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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)  
BIDEFORD**

# RIGHTEOUSNESS

The word 'righteous' means 'just', 'upright'. RIGHTEOUSNESS and JUSTIFICATION are definitions which are closely allied in the Word of God; in fact many of the terms explained in recent articles are inseparable and they stand or fall together. Righteousness is another Biblical word frequently used but seldom fully explained; consequently many believers have a feeble understanding of what this vital Scriptural term conveys.

In the previous article in this series we considered the subject of REDEMPTION; now as we examine the term RIGHTEOUSNESS the following Scriptural examples illustrate the connection between the terms: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24); "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked" (Deuteronomy 25:1); "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33,34).

The condemning of a man does not make him guilty; rather does it announce that he IS guilty. Likewise to justify a man does not make him just, it declares that he IS just. Justification is the formal sentence of the Divine Judge, whereby He pronounces a sinner of Adam's race as being righteous; the ground upon which God makes that pronouncement is "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). By this we learn that RIGHTEOUSNESS is contingent upon REDEMPTION.

Previously it has been shown that redemption is the consequence of an adequate ransom having been paid, such

as completely meets the demands of the Divine Law. This was accomplished by Christ who offered to God perfect satisfaction to the demands of that Law by His holy spotless life, culminating in the laying down of that life on the cross in obedience to His Father's command. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17,18). "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do" (John 14:31). In this way did Christ honour the Law as it was foretold by the prophet; "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the Law and make it honourable" (Isaiah 42:21). When upon earth, the Mediator, the man Christ Jesus perfectly fulfilled that prediction in thought, word and deed, in total and absolute conformity to that Holy Law. He "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22), He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21), "In Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5), He was "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). The life of Christ must be seen as vicarious, as was His death. By this flawless life Christ has wrought a perfect righteousness to be imputed to all his believing people. This is the preceptive aspect of the work of Christ's satisfaction and is a vital part of the doctrine of Atonement. Sadly many preachers and teachers will not accept this truth. The Word of God not only reveals that the Mediator would make reconciliation for iniquity, but also that He would bring in everlasting righteousness (cf Daniel 9:24).

The death of Christ is the penal aspect of the Atonement, when the iniquities of all His people were laid upon Him (cf Isaiah 53:6). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24), "Christ .... suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18), whereas His life is the preceptive aspect of that same great work. The death (penal) delivers the sinner from hell, whereas the life (preceptive) fits him for heaven. Both are

essential to secure our acceptance by a Holy God, the placating of the wrath of a sin hating, sin avenging God, which entailed Christ taking the sinner's place in death and judgment, thus complying with the judicial requirements of the Law, for as far as guilt is concerned, the sinner can no more get rid of his guilt than can a leopard change his spots. Equally powerless is the natural man to render perfect obedience to God's Holy Law; in this man is "without strength" (Romans 5:6), it can never be done because of the weakness of the flesh (cf Romans 8:3). By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in His sight (cf Romans 3:20); this teaches us that if we are ever to be saved and enter heaven at the last, then one must interpose, meeting both these needs on our behalf. The penal requirement of the Law for our transgressions must be suffered to secure pardon; active obedience to the Law in all its detail must be wrought to merit RIGHTEOUSNESS.

To preach only the death of Christ is half a gospel; it saves from hell but it does not fit for heaven. The obedience to the Law in the life of Christ was as vital as the enduring of Divine wrath in His death. The mere suffering of sin's penalty can never make a sinner righteous, as the damned in hell will discover to all eternity; they suffer the penalty but it will never secure for them righteousness.

Christ, in order to obtain RIGHTEOUSNESS for His people, lived upon earth a life of utter and complete obedience to every demand of the Law; in His death He paid the full and entire penalty demanded by that Law which we had broken and in this way He wrought perfect righteousness for all the elect. The authority of the Law was fully vindicated and the breach of the Law was fully avenged. There is in this an exchange of place, Christ took our place and we are given His. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). There is also a two-fold

identification, Christ was made one with us (cf Hebrews 2:11 & 14), and we are made one with Him, even members of His body (cf Ephesians 5:30). In our natural state we had no righteousness but now we have a perfect righteousness imputed to us by Christ. "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17).

To teach and preach as so many do, that the sufferings and death of Christ is all that Divine justice demanded in order to atone (make satisfaction) for His people, is to deny half of the teaching of the Word of God. The truth of RIGHTEOUSNESS is emphasised by the apostle Paul who states, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). This concerns the preceptive (life) not penal (death). Just as Adam through disobedience to God's Law, brought him and the race into a state of unrighteousness, so Christ, by being totally obedient to that Law has made many RIGHTEOUS. As light and heat are united and both proceed from the sun, so the righteousness of Christ's life and the efficacy of His death are united in our justification. Without the two, no mortal would ever be justified. The death of Christ must never be thought of as independent or detached from His life of obedience. Their united value which effected and procured our redemption are inseparable yet distinguishable and both must be preached and taught. Only as this is done is the gospel presented. in its full truth and glory. The wondrous work of Christ has not only made us accepted, it has made us acceptable.

The claims of the eternal God and the only standard of RIGHTEOUSNESS was published at Sinai. That Law (the moral Law) is a transcript of holiness. Its holy requirements reveal the glory of the Divine Law Giver, which is absolute RIGHTEOUSNESS. That Law will never be relaxed, its standards or claims cannot be altered. How could it be otherwise? for it is founded upon unchangeable holiness, it is the Law of the immutable God. It is absolutely essential to have a right view of that Law in

order to obtain a sound understanding of Christ's work of Atonement (satisfaction) and of imputed RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The moral Law (The Ten Commandments) has two aspects - mandatory and prohibitory. The Law of God demands that man shall love the Lord his God with all his heart, his soul and mind (cf Matthew 22:37). That love is to be perfect and unceasing in thought, word and deed and is the essence of the mandatory section. "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17), this tenth commandment, sums up the prohibitory which covers anything forbidden of God, and such we are not to desire.

To any who can keep this Law without failure on any point there is the promise of eternal life and blessing; our Lord Himself made this quite clear to an enquirer when He was here upon earth. "A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the Law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:25- 28). In these verses it is not the question of escaping death and hell, rather is it the inheriting and entering into life, and Christ clearly states that eternal life is guaranteed to the one who can keep the Law, that is, in total and absolute perfection. Only these will ever enter into life and heaven at the last. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14). They that have kept the commandments have right of entrance, none else. This is not the penal aspect, it is not being saved from hell, rather is this the question of being fitted for heaven; eternal blessing is consequent upon absolute and perfect obedience to the commandments. The contrast to this is also clearly set out in the Scriptures, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are

written in the book of the Law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). To fail in the keeping of God's Holy Law is to be cursed. Such will never pass through the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, their eternal end is as described by the Lord Himself, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

The requirements of this Divine Law, which must be kept, are terrifying to us fallen creatures if we carefully examine them. It requires: 1. The absence of wilful transgression, 2. The non-existence of sins of ignorance, 3. Perfection of mind and heart, 4. No defect in character, 5. Absolute devotion to God.

Who is there amongst the children of Adam who have continued to do all things which are written in the book of the Law? Let God Himself give the answer, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The glory of the Divine Law Giver as set out in His Law of perfect RIGHTEOUSNESS is a standard to which man has never attained, to the degree that from the bar of Divine justice the unmitigating verdict is pronounced, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). None RIGHTEOUS, and left to themselves all men are doomed.

Against this dark and hopeless background, it was announced from the counsels of Deity, that through the infinitude of God's grace, He would admit to a principle of substitution. He revealed the appointment of a Surety whose performance and undertaking would supply a valid and sure title to life and eternal glory. The One announced was Christ, the Mediator, the Head of God's elect, the Servant in whom the Father delighted (cf Isaiah 42:1). In due time He, who was none other than the Word, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, was made flesh (cf John 1:1,2,14). "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law" (Galatians 4:4). "Made under the Law" in order that He as Surety, might fulfil that Law.

When Christ took human flesh and was born into this world, He put Himself under the whole Law of God, and because of the imputation of our sins to Him as Surety, He became officially guilty and subject to its condemnation. The awful threatenings of the Law set themselves in terrible array against Him, which culminated at the cross. On Golgotha's hill, in total subjection to the Law's demands, asking for no mercy or mitigation as to the severity of the penalty (for indeed there could be none), Christ as the Substitute became legally responsible at the bar of Divine justice and the utmost farthing had to be paid. Without the shedding of His blood there never would have been remission of sin, but by His death and resurrection believing sinners are delivered from wrath to come (cf 1 Thessalonians 1:10). "Saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:9).

There is however this other aspect of Christ being made under the Law; it demanded of Him as man, perfect obedience to every jot and tittle. "Lo I come .... I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:7,8). It is this which is the grounds of imputed RIGHTEOUSNESS which was inaugurated when Christ was born "under the Law" (Galatians 4:4) and was perpetuated throughout the whole of His life on earth. He did always those things which pleased God (cf John 8:29). It was consummated when He bowed His head on Golgotha and cried in triumph "It is finished" (John 19:30). This was a work of flawless unceasing obedience, thus fulfilling: 1. The absence of wilful transgression, 2. The non existence of sins of ignorance, 3. Perfection of mind and heart, 4. No defect in character, 5. Absolute devotion to God. All qualities absent in us, but all perfectly fulfilled in and by Christ, our Surety.

Set within this context, how meaningful are the words, "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in



us" (Romans 8:3,4). The righteousness of the Law was fulfilled by Christ and that perfect RIGHTEOUSNESS which He wrought in the flesh as man, is set to the account of all His believing people, it is reckoned to our account as being fulfilled in us. The righteousness of the Law in this verse is a strictly judicial term, it refers to legal status before the bar of Divine justice. It signifies an answering in full of all the Law's requirements, an attaining by fallen man to perfect and absolute conformity.

It is this transfer to the repentant, believing sinner of the finished work and flawless obedience of the Surety, both preceptive and penal, which gives that person the title to eternal life and the right at the last to enter through the gates of the city as one who has kept the commandments.

Augustus Toplady had a sound grasp of the truth of IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS which caused him to write:

"In Him we have a righteousness,  
By God Himself approved,  
Our rock, our sure foundation this,  
Which never can be moved.  
Our ransom by His death He paid, (penal)  
For all His people given,  
The law He perfectly obeyed, (preceptive)  
That they might enter heaven".

As all, when Adam sinned alone,  
In his transgression died,  
So by the righteousness of One  
Are sinners justified;  
We to Thy merit, precious Lord,  
With humblest joy submit,  
Again to paradise restored,  
In Thee alone complete".

To be continued.

W.H.Molland

# TAKE HEED

## A SOBERING WORD FOR PREACHERS

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

These are solemn and weighty words for all those who labour in the word and doctrine. They were addressed by the inspired apostle to his beloved son in the faith Timothy, and contain most precious instruction for every one who is called of God to minister amongst His people and to preach the gospel. It is, assuredly, a very high and holy privilege to be permitted to take part in such a ministry; but it involves a most serious responsibility; and the passage just quoted, sets before the workman two deeply important duties - yea, absolutely essential duties, to which he must give his diligent, constant and prayerful attention, if he would be an efficient workman in the Church of God - "a good minister of Jesus Christ". He must take heed to himself; and he must take heed to the doctrine.

1. "Take heed to thyself". No language can adequately set forth the moral importance of this. It is of course, important for all Christians; but for the workman, pre-eminently so, for to such it is here particularly addressed. He, above all, will need to take heed to himself. He must guard the state of his heart, the state of his conscience, his whole inward man. He must keep himself pure. His thoughts, his affections, his spirit, his temper, his tongue, must all be kept under the holy control of the Spirit and Word of God. He must wear the girdle of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. His moral condition and his practical walk must answer to the truth ministered, else the enemy will, most assuredly, get an advantage over him.

The teacher ought to be the living exponent of what he teaches! at least, this should be his honest, earnest,

constant aim. He should ever keep this holy standard before "the eyes of his heart". Alas, the best will fail and come short; but where the heart is true, the conscience tender, and the fear of God and the love of Christ have their due place, the workman will never be satisfied with anything short of the divine standard for his inward state and his outward walk. It will be his earnest desire, at all times and in all places, to exhibit the practical effect of his teaching; and to be, "An example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). But let it not be supposed that the Lord's servant should set himself up as a model for those to whom he ministers; or that he should make his own experience the standard of his ministry. Nothing of the kind. An inspired apostle could say, "Be ye followers of me" (1 Corinthians 4:16); but where is the preacher or teacher now, who could adopt such language? And as to his ministry, he should ever be able to say "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants, for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Still we must never for a moment, lose sight of the weighty moral fact that the teacher ought to live the truth which he teaches. It is morally dangerous in the extreme, for a man to teach in public what he does not live in private - dangerous for himself, most damaging to the testimony and injurious to those with whom he has to do. What can be more deplorable or humiliating than for a man to be characterised by contradicting in his personal history and in his domestic life, the truth which he utters in his public ministry? It is simply fearful, and must inevitably lead to the most disastrous results.

Hence then, may it be the deep-seated, earnest purpose and aim of all those who minister in the Word and doctrine, to feed upon the precious truth of God, to make their own of it; to live and move and have their being in the very atmosphere of it; to have the inward man strengthened and formed by it; to have it dwelling richly

in them, that thus it may flow out in living power, savour, unction and fulness to others.

It is a very poor, yea, a very dangerous thing, to sit down to the Word of God as a mere student for the purpose of preparing lectures or sermons for other people. Nothing can be more deadening or withering to the soul. Mere intellectual traffic in the truth of God, storing up certain doctrines, views and principles in the memory, and giving them out with a certain fluency of speech, is at once most deluding and demoralising. We may be drawing water for other people, and, all the while, be like rusty pipes ourselves. Nothing can be more miserable. Christ said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37). He does not say "draw." The true spring and power of all ministry in the church will ever be found in drinking for our own souls, not in drawing for others. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). We must abide close to the eternal fountain, drinking deeply and continually. Thus our souls shall be refreshed and enriched; rivers shall flow for the refreshment of others, and streams of praise ascend to the throne and to the heart of God by Jesus Christ. This is Christian ministry - yea, this is Christianity; all else is utterly worthless.

2. We now give attention to the second point of our subject, namely, the doctrine or teaching, for such is the true force of the original word. How much is involved in this! "Take heed to the teaching." Solemn admonition! What care is needed! What holy watchfulness! What earnest, prayerful, constant waiting upon God for the right thing to say and the right way to say it! God only knows the state and the need of souls. He knows their capacity. We do not. We may be offering "strong meat" to those who can only bear "milk," and thus do only positive mischief. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). A man may rise and speak for an hour in the church, and every word he says may be in

strict accordance with the letter of Scripture, and yet he may not at all speak as an oracle of God - as God's mouthpiece to the people. He may minister truth, but not the needed truth, at the time.

How solemn is all this! How it makes us feel the seriousness of the apostle's admonition, "Take heed to the teaching"! How it sets before us the urgent need of self-emptied dependence upon the power and guidance of the Holy Ghost! Here lies the precious secret of all effective ministry, whether oral or written. We may talk for hours, and write volumes - and talk and write nothing unscriptural - but if it be not in the power of the Spirit, our words will prove but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, and our volumes as so much waste paper. We want to lie much at the Master's feet, to drink deeply into His Spirit, to be in fellowship with His heart of love for the precious lambs and sheep of His flock. Then shall we be in a condition of soul to give the portion of meat in due season. He alone knows exactly what His beloved people really need at all times. We may perhaps feel deeply interested in some special line of truth, and we may judge it to be the right thing for the occasion; but this might be quite a mistake. It is not the truth which interests us, but the truth which the people need which should be given; and for this we should ever wait upon our gracious Lord. We should look simply and earnestly to Him, and say "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to say to Thy beloved people? Give me the suited message for them." Then would He use us as His channels; and the truth would flow down from His loving heart into our hearts, and forth from us, in the power of His Spirit, into the hearts of His people.

Oh, that it were thus with all who speak and write for the Church of God! What results we might look for! What power! What growth! What manifest progress in the divine life! The true interests of the flock of Christ would then be thought of in all that was spoken or written. Nothing equivocal, nothing strange or startling would

then be sent forth. Nothing but what is sound and reasonable would flow from the lips or the pen. Sound speech that cannot be condemned, that which is good for the use of edifying would alone be sent forth.

May every beloved workman, throughout the length and breadth of the Church of God, take to himself the apostolic admonition, "Take heed unto thyself and to the doctrine.... for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee".

"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth"(2 Timothy 2:14-15.)

C.H.MACKINTOSH

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APPROVED UNTO GOD

I do not go to college  
And I own no high degree  
There is but one I truly crave  
And that's an A.U.G.  
There is no school upon the earth  
Which can this honour give;  
Tis given by the Lord to those  
Who in His classroom live.

His Spirit is the teacher  
And the textbook is His Word.  
When in His holy school I sit  
His still small voice is heard.  
And so though I shall never have  
The title of D.D.  
I trust that in Thy school, dear Lord,  
I'll earn an A.U.G.

## THE BATTLE IS REAL

"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8).

Paul admonished Timothy to "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). He urged the Christians at Ephesus to "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). Is the Christian to really fight? Is the child of God to actually "watch and be sober"? Are we truthfully called upon to "stand against" evil and the Evil One? Scripture answers these questions in the affirmative. Yet, the indifferent "Christianity" of our day has surrendered to the enemy without even a skirmish. We have lost our courage; we have put up our swords; our armour is rusty and dust-covered from non-use. The spiritual battle is on, but many are sound asleep. We know that ours indeed is "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains" (Joel 2:2). This is a day of gross spiritual darkness, a day of no morality for many, and a day of immorality and uncleanness for others. Many of us are feeling acutely what the Psalmist once said: "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law" (Psalm 119:53).

As never before, the people of God need arousing out of their sleep! We all need a trumpet blast in our ears, a moving of the Spirit of holiness in our hearts, and a mighty call of the gospel in our lives, urging and compelling us to turn back to the Lord of glory. This is no game we are involved in: it is war! "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of

this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). We must take our armour and put it on. We must fight. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

C.H.Spurgeon, the well-known Victorian preacher, began a monthly magazine in 1865, The Sword and the Trowel. In the very first issue Spurgeon clearly revealed his purpose in publishing this magazine, for the cover said, "A Record of Combat with Sin and Labour for the Lord". And in the opening article, Spurgeon related his aims and intentions: "We shall supply interesting reading upon general topics, but our chief aim will be to arouse believers to action, and to suggest to them plans by which the kingdom of Jesus Christ may be extended. To widen the bounds of Zion and gather together the outcasts of Israel is our heart's desire. We would sound the trumpet, and lead our comrades to the fight. We would ply the Trowel with untiring hand for the building up of Jerusalem's dilapidated walls, and wield the Sword with vigour and valour against the enemies of the truth".

This same zeal, consecration and determination is needed in these sinful times. We must have modern Gideons and Davids raised up of God to fight our contemporary Midianites and Goliaths (Judges 6; 1 Samuel 17). We must not give in to our enemies, give up the fight for truth, nor give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27). Again quoting Spurgeon, in the very last address he ever gave at his Pastors' College Conference, he encouraged all to fight for the gospel: "I hope that every man here wears the red cross on his heart, and is pledged to do and dare for Christ and for His cross, and never to be satisfied till Christ's foes are routed and Christ Himself is satisfied. Our fathers used to speak of 'The Cause of God and Truth', and it is for this that we bear arms, the few against the many, the feeble against the mighty. Oh to be found good soldiers of Jesus Christ!"



It seems we have forgotten what John Bunyan pictured for us in his allegories, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *The Holy War*; there is depicted battle scenes, battle scenes! The good soldiers of Jesus Christ are Christian, Faithful, Hopeful, Mr Great-heart and Mr Valiant-for-truth, to name a few. Their enemies were Apollyon, Giant Despair, Giant Maul, with many others. In the town of Mansoul there was Diabolous and his cohorts, defeated by the Son of Shaddai, Prince Immanuel. These stories picture for us what is actual in the real world. Our fight with sin and Satan is no fairy tale - the battle is real!

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:3-4). In that "Heroes of the Faith" chapter, Hebrews 11, we have mention of those who "stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens" (verses 33-34). "Others" had to undergo torture, "not accepting deliverance" (verse 35), still "others" were mocked and scourged, put in prison, stoned and slain with the sword (cf verses 36-37). But today we do not like to think about "enduring hardness" for Christ or having to be "valiant in fight". It would do us good to examine ourselves now with these words of Isaac Watts:

Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?

W.F.BELL

# THE EVANGELICAL DOWNGRADE

The average Christian has little or no conception of the stupendous nature of the events now moving across the screen of history. Divine providence is bringing to a climax the conflict of the ages, and the extraordinary, almost incredible collapse of religion throughout the world is the prelude to the last battle.

A rationalistic tide of unbelief swirls in every region of human thought, and has almost devoured the principal Protestant bodies, along with the Reformation. Science and art, music and letters, have alike been harnessed to the devil's chariot wheels; what is left of Protestantism and the Reformation as an organised system is either on the way back to Rome or on the way out to join the agnostic forces now in control of world thought and action.

There can no longer be any doubt that the final conflict is joined. And where is the evangelical testimony? The weak preaching, superficial Bible knowledge, outworn teaching methods, and the decisionism inherited from the revivalism of the last century are proving a barrier of straw to the forces now sweeping across the world.

Anglican bishops and nonconformist dignitaries are acting as spokesman for some of the most disgusting and demoralising legislation ever to emerge from Parliament. Heathenism and vice stalk, open and unashamed, throughout the land. Churches are emptying and denominations are disintegrating. It is the devil's "little season" with a vengeance (Revelation 20:3,7-10).

Yet there is very little evangelical preaching adequate to match the hour. A note of great and critical importance is missing from our pulpits. For the most part our evangelical sermonising breathes no sense of the awful

presence and greatness of God, and even where young men have been better taught than their fathers in the great Biblical doctrines, their preaching is without conviction and dynamic urgency. The Divine prerogative in salvation, the unsearchable wisdom and infinite holiness of God in His majestic control of evil and in the bringing to pass of His own counsel and pleasure, is too often presented in a style which is juvenile, hesitant and ineffective.

There is a tendency even amongst those of full doctrine of grace persuasion, to join with their lesser brethren in placing their hope in some sudden 'revival' which will fill their churches and solve their problems automatically. Others pin their faith on discussions of some hybrid thing which is coming to be known as "evangelical unity". All too few seem capable of realising that there is no substitute for mighty preaching, and that nothing will be done to match this hour unless the state of the evangelical pulpit is dealt with as a first priority.

Our British evangelical colleges (of which there never were so many) have had long enough to prove whether they can produce men adequate to the hour, but in too many cases they are preoccupied with a new and deadly form of evangelical scholasticism which tampers with university graduation based on modernistic and infidel theologies. The lessons of the past are ignored. Spurgeon's thunders against the "Downgrade" of his day are respectfully and reverently noted without any consciousness that we are far on in our own evangelical downgrade. It is not enough to produce a fresh generation of evangelical men who revere such names as Calvin and Owen and their contemporaries, if their whole souls have not been so claimed by the doctrines of divine and sovereign grace that, like the prophet Jeremiah, they cannot forbear; constrained by the power of the Word within them, they must shout and cry from the housetops, in the burning eloquence which sheer conviction imparts.

A glance at the programme subjects arranged from recent evangelical conferences shows the utter lack of vision amongst the compilers and the total lack of appreciation of the true situation facing the forces of truth and righteousness. To discuss forms of church government, the use of "mass media", departmental activity in churches and so forth, is so much meddling while shot and shell are falling on the lines of communication.

"The Place of God in History", "Divine Providence and the Control of Evil", "The Majesty of God and the Derisive Laughter of the Most High at the plans of the enemy", "The Divine Answer to the Last Apostasy", "The Cross of Christ no Afterthought in Creation", "Christ Reigning Now at God's Right Hand", - these and many more like them are the themes which alone are relevant in an age of total revolt.

Faithful men of past generations set out without any plans for a new church; with no revivalist notions; with no charismatic aids or aspirations; with no conference programme and no money. But they were great preachers, careful scholars, and distinguished for piety. They had an indomitable faith in God's Word, and great zeal and ability in expounding the entire range of Divine revelation. The rest followed in God's own time and way.

It is beyond the wit of any man today to declare, or even to discuss, what form the evangelical church may take in the grave crisis now upon us. One weapon we have - to preach the Word with conviction, zeal, earnestness and intensity. This is just what is not being done on a scale commensurate with the situation. It is not being done because young men and old men alike are not ready and not able. "They cannot preach", is the sad and tragic verdict written across many a pulpit.

The following principles should govern all study and all preparation for the declaration of the Holy and Divine Word:-

1. There is a governing and regulating principle which should control all study of the Word of God: it is THE PRIORITY OF GOD, in His greatness and Sovereignty, who made the world for Himself and directs and determines all causes and effects, has constructed by His wisdom all the phases of human history, has appointed and determined all conclusions, and will in the day that He has fixed from all eternity, wind up everything in judgment, righteousness and truth (Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26-31; Daniel 4:25-26, 35-36; Romans 11:33-36; Isaiah 46:10).

2. The Cross of Christ is not just an expedient or device to rescue undetermined numbers of souls from the wreck of human sin, but it is the grand purpose and means ordained by God from all eternity to display His wisdom, love, grace and power in the terms of the Everlasting Covenant of redemption made with the Son in the love of the Spirit before the world began (Ephesians 1:3-5; 3:9-10; Acts 2:23; Hebrews 13:20; John 3:35; Psalm 2; Psalm 110; John 17).

3. The purpose of preaching is to display the glory and majesty of God in His eternal justice and in His righteous extending of mercy in Christ, so that sinful man may repent, believe and worship in awe, love, reverence and submission. The gospel is not only that portion of truth relating peculiarly to conversion but the whole revelation of the grace of God to man, including all the soul's journey from death to life and from predestinated calling to final glory (Romans 1:15; 8:29-30; Acts 17:30; Isaiah 53:10-11; Psalm 145).

4. Evangelical worship (no so sadly impaired because of man-centred emphasis in preaching) can only be restored to standard by a new emphasis on God and upon the absolute glory and sovereignty of Christ (Hebrews 1:6-13; Revelation 5; Psalm 2:11).

CHARLES D. ALEXANDER

# EDITORIAL

"The powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1). "He putteth down one and setteth up another" (Psalm 75:7). It is important for everyone to realise that, "Whilst the lot is cast into the lap" (at a political election), "the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33). Why ungodly, immoral, even atheistic men and women are sovereignly ordained to high positions of governmental authority might be difficult for many to understand, but it is when nations and empires have so departed from the Law of God and their iniquity is come to the full (cf Daniel 8:23, Genesis 15:16), that such leaders occupy the seat of government. This is always a sure sign that God's judgments are abroad.

Where today are the statesmen, politicians and government officers who are marked by integrity, whose standards are upright and characters beyond reproach? The absence of such strong and honourable leadership brings in its wake tottering societies with all their attendant evils, now so painfully present. This world is fast ripening for the last and final judgment. Watchmen on the walls of Zion should "cry aloud and spare not" (Isaiah 58:1), that people prepare to meet their God (cf Amos 4:12).

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**VISITING PREACHERS**

Lord's Day:	17 April 1994	Mr D. Jones	Nailsea
	24 April 1994	Mr G. Thrussell	Truro
	15 May 1994	Mr G. Hawkins	Wattisham

Thursday: 12 May, 9 June, 14 July, Mr F. Stanbury Bow

**PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT**

Annual Bible Convention          Saturday, 6 August 1994  
Speaker: Mr A.T.McNabb          Dudley