

## Exhortations to encourage

John Nicholls

**Think on these things, Bill Guy.**

**Price £8.00 plus £1.30 postage and packing for a single copy.**

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**B**ROTHER BILL GUY, who will be known to regular readers of the *Testimony* magazine for his occasional poems, has published some of his favourite exhortations in a collection of ten chapters. There are many brothers and sisters who are unable to meet regularly with ecclesias due to distance, old age or illness, and exhortations like the ones in this 213-page book will be very helpful to such. For all of us it is sometimes just good to be able to read something encouraging or thought-provoking as we travel to the Kingdom, and again Brother Guy's book supplies those needs. The ten exhortations are written in an engaging and warm manner, anecdotal every now and then, but sound and faithful to the Truth we love. They read like verbatim reports, and you feel that Brother Guy is sitting next to you and exhorting you personally.

With titles like "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus", "We shall be like him", "I will give you rest" and "Let your light shine before men", the exhortations build up and encourage. One which the reviewer particularly enjoyed was, "Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee", a lovely exhortation on the letter to Philemon. Here is a flavour of this exhortation, taken from page 86 of the book:

"The first thing we note in this epistle is that Paul appreciated that each of these men had a God-given duty to respond to, as brothers in Christ. The old order had, to some extent at least, passed away with Onesimus' conversion. Paul was clearly aware that Onesimus had a duty to return to his master even though a heavy penalty might attach to a strict application of law. It is remarkable that 'the Truth' was possibly going to endanger his (natural) life and yet that same 'Truth' would ultimately be the only means of saving it in an eternal/

spiritual sense. In this context we recall the example of Daniel in Old Testament times—it was because of his faith in God, that in a quite literal sense, he was thrown into the den of lions, but it was precisely because of this same faith that he was also, again quite literally, saved from it. These examples bring home to us the realisation that we must always stand by our faith, even though in an immediate and very real sense, this may put our lives at risk. If our faith is sufficient, and if also it is God's will, then we shall emerge unscathed from such testing. And even if we do not, we shall certainly have benefits in an ultimate sense—for do not 'all things work together for good to those that love God'?"

There is a fine exhortation, "Lord I believe; help thou my unbelief", in which the reasons for the disciples' inability to heal the epileptic boy are explored in a particularly engaging passage on page 118. The seventh exhortation, "For fear that we should drift away from them", based on Hebrews 2:1, is another fine exhortation, with a good deal of exposition too.

The last two exhortations are most timely for the Brotherhood as it is today, so close to the return of our Master and yet so hard pressed by a world whose philosophy is, 'Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die'. In the first, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock", the words which form the title are considered in their context of the farewell meeting with the Ephesus ecclesia at Miletus, and then the words of Paul in his letter to the Ephesians and those of Jesus to John in Patmos. The last exhortation is, "Strengthen the things that remain". Brother Guy remarks at the beginning of this exhortation, "the message to all the seven churches/ecclesias is that they should remember what they have heard and have been taught, to manifest appropriate humility and repentance, and last and by no means least, to hold on. Holding on, I would say, is very much our preoccupation in the ecclesias of the Western World today".

These exhortations are given in a faithful and affectionate manner, and will be a stimulus to all as we walk towards the glorious Kingdom which our God has promised.