

Numbering Our Days

Part 1

The psalmist Moses prayed, ‘So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom’, Psalm 90:12.

As he uses the word ‘so’ here then it must mean that he is in the middle of a line of thought: therefore we must read what he is already saying. The immediate context is from verse seven:

‘For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

‘The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

‘So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.’

Moses betrayed a healthy fear of the Lord in these words. He knew that God could see into his heart: that even his secret sins were not hidden from the view of the Almighty – from the light of his countenance. Here was the Holy God before whom Moses and the people lived, and he shrank before His majesty, power and wrath. Sin was no light thing to this man of faith and he saw that because his life on earth was so fleeting, and that eternity before him was so real, vast and imminent, he needed the Saviour, the Redeemer – here referred to as ‘wisdom’ – to abide and remain with him, cp. the whole Psalm; and so he prayed, ‘teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.’

But Moses was not just praying for himself, as the ‘us’ and ‘our’ indicate; but for himself and the people under his charge. So this was no personal or private prayer but a prayer which, if answered, would issue in a spiritual unity, and a body of people in the faith growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Saviour. And what greater fruit could be manifest among the people of God:

that their one desire would be to ‘apply their hearts unto wisdom’? Indeed, ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering’, James 1:5,6.

But where are the people today who have such a desire? Who, first of all, are even numbering their days in the light of the brevity of time, the sinfulness of sin, and the imminence of eternity; and, therefore, are seeking to apply their hearts unto wisdom: it being the only sure and needful thing to do? Again, does the professing church today even know what wisdom is? For you can be sure – as we will go on to show – that this wisdom is not to be found in or of ourselves; and if not there, then where? In the light of which, is there any evidence among us of a felt deficiency of this wisdom, of a mourning over the lack of it, or even of the need for it? Only the reader can answer these questions.

Your Days Are Numbered

Before we come to look at what it is to ‘apply our hearts unto wisdom’ we must first realise that, as ‘our days are numbered’, it would be good if we were found in the habit of doing the same. Moses, who actually lived until he was a hundred and twenty years, obviously felt the need to pray to the Lord that He would teach both himself and the people to be sober-minded regarding the length of their lives on earth: even to the numbering of their days.

Nowadays, of course, we count our ages in years – and children usually add a fraction of a year as well: ‘I’m six-and-three-quarters!’ This is because we, in our carnal forms of religion and worldly-mindedness, have become dulled to spiritual things and have lost any real vision of how God thinks and judges, cp. Prov. 29:18. But in this psalm we read that in the mind and estimation of godly souls our lives are counted as much in days as in years: hence the phrases, ‘all our days are passed away... the days of our years... number our days.’

It may be interesting for the reader to discover that, if we do count our ages in days instead of years, then our lives don’t seem to be as long as we imagine. Though this should not surprise us, for the scriptures often speak of the brevity of our lives: ‘What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away’, James 4:14; ‘LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity’, Psalm

39:4,5; 'Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and is full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not', Job 14:1,2; 'For [the LORD] knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more', Psalm 103:14-16, etc. Days, days, days!

If the reader is honest, and perhaps a little more advanced in years, then he will not be able to escape the truth of the above sentiments. Where have all the years gone! But, no; where have all the *days* gone! If I live till my next birthday – fifty years – I will have been alive a mere 18,262 days – including leap days: not even 20,000 days old!

The following sobering statistics show how reasonable it is for God to draw our attention to 'the days of our years'; for they are not many:

10 years = 3,652 days

20 years = 7,305 days

25 years = 9,131 days (Silver wedding anniversary, perhaps? What, all those years only 9,000 days!)

10,000 days = 27 years and about 5 months

30 years = 10,957 days

40 years = 14,610 days

50 years = 18,262 (Golden wedding)

20,000 days = 54 years and about 9 months

60 years = 21,915 days (The Queen's Diamond Jubilee)

65 years = 23,741 days (Retirement?)

70 years = 25,567 (The psalmist's 'threescore years and ten')

80 years = 29,220 ('...and if by reason of strength they be fourscore...' – not even 30,000!)

33,333 days = 91 years and about 4 months

100 years = 36,525 (A telegram from the Queen!)

40,000 days = 109 years and 6 months

120 years = 43,830 days (Moses' age)

So, it's only been about 730,000 days since the Lord Jesus and his apostles walked the earth: that's only 25 lifetimes at 80 years a time; or about 80 generations! And as the earth is about 6,000 years old then it's only about 2,190,000 days since 'God created the heaven and the earth'; and six days less since the creation of Adam. (By the way, Adam lived 930 years; therefore his life covered nearly one sixth of the whole of time thus far – if he had lived in our day and had died this year [2012], he'd have been born in 1082! And as the Flood came 1565 years after the Creation then Genesis chapters 1-6 actually cover a quarter of the history of the world.)

Now if you want any further enlightenment on how brief, fleeting, and vain our lives are – along with the ultimate worth of anything we might have achieved in this world – then just read the book of Ecclesiastes. O man! What is thy life!

It's days; only days – and then you're gone. And then it's judgment! 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil', Eccl. 12:14. 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment', Heb. 9:27. And in that judgment? 'And the books were opened... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works', Rev. 20:12. Yes, everything we've ever done, said, thought or intended on each of the few days of our lives, has been meticulously recorded in heaven – even what you've just thought upon reading that statement – and if you die unsaved then your book will be opened on that day and you will be judged accordingly.

But alas, these books will be books of condemnation; for although we might like to think we've been good people – or at least not been really bad people – and that we have done some good things in our little lives – or at least not done

some really wicked things – nevertheless when all is said and done, according to *God's* judgment, actually, 'there is none righteous, no, not one', and 'there is none that doeth good, no, not one'. Before God all 'our' righteousnesses appear as filthy rags; for all are sinners by nature and by practice – a sinner being an active rebel against God; and all who die in this state – whether they've lived 3,000 or 33,000 days – will be cast into the lake of fire – the second death – to be tormented for ever and ever because of their sin and sins.

Now, again, O man; What is your life? And where do you stand at this moment in the judgment of God?

So the psalmist cries – and no wonder – 'Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' Moses knew his own frailty; he knew his and the people's natural tendency not to consider the number of their days; and so he knew that, as with everything else in the realm of truth and salvation, it must be God who must teach, reveal, and guide. Hundreds of years later it would be written by Isaiah the prophet – although Moses plainly already knew this in experience – that 'all thy children shall be taught of the LORD', Isa. 54:13; so here he cries, 'teach us'.

What then is wisdom, and how may we apply our hearts unto it? Well, whatever the answer, we can be sure that it will be our salvation.

Wisdom

As has already been stated – and all taught of God will know this to be true – the wisdom of which Moses spoke is not natural wisdom: it is not found in us by nature. This is proved on one level by considering the wisest man that ever lived: King Solomon. His wisdom was granted him by the Lord upon request for it; thus it was called 'the wisdom of God.' Solomon knew he was bereft of that wisdom he needed to rule the people justly and so he asked it of the Lord above all things – yea, even above long life, riches, honour, and the life of his enemies, 1 Kings 3. But this 'wisdom of Solomon' seems to be a wisdom which pertained principally to this life. Was this the wisdom – in all its fulness – which Moses prayer for? Well, Moses certainly had needed wisdom to lead and rule the oft-faithless children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years. But, no; there was some greater character to the wisdom which Moses – the man who walked by faith – felt to need. Here was the desire for spiritual wisdom; Moses, in the constant presence of the Lord, needed to be 'made wise unto salvation', in the fullness of the meaning of that word.

And there is evidence from scripture that Moses already knew what, or *who*, this wisdom was: Hebrews 11:24 and following states, 'By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season...' And why would Moses walk in such a way; what greater 'estimation' was working deep within his soul, apprehension and realisation? Why, nothing less than the knowledge of Christ! '...esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.' Furthermore, 'By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king', but in the fear of the Lord, as before stated, 'for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible': 'as seeing' means 'as being constantly aware of, in the presence of, and under the direction of the Lord himself: cp. Jesus' 'but ye see me' of John 14:18,19; 16:15,16. And again, Moses' knowledge and revelation of Christ, and of Christ crucified, was the object and foundation of his faith and salvation, in that 'through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood...' Heb. 11:24-28.

But what had all that to do with wisdom? Because *Christ is the wisdom of his people*. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that through the work of God they were found 'in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom...' 1 Cor. 1:30. Christ is 'the wisdom of God', verse 24, and he is all our wisdom: our own natural wisdom – and all the supposed wisdom which is in the world – being 'foolishness with God', 1 Cor. 3:18-20. We *do* have an innate knowledge of the existence, eternal power and deity of God, but in our foolishness – not to say in our ungodliness and unrighteousness – we soon hold this truth down in unrighteousness and become vain in the workings of our mind, Rom. 1. Left to ourselves we will never come into a knowledge of the truth, nor be able to reason according to wisdom. Thus it is only as we are found 'in Christ' that we will know wisdom; which can come about only by experiencing the new birth, John 3.

But it must be emphasised here that Christ isn't just the person to go to merely to *acquire* wisdom, as if it is something he possesses apart from himself; no, he is wisdom itself. If you know Jesus Christ then you have wisdom, for you 'have the mind of Christ'; therefore you 'know all things' and are 'made wise unto salvation'. Moses knew Christ and therefore was wise. And this knowledge drew him on to desire to know Christ more: '...that we may apply our hearts unto Christ'; which, of course, pre-echoes Paul's desires of Philippians 3: 'that I may

know him' further, whom he already knew; and Peter's at the close of his Second Epistle: to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

It may also be interesting for the reader to discover that this is the wisdom the 'men' possessed who came from the east in search of 'him that is born King of the Jews', Matt. 2:1-12. If we keep exclusively to the scriptural text we find that these men were nowhere called sages, philosophers, astrologers, or even kings; no, they had obviously been made wise by revelation from God that the true King of the Jews had been born, and that therefore they were 'come to worship him'. Worship? 'And when they were come into the house, they... fell down, and worshipped him', giving him gifts which reflected what they'd had revealed to them regarding the Person and work of this King. Wise men: men made wise.

Yet wisdom is only one of the attributes of Christ to his people. For he is also their life; their peace, and their rest. He is all their sustenance: being their bread and water of life. As well as being their wisdom he is also their righteousness, their sanctification, and their redemption; and his is their faith. He is their light, their strait gate, their way, their rock, and their salvation: well, his name means salvation, doesn't it? Again, he is their head – what is a body without a head? – he is their truth, their Word, their doctrine, their knowledge and, therefore, their wisdom. He is their one true desire, their glory and their all in all. The Lord Jesus Christ is everything to his people. Well, think about it; what else can being 'in Christ' actually mean!

And didn't Moses know Christ as all these things? In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul wrote of Moses' and the peoples' eating of the same spiritual meat, and drinking of the same spiritual drink: 'for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ', 1 Cor. 10:1-4. What was Moses' great desire above all things? '...thy presence...', Ex. 33:14,15.

Yes, Christ is the wisdom of God. But as we have already said the world knows nothing of these things. Is the reader lost in this world? By that I mean, are you confused as you look around and wonder what 'it' is all about? Is it that you can't really make head nor tail of life? Why is the world the way it is? Why do things happen the way they do? What is the answer to everything? *Is* there an answer? Not in the world there isn't; for the world is fallen: in darkness and spiritually blind; full of vanity and lies, deceit and pretence: 'Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance,

they are all alike: lighter than vanity', Ps. 62:9. Yes, man might have apparently increased in knowledge; but not all science is truth. And man, in Adam, having eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – that is, having gone after the lusts of the flesh and of the mind: the way of the world – may like to think that because of his increased knowledge he has become more wise than ever he was before – after all, wasn't the eating of that tree meant 'to make one wise'? – nevertheless, man is not wise, he does not know, he does not understand; in fact, he has lost the pure intellect he was created with, and has become blind and foolish in things relating to God, to his own soul, and to eternity.

But to what 'wisdom' did man think he would attain by listening to the voice of the deceiver in the Garden of Eden? Independence from God and his word? An endless life on earth in the flesh without God? The eventual deification of himself? Yes, and modern man verily believes that he has almost achieved these goals: just one more evolutionary step and he will be there. And how has this 'ancient hope' been increasingly manifested – especially over the last few hundred years: what wisdom has modern man attained to? Why, *democracy*, of course: man – not God – in control of his life and destiny.

Democracy is the wisdom of man: the quintessence of self governance. In all aspects of his life, under democracy, man thinks that he has arrived at a position where no-one apart from himself can provide the answers and the framework for his 'happiness', 'freedom', knowledge and future security. Think about it. Listen to the received wisdom of the day – readily propagated by the media; discern the overall message – the world-view – propounded by 'science' and see if these things are not so.

But for all that, democracy is a godless system and therefore a lie. O yes, with our freedom to vote, have our say, and live our lives relatively unhindered in our modern liberal society, we think we have attained to self governance, and have power over our lives and our future. But democracy will issue, ultimately, in one thing, and one thing only: a one world government under the rule of Satan himself who will soon manifest himself as the great world leader; worshipped by all as the one who has, at last, brought 'peace and safety' upon the earth. Yes, using 'all power and signs and lying wonders' he will have united the rulers of the earth under his authority – they all having 'one mind'; who will reign with this 'beast' on the earth for... a thousand years? No. For just 'one hour', in a godless reign of terror – for the remaining people of God – before 'sudden destruction cometh upon them': Jesus Christ's return in power and

great glory, defeating his enemies and ushering in the day of judgment. Yes; that will be the end of enlightened and emancipated man's so-called wisdom.

You don't believe it? Well, just open your eyes; because it's coming to pass as we speak! Why is it that long established dictatorships are suddenly falling – especially in North Africa and the Middle East? And why is the great cry for 'democracy' sounding in places that have lived without it for millennia? Because for the world to accept some sort of world government, it must be brought into being through the democratic process, so that 'wise' modern man can feel engaged. So the powers that be – who rule secretly behind the scenes, and behind this façade we call democracy – are working in all the malign ways they can to destroy the old ways, systems and mentality, to bring in this one world democratic system as the springboard for the ushering in of the new world order, and the manifestation of the man of sin: that Wicked who is about to appear to deceive and subjugate the whole world.

But if you observe all this with 'the mind of Christ', then you will find that this is nothing other than the following of the ancient lies which were told in the Garden: for wise man is still hearkening to and believing 'Yea, hath God said?' 'Ye shall not surely die.' 'Ye shall be as gods!' – could 'democracy' be better defined? So it turns out that modern man is no more wise than a blind deluded fool, being merely a bound serf of Satan, as he glories and immerses himself in the serpent's democratic process: engaging in 'politics' and the political system, thinking that therein lies the truth of how the world should be managed.

But looking at the basic principle which underpins politics, what 'wisdom' do you find? Lies and deceit. Think about it: the foundational principle of politics is, 'Get in power; stay in power.' So politicians necessarily have to be changeable creatures; they have to move and adapt with the times. They do not and cannot exist and continue upon stable convictions but must perceive the mood of the times and present themselves as the champions of 'modern society' – be 'politically correct' – so that the people will be attracted to their present day message and vote them into power. And if in a generation's time 'the people' have changed attitudes towards social issues, etc. then the politicians must adjust their 'convictions' accordingly – employing 'political correctness'. Why? 'Get in power; stay in power' at all costs. Therefore, I say, the whole process is vanity and lies, devoid of truth, full of deceit; is a great deception; and is a following of the ancient lies.

But the wisdom of God is different; and set altogether on another plane. For it is stable, unchanging, constant: yea, 'the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever', Heb. 13:8; and only – *only* – those made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus can see, perceive, know and understand these things; after all the apostles' doctrine does declare that 'he that is spiritual judgeth – discerneth – all things', 1 Cor. 2:15. Yes, the wisdom of this world is a lie, is foolishness; whereas the wisdom of God is his Son! Only in Christ can we see the world for what it is; can we perceive the hand of the prince of the power of the air working in the lives of the children of disobedience; and when we see it: when we do have our eyes opened to all those places of scripture that point to these things – enabling us to discern 'the signs of the times' – then it will shock us as we realise that it is actually coming to pass in our day! But then it will sober us, showing us that we cannot, and should not, try to change it – by political engagement; and will eventually separate us from this way of the world completely; leaving us truly as 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth', and ultimately, as the end draws near, leaving us only 'looking up, for our redemption draweth nigh', Luke 21:28. [See also in my 'Letters' – No. 10]

Proverbs 8 and 9

The most striking passage of scripture regarding wisdom in relation to Christ is Proverbs chapters eight and nine. Consider them in the light of the public ministry of the Lord Jesus – of Wisdom. 'Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths', etc. Prov. 8:1-4. 'Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am...' 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water', John 7:28,37,38. 'I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, wither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing', John 18:20.

But when Christ comes by his Spirit and begins a good work in our hearts he cries in the high places of our sin, pride and self-righteousness; he cries down our works, hypocrisy and rebellion; and so exposes by his word that 'our' way and paths are leading us to death and damnation.

'O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart', Prov. 8:5. 'When Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith,

why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand...? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, but that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?' Matt. 16:6-12. 'Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' Luke 24:25,26.

No, naturally we have no wisdom and understanding. Even the religious: even the professed Christian in himself, has no understand of himself. And this is manifest especially in the modern profession. Generally speaking they no longer want doctrine or truth as such; they just want 'love', togetherness, fellowship, praise and worship. But 'O ye simple...'; 'Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof...', Prov. 1:20-23; cp. also 2 Tim. 4:3,4. If ever the words of the Lord described the state of the modern church it is those. Believe it, reader; believe it, and fall under it.

And then, read verses 6-8 in Proverbs 8 to see a perfect description of 'the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth'? Jesus spoke only 'excellent things... right things... truth... and in righteousness'. Wickedness was an abomination to his lips, as it still is; and there was nothing froward or perverse in them. Indeed, verse 9, 'they are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge'; as the disciples declared: 'Now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God', John 16:29,30. 'Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God', John 6:68,69.

Wisdom's cry of Proverbs 8:10, 'Receive my instruction', is surely Jesus' 'learn of me', Matt. 11:28-30. He says further, 'Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength', verse 14. He *is* understanding! Again, 'Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver', verses 18,19. Compare those words with Matthew 13:44-46: 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and

buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all he had, and bought it.' And who is King in the kingdom of heaven?

Christ is, furthermore, the only one who leads in the way of righteousness, and in the midst of the paths of judgment – sober reasoning from a sound mind, verse 20; cp. 2 Tim. 1:7; as David had said of his shepherd: 'He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake', Psalm 23:3. And the apostles' doctrine is full of the inheritance which Wisdom speaks of in Proverbs 8:21: 'That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.' Yea, this is 'the inheritance of the saints in light'; that 'inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God...', which is the doctrine of Christ: the gospel; see Col. 1:9-17, 1 Peter 1:3-9.

Is the reader rejoicing with me over Christ our wisdom?

But whence the origin of Wisdom – of Christ? Proverbs 8:22 and following answer: 'The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.' But when was 'the beginning' of the way of the LORD? Surely he is the eternal one? Verse 23-26: 'I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was...' 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God', John 1:1,2. Clear enough?

He says in verse 27, 'I was there' when 'God created the heaven and the earth... the sea, and all that in them is', Gen. 1:1, Ex. 20:11. So Paul could write of the Son: 'For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones ['by me kings reign...' Prov. 8:15,16], or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist', Col. 1:16,17. It is no wonder then that heaven resounds with his praise: 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created', Rev. 4:8-11. By the way; if Christ was there at the beginning and created *all* things, then it obviously follows that he is uncreated himself.

Wisdom then says of the LORD, verse 30: 'I was daily his delight': 'This is my beloved Son, in whom – not just *with* whom, but 'in' whom – I am well pleased',

Matt. 17:5: the very Person of the Son – ‘I’ – was the Father’s delight. And Christ was ‘rejoicing always before him’: ‘Then said I, Lo, in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart...’ Psalm 40:7-11; ‘...I do always those things that please [the Father]’, John 8:29.

Moreover, he says that he is ‘rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth’, Prov. 8:31; and where is that? In church or chapel on a Sunday morning? No. No. A million times, No. ‘Where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest?’ Isa. 66:1; for you can be sure that he ‘dwelleth *not* in temples made with hands’, Acts 7:48, 17:24. The habitable part of the earth? ‘That Christ may *dwell in your hearts* by faith’, Eph. 3:17; yea, ‘my delights are with the sons of men’; after all, children of God, ‘*Ye* are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’, 2 Cor. 6:16. And it is *there*, and there alone, that ‘I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church – the gathered company of the out-called – will I sing praise unto thee’, Heb. 2:12. Wherefore, come out from among all those in whom he does not dwell; for what does the world, and worldly churches, know of this Wisdom.

‘Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life – LIFE! – and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death’, Prov. 8:32-36. ‘And it came to pass, when Wisdom had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.’

And then we move into Proverbs chapter nine; where immediately we find Christ and his church: ‘Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out seven pillars’, verse 1. The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth’, 1 Tim. 3:15. Yes, it is Wisdom, not men, who builds the one true church; and the seven pillars are the apostles’ doctrine – the doctrine of Christ. And what is that? Verse 2: ‘She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.’ What is this but the work of Christ upon the cross with its fruit? He came to fulfil the law and the prophets. Both it and they foreshadowed in type and spoke of the one sacrifice which was to be made. All those offerings for sin given under the law pointed to ‘the Lamb of

God': '...but now once in the end of the [old testament dispensation] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself', Heb. 9:26; '...the cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?' John 18:11; wine mingled with gall: the wine of the wrath of the Almighty poured into his soul as it was made an offering for sin, Isa. 53:10.

And when he had finished the work which the Father had given him to do, then, what a table was prepared and furnished for the people of God! All the blessings that result from the Lamb slain are freely theirs: Salvation; redemption; justification; reconciliation; forgiveness; sin put away; sins borne away; peace with God; resurrection from the dead; the law answered; all enemies overcome in the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, sprinkling of the blood on the heavenly mercy seat, and seating of Christ on the right hand of God. And from thence the giving of the Spirit to apply the work in his people. What a table!

But then Wisdom, by the Spirit, 'sends forth her maidens', Prov. 9:3. These are they whom Christ calls and sends with a heavenly calling to preach by revelation this wonderful gospel – the 'good message' of his salvation – in the power of the Spirit (please find me *one* of these ministers today). And Wisdom through them 'crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth – lacketh – understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live – LIVE! – and go in the way of understanding', verses 3-6. Could there be a passage of scripture more furnished with gospel language? Cp. John 6:48-66, for example: to be considered later.

Are you 'simple', reader? Are you 'as a little child'? 'Come. Come. For all things are now ready'. 'Come.' 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money – no works of righteousness – come ye, buy, and eat; come, buy wine and milk without money and without price' – free, 'priceless' salvation! '...when they had nothing to pay...' 'Eat of my flesh and drink of my blood' by faith; and in so doing, forsake the foolish (the simple foolish of Proverbs 1) – those with no need of Christ – and live: remember? 'Whoso findeth me findeth life'. 'Verily, verily, Wisdom saith unto you, He that believeth on me *hath* everlasting life', John 6:47; and, 'He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is *passed* from death unto life', John 5:24. And therefore they 'go in the way of understanding', Prov. 9:6. 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know

not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth', 1 John 2:20,21. Thus, 'Follow me... Come after me... Take my yoke upon you and learn of me... hear my voice and follow me.' This is a narrow way – Wisdom's way; but it is the way which leadeth unto life... the *only* way; and it is also called 'applying our hearts unto wisdom'.

Part 2

Abiding in Christ

As Christ is our wisdom, then to 'apply our hearts unto wisdom' can perhaps best be defined in this one phrase: 'Abiding in Christ'. To abide in Christ is to dwell in, and remain in him, and in everything that he is. It is to live in and apply our hearts unto the fulness of Christ. But what does this mean? Well, Moses obviously knew something of what it meant, for he opened this psalm by saying: 'LORD, *thou* hast been our dwelling place in all generations', Psalm 90:1.

The apostle John, of course, also knew this abiding from intimate communion with the Saviour: therefore he could write to his 'little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming', 1 John 2:28.

But we must understand that this abiding is not just – or even – a sensual thing; it is not experienced only under 'a feeling sense of his presence', as some people seem to imagine; no; it is a spiritual state that one dwells in. To abide in Christ is, fundamentally, to be placed 'in Christ' by the regenerating work of God the Holy Ghost. Countless times the apostles used this term to describe the position of the people of God. 'But of God are ye in Christ Jesus'. They had been 'in sin' as a settled state; but now, having been saved and called by the grace of God, they were 'in Jesus Christ', cp. Rom. 6:1-4. They had passed from death unto life; having been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. They had been indwelt of the prince of the power of the air, but now were indwelt of the Spirit of Christ.

This is not to say that in the application of this work the child of God does not experience a lot of feelings: for how can one move from being in the darkness of sin, ignorance and rebellion toward God into a position of light, knowledge, liberty and salvation in Christ without 'feeling' the change in the whole process of it; but that the settled and continued state of abiding in Christ thereafter is

not one which is experienced primarily by feelings. One remains unchanged in Christ regardless of how one feels at any given time; in fact the wonder of this truth is the great encouragement to the saint when he decidedly does *not* feel to be enjoying the light and liberty of the gospel.

It is vital then for the children of God to understand the state that they are in: being 'in Christ'. This wonderful doctrine of the union of Christ and his people is fundamental to their 'confidence', for they see that this is how *God* sees them as a result of his work and not their own. And as it is how God sees them then what a state they will find themselves in on the day of judgment! Totally unashamed! 1 John 2:28. All their confidence is in him. Being in Christ they have an anointing from the Holy One: the indwelling, possession and witness of the Spirit which teacheth them all these things and leaves them in no doubt as to where they stand, cp. Rom. 8:1. To abide in Christ, then, is to live and walk in the light of this truth.

What assurance; what confidence; what stability; what rest must flow from this realisation and belief of our sure standing in this 'new and living way'. But at the same time, what gratitude; what thanksgiving; what humility; what distrust of self; what fleeing from 'works'; what weariness with the world and the things of the world; what abhorrence of the merest thought that *I* had anything to do with the placing of me in this state; yea, and of keeping me in it. For there are many who arrogantly and presumptuously claim their position in Christ who have never been wrought upon by him at all. No. *They* believed. *They* accepted. *They* assured themselves. *They* took – stole – the promises. *They* worked, and continue to work under their beloved legality to keep themselves in the way. Yet they possess no self distrust; no self abhorrence; no self doubt; no fears that they could be deceived, cp. Psalm 73:3-5; no, all their confidence is in *their faith* in Christ; whereas all the confidence of the true children is only in Christ himself. The others have their own lives with 'Jesus'; but these know – as we shall see – that Christ is their very, and only, life; from which everything else flows.

The Love of Christ

But before we come to consider 'Christ our life' there are two causes to our abiding in him which must be shown, for without these fundamentals none of the others could follow. The first is the love of Christ. In John 15 Jesus says to his disciples in intimate conversation, 'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love', verse 9. Here we can trace our abiding in the

love of Christ back to all eternity – to the eternal councils of God. Well, was there ever a time when the Father did not love the Son? No. Therefore ‘as... so’ can only equate the Father’s love to the Son with the Son’s likewise love to his people: Jesus’ statement is a unified whole.

Now that we are back in the realms of eternity there is abundant reference to this love in the pages of scripture. God is love: in and of himself the Godhead is love. The world speaks of true love and yet it knows nothing of it at all. All our love is only conditional: we love *because...*; or we will only love *if...* But God, being love in his own Person, loves his own people in his Son. But they have been in the Son in the purpose and will of God from all eternity: as the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world, so in love has he chosen his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, John 17:24, Eph. 1:4. Moreover having loved and chosen them in eternity he designed to save and call them ‘according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began’, 2 Tim. 1:9. And also ‘before the world began’ he promised them eternal life, Titus 1:2; and so it is said that ‘from the foundation of the world’ their names were written in the book of life, cp. Rev. 17:8, and their inheritance was likewise revealed in that they would receive nothing less than ‘the kingdom’, Matt. 25:34. Deep things.

And all this emanated from the love of God toward them in Christ. Jesus speaks of ‘my love’: ‘continue ye in my love.’ His love? Christ ‘loved the church and gave himself for it’, Eph. 5:25. That is: his love preceded his giving himself. Christ gave himself; he laid down his life for the sheep; he gave himself a ransom for many, only because he first loved them. And having loved them till the end, he died for them; and rising, ascending, sprinkling the blood on the heavenly mercy seat and sitting down on the right hand of God, he sent his Spirit into the world with lovingkindness to draw them unto himself. Why? Because he had loved them with an everlasting love! *therefore*, with lovingkindness he draws them’, Jer. 31:3. An everlasting love? Yes, with the love which emanates from eternity: therefore it had no beginning and can have no end: time cannot hinder it; sin and rebellion in the elect cannot turn it away; unbelief cannot stand in its presence; no; all enmity in the chosen race will be overcome by this love; for love covereth a multitude of sins: and whose sins are so multitudinous as those who cry for and receive salvation! So it is written, ‘even *when we were* dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) for his great love wherewith he loved us!’ Eph. 2:4,5; and ‘God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet* sinners,

Christ died for us', Rom. 5:8. No, there was never anything seen in the elect to spark the love of God toward them.

Thus what else is there for the recipients of this love to do, but to abide in it? 'continue ye in my love.' And they do abide in it for the simple reason that it is the love of the Saviour which is being bestowed upon them as the first cause, and not their love towards him; and that he keeps them in his love; they don't keep themselves. Yes, we love him only because 'he first loved us', 1 John 4:19.

And what is the great fruit of dwelling in this love? Fear is cast out. 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect [mature] in love', 1 John 4:18. And what 'torment' there is outside of experiencing the love of God in Christ: the fear of death; the fear of the grave; the fear of judgment; the fear of condemnation; the fear of the world; the fear of man; the fear of the unexpected; the fear of fear itself! All fear born of being without Christ, without hope, and without God. And it is well founded, because 'the fearful... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death', Rev. 21:8. And from whence cometh this fear? From unbelief: 'But the fearful *and unbelieving...*' oh, don't be too proud that 'ye have no faith.' But for the redeemed it is all swallowed up in the love of God in his Son: for this perfect love bestowed and dwelt in casteth out all fear, and causeth one to walk in the faith.

The Word of Christ

The second cause of our abiding in Christ, and in all that he is, is a hearing, falling under and continuing in his word. Jesus had just said to his disciples in John 15:3, 'Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.' Christ's sheep hear his voice, and they follow him. His word sanctifies them, and it regenerates them, John 10:27, 17:17, 1 Peter 1:23. And because his word never returns unto him void but accomplishes the reason for which it is sent: namely to call his people and to reveal his salvation of them, then they hear and abide in it; and 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free', John 8:31,32. And here in John 15 Jesus reiterates this necessary truth – with again, a promise: 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you', verse 7.

Now, this word of Christ is – in all its fulness – the gospel of Christ. And the gospel is that message which declares to the people of God the knowledge of

their salvation in Christ. This is what the apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians. In chapter one verse five he says: 'For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.' The hope which was laid up for the saints in heaven was their full salvation; and how did they know of it? Under the sound of the word of the truth of the gospel: the hope 'whereof – of which – ye heard in the gospel.' Again, Paul had written to the Romans that the gospel itself was 'the power of God unto salvation [specifically] to every one that believeth', 1:16. Why? Because therein was the righteousness of God revealed: that righteousness essential to stand justified before God. And the gospel declares this righteousness to have been brought in 'from faith to faith': that is, 'by the faith of Jesus Christ', Rom. 3:21,22, Gal. 2:16, to the faith which God gives his people to believe under the sound of the gospel, Eph. 2:8.

It is no wonder then that the apostle Paul exhorted the church: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom', Col. 3:16; for he knew that it was only 'the word of his grace' – the gospel – which was able to build them up, and give them an inheritance among all them which had been sanctified by that word, Acts 20:32. But it has to be emphasised that this word is the *spoken* word of Christ, John 15:3: the gospel *preached*. Jesus said, 'My sheep hear my voice', not just 'read my words'; and he speaks through preaching. After all, he came preaching; as he sent his disciples out preaching: preaching the word. But how many of the men in the pulpits of our land today have been sent of Christ to preach: hardly any. Well, where is the fulness of the doctrine of the gospel being preached in the power of the Spirit: not in the churches. And because of this there are many people who 'hear sermons' without ever experiencing 'the power of God'; as well as there being many who read the letter of scripture, study it, imbibe it, and imagine that the Lord speaks to them by it, who never actually hear his voice at all. Yes, they 'love good ministry'; and they 'love the Word' as long as it remains on the page at arm's length and doesn't come too near and 'cut to the heart'. (For a fuller exposition of this point please see the chapter 'My sheep hear my voice' in my *Contentions...* elsewhere on this site.)

Christ our Life

Having seen, then, that the fundamentals to abiding in Christ – applying our hearts unto wisdom – are the experiencing and abiding in his love, and the hearing his voice and continuing in his word, we can now go on to discover some other aspects of Christ's very person in which we are said to abide: the first of these being to abide in 'Christ our life'.

Jesus was teaching his disciples in John 15 that he was the true vine and that they were the branches – and what are branches but they which abide in the vine. The whole of their life and sustenance emanates from the vine. They have no life in and of themselves but what flows into them from the vine; hence their need to abide in it. So the apostle Paul could say that though he was – or, had been – ‘crucified with Christ’, therefore he, Paul, was now ‘dead’; nevertheless, he lived; ‘yet not I, but Christ liveth in me’, Gal. 2:20. And this is why he writes of ‘Christ our life’, Col. 3:4. And how can it be otherwise? For Jesus had said, ‘I am the life’, John 14:6. In him was life; the Father having given him to have life in himself; which life ‘was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us’, 1 John 1:2.

Notice what John is saying here: he is not merely pointing to the fact that Jesus came down from heaven to tell us about life; but that in him, the great ‘eternal life’, the very life itself was manifested. When Jesus said, ‘I am the life’, he didn’t just mean, ‘Come to me and I will give you life’, as if life was something he possessed apart from himself, no; he said, ‘I am life’: ‘I am that eternal life which was with the Father.’ If you want to know what life is, in its very essence and in all its fulness, then look at the Son. Life does not exist outside of him. His very Person is ‘the life’; and this is the life of the people of God as they are brought to abide in him. If you are outside of Christ: if you do not abide in Christ as a settled state of existence, then you do not have life in any sense of the word. There simply is no life to be known outside of Jesus Christ, as John 17:3 states.

This world, in all its blindness and deceit, talks about ‘life’: ‘living life to the full’, etc, but it knows nothing whatsoever of life. Ever since Adam ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, and we in him, the only judgment regarding the life of man on earth has been, ‘dying thou shalt die’: a life of living death, Gen. 2:17. So by this man sin entered into the world and *death* by sin; not life. Having eaten of the tree which brought death, the LORD God cast Adam out of the Garden lest he eat of the tree of life and live forever in that state of death, Gen. 3:22,23. Thus life – the tree of life, which is Christ – was barred to man in sin and death; that is, man who lived in death had no way of access to true life, until or unless ‘the life was manifested’ and given freely: a work of God from beginning to end; for Christ – the life – has ‘power over all

flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him, cp. John 17:2.

Therefore, the fundamental possession of abiding in Christ is to have his life as our own. How can we live before God in his grace, and live with him in eternity unless we have the very life of eternity? It is impossible. There are none dead in the glorious presence of God. When Paul said he had been crucified with Christ – the true meaning of ‘the death of his saints’, Psalm 116:15 – and was therefore dead to sin, to the law, and to this world, still, he was alive unto God for Christ was now his life. And Paul lived in the glorious liberty of this truth; cp. Rev. 14:13. How could he overcome all the wiles of the devil, temptations, trials, oppositions, etc? How could he stand, and having done all to stand? Only by counting himself as ‘dead’, with Christ being his life. And it was the risen, ascended, seated and all victorious Jesus Christ who was his life; the one who could say, ‘I *was* dead, behold, I am alive for ever more!’ And who could say such a thing but ‘the life’ himself? This is the life which flowed down into the apostle causing him to overcome in this world, cp. John 16:33, 1 John 4:4, 5:4,5, Rev. 3:21. Thus in the fullest sense of the word Paul abode in Christ his life.

Truth

The next fruit of applying our hearts unto wisdom – abiding in Christ – is to dwell in Christ ‘the truth’, and therefore to have a love of the truth. Jesus said, ‘I am the truth.’ To abide in him is to know the truth – remember the world is full of lies. Everything outside of Christ – outside of his very Person – is a lie. Well, as indwelt of the father of lies how can one know the truth! The whole world – and the vast majority of professing Christian churches – lieth in the wicked one; therefore no truth can be found therein. No. Only in Christ is truth known. Just listen to John’s elevated doctrine, and marvel and rejoice with trembling: ‘...we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life’, 1 John 5:20.

Oh! ‘Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding’, Prov. 23:23. And it’s all to be found in Christ!

Now this truth is known and walked in as a result of the work of God within. He comes speaking and applying his word to our hearts causing us to walk in the truth. And this will – and does – happen to all God’s people for the simple reason that the Son prayed that it would be so! ‘I have given them thy word; and

the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world... Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth', John 17:14-17. Therefore his word, his doctrine, his speech – again, 'My sheep hear my voice' – comes and distills and resides in our hearts; it permeates into the depths of our being causing us to walk and continue in it; and if we continue in his word then – and only then – are we his disciples indeed; and we shall – we *must* – know the truth, and the truth shall make us free; Deut. 32:2, John 8:31,32. Free from what? From sin and the power of sin! Free from the world and the allure of the world; and free to walk truly by faith as Abraham did, and not according to 'the lusts of your father' the devil, as the unbelieving Jews did. Why did they not understand Jesus' speech? Even because they could not hear his word, and because, like their father, they abode not in the truth, and were not of God, John 8:31-47.

And what is Jesus' speech? Why, it is his doctrine: 'my doctrine', John 7:14-18. Christ's doctrine – 'the word of the truth of his gospel', Col. 1:5 – is *all* the truth there is in the world! And the fulness of that doctrine is all the fulness of the truth there is in the world. Therefore Christ and his gospel can be called the absolute truth. But there is transgression; and that transgression is not to bring the whole of the doctrine to the people; and, therefore, is not to abide in the fulness of it: as John said: 'Whoso transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bringeth not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God's speed: for he that biddeth him God's speed is partaker of his evil deeds', 2 John 9-11.

Notice the two absolute states mentioned in those words: 'hath not God... hath both the Father and the Son', and all dependant on abiding or abiding not in the fulness of the doctrine of Christ. And those who bring not this doctrine – in the fulness of it – are said to commit 'evil deeds'. So we must say it again: there are many, many men in the pulpits of our land today who say a lot of things about Jesus, salvation, the word of God, the gospel, repentance and faith – and about a whole host of other scriptural things – who never preach the doctrine of Christ in anything close to its fulness: therefore the sum of all their preaching is classed by the apostle as 'evil deeds'; and the true sheep of Christ *know* this to be true; because having wandered far and wide to hear the doctrine, and having not found it, have starved under what they have heard.

Thus to abide in Christ and to receive a knowledge by revelation of the doctrine of the gospel of Christ is to know, love, and continue in 'the truth'.

Light

Another fruit of applying our hearts unto wisdom is that we walk in the light. Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life', John 8:12. 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men', John 1:4. To abide in Christ is to abide in the light. So, as he is light itself then it follows again that everything outside of him must be darkness. It can only be repeated. The world knows nothing of Christ so it is a place of utter darkness. Men walk in darkness; their minds are dark: pitch black in their ignorance, cp. Eph. 4:17-20. And men are also blind, as well as being in the dark: they cannot naturally see anything: as Jesus said, 'Except a man be born again he *cannot see*...' That statement of the Saviour is again an absolute: 'Except... cannot.' And is the world a place in which the love of absolutes is found? It certainly is not. Therefore it is a place which languishes in darkness; as well as a place with no love of the truth, no wisdom, and no understanding.

Is the reader beginning to see how being 'in Christ' is the key to *everything* which is real in this life? Outside of him all is loss; all is vanity; all is lies; all is darkness; all is death. The world can only grope around in the blindness of its heart and hopelessly wail, 'What is truth?' But in its rebellion against the revelation of God in his Son, it will never find an answer to its question.

What is light? And what light is revealed when Christ is known? Why, 'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all'; then in Christ we know and 'see' the glory of God. To be in the light is to be fully aware: again the indissoluble connection between light and wisdom. To apply our hearts unto wisdom is to be in the light of full understanding regarding everything to do with time and eternity, and it is to see and know Christ for who he really is: 'A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel', Luke 2:25-32; as John declared, '...and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth', John 1:14. Is there to be sun and moon in the new heavens to give light upon the new earth? No. For the holy city, the new Jerusalem, shall descend out of heaven from God, 'having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal'; and that light, if not created light? '...the glory of God did lighten it, and *the Lamb* is the light thereof', Rev. 21:1-11,23. Yes, 'the light of the world' is the light of eternity!

To abide and walk in the light is to follow Christ and keep his commandments; it is to obey him; to fall under his word and submit to him. Again it is to 'know' and 'see'; it is to receive revelation, illumination and understanding of the truth, and of the will of God. All this is manifest in the light. Thus there can be no unbelief, no doubting, no debilitating fear, no mystery in the light; all is made plain. Darkness and ignorance, and a hiding away – a cowering – is all dispelled and impossible to find in the light. And despite their often short-sightedness in providential things, yet in truth, the children of God never really walk in darkness. How can they! What a terrible indictment it is on the Saviour if they can. What! the children of light – who are themselves described as 'the light of the world' by their Lord, Matt. 5:14 – found walking in darkness while being in Christ the light of life? That state is just not conducive with being in Christ in any way whatsoever. The heart that is being applied unto wisdom is not in, neither can it walk in darkness. You can be sure that if unbelief does appear then the only reason must be because we have to some degree wandered out of the way and ceased to apply our hearts unto wisdom.

As we have before pointed out, Christ is our wisdom, so the anointing which we have causes us to 'know all things', 1 John 2:20. We are no longer ignorant of either the true nature of God or of ourselves. We see everything with a new understanding. The world, the things of the world, and the way of the world opens up to our understanding in a completely new way. We now look at the world and can, at last, discern what it is really all about; again: 'he that is spiritual *discerneth* all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man', 1 Cor. 2:10-16. Yes, now we see that the world is full to the brim with vanity and lies. It is a place of darkness, rebellion and corruption. There is nothing intrinsically 'good' in or of the world. It is under a curse and therefore ripe for judgment. It increasingly holds little or no interest for the child of God as he sees it rushing headlong to destruction. What a spiritual wilderness the world is! And what a stranger and pilgrim the saved soul increasingly feels to be in it. Observe the world; listen to its desires; hear of its ambitions; are they yours? They will be abhorrent to you if Christ is your life; if you know the truth and are walking in the light – applying your hearts unto wisdom. The cry of Moses in Psalm 90:12 and a love for this world are completely incompatible; you either have the one or the other.

Faith

Next, to abide in Christ is to abide in ‘the faith’. To apply our hearts unto wisdom is to be walking by faith. But what faith is this; our faith? Certainly not! It is ‘the faith of God’s elect’, and God’s elect is Christ, Isa. 42:1. Jesus’ faith is the faith of his people – after all, he is the Author and Finisher of it. Paul said that the life he now lived in the flesh – that life being Christ – he lived ‘by the faith of the Son of God’, Gal. 2:20. He had just been writing that he was justified ‘by the faith of Jesus Christ, and not by [Christ’s] works of the law’, verse 16; and now he declares that he lives by His faith also. True saving faith is only to be found in Christ; and this faith is the gift of God, Eph. 2:8. Don’t think that the faith God requires for salvation is to be found in you. This faith emanates from heaven and is to be found in the Son. When that faith is granted then it is said to be our faith, as in 1 Corinthians 2:5; but then it still only stands ‘in the power of God.’

Does this offend the ‘simple believer’ – the one who has imagined that he has ‘put his trust in the Saviour’ when He was so freely ‘offered’ to him in the free-will ‘gospel’? Have you all this time been under the delusion that God could never have saved you unless you had first exercised ‘your faith’ towards Jesus? Well, that isn’t the faith the Father looks for. ‘Your faith’ is nothing but a work, and salvation is ‘not of works’. The faith that saves and justifies is ‘the faith of Jesus Christ’ and none other, Gal. 2:16; and unless that faith is granted to us when we realise we have no faith of our own to believe, then we will never come into a true knowledge of our sins forgiven; and our ‘salvation’ will be a terrible presumption. (I hope to write more fully about ‘the faith of Jesus Christ’ in a future article.)

The Way

As the faith of Jesus Christ is the faith which brings in the salvation of God, so Jesus himself is, obviously, the way of salvation. He said, ‘I am the way’, John 14:6. And that way is the way to the Father: ‘no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.’ Jesus was teaching his disciples of his Father’s house, that therein were many [lit.] dwelling-places; and that he was about to go and prepare a place for them in it. But what does all this really mean? As I was growing up under an Arminian gospel – which contained no real doctrine – I imagined Jesus to be saying here that there are going to be lots of big houses – mansions – in heaven for us to live in, and so he must go back to heaven, after he’d died for our sins, to start building them for us. That was what I perceived to be the

meaning of these verses based on what I heard in the preaching. But what a fairy story that is!

The Father's house *is* in heaven, 2 Cor. 5:1,2, but Jesus isn't saying that he was going to heaven to prepare their place. No, Jesus' 'I go' was to the cross to die for his people thereby preparing them to dwell in the Father's house which is the church; and we have already seen that this is where the Father dwells spiritually, 2 Cor. 6:16. This is why Jesus said on another occasion, 'I will build my church'; and he could only build it if he first went to the cross to prepare a place for them in it. And in this church – called the body of Christ – there are many dwelling-places, or 'members', 1 Cor. 12, etc. and subsequent to Jesus giving himself for the church, these members, in the estimation of God, have been raised up together with Christ, and made to sit together in heavenly places – in the Father's house – in Christ Jesus', Eph. 2:5,6. So Christ went – 'I go' – to the cross where all their salvation was wrought out, and their place prepared.

The only way into the salvation and house of God the Father and into the church of Jesus Christ is by the broken body and shed blood of Christ. In the old covenant the high priest entered through the veil of the tabernacle into the Holiest of all, alone, but once a year – and that not without blood – which he then offered for himself and for the errors of the people. And this was the only 'way' of atonement for the people; until Christ came to make his once for all sacrifice of himself for his people: which sacrifice for ever did away with the old covenant sacrifices.

In 'preparing a place' for his people in his Father's house, Jesus substituted the high priest with himself the great high priest; he went not into an earthly tabernacle and its holiest of all but to the cross to shed his blood, and thereafter entered not through a veil in a man made temple but through the veil of his flesh into heaven itself to sprinkle the blood on the heavenly mercy seat – or seat of propitiation. Therefore God's people now have full access into heaven itself by Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness and liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated – newly made! – for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God – there's the Father's house – let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith – oh, how those who love their unbelief hate that phrase – having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water', Heb. 8-10.

Therefore the 'way' that Jesus is, is all new: a new and, of course, a living way. And if he is the new way then the old has been for ever put away, as it is said: 'He taketh away the first – the old, that he may establish the second – the new', Heb. 10:9. So how is it that all these people who say they believe in Jesus can then continue under the law? Where are works of the law – the old way, though not even a way of salvation – to be found when one enters into the Father's house only by Christ the new and living way, and that by his blood alone, and through faith alone? The two ways are totally incompatible. If you want to cling to the old way – though you pretend to believe in Jesus and love to quote John 14:6 as one of your favourite 'gospel' texts – then you will never be made perfect in Christ and before God 'as pertaining to the conscience', Heb. 9:9: and what a blessed state it is to have a conscience purged from dead works – of the law – to serve the living God, in his living Son, verse 14.

Yes, if you want to abide in the old way then you must remain under the curse of the law, Gal. 3:10-13; stay under the wrath of God – whether you feel it or not, Rom. 4:13-15; and continue with a blinded mind and a veil upon your heart, 2 Cor. 3. How *can* those who work believe! What faith is there under the law? The law is not of faith at all! What need the legalist of Christ the new and living way! They have no need of him at all: therefore they remain lost and out of the way.

But not so the people of God. Christ alone is the way, he is their only way – access – to the Father, into his house, into the church, into heaven itself. It is a way entered by faith; that faith is only in his work upon the cross, and its fruit is nothing less than the reception of the promise of eternal inheritance, Heb. 9:15.

Christ 'the way' is also, then, synonymous with the strait gate, and the narrow way. This gate – the doctrine of faith in Christ's blood being the only entrance into the way which leadeth unto life – is thus called strait, or, a strait; for it is difficult to enter through. Why? Because we *will* work for our salvation; we *will* seek to bring something to God to endear ourselves or make ourselves acceptable to him. But no. Christ is the only way. Salvation is by him alone and it is not of works. And one of the things which characterises the narrow way which follows is a continual turning from works to please God with a constant looking to Christ and his blood alone to be all our salvation and acceptance before him. Yes, even when one has entered through the strait gate of Christ by faith, there is still the tendency to think that we can 'do good' to please him

which, we think, might somehow add to our acceptance before him, or at least confirm that we are in him. But no. God requires nothing else for the salvation and keeping of his people than his Son, and the work of his Son, Luke 3:21,22, Col. 1:18,19 – what can you possibly add to ‘fulness’! – and the flesh, pride, and Pharisaism of man will not fall under it; but fall under it you must if Christ is truly to be your way – the only way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it, Matt. 7:13,14.

But Christ ‘the narrow way’ has further application. For it is the way of self sacrifice. It is a way which discovers the will of God *and then* walks according to that will. And this costs us; for his will is usually – nearly always – contrary to ours. Jesus said that it is not those who merely call him Lord in this life which enter into the kingdom of heaven, ‘but they which do the will of my Father which is in heaven’. And the cost of doing that is to find oneself on a narrow way – a way displeasing to the flesh: ‘If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, daily, and follow me’, Luke 9:23. In a way the most cutting word in that verse is ‘daily’. Not only does the Lord Jesus call upon his people to deny themselves and take up their cross, but he calls upon them to do it daily – day after day.

To deny self is to be prepared to say ‘no’ to self in any given situation, daily. Again this can only be fully entered into in the light of the truth that we have been crucified with Christ and are therefore dead. A dead person can be denied for he has no will or feelings. So if we are dead, and Christ is our life, then what will do we actually have. We only manifest a will which is opposed to God’s will when we revert to seeking to fulfil the desires of the flesh, or turn back to works. But these things must be denied, daily. And they can be denied when we walk in Christ the way, when only his will is ours, and when faith in him covers any temptation to revert to the law.

But Jesus doesn’t ever ask his people to walk in a way which he himself didn’t walk. He knew denial of self, and submission to his Father’s will; and although it cost him his life – according to the determinate counsel of God – as it may very well cost us ours – both daily and perhaps ultimately – yet it was the only way that led unto life for us: Christ gave his life ‘the just for the unjust, to bring us to God’, 1 Peter 3:18; and this was by commandment of the Father, John 10:18. Then let us seek grace to apply our hearts unto this wisdom; and to abide in Christ ‘the way’.

The Prince of Peace

When Christ died he is said to have ‘made peace through the blood of his cross’, Col. 1:20; and is therefore become our peace. What peace is this? Peace with God: peace when there was war. ‘And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works...’, Col. 1:21; and what is an enemy but someone who is at war? ‘While we were yet sinners... when we were enemies’, Rom. 5:8-10; then sinners – those outside of Christ – are enemies and are at war with God. At war? Yes. At war. In our natural first-born state we are at constant war with God. We hate him, loathe him, and will not fall under his commandments. In fact, we do all we can to disobey him, show our detestation of him, and seek always to oppose his will and his ways. Enmity.

Why else is it the case, do you think, that when we begin to have an inkling of our sin we automatically turn to works and law to relieve ourselves of the convictions and the feeling that the wrath of God is upon us? Because even then we will not have his way of salvation, but will try and work our own. Faith? Away with faith, we cry, we will work. Work, work, work; all the while ignorant of the one work which has already been accomplished – the only work pleasing and acceptable to God. For the Prince of Peace has wrought the salvation of his people upon the cross. ‘And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight’, Col. 1:20-22.

There is the end of your enmity: the work of the Son alone. And you’ll struggle against that truth under conviction of sin until you’re brought to nothing before him to *plead* the application of that death to your heart and conscience; and you won’t receive it until he then gives it. Such is the experience of true salvation in the light of the pure doctrine of the gospel of Christ.

‘And having made peace’ between you and God! What a work! You can’t do it; only he can. He slays the enmity; he washes away our sins which causes the enmity; he puts away our sin by the sacrifice of himself so that we are no longer at war with him: how can we be! for we are now at peace with God in his Son. Therefore Christ is our peace, and he will remain our only peace so long as we remain in this flesh; for the flesh will always seek to rise up against the will of God and the way of the cross; but he, our peace, will always subdue the flesh

and bring us back to faith and submission; because he keeps us; and, anyway, his glory is at stake in the matter, and he will be glorified in his saints. And the world will see that there is a people on the earth who are called by his name, who were sometime enemies toward God but are now made to rest in him and rejoice in him; and to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light: and what darkness enmity is; and what light peace is! And all by and in Christ, our peace. Therefore be very suspect of and, indeed, flee anyone but Christ who comes seeking to speak 'peace' to you; cp. 1 Thes. 5:1-5, with John 14:27, 20:19-26.

Sabbath Rest

Following on from this is the wonderful truth that Christ is now our 'rest': yea, he is our Sabbath. What wisdom this is! – to see Christ as the end of the law for righteousness *including* the end of the weekly sabbath day: wherein many people think they are acting holy by going to 'a place of worship' and generally 'being good' – holy! – in one day out of seven. What a denial of being 'in Christ' as regards a full and free sanctification that attitude is. But no; our holiness, our sanctification, is only 'through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ', Heb. 10:10, and by our union with him, 1 Cor. 1:2, Heb. 2:11. This mentality which teaches us to 'be holy' on a certain sabbath day, i.e. Sunday, is a denial of these great doctrinal truths.

Listen to Jesus' unambiguous words – and apply your hearts to, and abide in them: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden' under, amongst other things, trying to keep the law: especially on a Sunday – 'Come unto me... and I will give you rest', Matt. 11:28. Yea, in him they do rest from all their labours; and thereafter their works of faith do follow them, Rev. 14:13, 1 Thes. 1:3. So Christ says for them to come to *him*, not to a day; and *he himself* will give them rest – an eternal rest to be found only in himself. Salvation in Christ is coming to an end of 'works' and resting by God-given faith in his full and finished work upon the cross. And anyway, do you think that you only have to be holy on one day of the week before going back out into the world again? No. But the LORD says, and Peter repeats it: 'Be ye holy, for I am holy... in *all* manner of conversation', 1 Peter 1:14-16.

Again, it is the lack of understanding in the fundamental truth of our position 'in Christ' which leads to ignorance on this point. 'Be ye' is language which describes 'abiding in a state' rather than doing works. The Lord does not say, 'Do holy things', but, 'Be ye holy: 'Be... Be.' To abide in Christ is to 'be' in a holy

state as far as God is concerned. Do you think that Christ's 'body', the church, is made up of sinful, deficient members? It certainly is not. In him all his members are called 'saints': holy ones; and they are to 'be' – reside in – what they are in him. And they can only be what they are as they 'abide in Christ'. Therefore as they 'rest in him' by faith: resting in the efficacy of his shed blood and finished work upon the cross as all their hope of salvation; will they be found keeping the sabbath, and keeping it holy. This has nothing to do with 'remembering' a weekly day on earth, but of abiding in him by faith, and therefore 'being holy' every day. In the light of which: to 'break the sabbath' under the new covenant is to take our eyes off Christ and look to some other work for our acceptance before God. Therefore how many sabbath breakers there actually are who pride themselves in having the law as their rule of life – especially on a Sunday – and who love to feign a holy air on the first day of the week, thinking they are keeping the fourth commandment by going to chapel and by not... [enter your own Sunday prohibition here]. Pray tell, what need they of Christ and *his* finished work?

Likewise, the Lord's 'day' is the gospel day, not Sunday. How many times in the Old Testament do we read of a 'day' – 'in that day' – wherein is described the coming of Christ and his accomplishing the work of salvation for his people, spiritual Israel? Surely in the context of the whole of Psalm 118, for instance, 'the day which the LORD hath made', wherein his people 'rejoice and are glad', is not one earthly, carnal day in seven! No; the psalmist is speaking of having been chastened sore, but not given over unto death; of having had the gates of righteousness opened unto him; of going into them and praising the LORD: "This gate is of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused – rejected – is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it", verses 18-24.

Surely this 'day' is the day of salvation! It indicates the 'day' ushered in by Christ's substitutionary sacrifice upon the cross, and his resurrection, cp. Acts 4:10-12; the day in which Christ has 'become my salvation': the new covenant gospel day! You might get cross-references in some Bibles and commentaries to Matthew 28:1, etc. meaning the, now, first day of the week in a carnal sense, but there is no justification for that in the actual text of Psalm 118. (See *Appendix*)

So Christ, and Christ alone is ‘the rest’ of his people. Their work and labours are finished, having been brought to nothing, and they rest in him by faith. At least this is what Paul writes in Hebrews chapters three and four. There we read of the children of Israel in the wilderness who provoked the LORD by their continued unbelief; so he ‘sware to them in his wrath, They shall not enter into my rest’. And neither did they; for how can the unbelieving – those who do not and will not walk by faith – enter in to his rest? ‘Wherefore, take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.’ And what ‘To day’ is this? It can only be the gospel day, the day of faith, cp. 2 Cor. 6:2. Don’t be like them of old, brethren, who fell in the wilderness. ‘And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.’

Therefore we see that ‘entering into rest’ is by faith alone and not by works, nor under a legal rule. So much then for the sabbath being Sunday. But the apostle goes on to say this anyway: ‘Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.’ Oh, do meditate on that phrase: ‘For we which have *believed* do enter into rest.’

Notice also how God says that they enter into *his* rest: a rest which also becomes theirs. The original seventh day was the day in which ‘God rested from all the work which he had made’, Gen. 2:2; and in regards to ‘creation’ he was never to work again, because he had ‘ended his work’. Well, God has ‘ended his work’ of salvation in his Son and he, God, rests again. And it is this ‘rest’ which now remaineth – ‘to day’ – for the people of God who believe and work not: ‘for he that is entered in his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest – by faith, obviously – lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.’

Yes, there remaineth therefore a rest – a keeping of sabbath – to the people of God, Heb. 4:9. That’s your sabbath day; it is entered into, and dwelt in by faith;

it is a permanent rest; and is only to be found in Christ. And *this* is the 'sabbath day' of which the Son of man is Lord, cp. Matt. 12:1-13. Therefore to abide in Christ is to abide in the perpetual sabbath day; and in that day the commandment is, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord.' So, again; once turn from 'the faith of the Son of God', from faith in Christ's blood, to any work for your acceptance with God, and you break the sabbath day.

Food convenient

Those who cry with Moses, 'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom', also cry, '...feed me with food convenient for me...', Prov. 30:8. The spiritual have a spiritual hunger, and desire spiritual sustenance. What 'food' can give them satisfaction? Only Christ! Christ is the nourishment for the longing soul; it can only feed on him. And this is what he taught. When speaking of the manna which the people ate in the wilderness he said, '*I am* the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh... Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him', John 6:48-58.

Elijah, too, had been fed by the Lord with 'bread and flesh, and water' morning and evening at the brook Cherith; while later his sustenance was 'a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water' which he partook of twice to equip him for the journey ahead, which was too great for him. But he 'went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God', 1 Kings 17:6, 19:5-8. Only those of the faith can appreciate the preciousness of such food; for it is a spiritual feeding upon Christ.

There is nothing here which will not now be unfamiliar to the reader. Look at the phrases in John 6 quoted above: '...hath eternal life...' and '...dwelleth in me, and I in him...' His people dwell in Christ their life, and this life is the life of eternity. How is it then that they should not feed upon him as well. Isn't 'life' something we 'feed' upon? In Matthew 5 we read of the blessedness of those who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled', verse 6; and Paul says that it is Christ who is made by God unto them 'righteousness'. Jesus said, 'I am that bread of life', and, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall

flow rivers of living water', John 7:37,38. Therefore coming to Christ and feeding and drinking – believing – on him provides the basic necessities for life: spiritual bread and water.

But here in John chapter six Jesus speaks specifically of 'eating his flesh, and drinking his blood.' What is this? Is this the papist's mass, where, upon a prayer uttered by a priest, a wafer and some wine is transubstantiated into the actual body and blood of Christ, so that they can literally 'eat' and 'drink' of him? No, it is not. The words which Jesus spoke were 'spirit and life', and his 'flesh and blood' are partaken in a spiritual 'eating and drinking.' Anything else is blasphemously wicked, not to say cannibalistically disgusting. For the actual flesh and blood of Christ are they which were broken and shed upon the cross two thousand years ago: the body for the taking away of sin, and the blood for the remission of sins. Therefore, to eat his flesh and to drink his blood spiritually is to believe and rest in his once for all atoning sacrifice of himself for sin and sins upon the cross.

We are not really saying anything different to what we have already said. As the children of God are found in the way of wisdom: as they abide in Christ; then his substitutionary death is the foundation of all their walk. To apply our hearts unto wisdom is to see the full efficacy of the broken body and shed blood of Christ as all our hope, all our trust, and all our salvation. Constantly to believe in them and rest in them is the foundation of what it means to walk by faith, and is spiritually to feed on him. What life is communicated to the soul through a sure and certain revelation that his body was broken for you, and that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, has cleansed you from all sin! Any other 'food' than this fed to the hungry child of God is so much poison; and can one live on poison? But this is what is fed every week to multitudes in the churches and chapels: 'If only you will believe on Christ, then you will be saved. Christ has provided salvation for all, if only all will believe it. Jesus' work is done, now your faith is needed to make it effectual.' Poison. Lies.

And then what about: Come to Christ for the forgiveness of sins and justification; and then turn to the keeping of the law for sanctification. But Paul said that Christ was our sanctification as well! 1 Cor. 1:30. And what about 'teaching for doctrines the commandments of men' instead of preaching the doctrine of the gospel exclusively? Nothing but vanity, Mark 7:5-9. All these lie, and pour poison down the throats of the undiscerning. But this is no nourishment for the faithful. This is not 'convenient food' to those for whom

Christ is their life and all their salvation. No. Preach to us nothing but ‘Jesus Christ, and him crucified’ is their cry. Paul knew this was the only hope of the church, and therefore the only proper food with which to feed it; which is why he said that he desired to know nothing else among them, 1 Cor. 2:2. ‘Are the people feeding on the right food?’ was his only concern; and when he found that they weren’t – because others had followed on behind him with their legal poison – he paced up and down dictating as fast as the words and arguments could leave his mouth, from the heart, to make sure that he fed them with the truth of ‘Christ is all’ again, see Galatians.

But there is another aspect to feeding which is important to bring out here. When one eats, the food goes in through the mouth and down into the stomach, there to be digested and the goodness absorbed and assimilated into and throughout the whole body: feeding the body. As we do not feed through the ears for the good of the brain only, so we do not feed upon Christ just to accumulate knowledge of him in the head – as ‘academic – letter – Christians’ do – but we eat and drink of him in such a way that the whole man is fed and sustained.

More than once in his teaching the Lord Jesus used the word ‘keep’: ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments’; ‘But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience’, John 14:15, Luke 8:15. The word ‘keep’ as used here can be understood as ‘a keep’: a secure holding. In olden days troublemakers or drunks were locked in a keep over night to sober them up and calm them down. Likewise the commandments of the Lord Jesus are to be ‘kept’ in the heart; his words are to be hidden there – as Luke 2:19,51 – ingested so that they permeate the whole man, from whence – within – they not only nourish but cause the man to live according to them as they have become part of him: he brings forth fruit because of their living influence within. This is so different to the understanding of these words generally given: ‘Oh, we must keep the commandments; keep the law: do this, not do that; which will prove that we love Jesus.’ But that’s just works – legalism; and there are many who live like that who never feed on Christ spiritually, and therefore never actually do ‘keep’ his commandments.

So to feed upon Christ is to have him as our very life, our meat and drink; as important to us as the breath in our lungs and the beating of our heart. It is to have him dwell with us, so that his person, his words and his mind become such

a part of us that they are what cause us to think, do, and live. Well, what else can 'I in them, and they in me' actually mean? And as the Lord Jesus prayed to his Father that this would be the state of all his people in their experience, then that is their state in their experience.

'Christ Is All'

Well, this is just something of what it means to abide in Christ: to apply our hearts unto wisdom. There is nothing needful to the walk, life and salvation of the children of God to be found outside Christ: he is 'all' to his people. And how can it be otherwise when he himself has become their salvation? They cannot live without him; there is no joy, fulfilment, contentment, or peace without knowing him; there is no standing on the coming day of judgment outside of him. Only regarding Christ can words such as fulness, abundance, completeness, assurance and absolute security – 'if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...', Col. 1:23, so there is no room for presumption – be assigned their purest meaning – as far as the children of God are concerned. And the same can be said as far as the Father is concerned, also: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' – pleased to the full! – then 'hear ye him.'

There is no meeting of God in his grace outside of his Son. There is no other way to the Father but by Jesus Christ. There is no access to God in prayer but by the sovereign mediation of the Son. There is no salvation possible but by the blood of Christ – in and of itself. When Christ's body was broken and his blood was shed, *then* were all his people saved. This world and worldly religion can offer you nothing – though it pretends to offer you everything. The salvation of God's elect is a spiritual work; but all this world has to offer is carnal, of the flesh, and is only of time. No work from us can procure, aid, spark, or influence salvation in any way. Only Christ can save; for salvation is his prerogative, his institution, his work, and his sovereign will. Without Christ there would be no hope of salvation – all would be lost.

Therefore to his people, who know him, who have had his attributes revealed to them in their experience – however dimly they feel they can see him, and however fitfully they walk in them; nevertheless, to them all, he is 'all in all'; and he will be their all, and all their rejoicing for all eternity; for he is and will always remain: King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. So...

‘So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom... that we might be filled with all the fulness of God in Christ.’

Amen.

Appendix

Some further observations regarding ‘the Lord’s Day’.

As mentioned in the section dealing with Christ our ‘Sabbath Rest’, some point to Matthew 28:1 etc. as proof that the Sabbath has been changed from the seventh day of the week to the first, and that this is now to be called ‘the Lord’s Day’.

But Matthew 28:1 actually says that the sabbath has come to an end: ‘In the end of the sabbath...’ That is a very significant phrase. Surely we believe that every word of God is pure; that it is full of spiritual meaning and application above and beyond its immediate and literal meaning. What did the Spirit mean when he inspired Matthew to write such a phrase? Yes, on one level he is referring to the actual Jewish sabbath day as having passed; it now beginning to dawn toward the first day of the week; but in the context of the whole doctrine of the gospel of Christ that is not the only way to understand those words.

Just read what Matthew says: ‘In the end of the sabbath...’ Mark, typically, is even more blunt in his account: ‘And when the sabbath was past’, Mark 16:1. To the spiritual these phrases can only mean one thing: as far as an earthly, carnal, interpretation of the sabbath day is concerned, it is finished. The Lord Jesus, in his death and resurrection, has become ‘the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth’, Rom. 10:4; which is an absolute statement – the Fourth Commandment of the law not excepting. Either Christ has become the end of all the law or he hasn’t become the end of any of it. As far as God is concerned there is no more weekly sabbath day but, as has been shown in the article above, the sabbath rest for the people of God is now entered and dwelt in by faith in Christ alone – his people’s ‘rest’.

There are a number of other verses of scripture which are used to ‘prove’ that the first day of the week is the new Christian sabbath day – the Lord’s day; and we will briefly look at these:

The apostle John describes himself in Revelation 1:10 as ‘being in the Spirit on the Lord’s day’; and that is all he says – no mention of being in ‘a place of worship’, or even of being gathered with other saints: not ‘We were in the Spirit...’ but ‘I was...’ This verse comes at the beginning of a book full of allegory steeped with spiritual meaning – just read the rest of that first chapter for example. Nowhere in the immediate context, or anywhere else in scripture, is there anything which indicates this ‘Lord’s day’ to have been the first day of the week, or any particular earthly day for that matter. Also, as there is no other mention of ‘the Lord’s day’ at all in the whole of the New Testament, therefore for that fact alone, calling the first day of the week the Lord’s day – not having ‘two or three witnesses’ to establish it, Matt. 18:16, cannot scripturally stand.

As well as calling the now first day of the week ‘the Lord’s day’ some also refer to it as the sabbath as well: this is particularly true in legalistic ‘reformed’ places. The trouble is that these also end up imposing legal OT-type sabbath restrictions on this day, which is to deny the Lord’s salvation completely. When I was in the *Gospel Standard* denomination I became increasingly disgusted – as more light came regarding these things – at their treatment of this day. For a denomination supposedly ‘not under the law as a rule of life’ their treatment of this day with all its sabbath restrictions struck me as being totally hypocritical and a denial of Christ actually being ‘the end of the law for righteousness’. Legalism is the bane of any gospel witness and the bondage that the GS puts its people under regarding this day is nothing different in principle to what the Pharisees were imposing upon the Jews at the time of Christ.

Another text used to justify this day is Acts 20:7. But that verse says only that ‘the disciples came together to *break bread*’. Nowhere does it say they came together on this day to worship, to hear preaching, or to attend ‘synagogue.’ As Paul was with them at that time he did preach to them on that occasion; but, again, it doesn’t say it was in a religious building, or that he preached ‘morning and evening’ for 45 minutes at a time. Neither is there any reason to believe from the verse itself that this was particularly seen by them as a sabbath or that they hadn’t actually been to work that day. Notice from the following verses that they obviously met in the evening – breaking bread, or having a meal together

would likely be at the end of the day – and Paul preached till midnight, and beyond!

I suppose that with preconceived ideas it could be inferred from this verse that there was a gathering of some sort ‘on the first day of the week’ – although we don’t get any phrase added like ‘as was their custom’ – and yet another reference which is used to justify this idea, 1 Corinthians 16:2, does nothing to encourage that belief. There all we are told is that Paul commanded that on that day ‘let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him’ as a collection for the saints who were starving at Jerusalem, cp. Rom. 15:25-27. Again no ‘worship service’, formal meeting, or sabbath restrictions are mentioned; and again, I don’t see any reason to believe that the people hadn’t worked on that day. The labourer, in those days, received his pay daily, Matt. 20:2, and Paul’s command hints at a laying aside of their firstfruits – out of the wages they earned on the first day of their working week – for the needy among the saints, nothing else.

Now I am not saying that we should not have a day for rest from physical labour, and for the meeting together of the people of God – although it does seem that at the beginning the church met more regularly than twice on a Sunday and once mid-week: such was the life and hunger for the word among them, cp. Acts 2:46, 5:41,42, 19:9, 20:20 – but I am arguing, and with scriptural justification, that if such a day be kept, perhaps after Romans 14:5,6, it shouldn’t be called ‘the Lord’s day’, the Sabbath, or that any form of legalism be introduced to it whatsoever. According to 1 Corinthians 14:40 ‘order’ should be upheld in the gatherings of the Lord’s people; but that is not the same as the dry and rigid formalities which pass for the gathering of the saints in many places today. In fact I don’t believe that ‘the form of godliness’ in such meetings bears much resemblance to how the church gathered at the beginning: the apostles’ doctrine on this point certainly needs revisiting...