

The Prophet Jonah (3)

—R. Been Sr.

Chapter 2

Jonah in the fish

I doubt there has been another place as strange from where a human being has prayed to God. Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God *out of the fish's belly*. This proves that he was conscious there, in a place void of air, something that is only possible through a divine miracle. Later the prophet entered this prayer into his book.

The previous chapter portrayed Jonah to us as a real Israelite, a pious man, a leader. Yet, he had to acknowledge: I am the guilty one, cast me into the sea. Then he descends as it were into his grave. One would be inclined to say, "It is finished with this prophet. But that was not the case."

In his prayer, Jonah does not speak about a fish, although he implies it several times. He says that he was "in the belly of Sheol (the grave)," that God has brought up his "life from the pit (corruption—AV)." With this he expresses that he, because of his sin, is a dead man, laid in the grave, and given up to the corruption of the body. This sentiment is well-pleasing to God.

In the Dutch Statenvertaling, we read: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the *whale* (Dutch *walvis*) so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Mt 12:40). The translation "whale," however, is not correct. The translators came to this because meaning of the old-Dutch word "wal" is "great." This can still be seen in such words as "walnut" (Dutch *walnoot*), which means: great nut. Consequently they translated "great fish" by "walvis" which is also the Dutch word for whale.

This translation has led to considerable difficulties and mockery. It shows how important it is to have a good translation, even by times of one word. But it also shows how man, being antagonistic towards God and His Word, uses every opportunity to ridicule the Word and to rob it of its power.

The NASB translates "sea monster," the KJV and the Darby Translation have "great fish," the NIV "huge fish." None of these translations cause us to think of a whale of which the mockers claim that its throat is too small to swallow an adult. They also tell us that there are no whales in the Mediterranean. In "The Times" of July 9, 1928, a missionary reported that he had heard from very trustworthy sources that someone who often accompanied whaling expeditions fell overboard and was swallowed by a whale. Happily this was noticed by others and the whale was harpooned. It is known that a whale that is harpooned immediately vomits the contents of its stomach. This happened to the just-swallowed man.

But unbelievers also claim that there is no fish at all that can swallow an adult man; even less could a man remain alive in a fish. A very capable Ichthyologist has in the past written that the great fish in the Bible story was a sperm-whale or cachalot. This sea monster grows to a length of about ten meters. It has a very elastic gullet, wide enough for an adult. Once someone caught a sperm-whale whose stomach contained a shark of five meters. Humans can bear its stomach temperature of approximately 39 degrees Celsius and its stomach acid.

Although we have with interest taken note of all this information, because it is valuable in the face of the mockery of unbelieving know-it-alls, it is not essential to believers. They believe what is written about Jonah in the great fish in God's Word without the stories and remarks of experts, because they know God, and know that He performs those miracles that are well-pleasing to Him. The greatest miracle wasn't that Jonah *entered* the great fish, but that he *came out of it* alive and without injury, spiritually restored, without the fish having been harpooned, but just by the voice of God.

The Lord Jesus spoke of Jonah in the great fish and He referred to it as a shadow of His death and resurrection. This is sufficient proof of the reality of Jonah in the fish. Someone has said that a faith that does not accept, is not faith, but insignificant chatter. After the Lord's reference to Jonah in the fish — the highest and best proof possible — all objections and reasonings are rejectable, empty, meaningless, talk.

Another objection sometimes raised, however, even by those who believe is, that Jonah had been *three days and three nights* in the belly of the fish. This time span is also given by the Lord Jesus of His stay in the heart of the earth, in the grave, although He, as the Gospels tell us, stayed there only *two nights, one day, and two small parts of a day*.

This objection is entirely solved when we think of it that it is customary in the east to call a part of a day, "*day and night*." When we say that we have been somewhere one day, we do not mean at all that we have been there exactly for twelve hours. The last hours of the Friday (to the Jews, the day begins in the evening) and the first hours of the Sunday are counted as two days and two nights. A Jew would never raise the least objection to the time reference as given in the Gospels. These objections flow from the western mind.

Some have thought to explain this objection as to time by claiming that the Lord did not die on Friday, but on Wednesday, or on Thursday. But this claim is contradicted by Scripture. The two on the way to Emmaus went on the Lord's resurrection day, i.e., our Sunday, to their village. Scripture says explicitly: "That same day" (Lk. 24:13). From the context it is clear that this was the resurrection day. In the conversation with the Lord, they say, "...today is the third day since these things were done." This means, a part of the Friday, the Saturday, and a part of the Sunday (Lk. 24:21).

In this small book we read ever again that God *prepared* something:

- 1:17 A great fish to swallow Jonah
- 4:6 A gourd
- 4:7 A worm to cause the gourd to wither
- 4:8 A vehement east wind.

All men, all things, are in His service, just as Balaam's donkey, the lion that killed the man of God from Judah, and the roaring lions in Daniel's story (Num. 22:28-30; 1 Ki. 13:24; Dan. 6:23). In Jonah's case, God prepared a great fish that had to swallow Jonah alive, to keep him three days and three nights uninjured, to vomit him up on the dry land afterwards.

The apostle Paul says that God causes all things to "work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose" (Rom. 8:28). It does not say, "to those who are loved of God," but, "to those who love God." It further says, "to those who are called according to purpose." Jonah is not characterized by his love for God, nor by his obedience to God. But *because he was one called of the Lord*, God caused all things to work for good for him. Here this good was that Jonah became of one mind with God and learned to accept God's doing without protest.

Through the storm God had spoken in a chastising manner to Jonah. Then he had been swallowed by the fish and yet remained fully conscious in that place. There God spoke to him to bring him to repentance. As a result, the tightness of Jonah's soul became greater than the tightness of the closed space in which he was. God did not wait until Jonah returned to Him, but spoke to him through the storm and in the fish. Neither did God wait for fallen Adam, but looked for him in the garden of Eden. People often act just the other way. They say that the one who has done wrong must come to them and humbly confess their guilt.

The fish, with Jonah inside, swims to the depths of the sea, to the bottom of the mountains (v. 6). The fish enters the sea currents, the waves go over it, but Jonah says in his prayer that *he* has been cast into the deep, into the heart of the seas, that the flood surrounded *him*, that all God's billows did go over *him* (v. 3).

Just as the Gentiles, these uncircumcised, in the storm had prayed for deliverance, so must now the pious Jonah, this prophet of the Lord, pray to God for deliverance. But now he acknowledges that he is in this anxiety because of his own disobedience. What would have become of him in the storm and in the fish if God had not come to him in *grace*? That he belonged to the privileged people of God could not help him now.

The expressions in Jonah's prayer have *much in common with those in many psalms*. Some therefore maintain that Jonah's prayer has been composed out of several psalms. This is, however, not so; they are the words of Jonah himself. Wasn't he a prophet of the Lord who certainly knew the expressions of the many psalms? Now that he is in anxiety, many expressions from psalms come before his mind and he makes them his own. Many believers do the same thing when they are in need or circumstances of which the psalms also speak. Don't they then express these words as their own words as well?

Jonah says that God heard him *when he called upon Him in the belly of Sheol*. That is also the experience of all believers. In the greatest needs God hears. Even when they have come into that need through their own fault, if at least they acknowledge their guilt. The Lord had cast Jonah into the deep. He *acknowledges God's chastening hand* upon him. Still, he *trusts to see God's sanctuary again*. Twice he speaks of "Thy holy temple." First he expresses his trust to see that

temple again, then his conviction that the Lord in His holy temple heard him even from within the fish. He already places himself after the need. God *has brought up his life from the pit*. The Gentile sailors had first called upon their gods, but after their experience they called only upon Jehovah. They left their idols. But Jonah would do more. He would bring sacrifices of thanksgiving, and *pay what he had vowed*. With this we may well think of his promise to listen from then on to God, and that he would go to Nineveh.

Jonah experienced *need, deliverance, thankfulness*. This is still the path for God's people — living through dying; obtaining the victory by losing; rising by going under. The directions of God lead to repentance and humbling. Jonah concludes his prayer with the cry: "*Salvation is of Jehovah!*"

This is a word with the richest content and significance. Salvation is of *Jehovah*, the "I am, who I am," the unchangeable One, the Eternally Faithful One. Salvation is *accomplished, shared, given* by Him.

Both in the old and new dispensation, there is for those, who have a relationship with God, a salvation of the Lord, accomplished by Him. In the past this was so; today there is a salvation of the Lord surrounding them, and so there will be a salvation of the Lord in a future day.

Especially in the so-called Christian countries, it is most essential to keep this in view, that salvation is of the Lord. The Jews were very much occupied with their privileges, and they took a position that was not according to God's thoughts. Meanwhile the greater part of the people had no life from God. In the "Christian world" we see something similar. Many pride themselves to belong to God's people, yet they do not have, through faith, a personal bond with God, with Christ. Besides this there is a looking down upon those who think differently. Salvation causes one to think of healing. But it is not a question of a salvation of which a certain group of Christians possess the monopoly, but of the salvation of the Lord, accessible to all who in faith reach for it. It is a question of a bond of faith with a Person, with Christ, and through Him with God.

Therefore it is not sufficient to merely be outwardly part of the Lord's people, to be baptized, to go to church, and to bring up one's children in the doctrine. Paul quotes the word of the prophet Joel, that each one who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, receiving the salvation of the Lord (Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32). And: "If we should live then, and if we should die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8). It is precious to be "the Lord's," to belong to Him, to be His possession because we have received His salvation.

To be cont'd

Joshua 1 (3)

—H. L. Heijkoop

The Manna (the food for our hearts in the wilderness) is in Scripture a picture of the Lord Jesus in His life on earth and in His giving Himself into death. In Joshua 5:11 we read about the eating of the old grain of the land. This is a picture of feeding ourselves with the risen and glorified Christ who sits now at the right hand of the Father. This place is now also our place in Christ.

Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh

In verse 12 Joshua speaks to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. In Numbers 32 and Deuteronomy 3 we read more about these tribes. They preferred to remain in the land on the other side of the Jordan, for it was a fruitful land. They had asked Moses whether they would be allowed to live there, "For," they said, "we have much cattle and it is a land for cattle. Allow us to stay and live here and do not bring us over the Jordan." Moses had agreed to this.

Spiritual Blessings

That land was not the actual land, for that lies across the Jordan. Yet we read in verses 3-4 that God would not just give them the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, but a much larger territory as their inheritance. That is true for us as well. God has given us everything. "All is yours," the apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 3:22. But not all things are

specifically our Christian portion. Our actual Christian portion is what we find in the Epistle to the Ephesians, namely the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Earthly Blessings

There are many things on earth that we may enjoy. Food is for instance also a gift of God. But both believers and unbelievers receive this gift. God promised Israel earthly blessings if it would walk in His ways. Read, for instance, Deuteronomy 28. All Israel's blessings are earthly: a kneading trough, the fruits of the land, fruitful animals, and the bearing of many children. These are all blessings, but they are blessings of this earth. We, too, may enjoy these blessings, but we must be well aware that these are not the actual Christian blessings. According to Luke 16, we are stewards of these things. Those things are not our actual portion. In verse 12 the Lord says, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give to you your own?" "That which is another's" is here money for instance. "Your own" are our spiritual blessings. In 1 Timothy 6:17-18 we read that God "affords us all things richly for [our] enjoyment; to do good, to be rich in good works, to be liberal in distributing, disposed to communicate [of their substance]."

Sihon, the king of the Amorites

The two and a half tribes who wanted to remain across the Jordan had first to fight against the kings of the Amorites on the other side the Jordan, namely Sihon and Og, whom they had to utterly destroy. Do you know the significance of these two kings? Sihon was so mighty that poems were written about him. He was famous in the then-world. He used his riches to enhance his fame. He used the possession of earthly blessings to obtain a name for himself on earth. First of all they had to overcome him, before they could obtain possession of his land.

Og, the king of Bashan

The only thing we know of Og is that he was a giant and had a large bed, nine cubits long and four cubits wide (Dt. 3:11). Why would God have prompted this to be written down? Og used his riches for himself. He did not consider himself a steward; he used it to lead an easy life himself. The wrong use of money, of earthly goods, we must conquer first before we can truly enjoy the land.

The call of Levi

When Levi was called by the Lord Jesus, he left everything behind, rose, and followed the Lord Jesus (Lk. 5:27-28). Is that the normal order of events? We would have said: "He rose, left all behind, and followed the Lord Jesus." But it says first that he left all behind and afterwards that he rose. He could not rise before he had first taken leave of all his possessions in his heart, leaving it all behind in his heart. Only then could he rise and follow the Lord. And do you know what is so wonderful? In the next verse he had all back. But then he used it as steward of the Lord, for the Lord. We read that he prepared a great meal for the Lord Jesus in his home. He gave a banquet for the Lord. The Lord Jesus was the centre of that feast. Publicans and other sinners came there, too, to receive blessing. Levi had invited them to come there where the Lord was.

God gives us many earthly blessings

We return for a moment to the two and a half tribes who were satisfied with the terrain east of Jordan. They did not need a further blessing. We saw that they (in New Testament language) were satisfied with earthly blessings and did not long for spiritual blessings. The earthly blessings too, we may receive out of the Lord's hand. When God gives us material things we can be thankful for them, but we must be well aware that the devil, too, is quite keen to give us money and many other things. He knows that these things can draw us away from the Lord. We may thank God for a good house, for our daily bread, but these are not the eternal blessings, they are not the actual portion God has for us.

To be cont'd

141. The last Days — Matthew 26:1-5,17-25; Mark 14:12-21; Luke 22:7-18; John 13:2-35.

Outline

1. The last announcement of the Lord's death Mt 26:1-5.
2. The preparation for the Passover Mt 26:17-25
3. The foot washing Jn. 13:2-17
4. The traitor and his departure Jn. 13:18-32.
5. The New Commandment Jn. 13:33-35

Explanation

1. After the discourse of Matthew 24 and 25, the Lord spoke to His disciples of the soon-coming passover, His suffering, and death (Mt. 26:1). Christ is the last and true Passover Lamb (Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7). The plan of the chief priests and elders to kill Him only carried out God's plan for mankind's salvation (Acts 4:27,28). The plot not to kill the Lord during the feast failed because it was against God's purpose (in. 7:30).

2. On the first day of the week of unleavened bread all leaven (a picture of evil) was put away (Ex. 12:15), and the passover lamb was slain in the evening. The Lord Jesus and His disciples celebrated the passover according to God's Word (Lk. 22:7-8). He Himself indicated that the meal was to be eaten (Lk. 22:11,12) in the place where a man carrying a vessel of water entered. The Lord longed to eat this passover with His disciples (Lk. 22:15).

3. Customarily a slave washed the guests' feet before the meal but now the Lord Jesus did this work. What condescending kindness of the Lord of glory! He demonstrated His humility by serving, showing how they should serve each other (vv. 14-15). He had not come to be ministered unto but to minister (Mt. 20:28; Phil. 2:5-8). He never ceases to be a servant (Ex. 21:5-6; Lk. 12:37), but serves His own today as Advocate and High Priest (1 Jn. 2:1).

Water is a picture of the Word of God that cleanses from evil (Eph. 5:26). Peter drew back, but the Lord said, "Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part *with* Me." (Not: "*in* Me," because Peter had a part *in* Christ, for he was born again (Mt 16:16-17.) When Peter replied, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head," the Lord said: "He that is washed all over is clean" (Jn. 13:10). One is "washed all over" only once when one is born again through the Word. However, our feet need washing daily (not by blood, but by the Word). The Old Testament priests were wholly bathed with water only once, but they had to wash their hands and feet at the laver daily before they could minister in the tabernacle (Lev. 8:6; Ex. 30:17-21). So believers need the daily foot washing by the Lord, and to wash each other's feet, restoring each other (Gal. 6:1).

4. Then the Lord said: "Ye are clean, but not all" (Jn. 13:11), indicating that one of them would betray Him. This made the disciples very sorrowful (vv. 21-22). John, who was leaning on Jesus' bosom asked the Lord of whom He spoke. After the Lord indicated who the traitor was, Judas went out immediately. The dark night was around and in him. This most atrocious of all crimes led to the fulfilment of God's plan for our salvation! After Judas' departure, the Lord said: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him" (Jn. 13:31).

5. Then the Lord tenderly addressed the disciples, calling them "little children" and commanding them to "love one another, as I have loved you... love one another" (Jn. 13:34). Once He was gone, they would have to support each other in love. Their mutual love would be the distinguishing character of all true disciples (vv. 34-35; 1 Jn. 3:14). During the persecution of the early Christians, unbelievers saw this love and were amazed. How essential that love among the brethren be observed by the world (Heb. 10:24; 13:1).

Lesson

Daily defilement causes one to lose the practical fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 Jn. 1:3), not one's salvation. "We have a Patron with the Father: Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 Jn. 2:1), who prays for His own and cleanses them through His Word.

142. The Passover and the Lord's Supper. — Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32; 10:16-17.

Outline

1. The Passover Lk. 22:15-18
2. The Lord's Supper Lk. 22:19-20

Explanation

1. After the foot washing, the passover meal began. It was the last, for it found its fulfilment in the Lord's death. "I will not eat anymore at all of it until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 22:16). The wine being a picture of joy (Ps. 104:15), the Lord hands the cup to the disciples and announced: "I will not drink at all of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God come" (Lk. 22:18). The Lord will no more rejoice in the midst of Israel until the Millennium. Then shall His joy be the joy of this world and the joy of the world His joy (Isa. 35:10; Jer. 33:11; Zeph. 3:14-17). The vine is also a picture of communion of the Lord with the disciples (cf. in. 15:1,5). Through His death the earthly connection of the Lord with the disciples was given up by Him, but it shall once again be renewed with Israel in the kingdom (Zeph. 3:14-17).

2. While the Lord Jesus is in heaven, His own should lovingly celebrate His memory until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26; Lk. 22:19). As types of this celebration, we see in the Old Testament the yearly recurring passover and presentation of the first fruits of the land (Dt. 26:1-11). The Lord Jesus, therefore, instituted the Lord's Supper in close connection with the passover. Yet, the two were clearly distinct from each other, for it says: "He gave... the cup, *after* having supped" (Lk. 22:19-20).

The bread and the wine are symbols for the body and the blood of the Lord and, because they are separated, also of His death. The Lord's Supper is a remembrance meal ("This do in remembrance of Me" — Lk. 22:19), and not a means of obtaining forgiveness, for that must have been obtained before one partakes at the Lord's Table. The Lord's Supper expresses that all believers together are one body: "We, being many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17).

The Lord's Table is precious, but it gives responsibilities. All who partake must prove themselves before eating. Their walk, their behaviour, the condition of their heart, should be practically pure so they can partake worthily. In Corinth neglect of this caused the Lord to chastise them with illnesses and death (1 Cor. 11:27-30). All who do not walk in holiness have to be removed from the Lord's Table in discipline. Scripture says: "Remove the wicked person from amongst yourselves!" (1 Cor. 5:13) and also: "Purge out the old leaven" (1 Cor. 5:7). Since the table is the Lord's, His holiness needs to be maintained there.

Lesson

The blood is the basis for the New Covenant God will one day make with Israel. This covenant is not for today's believers, the Assembly or Church. However, the blood of the Lord Jesus is also the basis of their salvation (Col. 1:20; Eph. 1:7; Rev. 5:9). At the passover meal the Lord still spoke to the disciples as to believing Israelites who had recognized and accepted Him.

Because unbelievers are not part of that one body, they should never sit at the Lord's Table. Light has no fellowship with darkness, nor belief with unbelief.

To be cont'd

Peace with God (2)

—R. K. Campbell

The way of peace which God has for mankind is through His Son Jesus Christ. Of Him Isaiah prophesied that, "His name is called... Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:6-7). The same prophet wrote: "Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed [on Thee], for he confideth in Thee" (Isa.26:3). He also said: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation" (Isa. 32:17-18).

Notice that the work of righteousness and the effect of righteousness is true peace and quietness and abiding assurance. There must be a righteous basis for true peace. In line with this, Psalm 85 says: "For He will speak peace unto His people, and to His godly ones... Loving-kindness and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (vv. 8,10). This took place at Calvary's cross. There Jesus Christ met all the righteous claims of God against sin by dying for sinners. There He made peace with God for the believer by the blood of His cross as Colossians 1:20 declares. There all the truth, justice and holiness of God was satisfied and righteousness, mercy, and peace met and kissed each other.

Through the cross of Jesus Christ God has declared His righteousness, "that He should be just, and justify him that is of [the] faith of Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). Then the apostle continues in Romans four and five and says: "believing on Him who has raised from among [the] dead Jesus our Lord, who has been delivered for our offenses and has been raised for our justification, it will be reckoned. Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 4:24-25; 5:1). This *indeed* is God's wonderful way of peace for the believing sinner.

If we believe in Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who died for our offenses, our sins, and in the God of Peace who raised up Jesus from the dead for our justification, the positive statement is that we are justified by faith. This means we are declared righteous before God. The blessed result then is that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ whom we own as Lord. This is the only way for sinners, which we all are, to be right with a holy and righteous God. By faith, which lays hold of what Christ has done for our *sins* as our substitute, we are justified. We are cleared from all charges of sin that were against us. The believer in Jesus, the Saviour, then, has *peace of conscience* about his sins. "We have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This the Word of God assures us.

Hebrews 10 further encourages the believer by saying that we have boldness to enter into the holy presence of God by the blood of Jesus. We are thus urged to draw near to God "with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience" (vv. 19,22).

After having made peace with God about our sins by the blood of His cross, as we note from Colossians 1:20, the resurrected Saviour appeared to His disciples. What were His first words to them? As He stood in the midst of this fearful assembled company, He said unto them, "Peace be to you." He then showed them His wounded hands and side and the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Then He said to them again, "Peace [be] to you" (Jn. 20:19-21).

In Ephesians 2 we are instructed: "Now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ. For *He* is our peace," and He "has preached the glad tidings of peace" (vv. 13,14,17). Jesus who made peace at the cross, came and proclaimed peace as the victorious, living Saviour. And He is our peace with God.

We do not have to make our peace with God, as it is sometimes said. It has been made at the cross of Calvary where Jesus died, the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Now it is for the sinner to accept by personal faith the proclamation of accomplished peace and lay down his arms and cease the warfare against God. The peace terms are to be accepted and the wonderful peace with God enjoyed through saving faith in Jesus Christ. The words of Job 22:21 are to be heeded: "Reconcile thyself now with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."

Today we join in with the message the apostle Peter declared in the house of Cornelius: "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (*He* is Lord of all things,)... To Him all the prophets bear witness that every one that believes on Him will receive through His name remission of sins" (Acts 10:36,43).

This is the great subject of peace with God for the individual about the matter of sins. Next we shall consider the matter of the "peace of God" which is promised the believer in Jesus in regard to the daily circumstances of life which often trouble our hearts.

The Peace Of God

So far we were occupied with the subject of "*Peace with God*" through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we purpose to take up the matter of "*The Peace of God*" which we are promised in Philippians 4:6-7. There we read: "Be careful about

nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus."

Before taking up these wonderful verses, we would call to mind the words of the Lord to His disciples as recorded in John 14:29. "I leave peace with you; I give *My* peace to you: not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear." Jesus was going to the cross of Calvary, there to make peace *with God* for them by the blood of His cross of atonement (Col. 1:20). But in addition to this wonderful peace with God, He said He would give His own peace to be with them. Therefore they were not to be troubled in heart or afraid. This would be the peace which Jesus always enjoyed and experienced in His life of submission and obedience to the will of God. It was a peace unruffled by circumstances and in unbroken communion with His Father. This is the peace of God spoken of in Philippians 4:7. It has to do with peace of heart about the circumstances of life. Peace with God through faith in Jesus, the Saviour, has to do with the matter of our sins and the conscience.

The Lord further said to His disciples: "These things have I spoken to you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). These words indicate that this peace of heart in Jesus Christ has to do with our life in this evil world.

Returning now to our text of Philippians 4:6-7, the apostle desires that we should be anxious about *nothing* but to be prayerful about *everything* and thankful for *anything*. This is the way to the enjoyment of the peace of God. We would repeat this simple but comprehensive path to the peace of God: Worry about nothing, pray about everything, and be thankful for anything. We are to bring every trouble, care, problem, or difficulty to the Lord in earnest prayer and supplication with our thanksgivings for every mercy and blessing. We must do as the old hymn says, "Take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there." We are to leave our burdens and cares with the Lord at His throne of grace and not to carry them back with us and worry about them. So the apostle Peter exhorts: "Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares about you" (1 Pet.5:7). The Psalmist David also wrote: "Commit thy way unto Jehovah, and rely upon Him: He will bring [it] to pass... Rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently for Him" (Ps. 37:5,7).

If we bring all our requests to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving and commit everything to Him, the promise is that "the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts." This means that we shall have the same peace of God which surrounds His throne as the God of the universe. It will *be as* a garrison around our hearts and minds amidst the troubled circumstances of life through which we may be passing. God's peace will fill our hearts and minds and keep them in it all.

We are not promised that we will get the answer to our requests at once or that our circumstances of trouble and trial will immediately change. But we are assured that we will have God's peace about everything. As we commit everything to the Lord in believing prayer, we rest our case with Him who loves and cares for us and His sweet, incomprehensible peace fills our heart and mind and keeps out all anxious thoughts. This is not mere theory, but the proven experience of all who have acted upon the apostle's injunction.

So the prophet Isaiah declared of old: "Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed [on Thee], for he confideth in Thee" (Isa. 26:3). We must stay our minds on the Lord if we would be kept in this perfect peace and confidence in the Lord that all will work out well. Faith believes the word that assures us: "that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom. 8:28). It is not for us to reason or try to figure out how all our troubles and problems will work out for eventual good, but to trust God and believe what He says, that all things are working together for our eternal good.

To enjoy God's wonderful peace in life's changing circumstances, we need to take the Lord's yoke upon us and learn of Him, the meek and lowly One. If we do this, His promise is, "Ye shall find rest to your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Mt. 11:29-30). To take Christ's yoke upon us means to submit our will to His and accept His will for our lives. Then we experience rest in our souls, which is peace of heart in our circumstances. It is self-will, which is the root of all sin, that is the cause of unhappiness and conflict in the soul. We cannot have or enjoy God's peace in our hearts if we do not submit our wills to the Lord and accept His "good and acceptable and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2).

The End

The Prayer

—Bible Reading on John 17.

That we are privileged to hear the Son speaking to the Father in prayer, gives to this portion of the Word its unique character.

In the first part of the prayer the Lord expresses His desires for Himself (vv. 1-5); in the second portion the Lord prays, more especially, for His disciples who had accompanied Him on earth (vv. 6-19); in the last portion the Lord prays for all those who would believe on Him, through their word (vv. 20-26).

There would seem to be three great desires underlying the prayer. First, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (v. 1); secondly, that Christ may be glorified in His people (v. 10); thirdly, that His people may be glorified with Him (v. 22).

In Scripture "glory" conveys the thought of exalting a person through bringing into display all the excellencies that distinguish that person. In John 13:31 we read, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." This verse takes us to the cross, and that aspect of the cross, wherein every excellence of the Son of man was displayed under the most supreme test and all the glory of God was upheld. The following verse takes us to the glory. The Son of man, having glorified God on the cross, is Himself glorified on high and that immediately. Thus the excellencies of the Son of man are brought into display both at the cross and in the glory.

In the prayer the first request is that the Father would glorify the Son; but, even so, it is that the Son may use this new place of exaltation to glorify the Father, as He had already glorified the Father by setting forth His excellencies on earth. The natural man seeks to glorify himself; here, at last, we see One who seeks to be glorified by the Father, in order that He may bring glory to the Father.

With this object in view, authority had been given to the Son over "all flesh," that He might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given to Him. It was no longer authority given to Christ as the Messiah in connection with the Jews, but the far wider authority over all flesh — Jew and Gentile alike. Moreover, the blessing has in view, not simply a godly Jewish remnant but that far greater company that embraces all believers given by the Father to the Son.

In verses 4 and 5, three great facts pass before us which are the everlasting basis of all our peace and blessing. First, the Lord says, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." This brings out the perfection of His Person. In the very world where men had dishonoured God there has been One who, in the most absolute way, glorified God.

Secondly, the Lord can say, "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do." This takes us to the cross and tells us that all that the Father gave Him to do, to uphold the glory of God and secure the blessing of men, has been done.

Thirdly, the Lord asks to be glorified in the glory, and thus in this new place to become the everlasting proof of God's satisfaction with Him and the work He accomplished.

In the course of the prayer we notice, as throughout the Gospel of John, that the glory of the Son, as a divine Person, is ever kept before us; while, at the same time, the Lord never moves out of the place of Servant that He had taken as Man, and therefore he is ever the Receiver and the Father the Giver.

We see the glory of His Person shine out in a special way in verse 5. A man might, indeed, desire to be glorified; but who, that is only man, could add the words "With Thine own self"? We might desire to be glorified with the saints, but only a divine Person could ask to be glorified with a divine Person. It is still more manifest that none but a divine Person could use the words, "With the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

With verse 6 we pass on to the portion of the prayer in which the Lord prays for His disciples. First, however, the Lord recalls His work in the midst of His own (vv. 6-8); and presents the great motives for His prayer (9-11).

While with the disciples, the Lord had manifested the Father's name to them, and had made known to them the Father's words. Moreover, the Lord utters no word as to their failure and ignorance that the history so often reveals, but credits them with so much that is beautiful. The Lord can say, "They have *kept* Thy word"; "They have *known*"; "They have *received*"; and, "They have *believed*."

Then, in verses 9 to the middle of verse 11, we have the record of the great motives for the prayer. The Lord says, "They are Thine." He is praying to the Father about those who *belong to the Father*. Again, the Lord pleads that those for whom He prays are *His own*, and He is glorified in them. Then the last motive for the prayer is connected with the disciples themselves and their needs, for the Lord can say, "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee."

With the middle of verse 11, we come to the first great request on behalf of His own: "Holy Father, keep through Thy own name those whom thou hast given to Me." Name in Scripture sets forth what a person is. "Holy Father" speaks of all that the Father is in holiness and love. The request is that the disciples may be kept in consistency with the holiness and love of the Father. Peter, in his Epistle exhorts all who "call on the Father" to be holy even as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:14-17). It was only the Son, who ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father, who could "declare" the Father. Abraham and Moses could speak of the attributes of God as the Almighty, and as Jehovah, but none but a divine person could reveal the Father's heart and declare the Father's name.

The next request is conveyed in the Lord's words, "That they may be one as We." The Father and the Son were ever perfectly united in purpose and object. The service of the disciples may take many different forms, as we see in the different ministries of Peter, John, and Paul, but the Lord desires that they may all be perfectly united in having the same purpose and object that is ever before the Father and the Son.

In the verses that follow, the world is viewed as opposed to the Father, and hating all that belong to the Father, whether Christ, or His people, so the next request of the Lord is that the disciples may be kept from the evil of the world (v. 15). If Christ is to be glorified by being represented in His people they must be apart from the evil of the world.

Then comes the desire that they may be sanctified (v. 17-19). If we are to be witnesses for Christ, it is not enough that we are kept from evil, we must also be sanctified; and this implies that we are not only set apart from evil, but are set apart in heart and life to and for Christ. It brings in the thought of devotedness to the Lord. There are many things which may not be evil, and yet from which we should be wholly apart if devoted to the Lord.

The Lord indicates two ways in which this practical sanctification can be brought about. First, the Lord's words are, "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth." The truth instructs us in the mind of the Lord and engages our hearts with that which leads to a devoted life. Secondly, the Lord adds, "I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." By engaging our hearts with Himself in the glory — the One in whom perfect devotedness has been set forth, as well as the end to which it leads, we become "changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18).

In the portion of the prayer that follows, the Lord embraces in His requests all that would believe through the word of the apostles — believers of the Church period. While, however, we distinguish the two portions of the prayer, it would surely be as wrong to confine the earlier requests to the disciples present with the Lord, as to exclude them from the later requests. The words of the Lord, "Neither pray I for these alone," would indicate that the desires already expressed but the Lord equally apply to all believers, while the last requests, by their very nature, must include the disciples who were with Him then.

In verse 21, the request is that believers, "all may be one," and the Lord adds "one in Us." This then is a unity in their common interest in Christ, and in communion with the Father and the Son. This unity was to be a witness to Christ before the world: "That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." If the world could see a company of people who, though sharply divided by nationality, or wealth, or social position, are yet all bound together by their common interest in Christ, it would be to them an arresting witness to the power of Christ. For a short time it was so when, at the beginning, the world saw with amazement that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul." From a people thus united in their common interest in Christ there went out a witness to the world of "great power" and "great grace" (Acts 4:32-33).

Then, the Lord, having viewed believers in their mission in this world, as His sent ones to represent Himself, now looks on to the coming glory and prays that, "they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me." This is the third unity for which the Lord prays in the course of the prayer. The first is a unity in object — "One as We"; the second is a unity in common interest in Christ and communion with divine Persons — "One in Us"; the third unity is a unity in the glory of the Kingdom when all believers will be "perfected into one." Then, indeed, Christ will be seen in the saints, even as the Father is seen in the Son. When the Lord appears He will be "glorified in His saints" and "admired in all them that believe." The world will then know that the Son was sent by the Father, and that the Father loved believers, even as the Father loved the Son.

The last request carries us beyond the Kingdom glories into the yet greater privileges and deeper blessedness of the Father's home: "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." It was wonderful grace that brought the Lord Jesus down to be with us where we are; it is yet more wonderful that He should take us up to be with Him where He is.

We are not yet with Christ in the Father's home, so in the closing verses the Lord clearly indicates our present portion, and the purpose for which we are left in this world. The final words, "I in them" tells us once again that the great purpose that

underlies the last instructions of the Lord to His disciples, as well as the prayer to the Father, is that His people should in word and acts, and manner of life, represent Him during the time of His absence. With this great end in view we may well ponder, and seek to answer to these great requests of the Lord:

First, that we may walk in consistency with the holiness and love of the Father,
Secondly, that we may be united in having one object and purpose before us — the glory of Christ;
Thirdly, that we may be kept from the evil of the world, in order to be a true witness to Christ;
Fourthly, that we may be sanctified, or devoted to Christ and His interests;
Fifthly, that, forgetting the things that are behind, we may be united in our common interest in Christ and in communion with divine Persons;
Sixthly, that we may be one in the coming Kingdom to display the glory of Christ and the love of the Father;
Seventhly, that at last we may be with Christ in His own home — the Father's home, for the delight of His heart.

Such is the mind of Christ for His people as expressed to the Father, in our hearing, in this last great prayer. Answering to His mind we should truly represent Him and thus His words would have their answer:

"I in them"