

BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS

John Fawcett

John Fawcett was born on 6th January 1739 in Bradford. He was orphaned at twelve years old and was ‘bound out’ to a tailor in Bradford where he worked for fourteen hours a day. He learned to read by using John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and at the age of sixteen he was converted under the preaching of George Whitefield. Originally, he was a (Calvinistic) Methodist, before becoming pastor of Wainsgate Particular Baptist Church in West Yorkshire which was formed in 1750. Sadly, it closed as a church in 2001 but has been renovated and now accommodates concerts and such-like secular events. The Word of God is no longer preached there.

Wainsgate Baptist Church began out of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. It had a small membership. The village of Wainsgate was “a straggling group of houses on the top of a barren hill”. According to records, “The people were all farmers and shepherds, poor as Job’s turkey; an uncouth lot whose speech one could hardly understand, unable to read or write; most of them pagans cursed with vice and ignorance and wild tempers. The Established Church had never touched them; only the humble Baptists had sent an itinerant preacher there and he [*Richard Smith*] had made a good beginning”.

John Fawcett was their second pastor. After being recently married, at the age of twenty-five he and his new wife Mary served there for seven years but they found it extremely difficult maintaining themselves and their four children on £25 a year. ... His congregation couldn’t afford any more so, in 1772, when he received an invitation to succeed John Gill as pastor of Carter’s Lane Baptist Church in London he planned to accept the call. At the last minute though, - when he had all his belongings packed and had preached his farewell sermon, - he changed his mind and decided to remain at Wainsgate. In 1793 he was also invited to become president of the Baptist Academy in Bristol, but he similarly declined. Altogether, he was pastor to the Wainsgate congregation for fifty-three years, and he died at the age of seventy-eight on 25th July 1817. Following his decision to remain at Wainsgate, he wrote the hymn,

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship our spirit finds
Is like to that above.

... And the Sunday after he made his decision to stay, he preached from the words of the Lord Jesus in Lk. 12:15, [And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware](#)

of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. His decision to remain, therefore, came out of a soul-searching desire to be where the Lord wanted him to be, regardless of the cost.

The background to the verse John Fawcett preached from relates to the Lord Jesus on His journey from Galilee, to the Passover in Jerusalem, **Lk. 9:51** And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, **52** And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. **53** And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. **54** And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did [*III Kings 1:10,12*]? **55** But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. **56** For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. Shortly afterwards He appointed the seventy disciples to go out two-by-two, **10:1** After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. **2** Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. **3** Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. They went and experienced much blessing, **17** And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

Travelling on, after He had exorcised the demon from a man who could not speak, Jesus Himself was accused of being demonic, **11:15** some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. He dealt firmly with this accusation but the pressure upon Him 'took a different turn' when He was invited to dine with a certain Pharisee. Jesus entered the home, sat down to eat but didn't go through the usual traditional ceremony expected of Him, and the Pharisee found it offensive. ... Of course, Jesus was making a point, **39** And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. **40** Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? **41** But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. **42** But woe unto you, Pharisees! **43** Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. **44** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. ... He further included the religious legal scholars (v. 45-52) and this resulted in them sulking 'away off' with the unhappy Pharisees to devise an opportunity to entrap Jesus.

The conversation continues in chapter twelve where Jesus is thronged with the multitudes (12:1), and He warned them to beware of imitating the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, ² For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. ³ Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. Then He went on to speak to them about their priorities, ⁴ And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do ... ⁸ Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: ⁹ But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. ... He was explaining to them the will of God ... The will of God is for every Christian to defend, promote, and present the Lord Jesus Christ, to glorify Him, and to enjoy His company. ... There are other aspects to the will of God but basically that is the model for every believer, - to show the Lord Jesus in your life, **Lk. 12:4** *And I say unto you my friends. ... **Prov. 18:24** there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

However, someone wasn't grasping what Jesus was saying for they had their *own* agenda, **Lk. 12:13** *Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. ... ! ... Jesus has been addressing the subjects of the deceitfulness and dangers of false religion, the subject of giving God honour and glory and about honouring the Son of God, and about being careful not to blaspheme the Holy Spirit for if you don't accept the Holy Spirit's revelation about Christ, you can't know God ... And Jesus is speaking about all these lofty spiritual truths ... and this one man in a crowd of thousands basically said to Jesus, "Forget all that 'holy stuff' ... **Lk. 12:13** *speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. ... Jesus, that's what is important to me!**

And Jesus could have told him off there and then, but He simply informed the man that He wasn't there to rule on matters pertaining to the earthly, for as He said elsewhere, **Jn. 18:36** *My kingdom is not of this world ... **Lk. 12:14** Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? ¹⁵ And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness [*greed*]: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ... And those were the words which spoke so powerfully to John Fawcett as he considered taking on the pastorate of a larger and more outwardly successful church. If he had taken the job in London, his money worries would have been over, and he and his wife and his family would have led a comfortable life.*

But that is not the priority of the Christian. Yes, the Lord gives us more than we deserve, and often more than ever we imagined, but the greatest gift He has given us is referred to in the words of the psalmist, **Ps. 103:2** *Bless the LORD, O my*

soul, and forget not all his benefits: ³ Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; ⁴ Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. ... Christian, your sins have been forgiven, you have been redeemed from eternal punishment in Hell because of what Jesus did for you on the cross, and you are the recipient of God's lovingkindness and tender mercies ... and when you leave this scene of time, He will take you instantly into His presence forever!

Money and possessions will never gain you such a legacy. John Fawcett came to realise a bigger church in the centre of London, with thousands coming to hear him preach was not the right place if it was not where the Lord needed him to be. John Fawcett discovered it is not *my* will be done, but it is *Thy* will be done!

Yes, he was genuinely concerned for the welfare of his family ... to clothe and feed them ...

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one
Our comforts and our cares.

He *knew* what it was to be in want ... but as the larger church in London was dangled before his eyes, he came to realise it was the Lord Who would keep him,

This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way;
While each in expectation lives,
And longs to see the day.

From sorrow, toil and pain,
And sin, we shall be free,
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity.

“Blest be the tie that binds” ... As Christians, we're ‘wrapped’ in the goodness of God, - individually, and as a body of believers. The same goodness God gives to me, He also gives to you. It is how He spoke to the nation of Israel through the prophet Hosea, **Hosea 11:4** *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.*

John Fawcett ‘turned his back’ on the move to London, - not because it was wrong for it would have been right for someone else, - but he remained in Wainsgate, in a small country town, with the most ordinary of people because that was where the Lord would have him serve. That was the place for which God had given him the burden, and to where he was accountable unto God.

The Lord doesn’t call everyone to be a pastor, or a missionary, or a Bible teacher but He *does* call everyone to be faithful. I fear there may be those whose calling has been rescinded/revoked because they haven’t followed. Maybe they were expecting some grandiose area of service when, instead, God called them to serve Him in the simplicity of their surroundings. ... What needier a mission field is there than the street you live in, the people you speak with, your neighbour next door, your own family? ... If God hasn’t called you to serve Him in Africa or in Asia or in some other part, He *has* given you an equal calling to serve Him where you are just now and that is where you are responsible for.

The reward for John Fawcett was not a city-centre church with thousands of respectable people pouring in. Instead, his reward on earth was seeing those people from a small country town learn more about God ... And his reward on earth was translated into his reward in Heaven when he would have heard the words of His Master, **Mt. 25:21** *Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

The ties that bind us together are *of* the Lord and *in* the Lord. They cannot be broken. Jesus says to us individually and as a fellowship, **Lk. 12:15** *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* He will look after our necessities when He is given the priority. The prophet Zechariah told the people, **Zech. 4:10** *who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice ...* What was it that defeated the giant Goliath? Was it the armies of Israel with all their swords and spears? No, it was a young man confident in the Lord’s will, **1 Sam. 17:45** *Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts.*

Seek after the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33) and He will meet our needs for that is when, - as John Fawcett discovered, - everything will fall into its proper place in our work for the Lord.