

These letters were written by our pastor to be read in the services at Galeed during his absence from the pulpit due to serious illness.

—Letter 1—

The Bruised Reed Not Broken

Wednesday, 12th June, 2019

Dear Friends,

It was Mr Popham's custom (and William Tiptaft's) to write to his congregation from his bed when detained from the pulpit by sickness. I am not Mr Popham, and cannot come up to his standard, but a few thoughts having presented themselves to me sweetly, and forcibly, over the past few days, I felt I would like to share them with you in this way as you are gathered together for worship this evening.

The word that has been on my mind is: "A bruised reed shall he not break." (Isaiah 42:3)

This word first presented itself to me on Saturday morning. When I returned from hospital on Wednesday evening my boys were excited to show me that one of the peonies I had planted in our garden had flowered in my absence. I am particularly fond of peonies and the large white flower brought me particular joy. However, you will know that peony flowers are often too large for the support of their stem, and as I watched it beaten by the rain and knocked about by the growing wind on Friday, I was encouraged to see how strong it appeared. But when I woke Saturday morning, after a night of high wind, I was dismayed to notice from the window that the flower was lying in the mud. Fearing it had entirely broken off, as soon as I possibly could I went out into the garden, with some scissors, planning to retrieve the bloom for a vase in the lounge. Arriving at the flower however, I quickly discovered the stem was intact; it was simply bent and bruised. I went back to the house and used the same scissors to cut some garden wire, and taking a cane, I returned to the plant. Gently lifting the bedraggled bloom, I planted the cane next to it, as a stake, and wired it to its support.

As I lifted the bruised stem, those words came very sweetly: "A bruised reed shall he not break." I saw myself in that peony. So often bruised by sin, cleaving

to the dust. Yet I can only say that in my experience, on innumerable occasions God has come and lifted me up, drawn me to Christ as my support – through whom alone his people stand and are strengthened – that I can confirm to you the truth of that word, “not”, in our text: “A bruised reed shall he **not** break.” But rather, he brings “forth judgement unto truth.” That is grace! Grace indeed!

Now just for a moment coming to the text.

I mentioned to you a few weeks ago that there are four songs in Isaiah that speak of Christ in his work as the servant of his Father, as our Mediator and Saviour. The most famous of these is of course that which is found in Isaiah 53 and the last three verses of chapter 52. Our text is found in the first of these “servant songs”. It consists of the first nine verses of chapter 42. In this song the Lord God speaks of that one whom he will send, to be a ruler over his people. One who will particularly gather the Gentiles, both to bring forth judgement to them (verse 1), but also to be a light unto them (verse 6). A light which would draw them, and gather them unto this servant, that this servant should be their King – as Isaiah emphasises in chapter 60: “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” (v 3) A prophecy fulfilled by the coming of the Magi to the manger, and which continues to be fulfilled through the preaching of the gospel, till that day will come, of which John saw in Revelation 14, when that company shall be gathered before the throne of God and the Lamb in heaven, saved out of every “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” (v 6)

We have no doubt therefore of whom our text speaks: “A bruised reed shall **he** not break.” This glorious “he” is the Servant of God, his first elect. This is confirmed by God himself, when he spoke from heaven, not once but twice: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” “Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” And lest there should be any doubt, the Holy Spirit has left it on record in Matthew 12, that Jesus healed the sick outside the synagogue on the Sabbath, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, ... A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.” (v 17, 20)

And so, this text speaks of Jesus, our Saviour and our Friend. This is the glorious “he” who does not break the bruised reed. The one who has remembered us and stooped to us in our low estate, that he might take us as beggars from the dunghill, to set us among princes. That he might quicken us when we are found cleaving to the dust. To lift us up, when we are fallen. To take our feet from the miry clay and

set us on the Rock. This is his work – the charge given him from his Father in the eternal covenant of old. And in this work “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement on the earth.”

Now the points I want to come to are these:

1. What he does with the bruised reed.
2. Why he delights to do this.
3. How he performs this work.

1. What the Servant does with the bruised reed.

i) Firstly negatively, he shall “not break.” I could have taken my scissors to the peony and cut off the fallen stem. I could have taken the view that it had been given a chance to stand and failed. Now it would never stand again of its own. It was littering the ground. Better to get rid of it.

Speaking reverently, God could have justly done so with the bruised reed. Man was created upright in his image. God gave him opportunity under the covenant of works to stand. But Adam fell, and we in Adam. Sin bruised us. Now we cumber the ground. But God in his mercy appointed his Servant to be a saviour. To come into this world to save sinners. And as he comes, he cannot condemn his people whom he has come to save. He cannot cut them off. He cannot despise and reject them, nor can he forget them: though they may do all these things to him. “He shall not break.” “He’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”

What does this mean for a bruised reed? Well it means this.

a) Firstly, he will never reject a coming sinner. Never turn away one who has been drawn to him, who comes confessing that he is only hope. Why? Because to do so would be to cut them off. No! Rather this man receiveth sinners.

b) Secondly, he will never turn away from any soul who has trusted their all to him. “Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 10:11) The work of grace begun in restoring a bruised reed can never cease. If it could, it would be the breaking of the reed. Our text tells us that can never be. We may turn away from him, but his response will always be the same:

Rebellious thou hast been,
And art rebellious still;
But since in love I took thee in,
My promise I’ll fulfil.

I've bound thee up secure,
'Midst all the rage of hell;
The curse thou never shalt endure,
For I'm unchangeable. (Henry Fowler)

ii) But then his work is not just negative. It is not just that he won't break us. This servant has come to do something positive for the bruised reed. He will heal them. He will restore them. He will lift up those who are in the dust and cause them to awake and sing.

This was the reason he came into the world: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) He came to make good the breach that sin had made. To restore sinners to God. This is the work so beautifully described in verse 7. "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." The work of this servant is to let go those held captives by sin and Satan. To heal those wounded by sin. To give life to dying sinners. This is the positive work of this servant – and what a blessing. It's not just that he doesn't cut us off and cast us away as he justly might do, but he saves us with an everlasting salvation. This is the gospel. Is it good news to you? Can you say with John Kent:

Jesus heals the broken-hearted;
O how sweet that sound to me!

But can sweet assurance continue to say:

Once beneath **my** sin he smarted,
Groaned, and bled to set **me** free.
By his sufferings, death, and merits;
By his Godhead, blood, and pain;
Broken hearts, or wounded spirits,
Are at once made whole again.

God's righteous servant, his own dear son, Jesus Christ: he heals bruised reeds. He saves lost sinners.

2. Why the Saviour delights to deal gently with bruised reeds.

i) Firstly, he loves them. This is perhaps the greatest mystery for a bruised reed to understand. Why does the Saviour love them? How can he love such a poor one? Well you know natural love is a mystery too. Perhaps not so much the love

between a parent and a child, but the love between husband and wife – we may often look upon a couple and say, “I cannot see what they see in the other.” And within the marriage union we may often wonder what brought our spouse to love us. We see only our deficiencies, weaknesses, sins. They see only the points they love. Love, as Joseph Hart says,

Love all defects supplies,
Makes great obstructions small.

He loves, he tells us, simply because he would love us, and there we have to leave it.

But may we never doubt his love. The manifestation of it is great. Mr Popham was a great friend of Thomas Houghton, the then editor of the *Gospel Magazine*. Houghton’s son, Frank, wrote a hymn that begins,

Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,
All for love’s sake, becamest man.

That is the manifestation of Christ’s love to us – that great love wherewith he loved us. He left heaven for us. He took our nature – “dressed in such feeble flesh as they.” (Isaac Watts) That’s the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and its grace which has us as its object and its end. He came into this world to save sinners. He died for us, and in dying, “commended,” as Paul puts it, or “showed” the love of God toward us. May we never belittle that love. May we never question its sufficiency. May we never doubt it. But rather let us rejoice in it.

On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah!

Grace shall reign eternally.

(John

Kent)

We cannot understand it – but this is why he tends to bruised reeds – he loves them.

ii) Secondly, they belong to him. I tended to my peony because it is mine. I purchased it, I planted it, I watered it, and I have watched over it to see it flower.

My neighbour has peonies too, but their broken peony is no concern of mine. I pass by them. So Jesus tends to his bruised reeds because they are his.

They are his by gift. They were given to him by the Father in eternity past, to be his possession.

They are his because he asked for them: “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” (Psalm 2:8)

They are his because he has purchased them with his own blood. He paid the redemption price for them. They became his by purchase. What value he places on them – he gave his life for them, he poured out his soul unto death.

They are his because he is betrothed unto them. Engaged to be their husband. He spread his skirt over them (Ezekiel 16:8), they became his – that is the way in which one was claimed in Old Testament times for wife, as Boaz spread his skirt over Ruth. They are no longer desolate and forsaken, but his delight, and shortly we shall be his forever by marriage. He hates to put away – or as we might translate it – “He hates divorce” – therefore he cannot give up on his bride to be, however wayward and whatever whoreish behaviour we might be left to. We belong to him.

Therefore, as his possession, his right, he cares for his sheep. He tends his bruised reeds. He watches over us and guards us jealously.

iii) Thirdly, he delights in them. Just as I delighted to see the peony bloom – the fruit of my labour in the garden. The end of my care and watering. So Jesus delights in his people. He has given his all for them. He laid down his life for them. He cares for them. Therefore he watches over them. He cannot bear to see them overcome, downtrodden, or wandering from him.

But there is a deeper point here – a deeper reason for his delight in them. They are his glory. Not his essential glory. Not that glory of which John wrote: “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (1:14) Nothing can add to that glory. But Jesus has a glory which belongs to him in his office as mediator. A peculiar glory. Gadsby calls this his “highest glory.” In wonder if this is because it is not his glory by right of his person, but a glory which he has gained by performance of the duty given him to do.

Let me try to simplify what I mean. Somebody can be born into a wealthy family – they have estate, large house and fortune. They may have an ancient lordly title, but this is glory which they gain by birth. They have no control over it,

it is their right. But if that person uses the talent given to them to do great works of benevolence or become a useful member of the state or economy, they may gain a glory which excels their birth glory but is a glory they have gained through their work. An example could be Lord Shaftesbury – the seventh earl. Six earls had gone before him, and many since. They all had the same inheritance, the same natural glory by birth, but the seventh earl gained a glory for his wonderful works of compassion and care for the poorest members of society. So Jesus, having that glory which was his as God, in his office of mediator he receives a glory which is his, not by virtue of who he is, but by what he does. And, as his office as mediator has this end – our salvation – as sinners saved by the virtue of his work on our behalf, we contribute to his mediatorial glory.

As he sees that salvation being accomplished in us. As he sees himself being formed in us by the sanctifying work of the Spirit – his image appearing in the refining gold – he delights in us, and he longs for that day when we shall be his when he makes up his jewels. Nothing can get in the way of that end, and so he cares for us. He cannot, and will not, break the bruised reed. Rather:

Father-like he tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hands he gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows. (Henry F. Lyte)

He delights in us and his delight and joy is manifest as he cares for us and tends to us when we feel to be nothing but broken reeds.

3. How does he perform this work of strengthening and sustaining the bruised reed?

Much could be said on this, and the experience of the Lord's people are various. But coming to the heart of the doctrine, I want to just say two things. I took two things to my bruised and drooping peony – a stake and some wire to attach it to the stake. I believe the Lord uses similar means.

i. Firstly, Jesus becomes to us a stake upon which we as bruised reeds must depend for salvation. This Servant heals his bruised reeds by graciously lifting them up, taking their weight, and holding them up.

Now, What is a stake? In gardening it is a pole placed upright in the ground upon which something leans or hangs and by doing so, it strengthens and causes

the bruised and drooping plant to stand. It also acts as a guide to provide upright growth.

a) So Jesus is something to lean upon. He became our stake as he was lifted high for us upon the cross: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32)

What is it that bruises you today but your sin. Bowed down by it, you cannot so much as lift your eyes up to heaven. But this Jesus is our sacrifice, appointed by God, to make atonement for our sins. You will remember me preaching from Leviticus earlier in the year, concerning the man who brought the sacrifice leaning hard upon the head of the animal as he confessed his sins. That is where sinners bruised by sin, bowed down by their sin must come and lean – on Jesus Christ as their offering for sin. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) Some bruised reeds, tempted by the devil and taken with the sin of unbelief try to limit that verse, and think it cannot apply to them. But don’t undermine the sweetness of it. The foundation of the verse is Jesus Christ – he is faithful and just. Solemn if you feel you have a right to question that he is faithful and just. That is the grounds on which we come and lean on him. The verse gives no qualification – not the righteous, the good, the just, but sinners are called to confess their sin and to confess on this ground alone – Jesus is faithful and just to forgive. Therefore lean hard bruised reed! He will not fail nor be discouraged in the work given to him. He will not break you, nor turn you away. “He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37) Come leaning, as you cannot carry your load of sins – but lean hard on the leaning place God has provided, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Jesus bears the weight of all that come to lean upon him. He says to bruised reeds who cannot stand themselves, but come as sinners condemned before the wrath of God: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

b) But then Jesus holds up the bruised reed. The point I want to try and make is this – it is not just that we lean upon him, rest upon him, sink down weary upon him, but that he holds us up, he lifts us up. The stem of the peony I tied up is leaning on the stake, but the weight of the flower hangs from the stake, and the stake takes its weight through the wire tie.

Moses says of this one: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” (Deuteronomy 33:27) The hymnwriter puts it like this:

His oath, his covenant, and his blood,
Support me in the whelming flood,
When all around my soul gives way,
He only is all my hope and stay.

(Edward Mote)

Or as Charles Wesley comes even lower, “Hangs my helpless soul on thee.” Does that describe you at the moment – helpless, bruised, weak, sore, unable to do anything? Have you come to that place where you can only say, “Myself I cannot save!” Well here is one mighty to save. But you say, I am a sinner, he is holy, what hope can there be for me. But can you come with that poor woman – she was a bruised soul – “If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole.” (Mark 5:28) Do you believe that, that Jesus is able to save? Do you believe that through him it could be true of you: “I shall be whole”? If so, reach forth your hand even now – the promise is: “Whosoever will, let him.” (Revelation 22:17) “And as many as touched him were made whole.” (Mark 6:56) That is what it is for a bruised reed to hang on Christ and for him to take their weight. To come just as we are without one plea, but to come by faith believing that Jesus is able to save. We don’t come knowing our election. Election is not the ground of our coming. We come because we are bruised sinners, and the gospel speaks of the grace of salvation in Jesus Christ for bruised sinners, and so we have to come and hang on Christ as our only hope – and in hanging on him we will prove him to be the nail in a sure place. Certain salvation. We can never fall from his hands.

Why will the bruised reed never fall while hanging on Christ? Well, we can think for a moment of the analogy Isaiah uses previously in this Prophecy concerning this servant. He says of him that he is the nail in a sure place. “And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place.” (Isaiah 22:23) The image is a nail, driven into the wall, upon which things hang and something that hangs is held up by that which it hangs upon.

Now anything hanging on that nail will never fall – why? Because the nail is surely fixed. It holds us up. Why is this nail bruised reeds must hang on so sure?

Firstly, the nail is sure because of the wall it is driven into. It is fixed in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure in which the Son was appointed by God to his role as Saviour. Therefore, Jesus can never be removed from his office as Mediator. He can never cease to be a prophet, priest or king for his people.

Secondly, it is fixed by the very nature of the nail itself. That nail is a Divine nail. The only begotten Son of God. Therefore the nail can never rust, bend, or snap. It remains the same. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Therefore we can hang upon Christ. He will not fail his people.

Thomas Boston's wife was mentally afflicted, she was often very tried spiritually, but Boston says of her towards the end of her life: "On the Sabbath, I think, with difficulty she got told me, that, in her experience, none of the good things the Lord had spoken had failed: yesterday, that she was resolved never to part with Christ: at night, that she was like a bird on the side of a wall, griping with its claws." Boston's wife knew this nail; the upholding power of Christ. In ourselves, just like that bird clinging on. Every storm we expect the bird to be torn off, but it holds fast. We cannot understand it, we marvel at it, but the secret is the Rock it clings to doesn't move. Jesus never gives way, and therefore we are safe. "The bruised reed shall he not break." It's through his strength we stand, though a bruised reed, as we hang our weight upon him and all that he has done for us.

c) But then Jesus is upright and he makes and holds us upright.

Now firstly, *our stake is upright and it makes us upright*. In verse 6, the Father says to the Son as he appoints him Mediator on behalf of his people: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness." In the fourth Servant song, the Father describes the Son as "My righteous servant." (Isaiah 53:11) This one appointed to save bruised reeds is righteous. That means he is upright. Perfectly straight. No deviation. That is Jesus isn't it? Do you marvel with Isaac Watts:

And did *the Holy and the Just*,
The Sovereign of the skies,
Stoop down to wretchedness and dust,
That guilty worms might rise?

Surprising mercy! Love unknown! If so, it is because you behold the glory of his righteousness. Now the glory of the gospel is this: the sins which have bruised you were laid to the account of Jesus, this righteous one. "He was bruised for our iniquities." (Isaiah 53:5) And by the same transaction, the righteousness of this Holy and Just one has been imputed to us, or made ours. Paul clearly states this double imputation in this way: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians

5:21) And so through this righteous servant who justifies many, bruised reeds, bruised by their sin and unrighteousness, are made sound and whole, declared righteous as they are clothed in his righteousness. We stand bold in his righteousness.

But then I want to notice this secondly: having made us upright, *this stake holds us upright*. From this righteousness we can never fall. It is an impeccable righteousness. It is the righteousness of Jesus; the righteousness of the God-Man. And so, once made upright we are always upright. When he takes a bruised, bowed down reed from the mire of sin and death and makes it to stand upright in his righteousness, it can never again fall. That is the truth as it is legally, according to the holy law of God. But in experience there is the fact that we again and again find ourselves bruised by sin. This experience doesn't undermine this blessed truth that the believer cannot fall. But it separates for us the difference between justification (which takes place outside of us, and is a once and for all act of God), and sanctification (which takes place within us, and continues throughout our lives). Now just as Jesus makes us bruised reeds upright in justification, so he keeps us upright in sanctification.

How? He is our example. Our guide. Our pattern. He says: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:29) What is he saying? Jesus is saying follow me. I am upright. Seek to be upright like me. And, as by faith we are enabled to look unto Jesus day by day, and as the Spirit works within us to form Christ in us the hope of glory, there is a growing up into Christ, an increasing conformity with him, and the bruised reed stands straight in Jesus's example. You know naturally plants have nothing within themselves which makes them grow straight. Rather they are engineered by their creator to grow towards the sun. Consequently, they grow up straight because the sun shines directly above them at noon and its rays draw them up. So bruised reeds grow up straight, not from anything within themselves, but as the Sun of Righteousness arises within healing in his wings, and we experience what one has said:

*Jesus draws the chosen race,
By his sweet resistless grace ...

Draws them to his tender breast;
There they find the gospel rest. ...*

Then how eagerly they move
In the happy paths of love!
How they glory in the Lord,
Pleased with Jesus' sacred word!

When the Lord appears in view,
Old things cease, and all is new;
Love divine o'erflows the soul;
Love does every sin control.

(Richard Burnham)

Now, are you bruised, fallen over, bowed down again by sin militating within you? Why is it friends? Has something hidden the Sun of Righteousness from you? Instead of keeping your eyes on Jesus fixed that you might stand upright in him, you have been poring on yourself; looking within; looking to others – “Lord, what shall this man do”? Comparing yourselves to others like the Pharisee: “I’m glad I’m not as other men are ...” Have you lost sight of Jesus and his cross? Is this why you have become a prey to sin and lust? Can you see this is the reason why you have fallen and become bruised? You know we tend the way we look. When we are driving, we must look straight on, else the tendency is to unconsciously steer towards what we are looking at, and when we do that, we leave the road and end up in the ditch. I ask you: Where are you looking?

Look to Jesus, kind as strong –
Mercy joined with power.

(Joseph
Hart)

Look to him. That look will straighten you out, bruised reed. It will make you upright in him. He keeps us upright as we look to him and lean our weight upon him.

ii. But then I want to briefly come to the wire by which we are joined to the stake.

Had I just put a stake next to the peony, even though I had carefully leant the plant on the stake, the next breeze would have blown it off its support and it would have again lain bruised and helpless in the mud. So I took some wire to hold it to the stake so that the two could never be separated. This is the vital ingredient in the healing and strengthening of the bruised reed: that which connects the poor reed to the stake. What is it that connects us and holds us to the support for bruised reeds – Jesus Christ?

a) Well firstly, the wire goes from the stake to the plant. Christ is connected to us by ties from which he cannot be loosed.

There is his everlasting love. He loves us. That love cannot change because it is divine love and emanates forth from God who is love. And what is ascribed to God is essentially true of all his attributes, and therefore his love is eternal, it is immutable, it is strong. This love cannot let us go, but is continually drawing us towards that stake and holding us. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31:3) "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." (Canticles 8:7) The rain and the wind can never separate us from Christ.

But then the love was first manifest in the making of the covenant of grace. A covenant of love, made in love for a people God loved. That covenant can never be altered, broken or forgotten. It is sealed with the precious blood of Jesus. Its author is God. The parties to the covenant are all Divine. God cannot lie, neither can he repent or go back on what he has decreed. The covenant remains the same. John Kent says:

What from Christ that soul can sever,
Bound by everlasting bands?
Once in him, in him for ever;
Thus the eternal covenant stands.
None shall pluck thee
From the strength of Israel's hands.

We are united to Christ by that covenant which can never be broken. We can never be freed or fall from him upon whom we, as a bruised reed, have to lean.

But we are also bound to him by those mystical ties of relationship. As we become the sons of God, this servant becomes our elder brother. Through adoption of sons, we are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. Family ties cannot be broken. We may ignore them, try to forget them, deny them; but nothing can alter family ties. We can cut off friends, but we can never truly lose our family.

But deeper than that, this servant has taken us to be his bride. Bound by that marriage union, we have become his. For richer and poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or worse, come what may, that union cannot be broken. And Jesus as a faithful husband cares for his bride, and thus will ever tend to the bruised reeds, and draw the bruised reeds to rest upon their rightful resting place

– with beloved John – to lean upon his breast at supper. At supper – the evening, when we are weakest – to prove him to be unchangeably faithful to save.

What a blessing these bands are that hold us to Christ. We cannot fall. We are held onto when we would lose hold of him. And so united to him, we stand in him, though we feel to be but a bruised reed or the smoking flax – we must and shall be saved by him with and everlasting salvation.

ii) But the wire also returns from the plant back to the stake. So there are those things in us which bind us to Christ too.

The first of these is faith. We are saved by faith. The bruised reed is held up as it is brought into union with the Saviour. That union is produced in us by precious faith. Faith which goes out of self and unto Christ. Faith which is the gift of God to us. Worked out within us by the Holy Spirit as a result of the union we have to Christ in love, covenant bonds and marriage. We may fear our faith will not hold. If it was produced by us we might have grounds for such fear. But Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith, therefore the truth is,

It lives and labours under load;
Though damped it *never dies*. (Joseph
Hart)

It cannot die while Jesus lives. And it is this faith which unites us to the Lamb and causes us to cleave to the Rock and to hang our all upon that nail in a sure place.

But then on the heels of faith there follow all the other graces. Love – “We love him because he first loved us.” And as faith views him in his strength, suitability, and office as the restorer of bruised reeds, we love him as a precious Jesus. Hope – through faith we fix our hopes in him, and believe we shall through him get safe at last. Joy – it brings us to delight in him, to sing his praise. And together, all these graces lead us to Jesus, to fix on him and to stay upon him. To cleave to him, and to say with one, “I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go.” (Canticles 3:4) And, cleaving to him, we prove him a refuge in times of trouble, and a sure resting place for bruised and weary souls.

Now friends, in closing, I want to notice those words in the following verse. “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement on the earth.” Here is a point of comfort for us. Our Saviour cannot fail in his work with bruised reeds. His work will be perfected. Completed. Bruised reeds will be brought safely to stand in glory. “He shall *not fail*.” He *cannot* fail. That’s the force there: he **cannot!** He must and he will complete the work of grace in his people, though hell

should withstand, built on this rock, all hell cannot prevail against it. “He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles.” We may feel to go backwards rather than forwards; to only grow worse – but “He shall not fail.”

The work begun is carried on,
Nor hell can it deface;
The whole elect with Christ are one
And must be saved by grace. (William
Gadsby)

It’s not just *once* he lifts up the downcast; not just *once* he raises the smoking flax to a flame; not just *once* he heals the bruised reed. It is a continual work. A work which he lives to do. And he lives for ever. So that work will never end in the life of his people here. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. It is upon his intercession that this work in his people rests. A work of which he could say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. ... I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world ... I pray for them ... While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name.” And now he was going to his Father, he commits them into the hands of his Father: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” And at last that we should be gathered safely unto him in glory, “That they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” (John 17) That blessed day is the day spoken of here: “Till he hath set judgement in the earth.” The glorious day when Jesus will return to gather all his people to himself. Not one shall be lost. Not one reed broken by the way. Till that day, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged” in his care of his people and in his intercession for them.

But then this: “nor be discouraged.” Wonderful thought! We see so much to discourage us within our own soul, our walk before him. How far short we come! Can we ever live at this poor dying rate? How cold our love! How sinful our thoughts! How forgetful of him. We would drive a natural father to despair. Unruly children never to be tamed. But of this gracious one it is said with certainty: he shall *not be discouraged*. The work of grace will be continued against all odds, till we are brought safely to glory. What a prospect. What a Saviour! What a certain salvation! “The bruised reed shall he not break.”

May the Lord bless these thoughts to you.

With my love to you each,

Pastor

—Letter 2—

True Confession

Friday, 21st June, 2019

Dear Friends,

In seeking to address another letter to you, my mind has been set on a text I quoted in my last letter:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

John addresses these words to his children in the faith. They were addressed to a church which had been troubled by error. The result was that there had been a secession from the church: “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” (1 John 2:19)

The exact nature of the error that had entered into the church is unclear, although many believe it touched the reality of the Lord’s human nature. Certainly, here in this epistle John gives his blessed personal testimony to the reality of our Lord’s human nature: “Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, *and our hands have handled*, of the Word of Life – that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” He gives direct report of the veracity of our Lord’s own testimony: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” (Luke 24:39)

John emphasises the importance of right views of Christ – may we seek after them; it is so easy to fall into error here, and the Devil will ever be seeking to make it so. To be in error concerning the person of Christ is the spirit of antichrist. O to tremble lest we should be left to such a spirit.

The aim of the epistle is to confirm the tried souls of the Lord’s people in the truths they believed and loved. This is summed up in the closing chapter when John states why he has written: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (v. 13) May that be our desire every time we meet for worship, that Jesus might become increasingly precious to us, the one who we worship, “Lost in wonder, love and praise.”

In this opening chapter, John declares the nature of God – that he is light. He clearly states that all of the Lord’s people enjoy fellowship with him, and with one another, as they are found in the light – brought into the light by grace, we are told we become “partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:4) I believe that is what it is to walk in the light, as he is in – he is – the light; literally we become light. And the apostle tells us how we become light – as “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Jesus is, as John tells us, “the propitiation for our sins” – that is, he has taken away that which separates us from God and is the cause of his anger – our sin – and “having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.” (Colossians 1:20) But John, then writing experimentally, answers the case of those who, while they have a hope of salvation, find sin still warring within their members. Indwelling sin often causes the Lord’s people to ask whether they really know anything of grace. They say, “If I walk in the light, how can it be that I still sin? Surely rather I must be out of the secret.” But John says, “No!” If we say we are without sin, or have not sinned, then we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Rather he says, the work of grace in the soul of man causes us daily to confess our sins, our unworthiness, our inability to keep ourselves, and to cast ourselves alone upon Christ. And, as we come there by grace, we prove “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” It is in walking this pathway that the Lord’s people find daily union with the Father, and the light of God is made known in their souls – as they draw and receive daily peace and pardon from Jesus’s blood which cleanseth us from all sin. So our text speaks not to the righteous, or the whole who need not a physician, but to those who find themselves sinners in need of a Saviour.

Now the points I want to come to are these:

1. What it is to confess sin.
2. What is promised on confession of our sin.
3. The grounds of this promise.

1. What it is to confess sin.

i) Firstly, it is confession made to God.

This is surely the right deduction from the words that “he” – the one to whom we confess our sins, “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Can I forgive sins? Can you forgive sins? Outwardly we may forgive, but here forgiveness means to

“cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” That includes to justify us before the law, and to sanctify us before a holy God. Can you make another just before the broken law, or make one holy to go to heaven? We are to confess alone to the one who can justify and can make holy. To him who has the power to forgive sins. Not to the Apostle John. Not to your pastor. Not to the godly. But to God and God alone.

I say it in love friends: we don't need to hear what a sinner you have been. Some, even godly souls, seem to delight in telling you how evil and wicked they have been. It is not edifying. I remember hearing a godly elder in Scotland tell of witnessing a gracious lady, at the dinner table of an old minister, speaking of her sins and wickedness before she was saved by grace. The dear soul thought she was glorifying God's saving grace. But the minister leaned across the table and said to her: “The word of grace says this: ‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.’ (Psalm 32:1) If God has granted you the blessing of covering your sin, don't make yourself naked again in public.” Confessing sins to others is not grace, nor a mark of grace. A convicted murderer or thief in jail can show genuine remorse without grace. Natural confession is not saving. What is grace is knowing this: “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin.” “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Now do you know that friend? If so, speak of that grace of forgiveness in Jesus. Speak of what he has raised you to, rather than of the dunghill you were once inhabiting.

ii) Secondly, confession is not made by simply cataloguing your faults and sins before God.

We must be clear. General confession of sin is not the essence of confession. It is easy in one way to say, “Lord, forgive my sins.” What sins? What sin is it that you feel on your conscience now that drives you to beg for forgiveness? Sin is not a general thing. Sin is specific – the transgression of a point of God's holy law. Therefore, confession will have a specific nature. That is the force of what John says here – it is our sin in the definitive; nothing general and speculative about it. Not like Job's offering for his children in case they sinned, but confession of our specific sin. When a specific sin is revealed to us by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, and we stand convinced of a particular transgression, we have to confess it before the Lord and beg for mercy. As our sins are many, and various, we have much to confess. At times we may feel we have to come with an endless list of sins.

However, confession does not consist in simply listing our sins before God. It is in one sense an easy thing to list things that we have done wrong. But I venture that alone is not confession. Perhaps you have been simply listing your sins before God, and never found any forgiveness? Is this the reason – you have never come with real confession, just an exercise in cataloguing? You know, the devil loves to keep people there: “Ah! that sin – you haven’t confessed that yet! Still lots more to be mentioned. You cannot be forgiven without naming them all before God!” Is that what the devil is saying to you tonight? Is he keeping you in bondage and fear on account of not being able to confess all your sins?

While we were staying with my parents earlier in the year I took a phone call from a troubled soul who felt there was never any hope of forgiveness. He said, “Unless I confess a sin, it cannot be forgiven. Yet there are sins which I don’t think I even know about. I cannot remember all my sins of youth. Those alone will sink me to hell.” You know that soul was held in Satan’s legal chains. He had made confession a work – and we are not saved by works. But he had also misunderstood the essence of confession. It is not in simply cataloguing our sins before God. I venture tonight that it would actually be impossible to catalogue all our sins before the throne of grace, the aggravation of those sins, every aspect of our sinful lives, and even the sin which will be mixed with the prayer of confession.

You know we have two beautiful prayers of confession in Scripture. Firstly we think of the Publican. His prayer of confession was this: “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13) He never named a single sin! But he confessed his sin. How do we know that? Well, we read, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” (v. 14) ““If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” The Publican was justified in his confession of sin.

Then secondly, I think of Psalm 51, David’s prayer of confession after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah. Yet if the title of the Psalm did not tell us the background, we would never know what David’s sin was. But we do know that likewise he was heard and forgiven. So I emphasise, the essence of real confession is not just in naming or cataloguing our sins before God.

What is the essence of real confession then? Well we have mentioned those words that our Lord spoke concerning the Publican: “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” That speaks of the position of our heart in confession.

iii) So we would say thirdly, that true confession is not just made with the lips, but must also be made with the heart.

Confession is not simply in words. It is how we feel to stand before God. That is why true confession can be made without our lips moving, or us even naming a specific sin before God. It was said of unrepentant Israel, “This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.” (Isaiah 29:13) This is what Joseph Hart drives at when he says,

Christ is the friend of sinners:
Be that forgotten never,
A wounded soul, and not a whole
Becomes a true believer.
To see sin smarts but slightly;
To own with lip confession
Is easier still; But oh! to feel,
Cuts deep beyond expression.

And what the Psalmist means when he tells us that a broken heart and a contrite spirit is delightful to God – he will never despise such – but when one is found at the throne of grace with a broken heart and contrite spirit on account of their sin, then he is faithful and just to forgive them all.

To clarify: What does it mean to humble ourselves before God in confession?

a) Firstly, it is to be brought to own we are sinners. There is a difference between sin and a sinner. And that is why cataloguing sins is never true confession. It is not just that you and I have sinned a sin – be it we have lied, hated our brother, coveted our neighbours’ goods, or looked upon a woman to lust after her. But *we are sinners.* Our very nature is fallen, sinful. We cannot cease from sin. We love sin. Do you feel that this evening? It is not just that you need forgiving of a sin you committed today or yesterday – but you need a change of heart. You need sanctifying. That was where the Publican was, “God be merciful to me *a sinner!*” He was a sinner, that was what he had to confess at the throne of grace. Now can you come in there – are you a sinner? Do you feel your sinful heart is

prone to sin, and you are powerless against sin? Does that realisation bring you to cry for mercy this evening? If so, that is real confession!

b) Secondly, it is the broken and contrite heart that comes to the fore in confession. The Publican could not so much as lift his eyes up to heaven, but beat upon his breast. He was ashamed of himself as a sinner. Why? Well, not only because his sins had cost his Saviour his life and precious blood – that is true for the Lord’s people, but it perhaps more particularly forms part of the sorrow of a backslider. The Publican had not yet come to know his sins were even laid upon Christ. Rather his contrition springs from this – sorrow over his rebellion against God. God who is righteous and just. A God who has never demanded of man more than his right; who is not a hard-taskmaster. Yet he had basely sinned against him and perverted his holy law. There is no just cause for sin my friends. When convinced of that, we are ashamed of ourselves and our dealings before a holy God. We abhor ourselves.

c) Thirdly, if we really own we are sinners, then we won’t have anything to bring to the throne of grace when we come to ask God for mercy. We cannot come like the Pharisee who had some good works to plead. We will know something of the solemn truth –

Alas! from such a heart as mine,
What can I bring him forth?
My best is stain’d and dyed with sin,
My all is nothing worth. (John
Newton)

Its empty handedness which accompanies real confession. If you are listing your sins before God this evening, but then trying to bring some plea or name an extenuating circumstance; attempting to balance up your sins with your supposed good deeds, then I tell you solemnly that you know nothing of real confession.

I suppose confession can really be summed up like this – true confession is to see our self as God sees us. To own our self as God sees us. There is only one place that sight will bring you – into the dust. But it only ever brings into the dust in this way: “He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.” (Lamentations 3:29) And that hope brings me to the final aspect of real confession.

d) Fourthly, when we confess truly, we come with an eye to grace. There is no other way to come. Empty handed sinners have to cling on to the Saviour; just as we mentioned in our previous letter the Old Testament sinner leaning hard on the

head of the sacrifice. Real confession has this note: “Hangs my helpless soul on thee.” The Publican had to come and plead the mercy of God. It is the throne of grace we come to confess our sins at. Grace is sufficient grounds for the vilest sinner to come on. Indeed, says William Gadsby:

The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need – that is his state as a sinner –
Is welcome to the Throne of Grace,
The Saviour’s blood to plead.

And here sinners can come, without money and without price. Grace is free. It is without merit. Not given on the grounds of how good you are. But given freely by God and manifested in this: he freely forgives sinners when they come pleading the precious blood of Jesus.

Now, I say solemnly again, if you come listing your sins, but cannot come by faith pleading for forgiveness on the grounds of Jesus blood, then I say your confession is lacking. True confession is the fruit of faith. And faith sees the precious blood of Jesus and it cannot but believe that he is able to save sinners. So faith ventures – often trembling, like Esther, “If I perish, I perish.” Forced to come in one way, because there is no other way of salvation. But more strongly drawn, because it sees here a door of hope opened for sinners in Jesus’ wounded side. Here is blood that has power to wash you clean and take away all your sin. So faith comes boldly – it can take no denials when it pleads for Jesus’ sake. Do you believe that Jesus is able to save? Do you believe what John says here: “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”? If you do believe this, hear John’s words: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Come alone on that ground, beating on your breast, but pleading mercy for Jesus sake. You will not be disappointed.

iv) But then we must emphasise confession is not a one-off event.

We do not confess sins once in our life, receive forgiveness for our sins, and then put sin behind us forever. We again fall guilty of a sin which we have had to truly confess before the Lord and have gained forgiveness for in the past. Confession is not static. I remember when my sister was down in Brighton at University, she returned home one weekend very troubled by a so-called Christian friend on her course, who had said to her during the week, “Why are you worried about sin? You’re forgiven! There is no need to worry about sin anymore.” How different to John’s doctrine here: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive

ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But rather, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” In the very context John is speaking to those who have proved, fellowship with the Father, peace in finding their sins cleansed by the blood of Jesus, but now reeling under fresh breaking out of sin within them. It is evident therefore that John teaches we will never put sin behind us while in the flesh. We have to daily “Repent of sin, daily wash in Calvary’s blood.” (Richard Burnham) Confession is a life-long thing for the Lord’s people.

v) Finally, we mention that real confession is hard. You will never produce it by yourself. It is the effect of grace. Most typically produced not by a sense of God’s anger and righteous wrath, but rather by the love and mercy of God to sinners as manifested in the death of Jesus. As Paul says, “Or despisest thou the riches of [God’s] goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Romans 2:4) – and therefore to confession. The Lord’s tried people have to confess their inability to confess sin of themselves. Their felt lack of righteous repentance troubles them. But John says – bring your unrepentant heart, bring your formal confession, bring the solemnity of a stony heart which unconcerned can look upon eternal misery and is not moved by the death of Jesus Christ. Bring them to the footstall of mercy. Confess them. Don’t hold back. And, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

2) But I want to come in second place to notice what is promised to those that confess their sins. The promise is two-fold.

i) Firstly, forgiveness. “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” What is it to forgive? The Greek word translated forgive here says it all. It literally means – “to send away from.” He sends away our sins. This is what the Word of God declares: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12) “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:18-19) That is forgiveness!

Forgiveness is not to have our sins forgotten about. Not to pass by our sins or pretend they didn’t occur. Some seem to speak as though God covers up our sins

with the righteousness of Jesus. No! Then we would still be sinners. But now am I free from sin, as Paul states: “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Romans 6:18) Forgiveness is to have all our sins taken away – for them to be cast into the depth of the sea. What a graphic image that is, especially when we consider things such as the loss of that large Malaysian aeroplane a few years ago into the sea off Australia, and despite all our knowledge and technology it has still not been located or traced. So, in an infinitely greater way, if our sins are forgiven by God, they will never be found again.

We speak of washing – it’s the same image; he washes away our sins. Makes us clean. “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” (Zechariah 13:1)

What stream is that which sweeps away
My sins just like a flood,
Nor lets one guilty blemish stay?
'Tis Jesus' precious blood. (Joseph
Irons)

But it is also graphically pictured in the scape goat on the day of atonement, described in Leviticus 16. The sins of the people were laid upon that goat as the priest put his hand on its head and confessed those sins. The blood of the second goat – representing the precious blood of Jesus which taketh away all sin – was applied to the scape goat. That is the important point – this is the grounds of our forgiveness. The precious blood of Jesus. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission – or removal of sin. Then the scape goat was taken away, miles from the camp and set free. Never again to be seen. It pictured the removal – the absolute separation – of sin from the Lord’s people by the precious blood of Jesus.

Jesus blood is the grounds of our forgiveness, as John says, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” That blood is the price demanded by the law for our sin. The broken law demands our life – the wages of sin is death. The Bible tells us, “The life is in the blood.” When Jesus shed his blood on the cross, he gave his life in place of his people. He paid the price due to their sins. He freed them from the curse of the law. He made our account good. He literally bore away – removed our sins – by his death on the cross. That’s what constitutes the forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness! 'tis a joyful sound
To malefactors doomed to die;
'Tis the rich gift of love divine;
'Tis full, out-measuring every crime;
Unclouded shall its glories shine,
And feel no change by changing time.

O'er sins unnumbered as the sand,
And like the mountains for their size,
The seas of sovereign grace expand,
The seas of sovereign grace arise. (Thomas Gibbons)

Is this what you need this evening? For your sins to be taken away? Well, "If we confess our sins, faithful and just is he also to forgive us our sins." If grace brings us tonight to plead alone the precious blood of Jesus for sinners spilt – we will prove forgiveness is ours.

ii) But then our text has a second promise: "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I see in this expression a further promise: not only does he remove our sin – or forgives our sin – but he changes the sinner. He doesn't only deal with the sin (the act), but with that which is the root of our sin, our sinful nature. He cleanses us. He gives us a new heart, a heart that trembles at the approach of sin. Is that what you need tonight? Not only to have your sin removed, but is your cry with Charles Wesley,

Take away the love of sinning,
Alpha and Omega be.

If so, here is the answer you need and desire: "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I mentioned in my last letter the difference between justification and sanctification. Here we have them again – two distinct, and yet conjoined benefits of the death of Jesus. You cannot have the one without the other. The forgiveness of sin – justification; and the cleansing from all unrighteousness – sanctification.

You know, because justification takes place outside of us, it is not always easy to see. If you question tonight what you really know of forgiveness, can I ask you – has there been any difference in your life? Do you have the testimony of that

dear blind man who Jesus healed, “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” (John 9:25)

I think I have mentioned before the case of the woman who went to give her testimony to the kirk session in Scotland. As she sat there before the minister and elders, she could say nothing. They could not get anything out of her. Till one of the godly elders said, “Woman, are you a sinner?” She said, “Yes!” – (“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”) – the elder continued, “Were you a sinner?” She said, “Yes!” – (“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”) – Then came the searching question, “So what is the difference between what you were as a sinner back then, and what you are as a sinner now?” To which the woman immediately replied, “O! Then I loved sin; now I hate it.” That woman had been changed by grace. She had confessed her sin, and proved he cleanses from all unrighteousness. Sanctified by the truth. Do you know what she meant? Can you say before the searcher of hearts, an all seeing God – “Lord! That’s just my feeling too.” Is sin a burden to you? Do you have to confess it? Do you mourn over your felt lack of confession? These are all signs of the cleansing from all unrighteousness.

Another example of the difference made by grace is seen in John Berridge’s hymn:

When Jesus’ gracious hand
Has touched our eyes and ears,
O what a dreary land
The wilderness appears!
No cooling balm springs from its dust;
No cooling stream to quench the thirst.

Can you trace that effect in your life? The things of this world have lost their charms. Your soul now thirsts for the living God.

I hunger now for heavenly food,
And my poor heart cries out for God.

Is Jesus precious to you? Do you love the sound of his name? Do you long to follow his example – to be holy as he is holy? That’s cleansing from all unrighteousness.

Remember what I said, you cannot have the forgiveness without the cleansing. Justification without sanctification. The two are joined here by a mighty “and!” And, what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. If you can trace the

difference grace has made in your life, then this is certain: your sins are all forgiven – go in peace.

But solemnly, the converse is also true. No works – your faith is dead and you remain unpardoned, your sins unforgiven. We tried to set this before you a few weeks ago when preaching from James’s searching word: “Faith without works is dead.” (James 2:20) Indeed James says what I am trying to say now: “A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” (2:18) He is saying, “We show our forgiveness by the effect in our life – the cleansing from all unrighteousness. If you say you are forgiven, but continue with no evidence in your walk and conversation, then I fear you are deceived as to your forgiveness.”

But before coming to my final head, I want to just notice that little word “all” – “**all** unrighteousness.” The force of the truth in this verse is this – if we have one sin forgiven, we are totally cleansed. Made perfectly whole. That is why friends, while we will have to confess sin again and again, and taste again and again the fullness of the blessing here – forgiveness and cleansing – the devil has no ground to tempt you that because you have not, and cannot, confess all your sins by name, you cannot be forgiven. He that is forgiven of one sin, is forgiven of all. Mercy received for one sin, is your certainty of heaven. How important therefore to hear John’s gracious instruction to seek forgiveness through confession of sin. What a blessed promise is given to those who do – forgiveness and cleansing.

I should say this too – don’t let the devil tempt you this evening that if you still find sin in your members, and have to still mourn over your old nature which is “Prone to wander,” (Robinson) that you don’t know anything of this cleansing. Sanctification will never be complete here below. Paul was freed from sin, yet still mourned over sin (Romans 7), but his source of joy was this: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1) And Paul looked forward with faith fixed on that golden chain (which can never be broken): “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Romans 8:30) He had the prospect of a day when he would be finally sanctified, his spirit made perfect in holiness, and when he would enter into the joy of the Lord in glory. If we were fully sanctified here – we would be in heaven.

3) But finally to come to the grounds or the certainty which backs up this promise. “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Our forgiveness hangs on the faithfulness and justice of God.

Strange! We could understand it if John said, “He is loving and merciful to forgive us our sins.” But rather it is the two attributes of God which underlie the eternal inflexibility and holiness of the law of God which condemns us – the faithfulness and justice of God – which also ensure the peace and the pardon of the Lord’s people.

Before we go further, we would point out that in one sense, the faithfulness and justice of God include all his attributes. His faithfulness and justice mean his love and his mercy are holy, unchanging and can never decay or be removed from his people. God is never faithful and unloving; or unfaithful and loving. God is, as theologians say, “simple.” That is he is always what he is *entirely*. God is always faithful. He is always loving. He is always good. He is always holy. In everything he does and at all times. God is unchanging. That is why the nature of God is such a comfort in time of trouble. Why the faithfulness and justice of God is so comforting to a sinner, feeling the condemnation of sin, and having to come and confess his sin. It is why in trouble we can be assured of the outcome. It is what I am having to rest upon at the moment – come what may with my health, God will still be good, loving, faithful to me – and to you my people at Galed. May we not lose sight of that. Its in seeing this we say with David: “For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God?” (Psalm 18:31)

Now the important point here is to understand what our forgiveness is based upon. Were it based on us, we might feel that we needed God’s love, mercy and grace brought more to the fore. But we are not forgiven because of anything within us. We were not elected because of any ground in us. Our forgiveness rests on this: that Christ Jesus came into this world to pay the price due to the sins of God’s people. That is the only way of forgiveness through the precious blood of Jesus.

What John is saying here is this: God is faithful to his own dear Son. He will never pass by the blood of Jesus. God the Father is faithful to Son in discharging in full the terms of the covenant of redemption. He accepts the blood shed according to that covenant as the redemption price in full for his people. God the Holy Spirit is faithful to the Son in the mission given to him of coming into the hearts of sinners to apply the precious blood which removes all our sins, and who

sanctifies us by the truth, cleansing us from all unrighteousness. And, as God is faithful to his own dear Son, he is faithful also to his people – united to the Son. It is that faithfulness which undergirds the promise here: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful ... to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

But then we read that he is also just. God can never demand more than what was required under the law, because he is just. God is never the unjust judge. He is always fair. The law demanded life – blood for the remission of sins. Jesus shed his blood on behalf of sinners – for the remission of their sins. The law and the holy justice of God were satisfied. It is the justice of God that Toplady’s precious hymn is based on:

Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine.

Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest!
The merits of thy great High Priest
Have bought thy liberty;
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.

Read that hymn – 227 – at your leisure. It is a sermon on this point. The ground on which we plead with God for forgiveness is the precious blood – the person, work and merit – of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest. God is faithful and just to his Son, and therefore he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Indeed, the justice of God demands our forgiveness when the price has been paid in full. God *cannot not* forgive the sins of his people. I use the double negative for emphasis – God will forgive, **MUST** forgive, all who are brought by the Spirit to confess their sins and plead the precious blood of Jesus as their only hope. That is why there is a certainty to this promise. If it lay with us, everything would be uncertain. But because it lies with God and the offering of Jesus Christ our forgiveness, our salvation is blessedly certain. When faith can view this, we come boldly to the throne of grace, confessing our sin, and we receive full forgiveness.

None perish that him trust. “He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37) “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by

him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25)
Therefore:

Come boldly to the throne of grace,
Ye wretched sinners come;
And lay your load at Jesus’ feet,
And plead what He has done.

Come boldly to the throne of grace,
Though lost, and blind, and lame;
Jehovah is the sinner’s Friend,
And ever was the same.

Poor bankrupt souls, who feel and know
The hell of sin within,
Come boldly to the throne of grace;
The Lord will take you in. (Daniel
Herbert)

Or will you stay away? Have you nothing to confess? Our text is set in solemn context. On the one hand those who say they have no sin – they have been made perfect, they have no sins to confess any more. On the other, those who say they have never sinned. Neither see or feel any need to confess, no need for forgiveness or of cleansing from all unrighteousness. And they perish in their sin – they deceive themselves, they make God a liar, and they know nothing of grace. Solemn condition! If you don’t feel your need this evening of confession; have no knowledge of your state as a sinner – think and tremble, death is now upon the road.

But if you are a sinner here this evening, I say with John: come confess your sin to God; plead the precious blood of Jesus; and you will prove God to be a just God and a Saviour.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

May the Lord bless these thoughts to you.

With my love to you each,

Pastor

—Letter 3—

The Mind of Christ

Friday, 28th June, 2019

Dear Friends,

Over the past few days my mind has been led to consider the “mind of Christ.” Those words of Paul in Philippians 2:5 have been the centre of my meditation and I name them as a text for the subject of this letter.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5)

My thoughts ran this way after reading a rare tract written by Hugh Martin, a minister in the Free Church of Scotland during the nineteenth century, whose name I have mentioned on several occasions here before. He made this astounding comment, that he believed part of the crown of life, which James tells us, “the Lord hath promised to them that love him,” (James 1:12) is that when we get to heaven we will come into the full possession of the mind of Christ. Our mind will be just like Christ’s mind. It made me stop. Then I remembered what John says in those words I often quote: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2) That is the end of the work of grace, which will be performed in us by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, as Paul tells us: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13) Surely, that is what Paul is urging the Philippians to here. To grow in grace. To long for glory. To desire to know more of the work of sanctification. To seek to be more Christ like. To long for that day when we shall be like him, and when we shall be with him, crowned with that crown of life. That day when our mind will also be as his own.

Just briefly, we must consider the immediate context of our text, which really begins in Chapter 1, verse 27, where Paul beseeches them, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.” Conversation there not only meaning what we say, but our whole conduct before the world. His argument is: If we are truly part of the body of Christ, we should be seen and known as such by the world. There shouldn’t be any question about it. People should know us as Christians not because we come through the doors of Galeed. Not because we call

ourselves Christians, but because our very lives, the way we walk together as a church – of one mind – in unity, speaks of Christ.

He goes on to tell them as a church what it means for them to walk as becometh the gospel. Firstly, it means that they shall stand fast in the truth and strive for the faith of the gospel. Secondly that they should be of one spirit and act with one mind. Thirdly that they should not be terrified of persecution, knowing this, that the Lord told the disciples: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Then, coming to the second chapter, the Apostle tells them what the grounds for his request to them are. These are, the consolation that is in Christ, the comfort that flows from his love, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and the love and compassion these things produce in our hearts to our brethren, but especially the household of faith. His argument runs, these things are true, they cannot be questioned, therefore he says, “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

He then faithfully warns them of the sources of the troubles that generally affects the Lord’s people in this walk they are called to. They are strife or vainglory; and selfishness – putting self-first. He therefore exhorts them to especial carefulness to “esteem other better than themselves” and to consider each other before themselves – or to put themselves last. That reminds me young people of that little story of the godly woman who is said to have called her son, “James the third.” Why the third? Because he needed to remember that the golden rule for this life is: put God first, everybody else second, and self third or last. It will be a blessed thing if you are able to remember that and pray for God to give you grace to always put yourself last, or as Paul puts it here: “let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4)

But then he turns to the highest example. The motive and the pattern for our gospel walk and talk. Jesus Christ. He says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” And this brings us to the profound question, “What is the mind of Christ?” “What mind was in Christ Jesus?”

Now the points I want to come to are these:

1. What is the mind of Christ?
2. To consider, that as Paul exhorts us to have this mind in us, how do we obtain it?

1. What is the mind of Christ?

Let us pause. I feel we approach a holy and sacred thing. May we come with reverence and worship.

i) We begin here: how do we know what the mind of Christ is?

I was going to say “was,” and certainly Paul uses the past tense here, but in reality, with Christ there is only the present tense – “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Hebrews 13:8) His mind is the same today as it was when he was here on this earth. He is of one mind. What is the mind of Christ?

Well, our mind may be judged by our actions. We may be judged as having a loving, patient mind, or being of a hasty spirit, by how we behave with others. We generally only directly share our mind with confidants, and there may be somethings in our minds we only share with our dearest loved one. Somethings we may never reveal, at least not at the time.

Jesus Christ is in many ways no different in the revelation of his mind. We may know something of the mind of Christ as we read of his life, his actions, his demeanour and attitude in his dealings with mankind in the Gospel accounts. Then we find a greater revelation of his mind as he opens his thoughts in teaching his confidants – his disciples. We perhaps come to the deepest revelation of his mind as he speaks to his Father, as he prayed to him numerous times in the Gospels, but especially in the High Priestly prayer of John 17. But we must realise this evening, we will never fully understand the mind of Jesus. He says, “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” (John 13: 7) We will have to enter glory to come into the full measure of the mind of Christ.

We must not speculate on the mind of Christ, but we have been given an infallible revelation of it in the Bible. May we be kept now from going a step further than that revelation. It is a blessed one without speculation.

ii) I want to now consider some of the specific elements of the mind of Christ in turn. We must turn first to the context, the revelation of the mind of Christ which Paul gives us here.

a) Firstly, the mind of Christ has a single aim – the glory of God the Father.

Go to the end of the passage which our text begins, and we read the reason why Christ did all that he did in his earthly ministry – or to be more precise, in his mediatorial work. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*” That is the important bit: “*to the glory of God the Father.*” In John 17, Jesus declares: “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” (John 17:4)

This chief aim in the mind of Christ is seen in all his works, but our mind goes to the raising of Lazarus. Jesus stands by the grave and he prays to his Father. We read, “Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.” (John 11:41-42) Then he said, “Lazarus, come forth.” By his prayer, Jesus made it clear to what end Lazarus was raised. By what power he was raised. The glory was given clearly to the Father who heard and answered the Son in his state of humiliation.

Have you got the mind of Christ in this aspect this evening? A searching question! Vain man seeks his own glory. Are you willing for pride and self to fall before this: the honour and glory of God? It is your chief end – “to glorify and enjoy” God for ever. And in this Christ is our pre-eminent example. We are to “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” He did all for the glory of his father – that principle over-ruled all he ever did and thought. It is a depth beyond our comprehension – the Son humiliated, voluntarily becoming subject to the Father; seeking the Father’s glory in the salvation of sinners.

b) Secondly, and perhaps an aspect of the first, we read that the mind of Christ was obedient unto the Father’s will.

“And became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:8) That was the will of the Father – that the Son, his only begotten Son – should die a sacrificial death for his people. And the mind of Christ was such that he obediently fulfilled his Father’s will. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience.” (Hebrews 5:8) Jesus tells us: “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” (John 6:38) And at the end of his work on this earth he could say: “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” (John 17:4) The cry, “It is finished!” was the final seal to his obedience. What was finished? The will of the Father concerning the Son. There was a “must” about all he did: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49) “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12:50)

That brings us to the question this evening – are you an obedient child of your heavenly Father? Perhaps we should take a step back. Is your desire to know his will? Is your cry, “Show me – teach me – thy way O Lord!” That’s the first step of obedience. To ask the question – What is God’s design for me? Are you walking Paul’s pathway this evening when we read of him on the Damascus road, “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) You know what the Lord’s response was to Paul: “And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” Is the Lord keeping you waiting before he will reveal his will to you? Are you willing to wait? Sometimes waiting for his will to be revealed feels impossible, doesn’t it?

c) But that takes us as an aside here for a moment to another aspect of the mind of Christ: he was patient. All his doings were characterised by patience. He said, “My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.” (John 7:6) He patiently waited the Father’s perfect time as he fulfilled the Father’s will. How is it with you? Are you impatient? Want to know the end before the beginning? Want the work of grace completed in your soul today? Want the Lord to have provided before you needed? Or to have already answered the prayer you have just prayed? Or can you wait this evening on God? Can you say with David, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.” (Psalm 62:5) David’s Son and Lord could say that, couldn’t he? Then, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

d) But then we come to another aspect of seeking the Father’s glory in all things, we read here in this passage of Christ’s submission to the Father.

We often put submission and obedience together. But you know we can be obedient without being submissive. Obedience speaks of keeping a command. Submission speaks of an attitude of heart and mind in obedience, but also in other aspects of life too.

We see this submission so beautifully set forth in Christ. Firstly, submission as he was obedient to his Father. Submissive from the very point we read of here when he willingly submitted in becoming mediator, and put himself beneath his Father. His submission to the Father is seen in his doing the Father’s will. It is seen in his worship which was directed to his Father – he gave thanks to his Father in prayer. He prayed to his Father and made his needs known unto him – prayer is an attitude of submission to, or dependence on, God. Submission shines like a jewel in his heart-rending prayer in Gethsemane: “O my Father, if it be possible,

let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:39)

But secondly, Jesus was submissive to his fellow-creatures. To his parents: we read, “he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” (Luke 2:51) Children – is this mind in you – submission to your parents – as it was in Jesus Christ? He was submissive to those in authority – never disrespectful to the priests, the soldiers or the rulers. Read his responses to the High Priest, to Pilate and to Herod – all stamped with submission. This is all summed up so plainly in his teaching, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.” (Matthew 22:21)

A submissive spirit doesn't come naturally. We want to be chief. We want our way. It's the effect of sin. Is it plaguing you this evening? “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

e) Then closely allied to his submission, the preeminent point in Paul's discourse here is the humility of the mind of Christ.

Submission does not necessarily imply humility, although it may be that which induces submission. But in Christ I believe we can say it is one of the chiefest motives of his mind – “he humbled himself.” He “Made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” The mind of Christ! Why this humiliation? Paul tells us: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, *yet for your sakes* he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9) *For others* – that's the centre of humility isn't it? To put self behind others. As Paul puts it here: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” And friends, (if I may put it this way), who did Christ not put himself beneath? “A friend of publicans and sinners!” (Luke 7:34) I ask: Is he your friend? If so, you know something of the humility of Christ don't you? That he should stoop to a wretch like you! You love and admire this humility don't you? Then “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Of course, the humility of Christ begins in the right place. Its not just to humble ourselves before men. But to humble ourselves before our heavenly Father. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” (1 Peter 5:6) That is the path Jesus walked. Though a Son – the eternal, only begotten Son of the Father – equal with God, nevertheless he humbled himself as mediator and put himself under the Father, that he might be

a Saviour for sinners. As Paul tells us: “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Corinthians 15:28)

The way this humility is expressed here is profound: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” We can read this in two ways:

Firstly, emphasising the glory, or the station from which he came in humiliation as a man to this earth. He was God, co-equal, co-eternal. It was no robbery – he did no dishonour to the Father – rather it was his right as equal with the Father to receive all glory and honour. “But” – what a “but” – a “but” which emphasises this fact, it was God, the eternal Lord of heaven, who – “made himself of no reputation.” That is humility – humility indeed.

Secondly, others would translate this phrase, “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” in this manner – taking the word translated “robbery” to imply the item “robbed”: the “spoil”, or “prize”, obtained by a thief – they put it this way: “He did not see his equality with God as something he prized so as to prevent him making himself of no reputation.” I repeat: “He did not see his equality with God as something he prized so as to prevent him making himself of no reputation.” And here we see another aspect of the truth – his deity, his glory, his station, was no barrier to his humiliation. What a lesson to us! How often, like the Priest or the Levite in the account of the Good Samaritan, we find some reason as to why we cannot humble ourselves to help another. How many rich, noble and mighty, have used their position in society as a reason not to condescend to help others – they say it is beneath them. What a precious truth to sinful worms that Jesus counted nothing as being beneath him. Not all the eternal glory of his majesty was a reason why he should not condescend to sinners in humbling himself. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Is there something tonight before you of which you are saying – “I can’t do that Lord, it is beneath me”? Is there a Peter here, shunning to touch the unclean for the sake of the Gospel – as Peter did when he balked at going down to Cornelius because he was a Gentile rather than a Jew?

Hast thou a lamb in all thy flock

I would disdain to feed?

(Philip Doddridge)

May it never be the case! – the Lord never turned away a soul. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

f) Then we would notice that Jesus' mind was saturated with love.

Love to his father. Love to his people. Love to sinners.

His love to the Father is manifest in this – he was an obedient Son. As he tells us: “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” (John 14:31)

His love to his people seen in his tender dealings with them, his compassion, his patience, and his sympathy. See his loving sympathy thrilling through the shortest verse in Scripture: “Jesus wept!” Even his detractors could see his love openly manifest there, “Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!” (John 11:35-36) The evangelists tell us of the love behind his many miracles, and we often read words like this: “And Jesus, *moved with compassion*, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.” (Mark 1:41) But we must say mostly – and in blazing glory – his love was evidenced in him laying down his life for his people. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) Sacrificial love. If you have seen him with the eye of faith, suffering, bleeding, dying for you – a wretched, unworthy, sinful soul, undeserving of the least of his mercies, beholding the fruit of that great love wherewith he has loved his people, then I believe you will say with the poet:

What is love? My soul would echo
With the saints in heaven above,
Who, through Jesus, gone to glory,
Sing in concert, “This is love!” (Zion’s Trumpet, 1838)

His love to sinners. It drove his ministry (if I may put it that way), “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was *moved with compassion* toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.” (Mark 6:34) It is what drives ministers of the gospel still – a love for souls. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

And then we can notice how contemporary the Gospel is. Many think they are modern when they speak of social injustice. But we see the love of Jesus moved in this way also – unfair treatment of the poorest in society. Mark tells us: “And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And

when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other." (vs. 1-5) The sinless anger of Jesus towards the hard-hearted Pharisees, which sprang forth from his love for that poor man. How often does injustice move you and move you in love to action? The practical outworking of the gospel is a ministry of charity. History shows this. Where the heart is touched, the hand is touched, the purse is touched. Freely we have received, freely we give. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12) How far short we come! Self comes first. Self-love is a tremendous snare to the Lord's people. May we be delivered from it.

g) Then we must be at pains to point out that his mind was holy, sinless and pure.

If the gracious psalmist could say, "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love," (Psalm 119:113) how much more so the Psalmist's Lord and Saviour? There was never a shadow of sin found on mind of Christ. Paul cannot use enough words to emphasise this point when he wrote to the Hebrews, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Hebrews 7:26)

No pride ever rose in his mind. Pride the antithesis of his holy humility. No hatred, but that which is righteous and sprang from his vehement opposition to sin. No sinful fear – he never feared man. He never had those fears which arise from sinful unbelief and doubt of God and his gracious character. He trusted in God. He "was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7) – that blessed, righteous, filial fear of his Father in heaven. His mind exercised perfect faith in his Father. "But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." (Psalm 22:9-10) No covetousness – he never murmured, though he could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20) Deprived of the necessities – what we call necessities – of life, he never complained. When hungry, and the devil tempted him in the wilderness, he never gave in, but answered with righteous truth – "It is written, That man shall not live

by bread alone, but by every word of God.” (Luke 4:4) O how far short we come! What sins of thought we have to mourn over. Sins known only to us. Is this what makes you mourn – how far short you come compared to him, our glorious Saviour?

But there is another aspect of this sinless perfection of the mind of Christ. Though he grew in wisdom and stature, I don’t believe he ever had a misconception in his mind. His thoughts were consistent. His thoughts were always righteous. This also meant there was a constancy about them. They were always loving, always faithful, always just. And once his thought was fixed on a sinner with the intention of grace, nothing would alter that thought. After all, we are told, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Hebrews 13:8) His yea was yea, and his nay, nay. There was never any wavering, or indecision. O how changeable are our thoughts. Sometimes hot and sometimes cold. We waver in everything. Inconstancy is written over us. Fickle thoughts. James tells us, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (1:7-8) O that we had more constancy! More single sightedness. Where will we find that grace? We will find it as we keep our eyes on Jesus fixed, and are enabled by precious faith to believe all he has said. O! “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

h) Then we would say this, his mind was never contentious.

Naturally, men love contention. We may love debate. You know there was never any desire for contention in the mind of Christ. He came to bring peace, not contention. Yes, he spoke with authority. His word was always the last word. Because he is the TRUTH. But you notice the debates were always started by his detractors. And having stated the truth, he left them be. “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” (James 3:5) O! that we had the mind of Christ that we might know when to speak and when to keep silent. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

While contests rend the Christian church,
O may I live a friend of peace...

O keep me Lord from party zeal,
That seeks its own and not thy praise;
This tempter would I never feel,
Or when I do, would own it base.

Lord search my heart; O search me through!
Detect, destroy what's not thy own;
Whene'er I speak, whate'er I do,
O may I seek thy praise alone. (Thomas
Kelly)

i) I must conclude these thoughts, but I do so on this note – his joy.

Don't underestimate that joy which filled his mind friends! We are told in prophecy concerning Christ: "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Psalm 45:7) Precious gladness! No earth centred joy. No light, frivolous, froth that passes and leaves us where we were. But deep joy. Joy centred in his Father's good pleasure. Joy centred in that communion he enjoyed with his father. The joy of praise, of prayer, may I say, the joy of sacrifice? What a thought! The joy with which he could say, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." (John 17:4) "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." (Isaiah 53:11) If ever there was one who could joy in his completed work, it was Christ wasn't it? And the amazing thing is, he says: "These things have I spoke unto you, that *my joy* might remain in you, and that *your joy might be full*." (John 15:11) What do you know of that fulness of joy in believing – that joy that springs from resting on Christ and finding your all in him? Isaiah tells us, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (12:3) If you know anything of that, it was because Jesus had joy, and he speaks to us of the source of that joy – he makes known to us the Father – that we also might partake of his joy. Some seem to speak of true religion as a dark and doleful thing. That's not the mind that was in Christ. O seek to know this holy joy. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

So much could be said. What a precious field for our meditation! May you find profit in the coming week looking prayerfully through the gospels to discover the mind of Christ. And as that mind is unfolded to you, may your prayer be, "Lord, let this mind be in me, as it was in Christ Jesus."

2) Briefly, in second place we ask the question, how do we obtain the mind of Christ?

I must urge before I go any further, the importance of seeking the mind of Christ. This is an exhortation: "Let this mind be in you." It is something that Paul would evidently have us seek, pursue and not rest until we obtain. We have

already said, we will not fully realise the mind of Christ until at the resurrection, we enter into the fulness of glory in heaven. Therefore, until the work of grace is done, there should always be a striving in the heart of the Lord's people, an ardent desire in their prayer for more of the mind of Christ. If the devil or old nature is encouraging you to fold your hands this evening, and say, "I cannot do anything in my salvation; I cannot become more holy, more Christ-like of myself," – that is solemnly true! Do you have to mourn over the fact? Doesn't it make you cry more urgently,

More of thy presence, Lord, impart,
More of thy image let me bear!

(John Newton)

That is grace in exercise! And Paul writes to the Philippians here to stir up that grace which is within them that they should, "Let this mind be in [them], which was also in Christ Jesus." True we cannot impart this image ourselves, but we are called to be exercised about it, prayerful over it, seeking after it, desiring it – daily, momentarily, urgently, expectantly. May we each be so tonight.

i) That brings us to say, we obtain the mind of Christ as we seek after it. And the promise to encourage us is, "Seek and ye shall find."

You know naturally, we increase in conformity to something the longer we spend with it. Are you seeking the presence of Christ this evening? How needful! "Disciple" is the name of those who desire to follow their master, that desire to know the mind of their master and to do his will. But discipleship has this peculiar characteristic – disciples sit at the feet of their master. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus when she found the one thing needful; Legion sat at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. Two things here. Firstly, sitting speaks of patience. Stillness. No hasty moving. We read, "shall not make haste." Discipleship is a slow process. We have to wait upon the master as he slowly reveals his mind to us and brings us into conformity with him. Then the second aspect is this – we sit at the feet of Jesus – that speaks of humility. Willing to be nothing. Willing to give up our own will, our own mind, entirely to Christ, that we might be filled with his mind – with the Spirit of Christ.

But then Jesus rarely stayed long in one place. He moves on. We must follow him. And we will become more conformed to the mind of Christ as we seek to follow him, according to his command, "Follow me." We are called to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Don't let him out of your sight. Don't let him be silent to you, but cry, "O LORD my rock; be not silent to me." (Psalm 28:1)

I think I have said it before, but when I was at secondary school, a number of my peers wore bands round their wrists printed with the letters “W. W. J. D.” It stood for, “What would Jesus do?” I remember thinking it was rather trite. In one sense it is if we simply wear those words on our arm, but they never affect our heart by grace. But O to have a heart, desiring after the mind of Christ, which stops before we speak or act, to cry to the Lord, “Make my words, my will, my actions conformable to the mind of Christ.” You know that is where the Psalmist came when he said: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14) I ask tenderly, and it searches me – when was that prayer last on your lips, in your heart? When we have to cry that petition, we are desiring the mind of Christ.

ii) Well, where are we to seek the mind of Christ? In the place where he has revealed his mind. In the gospel, in the Word of God. Do you delight to trace his mind, his dealings with his people in grace as you read of him in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? Grace will delight in him. It will make you feel how poor you are compared to the Master. It will make you cry out over your poor discipleship. And friend, I believe this is the hallmark of grace – it will make you long to be more like him.

How can we know his mind if we hide him from us, or put the other way round, we try to evade him? If the revelation of Jesus Christ – the Bible – lies unread, how can we ever expect to even know, begin to understand, let alone acquire conformity to, the mind of Christ? Similarly, if we forsake the assembling of ourselves together for worship – the very place of which Christ himself said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” (Matthew 18:20) should we be surprised that we know him so little, and understand but poorly his mind? Paul tells us we will only persevere in the Christian life as we run, “looking unto Jesus.” (Hebrews 12:2) Jesus himself says, “Follow me.” “One thing is needful.” Can you say in response to these exhortations this evening,

While walking in the gospel-way,
I would see Jesus every day,
And see in all his grace. (John
Berridge)

O what encouragement the Bible gives to those who have to seek him as their all: “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your

heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13) and “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.” (Proverbs 8:17)

iii) But then I must caution, lest you become discouraged, don't think this is easy: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” It is all of grace. It is not something we acquire overnight. It is something we grow in. As Peter exhorts us, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18) This growth occurs as we draw water of life up from our root – the rod out of the stem of Jesse – and as our leaves absorb the light of life diffused from the Sun of Righteousness. As we have to lean harder on Christ; becoming increasingly dependant on him; viewing him as our ALL to the exclusion of everything else, and thus, we have to come with Charles Wesley and confess:

Jesus, in whom the Godhead's rays
Beam forth with mildest majesty,
I see thee full of truth and grace,
And come for all I want to thee.

Wrathful, impure, and proud I am;
Nor constancy, nor strength, I have;
But thou, O Lord, art still the same,
And hast not lost thy power to save.

Save me from pride, the plague repel;
Jesus, thy humble mind impart,
O let the Spirit within me dwell,
And give me lowliness of heart.

Enter thyself, and cast out sin;
More of thy purity bestow;
Touch me, and make the leper clean;
Wash me, and I am white as snow.

Growing is hard, it can be painful. We think of children and their growing pains. Its only as a child eats, that it can sustain growth – so we have to come and feast on the bread of life sent down from heaven. There is no other way of growth – no other way to obtain the mind of Christ, and to grow in conformity with that mind, but to be found seeking Christ, dwelling in his presence, asking to hear his voice, and longing to know him more. But the promise runs, “they that seek shall find.”

I cannot say much on this point, but leave it with you. We are not to seek trouble and difficulty, but you know it is often in the furnace that this mind of Christ is imparted to us. As the gold is refined, and the image of the refiner is seen more clearly in us. Are you proving – am I at the moment – that the Lord is using trouble and affliction to this end – to impart to us more of the mind of Christ? “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” (Hebrews 12:5)

iv) But then the blessedness of knowing the mind of Christ. Just a thought. Jesus says: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*” (Matthew 11:28-29) You see friends, obtaining the mind of Christ in a matter is rest isn’t it? When we have the mind of Christ in a matter then we are submissive to the will of God in it and will willingly obey. Then God’s glory is our chief aim and delight. Then we love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind, and our neighbour as our self. Then our experience is with Joseph Hart:

I’ll lay me down, and sweetly sleep,
For I have peace with God.

It is when we stray from the mind of Christ, when children like we want our own way – and worse, we go our own way – that we prove the hidings of his face, the withdrawal of his presence. We lose the mind of Christ and that peace with God is disrupted. We feel forsaken and alone. O how terrible it is to be without the mind of Christ!

v) But I must come to this point – it is a solemn one! – we will never have the mind of Christ except we are born again by the Holy Ghost. It doesn’t matter how much you read of the Bible. How many legal ways you attempt to make yourself conform to the outward pattern of Christ. Except God change your heart, the carnal mind will remain enmity with God. Paul tells us: “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Romans 8:7) Conformity to the mind of Christ begins with a change of heart. A renewing of the mind and the will by grace. What do you know of this? What do you know of the old things being passed away, all become new? The change of taste and desire? The things of this world losing their hold, while you now have a desire to be like this Christ? The one who you once hated – Jesus Christ – becoming the chief object of your love, and as we mentioned in our last letter, sin,

which you once loved, becoming the object of your hatred? If these are strange words this evening, you cannot understand them – seek that the Lord would give you a new heart. Pray that he would impart the mind of Christ to you and that he would make you as a little child. Spoiled of our own wisdom, but made wise in Christ.

vi) Finally, are there any dejected because of how far short you come this evening? But I ask, have our thoughts drawn your soul out in love to this precious Jesus? Seek after him. The day is coming when you will see him, when that mind will be imparted to you – the mind of Christ given in all its fulness, and you will receive the mind of Christ. Till then, hear the Saviour say,

Thou shalt see my glory soon,
When the work of grace is done;
Partner of my throne shalt be;
Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me?

That question draws true disciples out to seek more of the mind of Christ and may our response be – for this is the cry of those who seek for the mind of Christ–

Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is cold and faint;
Yet I love thee and adore;
O for grace to love thee more!

(William Cowper)

May the Lord bless these thoughts to you.
With my love to you each,
Pastor

—Letter 4—

The Voice of the Dove

Thursday, 15th August, 2019

“O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” (Song 2:14)

Dear Friends,

Since I tried to preach from this word a few weeks ago, a few further thoughts on the voice of the dove – the voice of the Lord’s people – have persisted with me. The more I have meditated on it, the more surprising the simile chosen by the Holy Spirit to describe the voice of the church. The call of the dove is singularly unattractive, repetitive, and mournful. Hardly the voice one would expect a person to say this concerning it, “let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice.” The song thrush, the nightingale – yes! – but the dove? But then, considering it a little further, I have had to consider what a suitable simile for the Lord’s poor tried people it is. And that is how I want to just briefly try to open the subject now. What are the characteristics of the dove’s voice which so suit it to describe the voice of the church before the Lord?

1. Firstly, we would consider its mournful nature.

There are very few high notes in the call of the dove. Compared to other birds it may sound like more of a dirge. Doves are noted for mourning. So, it is with the Lord’s poor tried people when they have to come before the Lord in prayer.

The low note of confession. When in answer to the call of their beloved, “Let me hear thy voice,” their voice is often heard as that of Ephraim, “Bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” (Jeremiah 31:18) Or with Isaiah, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” (Isaiah 6:5) The Lord’s people have to come mourning, in confession before the throne of grace. They are not what they would be. Shortcomings, sins, backsliding, unbelief – all have to be confessed before their beloved. But he graciously encourages these low notes, “Let me hear they voice; for sweet is thy voice.”

Then the low note of petition. Low because of how unworthy we feel of the least mercy. And so, like the Publican, we have to come not able to lift up our eyes to heaven – we blush with shame and fear presumption – beating upon our breast, but with that cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

I want to emphasise that we need both of these low notes. True religion has a balance. The Lord never drives to despair, but where he makes us mourn over our sin, and confess our sin, he also graciously draws his people to come and ask for mercy. They may come feeling to be beyond hope but drawn by the Spirit they must seek mercy – and they receive it because they come on certain ground: “He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” Samuel Medley picks up these low notes so beautifully in hymn 263 (do read it through at home):

Jesus, may I a mourner be,
Over my sins and after thee.

That’s the voice of mourning that thee beloved delights to hear. Not just mourning over self, but mourning after him. “And oft an absent God I mourn.” So he says to mourners in Zion this evening, “Let me hear they voice; for sweet is thy voice.”

2. Secondly, we would notice that it is a repetitive call.

The dove’s call is so simple. A “ka-coo-coo”. The same thing over and over again. Very little, if any variation. That is true of the prayers of the Lord’s people. We must separate between vain repetition. Its not that the Lord’s people simply repeat the same form of words. But their needs remain more or less constant, and so their real heart-felt cry at the throne of grace has a consistency about it. Some have bemoaned the fact that their prayer rarely seems to get beyond, “Lord help me.” Is that all you can cry this evening? Or “Dear Lord, remember me!” Over and over again? If the words you are saying go with the desires of your heart, then its no vain repetition. But the repetitiveness tries the Lord’s people. O that I could be eloquent in prayer! – is that your desire this evening? But you know, its not the words of ready talkers, it’s the broken heart and contrite spirit which the Lord loves to hear cry. With all its sameness. Day in and day out – the same old nature, the same sinnership, and yet – here is the important point – the same precious Jesus to plead. The same atoning blood to seek after. The same Rock to look to. There is nothing tiring to the Lord’s ears in the repetitive-heart-felt cries of his people. No, rather he says, “Let me hear they voice; for sweet is thy voice.”

Just another aspect of this repetitive voice. You know two young lovers never tire of telling each other that they love one another, or why they love one another.

Yet often they may wish they had better words to say it with, or could put it more eloquently, but nothing – no words – can really gain on the simple truth to the ear of our beloved, than, “I love you.” So, it is with the Lord’s people when expressing our praise, our gratitude, our worship to our beloved. We often feel lost for words and feel disappointed that we have to come back to the same well worn notes of praise. But the Lord says concerning that repetition, “Let me hear they voice; for sweet is thy voice.” Don’t be silent before him in praise and worship!

3. Thirdly, to the natural ear the dove has a peculiarly unattractive voice.

Of all the birds that sing, perhaps its mournful note, its low key, and its repetitiveness, all conspire to make the voice of the dove particularly annoying to the ear. You know, the voice of the Lord’s people is similarly irksome to the ears of the carnal man. Perhaps there is a one here this evening who listens to the prayers in the prayer meeting and says – “Not that note again!” “I wish they would get beyond sin!” Solemn! The different judgements of the cry of the Lord’s people. Heard by the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth, he says, “sweet is thy voice!” But the natural man hears the stumbling prayers and praises of the Lord’s people and finds no attraction. You know, it is a mark of grace to hear the Lord’s people speak as God hears them. Dear Mr Fearing in Pilgrims Progress, he hadn’t got much to say himself, but he “liked good talk.” That is, he could say amen to the Lord’s conclusion of the prayers, praises and conversation of the Lord’s people, and could say, “Let me hear they voice; for sweet is thy voice.”

And when the Lord’s people are in season before the throne of grace at the prayer meeting, time will stand still in the pew as the Lord’s people hear with approbation. I was struck recently reading concerning a fast day at the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s. Robert Baillie one of the Scottish members of the Assembly wrote: “This day was the sweetest I have seen in England. After Dr Twisse had begun with a brief prayer, Mr Marshall prayed large two hours, most divinely, confessing the sins of the members of the Assembly in a wonderful, pathetic and prudent way. After, Mr Arrowsmith preached one hour, then a Psalm [*was sung*]; thereafter, Mr Vines prayer near two hours.” In the Spirit, he heard the voice of the brethren praying for four hours as the Lord hears them. There was nothing unattractive or irksome about it. Rather he could say: “Let me hear they voice; for sweet is thy voice.”

4. Fourthly, doves chatter to one another.

I have twice watched doves in big old stone-built dovecot in Scotland, housing hundreds of birds, and there they sit on their perches, or in their holes, and they seem to do little but “coo” to each other. Not the sound of courtship – quite distinct – but the noise of companionship; the chatter of the flock.

True religion is communal. We quoted those words when we preached from this text: “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” (Isaiah 60:8) We are but members of one body. And as the members of our body communicate constantly – via nerves, hormones and the other biological systems – so the Lord’s people will commune one with another.

So in days of gracious exercise we read concerning the Lord’s people, “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.” (Malachi 3:16) You see when we view the voice of the Lord’s people as the Lord views it, and their voice is sweet to our ears, then we will rejoice to hear the Lord’s people speak of their exercises in grace and of the Lord’s goodness to them in providence. It is precious when we are given grace to draw one another out in communion by being able to echo the words of our beloved, “Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice.” “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1)

5. Fifthly, as is common with many birds, the dove does have a distinctive call for warning other doves of danger.

A combination of a high pitched, shrill call and the beating of their wings. An unmistakable call. The Lord’s people are to have the same note in their voice repertoire. The word of the Lord to Isaiah was this: “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” (Isaiah 58:1) I speak in love – this is a rare note, not one often heard from the Dove; but it is a vital note. It is a vital note in the church. Solemn to exercise it, for we must be sure we have no beam in our own eye, before seeking to warn our brethren about their mote. But if we love one another, we will watch over one another in the same way as our beloved watches over us. Jealous for one another’s souls. There is a voice of faithfulness – not phariseism, or enmity – but a loving voice, of which the Lord and his dear people can both say,

“sweet is thy voice.” And when we hear it, we will agree with Solomon: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.” (Proverbs 27:6)

Then that note must also be sounded in the world – a warning to sinners to flee from the wrath to come. Not any easy note to sound. One we often shy from. It is easier to keep quiet than to speak. But when our mouths are open to speak for Christ in the world, then I believe of that voice our Beloved says, “Let me hear they voice; for sweet is thy voice.”

6. Finally, for most of us, the voice of the dove is heard most frequently in courtship.

The hours doves seem to spend edging up to each other and softly “cooing” in courtship has often amazed me. So it should be with the Lord’s people. Do we love Jesus? If so, how can we be silent before him? Our cry may feel mournful, repetitive and unattractive, but to our heavenly lover it is sweet! Jesus only has ears for those he loves. He hears their every cry, and he longs to hear more from them. Confessions of their love to him, their faith in him. However feeble we may feel them to be, Jesus says of them, “Sweet is thy voice.” “Let me hear thy voice.” And perhaps sweetest is the note which confesses we want to love him more.

As Cowper takes it up:

Lord, it is my chief complaint
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love thee, and adore;
O for grace to love thee more!

And Daniel Herbert:

We want to feel, we want to see,
We want to know thee more;
We want sweet foretastes of thy love,
As we have had before.

In conclusion. I ask: Are you silent this evening before the Lord because you fear your voice is unattractive to him? Nothing new to say? You are mourning over your state and that quite appears to shut your mouth before the Lord? To such the Lord says, “Let me hear they voice; for sweet is thy voice.” Both our visiting ministers the last two Wednesday evenings have emphasised this point: *it is not how you feel; it is how the Lord views you.* This is how the Lord views the feeble, mournful, repetitive cry of his people this evening – it is sweet, and he wants to

hear more of it. May that be an encouragement to us this evening to come boldly to the throne of grace. To come just as we are. To trust him who calls us to himself, and thus to unburden ourselves at the throne of grace.

And if you still feel you must sit in silence, don't sit easy! It is a solemn place. Gadsby says:

Sometimes in solemn silence we have sat,
Then peevishly cried out, How hard's our lot!

You know, you have no right to complain before the Lord all the while you are silent to him and refuse to hear him say "Sweet is thy voice." "Let me hear thy voice." Are you silent tonight because you refuse to believe it to be true – and refuse to act upon it? Cowper shrewdly puts it this way:

Have you no words? Ah! think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful cry would oft'ner be:
"Hear what the Lord has done for me!"

A voice to speak to the world; to family; to friends; but no voice to speak to a gracious God who asks us to speak to him! He says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (Psalm 50:15) And the Word of God assures us: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13) How solemn to be silent before God!

Well may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. May this gracious call: "Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice," encourage us as we seek to lift our voices to him this evening. He has promised to hear, to answer, and not to turn away, and thus may there yet be in this note more abundant in the Galeed prayer meetings: "Hear what the Lord has done for me!"

May the Lord bless these thoughts to you.
With my love to you each,
Pastor