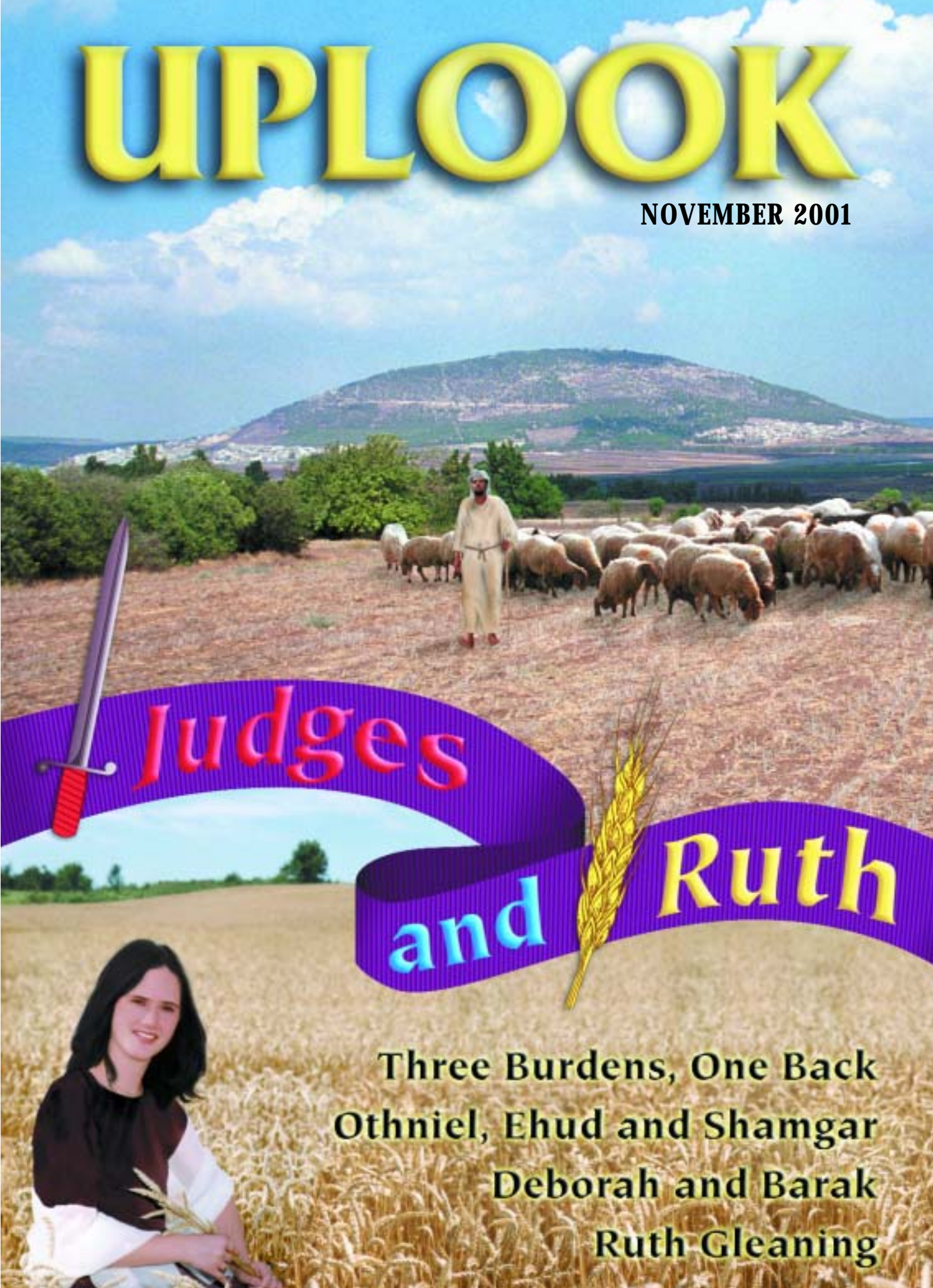


UPLOOK

NOVEMBER 2001



Judges

and

Ruth

Three Burdens, One Back
Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar
Deborah and Barak
Ruth Gleaning

THREE BURDENS, ONE BACK

How much is one person expected to carry anyway?

The human body has a weight of its own, with muscles and organs, skin, nerves and blood vessels carefully wrapped around its skeletal frame. But the body is designed to carry more than itself.

So it is with the soul. We have room in our hearts and minds for others, for their joys and sorrows, their blessings and burdens. *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”* (Phil. 2:4). Paul cites Timothy as an illustration of this: *“I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state”* (v. 20).

When we *“weep with them that weep”* (Rom. 12:15), a portion of their sorrow is shouldered by our hearts and some of the tears that they would have to weep now flow from our eyes, making their burden a little lighter. We may think we cannot carry more than our own load, but if we have a heart to help, the Lord will increase our carrying capacity. They say you can tell a lot about a man if, when the burden is heavy, he asks the Lord for a lighter load or a stronger back.

The Word of God delineates these burdens that every conscientious believer must face.

OUR OWN BURDEN WHICH WE MUST BEAR

“Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal. 6:4-5). The Christian life is described as an arduous race to be run, a weed- and rock-infested field to be cultivated, a ferocious battle to be fought, but never as a picnic or a party. Notice the link in these verses between a man’s work, burden, and rejoicing. As the poet described it: *“Be strong! We are not here to play, to dream, to drift, We have hard work to do, and loads to lift. Shun not the struggle—face it; ’tis God’s gift”* (M. D. BABCOCK).

While it is true that the Lord called us out of the world to be part of this new society called the Church, it is also true that He has equipped every believer so that, even alone, one has the resources to carry on. The indwelling Spirit, the eternal life of God, the intercessory work of our Great High Priest, prayer access, the panoply of the Lord—these are a few of the amazing

resources every Christian has with which to *“bear his own burden.”* God wants workers, not shirkers.

OTHERS’ BURDENS WE SHOULD BEAR

“Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). It’s a tough world out there; I don’t have to tell you that. A little visiting in the homes of God’s people, a little compassion, a little willingness to be a burden-bearer, and you soon discover that every family has its heartaches.

Behind many a smile lurk deep shadows in the soul. The One who *“bore the burden to Calvary”* introduced this moral law into His realm: when I, like the Good Samaritan, find a wounded life set upon by thieves who would steal from him his joy, peace and security, I must not look the other way. *“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”* is the most often quoted statement in the New Testament, and for good reason. The One called a Samaritan (who did not deny it, Jn. 8:48-49) crossed not a road but the universe to find us where we lay and effect our rescue. *“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak”* (Rom. 15:1).

WHEN A BURDEN SEEMS TOO HEAVY TO BEAR

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee” (Ps. 55:22). The marginal reading for *“burden”* is *“what He has assigned you.”* You may recall the story of the boy who was standing with his arms outstretched to receive firewood from his father. A friend standing by commented, *“Isn’t that enough, son?”*

“My father knows when I have enough,” he replied.

He does indeed. *“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able”* (1 Cor. 10:13) but will provide for those occasions when you feel overwhelmed *“a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* Peter, who cried out in a crisis, *“Master, carest Thou not that we perish?”* later wrote, *“Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.”* No one ever cared for you like Jesus.

J. B. Nicholson

J. B. Nicholson Jr.

UPLOOK

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RISE UP & WORK

Your last chance to get in on it!



Time is almost out! Register now if you plan to attend the conference!

The Indianapolis Marriott



Conference registrations keep coming in every day, but there is still room for you! Give us a call, send an e-mail or check out our website (www.risework.com) for answers to your questions.

37 seminars are being offered under the categories of assembly life, doctrine, evangelism, gift/ministry and personal/devotional. Here is a sample of some of the topics:

- The Bible: An Orderly Revelation (Randy Amos)
- Resisting Worldliness, Pursuing Godliness (James Hull)
- Prayer in the Life of the Believer and the Assembly (Jim Paul)
- Current Prophetic Issues (David Dunlap)

Keynote speakers are Roy Hill (UK), William MacDonald (CA) and J. B. Nicholson (MI).

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DOWNTOWN INDIANAPOLIS



"Occupy till I come"

WHAT'S GOING ON?

● PAKISTANI CHRISTIANS MOURN ●

An emotional funeral service was held October 29 in the town of Bahawalpur in Pakistan's Punjab province for 15 members of the Church of Pakistan massacred inside their building during their Sunday morning service. Among the dead was the pastor, Emmanuel Allah Ditta, who was killed as he was leading the 100-member congregation in a closing hymn when gunmen burst into the building. A Muslim police guard was also killed in the attack. —VOM Persecution & Prayer Alert

HELPING AMERICA HEAL

In the weeks immediately following the attacks on the U. S., Campus Crusade for Christ staff members set up prayer tables and prayed with men and women looking for news of their loved ones. Young executives have been reached through special meetings and discussions. Some of these men and women have been to scores of funerals within a week, and they are hungry for hope and security. High school students have also been looking for answers, so staff are distributing "No More Fear" kits to New York teenagers including a New Testament, a Christian music CD, an article on grief, and more. Even world leaders have been reached with the gospel through various outreaches at the U. N.

Perhaps the most exciting outreach opportunity involves a 16-page evangelistic mini-magazine called *Fallen But Not Forgotten* that memorializes those who died in the attacks, analyzes the problem of evil in the world, and outlines the gospel for those looking for answers (although some of its impact is negated by tacit approval of Roman Catholicism). Over 2 million of

these have been distributed.

One staff member shared how they were received at the Sept. 22 prayer service at Yankee Stadium: "Even the Red Cross workers at the stadium event were giving them out. We saw people reading them everywhere." Another staff member adds, "On the subway home, I looked up to see a Latino boy, a Chicago fireman, and a Catholic priest all reading [this] same magazine."

Literally thousands have been handed out to Wall-Streeters heading home on the ferry—8,000 within just 1 1/2 hours!

Other versions have been created and distributed as well—one focusing on the Pentagon and military, one on young executives, and others in various foreign languages for use in ethnic communities.

—www.ccci.org

SEE YOU AT THE POLE

Young people stormed the gates of heaven on September 19 when they gathered around the flagpole of their schools to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"See You at the Pole" was observed in more than 22 countries,

including Australia, Canada, the Cayman Islands, China, England, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Puerto Rico, South Africa, Swaziland, Taiwan, Thailand, and Ukraine.

In America, some gatherings were immense: in Lynchburg, VA, 2,500 met at Liberty University, while several secondary schools had 1,000 or more students.

But many prayed alone. One brave example is Celina in Waterboro, Maine. Her mother drove her to Massabesic Jr. High School and was a bit concerned when she saw no one else waiting to pray. She offered to take her to the high school where there were students gathered, but Celina said no, stating that she wanted to take a stand on her own campus. Celina walked to the flagpole, set down her backpack, dropped to her knees and began praying alone—for the second year in a row.

Some feel that as a result of the terrorist attacks, there is unprecedented openness to and for prayer in schools. Florida has passed a law to allow prayer in schools. In one local Grand Rapids, MI school, teachers are meeting for prayer before school on a regular basis. —www.syatp.com

SAD END TO NTM CRISIS

New Tribes Mission announced September 21 the end of a long saga for the families of Dave Mankins, Mark Rich, and Rick Tenenoff, hostages of Colombian rebels since 1993. An imprisoned guerrilla reported that the men were killed by rebels in 1996 after they were nearly discovered by Colombian troops.

On October 27, a fire destroyed the Camdenton, MO, home and most of the possessions of Patti Tenenoff, widow of Rick Tenenoff. Patti and her three children were not at home and they are all safe. —NTM

Word Alive Weekends

Enrichment in the Word of God; encouragement with the people of God.

Several assemblies in the Winnipeg area are again hosting a series of ministry-intensive weekends, including a youth rally on the Friday evening, an all-day seminar on the Saturday, and along with the regular Sunday morning meetings, a joint gospel meeting on the Sunday evening. If you are from out of town, and would like to attend one or all of these weekends, please contact:

Ron Hampton
204-669-6026
rhampton@attcanada.ca



November 30–December 2
Harold Summers (BC)

January 25–27
Jonathan Brower (VA)

February 22–24
Willie Burnett (ON)

March 29–31
Joe Mikhael (ON)

BRITISH COLUMBIA WORKERS' & ELDERS' CONF.

A first-time BC Workers' and Elders' conference is planned with the theme, "Caring for God's Flock Today." The purpose is to encourage all who desire to see spiritual health and growth in New Testament assemblies in BC. Lord willing, this 3-day conference will be held at the Executive Hotel in Harrison Hot Springs, BC. The dates are Monday, Feb. 25 (evening) through Thursday, Feb. 28 (noon). The invited speakers are J. B. Nicholson (MI), Jack Spender (CT), Elie Nessim (BC), and Ron Hampton (MB). The format will include plenary sessions, panel discussions, and prayer sessions.

Peter Anderssen at 250-477-5919
Don Street at 250-395-4230
dvstreet@bcinternet.net

PARK OF THE PALMS WINTER BIBLE CONFERENCE

Park of the Palms is a Christian retirement community and conference center located on Lake Brooklyn in North Central Florida. It offers eight weeks of excellent Bible

ministry from January 12–March 8:
Jan. 12-18 Steve Herzig (NJ)
Jan. 19-25 Paul Irwin (ON)
Jan. 26-Feb. 1 Jack Spender (CT)
Feb. 2-8 Joe Mikhael (ON)
Feb. 9-15 Daniel Smith (IA)
Feb. 16-22 David MacLeod (IA)
Feb. 23-Mar. 1 James Cochrane (BC)
Mar. 2-8 Roy Hill (UK)

Excellent conference accommodations are available as well as duplexes for retirees.

Park of the Palms
706 Palms Circle
Keystone Heights, FL 32656
352-473-4926
pop@techcomm.net

MINI-CONFERENCE SERIES

A series of three mini-conferences on the topic, "What the Bible teaches on practical topics confronting families today" will be held in 2002, Lord willing, at Brandywine Bible Chapel (Wilmington, DE). Jim McKendrick has been invited to speak on practical holiness on March 16; Mike Attwood will address courtship, marriage, and raising children on

May 18; J. B. Nicholson will discuss the Faith Once Delivered on September 21. Each conference is scheduled from 2:00 until 5:45, followed by dinner. Contact:
Sid Bhatt at 302-425-0762
Jim Robinson at 302-478-1677

GREENWOOD HILLS 2002

Greenwood Hills Bible Conference and Camps (Fayetteville, PA) invite you to the following winter conferences and retreats:

Congress Retreat (singles 16+)

January 4-6 Steve Hulshizer

January Jubilee (singles 12-16)

January 18-20 Craig Shakarji

Couples Retreat

April 19-21 Steve Hulshizer

Ladies' Missionary Seminar

April 26-28 see conf. brochure

Phone: 717-352-2150

www.greenwoodhills.org

YOUTH CONFERENCE

A youth conference is planned for teens, ages 13 and up, at Oak Lawn Bible Chapel, (Oak Lawn, IL) on Saturday, March 16, 2002. Chuck Meyers (MN) will be the speaker for

the day. The conference will begin at 9:30 AM and conclude at 3:30 PM.

Lunch will be provided and there is no charge for the conference. Bring money for candy, pop and snacks during the breaks. Books and videos will also be on sale. If you plan to attend, contact:

Dan Peterson
815-485-7009
incrediblebats@earthcafe.com

LAKE GENEVA SUMMER CONF.

Dates for the Lake Geneva Summer Conference have been set for July 20-28, 2002, Lord willing. Ted Grant and Dan Smith will be ministering during the week to the adults. Graham Marshall will be taking the teen meetings. Dave Brown will be working with the elementary age boys/girls and Jenny Coxhead will work with the pre-schoolers.

Accommodations for adults start at less than \$200 dollars for the week which includes all meals. Child rates are very low. This is a great place to take the whole family for a week of spiritual feeding from the Word. The conference is located on Lake Geneva in Williams Bay, Wisconsin. For additional information or brochures, contact:

414-248-5511
donnelson3@excite.com

COMMENDATIONS

Andy and Kim Hylton

On behalf of the assembly at Westlake Bible Fellowship (Cleveland, OH), the elders commend Andy and Kim Hylton to the work of the Lord in North Carolina. They believe that God has called Andy to serve as director of Mountain Top Youth Camp (NC) and also to minister from the platform as God gives opportunity in the surrounding area.

The Hyltons have been in happy fellowship at Westlake Bible

Fellowship since they moved to the area in 1996. Andy has been active at Mountain Top Youth Camp since he went there as a camper, serving in various leadership capacities.

At the assembly, Andy served as VBS director and Kim has been a faithful Sunday School and VBS teacher. They have led an after-school children's Bible club near their home. Andy has frequently spoken from the platform and his ministry is sound, well-prepared, and helpful. Andy and his family are very faithful in their attendance at all of the meetings.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Amicus International

Amicus Ministries International in Peterborough, ON, is seeking a host couple to oversee, manage, and operate Amicus House as a home that provides compassionate care to missionaries, full-time workers, and the Lord's people who come to stay at the facility. The host couple must be of proven godly character, with the gifts of hospitality and pastoral care, should have the support and recommendation of their local assembly and must be self-supporting. The host couple will live in Amicus House, which may provide services for upward to 500 people each year. Please contact:

David Fenton
705-742-5195
800-732-2769
amicus@nexicom.net
www.nexicom.net/~amicus

Greenwood Hills Bible Conference

Greenwood Hills (Fayetteville, PA) is looking for a general manager and a maintenance manager. These are salaried positions, with housing and insurance provided.

Greenwood Hills
7062 Lincoln Way East
Fayetteville, PA 17222

Guelph Bible Conference Center

We are presently looking for one or more individual(s) or a couple interested in preparing menus, food orders and meals for groups of 80+ throughout the off-season weekends. This person would have the same responsibilities during the summer months for 180+ weekly. Kitchen staff would also be an area in which leadership would be required.

For further information, call:
519-824-2571

ASSEMBLY UPDATES

Brazos Valley Bible Chapel

We are a new assembly in Bryan/College Station, Texas. We meet on Sunday mornings at 10:00 for worship and breaking of bread and Bible study thereafter. We also have a prayer meeting on Thursdays. We are few in number, but it is our desire to reach out to the non-believers in our community. We invite your prayers for growth and blessing for this assembly.

Siju Jacob
979-778-5302
979-690-7352

Hope Bible Chapel

After more than thirty years, Mountain Brook Bible Chapel (Birmingham, AL) is moving. The new information is:

Hope Bible Chapel
709 Ivawood Dr.
Irondale
Birmingham, AL 35210
Phone: 205-871-2381

Emerald Coast Bible Chapel

Emerald Coast Bible Chapel, serving the Niceville, Valparaiso area of Northwest Florida is now meeting at:

94 S. John Sims Parkway
Valparaiso, FL 32580
David McCulloch (Corr.)
850-651-4540

Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

Singular men of God in a pluralistic society.

It is the sad record of ecclesiastical history that the Church has generally been unfaithful to the call of God. It is obvious, because of this, that restoration collectively is no longer possible. Christians are sometimes misled, even as they think of the revivals effected by God, that sweeping change for the good is possible throughout Christendom.

Perhaps a narrow heart accustomed only to think of and love that portion of the Church which most immediately concerns ourselves, a sectarian spirit which leads us to designate as church the systems which man has substituted for the building of God—such are some of the causes which hinder us from forming a correct estimate of the true state of the Church in the world.

It is an indisputable fact for every Christian who depends on the Word of God that the present days are evil, that the mystery of iniquity already works for there are already many antichrists, and everything is ripening for the final apostasy.

But another fact quite as positive is this: God is faithful and will never leave Himself without testimony. He can even make use of evil to dispense fresh blessings to His people.

In the same way, in Judges the deserved oppression of the enemy is used by God to bring about revivals in Israel. They “cried unto the Lord” is invariably the word that ushers them in. Christendom in the present day discusses what means should be used to inaugurate revivals. There is only one; such a sense of the low condition of the world, of the sinner, of the church, as shall lead the exer-



cised soul to turn to God. They “cried unto the Lord.” Then He sent deliverers to them. We shall see these revivals in chapter 3 to chapter 16 of this book.

Let us begin by a general observation. When things are morally in a low state, God uses instruments which in themselves are imperfect and bear the stamp of weakness—Othniel sprang from a younger branch of the family; he was “the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother.” Ehud was weak through his infirmity, Shamgar through his weapon, Deborah from her gender, Barak by his natural character, Gideon on account of his relations, Jephthah by his birth. Other judges are mentioned who are rich, influential, or prosperous (10:1-4; 12:8-15) and God uses them no doubt but

more to maintain results already obtained than as deliverers.

We are no longer in the days of Joshua, or of the Apostles, when a power was developed in man which hindered the weakness of the vessel from appearing. Yet the very infirmity of these witnesses (characteristic of the period we are in) glorified the power of Him who could use them.

OTHNIEL (Jud. 3:5-11)

God had fitted Othniel through his private, domestic life (ch. 1) to be the first judge in Israel. Having fought to win a wife, he became the possessor of his own personal inheritance and of springs to water it. God now uses him to fight for others, and it is ever thus. Before the Christian can be publicly used by God, he must individually have made progress in the knowledge of the Lord, and in the power of his privileges. Before taking up public service, the Christian should have made progress in his own soul in the knowledge of the Lord and of the character of the calling. The absence of these generally accounts for our service being so contracted, our hearts are so little occupied with heavenly things.

The moral wealth which Othniel had acquired for himself was soon evident in his walk. In the short compass of verses 10 and 11, six things are mentioned of him: first, “the Spirit of the Lord,” the power of God to deliver Israel “came upon him.” Secondly, “he judged Israel,” he was entrusted with government; thirdly, he “went out to war;” here he had a willingness to face conflict;

fourthly, “*the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand*”—this is victory; fifthly, “*his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim,*” the enemy is finally subjugated; and sixthly, “*the land had rest forty years.*” Israel quietly enjoyed the fruits of Othniel’s victory. God’s end was achieved: this man who belonged only indirectly to the lineage of the noble Caleb, was fitted beforehand for this service, and when put to the proof, showed himself to be suitable material in the hands of the divine Workman.

Let us ask God to make us Othniels by true consecration of heart to the Lord, by an increasing desire to appropriate and realize these heavenly things, and we shall be instruments well-fitted for the Master and prepared unto every good work.

EHUD (Jud. 3:12-30)

Othniel dies; the children of Israel return to their evil ways and forget the Lord. The same God who had strengthened Othniel against the enemy, now, in judgment strengthens Eglon, king of Moab, against Israel. Eglon and his allies take possession of the city of palm trees (comp. Jud. 1:16, Deut. 34:3), Jericho, not in its character of the accursed city, but in that of blessing for Israel. And now Israel, in their fallen state, make use of the very one whom God was about to employ for their deliverance, to carry a present to Eglon, ratifying thus their subjection to the world whose favor they seek. How many gifts there are in the present day which become but willing instruments for keeping God’s children under the dominion of the world. But Ehud is faithful—he makes himself a two-edged sword: his first act—his only resource.

The Christian in the day of ruin has also his two-edged sword, the Word of God being his chief and only offensive weapon (see Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16, 19:13; Eph. 6:17) True, Ehud’s sword was only a cubit in length; his weapon was short, but well suited to its work. It was a tried sword, capable of piercing to the inward parts of God’s enemy and of giving him his death blow.

Before using his weapon, Ehud “*did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh,*” carrying it with him, ready for use; not displaying it, but conscious that it was there. The Bible is often displayed, and much quoted, without being used. But the Word of God has a purpose. Ehud, left-handed, adapts his sword to his infirmity, girding it on his right thigh. Had he worn it in the usual way it would have been useless. The manner in which the weapon is used invariably corresponds to the personal state of the one using it. To imitate others is of no avail, as we learn from the case of David, who was

unable to handle Saul’s sword, being accustomed, as a shepherd, to a sling and a stone.

Having brought the present to Eglon, Ehud turned again from the graven images (3:19, margin) that were by Gilgal; having, as he said, a “*secret errand*” for the king. It was not, as with many others, a public victory, but a secret single-handed encounter between the deliverer and the enemy, the public results of which were soon to appear. It was so with Christ when He was tempted of Satan in the desert.

Here everything takes place silently, with no apparent struggle, no cry: the enemy was found dead by the servants, who thought their master was resting. The power by which Israel had been enslaved was destroyed by the short sword of a left-handed man.

There was no fame or glory attending such a victory. It was a secret message, but a “*message from God*” to Eglon (v. 20). Our weapon is divine, and therein lies all its power. With Ehud, as with Gideon, it was the “*sword of the Lord.*” The king was dead, but the weapon was not drawn out of his belly. Ehud was gone, but the servants had before their eyes the instrument of victory. God proved to their confusion that it was this short sword which had abased the proud man, whose eyes stood out with fatness.

It remained for Ehud to reap the fruits of his victory. He blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim to assemble the people of God and they “*took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.*” The people recovered these usurped possessions; and, through the vigilance of the children of Israel, the way of approach for the enemy was cut off. The usurper was expelled and destroyed. Moab could no longer maintain himself on the two banks of the Jordan. Such should be the practical results of conflict at the present time. If the actual effect is not to make us openly break with the world, it is fruitless and does not answer to the purpose of God. The more complete the separation, the more lasting is the peace. “*The land,*” we are told “*had rest fourscore years.*”

SHAMGAR (Jud. 3:31)

Shamgar, the son of Anath, who followed Ehud, gained a signal victory over the Philistines. He also delivered Israel. Ehud’s sword was mighty, though short. Shamgar wrought deliverance by the means of a weapon which seemed wholly unsuited to such a work; a contemptible instrument, to all appearances only suitable for goading brute creatures. Without wishing to press unduly here a typical meaning—a tendency to do such in teaching is dangerous in more ways than one—I

would like to compare the ox goad of Shamgar with the short sword of Ehud. We have one weapon, the Word of God; it may be presented in different aspects, but it is the only one that the man of faith uses in the warfare. To the intellectual and unbelieving world it is like an ox-goad, fit at best, only for children and uneducated persons; full of fiction and contradictions; yet it is this instrument, despised by men, that God uses to gain the victory. Saul of Tarsus found it hard to kick against such goads (Acts 9:5).

In making use of such, faith finds a weapon where the world only sees folly, for the weakness of God is stronger than men. Doubtless, it is written for the unlearned and suited to their needs and to their walk; but this very ox goad can kill six hundred Philistines.

Let us, then, make use of the Word with which God has entrusted us, always remembering that faith only can make it effective, and that when the soul has found therein the knowledge of Christ, he has found the secret of blessing, joy and strength.



JOSHUA	JUDGES
<p>① FINAL PREPARATIONS On the Plains of Moab (chs. 1–2)</p> <p>② THE CENTRAL CAMPAIGN At Gilgal, Jericho, and Ai (chs. 3 to 8:29)</p> <p>③ TIME OUT AT SHECHEM The Covenant Renewed (ch. 8:30-35)</p> <p>④ THE GIBEON CAMPAIGN Defeating the Five Southern Kings (chs. 9–10)</p> <p>⑤ THE WATERS OF MEROM CAMPAIGN Defeating the Northern Confederacy (ch. 11)</p> <p>⑥ THE LAND ALLOTTED Possessing their Possession (chs. 12–22)</p> <p>⑦ JOSHUA'S LAST CHARGE The Covenant Repeated (chs. 23–24)</p>	<p>① Othniel, Caleb's son-in-law, takes Kirjathsepher, which was re-named Debir (1:9-15); defeats Chushan of Mesopotamia (3:7-11)</p> <p>② Ehud, a left-handed Benjamite, slays Eglon the Moabite king at Jericho (3:12-30)</p> <p>③ Shamgar kills 600 Philistines with an ox goad and so delivers Israel (3:31)</p> <p>④ Deborah and Barak defeat the forces of Jabin under Sisera at Mount Tabor (4:1–5:31)</p> <p>⑤ Gideon (Jerubbaal) defeats the Midianites at the Hill of Moreh with 300 men (6:1–8:35)</p> <p>⑥ Abimelech, Gideon's son, an oppressor instead of a deliverer, is crowned king at Shechem (9:1-57)</p> <p>⑦ Tola judges Israel 23 years from the Mountains of Ephraim (10:1-2)</p> <p>⑧ Jair, with his 30 sons, judges for 22 years from Gilead (10:3-5)</p> <p>⑨ Jephthah defeats the children of Ammon at Mizpah and is included in Hebrews 11 (11:1–12:7)</p> <p>⑩ After Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, Samson wars against the Philistines until he dies, restored by a gracious God, at Gaza (13:1–16:31)</p>

RUTH

- from Moab to Bethlehem
- from idols to Jehovah
- from hopelessness to redemption
- from widowhood to the Messianic line

BETHLEHEM

MOAB

Deborah and Barak

Deborah was no feminist; but her private ministry made a huge impact.

Israel's third fall into gross idolatry recorded in the book of Judges occurred during the eighty years of rest and quiet following the judgeship of Ehud (3:30). This was followed by a third servitude, longer than either of the two preceding, and more disgraceful, because the instrument was not an independent sovereign outside their own land, but one of the remnant of the Canaanites whom they ought to have destroyed.

Jabin reigned in Hazor, and was therefore a king of the same name, and reigning in the same place as one of Joshua's foes (see Josh. 11:1). Probably the rebuilders of this city and the restorer of this Canaanite kingdom either traced his descent from his namesake, or wished to associate his reign with that older one. Perhaps it was revenge that led him to make his rule over Israel remarkably severe. Harosheth has been generally looked for somewhere near Hazor: but much probability attaches to the opinion of Dr. Thomson (*The Land of the Book*), who identifies it with a tell by that name at the south-eastern corner of the plain of Akka, on the north side of the Kishon, close to the north flank of Mount Carmel.

DEBORAH (Judges 4:4-5)

Deborah stands out before us very prominently (vv. 4-5), a witness to the degradation of the people and to the goodness of the covenant God of Israel, who raised up for them at this time a person endowed with the gift of prophecy, the first case recorded since the death of Moses,

probably 200 years before; and this person a woman and also a judge.

There is no reason to suppose that she was a judge in any other sense than the rest of the judges in this book; though verse 5 makes it plain that the commencement of her work was that side of the judges office which consisted in holding up the law to Israel, and bringing them back to righteousness. A woman might be able to do this where a man would have failed under a tyranny such as Jabin's; she would not appear to intimidate the despot.

Her place of judgment was between Bethel and Ramah, now Beitin and Er Ram (see Josh. 7:2; 18:25), the latter five miles south of the former, on that high plateau named Mount Ephraim, though in that part of it which lay within the territory of Benjamin.

The palm tree was known as an emblem of the land of Palestine; and there may have been an allusion to this (compare Baal-tamar, "owner of the palm tree," a place in this neighborhood, 20:33) in her dwelling or sitting under the palm tree distinguished by her name. Her husband

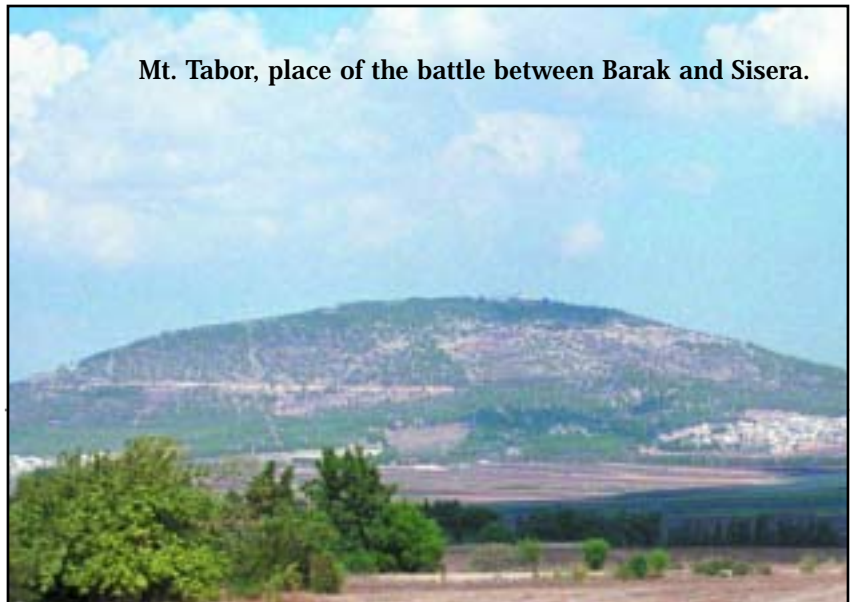
may have been dead, though she is called his wife: for it is not in accordance with the language of the Bible to speak of the widow of a man.

BARAK SENT (Judges 4:6-10)

The prophetess and judge called Barak to her southern home from his in the far north, the city of refuge in Naphtali, Kedesh (see Josh 12:22, 20:7). As on a former occasion Jehovah had fixed who should go up first against the Canaanites (1:1-2), so now His prophetess laid this duty on Barak's own tribe. As in Ehud's case, deliverance was to come from the very quarter in which the oppressor had his seat. Tabor, now Jebel Tūr, eleven miles west of the Sea of Galilee, is a mountain singularly prominent not so much for its height (1843 ft.) as for its cone-like shape. It sits isolated at the north-east extremity of the great plain of Jezreel, which was watered by the Kishon River (5:21).

Barak was to "draw toward Mount Tabor" or to "draw out in it," an obscure expression, which some content themselves with calling a military term. Others connect it with

Mt. Tabor, place of the battle between Barak and Sisera.



the same word as used of the lambs for the Passover (Ex. 12:21), where, as here, we read, “draw out and take,” as if he were to elude the tyrant’s vigilance by taking small bodies of troops one after another to the place of meeting. Then Deborah in the name of Jehovah added, “*and I will draw,*” or “draw out to thee” the opposing army in all its force, but only to give it into Barak’s hand.

The magnificent valley of Jezreel, an ideal place for large numbers of troops to act freely, and therefore the scene of numerous important battles, promised to be eminently suitable for Jabin’s chariots of iron (see Josh. 17:16-18). Here a victory should have been achieved as decisive as Joshua’s over the earlier Jabin. Barak’s refusal to go without Deborah may reasonably be attributed rather to piety than to fear, especially as we read of no hesitation in coming at the first call of Deborah. Nevertheless there was something in it of making conditions before he would yield obedience to the command of Jehovah. Therefore he was not to have the renown he might have had: he began by relying too much on the bodily presence of a woman, saint and prophetess though she was; and in the end Sisera would be delivered by Jehovah into another woman’s hand.

HEBER AND Jael THE KENITES (Judges 4:11)

The woman into whose hand Sisera was to be sold was the wife of Heber, a Kenite, and a descendent of Hobab (Num. 10:29-32), called in the AV here “*the father-in-law of Moses,*” rather “brother-in-law” for this meaning appears also to be included in the word.

It is vain to speculate on the circumstances which had led him to separate from his countrymen living in the territory of Judah, towards the south (1:16) and to move gradually in a northerly direction till he came as far as this oak which was by Kedesh. But since he thus moved about, he might be or become a conspicuous personage in the land of Israel, and his wife no less so, judging from the evidence of her strength of character. A similar inference may be drawn from the mention of peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber (v. 17). We know nothing of the circumstances which enabled the house of Heber to retain their friendly relations with Israel, and yet to be at peace with Jabin. This also removes a feeling of surprise at the mention of “*the days of Jael*” (Jud. 5:6).

THE BATTLE PLAN AND VICTORY (vv. 12-17)

The matter chiefly deserving attention here is that Barak would have ventured down with his relative handful of militia from Mount Tabor into the great val-

ley where the formidable Canaanite forces were gathered. But this was his reply to Deborah’s “*Up! For this is the day!*” and “*Is not the Lord gone out before thee?*”


This was because Jehovah “*discomfited*” Sisera and his camp, that is, struck panic into them (see Josh. 10:10). But the writer is careful to make an unprecedented addition (for in Ex. 17:13 “*discomfited*” stands for an entirely different Hebrew word). This panic was “*with the edge of the sword.*” It was “*before Barak;*” for while the excellency of the power was of God, doing what Barak could not naturally have achieved, still he had to use his sword as if all depended on him. He naturally pursued Sisera’s host towards Harosheth, westward near to the mouth of the Kishon; whereas Sisera escaped on foot in a north-easterly direction for 35 or 40 miles, as it is commonly thought, till he came to the oasis in Zaanaim, beside Barak’s home at Kedesh.

SISERA DELIVERED INTO Jael’s HAND (Judges 4:18-24)

The terrible scene which is vividly presented in these verses is surrounded with difficulties which our ignorance cannot solve. How did Sisera find his way straight to a woman’s tent (v. 17)? Was he so great a coward that he broke through all ordinary rules to seek refuge with Jael? Or had he base intentions, such as would justify all that Jael did, and such as his mother’s language (Jud. 5:30) suggests to be in accordance with his habits?

Again, could hers have been an act of deliberate treachery? Had she suddenly discovered the impossibility of preserving a neutral attitude? Or had she all along disapproved of her husband’s neutrality, and felt that the Kenites were duty bound to act along with Israel? Was it an attempt to avoid Barak’s wrath on account of harboring his great enemy? Did she see an opportunity to set things right again, with the idea that this was the critical moment in which God was calling her to fulfill that prophecy of Deborah’s (v. 9)—a prophecy which may have circulated among the women of the land?

According to the laws of hospitality in those countries, Sisera was entitled to consider himself safe when she gave him food and drink: and there was apparent heartiness in answering his request for water by giving him milk from the skin that hung beside her. But that all changed when he pressed her to lie for him (v. 20). “*Then,*” we read, she “*took an hammer in her hand.*”

The language of verses 23-24 suggests a struggle kept up for some time, though always more and more in favor of Israel. But that signal day determined the fate of Jabin, whose commander lay dead in the tent. “*So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan.*” 

Gideon's 300 lappers

Taking the taste test made all the difference. Vigilance is the price of safety.

Two Bible texts might well be written over this account, namely, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22:14: *"Many are called, but few are chosen."* And the Apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 10:18: *"Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."*

It was to be a full day in the life and experience of Gideon and his divinely chosen 300. We learn that all the people *"rose up early, and pitched (i.e., camped) beside the well of Harod"* (7:1). Harod means "trembling" and it is evident that the majority of the people did just that (7:3) as they looked down upon the vast host of Midianites in the valley below them, encamped by the hill of Moreh, meaning "teacher." Indeed, Gideon and all Israel were about to be taught a great lesson through the ensuing conflict with the Midianites. However, before the conflict there came the important matter of selecting the best soldiers to carry out the Lord's strategy against Israel's enemy, so the Lord set about to test the gathered hosts of Israel's army.

THE LORD'S APPRAISAL

In view of the vast number of Midianites the Lord made a strange appraisal of the situation, at least from the human standpoint, to Gideon. He said, *"The people that are with thee are too many"* (7:2).

Gideon was captain over 32,000 men. Were these too many for the 135,000 of the enemy (8:10)? Indeed, they were in the Lord's sight! Such an appraisal runs counter to human wisdom and serves as a

decisive blow against fleshly pride. The Lord knows perfectly the subtlety and haughtiness of the human heart, and He did not want Israel vaunting itself against Him and claiming to have gained the victory in their own strength (cf. Deut. 8:11-17; Ps. 33:16; Zech. 4:6; 1 Cor. 1:26-29).

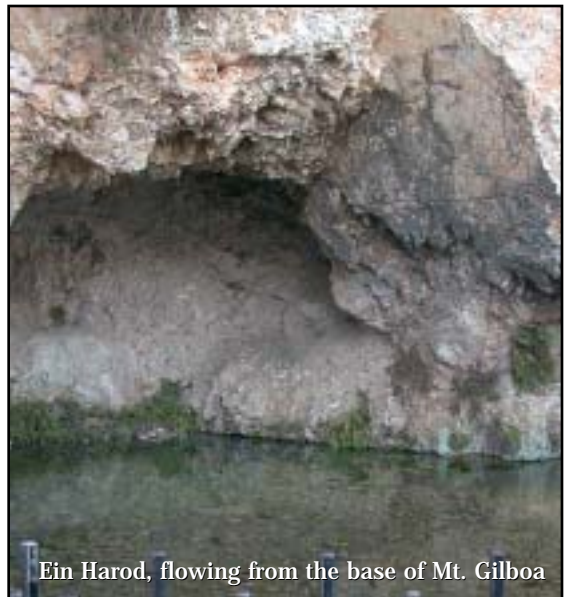
THE LORD'S TEST

The Lord's test was twofold regarding the 32,000 men who had assembled under Gideon's command.

First of all there was:

The Test of Fortitude (7:3): Those who were *"fearful and afraid"* were invited to return home, and the astonishing fact was that 22,000 left. However, under the law the fearful and fainthearted were always invited to return home lest their lack of courage hinder others going out to battle an enemy (Deut. 20:8). These were dark days in the history of Israel, especially when compared with the book of Joshua wherein the unity of the nation was evidenced and all went up to battle, the only exception being the first conflict at Ai (Josh. 7:1-5). The 22,000 felt they had something to lose and were thus unfit for service.

Presently we live in days of declension, division, and apostasy. Megachurches boast of quantity, but what about quality? Could it be that we are among those who think they



Ein Harod, flowing from the base of Mt. Gilboa

Photo © John Nicholson

have something to lose if they are out-and-out for the Lord? If so, we stand disapproved by God!

George Goodman has commented: "The world says there is safety in numbers. It is untrue, there is great danger in numbers, danger of panic, danger of depression by the pessimists, danger of self-confidence, danger of boasting. God has never wrought by the crowd; He chooses the faithful few who yield Him the obedience of faith and love, to do His work. *"Let not [him that wavereth] think that he shall receive anything of the Lord"* (Jas. 1:6-7).

The Test of Faith (7:4-6). With 22,000 on their way home, only 10,000 remained, yet God said that the people were still too many. Therefore, the 10,000 were tested by the water. Those who bowed their knees to drink were 9,700, while 300 lapped the water. The former longed

more for a drink than a fight; whereas the latter longed more for a fight than a drink. The former are suggestive of those who are too much occupied with earthly things; whereas the latter are suggestive of those who use earthly things with their eyes heavenward (cf. Mt. 6:33; Col. 3:1-2).

The unusual manner of this lapping or hurried way of drinking water has been described by A. Moody Stewart, who witnessed one doing it, as follows: "With one knee bent before him and the other stretched behind him in the same attitude as he ran, and with his face upward toward heaven, he threw the water with his cupped fingers in a continuous stream through his open lips without bringing his hand nearer to his mouth than perhaps a foot and a half, and so satisfied his thirst in a few moments."

If we test ourselves, some things are bound to go, but when God tests us we are made to realize both our utter insufficiency (2 Cor. 3:5; 4:7), and His all-sufficiency (Phil. 4:13, 19).

THE LORD'S CHOICE

From 32,000 to 300, God had sifted the army of


Israel, and by these 300 dedicated men—with Gideon as their human captain—He planned and purposed to rout and defeat 135,000 of the enemy.

Gideon, like Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Paul, and many others, was soon to learn that "little is much when God is in it," and that even one with Him is a majority when in His will.

During the Civil War someone wrote to Abraham Lincoln, "I am praying that God may be on our side."

Lincoln replied, "I have no desire to have God on my side. What I want is to be on God's side." Are you on His side? Would you have been among the 300?

W. Graham Scroggie wrote: "Is it incorrect to say that the majority of professing Christians do not mean business? They do most of the things the worldling does, and so they do not count in the great conflict between truth and error, and right and wrong. It were well if there were fewer Christians and better ones."

Do you not desire to be among the 300? I do! Are we really fit for active service, ready in faith to venture all for Christ, holding nothing dear except His glory and the promotion of His interests, or must we be classed among those who vacate or vacillate? 

The Days When the Judges Ruled

The span covered by these judges is not easy to calculate; it seems there is some overlap. Probably it covers about 300 years. But calculate the totals for the years of bondage and the years of peace. Even with some overlap, the years of peace are almost three times the number of the years of oppression. This is not to excuse the declension in Israel; in fact, one could wonder how they often waited for years to cry to the Lord. One could wonder, that is, were it not for our own wayward hearts. It is good to see, however, that the victory that Jehovah gave Israel through these judges was not a superficial thing. In most cases, it seems to have lasted for the lifetime of that generation (40 years or so) and, in the days of Ehud, well into the lives of the next generation also.

ENEMIES	BONDAGE	JUDGES	PEACE
Mesopotamia	8 years	Othniel	40 years
Moabites, etc.	18 years	Ehud	80 years
Canaanites	20 years	Deborah & Barak	40 years
Midianites	7 years	Gideon	40 years
Israelites	3 years	Abimelech	45 years*
Ammonites	18 years	Jephthah	31 years
Philistines	40 years	Samson	20 years
TOTALS	114 years		296 years

*under Tola and Jair

Jotham's parable

A helpful present application to a story from the distant past.

The variety of gifts in the Church is in itself a forcible reminder of the indispensability of any member. All are essential to the well-being of the whole. Since all are unique, it also follows that the work given to one cannot be properly performed by another. Each is specially gifted for a particular service. This is clearly illustrated in Jotham's parable in Judges 9.

On the death of Gideon, his son Abimelech slew all Gideon's sons with the exception of Jotham, and presented himself as king at Shechem. As the people were in the act of acknowledging the usurper as king, Jotham stood on Mt. Gerizim and contemptuously described the new rule in a remarkable parable.

The trees of the field, he declared, sought a ruler; the olive, fig and vine trees rejected the offer, but the bramble, of little note or worth, accepted and was ultimately the cause of the destruction of even the cedars of Lebanon.

Beyond the obvious application of the fable, there is undoubtedly a deep spiritual significance. As one writer points out, there is at least a twofold lesson: first, "contentment with our providentially appointed lot," and second, "providential adaptation to our sphere and work."

Each of the trees mentioned by Jotham possessed a unique quality, peculiar to itself alone. Deprived of that quality, it would be worthless. Yet the offer of regal power really resolved itself into a surrender of the natural gift for the instability of the place of supremacy (the word translated "promoted" means literally



An olive tree at the Biblical Garden, Tantur, Israel

"wander" or "stagger"). For this, none of the trees was willing, with the exception of the bramble, which had no useful purpose to fulfill.

THE REQUEST TO THE TREES

The olive tree was unwilling to leave its fatness or oil (a type of the Holy Spirit). Its oil was an essential part of the meal-offering (the beautiful figure of the Spirit-controlled life of Christ), and was found in the temple lampstands (suggesting that testimony also is dependent on the indwelling Spirit). Its oil made man's "face to shine," an indication of spiritual joy and happiness. Its fruit formed the dish of the noble, as the Spirit's fruit still brings delight to the heart of God and His people. That such service to man should be sacrificed for the empty glory of ruler was impossible and the olive tree refused. Well may the child of God spurn the empty glories and honors of life, and prefer development of spirituality and the production of spiritual fruit.


The fig tree was equally reluctant. Its sweetness and its luscious fruit were of far greater value to man

than the proffered honor. The sweet life and the fruitfulness of the Christian are also of greater value to God than an inept attempt to occupy a place of authority.

An appeal to the **vine** again proved unsuccessful. With its rich clusters of fruit (an apt picture of the fruitful evangelist), the vine brought cheer to the world, and its wine brought gladness to God and man. Without its fruit, the figurative joy of the drink-offering would have been lost. Without power or strength, it twined round others for support, but its fruit could not be replaced by anything else.

THE ONE THAT ACCEPTED

The fruit-bearing trees having refused, the only plant which would reply favorably to the appeal was the **bramble**, and this miserable tree invited the others to shelter in its shadow, despite the fact that it was well nigh without a shadow. Its thorns tore and lacerated the flesh, and were a menace to all. Its virtues were non-existent. Useless for oil, sweetness, or fruit, its loss affected no man. Yet its exalted position was a potential danger, for it threatened to devour the glorious cedars of Lebanon, just as the worthless Abimelech's ambition threatened to engulf nobler men in its destruction.

It is difficult sometimes for the Christian, in a comparatively unimportant position, not to feel envious of another who is more popular and apparently more honored. But external glory matters little, so long as we are in the right position and exercising the gift God has given us. 

EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Such a heritage doesn't call for a museum but a return to the Book.

The faithful exposition of the Word of God powerfully transforms lives. This was never more true than in the ministry of the Scripture by the so-called "Plymouth Brethren" 150 years ago. Men of God such as J. N. Darby, William Kelly, C. H. Macintosh, R. C. Chapman and others were noted and exceptionally gifted expositors of the Bible. C. H. Spurgeon commented that R. C. Chapman was one of the most godly and gifted expositors in England. J. N. Darby visited the United States and preached to eager audiences in the largest churches in North America. He preached on a number of occasions at Moody's Farwell Hall in Chicago and at the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, MO, at which James H. Brookes was minister.

"Brethren" Bible conferences in North America and in Britain attracted overflow crowds of serious Christians. Many of the leading evangelical church leaders of that time attended these conferences. Gratton Guinness, Henry Varley, and D. L. Moody visited the Mildmay conference in Dublin in 1872. C. I. Scofield and Arno Gaebelein frequently attended Bible conferences in the U. S. The Bible teaching among "brethren" was considered to be the richest and most spiritual available in that day. D. L. Moody wrote concerning the teaching of C. H. Macintosh:

I had my attention called to C. H. M.'s notes, and was so much pleased and at the same time profited by the way they opened up Scripture truth, that I secured at once all the writings of the same author, and if they could not be replaced, would rather part with my entire library, excepting my Bible, than with these writings. They have been to me a very key to the Scriptures.¹

THE LEGACY OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Regarding all the contributions of the so-called "Plymouth Brethren" movement to the evangelical Church, it may be that expository preaching is its most enduring legacy. Expository preaching had fallen into disfavor at this time in the history of the Church. Most ministers preached topically or textually; that is, using one text or verse and then building a sermon around the

theme of the verse. The "Brethren" did not follow this method, but introduced a verse-by-verse, consecutive exposition of the Scriptures.

Moreover, they preached the Bible as one unified book. They demonstrated that the prophecies of the Old Testament and New Testament could not be isolated from one another. Both were essential to the proper understanding of the Bible. They took seriously the historical-grammatic method of interpretation of Scripture, and labored in the exposition of types, dispensations, and prophecies of Scripture.

They were recognized authorities on the original languages of the Scriptures, trends within theology, and biblical history and culture. This spoken teaching of these brethren was in due course recorded using shorthand, and these notes were soon edited and published. These published works soon gained wide acceptance as sound commentaries on the books of Scripture.

This style of preaching was a refreshing change, stimulating spiritual growth and stirring great interest in the Scriptures. This unique approach virtually transformed the method in which the Bible was proclaimed and has influenced expository preaching well into our present day. Church historian Dr. C. Norman Kraus describes how the "Brethren's" expository preaching remarkably transformed evangelicalism of the late 1800s:

The striking feature of their ministry was their simple exposition of Bible passages. They did not preach a series of sermons on different topics or hold series of evangelistic meetings, as Moody did. Rather, they held Bible study meetings. The ministry of Malachi Taylor, who died in 1897 and was succeeded for two years by A. C. Gaebelein, is a good example of how they worked. For a period of about twelve years he held a daily Bible study meeting in Temple Court in New York City. Darby himself gave a series of studies at Farwell Hall at D. L. Moody's invitation. It was this method, taken no doubt from the Brethren's example, that was expanded and used so effectively by James H. Brookes and his associates in Bible conferences all over the country.²



The efforts of these expositors had a significant impact on the founders at Dallas Theological Seminary and at Moody Bible Institute, influencing the expository preaching of a whole new generation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPOSITION

As expository preaching was given great emphasis by the early “Brethren,” leading evangelical preachers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean were quick to see its great importance. As expository preaching began to gain acceptance, the spiritual lives of many Christians were revitalized. This expository preaching movement may have contributed in part to the deep interest in the Scofield Reference Bible, the surge in missionary interest, and the Bible Prophecy Conference Movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

How does expository preaching transform lives? Why is expository preaching so important? Alfred P. Gibbs explains vividly the importance of expository preaching when he writes,

Expository preaching puts the supreme emphasis on the Word of God. It magnifies the Word of God, and gives it the place of supreme authority... this type of preaching serves the far better purpose of edifying the people of God as the Scriptures are applied to their everyday lives. It provides an opportunity for speaking on many passages that would otherwise be neglected. By means of this method of preaching, little known truths will be given their rightful place, and it will be demonstrated that all Scripture is essential to furnish the man of God.³

The well-placed emphasis on expository preaching is a great tool in the hand of God for spiritual renewal.

HENRY MOORHOUSE AND MOODY

The faithful exposition of the Scriptures was the passion of the early “Plymouth Brethren” and they were tireless in passing on this deeply-held conviction. When Moody visited Dublin in 1867, he was told of the preaching of a zealous young “Brethren” evangelist named Henry Moorhouse. By this time, Moorhouse had established the reputation of being one of the leading evangelists in England. Initially, Moody was not very impressed with young Moorhouse. To Moody, Moorhouse appeared to be so young and frail.

However, a few months later, back in Chicago, Moody sent a note to Moorhouse telling him that if he was ever in Chicago, he was welcome to preach at Farwell Hall—not expecting him to come. However, Moorhouse did come and preach, and Moody was never the same again.

When Moody was in Dublin, he took notice of the expository method of preaching used by the “Plymouth Brethren” during meetings at the Mildmay Conference and at Merrion Hall. Their preaching was so much different than his usual sermons. Henry Moorhouse’s ministry was also greatly influenced by the men Moody heard preach in Dublin. Young Henry Moorhouse had been schooled in the art of preaching by “Brethren” pulpit giants like John Hambleton, F. C. Bland, and Richard Weaver. Henry Moorhouse was a preacher of the Scriptures; every point was backed up with Scripture.

Moody’s wife, Emma, upon

Sweet Old Chapters

*Whenever the heart is aching
And the days are thick with care;
Whenever the worry and trouble
Seem more than my soul can bear;
Turn to one of the sweet old chapters
Where the dew and the sun are sweet,
And the blossoms of peace and comfort
Seem springing around the feet.*

*Whenever the bitter battle
Is more than I’ve strength to fight,
Oh, one of the sweet old chapters
Will soon give back my might;
And I’ll rise and lift the banner,
And go forth brave again
For my part in the daily struggle
Of men in a world of men.*

*Never a downcast spirit
That cannot rise and go
When the words of a sweet old chapter
From the Holy Scriptures flow;
The voice of a tender message,
The word of a higher trust,
How the sound of a sweet old chapter
Can lift us from the dust.*

*I feel the touch of that healing,
That boon and that gift of love,
When I read in a sweet old chapter
Of the mansions that shine above;
The words of a sweet old chapter,
Ah, wonderful cure are they,
For the pain of the weary spirit
And the cares that infest the day!*

—Baltimore Sun



hearing Moorhouse, commented, "I like Moorhouse's preaching very, very much. He is very different from you. He backs up everything he says by the Bible." Moody's approach to preaching, at that time, was to string together in a sermon a number of detached thoughts and texts from the Bible. Moody saw that there was something missing in his preaching. He longed for a more biblical ministry.

On one occasion, young Moorhouse challenged Moody, "You are sailing on the wrong tack. If you will change your course, and learn to preach God's words instead of your own, He will make you a great power." The Spirit gave him no rest. Moody invited Moorhouse to hold a "Bible reading" in his house and 60 people were invited to attend. As a result Moody saw more clearly than ever that he needed to preach Scripture-based messages.

The Lord had plans to use Henry Moorhouse in Moody's life in an even greater way. When Moorhouse first arrived in Chicago, Moody was unexpectedly called out of town. He asked Moorhouse if he would preach for him at Farwell Hall. Moorhouse began preaching on the subject of the love of God. He preached nightly for one solid week using the text of John 3:16. When Moody returned, he was greatly surprised to find Moorhouse still preaching. As he listened to Moorhouse, he discovered that Moorhouse was still preaching on the same text, and that souls were being wonderfully saved. Moody confided to a friend, "I never knew up to that time that God loved us so much. This heart of mine began to thaw out; I could not keep back the tears. I just drank it in. So did the crowded congregation. I tell you there is one thing that draws above everything else in the world and that is love."⁴

THE CHALLENGE OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Early "Plymouth Brethren" expositors evidenced a deep love for Christ, a faithfulness to the Scriptures, and godly diligence in the exposition of the Word. These human messengers of the oracles of God were powerfully gripped by the realization that they were handling divine truth. Therefore, faithfulness and spiritual care were essential in setting forth the truth of the Scriptures. Many hours of careful study were devoted to understanding the truth of God. These expositors, armed with the Word of God in their hearts and skilled with gift from above, brought untold blessing to many. Many were challenged by the godliness of their character, the breadth of their knowledge of the holy Word, and their commitment to the truth of God at all costs. Many who heard their ministry were changed forever.

Harold St. John writes of his personal experience as he listened to one of these expositors,

I remember in my youth how the late William Kelly used to come up to London and deliver his annual series of lectures. He would take up perhaps seven lectures on Isaiah, or on the captivity books, and each year he would lecture on some broad portion of Scripture. He spent months preparing his lectures and there would be queues outside the largest hall they could get, and the good man would speak in a very studied English for over an hour, simply opening the Word of God.⁵

As Henry Moorhouse challenged D. L. Moody to the art of expository preaching, and William Kelly challenged his hearers to excellency in the ministry, likewise this same charge is needed today. Preaching is the appointed way to bring men and women face to face with the truth of God's Word. It is God's method of faithfully proclaiming the whole counsel of God and to fully furnish men and women of God for service. The apostle Paul exhorts Timothy, "*Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2); "*God...manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour*" (Titus 1:2-3). May we take up this important challenge to passionately preach the Word of God, to proclaim it expositionally, faithfully making the truth of God known to a new generation.

David Dunlap

David Dunlap

ENDNOTES

- 1 Ernest Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1978), p. 166
- 2 C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America*, (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1958), p. 47
- 3 A. P. Gibbs, *The Preacher and His Preaching*, (Kansas City, KS: Walterick Publ., 1964), pp. 242-243
- 4 Richard E. Day, *Bush Aglow: Life of Moody*, (Philadelphia, PA: Judson, 1945), p. 145
- 5 Patricia St. John, *Harold St. John: A Portrait by His Daughter* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1959), p. 141

How Jephthah fulfilled his vow

“He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not” (Ps. 15:4).

In a Bournemouth art gallery there is a series of paintings by Edwin Long depicting the story of Jephthah. The largest of them pictures the return from battle, with the daughter coming out to welcome her father. The last of the series is of Jephthah sacrificing her in fulfillment of his rash vow. It is terrible in its realism. The daughter is bound to an altar, and Jephthah is shown in anguish, about to take her life.

What are the facts? First of all, human sacrifices were expressly forbidden by the law. Israel was not to learn to do after the abomination of the nations, as making a son or daughter pass through the fire (Deut. 18:9). In Micah 6:7, the prophet asks: *“Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”* and shows that that is not what God requires. There is no evidence that Israel ever associated such sacrifices with the worship of Jehovah.

God’s testing of Abraham’s faith is no warrant for thinking otherwise. That yielding of the only begotten son was never represented to Abraham as being for the sin of his soul, but as evidence that Abraham was willing to obey in faith and keep back nothing from God, as God in love kept back nothing, but gave His only begotten Son for our salvation. That God did not allow the sacrifice to be consummated shows the true meaning of it. *“Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me”* (Gen. 22:12).

Look at the wording of the vow. *“If Thou shalt without fail deliver*



The Daughter of Jephthah by Edgar Degas

the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me...shall surely be the Lord’s.” Note what follows: *“or”* (not “and,” RV margin) *I will offer it up for a burnt offering”* (vv. 30-31).

It was either to be for the Lord as in Leviticus 27:1-27, under a “singular vow,” or if an animal as was suitable for the purpose (see Lev. 1:3, “of the herd”; v. 10, “of the flocks”; v. 14, or “of fowls”), then it was to be offered as a burnt offering.

Moreover, had she been thus vowed to the Lord she might have been redeemed in accordance with Leviticus 27:4, for 30 shekels, had there been nothing unusual.

The exception in Leviticus 27:29 is of those being “devoted” to destruction as was Jericho; a thing “doomed” was not redeemable. But the word “devoted” to death is not used in the case of Jephthah.


His vow appears to have pledged his daughter to perpetual virginity. This seems evident from her words: *“My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth...Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity...”* (vv. 36-37).

The words of verse 39 bear this out: *“Her father...did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man.”*

The word “lament” in verse 40 is variously translated. In the RV it is rendered “celebrate,” in the margin “talk with.” This suggests that for four days each year the daughters of Israel went to talk with the daughter of Jephthah, and to celebrate her submission to parental authority, and her sacrificed hope of that which a Jewish woman held most desirable, the birth of a son.

It has been objected that the thought of devotion to virginity was not considered a pious thing, nor a desirable one in those days, that the conception has arisen since, being taken from the heathen (such as the vestal virgins, etc., of pagan Rome) by an apostate Christianity, but this scarcely seems borne out by the words of 1 Corinthians 7:38, RV: *“So then both he that giveth [his own virgin daughter] in marriage doeth well, but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.”*

The devotion and submission of Jephthah’s daughter to her father’s will reminds us of the willing yielding of Isaac and, more wonderful still, of One who became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Such seems to be the reasonable interpretation of Jephthah’s vow but there are others who take a different view, and believe that he actually offered his daughter. The outstanding lesson of the story is found in the noble words of Jephthah: *“I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back”* (v. 35). 

Elijah, Groves and Müller

Is the God of the ravens still our God today?

Elisha's heart was heavy as he accompanied Elijah across the Jordan River on the day when God would take Elijah away. When they came to the Jordan, Elijah took his cloak and struck the water. The river parted before them and they both went across. Then Elisha watched in amazement as Elijah was taken up into heaven. His leader, his mentor, was gone and he had an inexpressible sense of loss. But Elijah's cloak was left behind and God's ministry must go on.

Elisha retraced his steps to the Jordan. He stood before the water, raised the mantle and struck the Jordan with it, crying out, "*Where is*

the Lord God of Elijah?" (2 Ki. 2:14). The waters divided and Elisha passed over. The God of Elijah was still present in power and He became the God of Elisha.

The God of Elijah was a God of great power who did miracles through His servant. He was a God who fed him first by the ravens, then through a poor widow, during those terrible years of famine and drought. He was also the God who sent rain in answer to the prayers of Elijah (Jas. 5:17-18). No wonder Elisha was impressed with the God of Elijah and desired Him to be his God as well.

Where is the God of Elijah

today? It is granted that God does not always act the same way. Some prophets worked miracles, such as Elijah and Elisha. Others were preaching or writing prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, performing no miracles. But all believed in the God of Elijah and knew His provision for their personal needs.

About 175 years ago there was a tremendous revival of interest in the simplicity of the early church structure in England and Ireland, as well as some other parts of the world. The state church at that time was characterized by spiritual deadness and was supported by government taxes. Brethren became burdened to

Elisha's hometown of Abel Meholah is not far from the join between the Jordan and Jezreel valleys. Somewhere near here Elisha was plowing when Elijah threw his mantle upon him. (1 Ki. 19:19)



Photo © Wolf Schubach

see churches begun that would emphasize the priesthood of all believers, with open worship, and the opportunity for spiritual gifts to develop. They rejected the concept of clergy and laity. They also realized the need for faith in those who would serve the Lord. They studied the example of Christ and His disciples and saw them serving God without salaries or guaranteed support. They believed God could still lead His people to support His work without salaries or pledges. This left God's servants free from the control of men (Gal. 1:10).



George Müller of Bristol became one of those men who believed in the God of Elijah. In March of 1829, he came to England to study in a seminary of the London Jews Society, hoping to become a missionary to the Jews. Earlier, in 1826, he had visited the Orphan House in Halle built by A. H. Franke, who had died in 1727.

It was an institution operated on a faith basis. This left a lasting impression on him. Later Müller wrote,

Soon after my arrival in England, I heard one of the brethren in the seminary speak about a Mr. Groves, a dentist of Exeter, who, for the Lord's sake, had given up his profession, which brought him in about fifteen hundred pounds a year, and was intending to go as a missionary to Persia, with his wife and children, simply trusting in the Lord for temporal supplies. This made such an impression on me, and delighted me so, that I not only marked it down in my journal, but also wrote about it to my German friends" (*Anthony Norris Groves* by G. H. Lang, p. 14).

Müller was so taken by this concept of faith that on December 12, 1829, he left the Society because of his conviction about the Scriptures. He determined to serve God under His immediate direction and to trust Him for all of His temporal needs. He was drawn to Groves' family and the next year, October 7, 1830, he married Mary Groves, A. N. Groves' sister. Groves' faith excited him and inspired him. In 1835, he accompanied Groves on a tour of Germany.

Henry Craik was a godly teacher with whom Müller worked for thirty-six years and who also greatly influenced him. They were kindred spirits in their pursuit of New Testament church truths. Müller had a burden for

orphans and built up a tremendous work which at times housed over 2,000 orphans. He is known for his faith, supporting the work by prayer, refusing to solicit funds, and trusting God alone. The story of his faith is exciting and inspiring.



Many workers caught this vision of serving God by faith, and assemblies prayed and gave to support the Lord's work. A missionary work was begun from assemblies which girdled the world and continues to this day.

Hudson Taylor caught this vision also when he founded the China Inland Mission. Many so-called faith missions came into being later. Their policy was not to mention needs and not to solicit funds. Workers could tell of their work but then should allow God to exercise hearts to give. Some seminaries, such as Dallas Theological Seminary, adopted this same approach in their early days.

But the winds have changed. Some today even ridicule Müller and the faith principle for God's work. Of course, most churches through the years have been very open about asking for funds and most preachers are salaried men. And some who once followed such a pathway of faith are changing their thinking. It is hard not to be envious: Look at some of these organizations and the funds they raise. Look at their big buildings. Observe how the megachurches seem to prosper. And so we see mission organizations abandoning that faith position and scrambling for the evangelical dollar. Some spend a third of their budget on promotion and solicitation.

Sad to say, some assemblies are yielding to the temptation. Home workers are being salaried and overseas workers are tempted to be more bold about asking for funds. Shame on us! Elisha cried, "*Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*" We might cry, "Where is the God of A. N. Groves? Where is the God of George Müller? Where is the God who has sustained His servants in years past? Where is the God who gets glory for Himself by providing the needs of His servants? Where is the God who provided for the temporal needs of our Lord Jesus and His apostles?" May God give us a fresh vision of faith for His work. Our God is the God of Elijah.



Samson

The story in Judges 13–16 is intended to both warn and encourage.

If we wish honestly to understand what God did and taught through Samson, we must ask ourselves not what any fanciful mind can now, in the light of the New Testament, bring out of the narrative, but what good did the contemporaries of Samson receive from him, and what impressions were produced in their minds by his career? These old heroes were not first sent so we can now look back at them and see a reflection of Christ. They were sent in the first place that they might be deliverers to their own generation. As such we must study them.

First then, we must find an answer to this question: What principles regarding the way in which God works deliverances for man were taught by Samson?

DELIVERED BY INDIVIDUALS

Obviously the first principle impressed on the minds of his contemporaries must have been that “in a state of universal depression all must ultimately depend on the indomitable strength which is aroused in individuals (Ewald, *Hist. ii.* p. 399). God loves to deliver His people from the multitudes of their enemies by single champions. This was never brought so prominently out as in the life of Samson. The other judges were backed by the people. The movement for freedom began with them individually, but the mass of the people rose at their call. But Samson throughout fought the Philistines single-handed. He despised their whole collected armies, went down alone into their strongest cities, and, when they

would shut him in, carried away gates and bars in grim satiric mood that was his fighting humor. And that was the nearest approach to seriousness the presence of armed enemies could induce. Samson was qualified by his natural gifts thus to stand alone and to hearten the people, giving them more courageous and hopeful thoughts.

It was not so much his great physical strength but the blithe and daring manner in which he used it that impressed the people and solaced the weaker men who could not imitate him. His name, Samson, refers not to his strength, but to his temper. It means “Sunny.” This was what the people saw in him—an inexhaustible joyousness of disposition that buoyed him up in danger and difficulty, and made him seem to the downtrodden people, whose

future was clouded and gloomy, as the sun rising up and cheering them.

This joyousness comes out in the lightheartedness with which he fights against countless odds; in his taste for witty sayings and riddles; and in the gigantic practical jokes he perpetuated in carrying off the gates of Gaza, and in tying the foxes tail to tail, sending them through the standing corn with burning brands. Nothing could have been better calculated to reanimate Israel when oppressed by the Philistines than a spirit like this which could treat them with such contempt.

In sending this judge to Israel God meant the people to admire and catch his spirit; He meant them to see that He expects His people to be “sunny,” to overflow with health and vivacity even under protracted misfortune. This, God produced in them not by giving this spirit of joy and vigor to all, but to one man only.

This therefore must be our first practical lesson—how much can be done by individuals. We can all be indolent in things spiritual; we shrink from everything heroic, from everything that goes beyond the actions of our neighbors. We need, therefore, to be reminded that grievances will not reform themselves, nor will be reformed by the whole community awaking to them, but that some individual must take each grievance in hand until it is mastered. How often it happens, if we are living with our eyes open, that we see some hurtful influence spreading and are filled with shame that we cannot put a stop to it. We have not the unselfishness of the



The Death of Samson by Gustave Doré

great men who fix upon some definite evil and give their life to its eradication; have not the gallantry of Samson, who picked quarrels with the Philistines as often as he could that he might rid his country of oppression.

In this way Samson was a type of Christ, who, single-handed, encountered those essential evils which keep us back from God, who did battle for us and by His own strength delivers us from every bondage, who *“trodden the winepress alone.”*

DELIVERED IN SPITE OF OURSELVES

A second principle illustrated by the life of Samson is that God often has to deliver His people in spite of themselves. The Israelites, instead of flocking to Samson’s standard and seconding his effort to throw off the Philistine yoke, bound him and gave him into the hands of the Philistines, complaining bitterly that he had brought them into trouble with their masters. They were willing to buy peace at the price of Samson’s life, just as the Pharisees said of our Lord, *“If we let Him thus alone...the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.”*

They would not strike a blow in defense of their own liberty, still less in defense of their champion. These 3,000 armed men of Judah stood by as idle spectators while Samson burst the bonds they had bound on him, and snatching up the only weapon he could see, the jawbone of an ass, fell on the enemy and slaughtered as many as did not flee. Put yourself in the position of these abject and cowardly men of Judah, and you will see that they must have been deeply ashamed of their treachery to themselves in delivering up Samson. They must have seen that God meant to deliver them, and *had* delivered them in spite of themselves.

Everyone who has endeavored anything for the good of others knows how common this spirit is. People for the most part don’t wish to be elevated, enlightened, purified. If advancement gives them the least trouble, they prefer to remain as they are, and turn angrily on those who stir them up to higher things. They need to be helped in spite of themselves. That man will not prove a very efficient social reformer who refuses to help any but those who help themselves; who is dismayed when he finds his intentions are misunderstood; who cannot, like Samson, patiently submit to abuse from those whose best friend he is, and have them undoing his work for them almost as fast as he does it.

We must, I fear, all plead guilty to a similar treachery in our own best interests, and acknowledge that if

saved, it must be in great part in spite of ourselves. Like these men of Judah we prefer respectable and comfortable subjection to sin to hard-won freedom. We become reconciled to the dominion of foolish and hurtful lusts. Some sins don’t seem to do us as much harm. They do not brand us as slaves, nor bind us with fetters that audibly clank. Their bondage is like that of the Philistines, mixed with some advantages and comforts. To rid ourselves of them is a painful, difficult and humiliating work—a work that throws us out of comfortable, easy-going relations with the world, and makes life a more dangerous and toilsome thing. Therefore we do not second our Redeemer when He would deliver us from such sins. For is it not true that indolence, love of ease, fear of putting ourselves into difficult circumstances are thwarting the Saviour’s work in many of us? If we are to be saved from such bondage, it will be with bitter shame and regret that while we laid heavy burdens on our Redeemer, we ourselves would not touch them with one of our fingers.

THE GREATEST VICTORIES ARE WON THROUGH SELF-SACRIFICE

But a third principle about God’s deliverances was lodged in the minds of the people by Samson’s career—that the greatest deliverances are wrought by self-sacrifice. As they themselves expressed it, *“the dead which [Samson] slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.”* Through mere love of fighting and in the joy of battle, he had slain many. In the mere overflow of physical vigor and exuberance of his own spirits, he had borne down the enemies of God. But his greatest victory was when he himself was humbled to the dust, when life had lost its charm, when no joy for himself was thought of, and when his only motive was to assert the might of Jehovah against the boastful worshippers of Dagon. It cost him his own life, but his life could not have been better spent. In those former victories he sustained no hurt, displayed no devotion, no character, scarcely any daring—for he trusted in his talisman of hair, and knew he could overpower all opposition. But in his death his heroism first appears; and we understand how he should be enrolled among the glorious names of history. We forget all his faults in his

Samson’s greatest victory was when he himself was humbled to the dust.

noble disregard of his own life, in his magnanimous scorn of those Philistines and their god.

In this one moment, as he bows his mighty frame between the two pillars, a new light shines upon him, and we see that he is indeed a saviour worthy of Israel and worthy of God. Would not everyone go with his brethren and gather out the mangled remains of the hero, tenderly separate them from the carcasses of his enemies, and carry them up to the burial place of his fathers, in pledge that he loved not his life unto the death, but laid it down for the brethren?

We need not pause to show how this principle was displayed in the great salvation; how the death of Christ accomplished more than His life. Rather let us reflect

***Slowly his
hair grew
and with
it slowly
returned his
strength.***

that whatever we do for our fellows and for God, it is not always our greatest activity that is most truly successful. You cannot measure the good a man does by the length of time he is about it, or the diligence he shows in it. One moment of true devotion effects more than a lifetime of labor. This is what is needed if we are to do good. In the family, in

society, anywhere or anyhow, it is all the same; this is the one requisite for the highest kind of efficiency, a heart going out more to others than resting in itself; a spirit of genuine devotion to a great cause, or to the people around you—that is what all men acknowledge to be a real blessing and gift of God in their midst. But seldom do we see it, except in men whose experience has been something like Samson's, who have sat in darkness and the shadow of death, the light of whose life has been extinguished, and their hearts brought down with affliction and labor.

These, then, are the three principles which the life of Samson sets vividly before us: that the good done on earth is mostly done by individuals; that it has often to be done in spite of indifference or opposition of those for whom it is undertaken; and that to accomplish the highest and greatest good, men must devote *themselves*.

There is no picture in the Bible, or perhaps in all history, more pathetic than that of Samson after his fall: the mighty sunny Samson, the flash of whose eye had unnerved his enemies, fettered now in the Philistine dungeon, deprived of the light of day, set to grind like a woman, and dragged out to be the jest and scorn of his insolent conquerors. Were circumstances ever calculated

to inflict a keener, more overwhelming shame than when this mighty champion, who had never encountered resistance and had never conceived the possibility of defeat, who had borne everything before him in one uninterrupted tide of victory, suddenly found himself hopelessly in the hands of his enemies, his eyes put out, his strength all gone from him, and with it all token of the favor of God? Was ever a dungeon inhabited by gloomier thoughts, was ever a more pitiable humiliation than that of this forlorn captive, far from his friends, shut out from the light, pursued by the thought of his own mad folly and low lust and reckless forsaking of God that had brought all this upon him?

Are there none of us who should take Samson's humiliation to heart, none of us who are reckless as he in the use we make of the gifts God has given us? We also were, like him, vowed to God before we had consciousness of our own, and we have received some grace or gift with which to serve Him; but how many barter these gifts for the most contemptible indulgence of the flesh, or for the gratification of a small ambition, or for a little portion of the world's goods!

But, in conclusion, observe how God returned to Samson and gave him back his strength. There is no better instance of the use God can make of the wreck of an ill-spent life. He had ruined himself beyond repair for this life; he could never be the man he was; but in those lonely days in the Philistine prison-house, when his blindness cut him off from converse with outward things, his own humbling, remorseful thoughts were his company, his own past life his only view. He saw the ruinous folly he had been guilty of, saw his betrayal of the trust God had reposed in him, saw that out of the best material for a life of glory that any man of that period had received he had wrought for himself a life of shame and a degrading end. His heart was broken; the strong man was crushed, and had, like the weakest sinner, to cry to God, to seek that last comfort that abides when all others are gone, and that more than makes up for the loss of all others—to seek that light, the light of God's own presence, that restores brightness to the most darkened life, and that does not refuse to shine on that most benighted soul.

Slowly his hair grew, and with it slowly returned his strength, as health comes back slowly to a man that has been shattered by disease or accident. If you have fallen into sin, you must not expect your soul to recover quickly. It is like the growth of hair; you cannot hurry it. Let repentance work its perfect work, thankful that even thus you may get back to God.



Ruth gleaning

We know where the field is, too!

Boaz was a “mighty man of wealth.” This expression is not found in Scripture anywhere else, but you know that Boaz is a picture of the Lord Jesus, our Kinsman. There is no reason why God’s people should live as paupers; everything our “mighty man of wealth” possesses is ours. “*Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich*” (2 Cor. 8:9).

Ruth had a great deal of faith. She said to Naomi, “*Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace*” (v. 2). How did she know that she had any rights to glean in the fields? Because God—under whose wings she had come to trust—had told His people before they entered the land that this was to be the privilege of the poor and the stranger. She took the place of the stranger, believing the Word of God.

Note Deuteronomy 24:19-21, “*When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree... gatherest the grapes...*”

One of the blessed principles laid down in the Old Testament and taught in the New is that we should be kind to the stranger, the fatherless and widow. The claim they have on us is not their relationship to us but the opposite; it is their very helplessness that calls for our help.

How may we apply this beautiful

passage about gleaning? You know what corn was for—to be made into bread. And you know what bread was for—to give strength for living. Then the olive is a symbol of peace and its oil speaks of the ministry of the Spirit. The grape typified joy. So by these three God teaches us that we are to share His strength and peace and joy with the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

How can we do this? Notice Proverbs 12:25. “*Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop.*” What is going to make it glad? A fifty dollar bill? No! “*But a good word maketh it glad.*” You know this world is full of heavy hearts and drooping souls. And too many Christians seem to think that good words cost a small fortune each, the way we give them away.

Our Lord accomplished more by His words than by His miracles. I do not know how many people He raised from the dead, but there have been millions brought to glory and millions cheered down here by the loving words of the Lord Jesus. He wants us to be imitators of Him. We, too, can give these encouraging words and be none the poorer for it.

Read also Colossians 3:17. Only recently this struck me with such force: “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of*

the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.” Has it occurred to you that is a very strange way of putting it, “*whatsoever ye do in word or deed*”? As if God said, “Every good word you speak for Me is a good work.”

If you want to be glad, try to make others glad. Let us try to give them strength and peace and joy. The miserable man is the one who lives for self; the happiest man forgets self, and lives for others.

Now in Ruth 2:4 it says: “*And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, ‘The Lord be with you.’ And they answered him, ‘The Lord bless thee.’*” These servants might not always have spoken kindly to one another. But when the master came, he spoke kindly to them. He reminded them of the



Lord's presence with them and his servants responded with a reminder of the Lord's provision. The Master still sets such an example.

Boaz then asks his foreman, "*Whose damsel is this?*" The chief reaper replied, "That is Ruth, the Moabitess. She has come with Naomi from Moab. She is very poor. Naomi has nothing for her, so she has come to glean." So Boaz turned to her, and said (v. 8): "*Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.*" In effect, he said, "All the fields around you belong to me; I have plenty to satisfy you."

The Lord Jesus tells His people, "*Love not the world.*" Do not go to glean in another field. Do not look for anything to satisfy you outside of My fields. Do you know why there is so much sorrow in the Church, so many sad hearts among God's people, so much coldness and deadness? We do not think He has enough to satisfy us. We have a craving for something else. As a result sorrow and sadness have come over our souls.

God requires that we should come right out, and be separate. "*Be ye holy, for I am holy.*" Let us get the question settled. If we are Christians, let us be out and out for Christ. Let us be what we are. Oh, my brother, my sister, listen to this advice: "*Go not to glean in another field.*" There is nothing but hay and stubble there. But there is a bountiful harvest for you in the Master's fields. Stay and glean. He will give you plenty.

The next advice that Boaz gives to Ruth is this: "*When thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes...? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done....*"

Perhaps you are a worker for the Lord. At times you get fearfully discouraged. You are working away, perhaps, in some little dark street; you start off on Sunday afternoon, and when you get there you find five or six people gathered. You tell them the truth, but they seem indifferent, and the Word does not appear to have any effect. Nobody pats you on the back and says you are doing a good work. So you get discouraged.

Nobody seemed to notice Ruth, either, but Boaz said, "*It hath fully been showed me....*" I would rather the Lord took knowledge of my work than anyone else. He will not forget those dreary days when you went to teach those people about His beloved Son. Take courage. You may have to go through the rain and the mud; but there never was an angel in heaven yet who had the privilege of catching a cough or cold for Jesus.


Boaz knew everything, and if she was patient, he would bring her into the fulness of his blessing. "*The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee....*"

Boaz says, "*At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread...and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left*" (Ruth 2:14). She did what he told her, and that was why she was so blessed. So with us. We ought to do what He tells us. He will give us strength for obedience, and blessing will follow.

Then he told the servants, "*Let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her....*" If it had not been for the master, she would never have had anything but single ears of barley. But as soon as she obeyed him, he told the servants to let fall "*handfuls of purpose*" for her, "*and reproach her not.*" Do not tell her she is getting too much, that her pile is accumulating too fast.

When we get up yonder, and look back on the past, we will see how many "*handfuls of purpose*" have been dropped for us, too. You remember that day you went out with a sad heart. You had not gotten very far before you met a friend, "by accident" of course, who spoke so lovingly to you, and cheered you on your way. It was such a happy accident you turned down that street. No, no; your friend came with a handful of blessing. There was no such thing as chance about it. All the way we find our path strewn with handfuls dropped on purpose.

"*So she gleaned in the field until even.*" She kept at it hour after hour, all the day long. Then just look at what she had gleaned. More than she could carry! So she "*beat out that she had gleaned....*" She carried away—the straw? No, she did not; but that is what we do sometimes. We attend a meeting, and when we go away we leave the corn behind and carry away only the straw. "Dear me! Never heard anything like that before." "Do you agree with what he said?" That is carrying away the straw instead of the wheat. Many sermons, like many fields, have more straw than wheat in them. Beat it out. Leave the straw and carry home the wheat. I never heard anyone who spoke about the Master who did not give me some wheat to carry away.

May the Lord help us to go and find some poor Ruth for whom we may drop some "*handfuls of purpose*" for the Saviour's sake. Or perhaps we may find some Naomi who awaits our knock at the door to share what we have received at the generous hand of our mighty Man of wealth, our Kinsman-Redeemer. "*Now He that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God*" (2 Cor. 9:10-11). 

Ruth redeemed

What an eloquent “Moreover”! “Moreover I want her to be my wife.”

Nothing but Christ and a definite personal link with Him will avail for us in our need.

We have to learn under divine teaching the utter inadequacy of the legal principle, and this is brought out typically in Ruth chapter 4. Man has the knowledge of good and evil, and conscience applies this to responsibility. Every man knows he ought to do what is good, and not to do what is evil. This is represented by the one who had the prior claim in the case of Ruth; the law is nearer to us naturally than Christ. It is true that Gentiles have never been put under the law by God, but obliga-

tion to do what is right is upon all men by the knowledge of good and evil, and by conscience. Many would tell us we have only to use our inward perceptions and keep a good conscience, and we shall be all right. But we have to learn that we have no power. The law, or any kind of obligation you can think of, cannot undertake to meet conditions which are exactly opposite to what they ought to be.

That principle cannot do anything for a dead man. The raising up of the name of the dead involves the power of life in Another on his behalf. Such power is in the true Boaz.

The object of the statute in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, was that the inheritance might be secured to one on whom death had come *“that his name be not blotted out...”*

(DARBY). This was pure grace, acting in regard of one dead; the legal principle could do nothing in such a case. So the nearest kinsman—representing the law, or the legal principle—says, twice over, *“I cannot redeem it.”* He drew off his sandal, as much as to say, I have no standing in such a case as this; I must give place to another.

Everyone has to learn this lesson. The early part of Romans 7 gives the solution of the problem before showing us in detail what the problem is; it is like a boy being given the answer to a sum before he is set to work it out. That is how grace would help us; we are shown that we have become dead to the law by the body of Christ, so that we might be alive to Another, even to the One who has been raised from the dead.

The nearer kinsman could not undertake what was really needed; he could not take up Ruth, nor bring in a seed to inherit when death had come in. I may feel as a Christian that my ways should be this or that, but this does not give power. Power is in Christ. Without Him we can do nothing, but having Him there is sufficiency to achieve everything.

The gate of the city would suggest a definite public witness to what Christ has become to those who love Him. There are no people in the world so much observed as Christians; they are in the *“gate”*; the eyes of the world are fixed on them. Do they see clearly that we have a mighty and wealthy Husband—One who has given us rest from selfishness, worldliness, and earthly-mindedness?

Our Boaz alone has the true right of redemption. He has established a title by purchase; it is an *“acquired possession”* (Eph. 1:14). He holds it by an unquestionable title for He has discharged every claim upon it and made it His own. The precious thoughts of divine love in all their fullness could not be held by any other; in this regard Israel, and the



Gentiles too, are “*the dead*.” If their names are raised up on the inheritance, it must be in virtue of the power of life in Another who acts in grace towards them.

All that God has in love purposed for man is held by Christ in the strength of resurrection, and it becomes the portion of those who, like Ruth, come to Him, and are married to the risen Christ.

And if, like Israel, the saints of the present period have lost the possession and enjoyment of their God-given portion, the way is open for Naomis and Ruths to return, and to find such a Kinsman who delights to secure for them all the wealth that they have left.

This book belongs to the time of the judges; that is, it stands in relation to a time of failure and departure. It shows how love will reach Christ and find Him sufficient for everything—sufficient to secure the enjoyment of the inheritance for us, sufficient to answer perfectly every affectionate desire for what is of God, sufficient, by giving us the Spirit, to constitute us suitable heirs. In Romans 8 we see that saints are suitable to inherit; they are sons and children, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Without heirs the inheritance would lapse; God’s thought would be invalidated. This could never be

The effect of reaching Christ as the true Boaz, and being married to Him, is that a seed is secured which is capable of enjoying the inheritance. A son is born (4:13) who has the right of redemption, for the woman said, “*Blessed be Jehovah who hath not left thee this day without one that has the right of redemption, and may his name be famous in Israel*” (v. 14 DARBY). This refers to Obed, whose name means “servant” or “worshipper.” The right of redemption becomes practically valid in the saints as they bring forth fruit to God in service and worship. Not only are things secured on God’s side in Christ, but He brings about conditions on our side that are suitable in heirs. This is the result of the work of God in His saints, brought out in Romans 8.


The general state of things today is evidence that the people of God are in the fields of Moab rather than in Bethlehem. Death has come in, for the Lord says to Protestantism, “*Thou hast a name that thou livest, and*

art dead” (Rev. 3:1). But Christ is great enough to bring in life where death has been. If God has assigned a portion to His saints, He is glorified in their being in possession of it, and enjoying it, and bringing forth its fruits. He is not glorified by there being famine in the land, and by His people being in Moab. Such a state of things is to say publicly that Moab is a better place than Canaan. When Christians turn to the world and to earthly things, they say publicly that these things are better than what God give. I am sure that none of us would like to continue to give such a testimony as that.

But through the rich grace of our God there is opportunity for any who are in such a condition to acknowledge it, as Naomi did. And if hearts are attracted to the blessing of God as Ruth’s was, the result will be that Christ will be reached as the Mighty Man of wealth. He will be known as the source of everything, the Restorer of all that was in God’s original thought for His people. And as saints abide in Him they become capable of taking up the inheritance. The reason why many fail to enjoy the inheritance is that they have never realized that

they are not enjoying it; they lack the deep exercises seen in Naomi. Their spiritual standard is low; they believe that their sins are forgiven, and that they will go to heaven when they die or when the Lord comes, but they have very little conception that there is a vast wealth of spiritual blessing which they might be enjoying now.

On the other hand, how often is there a lack of affectionate interest in God’s things such as was seen in Ruth. She had never personally been in the land, so that she could not have the sense of having departed from it. Yet under the influence of Naomi her affections went out to what was of God. If this is so with us, it will lead to reaching Him who can fully secure us the blessedness of the inheritance.

Then Obed begets Jesse—“*Jah exists*”; we are brought into the changeless certainty of all the things which are of God. And it only remains that Christ shall come as the true David to publicly introduce the rights of God as King, and to give the heirs of promise their full place in the inheritance in glory. 

♥ His, by reason ♥
♥ of creation, ♥
♥ His, who paid the ♥
♥ price for me, ♥
♥ His, through the ♥
♥ life-giving Spirit, ♥
♥ His, because I ♥
♥ want to be. ♥

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Boaz and Ruth

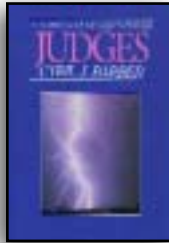
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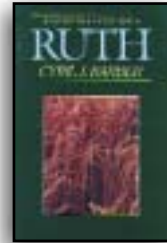
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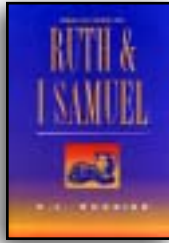
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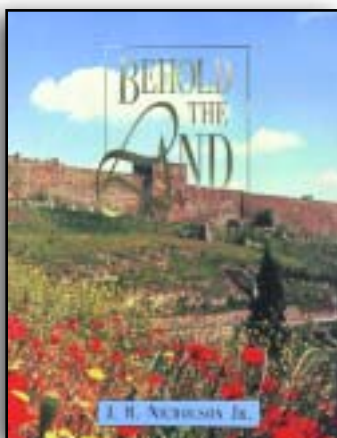
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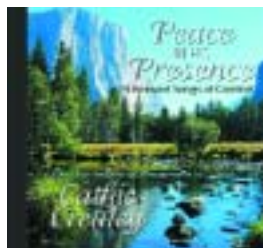
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HE DOES IT ON PURPOSE!

The servants dropped the handfuls on purpose. All the Lord's servants should know how to do this. There should be a purpose in our ministry: we should seek to know the special needs of our hearers, and be able to drop food "on purpose." We should also practice dropping precious truths for even the lowliest believer to pick up, instead of talking over people's heads, as is so often the case.

Boaz' kindness led to a richer harvest for Ruth. So our fruitfulness depends on His blessing upon us. Not merely on our labor, though that is of prime importance, but with Paul we should be able to say: "*His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I*

labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10).

Ruth gathered that day an ephah of barley; ten times as much as the children of Israel gathered manna for each day (Ex. 16:16, 36). She truly had been richly blessed and rewarded. But she worked all day, and worked hard. Gleaning means stooping, a humbling and tiring job. So Christian growth and usefulness come only through hard work. Sometimes folks tell me, after a certain message, how much they enjoyed it. And I tell them occasionally: "You ought to; it took me forty years of study and meditation to get it together." —AUGUST VAN RYN