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The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ

Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. 1 Peter 1:8

The life of Christianity consists very much in our love to Christ. Without love to Christ, we are as much without spiritual life as a carcass when the soul is fled from it is without natural life. Faith without love to Christ is a dead faith; and a Christian without love to Christ is a dead Christian, dead in sins and trespasses. Without love to Christ, we may have the name of Christians, but we are wholly without the nature. We may have the form of godliness, but are wholly without the power. 'Give me thine heart' is the language of God to all the children of men (Prov. 23:26). And 'give me thy love' is the language of Christ to all His disciples.

Christ knows the command and influence which love to Him, in the truth and strength of it, has. It will engage all the other affections of His disciples for Him, that if He have their love, their desires will be chiefly after Him. Their delights will be chiefly in Him, their hopes and expectations will be chiefly from Him; their hatred, fear, grief, anger will be carried forth chiefly to sin, as it is offensive to Him. He knows that love will engage and employ for Him all the powers and faculties of their souls; their thoughts will be brought into captivity and obedience unto Him; their understandings will be employed in seeking and finding out His truths; their memories will be receptacles to retain them; their consciences will be ready to accuse and excuse as His faithful deputies; their wills

will choose and refuse, according to His direction and revealed pleasure.

All their senses and the members of their bodies will be His servants. Their eyes will see for Him, their ears will hear for Him, their tongues will speak for Him, their hands will work for Him, their feet will walk for Him. All their gifts and talents will be at His devotion and service. If He has their love, they will be ready to do for Him what He requires. They will suffer for Him whatever He call them to. If they have much love to Him, they will not think much of denying themselves, taking up His cross, and following wherever He leads them; love to Christ then being essential to true Christianity, so earnestly looked for by our Lord and Master, so powerfully commanding in the soul and over the whole man, so greatly influential on our duty. I have made choice to treat this subject of love to Christ, and my chief endeavor herein shall be to excite and provoke Christians unto the lively and vigorous exercise of this grace of love into the Lord Jesus Christ, of which incentive there is great and universal need.

Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)

News of the Fellowship

An after church fellowship was held on the Lord's Day evening 1st May. We sang some favourite hymns along with practicing lesser known ones and their tunes. We tried an alternative tune to 'Christian Hymns' no. 152 "Tis the church triumphant singing" and further practiced 451 "Ye that know the Lord is gracious", 621 "Thou whose Name is called Jesus" and 763 "Whate'er ny God ordains is right". The next after church will be held, God willing, on the Lord's

Day 7th September and will be led by the Rev. Dafydd Morris.

Sadly it was felt necessary to cancel the church Barbeque scheduled to be held on the manse lawn 20th June due to uncertain weather conditions.

On the weekend of 21st/22nd June Rev. Pfeiffer preached at the Anniversary Services of Coedpoeth Evangelical Church, Wrexham. Here at Peniel we were served by Mr Alex Hutter from Tabernacle, Cardiff who is being considered for the work of the ministry.

The Christian Worship hymn book project is on schedule. The trustees give thanks to God for His enabling and provision. The hymn book will contain a complete metrical psalter and over one thousand traditional hymns. There will also be the inclusion of over thirty additional Welsh hymn tunes. The website for the project is now up and running and can be found at www.christian-worship.org.uk. The deacons have agreed to support this project with a gift of £500. This work is of vital importance as the old Christian Hymns hymn book will not be re-printed.

The following report is given of the annual Sunday School outing "Excited members of the Sunday School boarded the coach at 9.30am 5th July, at Peniel Green Chapel. After Rev. Pfeiffer prayed for the Lord's blessing to be on us during the day, we set off for our annual outing. Once again the destination for the trip was Folly Farm, near Tenby, only this year the sun cream and sunglasses were swapped for macs and umbrellas!

Whilst last year we enjoyed the open-air facilities in glorious sunshine, this year we equally enjoyed the many indoor facilities because of the rain and wind outside, which we knew little about.

Feeding the animals in the big barn is always a huge attraction, and we waited with great anticipation for the goats to arrive with their feeding bottles. It was then off to the hayrick for a jumping session in the straw before tucking into our packed lunches. Both young and old enjoyed the carousel, swing boats, caterpillar and many of the Victorian rides before encountering the new enormous



indoor adventure play-ground where the children could run and play quite freely and safely.

The icing on the cake was the purchase of a tub of ice-cream for everyone before returning to the coach. Soon exhaustion set in as we relaxed or slept on the way home." - Marge

On the Lord's Day 13th July the Sunday School held a tea to mark the last Sunday School before the summer recess. We pray that the Lord will bring the children back in September. To that end Sunday School visitation will be conducted prior to the commencement of classes in September.

In July we sent our half yearly church tithed support to the following: European Missionary Fellowship for Dawid Koziel, Andrew Birch and Antonio de Noia; Eastern European relief support via Mrs Marge Norris; Trinitarian Bible Society; Protestant Truth Society and the Protestant Alliance.

In July some folk from the church attended the School of Theology at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London.

We continue to uphold in prayer those who have been unwell including Jane Hughes and Avril Edwards. May God bless and comfort them.

We would especially pray for Lyn Hopkins who is once again in hospital. Pam has asked to give thanks to the church for upholding them in prayer through this very trying time, they are both very aware of the Lord's presence. She also sent this letter:

“Dear Rev. Pfeiffer, brothers and sisters.

Lyn and I wish to thank all of you who were able to attend our recent 70th birthday celebration. It was a lovely day, despite the weather!

Collecting for the Parkinson's Society proved a good idea; we raised over £400. Thank you once again. The money will, I am sure, help to find a cure for this debilitating illness.

As you are aware, Lyn is terminally ill. This has come as a shock to us all. Sadly, his chemotherapy treatment is delayed due to an underlying infection. Your prayers have been most welcome and prayers do get answered.

As a family we are trying to keep strong for Lyn. I know that my strength comes from the Lord and I know He will not let me down. Please continue to pray for Lyn's salvation.

God bless you all.

Pam”

The following letter was received from the Parkinson's Centre:

“Dear Pam & Lyn

On behalf of myself, Dr Weiser, Dr Thomas and all the Team here at the Parkinson's Centre may I extend our deep gratitude for the very generous donation recently given to us. As the money was raised by your joint 70th birthdays it is a testament to how popular you both are in collecting £400.

The money will be placed in the Parkinson's Trust Fund and as you are aware it will be used purely for the benefit of those with Parkinson's and their families.

Again thank you so much for your very generous gesture.

Kindest regards.

Mrs M Thomas-Moran”

We offer our congratulations to Mrs Emily Gledhill for achieving her Diploma in Health Care Studies and also to Bethan Pfeiffer and Robbie David on their A level results. May God bless them in their future endeavours.

The church annual general meeting witnessed the end of an era with the announcement of the retirement of our church organist Mr Ron Williams.



Mr Williams commenced this role in 1985 and has therefore served the church for 23 years. Many in the church will not be able to remember the days before his tenure.

Mr Williams was born and raised in a godly home. He especially remembers that his grandmother was a woman of prayer. His grandfather would act as the precentor in the Aberaman Pentecostal Assembly near Aberdare. In those days something of the 1904 revival remained.

Mr Williams was converted at the age of thirteen and this coincided with beginning accordion lessons with Mr W. R. Thomas. He played in concerts and especially remembers assisting in open-air meetings. From the accordion he developed a particular interest in playing the organ. He was already familiar with this instrument as the family had one at home. He played at the age of fifteen at a wedding in Tintern. After a spell as a greengrocer he went down the 'mine' and worked in three pits, the last being in Glynneath. In due course he met and married Gwen and they had four children. In those early days they clearly saw the hand of the Lord in the healing of their daughter Margaret who had been diagnosed with the disease Huntington's chorea. The church in Glynneath held all night prayer meetings to pray for her.

Mr Williams was involved in the construction of the church in Glynneath which in the early days had a congregation ranging between sixty and eighty and a strong Sunday School. Sadly, under a new young minister, the church changed radically and a large number of people left, including Mr and Mrs Williams. On the way down to Mount Pleasant Chapel, Swansea, their attention was drawn by a large number of cars on Peniel Green Road outside the chapel. Curiosity drew them

into the chapel where they found a large congregation, a warm welcome, the preaching of the Gospel and Mr Don Rowlands who showed them to their seats

“Pray without Ceasing”

Notes from a recent Bible Study and Prayer meeting on 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Here is a command for the church as a gathered assembly. We have often viewed this call as addressed to the individual but note the following:

1. The verb 'to pray' in the original is in the plural. It effectively means you pray as a people corporately.

2. Also the other commands here have to do with the people of God as an assembly e.g. “Quench not the Spirit” (v.19) and “Despise not prophesyings.” (v.20).

There is a command then from the Lord for the church. This command cannot be fulfilled unless the people of God meet together for prayer. The New Testament Church was a praying church. This was so before Pentecost (Acts 1:14), at Pentecost (Acts 2:1) and after Pentecost (Acts 2:32, 4:24 etc). A declining prayer meeting evidences a church that is declining in spiritual life and zeal.

Why is it so important to fulfil this command to “Pray without ceasing”?

1. Firstly because it is so central to the welfare of the church. There we receive grace and strength. William Cowper's hymn puts it:

Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy seat;
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.

Here may we prove the power of prayer
To strengthen faith and sweeten care;
To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all Heaven before our eyes.

Lord, we are few, but Thou art near;
Nor short Thine arm, nor deaf Thine ear;
O rend the heavens, come quickly down,
And make a thousand hearts Thine own!

At the prayer meeting we meet with God. There we make our requests known. There the concerns of the church are addressed. Strong prayer meetings make strong churches.

2. By prayer we thank the Lord as a church for mercies received. You note that this command to pray is followed in (v.18) with the words “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

A church gathered for prayer is showing its gratitude to the Lord for His goodness. Only one leper returned to give thanks to the Lord. Sadly there are many who fail to imitate him.

3. Praying together is an expression of unity. We see in Acts 1:14 “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” and the same again in Acts 2:1 “they were all with one accord in one place”. We note also the effects of the outpouring of the Spirit and Peter’s preaching in Acts 2:42 “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Surely it is especially at the throne of grace that we unite, bearing one another’s burdens, weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15). Praying together is essential for church unity and harmony.

4. It is important that we fulfil this command for the success of the Gospel. Here we pray that the Lord would send out

labourers into His harvest field. In 2 Thessalonians 3:1 Paul requests “pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you”.

Can there be a greater activity in the week than uniting with the people of God at the church prayer meeting?

CONFORMING TO THE WORLD

Rev. D. P Morris

At the outset I might just establish the spirit in which we seek to speak about these things. I have not come here to be ‘holier than thou’, and we should certainly not act in any way as if we have succeeded in beating the problem of worldliness. Speaking personally, I feel I am worldly enough as I am, and I don’t want to get worse. There are trends and there are movements in the churches today which are seeking to promote worldliness, and it behoves us to be sad about these things, to mourn about these things, and to confess them – you remember the ninth chapter of Daniel, and the way that Daniel prayed on behalf of the whole nation; perhaps he was not guilty himself, but he prayed on the behalf of the whole nation, and we identify with the churches, as we see these various things that have come in; we seek to confess and repent, to shy away from the things that have come in, and to seek to warn others concerning them.

WHAT IS WORLDLINESS?

The ‘world’ is used in various senses in Scripture, but the ‘world’ in which we are speaking tonight means the outlook and the mentality and the organisation of life apart from God. So God is left out, and then, of

course, nature pours a vacuum, and the devil and man take His place. This 'world' which we are speaking about, the world in its moral sense, it follows its own wisdom and lives by the light of its own reason; and there are leading characteristics of worldliness, we are told in Scripture: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; these lusts meaning these strong passions. They lead men to enthrone something other than God: pleasures, occupations, ideas; these are ensued, and God does not enter into the picture at all. That's the world.

We are told in Scripture, in James 4:4, that to love the world is to be an enemy of God. In 1 John 21:5: 'Love not the world' – that is in its moral sense. We are told in that context that it is passing away. We are to keep ourselves as Christians unspotted from the world – James 1:27. And Paul, in Romans 12:2 says that we are not to be conformed to this world. So there it is quite clearly put forth for us. And if churches do conform to the world, there will be no reason for their existence, and, indeed, they will be tools in the hands of the enemy; and there is such a church becoming a synagogue of Satan; and one way on which that can happen is by an infiltration of worldliness into a church – that is the opinions and the ways and the desires and the priorities and the ambitions and the methods of the world coming into the churches weakening them and softening them and rocking them from within. And so what we are talking about practically is people such as ourselves being got at through the media, through the education system, through absorbing the attitudes and the ways of those around us that are unsaved.

Now it seems to me that many of the features of modern evangelicalism are traceable to movements in the world, and if this is true, then we are in a very bad state

indeed. Now it does surprise me, to be quite honest, that Christian people don't smell a rat oftener than they seem to do. So we need to understand the times in which we live. We need to discern what is going on in the world around us; and we need to know God's Word. We need more than ever before to be firmly grounded in God's Word, to know God's will, and when we do, to stand firm, and to refuse to bow to the image, and to enthrone Christ, and to have Him to be the soul King and Head of the church, and King and Head of our individual lives as well.

I'm just going to mention some of the trends in the world which have gained currency in the churches unfortunately:

1. The 'Willow Creek' phenomenon that has emerged in America. The approach taken by Bill Hybels we might say is the market-driven, consumer-led, user-friendly approach. You find out what unsaved people are like, what they want, what attracts unsaved people, what they would come into a building such as this for. And when you find out what they want, you lay it on for them. And so the world, in effect, sets the agenda for the church. And what you get is a lot of popular-style music, because people generally like music very much, of course, and you get a lot of bands performing, you get short shots of everything, and a short message; that message then tends to pander to what people want again, and by nature we are selfish, by nature we want to be happy, we want to be fulfilled, and so the message panders to these needs. And then, in order to keep the people, certain truths that are unpalatable tend to be left out: the absolute necessity of regeneration, for example; total depravity; sin, hell, the cross. These things are downplayed, compromised with, left out completely perhaps, in the end. So you've got that in America.

Now even in the consumer-led and user-friendly approach isn't so obvious in this country, for example, you often hear people saying, 'You cannot expect people to listen to a 30 minute or a 40 minute or 45 minute sermon. You can't expect people to come in from the outside, and to listen to something like that. You can't expect them to sing these old hymns. People don't like that,' they say. 'People don't like such and such.' And sometimes the apostle Paul's dictum is mentioned in this context. You remember that 'he became all things to all men, that he might win some.' But that is misquoted, I believe, in order to justify this approach of the world setting the agenda for the church. What the apostle Paul was willing to do, and we must be clear about this, that he was willing to accept the Jewishness of the Jews, and willing to accept the Gentleness of Gentiles, but he preached to both constituencies and preached Christ to both constituencies, knowing full well that Christ was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews. Nevertheless, that was what he preached: Christ and Him crucified. And he never let the world set the agenda for the church.

So the world is not to set the agenda for us. Neither must we Christians set the agenda for the church either. With the weakening of Biblicism and the preferences of worldly Christians, these things can become the governing factor regarding worship and practice: what worldly Christians like, they become the norm in the churches. So the apostle Paul, for example, concerning the Christians at Corinth, they were partaking of the Lord's supper and doing things their own way, but the apostle Paul corrects them and he says, 'For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you.' There is such a thing as a regulative principle, that we do things which the Lord has commanded, and

that's what we have to ask: 'What does the Lord sanction as far as worship is concerned.' My own ideas concerning worship have nothing at all to do with it, I would submit. But it surprises me sometimes, oftentimes really, what people say, that they are willing to tolerate, or they are willing to bring in, willing to countenance.

I was speaking to a man the other day in a funeral – I'm sure that he's a saved man – but the subject of women preaching came up and I put the view of Scripture to him, of course. 'You don't believe that, do you? You don't believe that women shouldn't preach.' 'I certainly do,' I said. 'But they used to come to the church,' – we were sitting in the vestry of a certain chapel – 'we had women preachers here years ago, and the old Christians saw nothing wrong with it,' he said; and so he saw nothing wrong with it either. I said that the old Christians then weren't infallible. What does Scripture say? Scripture says: 'Suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over a man.' We have to go back to the Word, to the law and to the testimony. What sayest Scripture? And it seems to me that we have to be very very careful about that, about public worship, and what the Lord does actually sanction as regards public worship is concerned. I'm not to ask what is satisfying for me emotionally; what are my preferences and which style I like. That's not the issue at all. It's what the Lord has said; it's what the Lord requires, so far as worship is concerned.

2. Related to the matter we have just touched on is music. Now, pop music is a multi-billion pound industry; and it's all-pervasive; you can't get away from it really. It's in shops everywhere; banks – I was sitting in a bank in Carmarthen the other day. And it has intruded into evangelical Christianity. But the thing we

must ask is: 'Can we absorb this particular phenomenon and Christianise it in these so-called Christian rock concerts?' The music is no different to the world's music. It's an attempt to put some kind of Christian words to the music, but you often would not be able to hear the words; you wouldn't be able to hear what the words were because the volume is so loud; and, more importantly, when rock and pop music is associated with the sinful and degenerate culture of the day, it carries associations with it; and it carries associations whether we like it or not, of drugs and sensual pleasures, immorality and the mindlessness, oftentimes. You see people nodding their heads to the music, and the idea is to loose all sense of responsibility. You go to get away from the problems of life, into loud music. And so mindlessness, not thinking, is encouraged by this music; and some of it even has satanic associations. (Read John Blanchard's book, 'Pop goes the gospel'. It's a very good book. He sets these things out, things that I wouldn't know, but there are satanic associations, with some of the bands, with some of the words even; the life-styles involved in this kind of music). And so we would have to say that it is completely incompatible with Christianity, and an attempt to marry Christianity to this is a sheer impossibility.

Now, if you ask people in evangelical churches, 'Do you think its right to have electric guitars and drums and sound systems and rock-style music in the church?' a lot of them, I think, would say 'No.' But churches do not go from a hymn-singing simple accompaniment to a full band and drums in one leap. It starts off innocuously probably, usually. It starts perhaps with a new version of Scripture, and there are so many of them now – that's a feature of modern-day evangelicalism

too. There are umpteen versions of Scripture available. And so it starts there. And so you change what is sound to be in accord with the new version that is chosen. Perhaps at the beginning you retain the traditional hymns and start with just one or two modern choruses, perhaps, in each service, but then the momentum of change gathers pace. It hardly ever stops like that for a long time, because there is this desire, generally speaking, for change these days. And then one has to think, 'How will that church be ten years down the line? How will it be fifteen years down the line? How will it be twenty years down the line?' And then having introduced all this new modern worship, will the church still keep on preaching and believing those truths which are unpalatable to the natural man? Does preaching and believing the absolute necessity of regeneration on account of total depravity, and preaching the cross, and warning people to flee from the wrath to come, and the awful reality of hell, does that go with this new style? Can they be accommodated together after getting people in and buttering them up, if you like, and making them feel at home, and giving them what they want? Can you then speak about hell? Can you then speak about total depravity? I predict, with a very heavy heart, that the gospel will eventually be lost, and the little truth will be so downplayed and softened and compromised where the style of worship is worldly. And remember that this starts somewhere.

3. We have also noticed in this secular culture the sense of informality. There has been a great movement against everything that is regarded as stiff and starchy. Informality has affected many areas of life: dress, manners. Older people would be able to recognise these things: Modes of speech,

the ways in which people are addressed and spoken to. I notice a terrific change in this in my lifetime: prime ministers were never called by their first names - when I was a boy it was always Mr McMillan, but now its Tony or Gordon; people in old people's homes such as the one next door are addressed by their first names; they might have been called Mrs Jones all their life, but then they go into a home and their first names are used, whether they like it or not. Informality.

And this trend has certainly influenced churches. I'll tell you the ways in which this has happened: In some churches the high pulpits are no longer used, and platforms have been installed, and the preacher's style then changes with the change in the architecture of the chapel. The preacher's style becomes conversational rather than declarative. The minister becomes a master of ceremonies, joking with the congregation and indulging in banter with them, and encouraging them to respond. So he comes in in the morning, and he says, 'Good morning, folks!' It's all very cheery and it's all very witty, and he wants a response from them. And if they don't say 'Good morning' back, he'll say, 'I didn't hear you.' It's like a circus really. He is dressed in an open-neck shirt and fleece and trainers so that he doesn't appear different or threatening, and so that he is one of the boys. A defence for all this is that God looks upon the heart, not that which is outward, but I notice that that principle doesn't apply when informalists go to weddings, for example. They do dress up, then, for occasions that they think are worthy of dressing up. Such people, if they were asked to go to Buckingham Palace to receive an MBE, then they'd have their morning outfit on, because that is an important occasion. You see, the implication is that what happens in church isn't that important. It's not the grand

occasion. I'll tell you, friends, if I was ever asked to meet the Queen - very very unlikely - if ever I was asked, I'd make sure that I wore my second best suit, and my first best suit to come to chapel. That's not to disrespect her Majesty the Queen; we are told to respect the powers that be, and I seek to do that, but the assembling of God's people is the most important assembly of all.

Now what about formality and informality. We have to say that formality in a spiritual sense is a deadly enemy for any Christian. What I mean by formality, of course, is going through the motions. Now we know what a temptation that is, don't we? We have all gone through the motions, and haven't had our hearts engaged in the worship. Now that's formality. But how do you combat that? Is it through informality? What is the opposite of formality? Is it informality? No, it's being spiritual. That's the opposite of formality. And the more spiritual we are, the more we'll realise the awesome nature of the being of God, and what an occasion public worship is. It's the grandest thing, the grandest occasion, where God deigns to be amongst His people. The Lord Jesus Christ says, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.' Let us seek to realise these things. We must seek to realise, however many people are in this chapel tonight, the first person present with us is the Lord Jesus Christ. So there's something momentous about the gathering of God's people together. Informality is not the right note for such an occasion. It's the business of the Christian minister to lead the congregation into the presence of God in prayer, not to be matey. He has infinite good will towards you as he stands in the pulpit, but he's not here to say, 'Good morning, folks!' He is here to usher all into the presence of almighty God, and to beseech almighty God for His blessing

upon the service. I suppose that I've been spoilt in this direction, seeing and hearing Dr Lloyd-Jones, and noting carefully his approach, and that was his approach, and that's the right approach, I think, that he ushered into the presence of God, and there is a meeting with God with His people. As far as the minister is concerned, the high nature of his office: What is he? He is a steward of the mysteries of God, dear friends. He is an ambassador of Christ. And surely that has to be reflected in his manner, in his speech, in his approach, and even in his dress. I think there has been a great reversal since the days of Robert Murray McCheyne. When the congregation saw Robert Murray McCheyne come into the pulpit, they would weep at the sight of him before he actually said anything, and it was the holiness of the man that affected people deeply before he even opened his mouth. If the modern man with the open-necked shirt blowing into his microphone saw people weeping, he'd feel a complete failure, because he'd feel he hadn't been able to jolly them up. You see how far away we are from the way things were in Robert Murray McCheyne's day. And so we have to ask, with this trend of informality in the world – and I'll let you think about that now – how you've seen things changed and things become more informal in the world. Is it a good thing to have in the church? And when we decided that it isn't, we combat it, and we seek to be spiritual. That's the way to combat formality, with spirituality.

4. I'll just mention a few points before I come to my last point:

These are some of the things that have influenced the church to a tremendous degree: political correctness, the trend to dumb things down, so people are conditioned to think they can't handle big words, they can't handle hymns – 'One transient gleam of love divine' – what's

'transient'? I want two-syllable words; a dumbing-down of things. Friends, we need to dumb people up. Relativism, feminism, predominance of youth culture, deregulation of the Lord's day: all these trends have had an effect upon the church and have left a sad mark upon the churches. We've got to stand back and to assess what is happening in the world; we are not going to be led by the things that are going on in the world.

5. The mania for change. It is the spirit of the age. When I was a student, in the late 1960s, there was certainly a spirit of the age then, and it was happening in many countries. It was revolution, a student revolution. It was happening in France; it even happened in our college in Camarthan. What's the spirit of the age today? Well you could say many things, and change is one of them. And that pervades all aspects of life in the world. As soon as you know how to get hold of the soup in the supermarket, they change it because they have to keep changing, and things have got to be new. That's the world that sells. You're not forsaking public life, the boundaries of the political constituencies, they keep on changing; you're not quite sure who your MP is any more; we've seen local authority changes in the part of the world where I come from, from being three counties when I was a boy, to Dyfed, and then it changed back again. I suppose we're due for another change shortly. There have been terrific changes in the way the health service has been organised. Education and the despair of teachers: some new method of assessment comes in, and just as you are getting used to it, something else replaces it. And of course in the realm of technology, things are changing very very quickly. Things get old hat very quickly.

You can't seem to be left behind either. You must keep up with things, all the time.

And we are told, in the churches, 'You adapt or die.' And what is that? Again we have to stand back and assess things like that. Do you know that that is revolutionary dogma: 'Adapt or die.' You've got to change with the times. Sometimes we're actually told it, sometimes it's unspoken, but you've got to change with the times. But are we to be determined by the times in which we live? People who do want changes, I think we can say to them legitimately, 'Show from God's Word where we should change. Not personal preferences. You show us from God's Word.' I am sure there are things that need changing; I'm sure that there are reformations that we should be involved in. But they are not the cosmetic changes that people are so in love with these days. After all, as God's people, we have been involved in the greatest change. It's an eruption from death to life; it's a translation from darkness to light; it's an initiation from folly into wisdom; it's a new birth. There's no greater change than that. It's the transition from a broken covenant to a saving covenant; it's immigration from one kingdom into another; it's a change from lostness to foundness; from enmity to friendship. We're not against change, but that sort of change, this great radical change, and surely what ought to occupy us as God's people in these days is the profound and radical and fundamental change spoken of by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3. You remember he speaks of beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. What he is talking about is this, that as we look into the mirror of the Word and the gospel, we find Jesus Christ there, and he says we are given liberty to look at Jesus Christ in the Word, and in the gospel by the Holy Spirit, and as we look at Jesus Christ – meaning as we contemplate Him and get

off and study Him reverently and commune with Him, as we get into contact with Jesus Christ, we are changed, and we become like Him. That's the change that we should be occupied with, friends. Isn't that what you desire? Not tinkering with cosmetic changes, which don't achieve anything spiritual. O that we were fixated in evangelical churches upon Jesus Christ.

Now what's happening is this: We are suffering at present from smaller measures of the Spirit; and everything we are told in Scripture that the Spirit does, because of the smaller measures of the Spirit, is bound to be muted. And so this liberty to look at the Lord Jesus Christ because of the smaller measures of the Spirit at present, He becomes a little indistinct. There is less liberty to look at Him and to gaze at Him and to look our eyes away, as Spurgeon said. O that we might know greater measures of the Spirit. That would mean greater liberty, obscurity dealt with, the film of carnality and worldliness cleared away, so that we are more free to behold Jesus. Changed from glory into glory. We're not against change, but it's that change amongst others.

'Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Him,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.'

May we be given grace then not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed through the renewing of our minds.

Gehazi

Rev. F. W. Krummacher

I.

The individual with whom we have to do, is no blackguard from the street, no spiritually neglected person, nor one selected from what are called "the dregs of the people." Brought up in the schools of the prophets, he is Elisha's foster-son, servant, and companion. He would not have become so, had not something once taken place in him, which presented the appearance of an awakening to newness of life. What this was, is difficult precisely to say. At all events it was a pleasing impression, a better feeling, a hopeful excitement. Chemically analyzed, this apparent regeneration would probably have produced little more than a flickering flame of natural enthusiasm, and a youthful intoxication of feeling, as the result of the whole. And it is not unfrequently the case, that even in the present day, individuals offer themselves for the service of the cause of missions, whose flaming zeal for converting others is not discoverable at first sight to be nothing else, from the crown to the root, than a flower of the flesh. And still more frequently do we see persons enter, with undeniable warmth of feeling, into the society and manner of life of the people of God, who have never perceived their sinfulness, and consequently never experienced what it is to thirst after Divine grace.

"It is therefore possible for the flesh to assume a promising religious appearance?" Certainly, my brethren. The natural imagination, for instance, may find food for itself in the region of Sacred History; the feelings, in the enjoyment of

those manifold solemn emotions which attend a life of godliness; the understanding, in the ingenious decyphering of that which is mysterious and enigmatical in the Scriptures; and the conscience, in Pharisaic self-soothing, by means of devotional exercises. In modern times, religion is the cause of bringing honour upon its professors, at least, in many places. The return from superficial rationalism to biblical truth, is regarded as a sign of superior intellect, and one or other temporal advantage is frequently connected with it. How should it therefore be impossible for the flesh occasionally to covet the vesture of Godliness!

What it was that Gehazi sought in the peculiarities of the children of God — whether it was the mysteriousness of the quiet fraternity which attracted him — the respectability and outward appearance of the prophetic vocation which allured him — or the hope of being eventually himself irradiated by the glory of a wonder-worker, and thus of shining amongst the chief men of Israel — I know not. So much however appears certain, that the young man had not entered by the right door into the Lord's sheep-fold, but over the wall and through the roof, and that what presented the aspect of a work of God in the ardent proselyte, was nothing else but an ebullition of natural emotions and affections.

But how came it that Elisha, out of the number of the disciples of the prophets, granted to this one the delightful privilege of attending him upon his official journeys, and of uninterruptedly enjoying his society? You inquire too much, my friends. Who is able to answer the question? However, it is almost beyond a doubt, that Elisha cherished no small expectations with respect to the future,

from this lively and variously gifted youth ; although he did not take him into his immediate fellowship, because he clearly perceived the diseased spot in his character, and found it necessary to take him into his especial pastoral care and minute inspection, because of the ease by which he might be led astray. The prophet, however, probably never dreamt that he would be so bitterly deceived in the object of his fostering affection, or ever meet him upon a path like that on which we see him this day caught ; and it may have been to him one of the most painful occurrences of his life. Do you still remember how we observed the youngster with his master's staff in his hand, at the corpse of the son of the Shunammite? Even at that time, Gehazi no longer fully satisfied us, since it was evidently his intention to apply the miraculous power, which he believed to be contained in the staff, not to the Lord's honour and glory, but his own ; however we suffered it to pass, and designated his conduct on that occasion, as childish, rather than wicked. But the event, of which we are this day witnesses, gives even that circumstance a black colouring. Alas ! the poor man had been for some time in a critical state. From the very outset, he had mistaken the inscription over the portal of the kingdom of God, and found in it something very different from the words, "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." A carnal dream conducted him into the fellowship of the saints. The dream disappeared, and the reality did not offer him that which a self-loving imagination had so dazzlingly presented before him. He reckoned upon a variety of pleasing and splendid enjoyments, and found, in the grave and self-denying life

of the retired fraternity, the very reverse. Hence he stuck fast in the manner of life of the children of God, which he had adopted, as in the stock or in a prison ; painfully deceived, and yet not sufficiently sincere to confess it ; uncomfortably pent up in an element which was foreign to him, but too cowardly to throw aside the burdensome girdle ; a hypocrite, therefore, inwardly glowing with the love of the word like a furnace ; in his external appearance arrayed in all the characteristic marks of the profoundest contempt of the world; the eye of his body directed upwards towards heaven : whilst the evil eye of his heart, looked greedily askant at the fleshpots of Egypt. O that he could only have summoned up sufficient courage to show himself as he really was, and openly to confess that he regretted having entered among the brethren ; that he was grieved at having bidden farewell to (he world and its charms; and at having exchanged its pleasures and enjoyments for the sobriety and privations of his present condition ! He would then have been willingly liberated from that confinement, which a life of godliness had become to him, and his former freedom, or rather slavery, would have been restored to him ; and a great cause of offence would thus have been prevented. But instead of this, the man continued to lurk behind his barricade, continued to be a scholar of the prophet, and Elisha's attendant, in spite of his inward repugnance, and joined, as before, in all the pious exercises of" the quiet in the land," whilst in the interior of this whited sepulchre, the cancer of corruption spread only the more virulently in every direction, the more deeply it lay hidden under the specious flowery covering of a devotional life.

Ah, I fear that even amongst ourselves, there is no want of such persons as Gehazi! I could almost venture to point with the finger at some among you as being such characters. They also once swore allegiance, as it seemed, with a kind of enthusiasm, under the banner of Christ, and in joyful excitement entered into an alliance with the children of God, and upon their mode of living, thinking, and speaking. And even to the present hour, we probably see them moving in this sphere, but in a pitiable manner, like those who have entered by mistake, and would gladly retire in the best manner they are able ; who have once hastily given their word to something, and are now obliged to keep it, because by withdrawing it, they would degrade themselves in their own eyes and those of others. But retract your word, ye false brethren ! You are seen through, notwithstanding. We know, without your confessing it, that in your inmost being you belong to the world, and only carry about the form of religion with you as a burdensome fetter. O, we will gladly excuse you from making pious speeches ! We will joyfully grant you the dispensation from the obligation of continuing any longer in our fellowship, seeing that you only bring up an evil report of the good city of our king Jesus, and betray the sacred deposit by your works, whilst bringing your fallacious homage to it in your words and gestures. Let the past suffice. Pollute no longer the courts of the Lord. Lay aside the hypocritical mask, which is already falling to pieces. Be outwardly children of the world, even as you are inwardly. Visit balls, theatres, &c., instead of religious meetings. Instead of wearisomely continuing your intercourse

with the saints of the Lord, keep company with those that are without. Say to those that laugh and jeer, "We are your associates!" Of a truth, you would thereby do us and our kingdom a great service. Your fraternity only brings unnecessary suspicion upon our sacred cause.

But now to the narrative. Naaman, as happy as a child, at the great deliverance he has experienced, has just reached his hand to the prophet on taking leave. Elisha stands inwardly moved, his heart filled with profound thankfulness to God for the grace and mercy he has manifested towards the dear stranger. The eyes even of Naaman's servants swim in tears of sacred emotion. The angels around the throne take their harps and tune them to new songs of praise. Gehazi's soul is also affected.

When the sun shines from heaven, not only do the little birds ascend on high, whilst warbling their notes of joy ; but even the basilisk and the adder move in the bushes. The serpent now wound itself about the heart of Gehazi. Gehazi does not rejoice. Gehazi is out of humour. Gehazi looks gloomily. O significant sign! For he who does not participate in the joy of heaven over a repenting sinner, surely does not belong to heaven, nor is he born of God. Satan does not rejoice on such an occasion. It is a grief to him. He pines with vexation. But what is it that causes Gehazi's ill humour ! He is chagrined that his master is so disinterested as to decline the rich presents offered to him by the Syrian. It pains him deeply that he is

compelled to give up the hope of a rich booty, which he had derived from the arrival of the illustrious stranger. Alas, how dreadful ! How is the seed of

corruption already matured in the man ! How widely has the poisonous bud of lust already expanded within him ! " Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin; but sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." We shall now witness the whole of this deplorable process take place, in the most lamentable manner, in the case of Gehazi.

Naaman proceeds joyfully upon his way ; Elisha retires, with a prayerful heart, into his cottage. For a while Gehazi stands lost in thought, and the following soliloquy takes place within him. " Behold," says he, " my master has spared Naaman, this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought." " This Syrian," he says. Does it not seem as if by the contemptuous appellation of the man, he sought to excuse his villainy towards him, and again lull to slumber his awakening conscience? "Naaman," he continues, " will be unable sufficiently to extol the strange magnanimity of the prophet; but what the better am I by his carrying back his gold and silver to Damascus? What should I not all at once become, if the gift my master has disdained, were to fall into my lap? I might then purchase an estate for myself, plant oliveyards and vineyards, keep sheep and oxen, and be surrounded by menservants and maidservants? Up, therefore, he is still there. Seize the favourable moment. Hasten after him, Gehazi ! In this way the thing may be accomplished. As the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him!"

Thus the worthless young man mutters to himself, and the wicked resolution is taken. Observe the entire snaky fold of baseness in this resolution. He cannot conceal from himself how truly magnanimously the prophet had acted in

declining the present; notwithstanding which, he daringly treads the beautiful example under foot, and can even prevail upon himself to prepare for an act of the most contrary description. It does not escape him, that by doing so, he will be inflicting a blot upon the name of his venerable master, in the eyes of the stranger from Damascus ; but this by no means restrains him from lending a willing ear to the suggestions of his avarice. He clearly sees, that by such a disgraceful affair, he may cause the whole of God's people to be suspected of insincerity and carnal love of gain ; but what does this trouble him ? He thinks only of himself, and the advantage he will derive from it, and is already impious and degraded enough, with truly blasphemous frivolity, to call Him to be the witness and promoter of his plan, who could only abhor and execrate it. " As the Lord liveth," says he, as it would appear, in addition to this, with a scoffing side look at Elisha, who with the same form of asseveration had declined accepting the offered present, " as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him."

II.

No sooner said than done. Gehazi sets out, in order to overtake the Syrian cavalcade, which had already moved forwards the length of a furlong. Naaman, who accidentally looks round, observes Gehazi hastening after him, and recognizes him. He immediately orders a halt to be made, springs from his chariot, and advances to meet the hastening youth — a new proof of his veneration and gratitude towards Elisha. "What is the matter? Is all well?" says he, with some degree of apprehension, to the boy. " What is the meaning of thy hastening after

us?" is what he intends to say. "Has any evil befallen thy master?" "No," replies Gehazi, with the most unsuspecting expression of countenance, "all is well;" and then comes forward with his sanctimonious lie. He says that he is sent by his master; but foreseeing that Naaman would scarcely believe that Elisha would, on second thoughts, lust after the present he had rejected, he invents, with extreme facility, a complete tale. He relates that two of the sons of the prophets had arrived from Mount Ephraim, in great poverty and distress, at the abode of the man of God; and that Elisha would gladly relieve them, but is unable to do so. He therefore applies, in full confidence, to Naaman, and requests of him, for this purpose, a talent of silver and two changes of garments!

Who does not burn with indignation at this statement? The most shameful treason is committed against the prophet, and even against all Israel. A lump of silver is a sufficient price for the villain to bargain away the honour of Jehovah, as well as that of his children, to the heathen, and for ever to shake and put at stake the faith of the world, in the existence of real holymindedness under the sun.

Fortunately, however, he did not succeed in this respect with Naaman. The dangerous point of Gehazi's impious act broke upon the childlikeness of this individual. Naaman had acquired too high an idea of the members of the schools of the prophets, to permit him to imagine there could be any thing but the purest truth in the message which Gehazi delivered; and nothing could make him for a moment suspect the sentiments of the man of God. "The Lord preserveth the simple." Candid and unsuspecting as a child, the worthy Syrian believes every

thing that the youth states to him; nay, it even causes him heart-felt pleasure to have, in this instance, an opportunity afforded him to show his feelings of gratitude to the prophet by word and deed, and to do good to the children of God. He urges the boy, who meanwhile affects modesty, and assumes a hypocritical expression of countenance, to take two talents of silver instead of one, and presents him, equally cheerfully, with the two changes of garments. But even this does not satisfy him. He sends, besides this, two of his servants to accompany Gehazi, in order to carry the money and the garments. Should we not be inclined to think that Gehazi would have sunk into the earth for shame, when contrasting his conduct with such unsuspecting innocence and simplicity? But on the contrary, his forehead is brass, his face harder than a flint. Rejoicing only in witnessing the success of his roguery, he hastens away with his booty, with all speed, and only reflects how he may bring his treasure to a place of security, and avoid discovery. O the wretched mortal! How much happier is the deceived to be esteemed than the deceiver; and him that is thus imposed upon than the cheat, notwithstanding his triumph? O sincerity, simplicity, and truth, ye are the fairest pearls in the attire of a Christian! O that we might be more abundantly adorned with these ornaments! But characters like Naaman become increasingly rare in the present day.

The epilogue: Are You Offended?

Let me begin by posing a question: how does mankind perceive the Person of Jesus? Some might be quietly respectful and answer that He was a good man, an honest sort of fellow, and a wise philosophic teacher. Others might respond by saying that Jesus, at best, was an enthusiastic revolutionary, a good sincere sort of man, of somewhat questionable principles. By many He is thought of in terms that are downright odious; they see Him as a pretender, a deceiver of the highest order, a mad imposter, just one of the many notorious charlatans who have trod this world's illusionary stage. Then there are those for whom the whole question may be dismissed as an irrelevance, and one of total disinterest to them, who regard any view of Him as being a complete waste of time. From a Christian perspective, the answer will be that of spiritual affirmation of biblical revelation and personal identification, confessing Him as Christ, the Son of the Living God!

Patently nothing has changed, for now, as in the days of His earthly sojourn, both friends and foes alike voice their differing views of Jesus. As such then, is one opinion as justly valid as any other opinion? If so, is there an arbiter in this whole matter? More precisely what, if anything, decides this whole issue once for all? I proffer an answer, one that should be taken seriously by all who would come to the knowledge of the truth, an answer that focuses attention upon all that Jesus said concerning

Himself! To come to the point, the only accurate and sustainable acuity of Jesus is Jesus' perception of Himself!

One such stated aspect of this latter fact is Jesus' self-attestation of sacrificial fulfilment, as recorded in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever...This is that bread which came down from heaven...he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." (verses 51 & 58). Such self-disclosure by Jesus struck at the very nerve of human understanding, to include even to those who were closest to Him. The resultant affect was to bring forth a somewhat obtuse and injudicious objection, "...This is an hard saying..." (verse 60). For those that heard, this self-revelation by Jesus bordered upon that which was perceived as offensively ensnaring! Jesus questioned response to this, "...Doth this offend you?" (Verse 61), confirmed this.

As presented in the original language of the New Testament, the word translated "offend" is that from which we obtain the English word scandal, and is descriptive of that which may cause deep offence. Interestingly, it incorporates and directs attention to entrapment of an individual in sin. What is evident is that the self-disclosure of Jesus, revealing 'Who' and 'What' He is, being fully substantiated in His sacrificial death, is demonstrably the source of offense, even as prophesied, (Isaiah 8:14; cf. 1Peter 2:7-8). Therefore, as a result of this self-exposé by Jesus, the one question that just will not go away is this: "...Doth this offend YOU?"

In the scheme of things, this objectionable reaction of being offended by Jesus [words] ought not to be a surprise. Yet it comes as a shock, for this eminently personal question is a most searching question. When considered, it is of course a question that could be aimed at all-and-sundry; yet significantly, Jesus directed it specifically to those who were the closest to Him, to His own disciples (verses 60-61). Unfailingly this question spans the eons to our present day, and with it the same grave earnest force of enquiry "...Doth this offend you?" If so offended, it is time to pause and consider the fundamental root cause.

It is plain that the underlying cause is as simple as it is profound; we are offended, if indeed we are, not because of Who and What Jesus is, but primarily by reason of who and what we are; and yes, even as Christians! Now you may wish to balk at this assertion, but let's test the water. Remembering that the word "offend" carries the weight of ensnarement, consider for a moment the [quite unforgivable] embarrassment often experienced when approaching any Gospel dialogue with those I would describe as the 'un-churched'. Silence may indeed be golden; but in this case it is so because it is entrapped within the golden cage of our comfortable diplomacy, namely our evasiveness, to proclaim Who and What Jesus is. 'After all', the argument runs, 'we must be careful not to offend them!' But in so doing we become successful in offending our Lord and Saviour; have you never thought of this? "The fear of man bringeth a snare..." (Prov. 29:25)

Political correctness, a significant curse of present day society, has long been evidenced in the Church. 'Accommodation' is the popular watchword, one that is much used in the so-called post-modern Church. It is by such that the Church at large has managed to formulate a pluralistic mandate, a system of ensuring that 'all roads lead ultimately to the one God' (or gods), whatever the name. To declare that "...there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1Tim. 2:5), is to so many in the Church today anathema.

Yet, despite such erroneous apostasy, the truth ever declares the absolute uniqueness of Jesus: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever..." O let us not, in these uncertain and dark days, be ashamed of the matchless distinctiveness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And when asked the question, "...Doth this offend you?" may we, "...in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free..." (Gal. 5:1), respond with an unequivocal "No Lord!" and say with the hymnist:

Ashamed of Jesus, of my Lord,
By all heaven's glorious hosts adored!
No, I will make my boast of Thee,
In time and in eternity!

Howell Green

Diary

Lord's Days:

September

7th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
14th	–	Pastor		
21st	–	Pastor	–	Communion -a.m
28th	–	Pastor		

October

5th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
12th	–	Pastor		
19th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
26th	–	Rev. R. B. Higham		

November

2nd	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
9th	–	Pastor		
16th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
23rd	–	Pastor		
30th	–	Pastor		

Dates to note:

Lord's Day 7th September - After Church Fellowship - Rev. D. P. Morris

Thursday 23rd October - Protestant Alliance - Mr C. Richards

Saturday 29th November - Church Fellowship meal (see Mr Edward Williams)

Pastor's engagements:

Saturday 27th September - Preaching - Trinitarian Bible Society AGM, London

Lord's Day 26th October - Preaching - Clarbeston Road

Monday 2nd November - Preaching - Sovereign Grace Union, Ipswich

Thursday 5th November - Preaching - Bible Spreading Union, Chelmsford