

EXCERPTS FROM

APRIL - JUNE 1977

THE LINK

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

SALVATION - ALL OF GRACE

In the light of Holy Scripture, a man is either seen as being "In Adam" or "In Christ". In his natural state he is in Adam with all the consequences of Adam's fall attached to him. Even if a man had never committed a single sin he would be no less a sinner because he is "Born in sin", Adam's sin and Adam's death are his by inheritance apart from actual transgression. Being "In Adam", all that pertained to Adam is his. Whether man acknowledges this or not the fact remains, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (JOHN 3 v 6) "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me" (PS. 51 v 5) "By the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation". (ROM 5 v 18). The Word of Truth is sweeping in its statement it categorically states "In Adam all die" (1 COR. 15 v 22) By natural birth man is "In Adam" therefore he is involved in all the consequences of that relationship; from the moment of physical birth man is therefore "dead in trespasses and in sins" (EPH 2 v 1).

In contrast to this the believer is "In Christ", and just as in the natural, man personally had nothing to do with the bringing of sin and death upon himself, so spiritually, he has nothing to do with bringing eternal life and righteousness on himself, it is the Grace of God alone which bringeth salvation, just as all that pertained to Adam was ours by nature so all that pertains to Christ is ours through grace. The believer is represented before God in the person of another - even Christ, and is regarded by God in that very same light. We are "In Christ" indeed "We are COMPLETE in Him" (COL. 2 v 10). This is a very precious truth and one which the adversary is constantly seeking to rob us of. The believer is so prone to look around and circumstances cause uneasiness and perhaps alarm? he then looks within and sees failure, shortcomings, and peace is disturbed, his joy goes, but what else can we expect to find, for our hearts are still in very large measure "Deceitful above all things". The believer's eye should ever be fixed upon Christ, for we are "In Him" and as we look on Christ, we remember that what He is - we are, His righteousness is our righteousness, think yet again of His glorious perfections then remember that we are "Complete in Him". To be complete means to be wanting in nothing, and this is our standing in Christ -

even now, for the Bible does not say. we may be, or we hope to be, or that we shall be, but "ye ARE complete in Him".

These words were written to the Christians at Colossae more than nineteen hundred years ago, yet just as they were "In Christ" so are we, though we have many faults and failings and fall so short ofttimes of what we should be, nevertheless through the Sovereign Grace of our God and the regenerating power of His Holy Spirit we have been born again and through faith have laid hold of Christ as our only hope of salvation, His righteousness has become ours and we are complete in His completeness, no longer are we of the first Adam but of the "Last Adam" - the Lord from Heaven; But says the Word of God in the same 2nd chapter of Colossians "As ye therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him and stablished in the faith".

The Christian is one who received Christ, indeed from first to last, we are only receivers, we are not givers, for we have nothing to give. In Rom 9 v 23 we are described as "Vessels of mercy". What is a vessel? It can give nothing but it can receive, but before it receives it must be seen to be empty and so the Holy Spirit sovereignly prepares a man's heart to receive Christ. We have many illustrations in the Scriptures of this being wrought out, we listen to Job and hear him cry "I am vile, I abhor myself", we hear David in anguish of soul say "Have mercy on me O God, wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, cleanse me from my sin", Isaiah exclaims "Woe is me I am undone", the publican smiting upon his breast says "God be merciful to me a sinner" These are all "vessels of mercy" being prepared by the Holy Ghost to receive Christ. Having been thus dealt with we are quickened together with Christ, raised from our position of death and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ and the Word goes on to say that it is all of God including the faith which lays hold of, and receives. We are debtors to grace and to God for every aspect of salvation, we do nothing, we are the receivers, and as receivers of Him we are complete in Him. Now having received Him the Scripture goes on to say in Col. 2 v 6 "So walk ye in Him". This is a natural figure but contains tremendous truth. Some men walk more quickly than others, some can walk long distances, others soon tire. Some walk with dignified carriage others have an ungainly gait. In severe sickness the legs

become weak and the patient must needs lie down for the strength is gone and walking ceases, through accidents and falls some men are lame, babes do not walk, but quickly learn to do so. All this is so significant in the spiritual realm. As babes we receive Christ and with a normal healthy appetite we feed upon the sincere milk of the Word and grow thereby (1 PET. 2 v 2) soon we are walking and learn that ours is the narrow path, this we should tread steadfastly, not racing then tiring, always studying our spiritual health that we never fall spiritually sick, carefully looking out for the pitfalls in order to avoid falling by the way with its attendant dishonour, never loitering or following the course of the world, but with holy dignity, poise, and balance, as men who have a sense of direction so should we walk through this present scene.

"Rooted and built up in Him", here two further very beautiful figures are used, to be "Rooted in Christ", what a glorious thought! It is the root of the tree which imparts the character to the tree itself, its health, its growth, its foliage, its fruit is all dependent upon the root and the ground upon which it grows, and God's people are rooted "In Him" planted in that soil which is of heavenly fertility - "Jesus Christ". From that source we derive our vitality, the dews of heaven are ever upon these roots, were we rooted anywhere but here there would be neither fruit or beauty. Indeed without this soil and rooting there would be no trees at all, this world would be totally barren, without Jesus Christ there would be no living tree, but all men would still be "In Adam all "Dead in sins" and this earth a complete moral and spiritual desert, but through the Sovereign Grace of the Eternal God this is not so, for trees have been planted in every nation under heaven, in numbers which no man can number.

God himself planted them by the rivers of water that they might bring forth their fruit in their season, and says the Scripture "Their leaf shall not wither" (PS. 1 v 3) They cannot wither for they are rooted "In Him". In the natural, the process of communication, of vitality from the soil to the root, and so to the tree is hidden and unknown, precisely so in the spiritual, all that makes the believer to grow, the strengthening of his faith, the deepening of his hope is

unseen, the world knows nothing of the secret, indeed the Christian himself cannot fully understand it, for to be rooted in Him means the communication of His life to us, the roots at first are small and tender, only tiny fibres yet alive hence they grow for the soil is right, stronger and stronger they become, after a while even hindering stones and boulders present no problems for the roots push around and beneath them as deeper and deeper they penetrate till the storms and gales beat upon that tree but it is unshaken as its roots are anchored into the immoveable, so with the Christian. Tiny beginnings, but God was at work, a multitude of circumstances maybe, by providences, by applications and by means of grace all combining, the good work commenced in the soul, the fibres of faith, tiny indeed, yet alive because it was of God, they lay hold of Christ, there they thrive and grow - rooted in Him, watched over by the Holy Spirit who prepared the ground, sowed the first seed, gave the first spiritual desire , the first look toward Christ, He superintends the whole of the time so that the good work begun shall be completed (PHIL 1 v 6) so in this way we are "Kept by THE POWER OF GOD unto salvation" (1 PET. 1 v 5) yes kept by the power of God, the storms may rage, the adversary assail, but the roots run far deeper than these things, we are rooted in the Eternal "Which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast" (HEB. 6 v 19)

The Word of God goes yet further for not only are we "rooted in Christ" but "Built up in Him" (COL. 2 v 7). Here the figure is of a house, something which is seen, yet just as the tree is dependent upon that which is hidden "the root", so is the house dependent upon its unseen foundations, no foundations and the building totters and falls. If a man professes to be a Christian but is not built upon Christ, then he is such an one as depicted in MATT. 7 a foolish man who built upon sand. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid Jesus Christ. (1 COR. 3 v 11) The stability and durability of a house depends upon that which is hidden. Our stability and durability is "In Christ", and we are built "in Him".

One may wonder why the Holy Spirit should suddenly switch the analogy from a tree to a building, it is simply because no single tangible object can fully illustrate or convey to

us the wonders of God's grace. He has not only planted us as trees, objects of beauty to Himself in an otherwise barren world, and to bring forth fruit in its season, but He has also constituted us a building, "Ye are God's Building" (1 COR. 3 v 9) "Ye are the temple of God" (1 COR. 3 v 16). A building is to be dwelt in, every vital and important structure of man is purpose built, designed for that for which it is to be used. The Eternal Architect has sovereign designs known only to Himself, so here this spiritual edifice is for a purpose, it is therefore designed to accord with the dignity of its occupant. At the first, man was made in the image of God, in form, in beauty, and in character, higher than any other creature; but in Adam this was lost. However through grace we have been raised in glorious perfection "in Christ" to be occupied by God the Holy Spirit who also is the builder, who lays each stone of the church upon Christ and with absolute precision according to the eternal purpose stone by stone is builded together for an "Habitation of God" (EPH. 2 v 22) all this is of God, and wrought by Him alone, yet through His matchless grace we have obtained this inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Although we but dimly comprehend these things now, yet in the ages to come He will show the exceeding riches of HIS GRACE in His kindness to us - ward in Christ Jesus, then to use the words of Philip Doddridge:-

Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days,
It lays in heaven the top-most store,
And well deserves the praise.

W. H. M.

"During the epidemic of cholera, though I had many engagements in the country, I gave them up that I might remain in London to visit the sick and dying. I felt that it was my duty to be on the spot in such time of disease and death and sorrow. One Monday morning, I was awakened about three o'clock by a sharp ring of the door bell. I was urged, without delay, to visit a house not very far from London Bridge. I went; and up two pairs of stairs I was shown into a room, the only occupants of which were a nurse, and a dying

man. "Oh sir!" exclaimed the nurse, as I entered, "about half-an-hour ago, Mr. So-and-so begged me to send for you". "What does he want?" I asked. "He is dying sir" she replied. I said, "Yes, I see that he is; what sort of a man was he?" The nurse answered, "He came home from Brighton last night sir; he had been out all day. I have looked for a Bible sir but there is not one in the house; I hope you have brought one with you." "Oh! I said "A Bible would be of no use to him now. If he could understand me, I could tell him the way of salvation in the very words of Scripture". I stood by his side, and spoke to him, but he gave no answer. I spoke again, but the only consciousness he had was a foreboding of terror, mingled with the stupor of approaching death. Soon, even that was gone, for sense had fled, and I stood there a few minutes sighing with the poor woman who had watched over him, and altogether hopeless about his soul. Gazing at his face, I perceived that he was dead, and that his soul had departed.

That man, in his lifetime, had been wont to jeer at me. In strong language he had often denounced me as a hypocrite, yet he was no sooner smitten by the darts of death than he sought my presence and counsel, no doubt feeling in his heart that after all I was a servant of God, though he did not care to own it with his lips.

There I stood, unable to help him. Promptly as I had responded to his call, what could I do but look at his corpse and mourn over a lost soul. He had in health wickedly refused Christ, yet in his death he had superstitiously sent for me. Too late did he sigh for the ministry of reconciliation, he sought to enter in at the closed door but he was not able. There was no space left for him for repentance, for he had wasted the opportunities which God held long granted to him. I went home, and was soon called away again; that time, to see a young woman. She was also in the last extremity, but it was a fair, fair sight indeed. She was singing - though she knew she was dying, and talking to those around her, telling her brothers and sisters to follow her to Heaven, bidding good-bye to her father, and all the while smiling as if it had been her marriage day. She was happy and blessed. I never saw more conspicuously in my life than I did that morning, the difference there is between one who feareth God and one who feareth Him not."

"Controversy and religious strife, no doubt, are odious things, but there are times when they are a positive necessity. Unity and peace are very delightful; but if they are bought at the expense of truth then they are bought too dear. There is a vast amount of maundering childish, weak talk nowadays in some quarters about unity and peace, which I cannot reconcile with the language of the apostle Paul. It is a pity no doubt, that there should be so much controversy but it is also a pity that human nature should be so bad as it is, and that the devil should be loose in the world. It was a pity that Arius taught error about Christ's person; but it would have been a greater pity if Athanasius had not opposed him. It was a pity Tetzal went about preaching up the Pope's indulgences, it would have been a far greater pity if Luther had not withstood him. Controversy, in fact, is one of the conditions under which truth in every age has to be defended and maintained, and it is nonsense to ignore it".

J. C. RYLE

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

Our opening prayer meeting for 1977, was certainly a very memorable one with so many gathered, and almost all the brethren present taking part in prayer. There certainly was great liberty and a real spirit of worship and intercession. It does seem sad that such prayer cannot be sustained by us, indeed it is a very great weakness in our church life.

How very different was the report read in the Prayer Meeting a few weeks ago from Northern Ireland where prayer meetings are held at 7.00 a.m., 1.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. on weekdays with hundreds of people coming to the evening session, and on Sundays many of the folk not returning home after morning service but spending the afternoon in the chapel in prayer to God. Little wonder that God is saving men and women as the Word is faithfully preached. Yet here, where our circumstances are so vastly different to Belfast we seem to be so indifferent to our solemn charge and responsibility to intercede before the Throne of God on behalf of the people of this godless tragic age.

Again we must make mention of the goodness of our Heavenly Father in all His gracious provision for our spiritual needs. Truly as we have come together our souls delight themselves in fatness, as His Word is ministered. We welcome the visits to be made to us by God's servants listed on this quarters church calendar. The series on the subject of "The Church" will be continuing each Sunday morning.

This quarter sees increased activity, with the Annual Convention on 27th April, to which we prayerfully look forward, and to the visit of Mr. Geoffrey Thomas of Aberystwyth for the first time. Then we have ... the "Drive-in" Church commencing on Sunday 29th May D.V. We look above for His enabling in all this, and count on the help and co-operation of all the "able-bodied" in the fellowship.

Our thoughts reach out continually to so many of our elderly brethren and sisters and we assure you again of our love and prayers, some can get out occasionally and how thankful we are to see them, others are completely shut in, and feel sometimes so lonely and isolated from fellowship. How much a visit means to our friends who are thus cut off, and we are thankful to all those within the church who take a share in this very important ministry.