



SKYWORLD

Internet Bible Materials

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Called to Proclaim

by Martin Girard

“... to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” (1 Corinthians 1:17)

In the opening chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul explains to his readers that he had been commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the gospel, not to baptize. Paul did not consider the baptism of believers to be optional or unimportant. He could name some individuals whom he had baptized. As he was concerned that a personal allegiance to himself should not develop, with people declaring, “I am of Paul,” he stressed that he had never baptized an individual in his own name. He had been sent to “preach the gospel.”

Someone might ask the question, “How did you preach the gospel, Paul?” The answer that Paul gives is an important one for us to grasp today. The first thing that he tells us about his method of proclamation is negative: “not with wisdom of words”. The Greeks were great orators and loved to debate matters. Many a philosopher could stand outside and gather a crowd, or impress the students in his class with his ability in the realm of reason. Paul was an intellectual giant. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and had perfect understanding of the law, (Acts 22:3). He could well have used his brilliant mind and skilful rhetoric at Corinth to outwit his opponents and thus demolish their arguments.

NOTHING MUST DISTRACT!

Instead we find Paul doing none of this. The “wisdom of words” did not feature in his proclamation of the gospel message, and Paul gives just one reason for refusing this approach. He refrained “lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” In other words, the cross of Christ must stand alone. It does not depend upon human wisdom. Actually, human wisdom is damaging to the message of the cross for it deprives it of its power. Christ Himself is “the power of God,” (v.24). Salvation is found only in Him. Human effort has no part to play. On the cross the Lord Jesus bore our sins and dealt a blow to human pride. We are saved by repentance and placing our faith in Him. The power is in the Saviour and in the work that He accomplished and never in the impressiveness of the message preached.

Where do we stand today? In many churches the pulpit has been replaced by the stage. Instead of a message being heard, some kind of theatrical performance is enjoyed by the audience. In many “missions” nowadays a carnival atmosphere prevails - with balloons, face painting, comedy, laughter, and fun. All these things are incorporated in “outreach” to get people in and to try and convince unbelievers that Christians are just ordinary people too. There is, however, a fundamental flaw in all of this. Somehow the true message of the gospel has become obscured in an overpowering desire to be seen as “relevant”.



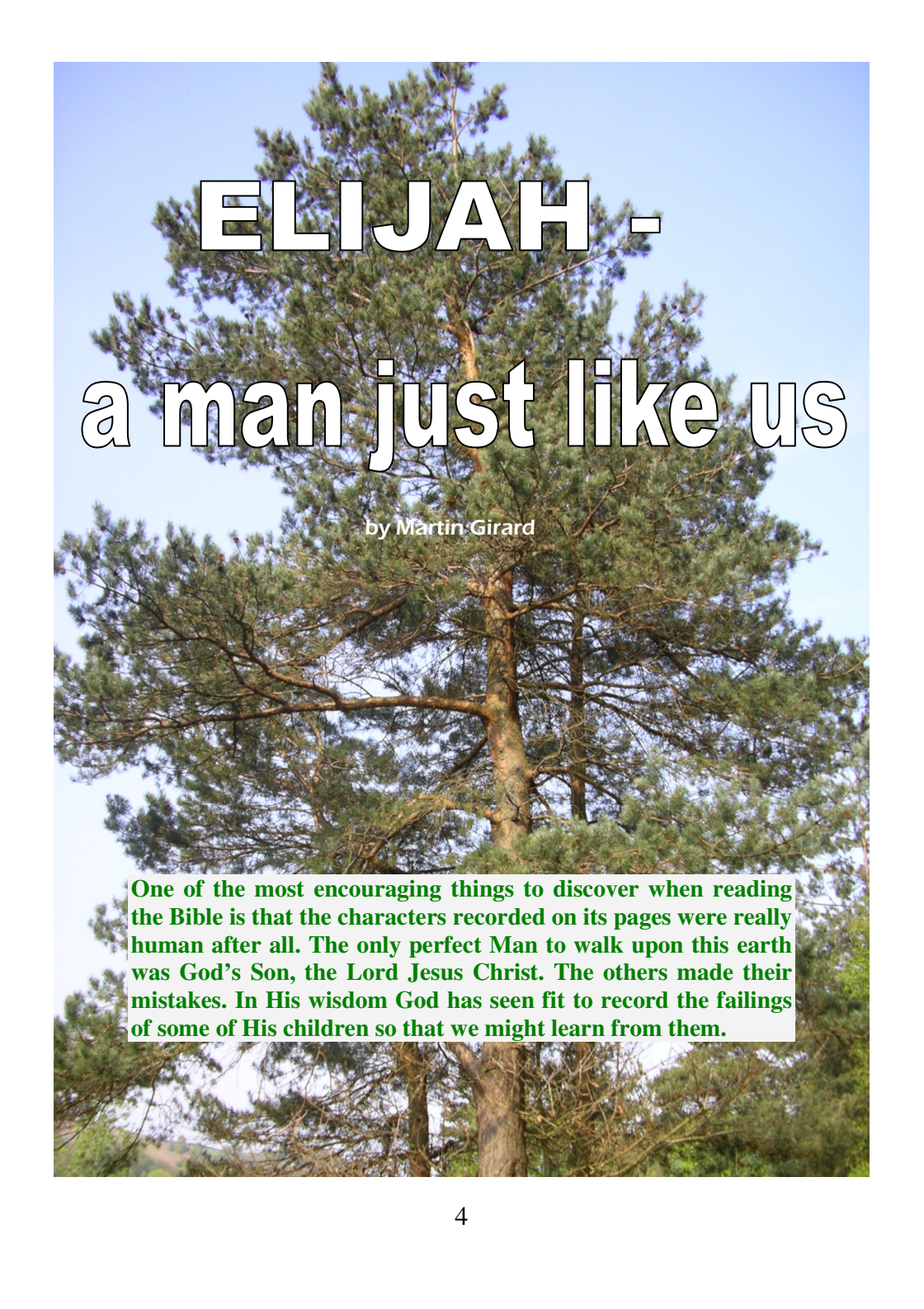
A TIME-HONOURED METHOD

Let us be quite clear: the gospel is no laughing matter. It is deadly serious, for it concerns righteousness, sin, judgment, and (against that background) the love of God. Just as clever arguments rob the cross of its power, so entertaining sketches and worldly amusements divert people from the awful solemnity of their guilt before a holy God. The time-honoured method is preaching.

Both impressive rhetoric and entertainment can rob the cross of its power. The great need today is for an unadorned and unadulterated gospel message to go forth.

“to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words”

1 Corinthians 1:17



ELIJAH - a man just like us

by Martin Girard

One of the most encouraging things to discover when reading the Bible is that the characters recorded on its pages were really human after all. The only perfect Man to walk upon this earth was God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The others made their mistakes. In His wisdom God has seen fit to record the failings of some of His children so that we might learn from them.

In James 5:17 we are told that “Elijah was a man just like us,” (NIV). If the Old Testament had recorded only his adventures on Mount Carmel, we would have difficulty with the statement made by James. From 1 Kings 18 we might think that Elijah was a spiritual giant. God had responded to his prayer before all the people, causing them to exclaim: “The Lord, He is the God!” (v.39). What a victory! We might well feel that Elijah was some sort of “superman”. Not so! James tells us that Elijah is not one **apart** but **alike**. Although he knew the exhilaration of victory, he also knew the exhaustion of defeat. We can therefore read the Old Testament narrative with confidence, knowing that we shall be able to identify fully with the contrasting experiences of this man of God.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Perhaps at the seaside you have watched a windsurfer riding majestically on the crest of a wave. His poise seems perfect, and for a moment you envy his skilful control of the sailboard. Then, for some reason unknown to you, the sailboard slips into a trough and the champion (as you thought him) topples into the sea.



Often we cannot understand what it is that causes us to lose our spiritual poise or to reach the point where, with William Cowper, we have to lament,

“Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?” (1)

Elijah became depressed, dejected, and deluded- just as we can. As we consider both the causes for this and the cures from 1 Kings 19, we may be able to trace analogies that will help us in our spiritual pathway.

DISCOVERING THE CAUSES

At the end of 1 Kings 18 Elijah, empowered by the Spirit of God, is seen running ahead of Ahab’s chariot. A distance of at least 16 miles was no small achievement for a man of his age! Yet, as Chapter 19 opens, we find a remarkable contrast. Instead of running before Ahab’s chariot to the glory of God, we now find Elijah running for his life. Bravely, he had stood all alone on Mount Carmel to challenge the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, and the Lord had wrought a mighty victory. Now the same prophet is terrified by the threats of one woman and thinks nothing of running almost a hundred miles with his servant from Jezreel in the north to Beersheba in the far south! Then, as if he had not gone far enough already, on he goes alone “a day’s journey into the wilderness,” (v.4). In a state of dejection Elijah sits down under a juniper tree and prays, “Now, O Lord, take away my life.”



CONFUSED!

Poor Elijah was terribly confused! If Jezebel had intended to take his life, she could have done so instantly without issuing a warning beforehand as she did (see verse 2). After escaping *for* his life, Elijah now asks the Lord to *take away* his life! Any reasonable person might ask, “What is the point of escaping a hundred miles, only to request to die at the end of the journey?”

The root of the problem was that Elijah had taken his eyes off the Lord. Earlier, when sent to Cherith, Zarephath, and even to King Ahab, he had obeyed the Lord implicitly (2). Regardless of the circumstances - however distressing they may be - the person who is trusting in the Lord will be kept “in perfect peace” (3) by Him. Instead of trusting in the Lord for safety, Elijah trusted in his own ingenuity and fled as far as he could. However, it was not simply a *spiritual* problem that he had. *Physically*, Elijah must have been tired even before commencing his “escape”. His experience on Mount Carmel must have been extremely demanding, and the subsequent 16 mile run must have left him drained of energy. In one sense therefore it is hardly surprising that he should pray as he did in verse 4.



Remembering that Elijah was “just like us” (James 5:17, NIV) we need to apply these important lessons to ourselves. We are told: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Prov.3:5). If we take our eyes off Him and obtain instructions apart from Him, things will soon go wrong. We must also remember that our physical condition can affect our spiritual feelings and can result in us praying the wrong kind of prayers. Have you ever realized that Elijah’s prayer in 1 Kings 19:4 was *never* answered? God took His servant home to heaven, much later, without dying! God always has the last word!

THE RIGHT CURES

In his excellent book on Elijah, Theodore Epp writes:-

“Our inner life is very sensitive to our outward condition. Rest is very important to all of us. Proper exercise is also important. We sometimes forget this, but God does not.” (4)

How very thankful we should be for our Father’s constant care! “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust” (Ps.103:13-14). God fully understood His servant’s thoughts and feelings and had the appropriate remedy for him. It may surprise us to realize that He catered for Elijah’s *physical* needs before

ministering to him spiritually. In view of the tasks that lay ahead, Elijah needed rest. “He giveth His beloved sleep” (5), and so Elijah “lay (down) and slept under a juniper tree,” (v.5). That was just what he needed. Some hours later he could have testified, “I laid me down and slept; I awakened; for the Lord sustained me” (6). It was then time to receive refreshment. An angel of the Lord provided him with a nourishing cake before he slept again in preparation for the 200 mile journey to Horeb, the mountain of God (v.8), where he was to receive his *spiritual* tonic.

Like Elijah, all Christians experience periods of spiritual depression at one time or another. Although we can determine certain causes (physical *and* spiritual) accounting for Elijah’s despair, we must not *blame* him; indeed, he is to be commended for turning to the Lord in prayer when things went wrong. Do we?

Rested and refreshed, Elijah is now able to commence his arduous trek to Horeb. This time he steps out with resolute purpose. He is no longer escaping for his life but is heading deliberately towards the very place where, years before, the Lord had appeared to Moses and had commissioned him after his failure (7). A similar work was now about to be done with Elijah.

A NEW COMMISSION

It is said that Elijah could have covered the distance to Horeb in about a week, yet it took him forty days. We are not given any reason for this, but it does remind us of the Israelites’ long time in the wilderness (8). There on Hebron’s lofty heights, far from any human distraction, the Lord asked him that deeply searching question, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” (v.9). The same challenge comes to us today. What are we doing for him just where we are? Elijah replied very honestly, but his words in verse 10 did not tell the whole truth. Although he had been “very zealous for the Lord God of hosts” (NKJV), he was *not* the only one left. The dejection seen earlier in the chapter had passed, but there still remained a delusion for the Lord to deal with. Indeed, Elijah was so convinced that he stood alone that when the Lord repeated the question he reiterated his answer verbatim (v.13-14)! Little did he realize at this moment that there were “seven thousand in Israel” who had not bowed down to Baal, (v.18).



Do we ever suffer from a similar delusion? Have you ever felt alone in your work for the Lord? Often we fail to realize that the Lord has many other servants whom He owns - perhaps even in our own neighbourhood! We should therefore never be discouraged like this.

GOD'S SERVANT REINSTATED

A great demonstration of God's power followed (wind, earthquake, and fire) but it was the "still small voice" that moved Elijah (v.12). Today many Christians are seeking spectacular, convincing displays as evidence of God's presence. Like Elijah we must learn the truth of Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God." It was not in the thunderings of the Law but in the gentle whisperings of grace that the Lord recommissioned Elijah with the words, "Go, return..." (v.15). There on the mountain He unveiled His plans to His troubled servant. Hazael and Jehu were to be anointed as instruments of judgment, and Elisha was to be anointed as prophet to continue Elijah's ministry. What an encouragement it must have been for this disappointed man to realize that the Lord had not rejected him! Already He had marked out a younger man who was to be trained by Elijah before maintaining the prophetic voice in the land himself.



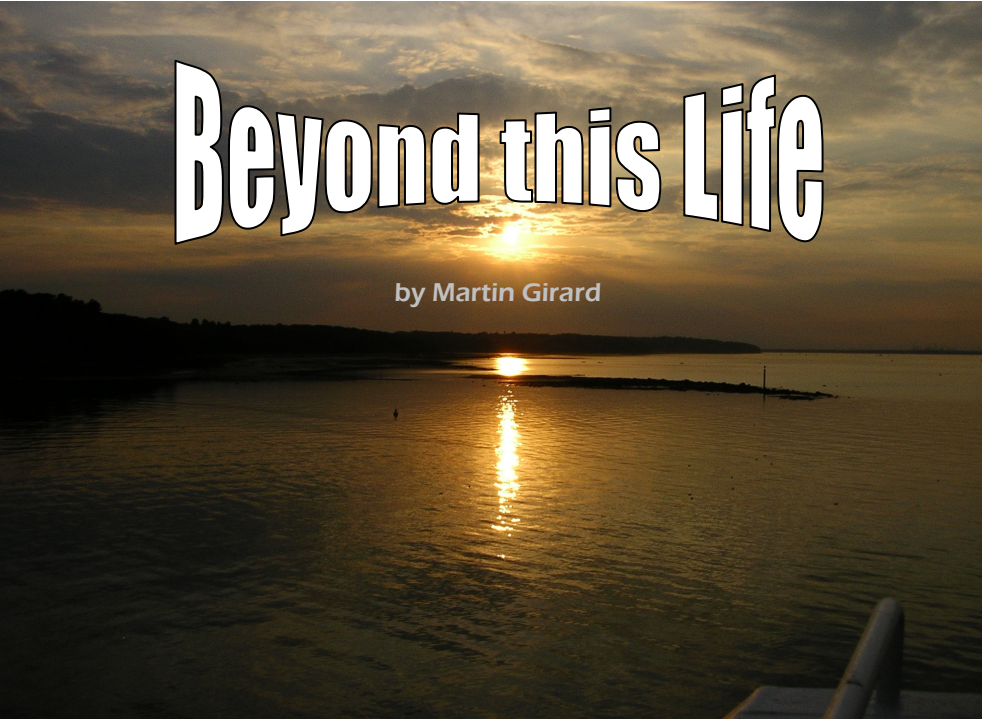
Are you feeling weary and discouraged? The devil is always doing his utmost to render our lives ineffective for the Lord. Reflect upon the experiences of Elijah - this man who was *just like us*. The Lord can meet your physical and spiritual needs and recommission you to serve Him with purpose too. He has a personal plan for your life. Whatever your circumstances, why not make the last verse of John Greenleaf Whittier's beautiful hymn your own prayer?

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb - let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm!* (9)

END NOTES:- (1)Hymn 404 in GOLDEN BELLS: *Oh, for a closer walk with God.* (2)1 Kings 17:3,5,8-10a; 18:1-2. (3)Isaiah 26:3. (4)*Elijah: A Man of Like Nature*, by Theodore H. Epp; Back to the Bible, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965, (page 106). (5)Psalm 127:2. (6)Psalm 3:5. (7)Exodus 2:12,15; 3:1. (8)Deuteronomy 1:2-3. (9)Hymn 402 in GOLDEN BELLS: *Dear Lord and Father of mankind.*

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Psalm 46:10



Beyond this Life

by Martin Girard

There is one subject that very few people like to talk about. The brave person who dares to introduce it in conversation can receive the kind of look that says, “You’ve raised something I don’t want to discuss.” To many people it is not a pleasant matter. They are afraid of it, and for this reason they refrain from talking about it. The unpleasant subject is death.

Why are people afraid of death? What makes it, in the words of William Dyer, “the king of terrors, and the terror of kings”? There is an unknown element - and it is *this* that causes the fear. What, if anything, lies beyond the grave? Do the pleasures of life continue, or do we pass into oblivion? Instead of facing up to the fact of death, millions prefer to adopt the motto, “Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die,” (1 Cor.15:32). They reason that since we are going to die (later, we hope, rather than sooner) we might as well enjoy living now and fill our lives with pleasures. Fear of the unknown is thus repressed and replaced with an obsession for material things.

How can we know what lies beyond the grave? Sometimes an individual will remark, “If only someone would come back and tell us.” Someone has! The Lord

Jesus Christ died and came back to life again. He was seen on one occasion by a crowd of more than five hundred. (1) There could be no doubt that the same Man who had died upon a cross was walking on earth once more. He holds the keys of Death! (2) We must therefore listen to Him.

A PRESENT REALITY



The Bible states that “it is appointed unto men once to die,” (Heb.9:27). Even unbelievers accept this statement! For many, death is the only certain thing about life. It is an appointment that cannot be cancelled - and it is not always possible to postpone it either. As author John Blanchard has remarked, “Man can defy gravity, but not the grave.”

Death claims people across the whole world from all walks of life. Old and young, rich and poor, kings, presidents, paupers, and beggars all die. Both the intellectual and the ignorant die. Just visit a typical cemetery and take a look at the inscriptions found on tombstones and you will see what a comprehensive thing death is. Some enjoy a full life and die, like Isaac, “old and full of days” (3). Others die tragically and unexpectedly in accidents, while undergoing operations, or as victims of famine, war, or murder.

WHAT HAPPENS?

Have you ever been with someone as they died? It is strange to look at the dead body and to realize that only seconds before the person was still there. Every



human being is tripartite and consists of spirit, soul, and body, (1

Thess.5:23). At the moment of death a separation takes place, with the soul and spirit leaving the body. The Bible tells us that the spirit returns to God who gave it. (4) The body is left behind.

If the person had trusted Christ as Saviour, at the moment of death they go at once to be “with Christ; which is far better” (Phil.1:23). This is described as being “absent from the body present with the Lord” (2 Cor.5:8). The soul and spirit are not asleep in His presence. Those who pass into the glorious presence of the Lord are very much conscious of being there! It is the **body** that sleeps in death.

For unbelievers, what happens at the moment of death is very different. On one occasion our Lord Jesus Christ drew aside the curtain and revealed the condition of a rich man who had died without faith. The incident is recorded in Luke 16:19-31. We read of him after death being “in torments”, still having his memory, and

being aware of the bliss of others who were saved and were in the Lord's presence. He could not cross over to where they were, however, for "a great gulf" separates believers from unbelievers after death. It is "fixed", and movement from one side to the other is impossible. The rich man knew that there could be no escape from the place of torment. For this reason it is pointless praying for the dead. The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is erroneous. Reformation of character cannot take place after death - and neither can salvation.

**Believers, when they die, enter the presence of the Lord because they have been saved by His grace - not through any works of their own. (5)
Unbelievers pass from this life into eternal torment from which there is no escape. The Bible calls this place Hades. (6)**

RESURRECTION FOLLOWS

The Lord Jesus is described as "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev.1:5). Although He died, He was raised from the dead - never to die again. "Marvel not at this," He said to those who were questioning His authority, "for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28-29a). Just think of it - ***every person who has ever died will be raised!*** He who called Lazarus by name to come forth



from the tomb (7) will one day raise ***all*** who have died. Some think that by having their bodies cremated they will prevent such a thing from ever happening. Nothing, however, will prevent resurrection from taking place. Even the sea will yield up the bodies that are hidden in its depths (Rev.20:13). This will not all happen at the same time. There will in fact be two resurrections, separated from each other by an interval of a thousand years.

The first resurrection (otherwise known as the resurrection of life) is the resurrection of believers only. It will take place when the Lord Jesus returns from heaven with a shout of command to claim His own (1 Thess.4:16).

The bodies of all believers will be raised in a split second and be instantly transformed, as explained in 1 Corinthians 15:52. Each one will receive a body like Christ's own glorious body, according to the working of His own mighty power (Phil.3:21). What a moment that will be! "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn.3:2). The soul and spirit of each believer will be reunited with the body (now

***Resurrection
of Life***

wonderfully remade) and will be like Christ for all eternity - living in a glorified, resurrection body. At that moment of resurrection living believers will also be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They, together with those raised believers, will be taken to heaven to be with the Lord for ever.

The second resurrection is also known as the resurrection of damnation. (8) This is the resurrection of unbelievers. Revelation 20 describes this solemn moment (one thousand years after the first resurrection) when the bodies of the unbelieving dead are raised to stand before God. Appearing before His “great white throne” they are judged according to their works and, because their names were never recorded in the book of life, they are cast into the lake of fire (Rev.20:5a, 11-15). They have experienced the torment of Hades already in spirit. After their resurrection they go “into the furnace of fire” where there will be “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Mt.13:50).

The judgment of the Great White Throne is for unbelievers only. No true child of God will ever stand there. Instead, Paul tells us, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor.5:10) for our lives to be reviewed and our service for the Lord to be evaluated. Some will be rewarded for faithfulness; others will experience loss (1 Cor.3:12-15). This judgment, however, has nothing to do with salvation.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Death casts its shadow over so much of life, but for the Christian it remains just that - a shadow. David in his beautiful and much-loved Psalm could declare,

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me” (Ps.23:4).



There is no need to be frightened of a shadow! It can be terrifying to meet a savage dog that growls and snarls menacingly, but the *shadow* of a dog cannot harm anyone. Notice, too, that in Psalm 23 David writes about walking *through* that valley. It is not a place where anyone stays; it is just a place of passage. However, there is something even more comforting to consider - and it is this fact: ***no believer will experience that valley alone.*** Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep. He has promised that He will never leave or forsake them, and He will be with them even if they do have to tread that “valley of the shadow”. Our triumphant Saviour has overcome death’s sting! (9) No longer is death to be feared for those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

AFRAID OF DEATH

Are you afraid of death? Does a chill go through you when you think of the time when **you** will pass through “the valley of the shadow”? There is no need to fear if you are saved - but **is** Christ your Saviour? Willingly He came into this world to “taste death” for us (Heb.2:9) upon the cross. It is vital to trust Him for salvation if you have never done so, because He died for your sins. If He is your Saviour He will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb.13:5) - not even in the presence of death itself.

It is important to be ready for death because so often it comes unexpectedly. The true believer, however, waits not for death but for the coming of the Lord. Paul counted himself among the living at the Rapture (Christ’s coming for His own) when he referred to **we** “which are alive and remain” at that moment (1 Thess.4:17). Someone put it this way: “We are not looking for the undertaker but for the Up-taker” - the One who will take His people up to their heavenly Home. If you are a child of God, make the triumphant words of H.G. Spafford’s hymn your very own and rejoice in the prospect that awaits you:



***“But, Lord, ‘tis for Thee, for Thy coming, we wait;
The sky, not the grave, is our goal:
Oh, trump of the angel! oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope! Blessed rest of my soul!”*** (10)

END NOTES:- (1)1 Cor.15:6. (2)Rev.1:18. (3)Gen.35:29. (4)Eccl.12:7. (5)Eph.2:8. (6)Lk.16:23, NKJV. (7) Jn.11:43-44. (8) Jn.5:29. (9)1 Cor.15:55. (10)Hymn 274 in GOLDEN BELLS: *When peace, like a river, attendeth my way.*

Jesus said:
"I am the resurrection, and the life."
John 11:25



It all began in Toronto, Canada, on Thursday 20th January in 1994. Few people realized at the time just how significant the event would be. One journalist, some months later, reported that

"British Airways' flight BA092 took off from Toronto Airport on Thursday evening just as the Holy Spirit was landing on a small building a hundred yards from the end of the runway." (1)

"The Toronto Blessing" (as it was described) became a world-famous phenomenon. In the early days after the event thousands of visitors flocked to Toronto to witness the unusual manifestations at the Airport Vineyard, and many took "the blessing" home with them to their own churches. As a consequence, churches all over the world were affected by the event that many people have called a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

There were two parts to "The Toronto Blessing". On the one hand there were the extraordinary physical manifestations. These included falling down, uncontrollable laughter, staggering (as if drunk), trembling, jerking, jumping, writhing on the floor as if in childbirth, shadow-boxing, swimming movements,

crawling on all fours, warrior-like dancing, monkey movements, running backwards, arm-windmilling, animal noises of all kinds, and - on occasions - weeping. The list appears endless. The other part of the “blessing” consisted of claims that personal renewal had been experienced. Repentance, holiness, a love for the Lord, a love for the Scriptures, and a new desire to evangelize have all been mentioned as consequences.

MIXED REACTIONS

Reactions to “The Toronto Blessing” were mixed - to say the least. Some immediately pronounced that it was God’s great work in our day. Others spoke out against it and branded it as nothing more than a work of the flesh. Somewhere between these two opposing viewpoints were thousands of souls who did not know what to think and decided to “wait and see” before coming to any final judgment. In addition to these, some other people completely changed their assessment since first encountering the “blessing”. Perhaps the only fact beyond dispute was that the scores of books written about the phenomenon gave a real boost to many publishers’ sales figures!



Revival is, of course, something that all born-again believers should long for. The prophet Habakkuk cried, “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years” (Hab.3:2). Isaiah prayed, “Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down” (Isa.64:1). Another saint pleaded, “Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?” (Ps.85:6). While we should rejoice (2) to know that, through repentance, another believer has been brought to a greater desire for holiness and into a more fervent love for the Lord, was the movement that radiated from Toronto really *revival*?

Many people (even those favouring “The Toronto Blessing”) found some of the manifestations disturbing. Consider, for instance, the animal noises. Many times in the New Testament we are told that, as believers, we should behave like Christ. Did the Lord Jesus ever roar like a lion or bark like a dog? The question is too absurd to require an answer. Although barking or roaring are not wrong in themselves, there is nothing distinctively “Christian” about either of them. There is therefore no reason to *expect* one of Christ’s followers to produce such noises.

THE HOLY SPIRIT’S WORK

The biblical content of some of the teaching related to these unusual manifestations was equally disturbing. While a journalist might be excused for making statements that lack theological precision, it is to be deplored when pastors and teachers are found speaking without biblical accuracy. One particular area of confusion relates to the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit of God was promised by the Lord Jesus (3) and came at Pentecost (4), baptizing those early believers into the Body of Christ on that memorable day. (5) Like Calvary, Pentecost is a “once-for-all-time” event and has never been repeated. Christians today are sealed with that same Holy Spirit of promise from the moment of believing. (6) It is true, of course, that at certain times in history the Holy Spirit has been strikingly active in revivals in particular parts of the world. However, because He indwells every true child of God, the practice of calling the Holy Spirit to come (often found in these meetings) is both unnecessary and wrong.

We must not misunderstand the Holy Spirit’s work today. Before returning to heaven the Lord Jesus spoke of the Spirit’s coming and declared, “He shall glorify Me” (Jn.16:14). The Son of God is glorified through powerful preaching that exalts the Lord Jesus and draws sinners to Him in true repentance. (7) The Holy Spirit also glorifies the Saviour by producing in the lives of believers His distinctive fruit: “Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal.5:22-23). A careful reading of the gospels will make it clear that these beautiful features marked the life of the Lord Jesus. Those who are His followers should display them too.

MISSING FRUIT

To those who maintain that “The Toronto Blessing” was an undeniable work of God, it ought to be a matter of great concern that certain aspects of the Spirit’s fruit were noticeably missing. One of the pastors at the Toronto Airport Vineyard has described how his wife “took the joy” and became hysterical with laughter. When guests arrived for a meal she was unable to prepare anything, and when her husband returned home after purchasing portions of fish and chips, she tossed the hot, greasy fish to each guest as she continued laughing hysterically. (8) While joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit, so is self-control. ***The holy joy which He produces never displaces self-control.***



Any truly Christian experience will stand the test of Scripture. Many today will protest that because God is sovereign we cannot restrict Him to working in particular ways of our own choosing. “We must not be guilty of quenching the Spirit!” they warn us. While this is perfectly true, God’s ways will not contradict the principles He has laid down in His Word. Just as it is wrong to ***quench*** the Holy Spirit, so it is wrong to ***believe every spirit***. John warns us that we must test them in order to discern “whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (9) Applying Scriptural tests is perfectly reasonable.

Remember, however, that an experience is to be tested by Scripture - not Scripture to be tested by one's experience.

One particularly relevant test is found in 1 Corinthians 14:40:- "Let all things be done decently and in order." The confusion of sprawling bodies and the lighthearted frivolity often seen in meetings connected with "The Toronto Blessing" should raise questions in the mind of any honest believer.

ANALYSIS

Books supporting this "Toronto experience" often contain many personal testimonies of those who have been helped or blessed. Testimonies by themselves, however, are inadequate. Nowhere in Scripture do we find the principle that the end justifies the means. Failing to recognize this important point, many Christians (and non-Christians too) are receiving an "instant thrill" which is nothing more than an emotional substitute for the real spiritual blessing.



We must not forget the warning given by the Lord Jesus that false Christs and false prophets would arise before His return. He said that they would show "great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt.24:24). In these last days we need to be on our guard. The saying "all that glitters is not gold" may not be from the Bible, but it remains true. It is right to long for revival, but it must be in God's own way and in His time - and that will always be in accordance with His unchanging Word.

Many, through the passing years, have practically forgotten Toronto. Clearly what took place did not bear the usual hallmarks of revival. To remember it as "The Toronto Blessing" is to perpetuate a misnomer. The manifestations were hardly God-glorifying, and to suggest that they were poured out from heaven is a slight upon the holy, righteous, and perfect character of God. It might be better to remember the event which had its birthplace in Toronto as ***The Toronto Experience***. With hindsight, many of those fleshly experiences are really best forgotten.



END NOTES:- (1)*The Sunday Telegraph*, London, 19 June, 1994. (2)Rom.12:15. (3)Jn.14:16-17. (4)Acts 2. (5)Acts 1:5; 1 Cor.12:13. (6)Eph.1:13. (7)Jn.12:32; 1 Cor.2:1-5. (8)Guy Chevreau, ***Catch the Fire***, (Marshall Pickering: London, 1994) p.13-14. Jonathan Edwards is quoted extensively in this book to support the author's case. A thorough examination of Edwards' works, however, will show that Guy Chevreau is very selective in his quotations and misrepresents Jonathan Edwards. Edwards would never have approved of "The Toronto Blessing", yet some writers today give the impression that he was its founder! (9)1 Jn.4:1.

LOST!

by Martin Girard

Depending on where you are in life, to be lost can be either frightening or frustrating.

For a child, being lost can be a frightening experience. Perhaps you can recall a scene from your own childhood. You were in a busy shop one day, when the adult who was with you disappeared from sight for just a moment. It was when you happened to be looking the other way. Although it was only momentary, terror gripped your heart, and tears soon filled your eyes. You wondered whether you had been abandoned for ever!

As an adult the experience can be very different. Picture yourself on holiday - driving through an unfamiliar city in another country and getting confused by a complicated one-way system, or losing your sense of direction because there were not enough road signs. At the very least it can be frustrating and inconvenient finding that you are lost, but under some circumstances it can for a time be a terrifying ordeal.

Many people seem to be lost in *life*. They feel they lack direction and purpose and wonder why they're here. Life can be very confusing and perplexing. Is there any meaning to our existence?

Actually, God says that we are all lost! The Bible declares: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way.” (1) We have chosen our own way rather than the right way God intended for us, and we are **lost from God** because of sin. The sinful nature that we were born with causes us to commit sin and do things that God says are wrong. Because He is holy, we have become separated from Him, and in this sense we are lost.

THE GREATEST NEED

Imagine you are utterly lost, and you tell someone of your predicament. If the person kindly says, “I can help,” it is a tremendous relief. The **local** person who comes to our rescue in a foreign town is **just** the one we need, for if he has lived there all his life he will know the streets better than anyone else. Knowing that we could never find our own way back to God, the Lord Jesus Christ (God’s Son) came from Heaven “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (2) His great love brought Him into this sinful world and eventually led Him on to face a cruel cross where, as the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for us. (3)



Being lost from God, we need help in order to find Him. Like the local resident in the foreign town, the Lord Jesus is the best Person to consult. He knows all about Heaven because it is His eternal home! He knows how we can reach God too. “I am the Way,” He said. “No man cometh to the Father but by Me.” (4) What does this mean? These words tell us that there is only **one** way to approach God - and no other way. It is only through Jesus Christ who died for our sins that we can ever come back to God.

FINDING THE WAY

When help is available, you don’t need to remain lost! Although you may not be aware of it, the Lord Jesus is seeking you today. “Return to Me,” is the personal appeal God is making to **you** through His Son.(5) If you ignore His loving invitation, you may remain lost from God for ever.

The way back to God is simple. We must confess our sins to Him, admitting that we **are** lost. Each person who is aware of being lost must say honestly, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep.” (6) We must believe that Jesus bore the penalty for our sins at the cross (7) and ask Him to be our Saviour and Lord. If you do this, He will give new meaning to your life. You need not remain lost for another moment!



END NOTES:- (1)Isa.53:6. (2)Lk.19:10. (3)Jn.10:11. (4)Jn.14:6. (5)Zech.1:3. (6)Psa.119:176. (7)Isa.53:6.