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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

Lessons from John's Gospel chapter seventeen

"As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John 17:2)

The doctrine of the Trinity to mortals is a profound mystery; nevertheless it is an undeniable fact that the Scriptures set forth one God in a Trinity of Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These are to be distinguished but not divided; "*These three are one*" (1 John 5:7). The holy perfections and glorious attributes of the God of heaven as revealed in Holy Writ, apply specifically to the Almighty in the Trinity of His being. The Trinity in one is in focus when we are confronted with such majestic words as, *"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen"* (1 Timothy 1:17), *"Who 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: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen"* (1 Timothy 6:15,16). Although finite creatures cannot fathom this, through grace His elect accept it by faith and are fully assured of such truth.

This second verse of John chapter seventeen is unique and must be rightly understood. Here it is Christ the Mediator in view, the eternal Word, the Son, made flesh (cf John 1:14); God manifest in flesh (cf 1 Timothy 3:16); *"the Man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). As the Mediator, He was possessed of two natures, the human and the Divine, yet one personality and it was in **this** form that He re-entered heaven, having obtained eternal redemption for His people (cf Hebrews 9:12), and so He eternally remains. Upon His ascension into heaven as the **God-Man**, He was not only glorified as such, as stated

in John 17:1; He was also given **all power**. This was in fulfilment of the words of the prophet Daniel, "*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him, and there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*" (Daniel 7:13,14). Christ is here described as "*like unto the Son of man*", thus setting forth His mediatorial form as the 'God-Man', and it was in this capacity that He was crowned with glory and honour (cf Hebrews 2:9), and given universal dominion (cf Daniel 7:14).

In His eternal essence, or being, He ever was King; to this He has an unassailable right, but God the Father decreed that upon becoming Mediator (the uniting of His humanity with His Divinity) and completing His work of atonement, He should be given universal dominion; "*Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*" (Psalm 2:8). "*Ask of me*" saith the Almighty Father and in John chapter seventeen, as the 'Son of man', He does just that; "*Father, the hour is come*". He is now to accomplish the work assigned to Him on earth, after which He will return to heaven as the 'God-Man'; in this capacity he prays, "*Glorify Thy Son*" (John 17:1). He then goes on to remind His Father of that promise of power and dominion as previously referred to in both Daniel and the Psalms.

A closer examination of our Lord's prayer reveals that it was more than asking; He prays in full assurance as if He had already received an answer to His petition. Christ the Mediator knew that He **would** succeed totally in His great work; He **would** bruise the serpent's head; He **would** spoil principalities and powers; He **would** make a full discharge of sin to the absolute satisfaction of Divine justice. In

consequence, God the Father would not only exalt Him above all things, He would also be true to His promise of giving Him total dominion and power. Hence His words in this prayer, "*As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh*". There was no doubt whatsoever in the mind of the Mediator concerning the fulfilment of these prophecies. God had destined Christ to occupy a position of rightful authority over "*all flesh*", that is, the whole of the human race.

By consulting other sections of Holy Scripture, we find that His authority covers an even broader scope. "*Jesus Christ who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him*" (1 Peter 3:22). "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matthew 28:18). Christ is "*the head of all principality and power*" (Colossians 2:10). This signifies governmental dominion and jurisdiction over every realm. It is His prerogative to deal with, and to dispose of, according to His righteous judgment, as clearly stated in Holy Writ, "*Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth*" (Proverbs 8:14-16). He "*is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another*" (Psalm 75:7). "*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth*" (Psalm 2:9,10).

Sadly monarchs, rulers, judges and magistrates are not mindful of this for they rule by earthly wisdom and human assessment, failing to consult the Divine statute book, not realizing they are accountable to the supreme Judge. This is why empires crumble and fall, why wars and pestilences befall nations, for these are all means in His governmental hands whereby He breaks them and dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Little wonder the challenge is issued to the rulers of this world, "*Who would not fear Thee, O King of*

nations?" (Jeremiah 10:7). Yes, the One exalted at the right hand of God is King of nations, He has power over "*all flesh*".

By searching further into the Scriptures we also discover that this same glorious Person is "*King of saints*" (Revelation 15:3); He is "*head over all things to the Church*" (Ephesians 1:22). Not only is Christ the absolute and supreme ruler of the world, He is also sovereign Head of the Church. The world He rules with a rod of iron; the Church He guides with a golden sceptre. In the nations, He operates by His providential and governmental dealings; in the Church, by His testimonies and statutes. It is in this capacity, "*King of saints*" and "*Head over all things to the Church*" that verse two of John chapter seventeen is mainly focused. "*As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him*". The supreme work given to Christ the Mediator as He was set upon the throne of the universe, was to give eternal life to all of Adam's posterity who had been given to Him by the Father in His sovereign election. In His eternal counsel, God the Father appointed His Son to save a remnant of the human race and ultimately to conduct them to glory as many sons (cf Hebrews 2:10). But this remnant, like all sons of Adam were dead in sins, children of wrath even as others (cf Ephesians 2:1-3). Nevertheless, they were given to Christ to **save**, to **deliver** from wrath to come and to **bring** at last to the Father's house.

By taking the sins of all that number upon Himself He, the Mediator, endured all the wrath of God which was due to every one of the election of grace. Through this, God, who is infinitely holy, was able to be both just and the justifier of all who believe in Jesus (cf Romans 3:26). However, depraved man will not believe, and this is as true of elect sinners as it is of the reprobate. None of the human race would ever of themselves come to Christ, the Saviour of sinners in order to be saved from wrath to come and receive eternal life. Not one of us

by nature has any desire for Christ or for spiritual blessing. What is more, we are so blinded by the God of **this world**, that the gospel itself is foolishness to us; we are ensnared and taken captive by the Devil (cf 2 Timothy 2:26). How then could the wondrous atoning work of Christ ever become a reality to such blind, ignorant and rebellious creatures? Would the redemption procured by the Mediator be unavailing because of the depravity and rebellion of the sinner for whom it was accomplished? To such questions there is a resounding **No!**

Every elect soul is redeemed by the Mediator's precious blood and every elect soul will be effectually called and saved because of the truth of John 17:2. The Man, Christ Jesus, who sits at God's right hand has been given **all** power in heaven and in earth, even principalities and powers of darkness give way at His word. He has power over **all** flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him, that is all the elect; everyone for whom He died. The power which is vested in Christ is such that He will bring every individual sinner of the election of grace to know the reality of the eternal salvation which He has secured for them. The God of heaven has said, "*Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power*" (Psalm 110:3). "**Thy people**"; all of Adam's race who were chosen and given to Christ before the foundation of the world, who in the fulness of time were redeemed by Him. Every one of that number will in their respective generation, be "*made willing*". The most rebellious character will yield, the greatest antagonist will give way. The foulest sinner out of hell, if elect will break down and come like a lamb. In this way, Isaiah's prophecy will be spiritually fulfilled, "*And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together:*

"and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den" (Isaiah 11:5-8).

Eternal life is given to all classes and types of men and women. Vicious, Godless, blaspheming types as depicted by the wolf, the bear, the leopard and the lion; the more ordered and refined characters as represented by the cow and the ox; the gentle, portrayed by the kids, lambs and calves. Not only does the Mediator by His invincible power, bring all who are ordained to eternal life, to faith and salvation, He causes the many types to dwell harmoniously as one family in a church. Even the babe in Christ described as the sucking child, is perfectly at home with all the others in this wondrous circle of the people of God.

What a vast amount of truth is contained in these few words, "*Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him*".

This glorious theme cannot be adequately dealt with, without mentioning of 'The Everlasting Covenant', a covenant ordered in all things and sure (cf 2 Samuel 23:5). This is an eternal and an immutable treaty, drawn up before the foundation of the world and is an integral part of the truth of John seventeen, verse two. In this document the names of all God's elect were written, Christ was not only to atone for them; His great charge was to **give** unto them the life which He died to secure. The day of judgment will not come upon this world until the last person enrolled in that covenant has been saved. Such is the veracity of that deed that to whatever level this sin-benighted world may sink, as long as there is one sinner ordained to eternal life remaining to be called, the Lord's second advent will not take place. "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to usward, not willing that*

any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The long-suffering of the Lord is not toward the world, it is to "usward" - the elect. He is not willing that any of these should perish; the underlying Greek word here translated 'willing' means 'to will' or 'to determine'. Christ has determined, He has willed that none in the Covenant of Grace shall perish. Reverently does one say it, but Christ's 'Will' can never be revoked. 'Wills' today can be adjusted by what is known as a 'Deed of Variation', but not so with the 'Will' of the Mediator. He has determined and willed that all the elect should be brought to repentance, and no power on earth or hell can upset, thwart or vary that 'Will' and 'Testament'.

Wherever an elect person is, the arm of Christ's power will be put forth at His appointed time. When this takes place, no friend, relative, circumstance, influence or even government restriction will stop the sovereign act of salvation being imparted. Again does Isaiah sound forth the truth in majestic language; *"For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him: yea, I have made him"* (Isaiah 43:3-7).

When God would deliver His chosen people Israel out of Egypt's bondage, Pharaoh amassed all his forces in an attempt to hold those people and so thwart the purposes of the Almighty. Could it be done? Never! When it came to the point of Israel's emancipation, all Pharaoh's armies must perish. In order to secure Israel's liberty, God

did not hesitate for a moment to destroy all the host of Egypt in the Red Sea.

Thus it is with all those ordained unto eternal life. Tyrants may oppose the gospel, Godless rulers may instigate persecution, but if there are elect souls in such a place, the Man Christ Jesus has power over **all flesh** to reach those people. He can remove or change the ruling or opposing forces by the breath of His mouth. Wherever there is one of the election of grace, in whatever part of the world, the sovereign Christ at God's right hand will cause the gospel to reach that person; what is more, He will cause that person to respond to the gospel. His seed will come from the east, He will gather them from the west, His sons and daughters will come from the ends of the earth. Every one that is called by His name.

Let us all be assured of this fact, that every one whose name is in the Covenant of Grace will be brought to repentance and faith; not one will be missed in any part of the world in any generation, because God hath made Christ the Mediator to be head over all things to the Church. He has power over **all flesh** to accomplish this, and **He cannot fail.**

W.H.Molland

"Not one shall be missed at the final review,
Of numbers exceeding the drops of the dew;
Called, chosen and faithful, that host was the same,
The prophet, in vision beheld with the Lamb.

Sought out and brought home, not a hoof left behind,
By the methods which infinite Wisdom designed,
No seat shall be vacant, but each one be there,
His mansion to fill and His diadem wear".

John Kent

Holiness Demanded

"Unholiness men cannot enter heaven; it is impossible. Sooner might God die than unholiness live in His presence" (C.H.Spurgeon). "That opinion that personal holiness is unnecessary to final glorification is in direct opposition to every dictate of reason, to every declaration of Scripture" (Augustus Toplady).

The word 'holiness' actually scares many religious people. Sadly, in many cases, this is understandable, yet regrettable. The various interpretations people give to the word are largely the reasons for the confusion, coupled with the totally **unholiness** lives some live who loudly profess to be 'holy'. What some call 'holiness' is nothing more than self-righteousness, religious pride, and a 'holier-than-thou' attitude. Holiness is thought by many to mean simply a certain religious denomination. For others, to be 'holy' is to refrain from doing certain things, e.g. staying away from movie houses and world-sporting events, not using tobacco in any form, and a woman not using make-up or lipstick. While there certainly is a negative aspect of the subject, God's Word reveals that true holiness is far more than external taboos.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"* (Matthew 5:8). *"But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"* (1 Peter 1:15,16). In defining holiness, Arthur W. Pink makes these comments: "There must be that renovation of soul whereby our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God. There must be that impartial compliance with the revealed will of God and abstinence from evil which issues from faith and love. There must be that directing of all

our actions to the glory of God, by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel. There must be a spirit of holiness working within the believer's heart so as to sanctify his outward actions if they are to be acceptable unto Him in whom "*there is no darkness*". True, there is perfect holiness in Christ for the believer, but there must also be a holy nature received from Him". Pink has also said, "Evangelical holiness consists not only in external works of piety and charity, but in pure thoughts, impulses and affections of the soul".

Alexander Cruden gives us this excellent definition of holiness: "True holiness consists of a conformity to the nature and will of God, whereby a saint is distinguished from the unrenewed world, and is not actuated by their principles and precepts, nor governed by their maxims and customs". Cruden's words reveal that true holiness is both positive and negative. How we need to be balanced in all our views of doctrine. Especially is this so in this matter of personal holiness. Positively, holiness involves "a conformity to the nature and will of God". This conformity begins inwardly as a work of grace upon the heart, mind and will of sinners. To be conformed to the will of God is to be like Christ, live in daily obedience to God's revealed law, and to actually delight in glorifying God. Anything short of **heart conformity** to Christ Jesus is not holiness! We must love Him, obey Him, live for Him, long to be like Him. The Psalmist rightly describes the righteous person by stating: "*The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide*" (Psalm 37:31). There is no place for antinomianism (being opposed to the Law of God) in the life of the true Christian. Well did the apostle Paul say in Romans 7:22, "*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man*".

After this inward conformity, there must of necessity be an outward effect, which is the negative aspect of the subject. Cruden goes on to define holiness as that "whereby a saint is distinguished from the unrenewed world, and is not actuated by their principles and precepts,

nor governed by their maxims and customs". This is plain speaking. It does not require an expert commentator to figure out what this kind of language means. Cruden is simply stating the glorious fact that there is a difference between a child of God and a child of the Devil. And Scripture verifies this difference: "*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother*" (1 John 3:10). The wicked are unrenewed, not born from above, so they have no likeness at all to our heavenly Father. But those who are truly regenerate bear the likeness of their Father. The very image of Christ is stamped upon them, for to this end they were predestinated (cf Romans 8:29). This conformity to Christ begins in this life, and is not actuated by their (the world's) principles and precepts. How this is denied by many so-called preachers and Christians. Some say, "You must not be so negative". This statement should grieve all the true saints. How can anyone read and study the Bible, and not believe in being negative? The whole revelation of God's Word is that His people are different from the unsaved world. And how do we prove this difference except by being different? If we see men and women who do not even profess to love God, doing things that are contrary to Bible precepts, must we follow them or the Bible? Here is a man who uses dirty, suggestive language, all the while drinking his alcohol and smoking his cigarettes. Is this the example for the Christian to follow? Let all sane, sober-minded people answer negatively. Yet, we have multitudes of church people who see absolutely nothing wrong with any of the above characteristics of this man. If you want a drink, go ahead, so we are told. Drinking and smoking will not send you to hell, so what's the fuss? We all agree that these things within themselves are not the reasons people go to hell. However, the point is that we must not be "actuated" or called into action by what worldly people do. We must not abuse the doctrine of Christian liberty by making that doctrine teach that we are free to do as we please since we are justified by the grace of God through faith in Christ. This is

the very thing the apostle Paul refutes in the sixth chapter of Romans. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1,2). Note, "*dead to sin*". This means we have new life. "Nor governed by their maxims and customs". How this separates the sheep from the goats! We must be totally against any and all self-righteousness, or being a Pharisee. While we see the danger of a legalistic spirit invading a Christian's life, still we must not deny that God wills for His people to live differently from the ways of the ungodly. Let us appeal to no authority but the Word of God itself. May these blessed truths from God's inspired Book burn their way into our hearts:

"*Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way*" (Psalm 119:104).

"*Seek good, and not evil hate the evil and love the good*" (Amos 5:14,15).

"*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*" (Romans 12:2).

"*Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good*" (Romans 12:9).

"*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*" (Ephesians 5:11).

"*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Colossians 3:2).

"*Abstain from all appearance of evil*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

"*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*" (Titus 2:11,12).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

These ten passages leave no room for questions on the subject of the believer's attitude toward ungodliness and the world. The Christian is to set himself apart from the things and the people of the world-system about us. People living by the standards and principles of the world are not to shape or mould our lives. This does not mean we have no social dealings with worldlings, but it does mean we do not love their ways, nor act as they act.

Some would disagree with this interpretation of the subject of holiness, stating that *"all our holiness is in Christ alone"*. To this argument let it be carefully noted that the Hebrews 12:14 text states that the holiness under consideration is to be 'followed' or 'pursued'. The word *"follow"* refers to a hunter in pursuit of his game. This involves diligence and effort on the hunter's part, and this same perseverance is required of one truly seeking to please God in his life. And this pursuit of holiness is not just for a short while, but is a lifelong task.

Let C.H.Spurgeon expound Hebrews 12:14: "Certain theologians are so averse to the preaching of practical holiness, that they have tried to import into these words (*"holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"*) the idea of imputed righteousness. In imputed righteousness I glory, but it is not mentioned here. No, my hearer, it is utterly impossible that the text should mean anything of the kind, because you will observe that we are to *"follow"* it, whatever it may be. Now, we do not follow imputed righteousness, for as soon as we put our trust in Christ we are justified through His righteousness; it is not a grace to be followed, it is a boon possessed already by every Christian. This text deals with inward, personal holiness, and nothing

else. Imputed holiness is a gross misuse of terms; it is not scriptural, and it is a thorough perversion of this passage to force such a sense upon it. This is a holiness produced in us by the Holy Ghost, which we progressively manifest in our heart and lives".

How can anyone, seeking to properly exegete Scripture, disagree with Spurgeon on this text?

W.F.Bell

Recollections of Spiritual Work in the County of Devon in Generations Past cont'd

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old" (Psalm 44:1).

The main character in this reminiscence is Robert Gribble, a draper in Barnstaple in the very early years of the last century. For this glimpse into the working of God through this humble man, one is indebted to the writings of the late Mr G.H.Lang in his book "**God at Work on His Own Lines**". It is from this publication that extracts are taken.

In 1846 Gribble was guided to remove to Merriott in Somersetshire. The method of this guidance is instructive, and may help any other who needs the leading of God, even though one can never dictate to the Lord how He shall lead. Yet the state of the heart Godward must ever be the same, even a readiness to be led by Him without any reserve as to place or time, so that His will may be impressed upon the mind. He says:

"It has already been stated that toward the close of 1845 my mind became exercised about removal. The feeling was similar to that which I experienced at High Bickington seven years previous, arising

from a consciousness that my work in and near Coleford was completed and that I was to remove elsewhere. Conversions had been very rare in the last two years, and my hope was, that by going to some other locality where the gospel was but little known, I might be used for further blessing.

If I had been conscious of any motive of personal interest as actuating me in my desire to change, it would have cost me much more anxiety, from a fear of acting contrary to the mind of the Lord, and of being tempted like Lot, when he saw before him the well-watered plains of Jordan (cf Genesis 12:10,11). This however, was not my case. I have always felt the removal into a new locality where the ministry is much, if not wholly, confined to the poor classes, to be connected at first with much trial, arising from the fact of being thrown entirely among strangers, and also from an entire lack of social communion; in addition the trouble and cost of removal are by no means desirable.

I had on this occasion engaged to rent my cottage for three years, on account of the expense incurred by the landlord in making it convenient for me; and as only half that period had expired, I had the prospect of paying rent for two houses for some time to come; these things were all in favour of my remaining where I was, especially as I was truly happy in my intercourse with the Lord's dear people. But none of these things had the smallest effect in removing the impression, which I believe came from the Lord, that my work there was finished. I spoke of it as a certainty, though entirely ignorant as to where I might go; so that when a mason came to do a little work which he had for some time delayed, I told him he should have come before, as I was now going to leave the neighbourhood.

During the previous summer I had visited some friends in Somersetshire, near a village where there was a remarkable work of the Lord going on in conversion, and the thought had occurred to me

that at some future time I might be called into that locality. My visit was repeated in January 1846, and on this occasion a village was mentioned to me, the inhabitants of which were very numerous and the gospel was much needed. This place was entirely unknown to me, but the mention of it excited in my mind the most determined resistance. I can only account for this by supposing it to be the result of powerful temptation. After two days, during which I was most anxious to know the Lord's will, a sudden reaction took place in my mind, and I was led to believe that the village Merriott was the spot intended for me.

Within three months from the time when I first felt assured that I was to leave Coleford, I had removed to a village which I had not previously seen; nor had I spent six hours in the place until I came there to reside. Yet I had a confident persuasion that my steps were directed by the Lord. While on my way there I was told by one who well knew the place, that of fourteen hundred inhabitants not more than one hundred attended any church or chapel. This was perhaps an extreme statement, though the general indifference to spiritual things was such as almost seemed to warrant the statement. I was not discouraged at this, but expressed my sure confidence that the Lord had many souls to call to Himself in that place, and in this I was not mistaken. The prospect however, was at first very gloomy. Like most other large villages where the light of the gospel had shone but feebly, the grossest immorality abounded, with almost heathen ignorance. Many of the inhabitants were known thieves; and imprisonment and transportation for offences of this character were not uncommon. An aged man, who was once a smuggler, and had both a son and a grandson transported for theft, told me that he had been to no place of worship since he was married. Another said that except at his marriage he had never been inside any church, chapel or school in his life. This may give some idea of the place where I was to reside

eight years, and of the people among whom, after a short acquaintance I was, in spite of their depravity, pleased and content to dwell".

What a Paul-like gospeller was this! Ready to stay long enough to build up churches, with men raised up to carry on the ministry, then eager to go to regions beyond where Christ was little known or unknown. A heart dissatisfied when conversions ceased, concluding that his work in that region was done. A mind sensitive to the moving of the Spirit, yet careful not to move without His leading. Assurance gained as to the will of God, then openly announcing its course and acting accordingly. Joy in invading the Devil's territory, undaunted by heathen ignorance and wickedness, by spiritual isolation, by keen opposition. Confidence in the purpose of the Lord to save sinners and in the power of the message to effect this eternal result. Readiness to endure hardness and to trust his Master for temporal supplies. What a different course and spirit was this to touring around assemblies and churches already established, where work is easy and monetary support reasonably likely. What a vastly different life to working a tent or Bible carriage supplied and owned by others, who bear the responsibility and in measure direct the effort. No wonder that the faithful Lord justified the faith of His servant and that here also there were numerous and striking conversions, with other evident interpositions of the power of God.

Conclusion and Contrast

Every page of Robert Gribble has spiritual value, but the foregoing will suffice to depict a workman who needed not to be ashamed, a servant such as our Lord loves and honours. He shall give his own summary of his service:

"The preceding chapters contain a brief detail of village labour in the gospel from 1815 to 1847. My object in publishing this memorial of past service will only be partially accomplished if it merely tends

to interest or amuse those who read it, or even if it should only excite some increasing desire to further the work of the Lord. It is my hope that the Lord's dear people may be led to weigh well the facts here set before them, in reference to the manner in which He has sustained a very unworthy instrument in that work for twenty five years, and also the measure of blessing with which He has been pleased to accompany his simple and unpretending statement of gospel truth.

The Christian reader is requested to notice the following facts in reference to that period.

1. During these twenty five years my service to the Lord has been entirely among the poorest classes, and in places where there had previously been a very small measure of gospel light.
2. Within that time six companies of saints have been gathered into communion, and still continue to meet in the name of the Lord Jesus. A very large proportion of these were persons newly converted, and besides these there are three other companies in places where it was my privilege first to labour and prepare the way. Since this paragraph was written I have received tidings of the prosperity of the Lord's work, and of fresh conversions in four of these places.
3. All these places have from the commencement been supplied with ministry raised up by the Lord in their respective neighbourhoods. Of the ten brethren who have been called into ministry, seven are the fruit of the gospel, the other three having been converted before.
4. During these twenty five years no public collection has been made in any of these places for any purpose whatever; all contributions for poor saints, and for necessary expenses connected with our worship, being given on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2); nor has help been at any time solicited, save from the Lord's people.
5. As my labours have been entirely among those who were unable to care for my temporal need, I have been cast on the Lord for nearly my whole support, for which He in His rich grace has abundantly provided; any occasional pressure causing trial of faith having only

tended to make the deliverance more sweet and precious when in due time it arrived.

6. During these twenty five years I have not purchased any article of the smallest value for which I had not the money to pay.

7. Neither for myself, nor for any brother helping in the work, nor for the erection of any of the chapels, has application been made for help to any religious society.

8. The conversions which the Lord has graciously granted as the fruit of the gospel in the six places I have alluded to (besides those which were granted in the first thirteen years at Tawstock) cannot be less than from two to three hundred; and if to these are added the souls converted in my first place of service, the whole number may be reckoned at not less than from three to four hundred; and the ministry for these has cost nothing.

Surely it is not needful to say more to prove that simple and devoted labour for Christ, if entered upon in dependence on Himself alone, and persevered in with a single eye to His glory, will be crowned with abundant success. It will not indeed be recognized by men (who will praise thee if thou doest well to thyself); but the path of self-denial, if it be one of reproach, will also be that of true blessing; for it is that which the Master has trod before us. He has sanctioned it by His example; and He still says to us in His Word, "*If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour*" (John 12:26).

There are still many dark places in this land where the gospel is needed and where its glad tidings would be joyfully received; but the labourers are few. Should any faithful servant of Christ feel led, by the statements contained in this volume, to give himself to such a work, by seeking to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ in places where He is not yet known, this brief detail of village labour will not have been issued in vain".

Editorial

There is a notion which seems to be gathering momentum, that Christ died for sinners, only that they might be saved from hell, delivering them from the wrath to come (cf 1 Thessalonians 1:10) and that having received pardon for their sins, there is little else that matters. This is a lamentably deficient view of God's salvation. True Christians are "*created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:10). Christ "*gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*" (Titus 2:14). Both in election and redemption, **good works** are in focus. The sovereign power given to the Redeemer to effectually give to every elect soul eternal life, as set out in the first article of this magazine, was not primarily that they should escape judgment; it was that those chosen should be holy before Him, living to the praise of the glory of His grace (cf Ephesians 1:4-6). This demands holiness of walk as outlined in W.F.Bell's composition p10-15 of this edition. Quite recently, the writer was passed a cassette tape in which the speaker commented upon the subject of justification, stressing the finished propitiatory work of the Mediator, by which God's justice was fully satisfied and His righteous wrath avenged. He then with tremendous emphasis quoted certain verses from Romans chapter eight, saying that none could lay anything to the charge of God's elect, none could condemn, for there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. To this he added that it matters not what sins we have committed, what sins we are now committing, or what sins we may yet commit, there is now no condemnation; all is covered, all is forgiven. The believer is absolved from the law, he is now under grace. This is a fearful perversion of truth. We dare not continue in sin that grace may abound. The believer is to be dead to sin (cf Romans 6:1,2); as aided by the indwelling Spirit, he is to "*walk in*

newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Having become the servant of God, his fruit is to be unto holiness (cf Romans 6:22). Let all beware of teaching which so stresses forgiveness and justification, that sanctification is excluded. The walk of the believer is of paramount importance. He is to "*cleave unto the Lord*" (Acts 11:23); hold fast his profession (cf Hebrews 4:14); "*Walk worthy of the Lord being fruitful in every good work*" (Colossians 1:10). This is the perseverance of the saints and by it is their calling and election made sure. In this, every Christian is to be diligent (cf 2 Peter 1:10).

"Stand up, my soul, shake off thy fears,
And gird the gospel armour on;
March to the gate of endless joy,
Where thy great Captain-Saviour's gone.

Then let my soul march boldly on,
Press forward to the heavenly gate;
There peace and joy eternal reign,
And glittering robes for conquerors wait".

Isaac Watts

Visiting Preachers D.V.

Lord's Days

4 October 1998	Dr S.S.Short	(Weston-Super-Mare)
25 October 1998	Dr J.Hulett	(Wool)
6 December 1998	Mr G.Thrussell	(Truro)