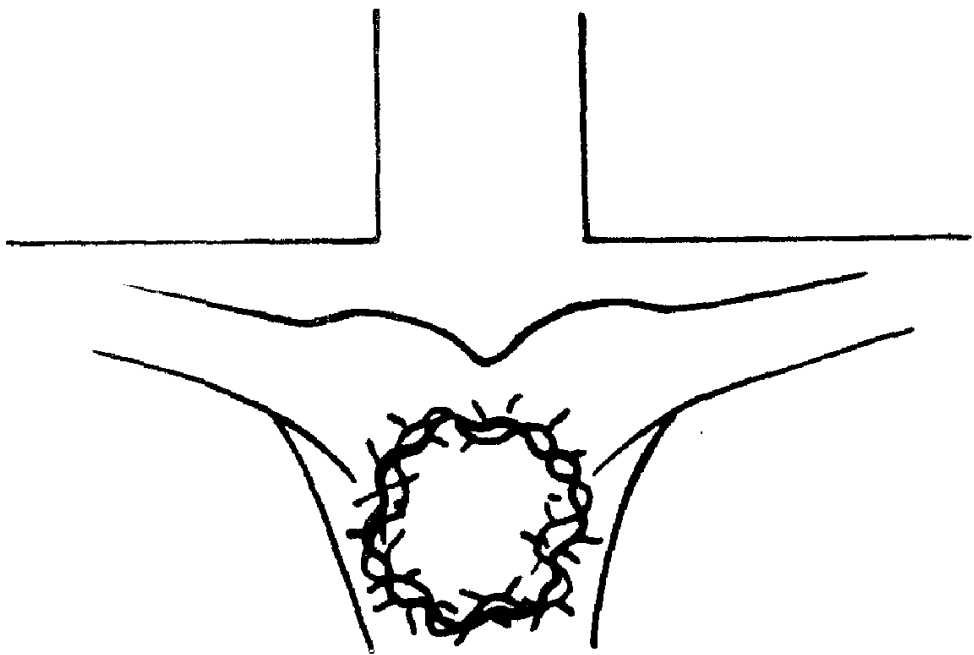
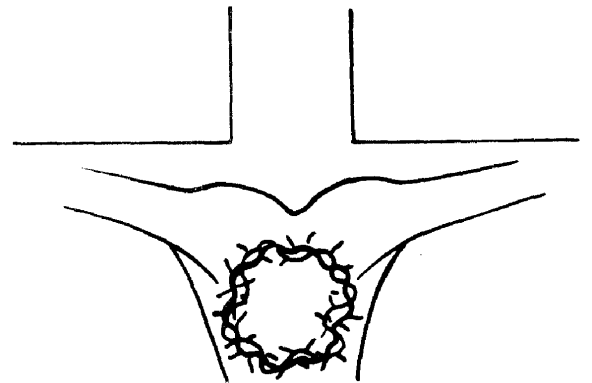


*Stronger
than the
Storm*



Stronger than the Storm

by Brian Johnston



1. *Father, forgive them*

It was a memorable afternoon as we sat together as a group, sharing God's Word. About fifteen to twenty of us had gathered under the porch of a house in the tropics. There was a good-natured atmosphere, which made the time spent there immensely enjoyable, but what was most thrilling was a real sense that God's Word was being received as the voice of the living God. Here was a group engaging with the Bible as the Word of God. The sounds of a neighbour's karaoke machine and a passing rain-shower weren't sufficient to distract us that afternoon. Questions came pouring out, and again and again we turned to the most relevant Bible verses and found answers that truly satisfied hearts that were seriously thirsty. Finally, the lady, under whose porch we were sheltering from the heat, exclaimed, "It's magnificent!"

It truly is a magnificent experience whenever we hear God's voice speaking to our heart out of our reading of his Word, the Bible. In the days which followed, the unfolding of events clearly confirmed that a work of God's Holy Spirit really had taken place in the hearts of our host family, and days of rejoicing followed just like we read about in the New Testament.

But that unsolicited remark extolling the magnificence of God's voice in his Word remained with me afterwards, and reminded me of Psalm 29 - a psalm which graphically describes for us the voice of the Lord. Let me remind you of what it says:

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;

The God of glory thunders, The LORD is over many waters.

The voice of the LORD is powerful,

The voice of the LORD is majestic.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;

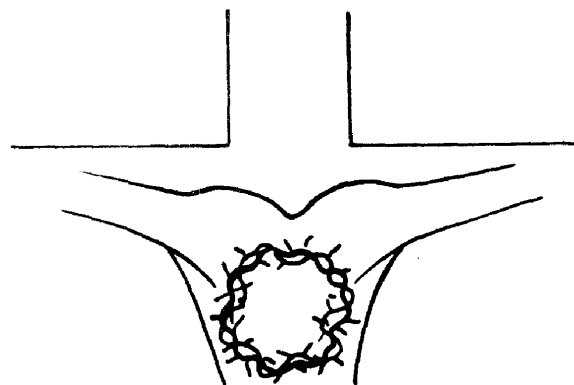
Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, And Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.

The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;

The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.



*The voice of the LORD makes the
deer to calve
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everything says,
"Glory!"*

(Psalm 29:3-29)

These words themselves are magnificent. They give us a breathtaking illustration of the power and majesty of the Lord's voice set over against the background picture of a breaking storm. It's certainly possible (indeed, it's likely) that David had been watching a storm approaching the land of Israel from out over the Mediterranean Sea when the words of this psalm came to him. Picture this storm as David describes it approaching with its 'many waters': there's darkness and lightning; thunder and earth-shakings; waves rising and leaves falling. It's as if we follow the storm inland, across and down the land of Israel. And this noisy storm, which displays God's power and majesty in creation, makes David think of the power and majesty of the voice of the Lord - the very voice which spoke the world into existence.

But it also reminded David of the fact that God's in control of the storm. Seven times he mentions 'the voice of the Lord' - as being on the waters; as being powerful; as being majestic; as breaking trees; as making flames of fire; as shaking the desert; and as making the forest bare - seven reminders that the voice of the Lord really is magnificent, and is over all

and in all.

Some countries, for example in the tropics, know all about storms. But there are other kinds of storms too. It's in the storms of life that God's voice can sound most powerful and majestic to us. In storms of doubt and despair; when our way seems dark; and our beliefs are shaken, and we're stripped of our hopes, how magnificent it is when we hear the sound of the Lord's voice in our reading of his Word. Remember, what the Bible says - God says (e.g. compare Romans 9:17 & Exodus 9:16).

God's Word changes lives; it did mine. I'd like you to imagine you're out walking. The night is dark and you're all alone. Suddenly, you turn around to see ten strong men coming towards you! Then you notice that each one of them is carrying a Bible. Wouldn't that make a difference to how you feel? The Word of God makes a difference!

God is stronger than any storm, and we've moved on to consider various kinds of storms in our lives. I would now like to take this a stage further in relating it to the experience of Jesus Christ. The world became dark on the Friday Jesus died on the cross around 2,000 years ago. The Bible describes Jesus' experience there in terms of a storm breaking over him - and that was the greatest storm ever. Listen to this description from another psalm in our Bibles, this time from Psalm 69. As you read the

words, try to relate them to Jesus dying on the cross, crying out in his agony:

*Save me, O God,
For the waters have threatened my
life.
I have sunk in deep mire, and there
is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters, and
a flood overflows me.
I am weary with my crying; my
throat is parched;
My eyes fail while I wait for my God.
Those who hate me without a cause
are more than the hairs of my
head;
Those who would destroy me are
powerful, being wrongfully my
enemies;
What I did not steal, I then have to
restore.*

(Psalm 69:1-4)

Sin had robbed us of our relationship with God, but Jesus, God's own Son, had come to make its restoration possible for any one of us. Psalm 69 with its waves and deep waters is one of the Bible's poetic and graphic descriptions which we can take as having an application to Jesus when he died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). For it was then he was baptized in floods of death, when the waves of God's judgement against sin broke over him: the innocent, sinless substitute who had been provided as part of God's plan to bring salvation to everyone who believes on him.

Seven times in association with that

great storm of the cross, the voice of the Lord was heard, reminding us of the seven mentions of 'the voice of the Lord' in Psalm 29 in the middle of the storm described there. You'll remember how we said that the marvellous word picture of the development of a great storm there is punctuated seven times by 'the voice of the Lord'. In this booklet, I'd like us to consider each of the seven sayings of our Saviour from out of the terrible storm of Calvary where he died. We begin with the first of those seven cries from the cross, which we read about in Luke chapter 23:

When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

(Luke 23:33,34)

Obviously, this is the scene of the crucifixion. Jesus' days of moving about among the people, his days of teaching and healing were at an end, for his hands and feet – those hands which had done such good - were now nailed to the cross. He could no longer travel on errands of mercy, but what he could do, he did: he turned to the ministry of prayer on behalf of others. We pause here just to say that, as you listen, you may be someone who doesn't have freedom of movement any longer, perhaps as

a result of advancing age or because of the onset of illness. Please don't feel that there's nothing useful you can do now; instead, follow our Lord's wonderful example of engaging in a ministry of prayer for others.

In praying like this for those who abused him, the Lord was fulfilling his own teaching, for he'd previously said: *"Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."* (Luke 6:28) This was a masterful example of practising in our own lives what we preach to others.

Previously, Jesus had pronounced forgiveness - as in the case of the paralysed man. On that occasion, recorded in Mark's gospel, chapter 2, he'd said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven"* (v.5). But now, here on the cross, he prays to his Father in heaven to forgive them. Why the difference? Is it because here at the cross, Jesus, though still the Son of God, was now our representative, identifying with us so that he might, in the will of God, die the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18)?

The Lord was praying for those who did not know what they were doing. The law of God in the Old Testament had underlined the seriousness of sin in God's estimate, by demanding that even sins committed in ignorance had to be dealt with (e.g. Leviticus 4:2). Ignorance is no excuse. Those who nailed Jesus Christ to that shameful cross were not aware of the enormity of what they were doing: imagine crucifying the Lord of glory! Satan still blinds the minds of the unbelieving today to prevent them from seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4) - and from seeing what the cross, in reality, is all about. But this blind ignorance is no excuse. The Lord's prayer shows such sins also require to be forgiven. Think about that.

As the storm was about to break, the Lord's voice was heard in prayer - and what a prayer! And what a magnificent Saviour! - one who's now risen as the living Word of God! *Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts* (Hebrews 4:7).

2. With me in Paradise

I remember one night lying in bed as a tropical storm broke overhead. I don't know if it was the noise of the storm which woke me or the fact that I was getting wet! Rainwater was pouring down the wall of the room. The friendly hotel staff member was very helpful - he assisted me in pulling the bed out a few centimetres further away from the wall, so at least I didn't get wet. It's a different class of service you get in some parts of the world!

There's something awesome about a terrific storm: something to do with the display of raw power. In this booklet we'll keep referring back to Psalm 29 - a psalm which graphically describes for us the voice of the Lord. Let's remind ourselves of what it says:

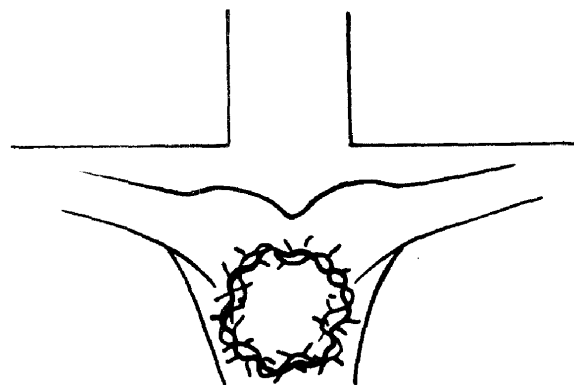
*The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;
The God of glory thunders, The LORD is over many waters.
The voice of the LORD is powerful,
The voice of the LORD is majestic.
The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
And Sirion like a young wild ox.
The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the*

*wilderness;
The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everything says,
"Glory!"*

(Psalm 29:3-9)

The storm, that David seems to have been watching, reminded him that God's in control - even in the storms of life. Seven times he mentions 'the voice of the Lord' - as being on the waters; as being powerful; as being majestic; as breaking trees; as making flames of fire; as shaking the desert; and as making the forest bare - in total seven reminders that the voice of the Lord is magnificent.

There are other kinds of storms too. In the storms of life God's voice can sound equally powerful and majestic. The Bible makes reference to what it calls 'the treasures of darkness'. I'd like to apply that phrase today to



something we can all possess - something which can be ours because God's Son, Jesus, came to a dark place, so we could have this treasure. The world became dark when Jesus died on the cross. The Bible describes Jesus as enduring a great storm there: with waves of suffering breaking over him (Psalm 69). Seven times the voice of the Lord Jesus was heard from the cross, the cross where the greatest ever storm broke. And now we come to the second of the seven times the Lord's voice was heard. We'll let the gospel writer, Luke, bring it to us from his gospel, chapter 23:

One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"

But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"

And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Yes, this is Christ's word spoken to the dying thief. It tells the story of an eleventh hour conversion - recorded to demonstrate that we're saved by

faith, and not by works. For what works could a man do who was bound hand and foot to a cross? But equally, this record of how one of the thieves received salvation proves how essential genuine repentance is for anyone who wants to be saved.

Notice the thief's unqualified confession: "We are receiving what we deserve for our deeds." Unlike his accomplice in crime who was crucified on the other side of Jesus, this man no longer screams abuse or demands to be freed from this punishment he's experiencing. He admits he's getting what he deserves. There are no more excuses, nor any appeals for sympathy - just an acceptance of guilt on his part.

Hanging next to Christ in death, this man's whole way of thinking underwent a profound change. That's what the Bible means by repentance. The dying thief's view of himself and of his past deeds has changed, but so has his view of Christ. He's stopped joining in with the mockery. Remember, this man has lived a lawless life, one which has opposed the rule of law. His had been a life of obvious rebellion, defying the government of the day as a political activist or murderous bandit - or perhaps both. Fair play was something he'd never had any respect for.

But, now, see the effect of his repentance. He's done with anarchy: he's applying to be admitted to the

kingdom of Christ! He's willingly yielding to his rule and authority, while fully recognizing Christ's right to reign over him. The Bible says we all need to repent. Even if we've been law-abiding citizens in our relations with our country, for it's been a different story in our relations with God. The Bible doesn't charge us all with serious crimes, but it does charge us all with 'going astray' from God. Every one of us. We've turned, every one, to his own way, the prophet Isaiah says. And what God requires is repentance: which is that we, the unrighteous, forsake our thoughts - our own wicked and rebellious thoughts - and return to the Lord.

This world is in the mess it's in, because we all go about acting like little gods, trying to take charge of our own lives. The dying thief had done that big time. But he was through with it. He was handing over the reins of his life to Christ - at the eleventh hour.

The dying thief had not only repented of his sin, but had also placed his faith in Christ. But you may say: "How?" He didn't say, "I believe." No, but he spoke of Christ's future kingdom. That took faith, for Christ was dying at his side. Evidently, he'd come to believe that, despite Christ dying on the cross at that moment, he would one day come again to reign.

What might have inspired such faith in this God-fearing thief? Had he

heard the Lord's first cry from the cross - the one we considered in the previous chapter of the booklet? - when he'd prayed a prayer of forgiveness for those who had driven the nails into his hands and feet. Surely here was evidence not only of innocence but of unearthly goodness! How could anyone pray for those who were so brutally abusing him? Had that been the point when the thief, witnessing it, had at last begun to care about the difference between right and wrong?

"In our case we deserved it," he heard himself say. "But this man has done nothing wrong." As the penny was dropping for him, it might have seemed too little, too late. He realized he'd done wrong, surely many wrongs. He needed to get right with God. But how could that happen now. Surely, he'd left it too late. Any resolution to reform his ways was a waste of his dying breath. Besides, the pain shooting through his body was a disincentive to prayer, and he was likely a complete stranger to prayer anyway.

What could he do, but turn, as a poor, broken rebel to Christ. If those soldiers could be forgiven because they didn't know the enormity of what they were doing, surely he could be forgiven - he, who had never realized before how wonderful God's King really was - until being nailed alongside him. He'd never intended to rebel against a king like that - like the man crucified next to

him with the superscription: 'This is Jesus, the king of the Jews'. So at the end of his life, a self-confessed anarchist bowed his heart in faith to heaven's King - and was at once assured of admittance into that coming kingdom.

We're never told his previous partner in crime turned to Christ, we're left to assume he departed this life to face the judgement to come; whereas this thief departed to enjoy the kingdom to come - more than that to be in Paradise with Christ that very same day!

How full of majesty was the voice of the Lord that day: "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise." As supernatural darkness was about to descend at noon that day, and the storm about to break in earnest over Jesus, hearing those words of Jesus was treasure beyond anything the repentant thief could ever have hoped for! Treasures of darkness indeed!

Have you received treasure like that? Even the forgiveness of sins by repenting and believing on the sacrifice of God's Son for you?

3. Behold your mother

The Lord had been in physical storms on the Sea of Galilee with his disciples. One time they had wakened him in fear for their lives while he was asleep in the stern of a storm-tossed boat. On that occasion, he'd risen up and given a command to the wind and the waves, and they'd obeyed him. No wonder the disciples had asked: "What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the waves obey him!" The voice of the Lord had been upon the waters as a powerful voice, a majestic voice.

Just like we read in Psalm 29:

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;

The God of glory thunders, The LORD is over many waters.

The voice of the LORD is powerful, The voice of the LORD is majestic.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;

Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, And Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.

The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;

The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

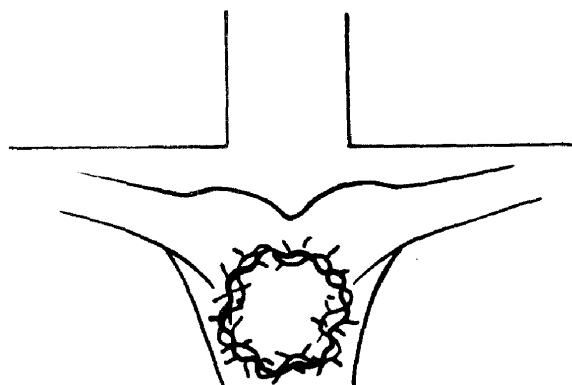
The voice of the LORD makes the

*deer to calve
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everything says,
"Glory!"*

(Psalm 29:3-9)

But it was an altogether different tempest that raged at Calvary, where Jesus died. While Jesus hung there, the greatest storm ever broke over him. Not a physical storm, but the storm of God's wrath, God's anger against sin, while he, Jesus, the Son of God, was there as the Lamb of God to bear away the sin of the world (John 1:29). There, Christ died for his creature's sins, according to the Bible (1 Corinthians 15:3). He suffered there as no one has ever suffered, and seven times from the cross the Saviour's voice was heard.

In our study we come to the third of these sayings, the one in which Christ addressed the disciple, John, and his mother, Mary. We'll let John himself tell us about the exchange



from his record found in John's Gospel, chapter 19:

... standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. (John 19:25-27)

There's a power and a majesty about these words which were spoken as the storm gathered that day, but first we should try to capture the pathos of the scene. The godly Simeon had foreseen it by the Spirit of God, when, in taking the infant Jesus from Mary's arms some 33 years earlier, he'd turned to Mary and said:

"Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed - and a sword will pierce even your own soul - to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34,35)

It must have seemed a strange thing for Simeon to say. Was she not the most highly favoured among women? To become the mother of the long-awaited Messiah - was that not an indescribable privilege? Of course, it was. But Simeon's words had sounded ominous. And it had not taken long for Mary's soul to be

pierced with trouble. How hard it must have been for her to bear the news of Herod's murderous intentions towards her son, not to mention the trauma of fleeing to Egypt! And the pain had flared up again when Jesus began to be openly despised and rejected during his public ministry. But what could have prepared her for this? To be standing by the cruel tree, the cross of her son, her mother's heart breaking. Had she not been the first to plant kisses on that brow - that brow that was now crowned with thorns? Had she not guided those hands and feet when as an infant he'd first begun to move around - and now she sees them nailed to the cross? The sword of which Simeon had spoken is now fully plunged into her soul.

As far as the Gospel writers reveal, Mary watched in silence, as the crowds passed by, as the thieves taunted, and the priests jeered and the soldiers paraded their callous indifference. Courageously, Mary stands there, not swooning or wailing, but maintaining her composure. Our Lord had been let down and betrayed in Gethsemane's garden, he'd been denied by Peter, and forsaken by all - but in loving courage Mary stands supportively by his cross.

During his mock trial, we read that the high priest had asked Jesus about his disciples (John 18:19). We can't fill in the blanks with any certainty, but we wouldn't have been

surprised to hear a sneer: "And where are those followers of yours now?" They were looking for cover from the storm, as far as it affected them.

But here was Mary standing by the cross, by this time probably a widow.

I wonder, had this been in the Lord's mind when he'd encountered the widow at Nain - the widow who had been heading out to bury her son? The grief of losing a life-partner had been followed by the loss of a special son. The Lord had been moved with compassion for that dear woman. And now he looks with compassion on his own mother. It seems likely that Joseph had died some time ago - the last record anywhere of him is back at the time when Jesus had been a boy of 12, remaining behind at the Jerusalem temple. Mary, almost certainly a widow, is now losing her special son on whom she'd depended so much.

Despite the greatest storm being about to break, bringing with it the most demanding undertaking ever in the history of the world, the Lord's thoughts are still for others. He's already prayed for the soldiers who nailed him there; once again he fulfils not only his own teaching, but the law of Moses - by honouring his mother. Subject to his parents as a youth; he now honours his mother at his death. No doubt; but there's a lesson here. When engaged in the greatest work for God, our Lord himself was considerate of those

bound to him by natural family ties. And so we're taught not to fail to provide for our own. Nothing excuses us from that sacred duty - a duty made sacred in no small way by this memorable action of our Lord's, and by these magnificently caring words of his, spoken as the storm closed in upon him.

We've thought of how the disciples had left him and fled. But at least there was one of them who came back. The disciple John, also known as 'the disciple whom the Lord loved', has made it back to the cross. Perhaps, John, simply because of his frequent description as the disciple whom the Lord loved, would be the very one we'd expect to overcome his fear, to think better of himself, and to return to his Lord at the end. It's one of those quiet consistencies in the Word of God which adds further to our sense of confidence in the total authenticity of the Bible. Of all the disciples, of course, it was John who returned.

No rebuke awaits John, only a tremendous honour: to be given responsibility for the care of the Lord's widowed mother. Perhaps, we, too, have known what it is to desert the Lord in some hour of trial which has overtaken us. Here in the case of John, and of how the Lord treated him, we can find real encouragement - encouragement to come back to the Lord, to draw near again to his precious, wounded side. We can appreciate something of the

Lord's wisdom here, for it does seem that John and Mary would be fit companions for each other, having both enjoyed an intimate bond with Christ. From that hour forward, we're told, John took her to his own home. Now, you remember how, on the third day, in the early hours of the resurrection morning, John had outrun Peter to the tomb, where they had found no body. At that moment, in the early dawn, we read about John believing - it became a personal dawning for him of the reality of

Jesus' promised resurrection. What does he then do? He went away to his own home, we read (John 20:10). "What's the significance in that?" you may ask. Well, at least in John's case, there's a special significance: for who's in his home - but Mary, the mother of the Lord. At once he would go to share with her the news of what's he's witnessed and come to believe. It's just another of the harmonies of the Bible, giving further credibility to the resurrection event and the reliability of the entire Bible.

4. Why have you forsaken me?

Seven times we get a mention of the voice of the LORD in the great storm of Psalm 29:

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters ...

*The voice of the LORD is powerful,
The voice of the LORD is majestic.*

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars ...

The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.

The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness ...

The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve

And strips the forests bare ...

(Psalm 29:3-9)

That's the dramatic backcloth we're keeping in mind as we gather around the Saviour's cross. While Jesus hung there, the greatest ever storm broke upon him; not a physical storm, but the storm of God's anger against sin.

Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls;

all your breakers and your waves have gone over me ... (Psalm 42:7)

No one ever experienced an application of the psalmist's words like Christ. Overwhelmed with grief, the floodgates of God's wrath against human sin opened against him there,

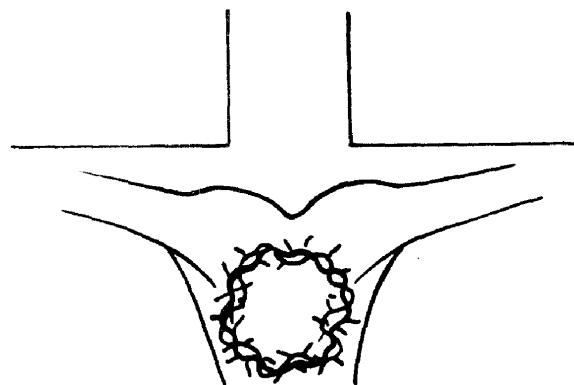
as wave upon wave of sorrow engulfed his soul. He suffered there as no one has ever suffered; and seven times from the cross the Saviour's voice was heard. We now come to the fourth of these sayings, which is recorded in Matthew's Gospel:

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45,46)

This is, of course, a quotation from Psalm 22, that great psalm of the cross, which begins:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?



*O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.
 Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.
 In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.
 To you they cried and were rescued
 ...
 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned ... and despised by the people.
 All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;
 "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"*

(Psalm 22:1-8)

In the great storm which broke upon him at Calvary, our Lord knew what it was to be abandoned by God, for he hung there as the representative of God's rebellious human creation. He was dying *the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God* (1 Peter 3:18). The Bible could not have made the substitution principle any clearer. It was not for sins which he had done that he groaned upon the tree. Jesus Christ the Righteous, the just, was dying in our place: for us who were unjust in the sight of a holy God, who is our Maker. On the cross, Jesus was forsaken by God, so that all who believe in his sacrifice for them, will never be forsaken by God - and such God-forsakenness is the punishment our sins truly deserve. Our rebellious nature makes us want to push God away from us: either in

bold defiance or simply by ignoring his claims upon our lives - or even by our patronising self-righteousness. God's sentence for sinners, as revealed in the Bible, is to give us what we ask for: which is separation from *himself*. *The wages of sin is death*, the Bible says, and this spiritual death is the separation of our souls from God. Make no mistake about it: we will exist for ever: but that eternal existence will either be in the presence of God or in separation from God. And since God is the author of life, to be separate from him, is to be separate from all that's good and worthwhile: from all that makes for happiness. God does not want any of us to perish in those terms, so he sent his Son, Jesus, to pay in his death the price we owed as the consequence of our sins. That's what the terrible loneliness of that God-forsaken cross, with its supernatural darkness, was all about.

God had signalled this in advance. The nation of Israel, throughout Old Testament history, had observed a God-given ritual. Once a year, when their sins were brought to remembrance, two goats were taken. One was slaughtered at the altar, and the other - after having had all the sins of the people symbolically transferred to it - was led into a desert place and left behind there. Utterly alone, and forsaken, it was left to wander and die, bearing the sins of all the people. The New Testament shows the wonderful grace of God our Judge, when it

unmistakably identifies Jesus Christ, God's Son, as the ultimate sin-bearer. He bore none of the moral characteristics of our sins, but he did bear the legal consequences of them, as he hung there, forsaken by God upon the cross, paying in his death the wages of our sin.

This was God's plan of the ages. A plan conceived by him before even the universe had been created. God's Son had been born into humanity with the intention of dying to make our salvation possible. In the first Christian sermon, Peter had said that:

Jesus [was], delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, (but, he went on to address the Jews) you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence."

(Acts 2:23-28)

Peter was quoting from a different psalm which promised that the soul of God's Christ would not be abandoned to Hades, neither would his body see corruption. Jesus' prayer from the cross had, of course, been heard. Here was the answer. Jesus had not been delivered from death, but rather, out of death (Hebrews 5:7 literally). On Friday it looked to all the world like a defeat, but Sunday - resurrection Sunday - was coming, and that would declare Christ's great victory. It reminds me of how the Duke of Wellington's famous victory over Napoleon at Waterloo was announced in England on 18 June, 1815. It was by a system of flag signals from the tower of Winchester Cathedral. The message was spelt out letter by letter. Onlookers read WELLINGTON DEFEATED ... But then a dense fog rolled in and they lost sight of the flags. The incomplete message spread gloom and despair all the way to London. When the fog finally lifted all the flags were now visible and the full message could be seen to read: WELLINGTON DEFEATED THE ENEMY. The good news spread like wildfire and lifted the people from gloom to gladness. That story closely parallels the story of the great battle that took place on the cross 2000 years ago when Jesus Christ endured three hours of suffering and then death, while bearing the punishment for our sins. From Friday evening, gloom descended over Jesus followers. As they dealt with his body the message really seemed to them

to be reading: JESUS DEFEATED. But come Sunday morning, the gloom had lifted - for there was the empty tomb: and so the full message was JESUS DEFEATED THE ENEMY. Now, God invites us to share the victory of His Son. How? He *'commands all ... to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.'*

Another psalm, Psalm 18, written by king David, after he'd known a time of God's deliverance, contains such dramatic poetry that it seems to point way beyond David and on to David's greater son, Jesus Christ. I invite you to connect it with the most glorious of all deliverances - when God delivered Jesus out of the death which he suffered for us. The psalm says - and now think of Jesus:

*I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.
The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of destruction assailed me;
the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.
In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.
Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the*

*mountains trembled and quaked,
because he was angry.
Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.
He bowed the heavens and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.
He rode on a cherub and flew;
he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water ...
He sent from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of many waters.
He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support.
He brought me out into a broad place;
he rescued me, because he delighted in me. (Psalm 18:3-19)*

Do you remember the taunt of Jesus' tormentors as they gathered around his cross? Let God rescue him if He delights in him. God did, because he really did delight in him. He delighted in him every day of his earthly life, even as he had delighted in him from all eternity. Well might we say - again with the psalmist -

*... exalted be the God of my salvation
... [who] gives great deliverance to
... His anointed (Psalm 18:46,50).*

5. I thirst

The fifth time the Lord's voice was heard from the cross is recorded for us in John's Gospel where we read in chapter 19:

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfil the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. (John 19:28,29)

From what immediately follows, we know Jesus said this only a short while before he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. And, if we compare the account in Matthew's Gospel, we can also place it as following on from his previous cry of abandonment: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Let's rewind to that point in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 27:

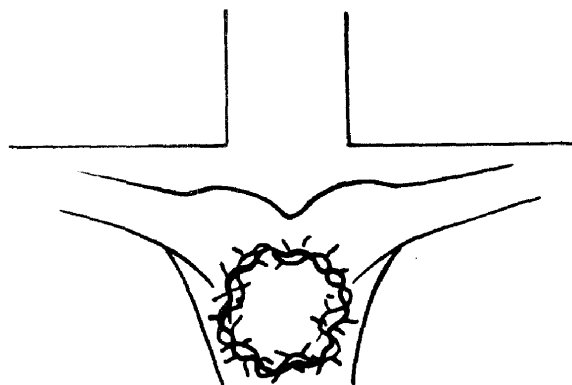
From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah."

And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it

to him to drink. (Matthew 27:45-48)

We see that it was in response to Jesus' cry expressing his sense of utter desolation that some bystander gave him a drink of sour wine. But John has already told us that this happened after Jesus said, "I thirst." So, it seems the fourth and fifth utterances were spoken one after the other, and then the wine was given. Which further means, that the cry, "I thirst," was spoken around the time in which the Lord emerged from the strange darkness which had shrouded the scene of the cross from noon until 3 pm. As one preacher (Spurgeon) famously said: "It was midnight at midday." The Lord had been on the cross from 9 am that morning. He had experienced three hours of daylight; and three hours of darkness while hanging there. I was reminded of that fact recently when reading various psalms which talk about 'day and night', often in relation to some deep trial through which the psalmist was passing. One



of them is Psalm 42 which reads:

*As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the
living God.
When shall I come and appear
before God?
My tears have been my food day
and night, while they say to me
continually, "Where is your God?"
... Deep calls to deep at the roar of
your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me.
By day the LORD commands his
steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me, a
prayer to the God of my life.*

(Psalm 42:1-8)

Those who passed through the experiences behind these words must have endured literal days and nights of weeping and attempts at drawing near to God. At times, God had seemed far away, and their souls thirsted for him, and for a sense of his presence. But, earlier in this booklet, when we recalled the words of verse 7:

*... Deep calls to deep at the roar of
your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me ...*

... we wondered if anyone but the Lord - on the cross - could fully have known this experience of all God's breakers engulfing him? That thought now invites us to apply other parts of this psalm to the greatest of all trials, namely the cross where

Jesus died. There was, in effect, day and night there - if we allow for the period of light followed by the period of darkness, the latter of which we might call the 'night season of Calvary'.

What we have seen from the comparison of John's Gospel with Matthew's Gospel - the comparison with which we began this chapter - is that this fifth cry from the cross, when the Saviour said, "I thirst," came as he emerged from the darkness around the ninth hour. We're told it was to fulfil scripture that Jesus cried out, "I thirst." What amazing composure - to think that in all that terrible ordeal, the Lord continued to meditate on the Scriptures, like the blessed man of Psalm 1. You remember how that psalm begins:

*Blessed is the man who walks not in
the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the
LORD,
and on his law he meditates day
and night.*

(Psalm 1:1,2)

In the day and night - in the light and dark periods of the cross - the Lord was meditating on God's Word. Various psalms, it seems, were on his mind, and at this point perhaps, none more so than Psalm 69:

*Save me, O God! For the waters
have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire, where there is*

*no foothold;
 I have come into deep waters, and
 the flood sweeps over me.
 I am weary with my crying out;
 my throat is parched ...
 More in number than the hairs of
 my head are those who hate me
 without cause;
 mighty are those who would
 destroy me, those who attack
 me with lies.
 What I did not steal must I now
 restore?
 ... For it is for your sake that I
 have borne reproach, that
 dishonor has covered my face.
 I have become a stranger to my
 brothers, an alien to my
 mother's sons.
 For zeal for your house has
 consumed me, and the
 reproaches of those who
 reproach you have fallen on me
 ...
 ... I became a byword to them.
 I am the talk of those who sit in
 the gate, and the drunkards
 make songs about me...
 Deliver me from sinking in the
 mire;
 let me be delivered from my
 enemies and from the deep
 waters.
 Let not the flood sweep over me,
 or the deep swallow me up, or
 the pit close its mouth over me
 ...
 Reproaches have broken my
 heart, so that I am in despair.
 I looked for pity, but there was
 none, and for comforters, but I
 found none.*

*They gave me poison for food, and
 for my thirst they gave me sour
 wine to drink.*

(Psalm 69:1-21)

In order to get the full force of this fifth saying of the Saviour from the cross, we need to notice its setting: *Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfil the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty."* The reference here is the very point on which we ended our quotation of Psalm 69 a moment ago: *for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.* The predictions of all the previous verses of that particular psalm had already been fulfilled. He'd sunk in the deep mire (v.2); he had been hated without a cause (v.3); he had borne reproach and shame (v.7); he had become a stranger to his brethren (v.8); and a byword, the talk of those in the gate, the song of the drunkards (vv.11,12); and so on ... In his meditation, emerging from Calvary's dark night, he had worked his way down to the twenty-first verse: *for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.*

Only this remained to be fulfilled, and so to bring it about, he cried out, "I thirst!" We say again: what composure! And what an example to us: in enduring this painful trial, the Lord was meditating on God's Word. He had reviewed the entire range of predictions there which had been made concerning the Christ and the death he was to accomplish. Everything that belonged to him in

the first 20 verses of Psalm 69 had been fulfilled, it only remained for him to receive the sour wine at this point, and so he cried out, "I thirst." 'The voice of the LORD is majestic'. These words from Psalm 29 seem so appropriate now. The fifth saying is so simple - "I thirst," but in their context they're majestic as we reflect with wonder and with worshipful hearts on our Saviour's composure. Of course, they also emphasize to us the real humanity of the Son of God made flesh so that he might taste death for us on the cross. And they mark the deeper fact that having known God's forsaking for the past three hours of darkness, his deeper thirst now is for the presence of God again, for renewed communion.

What a challenge these words present us with! Christ had fulfilled every scripture in that psalm except one, and now he was anxious to fulfil that as well. Sometimes we're content with partial obedience. If our lives comply with a few scriptures we feel content, but here's the challenge that comes from this fifth saying - a simple cry, but with a profound challenge - is there one scripture, one biblical command which the Holy

Spirit is bringing to our attention, one which we've not yet put into effect in our lives? As we consider today the magnificent example of our Saviour, shall we not now resolve together that we simply can't evade that scripture any longer?

There's another time in John's Gospel when it's recorded that, early in his ministry, the Lord sat by a well, thirsty. He asked a woman there to give him a drink, but there's no actual record that he received one. The Lord did go on to say that doing the will of his God and Father was meat and drink to him. What refreshed him that day more than any physical drink, I suggest, was the fact that the sinner woman responded to the will of God in her life. In Revelation 3 verse 20, the Lord is pictured as seeking admittance to a place at the table of our heart. If we respond to him, and enjoy the communion he's looking for, then it says not only will we sup with him, but he'll sup with us. By our obedience, and by means of our communion, we can still refresh the Saviour. Shall we enter into his own thirst for communion?

6. *It is finished!*

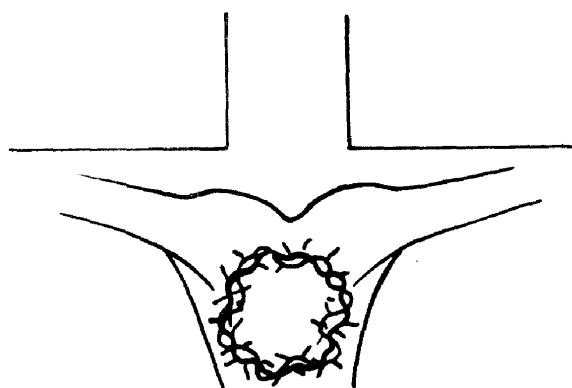
Vance Packard, in his book *The Hidden Persuaders*, tells of homemakers' problems with cake mixes in the days when they first appeared. The packets of cake-mix contained a warning not to add milk, but to 'just add water'. Some housewives would add milk anyway, as being their own special touch, and would then be disappointed when the cakes or muffins fell. Other cake mixes would also prohibit adding eggs, since eggs and milk had already been added in dry form by the manufacturer. But, women interviewed in the in-depth studies were disturbed: "What sort of cake is it if you just need to add tap water?" they asked incredulously.

It seems we all like to make our own individual contribution to the project in hand. We often don't like it when everything's done for us. It's also true of our salvation. After the preaching of the first Christian sermon, we read in Acts 2:41 concerning the audience reaction that day that: *they ... received his word ...* And that was it! That was all that was necessary for their salvation: just - if you like - the adding of the water of the Word (Ephesians 5:26), with no contribution of their own. For the Bible plainly teaches salvation is not by our own human works. We're

saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). It is not of works so that none of us may boast. It's not of ourselves. As the hymn says: 'There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin'. And that one was the Lord Jesus Christ. He has done the mighty work. That was what the cross was all about. And so it brings us to the sixth time the Lord's voice was heard from the cross:

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. (John 19:30)

The sixth saying that Jesus spoke from the cross was written down as the single Greek word 'tetelestai', which means, 'It is finished'. It's interesting that ancient receipts for taxes have been recovered which are on papyrus, and have this same Greek word 'tetelestai' written across them. So here's an everyday business use of this word from about the same point in history - and the



meaning in that context is very clear: a person's taxes had been 'paid in full.' The tax-collector was satisfied! That helps us to understand that when Jesus spoke the word 'tetelestai' or 'it is finished', it truly means that all the debt owing as a result of the believer's sins has been paid in full. Jesus paid the price by his death on the cross.

It may be true that many a dying person has said: "I am finished." But Christ said, "It is finished." And there's a world of a difference between the two! Jesus meant all the work of salvation was completed. He had suffered the penalty of God's justice which human sin deserved.

I'd like to remind us how closely this sixth saying of the Lord on the cross followed on from the previous utterance. Again, we're reading from John's Gospel:

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. (John 19:28-30)

It's interesting that the word for 'it is finished' is the same one that's used when referring to all things having

been accomplished - just a couple of verses earlier.

So what was finished? The Law had been fulfilled as never before; and the Messianic prophecies which the Lord had been mentally reviewing were accomplished; but more than that: the work of our salvation was itself completed - with nothing left for us to do. *For Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures'*, so the apostle Paul told the believers at Corinth (1 Corinthians 15:3). "It is finished," was the sixth time our Lord's voice was heard from the cross. It was the sixth out of seven utterances, and we've taken our cue from the Bible in likening the Lord's trial of suffering on the cross to a storm; without doubt the greatest storm ever.

In this booklet, we've thought often about how Psalm 29 is set over against the powerful display of a developing storm. Seven times we get a mention of the voice of the LORD in its description:

*The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;
The God of glory thunders,
The LORD is over many waters.
The voice of the LORD is powerful,
The voice of the LORD is majestic.
The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
And Sirion like a young wild ox.
The voice of the LORD hews out*

*flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the
wilderness;
The LORD shakes the wilderness of
Kadesh.
The voice of the LORD makes the
deer to calve
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everything says,
"Glory!"*

(Psalm 29:3-9)

That's the dramatic backcloth we're keeping in mind as we gather around the Saviour's cross. While Jesus hung there, the greatest storm ever broke upon him. He suffered there as no one has ever suffered.

The voice of the Lord makes the deer to calve. And in this sixth triumphant cry of the Lord from the storm of Calvary, we too can find our spiritual birth. In his death, can be our birth. The work of salvation is done for us! On our part we must only repent and believe.

In the opening chapter of this booklet I described a memorable afternoon when a group of us sat together, sharing God's Word. There was a real sense that it was being received as the voice of the living God. Questions came pouring out, and repeatedly we turned to the most relevant Bible verses to provide answers that satisfied hearts which were seriously thirsty. Finally, one lady said, "It's magnificent!"

It truly is a magnificent experience whenever we hear God's voice speaking to our heart out of our

reading in his Word, the Bible. I pray you'll hear the Lord's voice even now in his word from the cross: "It is finished." Rest by faith in his finished work for your eternal salvation. He wants to be your personal saviour, if only you'll repent and come to him. Perhaps, one of Jesus' own stories will help to emphasise to us again that for salvation, it's not our works, but his alone, that counts:

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

"The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

"I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

This parable was not spoken to play down good works - just to put them in their correct place. We must never

trust in our own works and expect God to accept us on the basis of our performance.

Suppose a top athlete and an overweight middle-aged man were about to begin a 100 m sprint. If the athlete has trained hard and is at the peak of his form, while his opponent has been smoking and drinking, the athlete would be less than honest if he were not confident of his ability to win the contest (although boasting is always inexcusable).

When it comes to the work that those who are already Christians are expected to do for God, Paul urges us to adopt the attitude of the athlete in training. There are eternal prizes to be won by careful discipline; whereas, by contrast, carelessness and indulgence may well cause us to be disqualified from service (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Good works, the Bible says, are to come after, or to accompany, salvation.

But rewards for work well done, important and eternal as they are, are in an altogether different

category from salvation and acceptance with God (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Our acceptance can never depend on our work, nor is salvation a competitive race in which the best performers get the prize. Our very best performance comes far short of God's standards of perfection. But what we can never earn - salvation - God is prepared to give us solely upon the condition of repentance and faith. This is what the story of the tax-collector and the Pharisee shows us. We must all say: "God be merciful to me the sinner!" The comparatively good man (the Pharisee) could not make himself acceptable on any other grounds, and so was, in fact, in no way superior to the most wicked of men.

Whoever we are, or think we are, we need to come 'just as we are', and throw ourselves on the mercy of the Saviour who finished all the work of our salvation for us on the cross. Then, having received God's gift of salvation, we're to do our personal best in service.

7. I commit my spirit

For more than twelve hours Christ had been in the hands of sinners just as he had predicted would happen, as early as Matthew chapter 17:

... while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." (Matthew 17:22,23)

Then, as the actual time drew near, while in the Garden of Gethsemane, *[Jesus] came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners."* (Matthew 26:45)

Then, in retrospect, the angels at the empty tomb announced to the women who had come there with their spices:

"He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." (Luke 24:6,7)

But, now, at the end of the three hours of darkness, Christ spoke his final word from the cross:

... crying out with a loud voice, [He]

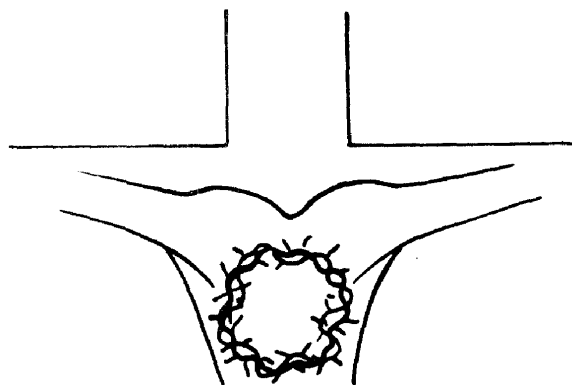
said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46)

He had surrendered himself bodily into the hands of sinners at the time of his arrest in the garden, but now, at the end of his cross ordeal, he committed his spirit into his Father's hands.

Luke, with his focus on Christ the man, records, simply, that he breathed his last. That could be thought of as quite passive. But, Matthew, who presents Christ as King, writes that the Lord literally 'sent forth' or 'dismissed' his spirit, a deliberate action consistent with the authority of a king.

It's important for us to notice that, for, earlier in his ministry, the Lord Jesus had said:

"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on



My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." (John 10:17,18)

Christ's death was absolutely unique. His life was not taken from him. He laid down his life on his own initiative, as an act of his own volition, albeit in obedience to the command he had received from his Father. It's this truth that lies behind the committal of his spirit to his Father.

We notice that it's another psalm which this final saying fulfils. It's already clear that the Lord has been meditating on Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 especially, but now it's the turn of Psalm 31:

*In You, O LORD, I have taken
refuge;
Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness deliver me.
Incline Your ear to me, rescue me
quickly;
Be to me a rock of strength,
A stronghold to save me.
For You are my rock and my
fortress;
For Your name's sake You will lead
me and guide me.
You will pull me out of the net
which they have secretly laid for
me,
For You are my strength.
Into Your hand I commit my spirit.*

(Psalm 31:1-5)

This is very precious. For three hours the communion of the Son with the

Father had been broken; during those awful three hours he had been forsaken on account of the fact that he was bearing sin for others. But now that storm is over. The bitter cup of suffering has been drained by him. The darkness recedes again. And now the Saviour is once more in communion with his Father - a communion never more to be broken. The first cry from the cross had been, "Father, forgive ..."; the last of the seven sayings is, "Father, ... I commit my spirit." Communion restored.

Seven times in relation to the great storm of the cross, the voice of the Lord was heard, reminding us of the seven mentions of 'the voice of the Lord' in Psalm 29. You may remember how we suggested that the marvellous word picture of the development of a great storm there is punctuated seven times by 'the voice of the Lord'.

*The voice of the LORD is upon the
waters;
The God of glory thunders,
The LORD is over many waters.
The voice of the LORD is powerful,
The voice of the LORD is majestic.
The voice of the LORD breaks the
cedars;
Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the
cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
And Sirion like a young wild ox.
The voice of the LORD hews out
flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the
wilderness;*

*The LORD shakes the wilderness of
Kadesh.*

*The voice of the LORD makes the
deer to calve*

And strips the forests bare;

*And in His temple everything says,
"Glory!"*

(Psalm 29:3-9)

In this booklet, we've considered each of the seven sayings of our Saviour, spoken from the cross with its associated terrible storm. We have emphasized the power and the majesty of his voice amid all that storm.

Let's conclude our study, then, by referring back to a day in the life of the Lord Jesus when he and his disciples experienced a natural storm on the Sea of Galilee:

On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side."

Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

And He got up and rebuked the wind

and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Matthew 4:35-41)

Another of the Gospel records has the disciples saying: "What kind of man is this?" And well they might. And the best answer to that question was given by the centurion at the foot of Christ's cross. The Lord's stormy trial of suffering was over, seven times his majestic voice had sounded, concluding powerfully with:

... a loud cry, and [then he] breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Matthew 15:37-39)

As we've heard the Lord's voice resound powerfully, majestically, those seven times from the storm of the cross as we've worked our way through this study, I pray that's also been the response of your heart: "Truly this man is the Son of God!" - my magnificent Saviour.

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