

Editorial

Are You Hungry?

“The children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: But now our soul is dried away: [there is] nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes” (Num. 11:4–6).

I remember many years ago my mother would often call us to a meal saying “dinner’s ready, are you hungry?” She was a wonderful and wise cook, fixing simple, nutritious food—food that not only tasted good, but was healthy. But all too often I was not hungry for that nutritious food.

Was there something wrong with the food or the way it was served? No! There was something wrong with me. The problem was my all too frequent visits to the snack counter at a store on my daily paper route. There I often found time during paper delivery, to stop and enjoy a bottle or two of soda, a package of frosted cupcakes and maybe even a bag or two of chips—all tasty but worthless “junk food.” Arriving home after delivering the papers, I often had no appetite for the good food which my beloved mother had so lovingly prepared for me.

As believers, we need to be careful that such does not happen to us in view of the wonderful spiritual food which our loving God has prepared that His dear children might be fed and nurtured. Feeding on the world’s “junk food”—religious or

natural—can quickly dull our “spiritual appetites.”

Among the Israelites there existed a “mixed multitude” of people who desired Egypt’s food. It was not very long before contact with them caused the people of God to lose their appetite for that heavenly wilderness bread of God—the manna. They turned back to desiring that which sustained them when they were Pharaoh’s slaves. How sad!

From this we learn the vital necessity of separation from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4). It’s children eat a diet wholly unfit for God’s redeemed children. Believers who get caught up in its ways quickly develop a taste for its natural and religious “leeks, onions and garlic,” losing their appetite for the sweet provisions of our God.

What an example we see in Daniel who “purposed in his heart” that he would not partake of the kings’ food. Rich, tasty—no doubt the best Babylon had to offer—still it was the food offered to idols, food that would defile and corrupt God’s dear people. Then it required purpose of heart in those who lived by faith, to refuse to partake of Babylon’s “junk food”—and it requires the same today.

Developing a taste for the world’s “food” causes the rich and wonderful truth of God’s Word to become unappetizing to the soul. There is also a loss of appetite for and desire to read good published ministry that is available. If filled with the dainties of the world, we find that God’s precious Word is no longer “sweeter than honey” (Psa. 119:103).

Let us also be careful of allowing a critical spirit towards the servants of God whom He may choose

to feed His sheep and lambs. While servants are very responsible for how they serve the precious truth of God, His children are very responsible for how they receive and feed on that precious truth.

Another danger lies in developing a taste for one certain kind of ministry, or for a particular style of presenting the truth of God. Isaac was fooled in this way. He developed a taste and love for a certain kind of food (Gen. 26:28; 27:4) that Esau provided him. But his desire for that *savory venison* was used to deceive him. Having a taste for only one kind of ministry can also deceive, for it may cause us to despise other vital spiritual food that is provided.

The Egyptian servant of the Amalekite, whom David found in the wilderness (1 Sam. 30:13), expressed no complaints about the food offered him. That young man—left sick and dying in the wilderness by his former master—no doubt was very thankful for the life-giving food David gave him.

We find no record that those who were fed barley bread and fish by the disciples after the Lord's blessing (Matt. 14:17-21), complained about either the kind of food they were served, or the way in which it was served. They were hungry and willingly received what Divine love saw fit to furnish them.

While we ought always to earnestly pray for those who minister the Word of God, let us also pray for ourselves—that we may have good appetites!

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away” (Luke 1:53).

Ed.

“Looking Upon Jesus as He walked”

Next in Luke 5 we have a poor palsied man, let down through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. The moment Jesus looked at him He said, “Man thy sins are forgiven thee.” How magnificent! The same condescension that comes down to a weak faith (the leper), delights in a bold faith. When the blind beggar met him, his bold faith commanded Christ. “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Does not such a picture of Jesus suit you? It is *worthy* of Him, but it *suits* you. If you approach Him with a bold, unclouded faith, He will delight in it.

In Luke 6 we find after the choosing of the twelve, He comes down into the plain and great multitudes came to Him, and He healed all their diseases. He was a divine visitor to this world—a heavenly stranger *among* men—a divine visitor *to* men. He had not where to lay His head while He was visiting their necessities with all the resources of God. This is the ideal for a saint of God—to be independent of all that the world can give, while, with open heart and lavish hand, bestowing upon it all the benefits and blessing of God.

In Luke 7 we find the Lord in company with the centurion. Two needy ones crossed the path of our Lord here—the widow of Nain and the centurion. The centurion took his place as a Gentile at once, and he pleads through the Jews—a beautiful instance of the intelligence of faith. He approached by the *right door* and the Lord says *I will go*.

Then we have next the widow of Nain, and the

Spirit presents the deep loneliness of her condition. The dead man was “the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.” The heart of Jesus was arrested, and then He arrested the bier of the dead young man. His compassions always went before His mercies—as it is commonly said that the heart moves the hand. Do you not prize a blessing that comes to you that way? Salvation gushing forth from the heart of Christ.

Jesus might have restored the young man without touching him, but He has God’s relationship to iniquity. *He not only stood apart from the actuality of sin, but from the possibility of it.* “And He delivered him to his mother.” Now the Lord does not say “I will forgive you if you will serve Me.” Surely He had purchased the young man, yet He gave him back to his mother. Do you and I go back to the world, and seek to make ourselves happy and important in it? Ah! throw the cords of love around your heart, and keep it fast by Jesus!

excerpts, “Notes on the Gospel of Luke, J. G. Bellet

Here are seven wonderful things the precious blood of Christ does for us. By it we are *redeemed* (1 Pet. 1:18, 19), we are *forgiven* (Eph 1:7), we are *brought near* (Eph 2:13), we have *peace with God* (Col 1:20), we are *cleansed* (1 John 1:7), our conscience is *purged* (Heb 9:14), and we have *access into the holiest*. (Heb 10:19). *T. Roach*

Our Heavenly Calling

Living according to our heavenly calling

In discussing the practical side of our heavenly calling, we would like to speak first of all of positive things. It is true that, as heavenly citizens, there is much which we must witness *against*, for we are in a world that has rejected our Savior. However, there is much too that we can witness **FOR**, and how important it is that this be prominent in our lives! It is humbling to read the account in Acts 5 of the solemn judgment of God on Ananias and Sapphira, who dared to lie to the Holy Ghost. This was followed by a healthy fear on the part of those who might not be wholehearted—"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them", yet we also read that "the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord" (Acts 5:13,14). So where God is working His power will be manifested in both grace and government.

Perhaps the most powerful testimony to our heavenly calling is a life lived in the atmosphere of heaven. If our hopes and treasure are all up there with Christ, and the things of this world mean little to us, there will be a peace and composure that the person of the world knows nothing of. There will be a calmness in meeting difficulties, a peace that looks beyond all that is down here, and an equanimity that the world covets. Coupled with this will be the earnest desire to display the character of our blessed Savior, who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister". The world of today is a world of takers,

where all want to be served. How good to be like the Master who could say, "I am among you as He that serveth". The Christian will freely give, having freely received, and will look for opportunities to be of help, to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith".

Living realities—wordless preaching

May we say that the lack of this, perhaps more than anything else, has discredited the believer in this world. We may speak of our heavenly calling, we may profess to wait for the Lord to come and take us home, we may even tell others about Him. But if our lives are characterized by the same self-seeking, the same materialism, the same going after the things down here, as the world exhibits, then our witness will be a hollow one. May we show the fruits of what we have been brought into, and above all display Christ in our lives. The world does not want Christ, it is true, but that new life in us, if lived out, will compel others to acknowledge that we have been with Jesus. Many years ago, an unbeliever, much against his will, was compelled to spend the night with an earnest Christian. So powerful was the life and testimony of the believer that in the morning the unbeliever rushed from the room exclaiming, "If I stay in that man's company any longer I shall become a Christian in spite of myself!"

Added to this, of course, is our witness in the gospel and the truth. As someone has aptly remarked, "Preach always, and if necessary, use words". We are told in Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech be

always with grace, seasoned with salt”, and we are to remember both. Grace has saved us, and it is the grace of God that will draw others to Christ, and save them. But we are always to have that heavenly character in our speech, that “salt” that preserves and seasons, a flavoring of that which might otherwise not properly witness to God’s character. Only walking with the Lord and in the power of the Spirit can give this. When the Lord Jesus met the woman at Sychar’s well, he seasoned his speech with salt in exposing her sinful life, but His grace drew her to Him in spite of this, making her want to know more.

A silent witness

Our witness will also have a negative side, for the one who follows a rejected Christ must witness against this world and its course. As we have seen in an earlier article, Satan diluted the Church’s witness by bringing believers down to the level of the world, and by having them try to reform the world. If we are to witness to this world, we must be clearly seen to be ambassadors down here, not citizens. We must be clearly seen to belong to another country, having seen that the world is under judgment.

Thus we will not be allied with the world, trying to make it better. While as individuals we will surely do good wherever we can, yet we must carefully avoid any compromise of our position as a heavenly citizens. We will not join with those who try in an organized way to promote the betterment of mankind, realizing that only a work of God in the soul can do this - a work of the Spirit of God in

saving individuals. God has saved us and called us out of this world, but then sent us back into it to do His work of calling others out of it. We will recognize that the work of the Lord by believers is done by the energy of the Spirit of God in the individual, not by man-made organizations, even if Christian in origin and membership. Someone has aptly remarked that a good principle for the Christian to follow is, "Never join anything!" The only membership scripture knows is membership of the body of Christ, and God has made us such, not ourselves.

Dangerous neglect

It is this neglect that has often ruined Christian character and testimony. As previously noted, when the believer allies himself with the world, even in a good cause, he must take up the world's methods and ambitions, since the world cannot take up Christian principles. If Christians as a body try to reform the world they run contrary to the truth that the world is under judgment, and depart from their command to call souls out of this world. The call to save a particular people or nation collectively from the effects of moral and spiritual decline, while well intentioned, is out of character for those who profess heavenly citizenship. God is not dealing today with nations, but with individuals from all nations, calling them out to be part of His Church. May we understand God's purposes and work.

The importance of attitude

Connected with this is our attitude toward the

enforcing of right principles of justice in the world. How often our souls are indignant when we see God's claims rejected, the Word of God laid aside, righteousness abandoned, and human passion and selfishness result in tyranny and misery. It is tempting for those who know right to seek to enforce it by physical power! Yet it is not the place of the heavenly citizen, for the time has not come for God to set the world right. We may talk of wars where justice or the lack of it was more evident at one time than another. The recent war in Kosovo is a case in point. But the believer does not belong to this world, and should not become involved in all this.

Our blessed Savior never became involved in righting all the injustice and sin in His day, but His words carried the weight of God's comment on it all. Thus it should be with the believer. A well-known preacher in the nineteenth century was once accosted by some sailors on board a British naval ship and asked about his stand on the subject of a Christian's going to war. He replied, "I believe in fair play! Suppose I go to war and meet an enemy who is not saved. Suppose I shoot him and he shoots me. He sends me straight to heaven, and I send him straight to hell. Boys, I don't call that fair play!" May we be found using our energy to relieve suffering, help the poor, feed the hungry, and above all to bring Christ before them.

Living as pilgrims and strangers

Likewise we will not be found seeking political office, or a position that tries to enforce the law. We

are to obey the law, and may well speak out as to that which is contrary to the Word of God. It is most fitting, for example, for us to give God's mind about such things as euthanasia, abortion, and capital punishment, and to expose the sinfulness of man's heart. The moral weight of our words will be in proportion to the degree that we walk as heavenly ones, for it must be clearly seen that we are giving God's thoughts and not merely our own opinion. But we leave this world to carry on in its own way, rather seeking to bring souls out of it before the judgment falls. We will not be taken up with various causes in this world, or become involved in such things as protest marches, lobbying of influential people, or forming organizations to take up some particular grievance. We will rather seek to be the salt of the earth by our walk first, and then our speech, but leave vengeance to the One who has said, "I will repay" (Romans 12:19).

The importance of communion

In all of this we must remember that only a walk with the Lord, constant dependence upon Him, and communion with Him, can effect all this. We may realize the truth of our heavenly calling in an intellectual way and even wish to walk in it, but we cannot do so in our own strength. Without constantly being in the Lord's presence we will duplicate the error of the early Church, when they either withdrew from the world in isolation, or became part of the world and thus lost their testimony. If we seek to act on the teaching of scripture in an honest

and true heart, it will always drive us back to the Source of it all, and make us more dependent. Our affections are drawn out to Christ and all that He has done for us, and at the same time we realize more and more that, as He is now in heaven, and we belong to Him, we have a heavenly calling.

*Called from above, and heavenly men by birth,
(Who once were but citizens of earth),
As pilgrims here, we seek a heavenly home,
Our portion in the ages yet to come.*

*We are but strangers here, we do not crave
A home on earth, which gave Thee but a grave:
Thy cross has severed ties which bound us here,
Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere. (LF#212)*
B. Prost

Answers to December 1999 Bible Challenge

H arden (not) thine heart	Deut. 15:7
U nderstanding	Prov. 2:2
M erry	Judges 19:6
B uild and house	1 Kings 8:18
L ifted up	Ezek 28:5
E nvyy sinners	Prov 23:17
D elight theyself also in the Lord	Psa 37:4

“And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not **HUMBLED** thine heart, though thou knewest all this; (Dan. 5:22)
R. Erisman

Meditations of a father

In 2 Co 12:14 we read these words, penned by a father— *“I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.”* How happy for children whose parents seek, as the Apostle Paul did, to lay up for them, a store of *true riches* gleaned in communion with Himself, from the Word of God. We begin this series of short meditations sent from a father to his beloved children, with the prayer and desire that they will serve as a source of blessing and encouragement to all who read them. *Ed.*

“And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” (Psalm 9:10)

To know Him is to trust Him. The more we know Him, the more we trust Him. Therefore our need is to get to know Him better. How important to have our faces in the right direction. Truly our greatest need in this life is to have our faces toward Him. There may be bumps in the road and times that are hard, but the direction is right and all those bumps and hard times will only be reason to prove Him who has promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

“Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.” (Psa 78:41)

Is it possible that an eternal, all powerful God can be limited? In His own Sovereign Person it is

impossible. But when it touches His working in the lives of His creature man, since we are created as responsible moral beings, our unbelief limits Him working in our lives. To not believe God, John tells us (1 John 5:10), is to make Him a liar. "He did not many mighty works there (His own country) because of their unbelief." (Matt. 13:58).

May God grant that we can discern if the doubts that we have relate to ourselves, or other persons around, or our God. We have abundant reason to mistrust ourselves. "He that trusteth in His own heart is a fool." (Prov. 28:26.) The Word of God even tells us that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. Psa. 118:8. This indicates that even though we should not be mistrusting of people in general, still there may be reason to mistrust them at times. But never will there ever be a reason to mistrust our God. *To do so only limits His working for us and in us* what is for our ultimate good. We often mistrust because of our lack of understanding. But that indicates that we trust our understanding more than His.

B. Thonney

"If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
(Gal 6:1)

If there is one place more than another where we betray our unspirituality, it is in our inability to restore the overtaken. I solemnly believe the Lord

has a controversy with us, not only for what we allow in others, but for what we allow in ourselves in our manner of handling issues in the assemblies, and for the spirit and temper of our action towards those failing.

We might ponder with profit Psalm 103:8-14. Do not yield an atom of truth. “Stand fast” and “hold fast,” but stand where His searching light shines on you even as on your brother, and hold the truth, “as the truth is in Jesus” who was “meek and lowly in heart.” He was the great Peacemaker, and it cost Him most dearly. To us He says, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” It may cost us something to make peace, but in it we are blessed.

How much we have missed, just here. But “the peace of Christ” must preside in our hearts (Col. 3:15 JND) if it is to spread to others. “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” Are you a peacemaker, or are you sowing discord? With Christ before our hearts, we shall feel that there is the same mercy for others that there is for ourselves. It should be written before our souls in letters bold and bright, “*God is rich in mercy.*”

Had mercy not been shown us in lingering patience, as sinners or as saints, what would be our state? It should never degenerate so as to tolerate evil in ourselves or in others. For those who have been dealt with in faithful discipline, may we cultivate the spirit of “For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still.” (Jer 31:20)

excerpted from a tract, F. C. Blount

The Glories of our Lord Jesus Christ

The glories of our Lord Jesus Christ shall occupy our hearts in worship and praise for all eternity. They ought to fill our hearts with praise even now as we meditate upon them. We trust the following two part series may be used for each who read it to this end. *Ed*

Seven Glories of Christ—part one

Glory is manifested excellence. The personal glories of our Lord Jesus Christ are many and varied. Some are intrinsic and some are acquired. Some are veiled and some could not be veiled. Some are shared with the redeemed and some cannot be shared.

His Godhead glory

This essential glory in deity was not something the Lord Jesus acquired. It ever belonged to Him, for He was “with God” and “was God” (Jn 1:1) He is “the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.” (Heb 1:3) he is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords: Who only hath immortality dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” (1 Tim 6:14-16)

When the Lord Jesus came into manhood there was a union of His divinity with humanity which is inscrutable. (Matt. 11:27, Rev 19:12) His Godhead glory was veiled in the body of His human flesh. (Heb 10:20). One exception was when He let a glimpse of that glory shine out—all those who had

come to take Him fell backwards. (Jn 18:4-6)

While this glory was veiled to man in the flesh, it has been revealed to faith. We know Him as the eternal God, through we cannot fathom the infinite depths of His person. Upon His return to His Father on high the Lord prayed that this union of His humanity and divinity would be taken into the glory from whence He came so that He would have it as a glorified Man. (Jn 17:5) This is a glory that will never be shared; it belongs to Him alone.

His Sonship glory

This is a glory that Christ has as being the only begotten Son. It is not an acquired glory, for He always was the eternal Son of God. He was the one concentrating object of His Father's delight, for He ever dwelt in the bosom of His Father. (Pro. 8:30, Jn 1:18) This glory was first manifested when He came among men. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a father)." (Jn 1:14) The parenthesis in the JND translation defines the character of this glory which men beheld. It is that which an only begotten child would have with his father, have his full undivided attention.

To illustrate this a brother told of the time when he was waiting for his wife outside a department store. He noticed in the car in front of him, a young father with his new born son. The young man was totally absorbed in his son, never taking his eyes off the baby. Similarly, when the Lord Jesus came among men they saw Him living in the full enjoyment of His

Father's love, being the object of His undivided attention. Joseph's coat of many colors is also a type, of this distinguishing him as being the son of his father's special love. (Gen 37:3, 4)

His creatorial glory

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork.” (Psa 19:1). “That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead (divinity).” (Rom 1:19-20)

The Bible also reveals that all three Persons of the Godhead were involved in creation. (Gen 1:1 “Elohim”-plural) The Father was the source (Heb 3:4, Acts 14:15), the Spirit was the power (Gen 1:2, Job 26:13), but the Son was the agent by which the work was done. (Jn 1:3, 10, Col. 1:16, Heb. 1:2, Rev 4:11) The Lord Jesus Christ was the Creator of the universe. This is not an intrinsic glory, but something He acquired through His work in creation. This glory is not veiled, but is displayed before all. (Psa 19:2-4)

His moral glory

Being Who He was, when the Lord Jesus came into Manhood, everything He did was perfect. Of all the men that have ever lived on this earth, only He could say, “I have glorified Thee on the earth.” (Jn 17:4) There was a moral glory connected with all that He said and did that simply could not be hid or

veiled. He “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.” (Acts 10:38) People wondered “at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth.” (Lk 4:22) He never said one word in a wrong tone of voice!

There is a type of this moral perfection in the “fine flour” of the Meal Offering. It speaks of the perfect evenness of His moral character. (Lev 2) This glory will be shared with the redeemed, for they have been given the very life of Christ. At His coming (the rapture), the saints will be glorified; and thus, be rid of the fallen nature so that they will be like Christ morally (1 Jn 3:2) and physically (Phil 3:21). The moral conformity to Christ has begun even now by the work of the Spirit, but will be complete then. (2 Cor 3:18)

to be continued, B. Anstey

“It is in the day of trial and difficulty that the soul experiences something of the deep and untold blessedness of being able to count on God. Were all to go on smoothly, this would not be so. It is not in gliding along the surface of a tranquil lake that the reality of the Master's presence is felt; but when the tempest roars, and the waves roll over the ship.

The Lord does not hold out to us the prospect of exemption from trial and tribulation; quite the opposite. He tells us we shall have to meet both, but He promises to be with us in them, and this is infinitely better. God's presence in the trial is much

better than exemption from the trial. The sympathy of His heart with us is sweeter far than the power of His hand for us.

The Master's presence with His faithful servants while passing through the furnace was better far than the display of His power to keep them out of it (Dan. 3). We would frequently desire to be allowed to pass on our way without trial, but this would involve serious loss. The Lord's presence is never so sweet as in moments of appalling difficulty.

excerpted from "Notes on Exodus", C. H. M.

"Let us work well, dear brother, while it is day; it is our only affair in this world, and at the same time, let us be very watchful that the inner life, communion with our precious Saviour, be the true source of our activities. May we be faithful to the will of God in our walk, and large-hearted towards all His children. I earnestly desire to preserve the true character of the work of brethren, poor as they may be—and we are poor—for whenever we have lost the sense of it, God has chastened us."

"Where there is wise interest of parents in them [children], they [parents] can . . . lead children to find their enjoyment with themselves, in kindly care of the poor, and a thousand healthful enjoyments and occupations; and this I have seen done, and children grow up attached to home and family. And this Scripture contemplates."

excerpts from letters, J. N. D.

Feed the Flock

A believer, Bernard Gilpen, was sentenced in the reign of Queen Mary to die for his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each morning and each night, during his imprisonment he repeated the text, “All things work together for good to them that love God.”

Finally the day came when he was led out to his execution. On the way he stumbled, fell and broke his leg. He was ordered back to prison where he lay, moaning in pain. His jailor taunted him with the text he had so often repeated. “Ah!” Gilpen replied, “but it is true all the same.”

For quite some painful period of time, he lay in the prison hospital, while his leg healed. But the Scripture he so faithfully quoted, indeed proved itself gloriously true. During the time he lay there, Queen Mary died and Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne of England. One of her first acts was to set at liberty Christians imprisoned for their faith, including Bernard Gilpen!

Though it does not say all things that happen to Christians are good, God tells us that *they work together for good*. Faith is put to the test by these words. But even when faith wavers and is ever so weak, our Father is unchanging and has spoken unchanging truth. Often perhaps, we do not see as striking a proof of the truth of this verse as in our little account. But whether or not we *see* such proof, the truth of God remains as unchanging as He—*all things work together for good*. (Rom 8:28)

adapted, “Truth for Young Christians”

Practical Reflections

Acts 4:16—33

16 *Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.*

Fear of the people (Prov 29:25)—not any sense of uprightness—kept the leaders from denying the truth. Repentance born of faith—not caused by miracles—leads to true blessing (Luke 16:31).

17 *But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.*

The world nor its religions will hear that Name, the source of all power and blessing. Even in these *Christian* lands it is easy to speak of God, church or the Bible—anything but that blessed Name of Jesus.

18 *And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.*

Though the spirit of the this *present evil world* will not hear about Jesus, the *glory* and *authority* of the His Name are reasons enough to continue speaking of and teaching about Him.

19 *But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.*

The apostles' decisions were made as responsible to One infinitely greater than the Jewish leaders, nor were they “careful to answer” the Jews. (Dan 3:16)

20 *For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*

They had *seen* perfection in every step of the Lord's life—had *heard* grace and truth in His every word. What motives for preaching the gospel!

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

These religious zealots' wicked threats and plans were governed by the whims of the people—the believers' blessed resource is the Lord. (Heb 13:6)

22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

The cripple's *condition* provides a picture of Israel (born *lame*), whose religion could not bring blessing (*begging* at the temple gate). His *healing* is a proof of the power and grace of God.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

Their own company—fellowship with those of *like precious faith*! Where we go when “let go” from our necessary daily routines is a profound test of our spiritual state. How we use this *liberty* speaks volumes about *who* and *what* we are enjoying.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou [art] God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

The Jews opposition brings forth collective praise from the assembly, to God Who is above all.

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people

imagine vain things?

David—the very one in whom they took such pride—prophetically condemned them, connecting them with the Gentiles in their hatred of Jesus.

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

The *elite* of the world find a common ground of fellowship in their rebellion against the Lord and His *Sent One*, Jesus. Why spend our time searching for satisfaction in this wicked, Christ hating world?

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together;

A better reading is “thy holy Servant Jesus.” Our blessed Lord and Saviour came meek and lowly, as a Servant, that man might be blessed through His perfect service. Those who by nature opposed each other, united not only against this Perfect Servant, but against God Who sent Him.

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Man was fully responsible for what he did to the Son of God—but God moves according to His own Sovereign purposes and counsels. Let us seek to always be in fellowship with His sovereign ways.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

They did not ask for power to *overcome* or *stop* persecution. They leave all with God submitting to

His ways, desiring only that the Word of God would not be hindered. (Rom 12:9, 2 Thess 3:1)

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

They weren't occupied with *self*—as being vessels of healing and miracles. All was left to the will of God and the power and authority of the blessed Name of His *holy Servant* (not “child”) Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

What blessing earnest collective prayer brings (Eph 3:20)! They had asked that the *servants* of God speak forth His Word (V29) with boldness. But God gave them *all* the ability to speak it boldly! Let us continue *instant* (Rom 12:12) in earnest prayer!

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

The Spirit produced oneness in *love* and in *practice*. Their earthly possessions belonging to God, were used for the blessing of all. Should God get just a tenth of our possessions? They *all* belong to Him. May we be *tender* and *wise* hearted in using *all* that He has given to us for His honor and glory.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

Great power and great grace marked the public, testimony of the early assembly. Today, public testimony to the unity of the body of Christ is ruined because of our collective failure. Yet in the midst of this ecclesiastical confusion we still have available the *power* of the Spirit (Rom 15:13) and the *grace* of Christ (2 Tim 2:1). The *Spirit of God* and the *grace of God* remain unchanged. We still can walk as Elisha *the man of God*, in the midst of great breakdown and ruin among God's people. Elisha especially pictures one who walks in faith by the power of God in grace, though the day morally be ever so dark

Ed.

The Christian home should be the soil where Christian character grows.

What God is determines what He does—what God does proves what He is: Love

The answer of grace always exceeds the request of faith

Praise is a higher note than thanksgiving, for it is more than just thanking God for some blessing received. it extols the Person from whom all blessings come.

Faith is nourished by faith, not by questions causing strife.

Spiritual Gems for the path of Faith

Bible Challenger

The first letter of each of the following responses will form the word that describes the shape of the *paths* whose travellers are devoid of judgement and peace. The number in brackets indicates the number of words in each answer.

1. How was a New Testament prophet proclaiming his message, "prepare ye the way of the Lord make his paths straight"? (4)

2. What word did a shepherd of sheep use to describe the paths on which the Shepherd of men was leading him? (1)

3. Which paths did an Old Testament prophet proclaim as the good way wherein rest of soul could be found? (1)

4. When we make straight paths for our feet, from what way will the lame be kept from turning? (3)

5. What should we do to experience mercy and truth in paths of the Lord? (6).

6. What is the time frame of promised pleasures at the right hand of the Lord, to whom he hath revealed the path of life? (1)

7. When one leaves the paths of uprightness what are the ways that lie ahead? (1)

R. Erisman