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Message from Pastor

O how vital it is to write to a church for prayer!

When we come together for this purpose we are expressing the thought that we need the blessing of God, and that this blessing is obtained from God in prayer. Nothing can compensate for its absence. How can a church be a church without this vital evidence of spiritual life? A church can be active in every other realm but if not in this she has a name for being alive but is dead.

The Scripture presents us with a praying church. In days of apostasy the Old Testament church was stirred by the Spirit “then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” (Gen 4v26) At the dedication of the Temple Solomon was promised that

“If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land”.

In what we commonly refer to as The Lord’s Prayer we are taught to say “Our Father which art in heaven” implying corporate prayer.

When the Lord cleansed the Temple before His crucifixion, He referred to His Father’s house as being “a house of prayer for all nations”.

At Pentecost three thousand people were converted “and they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayer”. (Acts 2 v 42)

When Peter was arrested we read in Acts 12v5 that “prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

There were times when Paul called upon the church, “Brethren pray for us”. In short prayer was as vital to the church as an engine is to a machine. When asked the secret of his success Spurgeon took the questioner to the downstairs prayer room. Prayer is the “power house” of the church. If this is so, what is our “power house” like? Is it well attended and full of the spirit of “grace and supplications?” Are we concerned about this vital area of the church’s life? What if it were to wither away?

Friends these are vital matters .The days are dark. The enemy of our spirit is active and the world despises the truth. If we have love for the Lord and His cause let us make this a priority. No one will regret-when they come to die – that they supported the prayer meeting.

News of the fellowship

We were greatly encouraged as a Church during our week of prayer (Monday 16th Nov –Thursday 19th) Goodly numbers were in attendance each evening, some coming every night ! Is there not a growing awareness in these evil days of the need of the Lord's intervention? How we need Him to revive His work "in the midst of the years." The Pastor took 1 Chronicles 5 verses 18-22, dealing with the theme "crying out to God in the midst of the battle."

One of our Sunday School pupils was sadly diagnosed recently with leukaemia. At the time of writing (February 10th) she is being treated in Cardiff. We remember her(Lucy) and her family in prayer.

In November we held an after church fellowship at which Mr Higham spoke about the 1859 revival in Wales. It was greatly appreciated. What God did then He can do again. A transcript of his brief message has been prepared by Nathan Munday and is included in this issue.

We conducted our annual calendar distribution in the area-some 3,000 calendars were distributed. We pray yet that some somewhere will be touched by the Word of God. We leave the results to the Lord-ours is to continue to seek to sow the Word.

The children's Christmas party was held on Saturday December 12th. This year it was open to all the children who attend the church. Food was in abundance and the usual fun and games were enjoyed by all.

We held our usual after church fellowship before Christmas with folk having the opportunity to choose their own hymns. It was a joy once again to hear the "two Dons" sing together. This is especially significant in view of Don Rowlands' fall earlier in the year. How good God is to us.

We were able again to hold a brief carol service next door at the Peniel Green Care Home although there were less of us from the church. These dear folk are on the verge of eternity. We pray that some light might enter their hearts. We were also able to go up to Hengoed Court, Winchwen. There we sang with Mrs Rabey. Her daily prayer there is that the Lord will give her contentment. There is a calendar in the schoolroom to ensure that she gets regular visits. Mrs Rabey sorely misses the fellowship of the church and the preaching of the Word.

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Sadly, in December we lost our longest serving member. Mrs. Avril Edwards had spent a long time in Cefn Coed Hospital before moving next door to the Care Home. She only spent two days there, dying some time before Boxing Day morning. We remember her husband Graham. Mr Edwards has expressed his thanks to the Church for all the kindness shown him especially over the past months. He was comforted by the thought that she had "come home" before she died (i.e. next door to the chapel.) Her funeral took place on the 11th of January.

Another after church fellowship was held this time on the 24th Jan. The theme was "Can I know that I am Christian?" Over fifty people remained for this hour. We practised some new hymns 776, 558, 594, and 654. In the hour we thought about the grounds of assurance. We considered the Word of God, the marks of grace and the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. A number of people contributed and the time was blessed.

On the 17th of January we received six new members into the Church: Mrs Margaret Beynon, Mr David Broom, Mr Graham Davies, Mr and Mrs Brian and Sian Harris and Miss Janet Hopkins. We praise God that He continues to build His Church in this place.

Please note that The Affirmation 2010 has been published. This is a call that began with The Bible League Trust to unite evangelicals in those truths which are most under attack at this present time. The affirmation has a web-site www.affirmation-2010.org. There is also a facility to sign it as an expression of support.

It was good to receive the Rev. Neil Richards on January 31st. Mr Richards is known to some of us here at Peniel Green because of his earlier ministry at Neath. The Lord greatly used him there with some of our folk being converted under his ministry. After Neath he ministered for a number of years at Sandbach, Cheshire. He is now retired and lives at Pen y Ffordd and serves as an elder at Caergwrle Evangelical Church about five miles from Wrexham, N. E. Wales.

We continue to remember those who are recovering from illness/treatment including Dafydd Morris and Mr. and Mrs. Colin and Glenys Jones. Church Members please note that the A.G.M. has been set for Monday 26th March.

Diary

Lord's Days:

March					
	7th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
	14th	–	Pastor		
	21st	–	Rev. R. B. Higham	–	Communion -a.m
	28th	–	Pastor		<i>after-church fellowship</i>
April					
	4th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
	11th	–	Pastor		
	18th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
	25th	–	Pastor		<i>after-church fellowship</i>
May					
	2nd	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
	9th	–	Visiting Preacher		
	16th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m
	23rd	–	Pastor		
	30th	–	Pastor		<i>after-church fellowship</i>

Please note –we seek to hold the after church fellowship hour after the evening service on the last Lords Day of the month.

Pastor's Engagements.

Sat March 20th Chippenham Youth Conference preaching on 'Striving to be pure in an impure age.'

Lord's Day March 21st Preaching in Bethesda, Saundersfoot.

Easter Monday April 5th Preaching at Easter Rally-Wattisham Strict Baptist Chapel, Suffolk.

Sat/Sunday May 9th /10th Preaching Heathersett Reformed Baptist Church Anniversary Weekend, Norwich.

Thursday May 13th –preaching in Newbridge.

Forward notice- Church A.G.M. Monday 29th March.

Good Friday evening service. Preaching Rally - Rev.Jonathan Munday.Exeter.

May 12th Wednesday evening-7.15 p.m. T.B.S.

June 9th Wednesday evening 7.15 p.m. Bible League Quarterly. - Rev John Thackway.

The 1859 revival.

Recently, our church held an after church fellowship meeting where Mr Higham gave us a talk on the 1859 Welsh revival. It was introduced by an interesting piece of information, which is quite sad in a way. 2009 was the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth, the 150th anniversary of Darwin's 'Origin of Species' and of course the 150th anniversary of the Welsh Revival. It does not surprise us that the event was marked by a series of stamps, many books- a Hollywood film was made about Darwin's work of deceit. But Christians especially in Wales remember 1859 as the year the Spirit of God touched Wales with a great revival. Dafydd Morgan of Ysbyty Ystwyth, Cardiganshire, is the most prominent figure of the revival and was used as God's tool for a great work in Wales.



Dafydd Morgan

Before we get an outline of the history one must define what revival actually is. The late Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones defined it as: "God choosing to do an exceptional work at a particular moment of time." That is to say God at times embraces his church with love. Wales is known for its revivals including the great awakening of 1735, and the 1817 revival in Beddgelert, which is well known for being a powerful embracing with heavenly singing and miraculous events which cannot be understood in such dark times as we live in today. But as Christians we believe that God hears prayers and in His will he answers. Let us pray that such heavenly happenings would shake our society in this year of 2010.

The 1859 revival centred on one man (similar to the 1904 revival with Evan Roberts.) Dafydd Morgan was always optimistic that God would once again come into His garden. He believed in the power of prayer and as he observes the godly men and women of old in his letters of 1855 he mentions at the end: "they prayed and they worked." What a lesson this is to us. Are we burdened for the renewal of God's Vineyard? Surely we have lost this yearning, this work that is needed in our lives of prayer.

The first flickering of revival was seen in Capel Isaac where 200 were added to the church. The same was seen in North Wales near Trawsfynydd. So there were isolated cases which somehow reflected the great things which were to follow, like tremors before a great earthquake. In 1841 he felt the call to preach, without any particular training in a theological college. He was still ordained because the emphasis in those days was on the sincerity and the genu-

ine nature of a man's calling and his spirituality, and not his academic abilities. Therefore he was ordained in 1848 at 34 years of age.

Revival was brewing and on Tuesday the 5th of October 1858 Dafydd Morgan went to bed promptly and slept heavily for some hours. Then, suddenly at around 4am he woke up conscious that he had gone through some mysterious change. He had a tremendous clarity of mind and God had miraculously touched his memory: "I woke up at 4 this morning remembering every religious thing I had ever read or heard or even been taught to me through my years." He knew the countless names of people, hundreds, and people he had never met before. He knew their souls were needy and he could remember each one of them. This is proof that revival is not merely an event where emotion takes over, it is real power performed by the Spirit of God. (In 1860 when the revival was diminishing, this ability left as suddenly as it came.) God came to him that night and from then on people seemed to be drawn to his words; countless numbers of these were converted.

The weeks followed with an upsurge of conversions and at times he felt that he was standing on holy ground. "The Lord would give us great things if he could only trust us not to be thieves and not to steal the glory for ourselves." These are his words in 1859. News of what was happening in Cardiganshire spread all over Wales and by the summer of 1859, 100,000 people were added to chapels and churches in Wales. Dafydd Morgan was now in demand all over Wales and every town, village and hamlet experienced some conversions. The revival rippled from its central point in Ysbyty Ystwyth and what is fascinating: not only did the revival come to the Calvinistic Methodists, but to all the denominations including the Church of England. Surely we see how God unites his children, and in times like these, they were all brothers and sisters in the faith.

Before the revival broke out there was certainly a lack of prayer and that of the Spirit. Prayer meetings contained less and less and there was that attitude of being at ease. The same weekly prayers mumbled by the same Tom, Dick and Harry each week and others remained silent in their seats. There wasn't that wanting, or tears or that pleading attitude which is essential in the prayer meeting. Praying people were getting fewer and fewer. The fact is prayer meetings were becoming non-existent. Isn't this the scene in 2010? The fact is, today, is even worse than 1859. We should be on our knees, in a time where darkness prevails, where every kind of immorality prevails. Churches are dying, and even some of those that are left standing squabble on the smallest points of doctrine. But there were some that had a concern. There were some that remembered the blessedness of the past. They knew the answer to all their tribulations was God. They knew that man could not bring revival. Surely we

need to learn a lesson. The emphasis in many evangelical churches is to attract with leaflets, advertisements, and worldly things creeping into the house of God. Surely we must look to the word of God: "My house is a house of prayer..."

Therefore there was need of a burden then as there is today. God often begins working when he calls his people back to acknowledge their impotence, to pray, and to preach with urgency and solemnity until He suddenly rends the heavens again. What were the results of the 1859 revival? They were countless, yet these are some of them.

On Thursday the 30th June in Beaufort there was a preaching service where 3 outstanding sermons were preached. At the close of the 10 o'clock service the whole congregation of at least 10,000 people were overpowered by their feelings. A prayer meeting was announced on the next day to be held at the chapel. The chapel was filled to the brim with people everywhere standing amidst the tombs and the chapel gates. The Spirit descended and hundreds were brought to God.

In Cardiganshire the revival was spreading like wild fire. The churches of Aberystwyth, Rhydfendigaid, Tregaron, Llanrhystud and Lledrod had increased their membership by 2000 people. People were queuing to come into Christ's fold of believers. Llangeitho, the famous home of the late Daniel Rowland was receiving the Spirit once again.

A preaching festival was held in Llangeitho since the great awakening and Thursday was certainly its climax. At 6am 20,000 people were assembled in the fields around the village. All from the youngest babe to the oldest civilian thirsted for the word of God. Dafydd Morgan called three men to open in prayer – the last was a young boy of seventeen named Moses Thomas from Tregaron. The young boy trembled like a leaf as he prayed with hands covering his face. Before long he gained confidence as the Spirit came. One arm dropped and then the other. His voice got louder as the supernatural power poured from his lips: "The Dove of Heaven has descended on this field!" Not one cheek was dry, hundreds were converted and to see 20,000 knelt in prayer must have been an awesome experience.



Daniel Rowland, Llangeitho

At the end of that memorable prayer meeting the Rev. R. Roberts spoke: "I had a dream three weeks ago, the strangest of dreams. I dreamt I had gone to heaven to request a representative to come from heaven to Llangeitho for the

preaching rally. A man approached me wearing a crown encrusted with precious stones and he asked: "Where have you come from?"

I answered: "From Llangeitho."

"From Llangeitho - it was from Llangeitho I received this crown."

And friends suddenly I realised that the shining one was Daniel Rowland. I told him that the preaching festival was to be held in three weeks time and we were longing for a servant to come from heaven. Rowland removed his crown from his head and cast it before a great throne where sat the King of kings. He delivered my request for a messenger to come from Heaven, the King replied: "Tell him I will send no one. I will come myself." As you can imagine, the crowds were filled with awe and the meeting was full of the Holy Ghost.

Dafydd Morgan passionately believed in preaching as God's means to bring sinners to Christ. Before God came to him and after God left around 1860 he pursued his high calling but he also acknowledged that there were seasons of refreshing, where the word preached is brought with great power and God is in the midst. He later admitted that one of the worst experiences of life was to find crowds still flocking after him when the influence of the ministry had declined. His friend told him: "You have lost your warrant haven't you? The Almighty gave you a commission and really you had authority while it was in force-you could lay your hand on which you would. Perhaps you could renew your commission. Go to the King!" In 1868 he became minister of Ysbyty Ystwyth and he died in 1883. The spirit never came in the same way to him again.

The revival brought young and old to the cross of Jesus Christ. Family life was transformed for the better. Crime was unheard of and there was peace and happiness in the hills of Wales. Prayer meetings were vibrant and sharp-preaching challenged the both common and wealthy folk. Alcohol was forbidden, and the Sabbaths became Sabbaths again. How we must yearn for these miraculous things once more. We live in dark times where Christianity is on its knees in the world. The fact is the Spirit of God is far away. We have a duty to plead and to pray for His return. They desired conversions and they certainly wanted God. The grim fact is that modern evangelicals and the many branches of it are not prepared for God and are not praying to Him. Even Reformed churches are characterised by coldness which can be seen. The droopiness and deadness can be seen on people's faces and a sense of false piety is enough to kill a church. We need to be a praying people and we are all guilty of abandoning our errands. We should look back on 1859 as a year when the people feared God. Let it be so in the coming year.

Nathan Llywelyn Munday

The Last Days of a Godly Man

For some little while Mr. Gould was permitted to enjoy the gatherings of the Church, but only for a little while. He had been failing for some time; physically he became very feeble but spiritually his soul was all alive. It was no small privilege to gather round the old man's chair at family prayer. When the minister was not present on the Lord's day evening, he would preach God's truth, confirmed by his own experience; and touching would be his entreaty to any unsaved one to make good use of the day of visitation. The baptism of the five had done much to break down the prejudice of many of the villagers, and one or two of the farmers would now and then be seen in the Sabbath evening congregation. This cheered the patriarch's soul. The dawning of better times he had lived to witness, though many still were dark and prejudiced, as subsequent events will prove. One Lord's-day evening he felt unusually frail, and intimated that he thought he was amongst them for the last time. This gave an earnestness and solemnity to his words, and as the meeting broke up, many expressed the hope that many earthly Sabbaths more would still be granted him. But, alas! not many days more did he spend on earth. On the Tuesday following he was confined to his bedroom, and the next day he was still a prisoner; and on the following one, Mary, John, Richard and a few Christian friends, are gathered around his bed, for it is evident to all that the Master he had served was about to call him hence.

"It is written, 'When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee,' - whispered John.

"True," said the dying one; "but I do not know much about the waters, I have so much of the presence of Jesus."

"Then the promise is fulfilled in your experience, master:
'According to your day so shall be your strength.'

"Yes; the promise is realized, I feel all strength. I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me."

"Have you any parting counsel to give us before you go home?" said John, weeping.

"Yes; dry your tears— no weeping. I am putting off these garments of clay. I feel half-dressed with the better robes. No weeping - rejoice!" He then feebly held out his hand towards his aged wife, and taking hold of hers said: "A little while, Mary; till then, John will care for thee. Happy has been this life - happier still our next. Only a little while, Mary."

He then looked at John and from John to the Bible. John understood the look, and opening the Bible he began to read: "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

At this point the old man broke in and said; "John, that is a blessed promise at all times, but the sweetness can only be realized when the end of the pilgrimage is reached. You see what death is to those Jesus has redeemed. It is nothing more than the Lord's coming to receive Unto Himself the soul. Did you notice the words, 'I will come again,

and receive you unto myself? Jesus has many times come to me during my struggles with the flesh, the world, and the devil; and I have many times thanked Him for coming, but now He is coming to me for the last time. He will not come into this world to visit me again; He will take me back with Him now. Blessed Redeemer! Thy visits to my home have refreshed and strengthened me; take me now to Thy home: I long to see Thy face." He then urged those around his bed to live so as to honour Christ, to carry on the service, and endeavour to win souls for the Redeemer. He then briefly implored the blessing of God to rest upon them all. A few days more, and the good old man was not. He had fought the fight, finished his course, kept the faith, and to him was given the crown of life. Thus departed one of whom the world was not worthy, in the seventy-second year of his age. Of him it can be said, as truly as of the patriarch, "They wept for him many days." A few devout men carried him to his burial, and laid down his body in the graveyard of the parish of Charles, *without one prayer or word being uttered at his grave.*

Scottish Heroines of the Faith: Margaret Lachlison (MacLachlan) and Margaret Wilson

Rev. Donald Beaton
(lightly edited)

Margaret Lachlison was the widow of John Milliken, carpenter, a tenant in the parish of Kirkinner, Galloway. In her petition to the Privy Council she says that she is "about the age of three-score [and] ten years," though on her gravestone in the churchyard of Wigtown her age is given as sixty-three years. She lived a quiet life, but "superior," says Anderson, to most women of her station in religious knowledge; blameless in her deportment; and a pattern of virtue and piety." But these virtues did not appeal to the ruling powers in Scotland at this time. Margaret Lachlison had been guilty of absenting herself from the services of the curate, and she had attended the services of the "outed" (prescribed or outlawed) ministers. She had also given shelter to some of the persecuted.

In the eyes of those in power this conduct was considered highly reprehensible and criminal, and the strong hand of the law arrested all further attentions that this good woman might be inclined to show to her persecuted countrymen. While engaged at family worship on the Lords day in her own house she was apprehended and carried to prison, where "she lay for a long time;" says Anderson, "and was treated with great harshness, not being allowed a fire to warm her, nor a bed upon which to lie, nor even an adequate supply of food to satisfy the cravings of nature."

Margaret Wilson was the daughter of Gilbert Wilson, a farmer. Both Gilbert Wilson and his wife were exemplary in their attentions to the High Church Episcopacy advocated by the powers that were. But, strange to say, their children — Margaret, who was

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eighteen, Thomas, who was sixteen, and Agnes, who was in her fourteenth year — refused to adopt the religious faith of their parents, and cast in their lot with the persecuted Covenanters. The strong pressure of the persecutors was brought to bear on Gilbert Wilson's home, until at last his children were outlawed and had to flee to the mountains. Such an existence must have told severely on the young people, and in the end Margaret and Agnes ventured to steal to their father's home. They were soon discovered and cast into prison.

Like Margaret Lachlison, Margaret Wilson was asked to take the Abjuration Oath, abjuring the principles of the Cameronians, the Covenanters influenced by such ministers as Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill and Patrick Walker; but also like Margaret Lachlison, Margaret Wilson refused to do so.

After enduring imprisonment for six or seven weeks they were summoned before their judges and charged with the guilt of Bothwell Bridge and Airmoss. Needless to say; these young girls had no part or lot in these conflicts with the Royal troops. But they were found guilty; and, along with Margaret Lachlison, they were sentenced to be "ty'd" (tied) to "palisados" (a stake) fixed in the sand, within the "floodmark", and there to stand till the flood overflowed them and drowned them." Gilbert Wilson, well-nigh distracted with the cruel fate awaiting his children, made every effort to get the sentence revoked, but it was only with difficulty that he succeeded in saving the life of his thirteen year-old daughter. He had to go to Edinburgh to plead for her and pay a sum of one hundred pounds sterling.

On the 11th of May, Margaret Lachlison and her companion were led out of their prison to die on the Solway sands. The officials who were entrusted with the cruel deed drove two stakes into the sand — one being further out towards the sea than the other. To the former Margaret Lachlison was fastened, in the hope that the dying struggles of the aged martyr might weaken the resolution of the brave young girl as the remorseless waves rolled on. The fate of the sufferers for conscience' sake appealed powerfully to the people gathered on the banks, and every effort was made to win them from their stern resolution to die rather than disown what they believed to be the truth of God.

As the waters of the Solway Firth came on and did their pitiless work, some of the bystanders directed Margaret's attention to her aged companion, asking at the same time what she thought of her now. "What do I see," came the reply, "but Christ wrestling there? Think ye that we are the sufferers? No, it is Christ in us; for He sends none a warfare on their own charges." Then she opened her Bible and read aloud the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. And as she read those deeply comforting words with the light of eternity already shining upon the holy page, how unspeakably precious they must have been! "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither

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death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Then she sang the 25th Psalm in the Scottish Metrical Version, beginning at the 7th verse:

My sins and faults of youth
do thou, O Lord, forget:
After thy mercy think on me,
and for thy goodness great.

God good and upright is:
the way he'll sinners show.
The meek in judgment he will guide,
and make his path to know.

Ere the end came they pulled her out of the water, and, waiting until she was able to speak, they asked her if she would pray for King James. "I wish the salvation of all," she replied, "and the damnation of none." "Dear Margaret" pleaded one of the onlookers, "say 'God save the King'" "God save him if He will" she replied, "for it is his salvation I desire."

Eagerly her friends caught the words as a passport to the fleeting life of time. "She has said it! She has said it!" they cried, But Major Winram was not the man to be robbed so easily of his prey. He offered to administer the Oath of Abjuration to her. By this Oath the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant were declared to be unlawful. As a true Covenanter, Margaret resolutely refused to take the Oath. There was no wavering; that fair young life had been laid on the altar, consecrated to Christ, and she would not take it back. "Let me go," she said, "I am one of Christ's children ." They plunged her into the unfeeling waters, and the battle so nobly fought ended in triumph for the young witness of Christ. To appropriate Carlyle's words as applied by him to the closing scene in Oliver Cromwell's career: — "Here is a life-battle right nobly done. Seest thou not,

The storm is changed into a calm
at his command and will;
So that the waves, which rag'd before
now quiet are and still.

Then are they glad, because at rest
and quiet now they be:
So to the haven he them brings,
which they desir'd to see."

[Scottish Metrical Version, Psalm 107: 29,301

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In Wigtown Churchyard a tombstone tells the story of the tragedy in the rude but graphic couplet: —

“Within the sea, ty’d to a stake,
She suffered for Christ Jesus’ sake.”

It was the terrible “Killing Times”, but the judgments of the Lord slumbered not, and already, in the High Court of Heaven, the decree had gone forth that King James would be a fugitive and that he would have to leave his royal throne to another. To quote the words of Mrs. Menteth, in her Lays of the Kirk and Covenant, in reference to the waves that drowned the Wigtown Martyrs:

“They will not cease, they will not sleep, those voices of the wave, For ever, ever whispering, above the martyr’s grave;

‘Tis heard at night, ‘tis heard at noon, the same low wailing song, In murmur loud, in cadence low, ‘How long, O Lord - how long?’ A cry against thee from the tide! O tyrant, banned of Heaven. It meets the blood-voice of the earth - and answer shall be given, ‘A little while, the cup fills fast, it overflows for thee, And thine extremity shall prove the vengeance of the sea.’”

Three years afterwards King James fled, and William Prince of Orange, landing at Torquay, was proclaimed King, with his consort as Queen, and the “Killing Times” were at an end.

True Prayer—True Power!

By C. H. SPURGEON

“Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” [Mark 11:24]

This verse has something to do with the faith of miracles; but I think it has far more reference to the miracle of faith. We will, this morning, consider it in that light. I believe that this text applies not only to the apostles, but also to all those who walk in the faith of the apostles, believing in the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ. The advice which Christ gave to the twelve and to his immediate followers is repeated to us in God's Word this morning. May we have the grace to constantly obey it. “Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

There are so many persons who complain that they don't enjoy prayer. They don't neglect it, for they dare not; but they would neglect it if they could, because they don't find any pleasure in praying. And don't we all have to admit, that sometimes when we pray, that it is very difficult work and seems to be almost drudgery? We spend the allotted time, but we rise from our knees unrefreshed, like a man who has laid on his bed but has not slept so hasn't really recovered his strength. When the time comes around again conscience drives us to our knees, but there is not sweet fellowship with God. There is no crying out of our needs to him with the firm conviction that he will supply them. After having gone again through a certain round of customary utterances, we rise from our knees perhaps more troubled in conscience and more distressed in mind than we were before. There are many Christians, I think, who complain of this—that they pray not so much because it is a blessed thing that allows them to draw near to God, but because they must pray, because it is their duty, because they feel that if they did not, they would lose one of the sure evidences of being Christians. Brothers and sisters, I don't condemn you; but at the same time, if I may be the means of lifting you up this morning from so low a state of grace into a higher and healthier atmosphere, my soul will be extremely glad. If I can show you a more excellent way; if from this time forward you may come to look at prayer as your natural state, as one of the most delightful exercises of your life; if you will come to esteem it more than your necessary food, and to value it as one of heaven's best luxuries, surely I will have answered a great end, and you will have to thank God for a great blessing.

Give me your attention while I beg you, first, to look at the text; secondly to look around you; and then, to look above you.

I. First, LOOK AT THE TEXT.

If you look at it carefully, I think you will perceive the essential qualities which are necessary for any great success and power in prayer. According to our Savior's

description of prayer, there should always be some definite objects for which we should plead. He speaks of definite request, "Whatever you ask for." It seems then that he made the point that God's children would go to him to pray when they had something to pray for. Another essential qualification of prayer is earnest desire; for the Master assumes that when we pray we have needs and desires, thus we are asking for something. Indeed it is not prayer, it may be something like prayer, the outward form or the bare skeleton, but it is not the living thing, the all-prevailing, almighty thing, called prayer, unless there is a complete and consuming desire. Observe, too, that faith is an essential quality of successful prayer—"believe that you have received it." You cannot pray so as to be heard in heaven and answered to your soul's satisfaction, unless you believe that God really hears and will answer you. One other qualification appears here upon the very surface, namely, that a real expectation should always accompany a firm faith—"believe that you have received it." Not merely believe that "You will" but "You that you have" received it—count them as if they were received, believe it as if you had it already, and act as if you had it—act as if you were sure you would have it—believe that you received it, and you will have it." Let us review these four qualifications, one by one.

1. To make prayer of any value, there should be definite objects for which to plead for.

My brothers and sisters, we often ramble in our prayers after this, that, and the other, and we get nothing because in each request we do not really desire anything. We chatter about many subjects, but the soul does not concentrate itself upon any one object. Don't you sometimes fall on your knees without thinking beforehand what you plan to ask God for? You do so as a matter of habit, without any action of your heart. You are like a man who goes to a store and doesn't know what he wants to buy. He may perhaps make a good purchase when he is there, but certainly it is not a wise plan to adopt. And so the Christian in prayer may afterwards attain to a real desire, and get what he asked for, but how much better would it be if having prepared his soul by consideration and self-examination of his true needs, he came to God with specific requests. If we requested a meeting with a king or a president, we should expect to be able to answer the obvious question, "What do you wish to see them about?" We would not be expected to go into the presence of royalty or a great leader, and then to think of some petition after we came there. It is the same with the child of God. They should be able to answer the great question, "What is your petition and what is your request, and it will be yours?"

Imagine an archer shooting with his bow, and not knowing where the target is! Would he be likely to have success? Conceive of a ship on a voyage of discovery, putting to sea without the captain having any idea of what he was looking for! Would you expect that he would come back heavily laden either with the discoveries of science, or with the treasures of gold? In everything else you have a plan. You don't go to work without knowing that there is something that you plan to accomplish; how is it that you go to God without knowing what you intend to ask for? If you had some particular need you would never find prayer to be dull and heavy work; I am persuaded that you

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would long for it. You would say, "I have something that I want. Oh that I could draw near to my God, and ask him for it; I have a need, I want to have it satisfied, and I long till I can get alone, that I may pour out my heart before him, and ask him for this thing after which my soul so earnestly pants after."

You will find it more helpful to your prayers if you have some objects at which you aim, and I think also if you have some persons whom you will mention. Do not merely plead with God for sinners in general, but always mention some by name. If you are a Sunday-school teacher, don't simply ask that your class may be blessed, but pray for your children definitely by name before the Most High. And if there is a mercy in your household that you crave, don't go in a round-about way, but be simple and direct in your pleadings with God. When you pray to him, tell him what you want. If you don't have enough money, if you are in poverty, if you are in desperate need, state the case. Don't be shy with God. Come at once to the point; speak honestly with him. He needs no beautiful phrases such as men will constantly use when they don't like to say right out what they mean. If you need either an earthly or spiritual mercy, say so. Don't rummage through the Bible to find words in which to express it. Express your needs in the words which naturally suggest themselves to you. They will be the best words, depend on it. Abraham's words were the best for Abraham, and yours will be the best for you. You need not study all the texts in Scripture, to pray just like Jacob and Elijah did, using their expressions. If you do you will not truly imitate them. You may imitate them literally and in a forced way, but you lack the soul that suggested and animated their words. Pray in your own words. Speak plainly to God; immediately ask for what you want. Name persons, name things, and be direct with the objects of your supplications, and I am sure you will soon find that the weariness and dullness of which you often complain in your prayers, will disappear; or at least you won't experience them very often like you did before.

"But," someone says, "I don't feel that I have any special things to pray about." Ah! My dear friend, I don't know who you are, or where you live, to not have any thing to pray about, for I find that every day brings either a need or trouble, and that I have every day something to ask of my God. But if we still insist that have no troubles, that we have attained to such a level of grace that we have nothing to ask for, then I ask, do we love Christ so much that we have no need to pray that we may love him more? Do we have so much faith that we have ceased to cry, "Lord increase my faith?" You will always, I am sure, by a little self-examination, soon discover that there is some legitimate object for which you may knock at Mercy's door and cry, "Give me, Lord, the desire of my heart." And if you haven't any desire, you have only to ask the first struggling Christian you meet, and he will give you something to pray for. "Oh," he will reply to you, "If you have nothing to ask for yourself, then please pray for me. Ask that a sick wife may be healed. Pray that the Lord will graciously help the person struggling with a discouraged heart; ask that the Lord would send help to some minister who has been laboring in vain, and spending his strength for nothing." When you have done asking for yourself, plead for others; and if you can't meet with someone who can suggest a theme, look on this huge, Sodom, this city like another

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Gomorrah lying before you; carry it constantly in your prayers before God and cry, "Oh that this city may live before you, that its sin may be stopped, that its righteousness may be exalted, that the God of the earth may draw to himself many people out of this city."

2. It is equally necessary that with the definite object for prayer that there should also be an earnest desire for its attainment.

"Cold prayers," says an old Christian, "ask for a denial." When we come to the Lord with an attitude of indifference in our prayers then, we do as it were, stop his hand, and restrain him from giving us the very blessing we pretend that we are seeking. When you have your object in your heart, your soul must become so possessed with the value of that object, with your own excessive need for it, with the danger which you will be in unless that object would be granted, that you will be compelled to plead for it as a man pleads for his life.

There was a beautiful illustration of true prayer, prayer that was addressed to a man, in the conduct of two noble ladies, whose husbands were condemned to die and were about to be executed, when they came before King George and plead for their pardon. The king rudely and cruelly rejected them. King George the first! It was in his very nature to act the way he did. And they pleaded again, and again, and again, and they would not rise from their knees; they had to actually be dragged out of court, for they would not stop pleading until the king had granted their wish, and told them that their husbands would live. Sadly! they failed, but they were noble women for their perseverance in pleading for their husbands' lives.

That is exactly the way for us to pray to God. We must have such a desire for the thing we want, that we will not stop praying until we have it—but always in submission to his divine will, nevertheless. Feeling that the thing we ask for cannot be wrong, and that he himself has promised it, we have resolved it must be given, and if not given, we will plead the promise, again, and again, until heaven's gates will shake before our pleas will cease. No wonder that God has not blessed us much lately, because we are not fervent in prayer as we should be. Oh, those cold-hearted prayers that die upon the lips—those frozen supplications; they don't move men's hearts, how should they move God's heart? They don't come from our own souls, they don't well up from the deep secret springs of our inmost heart, and therefore they cannot rise up to him who only hears the cry of the soul, before whom hypocrisy and formality are clearly seen. We must be earnest, otherwise we have no right to hope that the Lord will hear our prayer.

And surely, my brothers and sisters, we would stop all insincerity in prayer and be constantly serious in our requests, if we could comprehend the greatness of the Holy God before whom we plead. Will I come into your presence, my Lord, and mock you with cold-hearted words? Will I be content to babble through a form with no soul and no heart? Ah, my brothers and my sisters! We have no idea how many of our prayers are an abomination to the Lord. It would be an abomination to you and to me to hear

men ask us in the streets, as if they did not want what they asked for. But haven't we done the same to God? Haven't we taken that which is heaven's greatest blessing to us, and made it into a dry dead duty? It was said of John Bradford that he had an unusual way to pray, and when asked what his secret was, he said, "When I know what I want I always stop and continued to present that prayer until I feel that I have pleaded it with God, and until God and I have had dealings with each other upon it. I never go on to another petition until I have completely gone through the first."

Sadly! for some men who begin "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name;" and before they have realized the adoring thought—"hallowed be your name,"—they have begun to repeat the next words—"Your kingdom come;" then perhaps something strikes their mind, "Do I really wish his kingdom to come? If it were to come now where would I be?" And while they are thinking of that, their voice is going on with, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" so they jumble up their prayers and run the sentences together. Oh! stop at each request until you have really prayed it. Don't try to put two arrows on the bow at once, they will both miss. He that would load his gun with two charges cannot expect to be successful. Discharge one shot first, and then load again. Plead once with God and prevail, and then plead again. Get the first mercy, and then go again for the second. Don't be satisfied with running the colors of your prayers together, until there is no picture to look at but just a huge glob, a smear of colors badly laid on. Look at the Lord's Prayer itself. What clear sharp outlines there are in it. There are certain definite mercies, and they do not run into one another. There it stands, and as you look at the whole it is a magnificent picture; not confusion, but beautiful order. It should be the same with your prayers. Stay on one until you have prevailed with that, and then go on to the next. With definite objects and with fervent desires mixed together, there is the dawning of hope that you will prevail with God.

3. But again: these two things would not be powerful and effective unless they were mixed with a still more essential and divine quality, namely, a firm faith and belief in God.

Brothers and sisters, do you believe in prayer? I know you pray because you are God's people; but do you believe in the power of prayer? There are a great many Christians that don't, they think it is a good thing, and they believe that sometimes it does wonders; but they don't think that prayer, real prayer, is always successful. They think that its effect depends upon many other things, but that it hasn't any essential quality or power in itself. Now, my own soul's conviction is, that prayer is the greatest power in the entire universe; that it has a more omnipotent force than electricity, gravity, or any other of those secret forces which men have called by names, but which they do not understand. Prayer has as obvious, as true, as sure, as invariable an influence over the entire universe as any of the laws of matter. When a person really prays, it is not a question whether God will hear them or not, he must hear them; not because there is any compulsion in the prayer, but there is a sweet and blessed compulsion in the promise. God has promised to hear prayer, and he will keep his promise. Since he is

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the most high and true God, he cannot deny himself. Oh! to think of this; that you a puny person may stand here and speak to God, and through God is controlling the entire universe. Yet when your prayer is heard, creation will not be disturbed; though the greatest prayer is answered, providence will not be disarranged for a single moment. Not a leaf will fall earlier from the tree, not a star will stray from its course, nor one drop of water trickle more slowly from its fount, all will go on the same, and yet your prayer will have effected everything. It will speak to the decrees and purposes of God, as they are being daily fulfilled; and they will all shout to your prayer, and cry, "You are our brother; we are decrees, and you a prayer; but you are yourself a decree, as old, as sure, as ancient as we are."

Our prayers are God's decrees in another shape. The prayers of God's people are but God's promises breathed out of living hearts, and those promises are the decrees, only put into another form and fashion. Don't say, "How can my prayers affect the predetermined will and plan of God?" They cannot, except in so much that your prayers are decrees, and that as they come out, every prayer that is inspired of the Holy Spirit to your soul is as omnipotent and as eternal as that decree which said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" or as that decree which chose his people, and ordained their redemption by the precious blood of Christ. You have power in prayer, and you stand today among the most potent ministers in the universe that God has made. You have power over angels, they will fly at your command. You have power over fire, and water, and the elements of the earth. You have power to make your voice heard beyond the stars; where the thunders die out in silence, your voice will wake the echoes of eternity. The ear of God himself will listen and the hand of God himself will yield to your will. He commands you pray, "Your will be done," and your will, will be done. When you can plead his promise then your will is his will.

Doesn't it seem amazing my dear friends, an awesome thing to have such power in one's hands as to be able to pray? You have heard sometimes of men who pretended to have a weird and mystic power, by which they could call up spirits from the dead, by which they could make showers of rain, or stop the sun. It was all a figment of their imagination, but even if it was true then the Christian would be a greater magician still. If he has but faith in God, there is nothing impossible to him. He will be delivered out of the deepest waters—he will be rescued out of the distressing troubles—in famine he will be fed—in times of great diseases he will go unscathed—in the middle of calamities he will walk firm and strong—in war he will always be protected—and in the day of battle he will lift up his head, if he can only believe the promise, and hold it up before God's eyes and plead it with the confidence of unflinching reliance. There is nothing, I repeat it, there is no force so tremendous, no energy so marvelous, as the energy with which God has endowed every man and woman, who like Jacob can wrestle, like Israel can prevail with him in prayer. But we must have faith in this; we must believe prayer to be what it is, or else it is not what it should be. Unless I believe my prayer to be effectual it will not be, for it will depend to a great extent on my faith. God may be merciful and grant my request even when I don't have the faith; that will be his own sovereign grace, but he has not promised to

do it. But when I have faith and can plead the promise with earnest desire, it is no longer a probability as to whether I will get the blessing, or whether my will, will be done. Unless the Eternal will swerve from his Word, unless the oath which he has given will be revoked, and he himself will cease to be what he is, “We know that we have what we asked of him” [1 John 5:15].

4. And now to mount one step higher, together with definite objects, fervent desires and strong faith in the efficacy of prayer there should be—and Oh may divine grace make it so with us!—there should be mingled a real expectation.

We should be able to count the answered prayers before we receive them, believing that they are on the road. Reading the other day in a sweet little book, which I would commend to the attention of all of you, written by an American author who seems to truly and completely know the power of prayer, and to whom I am indebted for many good things—a little book called *The Still Hour*, [Austin Phelps, 1820-1890].

In the little book, I noted a reference to a passage in the book of Daniel, the tenth chapter I think, where, as he says, the whole machinery of prayer seems to be exposed. Daniel is on his knees in prayer, and an angel comes to him. He talks with him and tells him that as soon as Daniel set his mind to gain understanding and to humble himself before God, his words were heard, and the Lord had sent him to Daniel. Then he tells him in the most business-like, “I would have been here sooner, but the Prince of Persian kingdom resisted me; nevertheless the prince of your nation [Michael the Archangel] helped me, and I am come to comfort and instruct you.”

Now I want you to see that God breathes the desire into our hearts, and as soon as the desire is there, before we call he begins to answer. Before the words make it half way up to heaven, while they are yet trembling on the lip—knowing the words we mean to speak—he begins to answer them, sends the angel; the angel comes and brings down the needed blessing. Why the thing is a revelation if you could see it with your eyes. Some people think that spiritual things are dreams, and that we are talking nonsense. No, I do believe there is as much reality in a Christian's prayer as in a lightning flash; and the utility and excellency of the prayer of a Christian may be just as sensibly known as the power of the lightning flash when it strikes the tree, breaks off its branches, and splits it to the very root. Prayer is not an imagination of fiction; it is a real actual thing, coercing the universe, binding the laws of God themselves in chains, and constraining the High and Holy One to listen to the will of his poor but favored creature—man himself. We must always believe this. We need an absolute assurance in prayer. To count the answers before they are received! To be sure that they are coming! To act as if we have actually received them! When you have asked for your daily bread, then you are to no longer be concerned about it, but to believe that God has heard you, and will give it to you. When you have taken the case of your sick child before God and believe that the child will recover, or if they should not, that it will be a greater blessing to you and more glory to God, and so you leave it with him. To be able to say, “I now know that he has heard me; I will stand on my watchtower; I will

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look for my God and hear what he will say to my soul.” Have you ever been disappointed, Christian, when you prayed in faith and expected the answer? I bear my own testimony here this morning, that I have never yet trusted him and found him to fail me. I have trusted man and have been deceived, but my God has never once denied the request I have made to him, when I have backed up the request with belief in his willingness to hear, and in the assurance of his promise.

But I hear some one say, “Can we pray for earthly things?” Yes, you may. In everything make known your needs to God. It is not merely for spiritual, but for everyday concerns. Take your smallest trials before him. He is a God that hears prayer; he is your household God as well as the God of the Sanctuary. Always take all that you have before God. As one good man who was about to be united with this Church told me of his departed wife, “Oh,” he said, “she was a woman that I could never get to do anything until she made it a matter of prayer. Whatever it was, she used to say, ‘I must make it a matter of prayer;’” Oh for more of this sweet habit of spreading everything before the Lord, just as Hezekiah did with the threatening letter from the enemy, and there leaving it, saying, “Your will be done, I leave it with you!” Men say Mr. Muller of Bristol is a bit crazy and eccentric, because he will gather seven hundred children and believe that God will provide for them; though there is no money or food. He is only doing what ought to be the commonplace action of every Christian man and woman. He is acting in accordance to a decree of God, which the world will always scoff at, because they do not understand it, for it doesn’t make sense to them, because it is based on the uncommon faith in a faithful God. Oh that we had that uncommon faith to take God at his word! He cannot and he will not permit the person that trusts him to be ashamed or confused.

Now, I have, as best as I could, set forth before you what I conceive to be four essentials of prevailing prayer—“Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

To be continued.

The epilogue: Do I Love Jesus?

Before offering an answer to this question, just think about it for a few moments, for, as the saying goes, “*Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!*” But what is the reason for, and what lies behind, this question? Well, it arises directly from something Jesus said to His disciples, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)

The Lord presents the disciples with what is termed a *factual predictive condition*, e.g., ‘*If such is true, [then] you should!*’ In the instance quoted, Jesus, with challenging insight, calls for an evidential response. All too often we fail to realise the overwhelming intensity and penetrating power of our Lords words. As Dr. Charles Smith succinctly notes, “*We have a curious tendency, even in dealing with Jesus’ humanity, to overlook his sheer intellectual stature.*”¹ Consider then this statement uttered by Jesus there in the upper room.

“If you love me...”. The word “love”, in the original language spoken by Jesus, emphasises the strongest and purest of love, equating to the very love of God. Oh, is not this truly astonishing, that a poor sinful wretch has been granted such, that is, to love with the very love of God! Amazing grace! Astounding mercy! To be sure, there is a “love” that resides in the heart of the “new man” that beats with pulse-rate of heaven.

Now this “love”, Jesus insists, if indeed avowed true, does not dwell in isolation. Listen to what He goes on to say, “...keep my commandments”. Perhaps what springs to mind at this juncture are the *two* questions Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me...?” (John 21:15-16)² These two questions use the same mighty word for “love” as utilised in the statement under consideration. Peter’s [albeit restricted] affirmation is accepted, yet only on the strict demonstrative grounds that he “feeds” Jesus’ flock.

Plainly, it is of the essence that this “love” of which Jesus speaks must have an effect upon the soul, an impulse that directs, and a purpose that evinces. In the case under discussion, these derive from that devastatingly powerful little word “keep”, which He stated with all the authority of His Divine nature. The verbal form is structured so as to enforce the necessity of ensuring that one gives heed so to do. In reality, Jesus is saying, “If you love me, [then] you [shall] keep my commandments”!

The strength of the word “keep” enforces the notion that to do other than what Jesus requires is to demonstrate that the love professed is, regretfully, entirely misplaced. This is proved by that which He said only moments later, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love...”. (John 15:10) Quite obviously, in not keeping the commandments of Jesus, implies no abiding in the love of Jesus!

Christian friend, I wonder if you, like me, sometimes wish that Jesus had not said certain things? At times, how incredibly and extraordinarily severe His words appear; so unbending, so uncompromising, so unflattering. And indeed they are! But to entertain

such thoughts is altogether unworthy, utterly unjustifiable, and betray what can only be described as unutterable ignorance. Surely such words of Jesus, when spoken to His Redeemed ones, demonstrate His penetrating love.

“If you love me, keep my commandments”. Is not this one of those instances when the words of the Saviour penetrates the cloak of pathetic hypocrisy, shatters all fanciful delusions, and exposes puerile emotionality! But understand that the Lord here is engaging with His disciples in order to help them evaluate and realise the precise condition of their spirituality. Can there, therefore, ever exist any valid objection to His enquiring of the allegiance of His people? Is He not wholly justified and entirely reasonable in His interrogation? Does He not have the supreme right to challenge what is manifestly the most intimate relationship under heaven? Yes, a thousand times yes, in every way!

O beloved Christian, let me cut to the chase and state the case. The Lord’s people are not their own! Jesus, the Great Redeemer and Saviour, has come into the ‘slave market of sin’, (Galatians 3:13), to purchase outright the ones chosen of Him. Therefore, those so purchased, have entered, by emancipating grace, into the outright ownership of Jesus. To illustrate: when a business has been purchased from a previous owner, the prominent slogan proudly displayed reads ‘*Under New Management*’. As such, everything has to be done in accord with the new rules, and under the contractual terms and conditions of the new owner.

So too for the Christian! There is ‘New Management’ and a ‘New Covenant’, a new agreement, the guiding principles of which are the “commandments” of the Lord Christ Jesus, “...and his commandments are not grievous.” (1John 5:3), i.e., they are not heavy nor over-burdensome! Did not the Jesus say, “...my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light”! (Matthew 11:29) So there is every encouragement to embrace and obey the wonderful precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having all too briefly examined the matter, let me once more ask the question, “Do I love Jesus?” In the last analysis, and perhaps the very best, and indeed only answer is, “Ye Lord, thou knowest...” (John 21:15ff).

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1. The Jesus of the Parables’ p. 19 by Dr. Charles F. W Smith, quoted in ‘*Poet and Peasant*’ p. 158 by Kenneth E. Bailey, 1976. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

2. Whereas Jesus enquires of Simon Peter’s love to Him three times, the third question in the original is framed differently from the first two. The third question centres upon ‘filial’ love and not the ‘divine’ love previously employed.