

Retired Members Corner



THE ROAD WE TRAVEL

We seem to be in the midst of another financial crisis. New forms of linguistic jargon crop up daily to leave me baffled. Banks are having a "haircut". When I have a haircut it costs about £5. The haircut for some banks will cost millions of pounds. Just whose hair is getting cut I'm not sure. Perhaps if they were "top sliced" they would have no hair to cut. Is there an official EU hairdresser appointed for this lucrative post? Then there's another term, "sovereign debt". I am fairly sure that the Queen is not in debt and I am also unaware of a return to the gold standard. Sovereign debt is incurred by sovereign borrowers, it seems. As far as I can gather this is money borrowed by the state to keep it in business. I might have problems with modern English usage but I certainly feel at home with the 400-year-old King James Version of the Bible. Crisis or no crisis, God is still on the throne.

When you are seated in your recliner chair in front of the fire, snoozing after a satisfying meal, do you ever look back at the road you have travelled so far? You think back to your days at school, maybe to WWII, to when you first started work, to when you left home, to all the places you have been to, to the day you retired, to those loved ones who have died, and you wonder what the future holds. Then you might say to yourself, "Where was God in all these experiences?" Was all this part of God's plan for me? The Bible tells me that I was chosen by Him before the foundation of the world (Eph 1 v 4). I was raised in a household that encouraged me to work my way through school with good results, both in England and Scotland. Was that God's plan - to enable me to pass the Civil Service examination and interview? Did He cause me to serve in an African colonial regiment in the Army in order to give me a desire to return to Africa in later life? Did He cause me to be posted to Northern Ireland in the Customs and Excise in order that I might hear the gospel and emerge from darkness into light? The answer to all these questions must be, "YES". My times were in His hands.

I remember way back in 1973 when VAT was in its infancy. I had been posted to a vacancy for a Surveyor (DP in NICS speak) in the VAT Office in Lisburn. I arrived in my car one Monday morning. I had a lot of books and personal items in the boot. Two members of the staff came out to the car to help me carry my gear

into the room allocated to me. They told me that they had heard I was coming and they were pleased. They were both Christians and they hoped I would start a lunchtime meeting in the office for prayer and Bible study. (My reputation had travelled ahead of me!) I said that it sounded a great idea to me. I obtained written permission from the head of office to hold meetings on official premises. Very soon eight Christians gathered on Wednesdays at lunchtime in my room for a time of fellowship. Was this why God placed me in the Civil Service?

One day one of our fellowship came to me and asked if I had ever heard of the Civil Service Christian Union. No, I hadn't. Well, there's a lady called Ethel Patterson in the N. Ireland Dept. of Education in Rathgael who could tell you all about it if you write to her. I wrote and we all joined. As time progressed Christians from the Inland Revenue office came to join us and soon we had regular meetings of 12 or more. Then three folk for whom we were praying accepted the Lord as Saviour. There were about one hundred in the building, many of them involved in visits to dangerous areas. None were hurt. The Customs had 8 killed on duty and many injured in the troubles. VAT staff were not popular, especially if they were distraining. The Lord was a very present help in our time of need.

In II Samuel 22, David looks back at how the Lord travelled with him on his journey through life. The Lord was his rock, his fortress, his deliverer (v2), his shield, his high tower and refuge (v3). The Lord delivered him from his enemies and all manner of dangers, seen and unseen. The Lord had rewarded him as he walked in His ways (v20- 22). The Lord had been his lamp in times of darkness (v29). He was able to say, "the Lord liveth and blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God and Rock of my Salvation" (v47).

As I look back, I can concur with David regarding the faithfulness of God in His provision for me throughout my life. As regards the future, my journey is to a celestial city, a city whose builder and maker is God, the heavenly Jerusalem. The road is a narrow one but the Lord is able to keep me on it. I trust, dear reader, that you are journeying along the narrow road which leadeth to eternal life rather than the broad road that leadeth to destruction (Matt 7 v13/14). I am not walking alone. I have lost the travelling companions I had on the broad road but the Lord has given me many Christian friends who provide fellowship along the narrow way. Praise the Name of the Lord.