

CHRISTIAN WATCH

Issue 55

A Protestant Biblical Witness

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'And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.'

Mark 13:37

A LITTLE TALK WITH JESUS

A little talk with Jesus
How it smooths life's rugged way.
How it cheers and helps me on'ward
When I faint beneath my load.
When my heart is crushed with sorrow
And my eyes with tears are dim,
There's nought can yield me comfort
Like a little talk with Him.

I cannot live without Him
Nor would I if I could.
He is my daily portion
My medicine and my food.
He is altogether lovely
None can with Him compare,
The chief among ten thousand
The fairest of the fair.

Herbert Dawson

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Dear Friends,

A New Year has begun! 5 years ago, the United Kingdom left the European Union, following the referendum held in June, 2016. The referendum was held in an attempt by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, to silence the euro-sceptics in the Conservative Party and over 33 million people cast their vote. However, the Irish Sea border was subsequently created - which still remains – and we must continue to pray that the UK's sovereignty will be re-established over the whole of our nation – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales - sooner rather than later.

New police guidelines – controversial new diversity guidelines issued to UK police officers include the banning of phrases such as 'black sheep' and 'black-listed', together with the introduction of 'white fragility' training. These guidelines are political correctness gone mad - and whilst valuable time and effort is taken up trying to impose this 'woke' nonsense – our prisons are overcrowded and real crime-fighting priorities are ignored, undermining the effectiveness of law enforcement.

Winter Fuel Allowance – If Sir Keir Starmer had been upfront before the election about his plans to remove the winter fuel allowances from millions of pensioners, betray WASPI women, tax inheritance on family farms, increase Council Tax and energy prices, raise university tuition fees, install mass-scale solar panels on thousands of acres of prime farmland (despite strong local opposition), waste £22 billion of taxpayer's money on carbon capture machines, give £3 billion a year to Ukraine, pledge a 20% cut in meat and dairy produce and accept thousands of pounds worth of 'freebies', he quite simply would not have won. The electorate was misled – plain and simple.

Male and female – the Bible states quite clearly that there are only two genders – male and female. The ludicrous, utterly ridiculous and perverted notion promoted today by many organisations and public figures flies in the face of the declaration of God at the creation of man – *“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them”* (Genesis 1:27). Matthew Poole – an English non-conformist theologian and Biblical commentator stated that *“Mankind bears the ‘image’ of God – not His Divine nature, but likeness to God principally consists and most eminently appears in man's soul. In its nature and substance it is like God – spiritual, invisible and*

immortal.” It was a breath of fresh air to hear the newly elected President of the United States of America – Donald Trump – announce that only male and female genders will be officially recognised in America, thus ensuring the protection of female sex-based rights. Is it too much to hope that our own Prime Minister will have the courage to follow in his footsteps?

Scripture reading – the reading and studying of Scripture is an important part of the Christian life. However, we must also go further – and seek by God’s grace to apply and obey the Scriptures in every area of life. Mere reading of Scripture may increase our knowledge – but obeying the Scriptures for God’s glory will reflect a Christ-likeness. The hypocrite will read and not obey, but the genuine Christian will read and strive to obey out of love for God. As we commence this New Year, let us resolve to be hearers and doers of the Word of God. The American revivalist preacher, philosopher and theologian, Jonathan Edwards, stated: “Resolved to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find - and plainly perceive myself – to grow in the knowledge of the same.” This is a good practice for all of us. 2 Timothy 2:15 – “Study to shew thyself approved unto God.” The best and happiest way in 2025 will be a life of obedience to the Word of God.

Parliament – A group of Labour MPs are wanting to cancel ‘Britishness’, this time in their own back yard. The new intake wants daily Christian worship before proceedings in Parliament to be abolished as ‘archaic’ and ‘outmoded’. It has been the time-honoured start to every Commons day for centuries – as far back as 1558 – for a few minutes of private prayer and contemplation for MPs ahead of their political debates, with attendance being voluntary. Maybe the rising up of a new Oliver Cromwell would not be amiss in these days!

We need to be much in prayer for our nation. In the Word of God, there is an often-quoted phrase – “But God”. Two of the best words you could hope to hear in any situation. God is so good to His people – and we can see this throughout Scripture in many “but God” passages. May they be an encouragement to our hearts.

In closing, may I take this opportunity to thank all of you who have sent in both subscriptions and donations for this New Year. Every gift is greatly appreciated and your financial and prayerful support most welcome.

Yours in His service,

Ian Henderson

Ian R. Henderson (Chairman)

“PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL”

(Amos 4:12)

Mr. G. D. Buss,

Editorial in Gospel Standard Magazine, September, 2024

Amos, one of the minor prophets, prophesied at a time of apparent prosperity in the reigns of Uzziah, King of Judah and Jeroboam II, King of Israel. However, the spiritual moral and social health of the nations was fast decaying and e'er long, deserved - though delayed - judgments would descend, first on Israel and later Judah because of the blatant idolatry which was rampant in both nations.

In the opening verse of his prophecy, mention is made of an earthquake which took place two years after this command - and it may well have been that the warning “prepare to meet thy God” was in the mind of God’s servant in anticipation of this sudden catastrophe which overtook the people.



As Scripture is of no private interpretation, it behoves us each to take heed to the solemn exhortation given by Amos. Our nation, like Israel and Judah in Amos' day, is just as ripe for judgment and equally, if not more so, deserving judgment. It is the living child of God who lays this exhortation to heart and it is that remnant on the face of this earth who give heed to it. God's people share in the judgments which are poured out by an offended God on the nations, but however severe the chastening hand of God is, they cling to the little but vital word "thy." Here is to them a relationship closer than God had with His ancient people, special though that relationship was. To the Israel of God, the relationship is one of everlasting covenantal blessings. One of those essential blessings is being prepared to meet God in a saving way, while on earth, and then before the judgment seat at death and in eternity.

So the exhortation may be viewed as:

1. A *Divine appointment*: When Adam and Eve were first placed in the Garden of Eden, it appears that it was the appointed custom of the Lord God to commune with them in the cool of the day. They were each given an immortal soul, in which they could hold communion with their Creator; a blessing in which no other part of God's creation shares. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they dreaded this appointment and sought, ineffectually, to prepare themselves for it - all to no avail. Ever since that cataclysmic event, the word of Paul faces us each: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Here is an appointment made by God, which we will attend at the precise moment God has ordained. While we may be late or even miss earthly appointments, none of us can evade this all-important one. It is to be prepared for this that every true-born child of God has an exercise.

2. A *Divine command*: Here is a just command from our Creator, and yet one we have no natural ability for which to prepare. How can a

fallen nature like ours stand in the presence of the thrice Holy God? How can the multitude of our transgressions be removed so that the controversy God has with fallen man be dealt with before we reach that tremendously solemn moment? If this is not resolved before this appointment, then eternal ruin will be our just desert. How helpless and seemingly hopeless is the state of a sinner before this Holy God! How Isaiah in chapter 6 verse 5 of his prophecy trembled in the presence of the holiness of God! How unprepared Hezekiah felt in Isaiah 38:1 when commanded: "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live"! While perhaps he could make preparation for the disposal of his earthly affairs, he solemnly knew before God that he could not manage the infinitely more important matter of his never-dying soul, so soon apparently to stand before His Maker. So, the quickened and awakened soul finds no help in self and must look elsewhere for deliverance!

Blessed be God, help is at hand! The Holy Spirit has planted in the child of God a new nature, fit for Heaven, and in which lasting



communion with God is maintained by Him. Not only that, the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, has provided a perfect wedding garment with which to clothe His people, by imputing to them the obedience to the law and His Father's will, which He wrought out in His Holy humanity. And not only that, He has taken willingly and voluntarily to Himself the iniquities and transgressions of His people and on Calvary's cross (which in one sense was the judgment day for the church), He bore the just punishment for those sins so "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Thus, this Divine command has been fulfilled *for them* by the Saviour and is fulfilled *within them* by the Holy spirit. So, the language of the hymn suits us well -

"Prepare me, gracious God,
To stand before Thy face;
Thy Spirit must the work perform,
For it is all of grace.

In Christ's obedience clothe,
And wash me in His blood;
So shall I lift my head with joy
Among the sons of God."

(Elliott & Toplady)

So, as we read in Hebrews 6:19,20 of those who have fled for refuge in Christ - "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whether the Forerunner is *for us* entered, even *Jesus*, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

3. A Divine consummation: The sacred outworking of these infinitely blessed transactions is summed up by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in

John 14:2,3: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." As is often said: 'Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.' How favoured are those whom God is preparing to meet Him. How solemn if we are living careless lives and should be called to meet this Holy God unprepared, unready, and be cast for ever from His presence into the bottomless abyss. What Moses said of his generation, in Deuteronomy 32:29, is as pertinent in our own day: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

In these increasingly perilous times, it behoves us each to ask William Gadsby's important question to our soul: "Art thou ready to meet God?" (see following page) and to give Him no rest until He assures us - "It is well." Then we will know the blessing of Hebrews 9:28 where Paul speaks of the way in which Christ has gone before His people in fulfilling these solemn appointments: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."



“THE LORD IS AT HAND.”

Philippians 4:5; Amos 4:12

Pause, my soul! and ask the question,
Art thou ready to meet God?
Am I made a real Christian,
Washed in the Redeemer's blood?
Have I union
To the church's living Head?

Am I quickened by His Spirit?
Live a life of faith and prayer?
Trusting wholly to His merit;
Casting on Him all my care?
Daily panting,
In His likeness to appear?

If my hope on Christ is stayed,
Let Him come when He thinks best;
O my soul! be not dismayed,
Lean upon His loving breast;
He will cheer thee
With the smiles of His face.

But, if still a total stranger
To His precious name and blood,
Thou art on the brink of danger;
Can'st thou face a holy God?
Think and tremble,
Death is now upon the road.

William Gadsby

MINISTER'S STATEMENT – FROM A DISTINCTLY BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE - ON THE GOVERNMENT'S INHERITANCE TAX PROPOSALS RE FARMERS

Pastor Peter Simpson, Penn Free Methodist Church
(*CW Committee Member*)

It was heartening to see the farmers' protest taking place in London on November 19th about inheritance tax and the withdrawal of relief for farms valued above £1 million.

I would like to approach this question from a distinctly Christian angle, because there is no area of life on which the Bible, the Word of God, does not throw light. This is not involvement in Party politics, but rather an endeavour to shine the light of Scripture into one of the key issues of the day.

As a Bible-believing Christian Minister, I would in fact argue that the imposition of inheritance tax on anybody, no matter how valuable or modest their possessions, is unjust and is nothing but State-sponsored



theft.

The State has no right whatsoever to interfere with legitimately held personal property. A farmer who has paid his dues via National Insurance contributions and Income or Corporation Tax owes no further debt to the State in the sight of God. It is only the atheistic creed of Marxism which demands that the State should impinge upon the individual's property rights and upon his personal family decisions about how he should use his own property.

The Bible nowhere condemns the possession of valuable assets, be it land or in some other manner. It does, of course, condemn putting all one's hopes in the land, living for the acquisition of yet greater assets. What is really important in God's sight is the manner of stewardship of our possessions. Job, for example, was a wealthy landowner, but the Lord never deemed that to be his sin. Indeed, as Job humbled himself before His Maker, the Lord greatly increased his agricultural possessions: *"The LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before ... So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses"* (Job 42:10-12).

Yes, we all have to pay taxes to support some necessary essential services which it is legitimate for the State to provide, such as the nation's defence and looking after those in society in genuine need. Indeed, our Lord Himself endorsed the necessity of paying reasonable taxes to the Government of the day when He declared - *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's"* (Matt. 22:21). However, those who govern also have their own responsibilities before God. For example, we read in 2 Samuel 23 - *"He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God"* (v 3). To encroach upon an individual's lawful property rights is quite simply not just or righteous behaviour.

The eighth of the Ten Commandments prohibits stealing. This is a plain endorsement of the sanctity of personal property. The 10th Commandment is also devoted to the need to respect what others own and not desire it for oneself.

In the account of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21 a wicked King seeks to obtain the desirable property of one of his subjects. Yes, he initially offers to pay for it, but Naboth refuses on the grounds that it was his family inheritance and, therefore, inalienable. So he tells the King - *"The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee"* (1 Kings 21:3). Naboth's refusal eventually led to his death at the hands of the wicked King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel.

Naboth upheld before the Lord his family's inheritance rights and Ahab and Jezebel were severely judged for ignoring these rights and for their vindictive treatment of him. The issue of his property needs to remain within his family was one of fundamental principle and had nothing to do with the value of the property. This Biblical narrative,



which of course relates a real historical event, has a direct bearing on the Government's proposal to remove inheritance tax exemption from farmers. The possession of property, legitimately obtained, even if it is very valuable, is not a sin, and does not create any obligation to the State.

The principle of the inalienable status of property ownership is clearly set forth in the Old Testament civil law declaring - "*Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance*" (Deut. 19:14). Territorial rights and boundaries on a national, tribal and individual family level had to be respected. This was the Lord's own specific decree. (This, of course, also has enormous significance regarding the failure of this and previous Governments to control our national borders properly and thus ignoring God's own ordinance of national boundaries).

And who might the farmers' land be sold to if the inheritance tax is imposed? According to Nigel Farage, speaking on Sky News Australia, it could well be foreign corporations who pay little UK tax. Other buyers could well be those wanting to use productive agricultural land for wind farms or solar panel installations, neither of which will provide us with any food.

A major Old Testament institution was that of the year of jubilee which laid down that a family possession of land could not be permanently forfeited, even if, because of dire financial circumstances, it had to be temporarily sold. The sale remained legitimate only until the year of jubilee, which occurred every fifty years. We are accordingly told in Leviticus 25 - "*In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession*" (verse 13). The new owners had to be compensated, when the land was returned to the original owner in the jubilee year, but the principle of the estate remaining within the family had at all costs to be maintained.

In direct opposition to this Biblical principle, the Government's inheritance tax proposals threaten the ability of farmers to keep their own personal property within their own families, where it may well have been for many generations.

Our farmland is our nation's heritage. It is a precious God-given resource - and we are truly blessed in this country by so much of our land being fertile and productive. Nothing is more important than the production of food. How many of our soldiers who died in past conflicts would have had a picture in their minds of a green pastoral landscape as being an essential part of what they were fighting to defend? I suspect very many.

The wonder and beauty of our countryside are part of what we are as British people and our delightful landscapes are very much fashioned by our commitment to the importance of farming.

Think of some of Edward Elgar's most moving music. Much of this would have been inspired by the glories of God's creation which he surveyed as he walked the Malvern Hills, seeing the Cotswolds to the south-east, the Shropshire Hills to the north-west and the grand, lush scenery of Wales to the west and south-west.

A fertile and productive countryside is one of God's blessings to a people who honour Him. How desperately we need in this nation those who fear God in high places. How above all else we need as a people to return to the one true faith of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We shall then experience the truth of the following words:

"If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God... blessed shalt thou be in the field, blessed shall be...the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep...Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out" (Deut. 28:1-6).

'THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN'

John 10.35

Pastor M. Harley

A Vice-President of Trinitarian Bible Society

From: Quarterly Record, July to September, 2024

Breaking the law of our land is regrettably something which happens daily. Breaking the Word of God, for example the Commandments, is also a daily occurrence, though with much more serious consequences. If I were to drive beyond the speed limit, I may earn trouble for myself, a fine perhaps or some other penalty. The law does not cease to have force because I have broken it; it is not thereby invalidated. Its authority is not reduced in any way by having transgressed it. People think that if they reject God's Law and refuse to submit to it that it has no claims on them; but no matter how much they ignore it and break it, the authority of God's Law remains. Adam and Eve broke God's commandment but still were obliged to obey Him.



And that is the meaning of our text, though maybe just an aspect, as there are many applications. The Scripture cannot be invalidated, because it comes with the authority of God Who cannot lie. The infringement of the Word of God comes with dire consequences. We immediately classify ourselves as sinners and the only escape is belief in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that, upon repentance, His blood cleanses from every sin.

Were I to break the law of God I would earn the wrath of God upon myself, but it would not invalidate the Scripture. We cannot break it with impunity; every disobedience has its recompense; but the Holy Scriptures remain unimpaired.

As early in the unbreakable Scriptures as Genesis 2, two longstanding laws of God are established which our modern generation feels free to break; not only as individuals but by the laws of the land. In Genesis 2:3 we read - *'God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.'* In defiance of this, Sabbath breaking is widely legalised. Another example is in Genesis 2:24 where the marriage between one man and one woman is established. Modern



laws of the land legalise the breaking of marriage and the blurring of the sexes. People may try to explain and interpret away clear commands of God on these matters, but they cannot destroy their authority. The commandments are not invalidated; we simply heap up trouble for ourselves as the Apostle Paul makes clear in his Epistle to the Romans:

“Despise thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Romans 2:4-6).

The Lord Jesus Christ takes it for granted that among the Jews of His day it was correctly accepted that the

Scriptures cannot be broken – that is, they could not be invalidated. The point of His reasoning depends upon this very matter. It is proof positive. His contemporaries had objected to the Saviour calling Himself the Son of God; but the use of the expression ‘gods’ had Biblical precedent. It concerned lesser men than the Lord Jesus Christ. In Psalm 82:6 it is written - *“I have said, Ye are gods.”* Likewise - *“He judgeth among the gods”* (Psalm 82:1). They are the Judges in the



land, whether Kings, Princes as their deputies, or appointed Judges and magistrates. They are placed there by God to uphold His law, but they would die like men despite their exalted status, whereas the Saviour is perfect. If the expression can be attributed to lesser men it can certainly with justice be attributed to Him.

Omission of certain texts, for example Mark 16:9-20 and John 8:1-11, does not render them invalidated. Those who dispute them simply disqualify the versions which omit them or support those omissions. Those who perpetuate and follow their leading simply heap up trouble for themselves.

A very quick assessment of our standing before God is made by comparing our behaviour with the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20:1-17. Infraction, whether it be one or many, can only be atoned for by the blood of Jesus Christ, of whom we read - *“when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”* (Gal. 4:4-5). Not to come to Him is to verify His words of Proverbs 8:36 - *“he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death.”*

The deteriorating days in which we live must not loosen our conviction - the Saviour’s conviction - that “the Scripture cannot be broken.”

“The promise of God’s grace to enable us for our duty should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty.”

Matthew Henry

NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS



Children's Well-being & Schools Bill alarms home educators

British Church Newspaper, 20 January, 2025

Whilst the children's Well-being & Schools Bill currently going through Parliament is being represented by the Government as providing greater 'protection' for children at risk and an expansion of provision for them, other voices are expressing concern about the increased involvement of the State in seeking to control home education. The Bill applies only to England.

In the 2023/24 academic year, the Government reports that 153,00 children were home educated at some point, with just 2,100 subject to School Attendance Orders (1.4%).



Under the 1996 Education Act, parents had a duty to ensure their children received “efficient, full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude...school or otherwise.”

But now, under Section 25 of the new Government’s Bill, “a Local Authority in England must maintain a register of children” and parents who home educate will be required to notify the Local Authority who, at its discretion, will be entitled to refuse consent to a parent whose child is already at school, but who wants to home educate.

The group *Education Otherwise* notes that an astonishing 9% of all schoolchildren now have serious physical and/or mental ‘special needs’, with many parents feeling obliged to withdraw children from school because those needs are not being met. It claims the Government is troubled by the gradual drift towards home schooling: ‘This is a knee-jerk political reaction of spite to move to control home education...the rise in numbers is driven primarily by parents *not choosing to home educate but having no choice due to schools failing their children.*’

They add that in cases of marital breakdown, where one spouse wants to home educate their children, the other often insists on school education, with courts generally favouring the parent who insists that their children must go to school.

There has also been dissent over the legal requirement for all schools to provide free breakfast clubs for primary school children— a further financial and administrative burden for schools and another example of the burgeoning ‘nanny- State.’

BCN Editorial Comment: Last year 10% of all schools were found to be inadequate or “requiring improvement” with one in every 88 schools being put into special measures.

The State Mustn't Legalise More Family Fiction

Extract from an email issued by Coalition for Marriage (C4M)
22 January, 2025

If Government Ministers decided that triangles now have four sides, they would be wrong. Changing definitions does not change reality. The same is true of marriage.

When marriage was re-defined in law to include same-sex couples, C4M was derided for foreseeing the far-reaching consequences. Today, we see that removing gender from marriage has profoundly undermined not only marriage but also family and the very concept of male and female.

The Law commission's surrogacy proposals highlight this drift. Under the legal reform quango's preferred model, surrogate mothers could



be erased from birth certificates, replaced by the 'commissioning' parents. This amounts to recording a lie about who the child's mother is. The woman who carried and gave birth to the child would have no legal recognition.

Furthermore, the proposals would advance the commercialisation of surrogacy by allowing open advertising for surrogate mothers for the first time. Lies have consequences – and often it is women, especially those from poorer backgrounds – who suffer most.

At the same time, the Gender Recognition Act has, since 2004, allowed individuals to obtain new birth certificates stating they were born in a sex other than their actual biological sex; while the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, 2008 allows two female same-sex partners to be recognised as legal parents without reference to any father. This, too, embeds fiction into our legal system, further detaching the law from reality.

These measures are not just legal oddities; they have far-reaching societal implications. By pretending reality can be re-defined at will by the Government, critical safeguards for women and children are lost, families suffer and confusion reigns. Marriage as a union between one man and one woman has always been a cornerstone of stable societies, providing children with the security of knowing their biological heritage and the support of both a mother and a father.

At C4M we call on political leaders to resist this drift away from reality. Marriage was not re-defined without consequences. It is time to reclaim the truth about marriage and family life, grounded in the biological reality of being male and female.

CW Comment – for more information on the above contact www.c4m.org.uk

Scientists astounded by new discoveries

British Church Newspaper, 20 January, 2025

The latest edition of 'Science in the News', published by the *Creation Science Movement (CSM)*, includes new discoveries about our universe that has scientists' heads spinning.

Recent research by Florian Packnor, at the Lower Saxony Sea National Park Authority, has shown that not only does the Eurasian Reed Warbler steer with its 'magnetic compass', but can also navigate in three dimensions! For it has been shown that this tiny bird can distinguish the degree of inclination between true north (which is determined by the sun and the stars) and magnetic north which, as we know, moves around from year to year.

As CSM points out – 'This incredible ability depends on the birds having:

- good balance organs
- good optical visual 'feedback' and
- a specialised cryptochrome protein in the eye to detect magnetic fields.'

CSM adds – 'This confluence of abilities *could not have evolved*, as all these would need to be present from the start – plus neural processes – to enable successful navigation.'

"For by Him were all things created" (Colossians 1:16).



TAUGHT OF GOD

“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.”

Psalm 119:18

Charles Bridges

In order to keep God's Word, must we not pray to understand it? What then is the prayer? Not – give me a plainer Bible – but open mine eyes to know my Bible. Not – show me some new revelations beside the law – but make me behold the wonders of the law. David had acquired in the Divine school “more understanding than all his teachers;” yet he ever comes to his God under a deep sense of his blindness. Indeed, those who have been best and longest taught are always the most ready to sit at the feet of Jesus, as if they had everything to learn.

It is an unspeakable mercy to know a little – and at the same time to feel that it is only a little. We shall then be longing to know more and yet anxious to know nothing except as we are taught of God. There are indeed in God's law things so wondrous, that “the angels desire to look into” them (1 Peter 1:12). The exhibition of the scheme of redemption is in itself a world of wonders. The display of justice exercised in the way of mercy - and of mercy glorified in the exercise of justice - is a wonder that must fill the intelligent universe of God with everlasting astonishment.

And yet these “wondrous things” are hid from multitudes...They are “hid”, not only from the ignorant and unconcerned, but “from the wise and prudent”, and revealed only “to babes” (Luke 10:21); to those who practically acknowledge that important

truth, that “a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven” (John 3:27). External knowledge is like the child spelling letters without any apprehension of the meaning. It is like reading a large and clear print with a thick veil before our eyes. Oh! How needful then is the prayer – unveil - “Open thou mine eyes” – let the veil be taken away from the law, that I may understand it; and from my heart, that I may receive it!

But do not even Christians often find the word of God to be as a sealed book? They go through their accustomed portion, without gaining any increasing acquaintance with light, life and power – and without any distinct application of its contents to their hearts. And thus it must be, whenever reading has been unaccompanied with prayer for Divine influence. For we not only need to have our eyes open to “behold” fresh wonders, but also to give a more spiritual and transforming perception of those wonders, which we have already beheld.

But are we conscious of our blindness? Then let us hear the counsel of our Lord, that we anoint our eyes with eye-salve, that we may see [Rev. 3:18]. The recollection of the promises of Divine teaching is fraught with encouragement. The Spirit is freely and abundantly promised in this very character, as “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of” God [Eph. 1:17]. If, therefore, we desire a clearer insight into these “wondrous things” of revelation – if we would comprehend something more of the immeasurable extent of that love, with which God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son, and of that equally incomprehensible love, which moved that Son so cheerfully to undertake our cause – we must make daily, hourly use of this important petition - “Open Thou mine eyes.”

KEPT!

“The Lord... keep thee” - Numbers 6:24

J. C. Philpot

How we need the Lord to keep us! We stand upon slippery places. Snares and traps are laid for us in every direction. Every employment, every profession in life, from the highest to the lowest, has its special temptations. Snares are spread for the feet of the most illiterate as well as the most highly cultivated minds; nor is there anyone, whatever his position in life may be, who has not a snare laid up for him - and such a snare as will surely prove his downfall if God keep him not.

When Elisha sat upon the mountain and his servant was distressed lest his master should be taken away by violence, the prophet prayed the Lord to open his servant's eyes. What then saw he? Chariots and horses of fire all round about the mountain guarding the prophet. Perhaps if the Lord were to open our eyes, as he opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, we might see devils where he saw angels, see ourselves surrounded by Beelzebub and his legions, as the eyes of the servant saw Michael and the flaming hosts of Heaven.

Well then, may it be the desire of our soul - “The Lord keep thee” – keep me in His providence; keep me by His grace; keep me by planting His fear deep in my soul and maintaining that fear alive and effectual in my heart; keep me waking; keep me sleeping; keep me by night; keep me by day; keep me at home; keep me abroad; keep me with my family and keep me with my friends; keep me in the world and keep me in the church; the

Lord keep me, according to His promise, every moment; keep me by His Spirit and grace with all the tenderness implied in His words - "O keep me as the apple of thine eye!"

My friends, you can know little of your own heart, little of Satan's devices, little of the snares spread for your feet, unless you feel how deeply you need an interest in this blessing: "The Lord keep thee." And He will, for we read of the righteous, that they are kept "By the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and that "He will keep the feet of His saints."

"Let us...look forward to the days yet to come. We know not what they may be – bright or dark, many or few; but we know that we are in the hands of Him who "doeth all things well." He will not err in any of His dealings with us. He will take away and give, He will afflict and bereave, He will move and He will settle with perfect wisdom, at the right time, in the right way. The Great Shepherd of the sheep makes no mistakes. He leads every lamb of His flock by the right way to the city of habitation."

J. C. Ryle

“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE: FOR MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS”

2 Corinthians 12:9

From: *Mason's Spiritual Treasury*

Spiritual conflicts with the enemy of souls are at times the lot of all God's children. Paul, the Apostle, was in deep and afflicting distress of soul. Satan, the adversary, afflicted him powerfully and he groaned under it. He frequently besought Jesus that this grievous and painful messenger of Satan might be made to depart from him – and that the conflict might be at an end. What distressing exercises God's children undergo from the enemy of their souls? The hearts of such only know the bitterness of it. But, is the Captain of their salvation regardless of them? Is he deaf to their prayers, when they call on Him? No, He ever hears and always answers in love. But, did the Lord grant His dear servant Paul his request? No – and if He had, then the design of love would not have been answered. Paul was in danger of being exalted above measure and this was to be prevented. He was to be brought to glory in infirmities. This was to be effected by the means the Lord used in love to him. Satan's design was for his destruction, but Jesus made it work for his good – but not in the way Paul anticipated.

So that he might not faint in the combat, this wonderful promise was given to him - “My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” In other words, my love and favour is ever towards you and My almighty strength is engaged to preserve and support you. Although you are weakness itself and unable to withstand such an enemy, yet My

almighty strength shall uphold you and in this thou shalt conquer.

Here is the strongest assurance for the confidence of faith and the most solid ground for rejoicing and for hope. It is the grace and love of Jesus opposed to the malice and hatred of Satan; the strength of Jehovah triumphing in and made illustriously glorious to the saints in their weakness. Oh, what an ever-loving and all-sufficient Lord is Jehovah Jesus! The Lord whom thou servest, believer, knows every distress and conflict of thy soul. He will strengthen thee in and support thee under every trial and bring thee safely through these exercises and troubles. Thou shalt lose nothing in the furnace, but the dross of nature's pride and corruption and also the vanity of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness. God, by His Spirit, will teach thee to profit in humility and to glory in and exult the Lord Jesus more and more. Sweet and encouraging is that promise to God's church and people in general. It is as strong and comforting as God's declaration was to the Apostle Paul. "Fear not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am Thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Amen.

"If we understand that everything happening to us is to make us more Christlike, it will solve a great deal of anxiety in our lives."

W. Tozer



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