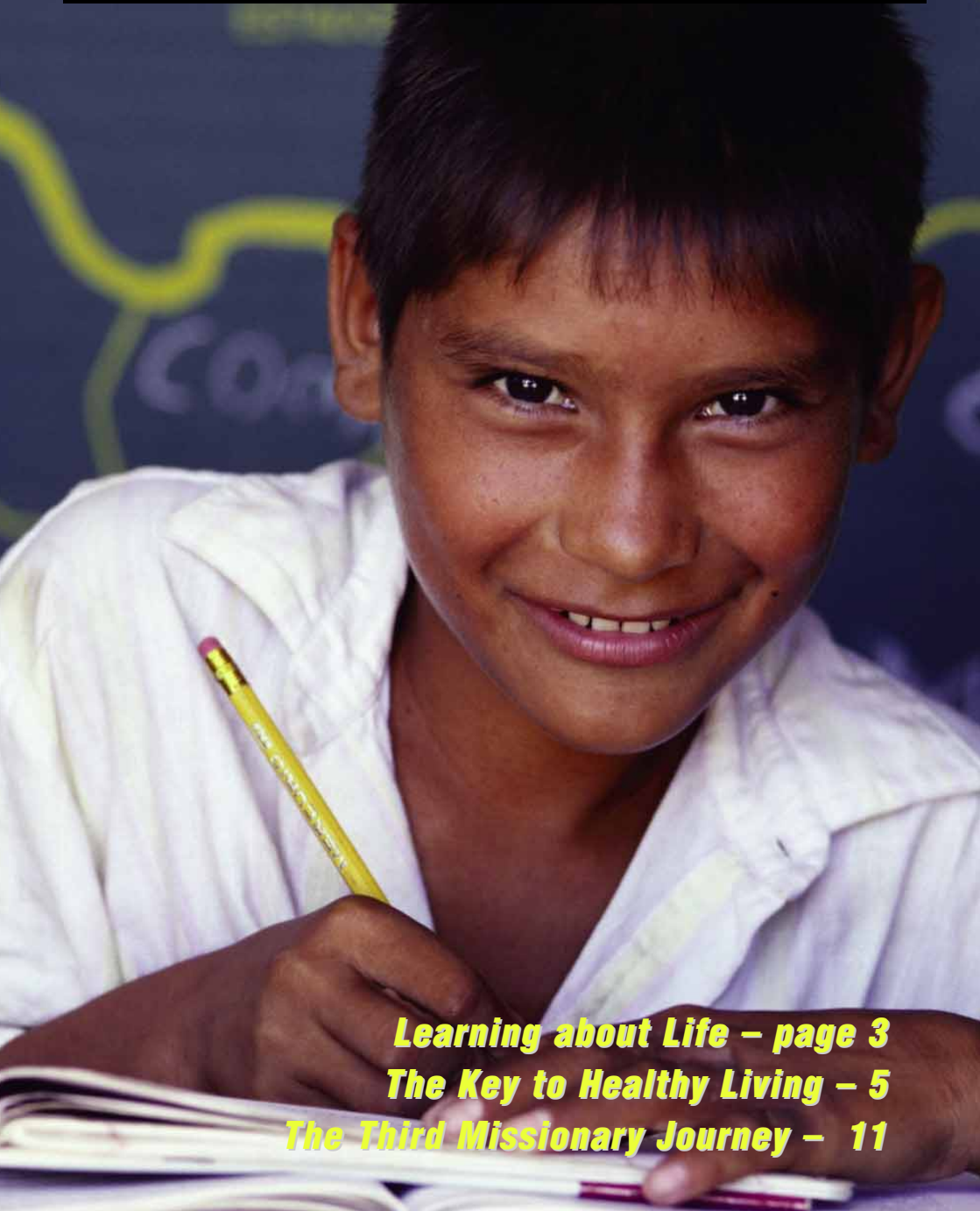


Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1489



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The Third Missionary Journey – 11

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

124th Year

F08

1489

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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Publisher: The Glad Tidings Publishing Association (a registered charity) Number 248352

Bible Talks, Study Classes, Sunday Schools and Youth Clubs are held regularly by Christadelphians worldwide. The address of your nearest group can be obtained from either the Distribution Secretaries or from the local agents or information addresses given above.

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Acknowledgements

Photographs:

Enjoying a learning experience photos.com

Illustrations:

Clipart.com 3-16,18

Bible Versions

The version most used in this issue is the New King James Version (NKJV) and other versions are sometimes used.

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Learning about Life

Education is a vital key to a better life and people who don't have easy access to schools and colleges recognise that only too well. If you can't read, you are at a major disadvantage. If you can't speak the language of the country in which you are living, you can feel isolated and very lonely. If you can't count, it is difficult to manage your money, to buy anything, or to really know the value of things.

Self-Taught

Not everybody goes to school, of course, to get educated. An increasing number of people are home-schooling: teaching their own children, and sometimes those of other people, in homes or suitable accommodation. More and more facilities are becoming available to make that possible: to create a more sheltered environment for children who might not be able to cope with all the challenges and stresses of a secular school environment. That trend is a comparatively new one, yet something like it has been in existence for a long time.

In earlier generations many people had very little, if any, education before they were required to go and work, because their families needed the extra money. Before the passing of Education Acts in the UK, which made schooling compulsory up to a prescribed age, very young children worked, regardless of their lack of education. Yet much later in life, when pressures had eased a little, many such people took it upon themselves to catch up on what they had lost.

They developed skills and abilities which circumstances had previously denied them. And, because they now knew the full benefit of education, they applied themselves very diligently indeed to the new-found challenges of life.

Educational Snobbery

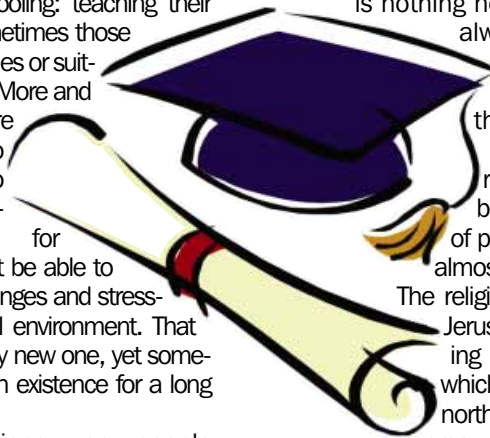
Some institutions love to parade their academic and social importance by reminding their students how privileged they are to be attending and how important they will be in society when they have finished their education. This

is nothing new, for people have always tried to make themselves out to be more important than they really are.

Consider this remarkable encounter between two classes of people which occurred almost 2000 years ago.

The religious establishment in Jerusalem were monitoring a revival movement which had begun in the north of the country – an area whose education and social standing was not well regarded. They decided to challenge the leader of that movement and engage him in debate, thus seeking to demonstrate his inferiority. But time and again they were bettered in debate; they always found themselves outmanoeuvred; they just couldn't win the arguments. Notice what the people said:

“The Jews marvelled, saying, ‘How does this man know letters, having never studied?’” (John 7:15).



Time and again people marvelled at the grasp and understanding possessed by the Lord Jesus (see Matthew 7:28-29; 13:54; Mark 6:2,3; Luke 2:47; 4:22; John 7:46). He had been educated of course, probably in a synagogue in Nazareth – a poorly-regarded village in Galilee. But he had never studied in Jerusalem, and people who put great store by the sayings of learned men of the past thought that unless you knew what they had said, you knew nothing.

Religious Snobbery

There was more to it than just educational snobbery, for these debates were about religion. They concerned the most vital issues of life. The underlying question was always: ‘How can a man be right with God?’ And the reply of Jesus to their question was a real eye-opener:

“Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone wants to do his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority’” (John 7:16,17).

Jesus made the claim that his education came from God. This did not mean that he had been taught in heaven. It meant that he had learned about God from the Scriptures and had come to see what God really wants from men and women if they are to please Him. Indeed, there was a very special sense in which Jesus learned about his life, because there were so many prophecies about the role the Son of God was to undertake and how he was to accomplish his Father’s will. So it was not a matter of what other people had said about the revealed Word of God. What mattered was what

he had read and understood for himself. While still a young lad, Jesus demonstrated his keenness to understand Bible teaching (see Luke 2:46) and when he began his ministry his marvellous grasp of Bible teaching soon became apparent. That was why crowds flocked to hear him and why the religious authorities became so jealous (see Matthew 27:18).

Today’s Challenge

We live at a very different time, but human nature never changes. Today there are very many people who have a second-hand faith. They believe what they are told to believe and their faith is founded upon the ideas and statements of mortal men and women. Their pastors and teachers have been well educated, in Seminaries and Universities, so surely they know what the Bible teaches. Why should mere parishioners have to think for themselves? Would it be reasonable to expect ordinary people to have to explore the Bible?

If Jesus had taken the view that his religious leaders knew best, none of us would have any hope of everlasting life. They were people who eventually decided that, in the interests of national survival, he should be executed (John 11:49-53). They tried him and then handed him over to the Romans, for they did not understand just who Jesus was (1 Corinthians 2:8). If you want to be sure that you are properly educated as God wants you to be, there is no better way to learn about life than reading the Bible carefully and regularly for yourself. It is God’s gift to us and it contains everything we need to help us find everlasting life.

Editor

Lifestyle Choices (1)

The Key to Healthy Living

To be healthy literally means to be 'whole'. It involves, as the Romans put it, having a sound mind in a healthy body. The two aspects are related: low spirits will have an effect on health, just as much as eating the wrong foods, and our modern lifestyle, is astray on both counts.

Wise Counsel

The Bible is the oldest book in the world. It has provided wisdom and comfort for generations of mankind. What ideas does it have to offer for healthy living? It tells us that in the beginning, Adam and his wife fed on the fruits of trees. After Adam sinned, God warned him that in future he must earn his food by cultivating the soil to grow crops, which would involve hard physical work. Later, after the Flood, God added meat to the human diet. And later still, God said to the Israelites that the Promised Land would flow with milk and honey.

You may not yet be ready to accept the religious aspects of Bible teaching, but here are some practical tips to consider. Already we can see some guidelines beginning to form.

- 1 Human beings are going to thrive best on a diet which includes the produce of the ground – vegetables and cereals, plus the fruit of trees, plus meat or foods of animal origin, such as milk. So vegetarians

are not going to find it so easy to keep healthy - the ideal diet being a balanced one, with a range of components.

- 2 It has become apparent that we were intended to use physical labour to win our food from the soil. Perspiration was part of the package. Our modern way of living isolates most of us from cultivating the soil, and as we sit behind the wheel of a car or stare at the television from an armchair, we rarely work our hearts hard enough to cause us to perspire. This is going against the rules for healthy living. It is a common cause of furred-up arteries, heart attacks and strokes.

Ill Health

What if things go wrong with our bodies? God made our bodies capable of self-repair. When a car breaks down, it only works again if we spend a lot of money at the garage. Left to itself it will deteriorate. But our bodies have been designed to get better by themselves. This is due to a complex system of specialised white cells circulating in the bloodstream which attack or neutralise germs, cancerous growths or alien chemicals which get into the blood through food, imperfect renewal of cells, infection or injury. But the system is not perfect, and if we abuse our

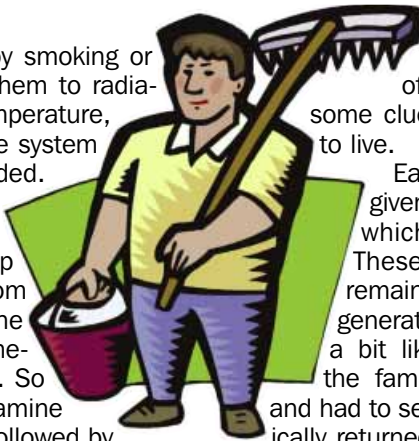


bodies, for example, by smoking or drinking, or exposing them to radiation, extremes of temperature, dirt or toxic metals, the system can become overloaded. This is especially true if we live on a poor diet, have not enough sleep or exercise, or suffer from anxiety or stress. One thing we can all do something about is our diet. So often in the Bible, famine (lack of good food) is followed by disease. A good diet is very important for health. It is better in principle to spend our money and time on ensuring we feed well in the first place, rather than to try to undo the damage caused by a poor diet, by swallowing pills.

When we succumb to illness, there is a range of natural healing agents – herbs, which can be taken to reduce pain or inflammation and speed recovery. These are mentioned in the Bible too. Some herbs provide cures for specific complaints – e.g. aspirin from the willow tree for headaches, quinine to treat malaria, and lemon balm for better sleep. Herbs are valuable, but are best prescribed by an expert, because some of them can be dangerous in high doses.

Ideal life-style

The Bible – God’s guidebook to life – has the key to health and happiness. When God brought the descendants of Abraham into the Promised Land, he set up a framework for society which was as near perfect as possible. Sadly, the Jews would not follow God’s instructions to the letter, and the system broke down. But, as



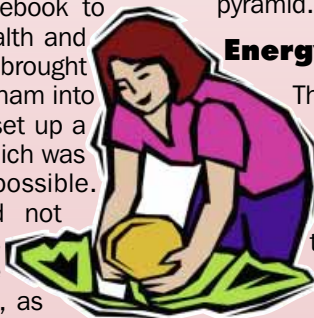
presented in the Law of Moses, it gives us some clues as to the best way to live.

Each family in Israel was given a plot of land on which to earn a living. These inheritances remained in the family for generation after generation – a bit like Russian dachas. If the family fell on hard times and had to sell the land, it automatically returned to the possession of the family every 50 years, in the Year of Jubilee. On this land each family could grow wheat or barley for bread, olive trees and figs for fruit, and vines to make wine, which is safer to drink than water in a hot country. They also reared sheep, goats and cattle for meat, for milk, and to provide clothing from wool and leather. From milk they could make butter and soft cheese.

Each tiny farm represented a ‘closed’ cycle, where the waste materials – the dung and urine and the straw or dead leaves – were returned to the soil. There was no loss of nutrients from the land, and the organic matter in the decaying vegetable material and the nitrogen in the urine and dung could maintain fertility year after year. Even the animals when they died were buried and re-cycled back to dust. It was a perfect miniature ecological pyramid.

Energy Recycled

The only loss out of the cycle was energy, needed for work and warmth, and that was provided by the sun, whose rays were trapped by plants through photosynthesis. As the herbivores took in the grass, they passed the energy up the



chain through milk and meat. So the cycle could continue indefinitely. And the beauty of growing small numbers of different crops and mixing livestock and crop production on the same patch of land was that the risk of disease was reduced to a minimum. Pests and germs only multiply when they have a big field or large herd of animals in which to reproduce. As for human health – the Israelites had a

perfect diet, with a mixture of animal and vegetable components, and through the exercise provided by daily labour they were kept fit and slept well at night. They believed in God. Through keeping His commandments to love each other, they could have been the happiest nation on earth.

City Dwellers

Contrast this picture of rural simplicity and order with our modern civilisation. Instead of dwelling on the land, people herd together in cities. Their food has to be brought to them, and the waste products of their existence are not recycled to the soil from which they are grown but broken down in sewage plants or pumped out to sea. Crowded together, with poor diets and little exercise, they provide an ideal environment for disease to flourish.

The production of crops has at the same time been relegated to huge factory farms which rely on artificial



fertilisers to replace the nutrients in an exhausted soil, because they have no animals and no straw to maintain fertility. Chemical sprays have to be used to cope with the explosion of pests and fungi that thrive on monoculture (growing the same crop year after year on the same land).

Conversely, specialised pig, poultry or dairy units spring up in wooden sheds, with no link to the land on which their food is grown. The disposal of their dung

is a smelly embarrassment instead of an asset, because there is no land to spread it on. And a fortune is spent on energy to ship the food that is grown and the meat, eggs or milk, to the people who want to eat them.

Sensible Choices

What are we suggesting? That everyone should abandon their apartments and head for the countryside? Well, that would take courage and money, and there could be legal obstacles. But, as far as we can we should aim to follow the guidelines we have been considering. For example, we can modify our diet until it comes closer to the ideal. We can ensure we spend time every day on exercise and fresh air. And if we have access to a patch of land, we can grow our own foods in a biologically sound way, recycling waste products, and using proper rotations of crops to minimise disease.

David M Pearce

Lessons about Sin

*The Fall of Man is described in Genesis Chapter Three and had far-reaching consequences. In His wisdom, God has explained what happened so that we can learn important lessons about our nature, our world, and the foundation principles upon which He is pleased to forgive us and accept us as His sons and daughters, as **Dudley Fifield** now explains.*

The Serpent's Lie

In conversation with Eve, the serpent said: *"You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"* (Genesis 3:4,5).

In other words he planted into the mind of Eve the thought that God was a liar. In effect he said: 'It's an idle threat; in fact if you eat of the tree, you will become as gods (Heb.'Elohim'), knowing good and evil'. You will be like the angels. Now as we have already noted, Adam and Eve were surrounded by the evidence of God's love and fidelity. There was only one absolute sense in which they could test the veracity of God's word, and that was by eating of the tree. They did eat and they found to their cost that God's word was true.

By believing and acting upon the serpent's lie, Adam and Eve slandered and falsely accused God and this shows us the true nature of sin. Fundamentally it is to disbelieve the word of God. This is true in our own experience too, although we may not consciously be aware of the fact when we sin. In His Word, God says, "This is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah

30:21). If we believe this we know that, because God is a faithful Creator, He will always direct us into the path of true fulfilment and real happiness.

"Let God be True!"

So often, we go our own way, not God's. We do not believe His Word; instead we look for satisfaction and contentment by fulfilling our own desires and ambitions. In effect, we too call God a liar. Two important facts emerge here:

❶ If sin is 'to slander and falsely accuse God' it is most significant that the Greek word '*diabolos*' (often transcribed as '*devil*' in the New Testament) means precisely that. In fact, on several occasions the word is translated to mean just that (see 1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3). Could we have a more pertinent indication that the term '*devil*' describes human sin?



We can illustrate the matter in the form of a simple equation, by bringing together two passages of Scripture that say the same thing in different ways:

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He (Christ) himself likewise shared in the same (flesh

and blood nature), that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14);

"Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14,15. See also Rom. 5:12; 6:23).

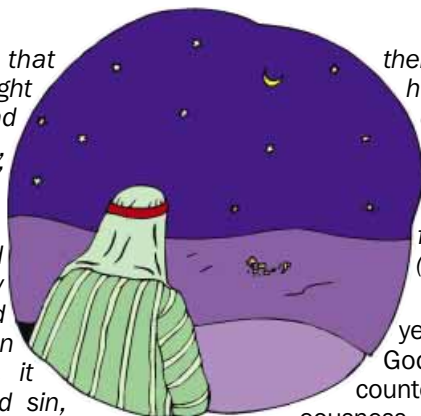
If you are any good at solving mathematical equations you will be able to work out that it is "the devil" that has the power of death in the first quotations and it is "sin" that brings forth death in the second. Hence we can see that the expression "the devil" is a Bible way of describing sin, in all its different guises. This is the conclusion we had reached when considering the first sin in Genesis Chapter 3.

② Because sin is a denial of His word, God has magnified it (His Word) above all else (Psalm 138:2). The greatest compliment that we can pay God is to believe His Word. This belief (or faith) in His Word, becomes one of the foundation principles of God's work of salvation. That is why we are told in the New Testament that: "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Reckoned Righteous

One starry night God invited Abram to look up at the sky:

"He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number



them.' And he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed in the LORD, and he accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:5,6).

Abram was a sinner, yet because he believed God's Word, it was counted to him for righteousness. God forgave him his sins and accepted him as righteous. The passage is quoted at least three times in the New Testament. One of those will emphasise the importance of this principle for us:

"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification" (Romans 4: 19-25).

To justify means 'to declare righteous'. God will justify us too, as He did Abraham (as Abram was later renamed), if we put our faith in His saving work in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God-Given Covering

③ Another lesson to be learned about sin arises from the reaction of

Adam and Eve after they had eaten the forbidden fruit. The inspired record says that:

“The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings” (Genesis 3:7).

They had become aware of their nakedness and because they felt a sense of shame and guilt, they covered themselves. Note that henceforth nakedness becomes a figure for sin, shame and guilt (see Revelation 3:17,18).

This was a natural reaction. It is how men and women have behaved ever since; they try to hide their shame and guilt; they make a covering for themselves – a mere facade that hides what they really are. But, before God, such a covering is of no avail, as Adam and Eve soon discovered. For when they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden, they hid themselves. Adam’s response to the searching question *“Where are you?”* was: *“I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:9,10).*

In fact they were not physically naked when he said that: they had covered themselves with fig-leaf garments. But these garments which they had provided for themselves did nothing to take away that spiritual nakedness: that shame and guilt they still felt. Only God could take that away.

Note the process by which God did just that: First Adam and then Eve



made an open and frank confession of what they had done (verses 12 & 13). Some readers think that they were just trying to pass the blame, but this surely is not the point. There is another foundation principle which is being emphasised. They freely acknowledged their sin and confessed their guilt before God; and this

is how it must always be for all those who want God’s forgiveness. The Psalmist once said:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long ... I acknowledged my sin to you, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ And you forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:1-5).

For as long as we try to hide our sin from God, the shame and the guilt remain. But, wonderfully, when we confess our sin, God hides it and takes all the shame and guilt away. It was so for Adam and Eve and it can be so for us:

“For Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).

Dudley Fifield

The Third Missionary Journey

Paul had undertaken two major preaching tours, first into Asia and then into Europe. By now it would have been about 52 AD and Paul, having returned to Antioch in Syria, might have considered that he had done enough travelling. But, as **John Hellawell** explains, it was not long before he was off once again.

Overland Journey

It seems that after a while Paul began to feel the need to visit the churches he had founded in Asia Minor during his First Missionary Journey and so set off overland through Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthen the disciples.

In the meantime, a Jew named Apollos who was a native of Alexandria, arrived at Ephesus. Although he missed meeting Paul on this occasion (and again in Acts Chapter 19, when Apollos had moved on to Corinth), he was known to Paul as is indicated by Paul's comments (1 Cor. 3:4-6,22; 4:6). He is

described as *"an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures"* (Acts 18:24).

It has been suggested that a better rendering of 'eloquent' would be 'cultured'. Apollos had been instructed in the way of the Lord: he spoke fervently and accurately about the Lord Jesus, yet he knew only of the baptism of John, that is, the teaching of John the Baptist about Jesus.

His bold proclamation in the synagogue convinced Paul's fellow-workers

Aquila and Priscilla of the need to direct his preaching. So, they invited him to their home where they were able to provide him with a more adequate understanding of the Gospel. It is interesting to note that in the original Greek text the order is *"Priscilla and Aquila"* (as in Acts 18:18), as though Priscilla was the prime-mover in this respect. Perhaps she recognised the potential of Apollos, but also realised that he needed to be brought up-to-date in order to ensure that his preaching was truly in accord with the Truth.

Now suitably instructed, Apollos wanted to travel from Ephesus to Achaia, which presumably meant Corinth in particular, as indicated in Acts 19:1 (see also 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6,22; 4:6).

Paul in Ephesus

Paul travelled from Galatia and Phrygia (19:1) to Ephesus, where he found some disciples who had been baptised



Paul in Ephesus – painting by E le Sueur

according to the baptism of John. The juxtaposition of this incident and the similar problem with Apollos in 18:25 suggests that these disciples may have been converted by Apollos. However, we are specifically told that Apollos:

“Had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25).

This knowledge does not appear to have been conveyed to these disciples. It is possible that they (or their teachers) had left Judea after their baptism and were, therefore, unfamiliar with the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Not only had the disciples Paul encountered failed to receive the Holy Spirit at their baptism, they were unaware of its existence. It was necessary for Paul to acquaint them with the details of the life and work of the Lord, stressing that he was the One whom John had said they should believe on: the One who would come after him. After these twelve disciples had been

fully instructed, they were baptised once more, this time into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Holy Spirit Powers

After their baptism, Paul placed his hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. This was made quite evident from their being able to speak in tongues and also to prophesy. Here is a clear-cut example of the distinction between baptism and the receipt of the Holy Spirit; the latter requiring the laying on of the Apostle’s hands.

This incident demonstrates the importance of correct doctrinal understanding for the validity of Christian baptism. At Pentecost, those who responded to Peter’s message were baptised and this pattern was followed in all subsequent preaching. The difference between Apollos (whose knowledge was enhanced by Priscilla and Aquila) and these disciples, who were required to be re-baptised, was that Apollos had sufficient knowledge to teach about Jesus accurately. The



Paul's Third Missionary Journey

knowledge of the others was so inadequate that they did not know about the Holy Spirit, in spite of the witness of John the Baptist regarding this aspect. Somehow the transmission of John's teaching had been incomplete.

Although the text does not identify their nationality but simply says they were "disciples", their acceptance of John's baptism suggests that they were Jews. If so, their knowledge of the 'Hope of Israel' would mean that all they now required was to be made aware of the one whom John had announced and submit to baptism in that knowledge.

Further Teaching

Following his customary pattern, Paul entered the synagogue in Ephesus and, over a three-month period, taught the Jews persuasively about *'the things concerning the Kingdom of God'*. One must assume that, among those present in the audience, there were some of those who had requested further instruction during his brief, earlier visit. Paul had kept his promise to return and there would have been keen interest in what he had to say, after arousing their interest earlier.

This time, some members of the Jewish synagogue were less responsive. Perhaps in the interlude between the two visits, some had learned more about Paul; or immigrant Jews from elsewhere might have carried news of his activities and begun to poison the minds of their colleagues. Not only did they obstinately refuse to believe Paul but they also slandered 'the Way' publicly. Paul soon realised that he would make little progress in the synagogue and decided to leave, accompanied by those who were responsive, and set up in the school or lecture-hall of Tyrannus, where he continued his

deliberations for a further two years. In this way *"all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord"* (Acts 19:8-10). This may be an example where "all" means all without distinction rather than all without exception. However, it is quite likely that in a cosmopolitan port such as Ephesus the intensive two-year effort would spread the message throughout the surrounding region.

The teaching was accompanied by evidence of Paul's authority in the form of *"extraordinary miracles"*. Certain articles, such as handkerchiefs or aprons that had been touched by Paul, were being conveyed to those who were sick and were effective in curing diseases and disabilities. It is possible that some of the items (leather aprons) were manufactured by Paul while the handkerchiefs (actually 'sweat rags', from the Latin sudaria;) could have been Paul's own. One could imagine that day-by-day these 'disappeared' from Paul's workshop!

Here is evidence that during this period Paul continued to work in order to support himself. He did not want people to think that he was preaching to them for any financial gain that might result.

John Hellowell

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“Where Were You When I Needed You?”



“Mummy, Mummy!” The voice of a child cries out in the night. Usually the mother is on hand to attend to the cry, but not always. If she is not there, or just doesn’t hear, the child’s lost and lonely feeling will be even worse.



All Alone

Even as adults, there are times when we have that same sort of feeling. Sometimes help and support from anyone seems far away. Some people just drive forward regardless: you have probably heard the saying – ‘when the going gets tough, the tough get going’. Faced with little or no support, other people flounder – they just can’t cope. What we have to face is that there are situations that we handle well and others that frankly we cannot really cope with.

Did Jesus have feelings like this? If so, did he give expression to them? We are told that he “*was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). He appears to have been totally self-sufficient and that might be no surprise.

- Didn’t he have all the power of God at his fingertips (John 3:33-35)?
- Hadn’t he got unlimited resources?

That’s true; but the fact is that he shared our common experience of life and, if he did so, sometimes he must have shared our feelings of inadequacy and even failure.

The Way Ahead

Let us take a step back. Jesus is the undoubted leader of all true believers. As such he has given us a clear picture of where he wants us to be (in the kingdom of God). He has shared with us his vision of that destination. He has also shown us a great deal about the route in life we need to take. He once said: “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). We also know that Jesus himself travelled through life accepting everything that happened to him. We are told that “*He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*” (Luke 9:51), knowing all along exactly what awaited him. Listen to him as he talks about it:

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. And they will scourge him and put him to death. And the third day he will rise again” (Luke 18:31-33).

Jesus already had a clear idea of all that would entail: the cruel beating, the humiliation, and so on. But he was prepared to face it all.

The Secret of Success

What was his secret? Two things certainly aren’t secret. One was that doing

the will of God was sufficient for him. The other was that he could look through the ordeal to its end – his resurrection, his victory. That still didn't make things easy; but it did give him the assurance that he was doing the right thing and it would turn out well in the end. As the crisis approached, the struggles of course became more difficult. Notice what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane.

“When he came to the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and he knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is your will, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done’” (Luke 22:40-42).

“Then an angel appeared to him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly. And his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When he rose up from prayer, and had come to his disciples, he found them sleeping from sorrow. Then he said to them, ‘Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation’” (22:43-46).

There was going to be no support for Jesus from his disciples. They were too overcome by the situation. As Jesus called out in the darkness, the only real help was to be found from his Father. The consolation was that the Father heard his cry in the dark and sent help in the form of the angel. Yet that support only emphasised the fact that there was no way out: this particular

‘cup’ of lonely suffering had to be drunk to the full. However the time of prayer had helped, as it always will help us too.

Jesus rose up from that prayer more determined than ever. He would indeed pursue the road that God had determined for him. It is the same road along which every believer must also travel – the path through life that God has chosen for each of us. The Lord once said that every follower must take up the cross and follow him. But the same assurances are also given:

- The journey may be difficult.
- We are assured that it is worthwhile.
- It will bring us to victory and success.
- We have constant access to God through prayer.
- Help and support is at hand along the way. We are not alone.
- We must proceed by faith.
- At the end of the road is the Kingdom of God.

Could We Fail?

If we have decided to follow Jesus, does that mean that we are bound to succeed – that everyone will indeed get safely to the end of the road and be accepted into God’s kingdom? Didn’t Jesus have something to say about judgement? So does that mean there is still the possibility of failure? Let’s look at the subject and listen to what Jesus has to say.

The apostle Paul said this when he was visiting Athens:



“He (God) has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

In part this is meant as a reassurance; for it means that men cannot simply go on behaving as they please and ignoring any claims on them. Justice, truth, righteousness, love and compassion will all eventually prevail and will be seen to do so when Jesus reigns. That this is so has been guaranteed by nothing less than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

When those gracious attributes triumph over the forces that now dominate and control human affairs, two things will happen.

- ➊ For those who are found acceptable to God it will be a time of great blessing:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5);

“Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:31,32).

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!” (Luke 2:14).

- ➋ But for those who disregard God’s offer of salvation:

“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12).

Jesus used this phrase on at least four occasions which are recorded by Matthew. On each occasion the context speaks of a lack of faith: disbelief in what Jesus has taught and consequently a reluctance to allow him

to change our lifestyle. We need to be willing to take up the challenge that Jesus has presented to us and then there is nothing to fear.

Choices

Jesus taught about coming judgement in four of his parables, each one related to his Second Coming. These were the parables of:

- ➔ Faithful and evil servants (Matthew 24:45,46)
- ➔ Wise and foolish virgins (25:1-13)
- ➔ The talents (25:15-17)
- ➔ The sheep and the goats (25:33,34).

You might like to read these for yourself, remembering that they are parables, and think about their overall meaning as far as judgement is concerned. Look out for the idea that by our actions and our way of life now, we are already deciding the outcome of any judgement.

In each parable of course there is censure, but for those who are watching for Jesus’ coming, taking the opportunities of service, and living by the principles of care and compassion he has shown, there is only encouragement and commendation. It is the challenge of faith again. We should trust God, in the sure knowledge that He knows what He is doing!

He will hear your cry in the darkness and He will support and help you through to a new and better day! It was the Lord Jesus who made this promise:

“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

David Nightingale

The Return of Jesus Christ to the Earth

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).



The angels said these words to the disciples of the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Olives at the ascension, as they watched him disappear into a cloud. It should not have been a surprise, for Jesus had often explained about his departure and the time when he will return to the earth to set up God’s Kingdom. He had used parables to reinforce the message, like the story of a man going on a long journey (Mark 13:34-36). At his trial, he told the High Priest Caiaphas:

“Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64).

World Astray

Jesus predicted what the condition of the world and of society would be like at the time he does come back, though he also made it clear that no one could know precisely when it would happen. Jesus said that life on earth would get very difficult prior to his return; that people’s hearts would be in great fear and that there would be *“distress of nations, with perplexity” (Luke 21:25)*. If you piece together all

that Jesus said about the time of his return, we must conclude that he was speaking of a world very like ours.

So is Jesus coming back to earth? The Apostle Peter said that there would come a time when people wouldn’t believe that Jesus was coming back (see 2 Peter 3:4). He even said that when people talked like that it would be an indication that Jesus was about to return.

God’s Coming Kingdom

Every book in the New Testament tells us something about the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth to set up God’s Kingdom. We learn that he will bring eternal life, that he will establish peace for all, and that he will remove all evil from the planet. Given the state of our world today when children go hungry or are ill-treated, when there is grief and suffering from war and when the planet is so badly treated that its survival is in doubt, the return of the Lord Jesus is the only answer to personal, national and international problems.

No wonder Jesus taught us to pray, *“Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*. His return will inaugurate a wonderful and happy time for those who want to be associated with Jesus. May God send him very soon.

Cynthia Miles

“Are Only a Few Saved?”

As Jesus went on his way through cities and villages teaching, he was asked this very question: *“Lord, are there few who are saved?”* (Luke 13:23). Jesus did not directly answer the question. Instead he turned to the bystanders and sounded a warning about the difficulty of obtaining salvation and the danger in delaying repentance.

“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (13:24).

In effect, Jesus was saying to anyone who is curious about their salvation – avoid needless pre-occupation and concern about how many or how few find the way which leads to everlasting life in the coming Kingdom of God. Instead think about yourself and your salvation. What is your heart set on? What are you striving for? Life demands effort and struggle if it's not to end in moral shipwreck and oblivion. In the art of living only the cheap prizes are cheaply won. The really precious things of life come to us often through agony and tears. No wonder people say “There's no gain without pain”.

It was so for Jesus, for Scripture records that: *“For the joy that was set before him (Jesus) endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2).

Narrow Gate

What then is the narrow gate through which Jesus says we are to strive to go

for the sake of our salvation? We get an answer from an encounter between Jesus and a rich young man:

“As (Jesus) was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before him, and asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’” (Mark 10:17).



In Jesus he saw a man whose life was stayed on something far deeper than his own. That ‘something’ was concerned with the eternal. And it was the only thing that would satisfy him too. Christ answered him, simply and straightforwardly:

wardly:

“You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honour your father and your mother’” (Mark 10:19)

We need to note that the revolutionary teaching of Jesus came about not because he saw less in the commandments than his contemporary teachers. The fact was that he saw *far more* than them; for he had come to fulfil the law – to fill it full of meaning, as never before. Jesus taught that God's law could never be satisfied by meticulous observance, but only by a constantly renewed understanding and interpretation (see Mark 10:21-22,27-28).

Challenging Words

Jesus repeatedly warned his hearers about “cares, riches, and pleasures of life” (Luke 8:14). In the young man before him he saw someone with none of the complacency which possessions and respectability so often engender. For the young man had begun to realise that a man’s life is not composed of the abundance of the things he possesses (Luke 12:15). And he seems to have realised that it was not just a matter of doing things, for he had been a law-keeper from his youth. But he knew that he had still to learn how to be saved if he was to live forever, so he asked: “*What do I still lack?*” (Matthew 19:20). Now came the tailor-made challenge:

“One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me” (Mark 10:21).

This call found the young man unprepared, for the demand was more than he felt able to meet. “All” was too much for him. “*He went away grieved, for he had great possessions*” (10:22).

Fortitude and Faith

We should not make the mistake of thinking that Christ’s prescription in its literal form is a universal cure. It was the right thing for that young man, who clearly trusted too much in his possessions. It tells us that we should not rely upon or trust in our own riches, such as they are, but should be willing to put everything aside and give Jesus priority in our lives. Every one of us has to take up the cross of self-denial if we are to follow Jesus. We must set aside our cares and preoccupations if we are to hear and obey the call of the Saviour of the world.

Christ’s call is no less challenging and no less thrilling today. Should you elect to respond and follow him you will walk a way which is beset by many a peril; a way that will ask for all that anyone has of fortitude and faith. But you will not walk alone. Jesus will be with you all the way. He who calls you to his high quest tells you that his yoke is easy and his burden light; lighter by far than the hard way of the world where heart treads on heart. (Matthew 11:29-30).

Without Exception

Every sinner who gives himself up to die to self by self-renunciation can be cured by the Great Physician. He has to be willing to submit his case completely into the hands of him who promised that: “*The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out*” (John 6:37). No-one has ever come to him and found that his case baffled the Lord’s power to save. Scripture says: “*He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him*” (Hebrews 7:25).

Die to yourself. To be saved with an everlasting salvation you have to become Christ’s – ‘his workmanship’; ‘re-created’; ‘born again’ through baptism into his saving name. What the young man could not do, we *must* do.

We have to yield to the challenge of Jesus and let our self-centred will go. Let the Word of God have its way with you, as the potter with the clay, as the musician with the ear, as the spirit over the flesh. Then the miracle begins. It is the new you who comes to life.

If there are only few that are saved, make sure that by the grace of God you are one of them.

Claud Lamb

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Fred Pearce

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