

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CHRIST'S SAVIOURHOOD

A.B.Parker

Acts 4: 8-12; Hebrews 7: 23-25; 9: 24-28

Is there anyone here who needs a Saviour? You may think that is an unnecessary question, but I am not so sure about that. I would ask again, Is there anyone here who needs a Saviour? This man, of whom Peter speaks, had need of a Saviour. He had been brought daily to the gate of the temple: he may have heard the Lord teaching in the temple; he may have heard the apostles preach; we are not told, but considering the number of times that he had been laid at the gate of the temple, he must have known something of what was transpiring. There will be those who have a false sense of security because they have eaten and drunk in the presence of the Lord and have heard Him teach in their streets. They will refer to this seeking entrance through the door which then will be closed for ever. The Lord will say to them, "I do not know you..... depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity", Luke 13: 27. So we must not just assume things. The Lord knows; "The Lord knows those that are his", 2 Tim 2: 19. Not only does He know who they are, but He knows *them*. It is a wonderful thing to be known of God; to be known by the Saviour. Does He know you? Do you know Him? How well do you know Him? Have you ever been moved inwardly by the preaching? Have you just consented to the preaching? Have you assumed that everything is all right because you have been to the preaching many, many times and are in accord with it, generally speaking? Have you merely assented to the preaching? Well, apparently this man had never been affected inwardly, he had never been moved. What we look for, and I trust will see, is such power in the preaching that persons are not only momentarily affected, but that something abiding happens in them. We need to be moved inwardly. This man was moved. He stood up, he leaped, he walked, he entered into the temple, he praised God. He was a real case. He became an example to Israel of what the Spirit of God was ready and able to do with them as a people if they would only listen and submit to the

appeal of the gospel. In listening to it, allow the word to enter, to penetrate, to affect your inward parts so that there is action and evidence that the power of God is working in you. The word relates to the Saviour, it relates to His Name, the only Name under heaven "by which we must be saved". What a Name it is!

Nothing is said about this man's state of soul. He is not questioned by Peter. He may have known something of the terms of the gospel, but it had not changed him. What he needed was change, and what we need is change. Christianity is a real thing, it changes persons. If there is no change with them, what evidence is there that God is working? We need to submit to the power of the word, to be searched in our inward parts. David, a repentant man, said to God "Thou wilt have truth in the inward parts", Ps 51: 6.

What are the inward parts? The mind? Well, the mind is the gateway to the heart. What is received through the mind is to have its effect in the heart; the very spring and source of the life of the person. In the circulatory system of our bodies the blood is forced, by the heart, throughout our whole bodies. And the word, finding its place in our hearts affects the whole body. Out of the heart are the issues of life, (Prov 4: 23). Note that it is out of the *heart*.

We want the word to penetrate, to get right in, to search out what is in the heart and bring us into the presence of God. God is a sin-hating God, but He is a God who delights to forgive when there is repentance. At what a cost has He established the platform on which He can show mercy; the platform of the righteousness of God. Never was there a proffered righteousness like it. That platform was not known until Jesus died and rose again, (see note 'd' to Romans 1: 17). There was righteousness of the law; any Jew could have told you about the righteousness which is by the law, but when Jesus died and rose again He established by His wonderful sacrifice, a platform on which God could draw near to men with forgiveness when repentance according to God took place. God can show mercy and forgive. What a God! What a platform! Through the glad tidings and the work of the blessed Spirit in our souls we become conscious that we need a Saviour, that to stand before a sin-hating

God in favour as forgiven, justified and reconciled we must, by faith, appropriate the precious finished work of Christ. I trust that we all know this, and that what I have said is, in a sense, unnecessary. Yet we need to be freshly reminded of the greatness of the work of Christ and the need for the work of the Spirit. For us to arrive at the acceptance of the glad tidings must be the result of new birth, the inscrutable work of the Spirit of God. I trust that all here are conscious of being in this category knowing and loving the Saviour.

The second scripture tells us that the Lord Jesus "is able to save completely those who approach by him to God". Does that mean persons who come to God in repentance? That is the way we come to God first, like that poor man, so conscious of his sins that he did not as much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast and said, "God, have compassion on me, the sinner", Luke 18: 13. We need to approach God and plead the precious blood of Jesus to know forgiveness of sins. But Christ, as Saviour, will help us to do that. And that is just the beginning of His Saviour service to us, for those "who approach by him to God" are persons who know God. Do such persons need a Saviour? Certainly - we all do! We need to be kept happy and with desires to draw near to God.

Approaching God is characteristic of such persons. They come to God by Christ daily, knowing the blessedness of approach by the new and living way. "Having therefore..... boldness for entering... by... the new and living way", Heb 10: 19. But we must be "sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience". That was first done when you accepted the Saviour; the efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus cleansed our heart; it was purified by faith, you came to God "by Him". But then, our bodies are to be "washed with pure water".

What do we know about that? It is part of our present salvation, giving us liberty to draw near to God. The water came from the riven side of Jesus: "immediately there came out blood and water", John 19: 34. Do we neglect the water? If we draw near to God by Jesus, we dare not neglect the water, which cleanses our circumstances, too. The priest of old did not dare enter into the holy place without using the laver. The blood of Christ settles every moral issue, the

water that came from His side cleanses us from unclean associations; from unclean thoughts; cleanses us from man after the flesh, so that we do not speak to God in the activity of the fleshly mind, but by the Spirit of God. How wonderful that a divine Person having come into manhood, has established the basis of our approach to God! And how wonderful that "those who approach by him to God" are the subjects of His present saviourhood!

What is the character of His saviourhood, you ask. Firstly, you may need to be saved from self; you need to be saved from a wicked world through which you must pass; you need to be saved from temptations which the enemy constantly seeks to ensnare us with.

We need to be saved "completely" now. May we know the Saviour in His present activity and priestly feelings for us as He appears in the presence of God for us. Some may think of Him only as Saviour when He was on the cross. He was on the cross, but He is now in glory, and in the glory He is still the Saviour. It is not just historical, it is a wondrous present reality.

If we draw near to God by Him we would know the value of His Name, and that God has raised Him from the dead. We believe in our hearts, and we confess with our mouths, giving Him a basis for saving us out of every problem and difficulty that we have to face in our lives here. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord; and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved", Rom 10: 9. That is not a matter of our eternal salvation, it is present salvation; the operation of the present saviourhood of Jesus. "For every one whosoever, who shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved", Rom 10: 13. That name "is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe", Prov 18 :10. It is a wonderful thing to confess that Jesus is my Saviour. Not only that He died for my sins, but He is a *living* Saviour, who lives to save me completely, or to the uttermost, as one who has come to God by Him.

Do you get on your knees each morning? Of course you do, you commit yourself to the care of God, you seek help by the Spirit to be true to the Lord during the day. In principle you offer your

morning lamb. What about the evening? Do you get on your knees then? Are you in the same vibrancy as in the morning? Or has something happened during the day and you have made a mess of things? Were you angry, and spoke rashly? That was not a demonstration of the Saviour's power to save us completely. We can walk in the consciousness of the saving power of Jesus, who is in heaven to make intercession for us, as Priest and Saviour and Advocate. Now the advocate service of Christ, which He takes on when you break down? Do you know that He interposes the efficacy of His precious death and blood-shedding when the throne of God demands that the soul that sins must die? And the blessed Spirit of God works in your soul to affect your conscience and bring you to the realisation of what the issue is. You repent before God and are restored to happy communion, but do you realise that the Lord Jesus, your Saviour has served you as Advocate? What a Saviour He is! Let us just be refreshed in our spirits in the consciousness that every moment the Saviour is in the presence of God to intercede for us. O, what a Saviour! His feelings are known by the blessed Spirit of God whose own feelings are so deep, so full, and as the Paraclete, He makes intercession for us "with groanings which cannot be uttered", Rom 8: 26. It all causes us to wonder how much we are costing divine Persons in the way of feelings which our carelessness causes. We should not go on independently until suddenly we find that we have transgressed. We need the Saviour all the time, and He is available.

One day our pilgrimage here will be over, unless the Lord comes for His own, we will die. The brethren will meet together and have a burial meeting, our bodies will be laid to rest, but our spirits will be with Christ. Shall we still need a Saviour? We surely shall.

He will still be our Saviour! This same One, who once has been "offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear". Ah, He is going to appear again. "Once in the consummation of the ages he has been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice". That has been accomplished. The Saviour we know and love did that. But "To those that look for him" He "shall appear... the second time

without sin for salvation". That long-expected coming will be apart from the question of sin. He will not deal with sin then, He will raise you and all His own from the dead, and change our bodies and take us to be with Himself. That, as I understand it, will be the *Saviour's* act. O, what a Saviour! A Saviour - past, present and future! His Saviour service covers the whole span of responsible history, from the cross to the translation of the saints to heaven, with our bodies of glory, incorruptible. O, what a Saviour!

You may ask, 'Will I not need Christ eternally?' I have no doubt about it. As a Saviour? Well, perhaps not as a Saviour. I believe that we always will need the support of Christ, possibly not as Saviour, but we never cease to be creatures. We will feed on Christ as the Tree of life, I believe. I believe there will be the appropriation of Christ eternally. Also, because we will always be creatures, even though we have incorruptibility, and there will be no possibility or danger of breakdown, yet we will find that we are sustained by the appropriation of Christ, the Tree of life. I believe the Spirit will keep us in constant freshness of spiritual life; we will drink (I speak figuratively) of the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which flows out from the throne of God, enlivening everything that it touches. The blessed Spirit is able to maintain, eternally, a freshness of life and response which will satisfy divine Persons. O, what it will be! In the meantime we are in the area of things where saviourhood is needed. Let us increase in our appreciation of the Saviour.

Think of how Paul would understand and appreciate the saviourhood of Jesus. He said "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to him", 2 Tim 1: 12. What a deposit he had placed in the keeping of Jesus! Paul knew that when he will be raised from the dead by the saving power of Jesus, those things which he had committed to Him will all be there - none will be lost. When we pass the zenith of our lives, we gradually lose the ability we once had; our minds can no longer retain things clearly, our faculties decline and we may become senile. Is that how we shall be raised? Paul knew

the Saviour well enough to commit everything to Him. What Paul reached to spiritually is in safekeeping in the hands of the Saviour; it has not been lost because of physical decline. All will come into fullest expression in the glorified body with which the Saviour will clothe us, He will do that as Saviour - Saviour of the body, as it says in Philippians: "Our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ *as Saviour*, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, according to the working of the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself", Phil 3: 20,21. Think of the Saviour bringing into the realm of glory those whom His precious work has secured. All will be fitted for the place with bodies of glory. Jesus Christ as Saviour shall transform our bodies; He will do that. Nothing will be lost, everything that is the result of the work of God, which has been resident in and has found expression through the human body, will be carried through into that wondrous day to express itself without restraint in bodies suited to that sphere of glory. What a day it will be! May the Lord help us to be more and more attracted to the Saviour, looking forward to the moment when His voice will be heard, whether we wake or sleep, and when He, as Saviour of the body will change us and take us to Himself.

CLAPTON LONDON

19 May 1974

THE RESULT OF THE WORD

D.J.Hutson

James 1: 21(middle)-25; John 14: 23-24; Matthew 7: 24-27

I have a burden as to what the result of these gatherings together which we have is going to be. We thank God for the occasions of our gathering, for the mercy which enables us to gather, for the experience of eternal life as we converse together in relation to the truth, in itself very enjoyable, but I think the burden that would be upon us is what result there would be from all these comings together. I think of it in relation to different matters: one is as to the preaching of the gospel every week. I would appeal especially to the young, who have not seen some of the things which those of us who are a little older have seen. There was a time when we used to listen to the gospel, to the wonderful story of Jesus and His love - the One who came into the world to save sinners, shed His precious blood to cleanse us from every sin, and Who is now a living glorified Saviour, able to save completely all who come to God by Him - and it was not unusual at the end of such a preaching for someone to come forward, maybe with tears, in the depth of their souls as to their need of a Saviour: how they may have felt that for so long "His gracious call they had off refused", and how they had found He was seeking them again, and at last the claims of the Saviour had broken the heart, broken the will, in the subduing power of divine grace, and they confessed that the Lord Jesus was their own personal Saviour.

I go over this because I have not heard of that happening lately, and this has been a burden to me. Things became, in a sense, automatic, in the time through which we have passed. It was one of the errors we have had to judge: the very young were brought into things in an automatic way, without really having had to do with God for themselves. Perhaps I am speaking to some who came in on that basis. You did not have to ask to break bread. Perhaps you broke bread before you were converted, before you even knew the Saviour for yourself. Maybe because of that you are slow in coming forward to say that you have found the Saviour. I heard of a brother

once who came forward after the preaching; who had been breaking bread for many years, and confessed that he had come to know the Lord Jesus as his Saviour that very night.

These things can happen, and what have been missing are the mile-stones in our histories. Can all you young people here tell me when you were converted? "Converted" means "turned round". If Jesus comes into your life, things are different. Can you tell me when things were different in your life? I am not questioning whether you are converted or not, but have you that point that you can get back to in your life, and that others know about and they can get back to also. The enemy would assail you and seek to overthrow the work of God in you, if it were possible, and you will find that it is a great point of safety to be able to get back to something definite, and for others to be able to get back to it and to remind you, and God will remind you of it Himself. He remembers for you, like He did for Israel of old, "the love of thine espousals" Jer 2: 2. Or perhaps you did feel that you must yield and be true to your baptism, and ask to break bread - when it dawned upon you that His claims were paramount and absolute and that you must yield to them, and you had to ask. Maybe one or two brothers came to see you and you had to give account of yourself as to where you were in your soul, and what brought you to this point. Then a time, maybe, when a truth which is generally held by us and valued by us first came into your soul. Some of us were not brought up to be free in addressing the Holy Spirit. You young people grow up into it. It is the recognised thing among us, thank God for it, something that has been challenged, but which has been confirmed in power, the recognition that the Holy Spirit has His due in worship. Some of us can remember when the light dawned on our souls, and could take you to the very spot where first on our knees we addressed that glorious Person for ourselves. We had not seen it, perhaps, as quickly as others, but in His grace the Lord waited upon us and the light came - and it did come without a doubt. The matter of wrong associations too, that we speak about so much - I remember when I was concerned in a professional association and a brother said,

"What is the difference between that and a trade union?" It struck me like an arrow. Something came into my soul, for it was a question I could not resolve. I went to see a brother valued among us, because there were those at that time ministering the truth who were in these things, and I could not understand it. His question to me was, "Is this a burden to you as you approach the service of God?" What an answer to all our difficulties! It is what we have been speaking of as to the oblation, the service of God and what we can present before Him. It relates to everything in your life. It is not going too far to say that. "Whatever ye may do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him" Col 3: 17. Is that you? I would not claim it for myself, to my shame, but that is the standard. Christianity is practical, it is not a system of sublime impossibilities. Read that address by Mr Raven "The means by which we are kept" (Vol 18 p.26). The word of God applied in power here by the Holy Spirit and the priesthood of Christ on high. Are these things real to you? These are mile-stones some of us can take account of. What about you?

Again I say, What is going to be the result of our being together today? Not for any credit it may bring to any - to God be the glory. If it abides, it is His work anyway and His alone is the praise, but what is going to be the result? Are you going to be a forgetful hearer? "If any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like to a man considering his natural face in a mirror". You have been exposed to yourself as we have been speaking about that blessed, glorious, perfect humanity of Jesus, which is God's standard. As the word has been among us and you have seen yourself in a mirror, and have seen where you come short maybe, are you going to forget it? How are we going to fill out the rest of the day today? Is it in things that will help us to forget, so that the word, sweet as it may have been in our mouths, (how sweet to speak about the manhood of Jesus!) does not pass through to become bitter in our belly and have its way in our inward parts, to produce an answer in us constitutionally, and to build us up to be just a little more like Him, until the time when we are changed, and "we shall be like Him, for

we shall see Him as He is"? 1 John 3: 2. But oh, to see Him now! Have you seen Him? We speak of these things. "There am I in the midst of them", Matt 18: 20. Have you seen Him? Is it real to you? Is it a matter of faith? I think it is. I think it would be a matter of faith to every one here. Tomorrow at the Supper it would be a matter of faith. He makes Himself known in the breaking of bread. Then it is a matter of experience, something more than faith, because the Holy Spirit is able to identify Himself with the work of God in you in such an undisturbed way that the glories of Christ can fill your gaze? How He would delight to do it! How He does it! So let us not be forgetful hearers of the word, but, as it says, "doers of the *work*". It involves some effort, maybe, but it will be well worth while.

That is why I read the second scripture in John 14. I would hardly ask the question here, "Do you love Jesus?" Thank God for the lovers of Jesus in this room, but this is what He says, the One you love, the One who gave Himself for you, "If anyone love me". It is not doubting it, but just raising the challenge as to how far our love comes into demonstration. "If anyone love me, he will keep my word". He will not be a forgetful hearer, "he will keep my word". How thankful we are for ways in which we can show our love for the Lord Jesus. How it affects us week by week at the Supper. Naturally we would be like Naaman to whom his servants had to say, "If the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" 2 Kings 5: 13. You feel that you want to do something great, but we can do nothing, because Jesus has done everything. Ours is simply to go down - "receive with meekness the implanted word". Then you feel as you come to know the Saviour and realise how much He has done for you, 'What can I do for Him?' Some may devote themselves to a life of missionary work, and some in other ways. But what does He say, what does He ask us, yea, what does He tell us to do? Something which the simplest and youngest lover of Jesus can do. "This do for a remembrance of me". Blessedly simple, taking something that was there, as we have been often reminded, already on the table, furnished, taking it and giving it a meaning so profound, so infinite, so that you and I, lovers of Jesus,

might have the sense in our souls, that though so simple it is just what He wants us to do. Then again He says, "If anyone love me, he will keep my word". What an appeal! You are not going to let it go, are you? - what He may have said to you today, what He may have said to you last week, the word that maybe the enemy is trying to cause you to forget by crowding something into your life. You love Jesus. Are you not going to keep that word? The commendation of Philadelphia was: "Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" Rev 3: 8. You keep it, that is you value it, because it comes from the One you love. You keep it so that it is fruitful, something is formed, something which answers to Him, something which heaven approves. This is the New Testament answer to Daniel 9. It says in James "he shall be blessed in His doing", and Jesus says "My Father will love him". So Daniel is addressed as "one greatly beloved", Dan 9: 23. This is the man who understood by the books. He kept the word, he read it, not academically but searching out for himself and making it his own, and he had the approval of heaven.

"My Father will love him". Thank God for the Father's providential care, but have you a sense of the Father's love like this, because you are keeping the words of Jesus? "And we will come to him and make our abode with 'him". Can anyone tell me what that is like?

"The word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword" Heb 4:12. If anyone takes it up he feels the edge of it for himself. What can I tell you about the Father and the Son coming to me and making their abode with me? I want to get back to this, that what we speak of in these meetings is real. I want us to feel that. If we just carry that away with us and seek to work it out something will have been effected by our being together. It is not simply a matter of faith. It is one of Mr Raven's outstanding statements that we get nothing by faith. Of course we get nothing without faith but what we get we get by the Spirit as a matter of experience. The enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins, you know it by the Spirit. All that we have, we get by the Spirit. Lay hold of it by faith indeed, or you will get nothing. I may tell you a lot about what I believe and what I know by faith, but what can I tell you about what I have by experience? There are those here who could tell me far

more than I could tell them, because they have kept His word and because they are conscious of what the Father's love is. "We will come to him, and make our abode with him" - so James says "he will be blessed in his doing". Oh, does it not make you desirous of this blessing? Whatever the work that may be involved, whatever the effort, - not natural effort, that will not get you anywhere, but as you apply yourself in diligence by the Spirit - "Occupy thyself with these things, be wholly in them" 1 Tim 4: 15 - what will it be but another expression of what was seen in perfection in Jesus, "Did ye not know that I must be in the things of my Father" Luke 2: 49 and note. This is what is in view, that something like that should come into result. What an incentive; beloved: could you have anything greater in the way of blessing? "He will be blessed in his doing", and "we will come to him and make our abode with him", - that is, come to stay. Oh well, you say, perhaps I shall fall away. But it is keeping it, as Paul says, "by the Holy Spirit that dwelleth in us" 2 Tim 1: 14.

The power for it is there. These men who have gone before, were men of like passions to ourselves. They were men of distinctive gift maybe, but it was one who styled himself the first of sinners and "less than the least of all saints", who could say "Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted" 2 Tim 1: 14.

Dear brother, dear sister, however young you may be, the Holy Spirit Who dwells in you is the Holy Spirit Who dwelt in the apostle Paul. He is the Holy Spirit of Whom Stephen was full, of Whom we were speaking earlier today, "the same Spirit", glorious title of His, which brings us nearest to that wonderful, infinite Name, "Thou art the Same". The same Spirit that dwells in us is the power for these things. Do not allow anything that will hinder Him having His full way, and hinder God from having a full answer and having an abiding place in your heart and mine. Oh that this might be arrived at for the divine pleasure through our being together today!

So I read in Matthew 7, to emphasise this. It struck me for the first time in reading it that it does not say what happened to these men. It speaks about what they build. It is not a question of eternal salvation, not raising any doubts about that, but of what you are

building. Paul could say, "Let each see how he builds" 1 Cor 3: 10. What are you building? "He that hears my words and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain came down, and the streams, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock". I suppose we have seen that. We have known something of the rain and the streams and the wind, the onslaughts that have come in against the assembly, but "hades' gates shall not prevail against it" Matt 16: 18. Then there is what comes in upon us individually forth at is where it is worked out. If anything has been lost in these days, it is persons who have been lost to the testimony. The assembly has not been lost, the assembly is going through, for "hades' gates shall not prevail against it", but persons have been lost. Thank God for every person here who through divine grace and through no merit of his own, has been retained in the testimony, in what is going through for God's pleasure to the end, so near. Thank God for everyone, too, who has been in the environs of such. You young people, thank God that your father has built a house founded on the rock, and in the protection of it you have been preserved where the light is, where eternal life is enjoyed, where the service of God is maintained. What are you doing yourself? You are growing up, building. Are you keeping His word, like the prudent man building upon a foundation that will not be overthrown, so that when the winds come and the rain and the storm come another time, you will be preserved in the testimony? As I said, nothing is said about what happens to the man. It is not a question of eternal security, but what he is building. It may well be that whatever it is you are occupied with will not stand the test of time, will not stand the storms of life and the assaults of the enemy which are unrelenting.

So again I say: "He that hears the word and is a doer of the work, shall be blessed in his doing". What an incentive! "We will come to him and make our abode with him". It is open to us, beloved, and may we say simply it is due to Him. He would appeal to us on the basis of our love for Him, even as He appealed to Peter. It is the test every time: "Lovest thou me? " And last of all when

Peter claimed attachment, how the edge of the word came home when Jesus used his own word: "Art thou attached to me?" and he said "Lord, Thou knowest all things", John 21: 17. Do not let me discourage any. The Lord knows your committal. He knows your brightest day. He will hold you to it, but if you love Him and keep His word, you will come into a blessing which is indescribable, which is infinite. I want to know more of it myself. I trust that our appetites may have been whetted and our desires quickened in this direction as a result of our being together, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

GRANGEMOUTH

27 July 1974

ATTRACTION

R.Taylor

Acts 26: 12-15; 1 Chronicles 29: 1-5

It is thought that this occasion might be suitable to remind ourselves of how God uses the principle of attraction to hold us in our households, in our localities and in our exercises. He would hold us as attracted into what He has provided. It is a very attractive occasion today; the very basis of our being here is that persons were attracted to one another. Indeed, we are all here because we have been attracted. It is a principle that God works on. He is going to have things like that in a day to come. He says, "Many shall come from the rising and setting sun and shall lie down at table with Abraham..." Matt 8: 11. What a journey that will be! Think of the movements there will be in that day, the whole extremes of creation being affected in movement as persons make their way to lie down in the place where Christ is honoured.

I have read about Paul at the end of his time and David at the end of his time and they are not speaking about hardships; they are speaking about the One Who attracted them and maintained them in the power of attraction. What a thing, dear brethren, to be held, but not legally! What a thing to be there because we have been attracted! Not a hardship, not there because it is required that we should be there, (although that would be true too) - but there because we are attracted! Paul is speaking here - he could have chosen many subjects, he had a life of rich history to draw upon but what he draws upon is this light that attracted him - the last reference he makes to it but by far the finest, "a light above the brightness of the sun" - above it. That was what held Paul. It had happened a long time before. It happened before those in Asia forsook him. It happened before Ephesus and these places turned away, and this is what he falls back on, that there was a light "above the brightness of the sun" and a voice speaking to him in Hebrew, - that choicest and most feeling of languages, saying, "Why persecutest thou me?" Well, beloved, the Lord would appeal to us today as we are here - we are

in the testimony, we are in our households, we are in our localities - because of being attracted, and we are held here as committed to this One. He spoke to Paul, He has spoken to you. What has He said to you? While Paul says, "Who art thou, Lord?" He says, "I am Jesus". He did not say "I am the King of kings". He did not assert His authority as He might well have done over such a rebellious soul, but He says "I am Jesus" - the Jesus of the gospels, the Man Who was in that house in Luke 7, the Man of John 8 Who said, "I am altogether that which I also say to you" (v 25). That was the Man Who says, "I am Jesus". That is what held Paul through the testimony. May it hold our brother and sister, may it hold us all!

There are exercises among us, exercises ahead. What is the answer to be? Are we here because our parents have been? Why are we in the testimony? Paul would say, I am here bound with a chain in answer to Jesus. Well, beloved, may we be helped to pursue like that. As I have said, none of us would have a harder time than Paul but he was held as attracted by that Man of the gospels. But not only that: he was held by the Man Who was enthroned in heaven. That was what Paul was impressed with, that this voice came from heaven. It far exceeded the brightness of the sun - it came from heaven because that is where Jesus is - the Man Who hung on the cross for you, the Man Who bore my sins in His own body on the tree - He is in heaven and He is speaking from heaven and He is attracting us to heaven. These exercises we have to go through, dear brethren, are not the end - the voice came from heaven where He was, and to which He was attracting Paul. That is the secret of why Paul's ministry is referred to as a heavenly ministry - not that Peter's was not heavenly but Paul's is distinctively a heavenly ministry because the Lord intervened from the glory and the voice was from heaven - "Why persecutest thou me?" May the appeal of "I am Jesus" hold us in these present times.

In David I would refer to one who committed his all, may I say, to the local assembly. He says "I have prepared". He prepared in his power - that was one thing and maybe we do not have so much opportunity as he had for that - but I want to speak especially of what

he says, "I have given in my affection". It was not so great in quantity but the quality was surpassing. The gold that he provided in his affection was not just gold, it was gold of Ophir; what he provided was silver that was refined - that is what he provided of his own hand, dear brethren. That is what he provided as a result of exercise, but here he is at the end of his days. I think he gained this very early in his life. Our brother has been speaking of reading the ministry, reading the Scriptures, applying ourselves to what the Lord would be saying - I think that is where David gained this - because he became very busy. Exercises almost overwhelmed him, but I think he gained that gold of Ophir in his early days. There was something there that the Spirit could expand. May I appeal to us all, especially to those who are younger, to commit ourselves early to have this gold that the Spirit can refer to as the gold of Ophir - something that was matured - silver that was refined. I think these things were gained - they began at least - in his early exercises and he maintained them. He says, "Behold, we heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood" Ps 132: 6. It came into his heart early. Oh, beloved, if things come into your heart early, apply yourself to them. It may not look worth while. Did it look worth while for David? A great Saul on the throne and he in the wilderness. Did it look worth while? He would say here, "It was well worth while" - like Jacob at the end of his time with God, "that shepherded me all my life long" Gen 48: 15. What a fund he had to draw on and what a fund here David has to draw on - that gold of Ophir and refined silver. Oh, let us appreciate divine things in broken days, beloved, and let us commit all that we have in our homes, in our localities, to the furtherance of what is going to finish in glory - not in breakdown but in glory. So David finishes with this appeal. He says, "And who is willing to offer to Jehovah this day?" Are you going to commit yourself today, beloved? Our brother and sister have made certain vows today. Are you going to join in avowal to God today? Who is willing? Is anyone going to hold back in the presence of such attraction? As I said, how many were drawn here today! God would just speak attractively. He says, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart". Hos 2: 14. Oh, what a

word to an erring, guilty Israel. That is what God says, "I will allure". Well, He is doing that to you today. May your heart be affected, with our brother and sister, with us all, to willingly commit yourself today to what God has proposed that is so attractive, so blessed and soon going to issue in glory!

On the occasion of a marriage

EDINBURGH

24 August 1974

SOME FUNDAMENTALS - CHRISTIANITY

It might be said that Christianity is a system of teaching and practice inaugurated by Christ and sealed in His death. It became fully established by His exaltation to the right hand of God and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We no longer have Christ here personally, but we still have His teaching, and people follow Christ and in their measure are marked by the features of Christ. In Christ God has been revealed in the fulness of divine grace, and wherever Christianity is fully embraced there is salvation, life, joy, hope and satisfaction.

Christ was the greatest Teacher that ever lived, but He not only taught, He exemplified perfectly in His walk and ways all the truth He taught. Now the teaching continues, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, 1 Cor 2: 13. Jesus and His teaching were vigorously opposed from the beginning to the end of His pathway. The religious leaders of Israel pursued Him and eventually in violent hatred delivered Him to Pilate. By the hand of lawless men He was crucified and slain. But God raised Him from the dead.

He left behind Him a few faithful followers, and these were the nucleus of a great company formed later by the coming of the Holy Spirit into that wonderful body known as the assembly. Thousands in those early days were added and they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking bread and prayers, Acts 2: 42. So Christianity became firmly established.

Then bitter persecution broke out, but the enemy's champion who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples was met personally by the Lord and by the transforming power of divine grace was converted into the greatest lover of Christ. So fully was he brought into conformity to Christ and His teaching that he was able to say later, "For me to live is Christ" Phil 1: 21. To the Corinthians he wrote, "Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ" 1 Cor 11: 1. It has been well said that Christianity is Christ. So

Christ is to be expressed in every individual Christian and every local company walking in the light of the assembly.

The power of Satan is still directed against Christ and the assembly. He seeks by every possible means to overthrow all that is of Christ here, but the Lord has assured us that hades' gates will not prevail against the assembly. The testimony to Christ must go through to the end and every true-hearted believer will want to go through with it. Many have turned back when facing difficulties through lack of personal links of communion with the Lord, or because they were not established in the basic features of the truth.

The fundamentals of the Christian faith will strengthen all of us (particularly those who are young) to be here in living testimony for Christ and to bring fresh features of Christ into the local assembly.

W.E.Ellis

THE CHILDREN'S CALENDARS

We should be surprised if our new diaries and calendars were headed 'The Acceptable Year of the Lord' instead of 1975! Yet this would be quite right. It was announced by the Lord Jesus at Nazareth in His first recorded preaching, and since then there have been more by far than seven hundred thousand days in it. In each of these days persons of all ages have found salvation for time and eternity.

When unrolling the scroll of the prophet Isaiah for His preaching Jesus passed over the words of chapter 53, which is one that every child should learn by heart. It was only because He would bear the sin of many and pray for evil-doers that the year of blessing could be preached at all. How much suffering in spirit, soul and body it meant for the Saviour!

No one knows what a day may bring forth and therefore a calendar, such as we suppose, would have only one day in it and this would read 'Today'. This is the day of salvation. In the chapter reminding them of this, the apostle Paul wrote to believers at Corinth quite simply 'as to children'. He told them, too, not to be such close friends with unbelievers as if they were in a yoke with them. The Lord Almighty promised to be a Father to them as His sons and daughters when they kept away from evil.

A gospel clock would always say 'Now', whatever might be the actual time of day or night. I remember seeing a grandfather clock with the word 'Eternity' on the face instead of the maker's name.

Anyone looking at it could not help thinking of the welfare of his or her precious soul. Men may make all kinds of clocks and watches to measure time, but God has created time itself for His own purposes. He is using it to gather what He calls in the scripture "My own possession". Do you ever think about *His* joy in having you always for His pleasure?

J.C.Evershed