

THE
Free Presbyterian Magazine
 AND
 MONTHLY RECORD

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"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth."—Ps. lx. 4.

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**Notes of a Sermon Preached at Ingwenya on the Thursday
Before Communion.***

"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" (Rev. iii. : 8).

THE expression, 'a little strength' has been interpreted variously and probably each view has truth in it. A church which is weak in any way is likely to be weak in other ways also. Of course this does not follow in every case, but generally we expect to find that a church which is weak in numbers will also be weak in material wealth and in its number of gifted persons. However, there are greater things than strength through numbers or material wealth, for the outstanding necessity for any church, weak or strong, is to have the commendation of the Lord that she has kept His Word. Through the keeping of God's Word a church or mission will keep itself from that dire calamity which renders a church useless in the world,—spiritual death. A church which is overtaken by spiritual death just falls out of its place in God's purposes of Salvation. It becomes, not merely a dead weight on His Kingdom, it becomes an enemy of it.

"A living dog is better than a dead lion," and a church or mission which is so much alive that it keeps God's Word, counts for very much, and it counts for still more if, with a hearing ear and a ready heart, it seeks to make use of these open doors pressed on her notice by her Lord. This is one of the ways by which a mission out of its weakness is made strong and by which the little one becomes a strong nation.

We must remember, however, that a church or mission which is weak on account of its small membership has her temptations just as surely as her bigger sisters. Often too these temptations are closely connected with its ignoring the opportunities set before her by the 'open door.'

The qualities which call forth the commendation of the Lord are, that she, 'had kept His Word and that she had not denied His name,' and these two always run so close together that where we find the one we may expect to find the other.

Before we speak of our mission and the way it has kept His Word we must first speak of the manner and spirit in which you have received it.

*The name of the preacher has not been sent us.—Editor.

You have received His Word. It is a long time since the home church received it, and not so long ago since you received it from her. At that time you knew that by its reception you were bringing a 'fire,' a 'sword,' a 'hammer,' as well as a 'light' and a 'joy' to your bosoms, but by a faith wrought in you by God the Holy Spirit you have received it. And having received it where have you placed it? Where have you kept it? Have you placed it in your schools for the purpose of moral teaching only. Have you placed it alongside other books brought to you by the white people? Have you placed it in church as one of many good books which teach us about God? I think not. You have placed it where God directed you to place it. Having received it as a direct message from God, sent to you personally as individuals, you have placed it with all its Divine authority over your hearts and lives.

It has been given a place by you over conscience, understanding and heart. Willingly and freely you have placed it above all authority in the interests and affairs of your souls. You have welcomed it into every relationship of your lives,—into your family life, into your community life, into your working life and into your congregational life. You have set it high above your own opinions and the opinions of others, and it is the only judge in all matters of debate relating to God, salvation, and Christian living.

You have been enabled to open your hearts to it. When it speaks to you, its voice is recognised and listened to. Even when it comes to find fault with you and to humble you it is still to you the voice of a loving Father and supreme Lord, and it is your prayer that its influence will go on and on increasing in your experience. You have received the Word and kept it.

The Word has taken that place among you that Jesus had among His disciples when He lived on earth. In a life where we must walk by faith it has become to us the very Saviour to whom the Word itself witnesses.

You have received it and you keep it in *love*. It can never become old or worn out to you. As your hearts hold the Saviour it brings, so do they hold the Word which He brings. How cannot we but love His Word? It has put Christ into our sinful past and the sin of the past has disappeared. It has put Christ into our future and it has become bright with well-founded hopes. It has put Christ into our eternity and we see ourselves not only with Him but in Him forever. We love the Christ of the Bible and we love the Word for His sake. It has become so knit up with our lot, so much a part of our very selves that we cannot but love it. This is so true that we find there is no sin we have to confess so frequently as that done directly against His Word. We have received it into our hearts, have placed it there; and in this state, in which we are absent from the Lord, and so long as we have to walk by faith; it is to us our all in all. We reverence it, we cherish it, we do homage before it, we humble ourselves before it, we enthrone it, we gave it that place which we can give none other. No human teaching can share a place with it in what it has to teach us, and no authority in heaven or earth can share its sovereignty over us. To us it is the Word of God, the only Word of God, alone the Word of God, all the Word of God, and it must be supreme.

Now in this receiving and keeping of the Word you have been tried.

The Word of truth must be kept in midst of a world of error. It must be kept as a testimony and witness inside the camp of its enemies. In its teaching it runs contrary to the works and words of all natural men. Yet you have not only to hold it up before them, but at times you must make its voice heard in their very midst. The opposition of the world to the Word, ranges from total unbelief in God, to the professing Christian who says, 'Lord, Lord' and is yet a stranger to Christ. The expression of its opposition ranges from the sword and fire to the quiet sowing of doubt in God's Word. And it is in a world of this kind that you have kept His Word.

Since the white people are their masters Africans often regard anything done by them as the right thing to do. At some time or other most of you men present, have had to work with white people, but although you have learned to do the work demanded of you, you have refused to learn those words and ways which appear to you to be contrary to God's Word. Rather it has happened that on occasion you have stood up for the Word of God, and your reward for this has been a kick or an oath. Well, what matter, what has been your reward from men, to-day the Lord rewards you when he says, 'You have kept my Word.' There are white employers who set themselves out to make fun of your religion,—they tell you the Bible is not true, they ask you to prove this and that,—they tell you that missionaries are only after your money,—that there is no Heaven and no Hell,—that there never was such a person as Jesus. Well, it is in such circumstances as these you have been enabled to keep His Word.

So too most of you have come into contact with churches which offer you a way to Heaven easier than the Word of God brings you. A Bishop's touch and blessing as these appear to men's minds, are things much easier to get than the constant sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. Regeneration by baptism is much easier than regeneration through the pangs of the new birth. Turning to the East and crossing oneself are child's play in comparison to the strenuousness accompanying inward sanctification. You know all about that kind of religion. More, you know how these supposed Christians regard you,—they regard you as being still heathen just because you have not become members in their church. You know how they regard our communion,—as no communion at all. And you all know what difficulties arise when any of your sons want to marry a girl belonging to this church. Even although he has been a member of your own church for years, even though his profession has been a most honourable one, yet he must be baptised again, receive the sign of the cross and what not other trifles before he is allowed to marry this holy thing,—a girl of their communion! You all know how on the few occasions this has occurred among us you set your face against this folly. You all know how you gave no consent to the marriage until the girl and her people promised that she should come with her husband to his church. Rightly you have stood up for the simple Word of Christ against the teachings of men.

When, times without number, you have had to decide how the Lord's Day ought to be kept in your homes did you ask how members of other churches observed it, or in this great matter did you fall down before the commandment which says, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And coming under the authority of the Word did you debate any further on

the matter? I think not. And speaking of the Sabbath question, do you not remember some years ago, how one denomination, 'the Seven Day Adventist,' broadcast leaflets among your people wherein they promised a reward of £50 to anyone who could prove from the very words of Christ that He had changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first. They expected you to take these papers to your missionaries and thereby to put them in the difficult position of having to answer the unanswerable. £50 is a lot of money for anyone, but it represents a greater amount more to an African, and you might be forgiven if you had acted as they intended. But what was the truth? What was the result? You know the answer. The bait offered to you was not so much as nibbled by you.

So too with other questions. Concerts in connection with schools and church work as encouraged by other churches find no advocates among us. If ever these questions arose you found no place for them in your religious life because you found no place for them in God's Word. On something of the same lines is the question of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. I do not know to what extent you may have had to fight encouragement of these movements in your homes, but I feel that some of you must have had a fight for it. The African boys and girls look so well in their uniforms, and these things have even a greater appeal to you than they have to us white people, that I feel sure that your children must have asked you at some time or other, "Why cannot we have things like other missions have?" If you were so approached we never heard of it. You knew full well the answer you would receive if you had. You have heard it more than once from the pulpit. You recognised and honoured our efforts to 'keep the Word' in all these matters and you fell into sympathetic line with us. 'You have kept my Word.' These are no longer living questions with us, they are dead, the Word of God has killed them.

In the same way I might refer to the conflict of the Word with heathenish customs. As you know, certain of these customs are prohibited by law while others are not. Is there any greater test of Word-keeping than that of the believing person who finds himself or herself in a kraal where beer-drinking is in process? Have I myself not found a Christian woman in such a kraal while the beer drink was under way at the command of her heathen husband? Where did I find her? I found her in a hut as far away as possible, her children gathered around and the door shut. There was one other person present,—a drunk man lying on the ground. Carefully and slowly into his muddled brain this woman was telling him what the Bible said of the drunkard and his end. Carefully and slowly and with emphasis she spoke of the only Saviour. Keeping the Word in her own home while outside. You know what the people outside were like. Men and women by the twenties singing, dancing, fighting, and drunken, until by midnight they were more brutish than the beasts of the field. That picture of that faithful woman can be multiplied over and over again. Some indeed have suffered physical violence for their zeal in this direction but the Word has been kept even in these untoward circumstances.

As you know we have no law on the question of Labola except to discourage it as much as possible. We have nothing to say against the custom as originally practised, but under present circumstances it undoubtedly brings evil. It is to the credit of you male members that many

of you have sacrificed the Lobola gift in order to secure decent marriages for your daughters. We would like all to follow your example as in this you are acting on clearly Gospel principles.

And so the Word has been kept and the Lord's name honoured. It has not been kept in life and spirit as it ought to have been but for that measure of strength by which it has undoubtedly been kept, we thank the Lord. If he says, 'You have kept' we reply, 'No, Lord, but thou hast kept. Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but do thou the glory take.'

Now when a mission which is weak in numbers finds itself in conflict with so many opposing elements in its effort to keep the Word, it may do so without fault. That, however, requires great grace. Rather we may expect that such intensive conservation of the truth will leave such a mission open to temptation of various kinds and we shall now look at these.

The church you belong to has this as one of its doctrines, "The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error." This is a truth based on scriptural statements and it is well for us to remember it. Jesus is the only person in whom Christians can safely glory. Yet through conflict, we cannot but make continual comparisons between ourselves and others and usually that tends to a higher appraisal of ourselves than is our due. This leads to vain glory, self glory and self righteousness and we should search ourselves to-day lest this root of bitterness has sprung up among us. Sometimes I feel that I have discerned just a little of it with our men when preaching among strangers and in introducing our church among them.

Then too when the world is in close conflict with the church or mission there is a great temptation for church members to forget that they themselves were once of the world. This is a very great temptation indeed. Paul says to church members, "Such were some of you" and from many parts of the Word we are given to hope that even amongst His greatest enemies Christ has sheep still to be gathered. A true zeal for the Word, and enlightened efforts to retain it, must have as companion "compassion for those who are out of the way." Otherwise our efforts are the outcome of "zeal without knowledge" and as this kind of zeal enters into the conflict, compassion goes out. Let us remember that our own sons and daughters who are still unconverted, but who are outwardly in sympathy with us, are as surely enemies of the truth as those we do battle with in sharper conflict. In seeking to keep the Word have we become bitter and uncompassionate towards our fellow sinners.

By compassion I mean much more than our giving an occasional thought to the lost, much more than an occasional pang of regret on their account, much more than something which can be dismissed by a sigh and a duty indicated prayer. I mean that opening of our hearts to the cry of lost men and women, I mean that willingness to take on the burden of their souls, I mean that close and sympathetic appreciation of their miserable and pitiable state that begets a misery so constant that nothing in life can relieve it.

Such compassion as is illustrated in the Old Testament under the figure of a woman in pangs. There can be only one of two ways of relief,—delivery or death; and such compassion as is shown to us in the New

Testament in our Saviour's tears over Jerusalem,—over such enemies as had closed with him in deadly combat,—deadly for him and for them. Have we somehow, somewhere, as a mission lost even a part of this compassion? We may have kept the Word, but we may have lost the love God gave us for our fellow sinners in the keeping of it. If so we have lost something very precious,—yes, so precious that no mission can afford to go on working without it.

With the going of deep, constant, enlightened compassion for our brother-sinners something else must go. We lose a sense of our calling and mission in the world. Contend for the faith is a straight commandment from the Word, but it is no more a commandment than, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." However pressing may be conflict between truth and error, however urgent the call to arms; nothing can excuse us for the hiding of one commandment under another. Retain, consolidate, conserve do all that, and do it with all the power you have, but in doing these things do not seek to cancel the "Go ye" of his last command. Retain that you may carry, conserve that you may spread abroad, is the manner of our warfare,—defensive and offensive.

I do not know how far backwards we may have gone in these directions but I do know that once the weak church or mission loses sight of her mission in the world she may go back far enough. History bears this out. We may quite unconsciously have committed ourselves to a policy of defence to the exclusion of all else. "At all costs we will preserve the Word for ourselves and our children" becomes a kind of unwritten law. In that case our vision becomes more and more confined, our horizon narrows itself down to just ourselves and the Word. We begin to turn in upon ourselves and the sum total of our spiritual interests revolves about our own activities. We tend to magnify them and what might pass as a mere item in our religious life, becomes magnified out of all proportion to its importance. Our spiritual life becomes cramped and cribbed and like men enclosed in a small room we may begin fighting among ourselves in our urge to get fresh air. We begin to blame anyone or everyone for our misfortunes, not understanding what is at the root of our discomfort.

This situation brings us to the point when we must defend ourselves against our own opinion of ourselves, and this defence may take its most common form,—self justification and self righteousness.

"Are we not doing the right thing?" Are we not doing all that can be expected of us? Since we are weak and becoming weaker what more can we do? Is it not clear that in the history of mission life there are times of enlargement and times of "small things?" Is it not God who makes a difference? Must we not wait His time? The time for building the temple is not yet come, is it? When it comes will it not be shown that by keeping the Word, we saved the whole situation? And so sometimes with a truthful statement and at other times by an untruthful one we comfort ourselves by justifying our attitudes and acts.

And while we thus close in upon ourselves, a subtle detachment, isolation and parochiality saps our strength, as the bed saps the strength of the pseudo invalid who has taken to it when he should have taken to the hills.

You will remember that Nehemiah directed his people to build 'every one with his sword girded by his side.' Now what would have happened if each builder laid down his trowel and devoted his whole attention to his sword? The wall which after all was to be the best defence, would never have been built. There are men in the church whose gifts are for defence, but for the multitude there is a sword and a trowel for each man. Those who laid aside their trowels might justly be called true soldiers, splendid watchmen, zealous friends and brave men, but, they could not be called good builders. After all, the main reason why they were there at all, was to get the walls up, and nothing would rejoice the hearts of the people and give them occasion to serve God with self-forgetfulness as their seeing progress,—the walls going up.

We have a truth to send out as well as to keep; we have the Gospel for the most bitter enemies of the Word and it has been left with us to bring it to them. I know that a number of you cycle to various places each Sabbath to preach the Gospel. Considering the difficulty in procuring parts for cycles and the price you have to pay for them these days, this service is much to your credit. It is not to you I speak so much as to the ordinary member.

I do not know how far these evils have entered among us, but I know they have entered well into the religious lives of some of us. Even though there might be but few of us who have come to think as I have indicated that few constitute a danger to others. I cannot help thinking, that with the large membership we have here, things in this Reserve would be very different if so many of us were as zealous in spreading the truth as we are in keeping it.

I am sure that if we look into our hearts we will find that, slowly but surely we have come to think that by keeping the truth within our own circle and by being careful and honourable members of the mission we are doing all that is expected of us as members in it. You women are closed into the companionship of your sister members, while the men are glad to chat together about mission work and churches and making comparisons between yourselves and others. Your vision has become more and more confined and your hearts more and more restricted, and your grooves narrower and narrower. Worse, you are ready in a moment to defend your position on the least provocation. This, I take it, you will readily confess, is a very unhealthy state for a mission, even though the number already affected is small.

The church in action is represented as an army on the march with banners, as men going forth with easy stride and swinging arms to sow the seed, to shepherds far out on hill or in dale seeking the "other sheep," to men in the grip of a power so tremendous that it "turns the world upside down." Men everywhere who have escaped the cramping grip and the stiffening atmosphere of a completely defensive position. The doors from this unnatural prison are open. The doors of escape for the Word of God and the spirit of the Gospel are open. No man can shut them.

Before we speak of these doors I should like to remind you of what we often speak at these communion seasons. These are seasons for the renewal of our covenants with the Lord. Over the symbols of His body and blood the Lord waits to renew His covenants with us and such transac-

tions are most solemn in their character. There is only one fitting approach to such solemn enactments,—the way of deep humility. It was with this in mind that our forefathers wisely set apart the Thursday before communion as a day of humiliation and prayer. On this day of preparation for the right and beneficial receiving of the communion we are called to confess our sin,—all sin, and now particularly the sin pointed out to-day in connection with this portion of the Lord's Word we have been considering together.

Let us get down on the knees of our souls and confess these sins of ours as a mission. Let us confess that we have gone off His way, and have not been anxious to return to it. Let us confess that we have willfully closed our eyes to His open doors, and closed our ears to His entreating voice. The sins of contentment, self complacency, self righteousness, the sin of overlooking our mission in the world, the sin of the uncompassionate heart, the sin of living a life on so low a spiritual plane and being content with it, the sin of putting our wisdom higher than the Lords, the sin of the idle trowel, the hesitant step, the closed hand, the blind eye and the empty seed basket, all these and many more, let us confess to-day. When we have raised walls around ourselves, we have raised them around the Word which is with us. Instead of temple building we have been building prisons. They may appear to provide safety for us, but in point of fact this kind of work has no place among our Gospel duties. It is work contrary to the purpose of God, contrary to His Word, contrary to His plans for His church, contrary to the dictates of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, contrary to what we were taught by the Lord when first we believed in Him. All this and much more involves us in sin, guilt, uneasiness of conscience, and dispeace.

We must escape, if we are to be healthy once more. We must break out of ourselves if we are to serve the Lord more fully. We must get a new vision of what is Christian duty here at Ingwenya,—such a vision as will carry us beyond our purely defensive position,—a vision that will carry us to our brother-sinners without the church. How to get out? That is the question. How to carry the Gospel as far as to the very gates of Hell? That ought to be our burden. We ourselves were saved by an invasion,—Christ, blessed be His name for ever and ever,—Christ invaded our souls. "Neither pray I for them only but for those who shall believe through their word." Those others for whom He prayed are to be saved by an invasion too and we are reckoned by Christ as those who are to bear the invading force,—the Word. Thou hast kept my Word,—the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God,—the instrument of invasion. We have it. Here it is. There it is in your hearts and homes, and hands.

Now if you have been seriously asking yourselves these questions as I believe some of you have been, then you will be prepared for the last thing I have to speak about. Listen to it and as you listen marvel at the love and goodness of the Lord. He is sovereign and He puts up one and sets another down. What I find to marvel at is this,—that He should not leave us alone with these doors we have closed around ourselves, and raise up others in our place for His work. Oh; the wonder of it. The loving concern shown in it. Listen. Behold, look you, I have set *before* you,—just before you; you have not to seek far,—an *open* door,—not a door slightly opened and still requiring some effort of ours to open,—and best

of all,—no man can shut it. Oh how quick He is to notice our error, how deeply concerned He is to see our return, how lovingly has He stretched forth His hand to open the door for us, and with what entreaty does He invite us to make use of it. It is as if He had said, "You dear children who have kept my Word, I know what that cost you. How every stroke in the defence of it has warmed my heart to you, but in the keeping of it you have not been careful to preserve yourselves from your own ideas and opinions as to *how* my Word should be kept by you. Now you are in danger of ceasing to be useful to me for the ingathering of my lost sheep."

The door for renewal stands open. The way of confession. And the door to the throne of grace is open. There a free and full forgiveness waits us. It may be that your wife or husband or friend is indifferent and remains unaffected, but come through this door and having received forgiveness go and speak to them about it afterwards. "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "Come now let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red as crimson they shall be as wool." "I have set an open door before you." Come, members of Ingwenya, let us return to the Lord, he has wounded and He will heal. Come for our beloved waits on us. Come, He will rejoice over you with singing.

The door to all the resources of the covenant stands open. The door to the almighty power of God the Holy Spirit stands open. We say but the truth, when we remember that He can be, and often is restrained because of sin, yet such restraint has often been removed and can be removed through pleading the precious blood of Jesus. Let us come one and all through this open door with burdened pleading for the Holy Spirit in the name of Christ. The same Spirit who enables us to keep the Word can now empower us to spread it. Surely it is not too much to expect that His very purpose in giving us to keep the Word is also a purpose to spread it through our efforts. Every blessing is already in his hands, the door is open, let us go to Him. He can and does empower men as surely as before. One of our preachers who goes each Sabbath to an out-station at a distance had to pass by a great beer-drink in progress. He went past silently and evaded the sinful scene. The following Sabbath he passed the same place and found another beer-drink in progress in a nearby kraal. This time he did not pass. The striving of the Holy Spirit was too strong for him. What was he to do? He had a fear to go among these drunken men. They might do anything to him if he spoke to them of their sin. But, as he put it, he had to dismount. He found himself on his knees in prayer and this was the way his thoughts carried him. "If I am a preacher I should not go to preach at all without the Spirit of God coming with me. If He is with me I need fear no man." So he went into the midst of them and preached. In a little time the men became silent, then they sat down, then as he proceeded some of them put their heads down and hid their faces in shame. No one hindered him and no one lifted a voice against him. The Holy Spirit can empower us and He can arrest men. The door is open, set open on purpose that we should enter. Will we disappoint the Blessed Spirit? will we grieve Him still further?

The door of providence is open. Not only is the silver and gold His,

but all creation waits on the soul which dedicates itself to the service of the Lord. "Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field." We do not go forth to this warfare at our own charges for all the charges fall on Him who said, "Lo I am with you." What a door is this. We are invited to refer every single difficulty to a Friend who is owner of all, and who is with us to the ends of the earth. When Jesus said to His disciples, "Lo I am with you always," they could not have understood at that time all that this was to mean to them in the days to come. When in prison they were to have His company, when facing the multitudes on the day of Pentecost they were to realise His power in giving them courage, when under the lash of the jailor He gave them grace to bear an even heavier burden,—His soul, when truth had to be vindicated the Lord appeared as the destroyer of Herod. "I am with you,"—the hearts of men are in His hands. Oh what a door is here for the sincere heart.

Then there is the open door of His purposes. What is God's purpose in keeping His Word in the world? Is it not that He intends to spread it more and more? What are His purposes in connection with the Gospel? Is it not that it should be blessed to the elect? What is His purpose regarding His Son? Is it not that unto Him every knee shall bow. Surely a wonderful door of hope opens for us in these purposes of God. We are not running where the Lord has not called. We are not beating the air. We are not following up on something we desire, but which we feel will never materialise. Far from it.

There are other doors, but we must make use of those mentioned first before we seek the others. Going forward in the joy of forgiveness, peace and love, the Lord with us and we with Him, doors will open everywhere. They will open in our families, in our communities, in our schools, at our work, at home, abroad and by the way. Doors will open for us to those who profess Christianity but who are without its power. I make no apology in referring to them. It matters not what church a person belongs to, it matters not if such a person is a church member or not, if such a person is without the new birth he should come within the scope of our concern and work. There are doors opened to such. Many can read the Word, and your question, "Are you baptised?" will of itself find a ready door. For the question of baptism leads directly to the question of their belonging to the family of God or not.

If we go out by these doors we will find enlargement and prosperity, from weakness we shall become strong and the little one shall become a thousand.

Let us not let this day of humiliation and prayer pass without putting this matter right between ourselves and our Lord. Who desires to escape from the vice in which we have wedged ourselves? Who desires to know the joy of full service in the Lord? Who desires enlargement for himself and our mission here? Who desires to exchange the cramped, narrow religious life he has become used to, for the abundant life our Lord throws open to him? Who desires the conversion of friends, neighbours, relations and heathen? Who desires a wide and deep and lasting work of the Holy Spirit to go out from our mission to the limits of this reserve? Who is on the Lord's side? "Let him come to me, for, behold I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it."

Halyburton's Account of His Conversion.

"I cannot be very positive about the day or hour of this deliverance, nor can I satisfy many other questions about the way and manner of it. But this is of no consequence, if the work is in substance sound, for "the wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii.8). Many things about the way and manner we may be ignorant of, while we are sufficiently sure of the effects. As to these things, I must say with the blind man, "I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see" (John ix. 25).

However, it was toward the close of January, or the beginning of February, 1698, that this seasonable relief came; and so far as I can remember, I was at secret prayer in very great extremity, not far from despair, when the Lord seasonably stepped in, and gave this merciful turn to affairs: "When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy held me up" (Ps. xciv. 18). And when there was none to save, then his own arm brought salvation: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into my mind, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

That which yielded me this relief was a discovery of the Lord, as manifested in the word. He said to me, "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help" (Hos. xiii. 9). Now the Lord discovered, in the manner afterwards to be mentioned, several things, which I shall here take notice of.—1. He let me see that "there are forgivenesses with Him,"—that with Him "there is mercy, and plenteous redemption" (Ps. cxxx. 4, 7). He made all His "goodness pass before me, and he proclaimed His name, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, who will be gracious to whom He will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom He will show mercy" (Exod. xxxiii. 19, xxxiv. 5). This was a strange sight to one, who before looked on God only as "a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29), which I could not "see and live" (Exod. xxxiii. 20). 2.—He brought me from Sinai and its thunderings, to Mount Zion, "and to the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling," that cleanseth from all sin, "and speaks better things than the blood of Abel" (Heb. xii. 22, 24). He revealed Christ in His glory. I now with wonder "beheld His glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). And I was hereon made to say: "Thou art fairer than the sons of men" (Ps. xlv. 2). 3.—Hereon He let me see that He who had before rejected all that I could offer was well pleased in the Beloved: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required: then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. xl. 6, 7). And, 4.—Hereby I was further fully satisfied that not only there was forgiveness of sins and justification by free grace, "through the redemption that is in Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. iii. 24); but, moreover, I saw with wonder and delight, in some measure, how God, by this

means, might be just in justifying even the ungodly who believe in Jesus. (Rom. iv. 5.) How was I ravished with delight, when made to see that the God in whom, a little before, I thought there was no hope for me, or any sinner in my case, if there were any such, notwithstanding His spotless purity, His deep hatred of sin, His inflexible justice and righteousness, and His untainted faithfulness, pledged in the threatening of the law, might not only pardon, but, without prejudice to His justice or other attributes, be just in justifying even the ungodly! The reconciliation of those seemingly inconsistent attributes with one another, and with the salvation of sinners, quite surprised and astonished me. And, 5.—The Lord further opened the gospel call to me, and let me see that to me, even to me, was the “word of this salvation sent” (Acts xiii. 26). All this was offered to me, and I was invited secretly to come and “take the water of life freely” (Rev. xxii. 17); and to come in my distress unto this blessed rest: “Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Matt. xi. 28). 6.—He, to my great satisfaction, gave me a pleasant discovery of His design in the whole—that it was “that no flesh might glory in His sight” (1 Cor. i. 29, 31), but that he who glories should have occasion only to glory in the Lord; that He might manifest the riches of His grace, and be exalted in showing mercy; and that we in the end might be saved, “to the praise of the glory of His grace, who made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. i. 6, 7; Isa. xxx. 18). 7.—The Lord revealed to my soul that full and suitable provision made in this way against the power of sin; that as there is righteousness in Him, so there is strength, even everlasting strength, in the Lord Jehovah, to secure against all enemies (Isa. xlv. 24); and that in Him there is sweet provision made against the guilt of sins, that through the power of temptation His people may be inveigled into: “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not; but if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John ii. 1, 2). 8.—When this strange discovery was made of a relief, wherein full provision was made for all the concerns of God’s glory, and my salvation, in subordination thereto, my soul was by a glorious and sweet power carried out to rest in it, as worthy of God, and every way suitable and satisfying in my case: “They that know His name, will put their trust in Him” (Ps. ix. 10, cxix. 93).

All these discoveries were conveyed to me only by the Word. It was not, indeed, by one particular testimony, or promise of the Word, but by the concurring light of a great many of the promises and testimonies of the Word seasonably set home, and most plainly expressing the truths above mentioned. The promises and truths of the Word, in great abundance and variety, were brought to remembrance, and the wonders contained in them were set before mine eyes in the light of the Word. (John xiv. 26; Ps. cxix. 18.) “He sent His Word, and healed me” (Ps. cvii. 20). This was the rod of His strength, that made me willing (Ps. cx. 2, 3); and it was the plain Word of Salvation that I found to be the power of God. (Rom. i. 16.) I cannot positively say that the particular places above mentioned were the words whereby these discoveries were conveyed to my soul; but by these, or such like passages, and I believe by many even of those mentioned promises and truths, were the discoveries above named made to me.

But it was not the Word alone that conveyed the discovery; for most of the passages whereby I was relieved I had formerly in my distresses read and thought upon, without finding any relief in them. But now the Lord shined into my mind by them. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) Formerly I was only acquainted with the letter, which profits not (John vi. 63); but now the Lord's words were "spirit and life" (Ps. xxxvi. 9); and "in His light I saw light," God opening mine "eyes to see wonders out of His law" (Ps. cxix. 18). There was light in them; a burning light by them shone into my mind, to give me not merely some theoretical knowledge, but "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). And many differences I found betwixt the discoveries now made and the notions I formerly entertained of the same truths.—1. It "shone from heaven" (Acts ix. 3); it was not a spark kindled by my own endeavours, but it shone suddenly about me; it came by the Word of God—a heavenly mean; it opened heaven, and discovered heavenly things—the glory of God; and it led me up as it were to heaven. Its whole tendency was heavenward. 2. It was a "true light" (John i. 9), giving true manifestations of God, even the one true God, and the one mediator between God and man; and giving a true view of my state with respect to God, not according to the foolish conceits I had formerly entertained, but as they are represented in the Word. 3. It was a pleasant and sweet light: "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun" (Eccles. xi. 7). It had a heavenly satisfaction in God attending it. It led to a pleasure in the fountain whence it came. 4. It was a distinct and clear light, representing not only spiritual things, but manifesting them in their glory, and in their comely order (2 Cor. iv. 6); it put all things in their due line of subordination to God, and gave distinct and sweet views of their genuine tendency. 5. It was a satisfying light. The soul rested in the discoveries it made, and was satisfied; it could not doubt if it saw, or if the things were so as it represented them. (1 John ii. 27.) 6. It was a quickening, refreshing, healing light. When this Sun of Righteousness arose, there was "healing under his wings." It was, like the summer's sun, warming. In a word, it was the light of life. (John viii. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 6.) 7. It was a great light. It made great and clear discoveries, whereby it easily distinguished itself from any former knowledge of these things I had attained. And, 8. It was a powerful light. It dissipated that thick darkness that overspread my mind, and made all those frightful temptations, that had formerly disturbed me, fly before it. When the Lord arose, "His enemies were scattered," and fled before His face. (Ps. lxxviii. 1.) 9. It was composing. It did not, like a flash of lightning, suddenly appear, and fill the soul inly with amazement and fear; but it composed and quieted my soul, and put all my faculties in a due posture, as it were, and gave me the exercise of them. (Gal. iii. 8, compared with Isa. lviii. 19.) It destroyed not, but improved my former knowledge. These particulars might be explained and further amplified; but the nature of this narrative, and the brevity designed in it, will not allow me to insist; and I the more willingly stop here, and forbear to give any more large account of my small experience of this light, because I know that no words can express the notion that the weakest Christian, who has His eyes opened, really has of its glory. The true notion of light is not conveyed by the ear. The ear tries words, the taste meats (Job xii. 11); but it is the eye that beholds the sun. No words can convey a true

notion of light to the blind; and he that has eyes, at least while he sees it, will need no words to describe it. It manifests itself and other things. (Eph. v. 13.) It is like the new "name, that none knows save he who has it" (Rev. ii. 17). And they who really see, but because their light is weaker, and Satan raises mists to obscure it, will be more capable of judging of it by its effects, than by any account of its nature. Therefore, I shall forbear to speak any more of that, and now proceed to account for the effects, whereby its reality and difference from former light will more obviously, evidently, and convincingly appear. However, at least, while this shining brightness lasted, this one thing it convinced me fully of, and made me certainly know, "that whereas I was blind, now I saw" (John ix. 25).

Balm of Gilead.

(Continued from page 47.)

Fourth and last particular to be considered. Why are any men sick, when they have an offer of health? Do they choose, do they love sickness? Yes. The same men, whose every pulse beats after bodily health, choose and love spiritual sickness. They are alarmed at the least disorder which attacks the body, and yet they have no concern about the soul although it be wounded with sin, and sick unto death, yea just ready to perish. How absurd is this conduct? Thus to prefer the health of the meaner and baser part of their constitution to the more noble and exalted part, is a flagrant absurdity. Nay, not to desire the health of the soul when it is offered them is acting unnaturally against their own interests. To reject it, when the great physician himself offers it in his word, is treating him with vile ingratitude and not to receive this inestimable remedy at his hands, when he sends out his ministers to invite sinners to take it, to spurn it from them, as if it was a thing which they did not value, or did not want, this is the height of sin and wickedness; for whosoever thus accounteth the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and thereby doth despise unto the spirit of grace, for him there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

This being the case, the question returns, What can be the reason, that the health of the daughter of my people is not recovered. Here is the all-healing balm of Gilead, here is an all-wise, and an almighty physician, and why then, my brethren, will you not for his sake, for your own sake, receive the sovereign medicine at his hands? What other cause can be assigned, but that you love your disease more than health. Sin, with all its infirmities, is dearer to you than the full enjoyment of the pleasures of a perfect recovery. Sin, although you die of it, is more precious than to receive life from the hands of our redeeming God. Sin, although it sends you to hell, is more desirable than health in heaven. Sin, although it brings on you never-ending torments with devils and condemned spirits, is sweeter to you than these eternal joys which are at God's right hand for evermore. Oh! what a wonderful delusion is there in sin, that it should thus make men love it more than health and happiness? How strong is the delusion, since the same men reason in the things belonging

to the body, directly contrary to what they do in things belonging to the soul! Propose immediate relief to any of them lying in a severe fit of the gout or stone, they embrace the proposal with eager joy. Propose immediate relief from the pains and miseries of sin, they will not hear of, much less take the remedy. There is balm in Gilead, a physician is there, even the Lord Jesus, the sovereign physician of souls, and yet they will not apply to him. Sick as they are, and ready to expire with the infirmities of sin,*yet they had rather perish than be beholden to him for a cure. All his attributes, his power, his wisdom, his goodness, cannot win them. All his graces, his pardoning, justifying, sanctifying grace, have no influence. He may be a God almighty to save, but the charms of sin, though but for a season, seem to them preferable to the blessings of his present and eternal salvation.

But whence is it that sin should be capable of deluding men so far as to make them prefer sickness to health? The true cause is this. Sin blinds their eyes and hardens their hearts. It stupefies and deadens the senses, so that they feel not their spiritual diseases in the same manner as they do their bodily diseases. The understanding is in darkness, they know not that it is diseased. When they know it, the memory is short and soon forgets it. When they remember it, yet conscience is fast asleep; it neither checks the will in the choice, nor the affections in the love and enjoyment of sin. Thus has sin impaired all their faculties, and they have no desire to be healed, because they are insensible of their malady. When we endeavour to convince them of it, they will not believe us; and because they do not feel the immediate smart of their sins, they will not therefore give credit to us, when we declare from the Word of God that they will smart for them, and to eternity, unless they come to the physician of souls to be healed. And this will be the case, so long as they are intent upon their present pursuits, and live entirely to sense and to its enjoyments. All this time their own hearts deceive them; for it is one of the greatest delusions of sin, to keep men ignorant of the true state of their souls. It flatters them with peace, while the Almighty is at war with them; and it promises them happiness in the enjoyment of those things which will bring on them eternal torments. And while it keeps them in this state of carnal security, nothing can appear to them more absurd than to hear that they are sick, when they fancy themselves to be in perfect health.

My brethren, are any of you in this state? Do you feel no pain, and do you apprehend no danger from your sins? Are you entirely secure, although your sins be unpardoned, and God might glorify His justice by immediately inflicting the deserved punishment? Nay, do you not find part of sin's punishment already inflicted, and why then should you hope to escape the remaining part? For have you not suffered some of those pains and sicknesses which in a course of years will infallibly bring down your bodies to the grave, and inflict the sentence on them, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The body was not at first liable to this sentence, until sin poured its cursed poison into it, and infected it with those painful maladies which no art of physic can heal, and which wear it down to the grave of death. Every pain which it feels, every sickness which it labours under, all the outward and inward dangers which threaten its mortal life, are owing to sin; for the wages of sin is death.

All the harbingers of death, which afflict and weaken men's bodies, and thereby prepare the way for his seizing on them, and carrying them prisoners to the dark and cold regions of the grave, all these derive their power over us from sin; for, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Sin has most undoubtedly wounded your bodies with pains and sicknesses, with mortality and death; and what a madness then and infatuation is it to think that sin has not wounded your souls as well as your bodies? For what says the scripture? "The soul that sinneth it shall die!" Is not that a desperate wound? "It shall die." How! Can the soul die? Yes. It may be dead in trespasses and sin. Its death consists in being separated from God, the fountain of life, and in having no communion with Him either in this world or in the next. And is not this a greater punishment than the death of the body, and is it not infinitely more painful too, thus to die from God and glory, and to be tormented with the worm that never dieth, and in the fire that never shall be quenched? What is not that a wound indeed which thus alienated you from the life of God, yea, a most dreadful wound, the torment and anguish of which you may suffer forever and ever? Men and brethren, are these things so? Examine the evidence and determine. Is not sin the great murderer, who has wounded your bodies with pains and diseases, and mortality, and has separated your souls from God, the fountain of life, and made you subject to the first and second death? Is not the proof of these truths as complete and full as the case will admit of? Does it not amount even to a demonstration? And do you not then stand in need of some sovereign balm to heal you, and do you not need a physician? You certainly do, as much as ever dying men did. And why then do you neglect the remedy, and slight the physician?

(To be continued.)

The Christian Described: the Hypocrite Detected.

By Rev. THOMAS BOSTON.

(Continued from page 74.)

Consider to which of the two sorts you belong, whether you be real Christians or not. Never value yourselves on the outward part or letter of religion, for you may have that and be stripped of all by apostacy to which you lie open, and will be turned out with the workers of iniquity at last, though you still keep on the mask. We must all appear before the tribunal of Christ. Study that religion which will be approved by Him there.—I now proceed to consider.

III. What is the outside and letter of religion, which only makes an outside Christian, and what is the inside and spirit of it, which makes a Christian?—Here I observe,

1. That the outside of religion is that part of it which lies open to the view of the world, by which men form their estimate, not God: 1 Sam. 16: 7, "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth

not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." It comprehends all church privileges, duties, whether of doing or suffering, and attainments lying open to the view of men. Men may come a great length in this, and yet be nought in God's esteem.—I observe,

2. That the letter of religion is that part of it which is agreeable to the letter of the law, whether in externals or internals. And it comprehends not only the outside, which is open to man's view, but also internal dispositions, exercises and attainments, as to the matter of them; for example, Judas's sorrow for sin, the stony ground's joy at receiving the seed of the Word, and the hypocrite's delight in approaching to God, Isa. 58, which have the matter, but not the form and manner, and so is like a body without the soul.—I observe,

3. That the inside of religion is that part of it which is open to the all-seeing eye of God, Matt. 6: 4, "That thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly." What persons go about, out of mere conscience towards God, as knowing that the world either is not, or cannot be witness to it, and though it was a witness, it does not know right or wrong; but such setting themselves in the presence of God, are carried in their duty as if the eyes of all the world were upon them, Acts 24: 16. But this is not all. I observe.

Lastly, That the spirit or spirituality of religion is the internal grace, joined to the external performance; it is the right manner, joined to the right matter of religion: John 4: 24, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." 1 Tim. 1: 5, "Now, the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," as when heart-humiliation is joined with bending of the knees to God in prayer, and the duty is gone about from right principles, and directed to a right end.—It remains that,

IV. I confirm the doctrine,

That not the former, but the latter sort of religion, marks a true Christian, is evident, if we consider,

1. That there is nothing in the outside or letter of religion, but what one may reach in an unregenerate state, in which no man can ever please God, Rom. 3: 8. The hypocrite's mask may take in the whole outward man, and the devil's goats may resemble Christ's sheep, in all but the hidden man of the heart. All these are but acts of moral discipline, not requiring a new nature from whence to spring, but may arise from the old corrupt nature, assisted by external revelation, and the common influences of the Spirit.—It will be farther evident, if we consider,

2. That the outside and letter of religion may be without any true love to God in the heart, which yet is the substance of practical holiness, and the comprehensive duty of the whole law: Ezek. 33: 31, "And they come unto me, as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Love to God makes all duties run in a right channel; but how can this be found, when the natural enmity is not overcome by regenerating grace?

Self-love may supply its place, so far as the outside and letter of religion go, and that upon this principle, Job 3, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." This will also be evident, if we consider,

3. That the outside and letter of religion may consist with the reign of sin in the heart: 2 Tim. 3: 5, "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power of it." Such in themselves are weak, and can never turn sin off the throne in the soul. Hence it is that every hypocrite is a slave to some lust or other; whatever be his attainments, this always remains true, Mark 10: 21. This kind of religion is ever like the legs of the lame, unequal. This is evident, if we consider,

4. That men are in religion only what they are before God, not what they are before men. When God directs Abraham to a holy walk, He says, "Walk before me." Gen. 17: 1. If God did not observe the hearts, the insides of men, the principles of their actions, an outside religion would be sufficient. But what does it avail before the all-seeing God, to cleanse the outside of the platter, while the inside is full of ravening, while that is wanting which God chiefly requires and delights in? Psalm 51: 6, how is it possible that the man should be approved of God? This will be evident, if we consider,

Lastly, That the great difference of accepted and unaccepted performances, dispositions, etc., does not lie in the letter but in something else. Cain and Abel both offered, the one acceptably, the other not. Gen. 4: 3-5, where lay the difference? The apostle shows it, Heb. 11: 4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Peter and Judas both mourned, and we need not hesitate to say, that the mourning of the latter in itself was fully as hearty as that of the former, but they differed in their kind, the one was godly sorrow, the other was the sorrow of the world. The trial of men's work is not on *by what* they have wrought, but *how* they have wrought: John 3: 21, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

V. I now come to make some brief improvement.—We infer,

1. What are those Christians, who do not so much as approve themselves to men, by the outside and letter of religion. Those surely have nothing of God, and shall never see heaven, if they change not their course of life: Matt. 5: 20, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." How many are there among us this day, whose way of life is a scandal to Christianity, who are in the church, as boils, botches, and sores, are in the body, serving for nothing but to grieve the spirits of others who have any concern in them? What sort of Christians are prayerless persons, liars, Sabbathbreakers who loiter away whole Sabbaths, unclean persons?, etc. 1 Peter 4: 18, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners appear?" The day will come, when such will see that it had been their happiness to have lived and died among Pagans. We infer,

2. That those also are a sad sort of Christians, who, if they can approve themselves to men, make it none of their business to approve themselves

to God: Rev. 3: 1, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and are dead." How many are there, with whom their credit goes farther than their conscience! And therefore, if they can carry their wickedness, so as none but God may see it, they value not his eye on them: Numb. 32: 23, "But if you will not do so, behold you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out." This practical atheism will be bitterness in the end, when the day comes, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel, Rom. 11: 16. Ah! how many cast a fair cloak of profession over reigning lusts; but behold their end: Psalm 125: 5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel."

Church Notes.

Communion.—September, first Sabbath, Ullapool and Breasclete; second, Strath; third, Tarbert (Harris) and Stoer. *October*, first Sabbath, Tolsta; second, Ness and Gairloch; fourth, Lochinver and Greenock; fifth, Wick. *November*, first Sabbath, Oban; second, Glasgow; third, Edinburgh and Dornoch. *South African Mission.*—The following are the dates of the Communion:—Last Sabbath of March, June, September and December. NOTE.—Notice of any additions to, or alterations of the above dates of Communion, should be sent to the Editor.

Synod Proceedings.—These are now being sent out. Price per copy is 1/-, not 9d. as in August Magazine. As the Proceedings are larger and cost of printing higher this year, extra donations from friends will be appreciated. Any one not resident in a congregation may send to Mr. J. Grant, Treasurer, Inverness, for copies.—Robert R. Sinclair, Clerk of Synod.

Acknowledgment of Donations.

Mr. J. Grant, 4 Millburn Road, Inverness, General Treasurer, acknowledges with grateful thanks the following donations:—

Sustentation Fund.—T. McL., 7th Seaforths, Muir of Ord per A. McLennan o/a Beaul, £1.

Home Mission Fund.—Friend, Glasgow, 10/-.

Organisation Fund.—Friend, Glasgow, 10/-.

Magazine Fund.—Tarbert, North Harris Congregation, £1 3/7.

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Friend, Diabailg, £1; Friend, Applecross, £1; Friend, Applecross Coast, £1. Friend of the Cause, Maryburgh, 2/6.

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