

SKY-WAY MESSAGES



Pointing People Heavenward

Internet Bible Materials

VOLUME 14: CONTENTS:-

- Page 2 - REFLECTION: ***The Power of God***
- Found in "the preaching of the cross"
- Page 4 - BIBLE CHARACTERS: ***"They also Serve..."***
- Timothy and Apollos: Paul's associates
- Page 8 - UNDERSTANDING: ***"I will show you the Bride"***
- A fascinating Old Testament picture of Christ and the Church
- Page 13 - CHRISTIAN LIFE: ***Together - with Him***
- The Importance of Standing
with the People of God
- Page 18 - GOSPEL TRUTH: ***The Human Bridge***
- On the "Herald of Free Enterprise"

The Power of God

by Martin Girard

**“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”
(1 Corinthians 1:18)**

Paul, the apostle, had received a divine call to preach the gospel. He refers to this privilege and responsibility in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians. Renouncing all human wisdom, Paul relied entirely upon the power of God as he made known the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Skilful rhetoric may impress and even sway an audience, but it cannot impart spiritual life. As the work of preaching the gospel is a *spiritual* one, human effort will achieve nothing lasting. Spiritual means therefore must be used in the great task of making known the way of salvation in Christ.

It has often been said that the cross is the great divide. No neutral ground exists beneath it; we are either on one side or on the other - either for Christ or against Him. In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul compares two very distinct groups of people: those who are perishing and “us” who are saved. At one time *we* who are now saved were perishing as well, but God in His great mercy intervened and saved us by His grace. What was it that made us aware of our need and brought us to salvation? It was *the preaching of the cross*.

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

This is the message that the world needs to hear. Nothing else can provide effective help. People are perishing. Many humanitarian agencies are at work today, endeavouring to raise standards and provide clean water, nutritious food, better housing and better education. While these efforts are not to be despised and the motives behind them may be good, the results are only temporal. There is nothing of eternal value in them. Only the message of the cross can bring real hope. Yet many have no sense of need and regard the message as “foolish”. They ask: “How can we be saved without *doing* anything? How can the death of a man on a cross two thousand years ago help us today?”

The Son of God stepped out from eternity and took upon Himself a human body. He lived here on earth as a man - fully human, but without sin. Although truly Man, He never ceased to be God. Upon the cross He gave His spotless life as a sacrifice and shed His precious blood that there might be forgiveness for lost mankind.



Those who regard the preaching of the cross as “foolishness” because it calls for no self-effort, prove by their own rejection of the message that they are perishing.

NO OTHER ANSWER

Without Christ there is no hope. But when a lost sinner trusts Christ as Saviour and rests entirely on what He has done, the message of the cross becomes *the power of God*. The Crucified One, now risen and glorified in heaven, is the source of power for His people. It is a message of power because only in this way are souls set free from sin and enabled to live their lives for the glory of God.

By the Holy Spirit’s enabling, we must continue to preach the true message of the cross today. According to the Bible, there is no other way to be saved.

“the preaching of the cross is... the power of God”

1 Corinthians 1:18



The English poet, John Milton (1608-74) penned the words

They also serve who only stand and wait.

While we may consider some forms of service more important than others, those who simply “stand and wait” play their part too and should not be despised. In the New Testament we meet some who fit into the “also serve” category. Although apparently *less* significant, they were by no means insignificant.

It has been said that a large field can be seen through a small crack in the fence. In just the same way we may be surprised by how much we can learn from what at first appears to be an insignificant Scripture. When we read an epistle, for instance, we may often find ourselves thinking that there is little point on spending very much time on the closing verses. Lists of names, along with personal requests relating to specific situations from long ago, surely cannot have a great deal of relevance for us today. Or *can* they?

Three such verses at the end of Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians give us a glimpse of Christian service long ago and provide us with some points that are

still extremely relevant today. Two very different fellow-workers are described at the end of this epistle. As we consider Paul's attitude towards Timothy and Apollos we can learn some valuable and timeless lessons about Christian service.

10. Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.

11. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

12. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

(1 Corinthians 16:10-12)

TIMOTHY - MAN OF GOD

Timothy, it would seem, was of a fearful disposition. In the pastoral letters addressed to him, Paul encouraged him not to be afraid but to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (1) He was sensitive and was concerned that others should not be upset by his conduct. Perhaps this was why Paul had to urge him to "use a little wine" for the sake of his health. (2) Some tended to despise him because he was young. (3) As a more experienced servant of the Lord, how did Paul view the service of his son in the faith? (4)

From his desk in Ephesus (some 250 miles away from him across the Aegean Sea) Paul thought of his young friend Timothy visiting the Corinthians. He knew the fear that often gripped Timothy's heart. If Timothy arrived in Corinth and did not feel "at home" there, his ministry might be ineffective. Much depended on the Corinthians' attitude. They could make things easier for the young worker by ensuring that he was welcomed among them and not left to feel like an outsider. Lovingly, therefore, Paul instructed the Corinthians to receive him in such a way that he would be "without fear" in their company (1 Cor.16:10). According to the Amplified Bible, they were to "put him at ease." Then Paul added the warm commendation that Timothy - just like Paul himself - was involved in the work of the Lord. As far as Paul was concerned, Timothy was no threat. He also was in the Master's service and was owned by Him.



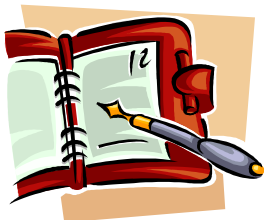
APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

These two thoughts are worth pondering: servants of the Lord need to be both welcomed and recognized. How do we treat the missionaries and full-time Christian workers that we know? When they visit a church fellowship are they

made to feel at home, or are they made to feel that people are eyeing them with suspicion and expecting more than is humanly possible from them? If you are an older Christian, how do you regard the younger worker? Do you see him as a threat to your position? Paul was a man with a generous heart and entertained no such thoughts. There is room for *all* in the Lord's service! How good it is to find an older Christian giving encouragement to a younger one and saying to others, "He is also involved in the Lord's work, just as I am."

Timothy might be young, but he was doing a great work. It would be wrong to treat him with contempt. "Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren" (1 Cor.16:11). Paul knew what it was to be neglected by others. He did not want Timothy to suffer unnecessarily in this way, hence the instruction to the Corinthians to ensure that he left with such provisions as were needed. Notice too that Paul was waiting for Timothy "with the brethren". Companionship and fellowship in service are both vital. Although "the brethren" here are not named, both Paul and Timothy valued them. The same should be true today.

WHAT ABOUT APOLLOS?



The second fellow-worker named here provides us with additional insights as we see how Paul regarded other labourers for the Lord. Paul told the Corinthians that he had "greatly desired (Apollos) to come unto you with the brethren." However, Apollos did not think the time was right just then. "He will come when he shall have convenient time," Paul added (1 Cor.16:12).

Apollos had begun his ministry in Ephesus, the place where Paul was now staying. (5) After a period of service in Achaia (where Corinth was located) he had moved on. (6) Paul knew that factions existed in the Church at Corinth, and some of the believers gave their allegiance to Apollos. (7) Perhaps the Corinthians had written to Paul about Apollos - which would account for the wording, "Now concerning our brother Apollos..." (NKJV) What could Paul say about him?

Two important points emerge from this verse. Firstly, *Paul was not at all jealous of Apollos*. The fact that some at Corinth favoured him more than Paul did not mean that Paul would do all he could to keep Apollos away. Quite the reverse: Paul had "greatly desired" Apollos to travel to Corinth - something he would never have done if he had been jealous of him and had regarded Corinth as his own "patch". In fact, he had done all he could to encourage Apollos to make the

journey. However, Apollos would *not* be persuaded - and here is the second important lesson. *Apollos was a servant of the Lord in his own right.* He was accountable to the Master and not to Paul. Doubtless he had prayed about it when Paul mentioned the idea to him, but the conclusion he reached was clear. The time was not “convenient” just then, possibly because it did not fit in with his other plans. (Perhaps the factions in the church would only be made worse.) When the Lord clearly opened the door, Apollos would make the journey.

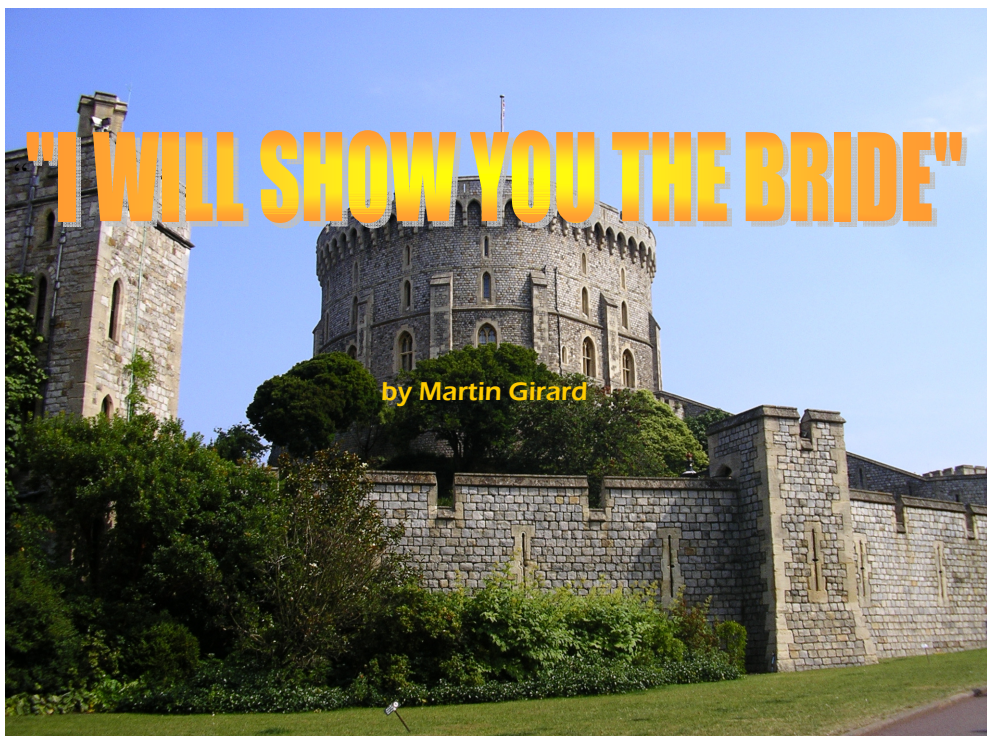
NOT JEALOUS

Just as Timothy was no threat to him, so Paul was not the slightest bit jealous of Apollos. One of the most potentially damaging things in Christian service is envy. It is described in Scripture as “rotteness of the bones” (8). Indeed, “Who is able to stand before envy?” (9) We must ask God for the grace to recognize others of His servants, and we must rejoice when he sees fit to use them - even if it appears to be at our expense.

Each servant is accountable to the Master above - whether Paul, Apollos, you, or me. One Christian today may urge another to pursue a course that seems right. The other, like Apollos, may be unwilling. That need not cause any disagreement. As God’s servant you must be guided by Him - and you should pray for the one who sees his responsibilities differently and doesn’t recognize your “vision” as his own call from the Lord. Remember an important principle from the Psalms: “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach His way.” (10)

END NOTES:- (1)2 Tim.1:7-8; 2:1. (2)1 Tim.5:23. (3)1 Tim.4:12. (4)1 Tim.1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2. (5)Acts 18:24-26. (6)Acts 18:27 & 19:1. (7)1 Cor.1:12. (8)Prov.14:30. (9)Prov.27:4. (10)Ps.25:9.





After the turbulent scenes of judgment in the book of Revelation, the reader enters a great calm in the final two chapters. The Apostle John describes his vision of a new heaven and a new earth where there is no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. (1) An angel then appears with the invitation:- “Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” (2) John is transported in the Spirit to a great and high mountain from where he views this object of indescribable beauty. What is this “bride” - described in terms of a magnificent city?

Perhaps this question can best be answered by turning to a passage in the Old Testament. God, in His wisdom, has preserved there a fascinating story that provides us with a perfect illustration. In Genesis 24 we have the story of the search for a bride. Seven features in the chapter are particularly worthy of our careful attention, for they teach us some profound truths.

1. THE FATHER’S PLAN (Genesis 24: 1-9)

Abraham was an old man now. God had blessed him richly and had promised him many descendants, but his son Isaac had no wife. Knowing that a bride must be found for Isaac, Abraham called his servant and gave him strict instructions to search among Abraham’s own relatives in far-off Mesopotamia for a suitable

woman. The servant was told categorically that the bride must be brought back. On no account must Isaac settle with her in that distant land.

In this story Abraham resembles God the Father who planned that His Son should have a companion. Isaac, the bridegroom, reminds us of the Lord Jesus. (John the Baptist spoke of the Lord Jesus in terms of a bridegroom in John 3:28-29), Rebekah, introduced later in the story, is a picture of the true Church. (The Church, of course, is made up of every born-again believer.) The servant, as we will see, is very much like the Holy Spirit.

Just as we read of Abraham's plan in the opening verses of Genesis 24 so in the New Testament we find God the Father's plan. His "Servant" (the Holy Spirit) is to "take out" from the nations of the world "a people for His Name". (3) In the same way that Abraham purposed that the bride for Isaac should leave the land of her birth, God's plan is that those who love the Lord Jesus should be delivered "from this present evil world". (4) How vital it is that we live daily in anticipation of the moment when we shall be taken to the Father's house. (5)

God's Plan

2. THE SERVANT'S MISSION (Genesis 24: 10-21)

It would appear that the honoured servant entrusted with Abraham's goods was Eliezer. (He is mentioned in Genesis 15:2.) With his master's plan before him, the servant departed for far-off Mesopotamia in search of a bride for Isaac. Reaching his destination one evening, he prayed earnestly that God would direct him in such a way that there would be no doubt. Before he had finished praying, an attractive young woman appeared and offered - to his joy - not only to give him water but also to provide for the thirsty camels too. As she worked industriously the servant watched, wondering if she was indeed the answer to his prayer.

In order to secure a bride for His Son God sent His Servant, the Holy Spirit, from heaven. (6) His work is to convict sinners and bring them into the blessings of salvation through the new birth.

(7) Very much like the woman in the parable who lost her silver coin, He is disturbing the dust of sin as He searches diligently for lost sinners. (8)

the Holy Spirit

3. THE ENGAGEMENT GIFT (Genesis 24: 22-27)

By now the servant had no doubt in his mind that this was the woman he had been sent to find. In accordance with the custom of his day he presented Rebekah (for that was her name) with a ring and bracelets. From verse 22 we can deduce something of the value of the gift.

In the very same way the Holy Spirit has a gift for the Bride of Christ. The moment we believe we are "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." (9) In fact,

the expression “the earnest” in 2 Corinthians 1:22 literally means an engagement ring. What a precious gift we have been given - none other than God’s own Holy Spirit Himself to live within our hearts!

4. THE SERVANT - NO PROMINENCE (Genesis 24: 29-36)

welcomed

At this stage in the story two points can be noted concerning the servant. Firstly, although Laban’s motives may not have been altogether honourable, he *did* welcome the servant into his home, (v.31). Is the Holy Spirit truly welcome in our lives? Is He Sovereign, permitted to control all areas? He should be.

Secondly, we notice that the servant remained just that - a servant. He sought no prominence for himself. Throughout the entire narrative his name is not mentioned once! He is simply called “Abraham’s servant”

to glorify Christ

(v.34). How like the blessed Holy Spirit this is! He never seeks to glorify Himself. His one purpose is to glorify Christ.

(10) Like Abraham’s servant who spoke of all his master’s wealth, the Holy Spirit seeks to engage us with divine realities so that we will be enabled to worship the Father. (11) Abraham’s servant also spoke much of Isaac, the heir. “Unto him hath he (my master, Abraham) given all that he hath,” he explained, (v.36). In the very same way the Holy Spirit delights to exalt the Lord Jesus, the “heir of all things.” (12) We are plainly told that God has put “all things” into His hands. (13)

5. A BRIDE PREPARED (Genesis 24: 50-53)

When the servant was permitted to take Rebekah to Isaac, various preparations had to take place. Further gifts were given to Rebekah as well as clothing for the journey. The New Testament tells us that the Holy Spirit has given further gifts to the Bride of Christ, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (14)

the garments of salvation

Like Rebekah we, too, have been clothed. Every believer can say, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.” (15) We could never meet our Bridegroom without these garments from His own wardrobe, and Christ Himself is our righteousness. (16)

6. TRAVELLING HOME (Genesis 24: 56-58 & 61)

Abraham’s servant did not want to be delayed. The Lord had prospered his journey, and it was time for the bride to be travelling with him. Would she be

prepared to leave her family and accompany this man into the unknown? To her eternal credit and to the servant's joy she said, simply, "I will go," (v.58). This is exactly where we find ourselves now. In a sense, the previous features of the story are past. The Church at the present time is travelling home to where the Bridegroom is. We are strangers and pilgrims in this world. (17)

It is lovely to see how Rebekah in the story "followed the man" (v.61). She had to exercise faith for she had never seen her bridegroom. Similarly today the individual members of the Bride are "led by the Spirit of God" (18). No doubt Rebekah had many questions to ask the servant about Isaac. If she had appeared disinterested, how disappointed that servant would have been! As we travel heaven-bound, the Holy Spirit seeks to occupy our hearts with the Lord Jesus so that we will love our Bridegroom more. Let us not be guilty of grieving the Spirit by our disinterest in the One we are going to meet. (19)

led by
God's Spirit

7. A HAPPY ENDING (Genesis 24: 62-67)

At last the journey was over. Isaac had gone out into the field in the evening to meditate. When he saw the camels approaching, he hurried over to greet the travellers. Rebekah was presented to him, and Isaac was told all that had happened, (v.66). This beautiful story ends with Isaac taking Rebekah as his wife, loving her, and finding her to be an ideal companion, (v.67).



There are many indications that we are living in the evening time of this world's history. At any moment our glorious Bridegroom is going to come from heaven to receive His Bride, the Church. Those precious words in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 describe how we will be caught up to be for ever with the Lord. Just as Isaac was told of all the earlier events,

meeting
our
Bridegroom

believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that their lives on earth can be reviewed. (20) Then those joyful words will ring out:- "Let us be glad and rejoice ... for the marriage of the Lamb is come..." (21).

The One who loved the Church and gave Himself for it, will present it to Himself as a glorious Church without any blemish whatever. (22) Our Lord Jesus will then "see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." (23)

caught up to be for ever with the Lord

Anticipating that day when the Lord Himself will have all the glory, Mrs. A.R. Cousin took the words of Samuel Rutherford and wrote:-

*"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace;
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."* (24)

What a glorious future lies before us! The One who died for us longs for the day when we shall be at home with Him in the Father's house. (25) Do we long to be with Him? If we do, we will echo from our hearts, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (26)

END NOTES:- (1)Rev.21:1,4. (2)Rev.21:9. (3)Acts 15:14. (4)Gal.1:4. (5)Jn.14:2. (6)Jn.16:7. (7)Jn.16:8 & 3:3. (8)Lk.15:8-10. (9)Eph.1:13. (10)Jn.16:13b-14. (11)Jn.4:24. (12)Heb.1:2. (13)Jn.13:3. (14)Eph.4:12, NKJV. (15)Isa.61:10. (16)1 Cor.1:30. (17)1 Pet.2:11. (18)Rom.8:14. (19)Eph.4:30. (20)2 Cor.5:10. (21)Rev.19:7. (22)Eph.5:25-27. (23)Isa.53:11. (24)PSALMS AND HYMNS & SPIRITUAL SONGS: Hymn 384 *The sands of time are sinking*. (25)Jn.14:2-3 & 17:24. (26)Rev.22:20.





"TOGETHER - WITH HIM"

by Martin Girard

It was a fine afternoon for the funeral service. About sixty people had gathered around the grave of a dear man of God to pay their last respects and to commit the mortal remains to the Lord until that glorious resurrection day. Christians from different church traditions and denominations stood *together*. On an occasion like this, differences seemed to have little significance. Together, those present at the grave-side wanted to support a grieving widow and provide comfort for a family in a time of deep distress.

Away from the grave (all by themselves) five people stood watching the proceedings. They had not attended the earlier service indoors. Their manner of dress was distinctive - and their beliefs must have been distinctive as well. Although they professed to be Christians, they had no wish to be identified with other believers that day and had little interest in talking to anyone else. What set these people apart?

A study of the New Testament will make it very plain that God's great purpose for His blood-bought people is that they should be *together*. The Lord Jesus, in His beautiful high-priestly prayer recorded in John 17 prayed "that they all may be one" (v.21). He uttered these words shortly before He faced the agony of the

cross. That prayer will, assuredly, be answered. When the Lord Himself descends from heaven to claim His Church, “the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” (1) Notice that “the dead in Christ” *and* those who are alive upon earth at His coming will be caught up *together*. No true believer will be left behind. The redeemed family will be complete.

We understand this, but things are not like that just now. The Church seems fragmented. Although we should be able to sing whole-heartedly, “We are not divided, all one body we...” (which is how God sees us), often it would be more appropriate to confess, “We are all divided, many bodies we...” What can we do? With whom can we walk along the Christian pathway?

JOHN'S LESSON

There is an interesting little incident recorded in Luke's Gospel, chapter 9. Peter, James, and John had had an unforgettable experience. Together with the Lord Jesus, they had climbed a mountain and had seen their Master transfigured before their very eyes. A voice from the heavens had spoken, telling them: “Hear Him!” (v.35). Descending from that holy place they had watched their Master heal a demon-possessed child and had heard Him tell of His coming death at Jerusalem.



But how quickly they forgot to *really* “hear Him”! Within moments they were arguing among themselves as to which of them would be the greatest. Lovingly and patiently the Saviour showed them the need for humility. True greatness meant being the least and receiving a little child in His Name. Now notice the next incident in Luke's account.

John had been indignant. A man had been casting out demons in the Name of the Lord Jesus. What audacity! It did not seem right to John. The man was not even one of “the twelve”! Surely he had to be stopped - and so John forbade him “because he followeth not with us” (v.49). Perhaps the incident had taken place some time earlier. The Saviour had mentioned “My Name” (v.48), and this possibly had caused John to recall the man who had invoked that lovely Name. Whenever it had happened, John now brought the matter to the attention of the Lord Jesus. John, it would appear, was pleased with what he had done. By his actions he had defended his Master and the little group of disciples.

This incident should speak volumes to us today. Sectarianism is a dreadful ill. To John and his fellow-disciples, what mattered most was being “with us”. The man did not follow “with us” and must therefore be wrong. Times have not really changed. It is all too easy to adopt the same spirit today and judge others

according to whether or not they are “with us”. Such distinctions can be motivated by pride. But there also seems to be a trace of jealousy here as well. While “the twelve” had been unable to cast out a demon (v.40), an unknown disciple (who was not in “their” group) had, apparently, been more successful. John did not report that the man was *trying* to cast out demons in Jesus’ Name but that he *was* “casting out” demons. Could it be that the “success” of this man provoked a spirit of jealousy in John and his fellow-disciples?

The Lord Jesus had only one answer for John. “Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us” (v.50). The man was not an enemy: he was a friend! He was doing the Master’s work. It did not matter in the slightest that he did not follow “with us”. The important thing was that *he was following* - and God was using him.



Some are quick to point out that Jesus did not tell His disciples to go and work *with* this man in order to enjoy more success. This is true. However, John had certainly acted wrongly. The man should not have been rebuked but *received*. Had not the Saviour just said, “Whosoever shall receive this child in My Name receiveth Me” (v.48)? Let us not forget these words.

“WITH WHOM CAN I WALK?”

We must return to the question, “With whom can we walk along the Christian pathway?” It is possible to approach this matter negatively and to *look* for problems. As believers we should be more ready to *include* than to *exclude*. “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom.15:7). John should have received the unnamed disciple whom, sadly, he rebuked. We should receive those who desire to have fellowship with us “to the glory of God” God Himself has graciously received us through the work of His dear Son. As a consequence it is our responsibility to receive others of His children whom we may never have met before. We do this to His glory.



However, there are things that must not be misunderstood. Exclusivism is wrong - but so is ecumenism. Because we are to receive one another, it does not follow that we cast doctrine aside, wipe away all differences, and join in with every ecumenical project around. All too often the “ecumenical movement” has no doctrinal foundation and is simply concerned with “Christians” (so-called) working “together”. How can truly evangelical Bible-believing Christians work with those who deny the fundamental truths of the Gospel? It simply cannot be done - unless we are prepared to betray the very gospel we profess to believe. This is the weakness of the current “Churches Together” movement which can be found in many of Britain’s towns and cities.

Doctrine *is* important. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 Jn.10). We might add, with the support of other Scriptures, do not receive him into your local church. (Early believers met in people’s homes.) John draws our attention to keeping “His commandments” and to abiding in “the doctrine of Christ” (2 Jn.6,9) - which has special reference to the Incarnation of our Lord (2 Jn.7).

We must be careful not to go beyond the bounds of Scripture. We are not to expect every believer to agree with every *tradition* of ours. The Pharisees, in particular, were condemned for their adherence to “the traditions of men”. The Word of God had been displaced by their traditions which became the “commandments” they taught (2). We must not have the Pharisaical spirit. On some matters Christians have always seen things differently. Perhaps, without realizing it, tradition has affected the minds of us all. We must seek out the truth of God’s Word and be glad to walk in true fellowship with those who hold “the doctrine of Christ”.

*right doctrine
matters!*

BELIEF AND BEHAVIOUR



In the church at Corinth a case of gross immorality had arisen. A professing believer was guilty of immoral behaviour. The occasion was used by Paul to teach them (and us) some vital Scriptural principles of fellowship.

We are told quite plainly that we must not “keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (1 Cor.5:11). Here is one who may have the doctrine of Christ in his head - but he certainly does not hold it in his heart! If Christians fall into any of these gross sins we are ordered to have nothing to do with them. Their lives are a disgrace, bringing the gospel of Christ into disrepute. We have been called to be holy (3).

The sins listed are all characteristics of the unrighteous who will not inherit the kingdom of God. They are absolutely inappropriate therefore in the lives of those who have been washed, sanctified, and justified (4). According to Scripture, the one guilty of such sin (and continuing in it) must be excluded from fellowship in order to make him see the seriousness of his sin. Thankfully, the man at Corinth who had fallen so badly *did* repent. He was therefore to be forgiven, comforted, and received back into fellowship (5). Church discipline must always have in view the longed-for repentance and ultimate restoration of the erring one.

*continuing
in sin*

PRINCIPLES FOR FELLOWSHIP

With whom can we walk along the Christian pathway? The Word of God tells us to avoid those who are unsound in doctrine or whose lives are a denial of the Gospel. Apart from these two exceptions we should gladly recognize and receive all God's true people.

Tensions and differences of opinion do arise, of course. John warned the self-opinionated Diotrephes that he would deal with him for his bombastic and authoritarian ways (6). One cannot imagine John being able to walk happily in fellowship with that man!

At Philippi a difficulty had arisen between two sisters. Paul pleaded with them to "be of the same mind in the Lord" (7). Thinking of that church with so much to commend it, Paul exhorted believers to lead lives that were worthy of the gospel of Christ. His greatest concern was that he might hear that they were standing fast in one spirit, "with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel," (Phil.1:27).

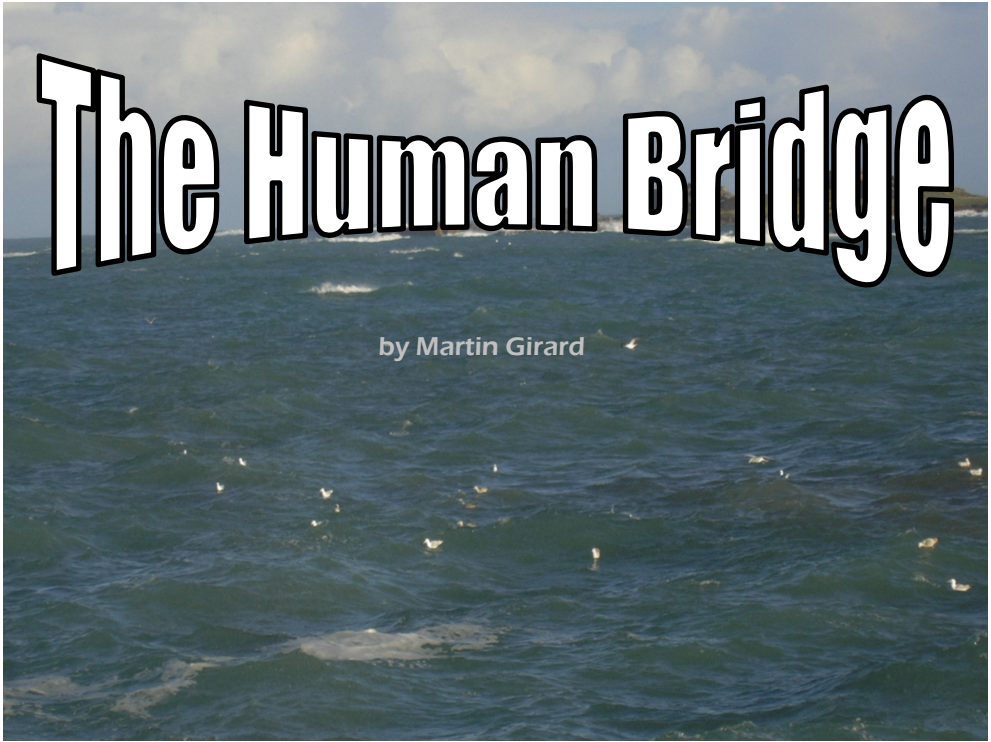
**standing
together**

We must not be guilty of taking from Scripture or of adding to it. Truth and tradition are not always identical. The "us" mentality displayed long ago by John must be abandoned! True believers are "all one in Christ Jesus" (8). At the same time we have to recognize that not everything described as "Christian" truly glorifies Christ. The Word of God must be studied carefully to discover whether or not it is right to take part, for instance, in a particular inter-church venture. A God-fearing believer will only want to be involved if he is absolutely assured that the activity is built upon a proper foundation. Without a clear doctrinal basis that spells out plainly the fundamental truths relating to Christ and salvation, there will eventually be compromise. If liberal churches (that do not proclaim the Gospel clearly and have both believers and unbelievers in membership) are involved in the activity, as far as the individual believer is concerned there are no real grounds for fellowship or involvement. Christ is the Head of the Church, and the aim of the believer must always be to glorify Him.

**a right
foundation**

One day all who are genuinely saved will be *together* - with Him. Until then, by God's grace, let us value the family into which we have been brought and seek to encourage those who are walking in the fear of God.

END NOTES:- (1)1 Thess.4:16-17. (2)Mk.7:7-8. (3)1 Pet.1:15. (4)1 Cor.6:9-11. (5)2 Cor.2:7. (6)3 Jn.9-10. (7)Phil.4:2. (8)Gal.3:28.



The Human Bridge

by Martin Girard

Many people have not forgotten the night of Friday 6th March, 1987, when the ferry *Herald of Free Enterprise* capsized so quickly after leaving the Belgian port of Zeebrugge. During those terrifying hours on board the ship, some tremendous acts of heroism were recorded.

SO BRAVE

Perhaps the most amazing story after the disaster was of the tall man who became a “human bridge” in order to save the lives of other people. Undaunted by the darkness and the icy waters all around him, this brave man placed his strong body across a great chasm so that fellow-passengers might clamber over him to safety. Because he risked his own life, twenty people admitted afterwards that they owed their lives to him.

This incident very aptly illustrates the Christian message of the Gospel. People on the ferry were in danger and needed a bridge to reach safety. **We** are in danger too - the danger of perishing and being eternally separated from God. This danger is infinitely more serious. The Bible tells us that our sins have separated us from God (1). We need a “bridge” to enable us to come back to Him.

SO READY TO HELP

Someone knew what had to be done. The Lord Jesus Christ came willingly from heaven into this world to make that way back to God possible. Facing the darkness of sin and the cold waters of death, He laid down His life and died in our place at Calvary to “bring us to God” (2). This “Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (3) was truly a “human bridge”.

Yet He was more than just a man, for He was “God manifest in the flesh.” (4)



In spite of the tall man's great courage, those who wanted to be saved could only reach safety by climbing over his body. It is the same with God's salvation in Jesus Christ. The only ones who are saved are those who “cross the bridge” - placing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sadly, many consider it too degrading to trust in the Man who died for them upon the cross. Others do not realize that they are in danger and so remain where they are. If, reading this article, you are in that position, is it not time that you “stepped across”?

THE ONLY BRIDGE

Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” (5) We cannot come to God any other way than by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Bible makes this very clear (6).



We must reach the point where we are prepared to say, “I need to be saved.” Do you believe that the death of Jesus Christ was for you? Will you accept what He has done and trust in Him? Very simply, will you ask Him to save you? Out of great love for us, the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and died in our place. He did not **remain** dead, however. Just as He had promised, He rose from the dead bodily and was **seen** to be alive again. He is alive today and will save all who call upon Him.

END NOTES:- (1)Isa.59:2. (2)1 Pet.3:18. (3)1 Tim.2:5. (4)1 Tim.3:16. (5)Jn.14:6. (6)Acts 4:12.

"One Mediator... the Man Christ Jesus"

1 Timothy 2:5