

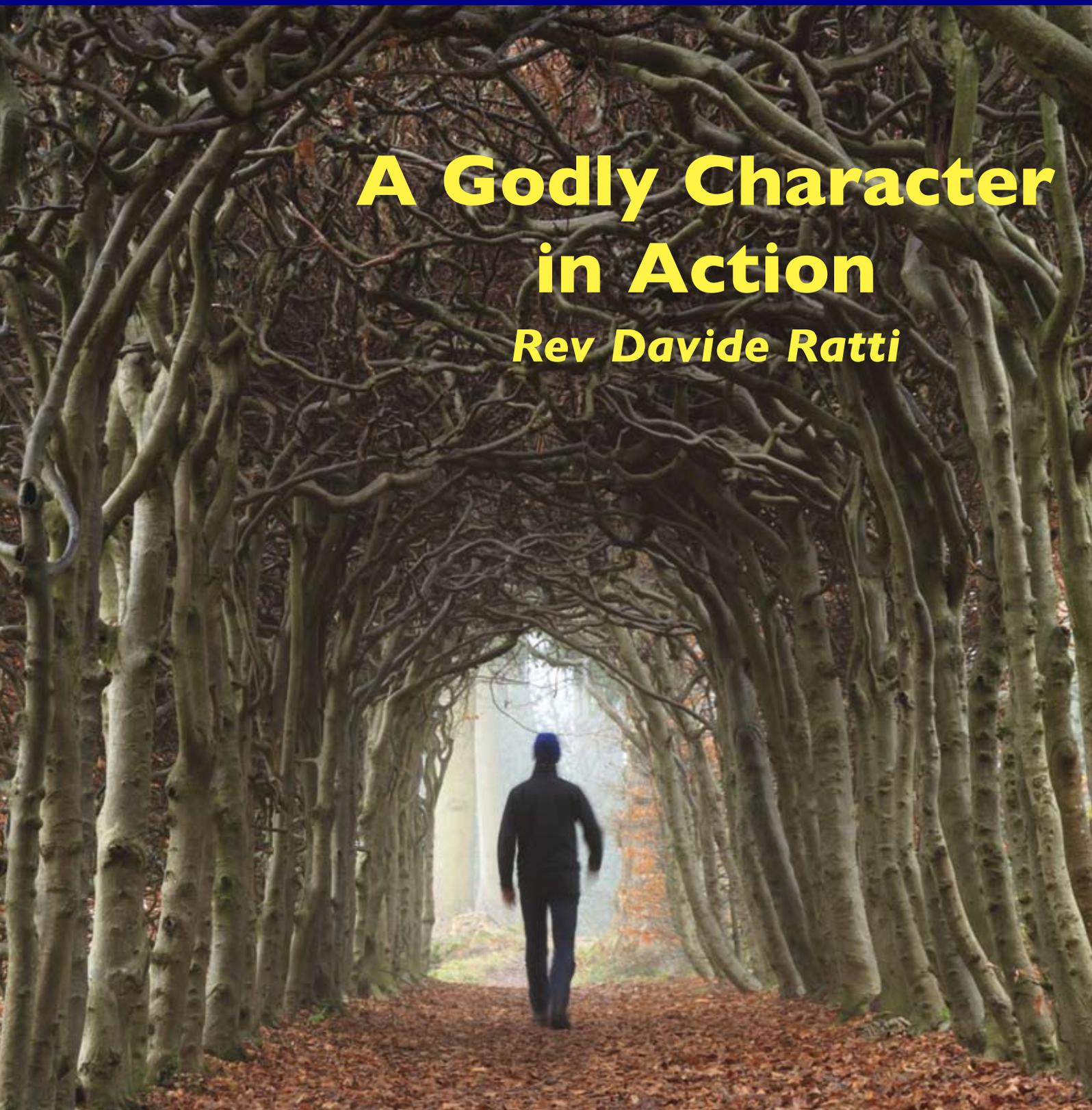
# Free Church **Witness**



**MARCH 2014 ISSUE**

## **A Godly Character in Action**

*Rev Davide Ratti*





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# The Happiest People

**W**ho are the happiest people in the world? Is it the wealthiest? They are able to buy everything they want. They have beautiful homes, luxurious cars, designer clothes, exotic holidays, gorgeous food and all the modern gadgets. They never have debts or financial worries. Surely they are the most content? And yet many of them are deeply unhappy. Tabloid newspapers and magazines display their miserable lives. Their marriages break down, they are depressed and anxious, they become addicted to drink and drugs, they are constantly watched by the media, they are surrounded by vultures, despite all their wealth they are longing for more, and inside their hearts there is an emptiness and craving.

Moses was an exceedingly wise man who lived to the ripe old age of one hundred and twenty years enjoying the use of all his faculties. His experiences were unrivalled. First for forty years he was educated in all the wisdom and culture of ancient Egypt. His next forty years were spent alone with his sheep and his God in the desert. His last forty years involved delivering more than a million slaves from Egypt and forming them under God into a nation which, after thousands of years, still exists today. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he wrote more of the Scriptures than any other man. God spoke to him face to face as a man to his friend. At the end of his eventful life, he could say on his deathbed, 'Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places' (Deut.33:29).

Who are these happy people today? Is it the Jews, the natural descendants of those to whom Moses spoke? Certainly not! For two thousand years they have suffered under the judgment of God as no other people have ever suffered because they rejected their Messiah, the one of whom Moses spoke: 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken' (Deut.18:15). The true Israel today are those who believe the Scriptures and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They are the happiest people in the world. Why?

## 1. They have a great God

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky' (Deut.33:26). Other gods are dumb idols who have eyes but cannot see and ears but cannot hear. Some like Allah are the imagination of men's hearts. The gods of many in today's Western world are soppy, sentimental and helpless. But Jehovah is the mighty God who created heaven and earth, who sustains all His creatures in being, who reigns over the nations; the awesome, majestic Lord. No-one can resist Him and all that happens happens according to His will. He is the supreme being. 'The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice' (Ps.97:1). Happy are those people who worship and serve the Almighty, the living and true God!

## 2. God is their God

This God enters into a personal relationship with some people. He calls Himself the 'God of Jeshurun' (Deut.33:26). Jeshurun is a pet name that God gives to His people. True religion is not simply beliefs, rituals and commandments; it is a relationship with the living God. Sadly this is what is missing even from so many forms of the Christian religion. God chose Israel, not mighty Egypt or Persia and He set His love upon His chosen. Yes, He set His love on you and me, child of God. That is worth infinitely more than anything this world can offer. Can you say, 'God is my God'? If you can, you are a happy, happy person.

## 3. God is their Saviour

God saved these happy people. He 'rideth upon the heaven in thy help' (v26). He saved Israel from their Egyptian slave-masters. He destroyed their enemies with plagues and drowned them in the Red Sea. He rode from heaven to this world to save us. He came and died for us on the cross, suffering what we deserved in order to take us to heaven to be with Himself forever. He came to seek and to save the lost and having found us he brought us home rejoicing. We were doomed to hell because of our sins but He paid the ransom price, His own blood, to set us free. Rejoice!

## 4. God is their Refuge

'The eternal God is thy refuge' (v27). The Amalekites were a warlike people. They attacked Israel from the rear so as to overcome those who were tired and frail and lagging behind. But God gave Israel victory and vowed an everlasting war with Amalek and their total destruction. The Lord is 'an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest' (Is.32:2). Whatever the problems, whatever the storms and trials, run to God. Whether your enemies are men or devils, here is the answer. Fear God and you need not fear anyone else. It is a happy people who have a safe castle where no enemy can touch them.

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## 5. God picks them up when they fall

‘Underneath are the everlasting arms’ (v27). Israel were tempted many times in their journey through the wilderness. They sinned and incurred His chastisement, yet they were never cast off. They were like a child learning to walk, tottering and falling but the parent was just behind catching them as they fell. It is wonderful to know that God’s arms are there. Sometimes, indeed often, we fall but, praise the Lord, no matter how low we fall, underneath are the everlasting arms. These arms are not there just sometimes, but always; the everlasting arms of the unchanging, covenant-keeping God.

## 6. God gives them a home

‘Israel then shall dwell in safety alone’ (v28). Having left Egypt, God’s people dwelt in tents and God tabernacled among them. Later they inherited nice houses in Canaan which others had built. Yet they were still looking for a city whose Builder and Maker was God (Heb.11:10). Eventually they reached the ‘house of many mansions’ (Jn.14:2). God is our dwelling place (Ps.90:1). Many are homeless in this world and the next but God’s people are unique and special and shall dwell in safety alone.

## 7. God makes them prosperous

‘The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew’ (v28). Many suffer from famine and hunger but God’s people are given a land flowing with milk and honey. The Psalmist can say of them even in this world: ‘I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread’ (Ps.37:25). Even in

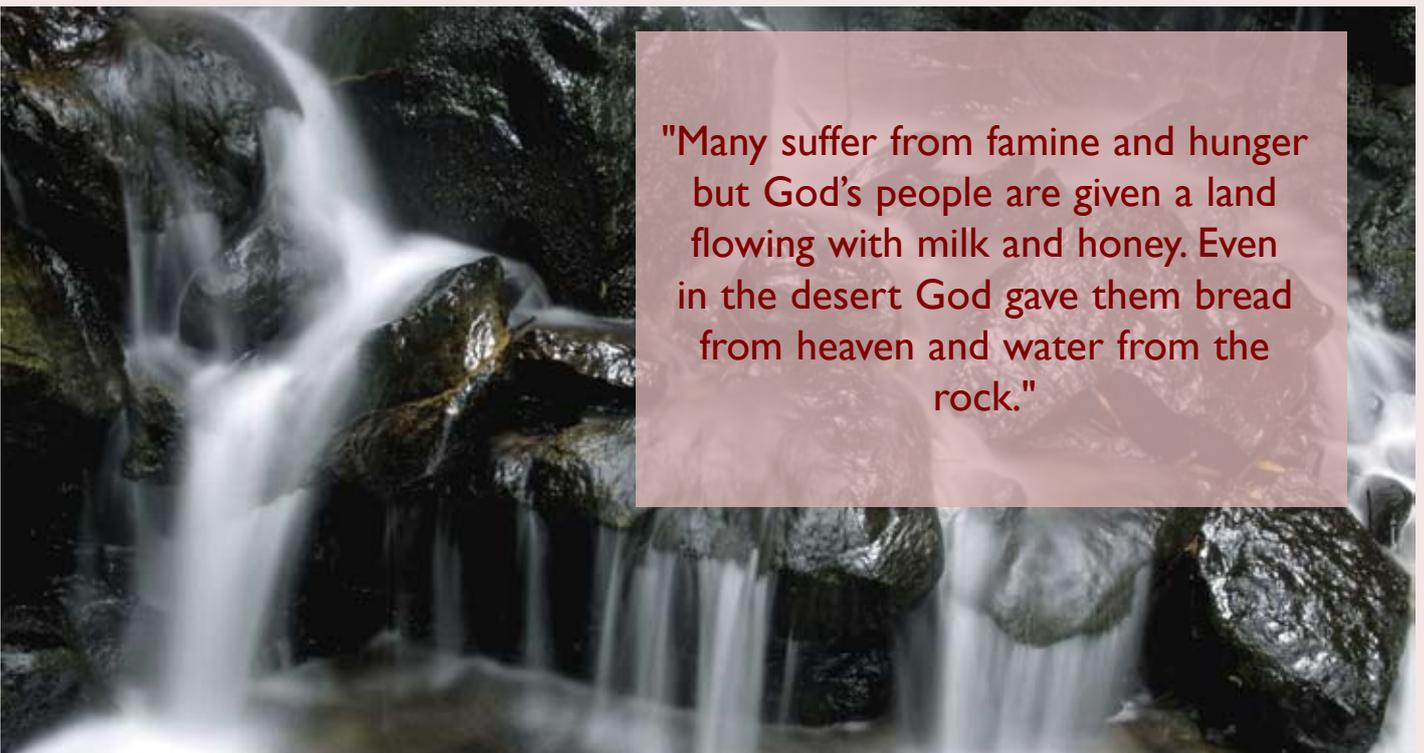
the desert God gave them bread from heaven and water from the rock. The Egyptians had to water their crops by irrigation but God will drop down His dew from heaven on His beloved. ‘My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus’ (Phil.4:19).

## 8. God saves them

God set His love on Israel and He delivered them from their bondage in Egypt. He saved them from the army of Pharaoh, from drowning in the Red Sea, from hunger and thirst in the desert and from the fiery serpents which they had brought upon themselves. They were His chosen from eternity and He was to them Jehovah, the great I Am, the covenant-keeping God of grace. He elected us, He sent His Son to die for us, and He came to live in us and to apply redemption to us. He called us, regenerated us, enabled us to repent and believe, justified, adopted and sanctified us, united us to Christ and will one day soon glorify us. ‘Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord’ (v29).

## 9. God demonstrates their enemies to be liars

‘Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places’ (v29). Proud Pharaoh said: ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go’ (Ex.5:2). But he learned who the Lord was, and, despite his hardening of his heart against Israel, he had to let them go. He was found to be a liar. People will mock us and defy our God, but one day they will



**"Many suffer from famine and hunger but God’s people are given a land flowing with milk and honey. Even in the desert God gave them bread from heaven and water from the rock."**

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have to answer to Him. Satan the great enemy tells us there is no hope and we are finished. He says our life is going to end in disaster but he too will be found to be a liar. Yes, and we shall tread upon the high places of our enemies and Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly (Rom.16:20).

### **10. God is their guide**

God led Israel by His pillar of cloud by day and His pillar of fire by night. He gave them Moses to be their prophet and so taught them His law and His gospel. He guided them to this point where they were about to enter the Promised Land. People look for direction. They are troubled by choices. They seek meaning and purpose.

But God guides us by His Word. There we are taught all that we need to know. The Psalmist said: 'Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory'. What a blessed people we are. No wonder the Psalmist adds, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever' (Ps.73:23-26).

'Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee'. Do not let the devil keep you down, nor the world discourage you nor unbelief leave you depressed. Rejoice in the Lord with all your heart.



## **A Godly Character in Action, Acts 27: 1-25**

**Rev Davide Ratti**

**P**aul had just been heard by the Governor Felix, then Festus and King Agrippa and was found not guilty of anything worthy of death or imprisonment. He could have been set free, said King Agrippa. But Paul had previously appealed to Caesar because of the Jews and so he was sent off to Rome. Let us consider Paul's behaviour and evangelistic efforts, bearing in mind the means he had available in the situation he was facing. It is interesting to note that Paul was not in a church building, he was not facing a welcoming congregation, he had no access to the internet or blogs - the occasion was not a well-organized conference either. Yet we can notice how Paul reacts to the events and speaks to the people taking every opportunity to preach the Gospel. Particularly, there are three verses in our text where we read Paul saying 'Sirs...', for three different reasons:

### **An Admonition (v10)**

The context is a first-hand description of the trip to Rome. Luke is clearly a witness and a companion of Paul in this journey. Right at the beginning of the chapter we find Paul treated kindly by a Gentile, an unbeliever. He is a centurion, a Roman commander of up to 100 chosen men, who was fully responsible for the prisoner's life. Surprisingly he gives Paul some considerable freedom, risking his own life (v3). We must remember Paul was on

the ship as one of the least important persons; he had been accused of riots and of murder, but obviously he did manage to gain some trust in the eyes of this important commander.

Notice in v10 that Paul is taking the initiative in speaking out: 'Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives'. What courage and boldness he had! Because of the place and the position he had in the ship he should not have dared to say anything to anybody. Here we find his admonition. He explains that there is a problem - he is warning those people of the danger ahead. Surely there is wisdom from above in his attitude. 'I perceive...' means to 'look at as a spectator'. He had been granted by God to see things with discernment. There is no arrogance in his speaking, nor offence, but a humble, quiet, yet clear, plain declaration of the truth.

What an example of Christian attitude and influence! How much we are in need of such leadership in our midst! How much in your own life (and ministry) you need the discernment that comes from God to admonish others who are in danger! How important it is for all believers to be so filled with the Spirit of Christ as to address our neighbours, our friends, our family members taking advantage of every opportunity!

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**"God accomplishes His plans by ordinary means; it is true that if God wanted to save the ship he could have done it without sending any storm. But God chose both the tempest and Paul to accomplish His plans."**



### **A Rebuke (v21)**

The advice of most of the crew is to move on to a better harbour, Phenice, and wait there for the winter to be over. It is not a long distance westwards, only about 40 miles, and to begin with 'the south wind blew softly'. But before long a tempestuous wind arose called Euroclydon which began to stir mighty waves (v14). With conditions deteriorating, the crew are forced to let the ship drift with the wind. They have to fasten supports to the whole ship and throw away part of their cargo. It is a huge loss, an incredible experience, an unexpected, life-threatening tempest.

And in the middle of this tense situation we read in v21 that Paul 'stood forth' with his remarkable boldness and courage to rebuke everybody! He told them that they should have listened to him: 'Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss'. There was a twofold reason for speaking. First, he wants to point out the truth - their foolishness in attempting such a journey against which they had been warned. Secondly, he reinforces the fact that what he is going to say should be heard and taken seriously. It is for their good! Paul is able to rebuke their sins without being harsh or offensive, but rather constructive and encouraging. God granted that no-one rebelled against him and we notice their increased interest and trust in what he is saying.

Do you rebuke others only when you are angry and when it is your last resort? Or do you really act for other people's good in order to tell the truth of God? Paul's reason for speaking up was the glory of God and the preaching of the Gospel to lost, ignorant men.

### **An Exhortation (v25)**

This time Paul addresses everyone with an exhortation

to life and hope ahead: 'Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me'. He gives comfort to these frightened people testifying that God will protect their lives. He adds, 'be of good cheer!' Again, we are confronted with his boldness of speech in the power of the Holy Spirit; he gives his testimony of meeting the angel, of receiving a good message from God, the God 'whose I am, and whom I serve' (v23).

Imagine two hundred and seventy six men staring at Paul and hearing that God is in control of everything: the storm, the sea, the ship, their own lives. Here is this prisoner with a God-prepared pulpit, a ready audience. He is preaching that God is worthy of being trusted and taken at His word.

It is such an encouraging lesson for all those who desire to preach the gospel, to witness for Christ and to look for means and methods to reach the unreached. God's sovereignty is perfectly matching with Paul's responsibility of preaching the gospel. He could have commented to his friends about the disobedience of the crew after the first admonition and then have said nothing; he could have said that the storm is what they deserved after his rebuke; but no, Paul has the responsibility of preaching the Gospel and he demonstrates real love for souls.

God accomplishes His plans by ordinary means; it is true that if God wanted to save the ship he could have done it without sending any storm. But God chose both the tempest and Paul to accomplish His plans.

Let us take to heart what Paul teaches with his holy life on this occasion. Let us remember that he wrote the same principles to young Timothy, charging him to 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort...' ( 2Tim.4:2).

May God grant you such godly character in action.



## Samuel Rutherford on the Spiritual Life, Part II

**Rev James Clark**

*Last month Mr Clark considered Rutherford's teaching on the love of Christ and holiness. Two lines were missed at the end of the article. Rutherford's quotation should have finished as, 'Let the believer's Christ be where He will, yet He is theirs.... He is a forsaking Lord, eg to David, Psalm 22:1, and yet He is their Lord when all is done'.*

*To seek strength for the battles of the new life we must pray.*

*Mr Clark now proceeds to deal with faith, prayer, assurance and the maintenance of the Christian life.*

### **Faith**

Rutherford in his Catechism describes faith as 'a resting and hanging upon Christ with all the heart for salvation ... a leaning upon God, as if a sinner were a lame man who cannot stand by himself but must lean upon Christ as his staff and hold'. Because it is an act of dependence, faith must pray; it cannot look to itself, it seeks Another.

The believer, dwelling in a sinful world and living with indwelling sin, finds himself continually in an environment of conflict, which exercises his faith. Faith therefore requires constant watchfulness and dependence on the guidance of the Word of God. We live among carnal minds which are at enmity against the advance of the Kingdom of God and have the devil as our perpetual enemy. Faith grows by experience and these experiences are given by God to His people as means, often involving trials and sufferings, for its growth. God always secretly supports those whom He afflicts and it is only as our strength increases that He increases the severity of our trials.

The believer finds it difficult to walk by faith alone. Rutherford exhorted his hearers, 'Whereas we should walk by faith, we walk much, even in our spiritual walk, by feeling and sense. We have these errors in our faith; we make not the Word of Promise the rule of our faith, but only God's dispensation [towards us]. Now, God's dispensation is spotless and innocent and white, yet it is not Scripture to me. Nor is all that that dispensation and providence seem to speak, the Word of God.... All that sense and comfort saith, is not canonic Scripture. It is adultery to seek a sign, because we cannot rest on our Husband's word'.

Faith will always be tried and can be severely put to the test by our experiences in God's Providence. The

woman of Canaan (Mt.15) did not strive with Christ when He would not answer her; 'He is Master of His own answers' and also Master of her experiences on the journey from earth to heaven. Yet His silence does not weaken her duty of worshipping and praying. 'But when she is reproached as to her interest in Christ – "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs" – she mildly, yet in the boldness of faith, contradicts Christ. Suppose Christ out of His own mouth should deny a child of God to be a child of God, there is place for a holy striving and contradicting of Him'. There may also be much seeking and using of the means of grace, and yet no sensible experiences of spiritual influences, as in Song of Solomon 3:1-2. Mary Magdalene was at the sepulchre but could not find Christ, until He was pleased to reveal Himself. When the Lord hides His face from us, it is a time of severe trial (Ps.22:1-2, Ps.69:1-3).

There is always the temptation to let our feelings overbear our faith. We need patience in our suffering and also to look to God in faith that our situation is entirely under the control of God. Our faith involves distrusting our own strength and looking beyond the things which are seen and felt. Faith strives to wait patiently for the fulfilment of God's promises and to justify God in the midst of circumstances that seem to contradict His faithfulness.

### **Prayer**

The principle exercise of faith is prayer. Prayer is faith expressing love and desire towards God. The same Spirit who produces faith in the heart also constrains the believer to pray. Indeed, faith is kept alive and active by prayer. Prayer is a grace and a response to grace; an echo of the Word of grace in the heart. Only prayer made in the name of Christ as Mediator is acceptable to God.

The believer seeks to harmonise his prayers with the intercession of Christ and thus the importance of the mind of God revealed in the Scriptures for our guidance in prayer. Heavenly mindedness in prayer is when we are conscious of being in the presence of God. Thanksgiving is a constant theme in prayer and reflects God's purpose in creating us. The 'poor and needy' abound in thankfulness, expressing their absolute dependence on God in prayer. We ought not to be discouraged by the many difficulties we experience in prayer (Romans 8:26), including distracting thoughts. Rather, we should make known to God our perplexities in our prayers.

Rutherford wrote that prayer is a fruit of adoption, a grace whereby we cry to our spiritual Father who has made us His children in Christ, to whom we are to come with reverence and faith. As a means of grace it is a 'chariot to bring us to God'. Prayer can be counterfeited. 'Praying must have some spiritual quality in it, since it is a work of the Spirit: for speaking of words is not praying. The legion of devils in the possessed man (Mt.8) spake words and made a suit to Christ, but they prayed not. David's enemies cry, even to the Lord (Ps.18:41) but pray not. The damned in hell speak words to God, but they blaspheme and quarrel with holy justice, and pray not'.

Prayer can be crying (Ps.22:1-2, Ps.69:3), breathing (Lam.3:56), lifting up the eyes (Ps.5:3, Ps.69:3), groaning (Is.38:14, Jer.31:18, Ezek.7:16, Rom.8:26), sighing (Ps.102:20), stretching out the hands (Ps.88:9, Ps.143:6), tears and weeping (Ps.6:8). The Lord counts such to be prayer and welcomes them, though words fail us. 'Speak to the Lord as ye can, and I will assure you He will not find fault with your prayers for lack of order and method and because ye lack logic in them; for it is the heart the Lord looks to ... But He cares for no sort of expression that can be used where the spirit is not humbled in His sight. But where the spirit is humbled before Him, Oh, but the least expression that such can make is very welcome to Him, if it were but a sigh or a sob, or a lifted-up head or hand or eye; till more come He will accept of that, and

will not let it go without an answer'.

We are exhorted to 'pray without ceasing' and Rutherford admonishes us not to be deflected from prayer by our conviction of sin or unworthiness. We do not approach God because we are worthy to (that would be the Pharisee's prayer), it is by grace. 'This Man receiveth sinners!' (Lk.15:2). He does not deal with us as our iniquity deserves (Ps.103:10) but according to His gracious love. Faith must be exercised, in clinging to God's revealed Truth and not to our subjective feelings.

## Assurance

While the believer is assured of Christ's ability to save him, (which is essential to faith, eg 2Tim.1:12) he sometimes lacks the subjective assurance of comfort within that state of salvation. There are different views about assurance. Rutherford agreed with the Westminster divines that assurance is not automatically enjoyed by faith: it does not belong to the essence of faith (Westminster Confession XVIII:3). 'But know this, assurance is not kept but by watching and prayer'. To one cast down by the hardness of his heart and inability to rise out of this condition he gave this counsel: 'Hold on, in feeling and bemoaning your hardness; for that is softness to feel hardness... Bid the Spirit do His office in you; and remember that faith is one thing and the feeling and notice of faith another. God forbid that ... this were good reasoning – "no feeling, no grace" – I am sure you were not always these twenty years bypast actually knowing that you live! Yet all this time you are living. So it is with the life of faith'.

Assurance does not mean that faith enjoys constant peace or that holiness prevents attacks by indwelling sin. 'Full assurance that Christ has delivered Paul from condemnation – yea, as full and real as produceth thanksgiving and triumphing in Christ (Rom.7:25. 8:1-2) – may and does consist with complaints and outcries of a wretched condition for the indwelling of the body of sin (Rom.7:14-16, 23, 24)'.

In his Catechism, Rutherford combines the doctrines of



"Rutherford wrote that prayer is a fruit of adoption, a grace whereby we cry to our spiritual Father who has made us His children in Christ, to whom we are to come with reverence and faith."

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assurance and perseverance. He grounds the assurance of salvation firstly in God Himself, ie God has decreed to save us, we have God's power towards us, we have His promise and covenant and Christ prays for us so that our faith does not fail. Secondly, we have ground because we have His Spirit dwelling in us to the end and Christ has promised to fulfil His part of the Covenant and ours (Jer.32:40, 42). We are assured in our own conscience of our continuance in grace by the witness of God's Spirit with our spirit (Rom.8). This witness of the Spirit accompanies the Word and 'it is the knowledge and feeling that my renewed mind and heart has of God's unchangeable love to me in Christ, as the wife amongst a thousand strangers knows her husband's voice, howbeit she cannot make others know it as she does (Song of Sol. 2:8)'.

What are the marks for the soul that this knowledge does not deceive us? – 'I have joy as a man that has found a treasure (Acts 8:39; 1Pet.1:8; Acts 9:17) and wonder why my God should love me rather than others (John 14:12 & 4:29; Acts 9:21). I love and desire God's love to do his will (Song 5:8 & 1:7; Ps.116:12; 1John 4:9; 2Cor.5:1,2; Phil.2:2,3) and prize this world at nothing for

Him (1Pet.2:11; Mt 13:44)'.

## The Maintenance of the Spiritual Life

The spiritual life in the believer shall last as long as its Author (John 14:19) and this life shall abide forever because such is the duration of the indwelling Spirit of Life (John 14:16). The Word is the rule of our duty, the Spirit the real efficient Cause. 'God has our seeking of Christ, and all our supernatural works of that kind, in His own hand. We believe, pray, repent, seek after Christ and His Spirit, praise, hear, read aright etc, as long as Christ holds us by the hand... When we are employed about these spiritual duties we are out of our natural element. And if the Lord take away His hand from the strongest of His children ... [we shall fall like Samson, David or Peter]. Thank God for any good thing that thou hast, and that thou art kept in a good state'.

The words of Dr. John Duncan aptly sum up Rutherford's teaching on the spiritual life, 'A man should be active about it while passive in it'. Or, better still, 'Watch and pray'.

## Wartime Miracle in the Pacific

**T**he Christian mother of a man in the armed forces of the USA had been regularly attending meetings held in our Haven of Rest Chapel. She gave a remarkable testimony at the time of the war with Japan: 'My son, who is a Christian boy, is now somewhere in the Pacific war zone. Many months before he left our shores, he and I memorised and repeated over and over again the wonderful ninety-first Psalm.

We agreed that, no matter where my son might be, at our time for prayer we would repeat again those verses. It was a sort of tie, binding our hearts and minds no matter how many thousands of miles might lie between us. A few days ago I received a letter from my boy which to me is evidence beyond all possible doubt that God's promises are real and operative'.

An excerpt from the letter reads as follows:

'Our convoy was under heavy attack from both air and submarines. Anti-aircraft guns chattered incessantly and the crash of heavy guns was deafening. Every battle station was manned and operating. One submarine was sighted off our starboard and within firing range. Momentarily we expected to see the wake of a torpedo heading our way, and it was not long in coming. It was a

tense moment and I knew that many of the fellows on deck with me were praying.

Suddenly I remembered our covenant with God and the ninety-first Psalm. I began to say it over again. I know you too must have been praying for before our very eyes God wrought a miracle. When the torpedo was a short distance from our vessel it seemed as though something went wrong with its mechanism, for it swerved sharply in its course and passed to our stern and disappeared.

Shortly after that a second torpedo was fired by the submarine and again its wake showed that it was aimed directly at us. I kept on reciting those verses. Somehow I was not afraid for I knew that God was able. This time, at about the same distance from our vessel, the torpedo seemed to go crazy. It spun in the water, took a sharp angle to its right and passed by the bow of the ship. That is the last we heard from the submarine. As for the attack from air, we suffered not a hit or a scratch'.

What a remarkable testimony to the keeping power of our God! One can almost picture that Christian soldier standing on deck reciting the wonderful words of promise:

*'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust... Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day... A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee' (Ps.91:1-2, 5, 7).*

Friendly Companion March 2013



# News



## Retirement of Rev Allan Murray

*Tim Nixon*

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2013 a goodly number of people made their way to the Brora Scout Hall, where we hold our services, to mark the retirement of the Rev Allan Murray. Friends from Scourie, Lochinver

and as far afield as Northern Ireland joined with us to mark the occasion. Also present was Mr and Mrs Murray's daughter Kirsty, her husband Grant and their children. Although aware of the presentation, Mr and Mrs Murray expressed their

surprise at the turnout of friends and especially the life-size posters of the minister and his dear wife which graced the walls of our normal meeting place.

The ladies of the congregation made sure that plenty of fine food was

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on hand and that no-one would go home with empty stomachs!

The whole congregation were saddened that Mr Willie Munro, the senior elder, was unable to be present due to ill-health but Mr John Urquhart read a letter from him which was very warmly received by all gathered.

Tributes and speeches were given by John Urquhart, Tim Nixon, Graham Sinclair, Sam Bell and Rev John MacLeod - with the Rev Robert Josey presiding and ensuring everything was done decently and in order.

They spoke for all the congregation and those present in expressing a huge thank you to both Allan and Maureen for the dedication and loving service which they poured out on the whole Caithness and East Sutherland

congregation at Brora over the years and for a faithful, Christ-centred ministry. As was ably expressed by one of the speakers, 'Rev and Mrs Murray went beyond the call of duty in their practical acts of Christianity on behalf of the people'.

Mr Murray was presented with a monetary gift whilst Hannah Sinclair and Sarah Nixon presented Mrs Murray with flowers. The afternoon was fittingly concluded with Psalm 133.

It is our earnest prayer that the Lord will raise up a pastor who would come among us and in due course fill the vacancy and that He would grant Mr and Mrs Murray a very long and blessed retirement.

## Scaladale 20s/30s Weekend Away

*Murray MacKay*

**W**e are pleased to announce that the 20s/30s weekend away in Scaladale, Harris, will return this summer, God willing, over the weekend Friday 27 - Monday 30 June.

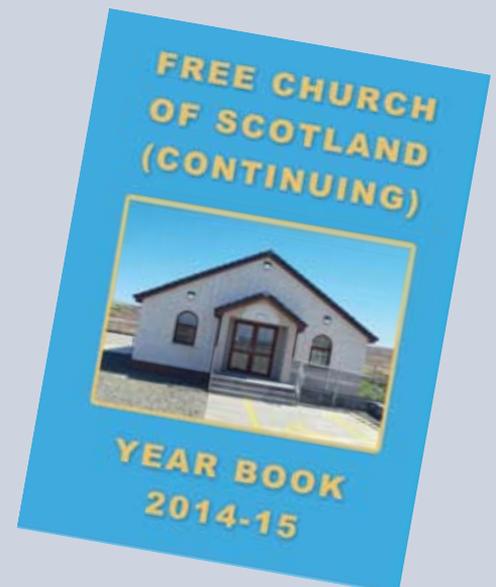
This year the speaker will be Rev John MacLeod, (rtd), and he will address us over the weekend on the theme 'Aspects of the Atonement'. For further information contact Murray Mackay, 27 Morison Avenue, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HSI 2HQ, Mobile (text only): 0779 3535227, Email (preferable): [murray.mackay@gmail.com](mailto:murray.mackay@gmail.com).

As was the case previously, we do hope and encourage that many will come and join us for the weekend, even if they are unable to stay overnight at the Centre.

## The Right of Continued Protest

*Rev D Blunt*

**T**he General Assembly of 2013 commended the document 'The Right of Continued Protest' to the wider Church. The document has now been printed as a 32 page A5 booklet and is available from the Publications Committee. The price is £2.50 per copy including p&p. To order please contact: Mr Bill McQueer, The Manse, Tordarroch, Farr, Inverness, IV2 6XF. Tel: 01808 521474; Email: [bill@mcqueer.com](mailto:bill@mcqueer.com).



## Year Book, 2014-15

*Rev D Blunt*

**A** new edition of the Free Church (Continuing) Year Book is now available. The 52 page booklet contains extensive information on our congregations in Scotland and overseas, including places of worship, times of services and communion dates, and also on our mission work and committees. Containing a full listing of ministers and details of other contacts it is an invaluable resource for those within the Free Church (Continuing) and also for people who may visit us.

To order copies of the Year Book please contact: Mr Bill McQueer, The Manse, Tordarroch, Farr, Inverness IV2 6XF. Tel: 01808 521474; Email: [bill@mcqueer.com](mailto:bill@mcqueer.com). The prices are £3.50 per copy for 1-9 copies and £2.50 for 10 or more copies. Please make cheques payable to 'Free

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Church of Scotland (Continuing)’.

## **Sri Lanka Persecution**

*E Kendal*

**E**arly on Sunday 12 January a church on the outskirts of Colombo in Sri Lanka’s west was set on fire. Whilst the blaze was extinguished before much damage was done, a threatening note was left on the gate. Later, two churches in the tourist town of Hikkaduwa on Sri Lanka’s south coast were attacked by a mob of some 250 protesting Buddhist nationalists, including saffron-robed monks. The protesters smashed doors, windows, furniture and equipment and burnt Bibles and other literature. Derana TV filmed the attacks. The Galle magistrate has called for the attackers to be arrested and rebuked police for not arresting them sooner. Please pray for Sri Lanka, its church and an end to impunity.

## **Changes in Lobbying Bill**

*Christian Institute*

**P**eers have voted in favour of an amendment to the Lobbying Bill that would give greater freedom to charity campaigners in the run-up to a general election by excluding certain staff costs from spending limits. During a debate in the House of Lords on 15<sup>th</sup> January, Peers voted 236 to 193 in support of the change, which means that staff costs associated with organisations’ meetings, media events and transport are excluded from spending caps. Previously, churches organising election hustings could have been caught by the Bill. However, charities and campaigners argue that their ability to speak out ahead of elections on important issues will still be restricted under the Bill.

## **Charity Commission U-turn**

*Christian Institute*

**T**he Charity Commission has announced it will allow a Brethren church to register for charitable status, after it turned the group down in 2012. The Commission previously rejected Preston Down Trust’s (PDT) application for charitable status on grounds that the group did not meet the ‘public benefit’ requirement of The Charities Act 2006. In its arguments against PDT, the regulator criticised the Trust’s Holy Communion services, which are reserved for members only. PDT will now be able to register as a charity on the condition that its trust deed, a binding document, reflects clearer ‘doctrines and practices’.

A spokesman for the group described the decision as a ‘huge relief’, adding they were ‘hugely encouraged and comforted’ that their practices advance religion for the public’s benefit.

Colin Hart, Director of The Christian Institute, also welcomed the news: ‘It’s a victory for religious freedom.

Common sense has been restored and the decision reflects what we knew all along, that the Charity Commission never had the power to direct how a church administers Holy Communion’.

*If the Charity Commission could interfere in church discipline faithful churches would have to give up their Charity status and as a result lose Gift Aid support.*

## **Peers vote for Free Speech**

*Christian Institute*

**T**he House of Lords voted overwhelmingly on 8<sup>th</sup> January in favour of an amendment to the Anti-social Behaviour Bill to protect free speech. Crossbench and Labour Peers, together with Tory and Liberal Democrat rebels, had a resounding victory and the amendment was passed by 306 votes to 178. Under clause 1 of the Bill government ministers were seeking to replace Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) with injunctions that are easier to obtain and require a much lower threshold of behaviour than ASBOs.

The vote took place after a debate during which one Lib Dem opponent said the annoyance orders will place a huge burden on police and local authorities. Another Crossbench Peer argued nuisance and annoyance are weasel words liable to be interpreted by different people in different ways.

The Reform Clause 1 campaign – backed by The Christian Institute and The National Secular Society – called the proposed orders, known as Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance (IPNAs), a ‘threat to free speech’.

Former Chief Constable, Lord Dear, tabled an amendment to replace the ‘nuisance or annoyance’ threshold with the test of causing ‘harassment, alarm or distress’. Senior lawyers across political parties agreed that IPNAs were a real risk to free speech allowing courts to issue injunctions against those – including street preachers – who breach political correctness. The test of causing ‘harassment, alarm or distress’ would protect free speech while still allowing the courts to tackle anti-social behaviour.

*We are thankful for the liberty we have to preach the Gospel.*

## **Cannabis Legalised**

*Christian Institute*

**O**n the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, Colorado became the first US state to legalise cannabis for recreational use. Colorado voted in November 2012 for a change in the law which came into effect on New Year’s Day – now adults over the age of 21 can purchase cannabis for personal use on private premises.

But Kevin Sabet, of Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM), warned that legalisation could have negative consequences. ‘This is an industry that makes money

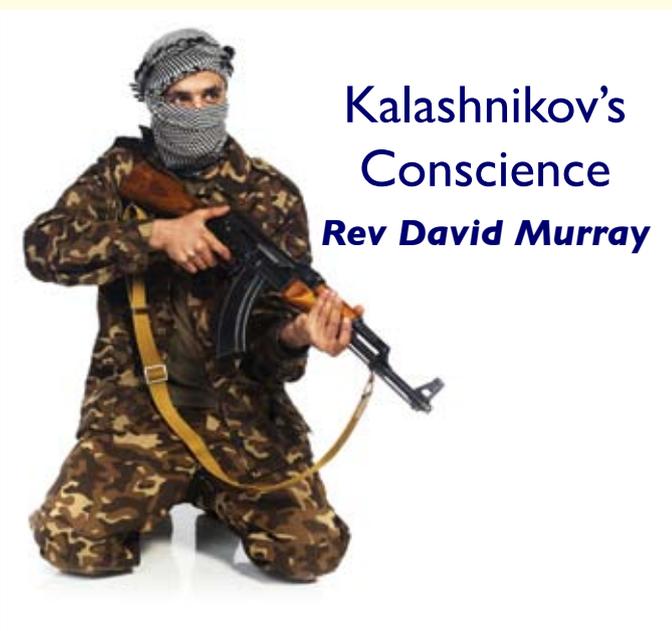
off addiction', he said. 'There will still be a black market to serve people who are ineligible to buy on a legal market, especially kids', he added. 'It is almost the worst of both worlds. We're opening the doors to allowing a new, powerful industry to downplay the effects of a substance they will be profiting off and to downplay the effects of addiction', he said. He added that children could be targeted and deceived into thinking the drug is harmless.

Patrick Kennedy, a former Congressman and recovering drug addict, said: 'We don't have to have other states go down this road and have to learn the same hard lessons that residents of Colorado are already learning'. An estimated 37 shops with recreational licences opened for business on 1<sup>st</sup> January – 136 retail stores in total have been licensed to sell cannabis across the state. Users can possess up to one ounce at a time under

the law, which is the most liberal cannabis policy in the world.

An editorial in *The Independent* said the UK should follow in Colorado's footsteps. It said, 'We hope that the enlightened and experimental policies pursued in Colorado and Washington, as well as in Uruguay in Latin America, will start to shake our own political establishment out of its complacent reliance on a policy based on prohibitions pure and simple'. [Uruguay recently](#) legalised growing, selling and consuming cannabis.

*The smoking of cannabis is usually the first step to taking harder drugs. Anyone visiting the high flats of Glasgow and talking to the young folk, and not so young, will see for themselves the devastation that drugs have made in their lives – addiction, ill-health, inability to work, poverty, crime, children having to be removed from distressed mothers who can't cope, etc.*



## Kalashnikov's Conscience

**Rev David Murray**

**H**ow would you like to go to the Judgment Seat as the creator of the AK-47 rifle?

Aged 94, Mikhail Kalashnikov just did.

He had previously refused to accept moral responsibility for the people his creation killed. But as death loomed fear of hell increased, and the 91-year-old went to church for the first time. He followed that up with a long, emotional letter to the head of the Russian Orthodox Church saying he was suffering 'spiritual pain' over the many deaths his gun had caused. If you've ever doubted the power of conscience, note these extracts from his letter, published in Russia's pro-Kremlin newspaper *Izvestia*: 'My spiritual pain is unbearable... I keep having the same unsolved question: if my rifle claimed people's lives, then can it be that I... a Christian and an Orthodox believer, was to blame for their deaths? The longer I live, the more this question drills itself into my brain and the

more I wonder why the Lord allowed man to have the devilish desires of envy, greed and aggression'.

He signed it 'a slave of God, the designer Mikhail Kalashnikov'.

### **Don't Give up**

This should encourage us never to give up on someone, no matter how old they are or how hard they seem. The conscience within is our greatest ally and God can 'drill' into it even after years of searing and numbing.

Let's just hope that Kalashnikov took his conscience to the blood of Christ and not only to a Russian priest. The blood of Christ can cleanse from every sin, even the tons of blood shed by Kalashnikov's guns.

### **Who's to Blame?**

It does raise the question as to whether it can ever be morally right to design weapons like the Kalashnikov. But is it really that different to someone making a bow and arrow or a primitive spear? It all depends on motive. Is it just to make money? Interestingly, Kalashnikov made virtually nothing from his gun. Is it to simply kill as many people as possible or is it to defend from aggressors? As the Russian Orthodox press secretary said: 'The Church has a very definite position: when weapons serve to protect the Fatherland, the Church supports both its creators and the soldiers who use it. He designed this rifle to defend his country, not so terrorists could use it in Saudi Arabia'.

Is it possible for a Christian to work in the arms industry? Yes, God can give some Christians that calling and a clear conscience in doing it.

Here's hoping we see Mikhail Kalashnikov one day, dressed in white, washed in the blood of the lamb, and fellowshiping with many of the millions his gun sent to glory.



# Books

## **This God our God: Creator, Judge, Saviour**

*Archibald G Brown*

Banner of Truth Trust,  
pbk, 248pp, £8.00

Having read with much enjoyment and profit the first book of sermons by Archibald Brown published by the Banner of Truth, *The Face of Jesus Christ*, I was immediately drawn to this second book and I was not disappointed. The sermons are very readable and very fresh. They are like Spurgeon's sermons but a little shorter. They can be read quite easily as a devotional each day. Brown was a later contemporary of Spurgeon and for a short time succeeded him in the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. His sermons were greatly blessed to the conversion of souls and thousands waited on his Sabbath by Sabbath ministry. I thoroughly recommend this volume. Some tasters will let you know something of his style.

Talking of God seeing Christ as the sinners' substitute he says, 'He saw on Him my accursed sins, He saw yours also; and oh, awful truth, although the substitute was His own Son, He would not, He could not spare the blow. That heaving breast was made the sheath of the sword of His justice'.

Commenting on the words, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory' (Ps.73:24), he writes: 'If God takes me by the hand and leads me, though it be up to that last monster [death], I will not be afraid. If God guides me into the sepulchre, I need not shrink back. Death loses its gloom, and the terrors of death depart the moment we realise that God guides us unto death. But dear Andrew Bonar,

no mean scholar, points out that instead of the word "unto" it should be "over" or "beyond". This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even over death. He does not bid me good-bye at the dying moment'.

In dealing with the words 'Past finding out' (Rom.11:33) he states: 'Beloved, how many have worshipped in this Tabernacle, and have since discovered the bliss that is past finding out. They have forded the river and gone up the shining steps on the other side, and they have had their welcome from the Master, and they are now just slowly learning what it is to be in heaven. I suppose that forever the joy must deepen, the glories unfold, the bliss intensify. The awful delight of being with God – oh this we cannot tell'.

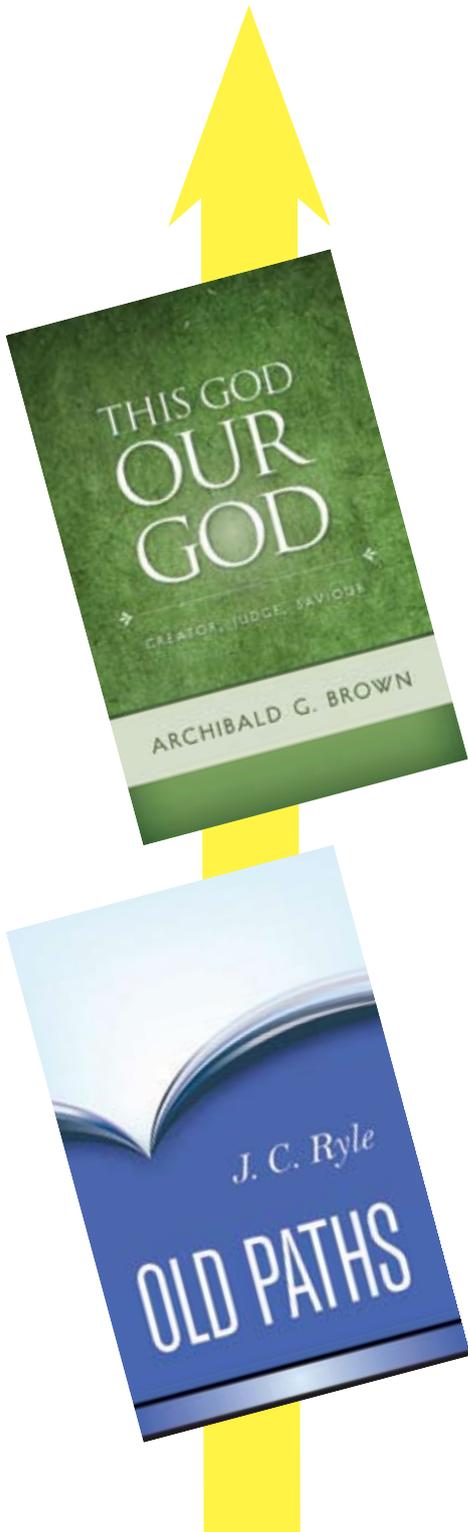
*Rev William Macleod*

## **Old Paths**

*J C Ryle*

Banner of Truth Trust,  
hbk, 408pp, £12.00

First published in 1877, and originally given by Ryle as individual papers, this volume systematically leads us through nineteen important doctrines of the faith which are to be believed, and defended most earnestly. Ryle wrote, 'It contains nothing but the "Old Paths" in the which the apostolic Christians, the Reformers, the English Churchmen for the last three hundred years, and the best Evangelical Christians of the present day, have persistently walked. From these paths I see no reason to depart'.



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In the first paper, Ryle begins with the Bible's 'internal evidences' for inspiration. He writes, 'I shall bring forth the Book itself and put it in the witness box'. The first argument is the extraordinary fullness and richness of the contents of the Bible. He has a number of sub-points: the Bible alone gives us a reasonable account of the beginning and end of the globe on which we live; the Bible gives a true and faithful account of man; the Bible alone gives us true views of God, and the Bible alone teaches us that God has made a full, perfect and complete provision for the salvation of fallen men. Another internal evidence for inspiration which Ryle gives is the fact that there is an extraordinary unity and harmony in the contents of the Bible, which is entirely above man. In the second half of the paper he makes known the extent of inspiration, that is, 'full verbal inspiration'. In doing so he sets forth reasons and arguments in favour, and dangers that arise from denying it. On a practical note, he argues that those who deny full, verbal inspiration destroy the usefulness of the Bible in regard to preaching. If the text is open to debate, the hearer will care little for its instruction or reproof.

In the second chapter entitled 'Our souls' he draws attention to the words of our Lord: 'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (Mk.8:36) He states, 'Every one of us has an undying soul', and stresses the importance of looking beyond the things of time to eternity. Then he declares in what he calls 'a sorrowful portion of my subject' that 'anyone may lose his own soul', that is bring great harm upon it and be eternally lost. You can 'murder your soul by running into open sin, and serving lusts and pleasures, poison your soul by taking up some false religion, starve your soul to death, by trifling and indecision'. In his popular commentary on Mark, he makes this comment, 'Many are the ways that lead to the pit. How vital it is that the sinner flees to Jesus for the saving of the soul!' In the third chapter he deals with the text 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' (Lk.13:23). Here, having underlined the meaning of what it is to be saved, he exposes those false notions that existed in his day concerning the state of the world and the number that were saved. He plainly states there are many careless sinners; many hypocritical professors of religion, and many who had a mere head-knowledge of the gospel. Are we not saddened, along with Ryle, concerning this painful reality with which we are also confronted today? We recognise the truth of the words of our Lord, 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it' (Mt.7:14).

Before moving on let me say, though everything which Ryle has said is right, we must be optimistic, for 'the few' comprises millions upon millions; a great multitude which no man could number (Rev.7:9). Consider what

has taken place in recent years in parts of the world such as Africa and China. Let us pray earnestly for the growth of the church. Dear friends, pray earnestly that in this beloved country of ours, multitudes will be found crying out for mercy; that our churches and chapels might be filled with men and women, boys and girls praising God. May He speed the day!

In his paper on 'Our sins', Ryle deals firstly with the reality of sin and that our sins are numerous. Secondly, he asserts the utmost importance of having our sins taken off us and put away; for God is infinitely holy and hates sin, death is before us and judgment awaits. Then he deals with the remedy: 'the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse away all our sins'. Here, in a heart-warming way, he speaks of the precious blood of Jesus. Near the end of this paper, in his application, he speaks a word of invitation and exhortation. He writes in one paragraph, 'Cling to Christ I say, and have high thoughts of the atonement made by His blood upon the cross'.

The precious subject of forgiveness is addressed in the following chapter. In giving encouragement to a man who desires to be forgiven, Ryle speaks of 'the treasures of gospel forgiveness'. Under this head he has a number of points: 'a great and broad forgiveness', 'a full and complete forgiveness', 'a free and unconditional forgiveness', 'an offered forgiveness', 'a willing forgiveness', that is, the Lord delighteth in mercy, 'a tried forgiveness', 'a present forgiveness' and finally, 'an everlasting forgiveness'.

The next paper, in a moving and affectionate manner, opens up the all-important doctrine of justification by faith, stressing, 'Without justification it is impossible to have real peace'. As in his day, so in ours, it must be set forth before the people, acknowledged and owned by men, and further, defended against those who would seek to attack, diminish, subtract from or change this glorious and vital doctrine.

Time and space permit me mention but briefly the other papers: The Cross of Christ, The Holy Spirit, Having the Spirit, Conversion, The Heart, Christ's Invitation, Faith, Repentance, Christ's Power to Save and Election and Perseverance.

In a day when the truth is under attack and many are giving an uncertain sound, we can be further assisted and prepared for the battle by listening afresh to this well-known, affectionate, and godly man. I heartily and warmly recommend this book to you.

To conclude, let me pass on to you his great and stirring conviction; 'The longer I live, the more I am convinced that the world needs no new Gospel, as some profess to think. I am thoroughly persuaded that the world needs nothing but bold, full, unflinching teaching of the old paths'.

*Rev Aaron Lewis*

# Christ Through Proverbs

**Rev Greg MacDonald**

*This is the substance of an address given at the Free Church  
School in Theology at Larbert, September 2013*



**T**his article will focus on how we make use of Proverbs. We believe that 'in all the Scriptures' we find the things concerning our blessed Saviour. Some parts of Proverbs glow with descriptions of Wisdom, often identified as being a view of Christ. This article will not directly address these better-known but isolated sections. The purpose is instead to seek and encourage the reader to access views of Christ and His commandments throughout this book, rather than in a few select passages. I hope that we will find an approach to Proverbs that naturally brings us to Christ throughout its verses. In short we want to see and find Christ *everywhere* in this book, but at the same time we confess that here are some mountaintops from which we get an especially good view, just as in Psalms or Isaiah.

Now, as already outlined, it is the purpose of this article to suggest one way in which, when we do study this book, we might do so with an eye clearly cast upon Christ. Remember that this book was part of the teaching, training, study, practice, doctrine and meditation of the Lord Jesus as He grew up into His public ministry. This book fed Him, guided Him, helped Him and described Him. No matter what part of Proverbs we investigate, we are reminded that this verse here, or that terse statement there, entered into the heart and soul of the Saviour. This was His food. If in the Song of Solomon we see the love of His heart, then in Proverbs we see the beauty, grace and wisdom of His character.

William Hendriksen states: 'Whoever practises the wisdom precepts contained in this book is using *the best means to achieve the highest goal*'. I like that phrase. It is a profound challenge for us - are we using this book for wisdom? Are we living by these words? Yet it becomes an even more profound statement when we remember that our Saviour too handled this book, and made full use of it.

Jesus Christ practised, as no man ever has, the wisdom

of this book. He personified the wisdom of this book. And when He did so, He was using '*the best means to achieve the highest goal*': a life exemplary in both the fear and wisdom of Jehovah.

You will have often heard that Proverbs is the application of God's Moral Law to everyday life. As such it is an exhaustive application of God's law. And when we begin to apply its exhaustive application to our own lives, we are constrained to cry out, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' And of course the answer is: Only One. Just as none can love with the love attributed to Solomon in the Song but Christ, so none can live with the wisdom described in Proverbs but that same Saviour. Here then are four ways of bringing our minds to focus on Christ.

## **I. Proverbs taught the Saviour**

Think of the advice of a father to his son. Imagine being able to listen in to the advice God the Father gave to His Son, as He, in our nature, was growing up! We can think of Proverbs in this way.

When we read 'My son' twenty-four times in Proverbs we should remember that these words were given to the Saviour in His youth too. Such little insight as we do have of Christ the youth, is of Him having to be about His Father's business, of Him asking questions of His elders and hearing intently their answers, of Him being subject to the lawful God-given means for His training. We should, in that context, take it as read that He would have been both *learning*, and *learning from*, the Scriptures. They fed, guided, and nourished our Saviour. This surely includes Proverbs (Proverbs 1:8, 10, 15; 3:1; 7:1; 23:15, 26; 27:11).

Not all His temptations are recorded, yet we know that He was tempted 'in all points'. We can be sure that He would not have failed to make use of all Scripture under these temptations. Consider the great meekness of the Saviour. It was innate to His character yes, yet also He

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learned obedience, and grew in favour with God and men by such words as Proverbs 3:7: 'Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil'.

Think of the Saviour's good works in the Gospels, and then read Proverbs 3:27-8: 'Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee'.

Or what of the Saviour's words, when He kept silence before Herod? 'Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him' (26:4). Why then did He begin to speak after His silence before Pilate? 'Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit' (26:5).

On every page of this book we find the Proverbs by which our Saviour lived His life. He was committed to keeping and upholding every word. When you meditate on any Proverb, consider how the Saviour made use of each particular Proverb in His own life. Proverbs becomes more sweet to us, more suited to our shoulders, when we are reminded that Christ was taught by these same truths.

## **2. Proverbs describes the Saviour**

Proverbs is not only telling us how God expected Jesus to apply His law throughout His life, it is also painting a picture for us of the Saviour. Each Proverb is a stroke of the paintbrush in the hand of the Spirit, portraying what our Saviour was like. We learn not only what He did, and why, but even who He was, and still is.

Who was Christ? He was a wise son who made His Father glad; diligent, who gathered in summer and was not slack in harvest, reaching out to lost souls in His preaching and ministry. His innate wisdom meant that He was humble and received instruction, walking with great integrity, uprightly at all times. His love was so strong that it covered sins, His lips dripped with wisdom, His words were a well of life, (think of the woman of Samaria). He was a man of hope and gladness, with His strength coming from the way of Jehovah alone.

Everything in that description comes only from one chapter of Proverbs, chapter 10. If we want to build up a view of the character of our Saviour, we should be in

Proverbs. Here we get to know Him, and gain a sense of His character. Viewing Christ will add salt to the meat, and make these verses tasty to our hungry souls. Without Him, we would find bland fare.

## **3. Proverbs describes the Saviour for our example**

Now this description is given for us to gaze upon and enjoy, but equally, to feast upon and follow! This brings us into direct, practical application. Imitating the Saviour, and not only getting an outward mimicry that tries to do what He did, but an inner spiritual reflection that wants to be as He was and is: that is our goal!

Proverbs gives us the fullness of His character for our example in all the nitty-gritty of life. Are we like Him in the way we eat our food? 'When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite' (23:1). Now our Saviour was not 'given to appetite' as the verse puts it, but we do know He possessed self-control; that He had great power over His bodily needs and desires, so that they never once were indulged or pampered. We also know that He was tempted of Satan to exalt bodily needs in the wilderness when He was hungry, to turn stones into bread.

Are we like Him in the way that we work and labour? 'Labour not to be rich' (Proverbs 23:4). Wealth must not be our motive. 'For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me' (John 6:38). He called it His 'meat', His ample reward, what satisfied His soul. O to be like Christ, and to be labouring not for the rewards of this life, but for the smile of our Father's face!

What about modelling His constancy of faith? Be in the fear of the Lord, 'all the day long' says Proverbs (23:17). How often we get caught out, by not being in a spiritual frame of mind, caught up with worldly affairs - but see the example of your Saviour! See the pattern He gave us, when He prayed all night, when He was fully *in* the fear of the Lord *all* the day long.

Can we take up the deep love of the Saviour, as He taught us, for our enemies? That doctrine so closely associated with New Testament theology, so particularly entwined with the deep love of the Saviour - is given for

**"Proverbs is not only telling us how God expected Jesus to apply His law throughout His life, it is also painting a picture for us of the Saviour. Each Proverb is a stroke of the paintbrush in the hand of the Spirit, portraying what our Saviour was like. We learn not only what He did, and why, but even who He was, and still is."**

## Congregational Remittances - January 2014

CENTRAL BUILDING FUND YTD 2013	ORDINARY REMITTANCES			
	2013 Jan	2013 To Jan	2012 To Jan	
<b>Presbytery of Inverness</b>				
Aberdeen	0	1,300	1,300	1,100
Duthil-Dores	0	1,219	1,219	1,396
Inverness	0	2,000	2,000	2,000
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	1,400	1,400	1,300
<b>Total Inverness</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,919</b>	<b>5,919</b>	<b>5,796</b>
<b>Northern Presbytery</b>				
Assynt & Scourie	86	0	0	0
Brora	0	0	0	500
Kiltearn	0	0	0	0
Tarbat	0	2,000	2,000	1,000
<b>Total Northern</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>1,500</b>
<b>Southern Presbytery</b>				
Arran	115	944	944	830
Ayr	0	1,000	1,000	0
Dumfries	0	0	0	0
Edinburgh	0	1,500	1,500	0
Glasgow - Partick	0	2,000	2,000	2,000
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	2,000	2,000	2,200
Glasgow - Knightswood	0	1,750	1,750	2,450
Rothsay	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Southern</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>9,194</b>	<b>9,194</b>	<b>7,480</b>
<b>Outer Hebrides Presbytery</b>				
Cross	0	4,861	4,861	1,797
Harris - Leverburgh	50	1,175	1,175	1,175
Harris - Scalpay	0	0	0	1,800
Knock & Point	0	1,085	1,085	920
North Uist	345	600	600	1,000
Stornoway	686	6,308	6,308	5,474
<b>Total Hebrides</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>14,029</b>	<b>14,029</b>	<b>12,166</b>
<b>Presbytery of Skye &amp; Lochcarron</b>				
Bracadale	0	0	0	1,500
Duirinish (Waternish)	0	0	0	1,000
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	0	0	0	0
Lochalsh	0	1,150	1,150	150
Poolewe & Aultbea	0	900	900	820
Ullapool	0	0	0	0
Portree	0	1,200	1,200	1,400
Snizort	0	1,300	1,300	1,200
Strath	20	275	275	795
<b>Total Skye/Lochcarron</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4,825</b>	<b>4,825</b>	<b>6,865</b>
<b>Total Congregations</b>				
	<b>1,302</b>	<b>35,967</b>	<b>35,967</b>	<b>33,807</b>
Other Donations				
	0	2,498	2,498	698
Legacy				
		0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>				
	<b>1,302</b>	<b>38,465</b>	<b>38,465</b>	<b>34,505</b>
Including Gift Aid				
		0	0	0

*[Continued from previous page]*

us to live out in our own lives, in Proverbs: 'Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth'. Or again, 'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink'

Can we school our words, our tongues and lips to speak in a way that echoes the speech of our gracious and kind Jesus? 'A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver'. Or again, 'A soft tongue breaketh the bone'. Or perhaps hardest of all: 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend'.

The way we eat our food, the way we go about our work, the way we love our enemies and the way we use our words - all exemplified for us by the Master, and all detailed for us to follow after in Proverbs.

We are called to be like Him. We are to strive for masteries, to run the race. Being like Christ in a world that detests our Saviour is tough. It is not going to fall into our laps; we won't wake up one morning with it done. We need help - all the help we can get. And if we don't use Proverbs, we are neglecting something given to us for this very purpose.

### 4. Proverbs is the Saviour's command for our obedience

It would be misleading to suggest that it is always easy

or obvious to treat every single Proverb as either instruction to Christ, a description of Christ, or given as our pattern after Christ. But Proverbs is *always* the Word of Christ, the command and instruction of our King for us, protecting us from the evil, warning us of the subtleties of temptation, and extolling to us the fear of the Lord and wisdom in our lives. It is always in the greatest interests of our souls for us to recognise, in Proverbs as in all Scripture, the tones and accents of our Lord and Master.

In John 10:27 we read: 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me'. Do not exclude Proverbs from this. When you are invited into the arms of this book, you are invited to hear a word from your King. Here is heaven's letter sent to help you. Here is the authentic voice of the Redeemer, in guiding, teaching and blessing us. All the motivation any Christian needs is in this Proverb: 'My son, be wise, and make my heart glad' (27:11).

This wisdom to which we are called has already become incarnate in Christ, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col.2:3; see also 1Cor.1:30). As Christ said of Himself: 'A greater than Solomon is here' (Lk.11:31). Surely then we can find the One who is greater than Solomon, in the pages of Proverbs!



## 'It's Not Fair'

Rev David Murray

All of us have been victims of injustice. To one degree or another, we've suffered from the unfair words and actions of others. We've been wronged by other people and yet they've got off with it while we've suffered painful consequences. We've been cheated, slandered, gossiped about, mistreated, and misrepresented. We've lost money, reputation, promotion, relationships, even jobs. People have abused their positions, their power, their privileges and their networks to do us harm or prevent good coming to us. 'It's not fair!' and there's nothing we can do about it. Even the youngest child knows something of this pain. One of the first phrases we learn is, 'It's not fair!' My bike is stolen, my favourite toy is broken, my brother thumps me and no one thumps him back. 'It's not fair!' and there's nothing we can do about it.

### Deeper and Wider Pain

As we get older the pain goes deeper as we perceive favouritism in the family, suffer bullying at school, experience betrayal by friends, become victims of social media smears, and even suffer at the hands of the church and other Christians. 'It's not fair!' and there's nothing we can do about it.

Then we begin to learn about the great inequities in the world: the perks and privileges of the rich and powerful, the sufferings and sorrows of the weak and the oppressed. We see it to some degree in our own country; we especially see it in other countries like North Korea, the Sudan, the Congo, etc. 'It's not fair!' and there's nothing we can do about it.

### Dwelling on Injustice

If we allow our hearts and minds to dwell on these personal, social, ecclesiastical and international injustices, we will

spend our lives in a state of constant and damaging agitation: fretfulness, anxiety, bitterness, anger and so on, will be our constant and damaging companions. Our minds will darken, our hearts will despair and our bodies will deteriorate too. 'It's not fair' **BUT** there is something we can do about it. In fact, there are a few things.

### 1. Don't inflict injustice upon anyone

Consider the effects, the impact, the damage and the destruction of injustice by reading, feeling and singing Psalm 37. Before you even think about abusing your power, taking advantage of

someone or wronging a person, ponder the long-term consequences for them.

### 2. Confess and put right injustices

Is there anyone who is singing Psalm 37 because of you today? Go to them, say sorry, put it right and deliver them from their painful plight.

### 3. Recognize the impact of injustice upon yourself

There are no medals for downplaying or denying how injustice has impacted you. In Psalm 37, David reveals the effects of injustice upon himself by what he commands himself and others not to think and feel: he frets (v1), he envies (v1), he doubts God will act (v2), he's agitated (v7), he's impatient (v7), he thinks they are getting away with it (v7), he's furious (v8), he questions if they will ever face justice (v9), he feels threatened (v14), he fears for the future (v19), he's tempted to sin (v27), etc.

This is deep, wide and long. Deep, in that it goes into the depths of our being; wide, in that it affects us in every dimension – spiritual, mental, physical, social, etc; long, in that it lasts for months and years. There is no point in bottling this up until we explode or disintegrate.

### 4. Bring it to God

You cannot carry this yourself. It is too heavy, too hard, too difficult. Follow the pattern of Psalm 37 where the Psalmist unbottles his feelings and spills them out before the Lord. Tell Him it as it is. Hand it over to Him. And remember, as the victim of the greatest injustice ever perpetrated, He understands and feels your screams. He can sympathise with you and support you through this agony.

“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them,  
because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

**John 17:14**