

July - September 2012

The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

Part 5

“And they shall make an ark ...And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.”
(Exodus 25:10-15)

The construction and contents of the Ark of the Covenant, the central item in the furniture of the Tabernacle, was described in the previous article. However, more detail of its design and fabrication remains to be considered. Four ‘rings’ of solid gold were cast, and attached to the Ark, at the corners. A pair of corresponding gilded staves was also made which could be inserted, each one sliding into two of the rings on either side of the Ark. The purpose of these staves or handles was for transportation. The Ark was not a piece of fixed equipment, but designed to be carried. In the wilderness, wandering from place to place, that precious vessel was to accompany the Hebrews wherever they went.

Israel had been redeemed out of Egypt. They had been saved from the wrath of God by the blood of the Paschal lamb, and delivered from sore bondage. It is important to register however that the selfsame redemption which emancipated them from Egyptian slavery placed them in a desert, where new trials and other forms of trouble awaited. They now had other enemies, and new sources of danger confronting them.

There were the Amalekites, Amorites and Midianites, who, along with numerous tribes of the area would seek to impede their progress to the

Promised Land. There was a trackless waste ahead of them with its attendant toils and weariness, scorching sun and blinding sand. Nor was this all, for in such a hostile environment, beset with many obstacles, Israel would learn something about themselves – the latent rebellion and unbelief of their own hearts which would manifest itself amidst the rigours of the wilderness.

All these foes within and without would have to be faced up to and addressed, for this company was the Lord's people; redeemed and delivered; called out by a holy God; a people bearing His name; to be distinguished by holiness, and to live to His glory. Jehovah was well aware of Israel's need. He knew that of themselves they were not sufficient for these things. But He was never going to leave them. The Ark was the symbol of His presence, and was so constructed that wherever **they** went, **it** went also. Whether combating heathen armies, caught up in a sand-storm, or cast down by doubts and fears, the Ark would always be in the midst of them. It was their defence against the aggressor, their deliverer from every opposing force, their comfort in trial, disappointment and distress.

What symbolism is here! For let it be remembered that the Ark of the Covenant is a great type of **Christ**. What application there is also to the present day, since the Old Testament people of God serve as a type of the New Testament Church. Israel's history is but a picture of the Christian's experience.

The redemption that is in Christ Jesus has once and for all freed the believer from the wrath of God due to sin. "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). All who are in Christ have passed from death unto life, spiritually speaking. But the Christian is still in the world, and the world is at enmity with God, so constitutes a hostile environment for the believer. To the true child of God, the world is a wilderness: barren, unsatisfying, devoid of

spiritual good or nourishment, bringing only sorrow to the soul. Further, the Lord's people still have to contend with the flesh – that old nature which warreth against the new – so clearly expressed by Paul: “*For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do*”, “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (Romans 7:19, 24).

Nor is this all – for in addition there is Satan and his hosts of evil spirits who beset the Christian's pathway; unseen principalities and powers. Invisible they maybe, but nevertheless very real, and ever watching, ready to take advantage of a weak moment or temporary lapse and attack, always with a view to overthrowing and marring the believer's testimony, thus bringing dishonour upon God.

However, just as the Ark was to constantly accompany Israel of old, so Christ, the Great High Priest, has His sovereign eye perpetually upon His people, and moreover is **with them** through all their pilgrimage. “*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*” (Hebrews 13:5) is His promise. Just as the Ark travelled precisely the same route as the people, so too the Saviour has walked Himself the whole pathway of human experience. He has been weary; He has been sad; He has shed tears; He has been tested. He “*was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). He is fully acquainted with all the wilderness journey, as the hymn-writer put it:

“Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations are,
For He has felt the same.” (Watts)

Is there failure in our lives? He is present to restore. Is there weakness? He is ever near to strengthen and sustain. Is there conflict? He is able to deliver. Is there ignorance? He is there to guide. He

who stated with Divine authority, “*All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*” added to it this further promise: “*lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen*” (Matthew 28:18, 20). Although the saints remain in a wilderness experience of conflicts and dangers, living a life which is totally different from that which they previously knew in the world, they have with them One who is invincible, whose power surpasses their helplessness.

“Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of Heaven,
Feed me ‘til I want no more.” (Williams)

“*Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me*” (Psalm 50:15). This is what happens when a poor, troubled child of God calls upon the Almighty for refuge and deliverance: God comes immediately to their aid, and by it He is greatly glorified. Every fresh difficulty, every recurring temptation only provides another occasion for a manifestation of the wisdom, grace and might of Him who, “*Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end*” (John 13:1).

Israel was a perverse people, and on account of their own sin and folly, they were sentenced to wander in the wilderness for forty years. This prolonged period was a judgment upon their rebellion and unbelief in God. Yet still the Ark went everywhere with them; never must it rest, as long as they were travelling. What does the Scripture say? “*The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it*” (Exodus 25:15). The Ark must be mobile, always ready to move wherever the tribes went. Although the people were often disobedient

and foolish, they were still God's people, therefore He bore with them, never withdrawing His presence.

What comfort there is in this! Not that such truth gives the Christian licence to sin, or liberty to do as they please. God forbid! Nevertheless, when there is failure (and the best of saints are still prone to it), none should fear that the Lord's grace is exhausted, or that His companionship is forfeited, or His sympathy lessened. No – the 'staves are still in the rings of the Ark'. With a caring and vigilant eye, He marks the path of every one of His children. Though in person He is in heaven, His heart and thoughts are here. Never will He cease to watch, and by His Spirit accompany the Church below, until that time when He presents it, "*to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*" (Ephesians 5:27).

The staves remained in the Ark throughout the wilderness journey, and were not withdrawn, until the Israelites reached the Promised Land, and the temporary tent of meeting, the Tabernacle, was superseded by a permanent place – the Temple in Jerusalem. "*Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the Lord was finished: and Solomon brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God... And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims: For the cherubims spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. And they drew out the staves of the ark, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day*" (2 Chronicles 5:1, 7-9).

There was no further need of the staves, for they had arrived in a position of permanency. So will it be in that glorious day when all the ransomed Church of God is gathered into heavenly Zion; the believers'

inexplicably wonderful hope. Then will all His blood-washed people be forever with the Lord. No more wanderings; no more trials; no more temptations; no more failures; no more disappointments. All such tribulations will be forever done away. These are just a few of the tremendous things spoken concerning the saints' final destination. Let the voice of Holy Scripture be heard: "*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new*" (Revelation 21:1-5).

These words describe the ultimate fulfilment of that which was prefigured by the removal of the staves from the Ark. Thus at the the great consummation of all things, when the Church of the Redeemed is eternally settled, God will dwell with them, and they with Him; for ever and ever in the permanency and perfection of the heavenly realm; in His immediate and actual presence.

Until that day, the staves will not be removed; the blessed Lord and Saviour will never forsake His people in the wilderness. Though they fail Him on times, He will never fail them, "*the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest*" (Joshua 1:9). May every reader be enabled to live in the good of these promises, until faith gives way to sight; until our "*eyes shall see the king in his beauty*" (Isaiah 33:17). "*And so shall we ever be with the Lord*" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

W. H. Molland
(transcribed by R. J. Steward)

SUPPLIES IN THE DESERT

When Israel by Divine command
The pathless desert trod;
They found, though 'twas a barren land,
A sure resource in God.

A cloudy pillar marked their road,
And screened them from the heat;
From hardened rocks their water flowed,
And Manna was their meat.

Like them we have a rest in view,
Secure from adverse powers;
Like them we pass a desert through,
But Israel's God is ours.

Yes, in this barren wilderness
He is to us the same;
By His appointed means of grace,
As once He was to them.

His Word a light before us spreads
By which our path we see;
His love a banner o'er our heads,
From harm preserves us free.

Lord, 'tis enough; I ask no more,
These blessings are Divine;
I envy not the worldling's store,
If Christ and heaven are mine.

John Newton (1725 – 1807)

THE WILDERNESS AND THE HIGHWAY

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose ... And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” (Isaiah 35:1, 10)

There is no class of persons who disbelieve God’s Word more than God’s children at times do; and, strange as it may appear, and criminal as it is, they frequently labour harder to make God a liar than they do to prove His Word true. They take their feeling sense of being such loathsome, hard-hearted, unbelieving sinners as a proof that God will have nothing to do with them; whereas, if it were not for such poor, groaning, mourning souls, we should not know what to do with one part of the Bible. Here God says, *“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose”* (Isaiah 35:1). Now, if there were no deserts, no wildernesses [in our experience], what could we make of such a passage?

But it is added, *“It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing”* (v. 2). Come, poor, barren desert; poor, waste wilderness; the promise is made, and it will assuredly be fulfilled. In the end thou shalt rejoice, and see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. The hands of your faith may be so weak that you cannot lay hold of God’s promises; your knees so feeble that you cannot bend them in sweet communion with God; your hearts so fearful that you are continually doubting and fearing that God will have anything to do with you, and cannot believe there is any blessing for you. But, by and by, waters shall break out in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Then shall your blind eyes be opened, and your deaf ears unstopped; then shall you be healed of your lameness and shall leap as a hart and

your dumb tongue sing. And the parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water. And a highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called The Way of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those.

Now what does that mean, ‘the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those’? I will tell you. It does not say the unclean shall not touch it, but, shall not pass over it. So that, the moment a poor unclean sinner is brought by faith to put a single foot on this way, that moment he becomes clean. The way itself makes him clean; and therefore, he passes along it, pure in the sight of God. And as this way makes clean all who come upon it, there shall be none of the lions of hell there, nor the ravenous beasts of the world; but the **redeemed** shall walk there; and they shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

“Dear Father bless us with this grace,
While travelling through this wilderness;
Our sonship still to keep in view,
And honour Thee in all we do.”

William Gadsby (1773 – 1844)

It was with great joy and thankfulness to God that the Church at North Road received into membership Mr R. D. Steward (Snr.) and Mrs C. Steward, on Lord’s Day 13th May. Their association with the fellowship dates back to the mid-1990s, and has increased through the intervening years. In recent months, the Lord sovereignly overruled circumstances to enable their relocation to Bideford from the West Midlands. The united prayer of the Church is that Mr and Mrs Steward will be blessed and made a blessing, in the midst of this congregation.

SPIRITUAL INSOLVENCY

“*There is no new thing under the sun*” (Ecclesiastes 1:9), and financial debt has been the scourge of individuals and nations since earliest history. In the late eighteenth century, following decades of international conflict, an economic crisis existed in Britain which prompted the clergyman Augustus Toplady to compose the following article, as a series of pertinent questions and answers. The illustrations and measures used are antiquated, but the situation is very familiar. By contrast, the magnitude of debt in the United Kingdom today, after two more centuries of inflation, is approximately ten thousand times the figure quoted by Toplady in 1775. The spiritual applications however, are timeless, eternal, and continually relevant. *(Editor)*

The National Debt

Q. Supposing this debt to be 130 millions of pounds sterling at present (although it is much more), and that it was all to be counted in shillings: that a man could count at the rate of 100 shillings per minute, for twelve hours each day till he had counted the whole; how much time would he take in doing it?

A. 98 years, 316 days, 14 hours, and 40 minutes.

Q. The whole of this sum being 2,600 millions of shillings and the... breadth of a shilling being one inch, if all these shillings were laid in a straight line close to one another's edges, how long would the line be that would contain them?

A. 41,035 miles; which is 16,035 miles more than the whole circumference of the earth.

Q. Supposing the interest of this debt to be only $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, per annum, what does the whole annual interest amount to?

A. 4,550,000 pounds sterling.

Q. When will the government be able to pay the principal?

A. When there is more money in England's treasury alone than there is at present in all Europe.

Q. And when will that be?

A. Never.

Spiritual Improvement of the Foregoing

Q. What is the moral law of God?

A. The transcript of His own most holy nature, and the standard of human purity and obedience.

Q. Will this law make any allowance for human infirmity, or admit any abatement of the perfect conformity which it demands?

A. It makes no allowance for the former, nor will it dispense with a single grain of the latter.

Q. How does that appear?

A. It appears from the undeniable current of Scripture: where the language of the law is, "*Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect*" (Matthew 5:48). "*Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them*" (Galatians 3:10). The indispensable requisition is, "*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*" (Luke 10:27). Hence, in the eye of the law and the estimation of the Law-Giver, the risings of wrath are tantamount to murder; the calling any man a fool exposes us to the penalty of hell-fire; an impure thought brings us under the condemnation of actual adultery (cf Matthew 5:22-28).

Q. What is the grand inference from these alarming premises?

A. That inference which the apostle terms an evident one, and evident indeed it is, “*that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God*” (Galatians 3:11). For a single breach of the law renders us guilty of the whole (cf James 2:10). And one idle word lays us open to the vengeance of God, according to the tenor of the covenant of works. (cf Matthew 12:36).

Q. Supposing a person was to break the law but once in 24 hours; to how many would his sins amount in a life...?

A. If he was to fail in moral duty but once a day his sins at ten years of age would amount to 3,650. At twenty years’ end, the catalogue would rise to 7,300... At eighty, to 29,200.

Q. Is there a single minute from the first of our existence to the very article of death, wherein we come up to the whole of that inward and outward holiness which God’s all-perfect law requires?

A. Most certainly not.

Q. Of how many sins then is each of the human race guilty, reckoning only at the rate of one sin for every minute?

A. At ten years old we (according to that method of calculation) are guilty of no fewer than 5,256,000 sins. At twenty, of 10,512,000 ... At eighty, of 42,048,000.

Q. When shall we be able to pay off this immense debt?

A. Never. Eternity itself, so far from clearing us of the dreadful arrear, would only add to the score by plunging us deeper and deeper even to infinity. Hence the damned will never be able to satisfy the justice of the Almighty Creditor.

Q. Will not divine goodness [reduce] the debt by accepting less than we owe?

A. Impossible. Justice, holiness and truth, will and must have their own, even to the very uttermost farthing. God Himself (with profoundest veneration be it spoken) must... renounce Himself, 'ere He can forego His essential attributes, and repeal His inviolable law... by making void [its] claims and threatenings.

Q. Who then can do us any good in this respect?

A. Not all the angels in heaven, nor all the men that ever did or ever shall exist. Others cannot help us, nor can we help our own selves.

Q. If so, are we not lost, without remedy and without end?

A. In ourselves we are. But (sing, O heavens!) God's own arm brought salvation!

Q. How so? What is there wherewith to counterbalance such an exceeding and astonishing weight of guilt?

A. "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law; being made a curse for us*" (Galatians 3:13). This will not only counter-balance, but infinitely over-balance, all the sins of the whole [company of believers].

Q. If the personal short-comings and misdoings of each sinner in particular amount to so vast a multitude, who can calculate the extent of the whole debt, the entire aggregated sum, which (abstracted from her union with Christ) lies on the Church at large, that elect nation whom He has redeemed from among men?

A. The arithmetic of angels would be unable to ascertain the full amount. O Thou covenanting, Thou incarnate, Thou obeying, Thou bleeding, Thou dying, Thou risen, Thou ascended, Thou interceding Son of God! Not all the seraphs Thou hast created, not all the innumerable saints Thy love hath ransomed, will be able to comprehend, much less to display, along the endless line of eternity

itself, the length, the breadth, the depth, the height, of a sinner's obligations to Thee.

- Q.** If, on one hand, we are each constrained to cry out with the believers of old – “*Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified*” (Psalm 143:2); “*how should man be just with God? If He will contend with him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand*” (Job 9:2-3); “*mine iniquities ... are more than the hairs of mine head*” (Psalm 40:12); “*Forgive us our debts*” (Matthew 6:12); ‘cast all our sins into the depths of the sea’ (cf Micah 7:19) – what has faith to say?
- A.** Faith, on the other hand, can reply in the very words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, “*the blood of Jesus Christ... cleanseth us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7); and, “*there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:1). So that we may sing:

“Believing sinners free are set,
For Christ hath paid their dreadful debt” (Watts)

We may add, in the words of another sweet singer in Israel:

“Who now shall urge a second claim?
The Law no longer can condemn;
Faith a release can show;
Justice itself a friend appears;
The prison-house a whisper hears,
‘Loose him, and let him go!’” (Stennet)

- Q.** What return can believers render, to the glorious and gracious Trinity, for mercy and plenteous redemption like this?
- A.** We can only admire and bless the Father, for electing us in Christ, and for laying on Him the iniquity of us all; the Son, for taking our nature and our debts upon Himself, and for that complete

righteousness and sacrifice whereby He redeemed His spiritual Israel from all their sins; and the co-equal Spirit, for causing us (in conversion) to feel our need of Christ, for inspiring us with faith to embrace Him, for visiting us with His sweet consolations by shedding His love abroad in our hearts, for sealing us to the day of Christ, and for making us to walk in the path of His commandments.

Augustus Toplady (1740 – 1778) *abridged*

Forgiveness is one of the first mercies God bestows upon repentant sinners; He alone can do this; “*Who can forgive sins but God only*” (Mark 2:7). This might appear to be an enigma, how a holy, righteous, immutable God can act in this way. The debt is there, the writ and warrant have been issued, and the sentence has been pronounced, “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*” (Ezekiel 18:20). How then can God forgive the sinner in this way and discharge the guilty? What of the debt? What of Divine justice? What of the character of the Almighty? It must be stated categorically that in this matter of the forgiveness of sin, there is no overlooking the debt on the part of Almighty God. Divine justice must be fully met and those under sentence will know no release until the uttermost farthing is paid (cf Matthew 5:26).

It is on the basis of substitution and suretyship that God forgives the debt. **Another** has paid to the last farthing. It was for the very reason of substitution that the Son of God left heaven and came into this world as a man, that He might live a perfect life vicariously, and die the sinner’s death substitutionally. God: “*laid upon Him the iniquity of us all*” (Isaiah 53:6); Christ “*bore our sins in His own body on the tree*” (1 Peter 2:24). He came into this world for the express purpose of putting away the sins of repentant sinners by the sacrifice of Himself (cf Hebrews 9:26).

W. H. Molland

THE COST OF REDEMPTION

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.” (1 Peter 1:18-21)

There are certain verities in the Christian Faith of which the saints need regularly reminding – matters of such magnitude and import that they demand a constant place in their sanctified thoughts. The Epistles of Peter were written with this purpose and end in view, “*in both which [states the inspired author] I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance*” (2 Peter 3:1); “*I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth*” (2 Peter 1:12). The familiar yet fundamental truth reiterated in this passage, although well-known to every believer, is **the cost of their redemption** – which price can best be measured by the coinage in which it was paid, namely, **the precious blood of Christ**.

The meaning of ‘precious’ in this context is ‘valuable’, ‘costly’, ‘honoured’, ‘of great reputation’. By way of contrast (and not comparison) Peter makes reference to silver and gold, commonly called ‘precious metals’. In monetary terms, these materials have great worth, and are a standard against which national currencies may be valued. They are substances famed for their purity, beauty and resistance to corrosion or depreciation. And yet they are here described as merely “*corruptible things*” – however durable or long-lasting; still a part of this fallen world-scene which soon will perish.

They are not worthy to be compared to the blood of Christ, which is precious beyond any weight of gold or silver.

From whence comes the preciousness of Christ's blood? What imparts to it such, inestimable, immeasurable, incomparable worth?

His blood is precious, because it is **Divine**. The Lord Jesus Christ, through whose veins it flowed, is Divine. He is very God of very God. He who was 'manifested in these last times for us' is pre-existent, uncreated, the second person of Immortal God, having neither beginning nor end of days. **His** is the blood under consideration. Thus Paul rightly describes: "...*the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood*" (Acts 20:28). He was God, and was with God (cf John 1:1); God's special choice; His appointed, anointed servant; the Christ. He was indeed a sacrificial lamb, but more – He is **the Lamb of God**, belonging to and beloved of the Father. How precious then must His blood be, who was Himself **God's** (cf 1 Corinthians 3:23)?

His blood is precious, because it is **pure**. The value of many earthly or man-made products increases with their purity. The fitness of every sacrificial offering depended on its goodness and wholesome nature. By how much more is Christ pure, who is the Lamb without blemish or spot, "*who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*" (Hebrews 7:26)? A more perfect, peerless sacrifice could not be found in earth or heaven.

His blood is precious, because it is **ancient**. It is well known that many human antiquities and heirlooms derive their worth from their great age. The early Jewish converts to whom Peter primarily wrote placed much store upon the aberrant teachings of their elders, simply by virtue of the fact that they were born of long tradition. What shall we say of the 'antiquity' of the Saviour, and His shed blood? He "*verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world*", beyond and before

which it is impossible to reach. He is ‘from everlasting, to everlasting’, the Ancient of Days.

His blood is precious, because it is **limited**. That which is unique or rare commands the highest price. As a particular commodity becomes less widely available and consequently harder to obtain, so its market value increases. The blood of Christ is likewise limited – not in its power or efficacy – but in its **application**. There is no redundancy in the sacrifice He made. There is nothing surplus to requirements in the sufferings which He endured. There is no surfeit or excess. Christ shed His blood for a peculiar people – **His** people – all who in time will believe upon His name. The sentence executed upon Him, the punishments inflicted, the blood, sweat and tears exacted, corresponded in precise measure to all the sins of His elect people – to the very last drop. *“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious”* (1 Peter 2:7).

His blood is precious, because it is **lasting**. A metal may be prized for its durability, but the best and purest of ingots will ultimately tarnish or oxidise; and none of these material things will outlast the created realm, which is destined for destruction. But the blood of Christ, and its effects, transcend time itself. It is truly **incorruptible**. His wounds, manifested to Thomas and the disciples after the resurrection, were made apparent before the Father after His ascension. Like the High Priest of old, but with infinitely more personal involvement, “He sprinkles with His blood, The mercy seat above”. His shed blood is the remedy for His peoples’ sin; it is the token of wrath propitiated and God reconciled; it is their title and guarantee to heaven. So long-lasting is the blood of Christ, that it will keep all His people secure in Glory for evermore. And they will sing in grateful response that eternally new song: *“Thou art worthy ... for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”* (Revelation 5:9).

His blood is precious, because it is **measured in souls**. In the absence of a monetary system, the value of goods or services may be reckoned by comparison with one another, on a relative scale. One item of a particular description might be considered to be worth two of another kind, and so on. Thus an ‘exchange rate’ is established. With the blood of Christ, souls are redeemed from sin and the curse; the never-dying souls of God’s people are bought back by virtue of that blood. And what, in turn, is a soul worth? “*Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Mark 8:37). If the asking price were to be set at ‘the whole world’, that would be insufficient. A single soul is of greater value than the earth itself – but Christ’s blood has redeemed **all** His people, **body and soul**, for **eternity**. Then it is precious beyond telling, or thought, or human conception.

How blessed indeed are those who can say with the Apostle ‘forasmuch as I know I am redeemed – not with corruptible things – but with the precious blood of Christ’; what a joy to have the fact of it brought constantly to our remembrance!

R. J. Steward

“What mighty sum paid all my debt
When I a bondman stood,
And has my soul at freedom set?
‘Tis Jesus’ precious blood.

What voice is that which speaks for me
In heaven’s high court for good,
And from the curse has made me free?
‘Tis Jesus’ precious blood.

What theme, my soul, shall best employ
Thy song before thy God,
And make all heaven to ring with joy?
‘Tis Jesus’ precious blood.”

(Irons)

EDITORIAL

There was amongst Christian of past generations a great desire and interest to ‘improve’ situations and circumstances that they met with in daily life – that is to say – to derive spiritual lessons from their everyday experiences; to seek some benefit for their souls even from that which was secular or commonplace. It is a practice sadly neglected today, but one which believers, concerned for their own growth in grace, would do well to recover.

Consider, for example, how well the present economic depression serves to emphasise the Saviour’s words: “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Matthew 6:19-21). The Scriptures make no secret of the uncertainty associated with earthly riches (cf 1 Timothy 6:17) – material wealth is subject to numerous hazards. The deleterious effects of moth and rust are illustrative of the many insidious process whereby one’s financial reserves may depreciate in value, becoming almost worthless. Years of prudence and conscientious ‘laying up’ may ultimately prove a ‘labour in vain’, for reasons beyond the individual’s control.

In marked contrast to this unpredictable scenario on earth, the Lord speaks of the spiritual counterpart, and exhorts that we should instead transact with heaven, making deposits there; where financial crises cannot reach, nor depreciation ever occur. There are many ways in which such ‘treasure’ is installed: any service rendered unto God upon earth, whether in prayer or praise or obedience, constitutes it. Any word spoken, or deed done ‘as unto the Lord’ here below, whether openly or in secret, is registered in His presence above.

It is important for the saints to realise that the least mite of spiritual treasure invested in heaven becomes a thing of inestimable worth, and continues to appreciate in value. Suppose a prayer is made – short and laboured – by a weary, struggling child of God. Immediately, the Holy Spirit attends that prayer, helping their infirmity, and giving utterance to the heart’s groaning (cf Romans 8:26-27); the Saviour Himself receives it as the Great High Priest, and makes superlative intercession, infusing it with His perfections (cf Hebrews 7:25); the angelic host play their part also, and ‘ere long that prayer is offered, *“with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand”* (Revelation 8:3-4). What a transformation!

Does a tried believer weep on account of sin, and deposit but one tear in the bank of heaven? The Lord preserves it, as in a bottle, that it might be permanently on record before Him (cf Psalm 56:8). Is some small deed of kindness discretely rendered by one member to another? *“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints”* (Hebrews 6:10); *“thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly”* (Matthew 6:6). Indeed, the promise of the Only Wise God is: *“Riches and honour are with Me; yea, durable riches and righteousness... I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and **I will fill their treasures**”* (Proverbs 8:18, 20-21).

Alas how infrequently, and with what small coin do we make our investments above! And yet there we have a guaranteed return, underwritten by the sure promises of our immutable God. Oh for more zeal then, in good works and deeds of righteousness! Let every believing reader realise: ‘treasures’ of this kind are of Divine consequence, and, multiplied by the eternity of the heavenly realm, will but increase in worth through ages unending.