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OUR DAYS

The expression "Our days" is one way of referring to man's lifetime on this earth, the period between birth and death. And as has been said many a time — how solemn it is to be a human being! Man is born in sin and shapen in iniquity and immediately commences a journey which is to end at the day of death. Thereafter there is heaven and hell, in what Jesus calls "The World to come." Those who believe upon the divine Redeemer, have the hope of eternal life in heaven with the glorified Redeemer; and those who at the end of their days know not God nor the Saviour and Salvation of the gospel, have but hell in prospect.

Our days, or times are wholly in the Lord's hand, as to the actual duration of our sojourn on this earth, as He ruleth in the Kingdom of men in this regard as in all other matters affecting us. And whatever stage in life's journey we are at now, childhood, youth, mature years, or old age, there is in each case an evidence of the long suffering and patience of God and a call to utter from the heart: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." (Ps. 103).

No one, familiar with the Scriptures, can fail to observe how frequently and emphatically the brevity of man's sojourn in the world is referred to. Although the generations of the patriarchs before the flood recorded in Genesis, make striking reading as to the length of *their* days — Methuselah living for nine hundred, sixty and nine years — yet at the end of each individual record it states: "And he died." Even their days were after all, as a shadow especially in the light of the eternal world into which they all entered. And although Jacob in his day stated to Pharaoh that the days of the years of his pilgrimage were an hundred and thirty years, yet he comments on this as follows: ". . . few and evil have the days of the years of my life been . . ." At the end of his long life, Jacob was after all impressed with the brevity of his time in the world. Again, the observations of the eminent and afflicted Job emphasises how short a time we shall on earth remain, when he says: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and

full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." And the Apostle James may be said to sum up this aspect of our days when he asks the question: "For what is your life?" And then he answers it thus: "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

In these modern times there is an increasing number of persons living to what is called "old age," that is, to seventy and eighty years and beyond to ninety and a hundred years in some cases. Moses, the Man of God, in his prayer set forth in the 90th Psalm, stipulates that our days may be as follows: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow." Yet to each individual as we proceed from one stage of life's journey to another, the actual number of our days and years is uncertain. We know not what a day may bring forth. In the Proverbs of Solomon, man is warned thus: "Boast not thyself of tomorrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Among other things, "today" itself may bring us face to face with death and the end of our days here. The narrative from the mouth of the Lord Jesus regarding the case of the rich fool is surely a striking example of this very thing. This man while contemplating years ahead of personal ease in the enjoyment of the abundance of the things which he possessed was told: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." The cutting short of his days in a moment suddenly, did not enter his thinking at all. But these matters are written for our learning and admonition. That the number of "our days," is to us uncertain, is also illustrated in the history of the young and godly King Josiah of Jerusalem and Judah. Just when he had brought a much-needed reformation to the land and had held an outstanding passover, he went out against the king of Egypt to fight with him, although this king declared to him "I come not against thee this day . . ." Thereafter, Josiah was mortally wounded, and taken to Jerusalem where he died. He was indeed a young man when his days came to an end. The words of the Lord Jesus "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not of the Son of Man cometh," may have their principle application to His coming to final judgment; but they do speak to us of the uncertainty of the time of His coming in providence by death.

It is therefore folly and madness, especially in the case of those who have been to any extent conversant with the Word of God and are under the teaching of the gospel, to be living carelessly in sin and walking according to the course of this world, having no regard to their souls salvation, and the brevity and uncertainty

of their days in the world. It is here and now, during one's days in time that sinners must seek the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation, if He is to be found at all. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Sinners may reflect on their days that are past and may entertain the prospect of days in the future, but God speaks thus: "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

As to Christians, they are advised that during their days in the world, they must not expect a full or permanent rest for soul or body. "This is not your rest." Although believers have found rest in Christ and His precious blood here, yet many influences are at work to disturb their peace of heart and mind, from within and without: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." And they are in a gracious, spiritual manner to labour to enter into that rest: during their days in the World, they are not to be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience, inherit the promises. They are to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear — the fear of God — and to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, pleading with God continually, that for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ, He would fit and prepare them to live godly and at the end of their days to die in the Lord.

How precious is time! How valuable are "our days" allotted to us by God! This will be our mind, if we are brought by the Spirit of truth to live not only under the shelter of the Cross of Christ, but under the influence of the divine revelation relative to the great eternity.

And as we come near the end of another year, may we pray with Moses, the man of God: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Ps. 90, v. 12).

SERMON

By Rev. Fraser MacDonald, M.A., North Tulsta

"And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chederlaomer and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God."

—Genesis Chapter xiv: verses 17 and 18.

In Genesis chapter xiii we are furnished with a simple but solemn account of the way in which Abram and Lot parted com-

pany. The sacred narrative informs us, that there was a strife between the herdmen of Lot's cattle and the herdmen of Abram's cattle—most probably a strife about the possession of wells and pasture, as the sequel seems to indicate. It was then that Abram the servant of the Lord said to Lot "Lot there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (Genesis xiii: 8). He called for an immediate end to scenes of quarrelling and wrangling on the basis of the fact that they were brethren. It was as though Abram had pointed out how altogether unbecoming it was that he and his nephew should take sides and quarrel, when no principle worth contending for was at stake. Well did Abram know that strife has a tendency to spread and grow. He therefore took the initiative and called for an immediate end to contention that could have disastrous results for all concerned. Too often bitter words of recrimination give place to angry blows, and bloodshed follows. Besides, the Canaanite and the Perizzite were then in the land, keeping close watch on the actions and movements of Abram and Lot. To the Canaanite, disagreement between *them* was a sign of weakness and a signal to attack. More serious still, at least in the eyes of Abram, was the risk to which their worship and religion would be exposed. Much less than open strife between brethren can prejudice the mind of the world against the godly, and the religion they profess. The smallest disagreement between two children of God is soon magnified by the worldling beyond all proportion, and made a sufficient warrant for condemning the Christian and his religion. To Abram we believe, the most painful thought of all, was that the reproach would fall upon the God whom he was known to worship. To prevent this, Abram was willing to suffer loss, as can be seen from the magnanimous proposal made to Lot. Jealous for the glory of God, and deeply concerned that he should walk circumspectly, in love, wisdom, and honesty to them that were without, he suggests a separation on the most generous terms, as recorded in Chapter xiii: verse 9, "Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Lot did not hesitate to accept the offer, but took full advantage of Abram's gracious proposal. Lured by the prospect of worldly advantage and prosperity, he made his now proverbial choice, and took his first step in the path of backsliding. Lot's carnal choice had now made him a dweller of the cities of the plain, with his tent pitched toward Sodom. There he had pasture in abundance, and if one would have remonstrated with him regarding the

wickedness of those among whom he lived, we feel that he would not have been slow to defend and justify the step he had taken. Be that as it may, the folly of Lot's choice was soon to become apparent to all. Thus far, the narrative makes sad reading indeed as far as Lot is concerned, while it clearly reveals the strength and dignity of Abram's character as a man of peace. The spirit of the New Testament precepts, to live peaceably with all men, and to be at peace among ourselves, was clearly understood by Abram, and exemplified in his life. The fact is, however, that the children of God are called to be men of *war* as well as men of peace. To come to the help of the Lord against the mighty; to rescue the victims of the marauding oppressor, and to fight the good fight of faith are injunctions, no less binding than those we have cited already. The changed circumstances in which Lot now suddenly found himself placed, constituted, as it were, a test of Abram's character as a warrior. These were the circumstances: under the chastening hand of God, Lot was now placed in a most humiliating and unenviable position. He has suffered the loss of his goods, and was now a captive in the land of a hostile king, with little or no prospect of escape. What now are his thoughts? Is he already beginning to rue his choice, and mourn his folly in being so willing to lose the fellowship of the friend of God? We know not, for on that subject Scripture is silent, but we must turn now to a more inviting theme, namely the ready and brotherly help afforded by Abram. In so doing, we would invite your attention to two particulars—

(1) Abram's reaction to the woeful tidings brought to him.

(2) Abram's reward.

(1) In the battle of the four kings with the five, in the vale of Siddim, it went ill with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, as we read in verse 10 of the chapter, "And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain." In this first recorded battle in Scripture, we read that Lot also was among the captives, but, oh, what a mercy that there came one that had escaped and told Abram that Lot was taken prisoner. Of this messenger we hear no more, yet to this man Lot was surely deeply indebted, for he rendered both to Abram and to Lot most noble service, in being the bearer of such tidings. This man's deed may well be overshadowed by the selfless love and magnanimity of Abram; forgotten however it should not be. It is in this way that the small and the great are linked together in the great purpose and providence of God. Instead of folding our hands in idleness and despair because we are not called to

some high and public duty, let us rather discharge with the utmost fidelity and haste the "smaller" duties laid to our charge. Abram's courage and resources may not be ours, but we can raise the alarm.

It may not be possible for us to rescue the distressed, but do we inform those who are in a position to help and deliver? If, by the grace of God, we seek to do what we can, when we cannot do what we would, a rich reward will be ours.

Dear reader, you may not be called to preach the Gospel to the heathen, but you are surely called to help according to your ability to *spread* the Gospel. Ponder these solemn words from Proverbs xxiv: 11, "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

To return to the narrative then, tidings have reached Abram's ears—the sad, sad tidings about Lot's condition. Now the question is how did the man of God *react*? The crisis demanded prompt though not precipitate action, and Abram saw that. Realising in measure the gravity of the situation, and the opportunity it afforded for practising as well as preaching the doctrine of brotherly love, Abram, instead of making the extreme and difficult circumstances an excuse for failure in duty, determined by faith, to do all he possibly could to rescue his erring brother. This decision was worthy of such a man, for, as we shall see, he could well have contented himself with doing much less. For example, he could have heard the evil tidings regarding Lot's plight, and left the matter there. After all, why should he become involved in a war with others, simply because his backsliding nephew was taken captive by a hostile power. Would it not have been easy for Abram to have justified himself in taking nothing to do with Lot? Could he not argue that he had no direct call from Lot himself? Could he not have said to himself that this was Lot's own doing, and that he was only now beginning to reap what he had sown? Even more, Abram might argue, why should I interfere if this is God's way of chastising him? Yes, it would have been a relatively easy matter for Abram to frame a very good defence against taking any action to rescue Lot. Ah, how subtle and complex are the suggestions of Satan and the carnal mind! Some of these are evidently carnal and selfish, others have a savour and sound of piety, and are thus not so easily discerned. Might Satan not suggest to Abram that if he showed kindness to Lot, and made a bold attempt to rescue him, that there would be a positive danger that Lot would minimise his

own sin and folly? Further, Abram might well have feared that his readiness to help on this occasion would be misconstrued, and that instead of leading Lot to repentance, it might only harden him in sin. Many such thoughts may have flooded the mind of the patriarch as he considered what he ought to do in the light of the news which he had just received. The situation was undoubtedly difficult and delicate, and one that required grace, not only to act, but to know *how* to act. There are times in the experience of believers when it is as difficult to *know* their duty as to do it, not for any lack of clarity in the Word of God, but because of the subtlety of Satan and the fearful corruption of their own hearts. Would Satan not have rejoiced if he had prevailed upon Abram to leave Lot to the Lord, instead of loving his brother to such a degree that he was willing to lay down his life for him.

Further, Abram might well have been tempted to content himself with a feeling of deep sympathy. There are situations in life where sympathy is all that can be offered and, if sincere, it can be of great comfort to the distressed one. And what about prayer? Would it not have sufficed that Abram the friend of God should pour out his heart in prayer on behalf of his brother? After all, the prayers of Abram were those of the righteous man. Effectual and fervent, they would avail much. Had Abram then interceded on Lot's behalf he would have given evidence of no small measure of concern and love for Lot's welfare. Indeed we venture to say that were it not that self was being mortified in Abram, he could well have secretly rejoiced at the fall of his brother. Alas, such a spirit is to be found in us all, even where there is grace, because of the pride, the vanity, the jealousy and selfishness that dwells in us. Do you exclaim as Hazael did to Elisha, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" Do you think that you are above this? If you do, it is because you are ignorant of your own vile and treacherous heart. With shame let us confess that such a monster dwells within us, yes, we may even go so far as to express sorrow on account of our brother's fall, while in our heart we rejoice that he *has* fallen. Thus we add hypocrisy to sin, if not kept by the grace of God as Abram was on this occasion. Instead then of consulting with flesh and blood, instead of adopting one of the easier courses which he may have followed, Abram rather looked to God alone for help and guidance, and girded himself for the battle. In one sense the battle was over already, for the greater conflict of the two was fought out and won in the plain of Abram's soul. By the breathing and light of the Spirit of God, Abram resisted every temptation to avoid the path of duty. Adding to his faith virtue, and to virtue know-

ledge, and to knowledge brotherly kindness, he armed his own trained servants, and set out at his own expense, and at the greatest risk, to recover the captives. He divided his forces against the enemy, and came on them by night. Taken by surprise, they fled, smitten and dismayed, while Abram pursued after them. Well might Abram have said with David, "As for God his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is buckler to all those that trust in him. For who is a God save the Lord or who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arm. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation; thy right hand hath holden me up and thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm xviii: verses 30 to 35). How Christlike was Abram's conduct, especially in the light of Lot's ingratitude and sin. Yet, Lot was a dear child of God, to whom Abram felt bound by ties infinitely more precious and enduring than any natural bonds. Dear reader, do you stand condemned, corrected, ashamed, before such a shining example of grace? Do you tremble when you set yourself beside this man of God? Are there none whom *you* should seek to deliver, or do you think that you will be excused because there are great difficulties and risks in the way? It may be well here to remind ourselves that it was vain for Israel's warriors to wage war against their enemies, if sin and covetousness, pride and envy were not mortified or conquered in their own breasts. In like manner it is vain for us to battle against the sickening immorality, the awful scepticism and materialism of our age, if we fail in our duty towards our brethren in Christ. O may the example of Abraham stir us up to the exercise of unfeigned love to the brethren. In ourselves we are weak, corrupt and utterly self-centred, but in Christ there is a fulness of grace from which we can draw. Did not Paul say "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me"? If we cherish the unspeakably precious hope that we ourselves have been freely forgiven by the Lord for His own Name's sake, and through the redeeming virtue and merit of Christ's atoning sacrifice, surely we would desire to forgive and restore an erring brother. Now, an exercise of that of Abraham's cannot go unrewarded, although the reward is not of debt but of grace. As we therefore watch the valiant warrior retire from the fray and set his face homewards, we feel that he could well have been singing the words of David though he had never seen them in print:

“ The statutes of the Lord are right,
And do rejoice the heart:
The Lord's command is pure, and doth
Light to the eyes impart.
Unspotted is the fear of God,
And doth endure for ever:
The judgments of the Lord are true,
And righteous altogether.
They more than gold yea, much fine gold,
To be desired are:
Than honey, honey from the comb
That droppeth sweeter far.
Moreover they thy servant warn
How he his life should frame:
A great reward provided is
For them that keep the same.”

Yes, friends, Abram had joy and light, and more than gold and honey, “ For verily there is a reward for the righteous ” as we read in Psalm lviii: verse 11.

Of that reward, it is time now to speak.

Long before Abram reached home his cup of joy was being filled. First of all, he had no small measure of satisfaction in being enabled to engage in a most difficult duty. In paths of pleasantness and peace he now walked, for, in the very nature of the case, the pleasure to be tasted in the faithful discharge of duty is infinitely superior to that which springs from a course of sin and disobedience. It is not only that these pleasures are but for a season; they do not last; they are not pure; and, so far from enriching the soul, they degrade and impoverish it more and more. Yet, alas, how many there are who revel in sin and know of no higher joy than that which they find in the gratification of lust. Abram's joy, however, was pure and spiritual, and can only be enjoyed by those who have respect to all God's Commandments, and seek to walk in the obedience of faith.

Another drop of sweetness distilled in Abram's cup of blessing lay in the fact that his efforts to rescue Lot were crowned with success. A sense of having accomplished something worthwhile, and having achieved his purpose, apparently without loss of personnel or prestige, would help to increase the rejoicing of his heart. His perilous mission did not end in failure or disgrace. Now, had these been the only rewards afforded Abram, we think that he would have no reason to complain or repent of his action. But, there are greater rewards in store for Abram, for “ O how

great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee: which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men." Surely it was no small token of the Lord's favour to Abram that he should have the opportunity of meeting with, and witnessing to the king of Sodom. If the witness of Lot in Sodom was weakened and almost invalidated because of worldliness, here was something to offset that—something to make the king of Sodom think again. By word and action this noble patriarch witnessed a good confession before the king of that desperately wicked city. And what was the nature of this witness? It was a living, thought-provoking witness to the reality of the being and power of God. It carried with it a stern rebuke to those who thought that they possessed and owned the earth, and went far to correct any mistaken ideas of the Lord and the character of His children. Before the king of Sodom, there now stood one who evidently believed what he said, and was ready to act upon it. Abram's refusal to take anything at all from this heathen monarch confirmed the truth of what he professed. Alas, that the conduct of Christians so often contradicts their creed. Here was one, who, on very definite grounds refused to take anything from Sodom's king, one who shook his hand at the taking of bribes. His trust was in the Lord, and he knew what to refuse. With marvellous contempt for the wealth of Sodom, and in living and loyal faith to his God, he would not take one iota of what was offered to him. Possibly some would say that Abram would be quite justified in accepting the goods offered to him, but he is too careful and farseeing to do any such thing. Listen to his words, "I have lift mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, but I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich." The same holy jealousy for the glory and honour of God as moved him to seek separation from Lot, characterises anew Abram's conduct before Sodom's king. Do *we* know what to refuse, or are we guilty of refusing the good and choosing the evil? If left to ourselves it is only all too evident that we will refuse what we ought to accept, and accept what we ought to refuse. We refuse to humble ourselves, to do judgment, to hear the Word of the Lord. Did not Jeremiah say of Israel in his day, "They refused to return, they refused to know me," and again, "This evil people which refused to hear my words." In one word, we refuse Christ, who is offered to us freely in the Gospel of God's grace. O sinner, thou who refusest to be ashamed, hear once more the Words of the living God, concerning Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, "See that ye refuse not him that

speaketh. For if they escaped not him who spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven " (Hebrews xii; 25). Yes, my dear reader, seek grace to refuse the evil and choose the good. Then will you be as Abram was, and have great recompense of reward.

Abram's *greatest* reward is still to be considered, and who can express the gladness of his heart when to his great surprise, and still greater delight he was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem, and priest of the most high God. If ever Abram saw the day of Christ afar off, and was glad it was then, for we read in the New Testament of this wonderful person, that he was undoubtedly a type of Him who was to come, a type of the Priest upon His throne. That apart, and taking Melchizedek only as another godly man, would not Abram be constrained to conclude that all his perils and trials were more than compensated for, by even a brief meeting with Melchizedek? How refreshing it must have been to Abram's soul to meet a man of this stature. Well might Abram say " What a mercy that I resisted the spirit of indolence and sloth and selfishness." Have you yourself ever gone on an errand of mercy, without any thought of immediate reward and, in the Divine providence, you have thus met some Christian whom you would not otherwise have met? O what strength and encouragement it must have afforded Abram to be greeted by this eminent man of God, who was both a priest and a king. From Abram's action, however, in giving to this man tithes of all that he possessed, we feel inclined to infer that Abram saw in him at least a shadow of the One who was to come. Who told Abram that this man was the priest of the Most High God? Who told him to give tithes to this man? Surely the Holy Ghost gave Abram to see through Melchizedek, the glory of Christ, the Priest after the order of Melchizedek, the Great High Priest of our profession. Of the Priesthood of Christ, Paul says " That after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews vii: 13, 14, 15).

Furthermore, we read that this same Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and even more, he blessed Abram and said " Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." O what rich rewards—the blessing of the king of Salem, the fellowship of the king of Salem, and bread and wine from the priest of the most high God. In a similar way, those who take up their cross and fight the good fight of faith, will enjoy the fellowship and

the blessing of One infinitely greater than Melchizedek, king of Salem. Christ is our great High Priest, Jesus is our King of righteousness and peace, who on the night in which He was betrayed in setting forth the real meaning and value of His death, used bread and wine, saying "This is my body which is broken for you and this cup is the new testament in my blood." In the light of this fact, we feel that the bread and wine offered to Melchizedek is vested with a symbolical significance. This much at least we know, that believers need the body and blood of Christ. Did not Christ say "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Who so eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed" (John vi: 53 to 55). It was no ordinary meal, in no ordinary circumstances, by which Abram was refreshed and sustained by the priest of the Most High God. Now, here is the man who refused to take anything at all from the king of Sodom, and yet, he takes bread and wine from Melchizedek, with whom he has had no previous contact or acquaintance whatsoever. Strange is it not, yet Abram knows what to *receive*, as well as what to refuse. Abram cannot refuse the bread and wine from the priest of the Most High God, nor can those, whose eyes have been opened to see the glory of Christ and the gracious suitability of His provision for them as sinners, refuse to receive His body and blood. Some there are, who would as it were, have the bread and wine along with the tempting offers of the world, but this cannot be. It is only those who receive Christ in truth that can refuse what the world has to offer, and it is only those who are brought to refuse what the world has to offer, who in truth receive Christ.

Having then received from the hand of Melchizedek bread and wine, and with the blessing of God upon him, Abram sets his face towards his own home. It is not without significance that we read in Genesis xv: 1, immediately after this incident, these words of the Lord to Abram, "Fear not Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." We wonder possibly at these words, but they throw light on the condition of Abram's mind after his return from Sodom. After all, Abram was a man of like passions with ourselves, and on reflection, might well be tempted to fear that those upon whom he had inflicted such a humiliating defeat, would rally their forces and make an attack upon him. To counteract these fears, the Lord in infinite condescension and love gave him this word. "Fear not." Further, any loss of time or energy was to be made up to Abram in a way that was worthy of the God whom he served. What depths are in these words, "For

I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Here is protection of a unique and wonderful kind—"I am thy shield" Here is reward, great reward, exceeding great reward, exceeding all that Abram could even ask or think. What a wonderful practical commentary on the words of the Saviour in Mark viii: 34 to 35, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."

WHY 'FAST DAY'?

As some may not fully understand why the Thursday of a Communion is called the Fast Day, it may be helpful to consider the subject and see how appropriately the name describes a day set apart for humbly confessing our sins to God, as part of the preparation needed for remembering the death of Christ worthily. If it is proper for Christians to fast, we may expect to find a warrant for it in the Word of God, as a practice in keeping with the spiritual nature of the new era of the Church inaugurated by the Saviour. This is what we do find when we examine the Scriptures.

Let our enquiry be directed first to the Gospels. We see there that fasting was much practised by the Pharisees who regarded themselves as the foremost, practical exponents of the Jews' religion. Jesus commented adversely on many of the Pharisees' activities; did He approve or disapprove of this one? We find in Matthew 4, v. 2 that He, Himself fasted. In the sixth chapter of the same Gospel He gives directions for fasting. In Luke, chapter eighteen, the Pharisee's fasting which he boasted of in prayer, is deprecated as sinful ostentation. Of special interest, however, in this enquiry is Matthew 9, vv. 14-17, especially verse fifteen. "And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast."

The Baptist was in prison and those disciples of his who had not accepted his testimony to Jesus, evidently felt resentful and ready to find fault with the Saviour, and even to align themselves with the Pharisees on occasion, as here. Yet it is understandable that John's plight should make them sad and that they should wonder how it was possible for Jesus and his disciples not to be fasting along with them. The Saviour's explanation is given in this verse and it is suited to help us also in our enquiry as to the suitability of the term Fast Day.

It is to be understood that we are concerned with religious fasting, not the kind engaged in for physical reasons. To fast is to abstain from eating, and from earliest ages it has been recognised as a natural accompaniment of deep grief. Intense sorrow takes away the inclination to eat. It did so in Saul's case when at Endor doom was pronounced upon himself, his sons and the host of Israel (I Sam. 28, v. 23). It would be just the same if the grief had a spiritual cause; fasting would be natural. It was so with David after the discovery of his great sin. "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. . . . David therefore besought the Lord for the child, and David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the earth." (2 Sam. 12, vv. 14, 16). Just as feasting is appropriate to feelings of joy, so fasting seems suited to sorrow.

The first mention of fasting in the Bible is in Judges 20, v. 26, when all Israel fasted in their grief at having to fight against the tribe of Benjamin. It is remarkable that there is no word of fasting in the five books of Moses, and it shows how far removed the Jewish religion, as established, was from the false asceticism and outward mortifications practised in the religions of their heathen contemporaries. There was, however, one annual occasion which in the later ages of Israel became known as the "Fast." This was the Day of Atonement when "the high priest went alone, once every year, not without blood which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." (Heb. 9, v. 7). Being a day for calling sins to remembrance (just like our Fast Day), the people were to afflict their souls and do no work at all. "It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls by a statute for ever." (Lev. 16, v. 31). On that day it was appropriate that godly sorrow for sins should be matched by their ceasing to gratify fleshly desires. Later in Israel's history the people fasted completely on the Day of Atonement, and the wearing of sackcloth and ashes was adopted as an additional sign of grief.

It is one thing, however, to fast because of deep, spiritual sorrow and another to fast apart from true humiliation of soul. In Israel, in times of backsliding, this became the tendency, and thus we find Isaiah denouncing purely formal fasts in Chapter 58, vv. 3-7. The people protested that they had fasted yet God had taken no notice of their piety. The Lord, however, saw that along with their fasting went pleasure-seeking and "business as usual." They oppressed the poor for gain and sinned in many other ways too. This is always the danger with external observances, that

they will become but empty forms. The Church in both dispensations has been prone to rest satisfied with the externals of religion, and to offer God the husks of words, postures and ceremonies, while their hearts remained far from Him. We see then that while God did not prescribe fasting as a religious ordinance, the practice, because of its suitability to express heart sorrow, made a place for itself in the religion of Israel in later times. Where it is a natural, voluntary expression of soul sorrow, the Word refers to it approvingly. In addition to the cases already mentioned, there are those of Ahab (I Kings 21, v. 27), the people of Nineveh (Jonah 2, v. 7), Ezra's proclamation of a fast at the river Ahava, and in the New Testament, the instance of the Church at Antioch fasting and praying before sending Barnabas and Saul to their missionary work.

Now, in our text it is clear that the Saviour confirms the spiritual view of fasting. As an end in itself, a mere outward and often hypocritical observance, He gave it no place and referred to it disparagingly in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. "I thank thee, O God, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." (Luke 18, vv. 11-12). Therefore on this occasion Christ excused his followers, because fasting now would be unnatural, but He foretold that the time would come when they would fast. Now as they drank in the gracious words which fell from His lips and rejoiced in His unique fellowship, the Light of the world and the Lover of the Church, they could not mourn. But the days would come, three terrible days, when they would weep and lament, and in their sorrow they would fast then. The men and women who loved the Saviour and mourned over His decease had no heart for eating and drinking while He lay in the grave.

Therefore, as far as private fasting is concerned, the matter lies with the individual. If sorrow demands it, then let it be done. It is a general law of our nature that the outward should correspond with the inward. Mournful expressions and gloomy words do not fit in with a marriage feast. Raucous laughter and exuberant jollity would be sadly discordant in the home desolated by death. Thus it is that a sober abstinence, total or partial, can help towards a proper feeling of sorrow for sin. Fasting is an act of self-denial, a refusal to gratify the appetites of the flesh, which can be an assertion of the soul's supremacy over the body, and does in fact tend to strengthen its authority. No doubt, when the Fast Day first came to be observed, fasting in some measure did constitute part of the observance. Partial abstention from

food would quite likely be an aid to the profitable observance of the day. Nowadays the practice of actually fasting is in abeyance, but the name lingers on. If we would seek by God's grace to feel truly humbled before Him on account of our transgressions and the sin of our hearts, the sadness to which fasting is so natural an accompaniment, would possess us and prompt us to pray as David did, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." If we would sincerely mourn over our sin, the literal fasting would be an indifferent matter. At the same time it might be pleaded, that should anyone think that it would be helpful to be sparing in diet on the Fast Day, none should stand in his way. The Lord Jesus has given directions for true fasting that is accepted of God and beneficial to him who does it. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matt. 6, vv. 17, 18).

A LETTER

By the Rev. Professor John Duncan, LL.D.

The following interesting letter was written by Dr. Duncan to his esteemed friend, Margaret MacPhee, Glasgow, better known as "Peggy 'Phee." Peggy, who died not long after the date of this letter, was one of the most eminent Christians in Glasgow in her day. She was a native of Argyllshire, but came to Glasgow in her youth, and sat under the excellent ministry of the eminent Dr. Love. She was one of Dr. Love's most exercised and intelligent hearers. Her house in later years was a centre of religious influences. Being a native of the Highlands, she was constantly visited by eminent ministers from that quarter, such as the Rev. Roderick Macleod, the Rev. John MacRae, and others. The late Mr Macdonald, Shieltaig, when a student, knew her well, and often visited her. His testimony was that she was the greatest Christian woman he ever saw. Dr. Duncan's intimate friendship with her is well known, and several interesting anecdotes are told in connection with it. They were mutually helpful to one another. Peggy was distinguished not only for her ripe piety, but for her superior mental power, her great dependence of judgment, and clear grasp of the doctrines of grace. It is told of Dr. Duncan that he visited her one evening at a late hour in much spiritual darkness and distress, and on her inquiring what was his errand at such a late season of the night, he replied,

“ Oh, Peggy, I have come that you may tell me about the righteousness which is by faith! ” The reply was a striking testimony to the Christian love and deep humility of the learned divine, as well as to the grace and understanding of his humble friend. The above incident no doubt took place when Dr. Duncan was resident in Glasgow as minister of the Milton Church. In after years, however, he still maintained his friendship with Peggy, and regularly corresponded with her. One of his letters is the following, which may be entitled “ Meditations for a Time of Thought ”:

Edinburgh, 11th March, 1848.

My Very Dear Friend,—I need not say what grief your brother's letter informing us of your illness has caused to me and to my dear wife. How frequently and how strikingly has the Lord been bringing before you the solemn admonition that “ here we have no continuing city.”

Since this earth became a place of sinning, it has most righteously become a place of suffering, and it is well that we trace all that we endure to that cause, that we may “ glorify God in the fires.” Our suffering, indeed, can be no expiation for sin. But you know of One who, though He “ knew no sin,” was made sin for sinners and a curse for accursed ones that such might be redeemed and “ made the righteousness of God in him.” With what astonished joy did His now penitent betrayers and murderers, gladly receiving the word, find in the death of Jesus the Messiah the fulfilment of the prophetic word: “ He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.” What a display is here of the character of God against whom we have grievously offended! Here let us sinners ever look on Him whom we have pierced, and while, through the working of the Spirit of grace and supplications, we mourn for Him, let us aim, however dim our eyes or weak our faith may be, to join the company of those who adoringly and gratefully exclaim “ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Christ crucified is the beginning of the confidence, and let the same be held steadfastly unto the end.

But though our sufferings cannot be expiatory, by the blessing of the heavenly Father, bestowed through His only begotten Son our Lord, and conveyed to our souls by the Spirit of all grace, they *may*, and repairing in humble, penitent believing faith to the Faithful One who has promised, we may and should rest assured that they *will* contribute abundantly to our sanctification: the chastise-

ment of the Father of spirits being, not for His pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. May He cause this affliction to work out for you the peaceable fruits of righteousness while you are exercised thereby!

It becomes not me to obtrude particular subjects on your meditations, persuaded as I am that the Glorifier of Christ is your leader and guide into all the truth. As, however, He is pleased to make use of instruments, and I would wish to be helpful as far as enabled to all the flock, and especially to you, my dear friend, I may venture to suggest the following very imperfect outlines of subjects of meditation for a time of trouble:—

1st. Our frailty and entire dependence as creatures on the self-existent and indefinitely glorious Jehovah.

2nd. Our awful inconceivable guilt as apostates from Him who made man in His own image, after His likeness; the entire depravity of our natures as fallen, and our personal actual transgressions by omission and commission, in youth and in riper years, before we knew, or rather, were known of God, and since; and most particularly in sins against Christ, His Gospel, Spirit, and grace, etc.

3rd. The believing contemplation of Christ in His person, covenant, engagements, mediatory work, all-sufficiency, grace, truth, and saving benefits.

4th. The patience, long-suffering, and abundant grace of the Heavenly Father, as it has been so richly manifested in the Son of His love and in His dealings with us.

5th. The shortness of time, the certainty of death, the vanity of the world, the solemnity of judgment, the preciousness of the mercy-seat, the necessity of entire sanctification.

6th. The glory of the exalted Redeemer, the perpetuity of His intercession, the fidelity of His promises, His power to guide unto death and through it, the blessedness of those that are at home with Him in the mansions which He has gone to prepare, the unutterable blessedness, transport and triumph which are stored up in the words of eternal life—"I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

Pray for me, for my mind is often despondent, and my faith and hope sadly and disgracefully feeble and low; how needful the blessed Spirit. I hope the Lord may be pleased to spare you a little before you go hence, and make you a blessing. My wife unites in tenderest sympathy and love.—Your attached friend,

John Duncan.

—From *F.P. Magazine*, Vol. VIII, p.11.

VICTORY OVER THE WORLD

By Octavius Winslow

Victory over the world may be specified as a strongly marked feature of a regenerate man. I John v, 4: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." How does victory over the world mark one born of God? It proves it in this way. That which overcomes the world must be superhuman, of almighty power. It cannot be anything of the world, nor can it be of the flesh; for the flesh has no power over the flesh, and the world will never oppose itself. The flesh loves itself, and the world is too fond of power, quietly and unresistingly to yield its dominion. What then is that which overcomes the world? John goes on to reply, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith then is the conquering grace; this it is that gives the victory; this it is that crushes this tremendous foe. And what is faith but the "gift of God," and the work of the eternal Spirit in the soul? So that he who possesses that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit is "born of God"; and "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," and the instrument by which he overcomes the world is faith. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

And how does faith overcome the world? By leading the believer to the cross of Jesus. True faith deals with its great object, Jesus. It goes to Him in the conflict, it goes to Him when hard pressed, it goes to Him in its weakness, it goes to Him in deep distress; on Him it leans, and through Him it always obtains the victory. Of the martyrs it is recorded that they "overcame through the blood of the Lamb," and Paul employs similar language in describing his victory: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is faith in Christ that gives us the victory. How could a feeble saint, with no strength or wisdom in himself, overcome so powerful and subtle an enemy as this without supernatural aid? He never could. Look at the world! There are its ten thousand temptations, its temptations of pleasure, its temptations of ambition, its temptations of wealth, its false religion, its temporising policy, its hollow friendship, its empty show, its gay deceptions, its ten thousand arts to ensnare, beguile, allure and charm. Oh, how could one poor weak believer ever crush this fearful, powerful foe but as he is "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"? The cross of Christ gives him the victory. Christ has already conquered the world, and faith in His blood will enable the feeblest

soul to exclaim, while the enemy lies subdued at his feet, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth me to triumph in Christ."

Reader, have you obtained the victory over the world, or has the world obtained the victory over you? One of the two is certain; either you are warring against it, or you are its passive and resistless victim; either you are "born of God," and "have overcome the world," or you are yet unregenerate, and the world has overcome you. On whose side is the victory? Perhaps you profess faith in the Lord Jesus, yet love the world, and conform to its maxims, its policy, its principles, its fashions, its dress, its amusements, even its very religion—for it has its hollow forms of religion. Is it so? Then hear what the Word of the Lord says to you. I John ii, 15: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him." A solemn declaration for you, you who profess faith in Christ and who are still lovers of the world! You cannot love God, and love the world at the same time. Do not be deceived! The outward garb will not save you. The mere name, the empty lamp—these will avail you nothing when you come to die. If the world has never been ejected from your heart, if you have never been crucified to it, then the love of God is not there; if the love of God is absent, then you are a stranger to the new birth.

SPIRITUAL COUNSEL

By John Berridge

EVERTON, *September, 1773.*

DEAR SIR,

I received your kind letter and thank you for it, you want nothing but an opened eye to see the glory of Christ's redemption, and he must give it, and will bestow it when it is most for his glory and your advantage. Had you Daniel's holiness, Paul's zeal, John's love, Magdalene's repentance (and I wish you had them all), yet altogether they would give you no title to a pardon, you must at last receive it as a ruined sinner as the Cross thief received it.

No grace or service of your own can give you a right to pardon. You must come to Jesus for it, weary and heavy laden; and if you are afflicted for sin and desirous of being delivered from its guilt and power, no past iniquities in your life nor present corruptions of your heart will be a bar to pardoning mercy. If we are truly seeking salvation by Jesus we shall be disposed as we are bound to seek after holiness. But remember, though holiness is

the walk to Heaven, Christ is the way to God, and when you seek for pardon you must go wholly out of your walk, be it good or bad, and look only to Him who is the way. You must look to Him as a miserable sinner justly condemned by His law, a proper brand for hell and look to be plucked from the fire by rich and sovereign grace; you have just as much worthiness for a pardon as the Cross thief had, which is none at all, and in your best estate you will never have any more. A pardon was freely given to him on asking for it freely and given instantly because no room was left for delays, and a pardon is as ready for you as for him when you ask for it as he did with self loathing and condemnation; but the proper seasons for bestowing the pardon are kept in Jesus own hand. He makes his mercy manifest to the heart when it will most glorify his grace and benefit the sinner. Only continue asking for mercy and seek it only through the blood of the Cross without any eye to your own worthiness, and that blood will in due time be sprinkled on your conscience and you will cry "Abba, Father."

Grace and peace be with both and with your affectionate and obliged servant.

JOHN BERRIDGE.

EVERTON, *November, 1786.*

DEAR SIR,

I find with your daily prayers for me that which I value more than human presents. The Lord bless you and lift the light of his countenance upon you and give you a sweet enjoyment of his peace. I have hitherto found that Christians who live in the dark, fearing and doubting, yet waiting on God, have usually a very happy death. They are kept humble, hungering and praying, and the Lord clears up their evidence in a last sickness, if not before, and they go off with Hallelujahs.

From what I know of you and from the account you give of yourself, I have no doubt of the safety of your state, yet rest not here but seek further two things which should be carefully attended to by all upright people. One is the evidence of the word, the other is the evidence or witness of the Spirit. The word says all that believe are justified from all things. I ask then, do you not place your whole dependence on Jesus Christ for Salvation? Do you not heartily accept of Jesus Christ in all His offices? And are you not daily seeking to him to teach you and rule you as well as to pardon you? Then you are certainly a believer and as such are justified in God's sight from all your sins according to the plain declaration of God's word. Let this

encourage you to seek with confidence for the evidence of the Spirit to proclaim that justification to your heart. The evidence of the word is given to hold up the heart in a season of doubts and fears, and the evidence of the Spirit comes to scatter these fears. Remember also that Salvation does not depend on the strength of faith but the reality of it. In the Gospels, Jesus often rebukes weak faith but never rejects it; weak faith brings but little comfort yet it is as much entitled to Salvation as strong.

Grace and peace be with you both and with your affectionate

JOHN BERRIDGE.

SELECTED EXTRACTS

Flying for Refuge

A poor sinner, finding himself in a condition of guilt, surprised with a sense of it, seeing death and destruction ready to seize upon him, flies with all his strength to the bosom of the Lord Jesus, the only City of Refuge from the avenging justice of God, and curse of the law. Now, this flying to the bosom of Christ, the hope set before us, for relief and safety, is believing. It is here called "flying" by the Holy Ghost, to express the nature of it to the spiritual sense of believers.

What now doth He declare Himself to be affected with their "flying for refuge," that is, their believing? Why, He hath taken all means possible to show Himself abundantly willing to receive them. He hath engaged His word and promise, that they may not in the least doubt or stagger, but know He is ready to receive them, and give them strong consolation. And what is this consolation? Must it not be from hence that God is freely ready to receive us—that He will in no wise shut us out, but that we shall be welcome to Him?—Dr. Owen.

Life's Richest Blessing

I was thinking the other day that there were only two things really worth living for—to be blessed ourselves, and to be made a blessing to others. Without this, what is life? To eat so many pounds of bread and meat, drink so many tumblers of water, sleep so many hours—is this life? But to be blessed and made a blessing, to have the hope of immortality in one's breast, and for some of God's children to bless the Lord that we ever lived—this is worth living for, and dying for, too. Let us live twenty years longer, it will only be the old scene over again, and we with less strength to bear it. The world, sin, and Satan will not change. But, if by living we are made instruments in the Lord's hands of spiritual good to His people, this will be a

blessing for eternity. This may reconcile us to our trials if, through them, we are made a blessing to the heirs of glory.—*Philpot's Letters*.

Sensible Emptiness Before Filling

He "filleth all in all" (Eph. i: 23). It is Christ's work in heaven, my brethren. "He ascended up far above the heavens, that He might fill all things," saith the Apostle in Ephesians iv: 10. He gave Him to sit at His own right hand, "that He might fill all things," saith the text. It implieth, first of all, an emptiness in us that are filled by Him. Not only a real emptiness, that we have nothing in ourselves; "Without Me," saith He, "ye can do nothing," we are but valleys, "every valley shall be filled" (Luke iii: 5). But He filleth only those that have a sensible emptiness, that have a feeling of their own wants: "He filleth the hungry with good things" (Luke i: 53). Hunger is not only a real emptiness, but hunger is a sensible emptiness.

My brethren, the Church, take all the saints in heaven and in earth, they are all empty things without Jesus Christ. We are not able to think a good thought, we are all but mere empty vessels brought to a conduit pipe to be filled; we have not a drop of good, not so much as one good thought, further than Jesus Christ filleth us. This is the glory of our Head.—Goodwin: from Gospel Standard, 1935.

OBITUARY

The Late John Gillies, Elder, Raasay

The removal of this worthy man from the troubles and trials of this world to the glory of eternity, was a great loss to the congregation of Raasay in particular, and the Cause of Christ in the Free Presbyterian Church in general.

He was born in North Raasay in 1892, and as a youth left home to work in Invermoriston. When he was about twenty years of age he came south, first to Alexandria where an elder brother was living, and afterwards to Glasgow where he set up home and married. He was employed by the Clyde Navigation Trust until 1947 when he became full-time Church officer in St. Jude's congregation. He remained in Glasgow until 1957, in which year he retired to live in his native island.

John was very reticent about his spiritual experiences, but it appears that he was awakened to a sense of his lost condition before God while engaged at family worship in his father's house.

How often family worship has been blessed by God to the bringing in of souls from the darkness of a lost estate into the marvellous light of the gospel! How sad, therefore, that it should be so widely neglected at the present time! A home without family worship is manifestly under the curse of God, and if there are any parents reading these lines guilty in this respect, let them now begin to repent and begin to worship God in their families forthwith.

We have been unable to discover how John was granted the liberty of the Gospel, but all who knew him could testify to the fact that Christ had been made precious to him as the only name given under heaven among men whereby sinners such as he had discovered himself to be could be saved. His exercises in public and private showed very clearly his deep need of the blood of Christ to cleanse him from the sins which he so willingly confessed, his deep sense of the need of the quickening and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and his sweet relish of the Word of God as that which feeds the hungry soul. "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God."

In 1930 he became a member in full communion in St. Jude's congregation, and the following year was elected a deacon. This early election was a testimony to the regard the Lord's people in Glasgow had for our friend, but to him it was made a real temptation, and the question of accepting office presented a severe trial to his mind. There is only one place to take temptations and trials and that is to the throne of grace. It was there that John received encouragement which proved a staff and a stay to him then and for many a day afterwards in the words of Psalm 48: 12, 13:—

"Walk about Sion and go round;
the high towers thereof tell:
Consider ye her palaces,
and mark her bulwarks well."

Walking about Sion was his constant delight from that day until he reached his journey's end in this world, and perhaps there is no text of Scripture which more accurately describes his Christian character than the words made so precious to him then.

In 1946 he was made an elder in St. Jude's, after the congregation had passed through a fiery trial which was a source of grief to the people of God and a painful experience to one who loved Sion as John did. He remained true and loyal to the Church and did all in his power to further its interests. As already indicated he became full-time Church Officer in 1947 and a better servant in

this respect could not be found anywhere. He loved the place where God's honour dwelt, and his sincere and prayerful desire was not only that he would be spiritually benefited himself, but that sinners would be born again in Sion and raised up as living witnesses on the side of the Saviour. On leaving Glasgow he was elected an elder in the Raasay congregation where he displayed the same interest and zeal in the Cause of Christ as he had done in that city.

Throughout his active life he showed himself to be a very healthy man, but in 1963 he began to fail. In September of that year he had an operation in Broadford and thereafter never really recovered his full vigour. He was able to attend the Raasay and Staffin communions that November. After the latter communion, he confided to a friend that he was very much impressed by the address at one of the Tables from the words "And he said unto them, With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22: 15). It was the last time he was to sit and serve at the Lord's Table to commemorate the death of Christ. However sweet the communion of Christ with His people in this world may be, it is only a foretaste of what they are to enjoy above where Christ's desire expressed in His intercessory prayer will be fulfilled, "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17: 24).

He came to Glasgow after this and was again operated on but his condition was pronounced incurable. He was taken to the home of his son, Kenneth, whose wife attended to his needs with loving devotion which John greatly appreciated. He passed away on 20th March, 1964, being then 72 years of age, and was interred at Craigton Cemetery where an infant son had been buried 40 years before.

So came to an end the journey of one of God's people who adorned his profession in this world. We believe he is at his eternal rest where sorrow and sighing have both fled away and where the redeemed have entered into the joy of their Lord. He was kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation until he entered the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled and which shall never flee away.

To his widow, his son Kenneth, and the other relatives we extend our sincere sympathy. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." (Ps. 37: 37).

—D. MACLEAN.

GLEIDHEADH A CHRIDHE

Leis an Urr. Iain Flavel

(Air a leantuinn bho t.d. 219)

3. Dearbhaidh bhur cùram agus bhur dìchioll ann an gleidheadh bhur cridheachan a bhi'n an aon de na fianuisean is fearr air bhur treibhidheireas.

Cha'n aithne dhomh gnìomh eile, bho'n an leth a muigh, a bhuineas do dhiadhachd a tha nì's fearr a cur eadar-dhealachadh eadar am fear-aideachaidh fallain agus am fear neo-fhallain. Tha e iongantach a bhi toirt fa'n ear cho fad 's a theid cealgairean, ann an dleasdanasan bho'n leth a muigh: cia cho innleachdach 's a dh'òrduicheas iad an duine bho'n leth a muigh, a cur folach air an ceilg bho bheachd an t-saoghail. Ach an sin, cha'n eil iad a gabhail suim air bith dhe'n cridheachan; cha'n eil iad 's an uaigneas a' nì tha iad coltach ri bhith anns an fhollais: agus roimh'n deuchainn so cha'n urrain cealgaire seasamh. Tha e air aideachadh gu'm faod iad, air son seal, fodh phian air leabaidh bàis, a bhi glaodhaich a mach mu aingidheachd an cridheachan; ach mo thruaigh. cha'n eil suim r'a ghabhail de na gearaineann sin a tha air am fàsgadh asda. Ma tha, gidheadh, fein-eud, cùram, agus faire, na obair làthail agus 'n a fhonn do chridhe, tha e gu làidir a comharrachadh a mach a threibhidheireis. Oir ciod ach mothachadh air suil Dhé; ciod ach fìor fhuath do'n pheacadh mar pheacadh, a chuireadh thusa a dh'ionnsuidh nan dleasdanasan uaigneach sin, a tha'n taobh a mach sealladh nan uile chreutairean.

Uime sin ma tha e air a mheas leat 'n a nì ion-mhianntaichte fianuis shoilleir a bhi agad air do threibhidheireas, agus fios a bhi agad ann am fìrinn, gu'm bheil eagal Dhé ort; an sin gabh beachd air do chridhe, dean faire thairis air do chridhe, gleidh do chridhe.

4. Cia torach, milis, agus comhfhurtail a bhiodh na h-uile òrduighean agus dleasdanas dhuinn, na'm biodh ar cridheachan air an gleidheadh nì b'fhearr?

O cia cho luachmhor 's a dh'fhaodadh an co-chomunn ri Dia a bhi dhuibh a h-uile uair a thigeadh sibh am fagus Dhà, na'm biodh bhur cridheachan ann am fonn. Dh'fhaodadh sibh a ràdh maille ri Daibhidh, "Bìdh mo smuaintean air milis" (Salm civ: 34). 'S e nì a tha cumail bh'uainn ar comhfhurtachdan uile ann an òrduighean agus ann an dleasdanas nì's uaignich, nach eil ar cridheachan ceart. Gheibh an Crìosduidh aig am bheil a chridhe ann am fonn maith, an ceum toisich air càch uile, a thig maille ris anns an dleasdanas sin. Tha iad a strì gu cruaidh a chum an cridheachan fhaotainn suas gu Dia, an so a feuchain an argumaid

so orra, agus an sin an aon so, a chùim am beothachadh agus buaidh a thoirt orra, agus aig amaibh theid iad air falbh cho dona 's a thàinig iad. Aig amaibh, tha'n dleasdanas cha mhòr crìochnaichte mu'n tòisich an cridheachan air gluasad, na ma fairich iad blàthas, beothachadh, na cumhachd bh'uaihte: agus so uile am feadh a tha'n cridhe th'air ullachadh ag obair; is e so esan a gheibh gu h-àbhaisteach a cheud sealladh de Chrìosd ann an searmon, a cheud seula bho Chrìosd ann an sàcramaid, a cheud phòg bho Chrìosd ann an ùrnuigh uaigneach. Tha mi'g innse dhuibh, agus cha'n eil mi'g innse dhuibh ach nì a dh'fhairich mi, gu'n tigeadh ùrnuighean agus searmoin gu bhì nì eile dhuibh na thà iad, na'n tugadh sibh cridheachan na bh' fhearr air an òrduchadh dha'n ionnsuidh; cha'n fhalbhadh sibh air 'ur tilgeadh sìos agus a fannachadh. O 's e dleasdanas a thà air a chàll a tha'n so dhòmhsa! mar a robh sibh air bhur cridheachan a chàll, cha bhiodh e mar sin. Uime sin ma thà comhfhurtachd òrduighean ri bhì milis, amhaircibh ri bhur cridheachan, gleibhibh bhur cridheachan.

5. Biodh eolas air bhur cridheachan fein 'n a thobar anns am faigheadh sibh nithean air son am biodh sibh ag ùrnuigh.

Bhiodh aig a' neach a tha dìchiollach ann an obair cridhe, agus dhà'n aithne anam fein, lànachd de ghnòthuichean gu bhì ga chumail a dol gu saoi-bhir ann a bhì cur aghaidh air Dia; cha'n fhàilnicheadh agus chà stadadh a theangadh le cion nithean. "Tha mo chridhe a' deachdadh deagh nì: cuiridh mi an ceill na nithean a rinn mi do an Rìgh; bithidh mo theangadh mar pheann fir-sgrìobhaidh dheis" (Salm xlv: 1), na, mar a tha *Montanus* ag eadar-theangachadh a cheud chànan, "Tha mo chridhe a goil suas deagh nì, mar thobar beo, a tha fathasd a taomadh a nìos an tuilleadh uisge, agus an sin bhiodh mo theangadh mar pheann fir-sgrìobhaidh dheas." Feumaidh muinntir eile a bhì cleachdadh inneal-tarruig air an cuimhne, a bhì rannsachadh an comas deilbh, agus bitheanta gun fhios aca ciod a their iad, 'n uair a nì iad na thà'n an comas: ach ma ghleidh thusa agus a ghabh thù beachd gu dìleas air do chridhe fein, bithidh e dhuit, mar a thà Iob ag ràdh ann an suidheachadh eile, mar shearragan làn do dh'fhion nuadh a thà gun chomas leigeadh a mach, agus a tha ullamh gu spreadhadh: mar a thà nì naomh a sruthadh gu pailte, mar sin thà e nì's faireachail agus nì's milse bho leithid sin de chridhe. 'N uair a tha Crìosduidh, aig am bheil fein-fhiosrachadh cridhe, a bròn an làthair Dhé thairis air truailidheachd sònraichte cridhe, a gleachd ri Dia air son a bhì deanamh suas falamhachd shònraichte 's an taobh a stigh, tha e labhairt cha'n ann mar dhaoine eile nach d'ionnsaich an diadhachd ach le aithris-bheulain; tha'n aideachadh agus an

tagraidhean air am fàsgradh a mach; thà aideachaidhean agus a thagraidhean-san a sìleadh gu saor, mar mhill fhior-ghlan bho'n a chir-mheala: 's e aobhar gàirdeachais a th'ann, uime sin, a bhì maille ri, na bhì dluth do, leithid sin de Chrìosduidh. Tha cuimhne agam air *Bernard*, air dhà riaghailtean a thoirt seachad gu bhì'g ullachadh a chridhe air son ùrnuigh, a bhì crìochnachadh mar so, " 'N uair a thà do chridhe anns an fhonn so, an sin cuimhnich ormsa."

6. Leis a so bhìd cumhachd diadhachd a th'air seargadh air aiseag air ais ann a' measg luchd-aideachaidh, nì is e staid is ion-mhiannaichte anns an t-saoghal so.

O gu'm bithinn beo gu bhì faicinn an latha sin, 'n uair nach siubhail luchd-aideachadh gu diamhain, 'n uair nach riarach siad iad fein nì's fhaide le ainm a bhì beo, air dhoibh a bhì marbh gu spioradail. 'N uair nach bì iad nì's fhaide, mar a tha mòran aca a nis, na'n cuideachd chopach, dhiamhain, neo-stòlda; ach a bhitheas gathan glòrmhor na naomhachd a dealradh bho'n còmhraidh neamhaidh agus stòlda, a chum fiamh an t-saoghail, agus ag agradh urram bho'n a thà mu'n cuairt orra; 'n uair a bhlàthaicheas iad cridheachan na muinntir a thig dlùth dhoibh, air a leithid de dhòigh agus gu'n abair daoine, " Tha Dia anns na daoine so dà-rìreadh."

Seadh, faodaidh sùil a bhì ri leithid sin de dh'am fathasd, a reir a gheallaidh sin, " Agus bhìd do shluagh uile 'n am fireanaibh; sealbhaichidh iad am fearann gu sìorruidh; am meangan a shuidhich mi, obair mo làmh, chum gu'm bì mi air mo ghlòrachadh " (Isaiah lx: 21). Ach gus an tig sinn gu bhì leantuinn nì's dluithe ris an obair mhòr so, a bhì gleidheadh ar cridheachan, thà mi eu-dòchasach a bhì faicinn nan làithean beannaichte sìn; cha'n urrain sùil a bhì agam a bhì faicinn amaibh nì's fearr gus an toir Dia dhuinn cridheachan nì's fearr. Nach eil e toirt bròn dhuibh a bhì faicinn ciod e chùis-fhanaid a thà air a dheanamh air diadhachd anns an t-saoghal? Ciod e na cuspairean tarcuis agus fanaid dheth 'm bheil luchd-aideachaidh diadhachd air an deanamh anns an t-saoghal?

A luchd-aideachaidh, am biodh sibh air son a bhì faotainn air ais bhur creideas? Am biodh sibh a ris air son a bhì faotainn fianuis urramach ann an coguisibh bhur dearbh naimhdean? An sin gleidhibh bhur oridheachan, deanamh faire thairis air bhur cridheachan: is e fuasgailteachd, copaireachd, agus talamhuidheachd bhur cridheachan a rinn bhur beatha mar a thà i; agus thug na nithean sin sibh fodh tharcuis an t-saoghail. Chaill sibh an toiseach bhur sealladh air Dia, agus bhur co-chomunn Ris, an sin bhur giulain neamhaidh agus stòlda a' measg dhaoine, agus le sin bhur fianuis 'n an coguisibh. O uime sin, air son creideas

diadhachd, air son urram bhur 'n aideachaidh, gleidhibh bhur cridheachan.

(R'a leantuinn)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Scottish Church Unity Trend Upset

It was announced last month that the Church of Scotland and Scottish Episcopal Church Ministers for the new town of Livingstone in the south of Scotland are to be "commissioned" in January at the same time and at the same service. The Episcopal Bishop of Edinburgh, Dr. Carey observed regarding this new venture that it was "a sign, a symbol and a pledge that the two Churches intend to work together in the closest possible association, while each remains entirely loyal to its own traditions and practises until the day of unity comes." The latter part of this statement does not savour very much of the unity so greatly spoken of in these days. But the said Bishop also gave a real shock last month to the unity enthusiasts, when he issued orders forbidding an American Episcopal 'priest,' who has been acting as assistant minister in St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, to officiate at any Episcopal Church services in Scotland. The Bishop has explained his point of view and others such as Dr. Whitley have done the same. Albeit the ban reveals that Episcopacy is not desirous of unity with Presbyterians but on Episcopal terms. This is our reading of the matter. When will the Church of Scotland learn!

Road Casualties

It was reported by the Minister of Transport that during 1964, nearly 8,000 people were killed and 378,000 injured in road accidents. All reasonable persons are distressed and alarmed at these figures which increase year by year. No doubt one obvious factor is the increased number of cars on the roads. But from all accounts human responsibility enters largely into the matter involving elements such as careless driving and drunk driving. We are not competent to judge on these things, only we learn of them from reports. It is a solemn and signal state of affairs in providence that whereas murderers may now live on in prison, thousands are losing their lives every year on the roads. And while cancer and heart troubles are the cause of death in many cases, yet thousands of healthy people are meeting death on the roads. We were told of one young clergyman in England, who, before beginning a journey in his car with friends, begged silence until he offered a prayer to the Lord for a safe journey. This of course we expect from the true Christian, followed by the utmost care in driving.

A Criticism of Ministers' Activities

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in a recent speech said: "Ministers are spending their day from morning to night running this and the next thing and never getting down to the real essentials of the ministry. The minister is becoming an organiser, with the result that his time is being frittered away on what are very often secondary considerations." This is only too true in many cases in the Moderator's Church. It may well be asked as to the principle task of preaching the gospel and the expounding of the Word of God — how much time is devoted by many ministers to the delivery of say two sermonettes a week and study in preparation for these? The main burden of the Christian ministry is to seek the conversion and salvation of precious souls by preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and pastoral visitation involving the reading of Scripture, prayer and the giving of counsel. We feel that the lack of these activities is to be discerned in the low state of religious life in Scotland today.

The Law Society and Crime

The Council of the Law Society in a memorandum to a Royal Commission makes the following statement: "The Council believe that there is evidence, not only in this country, but throughout the world, of a general depreciation of moral standards which has led to increasing reluctance on the part of large sections of the public to condemn conduct which is manifestly of a criminal nature." This is an excellent and true statement, yet a sad commentary on moral standards today. One thing, among other things which has been lacking in this country at any rate is, teaching regarding the nature of the moral law, that transgression of the law is sin against God and that the wages of sin is death. And also the preaching of a gospel which is no gospel, in place of the gospel of Christ in its fullness, has left multitudes in Britain completely ignorant of the nature and need of holy living, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

CHURCH NOTES

Communion

January—Fifth Sabbath, Inverness. *February*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; third, Stornoway; fourth, North Uist, Kyle of Lochalsh. *March*—First Sabbath, Ullapool; second, Ness, Portree and Tarbert; third, Finsbay, Lochinver; fourth, Kinlochbervie and North Tolsta. *April*—First Sabbath, Breasclete, Portnalong and Fort-William; second, Gisborne, N.Z.; third, London and Greenock; fourth, Glasgow, Wick. *May*—First Sabbath, Kames and Oban; second, Scourie; third, Edinburgh and Broadford. *June*—First Sabbath, Applecross; second, Shildaig; third, Lochcarron, Glendale, Helmsdale, Dornoch and Uig; fourth, Gairloch and Inverness. *July*—First Sabbath, Lairg, Raasay and Beaulay; second, Staffin, Tomatin and

Tain; third, Halkirk, Rogart, Flashadder and Daviot; fourth, Achmore, Bracadale, North Uist and Plockton. *August*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; second, Portree and Stratherrick; third, Bonar, Finsbay and Laide; fourth, Thurso, Vatten; fifth, Stornoway. *September*—First Sabbath, Ullapool, Breascleate; second, Strathy; third, Tarbert, Storr and Vancouver (Canada); fourth, Applecross. *October*—First Sabbath, Tolsta, Lochcarron, Fort-William; second, Gairloch and Ness; fourth, Gisborne, N.Z., Greenock; Lochinver; fifth, Wick. *November*—First Sabbath, Oban and Raasay; second, Glasgow and Halkirk; third, Edinburgh, Dornoch, Staffin and Uig. *December*—First Sabbath, London.

Auckland Communion

The next Auckland Communion will be held (D.V.) on the fifth Sabbath of January, 1966, that is, the 30th day of the month.

—Wm. MacLean.

Holland Collection

At the meeting held in Utrecht, in connection with the Mission, on 17th July, 1965, the sum of £2,300 was collected for Mbuma.

—Donald Campbell.

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