

January - March 2021

The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

THE LORD'S DAY

Part 18

“Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, and said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.” ... “And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.” (2 Chronicles 29:1-8, 31:20-21).

This final article in the series upon the Sabbath will summarise the content that has been before us, and conclude with certain practical measures that the people of God should adopt, relative to the situation in this land, at this time.

From the commencement, it can be seen beyond all doubt in the Scriptures that the Sabbath is a Creation institution. Indeed, it is a very

part of Creation; this is fundamental; it is basic. Let this truth be unwaveringly upheld. There are also abundant grounds to establish the observance of the Sabbath throughout the Patriarchal period, in spite of the contrary teachings of some. Then comes the giving of the Law on Sinai. The Moral Law, the Ten Commandments, was given first. Incorporated into that Law was observance of the Sabbath. At the same time the Ceremonial and Judicial Law was given, and while those statutes and ordinances carried several appendages to the Decalogue, these were of a Jewish aspect. The subject may then be traced right through the Old Testament, where the observance of this principle, ‘one day in seven for God’, is witnessed right up to the close of that age.

By the commencement of the New Testament era, a rigid formality had crept in. This our Lord ruthlessly redressed, for such an attitude quickly breeds hypocrisy. May God ever preserve us from it! Then comes the record of Christ’s work in redemption, and the bringing in of the New Covenant, accompanied entirely naturally by a **new day** – the day in which the victorious Mediator of that covenant appeared in resurrection power. There was an overlap of the Jewish and New Testament order for a few years, but as history testifies, the old system gave way in A.D. 70, when under the hand of God, the temple with its Old Testament set-up and association was destroyed, and the Jews scattered. From here, the Lord’s Day may be followed still further, right to the end of the Apostolic period and into the early centuries A.D. The history of the early church shows the continuation of Sabbath observance upon the first day of the week. So right through the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, and then on into history, this divine institution is seen for what it is: **A God-ordained principle to be observed by all men for all time.**

From this point our series of studies moved from the theoretical into the practical – man’s duty to the Sabbath today. The proper observance of this day is the Christian’s badge; it is a landmark and a monument to God and truth. The requirements for Christians’ conduct and behaviour on

this day, both in their dwellings and in the House of God, demands plain and down-to-earth language. It is a day of solemn assembly and of holy convocation; it is a day when Creation is celebrated, when redemption is commemorated and when Heaven (the eternal Sabbath) is anticipated. The Word of God points out the immense importance of correct observance in these things; it is flying an ensign of the highest order. A church rightly ordered, and carrying out the mandate of Holy Scripture, is “*terrible as an army with banners*” (Song of Songs 6:4) to a pagan society.

Some say that Sabbath observance cannot be imposed upon the unregenerate. Such reasoning is entirely wrong, for the fourth commandment is as much a part of God’s Law as is the sixth (on murder) or the seventh (on adultery), and so on. To say that the Holy Law of God is not binding upon all men, is to erode the only foundation upon which an ordered society can be built. An awful failure upon the part of many church leaders in the 19th Century was their acceptance of the fallacy that ‘the law is not for this age’. This has bred, in the present generation, an almost total neglect of teaching and preaching God’s Holy Law, with the appalling corruption of modern society in consequence. Culpability for this must primarily be laid at the feet of the professed people of God – as they are entrusted with the Truth. A nation is only preserved from corruption by the salt. Whilst there is no connection between church and state in the Word of God (indeed, the contrary is the case) nevertheless, it is a fact: let the pulpit go wrong, and error will spread in the land like a virus – which indeed it has.

Therefore, in conclusion: what practical measures should be adopted in this sad and serious situation that obtains today? What can be done about it? Let it be registered that the violation of God’s Day is the **symptom**, not the disease. The disease is, more fundamentally, “*no fear of God before their eyes*” (Romans 3:18); a disregard of the Law of God; no recognition of His claims and demands upon His creatures; every one doing as they feel and as they please. In such a situation there must be reform amongst

the people of God; rigid examination and constant alignment and realignment with the mandate of Holy Scripture. This is the **first step**; it is priority number one.

Consider the Biblical testimony of good king Hezekiah: *“he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses”* (2 Kings 18:6). *“And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered”* (2 Chronicles 31:20-21). Hezekiah **clave unto the Lord**. Nothing would move him; he wrought that which was good, right and true. He was upright and a man of integrity, and he was not side-tracked into compromise. He performed the Law and the commandments with all his heart; he continually examined his life. He scrutinised his actions and behaviour in order to ensure he was not watering down the Law’s demands. He was rigid in his attention to detail, in order to convey to the people his sincerity to the Law of God. This is what is needed today. Let not Christians be moved in any shape or form by contemporary society, nor swayed by a compromising church. They must be seen as lights in the dense darkness of this age. Light is a revealing element; it shows things up. This is the first thing God requires of His people: holy living and upright behaviour. Men who cleave to the Lord and depart not from following Him, but keep His commandments, will soon show up the sinfulness of sin. Let the Lord’s people **preach** the Law and **live** the Law. This is the God-ordained means for bringing home to sinners the knowledge of sin.

There is further instruction from Hezekiah’s example. He **prayed**: *“And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubim, Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the*

kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth.” (2 Kings 19:14-15). He brought the whole desperate situation to God, and spread it out before the Mercy Seat. ‘The problem is of such magnitude that Thou alone canst deal with it’, said this godly king. Even so in this day and generation; the evil is sore in the nation. We must let our light shine in this crooked and perverse generation – we must! As salt, we dare not lose our savour – we dare not! But God alone can effectually work in conviction. Truth is unknowable to a person, until the Holy Spirit works in quickening power. Prayer must be an ongoing exercise, in which we labour ceaselessly. In view of the mounting corruption, the great avalanche of sin rolling down upon the people, let the matter be ‘spread before the Lord’. The saints themselves are not sufficient for these things, but God has placed in their hands the weapon of prayer and this can, and must, be used!

Hezekiah was also bold in his **preaching**: *“For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs”* (2 Chronicles 29:6). This is healthy instruction for preachers. Ministers of God’s Word should be quick and ready to point out the great slide in the church and nation, from the days of the fathers. Men need to be awakened to the fact that they have turned away their faces from the habitation of God; they have turned their backs upon the Law of God and the Day of God, and have forsaken these things. Murders, robberies, adultery and immorality of all descriptions permeate modern society. It is the church’s charge to point this out. All lawful means should be employed: the pulpit first, also by witness and conversation, and by writing (printed works and publications). The subtle schemes of the Adversary must be exposed and the false reasonings of men must be refuted. It must fearlessly be declared that departure from God’s Law will inevitably incur His judgement. In all this, the local church has the responsibility to make Biblical truth known unto the world.

Hezekiah reproved the Levites, the spiritual leaders: “*And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.*” (2 Chronicles 29:4-5). He says, ‘you sanctify yourselves, then sanctify the House of God, then carry forth the filthiness out of the Holy Place’. Herein lies the main spring of the trouble, and here must the thing be tackled. Judgment must begin in the House of God, amongst the people of God. Let the faithful Hezekiahs of our day (alas, they are but few) be unsparing in rebuking and admonishing weak and compromising elders, pastors and ministers, in order that the filth of unsound teaching, the unbalanced preaching, the novelties and the gimmicks, may be forever carried out of the Holy Place. Let there be a return to the old paths; adhering to the Law of God and His commandments with a whole heart; walking uprightly before God and men; cleaving unto the Lord. This, and nothing short of this, is the solemn charge, in which **Sabbath observance** plays a tremendous part. It is the badge we wear; it is a monument which we erect to God and to His truth; it is a memorial to be kept throughout all generations. So, we close this series of articles with the fourth commandment: “***Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy***” (Exodus 20:8).

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

“In all reformation, personal or public, we must first be convinced, in what particulars we have done wrong, and then consider how we may do better. Neglect of God and omission of duty lead to more direct impiety and iniquity; and our own transgressions prepare us to become tempters and seducers of others. Thus religion is run down, and the wrath of the Lord comes on apostate professors of the gospel, and on apostate nations. In returning to Him therefore, we must renounce our sins and begin to practise neglected duties, to use the means of grace, and to watch against the wickedness of the heart.”

Thomas Scott (1747 – 1821)

HOW SHALL WE ORDER THE CHILD?

Some say there are but few direct instructions in the Word of God on the great subject before us. “*Train up a child in the way he should go*” (Proverbs 22:6); “*Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4), are general directions; ‘but where’, it is asked, ‘are the minute instructions to guide us under our daily circumstances?’ I answer: The Bible is the voice of our Heavenly Father instructing us how to please Him. To this we should add that, as we, who by faith are the children of God, hear what **our** Heavenly Father says in that Book, so ought **we** to speak and act before our children. **We** are to hear God’s sayings; we should also observe His dealings with **us**, and then follow after the general exhortation: “*Fathers . . . bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*”: that is, bring up your children, taking the Lord for your example, and His book for your guide.

God will honour your diligent searching of the Scriptures, and your persevering prayer for the instruction of His Holy Spirit, that you may grow in the knowledge of Him, and be filled with the knowledge of His will. He will set before you through the Word, abundant instruction for training your children in such a manner that, under God, they shall obey their parents – honouring both father and mother – and receive the promised blessing (cf Ephesians 6:1-3). It will be a joy to me if parents in this book see a friendly beam to light them through a path which is oftentimes darksome and trying, by leading them more duly to prize the Holy Scriptures, and to use them as ‘a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path’ (cf Psalm 119:105) . . .

Who[ever reads the Bible will ponder] the Lord’s words of Abraham, His Friend, as recorded in Genesis 18:17-19: “*And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be*

blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him". The perfect submission of Isaac to Abraham (cf Genesis 22) was a reflection of Abraham's long course of obedience to God. Abraham had exercised himself to profit for many years in the path of obedience; so much so that he was **more ready** to obey the word – "*Take now thy son*" – than the word spoken at the first by the Lord: "*Get thee out of thy country, unto a land that I will shew thee*" (cf Genesis 11:31, 12:1-5 and 22). In the intermediate long period, his faith had increased with increase of the knowledge of God; and he had been continually such a worshipper, that his faith did not fail when he was called upon by God to sacrifice his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved.

Abraham (not without infirmity) was wholly consecrated to God. And Isaac was to Abraham, what Abraham was to God. Patient, holy submission is seen in both. It is written, "*And they went both of them together*" (Genesis 22:6), and again, "*So they went both of them together*" (v.8). What a heavenly picture is here of the perfect fellowship between the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. "*I and My Father are one*" (John 10:30); "*As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee*" (John 17:21).

Happy that family where the heavenly reality finds its shadow in the ways of parent to child, and child to parent, as was the case with Abraham and Isaac, as recorded in Genesis 22. In many a true believer's house, alas! it is not so. With such I would deeply sympathize, and, in all humbleness of mind, would say: trace the evil matters – whether in yourself or your child – to their root; be assured 'you shall reap if you faint not'. Though you be faint, yet pursue; you have God on your side while you pursue. Interesting cases of success in the end come at this moment to my mind, in which there seemed for many years to be no hope, yet this was the comforting word: "*Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*" (Galatians 6:9, cf Judges 8:4).

Whatever the difficulties, take courage; commune with God. By God's grace pursue the path of faith toward God, of faithfulness to yourself, and love and faithfulness toward your child; trusting in God, that, in answer to your daily prayer, God will grant, in the end, sweet fellowship; such that parents, sons, and daughters may be worshippers together, as was the case with Abraham and Isaac: "*I and the lad will go yonder and worship ... They went, both of them together*" (Genesis 22:5-6).

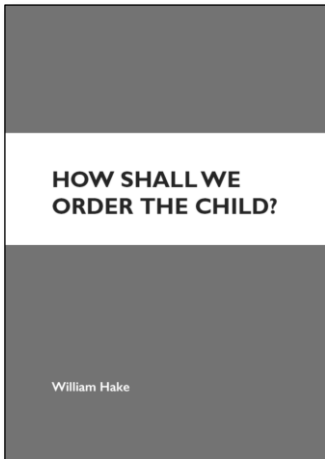
The Word of God not only furnishes examples for the encouragement of parents, but also of merciful warning against the neglect of training their children; and we need both. Look, for instance, at Lot. Lot was of a worldly spirit, or he had not pitched his tent toward Sodom, among a people, of whom it is written that they were: "*wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly*" (Genesis 13:13). And although, as the apostle informs us, he "*vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*" (2 Peter 2:8), nevertheless by his worldliness, fatherly influence and godly authority failed. Hence we find that two or more of his daughters were married to ungodly men – to whom, when he warned them of the coming destruction of Sodom, "*he seemed as one that mocked*" (Genesis 19:14). So they, with [certain of] Lot's daughters, perished in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain in the which Lot had dwelled, God, "*making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly*" (2 Peter 2:6).

At no time was the remembrance of these records more needed than the present. We are "*the children of God*". We are 'the servants of the Lord Christ', "*bought with a price*", 'redeemed to God by the blood of Christ', called "*holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling*", made "*kings and priests by Christ unto God and His Father*", "*who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*". We are "*strangers and pilgrims on the earth*", 'our citizenship is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 8:16, Colossians 3:24, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Revelation 1:5, Hebrews 3:1, Revelation 1:6,

Ephesians 1:3, Hebrews 11:13, Philippians 3:20). Let not, therefore, the “*holy seed*”, in any sense, “*join in affinity with the people*” of the world (Ezra 9:2, 14). The sin is of a far deeper dye now “*in these last days*”, when God has “*spoken to us by His Son*” (Hebrews 1:2), than it was in Ezra’s, or in any former day.

Let us with all prayerful diligence – as those who ‘are not ignorant of Satan’s devices’ (cf 2 Corinthians 2:11) – ‘put a difference between the holy and profane ... between the unclean and the clean’, lest the Lord be more and more ‘profaned among us’ (cf Ezekiel 22:26). Let us do all things in reference to ‘**the judgment seat of Christ**’, considering how such-or-such a thing, which we allow for ourselves, or our sons or our daughters, will appear then, and there.

William Hake (1795 – 1890)



The preceding article is excerpted from the book of the same name, first published in 1889, just prior to the death of its author. This godly father, school-master and preacher was also instrumental in commencing the work at Bideford, which continues today as North Road Chapel. We are thus pleased to make this highly instructive treatise available in print once again, free of charge.

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“For He established a testimony ... which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children” (Psalm 78:5).

THE CHIEF END OF MAN

Question: What is the chief end of man?

Answer: To glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

This concise statement sums up the main reason for man's existence upon the earth. Numerous verses throughout Scripture support this directive, for example: "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!*" (Psalm 107:8); "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me*" (Psalm 50:23).

The heavens and the earth, the seas and everything therein were all created by the Almighty and Triune God for the benefit of humanity. But without the creation of Adam and Eve there would be no ultimate purpose for the earth's existence. This world displays the manifold handiwork, glory and wisdom of God. We can all enjoy its splendour and beauty, its flora and fauna, its scents and sounds, its times and seasons. The stars, moon and planets orbiting the earth in their predetermined course have proved over the centuries to be of immense benefit to mankind.

When the Lord formed Adam from the dust of the earth, man was indeed fearfully and wonderfully made (cf Psalm 139:14). God gave him eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, hands to feel, a tongue to speak. Numerous creatures possess these same five senses, but the human race is so far above the rest of the animal kingdom; not only in the ability to use language, but especially in its capacity to utilise that language in praise and prayer to the creating and sustaining God. As the hymn-writer expresses it:

“My God I thank Thee, who hast made the earth so bright,
So full of splendour and of joy, beauty and light;
So many glorious things are here, noble and right.”

(A. A. Procter)

Benefits of Nature

During the spring of last year, when much of the country was being blessed with record hours of sunshine, restrictions on movement were enforced. Under these circumstances, many expressed appreciation for their gardens. Others who lived by busy roads or airports were grateful for the noise reduction, and uplifted by the newly-realised sound of birds singing. Millions became more aware of the natural environment around them, and remarked upon the sounds, beauty, colours and scents which had passed unnoticed for years. Research has suggested that green open spaces, birdsong and wildlife all have a therapeutic effect upon man's physical and mental well-being, lifting depression and reducing stress.

Heavenly Aspirations

The earth, though fallen, is still full of good things for humanity to richly enjoy (cf 1 Timothy 6:17), as this material creation was brought into being for man: "*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it*" (Genesis 1:28); "*I have made the earth, and created man upon it*" (Isaiah 45:12). **However**, it is not the earth, or things upon the earth, that man's mind and desires are to be fixed upon. The Scriptures constantly warn against being taken up with the creature, or creation merely – but rather direct toward the Creator (cf Romans 1:25).

Man is entirely separate from all other created beings, having been made in the image of God. He is not a body of flesh and bone only, but possesses soul and spirit. All of earth's manifold resources and experiences will never satisfy his more fundamental need, which is to be in union and fellowship with 'Him that created him'. Consequently, the repeated instruction comes: "*seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33); "*... seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Colossians 3:1-2). This earth is not a home, but a lodge; a temporary

dwelling place. There must be a focus upon the heavenly, not the earthly; the spiritual, not the carnal; the eternal, not the temporal. The poet continues:

“I thank Thee, Lord, that here our souls, though amply blessed,
Can never find, although they seek, a perfect rest;
Nor ever shall, until they lean on Jesus’ breast.”

This Passing World

Despite the beauties and wonders of this world, the Bible makes this fundamental truth abundantly clear: it is cursed and marred by sin. God’s sentence of death upon Adam and Eve for their transgression did not fall upon them alone, but upon the whole creation. Sin’s devastating influence can be observed everywhere. *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now”* (Romans 8:22). This world, with all its glories, is fragile and subject to change, deterioration and decay. Many people are waking up to the fact that its resources are limited, and easily lost. Green pastures can all too quickly be turned to desert; areas of outstanding beauty may be devastated by hurricane, fire or flood; centuries-old forests can be levelled in hours. Yet all life’s disappointments and bitterness are also for spiritual good. The omniscient Lord knows the proneness of the human heart to cleave to that which is tangible and earthly.

“For Thou, who knowest, Lord, how soon our weak heart clings,
Hast given us joys, tender and true, yet all with wings;
So that we see, gleaming on high, diviner things.”

A Final, Glorious Abode

When young plants are transferred from seed beds to larger fertile grounds, some roots are inevitably broken off. So too, the believers’ earthly roots of attachment to this world need to be severed in order for deeper, higher, better things to be enjoyed. The Lord has kept the best in store: *“... as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have*

entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (2 Corinthians 2:9).

The response to the catechism at the head of this article states that God is to be glorified, not for this life only, but for ever. These words transcend the earthly realm and reach to heaven. Saints should rightly yearn for that day when the Lord “*shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body*” (Philippians 3:21); when they shall ‘shine as the stars’ (cf Daniel 12:3, Matthew 13:43). In that final state of glorification, all the elect will dwell in that glorious abode, in glorified, sinless bodies, glorifying the Triune God in far greater measure than could ever be comprehended or attained in this earthly sphere. “*In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore*” (Psalm 16:11). In that final glorified state, their being and senses transformed, magnified and enhanced, unmarred by sin, they will enjoy a true awareness of God; who He is, what He has wrought; and will glorify Him eternally with unsinning hearts. “But oh! Eternity’s too short, to utter all His praise!”

R. D. Steward (Snr)

“Oh! Thou risen and exalted Lord Jesus! Send down Thine ascension gifts, and raise all my spiritual affections after Thee, that I may no longer grovel here below, but seek Thee, who art above! Didst Thou not promise this; Thou, dear Lord, before Thy departure; that when Thou wert lifted up, Thou wouldest draw all Thy people unto Thee? Oh, then ‘draw me, that I may run after Thee’, for Thou art the Lord my God! Precious, yea exceedingly precious, is that assurance to my soul, that the life of all Thy Church is hid with Christ in God. And sure I am, that when Jesus shall appear, then will all Thy redeemed appear with Thee in glory.”

Robert Hawker (1753 – 1827)

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

“in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”
(Romans 8:37)

The embattled Christians who dwelt in first-century Rome must have been well acquainted with the paraphernalia of war, living as they did at the epicentre of an international empire, secured by military might and force of arms. To these believers the inspired Apostle wrote of a far greater and universal conflict, relating to the salvation of souls from the principalities and powers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness. The battle lines are drawn in the epistle’s opening chapter: the righteousness and other invisible attributes of God manifested in the creation of the world (cf Romans 1:17, 19-20), the fall and rebellion of mankind (v. 21-25), and in consequence, *“the wrath of God . . . revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”* (v. 18). There appears to be a total triumph on the part of Sin and Death, which have dominion, and reign in men’s mortal bodies (cf Romans 6:12, 14). Against these forces is mustered the weapon of God’s Law – holy, just and good – which alas, only slays those who attempt to wield it, for they are too weak to bear its weight (cf Romans 7:10-14). The war rages on in hearts and minds, where ever-present Evil and Sin continue to take the field and many captives, provoking a bitter cry of defeat (cf Romans 7:21-24).

But in this darkest hour, a ray of light dawns. The name of Christ is invoked (cf Romans 7:25) and He, the Captain of Salvation, appears upon the scene (cf Romans 8:3, 32) with transformative effect. He at once turns bondage into freedom, disinheritance to adoption, carnality to spirituality, condemnation to vindication, and even death to life. By degrees, His many predestined brethren are each called, justified, and glorified; these bruised reeds and smoking flaxes are sent forth unto victory (cf Matthew 12:20), and stand at last upon the winning side, being made conquerors through all these things.

Yet our text does not merely say: ‘in all these things we are conquerors’. The Holy Spirit affords us much stronger language, and a word unique to this verse: ‘*hypernikomen*’ – aptly rendered by the English translators as: “**more than conquerors**”. Surely, the average saint would be grateful enough to have escaped capture, avoided defeat, be a ‘conqueror’ only. But the outcome is more profound and glorious. In what sense then are the Lord’s redeemed people ‘**more than conquerors**’?

Smallness of the Protagonists

A conquest becomes ‘more’ of a conquest when there is a disparity between the combatants; where the protagonists are in the minority, or greatly disadvantaged; a ‘David and Goliath’ situation. Never was this truer than with the people of God. The familiar analogy of a ‘flock’ is no comfort in a military context where “*we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter ... we are killed all the day long*” (Romans 8:36). The origins of this ‘little flock’ are equally unpromising. Let it never be forgotten that they all began on the opposing side; the lawful prey of Satan, vassals of uncleanness and iniquity (cf Romans 6:19-21). “*Ye were the servants of sin*” (Romans 6:17). “*We were yet without strength ... ungodly ... we were yet sinners ... we were enemies*” (Romans 5:6, 8, 10). Were there some redeeming features that presented themselves; some native strength or inherent qualities that warranted Christ’s intervention? No – “*For I know that in me ... dwelleth no good thing*” (Romans 7:18); only an inability to do right, coupled with the inability to eschew wrong (v. 18-23); inward groaning, infirmities, ignorance and impiety (cf Romans 8:23, 26). Humanly and spiritually speaking, there was never a band of renegades who were **less** likely to triumph, than the people of God – which makes their ultimate victory all the more amazing.

Strength of the Opposition

By contrast – what does Sin have on its side; what has the Devil subverted unto himself; what is arrayed against the cause of truth? “*The whole creation*” is in the bondage of corruption (cf Romans 8:21-22). “*The*

whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). Everything comprehended in that three-fold description ‘the world, the flesh and the devil’ is marshalled against the people of God. There are innumerable foes without, for the earth’s populace: “*are all under sin; As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God ... Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes*” (Romans 3:9-11,16-18). And there are fightings and treason within: “*...sin that dwelleth in me ... evil is present with me ... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*” (Romans 7:20-21, 23). In consequence of which, the Lord’s beleaguered people suffer a constant round of: “*tribulation ... distress ... persecution ... famine ... nakedness ... peril ... sword*” (Romans 8:35); they are completely surrounded, inundated and immersed, ‘**in** all these things’. This is the disproportionate scale of the opposition.

Surprising Strategy

The Christians’ conquest is further magnified by the way in which it is won – by a method and manner that confounds the wisdom of this world. When it might be expected that the Lord would accomplish His purposes with hosts of angels and grand demonstrations of omnipotence, God instead ‘sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh’ (Romans 8:3). When reason might have anticipated the wielding of earthly power and carnal weapons, God instead ‘set Him forth to make propitiation through His blood ... for the remission of sins’ (cf Romans 3:25), and thus the immortal Christ died (cf Romans 5:6, 8). S. W. Gandy writes:

“Through weakness like defeat	He hell in hell laid low;
He won the meed and crown;	Made sin, He sin o’erthrew;
Trod all our foes beneath His feet	Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so
By being trodden down.	And death, by dying, slew.”

This is victory seized from the jaws of defeat, yea from the very jaws of hell; turning the proud enemy’s vaunted triumph, into His own.

Spoils of War

In regard to human wars, a measure of conquest is often made by comparing the relative gains and losses on both sides. In some cases, the cost to the winning side, the collateral damage, is so great, it constitutes only a ‘pyrrhic’ victory. What of the spiritual equivalent? If the cost of this triumph has been the death of the Saviour; if His people are themselves still subject to much tribulation, and death too; is it really a worthwhile victory? Yes! For the wonder of it is, “*all things work together for good to them that love God*” (Romans 8:28). No part of God’s divine purpose has been thwarted, or too hard-won. “The Christian gains by his losses”. Even though they ‘suffer with Christ’ for a season, it only results in their ‘being glorified together’. The Apostle gives the final account: “*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Romans 8:18). “What joys await us there – what radiancy of glory – what bliss beyond compare!” “*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us **all things**?*” (Romans 8:32). This is the ‘size of the prize’ – “***all things** are yours; whether . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s*” (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

Security of the Victory

The long view of history shows how many of man’s wars, their outcomes and attainments, are soon afterwards reversed; and later, perhaps reversed again. In regard to this spiritual conflict – are its conquests assured? Or are its triumphs subject to change? The glory of our conquest is its **certainty**. It was always guaranteed. According to God’s purpose, those whom He foreknew He predestinated unto glory. The outcome was secured before it began, even before the foundation of the world. And no force or foe can alter it, either now, or to an eternal future: “*neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature*” (Romans 8:38-39).

Single Combat

Perhaps the most wondrous aspect of this victory is that, those who enjoy the benefits of it did not win it for themselves; rather was it secured for them by another. Yes, “*we are more than conquerors*”, but only “*through Him*” – He triumphed single-handedly. We are: “*saved from wrath through Him*”; “*we shall be saved by His life*” (Romans 5:9, 10); this gift of grace came by **one** man; we shall reign in life through **one** man; by the righteousness of **one** came justification of life; by the obedience of **one** are many made righteous (cf Romans 5:15, 17-19); “there conquered one - and Jesus is His name”. Then, “*thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthian 15:57).

Why would any individual be moved to act in this way; to conquer vicariously for the sake of others? What possible motive could sustain so great a campaign, through to its glorious end? “*We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*”. **Love** is the driving force; the indomitable principle: “*for love is strong as death . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it*” (Song of Songs 8:6-7); neither can all our foes oppose it. If that divine, unconditional, eternal love be once fixed upon a person, it has an inseparable quality. The Apostle asks and answers the question: “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*”, and though enumerating a seventeen-fold list of sundering powers, concludes that **nothing** “*shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:35, 38-9).

What then remains to the people of God? Must this victory-gaining affection be merited, earned, or repaid? No – but simply trusted, and believed upon. “*For we are saved by hope*”; “*it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all*”; “*this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*” (Romans 8:24, 4:16, 1 John 5:4). God grant us such faith this, and we shall each be made **more than conquerors**, now and eternally.

R. J. Steward

EDITORIAL

From time to time, astronomical events like solar eclipses, comet appearances or the conjunction of planets, pique the interest of secular and religious commentators. Academic and theological speculation ensues, as to whether such phenomena might underpin the Biblical narrative, or explain away particular miracles. Professing Christians are often foremost in promoting these theories, and greet with great enthusiasm any evidence which suggests the timing of certain celestial or meteorological incidents could correspond with Bible chronology. Indeed, the ‘Christian apologetics’ movement seems geared to removing every possible obstacle to worldly man’s credulity with the palliatives of science or archaeology – from the Genesis flood to the judgments of Revelation – claiming that, if everything has a logical explanation, the unbeliever is more likely to receive the message of the gospel.

But a ‘rational acceptor of facts’ is **not** a believer. Faith in well-reasoned arguments is **not** the Christian Faith. Conscious of this, the apostle’s policy was clear: *“my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”* (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). We actually concur with the sceptics who point out that, ordinarily, the sun cannot go backward (cf Isaiah 38:8), an eclipse does not last for three hours (cf Luke 23:44), and a star cannot guide to a fixed spot on earth (cf Matthew 2:9), for these phenomena are among the supernatural and miraculous works of God, *“which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers’ fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day”* (Exodus 10:6). Let critics protest as they will, *“With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible”* (Mark 10:27). They who cannot accept the plain testimony of Scripture will never be persuaded in One who rose from the dead (cf Luke 16:31). But those unto whom true faith is imparted will endure, ‘seeing the invisible’ (cf Hebrews 11:27) and believing the unbelievable.

NOTICES

In the goodness of God, April 2021 will be the 50th Anniversary of publication of 'The Link', which commenced in 1971. We hope to mark this occasion with a special edition of the magazine, to include an index of the foregoing 200 issues, and other salient articles. Digitisation of the back-catalogue will also be completed for this date, enabling access to past copies via our website: www.northroadchapel.org/the-link Paper versions and reprints of back numbers can also be provided. However, one particular edition is missing from the church's own collection, and we draw our readers' attention to this:



The Link: July – September 1978

If any of our readers are in possession of the July – September 1978 edition of the Link magazine, or can locate or obtain it, please notify the Editor, who would be very grateful to receive a copy (contact details inside front cover). This will complete the church's archive. All postage or duplication costs will be fully reimbursed, with our thanks.

Preliminary Announcement

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION

Saturday 5th & Lord's Day 6th June 2021 D.V.

Preacher : Mr S. Ford (Snailbeach)