



QUARTERLY | 3:20

# Precious Things

**Missionary**

Focus –

**Chris & Linda Killen**



**Retired  
Minister**  
Interview –  
**Wesley  
McDowell**



**Precious  
Promises –**  
**Andrew  
Foster**



# Editorial

Dear Reader,

**W**elcome to this edition of Let The Bible Speak Magazine. Once again we go out as an online issue because of the difficulties of distribution at this time. Please do take the time to forward the magazine via email and to advertise it via social media. What a wonderful opportunity to share biblical teaching and edifying articles!

Thus far, 2020 has been a year when our world has learned that change is inevitable. It can come suddenly and destructively while at the same time being unwanted and unwelcome. Best-made plans have had to be cancelled, postponed, or changed because of circumstances beyond our control that have brought our plans to nothing.

Even before the pandemic, we experienced this in varying measures. We've all had to deal with sickness, bereavement, and changes to the lifestyle we have known. But perhaps this year especially has shown to this generation that there is very little that we can depend upon in this life.

Yet, for the believer, in the midst of a world of

constant change there is One who brings a message of great comfort, hope, and peace by declaring, "I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). This truth reminds us of the One who is sovereign, just, and faithful. He is the One upon whom we can always depend. He cannot fail nor will He forsake His people.

We are also reminded in Hebrews 13:8 that our eternal Saviour is revealed to be "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." At the time of this writing some of the teachers and leaders of the Hebrew believers had died, and some were coming to the end of their lives. But these believers were reminded that the Lord would not change and would not leave them. When we read this chapter in Hebrews we find that this doctrine should cause us to live by certain principles:

- We are to be content (v. 5).
- We are not to fear (v. 6).
- We are to be steadfast in our faith, established by grace (v. 9).
- We are to be in constant remembrance of the work of our Saviour as our High Priest (vv. 10–13).
- We are not to regard this world as our home (v. 14).

What great principles to put into practice today. In a world of constant change, God's Word shows us how to live well, in a manner that will bring Him glory. Prayerfully consider these truths and ask the Lord to give us grace to live in such a way.

*When the world around me changes  
And the things I used to know  
All are gone and I'm left standing  
In the midst of shock and woe,*

*Then to God my prayer will rally,  
Made by faith in Jesus' name,  
Praising Him for truth and comfort;  
He is God and cannot change.*

*Here I stand on this foundation,  
Whether found in joy or pain;  
I am trusting in His wisdom;  
He is God and cannot change.*

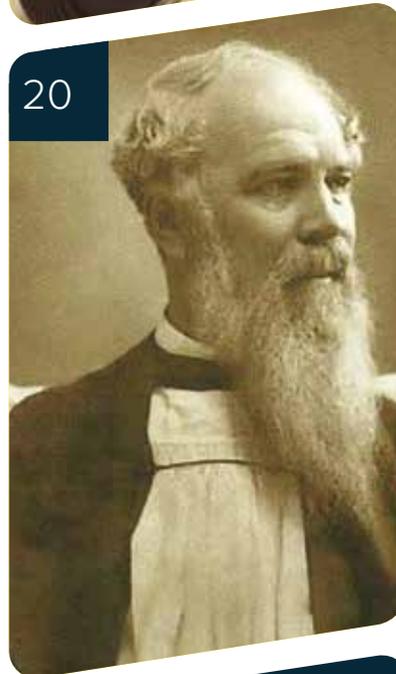


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## Precious Things

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## TV RECORDINGS

Our TV recordings have continued despite the restrictions due to COVID-19. The preaching was done with no congregation present, and we are most grateful to our ministers who came and adapted so well to the unusual circumstances. Items of praise from previous recordings were used in place of “live” congregational singing. We are indebted to all who assisted on the technical side, ensuring that the broadcasts can continue sounding out the message of Christ and Him crucified. Pray that the Lord will use them for His own glory.

### Leslie Curran

*Programme director of LTBS in Northern Ireland and Convener of the LTBS Committee.*



## Missionary Focus – MINISTRY TO THE ADDICTED

For many years it has been my privilege to serve the Lord as a missionary to the addicted under the Mission Board. Seeking to reach those whose lives are bound by stubborn habits and life-controlling addictions is both a challenging and a difficult ministry. One of the verses the Lord used to call me to labour for Him is Revelation 3:8: “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” I am truly thankful to the Lord for the health, strength, and opportunities He has given me to serve Him.

There are many aspects to the work I do. The main focus is to present the message of the gospel: Christ is the answer to addiction!



“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

A lot of my time is taken up with visitation – meeting addicts on a regular basis and encouraging them to address their addiction issues. Providing support for families (especially Christian families – Galatians 6:10) is also an integral part of the work. Two years ago my wife Linda started accompanying me on all the female visits, and she has been a real blessing and help. Providing ongoing support to men who have gone into residential centres, such as New Hope in Dublin, is another facet of the work. In 2018 the Lord opened the door for me to start a street outreach to the homeless in Dublin City Centre, and several men from New Hope go with me each time.

Almost forty community drugs awareness meetings have been held over the past three years, and I am so thankful to the Lord for everything He has done.



It has also been such a wonderful blessing to see the Lord transform ruined, wasted lives. There is hope for the hopeless!

Please pray that the Lord will give us wisdom as we endeavour to reach the addicted for Christ.



**Chris & Linda Killen**  
*serve the Lord with the Ministry to the Addicted in Northern Ireland.*

# Precious Faith



**T**here are many items considered valuable in this world. For example, in 2019 a Philippe Henry watch was sold for £18 million, and in 2018 a Ferrari 250 GTO was sold for £52 million.

In 2 Peter 1:1 we are told about those who have obtained “precious faith”. I want to look at this faith.

## **Faith is precious because of its necessity.**

Oxygen, food, and heat are not expensive to buy, but they are extremely valuable, because without oxygen to breathe, food to eat, and heat to keep warm a person cannot live temporally on this earth! Similarly, a person cannot live eternally without faith!

In Romans 3:28 you and I are told that “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”. To be “justified” is to be declared perfect in the sight of God – “just as if I had” never sinned and “just as if I had” done everything perfect – and an heir of God

through Jesus Christ in time and eternity. But how is one justified? Is it by your works or goodness? No. It is by faith and faith alone!

## **Faith is also precious because of its simplicity.**

Unlike quantum physics and actuarial science, which are difficult to grasp and understand, faith is so simple that it can be understood and possessed by someone as

**... faith is so simple that it can be understood and possessed by someone as young as three or as old as ninety-three!**

young as three or as old as ninety-three!

In Hebrews 11:1 you and I are told that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things

not seen.” To put this simply, faith is believing God. It is believing all that God has said in His Word to be true and sure even if you have not yet seen it. Such simplicity makes faith precious because it is not only for some elite academic geniuses, but –

A little child of seven,  
Or even three or four,  
May enter into heaven  
Through Christ, the open  
Door.

For when the heart believeth  
On Christ, the Son of God,  
'Tis then the soul receiveth  
Salvation through His  
blood.

Do you not merely believe in God, but do you believe God? Do you believe that while “all have sinned,” and “the wages of sin is death”, yet “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”? Do you believe God when He says, “I am God, and there is none else”,

and “[W]hosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; Isaiah 45:22; Romans 10:13)?

## **Faith is precious because of its productivity.**

Faith produces faithfulness! After being told in Hebrews 11:1–3 what faith is, in verses 4–40 we are given examples of those who had faith, and the result of their faith every time was faithfulness: whether it was obeying God, walking with God, trusting God, following God, giving all for God, or living for God. Every time, faith produced faithfulness!

## **Faith is precious because of its humility.**

Just as it is easy for athletes to become proud of their fitness, so it is easy for the children of God to become proud of their faith in God. This ought not to be. After all, no one is saved because he believes in Christ. One is saved because of Christ through faith (2 Peter 1:1).

Furthermore, Ephesians 2:8–9 tell us that faith is “the gift of God: [n]ot of works, lest any man should boast”, and Romans 12:3 tells us that it is God Himself who “hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

Faith ought to humble you and me in our pride, and faith ought to humble you and me to prayer, for if faith is a

gift of God then no parent, friend, evangelist, or minister can pass faith on to those we love.

Faith! – 'tis a precious grace,  
Where'er it is bestowed!  
It boasts of a celestial birth,  
And is the gift of God!

## **Faith is precious because of its beauty.**

It is possible to despise small, weak faith. But is this right? In Genesis 1 the LORD created strong elephants, lions, and dinosaurs as well as large planets, stars, and galaxies. But the LORD also created small bumblebees and butterflies as well as weak flowers, reeds, and leaves. Over all these we are told, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Do not despise small faith. It is a creation of God, and “behold, it is very good.” After all, a small faith placed in a strong Saviour is mighty to the removing of mountains (Matthew 17:20)!

## **Faith is precious because of its possibility.**

If a small faith can remove mountains and see the beauty of Christ, how much can be accomplished and seen through a larger faith?

## **Faith is precious because of its unity.**

While many things can divide children of God, such as certain backgrounds and beliefs on subjects like the end times and baptism, yet there is but “[o]ne Lord, one faith” (Ephesians 4:5).

Dear reader, do you have faith? Do you believe God?

If so, be thankful! You have something more precious than a £18 million watch or a £52 million Ferrari!

Also, be humble! You and I are what we are by the grace of God!

Finally, be prayerful! Pray like the apostles, “Lord, [i]ncrease our faith” (Luke 17:5), and rescue those without faith. How does God increase and bring faith? He does so through His Word (Romans 10:17) as the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22) shows the faithfulness of God in Christ (1 Peter 4:19; 2 Corinthians 3:8).



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# Precious Promises

## 2 Peter 1:4



The promises of God play an important role in the development of the Christian's spiritual life. Peter refers to them here in the context of desiring these saints to experience a multiplication of grace and peace in their lives, even in the face of the suffering and hardship he speaks of throughout the epistle. The promises of God, revealed in His word, are therefore a wonderful means of grace and edification to God's people, enabling them to overcome adversity and trial. As we, by faith, obtain the promises (Hebrews 11:33), we may grow into an experience of multiplied grace and spiritual peace. Peter is obviously speaking of obtaining a personal experience of what God has promised to His people in Scripture. It is not simply that we take comfort from knowing the blessed words of promise which God gives, but that we actually come to experience the substance of those promises worked out in our lives. That experience is invariably the result of a

simple, believing obedience of the commands of God that are linked to His promises. As we do so, we will prove them to be genuinely great and precious.

***The promises of God are only great and precious to those who have escaped from the corruption of the world.***

The promises of God are only great and precious to those who have escaped from the corruption of the world. The words evidently indicate a recognition of the value of what God has promised to do for His people. His promises are only precious to those who have been delivered from the moral corruption of the world. The words precious and corruption express opposite ideas. Corruption entails that which

is decaying, rotten, and perishing. There is nothing precious in corruption. A great spiritual change is in view here. The destructive power of sin at work in the world causes sinners to devalue and dismiss what God sets before them in the promises of His Word. This is especially the case with the promises of the gospel. The spiritually corrupt place no value on what God, in grace, promises to do for those who seek Him through Christ. The view of the promised action of God as exceeding great and precious is evidently the thinking of the new creature. A new mind, a new set of values is at work here! Only when their thinking is renewed do sinners reckon the promises of the gospel to be as the pearl of greatest price, worth selling all to obtain it. There is an ongoing lesson here for the Christian too. The less our thinking is contaminated by the pollution of the world, the more we will prize, and so the more earnestly we will strive to obtain, what God has promised to do for His

people. How sad it is that so often God's people allow themselves to be robbed of these great and precious things by allowing the world and its ways to influence their thinking.

These promises that Peter has in view are great and precious because they are the gift of divine power and grace (2 Peter 1:3). The promises of God, as His gift, are not empty words! What they proclaim is freely and fully backed by the power of the omnipotent God. Often human promises go too far and so have to be abandoned as impossible to fulfill, but this is never the case with the promises God makes. He does not speak of doing something for His people and then have to revise or scale back His words. We need never fear the failure of a single promise of God. Like Paul we can say, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25). Paul had this confidence because he recognized the power of God to do just what He had said. Despite the raging storm and the fact that the ship was being beaten to pieces, the promise of God was unassailable. The promises of God are such that we can say that we are "confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of

***The great end of all these promises, as they are applied in divine power to the redeemed, is simply to make us like Himself.***

Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19)

God's promises are great and precious because of their glorious substance. His promises revealed in Scripture deal with many different matters, comprehensively addressing all things necessary to spiritual life and godly living (2 Peter 1:3). God has blessed words of promise that relate to every circumstance and condition of life. Yet, clearly, they all unite in the single, common purpose that Peter speaks of. That purpose is seen to be that God's people be partakers of the divine nature. The great end of all these promises, as they are applied in divine power to the redeemed, is simply to make us like Himself. That likeness begins in regeneration and develops

through our justification and sanctification, to our ultimate glorification, in which "we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). He effects all this through Christ. It is in Him alone that all the promises of God are yea and in Him Amen (2 Corinthians 1:20). That is, on account of His redeeming work, the promises God makes never need revision, are never reversed, and are certain to be fulfilled.

How precious are these truths to the Christian! How great is the miracle of grace effected by God, for Jesus' sake, in changing the corrupt worldling into one bearing the image of God Himself. May God help us to pursue diligently the experience of all that He has promised to work in us by His grace through Christ.



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# Precious Blood



**T**here are many things in this life that are precious to the child of God. Friends and family are precious to us. Our homes and comforts are precious. Our church is precious to us, as are those with whom we worship. The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs by which we lift our voices in adoration to the Son of God are uniquely precious. However, in all of Christendom there is nothing – whether it be in this life, or in the life to come – as precious and dear to the believer as the spotless, crimson blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Sadly, in our day, the preaching of the blood of Christ leaves a bitter taste in the mouths of many.**

Sadly, in our day, the preaching of the blood of Christ leaves a bitter taste

in the mouths of many. The doctrine of Christ's blood, which is the redemptive scarlet thread, central and key to all Scripture, is regrettably given a back seat in our generation's pulpits. Men will preach about anything and everything, so long as it isn't the blood. It's a message that's not viewed as "PC", or "seeker friendly". Men would seek to blot out and redact anything to do with the precious blood. However, when you blot out the blood, you blot out the Bible. In a day which recoils at the veracity and virtue of the blood of our Saviour, let the true believer hold an ever-tightening grip on the most precious thing the Lord ever, in grace, gave us – His impeccable, cleansing blood!

As Peter writes his first epistle, he writes with a twofold purpose: to give cheer, and to give charge. In chapter 1 we see this most clearly demonstrated. In verses 3–12, Peter is giving cheer, hope, and comfort to the anxious and fearful saints. However, when he

comes to verse 13, there's a dramatic tonal shift. He goes from the seat of the succourer to the stance of the sergeant. "Gird up", he imperatively commands, seeking to marry together the Christian's comfort to the Christian's commission. However, as Paul instructs the church how to behave in a darkened world, he pens a most blessed and treasured revelation in verses 18–19:

*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; [b]ut with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

The Oxford Dictionary defines the word "precious" as something most "rare" and of "incalculable worth". The Oxford dictionary goes on to say that something can be deemed "precious" if it is "loved and valued very much". Precious, then, is a fitting adjective to employ when speaking of the

Saviour's atoning, redeeming blood!

His blood was "rare", for it was none other than the blood of the Divine! His was not a mere man's blood, common and unavailing, but it was the blood of God Himself (Acts 20:28). Man's blood is the blood of a tainted and depraved creature; however, Christ's blood was precious, unique, and most rare. The blood of One without blemish and spot, says Peter. The blood of One who did no sin, nor knew no sin. The blood of One who was not born into the same sinfully unrighteous position as the sons of Adam, but One who was perfectly righteous. It will be the eternal wonder and mystery of eternity, why such a holy God would shed His blood for such unholy wretches as we are.

His blood is of "incalculable worth". The pound sterling rises and falls. The US dollar, the yen, and the euro too! All currencies on earth shall peak and plummet. The hymn writer said it best when he penned the words, "The things of earth will dim and lose their value". "Silver and gold" (1 Peter 1:18) are

**Christ's blood is precious, for it is the only means of saving grace!**

corruptible things, meaning that they eventually perish, decay, and diminish. The blood of Christ, however, is eternally precious – for it is imperishable, and intrinsically valuable.

Christ's blood is of incalculable worth to God, for it alone satisfied His justice. Christ's blood fully atoned for, and appeased, the wrath of God due to our sin (Romans 3:25). Much like the angel of death in Egypt, God's judgment on sin is turned away by blood! It is not only precious to God, but it is unfathomably precious to man. Without the precious blood there is no forgiveness, and by extension, there is no hope (Hebrews 9:22). However, when Christ's blood is applied to the sinner, it has the most desirable effects. Christ's blood justifies, expiates, pardons, covers, and purges sinners from all sin (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Revelation 1:5). Indeed, we find in Psalm 49:8 that "the redemption of their soul is precious". Praise God, a precious Saviour died a precious death, and shed His precious blood, that He may provide a precious redemption for a people most un-precious and sinful. Christ's blood is precious, for it is the only means of saving grace!

Finally, to close with a charge, the precious blood must be loved and valued very much. Christ's blood is objectively precious, but,

**Without the precious blood there is no forgiveness, and by extension, there is no hope.**

reader, is it subjectively precious to you? Is each day filled with rapturous thoughts of what it truly is to be bought by blood? Are your fears and anxieties plunged into and extinguished by that scarlet flood? It was St. Augustine who said, "Christ is not valued at all, unless He is valued above all". Dear Christian, above any worldly ambition, career, hobby, relationship, or trinket of time, let the precious blood of Christ be your everything. Love it, meditate upon it, praise God for it, value it, and esteem it as your greatest treasure. Praise God, Christ's precious blood was shed for you!



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# Precious Saviour



In 1 Peter 2:7 we read, “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious”.

What beautiful, soul-stirring words! Surely no greater summary can be written of the Christian’s feelings concerning our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is precious! Just to think of Christ ought to cause our hearts to become overwhelmed with love, joy, and happiness. There is no one quite like the Lord Jesus. As the hymn writer puts it:

I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold;  
I’d rather be His than have riches untold;  
I’d rather have Jesus than houses or lands;  
I’d rather be led by His nail-pierced hand

Than to be the king of a vast domain  
Or be held in sin’s dread sway;  
I’d rather have Jesus than anything  
This world affords today.

But why would the Christian feel this way? Why at the

## **The Lord Jesus Christ was, still is, and always will be God Himself.**

name of Jesus Christ ought our hearts skip a beat? Why are we so keen to catch a glimpse of the altogether lovely One? I submit to you that it is because He is precious.

### **1. He is precious because of who He is.**

The Lord Jesus Christ was, still is, and always will be God Himself. As we learn in the twenty-first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. 21. Who is the Redeemer of God’s elect?

A. *The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever.*

Jesus Christ is God; Jesus Christ is man; He is the God-man. What a remarkable truth! 1 Timothy 3:16 tells us that “God was manifest in the flesh”. Then in John 10:30 we find the Lord Jesus saying, “I and my Father are one.” We find He could say such things because Philippians 2:6 states, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God”.

The word “precious” as an adjective means “of great value; not to be wasted or treated carelessly”. As a noun it can be defined as “a term of address for a beloved person”. Oh, how precious He is to us when we remember who He is.

### **2. He is precious because of what He has done.**

Now as we approach this point – and we have discovered who Christ is – we also need to establish who we are. We are all sinners. In Romans 3:23 we read, “For all have sinned, and come short of the

glory of God”. It is because of our sin that the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son, came down from the glories of heaven to this wicked world.

Jesus Christ became the God-man and suffered the humiliation of condescension for us. He then willingly fulfilled the law of God that we had so wilfully rebelled against. He did it for us. He put His righteousness to our account, and our sin was placed on His. He took our place. He was obedient when we were not. He suffered the Father’s wrath when we could not. He performed a wonderful atoning work upon Calvary’s hill so that our sins could be paid for, and the wrath of God was against us no more! Hallelujah, what a Saviour! Surely, He is precious because of all He has done on our behalf.

### **3. He is precious because of what He is going to do.**

In the Free Presbyterian church we hold an open position on eschatology and the study of future things, but one doctrine we all agree on is that CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN! Does that not thrill your soul, Christian? In 1 Peter 4:13 we read, “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” Then in

Revelation 1:7 we discover, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him”. And in Titus 2:13 we are exhorted to be “[l]ooking

## **He put His righteousness to our account, and our sin was placed on His.**

for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”.

And whichever happens first – our promotion unto glory or Christ’s coming again – does it not make you realise, believer, that He is precious? What a wonder it is to know that one day we’ll see Jesus. The hymn writer puts it so eloquently:

What a day that will be,  
When my Jesus I shall see,  
And I look upon His face,  
The One who saved me by His grace;  
When He takes me by the hand,  
And leads me through the Promised Land,  
What a day, glorious day that will be.

Nonetheless, as we consider the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is precious, we must also reflect upon the fact that the title of this article is “Precious Saviour”. The

definition of Saviour is “one who saves someone or something from danger or difficulty”.

In conclusion I ask you, is the Lord Jesus Christ your Saviour yet? Only then will you truly understand the words of 1 Peter 2:7: “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious”.

I encourage you today, don’t delay. Come to Christ. Realise that He is precious! “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

## **What a wonder it is to know that one day we’ll see Jesus.**



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Free Presbyterian Church,  
Northern Ireland.

# Precious Death



## Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

### Psalm 116:15

Often when confronted with the death of a friend or loved one who has died in faith in Christ, we have sought to comfort one another with various words of encouragement:

“They are with the Saviour now, beholding His face.”  
 “They are now free from the sorrows and sicknesses that troubled them.”  
 “They wouldn’t come back again even if they could.”

We miss them. Their absence will be keenly felt, and tears will flow unbidden upon their remembrance, yet how comforting it is to know that we “sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). As comforting as friends and family are at these difficult times, our greatest consolation is found in this wonderful little verse,

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15).

What makes the death of the believer precious? Let me offer some suggestions.

**The death of a believer is precious in God’s sight because God does not see things the way that we do** (1 Samuel 16:7). We speak of death as being a loss, but God knows that for the saint death is not loss but a gain (Philippians 1:21). For the believer death is not the end of life, but the beginning. We lose an old, weak, mortal body and gain a new, immortal, eternally strong body. We lose sin and gain perfect holiness. We lose ignorance and gain perfect knowledge. We lose shame and gain eternal glory. We leave this world of sin and enter the heavenly realm of perfect righteousness. We leave this world of sorrow to enter eternal bliss in the presence of the Saviour.

I like what Richard Baxter said on his deathbed. A

friend came into the room where that great old saint was dying, walked right up to the bed, and said, “Brother Baxter, how are you?” The old man looked up at him and said, “I’m almost well, thank you.”

To die is gain for the believer. To die is to be present with the Lord. Paul said that to die is “to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23).

**The death of the saint is precious in God’s sight because we are the Father’s gift to the Son.** We have been elected by the Father, from eternity past, and entrusted to the Son in the covenant of grace (Ephesians 1:11, 12).

As our Saviour, the Lord Jesus receives all that the Father has given Him, losing none of them, but promises to them everlasting life and a place in the Father’s house (John 6:37–40; 14:1–6; 17:24).

**The death of the saint is precious to the Lord because the blood that**

**redeemed us is precious to Him.** We belong to God because the purchase price of our redemption was paid in full by the death of His dear Son. We have been reconciled by precious blood. The Lord Jesus prayed, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

It was for this purpose the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world. He came to redeem His sheep. He said, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Because He laid down His life for us, we have been redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19). The Lord has invested too much in our redemption for us to be anything less than precious to Him.

**The death of the saint is precious in the sight of the Lord because the saint is precious to Him.** He has done wonderful things for us in election, redemption, justification, regeneration, and sanctification. He is doing wonderful things for us in preservation and providence. Yet our God has wonderful things in store for us which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no

mind has conceived. He has wonderful things yet to show us (1 Corinthians 13:10–13). He has wonderful things yet to give us (John 14:1–3). He has wonderful things yet to do with us (Ephesians 2:7).

This precious promise applies equally to all believers. It is an unlimited, unqualified, unconditional statement of truth with regard to all God’s saints. “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”

**The Lord has invested too much in our redemption for us to be anything less than precious to Him.**

It matters not who the saint is. We can understand how the death of a martyr like Stephen would be precious in God’s sight, yet his death was no more precious than that of the most obscure saint. All believers have the same attending angels to carry them into paradise, the same Saviour awaiting their arrival in heaven, and the same glorious inheritance with Christ (Romans 8:17).

It matters not when the believer dies. We talk of untimely deaths, of accidents, and of lives ending prematurely, but there are no untimely deaths. Every

believer’s life is a completed, fulfilled plan. God takes His saints when it pleases Him, at the time He has appointed.

It matters not where the believer dies. It may be in a lonely hospital room. It may be on a busy highway. It may be upon a terrible battlefield. It may be in his own bed. That does not matter: “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”

No matter how or when, or under what circumstances a believer dies, they die by God’s appointment and by God’s hand, and their death is precious in God’s sight.

Ultimately, the death of the saint is precious, for that is their day of seeing Jesus face to face.



**Ralph Hall**  
 is minister of Kingston  
 Free Presbyterian Church,  
 Tasmania, Australia.



## Retired Minister Interview

### “Can you share how you came to know the Lord as your personal Saviour?”

As well as pursuing sinful practices, I dabbled a bit in spiritism. I remember my father taking me to great open-air gospel meetings at Customs House Square in Belfast. In my place of employment a Christian worked with me for a while. Campbell was faithful in telling me of Christ. One beautiful summer's day, 5 June 1967, I went in to work. I was troubled and asked Chrissie, a lady who worked there, if I could speak to her. She came to me at tea break, and I said to her that I would like to be saved. Her husband Adam came to bring her home, I got into their car, and Adam led me to the Lord. Sitting in a car outside work, between the Falls and Shankill Roads, I got saved.

### “How did you come in contact with the Free Presbyterian Church?”

Being brought up a

Protestant, I had a great admiration for Dr Paisley. I remember watching the famous Oxford debate in a shop window. Dr Paisley was fantastic. In my first year as a Christian I went to a lovely mission hall called the Branagh. Whilst the people were really good there, I felt that I needed a settled ministry and started going to Dr Paisley's church. What powerful meetings there were, and I got involved in various aspects of ministry there.

### “How were you called to the ministry?”

Being involved in the youth fellowship with Trevor Baxter as its leader and also the weekly outreach (Rev. Wesley

***Sitting in a car outside work, between the Falls and Shankill Roads, I got saved.***

Graham and his wife were there as well) and the Martyrs Memorial Male Witness, I had a deepening desire to serve the Lord more. Simpson Gibson, a member of our Newtownards church, took me under his wing for a while, and I went to various meetings with him. I started preparing for our theological hall, and whilst doing so I felt called to go to the Isle of Man. I spent a year there, doing personal evangelism, looking after a little church for six months, and continuing to prepare for our theological hall. I returned in 1974 and did our theological hall studies until 1978.

### “Outline some of the encouragements you enjoyed during your pastoral ministry.”

Tuesday mornings in training were great. Our men recounted to the rest of us what happened in their churches over the weekend. There was hardly a Tuesday that went by without some great encouragement. I



Bible College Students - Wesley McDowell is at back left

served the Lord in our Mulvin and Limavady churches. I was greatly encouraged working with men like Revs. Elliott and McCrea in gospel missions. Sam Houston and Joe Peden and James McCosh were regulars at these special meetings and missions. What great days they were! During my Limavady years I was involved in prison chaplaincy and witnessed a notable conversion, in HMP Magilligan, of a man called Bobby Simpson. What a story I could tell here if I had space. Bobby was buried less than a hundred yards behind the Limavady Free Presbyterian manse. I have stood at the back door and thanked God for allowing me a part in his conversion. What a story behind it, but Bobby was now in heaven rejoicing in Christ with all the saints. If I had done nothing else, I was thrilled to be involved in Bobby's marvellous conversion. As a reminder, his grave was right at my back door. What a story I could tell if I had more space. Seeing souls saved is what it's all about.

### “Can you share any humorous moments from that time?”

In the minor hall in Martyrs, we had our lectures. There is a bust of George Whitefield in preaching mode. A cap was put on his head. Our lecturer came in and walked right past it without noticing the cap. Some way through his lecture he noticed it and came to an abrupt stop. “Who did it?” he asked. Now, there were about thirty-two students. The lecturer went round the students, asking one by one, “Was it you?” until he came to the culprit, who was asked to remove it. I suspect the lecturer could not carry on without being humorously put off.

### “What advice would you give to young men starting out in their pastoral ministry today?”

I had to contend with various legitimate activities which kept me back from full-time service. I always felt the Lord had called me, and I had to be brought to the place where these pursuits had to be given up. Once I did

that, I really began to enjoy things more. Young men and women contemplating full-time service should give themselves fully to their calling, even if it means sacrificing pleasurable and legitimate pursuits.

***I always felt the Lord had called me, and I had to be brought to the place where these pursuits had to be given up.***



**Wesley McDowell**  
is retired from the pastorate, having ministered in Limavady Free Presbyterian Church, Northern Ireland.

# John G. Paton – Missionary to the South Sea Islands



**J**ohn Gibson Paton (better known as John G. Paton) was born on 24 May 1824, near Dumfries in Scotland. The eldest in a family of eleven children, he worked with his father after leaving school at the age of twelve. However, having an appetite to learn, John worked extremely hard at several jobs to finance and further his own education. The biggest spiritual influence in his life came from his father. He was a godly man who constantly prayed that God would save his children and then use them in His service. God heard his prayers, and three of his children grew up to become ministers of the gospel. It was John's father who led him to Christ at a young age.

As a young man John felt called by God to serve as a missionary. The command of Matthew 28:19–20 weighed heavy upon his heart: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

**It was while labouring in Glasgow that John's heart was powerfully stirred about foreign missionary work through an advertisement in his own church.**

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” In his early twenties John determined to prepare himself for the mission field. He went to Glasgow, where he studied at the university and at the Reformed Presbyterian Bible College. He would eventually spend ten years in Glasgow, working as a city missionary, visiting the needy, and engaging in tract distribution.

It was while labouring in

Glasgow that John's heart was powerfully stirred about foreign missionary work through an advertisement in his own church. After much prayer he then offered himself for this position. However, although the secretary of the Heathen Missions Committee cried for joy, not everyone was pleased at his decision. One respected elder exclaimed, “You will be eaten by cannibals!” John responded,

*Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honouring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my Resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer.*

After being ordained by the Reformed Presbyterian Church on 23 March 1858, John G. Paton married Mary

Ann Robson on 2 April 1858. Fourteen days later they set sail for the South Sea Islands. One of their first tasks was to establish a mission station in Tanna, an island west of Australia, which was then home to a savage cannibal people. During this time John wrote,

*On beholding these natives in their paint and nakedness and misery, my heart was as full of horror as of pity. Had I given up my much-beloved work and my dear people in Glasgow, with so many delightful associates, to consecrate my life to these degraded creatures? Was it possible to teach them right and wrong, to Christianize or even to civilize them? But that was only a passing feeling. I soon got as deeply interested in them, and all that tended to advance them, and to lead them to the knowledge of Jesus, as ever I had been in my work in Glasgow.*

On 12 February 1859, John and Mary had a son. However, on 3 March, Mary died of a sudden attack of pneumonia and was followed in death by their son on 20 March. Although brokenhearted, John, for the next four years, continued to labour in Tanna. His life was continually under threat, either from sickness or savages, and he was

**One of their first tasks was to establish a mission station in Tanna, an island west of Australia, which was then home to a savage cannibal people.**

eventually forced to flee the island in 1862.

After returning to Scotland to plead the cause for missions, John married Margaret Whitecross in 1864. Two years after marrying they set out for Aniwa, a small island near Tanna. God gave them favour with the people, and over the next fifteen years the entire island of Aniwa was turned to Christ. Years later John wrote, “I claimed Aniwa for Jesus, and by the grace of God Aniwa now worships at the Saviour's feet.”

As well as bringing the gospel to these unreached people, the Patons also built orphanages, opened schools, ministered to the sick, taught many practical skills, and translated the Bible. Despite great success on the mission field, John and Margaret suffered great personal loss. Out of their two daughters and eight sons, one daughter and three sons died at a very

young age. Nevertheless, they laboured on unceasingly to reach the lost for Christ.

On 28 January 1907 John Gibson Paton went to be with the Lord. The labours of this godly missionary remind us of the mighty transforming power of the gospel. As he preached Christ, savages became saints, cannibals became Christians, and satanic witchcraft was replaced with spiritual worship. His own words testify to the tremendous Christ-like love he possessed for perishing souls:

*If God gave me back my life to be lived over again, I would without one quiver of hesitation lay it on the altar to Christ, that He might use it as before in similar ministries of love, especially amongst those who have never yet heard the Name of Jesus.*



**Graham Lucas**  
is minister of Garvagh Free Presbyterian Church, Northern Ireland.

# Notes on John 1:1–5

## by J.C. Ryle (1816–1900)

The Gospel of John, which begins with these verses, is in many respects very unlike the other three Gospels. It contains many things which they omit. It omits many things which they contain. Good reason might easily be shown for this unlikeness. But it is enough to remember that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote under the direct inspiration of God. In the general plan of their respective Gospels, and in the particular details - in everything that they record, and in everything that they do not record - they were all four equally and entirely guided by the Holy Spirit.

### **The things which are peculiar to his Gospel are among the most precious possessions of the Church of Christ.**

The things which are peculiar to his Gospel are among the most precious possessions of the Church of Christ. No one of the four Gospel-writers has given us such full statements about the divinity of Christ, about justification

by faith, about the offices of Christ, about the work of the Holy Spirit, and about the privileges of believers, as we read in the pages of John. On none of these great subjects, undoubtedly, have Matthew, Mark, and Luke been silent. But in John's Gospel, they stand out prominently on the surface.

The five verses now before us contain a statement of matchless sublimity concerning the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. He it is, beyond all question, whom John means, when he speaks of "the Word." No doubt there are heights and depths in that statement which are far beyond man's understanding. And yet there are plain lessons in it, which every Christian would do well to treasure up in his mind.

We learn, firstly, that our Lord Jesus Christ is eternal. John tells us that "in the beginning was the Word." He did not begin to exist when the heavens and the earth were made. Much less did He begin to exist when the Gospel was brought into the world. He had glory with the Father "before the world was." (John 17:5.) He was existing when matter was first created, and before time began. He was "before

all things." (Col. 1:17.) He was from all eternity.

We learn, secondly, that our Lord Jesus Christ is a Person distinct from God the Father, and yet one with Him. John tells us that "the Word was with God." The Father and the Word, though two persons, are joined by an ineffable union. Where God the Father was from all eternity, there also was the Word, even God the Son; their glory equal, their majesty co-eternal, and yet their Godhead one. This is a great mystery! Happy is he who can receive it as a little child, without attempting to explain it.

We learn, thirdly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is very God. John tells us that "the Word was God." He is not merely a created angel, or a being inferior to God the

Father, and invested by Him with power to redeem sinners. He is nothing less than perfect God—equal to the Father as touching His Godhead—God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds.

We learn, fourthly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things. John tells us that "by Him were all things made, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." So far from being a creature of God, as some heretics have falsely asserted, He is the Being who made the worlds and all that they contain. "He commanded and they were created." (Psalm 148:5.)

We learn, lastly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of all spiritual life and light. John tells us, that "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He is the eternal fountain, from which alone the sons of men have ever derived life. Whatever spiritual life and light Adam and Eve possessed before the fall, was from

Christ. Whatever deliverance from sin and spiritual death any child of Adam has ever enjoyed since the fall, whatever light of conscience or understanding any one has obtained, all has flowed from Christ. The vast majority of mankind in every age have refused to know Him, have

### **He is the eternal fountain, from which alone the sons of men have ever derived life.**

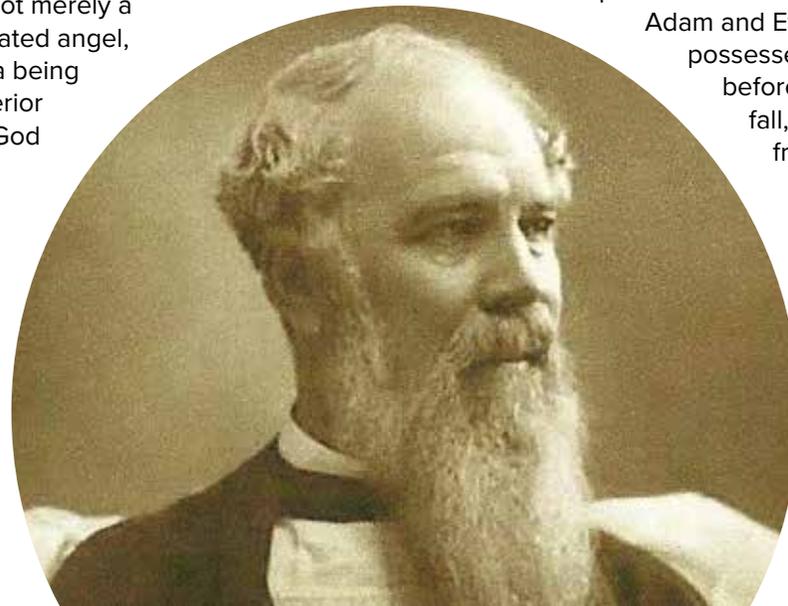
forgotten the fall, and their own need of a Savior. The light has been constantly shining "in darkness." The most have "not comprehended the light." But if any men and women out of the countless millions of mankind have ever had spiritual life and light, they have owed all to Christ.

Such is a brief summary of the leading lessons which these wonderful verses appear to contain. There is much in them, without controversy, which is above our reason but there is nothing contrary to it. There is much that we cannot explain, and must be content humbly to believe. Let us however never forget that there are plain PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES flowing

from the passage, which we can never grasp too firmly, or know too well.

Would we know, for one thing, the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Let us often read these first five verses of John's Gospel. Let us mark what kind of Being the Redeemer of mankind must needs be, in order to provide eternal redemption for sinners. If no one less than the Eternal God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, could take away the sin of the world, sin must be a far more abominable thing in the sight of God than most men suppose. The right measure of sin's sinfulness is the dignity of Him who came into the world to save sinners. If Christ is so great, then sin must indeed be sinful!

Would we know, for another thing, the strength of a true Christian's foundation for hope? Let us often read these first five verses of John's Gospel. Let us mark that the Savior in whom the believer is bid to trust is nothing less than the Eternal God, One able to save to the uttermost all that come to the Father by Him. He that was "with God," and "was God," is also "Emmanuel, God with us." Let us thank God that our help is laid on One that is mighty. (Psalm 89:19.) In ourselves we are great sinners. But in Jesus Christ we have a great Savior.





# My Hiding Place

There are times in our Christian lives when we can be so severely tested and tried that we feel totally disoriented and inwardly emaciated. David knew the physical devastation of turmoil. In psalm after psalm he shares his grief when tears were his food day and night, his bones ached, and his “moisture turned into the drought of summer.” Conflict threatened to drain him. Already he had a heavy workload with the oversight of the kingdom and the stress of enemy warfare, but what really shredded his heart was betrayal by those he loved and trusted, even by his own son.

If such conflict happens to a man after God’s own heart, it should not surprise us that it can happen to us. Therefore, it is good for us to go to the Psalms and learn how David reacted to his distresses. Instead of allowing himself to fall victim to Satan’s battering ram, he lifted up His eyes to the Lord. There we learn the source of his joy and strength amid turmoil: “Thou art my hiding place” (Psalm 32:7).

What a blessed thought! The Lord was David’s ever-present hiding place. Nor was He

limited by David’s location or circumstances. David could go to Him anytime, anywhere – even on a noisy battlefield or in the quietness of his royal chamber. This was the key to David’s success. The Lord’s hiding place offered him constant relief and grace to keep going. Here the Lord welcomed him with outstretched arms; here David could unburden his soul, knowing the Lord would either remove his conflict or give him more grace to bear it. Here, in the midst of fierce opposition, David was perfectly safe, perfectly at peace, and perfectly free. And it’s the same for us.

## What a blessed thought! The Lord was David’s ever-present hiding place.

As I pondered this wonderful thought, a simple illustration presented itself to me. My little granddaughter Olivia was being chased (in fun), and she came rushing to my side, “Nanny, Nanny, hide me!” I happily opened my arms and

closed them tightly around her; I could hear her sigh of relief as she knew she was safe from capture. How simply and automatically we should run to Christ for refuge as a little child when pursued by our fears, our foes, and even our own imagination. When we fail to go, we fail to get the blessed relief we need. Sadly, our “adult-ness” gets in the way and we don’t come as often as we should. And so, we suffer on – needlessly.

This reminds me of the words of a hymn composed by a young Australian pianist named Robert Harkness who accompanied evangelist R. A. Torrey on his gospel campaigns across the world. It was actually at a campaign in Toronto in 1906 that Robert felt an urgent need for a hymn to assure new converts that Christ would hold them tightly in their future trials. He wrote to Ada Habershon in England and asked her to write some verses that would help weak and doubting believers. The evangelistic team had already moved on to Philadelphia by the

time Robert got her reply. This is how he described what happened:

*It was 1906, during the Mission in Philadelphia. I remember Dr. Torrey was preaching to about 4000 people in the Armory. During a sermon I took out some slips of paper with some words which Miss Habershon had sent over in response to a request for some verses about the keeping power of Christ. I read over the lines of “He will hold me fast”; the melody came to me, and I worked it out there and then, writing the music for the verses and the chorus.*

When I fear my faith will fail,  
Christ will hold me fast;  
When the tempter would prevail,  
He can hold me fast.

I am precious in His sight,  
He will hold me fast;  
Those He saves are His delight,  
He will hold me fast.

He’ll not let my soul be lost,  
Christ will hold me fast;  
Bought by Him at such a cost,  
He will hold me fast.

Refrain:

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast;  
For my Saviour loves me so,  
He will hold me fast.

When my heart is broken and  
my world turns upside down,  
He will hold me fast. As the

sparks fly upward (Job 5:7), we will go through trouble, but the Lord is always ready to be our refuge and strength. “How blessed is the standing of the man whom God himself sets on high above his foes, upon an impregnable rock which never can be stormed! Well may we desire to dwell with the Lord who so effectually protects his people” (C. H. Spurgeon).

How often when trials like  
sea billows roll,  
Have I hidden in Thee, O  
Thou Rock of my soul.

Adam hid from God; David hid in God. That made all the difference. One preacher said, “There are many ‘Jigsaw Christians’ in the world today: every time they are faced with problems, instead of going to the Divine Hiding Place, they go to pieces.” That wasn’t the case with Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, born in India in 1853, who found Christ to be her hiding place even though she lost her parents as a child and was taken away to England. Rather than living in the sorrow of the past, Ellen returned to India as a missionary and a hymn writer. Here she explains where she gained her strength:

In the secret of His presence  
how my soul delights to hide!  
Oh, how precious are the  
lessons which I learn at  
Jesus’ side!

Earthly cares can never vex  
me, neither trials lay me low;  
For when Satan comes to  
tempt me, to the secret  
place I go.

The Lord’s hiding place for His people is a vital combination of His precious Word and a personal, secret communion between us and Him: “Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence ... He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 31:20; 91:1). Friend, it is available to you and me. Why suffer? Run to Christ! Only He can relieve the pain that gnaws at your heart. When my little Olivia needed me to be her hiding place, I welcomed the moment because I love her so much. How infinitely greater is the Lord’s love for us and longing to help us! May we honour that amazing love by finding in Christ our blessed and only hiding place.

I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad;  
I found in Him a resting  
place,  
And He has made me glad.  
(Horatius Bonar)



**Jill Saunders**  
is the wife of Dr Larry Saunders, minister of Toronto Free Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Canada, and the Principal of Whitefield Christian Academy.

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