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Prayer For Promised Blessing

The Lord's promises and encouragements to His Church in the world are many. They are scattered through the Word of God and appear like bright shining stars to guide and encourage His people onwards to Zion. Especially in trying times the promises given in the Word of God of more glorious days for the Church of God cannot but be uplifting to the tried hearts of the children of God. Isaiah's plea is one such encouraging word when he says: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

The low state of Zion is oftentimes a burden to the true people of God for they seek the good of Zion. The low state of the Lord's Cause in their own midst and in their own souls causes them greater anxiety than anything else. Their inmost desire is that the Lord would be glorified in their midst and that Zion would be built up. They mourn over their own part in the desolations of Zion. They acknowledge and grieve over their many sins and backslidings which have caused the Lord to hide His face from them. Had they been more zealous for the glory of God, had they been more dependent on the Lord, had they been more urgent in their entreaties at a Throne of grace, they know that things would have been otherwise than they are now. Their desire is that the Lord would come over the mountains of separation which are raised up between them and Him, and that for His own Name's sake He would remember mercy.

The Lord has said in His Word: "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." They know that this is a duty laid upon the children of God, that is, to plead for His Cause in the world and in their own midst. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem", they are exhorted in his Word and are given encouragement to do so by the

assurance, "they shall prosper that love thee." They know that when the Lord is to revive His Cause that He will give His people a pleading spirit, and this they desire to have. "They shall seek Me and find Me, when they shall seek for Me with all their heart," the Lord promises, and He is faithful that promises. His people then desire to be of a like mind with Isaiah when he says: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

The servants of Christ cannot but be painfully aware of the low state of Zion. They have to lament with the Psalmist.

Our signs we do not now behold;
there is not us among

A prophet more, nor any one
that knows the time how long.

They are ready to say with Isaiah the prophet: "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." How good if they can add with the prophet: "Yet surely my judgement is with the Lord, and my work with my God." Whatever may be the complaints of the servants of God, yet the Lord Himself has to say: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." And neither shall they hold their peace until the righteousness of Zion and of Jerusalem go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

However great is the interest of the Lord's people and servants in the prosperity of Zion, there is One who has a greater interest in it still, even the Holy One of Israel. The Lord can say of His people: "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands and thy walls are continually before Me." His eye is ever upon His Church in the world. She is precious in His sight. His glory is bound up with her interests. He has purchased His Church with His own blood. She is a vineyard of red wine to Him of which He says: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." He alone can build up Zion and it is to Him His people look in order that great things may be accomplished for Zion. Man's power cannot effect the building up of Zion, only the power of God can do this. However impossible it may appear now that Zion shall become a praise in the earth, yet the Lord shall do this by His mighty power and to the glory of His great Name. With Him nothing shall be impossible. Trampled down and despised though Zion be in our

day, she shall yet rise and prosper and her enemies shall then be ashamed. To her it shall be said: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee and His glory shall be seen upon thee."

The enemies of Christ's Cause say: "Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion." But the answer of the Lord to these enemies is that "they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel." He declares that "he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor." The Lord says also to His Church and people in the world: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Let not then the hearts of the Lord's servants and people be discouraged even in a day of blasphemy and rebuke and of abounding iniquity. Rather let them trust in the Name of the Lord and stay themselves upon their God.

Sermon

by Dr. Duncan.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." — Eph. 3: 20, 21.

Paul abounded in prayer, and one mean by which the grace of God wrought this on him was, not only his deep feeling of absolute dependence upon the God of all grace, but his enlarged apprehension, enlarged believing apprehension of God, as the God of all grace. Two things make us stinted in prayer, either little feeling of need, or little hope of supply. Under the pressure of felt need many are still much straightened; they feel, indeed, that they want much, but they have no expectation, or no high or settled expectation of getting much. They are shut up, they do pray, they cannot help it — a feeling of need makes that they do ask, but they ask of God earnestly, but not amply earnestly, because they feel need, but not amply, because they think He is a niggard. They have not corresponded so faith to their feeling of want, they do not rightly believe in God, as giving to all liberally, and upbraiding not. They are indeed humbled, and are content to be glad to pick of the crumbs that fall from their Master's table; but they are doubtful if they

shall get a dog's right to them. How much more is any measure of desire repressed by the thought why that they dare never ask? Now, dear friends, either we are to approach God on our own merits, or we are not. If we are to approach God on our own merits, I don't know how little we should ask. I don't know what we could pray for at all, unless to be cut off, and sent to hell very speedily. Either we are to ask on our own merits, and then we can ask nothing, unless we are to set about it, and pray down damnation on our heads: or we are not to ask on our own merits, but on God's rich mercy, and Christ's glorious merits, and if so, if I am not to ask anything but for that, why let me not disgrace that by asking little things upon it. I know not whether it be more dishonouring to disbelieve that He hears prayer at all, or to think that a little good may be extorted out of an unwilling God. Did you ever thus pray, and do you never pray to God in the thought that He is very niggardly, and that you know that He has what you need, that it's very good, and you being very unworthy, you don't think He will give it to you. If He give it, it will be a very small portion, and that forced out by your importunity. Well, though no doubt it is better to deal with God as if He were the widow's unjust Judge, than not to pray at all, for then He will forgive and He will grant. But I think it a burning shame for all that, to think of Him as being the widow's unjust Judge. Now, Paul prayed, we have an example in the context. He was concerned about a certain matter, about the stability of the Ephesians, as it might be affected by the tribulation to which he, the Apostle of Christ, was subjected. He says — "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you." This was his desire — a generous desire, you see. The tribulation did not trouble him much, so far as he had to bear it; but it gave him somewhat concern as regarded the Ephesians. The tribulation was nothing to Paul, but the effect the tribulation had upon their minds was a great deal. His anxiety then was that they might not faint. Now the Apostle did not think it was an easy thing to keep up the Ephesians under his tribulation. Many, in foolhardiness, are ready to make great martyr-boastings, and they will go through fire and water for Christ, and though all men forsake Him, they never will. They are ready to die for Him; but Paul knew by the grace of Christ what human nature is, a little better, and what human nature in the saints of God even is, and he knew that men were very ready to faint, not only when they feel the cross, but at the bare sight of it upon another man's shoulders. When they saw an Apostle who hath come with the unsearchable riches of Christ, poor, oppressed, persecuted, forsaken, they would be tempted to say — "Is this the blessedness whereof he

speaks?" Now, the Apostle thought there was much here to make the Ephesians faint, and yet he did not think it was a necessary thing that they should faint. For all that there was much to make them faint, and yet it was not absolutely necessary they should faint; there was something which could support them, could keep them from fainting but it was no little thing: it was a great thing — a Divine thing, and therefore obtainable, for here is the difference between faith and unbelief. Whenever faith sees a thing in God's hands, faith says — I have it. Unbelief says — I cannot get it. Such is the different estimates of faith and unbelief. Paul hath a good hope that the Ephesians would be supported, because he saw that their support lay with God, and this led him to have a good hope towards God, and to be very prayerful; "Wherefore I desire," etc., "for this cause to bow my knees." That was all Paul could do to hold up their hands, namely, to bow his knees; to keep them strong, all he could do was to go into a position of the greatest lowliness, and poverty and weakness, "I desire," etc.; and he bowed that they might get strength, but how much strength? "I bow my knees," etc. That they might not faint at his tribulation, he bowed his knees, that God would strengthen them with might, according to His glory, according to the riches of His glory; the Ephesians needed all that to keep them from fainting, not at their own cross, but even at Paul's; and he asks this; he did not think they needed little, and he did not expect God to give little. He felt need widely and deeply. He believed in grace as widely and deeply and somewhat more; he had not learned to look upon sin as a little thing, small and in petty quantity, but as abounding; but then he had learned to look upon grace as super-abounding; he had not conceived the Ephesians to be very strong people, but very weak people indeed; but then he bowed his knees in expectation of obtaining for them no less strength than according to the riches of his glory, etc. What this would work is described in the following verses on which we cannot enter. Through this strength he would be able to comprehend with all saints, etc., and so would not faint at his tribulation. Now, you say this man knows how to pray. I daresay he does, a little better than you or I, but he does not please himself. I daresay we wonder at what he thinks and asks; but is his thinking and asking the bounds of his desire? No, he grapples with something too great for even his comprehension, with the almighty power of God to give blessings and, absorbed in this thought, concludes his prayer with the doxology, "Now unto Him," etc., he has both thought and asked a great deal for them, "To Him that is able," etc. Let us attend:-

1st. To Him who is the object of this doxology: and then, if time permit, to the doxology itself.

1st. "Unto Him," etc. You know who this is — the God of all grace and consolation. The God who says, "I know the thoughts that I think concerning you to give you an end and expectation, and an end beyond expectation." Now we, in relation to Him, ask and think: we ask of Him, and we think what we shall ask of Him; we put our ingenuity to ask, the ingenuity of a renewed and spiritual and Divinely instructed mind: we have got a *carte blanche*, a blank put into our hands by Christ — Ask what ye will. Now, we would think it a sad pity to get nothing, or to get little, when we have such a draft upon God, for all whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, we ask, and we not barely ask; we think, guided by the Word and Spirit of God; we think upon all things that could be good, good for us, good for others, good for our family, good for our congregation, good for our city and country, good for the Church, and good for the world, good for time and Eternity. We are always thinking, at least that is what we should be doing, when He says, "Ask what ye will." Thinking what good we shall ask, and then we ask up to the point of our thinking. Whatever we think we ask, no limit to our asking, but our thinking. The moment we discover anything to be bad, we ask God to put that thing away. As soon as we find anything to be good, we ask God to grant that good thing — yea, we study His very character, amongst other things and attributes, that we may learn how far we shall think that we shall be able to ask; but then, God pity us if that were all the good we were to get. If we were to get no more than we would get by that, poor would we be after all that He is able to do above — abundantly above — exceedingly abundantly above all, etc. When you go with all that you ask, and all that you think, God says — "Poor soul, is that all you want, is it only these trifles — would that please you? would you go away with that only?" That won't please God to give; you think He is not willing to give you so much. I tell you He is not willing to give you so little; above it all, some little addition. Ah no, abundantly above. He not only hears and answers the prayer, whatsoever ye ask, and gives a little more full measure, filled and running over. No, an abundance over and above the asking — abundantly above — an immense quantity more — not that only, not merely an abundance, but an exceeding abundance — an abundance that passes, that surpasses all ordinary idea of abundance. It is not the usual abundance, but it is an exceeding, a surpassing abundance. Now, remember, however, that we do ask, and we do think; we come with our poor, scrimp, narrow-hearted

petitions; we would give so little ourselves that we think of others, and we would carry it on to the Great God Himself, to be poor, miserly, wretched creatures; and perhaps, if our hearts were opened by grace, we would give a little. If a man came and said, "Do this," we would say, "We cannot do all that, but we will do something for you." We would do not as we were asked, or thought of, but somewhat a great deal below it; and still we think we have some generosity. We would feel, and we would do something, and so we think of God. He is good and generous, and something may be got at His hands. The world will not believe that good is to be got at His hands at all. Believers, with their little faith, have rather better thoughts of God. He has some goodness, mercy, and grace. By importunity we shall get something out of Him. He will not disappoint the expectation of the poor entirely and for ever, and if we shall not get all we think and ask; still, we shall get something. So it is we expect, but when we come, what does He give? All that's asked? Of course. He is wise and good and kind, and he reserves in the answering whether it be for His glory and their good, which are indissolubly united together. But if it be really a good thing, they will get up to the asking and thinking; but God would be ashamed to stop there. They might say, "O how happy are we, and how much we have got! — everything we could ask or think." But while they would be filled with joy, God would be covered with shame. I use the language, "He is not ashamed," etc. God would be ashamed to let you away with that. "I am not a little God, poor, niggardly. I have great plenty, and a great heart. I am a bountiful Giver, I give liberally, and upbraid not. Here, take all this." What is it? Ah, poor thing. That transcends thine asking, and even thy thinking; but "Take it by me now, if I will not open the window of Heaven," etc. "But," you will say, "What shall I do with the thing that I cannot think or ask if God will give it?" Why, so far as they may go, if He gives an additional power of mind to receive, I receive it; and if it transcend all communicated power of mind, I say, "Thank thee, my God, for it; I know it is exceeding good; but I cannot understand it; keep it among thy treasures; my blessedness rests not in my intellect, but in thy favour, and if Thou hast mysterious good in store that I cannot understand, keep it, but keep it for me. It may come that I shall be able to appreciate it more, and understand it better. Meanwhile, as Thou dost not make my asking or thinking the bounds of Thy gifts, neither shall I make my understanding the bounds of my receiving." Now, Paul, says on that he is able to do so — "Unto him that is able," etc. But in respect of his ability, he glorifies him with the Doxology — "To Him be glory,"

etc., and do you not think that it's just as good when it is said that God is able, as if it had been said that God will? If that is doubted, whether we should not take the declaration that God is able, is just as good, and as importing that He will, let us turn and read together the 11th of Romans. The Apostle, speaking of the cut-off unbelieving Israelites under the present dispensation — "And they also if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able," etc. Therefore they shall be. Mark the argument — He says, "They shall be, because God is able to do it," and this implies that God is able to do that good He will do. "They shall be, for God," etc. The force of the argument lies in the unenunciated thought, what God is able to do, that He will do. Now, God is able to do exceedingly abundantly, etc. And now, though you and I cannot reach it, we know what we are to aim at, we know where we are to point our desires and prayers and thoughts; and whether, since we cannot reach, we are ever more and more to approximate — and that's God's ability. I shall never have asked too much. I shall never have thought too much, till I have asked beyond God's ability, till I have thought beyond God's ability. I shall never have asked up to the point from which I expect my good to come, till I have asked up to, and even that I never shall do — till I have asked and thought, and thought and asked up to God's ability; whatever God can do, that may I ask Him to do, that in the name of Christ may I ask Him to do, and depend that He will do it; and as I cannot reach that in my asking or thinking, what have I to do then? Why, when in explicit prayer I have prayed up to the asking and thinking, I must take to the implicit prayer, saying — "Lord, I cannot ask further," but this is not the point. I would be at Thy power. Here is the point, here is my asking, my thinking, but answer me, Lord, not according to that I ask or think of, but according to that which transcends it, according to Thy power, thine ability. O Lord Jehovah! do me all the good Thou canst, whatever blessings thou canst bestow, empty Thy goodness on me, on mine, on Thy Church, on the world. This ability is according to the power that worketh, etc. It is not a bare abstraction of the omnipotence of God, but it is the omnipotence of God as working in the Church and people of God; it is not barely and simply extrinsic omnipotence. Mark what the Apostle had said — "That ye be strengthened." etc. The Apostle speaketh of the exceeding greatness of His power, to us-ward who believe. Now, we may be sure that the whole omnipotence of God was in that, it was all put out, greater act never was done; greater act (we speak reverentially) never could be done, it was on the footing of God's omnipotence. The highest proof that He was able to

subdue all things to Himself, "Now unto him," etc. "The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward." "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples?" etc. "The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God which is in you, crying out," etc.; "Shout, thou inhabitant of Zion," etc. It is the omnipotence of the indwelling God. Thou art poor and feeble, but the Eternal God is not only near thee, but with thee; He is in them all, His Almightyness and the communion of the Holy Ghost, including in it from the unity of essence; indeed, from the Persons of the Godhead, as well as the unity of purpose in the economy of redemption. Thereby, truly and really the presence and indwelling of the Triune. All the grace of our Lord Jesus, and all the love of God, being wrapped up and contained in the communion of the Holy Ghost. Now, God, working according to His power in us, is able to do, etc. The Apostle was asking and thinking about stability, not fainting — was then king of strength in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. He thinks of all that, because God is able to do it, according to the power wherewith He, the indwelling God, worketh. The Holy Ghost has not left his omnipotence behind; He is not omnipotence in Heaven, and impotent in thee, or particularly powerful in thee. When he comes to dwell in thy heart, He comes in all His omnipotence, and then He is as the Spirit of grace and supplication, teaching thee both to think and ask; but then, even thou art but an evil creature. There are two causes that keep us down — 1st, we are sinful creatures, even believers; and, 2nd, We are but feeble creatures. Suppose there was no opposition in us to the work of the Holy Ghost, suppose we were passive, yea, most willing, active recipients of Divine grace; God is infinite in knowledge to teach. We are but of finite capacity to learn, and a believer at every step learns but as much; but it was not to do up to that point that the Spirit of God came; but to do all the mighty things that are to be done, and more than the man knows. He comes with all His omnipotence to you; therefore, He is able to do all this, not by anything more, but by the outputting, the exertion of the power that already worketh in us; but we see that God's greatest work for a man is His work in the man — His greatest work. I am not speaking antecedently, but I am comparing the internal good which God does to a man with all the external good He does to Him; and I say the internal good which God does to a man transcends the external good which (at least in this work) He does to him. The principal thing that God does for us is what he does *in* us, "According to the power," etc. There is a power beyond that worketh for us, and that power works the universe for us — "All things work together," etc. That's God's working the universe for us. But not

less, in some respects greater, is God's work in us — "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly," etc. Now, what is due to Him who is able thus to do? What should be rendered to Him? Unto Him be glory. Is it not a glorious work? And in doing the glorious work, doth He not manifest the possession of glorious perfections? And for the glorious perfection possessed, and for the glorious work manifesting it and communicating holy blessedness to us in the manifestation, owe we not glory? Make Him glorious we cannot; but think how glorious He is, and tell how glorious he is. Show that forth in lip and life; by His gracious and mighty working we may. And surely His character as set forth thus ably demands it. Unto Him be glory. "Once I have heard, yea, twice, that glory belongs unto Jehovah." "Thine," said Christ, teaching His disciples to pray, "Thine is the Glory." Not only is God all glorious, but all glory belongs unto Him. No other has a right to glory. Were an archangel to glory in His presence the act would transmute him into a devil, and send him straight to hell. Glory is God's prerogative alone. Many things are glorious because God has given them glory and beauty. The sun is glorious, and the stars are glorious, and one star excelleth another star in glory; but they do not deck themselves with their own splendours; they do not feed their own fires. Glory belongeth unto Jehovah. When He has done exceedingly abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, how rich shall we be then, and how glorious! Our houses shall be full of all precious substance; but He did it. If thou hast received, why boastest thou as if thou hadst not received? If the King of Glory hath taken the beggar from the dunghill and exalted him to sit with princes, even with the princes of the people. When we look on that exalted beggar, we stop not to say, "What a glorious man!" No, we dare not say that at all, unless in conjunction with — "How glorious the King of Glory who hath in the omnipotence of grace done this thing!" In short, when we are so enriched we are glorious. The Name of our Lord Jesus is glorified in us, and we in Him; but it is as the Name of the Lord Jesus is glorified in us that we are glorified in Him, and it is when the glory that God reflects on the creature, is by the creature ascribed as due only to God when He is glorified as the Author of it — transcendently and infinitely glorious. It is then that the glory rests. When it is appropriated it is lost; but it is possessed when it is as it were tossed back and fore between God and the creature. When the creature gives it to God, God of His rich grace sends it back in greater measure. But the humble creature, emulous of God's glory, sends it all back again to him, and as it reciprocates, so it increases; "Unto Him be glory." Dear friends, these are very instructive

words of the Apostle, that "No flesh should glory in His Presence." Mark the connection — no flesh must glory before Him, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The only way not to glory before Him, is to glory in him. Israel durst not say, "We are a better people than other people," richer or more learned, warlike, or moral; Israel had but one glory legitimately. "Their rock is not as our rock." Might they not say to all the nations, "Their rock," etc., our enemies themselves being judges. The gods of the nations are dumb idols. Yea, there was no hurt in the Jews saying to all the nations in the world (I speak under that economy) — "ah, you may be a far better people than us in every way, but our God is a far better God than all your gods put together." He did not glory before God; he gloried in God. He only announced God's glory, and so the people of Christ. Their profession is not of betterness, save of betterness bound upon them, desired and aimed at; little, and clothed with humility, a little unto the praise of Divine grace. They may acknowledge sometimes that they differ, having been made to differ; but of this they can glory. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a better God than all the worldlings know. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a glorious Lord, "The Chief among ten thousand." Whatever I be, my Saviour is a glorious one. Thus may we glory, "He that glorifieth," etc. Not even in his relation to God, but secondarily — "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us," etc. God was before the relation, for God constituted that relation. It is therefore not glorifying in our relation, for He made that. His relation is glorious, simply in Himself giving unto the Lord the kingdom and the dominion and the glory and the power, for they are His — "Unto him be glory." All should glorify God, all will not. In the Church alone will God get glory. Most true it is that there is no salvation out of the Church; most true it is that there is no God known out of the Church; however men may have construed that, and defines that wrong constituting human and even corrupted societies as the Church. Yet, taking Scripture definition of the Church, the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. There is no salvation but in the Church, and no glory given to God, but in the Church; and if we pray that all nations and all individuals of the human race may glorify God, this is not praying that God's glory may go beyond the Church, but that the bounds of God's Church might be mightily enlarged; for all glory is in the Church to God's, because it is by Christ Jesus, "Unto him," etc. It is through Christ Jesus that He is able and that He is willing to do exceedingly abundantly above. It is through Christ Jesus that He manifests all the glory of His perfections in the highest degree. All the

glory of His perfections as the God of grace and salvation, with all the reflected glory of the ministration of the government of nature in subordination to grace. It is through Christ Jesus that he shines in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Gifts of exceedingly transcendent abundance come through Christ, and consequently what comes is in the Church, for it is through Christ; by the Spirit of Christ to the ministers of Christ, the law of the Spirit of Christ, etc., lying at the very foundation of all these blessings. Through Christ, therefore, is all the glory to ascend to Him. He is the Mediator, and as all Heaven's bounties pass through the Father's hands into His, so all earth service, all the Church's service, for none on earth but the Church ever do or will serve Him, all the Church's service goes up to God through the hands of Christ. He, receiving of the Father, showers down the blessings; He, receiving the thanksgiving from man, presents them to the Father, and so through Christ Jesus is kept up through the spirit of prayer, keeping us asking and thinking, and the grace of God doing exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think; this in the reception of blessings the glory of God as well as His goodness. The glory of His goodness being seen, we ascribe honour and glory and blessing, with warm adoring, grateful hearts to the glorious God manifested by the glorious blessings He confers on us by Jesus Christ and thus Divine adoration, Divine gratitude, unitedly ascend through Christ Jesus, and thus God keeps up by Christ Jesus in the world as Church, and a glorifying of Himself in the Church, "Unto him be glory," etc. It was not in the days of the primitive Church only that God was able and God was willing to do, etc. The arm of the Lord is not shortened since Pentecost that it cannot save. It was not then and then only the same glory is to God, and the same glory can go up by the same riches of blessing let down on the Church. The called, according to God's purpose, both Jews and Gentiles, throughout all ages. The stream of time rolls on, world without end, throughout all the ages of time, not terminating there — "World without end." For shall the communion with God of blessing and praising only run on, while this globe runs round its axis, or whilst the days and nights are measured by the rising and setting of the sun? Throughout all it shall extend, "His name will endure for ever." "I will make thy name to be remembered throughout all generations." But that song of glory is only sung now as preparatory. The redeemed among men are but learning to sing it. Many a false note they admingle with their melody, now poor and puny, for they are but learning the song. But, then, as it shall be perpetuated in this school, on this earth, which Christ

hath visited, and hath rendered a school of Heaven. When this school of earth shall end, then as adepts into the choir around the throne of God shall the redeemed among men enter, to sing for ever with perfection of celestial music the song of thousands of the Lamb — “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power,” etc. amen, so let it be, so it shall be, so let it be. God’s Amen declares it shall be, but our Amen says, “So let it be.” Praise ye the Lord. Do you set to your seal that God is true? Is your heart Amen from a heart filled with admiration, adoring admiration, and gratitude? Or is your heart hard pressed down with darkness, with care, and with anxiety? Hold an Amen which would burst forth, with which you are pent up, a silent Amen, which your consciousness can scarcely hear, yet an Amen God hears. God will bring it forth into distinctness. And, now, in conclusion, what can we say, friends, but that the whole subject should teach us, as the whole service of the day, that we should ask and think, and think and ask, and press on to the exceeding greatness of the ability. Let us be ashamed of our stinted prayers, with which we dishonour God’s rich grace. Let us ask that we may receive, that our joy may be full; for God gives not to end by enriching. No, that’s an immediate end; but the ultimate end is that He may be glorified; and let us not stop short of the ultimate end, when enriched; but let us see that when we have all sufficiency in all things, thanksgiving may abound, “Unto him be glory,” etc. To conclude, what wretched creatures are they who are far from the Lord Jehovah, who know not this God, who do not ask, who do not think, who know nothing of communion with Him, who get no blessings of salvation from Him, who give no ascription of glory to Him. Believers! you see you have a struggle to maintain with your sinful nature and with your feebleness, which can ask no more and think no more. You have a strife to maintain with that, maintain it in the view of His power, of His ability to do exceedingly abundantly. And now, if you can look beyond your power of asking and thinking, surely you know there lies an infinity beyond that, and that filled with God’s, to you, unknown goodness. Now, thank Him not only for what you see, but give thanks, because beyond your power to ask or think there lies an infinity of power to bestow; yea, and that power worketh in you, believer. Be ashamed to get little, get all things; don’t be poor any more; don’t be poor when you have to do with Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly. Get out of your poverty, not by fancying you are rich, but by coming and getting. “Ask and ye shall receive,” etc. Now, you know yourselves that your joy is not full yet. Well, if your joy is not full, your Saviour is not pleased. He is not satisfied, that is not satisfaction to Him. He wishes that your joy

may be full. Now, why is it not full? What are you doing? Ask, even in this world, with all your asking. It won't be full, but it will be filling, and still Christ saying, "Ask and ye shall receive." He never sets a bound till your joy be full. Nay, He says you have not asked enough if your joy be not full. Now, you are conscious that it is not full, then take your Saviour's directions, "Ask," etc. But give thanks, in everything give thanks; that's one cause also why we get so little good. The prayers of the people of God are often of that kind, just extorted by feeling want, or mostly so. If God is very gracious, and He gives; but they were pressed on by want. It was spiritual selfishness, religious selfishness. Their souls were selfish about salvation. You may know, or do you know, that there is such a thing as spiritual selfishness about one's soul? That is always in a man when he thinks more of his salvation than of the great end of salvation, the glory of God in Christ thereby. However he has asked (and is a bountiful giver), and though the prayer is very selfish, God gives good. Thus the man is relieved; but when he asks for good, it's not so much for God's glory as for his own comfort. He comes and begs and begs, and he gets. He is always begging from God, and always getting, and never says, "Thank you". God will never put away His suppliants. He gives them more than they ask; but that's one cause why they get so little. Would they not get a great deal more if they were thankful for what they get? Now, if I had a good friend who did me some good when I was in distress, and I fell into another, and go to him, and say, "Sir, I am in misery again; you will need to help me again," and never thank him for what he did before. Why, suppose he did relieve me, I never would be a happy man, besides, there is not a right moral relation between giver and receiver, when there is no gratitude. So, dear friends, whatever God gives, if it should be a very little thing, we are heirs of hell, and should say, "Oh, Lord! I thank Thee for that, give me more"; and the more you get, always give glory, and come and ask and receive, and this prayer, mixed with thanksgiving, thanksgiving with prayer, I cannot tell into what intimacy your communion with God might grow.

Zion's Troubles

By the Rev. John Flavel (1667)

Settle this great truth in your hearts, that no trouble befalls Zion but by the permission of Zion's God; and he permits nothing out of which he will not bring much good at last to His people. There is truly a principle

of quietness in the permitting, as in the commanding will of God. See it in David, "Let him alone, it may be God hath bidden him." And in Christ, "Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." It should much calm our spirits that it is the will of God to suffer it; and had he not suffered it, it could never have been as it is.

This very consideration quieted Job, Eli, David, and Hezekiah; that the Lord did it was enough to them. And why should it not be so to us? If the Lord will have Zion ploughed as a field, and her goodly stones lie in the dust; if it be his pleasure that Antichrist shall rage yet longer and wear out the saints of the Most High; if it be His will that a day of trouble and of treading down and of perplexity by the Lord of hosts shall be upon the valley of vision; that the wicked shall devour the man that is more righteous than he — what are we that we should contest with God? Fit it is that we should be resigned up to that will whence we proceeded, and that He that made us should dispose of us as He pleaseth. He may do what seemeth Him good without our consent. Doth poor man stand upon equal ground, that he should capitulate with his Creator, or that God should render him an account of any of His matters? It is every way as reasonable we be content however God dispose of us as that we be obedient to whatever He commands us.

But then, if we pursue this argument farther, by considering that God's permissions do all meet at last in the real good of His people, this will much more quiet our spirits. Do the enemies carry away the good figs, even the best among the people, into captivity? This looks like a sad providence; but yet God sends them thither for their good. Doth God take the Assyrians as a staff in His hand to beat His people with? Those blows are smart, and make them cry; but the end of His so doing is, "that He may accomplish His work upon Mount Zion." If God can bring much good out of the worst and greatest evil of sin, much more out of temporal afflictions; and it is as evident that He will as that He can do so. For it is inconsistent with the wisdom of a common agent to permit anything (which he might prevent if he please) to cross his great design and end; and can it be imagined that the most wise God should do so?

Well then, as Luther told Melancthon, "*Desinat Philippus esse rector mundi;*" so say I to you, let infinite wisdom, power, and love alone — for by these all creatures are swayed, and actions guided, in reference to the church. It is none of our work to rule the world, but to submit to Him that doth: the motions of Providence are all judicious, the wheels are full of eyes: it is enough that the affairs of Zion are in good hand.

Ponder this heart-supporting truth, in reference to Zion's trouble.

That how many troubles soever are upon her, yet her King is in her. — What! hath the Lord forsaken His churches? hath He sold them into the enemy's hand? doth He not regard what evil befalls them? that our hearts sink at this rate. Is it not too shameful an undervaluing of the great God and too much magnifying of poor impotent men, to fear and tremble at creatures, whilst God is in the midst of us? The church's enemies are many and mighty — let that be granted; yet that argument with which Caleb and Joshua strove to raise their own hearts is of as much force now as it was then: "The Lord is with us; fear them not." The historian tells us that when Antigonus overheard soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, and so discouraging one another, he suddenly steps in among them with this question, "And how many," said he, "do you reckon me for?" Discouraged souls! how many do you reckon the Lord for? Is he not an overmatch for all His enemies? Is not one Almighty more than many mighties? Doth His presence stand for nothing with us? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What think you was the reason of that great exploration Gideon made in Judges 6? He questions, verses 12, 13; he desires a sign, verse 17; and after that another, verse 36. And what was the end of all this but that he might but write this motto upon his ensign, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." So then, if you can be well assured the Lord is with His people, you will get thereby above all your discouragements: and that He is so, you need not, with him, divine a sign from heaven; lo, you have a sign before you, even their marvellous preservation amidst all their enemies. If God be not with His people, how is it they are not swallowed up? Do their enemies want malice, power, or opportunity? No; but there is an invisible hand upon them. Well then, as it is, let His presence give us rest; and though the mountains be hurled into the sea, though heaven and earth mingle together, fear not, God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.

Ponder the great advantages attending the people of God in an afflicted condition. — If a low and afflicted state in the world be really best for the Church, then your dejections are not only irrational, but ungrateful. Indeed, if you estimate the happiness of the Church by its worldly ease, splendour, and prosperity, then such times will seem bad for it; but if you reckon its glory to consist in its humility, faith, patience, and heavenly-mindedness, no condition in the world abounds with advantages for these as an afflicted condition doth. It was not persecutions and prisons, but worldliness and wantonness, that was the poison of the Church; neither was it the earthly glory of its professors, but the blood of

its martyrs that was the seed of the Church. The power of godliness did never thrive better than in affliction, and never ran lower than in times of greatest prosperity: "When we are left a poor and an afflicted people, then we learn to trust in the name of the Lord." What say ye, sirs? Is it indeed for the saints' advantage to be weaned from the loves and delights of ensnaring worldly vanities — to be quickened and pricked forward with more haste to heaven — to have clearer discoveries of their own hearts — to be taught to pray more fervently, frequently, spiritually — to look and long for the rest to come more ardently? If these be for their advantage, experience teacheth us that no condition is ordinarily blessed with such fruits as those like an afflicted condition.

And is it well done, then, to repine and droop because your Father consults more the advantage of your souls than the pleasing of your humour — because He will bring you a nearer way to heaven than you are willing to go? Is this a due requital of His love who is pleased so much to concern Himself in your welfare? which is more than He will do for thousands in the world, upon whom He will not lay a rod or spend an affliction for their good. But alas! we judge by sense, and reckon things good or evil according to what we for the present can taste and feel in them.

Take heed that ye overlook not the many precious mercies which the people of God enjoy amidst all their troubles. — It is a pity that our tears upon the account of our troubles should so blind our eyes that we should not see our mercies and grounds of comfort. I will not insist upon the mercy of having your lives given you for a prey, nor yet upon the many outward comforts, temporal conveniences, and accommodations which you enjoy, even above what Christ and His precious servants, of whom the world was not worthy, ever had.

But what say you to pardon of sin, interest in Christ, the covenant of promise, and an eternity of happiness in the presence of God after a few days are over? O that ever a people entitled to such mercies as these should droop under any temporal affliction, or be so much concerned for the frowns of men and loss of trifles! You have not the smiles of great men, but you have the favour of the great God. You are, it may be, cast back in your estates, but thereby furthered in spirituals. You cannot live so plentifully and easily as before, but still you may live as holy and heavenly as ever. Will you then grieve so much for these circumstantial as to forget your substantial? Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies? Remember, the Church's true riches are laid out of the reach of all its enemies: they may make you poor but not miserable. What though God do not distinguish in His outward dispensations bet-

wixt His own and others? Yea, what though His judgment single out the best and spare the worst? What though an Abel be killed in love and a Cain survive in hatred; a bloody Dionysius die in his bed and a good Josiah fall in battle? What though the belly of the wicked be filled with hid treasures, and the teeth of the saints broken with gravel stones? Yet still here is much matter of praise; for electing love has distinguished though common providence did not; and whilst prosperity and impunity slay the wicked, even slaying and adversity shall benefit and save the righteous.

Believe that how low soever the church be plunged under the waters of adversity it shall assuredly rise again. — Fear not; for as sure as Christ arose the third day, notwithstanding the seal and watch that was upon him, so sure the church shall arise out of all her troubles and lift up its victorious head over all its enemies. There is no fear of ruining that people that thrive by their losses and multiply by being diminished. O be not too quick to bury the church before she is dead! Stay till Christ hath tried His skill before you give it up for lost. The bush may be all in a flame, but shall never be consumed, and that because of the goodwill of Him that dwelleth in it.

Record the famous instances of God's care and tenderness over His people in former straits — Christ hath not suffered it to be devoured yet, for above these 1700 years the Christian church hath lived in affliction, and yet it is not consumed: many a wave of persecution hath gone over it, and yet it is not drowned; many designs to ruin it, and hitherto none hath prospered. This is not the first time that Hamans and Ahithophels have plotted its ruin; that a Herod hath stretched out his hand to vex it: still it hath been preserved from, supported under, or delivered out of all its troubles. And is it not as dear to God as ever? Is He not as able to save it as formerly? Though we know not whence deliverance should arise, "yet the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

If you can fetch no comfort from any of the former arguments, then, in the last place, try whether you cannot draw some comfort out of your very trouble. — Surely this trouble of yours is a good argument of your integrity; union is the ground of sympathy: if you had not some rich adventure in that ship you would not tremble as you do when it is in danger. Besides, this frame of spirit may afford you this argument, that if you are sensible of the church's troubles, Jesus Christ is much more sensible of, and solicitous about it than you can be, and He will have an eye of favour upon them that mourn for it, Isa, 57: 18. — Taken from *Gospel Banner*, December, 1903.

A Noted Minister — Rev. James Durham

MR JAMES DURHAM, minister at Glasgow, was a prudent, pious, and humble divine. He was Laird of Powrie in Angus; but after he had been married and had children, being urged in spirit, and pressed by godly and able ministers, and private Christians, he came to the University of Glasgow, and studied divinity, where in a short time he profited so as he might have been a professor of divinity in any university in Europe. He was soon appointed minister at Glasgow, and in the year 1650, when King Charles II came to Scotland, he, as most fit, for his gravity, learning, wisdom and piety, was unanimously chosen by the General Assembly, to be minister to the king's family. Here he continued for some time, not without great approbation, and some success, as might have been expected at such a time in such a place. Also, he offered to go with the king when he went towards Worcester, but not finding acceptance he returned to Glasgow. He continued in his ministry till the year 1658, when he died, being about 36 years old. His Book of "Scandal", his "Exposition of the Revelation", and of the "Song", with many other pieces, show what rare gifts the Lord had bestowed on him.

His conversion took place as follows:- Going with his wife to visit her mother in the parish of Abercorn, some miles west from Edinburgh, it happened to be the time when the Lord's Supper was being administered in that parish. On Saturday, his mother-in-law earnestly pressed him to go with them to church, and hear the sermon. He showed at first a great unwillingness, but was at last prevailed on to go along with them. The minister who preached that day was extremely warm and serious in his delivery, and though the sermon was but a plain and familiar discourse, yet his seriousness fixed Mr Durham's attention very closely. He was much affected by it, but the change was to be reserved for the next day. When he came home, he said to his mother-in-law, "The minister has preached very seriously today, and I shall not need to be urged to go to church tomorrow." Accordingly, on Sabbath morning, rising early, he returned to the church, and Mr Ephraim Melvil preached from 1 Peter 2: 7 "To you that believe, He is precious". In that sermon the minister so sweetly and seriously opened up the preciousness of Christ and the Spirit of God wrought so effectually upon his spirit, that in the hearing of that sermon he first closed with Christ, and then went to the Lord's table and took the seal of God's covenant. He ordinarily called Mr Melvil 'father' when he spake to him.

He was of great integrity, authority, and respect in the country where

he lived, and among all his neighbouring gentlemen; so that in all debates and differences that happened, Mr Durham was chosen by both parties as their arbitrator and judge, to whose sentence they submitted.

In the time of the civil wars, many gentlemen were in arms for the cause of religion, amongst whom Mr Durham was chosen, and called to be a captain, in which station he behaved himself like another Cornelius, and prayed to God always with his company; yea, he sometimes acted more like a minister than a captain, standing at the head of his company, and giving them many serious exhortations, advices, and counsels for their souls, and prayed before them so powerfully and effectually, that not only all his company, but strangers who passed by and heard, were greatly affected and surprised, looking to him as a man in whom there was much of the Spirit of God.

His call and coming forth to the holy ministry was remarkable. The Scots army being about to engage with the English, he judged it proper to call his company and soldiers to prayer before the engagement. And as he was beginning to pray, it happened that Mr Dickson, professor of divinity then at Glasgow, came riding by the army, who seeing the soldiers addressing themselves in prayer, and hearing the voice of one praying, drew near, and lighted from his horse and joined with them. He was so much taken with Mr Durham's prayer, that, after prayer, he called for the captain, and having conversed with him a little, he did solemnly charge him, that as soon as this piece of service he was engaged in was over, he should devote himself to serve God in the holy ministry, for to that he judged the Lord called him. But though, as yet, Mr Durham had not light to yield to Mr Dickson's desire, yet two remarkable providences, happening shortly after Mr Dickson's solemn charge, served very much to make his way clear. The first was, — In the heat of battle, an English soldier was ready to strike him down with his sword, but apprehending him to be a minister by his grave deportment, black clothes, and band, as was then in fashion with gentlemen, asked Mr Durham, if he was a priest? To this Mr Durham answered, Yes, and so his life was spared by the soldier. Upon after reflection, Mr Durham considering with himself how wonderfully the Lord had spared him, and preserved his life, and that his saying he was a priest had been the means of his preservation, resolved, therefore, as a testimony of his grateful sense of the Lord's mercy to him henceforth to devote himself to the service of God in the holy ministry, if the Lord should see meet to call and qualify him for the same.

Accordingly, having studied divinity under Mr Dickson at Glasgow, he

was licensed, in the year 1646, and ordained a minister in Glasgow, November, 1647. When Cromwell and his army were in Glasgow, on the Sabbath Day, Cromwell heard Mr Durham, who preached against the invasion to his face. Next day Cromwell sent for Mr Durham and told him, "That he always thought Mr Durham had been a more wise and prudent man, than to meddle with matters of public concern in his sermons". To which Mr Durham answered — "That it was not his practice to bring public matters into the pulpit but that he judged it both wisdom and prudence in him to speak his mind upon that head, seeing he had the opportunity of doing it in his own hearing". Cromwell dismissed him very civilly, but desired him to forbear insisting upon that subject in public. And at the same time sundry ministers both in town and country met with Cromwell and his officers, and represented in the strongest manner the injustice of his invasion.

On a certain day when Mr Durham, and Mr Andrew Gray were to preach, as they were walking together, Mr Durham observed multitudes thronging into that church where Mr Andrew Gray was to preach, and but here and there one dropping into that church where he himself was to preach, said to Mr Gray, "Brother, I perceive you are likely to have a thronged church this day", to which Mr Gray answered, "Truly brother, they are fools so leave you and come to me." To which Mr Durham replied, "Not so, dear brother, for a minister can receive no such honour and success in his ministry, except it be given from heaven. I rejoice that Christ is preached, and that His Kingdom and interest is getting ground, and that his honour and esteem doth increase, though my esteem in people's hearts should decrease, and be diminished, for I am content to be anything, so that Christ may be all in all". He was a person of the utmost composure and gravity, and scarce smiled at anything. When Mr William Guthry and he were together at dinner in some gentleman's house, Mr Guthry was exceeding merry, and made Mr Durham smile, and even laugh, with his pleasant facetious conversation. It was the ordinary custom of the family to pray after dinner, and Mr Guthry was desired to pray, which he did with the greatest measure of seriousness and fervency, to the astonishment of all present. When they rose from prayer, Mr Durham came to him and embraced him, and said, "O William, you are a happy man, if I had been so merry as you have been, I could not have been so serious, nor in any frame for prayer, for 48 hours."

As Mr Durham was devout in all the parts of his ministerial work, he was more eminently so at communion services. Then he endeavoured

through grace to rouse up himself to such a divineness of frame, as very much suited the spiritual state and majesty of that ordinance, greatly fearing lest himself or any of the people to whom he dispensed it, should fall under the grievous guilt of the body and blood of the Lord. Then, in a manner, his face shone, as being in the mount of communion and fellowship with God, and at some of those solemn and sweet occasions, he spake as a man that had seen heaven, commending Jesus Christ, making a glorious display of the banner of the free grace, holding forth the riches of it very clearly and convincingly, and bringing the offer of it very low, wonderfully low: so that in the hearing of some of his sermons at those occasions, particularly that of Matth. 22: 4, some of his hearers were made to think, that the cord of the offer of salvation was let down and hung so low to sinners, that those of the lowest stature among them all, might have caught hold of it, whom, through grace, had any mind to do so; and, so vehemently and urgently pressed, on so sweet and easy terms to be embraced, that it was a wonder to some, how they could refuse or avoid them. Mr Durham gave himself much to meditation, and usually said very little to persons that came to make known their case to him, but heard them patiently, and was sure to handle them in his sermon. His healing disposition and great moderation of spirit remarkably appeared, when this church was greatly divided betwixt the resolutioners and protesters. As he would never give his judgement on either side, so he used to say that the division was by far worse than either of the sides. He was equally respected by both parties, so that at a meeting of the Synod of Glasgow, when those of the two different sides met separately, each of them made choice of Mr Durham for their moderator; but he refused to join with either of them, until they would both unite together, which they accordingly did. At this meeting Mr Durham gave in overtures for peace.

His lectures on the book of the Revelation were revised and put to press by himself, but he died before it was finished. All the while he was lecturing upon this scripture, it is said, he kept two days a week for fasting and prayer, in order to find out the Lord's mind in it.

When on his death-bed, he was under considerable darkness about his state, and said to Mr John Carstairs, "Brother, for all that I have preached and written, there is but one scripture I can remember or dare hold on to. Tell me, if I dare lay the weight of my salvation upon it?" — "Whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Mr Carstairs answered him, "You may depend on it, though you had a thousand salvations at hazard". It is said he cried out a little after, "He is come, He is come."

The Jew

Scattered by God's almighty hand,
 Afflicted and forlorn,
Sad wanderers from their pleasant Land,
Do Judah's children mourn;
And e'en in Christian countries, few
Breathe thoughts of pity for the Jew.

Yet listen, Gentile, do you love
 The Bible's precious page?
Then let your heart with kindness move
 To Israel's heritage;
Who traced those lines of love for you?
Each sacred writer was a Jew.

And then as years and ages passed,
 And nations rose and fell,
Though clouds and darkness oft were cast
 O'er captive Israel
The oracles of God for you
Were kept in safety by the Jew.

And when the great Redeemer came
 For guilty man to bleed.
He did not take an angel's name,
 No, born of Abraham's seed,
Jesus, who gave His life for you —
The gentle Saviour — was a Jew.

And though His own received Him not,
 And turned in pride away,
Whence is the Gentile's happier lot?
 Are you more just than they?
No! God in pity turned to you —
Have you no pity for the Jew?

Go, then, and bend your knee to pray
 For Israel's ancient race;
Ask the dear Saviour every day
 To call them by His grace.
Go, for a debt of love is due
From Christian Gentiles to the Jew.

— *Author Unknown*

John Calvin on Church Music

“To sing the praises of God upon the harp and psaltery unquestionably formed a part of the training of the law and of the service of God under the dispensation of shadows and figures; but they are not now to be used in public thanksgiving.” (Calvin on Psalm 71: 22)

“With respect to the tabret, harp, and psaltery, we have formerly observed, and will find it necessary afterwards to repeat the same remark, that the Levites, under the law, were justified in making use of instrumental music in the worship of God; it having been his will to train his people, while they were yet tender and like children, by such rudiments until the coming of Christ. But now, when the clear light of the gospel has dissipated the shadows of the law and taught us that God is to be served in a simpler form, it would be to act a foolish and mistaken part to imitate that which the prophet enjoined only upon those of his own time.” (Calvin on Psalm 81: 3)

“We are to remember that the worship of God was never understood to consist in such outward services, which were only necessary to help forward a people as yet weak and rude in knowledge in the spiritual worship of God. A difference is to be observed in this respect between his people under the Old and under the New Testament; for now that Christ has appeared, and the church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the gospel should we introduce the shadows of a departed dispensation.” (Calvin on Psalm 92: 1)

“I have no doubt that playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and viol, and all that kind of music, which is so frequently mentioned in the Psalms, was a part of the education — that is to say, the puerile instruction of the law. I speak of the stated service of the temple. For even now, if believers choose to cheer themselves with musical instruments, they should, I think, make it their object not to dis sever their cheerfulness from the praises of God. But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to him. Paul allows us to bless God in the public assembly of the saints, only in a known tongue (1 Cor. 14: 16). The voice of man, although not understood by the generality, assuredly excels all inanimate

instruments of music; and yet we see what Paul determines concerning speaking in an unknown tongue. What shall we then say of chanting, which fills the ears with nothing but an empty sound? Does any one object that music is very useful for awakening the minds of men and moving their hearts? I own it; but we should always take care that no corruption creep in, which might both defile the pure worship of God, and involve men in superstition. Moreover, since the Holy Spirit expressly warns us of this danger by the mouth of Paul, to proceed beyond what we are there warranted by him is not only, I must say, unadvised zeal, but wicked and perverse obstinacy." (Calvin on Psalm 33)

"I do not insist upon the words in the Hebrew signifying the musical instruments; only let the reader remember that sundry different kinds are here mentioned, which were in use under the legal economy. . . ." (Calvin on Psalm 150: 3-5)

"What, therefore, was in use under the law is by no means entitled to our practice under the gospel; and these things being not only superfluous, but useless, are to be abstained from, because pure and simple modulation is sufficient for the praise of God, if it is sung with the heart and with the mouth. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ has appeared, and by his advent has abolished these legal shadows. Instrumental music, we therefore maintain, was only tolerated on account of the times and the people, because they were as boys, as the sacred Scripture speaketh, whose condition required these puerile rudiments. But in gospel times we must not have recourse to these unless we wish to destroy the evangelical perfection, and to obscure the meridian light which we enjoy in Christ our Lord." (Calvin's Sermon on 1 Samuel 18: 1-9)

The foregoing quotations from Calvin's work set forth the great Reformer's views on instrumental music in worship in his own words. It is a constant source of astonishment that scholars professing to be Calvinists attempt to derive principles concerning a Calvinistic view of instrumental music in worship by deductive reasoning from general features of Calvin's theology, while they totally disregard Calvin's own explicit rejection of the whole idea of instrumental music in New Testament worship. Can it be sound to use deductions from Calvin's theology to contradict explicit, emphatic statements of Calvin himself? Or can we claim that Calvin's view of instrumental music was contrary to Calvinism?

Book Reviews

Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales by Eifion Evans. Banner of Truth Trust — £9.95.

In 383 pages Dr. Evans gives a vivid account of the 18th century Welsh revival with the weal and the woe of both its instruments and subjects. The instruments God used in this mighty work were comparatively few. Some were humble exhorters, others ordained preachers. Daniel Rowland, an ordained minister of the Church of England, was the main instrument in this powerful movement which set the whole of Wales on fire with the gospel. The writer has laboured and succeeded to show that the great force at work in revival is the power of God unto salvation. There was "an irresistible constraint, an inner and inexplicable attraction, to hear the preachers of the Great Awakening." One man testified: "I was led to go in spite of all reasoning, even though I could not think nor know what carried me, nor what purpose I had in going, but that I went with as ardent a desire as I had gone many times to my favourite pleasures." This is something completely different from the artificial gimmicks that are used in modern evangelism to attract the world and move sinners to some kind of decision. Large congregations often numbering thousands gathered to hear the preachers who were kindled with fresh fire from heaven. This fire took hold of Daniel Rowland when he was converted at the age of twenty-five, after five years in the ministry. He began to preach like a man in earnest which brought upon him the nickname of "the angry clergyman". Under this kind of preaching spiritual concerns became paramount. Before long Mr Rowland could count his communicants not by tens, or hundreds, but by thousands. Two thousand communicants would regularly remember the death of Christ at the monthly commemoration at Llangeitho. This marks another difference with 20th century Arminian evangelism. The true revival is characterized by thorough conversions from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. The doctrines that bring about such a great change are the truths enshrined in the sacred record — total depravity, sovereign election, regeneration by the Spirit, justification by faith, perseverance unto the end. These were the truths Mr Rowland and his fellow labourers continually declared. Wales became a well-watered and fruitful garden. Every Christian would like to read how this work commenced and was carried on by heavenly influences over a period of half a century. This, together with their difficulties, trials, opposition, persecution, formation of societies, provision of rules and

Association meetings, are amply covered. In perusing this very readable book we are left in no doubt what the Welsh Methodism or Calvinistic Methodism of the 18th century is all about. Nothing less than the mighty works of God. If the circulation of this book would stimulate prayer for the much needed outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this production may yet be a source of much fruit.

J. A. T. Van D.

The Essex Martyrs by A. J. Green. Paperback 92 pp. Essex Protestant Council, 1 Donald Way, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 9JB. £1.25 plus postage.

This paperback is a reprint of a book published over 100 years ago. The accounts given in it of the martyrs from the county of Essex who suffered in Queen Mary's reign in the 16th century are taken without abridgement from Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Many of these are harrowing recitals of the sufferings of these martyrs at the hand of the Romish Church by whom they were condemned and delivered over to the secular power to be put to death. While that is true, what is recorded brings out most clearly how they were sustained by the Lord in the midst of their sufferings. In many instances the pain in being cruelly put to death by burning seemed to be greatly allayed by the measure of the presence of the Lord given to them at that time. Here then is an account of some of the noble martyrs who counted not their life dear unto themselves in order that they might finish their course with joy. In such a dark day as this it is heartening to read of those who willingly yielded up their bodies to death rather than deny their Lord and Master by countenancing the heresies of the Church of Rome. What need there is of such a band of faithful men and women who would be faithful to Christ in the midst of abounding wickedness and apostacy.

It is well to keep in memory how dearly our Christian privileges have been bought and this booklet should be a help to this end.

D. B. M.

Expository Thoughts on the Gospels by J. C. Ryle. Four Vols. Paperbacks in presentation slipcase. £22.95. Evangelical Press.

The volumes on the Gospels by J. C. Ryle are well known. In his preface Ryle says that the reader must not expect to find in these "Expository Thoughts" a learned, critical commentary on the Gospels but only a continuous series of short practical Expositions. One aim Ryle had in view was to aid all readers of the Bible in the private study of

God's Word, and certainly these volumes would be very useful for daily readings. As many will be aware, Ryle's style of writing was one of simplicity and plainness, making all his writings easy to read and understand. Because of Bishop Ryle's commitment to the doctrines of the Reformers his works can be heartily recommended.

The Banner of Truth Trust has already reprinted the volumes on Matthew and Mark in paperback and in attractive format. Evangelical Press has issued the four volumes, also in attractive format, but omitting the footnotes contained in the Banner issue. The cost of the Banner reprint of Mark is £2.95 which seems more reasonable for this type of book than the price asked for by Evangelical Press.

D. B. M.

God is Love (Communion Addresses by J. W. Alexander). Banner of Truth Trust. 366 pp. £2.95.

This excellent paperback is a reprint of "Sacramental Discourses", first published in 1860 as a commemorative book to mark the lamented death, in 1859, of the author of the discourses.

It was at times of the celebration of the Lord's Supper during J. W. Alexander's ministry in New York that he preached the thirteen selected sermons included in this publication. From the first sermon, on 1st John, 4: 8 and 16 to the 13th, on Revelation 19: 12 and 13, the gracious, sovereign love of the Triune God, the Person of the Saviour and His atoning work are treated with rare spiritual insight and warmth by one whose heart was aglow as he contemplated the love of God in the salvation of sinners.

In recommending this book, this reviewer desires to echo the words which conclude the foreword to the 1860 edition: "May the prayers which accompanied the writing and preaching of these sermons be now abundantly answered by that Immanuel whom they were intended to glorify."

A.G.

Notes and Comments

House of Lords Decision

In an action which finally reached the House of Lords a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales lost his case in which he claimed the right to bring a claim for unfair dismissal from his pastorate before an industrial tribunal. The case was heard before Lord Keith of Kinkel, Lord

Brandon of Oakbrook, Lord Brightman, Lord Templeton and Lord MacKay of Clashfern. The Court found that the duties owed by a pastor to the church were not contractual or enforceable. A pastor was called and accepted the call. He did not devote his working life but his whole life to the church and religion. His duties were defined and his activities were dictated not by contract but by conscience. He was a servant of God. If his manner of serving God was not acceptable to the church then his pastorate could be brought to an end by the church in accordance with the provisions of the book of rules.

The case is an interesting one. It is gratifying to find expression given to such sentiments in a decision of the highest Court in the land. An account of the case appeared in the *Times* of 7th March.

Sabbath Shopping Bill

It is heartening to know that this Bill was defeated in the House of Commons on its second reading by a majority of 14 votes. The Government indicated it had no plans for re-introducing it and that they accepted the decision of the House. It is a token of good from the Lord to our land that the Bill was defeated and to Him be all the glory.

Children's Diet

According to a survey carried out by the BBC nearly 90 per cent of children between nine and 12 years of age watch television or videos at some time on Saturdays and almost half spend four hours or more in front of the set on that day. This is the diet on which the young of the land are being brought up. In many cases it is to be feared that little control is being exercised by parents as to what kind of programmes their children watch. In view of this, can we wonder at the great increase of crime among the young. Young impressionable minds graduate from a diet of violent and other crimes shown on the TV screen to actual participation in such crimes in real life and the nation and families reap as they have sown.

Licentious Pictures in Newspapers

An attempt by a member of Parliament to prohibit the use of licentious pictures by some of the popular newspapers exposed her to ridicule from other members of the House of Commons. One said: "You would have our newspapers like Pravda." In supporting her Bill she declared that many women think there is some connection between the rising tide

of sexual crime and Page Three newspaper photographs. The Bill received a First Reading but is not likely to become law in this session of Parliament.

Rape Offences

The latest crime statistics have revealed that rape is increasing faster than virtually any other crime. In view of this the Government has given pledges of tough action against rapists. In England and Wales the figures rose by a third while in London they rose by more than 50 per cent. The Home Secretary, Mr Hurd, described the increase as most shocking and declared rape to be a totally barbaric act. He promised to give the police further resources to deal with this type of crime. The maximum penalty for attempted rape is to be a life sentence. It is to be hoped that these measures will be effective and the streets and parks of our towns and cities freed from this and other crimes. Yet only a true revival of religion will change the prevailing moral climate throughout the land.

Church Notes

Meeting of Synod

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland will meet D.V. on Tuesday 20th May 1986 in St Jude's Church, Glasgow, at 6.30 p.m. when the retiring Moderator, Rev John MacLeod, Stornoway will conduct public worship.

Annual Synod

As noted above the annual Synod of our Church takes place in Glasgow during the week after the 3rd Sabbath of May (D.V.). Then the ministers and representative elders of the Church will meet to hear reports of the work of Mission and the Church overseas and to discuss matters affecting the interests of the Lord's Cause in our midst. We would ask for the prayers of the Lord's people in connection with these deliberations — that the Lord's Presence might be granted and His guidance given in all the matters that come before the Synod for discussion and decision. This year Rev. Z. Mazvabo and Mr Cecil Sobantu are expected to attend the Synod from Zimbabwe.

Church Deputies

Rev. Alex MacPherson, London and his wife returned to this country on 18th March after Mr MacPherson's visit as Church Deputy to New Zealand and Australia. We would acknowledge the Lord's goodness in bringing them home again in safety and we trust that the Word preached

in the overseas congregations may be blessed to many souls. We would acknowledge the Lord's goodness also in the safe arrival of Rev. Lachlan MacLeod and his wife in New Zealand. During the month of May Mr MacLeod expects to pay a visit to Australia and minister to the congregations there.

Change of Communion Dates

The Congregation and Kirk Session of the Joint-congregation of Lairg, Creich, Dornoch and Rogart have decided to revise times of Communion as follows:-

First Sabbath of June	— Lairg
First Sabbath of July	— Rogart
Third Sabbath of August	— Creich
Third Sabbath of November	— Dornoch

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 30th May at 3.30 p.m.

Zimbabwe Presbytery: To be held on 10th June.

Western: At Laide on 17th June at 11 a.m.

Skye: At Portree on 1st July at 11 a.m.

Zimbabwe Mission — Staff Vacancies

GENERAL — Post of Administrator/Treasurer.

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL — Graduate Teachers (Four Posts) with qualifications in English, History, Geography and Mathematics.

MBUMA HOSPITAL — A doctor is still urgently required, also a further Nurse/Midwife and preferably with teaching experience.

With the new situation that exists in Zimbabwe consequent upon independence it is desirable that all of the seven above posts be filled as soon as possible. The work provides a real challenge to all who may have these necessary qualifications, and all our Church people should make the needs of our Mission a matter of constant prayer.

Enquiries to Rev. A. Murray, F.P. Manse, Lairg, Sutherland, IV27 4EH. Telephone 0549-2176.

TOMATIN CHURCH — The Deacon's Court of the Daviot-Stratherrick-Tomatin Congregation has recently sold the Tomatin church so that services are held meanwhile in the local Church of Scotland building. The Sabbath service is held at the usual time, but the Tomatin Prayer Meeting has been discontinued. There will be no Tomatin communion in 1986.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Wm. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Glasgow, G12 0HE, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks.

Sustentation Fund: Mr and Mrs J. A. MacD., Downend, Kyles, Tarbert, £44.

Home Mission Fund: Mr and Mrs J. A. MacD., address as above, £10.

Organisation Fund: Mr and Mrs J. A. MacD., address as above, £16.

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Lancashire postmark, £30.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: "In memory of my mother, Mrs R. S. MacKenzie," £150.

Home of Rest Fund: Visitor, £30 for "air conditioning in the sitting room" and £30 for "bath chair lift."

Chesley: Anon. Friend, Inverness, £20; A. M., £5; Friend, Edinburgh, £10.

The Publications Treasurer, Mr R. W. M. MacKenzie, Geanies House, Fearn, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Publications Fund: Lairg Congregation, £20.

Welfare of Youth Fund: Miss MacL., £10; M. M., Gairloch, £5.

Free Distribution Fund: M. M., Gairloch, £5.

The Treasurers of the following congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Barnoldswick: Wellwisher, £10 for Communion Expenses; Anon., £25 for Communion collection.

Dingwall: Wayfarer, £20; S. C., Invergordon, £10; Friend, Alness, £20 towards Manse Kitchen, last two per Rev. D. B. M.; From Executor of late Wm. B. Sim per Middleton, Ross & Arnot, £1232.50 for Dingwall Congregation.

Fort William: Anon., £2 (envelope in plate); Mrs B., £5; Friend, Caol, £10, both per Rev. J. A. MacDonald.

Glasgow: Mrs MacK. (two donations), £8 for Congregation Fund; Anon., £5; Anon., £80, both for Sust. Fund; Anon., £10; Anon., £50, both for "Sponsor a Child"; T. McL., £5 for T.B.S.; Anon., £5; Anon., £5; Matth. 6: 3 (two donations), £20; M. M. A., £10; Anon., £20; In ever loving memory of Hamish B. Grant, £100, all for Bus Fund.

Portree: M. M., £11; M. A. M., £2, both for property maintenance; Stornoway Friend, £10 for Communion Expenses; M. A. M., £2 for Door Collection, all by envelope in plate.

Shieldaig: Anon., £6 for Congregation Purposes; Anon., £10; Anon., £20; Anon., Inverness, £25.

South Harris: D. M., £5 (in plate); Anon., £10, both for Communion Expenses; N. MacL., Seilebost, £10; S. MacK., Geocrab, £100 in memory of beloved parents, last three per Rev. J. MacLeod; M. M., Lingerbay, £30, per D. MacKenzie, last three for Congregation Fund.

Staffin: Anon., Psalm 122: 8 and 9, £50 per A. MacInnes.

Stornoway: Anon., £5 for Sust. Fund, £2.50 for Home Mission, £2.50 for College and Library Fund; Mrs M., Tarbert, £10 for Communion Expenses; In memory of John MacKenzie, Kishorn, £100, all per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anon., £2 for Communion Expenses.

Correction in March issue — £30 for Sustentation from Mrs K. A. MacL. should read "from Miss K. A. MacLeod, Callanish."