

*Serve the Lord  
with gladness  
Come before his  
presence with singing.*

*Psalm 100:2*

## From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. (Gen 50.20)*

In the verse above we have a tremendous statement about the providence of God; Joseph is reflecting on his brothers' ghastly act— selling him into slavery— and the trouble which thereafter ensued. Regardless, he remembers the remarkable providence of God.

When sold into slavery and languishing in prison due to false accusations he undoubtedly found the providence of God hard. It is important to recognise that these times of testing are a miniscule part of a larger picture. We do know that these trials and tribulations will be for our spiritual good - though we may remain bereft of the larger picture. Often difficult providences are used to draw us closer to God and remove any notion that we are saved by our own righteousness causing us to recognise Christ is the only way of salvation.

A writer once said 'Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye'.

We also see God's providence in the life of Joseph's relatives. His father Jacob grieves as he believed his son Joseph had been killed. Joseph's father, Jacob was the one who wrestled with the Lord and the invisible was revealed to him by the Lord – a ladder up to heaven with angels ascending and descending. The Lord promised Jacob to be with him wherever he went (Gen 28.15). However, when a the providence of losing his son came to pass we are told he refused to be comforted (Genesis 37.35). Knowledge of a godly providence is easier in concept, but it is harder to reconcile on a personal level.

The Bible tells us that soon after Joseph went missing a famine hit the country – how can that be a good thing? Joseph's brothers are sent to Egypt to get food. Joseph (not yet know to his brothers) tests them by allowing them to be accused of stealing. His brother Simeon is taken into prison. The remaining brothers return to Jacob to give him a message—they have been instructed to bring Benjamin in order to procure the food they need and free Simeon from jail. What difficult circumstances!

*And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take*

*Benjamin away: all these things are against me. (Gen 42:36)*

Jacob's view in this statement was accurate – everything circumstantially was against him, he did not know or believe Joseph was alive.

How wrong he was: Joseph was still alive, assigned as the Prime Minister of Egypt. Simeon, unknowingly, was in the protective custody of his brother who loved him. The hand of God was working for Jacob and his whole nation's redemption.

Though he thought everything was against him - everything was for him! There is a verse in the New Testament that says that 'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?' ([Rom 8:31](#)).

When, dear believer, it seems like you are going through a afflictive providence - life's circumstances are tough - remember Jacob & Joseph and the Lord's providence to their family. We have the same Lord – the same promise of the Lord's protection. Romans 8:28 states 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose'.

John Flavel once said 'Providence is wiser than you, and you may be confident it has suited all things better to your eternal good than you could do had you been left to your own option'. Jacob at the end said 'And Israel said, *It is enough*; Joseph my son *is* yet alive: I will go and see him before I die' Gen 45:28. Jacob took a lifetime to learn God's providence and he concluded it is enough – God is always enough.

May we be encouraged to trust in God's providence – not just the latest blessing – knowing our God is faithful and will keep that we have committed unto him against that day so that he that has begun a good work in us will perform it as we live and grasp God's sweet and bitter providence.

## Upcoming Dates

- Sunday, 30 September: Harvest Festival
- Saturday, 15 September: TBS Annual General Meeting
- Wednesday, 26 September: David Allen taking the Prayer Meeting & Bible Study
- Wednesday, 24 October: Chris Buss taking the Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

*With love,  
Pastor Jonathan Arnold*

## Prayer Requests

- Thanks for the many visitors who have recently attended and that the upcoming services may be blessed.
- Mary Ward—she is now in a care home near the church and continues to have health difficulties.
- Marta Jinx—despite poor health, she continues attending when she can.
- The children who attend Sunday School to enjoy holiday camps and to be prepared for school which begins in September.
- Edgardo: recently started preaching at his home church in Panama.
- Remember others in the fellowship who are unwell or dealing with difficult issues.

## News

The last few months have been a mixed blessing for the church. We have had fellowship for a time with friends from the USA, Panama and Nigeria. Who after work or studies have returned home. It has also been our joy to have a number of one off visitors in recent months while on holiday to the UK.

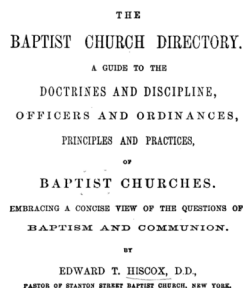
The end of the school year also marks the conclusion of a Sunday School year where a number of children from the local area and from church families have faithfully attended. We continue to pray for this work as the children hear the Gospel on a weekly basis and thank the teachers for all their labours.

On 19 May a number of people came to assist in the maintenance of the church. This is a vital work in sustaining the building that we use and much was accomplished but there is much yet to be done. Please listen for future announcements of a further maintenance day.

The preaching ministry has recently been centred on Hebrews on the Lord's day and we have once again been reminded of the supremacy and all sufficiency of Christ. On Wednesdays we have concluded our studies in the Gospel according to Mark and have now moved on to the challenging prophecy of Hosea and its warnings against spiritual adultery.

## A Bite of History

### *How to become a member at 19th Century Romney Street Baptist Church*



Renowned Particular Baptist John Gill believed that church membership should not be available to “anyone at pleasure” but instead should be reserved for those who demonstrate their Christianity through a profession of faith in Christ.

This was echoed by the American Baptist, Edward Hiscox\*, who set forth two means by which a member might enter the church: 1. by

their testimony 2. by a transfer of membership from another church (often called ‘dismission’).

The former procedure was for candidates who were not presently a member at any other church. They would relay their Christian testimony to the members at the church, to ensure that those who joined the fellowship were of one mind with the rest of the congregation. Indeed, Hiscox argued, “It is very desirable there should be a general harmony, and if possible, entire unanimity” in the vote for their acceptance. This was not a surprising practice, since the church undoubtedly wanted to avoid any contro-

versy which might lead to additional divisions which were all too common in this era.

At Romney Street Chapel, proposed members were expected to submit a letter of intent to join the church to the deacons after which a month would elapse between the proposal and acceptance of a candidate for membership. During this period, two “messengers” would be appointed to the candidate(s) to assess the spiritual and moral condition of their lives through multiple home visits. Membership would not be granted to candidates until these visits had taken place (unless members were transferring from another like-minded church).

This was not an unusual practice in Baptist churches; Little Wild Street Chapel, where Christopher Woollacott (the second pastor) joined after leaving Romney Street, referred to this procedure. It was also the practice of some Baptist churches in the USA, one of whom mentioned this in their manual, arguing that “No application for membership, (except those dismissed from sister churches,) shall be acted upon by the church, until the Pastor or Deacons, or a committee appointed for that purpose, have had opportunity to ascertain the character and standing of the candidate.”

*\*Hiscox authored The Baptist Church Directory which sold over 30,000 copies which were translated into six languages. It would not be unreasonable to assume this book would have been known to the congregation at Romney Street. By Angela Platt-Arnold*