

## Westerham Hill Pastoral Letter No.8

*Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.  
(Psalm 115v1 NIV)*

This Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> May, we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German surrender bringing the end of the Second World War in Europe after almost six years of fighting. If we were able to meet this Sunday, we would have used some of the material supplied by SASRA to help us give thanks to God for his providential undertaking and sovereign over-ruling which enabled the Allies to overcome the Nazi evil. We remember with gratitude the bravery and fortitude shown by our parents' and grandparents' generations (and yes, I must include Eileen too, very much of the present generation!) who for a while stood alone with the Empire and Commonwealth against such superior forces. We remember the hardships born by those at home, the sufferings and shortages, the bombings and the rockets, as well as those who fought on land and sea and in the air. Our present situation is surely nothing compared to wartime rationing and restrictions. I recall with gratitude to God, Norman, a Normandy veteran of 1944, who with his dear wife Mary use to regularly babysit for us when we moved to West Wickham, and welcomed us on our first Sunday at Bromley Baptist Church, and who served the Lord so faithfully until Covid19 took him in Beechmore at the age of 97. While we honour and thank God for these stalwarts of faith who went before us, the Psalmist's quote above reminds us that the glory and the praise belong to our God alone. In the same way, William Shakespeare in Henry V, describes the victorious English longbow men singing this verse as they leave the battlefield after Agincourt.

In the book, 'SASRA in the Second World War,' there is the following account from a scripture reader: 'Signalman X came to France a puffed-up young man, full of his own ideas and thoughts about God, and lived his own life, wrapped up in high sounding words and scientific theories. Then came the German attack and with it applied science all around him in the form of high explosive shells, tanks and planes, and he found that there was very little constructive comfort in 'science'. Later, he found himself in utter helplessness on the beach at Dunkirk, with others around him being blown into eternity and not knowing just when his turn would come. He sought for comfort in his atheism, but there was none for him there, and in agony of soul he cried to the living God for deliverance. God answered the cry and the lad was delivered. He arrived at our hut, a firmly convinced man, definitely believing in the existence of God. His trouble, however, was not yet completely dealt with, and he told me that he could not conceive that the God whom he knew and the God of the scriptures were one and the same, and that God had manifested himself in flesh and dealt with our sins on Calvary. I quietly asked him if he would seek a quiet corner, take a gospel of John with him, and ask God to teach him the meaning of the book. He came back the next night with the light of heaven in his face as he told me that he now believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and he now understood. It was a delight to point him to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Surrounded by a sea of khaki, we simply bowed our heads and hearts before Him who is plenteous in mercy.'

Do we not pray and desire that God, in that same mercy, will use our witness in our present troubles to bring lost and desperate souls to our Lord Jesus Christ? Our present trouble is with an invisible enemy, a virus, and as Christians we have always known that our battle is with the forces of darkness that are unseen, but very powerful. But we know, and Christ's resurrection has proved it, that our God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing and able to save to the uttermost (to use KJV type language). The same SASRA book quoted above contains another article written at the conclusion of the war with Japan later in 1945 which says: 'Six years ago, when within a quarter of a century Germany had once again plunged the world into war, His Majesty the King called the nation to prayer. At the close of his message he said 'We can only do right as we see right, and reverently commit our

cause to God.' On pondering over these words, and as we look back upon those tragic six years, we can surely see how the Lord did undertake our cause and enabled the Allies to do right as they saw the right, until victory was finally accorded and peace throughout the world once more vouchsafed. Truly, we ought to proclaim with the Psalmist: 'Not unto us, O Lord, Not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory.' Mindful too of the spiritual battles that had been won in the hearts and lives of many men and women as they faced up to the forces of evil, with Paul we have been able to say: 'Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (I Corinthians 15:57)'

Let us pray for the worldwide church: 'O God we pray that as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we may show forth the virtues of courage, endurance, discipline and obedience, so that your kingdom may advance and triumph, to the glory of Almighty God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

Let us also remember those, on the home front as it were, who continue to work caring for others and for Clive and Melanie as Clive goes through another extended period of treatment. Let us also pray for our brothers and sisters in East Africa, who face another and more serious plague of locusts, which are devouring the harvest.

*Our God, our help in ages past.*

*Our hope for years to come,*

*Be Thou our guard while troubles last,*

*And our eternal home.*

Isaac Watts.