

April **1** Tuesday

Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall no way fulfill flesh's lust. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh...If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit.

(Galatians 5:16-17,25)

ENJOYMENT: THE JOY OF SALVATION (1)

Although you are saved by Christ's work and assured by God's Word, your joy is maintained by the Holy Spirit who indwells you. Christ's work and your salvation stand or fall together, your walk and your enjoyment stand or fall together. Christ's work cannot fail, so your salvation cannot fail. However, your walk can fail, and when it does, your enjoyment fails with it. In other words, your spiritual joy will be in direct proportion to the spiritual character of your walk after you are saved.

Have you made the mistake of mixing up enjoyment and safety? When through self-indulgence, loss of temper, or worldliness you grieved the Holy Spirit and lost your joy, have you thought your safety was also lost? Your safety depends on Christ's work for you. Your assurance depends on God's Word to you, and your enjoyment depends on not grieving the Holy Spirit in you.

When a child of God grieves the Spirit, his communion with the Father and the Son is stopped. When he judges self and confesses his sin, the joy of communion is restored. For example: Your son has done something wrong. His communion with you is broken because of his disobedience. You have assured him of forgiveness if he confesses his wrong, but pride and self-will keep him from doing so. All his joy is gone because communion has been interrupted.

What has happened to your relationship? Has that gone too? Of course not. Relationship depends on birth, communion on behavior. As soon as your son confesses, you take him in your arms, and his joy is restored because communion is restored. The communion we have with the Lord is the joy we have of salvation.

G. Cutting

April **2** Wednesday

Everyone that practices sin practices also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And ye know that He has been manifested that He might take away our sins; and in Him sin is not. *(1 John 3:4-5)*

Everyone that practices sin practices lawlessness. The gold of the gospel is in the Epistle of John. The germ of truth is there, for it sets forth in such blessed, rich fullness God's standard of holiness and the working it out in detailed power. It gives us to know the precious from the vile, and gives grace and wisdom to separate them. And then you get a clean vessel meet for the Master's use, filled with all the fullness of the knowledge of God, sanctified unto every good word and work.

Where man in his sinful state has done his worst, God shines out most in all the resplendent character of His perfect holiness. The world with all its wisdom and boasting of moral power of doing good, pressed Christ out and murdered Him, and it will put the believer outside too, if he will walk with that blessed One as He walked. Only they who will live godly in Christ Jesus have the promise of suffering persecution and reproach for Christ.

Nothing tends to keep the soul of a saint in such a healthy condition, as he ought to be in order to manifest Christ, but trouble of some kind or other. It is the sphere alone in which he can be kept happy, therefore Paul says, "I take pleasure in necessities, in infirmities, tribulations." Christ says, "These things they will do because they have not known the Father nor Me" (Jn. 16:3). They also took up stones to cast at Him, but He went through the midst of them and so passed by.

Can you and I walk before Him and walk in the power of that new nature even as He walked? The world's hating of the Son of God drives us to do so.

J. N. Darby

April **3** Thursday

Who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness: by whose stripes ye have been healed. *(1 Peter 2:24)*

My children, these things I write to you in order that ye may not sin; and if any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. *(1 John 2:1)*

ENJOYMENT: THE JOY OF SALVATION (2)

God's judgment of the believer's sins is not less than that of the unbeliever's sins. When a believer sins, the question of criminality cannot be raised against him, for the Judge settled that on the cross; but the question of communion is raised within the believer by the Holy Spirit every time He is grieved.

On a clear moonlit night, a man, looking at the moon's reflection in a still pool, remarks how beautiful the moon is. Then someone throws a stone into the pool and the man exclaims, "The moon is all broken up and the fragments are shaking in disorder!" His friend replies, "Look up, man. The moon hasn't changed. The condition of the pool has changed." Your heart is the pool. When you don't allow evil in your life, the Holy Spirit reveals the glories of Christ for your joy. But the moment sin enters, the Holy Spirit begins to disturb the pool and your happy experiences are broken up. You are restless and disturbed within. But when you confess the sin, the calm, sweet joy of communion is restored.

While your heart is in the state of unrest, has Christ's work changed? No! Then your salvation hasn't changed either. Has God's Word changed? No! Then the certainty of your salvation also hasn't changed. What has changed? The Holy Spirit's action in you. Instead of filling your heart with the sense of Christ's worthiness, He is grieved at having to fill you with the sense of your sin. He takes away your joy until you judge and resist the evil that grieves Him. This done, He restores your communion.

G. Cutting

April **4** Friday

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thine understanding. *(Luke 10:27)*

WHO WILL RING THE BELL?

Bong, bong. The sound of the bell broke my sleep, early in the morning. As I looked out of my window, I saw old brother Tatai, striking a truck tire rim with an iron bar. Resounding with each blow, the sound of the bell was calling out to the forest village that prayer meeting would be starting in half an hour. Five minutes before the meeting, there he was again, striking the bell to signal meeting time. It is so heart-warming to see this aged brother, serving the Lord with all his might and an open heart.

Brother Tatai, 98 years old, rings the bell, opens the door of the meeting hall, and with much respect sets the table with the bread and wine each Sunday. He is *always* there. Although his eyes are dim with cataracts, he still gives out hymns in meeting—he knows them all by heart.

Evenings, after supper, as we sit on the porch looking toward the sea, the sun set and darkness only chased away a little by the lantern on the small wooden table, he often asks questions—“What happened to Jericho?” “How will it be when the Lord comes?” “How will it happen and what will happen after that?” And so we enjoy the Lord together.

What a blessing to have older brothers and sisters who love and serve the Lord to the measure the Lord gives them strength. How beautiful to think of some like Caleb who said, “Jehovah has kept me alive...these 45 years...and now behold, I am... 85 years old, I am still this day strong...and now give me this mountain” (Josh. 14:10-12).

But Tatai is 98. If the Lord does not come before, Tatai will soon be called home. Then who will set the table and open the meeting hall doors? May the Lord exercise our hearts to fill the gaps in the ranks! If not, who will ring the bell?

A. Blok

April **5** Saturday

Having come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, Whence has this Man this wisdom and these works of power? Is not this the Son of the carpenter? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this Man all these things? And they were offended in Him. *(Matthew 13:54-57)*

In His early years the Lord Jesus increased in stature and in favor with God and men, and this was true in His own city of Nazareth. But when, in the synagogue of Nazareth, He began to teach the Word of God and to work miracles of grace, it might be thought the people would rejoice that One from their own city would be so gifted by God. Though they marveled at His wisdom and His works of power, evidently they foolishly thought that He had no right to be so wise and so powerful! And they were offended in Him. Were they not sensible enough to consider that, whatever they might think, He *did* have great wisdom and He *did* work miracles such as they had never seen before!

Such clear facts ought to have so impressed them that they would want to know more of Him. Nicodemus, in Jerusalem, spoke very positively as to this, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art come a Teacher from God, for none can do these signs that Thou doest unless God be with him" (Jn. 3:2). Nathanael, when the Lord told him He saw him under the fig tree, responded, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel" (Jn. 1:49). Even the Jewish soldiers sent by the Pharisees to apprehend the Lord, came back and told the Pharisees, "Never man spoke thus, as this Man."

No one will ever give the Lord Jesus the honor he should unless God in mercy works repentance in his heart and he is born again. No doubt some, even in Nazareth, had their eyes opened, but the general attitude was that of unbelief.

L. M. Grant

April **6** Lord's Day

Simon Peter answering said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in the heavens. *(Matthew 16:16-17)*

The name of the Lord Jesus Christ has been declared in this world for centuries, and men have professed some sort of outward allegiance to that name. But where are hearts that are absolutely true to Christ in His person and in His glory? Who are they that believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? This confession was not a deduction of logic nor something that sprang from Peter's own mind or feelings. It was an utterance absolutely true because the Father in heaven had made it known to the apostle.

It is not at all likely that Peter was at the Jordan when from heaven came the voice of the Father, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight." That was a voice specially for John the Baptist, because John said himself, "He who sent me to baptize with water, He said to me, Upon whom thou shall see the Spirit descending and abiding on Him, He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God" (Jn. 1:33-34).

But the declaration by Peter was a special and definite revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory as not only the Christ, but the Son of the living God. It is needful in a day of rejection that there shall be witnesses to the essential glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God always finds them. He found one here, Peter, and revealed to him the truth concerning His Son. What is hidden from the wise and prudent the Father reveals to babes.

*Crowned above in heavenly light,
What an all-transcending sight!
Worthy Lord, we bow the knee,
Power and praise belong to Thee.*

W. J. Hocking

April 7 Monday

After [Ehud] was Shamgar the son of Anath; and he smote the Philistines, six hundred men, with an ox-goad. And he also delivered Israel. *(Judges 3:31)*

Shamgar delivered God's people from a few hundred Philistines with a most unusual weapon. The Philistines were "wanderers" as their name implies. They came into the land by a shortcut and not through the Jordan. They symbolize those who come among the Lord's people without exercise. Such people claim the right to be among us even though they have never gone through "Jordan"—in type, through "death and resurrection." Thus they are an imitation! So also is the religion which reintroduces the rites and ceremonies of Judaism into Christianity—this action is rebuked in the epistles to the Galatians and the Hebrews.

"Wanderers" and pilgrims may resemble one another, but a wanderer is a very different person from one who is a stranger and a pilgrim. A wanderer is one who goes about without any definite purpose, but a person who is a stranger and a pilgrim, as we should be, has a definite purpose toward which he or she is going. It takes a person like a Shamgar, "the stranger," to deliver God's people from subjection to "the wanderers," the imitators, the Philistines. He takes an ox-goad and eliminates them.

The lesson is simple enough. God can use anything to win the victory. A mere exhortation which acts as an ox-goad is enough. It stirs the oxen to walk a little faster, or makes them walk in the right direction when they are going wrong. An ox-goad that pricks and punctures the conscience will reveal and eliminate the imitation that seems to be so mighty. Would that we were more familiar with the ox-goad!

S. Ridout

*Give of your best to the Master,
Give of the strength of your youth;
Clad in salvation's full armor,
Join in the battle for truth.*

H. B. Grose

April **8** Tuesday

When the Most High assigned to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For Jehovah's portion is His people; Jacob the lot of His inheritance.

(Deuteronomy 32:8-9)

The primary application of all this is to Israel. The Church may learn from it and profit by it, but to apply it to the Church would involve a double mistake of the most serious nature; it would involve nothing less than the reducing of the Church from a heavenly to an earthly level, and the most unwarrantable interference with Israel's divinely appointed place and portion.

What had the Church of God, the body of Christ, to do with the settlement of the nations of the earth? Nothing whatever! The Church, according to the mind of God, is a stranger on earth. Her portion, her hope, her home, her inheritance, her all, is heavenly. It would make no difference in the current of this world's history if the Church had never been heard of. Her calling, her walk, her destiny, her whole character and course, her principles and morals, are or ought to be heavenly. The Church has nothing to do with the politics of this world. Her citizenship is in heaven, from whence she looks for the Savior. She proves false to her Lord, false to her calling, false to her principles, insofar as she meddles with the affairs of nations. It is her high and holy privilege to be linked and morally identified with a rejected, crucified, risen, and glorified Christ. She has no more to do with the present system of things, or with the current of this world's history, than her glorified Head in the heavens. "They," says our Lord Christ, speaking of His people, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

This is conclusive. It fixes our position and our path in the most precise and definite way possible. "As He is, so are we in this world."

C. H. Mackintosh

April **9** Wednesday

The word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? Because he humbleth himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days: in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

(1 Kings 21:28-29)

PROPHETS AND THEIR PROPHECIES—ELIJAH (5)

Although after Elijah's outburst on Mount Sinai God used others of the 7000 He saw faithful to Himself in Israel, yet in His grace He still continued to use Elijah. After Jezebel's judicial murder of Naboth, God sent Elijah to confront wicked Ahab and to announce God's judgment upon him, his wife Jezebel, and his entire family. Elijah went without demur and confronted Ahab in Naboth's vineyard, where he had gone to take possession of it.

Without mincing words, Elijah sternly faced Ahab with God's verdict on his sin and the punishment he and his entire family would reap in consequence. Guilty Ahab replied, "Hast thou found me, mine enemy?" The wicked of this world still view believers who boldly stand on the Lord's side as their enemies when they denounce sin rather than tolerating it. Elijah did not let Ahab's accusation deter him. Better to be called an enemy by Ahab than to run the risk of being at enmity with God! James 4:4 states clearly: "Friendship with the world is enmity with God."

We see fellowship between God and His servant at the end of this chapter. Amos 3:7 tells us, "The Lord Jehovah will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." God noted "when Ahab heard these words, that he rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly." He pointed out to Elijah how Ahab was humbling himself before Him. Though this was not repentance, still God acknowledged it and wanted His servant to understand why He was postponing the execution of His judgment until later.

E. P. Vedder, Jr.

April **10** Thursday

God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him may not perish, but have life eternal...He that believes on Him is not judged: but he that believes not has been already judged, because he has not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. *(John 3:16,18)*

God so *loved* the world—*not loves* the world—that *He gave His Son*. The holiness and righteousness of God in this present dispensation calls for condemnation upon the sinner out of Christ now—and the only remedy for the sinner that God has provided is not the receiving of the love of God, but receiving Christ alone, and as soon as he does that, he receives the love of God and can say, “We love Him because He first loved us.” Hence it is very unscriptural to tell an unbeliever God bore your sins away on His Son; because the unconverted have not believed, but as soon as they have believed that Jesus is the Christ, then it is true of them. The children out of communion have had their sins put away, but they will bear the consequences of their ungodly walk. “He hath made Him to be sin for us” so consequently we have the standing of the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). God’s claim upon us is that we should walk according to the measure and state of that condition in which God has placed us. So God has only wrath for the unconverted; the correlative (or opposite) of love is wrath (See Jn. 3:36).

Divine righteousness and divine love have been shown towards this world and now divine wrath is about to be poured out on all those who are rejecters of God’s righteousness. God could not possibly give any greater proof of His love than putting the sinner’s sins on His own dear Son in whom was all His delight. The very nature of God is love, not derived from any other source, as we get it, but He Himself is the Author of it.

J. N. Darby

April 11 Friday

Everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them. *(1 Samuel 22:2 KJV)*

It was better for them to throw in their lot with David, who was rejected by man but chosen of God, than to remain with Saul, who was approved of men but rejected by God. David is a remarkable type of the Lord Jesus: in his victory over Goliath in order to deliver God's people, in his sufferings and exaltation, as well as being the gathering center for all who were conscious of their deep poverty.

Distress, debt, and discontentment are the byproducts of sin. Joseph's brothers confessed, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother...therefore is this distress come upon us" (Gen. 42:21). As to our sin-debt, Isaiah wrote, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). No wonder the apostle to the Gentiles could say, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors" (Rom. 8:12). Finally, who would deny that there is discontentment everywhere: in the home, in the workplace, and even in assemblies.

No matter what the situation is we find ourselves in, the invitation of Jesus still stands: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28).

Furthermore, we must not forget that those who identified themselves with David in his rejection, are later seen with him in his exaltation. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). It will be worth it all. What an encouragement!

R. A. Barnett

*Whatever foes or fears betide,
In Thy blest presence let us hide;
And while we rest our souls on Thee,
Thou shalt our sanctuary be.*

S. Medley

April 12 Saturday

In the fourth watch of the night He went off to them, walking on the sea. And the disciples, seeing Him walking on the sea, were troubled, saying, It is an apparition. And they cried out through fear. But Jesus immediately spoke to them, saying, Take courage; it is I: be not afraid. *(Matthew 14:25-27)*

This occasion beautifully pictures the dark night of the tribulation nearing its end, when the Lord Jesus will come in marvelous grace and power, walking on the boisterous waves of the Gentile nations, having them totally under His control, while the godly remnant of Israel passes through those same waves in great distress and anxiety, as pictured in the disciples in the boat.

To them it will seem to be an apparition. How can a human being walk so calmly over the waters of the sea? Had the sea been calm, this would already have been an impossibility, but the sea was in a state of great upheaval. But this was of no more consequence to the Lord than had it been a calm, untroubled sea.

The Lord spoke to the disciples, "Take courage, it is I: be not afraid." And Peter, emboldened by faith, asked that the Lord should command him to walk on the waters. Does this not teach us that there will be some Israelites at the time of the Lord's coming in glory who will be willing to go forth to Him, even apart from the benefit of the boat—the organization of the nation Israel—because He Himself is their attraction?

Peter actually walked on the water, but seeing the elements so alarming, he began to sink. If instead of observing the elements, he had fixed his eyes on the Lord, this would not have happened. However, he did not cry to the disciples to save him, but to the Lord. And by His hand of power, the Lord lifted him up.

Let us remember that whether the waters of our circumstances are rough and threatening, or whether they are perfectly peaceful, it is the Lord Jesus whom we need to preserve and bless us.

L. M. Grant

April 13 Lord's Day

With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

(Isaiah 12:3)

How many wells of salvation has God provided for the joy and pleasure of His people? I'm not sure, but for a start I'd like to suggest an acrostic of nine inexhaustible wells of salvation for our joy and refreshment.

Security—In a world of insecurity, our Good Shepherd has given us a secure promise of eternal life. We shall never perish (Jn. 10:28).

Assurance—God's inspired Word can be fully trusted. It not only makes us wise to salvation, but fully fits and furnishes us unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Love—Having demonstrated His love by dying for us, our risen Savior continues to love us with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3).

Vision—With opened eyes, we can behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

Access—We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way (Heb. 10:19).

Testimony—Our lives, once full of bitterness and sin, can now set forth the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9).

Illumination—God has revealed to us by His Spirit the things He has prepared for those who love Him—things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

Opportunity—We have the great privilege of being ambassadors for Christ and urging people everywhere to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20).

Nearness—We who once were far away have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

G. W. Steidl

April 14 Monday

Jehovah called again the third time, Samuel! And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And Eli perceived that Jehovah was calling the boy. And Eli said to Samuel, Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah, for Thy servant heareth. (1 Samuel 3:8-9)

God chose to work through Samuel to bring His final message to Eli. God had previously warned Eli through a “man of God” whom he had ignored (1 Sam. 2:27-36). Was this a job for a child? Well, why not? God can work through children. Samuel’s job was not an easy or pleasant job for a child. We see this from the fact that, after he received the message from the Lord, “Samuel lay [down] until the morning...[because he] feared to declare the vision to Eli” (v. 15).

God can also work through children today. In many families God has worked through children to bring an entire family to salvation and to bring Christian parents closer to the Lord. In many classrooms, God has worked through children to combat unscriptural, secular ideas.

When Samuel said, “Speak...for Thy servant heareth,” it meant that he was listening with a view of obeying. Have you ever prayed that way? Do we not often pray for His help with our problems without considering doing what He asks of us to solve them, especially if it is difficult or unpleasant?

Children are given spiritual gifts at the time of their salvation, but they need to be developed with use (See 2 Tim. 1:6). Older and more mature believers are responsible to recognize and encourage their development by giving them, for example, opportunities to serve and speak for the Lord.

We do not know who may be another Samuel!

D. R. Reid

April 15 Tuesday

We have also access by faith into this favor in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works endurance; and endurance, experience; and experience, hope.

(Romans 5:2-4)

Tribulation, trials, disappointments, sorrows—these are the things that deal a death blow to the serenity and good times of the sinner, but they are the very things that God now takes up and uses to advance His work in the souls of all whom He has justified. So the believer, instead of being moved and discouraged by these things, can glory in them, “knowing that tribulation works endurance; and endurance, experience; and experience, hope.”

Endurance is that attitude of submission and surrender of our own wills to God in His providential dealings when we are in circumstances that are distasteful to the natural man. Its language is: He knows best, and He makes no mistakes. He has chosen my circumstances, guided by His infinite wisdom and prompted by His unchanging love. But someone may say. Yes, that is all right if God sends it, but what about when it is the devil or wicked men at the bottom of it? We answer, it makes no difference, for, what God does not hinder, He allows, and if He in His wisdom and love sees fit to allow it, it is always for our good. That is just what we see in Job’s case.

Whatever God allows, He allows for our good, that we, through the trial, might gain a richer blessing for our soul, a deeper experience of His sustaining love, and a fuller appreciation of our hope of glory. Then beside every trial is also an opportunity for the exercise of faithfulness, patience, and confiding trust that ever has its rewards.

*Though Satan seeks to buffet sore,
He bows at God’s command;
He cannot touch nor harm thee when
God says, “Stay now thine hand.”*

April **16** Wednesday

Let us make here three tabernacles...While [Peter] yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

(Matthew 17:4-8 KJV)

More and more, Christ does not have His proper place among the children of God. He is not the object. It is a doctrine, a dogma, a party, or our experience—something besides Christ. We seem possessed with the same spirit that actuated Peter on the mount.

Have you ever been in the “cloud”? Have you ever heard the “voice”? Have you been on your “face”? Have you felt the “touch”? Then, have you heard His voice, “Arise”? Do your eyes see “no man save Jesus only”? Many, perhaps, have reached the top of the mount; but few, very few have risen to see “Jesus only.” “Christ is all.” Do we make Him this?

Is it a question of my salvation? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Is it a question of relationship with God? “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Is it a question of experience? “For to me to live is Christ.” Is it a question of service? “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Is it a question of my path? “I am the way.” Is it a question of the place to which my path leads? He would define it as “where I am.”

Let us know more of that rich blessedness which comes of making Christ all, of seeing “Jesus only.” Our cry should be: O, to know Him! In our selfishness we cry for blessings. We need the Blesser *Himself*. *He* is the joy of the Father’s heart. Let us taste with Him the delight He takes in His Son. Christ is infinitely higher than doctrine or experience. Experience we shall have, but only with Him can our hearts be ravished and raptured.

F. C. Blount

April 17 Thursday

The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of Jehovah ...And Jehovah sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. *(Judges 4:1-2)*

It is noteworthy that Hazor and its allies had been conquered by Joshua a hundred years before this time (Josh. 11:10-15), and had been destroyed from off the face of the earth. Why, if it had been completely destroyed, do we hear of it again? If we regard Hazor as picturing some spiritual evil that has had a mastery over us, we obtain a valuable lesson. We all know what it is to have overthrown such a thing and then awake to find some day that old enemy, just as strong, and have to fight it all over again!

The king of Hazor's name is significant—it means “understanding.” Understanding can be an enemy if we allow the power of the human intellect to take over in place of the power of the Word of God. The power of mere human understanding controlling in divine things is a dreadful and awful thing. “Jabin” thus pictures the kind of people who do not want the “light of the Lord” because they are satisfied with the illumination of their own understanding.

There is a difference between the various classes of mankind. There are those who have been under the light of God's truth and have turned their backs upon it to live in darkness. People may proclaim an open Bible, but that is no guarantee that they will have more than profession or ritualism. On the other hand, some will proffer Scripture, but deny its place and its authority as the Word of God. This is actually infidelity—it effectively closes the Book to us.

The intellect used away from God means infidelity, no matter under what name it masquerades

S. Ridout

April **18** **Friday**

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. *(Proverbs 8:22-23 KJV)*

Nothing more effectually baffles the mind of man than the concept of eternity before the world began. Man can know nothing at all concerning it except what God has revealed. Scripture is comparatively silent about the eternal past. Even in the New Testament, where the clearest and fullest light of God's revelation shines, very few passages reach backward further than the foundation of the world and the beginning of the ages of time. But these few allusions of choicest worth unveil to us a little of God's secret purposes formed by Him before He launched the universe into being by His omnipotent word and furnished it by His omniscient wisdom.

The "foundation of the world" is frequently mentioned in Scripture as the extreme borderline of the past from which human history is reckoned. The names found in the book of life were written "from the foundation of the world," the Revelation declares. The divine record of these elect persons began at that point.

But what lies beyond that borderline of creation's beginning, when God was all? What took place when the Deity was Absolute, and unrelated to the nonexistent universe? From the disclosures God has been pleased to make in His Word, we learn of His love, of His foreknowledge, of His election, and of His promise of eternal life; and we know, therefore, that these plannings of infinite love were formulated before the foundation of the world. The counsels of grace existed in the Godhead from eternity, but the fact of their existence then was necessarily revealed to man in time.

W. J. Hocking

April 19 Saturday

I also, I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My Assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be bound in the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest loose on the earth shall be loosed in the heavens. *(Matthew 16:18-19)*

The Lord Jesus in these words gave Peter an honored place, but not one such as false religions have given him.

Peter's name means "stone," not rock, for Christ is the Rock (1 Cor. 10:4). The Assembly, the Church, began its existence on the day of Pentecost with the coming of the Spirit of God. It is built on Christ, the solid, unfailing Son of God, not on Peter, a failing disciple.

And certainly Peter was not given the keys of heaven, nor of the Church, but rather of "the kingdom of the heavens." That kingdom is on earth, but its headquarters is in heaven, where all authority is vested. The Church includes all true believers only, but the kingdom at present includes all, also, who claim to be believers, though they may be mere professors of Christianity.

The "key of knowledge" is one of the keys of the kingdom. Peter used this when he declared the Word of God at Pentecost, and many were affected by this. He used the other key also, which is baptism, and 3000 were baptized that day. We cannot say all were born again, for only the Lord Jesus can give new life, eternal life; but by being baptized, people were publicly forgiven, not necessarily eternally forgiven. This forgiveness is conditional on continuation, for one may be "loosed," yet afterward "bound." This was true of Simon the sorcerer, who was "loosed" when he claimed to believe, but soon proved false, and Peter "bound" him, telling him, "Thy money go with thee to destruction... Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter" (Acts 8:20-21).

L. M. Grant

April **20** Lord's Day

He is before all, and all things subsist together by Him. And He is the head of the body, the Assembly; who is the beginning, first-born from among the dead, that He might have the first place in all things: for in Him all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace by the blood of His cross—by Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. *(Colossians 1:17-20)*

He, the risen glorified Man, is Head of His body, the Assembly, the beginning of the creation of God. Atonement is completed, God is glorified, and every claim of the throne is settled. He is the victorious Man now crowned with glory and honor. And He will have His companions with Him in that same glory, before He claims the kingdom as His own. The work is complete. He is seated on the Father's throne, the highest place is His. He is waiting now in patience, and we are waiting with Him.

His headship over creation was His divine right. His headship of the Assembly He gained as Man by His work and victory over the enemy's power. His place now in glory proclaims God glorified, and the enemy vanquished, and we are now, as believers, one with Him, the glorified Man, our Head in heaven.

The Man Christ Jesus, God manifest in flesh, is our Savior, Lord, and Head. We know the Father—revealed in Him. The Holy Spirit too, in all His fullness was and is in Him. As the One who finished the work of atonement, He also received the Holy Spirit for us. God Himself in all His fullness was revealed in the person of Christ.

*Head of the Church. Thou sittest there;
Thy members all the blessings share;
Thy blessing, Lord, is ours:
Our life Thou art; Thy grace sustains;
Thy strength in us each victory gains
O'er sin and Satan's powers.*

J. G. Deck

April **21** Monday

The boy Samuel ministered to Jehovah before Eli. And the word of Jehovah was rare in those days...and Jehovah said to Samuel...In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house; I will begin and make an end.

(1 Samuel 3:1,11-12)

Samuel was the last judge and the first of the new line of prophets in Israel (Acts 13:20; 3:24). During the time of the judges, moral and spiritual conditions in Israel were so bad that people were not open to listening to God and His Word. God, by His grace, raised up Samuel as His spokesman and all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of Jehovah (1 Sam. 3:20). (The office of prophet had not been established previously.)

This account in 1 Samuel 3 describes the call of Samuel to the office and ministry of prophet. It also teaches us that, contrary to our cultural wisdom, children *should be seen and heard!* Samuel was probably no older than 12 when the call of God came to him—"Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, neither had the word of Jehovah yet been revealed to him" (v. 7). That changed when he declared himself ready to obey the Lord. He communicated the important message given to him, that God planned to remove Eli and his family as high priests.

God can communicate with children, even about unpleasant topics. We should not be afraid, for example, to speak with children about hell. Children can understand what God says about hell in His Word and He can use it to bring them to Jesus Christ for salvation. Some children acquire insights into the Bible and its truths that even some Bible students do not readily see. Why? Children are more open than adults to the Word of God, and to listening when He speaks. He can and does communicate with children.

D. R. Reid

April **22** **Tuesday**

For of His fullness we all have received, and grace upon grace.

(John 1:16)

HOW TO KNOW GRACE TRULY

How difficult it is to learn our utter worthlessness, and thus the preciousness of divine grace! Learning how poor we are in the presence of a holy God is learning the preciousness of Him by whom grace came. Job, doubtless for the first time, felt fully cast upon grace and tasted its sweetness when he saw God, abhorred himself, and did “repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

In Christ, saints indeed have a blessed place before God, but if they view themselves in Christ, it is impossible for them to have too exalted a conception of themselves. Thus our place as believers is both a low one and also a high one—low as to self and high as to Christ. The one who truly realizes this and lives in these two places will not live to himself but to Him who died for him and rose again. It was only when Isaiah fully realized the value of that by which his “iniquity was taken away, and [his] sin expiated” that he was able to say, “Here I am; *send me*” (Isa. 6:5-8).

Oh, how blessed it is to have grace and the Gift of grace filling the whole mind and heart and life and hopes!

R. H.

*Come, Thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for ceaseless songs of praise.*

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.*

R. Robinson

April **23** Wednesday

The third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him and said to him, Man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants be precious in thy sight. Behold, there came down fire from the heavens, and consumed the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties...And the angel of Jehovah said to Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. *(2 Kings 1:13-15)*

PROPHETS AND THEIR PROPHECIES—ELIJAH (6)

King Ahaziah of Israel, Ahab's son and successor, had injured himself in a fall and lay in bed sick. He sent a delegation to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of the Philistine city of Ekron, whether he would recover. God sent Elijah to intercept these messengers and send them back with the message that the king would die. Twice the king then sent a captain and fifty soldiers to arrest the prophet. Elijah had called down fire from heaven on them, consuming both insolent captains and their soldiers.

The king refused to learn from this and bow before God. Rather, he sent a third captain with fifty men. But the attitude of this captain was quite different. Recognizing Elijah to be a man of God, he humbly pleaded for his life and that of his soldiers. With him Elijah was told to go. Elijah obeyed, and pronounced God's impending judgment on wicked King Ahaziah to his face.

We live in the dispensation of grace. Many Christians don't understand what this involves. While in the time of the Law the man of God could call down fire on the foes threatening him, the Lord has given us different directions. We are not to retaliate when treated unjustly, but rather to turn the other cheek. Peter was told to put his sword in its sheath when he tried to defend Jesus. Christ has suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps. He, not Elijah, is our great Model.

E. P. Vedder, Jr.

April **24** Thursday

Ye have done well in taking part in my affliction...once and even twice ye sent to me for my need. *(Philippians 4:14,16)*

This was a precious commendation of the Philippian assembly. Are we not to gather instruction from this, and not neglect meeting the need of those who labor for the Lord?

Under the law, the order was, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse,” but now, under grace, we are told, “Ye have received gratuitously, give gratuitously” (Mt. 10:8 NASB). In other words, respond to God’s rich goodness and freely given grace by giving freely in return. Since the tithes of the fruit of Canaan are types for us of the heavenly blessings we have and realize in Christ, acceptable giving for us is a giving not of command but of a heart filled with the joy of the Lord. Thus, New Testament exhortations have a tone quite different from those of the Old Testament, and they guard us from any legality in our thoughts and exhortations.

However, the scriptural example of the Philippians is not to be slighted—the assembly at Philippi had sent twice to meet the needs of the apostle. Thus, it would surely not be right to *confine* our support and ministry to a laborer in our midst. The laborer needs to have full liberty to go wherever the Lord leads, to “regions beyond” (2 Cor. 10:16), especially to help other assemblies that might be in a low spiritual state.

It is good to send abroad to laborers and to support not only those that come to us. Also, the coming of a laborer to an assembly does not require that it contribute to his support—such a thought would be bondage! Nevertheless, it is a blessed privilege to contribute to those laboring in our midst.

May we all be ready, and glad, to give—ready to share the burden of the conflict!

E. S. Lyman

April **25** Friday

The children of Israel cried to Jehovah...And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, judged Israel at that time. (Judges 4:3-4)

You will notice that the dominion of the enemy took place because the people had departed from God after the death of Ehud (Judg. 4:1). The question then became, Who will be the judge that delivers? Who will be the one that sets God's people free? It was a woman, Deborah. Apparently not a man could be found to do the Lord's work! We see that God can, and does use people, no matter who, whose trust in Him makes them suitable instruments for His work.

Deborah means "the word" and she was a prophetess. Prophecy is not merely the written word but the word from God by the Holy Spirit. Scripture can give us all the theology we need. Yes, a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, of archeology and science can help, but it can also turn out to ensnare. If someone comes to you and says that you must know philosophy, or archeology, or history before you can understand the Bible, rest assured that he is not really likely to be helpful.

Deborah calls for Barak. True to her name, she meets him with the word of God: "Hath not Jehovah the God of Israel commanded?" Go with your army and I will give Sisera into your hand (Judg. 4:6-7). A simple "thus saith the Lord" should have been sufficient but Barak would not go unless Deborah went with him. Therefore, the full victory would not be his—Sisera would fall by the hand of a woman, Jael, not by a man.

Let us not be too severe with Barak. How often have we ourselves held back for some feeble instrument, some arm of flesh, when the living God has given us His command—and thereby lost the blessing!

S. Ridout

*Gird thy heavenly armor on,
Wear it ever, night and day;
Ambushed lies the evil one:
Watch and pray.*

C. Elliott

April **26** **Saturday**

There they rehearse the righteous acts of Jehovah, His righteous acts toward His villages in Israel. *(Judges 5:11)*

DEBORAH'S SONG

*For that leaders led in Israel, people offered willingly,
Bless Jehovah, kings and princes, listen, give your ear to me.
To Jehovah I am singing, I will worship Israel's God,
Praise the One who went before us, who in Edom's fields has trod.
Earth has trembled, clouds dropped water, mountains quaked
before God's face,
When Jehovah, God of Israel, spoke from His appointed place.
In the days of Jael and Shamgar, travelers went by crooked ways,
Roads into disuse had fallen, Israel's villages were razed.
I arose, Mother in Israel, though we lacked both shield or spear,
God was pitying His people, showing His unerring care.
From the tribes came men of valor, though in Reuben some had doubt,
Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan, Dan and Asher conflict flout.
Zebulon their lives were risking, full of prowess Naphtali,
Stars of heaven in their courses join their forces in the melee.
Blesséd is she above women, above women in her tent,
Jael, the faithful wife of Heber, who with nail and hammer went,
Struck Sisera through the temples, prone between her feet he bowed;
Honored is the wife of Heber, with such energy endowed.
But a Canaanitish mother looked for chariots in vain:
Why is Sisera not coming? Is he counting up the gain?
Is He loaded up with booty? Has he found a damsel fair?
Is he lingering satiated with the spoils of victory there?
God had acted for His people, scattered are their enemies;
Let His people, those who love Him, thank Him for their victories!*

A. E. West

April **27** Lord's Day

He was transfigured before them. And His face shone as the sun, and His garments became white as the light; and lo, Moses and Elias appeared to them talking with Him. And Peter answering said to Jesus, Lord, it is good we should be here. If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles: for Thee one, and for Moses one, and one for Elias. While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight: hear Him."

(Matthew 17:2-5)

Only the Lord Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and John, though Moses and Elijah miraculously appeared also. Was it the time for Peter to speak? No indeed! He ought to have been a willing, silent listener. Instead, he made a suggestion to the Lord that was altogether wrong. Both Moses and Elijah had been sufferers on earth, and indeed the Lord Jesus was also a sufferer here. There was no dwelling place in the world for any of them. Also, we may be sure that neither Moses nor Elijah would desire in the least to be exalted to share the glory of the Son of God!

Moses and Elijah fade into the background when the voice from heaven says, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight: hear Him." On such an occasion if anyone was to speak, it must be the Son of God Himself. Thus, God intervenes, and His words are a serious rebuke to Peter, who, we may be sure, took this to heart. Indeed, he speaks of this in his Second Epistle, "For He received from God the Father honor and glory, such a voice being uttered to Him by the excellent glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight; and this voice we heard uttered from heaven, being with Him on the holy mountain."

Certainly Peter could never forget this momentous occasion, nor forget the message from the lips of God the Father concerning His beloved Son, and His pure delight in Him.

L. M. Grant

April 28 Monday

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness. *(Proverbs 16:31)*

As we read through the Bible we encounter a number of old men who finished their lives in varying conditions of faithfulness. Moses “was 120 years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Dt. 34:7).

Caleb too, because of his faithful testimony about Canaan when he went in as a spy, lived through the wilderness journey. Then when most of the land was conquered seven years later, he asked for the portion God had promised him. “I am this day 85 years old. I am still this day strong...and now give me this mountain, of which Jehovah spoke in that day; for thou heardest in that day that Anakim are there, and great fortified cities. If so be Jehovah shall be with me, then I shall dispossess them” (Josh. 14:10-12).

Jacob, near the end of his life, had the spiritual insight to bless Joseph’s younger son rather than the firstborn, though his eyes were dim, and Joseph placed his oldest son at Jacob’s right hand (Gen. 48). By contrast, Isaac, when he was ready to bless his firstborn, Esau, first wanted to enjoy the pleasures of the world, a meal from Esau’s hand. His eyes too were dim so that he could not see properly, and he was deceived by Jacob (Gen. 27).

Eli, old, fat, and also with dim eyesight, had part in his sons’ wickedness as he made himself fat from their wicked actions (1 Sam. 2:29; 4:18).

Solomon, the great wise king, when old, was led astray by his foreign wives and his heart was not right with God (1 Ki. 11:4).

We can learn much from these examples and from godly old men whom God has placed in our lives. How important it is to have such godly old men who remain faithful to the end! We should thank the Lord for them. What a challenge for older brothers and sisters! The Christian life is not a 100-yard dash but rather a marathon.

A. Blok

April **29** Tuesday

He has taken us into favor in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace. *(Ephesians 1:6-7)*

Here we see the Christian according to the teaching of the New Testament. We are sheltered from judgment by the blood of the Lamb, we are delivered from the power of guilt by forgiveness, but even more, we are taken into God's favor. God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). We have become a heavenly people.

This is very real, very definite, very positive, and very practical teaching. As a heavenly people, we are to walk in this world as such, in all the varied relationships and responsibilities into which the good hand of God has placed us. We are not to be like monks, like ascetics, living dreamy, misty, unpractical lives, but to be reflecting the graces and virtues of Christ amid the scenes and circumstances of each of our lives. This is the kind of life a child may know, may realize, and may exhibit!

How different this description is from the ordinary Christianity we see everywhere around us. There should be no reason whatsoever why we should not be in the full enjoyment of our rich and rare spiritual blessings. However, dark unbelief fed by legality, bad teaching, and spurious religiousness robs many of God's dear children of their proper place and portion. And many are also sadly hindered from the clear perception and full realization of their position and privileges as heavenly people by their worldly values. We should only glory "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

Let us then measure ourselves by God's standard and see wherein we come short in our enjoyment.

C. H. Mackintosh

April **30** Wednesday

He...took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat.

(Luke 8:54-55 NKJV)

CHRIST, THE VICTOR OVER DEATH

This account of the raising of Jairus' daughter also contains important instruction for us. When the Lord entered the house, the young girl was sleeping "the sleep of death." But all live to God (Lk. 20:38). So the Son of God saw in that child a living soul and could say, "She is not dead, but sleeping." The scornful laughter of those present was silenced when He gave the proof of this by summoning the girl back to life.

The Lord's word of grace was addressed particularly to the parents. He commanded them to give their daughter something to eat. What care He took for the child! But what a solemn word that was for the parents! Nobody can live without food, and it was the responsibility of the girl's nearest relatives to see to it that her life was now sustained.

Where Jesus Christ has led a sinner from death to life and granted him eternal life, it is the duty of those who already have this life to start feeding those young in the faith with the "bread from heaven." Tender plants need daily care from the beginning so that they may grow properly. Loving parents take care to give their children the food that corresponds to their age. This is also true in a spiritual sense. All believers need the Word of God as regular nourishment for their souls.

*Risen Christ, our souls adore Thee:
Thou hast left the silent grave;
Death and Hades quail before Thee,
Thou art mighty now to save:
Glory, glory, we adore Thee,
And the Victor's banner wave.*

C. H. von Poseck