on account of sin; sin is the abominable thing which God doth hate. It is on account of sin that we do not deserve God's mercies.

"The earth O Lord is full of thy mercy." Some of these mercies

are of a temporal nature and other mercies are of a spiritual nature. Well, what great blessings we enjoy of a temporal nature. You see all the plenty that is being bestowed upon us in this land; the things of nature; the food and clothing we enjoy; the liberty and the freedom that we enjoy. Yet, we tend to take these for granted. We look about us in the world and the greater part of this world is undernourished and underfed. They do not have the clothes that we possess; do not have the means to purchase these things; do not prosper as we do in New Zealand and as others do in other parts of the world. Many people lack these things.

What about the liberty we enjoy. People in communist lands, whilst they may have sufficient of the things necessary for this life, do not enjoy the liberty that we enjoy. They are not permitted to move about in their own country without permission and many people are deprived of their liberty and that often for very trifling reasons. The writer Solzhenitsyn, who was banned from Russia and who has written so many books about conditions in Russia, well, all the crime that he was guilty of in the war time was that he had correspondence with a friend in another part of Russia and that was not permitted and for that reason he was banished to slave labour for many years. I forget how long he was in a slave labour camp, something like ten years. Now what atrocious things those are. Those are the conditions that prevail in Russia and yet we have freedom and we have liberty not only to write to friends in another part of New Zealand, not only liberty to go and visit them when we desire to do so, but also liberty to read the word of God and liberty to gather together in proper assemblies around the truth to worship God, to publicly acknowledge God. What an outstanding blessing, what outstanding blessings they are.

Now, whatever Russia and other communist lands profess to do publicly, and they do profess that people are permitted to read the Bible, yet the communist regime is against the Bible—it is against

Christianity. What outstanding blessings we enjoy when we have all that liberty and we do well to acknowledge God for it. He has placed us in these circumstances. The Psalmist when he was living at that time in the land of Israel 1000 years or so before Christ came into the world, he recognised that "the earth O Lord is full of thy mercy." He could see what a distinct position they held as a nation. "The earth O Lord is full of thy mercy." Of course he could look beyond his own nation and see the goodness of God in the earth. He often thought about the beautiful things of nature. "The heavens God's glory do declare, the skies his hand works preach; day utters speech to day, and night to night doth knowledge teach." He has regard for nature. When he considers his own nation however, he could also see other mercies bestowed upon them as a nation. What other nation was favoured with the word of God and with the worship of God as the nation of Israel? At that time the Psalmist could look beyond the boundaries of his own nation and what did he see? Philistines, Moabites, Babylonians, Assyrians, and did they have the Bible? They did not have the Bible nor the worship of God. The Israelites were distinctly favoured. They were a distinct nation, a nation favoured by the Most High. That was not just a matter of having classical books such as were written in Greece and in Rome by philosophers. When we have the Bible, the word of God, there we have books given by God, the inspired word of God. That is not just a matter of a natural gift. People talk of a poet being inspired, a painter being inspired. It is a different thing altogether with respect to the word of God. When we think of the word of God and speak of the word of God as inspired, we speak of it as the word that has been given by God himself. The Holy Spirit of God was so present with the writers of the Bible, that when they recorded these words, they recorded the word of God. So what we have here in the Bible is the word of God from Genesis to Revelation given under special conditions and also preserved for us under special conditions, so

that now as we are living in the 20th century, we have commenced the year 1975, we have here the word of God from Genesis to Revelation. The Psalmist *was* aware of that when he is speaking of the statutes of God, when he is speaking of the mercies of God and when he is thinking of themselves as a nation having the word and the worship of God. He full well knew that what they had was given to them by God and that they had these things as a nation. He also knew well that the nations around Israel—the nations occupying other parts of the globe—did not have these things. These things were given to Israel. When he is saying “the earth O Lord is full of thy mercy” what an outstanding blessing he is conscious of. These are the things that are able to make and do make people wise unto salvation by the blessing of the Holy Spirit and that is what he had experienced in his own soul. When he was born into this world he was ignorant of these things and when he grew up he remained indifferent to these things until the Holy Spirit of God blessed that word to his soul and he was made a new creature in Christ Jesus and thus when he is speaking of the earth being full of the mercy of God, he is conscious of distinguishing mercies being bestowed upon them as a nation and being bestowed upon him as an individual. He did not remain in the power of darkness but he was delivered from that darkness, a distinct spiritual mercy that came to him in the sovereign mercy of God. He was a new creature in Christ Jesus and what does the word of God say about a new creature in Christ Jesus? There is “no condemnation! There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Rom. 8:1.

When at that time he was looking about him in the nation, he could also see this, that there were others that were born in a privileged nation and who had the word of God and the worship of God and yet they remained altogether indifferent to these things. There is such a thing as reading the word of God and there is such

a thing as going to church and yet remaining quite indifferent, but not so with the Psalmist. His heart was in it. The Holy Spirit had enlightened him. The Holy Spirit had quickened him so that as a believer he was holding a distinct position altogether. That is the position of every believer. It is a distinct position, being a recipient of the saving mercy of God, so that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. Now, when we find ourselves blessed in that way, we have occasion to say the earth is full, "the earth O Lord is full of thy mercy." There is occasion to acknowledge the mercy of God, to acknowledge His power and His wisdom and His love which is an everlasting love. "The earth O Lord is full of thy mercy." The Psalmist was holding a distinct position and every believer in Christ is holding a distinct position as is evident in their acknowledgement of God's mercy and it is evident in the circle of their friends. He is saying here, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." Well, he was not just making friends with anyone in the world. He is bringing it before us here that his position as a believer is a distinct position and that is evident in the friendships he built up. We read in the Bible, "can two walk together except they be agreed?" If people have friends, there must be friendship, there must be things there that bind them together. The word of God says "can two walk together except they be agreed?" There must be agreement between people when they walk together and often in the New Testament we see what the word of God declares about those who hold that distinct position and were being favoured by the Lord in this way to be partakers of the mercy of God. He delivered them from the power of darkness and brought them into God's marvellous light. The Apostle Peter in writing to believers says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." That is what is true of every believer. They are a distinct people. The word

of God says “a peculiar people,” or as we may say, a special people, a people favoured by the Lord. A people taught by the Lord, by His holy word. Therefore the Psalmist is saying “I am a companion.” He is companion. He is not just on his own. He knows others that are like-minded, like himself and they are his companions. The word of God says “know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” He does not choose his companions from the people of the world. Now he is King of Israel; this man holds a very influential position in the land of Israel, occupying the throne. He was the King of Israel. Does he look for friends amongst the nobles of the land irrespective of what their train of thought is, what their outlook is and how they conduct themselves in the world? No! verily no! “I am a companion of all them that *fear thee*,” that fear God. I am a companion of all them that fear God. Now, what is the fear of God? It is wrought by the Holy Spirit. By nature a man does not fear God. By nature he has no regard for the word of God. By nature he does not love His statutes and His precepts. By nature he has no regard for God’s Holy Day. You see, he needs to be born again. The word of God speaks of being born again. But some people say, you can go to church here in Gisborne and the preacher will tell you, you are born again when you are baptised, through the water. That is not the teaching of the word of God. You are born again by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit of God. That must take place if a person is to enter into Heaven at last. As the Saviour said to Nicodemus, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Now that is the work of the Holy Spirit, “born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.” But the Psalmist says, “I am a companion of all them that *fear thee*.” All who are born again fear the Lord, that is with reverential fear, a fear of reverence. Just

as children ought to fear their parents. It does not mean to say that they dread their parents or are unduly afraid of their parents, but it means that they have reverence for their parents and they love their parents. The fear of the Lord is that fear that every true believer has, every person that is born again. It is that fear that is mingled with love whereby they desire to keep God's statutes and his precepts and they desire to obey his laws and to do his commandments. You see, they do not have that outlook because they dread God but it is because they have the fear of reverence that is wrought in this work carried on by the Holy Spirit, when they were born again. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." That is joined together. If a person fears the Lord, if he is born again, his desire is to keep God's precepts, to walk in accordance with God's commandments in his secular life and in his life in the church. You see what a distinct position the Psalmist is in. I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of all them that keep thy precepts. They are my friends, they are my companions who are like-minded, who have a love for the word of God and a love for the ordinances of God. I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts. That person keeps the precepts of God whether he is home in the family or in the city where he lives or whether he is in another town where people do not know him. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts."

It goes without saying that this is a matter that applies to the worship of God. The precepts of the word of God have respect to one's life, to one's secular life, one's private life and they have respect to the worship of God. What we do in the worship of God should be altogether in accordance with the mind of God as we have it in the scriptures. We find that the writers of the Bible were very particular about that. They had been favoured by the Lord with positions in His cause, such as Moses, and he had instructions from the Lord

to make everything and to do everything in accordance with the pattern that was shown him by God in the mount. God gave him a pattern and all the public worship of God had to be arranged and done in accordance with that pattern and it is recorded of him that "he did all things in accordance with the pattern that was showed to him in the mount." When Solomon built the temple he did it all in accordance with the pattern that was given to his father David. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts." David was particular in that. He had a love for the word of God. He was a born again man and he showed it in all that he did in the cause of Christ. His desire was to do what is well-pleasing in the sight of God. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts." They are his companions. You see how his position was a distinct position and that he was separate from those who brought in or desired to bring in things that were not in accordance with the mind of God. This is what applies now in the twentieth century. People may say that this way of thinking was good enough a thousand years ago or two thousand years ago, but now we live in the 20th century and they say, we must bring in new things into the church. However, it is the word of God that stands. Therefore, we take a separate stand as a church. Our stand is on the word of God. Our worship and our practice must be in accordance with the word of God. That is why we take a separate stand because all over the world they are bringing in new things. They come with new ideas in the worship of God. Things that appeal to people; things that are attractive to people. This is why we are not affiliated with the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches and that is why we are not affiliated with local organisations of these churches for they are framing their worship and introducing things that are not in accordance with the word of God. You go to other churches in Gisborne, you go to other churches in New Zealand, throughout New Zealand, and you find people, you find ministers

there who do not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures. They say, this portion of the word of God, that suits me; that portion of the word of God, we could do away with it, it doesn't seem to be suitable for the 20th century. That is human reasoning and it is ignorant reasoning. If people reason in this way it shows and indicates they have never been born again, that they have never been taught by the Holy Spirit. It shows that the word of God never had an entrance into their hearts to bring light into the understanding. We read in the word of God "the entrance of thy word gives light, it makes wise who simple are." For people who do away with the inspiration of the Scriptures, people who introduce things into the worship of God which are not in accordance with the mind of God, they go astray from the precepts of God. David says "I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts." It's the precepts of God that must be our rule and our guide in the worship of God. People that come from outside into our church services may say, what! no instrumental music, no stained glass windows, nothing there to embellish the worship to make it more attractive? But what we have to do with is what God has laid down in His word in doctrine and in worship. "God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." What is the worth of a person's prayer. You find people praying, and they still pray the Lord's prayer—"Thy kingdom come, *thy will be done* on earth as it is in heaven" and at the same time things are introduced into the worship of God which have no authority in the word of God. I am just thinking of what I read in one of the newspapers when I was in Holland three years ago. There was a man there who had visited Scotland and was in one of the congregations of our church in Scotland. He was commenting on the absence of instrumental music and he said, a person may just as well do away with electric light. Now, you see, such a way of reasoning is not permissible and should never be used. I wrote to him to point out that electric light is not an element in the worship

of God at all but instrumental music is. Instrumental music is an element in the worship of God. Our stand is on the Bible, the word of God, in doctrine, in worship and in practice. Therefore we cannot have companionship and fellowship with the churches of the World Council of Churches or of the National Council of Churches and that is why we take a separate stand. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts." To hear people pray, "thy will be done," and then see them introduce things that are not authorised in the word of God, indicates there is something wrong. When we pray "Thy will be done," then we must go to the word of God to see what the word of God declares; what are the statutes of God; what are the precepts of God. That is why we take a separate stand. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts."

Now we may just notice for a minute his desire, "teach me thy statutes." We should notice that this is the desire and prayer of this eminent man king David. You know what an eminent person he was and how gifted he was in all spheres of his life. This person was with his father on the farm and he kept the sheep; how able he was in that occupation and how well he acquitted himself. Then you find him fighting the battles for king Saul and how gifted he was in that sphere of work. People were singing, Saul hath slain his thousands but David hath slain his ten thousands. A very able man. At last we find him on the throne of Israel and he was very able there. Yet now we find him saying, teach me thy statutes, teach me Lord. You see what the grace of God, the mercy of God, did for him. He was not only an able man, he was not only a gifted man, but he was a very humble man. He took a very low place at God's footstool. Teach me, Lord. Now you say, teach him? Look at the Book of Psalms, what a knowledge he had of God; what a knowledge he had of Christ. Oh, you say Christ? but he was living about a thousand years before Christ came into the world. Yet you see how he was favoured, what

an insight he had in the truth and what an insight he had into things that were yet to be accomplished. You find him writing about the Son of God that He was to be King and about Christ coming into the world. You look at Psalm 22 how he is describing the suffering of Christ, although Christ was to come into the world a thousand years later. How His clothes were to be shared amongst people and how they would cast lots for His vesture and how the feet of Christ were to be pierced. You find that in the word of God as evidence of the inspiration of the word of God. He knew of Christ and how precious Christ was to him and this Christ is precious to every true believer. "Whom have I in the heavens but thee and there is none upon earth that I desire" but Christ. "My flesh and my heart doth faint and fail but thou art the strength of my heart and my portion forever." When you read all that David knew and the insight he had, you say, did he need to be taught? But you see the humility that is there. You see the sense of need that is there. "He must increase but I must decrease." He didn't take the position at all that he knew everything already. No, his desire is *teach me* thy statutes and when he is praying that, what he was desiring I believe, is that the Lord would keep these things before his mind. That he would not be left unto himself. He well knew what is in the heart of man. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." He desired this favour of the Lord, that the Lord would be with him, and would keep these things before his mind. Now is that not a good desire to have at the commencement of a new year, that the Lord would teach us His statutes, that He would give us a retentive memory and that He would keep these precepts before our minds so that we would not depart from the ways of God as others have departed. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. I am thinking just now of the history of Scotland, the church history. You see people may sometimes make a shining profession and make great claims, but think now of the man who was an eminent

covenanter in covenanting days who signed the covenant. He was a preacher in the Church of Scotland and people could say, well, he is an eminent servant of the Lord. Wait a few years. Later on we find he has been made an Archbishop and became one of the most cruel persecutors that the Church of Scotland knew, Archbishop Sharp is his name. You see what need we have of being taught by the Lord, of being kept by the Lord, of praying teach me, teach me thy statutes Lord.

I also believe that David expresses the desire that the Lord would not withhold His Holy Spirit from him; that the Lord would continually give him His Holy Spirit that the word of God would be with power to his soul; that these statutes and these precepts would always be beautiful to him and desirable to him. It is only by the Holy Spirit; “without Thee we can do nothing.” What a need we have of the Holy Spirit therefore and to pray of the Lord, teach me thy statutes. I also believe that he was desiring that the Lord would enable him to make right decisions. That he would have such a knowledge of the statutes and precepts of the Lord that he would be enabled to make right decisions. Although he is not a Levite and he is not a priest, yet as a believer he has the church of God at heart. His heart was in the church, in the cause of Christ, and it was his desire that he would have clean hands and a pure heart, that he would be kept by the Lord in his situation and position as a believer. Is he not saying, “God is of mine inheritance and cup the portion; the lot that fallen is to me thou dost maintain alone.” Ps. 16:5. It was God’s distinguishing mercy that had brought him to that position of which he could say, “unto me happily the lines in pleasant places fell; yea the inheritance I got in beauty doth excel.” Ps. 16:6. Of course there is this inheritance every believer has, the inheritance that is incorruptible and full of glory, which he must yet inherit at last in the presence of God. What an inheritance the church of God has. Also, what an inheritance every believer has in

the church of God, when we have the public worship of God and when we have a way of worship in accordance with the word of God. It is an inheritance that excels in beauty. In connection with it, he has occasion to say,

“I bless the Lord, because he doth by counsel me conduct;
And in the seasons of the night my reins do me instruct.
Before me still the Lord I set: sith it is so that he
Doth ever stand at my right hand, I shall not moved be.”

Ps. 16:7 and 8 metrical.

Now, you see his desire was that he would not be moved, that he would not be moved away from the distinct position that he enjoyed, from that inheritance that excels in beauty. That was the position in which he was with his companions. I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of all them that keep thy precepts. It was not just as if they had formed a kind of club. People may associate together in a club. That's a different thing altogether. David and his companions were people who feared the Lord. Each one of them taught by the Holy Spirit, each one of them brought into that sphere of influence in the church of God and his desire was not to be moved away from that position. His desire was that he would have clean hands and a pure heart. It was a duty incumbent upon them as living stones in the building of which Christ is the foundation. That duty is to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and what a precious privilege that is and that is a duty that the word of God lays on us. “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. The earth O Lord is full of thy mercy, teach me thy statutes.” When we acknowledge the mercies of God, do we not have to acknowledge this great mercy, this distinct mercy, this mercy that distinguishes us from multitudes of others in other lands and in this nation. The Lord has handed down to us this inheritance

that excels in beauty in the form of worship, doctrine and practice, foursquare upon the word of God and that is a privilege. I know of no other church in this land that holds to this position, the distinct position that we hold as a church and what a privilege it is for it is in connection with the pure worship of God, that He gathers in His people, that He builds His church. What a distinguishing mercy it is when you think that this inheritance was handed down to us right from the other side of the world so that in the year 1975 we are enjoying these privileges in New Zealand. It was not given to the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand to have*. We claim to have what is in accordance with the word of God, the statutes and the precepts that are dear unto us and which we must maintain. That is the duty laid on us in the year 1975. When we find our distinguished position to be on the word of God, what a favour we have, what a privilege we have and it is our duty to carry this on and it is our duty to seek grace, for it is by grace that we stand. We must seek grace to carry this on that it may be handed down to generations following. "I am companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts." They are our companions, all them that fear thee and that keep thy precepts, therefore that is what we must pray for, teach me thy statutes Lord, teach me, continue to teach me that we may be enabled to keep the unity, the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace. May the Lord enable us and give us grace to seek that and to be given to it. May the Lord bless His truth.

Preached by Rev. J.A.T. Van Dorp, Gisborne 1975

* The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand accepted a Declaratory Act in 1901, which allows ministers to hold and teach views that are not in agreement with the Bible. When Professor Geering, who taught at Knox Theological College, propounded his heretical views denying the resurrection of Christ from the dead, he appealed to that Declaratory Act for the defence of his heresy.

A PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE AND QUICKENING

*“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: and quicken
Thou me in Thy way.”*

Psalm 119:37

Throughout this precious portion of the Word of God the Psalmist is found pleading with the Lord, the God of his salvation. He desires things which are agreeable to the mind and will of God. He glories in God and makes mention of His goodness to him and thus makes thankful acknowledgement of the mercies of God. The Psalmist was a man after God’s own heart, who loved God’s blessed Name and who hungered and thirsted after righteousness. Christ pronounced such blessed. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:6). He meditated upon God’s statutes. He thus showed that he was a “new creature”—that a principle of holiness had been planted in his soul. It is true of all God’s people that when they are regenerated or born again, a principle of holiness is implanted in their souls by the Holy Spirit. It is written, “Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a

new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are made new”.

The Psalmist also shows that he had been afflicted for his spiritual good. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes” (verse 71). “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept Thy Word” (verse 67). In the words of the text, he prayed to the Lord to be delivered from beholding vanity and he craved of the Lord that God would quicken him in His way. There were dangers in his way to Glory and he resorted to the Throne of Grace to obtain mercy and find grace in time of need.

We may notice, as enabled:

1. His desire to be delivered from beholding vanity.
2. His desire to be quickened in the way of God.

(1) His desire to be delivered from beholding vanity.

The Psalmist was evidently under the gracious influence of God the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Grace and of supplications when he prayed in this way. To him the throne of grace was precious. He was enabled by grace to pour out his heart before the Lord and he, therefore, shows his love for the name of God in seeking what was glorifying to God as well as what was profitable for himself. He is obviously afraid of sinning against God—of offending the Most High. He realises his own weakness and his inability to keep himself from sin, so he appeals to the Lord who alone could do this for him.

David shows that having come to love the Lord in truth, he loved what was real, what was substantial, what was true, what was of good report and he, therefore, abhorred lying vanities and he abhorred that which was vain, empty, foolish and unreal. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are

lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4:8). The Psalmist cried to the Lord that He would graciously, “Turn away his eyes from beholding vanity”. Well did he know how prone he was, by nature, to view vanity and to take pleasure in what was contrary to God’s revealed will in His Word, and how great was his need of being preserved by the Lord from desiring what was dishonouring to God and what was provoking to the eyes of His glory.

How true it is with regard to ourselves if we are left in any measure to ourselves, that we do seek what is unprofitable and vain and we desire to walk in a vain show. We thereby desire to walk according to the course and principles of this ungodly world. Man by nature loves what is sinful. He is in his element in a sinful way. The Apostle John, writing under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, mentions the love of the world and how those who profess to love God are not to love the world or the things which are in the world. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:15-17). The Psalmist by his prayer was thus making it abundantly plain that while he was in the world he was not of it, but that he was chosen by the Lord out of the world to serve Him. “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15 v. 19). The Lord’s servant then found that the things of the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and the pride of life, were a great burden to him. Because he loved God he was afraid of sinning against Him and he was therefore afraid of this present evil world. He realised the power of the temptations which beset

him and which beset poor sinners in the world. He knew the power of Satan, the god of this world, who seeks to ensnare and entangle sinners to their eternal destruction. The Psalmist therefore cried to the Lord as one who was in great need and who realised, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, his need of praying, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity". Surely we see in this his genuine desire to be preserved by the Lord from the way in which destroyers go—the way of sin and death. It was not a case of drawing near to God with his lips while his heart was far from Him, but as one who was exercised in the Truth and whose heart was in what he desired, he made his request known to the Lord. He pleads with the Lord to do these things graciously for him. He could not do them for himself nor could others do them for him. The Lord alone was able to deliver him.

The Psalmist was not left to despair nor was he given over to a reprobate mind. He would not perish in his sins. When he appealed to the Lord to turn away his eyes from beholding vanity he was in effect praying that his affections would be set upon things above where Christ is and that he would not be left a slave to vile affections and to the lusts which war against the soul. He earnestly prayed to be kept by the power of God from beholding vanity or delighting in it, and by grace he did not desire to be given any liberty or license whatsoever to indulge in sin. He did not seek for an excuse to do what was contrary to the mind of God. His heart was sincere. Job made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1), and David is exercised in a similar way. His fervent prayer is that his eyes would not be avenues to allow sin to enter his soul, nor occasions of temptation to him and that he would be preserved from the lustful look. The Psalmist, as one who loved the Lord in sincerity, sought to keep the garments of his profession clean and unspotted from the world. He would not bring reproach upon the Cause of God in the world. His attitude was not that of those who said, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me;

for I am holier than thou” (Isaiah 65:5), but rather was he afraid of taking fire into his bosom and so be burned.

“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity”: let me have no inclination towards those things which my soul ought to abhor. David was well aware of how those things were fitted to distract him and alienate his mind from the Truth and from the doctrines which are according to godliness. We notice in this respect his petition in verse 36, “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness”. He was living in perilous times as far as the things of God were concerned, as we are, and if he needed this prayer, so do we. We need to be kept from that which dishonours God and that which takes our minds away from what pertains to the glory of God and belongs to our everlasting peace. How ready we are to be engrossed in the things of time and of sense and to forget the chief end of our creation which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever: to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”. Do we not reverse the order and put our own things before the things of God? The Psalmist, as one who was taught by the Lord, was of another spirit as the desire of **his** heart was, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity”. Observe the holy fear **he** had, of being entangled or ensnared and his affections thereby drawn away from the Lord, from His Truth and from His testimonies and His statutes—which he found to be wonderful. “Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.” (verse 129). David had been ensnared, as many of the Lord’s people have, through the corruption of the flesh. He desired deliverance from what would cause him to err and in effect he is expressing the petition which Christ taught His disciples, “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”. One can be placed, in the providence of God, in circumstances which are dangerous to one’s soul and can prove injurious. If one is in such a situation not because one chooses to court temptation nor to tempt God but in the course of one’s duties, in the Lord’s providence, how

necessary it is for such a person to pray earnestly, “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity”.

In this age there are great dangers. Film shows, theatrical performances, lewd inventions of carnal men, serving the flesh and the devil incite others to evil. Television too can be a great evil in this respect. Picture houses, theatres, dance halls and public houses are places which should be shunned as places of temptation. If we go into such places wilfully, are we not tempting God to give us over to the lusts of the flesh? How necessary then is the prayer, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity”. That which is vain has this native tendency to lead one astray, to put one in a wrong way and to put one among those who are on that slippery path that leads to eternal destruction. How solemn it is to consider that this is the way that **we** naturally love, that we naturally choose and that is the way in which sinners are by nature. As Christ said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13, 14). Is it true concerning **you** that you are not concerned about your soul’s salvation? Is it true of **you** that you have no desire to be preserved from the way in which destroyers go? If so, how unspeakably solemn is your condition on your way to the great eternity!

Thinking of what is brought before us in this Psalm alone, is there any petition here that corresponds with the desire of **your** heart? Could you put your Amen to any petition in this Psalm—even the portion we read? Observe how the Psalmist was praying “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (verse 18). The solemn truth is, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”

(1 Corinthians 2:14). “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:6, 7). No petition ever rose from the carnal mind which was in accordance with the mind and will of God. There is no desire towards God in the natural heart. By nature we are, as the Truth declares, “without God and without hope in the world” and we are “alienated from the life of God” through the evil that is in us. Therefore it is, and must be entirely of grace that any man or woman, boy or girl, should in truth desire what the Psalmist expresses here as his own desire. We naturally love sin. We naturally pursue what is evil both outwardly, if circumstances permit, and secretly in our imaginations. How much sin is committed through the thoughts and intents of our hearts—our vain imaginations. We ought therefore, to desire to be delivered from vanity. Bunyan’s Pilgrims, when passing through Vanity Fair, stopped their ears and closed their eyes and their cry went up, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity”. “Eye gate” as well as “ear gate” constitutes a great danger to sinners on their way to eternity.

2. His desire to be quickened.

The Psalmist goes on to say, “and quicken Thou me in Thy way”. He knew very well that this was the way of God’s commandments and the way by which he would shun evil and cleave to what was good. He desired the Lord to enliven him and that he would be revived in his soul. Only the Lord could quicken him and David knew it. This was pleasing to the Lord because he looked to the Lord in faith and without faith it is impossible to please God. His heart, as it were, was beating in sympathy with the Word of God. His mind was in agreement with the mind of God and his affections were set on things that are above. In this he proved that his treasure was in heaven for

“where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”(Luke 12:34). The Lord was the object of his desire, as He was the object of his faith.

There are times when true believers feel very dead and barren—as if the things of God are tasteless and do not have the savour they once had. At such seasons it is as if the things of God are far removed from the believer as he struggles with spiritual darkness and a feeling of spiritual death. How appropriate then is this prayer, “Quicken Thou me in Thy way”. “While I feel”, the believer may say, “so dark, so brutish, so sensual and devilish, so hard hearted and so clouded in my understanding, yet ‘quicken Thou me in Thy way’”. It is **the way** of God, **the way** of His Truth as we read repeatedly. “I will delight myself in Thy statutes”. “I will meditate in Thy precepts and have respect unto Thy ways”. “I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches”. “I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart”. He believes that if the Lord would quicken him, if He would revive the graces of His Spirit in his soul and if the Lord would lift upon him the light of His reconciled countenance, then the things of God would again be most precious in his soul’s experience. “Quicken Thou me in Thy way”. The way of God is the Way of Life. It is the “path of the redeemed”—that narrow way that leads to everlasting life. It is the way of holiness of which the Prophet Isaiah speaks “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:8-10). While the way of God is the way of life, the way of holiness, the way of blessedness and peace for all Wisdom’s “ways are ways of

pleasantness and all her paths are peace”, the way that we choose by nature is a slippery way that ends in eternal death for “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14 v. 12). The gracious soul knows that those have great peace who love God’s Law and the Psalmist also knew that if he were kept looking unto his Saviour then he would not desire to turn aside to vanity and lies. It is only through being quickened that his soul would love the Lord more fervently, serve Him more ardently and follow Him more fully. Truly thus would his soul prosper and be in health. One is in a backsliding condition if one is hankering after evil of any kind.

It is clear in the Psalmist’s case that his was a healthy state of soul and a wholesome frame of mind. When he prays, “Quicken Thou me in Thy way” he fervently desires to delight himself in God and to delight in the Word of God, and in those precious promises which he did “gladly hear”. “Remember Thy Word unto Thy servant upon which Thou hast caused me to hope”. There is in verse 65 a precious portion, “Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy Word”. What glory to God is in that confession of faith on the part of the Psalmist. He displays this banner because of the Truth in the midst of a perishing world, full of hypocrisy, vanity and lies and of God-dishonouring practices and principles. By grace he sought to adhere closely to the Word of God and to abide in the Truth as it is in Jesus. “Abide in me and I in you” said the blessed Saviour, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:4).

The Psalmist was manifestly under the influence of grace and abiding in the Truth when he gave expression to these desires. We, too, should examine ourselves on this Lord’s Day whether we are in the faith, whether we have these gracious desires planted in our souls by the Holy Spirit of God. Do we know anything of the breathing of God’s Holy Spirit upon our souls? If so, we have breathings of soul

after holiness. We have longings of soul which God alone can satisfy. "For He the soul that longing is doth fully satisfy". The Psalmist in seeking to be quickened in the ways of God was setting to his seal that God was true and that by divine grace he had made choice of God's testimonies. The Holy Spirit was making intercession within David's soul and it was He who granted him those gracious desires, for, as it is true in regeneration that the Spirit of God works as He listeth so with respect to any spiritual appreciation of the Word of God or any true understanding of the things of God, these are from the same blessed Person. We, therefore, can safely conclude that all who truly fear the Lord have this prayer, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity and quicken Thou me in Thy way". What was true then, is true now, that however great his needs were, the Lord was able to supply these according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

We should consider how solemn it is to hear the Gospel and to have the Word of God in our hands and in our homes and yet be completely destitute of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are destined for the great eternity and none can afford to trifle with the Gospel of the grace of God. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3). It is common to call sin by some other name and thereby imagine that because sin is not admitted sinners can be excused in wrong-doing. Some may admit, while others deny, that there is **right** and **wrong** but it remains true that apart from divine grace sinners do not have a true conception of the real nature of sin. They do not understand that it is against God and is that abominable thing which He hates and which cannot be forgiven apart from the blood of the eternal Son of God in human nature. Nothing but the infinitely meritorious sacrificial death of the divine Redeemer could be a sufficient atonement for sin. "He gave His life a ransom for many". Only thus could any sinner escape the damnation of hell. Yet if left to ourselves we will despise the blessed Saviour.

Those who are “the ransomed of the Lord” do desire to be quickened in God’s good and holy way, and earnestly pray to have a greater appreciation of God’s everlasting love as it is revealed in the Person and redemptive work of His well beloved Son and thus increasingly experience the communion of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle John writes, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”. (1 John 1:3). Only by being quickened by the Spirit of God in the ways of God can one serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and this the Psalmist knew as do all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. The living soul in harmony with the mind of God desires to be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. For this the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Great High Priest over the house of God, prayed in His great intercessory prayer as recorded in John 17:15-17. “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God and being led by Him to the land of uprightness, even to heaven itself, value such desires as are here expressed in the words of our text, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way”. May the Lord graciously grant that this prayer arise from our hearts. May He bless His Word.

Preached by Rev. D.M. Macleod at Auckland August 1975

THE FATHER'S DRAWING

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:44

I wish to draw your attention as enabled tonight, to a verse you will find in the Gospel of John, chapter 6, verse 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day". I would like to draw your attention particularly to the first part of the verse, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him". We have here two of the great and fundamental truths of the Gospel of Christ, that is the sovereignty of God and the irresistible grace of God. Where grace is, it is sovereign and irresistible and this is something that is clearly set before us in this portion of the Word of God. We must also take careful note that the doctrine of the irresistible grace of God is taught throughout the Scriptures. It is not something that is isolated here, but something that we find in the teaching of God's Word. And, as it is a clear teaching of the Word of God, it is something that has always been held by the true church, whether we are thinking of the church in the Old Testament, or the New Testament church in the days of the Apostles, or the church at the time of the Reformation, or the church today. It is a doctrine that has always been held by the true

church of God and it will continue to be held, because you see, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. When we are thinking of the Old Testament, we may say that the Gospel is there in the bud, but when we come to the New Testament we have there the Gospel in full flower. The same doctrines are taught throughout the Word of God and in the church in every age and generation. Irresistible grace is therefore set forth with clarity in the confessions and catechisms at the time of the Reformation after the darkness of the Middle Ages. Wherever the true church is this doctrine of the irresistible grace of God will always be held and taught.

Just as the teachings of the Saviour were rejected by the Jews of Christ's day, so today we are not to be surprised if the professing church rejects this teaching, because of the prevailing apostasy. Many said then, "It is a hard saying, who can hear it?" So today many religious people express the same attitude. We need to be dogmatic today, although it is continually said we must compromise for the sake of unity. This is an age when truth is blurred, when distinctions are obscured, when black is made white and white is made black. So you see, we are to hold fast the form of sound words according to Paul's exhortation to Timothy. We have in the Bible the faith which was once delivered to the saints and it is not for us to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. It is not for us to soften down the Word of God to please the itching ears of men, but to set forth the truth of God. That is what the Lord will bless to the salvation of souls and we cannot expect that sinners will be saved where the Word of God is not proclaimed faithfully.

In seeking to make a few remarks upon the words of our text I would draw your attention first of all to the need there is of the Father's drawing. If there were no need of the Father's drawing then the Father would not draw. We would not need to be drawn to Christ for salvation if we could come to Him in our own strength.

God makes a willing people in a day of His power. Psalm 110 clearly states that.

In the second place we might go on to notice the nature of the Father's drawing. What does that mean? What does that involve? What do we understand by the Father's drawing?

Thirdly we may notice the result of the Father's drawing. One who is drawn by the Father comes to Christ as we see in our text, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him."

First of all then we have the necessity of the Father's drawing. This immediately draws our attention to man's condition. What is man's condition? If we are to understand what man's condition is, it is no use looking to the ideas of men. It is no use looking to our own reasoning. We must go to the infallible guide—the Bible. It is the instrument which detects our true moral and spiritual condition. The Bible brings to our attention the fact that man is altogether corrupt. This is the doctrine known as Total Depravity and is one of the Five Points of Calvinism. In other words, if you look at all the aspects of man's personality, in the light of God's Word, you will see the corruption of sin. We must then conclude that man is altogether in need of being drawn by the Father. Paul tells us, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that man is dead in trespasses and sins. If a man is dead in trespasses and sins he is without life. Just as a doctor has various instruments to tell whether there is life in the body or whether death reigns, so we must apply the instrument that God has given us, which is His Word, to each faculty of the soul of man. Of course, we are not dealing with the physical aspect of man's being, but we are referring to his personality. We are dealing with his soul and with spiritual matters. What we are to determine is whether there is a spiritual relationship between the soul and God.

Let us look at the mind of man. Then let us take the instrument God has given to determine whether there is spiritual life in the mind. The

result is clear. The carnal mind, says the Bible, is enmity against God (Romans 8:7). What does the Bible say about the understanding? It says that the understanding is darkened (Ephesians 4:18). You may have plenty of understanding about the things of the world, but that does not mean that there is understanding about spiritual things. Again look at the will of man and from Scripture you see the bondage of the will because of spiritual death. The Saviour says, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life". Now, there are many people today that say, "Oh yes, we believe in Total Depravity. We believe in the Apostle's remark that man is dead in trespasses and sins." Yet if you press them concerning the depravity of the will you will find that they reply, "No, man is free to choose what he wants." Man is only free to choose according to his nature and as man has a sinful nature he will not choose that which is spiritual. He will not make choice of Christ by himself. He has no desire to make choice of Christ, because he sees no beauty in Him that he should desire Him. The sheep will eat grass and the lion will eat flesh, but what does the sinner desire? He feeds on the mountains of vanity. He will not feed on Christ. If we examine man's affections we see they are set on the pleasures of sin. Man is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. Why is it that man is so adverse to the worship of God? Why is His Word left unread? Why is the Bible a closed book left on the shelf, if indeed it is in the house at all? Why is it that people do not pray? It is because they do not know and do not love the Lord. This proves that man in his natural state is dead in trespasses and sins. It shows the need of the Father's drawing, so that their affections may be set on things above. Why is it that people are continually immersed in the vain song of the pop star and live for drink and gambling? Again the answer is the same.

In spite of this man thinks well of himself. He looks to his virtues or qualities and gifts. Man has natural qualities and may perform various commendable duties and perhaps religious duties. Consequently the

conclusion reached is that these certain commendable acts or duties give us acceptance with God. Man thinks he can buy his favour with God in this way. No one denies that he possesses these natural gifts, but what does he do with these natural gifts? He uses them for his own advantage and for his own prosperity. He seeks to wield these natural blessings, that God gave to him, to obtain the favour of his fellow men. He uses these gifts to obtain friends and to spread his influence. Thus he also concludes that by these various gifts and qualities he may not only gain the favour of man and his own advancement but also the favour of God. How ready he is to justify himself. Christ said concerning the Pharisees, "Ye are they which justify yourselves." There was Paul going about to establish his own righteousness. How proud he was in his unconverted days. He was proud of his city. He was proud of his upbringing. His teacher was none less than Gamaliel. He was taught according to the most perfect manner of the Pharisees. How zealous he was towards God. He had a good opinion of himself and so he thought that God also had a good opinion of him. Men relying on their natural gifts or religious and moral duties have the same attitude as the Pharisee who prayed in the temple after this manner, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." But this is not the drawing of the Father, it is natural conceit and carnal presumption.

Once again man is so used to buying the things that he needs for his temporal use. If he wants a home, if he wants shelter, if he wants food or clothing, then he must work and earn his way. This is the way he is used to living and thinking. His whole outlook is channelled in this way. Then he tries to apply this outlook to spiritual matters. He thinks that because he needs to buy his food and clothing that the same must be true when he comes to consider acceptance with God. He thinks he must buy his favour with God, with religious duties. The Bible however has something altogether different to tell us. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that has no

money, come, buy, and eat" (Isaiah 55:1). He cannot pay for he has no money. He has nothing to offer God because he is a *sinner* and all his "righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). His sins have made him bankrupt so that he is in debt to God. God's law has been broken and demands fulfillment or payment. Sinful nature has no ability to make this payment. Thus he must be drawn by the Father to Christ who has made the payment needed for sinners, for we are not redeemed by silver and gold but by the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18).

There is still another reason why man must be drawn by the Father. It does not matter who the preacher is. He may be the most famous of preachers such as Paul himself. If Paul stood here tonight and delivered the most powerful sermon, that would not have any effect upon sinners without the drawing of the Father. The Apostle acknowledges this, when he says, "Paul may plant and Apollos may water but the Lord giveth the increase". There was Apollos, one who was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures. He could expound the Word of God so clearly and forcefully. Still that would be of no use apart from the drawing of the Father. Some people may be drawn by eloquence but that is not sufficient. All must be drawn by the Father to Christ for salvation.

We may now go on to notice in the second place, the nature of the Father's drawing. Because of the desperate wickedness of man the nature of this work is a gracious one. If it is a gracious work it is also sovereign. It is of God's sovereign good pleasure that sinners are saved from this corruption and made willing in a day of God's power, for the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. That is the testimony of the Bible concerning the heart of man. If the Father draws such to Christ then He is displaying grace and showing mercy to people that were deceived, proud, rebellious and hostile against the truth in their sinful condition.

The nature of the Father's drawing is seen in the great power that

is manifested. Now we know that in the creation of the world great power was manifested and so that is also true of the new creation, when the soul is created anew in Christ Jesus. The Lord is He who creates a clean heart and renews a right spirit and this is altogether of the power of God. It is by the grace of God and by the power of His Spirit that one is created anew. It is not by any influence of the world. It is not by any influence of men. It is not by the influence of gracious men and of good men, but according to the power of God. We see what a wonderful thing it is when a child is born. So in the Word of God we see that those who are Christians in truth are born again. When a person is born again he has a new will, new desires, new interests, a new appetite, and new affections. Those things that he delights in now he had no regard for in his unconverted days. So, "It is not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord." When people say they are not interested in such matters, that is because of the enmity that is in the heart by nature. But when the Lord deals in mercy and when the Father draws the soul to Christ there is a new appetite.

The Father's drawing makes those who were enemies to God by wicked works, the friends of the Lord. Saul of Tarsus showed the utmost enmity against the Lord and against His people. He had no time at all for the gospel of Christ and yet when the Lord met with him on the Damascus Road we see the difference. What a difference was also made when the three thousand at Pentecost were converted. They were Jerusalem sinners who had desired the death of Christ. But they were brought to this, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved". Instead of being like ravening wolves as they were before the crucifixion, they were brought to repentance. Christ had prayed for them, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." These beautiful words were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in a large measure. Many of those who desired the crucifixion of Christ were pardoned and forgiven. What power! What grace!

The drawing of the Father changes those who strayed morally and who went far and wide from the moral law of God, not only in their hearts but also in their outward life. Among the Corinthians, Paul tells us there had been fornicators, idolators, effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind. He says, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." There was the woman of Samaria, one who had five husbands and yet we see that by the grace of God she was changed. She was a different person. She no longer lived according to her former lusts, a life of disobedience and rebellion against God. We see how the covetous are made liberal. There was Zacchaeus feathering his own nest; advancing his own cause at the expense of others. The lust of greed is that which operated in his heart and controlled his whole life. Yet because of the drawing of the Father he was made liberal. When Christ met with him he restored fourfold that which he had taken falsely from other people. Again the ignorant are enlightened. This can be seen when we read the accounts of mission work. Paton, missionary to the New Hebrides, went to preach the gospel to headhunters who were given over to the grossest heathen practices and darkness. By the power of the gospel there were multitudes who were saved by the preaching of this famous missionary. Christ, by the gospel, shines into our darkened hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Father's drawing delivers us from the power of the world. How the world is like a magnet. It makes such demands upon us that we in our natural condition must conform to its standards and philosophy. The world demands that we must live according to its dictates, to its pattern of life and to its outlook. The world wields the big stick and it says, "How dare you be different". How hard it is to go against the philosophy, the practices and the social patterns it sets forth. How hard it is to be different from your work-mates and from your friends, or from worldly relatives who may try

to keep you from the gospel of Jesus Christ. But when the Father draws us we overcome the world. It is because the love of Christ constrains us.

Thirdly when the Father draws, sinners come to Christ. Use is made by the Holy Spirit of the law of God in the first place. The law is used to drive sinners from all false refuges. By the law is the knowledge of sin. People today want to hear smooth things. Preach the gospel, yes, but do not mention the hard things. That will put people off, and drive them away. The very opposite is the truth. Where the Word of God is blessed, it is by the law that there is the knowledge of sin. It is by the law of God that every mouth is stopped and all the world becomes guilty before God. We like to hide behind various sinful refuges. We betake ourselves to the covenant of works, and hide behind our works or duties. What does the Lord do but drive us away from these false refuges. Whatever refuges of lies we take ourselves to, when the Lord deals in mercy He drives us from every false hope. It is a mercy to be delivered from a false foundation for eternity. If we think that we are going to be accepted by God because of what we do or what we are, we are mistaken. The Lord delivers us from a sense of false security. The security of Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, was his religious position and knowledge. He was a master in Israel, but when he came to Jesus by night he was taught that he must be born again. Jesus said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus had to be shown his ignorance, even though he was a master in Israel, for he did not understand the very basic essentials of the truth.

While it is true that a man is driven from every false refuge there is also the other aspect of effectual calling. There must be gospel drawing too. A person is not coerced; not dragged against his will. After the law has done its work the sinner is drawn to Christ, as He reveals Himself a Saviour of sinners, most necessary and suitable.

The good news of Christ is manifested and when the Lord is lifted up He will draw all men unto Him. "And I," says Christ, "If I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." Christ is lifted up as One who came to seek and save the lost.

Christ is lifted up in His Person. The manifestation of His glory in His Person draws sinners to Him. Who is Christ? A good man? Many set forth Christ as a good man and nothing more. But regarding Christ's divine nature, He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person. He is God manifest in the flesh. When thinking of the human nature of Christ we refer to the perfection of His human nature. It is revealed to us in Scripture that He is without spot or blemish. The human nature of Christ is thus quite unlike the rest of human nature. He has done all things well. Christ is perfect without the least trace of sin, original sin or actual transgression. His virgin birth ensured that there was no original sin transmitted. He was "conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Ghost and born of her yet without sin." The disciples were beholding the glory of Christ who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. "We beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). Now, if the Lord is lifted up in the glory of His Person and in the glory of His finished work; His redemptive work, poor sinners are drawn to Christ to receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation. It has been said that Christ's soldiers are volunteers. In the old days in Britain, the navy was replenished by press gangs going around, taking and forcing men into the navy. As far as Christ's soldiers are concerned they are volunteers because they are drawn by His preciousness. Those drawn to Christ see beauty in Him that they should desire Him, when He is revealed in His glory as mediator and when He is revealed in His suitability as Saviour. He is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One. He becomes all our salvation and all

our desire. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Now just leaving our subject at this time I want you to consider two things. First of all we need not think that we have come to Christ if we think that we can come to Him without the drawing of the Father. Dr Kennedy preached a sermon on this text and in that sermon he says that we have never been to the school of Christ if we have passed over this first and basic lesson. If you think that you can come to Christ in your own strength; by your own ability, you have passed over this lesson. This is said that you might realise that in yourself there is no good thing; there is no ability to save yourself and that you need the drawing of the Father.

Now the other thing I want to leave with you tonight is this. Do you see that nothing will do, but the drawing of the Father? Do you feel your inability, grieve over your inability and feel very conscious of your inability? Is this something that disturbs you? Is it your prayer and desire that the Lord would quicken you? The Psalmist could say, "My soul cleaves to the dust, quicken me according to thy Word." Your soul cleaves to the dust too. You are conscious of your deadness. You are conscious of your carnality. It is something you wish to be rid of. You feel the straitness of the gate and the narrowness of the way and unbelief is a burden to you. It may be that you are being drawn by the Father and you are coming through the strait gate into the narrow way. As another you say "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Now, if the Father has brought you this far, He will continue to draw you and lead you in His everlasting way. If the Father has begun to draw you to Christ, then where He begins the good work He will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ. You realise there is no rest except you rest in Christ. There is no peace for you but what Christ gives. He is all your salvation and all your desire. Here in the promise you see Jesus beckoning you on. He is calling you to Himself. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no

wise cast out." "Come unto me," He says, "All ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." What precious words we have here. May the Father so draw you to Christ this night that you might rejoice in Him, having no confidence in the flesh. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." May God bless His Word.

Preached by Rev. E.A. Rayner at Wellington 17th April 1977

GOD REMEMBERED ABRAHAM

“And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.”

Genesis 19:27-28

Our text tells us that Abraham went “to the place where he stood before the Lord.” As we see from the preceding chapter, that place was where he “stood yet before the Lord” to intercede for Sodom, and where God had given him the promise, “I will not destroy it for ten’s sake. But as we know, there were not even ten righteous persons in the city.

From that place Abraham could see the terrible catastrophe that had overtaken the cities. “And he looked toward Sodom and Gommorah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.” Then we read, “And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the

plain, that *God remembered Abraham*, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.” I would like to dwell just now on this fact of *God remembering Abraham*.

First, we will consider *the time when God remembered Abraham*, namely when He “destroyed the cities of the plain.”

Secondly, *what is meant by God remembering Abraham*? It is obvious that He remembered Abraham mainly by answering his prayer for Lot. The third matter is *that Lot benefited from the fact that God remembered Abraham*. “God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow.”

First, we will consider **the time when God remembered Abraham**, namely, when He “destroyed the cities of the plain,” It was a time of fearful judgment upon cities that had been given over to terrible wickedness. In chapter 13 it is recorded that “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” Chapter 18 tells us that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was “very grievous;” and chapter 19 shows how evil the inhabitants of those cities were.

When we are told that the men of Sodom were “sinners before the Lord exceedingly,” it means that their wickedness was extraordinary in God’s sight. In one sense, we are all sinners before the Lord, inasmuch as the eye of the Lord is upon every one of us; but when it is stated that people are sinners “*before the Lord*,” it means that they are sinners in a very bold and evil manner. It is recorded also of the antediluvian world that it “was corrupt *before God*, and the earth was filled with violence.” So the people of these cities were sinners in an outstanding way and were exceedingly evil. Chapter 18, tells us that the cry of the cities came up to God. “And the Lord said, Behold the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great because their sin is very grievous.” These words, “the cry,” indicate the enormity of the sin.

Notice also that it is “sin” (and not “sins”) that is spoken of;

meaning that a particular sin was rife in the cities. It was that sin which provoked God's wrath and cried out, as it were, for judgment. What was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah? Well, without mincing words, it was gross uncleanness in the form of sodomy. It is difficult, especially for a minister of the gospel, to speak of these things. One is ashamed to mention them, but they have to be dealt with.

This sin is a judgment in itself. This is something we must remember, that when a generation is given over to the sin of sodomy, it is a judgment in itself. In Romans, chapter 1, we read about the sins that were prevalent among the Gentile nations in the time of the apostle. He says that because they left God and turned to idols, "God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own heart, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves...." That chapter shows clearly the vileness of this sin; but the point I wish to stress is that God, in judgment, *gave them up* to this sin. They dishonoured God by turning away from Him to idols; and God, in judgment, gave them up to dishonour themselves. This was a judicial act on the part of Jehovah. Let us seriously consider this scriptural aspect of this vile sin: that it is a judgment of God that a generation should be given over to it.

It is also to be feared that where this sin is prominent, further judgment cannot be far away. When this sin is in a nation, it ought to make us tremble when we look at it in the light of God's word. It is a sin that is thought little of today. You meet with it in many parts of the world, including Canada, the United States of America, Britain, Australia, and here in New Zealand; and everywhere it is lightly regarded and frequently condoned.

What should especially concern us today is that this sin is now "lawful" (and I put "lawful" in inverted commas because it is not lawful as far as the law of God is concerned). Here in New Zealand, your legislature made this sin legal last Wednesday. This means that a majority of the Members of Parliament in Wellington consider

themselves wiser than God. That is what it amounts to. In several press reports it is clear that anyone who backed up an argument with Scripture (and very few took the Word of God into account) was mocked and ridiculed for being so backward as to take Scripture for a standard. Well, that speaks volumes and is a sad situation indeed.

Some hope that the Bill will be repealed soon by another government, but I doubt it. When such laws are made, it is very difficult to get them repealed because—and we must remember this—when people go as far as this, God gives them over and leaves them to their sin, as He did in the days of the apostle. I fear that there will be terrible judgments upon this nation before these laws are repealed. The moral outlook for New Zealand is bleak. Sodomists and perverts should be restrained, according to the law of God. Never mind what the psychiatrists say in support of sodomy, for many of them are ungodly and have no respect for the Word of God.

Along with the sin of sodomy in Sodom there was the sin of pride. Scripture says, “Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom *pride*, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness was found in her,” Ezekiel 16:49. Where there is this vile uncleanness of perversion and sodomy there is pride along with it. You could see that even in some newspaper pictures last Thursday morning. Pride is condemned by God and denounced in the Scriptures. It is a sin that God hates; and “those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” Pride goes before destruction, and this was certainly true regarding the cities of the plain.

Sodom also had “fulness of bread and abundance of idleness,” that is they were well off as a people. How does fulness of bread become sin? It is not wrong in itself to have fulness of bread, but they made it sin by misusing it. They had a high standard of living and comparative ease. Their land was one of the most fertile spots on earth, “well watered everywhere even as the garden of the Lord,” an earthly paradise of beauty and plenty; but instead of being thankful

to the Lord for His goodness they forgot Him, rebelled against Him, and sinned grievously.

Do you know that it is written in the Bible, “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them”? When people are prospering in the world they should be on their guard. We need prayer at all times but in prosperity we need more prayer than ever. If we are not kept, prosperity will destroy us because there is folly in our hearts. In New Zealand you have a wonderful land; a beautiful land of plenty; a land that in many respects is like the garden of the Lord. You cannot deny that; but the question is, has the goodness of the Lord led you to repentance? and, has the goodness of the Lord led the inhabitants of New Zealand to humility before Him? It is to be feared not. The apostle asks, “Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” How often we misuse His goodness! When we get much of the goodness of God in providence, unless the Lord in His mercy will prevent it, we will lose sight of God and forget the Giver of all good.

What did the people of New Zealand do last Wednesday through their representatives in Parliament? Did they honour God? No, they did not! They forgot God; they despised God. Well, God is not mocked! Remember this, friend: God is not mocked. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah forgot God, but that did not mean that God forgot them and that their sin went unnoticed by Him. God said He would go down to “see”, (the Lord is here speaking after the manner of men). The Lord saw their vile sin, and the result was that He sent His angels to destroy the place. The angels said to Lot, “For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them has waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.” And the cities were destroyed by fire and brimstone raining down on them from heaven.

What a *fearful judgment* was that rain of brimstone and fire!

Before this it was ordinary rain that God sent as they needed it. Their plain was “well watered”. God gave them rain, not too much, not too little, but just what was necessary to make it “as the garden of the Lord” But they abused it, rebelled against God, and committed sin that was “very grievous”; and now judgment came. “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.” Sodom and Gomorrah were turned into a furnace.

This fearful judgment came *suddenly*. The morning of that awful day was a good morning. We are told, “The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.” It was just like any other morning to the people of Sodom as they went about their work. Scripture tells us that they “did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built.” Suddenly, destruction came! “It rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all,” Luke 17:28, 29. Never a thought of God did they have—never a thought of asking God to prepare them for their latter end.

Do you ever think of your latter end yourself? Do you ever think that here you have no continuing city, that you need preparation for death, and that there is no preparation for death but the grace of God? Do you ever think of the grace of God? Do you ever think of your need of being changed, and your need of the gospel of the grace of God being blessed to your soul? Well, in Sodom they had no thought of that; and the city was turned into a furnace.

That was the awful sight that Abraham saw early in the morning when he looked towards Sodom. What were his thoughts as he saw that “the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace”? He may have concluded that his prayer had not been answered—that his prayer had been ignored by the Lord. He had prayed, but now he was seeing this fearful sight, and he probably thought “The Lord did not hear my prayer.” But that was not the case. Just then, as the Lord was raining fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, He

was remembering Abraham. “It came to pass, *when God destroyed the cities of the plain*, that God remembered Abraham.” God, in the midst of wrath, was remembering mercy.

Again and again the Lord has done this. He remembered mercy in the midst of the terrible judgment of the Flood by remembering Noah in mercy. He remembered the Children of Israel in the midst of the destruction of Egypt. Habbukuk was praying in his own day, “O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.” This is a prayer that you and I should have for New Zealand at this time in its history: “O Lord revive thy work,... in wrath remember mercy.” If there is anything New Zealand needs it is a revival of true religion—a revival from heaven, and that the Lord would “in wrath remember mercy.”

Well, all that Abraham could see was destruction and he was probably concluding that his prayer was not answered. Maybe someone here is praying much over some matter, and perhaps, because of what you see happening in providence, you are concluding that your prayer is not answered. Abraham could see only utter destruction and God as a consuming fire, but yet, at that very time, “God remembered Abraham.”

Now, **secondly**, let us consider **how the Lord remembered Abraham**. On the whole, the Lord remembered Abraham for good. More particularly, He remembered Abraham by *remembering Abraham’s intercession* for the righteous in Sodom. Had ten righteous persons been in Sodom, it would have been saved in answer to Abraham’s prayer, but they were not there. However, Lot was there, and Lot was a righteous man. We say that on the authority of the Word of God which describes him as “that righteous man”. Lot with all his faults was a righteous man and therefore he was in the intercession of Abraham. That meant that nothing could happen to Sodom until Lot was out of it. “Haste ye, escape thither,” said the

angel to Lot, “for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither.” God remembered Abraham’s intercession.

The Lord also remembered Abraham by *remembering His promise* to him that He would make him a blessing. “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: *and thou shalt be a blessing.*” It is amazing grace for any sinner to be blessed by God. It is more amazing still to be made a blessing—to be used by the Lord for the blessing of others. At this time God remembered Abraham by making him a blessing to Lot. Abraham prayed for Lot and God answered that prayer by remembering His promise, “Thou shalt be a blessing.”

Now this, in a measure, is true of every one of the Lord’s people—of all who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, that as well as being blessed themselves they are made a blessing to others by being made the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Not only are they made a blessing in this general sense but also in particular cases. When Andrew himself was blessed he went to find Peter to bring him to Christ. What a blessing Andrew was to Peter! Peter, being blessed by the Lord, was then made a blessing to thousands on the day of Pentecost. Paul was blessed by the Lord and then made a blessing to thousands in the cities of the Gentiles. Down through history this has been the case thousands and thousands of times.

The Lord’s people are also made a blessing by their prayers for certain people. Many a godly mother or father is a blessing to their family in this way. It is reasonable to think that the father of the prodigal was praying for his son as he left home and that he continued praying for him, expecting him to come back (for he was looking out for him). You may be tempted to say, because of certain happenings, that your prayers are not being heard. Abraham probably thought so that morning, but that was the very time God was remembering Abraham to make him a blessing to others; and

it could easily be the same in your case. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.”

Lastly, we shall consider **how Lot benefited because of God remembering Abraham**. Lot did not perish. God “sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow” because He remembered Abraham. I was wondering if Abraham ever knew that Lot was saved. There is no word in the Bible that Lot and Abraham ever met again in this world; and there is no indication that Lot ever knew that Abraham prayed for him. How many blessings we receive that very likely are answers to prayers that we never knew about. Well, Lot certainly benefited from the fact that the Lord remembered Abraham. The fact that God remembered Abraham was the real reason why Lot was delivered. Here we have a case of “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man” availing much. As I said, we are not told if Abraham ever knew if Lot was saved. Indeed, the next thing we read about Abraham is that he journeyed “towards the south.. and sojourned in Gerar.” As far as I can see, that was a long way from Zoar; but what a blessing it was for Lot that he had this godly man taking an interest in him and praying for him.

Eternity alone will reveal what blessings have been the result of the prayers of others: of the prayers of godly fathers and godly mothers for their children; of the prayers of godly men and godly women for others for whom they were burdened and who did not know of these prayers. Even in this world itself these things come to light. There was a certain Royal Navy ship in the Mediterranean during the last war and there was a young lieutenant from Canada on the bridge. Suddenly he saw ahead of them a mine floating in the water, and the ship was making straight for it. There was no time to be lost. Although he was not the officer in charge, he immediately took charge and gave an order to alter course; and in that way the ship was saved. The officer in charge saw what happened and realised that the young man had saved the ship and all the lives aboard; and

when the emergency was over he asked him, “How did you notice that mine?” The answer the young man gave was, “I believe it was in answer to my mother’s prayers.” He knew his mother back in Canada was praying for him. When that danger was ahead of the ship, the Lord remembered the mother and they were saved.

That was how Lot was saved—because Abraham’s prayer on his behalf was remembered by the Lord. We know from 2nd Peter that Lot was a righteous man, and he was therefore safe as to his soul; but, as far as I can see, he would have perished with the rest, were it not that “God remembered Abraham.”

So there is encouragement here for praying men and women in New Zealand, and elsewhere, to look to the Lord, and to continue looking to the Lord. He is encouraging them to be casting their burden upon Himself, and to faint not, however discouraging things may be. I’m sure that Abraham’s hope went down when he saw the place burning. He thought that Lot was gone; but, No! he was not gone. “God remembered Abraham.”

May the Lord add His blessing.

*Preached by Rev. L. MacLeod in the Auckland congregation
of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland on Sabbath,
13th July 1986, following the passing of a Homosexual
Reform Bill in the New Zealand Parliament.*

THE GOD OF PEACE

A FAREWELL SERMON

“Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”

—2 Thessalonians 3:16

Let us now turn to the chapter read in God’s word in the second Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians chapter 3 and for some time as the Lord will enable us let us look at the words in verse 16. And “now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you always.”

In this chapter the apostle is giving precious exhortations to the Thessalonians. He is exhorting them as to how they should behave themselves; that they walk orderly and according to the gospel.

Among other exhortations he tells them great things with regard to the second coming of Christ and the man of sin; that the man of sin must be brought down by the spirit of God’s mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His coming. Now we ought to be concerned with regard to matters in connection with the antichrist. We as a Church, whatever other churches hold, (they have their own views) but we believe that we have a Scriptural view with regard to the antichrist

the man of sin—that is the Pope of Rome*. And the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians in connection with the second coming of the Lord and that the man of sin, the antichrist, must appear in the world and that he must be brought down before the coming of the Lord. As to the antichrist in our day, we are getting used to things; matters are becoming common to us. We are not concerned as we ought to be with regard to the antichrist. He is expecting to come to Britain and to come to Scotland also—the land of the covenants and the land of the covenanters and the land of the martyrs. And they are preparing Bella Houston Park in Glasgow, for the Pope. They are going to cut down trees, 60 large trees that were there for a long long time and although there are protests with regard to these matters, yet it looks as if things are going ahead and preparations made for the Pope to come to Glasgow where thousands, they say, will have a full view of him and of the altar where he will celebrate Mass so that these large trees have to be cut down. Well these matters ought not be common things to us at all. We should not be unconcerned about these things, at all. We should be praying to God that He would intervene in His providence.

Now the apostle speaks in this epistle to the Thessalonians of the “man of sin.” Now many ministers in our day will not have it at all, that the Pope is the “man of sin” and “the antichrist,” but it is wiser for us to keep to statements with regard to “that man” in our Confession of Faith, whatever other churches will say and whatever

* The constitution of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is the Westminster Confession of Faith which in chapter 25 section 6 states, “There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God.” See Matt. 23:8-10 and 2 Thessalonians chapter two.

other ministers and professors will say and write. Those who made these statements with regard to the “man of sin” and “the antichrist” in our Confession of Faith were not men without learning. They had great learning, along with great gifts and talents and along with much spiritual light—real piety; who knew real experimental godliness and were anointed with the Holy Ghost. They had the gracious light of the Holy Spirit. They had learning—sanctified learning and talents and gifts and they made statements with regard to the “man of sin” in the light of God’s word and it is our wisdom to accept and believe what they wrote and what they left in writing for us.

Now we come to the words of our text. We read, “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.” From the words of our text we will notice

- in the first place something with regard to the Lord of peace Himself,
- and in the second and last place some things with regard to the desire and prayer of Paul for the Thessalonians.

And in the first place then, some things with regard to the “Lord of peace Himself.” We read, “Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means.” We read in many places of Scripture of the God of peace. And the God of peace is the Lord of peace Himself. God the Father and the Eternal Son are one in essence. They are distinct persons; the Trinity. The three Persons in the godhead are distinct Persons with regard to their personal properties. The Father eternally begets the Son—the Eternal Son, and the Eternal Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. There is but one God. The doctrine of the Trinity is a great mystery but we must accept this doctrine. No man in this world can fathom or understand the depths of this doctrine at all—that there are three Persons in the Godhead,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and in glory. It is not a third at all of the Godhead that is dwelling in each of the Persons of the Godhead. God is infinite in His being—the infinite, undivided, divine essence dwelling in each of the Persons of the Godhead. The Father and the Son in the Godhead are co-equal in power and Glory and the Holy Ghost also.

We read here of the Lord of peace, “now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means.” God is always the God of peace. He is the God of peace with regard to divine communion between the Persons in the Godhead. The Persons of the Godhead had from all eternity holy communion with one another. God enjoys Himself. He enjoys the divine eternal contemplation of His own glory and we should seek to enjoy, in a measure, what God himself enjoys. We ought to pray that we would enjoy God. This is our chief end, that we would enjoy God. That we would glorify God, and that the Holy Spirit would be enabling us to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—the glorious person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God in our nature. The Eternal Son of God is the essential image of the Father. The Eternal Son of God in our nature is the representative image of the Father to the church. These things are revealed to us in the word of God, these great mysteries, the glory of God.

Again, God is the God of peace, with regard to His own government in this world and throughout the whole universe. God is the God of the universe. He has the universe in the hollow of His hand. He is the governor of this world. Things look sometimes to us as if everything in the world is in chaos and in confusion—there is just confusion and chaos covering the whole earth—as if there was no order. As if things had gone out of hand. And as far as men are concerned, in a way, things have gone out of hand. Many things have gone out of hand, but still God is the God of peace and He is the

Governor of this world. And things have not gone out of His hand. He knows what He is doing and what He is going to do. He is ruling and governing; all things in this world will redound to the glory of God and will be for the good of His church. Christ is the head over all things—over all things. You think of that, over all things in this world, and the whole universe. All things mean all things. Christ is the “head over all things for the church which is His body—the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” All things will redound to the glory of God and the good of His own church in this world, and for the good of the church throughout eternity.

Here we read, “now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.” Now, God is the God of peace when he awakens the sinner by His Holy Spirit. The sinner is alarmed when he is awakened by the Holy Spirit. And why? Because when a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit in his conscience, in his heart and his understanding, in his will, then he gets a glimpse by the teaching of the Holy Spirit of the holiness of God. And when he receives a glimpse of the holiness of God, he understands that there is justice in God. He gets a glimpse of the glory of God and His justice as that is revealed in His holy law. He sees what he never saw before. He gets a glimpse of the image of the eternal God who is holy and who is just, who is the God of love and the God of holiness, the God of justice and because He is so, He is angry with the wicked every day. We read that in the word of God, and we must accept that from the word of God.

Now when a sinner receives a glimpse of the image of God—the holiness of God, the justice of God and His divine law, he realises in some measure, what it is to have sinned against God. He realises then that sin is terrible, sin is rebellion against God, sin is defiance of God, sin is a transgression of the law of God—that sin is against God who is holy, who is just—and as the God who is revealed to the sinner now in His holy law. And when God by His spirit is giving

the sinner a glimpse of His own holiness and justice in the law, the sinner, in a measure, trembles. Oh that we would know what it is to tremble in the presence of God, realising in some measure, who God is and what God is. We tremble at other things—especially when sometimes we come into sudden danger. You see at once that men and women are alarmed—why? Because they laid to heart, in some measure, the solemnity of being ushered into eternity. I remember going to a Communion in London some 12 or 13 years back, and as we were going to come down to the London Airport, the captain of the aircraft told us through the speakers that we couldn't come down. He said, "I cannot come down—the nose wheel will not release. Prior to this people were talking and laughing but when that came through the aircraft there was a hush—why? Why this hush through the aircraft? Because men and women realised their danger—and what danger! And perhaps in a few minutes we would be ushered into the presence of God who is holy, who is just,—ushered into the eternal world. Conscience was telling many of them that they were not prepared to appear in the presence of God—to be ushered into the presence of God. When the stewardesses were going around telling the passengers what they should do, everybody was dead silent! And why? Why this silence—why this solemnity—now? Because in their hearts there was this secret, solemn, serious thought that perhaps in a few minutes we would be in the eternal world. A young man was sitting beside me. He was talking to me and was trying to keep his mind off the situation. I said to him, now, this is a time for prayer. He was very respectful and he said, that is so. I said, we should now pray if it be God's holy will that he will save our lives and if not that he would prepare us for eternity—he answered and said, that is very true. The captain was telling us what he was going to do as the control tower could no give him any further information. He said, 'I will come down and I will touch the ground and touch ground twice to see if I can shake the nose wheel into position. I will try it anyway.

I will fly up and if you hear a loud noise don't panic.' He came down with a loud banging noise, and landed safe. Now you see what I am at is this—what were they afraid of? Why were they not chatting and laughing as they were before? Because of this, they were realising in their hearts, and in their consciences, that maybe in a few minutes they would be in the eternal world. Anyway that captain, under the good hand of the Lord, brought the plane down safely. He kept the nose of the aircraft off the ground until he stopped. But what I am at is, we are all going to eternity. The wages of sin is death. How solemn it is when men and women realise they are going to eternity.

Now friends, "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom 6:23. Oh, to be prepared for death and eternity. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Now!

When the Lord, by His Spirit and word, will bring home to the heart and conscience of a man that the wages of sin is death—God is doing this as the God of peace. The sinner then realises that God is holy and just and good. Now he gets a glimpse of the holiness and justice of God, the only true God. He then realises his need of mercy. And may the Lord give each one of us a true realisation so that we would lay to heart our need of mercy.

But we cannot learn true saving evangelical religion—true heart religion—as we can learn other things such as philosophy and so on; we can learn these things. But we are absolutely, totally ignorant, of what true saving heart religion is. Oh, our great need of being delivered from our ignorance and to know what true saving heart religion is. Do you know what it is to be condemned by the law of God? Do you know what it is to be delivered by Christ? "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom 6:23.

Now, when the soul is brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, and the peace of God is pervading the heart of a sinner, the sinner then knows what the peace of God is. It is the peace of God that

passeth all understanding, which keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus. When this love of God in Christ pervades the heart and all the faculties of the soul—God is doing this for the sinner as the God of peace.

Now when God is casting the soul of a sinner to a lost eternity, He is also doing it as a God of peace. When we are angry we are always prone to justify ourselves. We say that it is righteous indignation which we have! We should always examine our state of mind and heart when we are angry. (There are times when there is such a thing as righteous indignation.) The mind is disturbed when we are angry. But that is not so with God. When He in His holiness and divine justice casts the soul of a sinner down to hell—there is no turmoil in the divine mind. . He is the God of peace.

Oh, friends our great need is of praying that we would know God—the only true God. We will never come to a true knowledge of God until we come to a true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, brought to us in the everlasting gospel. Our great need is of the knowledge of Christ in the gospel. Christ is crucified before our very eyes in the present revelation of truth. It is not something that took place in history and is now in the past. Calvary—Christ crucified is present before us. We need to have the eyes of our understanding opened to see the glory of God in salvation—to know the God of peace. “Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”

And in the second place, the last place, we come to the desire in the prayer of Paul for the Thessalonians. This was his desire and prayer for them, “Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.” God is the God of peace when He brings the soul of the believer to heaven. All transactions at the great day of judgement will be performed by the God of peace. “The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.” (WSC. A 37) God is doing that

as the God of peace. He will see to it as the God of peace that the “bodies of believers still united to Christ will rest in their graves till the resurrection.” They will rise again on the resurrection morning, when their bodies will be raised from the grave and the soul and the body of the believer will come together. Oh, what holiness! Oh, what beauty! Soul and body united again together. The whole person made holy with the stamp of eternal youth—to be with Christ which is far better—to be with Christ for all eternity.

The soul and body of the wicked will come together again, also. How terrible that meeting will be. The soul and body of the wicked coming again together at the sound of the last trumpet—to be cast into hell for all eternity. The wicked will hear “depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt 25:41. They will be desiring the mountains and the rocks to cover them from the face of the Lamb—and from the wrath of the Lamb! But not a rock, not a hill, will fall on top of them to bury them, and to cover them, to hide them from the Judge of all. Lost for all eternity! Dear soul, see that you will have what will stand good for you in the swellings of Jordan. See that you will be found on the “Rock”—that you would have a saving union with Christ. You see knowledge of a kind will not save the soul. Knowledge about doctrines. Oh what we need is Christ. To know Christ, friends, and to love Christ, to have saving faith in Christ—a saving union with Christ. We need to know the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts.

The apostle writing to the Romans says, “that I may come onto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now, the God of peace be with you all, Amen.” Rom 15:32-33. The apostle knew—and the servants of God know,—what it is to be refreshed with the people of God. How precious that is—and it is all of the Lord. It is to the glory of God and for our good, when we know something of that. And we trust we know something of that since we came among you, to this city, by the will of God. With

all humility before God, and with a thankful heart to the Lord, we know what it is to be refreshed with you. That's what the servant of God here says, and that is what the servants of God in our day also know, in preaching the gospel and in visiting from house-to-house. They know, in attending the courts of God's house, what it is to be refreshed with those who love the gospel—who love Christ in the gospel—and who have a mind for the cause of Christ. We read also of the servant of Christ encouraging others. The people of God need encouragement. They are assaulted by Satan. They are attacked and assaulted in many ways, by the arch-enemy—by Satan. You see Satan is a personality and a powerful personality—a mighty personality. It's not just something in the mind of man. That's not Satan at all. Psychologists and psychiatrists, and some ministers of a kind, will tell you that—but you look at the word of God and search the word of God. We read “and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Rom 16:20. That is the promise to you child of God. It is a promise for you now. Time is short. You are on your way, child of God, to heaven; you are an heir of heaven there to be with Christ—an heir of God, on your way to the Father's house. The promise for you is that “the God of peace, shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Thomas Brooks says, “time is not long, therefore your troubles Christian cannot be long.” Well, that is true. The apostle, writing to the Corinthians says to them, “finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort.” 2 Cor 13:11. He exhorts then to be of good comfort. They have every reason to be of good comfort. The people of God—those who are truly regenerated by the Holy Ghost and who know the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts. They know what it is to weep over forgiven sin, at the foot of the cross. They behold Christ and Him crucified, raised up on the accursed tree—the just for the unjust—the Holy Lamb of God bearing my sins in His own body on the tree—unworthy, wretched sinner, that I am. They are mourning over forgiven sin.

Well, they have every reason to enjoy, at times, comfort, because they have Christ, and they are loved by Christ. They are on their way to heaven. “Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you”. And that is the word of God to you. We are just stating the word of God to you, and exhorting you in the spirit of the gospel, as we are parting the one from the other.

Finally, brethren. To the congregation here, each one, and everyone, and the children also—“finally brethren, farewell, be perfect.” It does not mean that anyone will be absolutely perfect in this world—but there is such a thing as gospel perfection. We are to be perfect in that sense. And that’s what the apostle meant—to be perfect in that way—to know the Lord, and to seek to walk according to the commandments of God. He says to them, “finally brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” The servant of God writes to the Thessalonians in another place, “and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” 1 Thes 5:23. That was his desire for them—that the work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, would be carried on in their hearts.

“Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”—by all means, He says to them. That should be our prayer that the means of grace, the means of God, the appointed means, will be sanctified to us and would be blessed to us. The public means, the private means, the secret means of grace—all the means of grace would be blessed to us—sanctified to us. “Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.” He couldn’t desire, he couldn’t wish better for them. And his heart was filled with love for them. This was his honest, sincere, desire and prayer to God for them. “The Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.” And may it be so.

We can just say that we were refreshed among you since coming

here. We experienced the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts since coming with you. That we experienced communion with God and communion with the people of God—fellowship with the people of God. We experienced the sweet, comforting, presence of the Lord among you, since coming with you. And it is now our desire and prayer for you—“now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.” May the Lord bless His word. Let us pray.

PRAYER

Oh, eternal and ever blessed one, do Thou prepare us for eternity.

There are changes in this world, but Thou art from all changes free.

Grant that we would be looking to Thyself. Go before us as the breaker-up of our way.

Prepare us for the eternal world and to be for ever with the Lord.

Sanctify us, prepare us for the Fathers house: in My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am, there you may be also.

Bless this congregation, each family apart.

Thou knowest all our needs. Take care of them.

Oh, bless the young and the little ones, the young children, the infants of days.

Do Thou gracious one, be their Shepherd and be a wall of fire around them, and bringing them to the knowledge of Christ in their young days.

*Bless the families apart, those who have sickness and trouble
in their families.*

Do Thou help them and comfort them and sustain them.

Grant Thy blessing as we part one from another this evening.

*Thy kingdom come in our hearts, in our families, in our
congregations, in our cities, in our towns and in our villages.*

May Thy kingdom come, Oh, Lord.

Forgive graciously our sins.

Love us freely.

Sprinkle the blood of the Lamb upon us.

All we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

I wish to tell you, that God willing, I will be leaving Auckland tomorrow evening at 20 to 6. I was happy with you since I came here. You showed me great kindness, which I appreciated very much. You are real friends in the gospel to me, all of you. The children also. And all I can say to you is—thank you. After the benediction will you please remain seated and I will go to the door so that I can say goodbye to you as you leave the church.

BENEDICTION

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

*This sermon was preached by Rev. Angus MacKay in Auckland
Sabbath evening 7th February 1982*

Psalms sung (1) Psalm 145:1-8 (2) Psalm 138:3-8 (3) Psalm 122:4-9

APPENDIX 1

THE BANNER DISPLAYED

“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth”.

Psalm 60:4

The title of the Psalm is “a lily of witness”—the meaning of the Hebrew words, Shusan-eduth. The lily is the symbol of purity. Christ’s banner is a witness on the side of the purity of the Word of God, as we find the Psalmist elsewhere confessing,

“Thy word’s most pure, therefore on it thy servant’s love is set. Small, and despis’d I am, yet I thy precepts not forget”.

What is of the Lord is pure and undefiled. Where Christ has His Cause there you will find a banner displayed in defence of the Truth, and against all that is contrary to the Truth.

The Purity of the Text of Scripture

Those to whom Christ has given this banner, seek to display it in defence of the purity of the text on which the Authorised Version, and all the Versions of the Churches of the Reformation is based. It is the text concerning which the Westminster Confession of faith says: “The Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in

Greek being immediately inspired by God and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical". The Greek Text, which had been providentially preserved in the Greek Church is known as the Textus Receptus or the Received [Majority] Text. Westcott and Hort, professors in Trinity College, Cambridge, believers in the Theory of Evolution and destructive critics of the Word of God claimed that the Greek manuscripts discovered about the year 1860, usually known as Codex Aleph and Codex B, contained the genuine Greek Text of the New Testament and not the Textus Receptus. They accordingly produced a new Greek Text which they based on Codex Aleph and Codex B, and devised an elaborate theory, elevating these two manuscripts and one or two others of a later date, to the heights of almost infallible authority. "They used these Codexes despite the fact that they disagree with 95% of the extant manuscripts, papyri and Scripture portions of the early Church fathers, which on the other hand, do agree with the authorised Greek text on which the King James and other Reformation translations are based. In fact, the Westcott and Hort text represents a radical revision introducing as many as 5337 changes in the Greek, and more than 3600 changes in the Revised English Version of 1881." "I insist and am prepared to prove" wrote the learned Dean Burgon, "that the text of these two Codexes (Aleph and B) is very nearly the foulest in existence."

In **Defence of the New Testament Majority Greek Text**, the author Donald A. Waite, Th.D, Ph.D states that Dean Burgon made an exhaustive examination of citations of Scriptures quoted by the Church fathers of antiquity which runs into "sixteen thick manuscript volumes, to be found in the British Museum, and contains 86,489 quotations." Dr Waite supports the claim of Professor Zane Hodges that from the standpoint of sheer numbers of existing manuscripts that have survived, the Majority Text upon which the King James Version is based, has in reality the strongest

claim possible to be regarded as an authentic representation of the original text.

Purity of Doctrine

The banner is displayed as a witness in defence of the purity of the of the Truth, as these are clearly and Scripturally set forth in the Confession of Faith. The stand made in 1893 by the Rev Donald Macfarlane was in defence of these doctrines, and against the false and unscriptural doctrines of Voluntaryism and Arminianism ratified by the Declaratory Act. It has been claimed that the Declaratory Act was but a dead letter and therefore inoperative. The fact that the General Assembly of 1893 declared protests entered on Presbytery Records against the Declaratory Act null and void proves the contrary. The stand made was of the Lord, and in His goodness and mercy it has been preserved intact for the long period of over 80 [now 125] years.

The Sacraments

The banner is displayed as a witness in defence of the ancient and honoured mode of dispensing the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. With regard to the former the Church acts on the principle which at one time was almost universal among the Churches of the Reformation, the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Churches on the Continent of Europe, the Presbyterian Churches of America, and most Protestant Churches, as the Church of England and the Congregationalist Churches, that every baptised person not excommunicated being a member of the visible Church has a right to have his child baptised. "Infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptised." (Cat. Q. 95).

The Church accordingly holds that the two sacraments are in *general* seals of the covenant of grace, and that as such they are equally

valid, but that they do not *seal* the same measure of privilege, that the qualification, therefore for baptism and for full communion are not identical, that many may be properly admitted to the former, who are not prepared for the latter. Dr Kennedy, Dingwall, states that most desirable results were secured by this mode of dispensing sealing ordinances, which go far to prove that it was the mind of the Lord, and crowned with His blessing. To quote but two of his arguments—(1) The Church is preserved from the extreme of exclusiveness on the one hand, and from that of laxity, on the other. The door of admission was open to all to whom piety, charity and prudence would admit, and the inner circle was guarded from the profane rush of the crowd. (2) It marked and preserved a distinction, so far as this can be legitimately done, between the approved followers of Christ and all others. This distinction, as an ecclesiastical one, is quite blotted out, when both sacraments are administered on the same footing. (*The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, Chap. 4.)

Church Privileges

While the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland does not hold the doctrine of Close Communion, it exercises the greatest care in granting Church privileges. All who engage in Sabbath work (except works of necessity and mercy), or who travel by public transport run in systematic disregard of the Lord's Day, and all who are members of secret societies as Freemasonry, etc., are denied Church privileges.

The Testimony Maintained

In connection with the Billy Graham campaign in Scotland in 1955 the Synod passed a unanimous Resolution, a part of which states:

“The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland convened this day the 17th May 1955 resolved to inform our people at home and abroad and all concerned that our Church took no part whatever in the recent so-called “All Scotland Crusade” by Billy Graham and his ‘team’ from the United States of America. It seems to us that the preaching was similar to the Wesleyan and D. L. Moody’s Arminianism, which conservative divines rejected and condemned as being contrary to the doctrines of free and sovereign grace. We accept the trenchant exposure and condemnation of Arminianism preached by Moody and others, by such eminent divines as the Rev. Augustus Toplady and Dr John Kennedy, Dingwall. We believe that the doctrines preached were from the same school as Wesley and Moody. We rejected the soul-destroying teaching of Arminianism”.

Twenty years later in May 1975 the Synod passed a unanimous Resolution re-affirming the separate position from other denominations in this land taken up in 1893 by the Church. Without quoting it in full it reads: “The Synod desires to state in terms of its constitution, that this Church has taken up a separate position from other Churches in Scotland in order to maintain a testimony to the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures as the Word of God and in order to adhere in its practice to that Word as its supreme standard and the Westminster Confession of Faith which is based on the Scripture, as its subordinate standard. This separate position is justified because, and only as long as, it is necessary. Accordingly conduct giving the impression that there is no obstacle to association with other churches, undermines the necessity for a separate position and is therefore inconsistent with loyal adherence to the Free Presbyterian Church, and is consequently disapproved of by this Church. The Synod would accordingly call upon our people everywhere to remain loyally and firmly attached to the full-orbed testimony of Divine Truth among us, and to wait patiently

and prayerfully upon the Lord, who will yet arise to plead the Cause which is His Own”.

These Resolutions show the unbroken continuity of the witness of the Church.

Words Fitly Spoken

How we should value, prize, uphold and defend such a witness on the side of the Truth in this dark day of appalling apostasy! It is the continued testimony of the historic Church of Scotland. “We have not stepped aside” said the Rev. Donald MacFarlane “from the position of the Church of Scotland for centuries”. (Memoir p.55). The Scottish Establishment was universally regarded as the fairest flower of the Reformation Churches. The Protest of 1843 preserved the Establishment from the ravages of Patronage: the Protest of 1893 from Voluntarism—the boar from the forest that would have trampled this fair flower, watered by the blood of the martyrs, underfoot, and from the heretical doctrines of Arminiansim. As a consequence of the Protest of 1843 eviction from churches and manses followed. The same pattern of eviction followed the Protest of 1893, but on both occasions the servants of the Lord took joyfully the spoiling of their goods in order to preserve whole and entire the fair flower of our Establishment for generations yet unborn.

In a series of Gaelic articles which appeared in the magazine in the year 1899 from the pen of the Rev. Neil Cameron, Glasgow, on “The Fall of the Reformed Church in Scotland”, Mr Cameron says in one article, “when the witness was raised in 1893 we took with us every pin and cord and pillar belonging to the Reformed Church of Scotland”.

The late Rev. D. N. Macleod, Ullapool, in his address to the Synod in 1948 said “There is a great forsaking of the true faith in the land, as well as throughout the world in this sad day of ours. It

is indeed a cloudy and dark day—so dark and cloudy that whoever will get through safely and be accounted worthy of the Lord will have reason to praise God throughout eternity. But this I say to the rising generation. They have been left a goodly heritage, a heritage of which they have every reason to be proud, and it is their duty to value that heritage and leave it to those who will come after them unimpaired as others left it to them. Let them make conscience of that before God, to be faithful to what was left by those who went before them. It was not the work of men and women at all. It was the Lord's work. Well, they are duty bound to serve Him. If not, I pity them when they will meet the Lord at the last day. I pity them from the bottom of my heart who will be unfaithful and will not do their utmost to preserve that heritage for the generations coming after them”.

“There are many who maintain” wrote the Rev. Neil Cameron, “that we are perpetuating unnecessary contention. Woe to that man who without cause makes divisions in the Church of God. But a double woe is on the man who will not stand for the Truth. We are not against union, but are whole-heartedly for it, but let it be based on the Word of God and the Confession of Faith. At the same time we cannot admit the claim, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord” when the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen are in our ears. Were it possible for us, our desire is that neither the sad divisions nor the contentions among our fellow-countrymen would continue, and that not only the people of Scotland, but all peoples under the sun would be united in one on the foundation of the Reformed Church of Scotland. We would open our heart to all the people of the world, were they to come together on the basis of the Truth and in the name of Christ”. (Extract from Gaelic sermon on Rev. 3:20. F.P. Magazine Vol. VI).

It has been publicly affirmed by Church historians not belonging to our Church that they had to confess that the cream of the godly

in Scotland rallied to the standard raised in 1893. Several of these eminent in godliness and who had the mind of the Lord above many, made known that they were fully persuaded that the witness raised in 1893 was of the Lord and that He would preserve it until the latter-day glory.

What reason we have at the end of 83 year [now 125] to set up our Ebenezer and say, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us”! and to give heed to the exhortation—“Destroy it not; for there is a blessing in it”; “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life”, and “Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them”.

Taken from an article by Rev. William MacLean.

APPENDIX 2

CHRIST OR FREEMASONRY

In the Masonic Lodge the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is forbidden, except on the same level with Buddha, Zoroaster, Mahommed, Osiris, etc. ‘There is so-called ‘worship’ in the Masonic Lodge’ writes Rev AW Rainsbury in ‘Freemasonry of God or the Devil’ but from that ‘worship’ Jesus Christ is deliberately excluded. There is so-called ‘prayer’ in the Masonic Lodge, but it is not offered in the name of Jesus Christ—through whom alone prayer is acceptable to God. His name is deliberately excluded even from prayers where it is normally found. There is so-called ‘praise’ in the Masonic Lodge, but the precious name of Jesus is excised from every hymn.

How can it be the mind of Him who says, ‘Swear not at all’ to take solemn vows not to divulge a secret, still unknown, and to call down on one’s person blood curdling oaths in case of failure to keep the oaths? The ritual is really Hindu with Bible names substituted. As the degrees advance the penalties increase. For the first degree, your tongue is torn from its roots, for the second, your heart; for the third, your bowels, and then burnt etc etc and you pray that it may be so. (Heresies Exposed by W C Irvine p. 95).

Freemasons rob Christ of the glory which is His due. By putting

Him who is the image of the invisible God, on the same level with Buddha, Mahommed etc. they are coming dangerously near the sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no forgiveness. They also prove their rejection of Him and their want of love to Him. Masons who have been converted to Christ forsake the Lodge. 'No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon'. (Luke 16:13) It is Christ or Freemasonry. Choose Freemasonry and you reject Christ. Reject Christ and you shall be damned. 'Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way when His anger is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him'. (Ps 2:12)

Churches whatever their claim to orthodoxy which admit Freemasons to the holy sacraments of Baptism and the Lords Supper are openly countenancing what is an abomination in God's sight. 'But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils'. (I Cor. 10:20, 21)

Taken from an article written by Rev. William MacLean, Gisborne

APPENDIX 3

THE PAGANISM OF CREMATION

An Abomination To The Lord

Cremation is of pagan origin. To burn their dead was and still is the recognised custom of heathen peoples. Cremation was virtually unknown in Britain until late in the 19th century, and did not obtain legal sanction until early in the 20th century. Its introduction coincides with the apostasy of the latter days, “when men will not endure sound doctrine and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). Hence the paganism of our day, of which cremation is one of the proofs. Cremation belongs to the worship of Molech, all the rites of which were an abomination to the Lord. Against them He gave repeated warnings to His people Israel. “Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 18:30). The rites of Molech worship are specifically mentioned as “one of these abominable customs” (v. 21). Hundreds of years afterwards the prophet Jeremiah declares, “For the children of Judah have done

evil in my sight, saith the Lord: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire: which I commanded them not neither came it into my heart” (Jer. 7:30, 31).

Families and individuals may consider themselves modern, and abreast of the times in having their dead cremated, but neither the fatuities of modernism, nor the worthless prayers of ministers officiating at cremation services, can avert the judgments of the Most High. What God has said shall stand: “And I will set my face against that man.”

There is not a single instance of any of the Lord’s people in either the Old Testament or the New, being cremated. They were all reverently buried. We read that Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab against Beth-peor by God Himself (Deut. 34:6). The divinely-inspired Apostle, in writing of the resurrection body of believers, says: “It is sown (not cremated) in corruption: it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness: it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

“Know ye not,” said the apostle to the Corinthians, “that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid” (1 Cor. 6:15). Cannot the question be pertinently put. Shall I then take the members of Christ, and prostitute them at death to pagan form of burial? God forbid. In either case the giving over of the body to fornication or to cremation is a shameful and gross violation of God’s revealed will. Flowers and prayers and beautiful singing cannot alter the solemn fact that cremation is an abomination in God’s sight, a pagan practice to be shunned and abhorred.

Surely the burial of the Saviour in the grave is the last word on the subject for any believer! The Church of God has in the infallible

Word an account of the burial of the Lord. Through His death and resurrection He robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. The grave, He has bequeathed as a place of rest for the bodies of His people until the resurrection of the Last Day (John 6:40), when “all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28, 29).

“Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain” (Jer. 10:2, 3). Let us rather learn of Him who hath said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love Him and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21).

Taken from an article written by Rev. William MacLean, Gisborne

APPENDIX 4

WHITEFIELD AND WESLEY

Whitefield's Journals up until the year 1741, when Whitefield was then 26 years of age, show that Whitefield and the Wesleys were working in close co-operation. It is well known that this co-operation terminated that year when Whitefield returned from America. On leaving England in 1739 Whitefield was the leader of the awakening; when he returned in 1741 it was to find himself supplanted and Wesley organising the movement around himself. He had cause to write at a later date: "I have been supplanted, despised, censured, maligned, judged by and separated from my nearest, dearest friends" (Quotation from footnote in Whitefield's Journals, p. 568, Banner of Truth Publication). Tyerman in his Life of John Wesley says that the gulf between Wesley and Whitefield was immense, and that it led them to build separate chapels, form separate Societies, and pursue to the end of life separate lines of action (Vol. 1: pp. 351, 352)

In the year 1739 John Wesley published his sermon on *Free Grace* containing an impassioned attack on the doctrines of predestination and the extent of the atonement. In his excellent "Letter to John Wesley," Whitefield writes, "For some time before and since my last departure from England, both in public and in private, by preaching and printing you have been propagating the doctrine of *universal*

redemption. And when I remember how Paul reproved Peter on his dissimulation, I fear I have been sinfully silent too long. O then be not angry with me, dear and honoured Sir, if now I deliver my soul, by telling you that I think in this you greatly err. How can all be universally redeemed if all are not finally saved? Dear Sir, for Jesus Christ's sake, consider how you dishonour God by denying election. You plainly make salvation depend not on God's *free grace*, but on man's *free will*; and if thus, it is more than probable, Jesus Christ would not have had the satisfaction of seeing the fruit of His death in the eternal salvation of one soul. Our preaching would then be in vain, and all invitations for people to believe in Him, would also be in vain.

"But blessed be God, our Lord knew for whom He died. There was an eternal compact between the Father and the Son. A certain number was then given Him, as the purchase and reward of his obedience unto death. For these He prayed, John 17, and not for the world. For these, and these only He is now interceding, and with their salvation He will be fully satisfied.

"Dear, dear Sir, O be not offended! For Christ's sake be not rash! Give yourself to reading. Study the covenant of grace. Down with your carnal reasoning. Be a little child; and then, instead of pawning your salvation, as you have done in a late hymn book, if the doctrine of *universal redemption* be not true; instead of talking of *sinless perfection* as you have done in the preface to that hymn book and making man's salvation to depend on his own *free will*, as you have in this sermon, you will compose a hymn in praise of sovereign distinguishing love. You will caution believers against striving to work a perfection out of their own hearts, and print another sermon the reverse of this, and entitle it *Free Grace Indeed*. Free, not because free to all; but free, because God may withhold or give it to whom and when he pleases. Till you do this, I must doubt whether or not you know yourself" (Extract from "A Letter to John Wesley").

“Having heard much,” says Wesley, “of Mr Whitefield’s unkind behaviour since his return from Georgia, I went to hear him speak for himself, that I might know how to judge. I much approve of his plainness of speech. He told me ‘He and I preached two different gospels,’ and therefore he not only would not join with, or give me the right hand of fellowship, but was resolved publicly to preach against me and my brother whensoever he preached at all. Mr Hall, who went with me, put him in mind of the promise he had made but a few days before, that whatever his private opinion was he would, never publicly preach against us. He said ‘that promise was only an effect of human weakness, and he was now of another mind’” (Life of John Wesley p. 112).

“It is a great mistake to confound Evangelicalism with Wesleyanism,” wrote the late Rev. J. P. MacQueen, London, “or to imagine that Wesley and Whitefield both belonged to one Movement and preached the same Gospel. On the contrary, their teaching was diametrically opposed, free-grace being Scriptural, while free-will is the illegitimate product of the carnal mind. Whitefield was in the Puritan, Calvinistic, Apostolic, succession, while Wesley and his associates were semi-Pelagian and Sacramentalist.” “It is amazing,” continues Mr MacQueen, “that any true evangelical Calvinist would ever quote John Wesley with approval, either in speech or in writing. He bitterly hated and rejected Calvinism, while he taught a theory of justification practically identical with sanctification. He commended the so-called ‘devotional literature’ of the Oxford Tractarians, such as the works of so-called Romanists like Thomas a Kempis, Francois de Sales, and Cardinal Bona. He even published the ‘Introduction to a Devout Life,’ by Francois de Sales, the sworn foe of Calvinism, in 1750. He advocated prayers for the dead, justifying himself thus: ‘Prayer for the dead, the faithful departed, in the advocacy of which I conceive myself clearly justified’” (Works ed. 1872, IX 55).

Mr MacQueen says that he is amazed at Evangelical Calvinists

who say that while John Wesley was undoubtedly Arminian in his views, his brother Charles was Calvinistic. “After a careful perusal of their lives and the views of both of them,” Mr MacQueen continues, “I am thoroughly persuaded that they were both Arminian to the core, Charles’ hymns notwithstanding. Their false undermining Arminian teaching and influence weakened the Protestant witness against Popery in England and throughout the British Dominions, while Scotland itself was by no means exempt, and this evil free-willism, as a result, continues rife and rampant in professedly evangelical circles in England and Scotland, and the whole English-speaking world to this day” (F.P. Magazine, Vol. 55: pp. 99-102).

Taken from an article written by Rev William MacLean, Gisborne*

* See also a recently printed book of 12 sermons by Rev. William MacLean entitled “To All Ends of the Earth” published by Westminster Standard 2018.