

“IT ALWAYS HAPPENS TO DAVID!”

SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES OF DAVID PAWSON

by *CHRIS HILL*

Ever since his childhood, David Pawson had a tendency to fall on his feet. His family always quipped. “O it always happens to David!” On his own admission, his life was full of unusual and unexpected events, most of which he did not seek. Not only was this an observable fact in his life, it continued on to include his *death!*

If, as a Christian, you had a choice of when to pass into the presence of the Lord, you might well opt for Ascension Day! If you had a choice as to the time of day, you would probably opt for the time your Saviour was crucified or even the time the Holy Spirit fell onto and into the disciples at the Feast of Pentecost. That is to say, 9 o'clock in the morning. It happens to be the precise moment when the Morning Sacrifices were kindled in the Temple at Jerusalem.

JDP passed into the presence of his Saviour at 9 o'clock in the morning on May 21st, 2020 ... Ascension Day! No doubt he chuckled to himself, as he entered Paradise, “Trust me! It's happened yet again!”

Some have called David Pawson one of the finest British preachers of the last sixty-plus years. It is an accolade few would argue with. His erudition was matched by a disarming sense of humour, enriched with a wondrous array of anecdotes. David had the common touch and that rare gift of making complicated doctrine not only palatable but delicious! We all clamoured for more!

If you want chapter and verse of his varied and fascinating life, David's autobiography, *“Not as bad as the truth”*, will serve you well.

When I was asked to write this appreciation of my friend, I decided I would not try to “reinvent the wheel”, but rather to share some personal memories.

My first meeting with David was fifty years ago at a conference at which he was the featured speaker. The immaculate, silvering hair and beard (I *think* he had his beard then), coupled with a silver-grey suit and tie, presented an impressive figure. His orthodox appearance belied his somewhat radical approach to Bible teaching, and I was well and truly hooked! We saw each other at regular intervals at conferences of various kinds, and acquaintance developed into respect and then into a much valued friendship. It was a privilege to know David.

Lindy and I were invited to visit David and Enid at Sherborne St John where we revelled in the kingfishers and David’s ‘N gauge’ model railway in the shed!

In 1996, Lindy and I were most excited when David and Enid asked to join one of our *C L Bible Tours of Israel*. He was gracious when I told him to feel free to add his own comments as we visited the sites. His reply was, “No, Chris: Enid and I are here to enjoy *your* teaching: we’ll just be part of the group!”

Can you imagine how the other tour members greeted that? They were literally ‘gagging’ for his insights! Lindy and I knew we would be lynched if I failed to include David! At every point of the tour I would turn to David and say, “Now, my brother, if there is anything you would like to add, please do so.” It will come as no surprise to know that he responded with great frequency, “Well, perhaps there is *something* I would like to add ...!” David’s “somethings” made that tour utterly memorable! The only challenge is that it extended each touring day by at least two hours! But who was complaining?

Lindy recalls the day when we visited St Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai. We had forgotten that religious protocol required what we referred to as 'Church Dress': no knees, please! David and I had gone in shorts, so admission was refused. However, the monks were gracious and provided us with grey kaftans to cover our hairy appendages! The members of the group found this hysterical and all returned home with memorable photos of JDP in mufti!

Every evening as we returned to the hotel, the cry would go up, "Tell us a story, Uncle David!" And, as may be supposed, he always obliged and had us roaring for more.

Speaking for myself, I have valued David's writing as much as his preaching. His clarity of expression transferred to the printed page very easily. Of all his books, I rate "Unlocking the Bible" as his greatest. It accomplishes just what it says on the cover: it unlocks the Bible for the common man. Mind you, I know of many senior *Ministers* who consult David's book with surprising regularity! I know *I* do!

True friendship is capable of being tested. I'm glad about it because David and I did not always see eye-to-eye on matters theological! We could never agree regarding Assurance or the Rapture and so we agreed to *differ* and loved each other anyway!

David never shrank from controversy! He lived by the adage, 'We must obey God rather than men', and this was reflected in his choice of book titles: "Leadership is male" and "The Road to Hell" to mention but two. The prophetic insight that led him to write, "The Challenge of Islam to Christians" has been confirmed over and over, in spite of it being dismissed by many as extreme when it was published.

We visited David and Enid at their apartment in Basingstoke on several occasions and they were always gracious hosts. David was

thrilled that their last home offered him adequate space for his enormous library and dear Enid never seemed to be phased by it. She has truly been the perfect help-meet.

A lasting memory for Lindy and me is David's 90th Birthday Celebration. He was born on Tyneside on February 25th, 1930 and so the Celebration was 90 years after, to the day. Shrove Tuesday. Around forty friends and relatives gathered at the Oaklodge Nursing Home and David and Enid 'held court'. It was a delightful occasion and a great opportunity to say, "Thank you" to them *both*. It is well said that behind every successful man there is a remarkable woman. David and Enid are certainly a fine example of that.

Through books and through the extraordinary means of modern recordings, David's preaching and teaching ministry is appreciated all over the world. The Lord has caused His wondrous works through our brother to be remembered. As long as our precious Lord delays His return, the works of David Pawson will be cherished. As well they might be. Everything he spoke and wrote glorified his Saviour and he might very well have adopted as his motto the glorious words of Charles Wesley,

"O let me commend my Saviour to you."