

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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SANCTIFICATION BY THE TRUTH

C.Hammond

John 17: 11-19; 1 John 2: 14 (middle)-17

I suppose this chapter 17 of John is one of the most profound scriptures we could consider. The Scriptures are very wonderful, particularly the New Testament, because there is such variety in them and yet such unity. Take the gospels - what variety there is in the four accounts, but one Person: but the way in which John is helped by the Spirit to present things is one of the most elevated of the four. We have had a word published on the need for vigilance as to worldly things being introduced into the houses of the saints.

John would confirm that, but in his own inimitable way. It is right, of course, to call attention to the harm that can be done by what might appear to be reasonably harmless but in fact will divert from the entrance into what is our real privilege as Christians. So that separation, or a separate people, which is dealt with in many other scriptures, is elevated by John in this chapter to a sanctified company. You cannot have a sanctified company if you are not separate; but sanctification involves holiness, hence the Lord's address to the Father at this time: "Holy Father". He refers to Him later in the chapter as "Righteous Father", over against the world; but here "Holy Father", and twice the Lord refers to the fact that the disciples were not of the world. In verse 14 He says 'they are not of the world, as I am not of the world'. It is a remarkable standard, referring inferentially, as I understand, not so much to derivation, though that is implied, but to character; the character of the persons was that they were not of the world. Again, in verse 16, the Lord says "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world". As to the Lord, you can understand that. The prince of this world came "and in me he has nothing", John 14: 30. How perfectly as Man He was completely separate from everything that was outside of the sphere of the Father's pleasure. But He predicates it of the disciples here; and there seems to be a need, dear brethren, for our seeing that there is a positive way in which we are preserved from everything

that savours of the world, and that is to be in touch with the Father's realm where the Father is supreme in the Trinity, as we speak of it, and where the Lord is in a mediatorial position.

John treats of the Lord's mediatorship in his own unique way. He says "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1: 18) - a mediatorial position, not so much on our side, though of course it is of the greatest importance that we should understand it, that in the realm of spiritual realities, dear brethren, we are only sustained as the Lord's mediatorial activity in it is understood. But to John He is "the only-begotten Son, who is bosom of the Father".

That stands related to the great thoughts of God, it stands related to the Father's realm, it stands related to our being sanctified by the truth. The Lord had made known the name of the Father to the disciples and that should have had, and did have, and should have with us, a sanctifying effect; that we are on right terms with the Father Himself, and in the sense of relationship, because of the Lord's ministrations to us as to the Father Himself.

So the Lord goes on: "Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world; and I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth". The Lord sanctifying Himself, as I understand, was in His going into the immediate presence of the Father as a Man. The truth that is calculated to help us is that our associations of life are connected with a Man who has gone to the immediate presence of the Father, and there He sustains us in relation to the things of God in the fullest sense. Holiness is not just that we judge elements that are evil but that we have an intuitive rejection of them in our minds and spirits before even they take shape in wrongdoing.

So that the constitution of the believer is built up; and the sanctifying effect of the truth as connected with One who has gone into the immediate presence of the Father is a very real thing. It is the life-stream, so to speak, in the believer, in the power of the Holy Spirit, which will reject the hidden things of shame, which will have a judgment of them before ever they lay hold of mind and heart and govern our life.

The question really is, where is our life? We have the Father of compassions, we prove God's mercies day by day; every time we partake of a meal we ought consciously to be in the presence of the Father who has infinite care over every detail of our lives. Maybe we cannot always see that, because sometimes circumstances are adverse, but the Father still has control. If He allows certain things there is always wisdom behind it, so that we do not doubt the wisdom even if we do not fully understand what He may be at at any given time. Even in every day's circumstances it is a great thing to be consciously in the presence of the Father who has a personal interest in us; but it is all in view of our having to do with the realm where the Father is supreme, where the Lord is active and the Spirit is powerfully keeping us related to the things that belong to life. This gospel deals with life, not only eternal life, but life. I believe things testimonially will go through on the principle of life, that is, persons who are living in what stands connected with the Father's realm and the place that the Lord has, into whose hands, it says, the Father has given everything (see John 3: 35). Think of things in the hands of the Son; it seems to give increasing meaning to the Lord's showing them His hands and His side. They both relate, I believe, to what was the purpose of the Father in regard of those He gave to the Son when here. "They were thine", He says in this chapter, "and thou gavest them me".

So that if it is a question of what is of what is in the world, or the things of the world, as John writes in his letter, he says very simply, they are "not of the Father". He speaks to the young men because they are strong. No doubt when we are younger we are more energetic. Our minds need occupation and our affections get involved. Well, there is a sphere of things in which we can occupy our minds; our spirits can live in relation to them and we can know what life really is. I do not think this is confined to young people. Whatever age we are we ought to be young men in this sense, that "ye have overcome the wicked one". He is so surreptitious in his attempts to divert us from the high level of the truth, from the purpose of God. Every attack of the enemy gives evidence that

there is something there, that he considers worth attacking, there is something that is for God that causes him, and his malign hatred of what is of Christ in this scene, to attack it and divert if he can, not merely to divert believers but to rob God. The preservation is in this sphere of life which stands related to the knowledge of the Father.

So John says "I have written... because ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, nor the things in the world". "The things in the world" to some may appear harmless. As to this word to which I referred, as I reflected on it, my mind went back to Genesis 4 and found where the thing started with Jubal, who was a descendant of Cain who was suffering under the government of God and regarded himself as a stranger and a fugitive, and you look at the descendants and there is Jubal who played the harp and the pipe. He not merely made them but evidently used them. I have no doubt God has given us vocal organs to be able to sing. Mr Taylor sen pointed out that the particular mechanism for singing is one of the most marvellous of God's creation of the human body; and we ought to use it, as far as we are able, to hymn Jehovah under the control of the Minister of the sanctuary.

So "If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world". How can we get clear of the se things, dear brethren?

Because we have not any taste for it; because we say it is "not of the Father". It is not that we have to delve into the wickedness of the thing, it can usually be obvious, and as time goes on it will become more and more apparent. I have no doubt these sophisticated methods of spreading "the things of the world" will eventually give the man of sin the means of making his voice heard throughout the habitable earth. But we do not need to delve into that. We say, Is this of the Father? If it leads us astray, if it diverts our attention from Christ, if it gives us an appetite for things that will not go into eternity but are only for time, we judge that it is not of the Father and we are not having it. The positive side, I think, is to be consciously living in relation to the Father's realm.

So it was just that - the elevation that John gives to the thought of sanctification and the ability to live in relation to it in the power of life. If I may use an illustration: we have had a mild winter; what will happen presently is that the sap in the trees that appear dead will spring up and affect the topmost branches and the strong winds of March that we usually expect will not hinder it but help the rising of the sap to the uttermost twigs. So as to the power of life in the believer, even adverse circumstances or tribulation do not hinder, they help, for tribulation is said to be one of God's workers (see Rom 5: 3) and it works towards the element of endurance. Let us go through according to God.

It was just the concern that we should elevate the thought of separation or a separate people, which is right and in accord with the truth, to the thought of believers who are sanctified in relation to the Father's things. Think of the hand of Christ - "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand". I believe His hands in John 20 not only relate to His service of love to us, as we have often said, but to what He has in His hands for the Father's pleasure at the present time. May we be consciously in His hands, dear brethren, for that purpose, and so preserved that in some measure it can be said of us, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world".

LONDON

4 February 1975

MAINTENANCE

D.L.Stewart

Genesis 2: 15 ; 1 Kings 17: 8, 9, 15, 16

I have been thinking of how things are maintained. This is always a concern to us as we have some fresh experience of blessing, whether individually or locally, and we wonder how this can be maintained. Adam was placed in the garden having in mind that it should be maintained as a place of delights for God. Everything there was absolutely suitable, planned with divine skill, to provide this; delights for man, too, of course - he was to eat freely - but what God had in mind was a place for His own pleasure. It was one of God's original thoughts, before sin came in, that He should have a place for His own delight. The thought of Paradise in the New Testament is similar - a place of delights. It says that Adam was put there "to till it and to guard it". We know, of course, that everything broke down then and that everything has broken down in the hands of man, and there is therefore always this concern as to how things are to be maintained. The prayer of Solomon was connected with this. Man had no part in the pattern but Solomon's prayer is concerned with the maintenance of things which had been reached in God's thoughts. In the New Testament this is seen pre-eminently in the prayer of Jesus in John 17, a prayer that covers the dispensation. His prayer to the Father is that His own might be kept, that what had been secured in the perfect workmanship, and what they represented. as entering into the dispensation, should be maintained. Perhaps it is only in this dispensation of the Holy Spirit and in His power that there are the means whereby things can be maintained. We know, of course, that, in spite of this, breakdown has come in. Then there is Paul with the elders at Ephesus, at the height of his ministry and all that had been reached there, and how he commits them to God for preservation.

In the scripture in Kings the word is "I have commanded a widow woman there to maintain thee". It was a time of grave departure and apostasy as at present, and then there is the

sovereign reviving that Elijah would represent - the beginning of the chapter speaks of it - how he comes forward unexpectedly, representing God's word and the power of it, the tremendous power of it; the power of prayer too by "a man of like passions to us", Jas 5: 17. This section is concerned with how this is to be maintained, and the means for maintenance which Jehovah uses. In this section, at any rate, they are all found in the widow woman. It is nothing official, and it is not gift that is connected with maintenance. There is the prophetic word, of course, but the means are all provided in this house. Then there is the thought of command. What comes to light in this widow and her house is an area of things which is under divine command - a wonderful thing. There is a locality here, there is a gate, there is a house, there is a widow woman, and God selected this place. The Lord Himself speaks of it; He says "to none of them was Elias sent but to Sarepta", Luke 4: 26. Think of the divine eyes, "The eyes of Jehovah are in every place beholding the evil and the good" (Prov 15: 3), and the divine selection, divine choice - nothing in Israel - God working sovereignly, indicating something in relation to the present dispensation. So we need to be under divine command if the truth, if the light, if the enjoyment of things is to be maintained. How did Jehovah communicate with this person? There must have been some secret transaction that He can refer to her as under commandment. We are not to be afraid of commandment. If things are to be maintained among us it is a necessity. I have been struck with the fact that John in the New Testament speaks more of commandment than any other writer. He is the one who speaks about family conditions, and he speaks of himself as the one whom Jesus loved; but he speaks constantly, in his gospel, in his epistles and in Revelation of this great matter of commandment. Connected with the widow woman is the thought of dependence, weakness, bereft of outward support. We have known, perhaps, a little of it, but it is in the spirit of dependence alone that things will be maintained. The apostle speaks of the widow in Timothy as having "put her hope in God", 1 Tim 5: 5.

So the provision for maintenance in this section is in her house, the handful of meal in a barrel and the little oil in a cruse. The handful of meal could not speak of any other than Christ. It would be the product of exercise, of sowing and harvest, the death and resurrection of Christ, those features that belong to heaven and shone here in circumstances of humility and lowliness carried through to the other side of death. Then the threshing and the grinding in order that what is of Christ should become food available for the building up of that kind of manhood that is going to be maintained, and going to maintain things for God's pleasure and delight. I wondered about this word 'meal'; it does not occur much.

In the instructions of Moses it is usually 'fine flour' which would be the evenness of the life of Jesus. There is one passage which refers to barley-meal. It is the passage which speaks about the searching matter of fidelity, Numbers 5, and in the midst of the searching process in the presence of Jehovah the oblation of jealousy, the barley-meal, was put into the woman's hands. As brought in in that way it must represent something of Christ. A handful of it is taken and burned upon the altar, showing that it is that which goes up to God for His pleasure. So it would seem that it might represent Christ in relation to fidelity to God. In this He stands over against the whole realm of infidelity, whether in Israel or in Christendom. In that chapter what is in mind is that what is true should come to light, to correspond to that which Christ represents. Christ then in His committal in absoluteness to the will of God is the kind of food for days of departure and apostasy and infidelity. This is the food that they ate for a whole year, she, and the prophet, and her house.

Think of things being maintained for a whole year - summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, day and night, cold and heat, every kind of experience, every kind of assembly experience, and yet there is that in this house which is capable of maintaining things for a whole year. What food must have been in Antioch after Saul of Tarsus was brought there; "for a whole year they... taught a large crowd", Acts 11: 26. The Lord would encourage us to have this kind of food to maintain us. We have thought of the meal but there is also the oil. In the outward poverty of the situation there is yet the "little

oil". She is not saying, like another woman did, that she had not "anything at all in the house but a pot of oil", 2 Kings 4: 2. She is not depreciating the blessed Spirit but she says I have only a little, a handful of meal, a little oil; enough for the next meal, enough for the next meeting; dependence upon the Spirit of God, here in order to make the things of Christ available to us, in order to build these things into us individually and collectively, in order that there might be the maintenance of what is for God's pleasure and for His delight. May the Lord bless His word.

LONDON

22 October 1974

GIVING ACCOUNT

D.J.Hutson

Romans 14: 11,12; Isaiah 45: 21-24 (middle of verse)

The object of our being together now is to preach glad tidings. If any has been arrested by the first scripture read, thank God for that. It is not exactly glad tidings but it affords a background against which the gladness of the tidings that are preached in the gospel shines all the brighter, and I trust may be the more attractive, so attractive as against this background, that if you have never accepted them as the glad tidings of your salvation you may do so tonight. The glad tidings are concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. So we do not want to spend long in talking about you, and we certainly do not want to say anything about ourselves. We want to speak to you about Jesus; but we want you to feel your need of Jesus. Everybody needs Jesus. There is not a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, who does not need Christ. It is wonderful that God should have taken account of you and me in all our need and should have met that need by giving His Son, so that in that glorious Person, being who He is, over all God blessed for ever, we might find all that we need.

We might say with reverence that God has found in Christ all that He needs for the satisfaction of His heart. All that He has needed for everything He has found in this glorious Person who is presented to you tonight, as He may have been presented before, in the gospel, Christ the wisdom of God. As the good teaching tells us, that means that He is God's resource. It is right to say that God has never had to go outside of Christ for anything. How great and glorious a Person Jesus is! If it was a question of creation, with all that seems to be infinite in it, and yet because it is creation it is not infinite (but what can we say about it when we cannot measure it? - measured by God alone because it is His creation), if it was a question of bringing it into being, who was able to do it? This glorious Person of whom we speak in the gospel: "By whom also he made the worlds", Heb 1: 2. If it is a question of maintaining it, astronomers can tell us about the laws of the universe and things being held in relation to

one another, and that apart from some mysterious control behind it all the universe would be annihilated by a catastrophe. Why does it not happen? How is it all maintained? - " Upholding all things by the word of his power", Heb 1: 3. What He has brought into being He is able to sustain as the platform of God's operations in time. When it has served its purpose He is able to roll it up as a garment (see Heb 1: 12) as something that can be put aside, when God will usher in the eternal day and the results of all that He has secured in time will abide for His eternal glory. Christ is the great Operator. Again I say, God has not had to go outside of Him for anything, but God wanted man.

Isaiah 45, if we had read all of it, would have told us that He made this world to be inhabited. He did not make it waste and empty. That is not Genesis 1: 1; that is Genesis 1: 2. Something had come in to cause the chaos. He wanted it to be inhabited, for His delights were with the sons of men. He wanted men. Oh! the wonder of it, that divine love would have an object outside of itself.

We have been speaking about relationships, and what can we say about the relationships that existed before the incarnation between those glorious Persons that we now know as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit? All that we know is that infinite love was there, love that was sufficient in that sense to itself, and yet in another sense wanted something outside of itself, and has reached out in this wonderful way in creation, has looked out to men, to you and to me, that we might be the objects of the love of God, that we might answer to it and that God might find His delight in us. What a God it is with whom we have to do! The greatness and grandeur and glory that are His, and yet the infinite grace that would think of you and me. Does everyone here realise that, that God is thinking about you now? However old or young you may be, God is thinking about you. Not only do we say that because you are here at the gospel preaching, but He is thinking about every man. It says in the scripture that "if he only thought of himself, and gathered unto him his spirit and his breath, all flesh would expire together", Job 34: 14, 15. But He is not just thinking about Himself, He is thinking about

you and me; He is thinking about all men. The greatness and glory of God are wonderful the more you ponder them, and yet that He should want you and me despite all that we are and all that we have been, and that He should go to such infinite cost that He might have us for Himself, not only as His creatures, but as those He has redeemed with the blood of Jesus.

So the background is that every one of us must give an account of himself to God. Does what I have said help you to understand that? Whatever your life may have been up to this point, however much you may have disregarded Him, the very fact that you are here and in a measure of health and strength you owe to Him. Is it not right that you should give account to Him about it, how you have used that health and strength, and how you have used your body? But what can you say? How would each one of us here give account of ourselves if we were brought to face God tonight? It could be; these are realities. How uncertain life is, and every one of us must give account of himself to God. Thank God there are many here who can give account of themselves in the light of what Jesus has done, because they have found in Him the One who satisfies their every need, has met the demands of their consciences, met the claims of a holy God, shed His precious blood to wash their sins away. That is the account that we read of in the hymn we sometimes sing (No.357):

'The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, The Saviour died for me;
Can point to the atoning blood
And say, This made my peace with God'.

What an account that is - the only account in that sense that anyone can give that is of any value in the sight of God. This is a quotation in Romans 14, as Mr Darby tells us in his notes. It is interesting and profitable to follow these notes through and see where they lead to.

That brings the glad tidings into Romans 14. If there is the solemn side that everyone of us must give account of himself to God, we see that the previous verse is a quotation from Isaiah 45 which tells us that the God to whom we have to give account is a just God and a

Saviour. "Our Saviour God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2: 4) is the God to whom you have to give account. He is not a God who desires things that are impossible but a God who has made a way that is according to the righteousness of His throne, whereby you might come into the infinite blessing of the knowledge of Himself and might be able to give an account of yourself which He could accept: but you must give an account. I have referred to the time that is coming when all shall give account, but I think you only have to give account of yourself once. Do not put it off. Young people, do not put it off. We preach tonight about this God to whom you must give account as a just God and a Saviour. Tonight is a time of wonderful opportunity when you can give account to Him, and all you have to do is simply what that man did, of whom Jesus spoke, who said "O God, have compassion on me the sinner", Luke 18: 13. Just take your place as a sinner and accept the Saviour that God has provided. Take account by faith of the fact that He has met everything that was due in relation to your history, however long or short it may have been, and you will come into infinite blessing.

"This man went down to his house justified rather than that other" (verse 14). So He desires that all should be saved. He is interested in you, desiring that you should be saved, and He is setting forth this glorious Person a mercy-seat, the place where God is prepared to meet man. He will meet you tonight in Jesus, and you will find in Him a Saviour God and find eternal peace. "Whom God has set forth a mercyseat, through faith in his blood" (Rom 3: 25); that is what it has cost, speaking of that life of Jesus, its infinite inestimable value, known to God alone - the life which was laid down. The life was in the blood:

'Of all the gifts Thy love bestows,
Thou Giver of all good!
E'en heav'n itself no richer knows
Than the Redeemer's blood'. (Hymn No 1)

He says of the blood "I have given it to you upon the altar..., for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul", Lev 17: 11. So He is

a Saviour God and He has provided the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse you from every sin "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin", 1 John 1: 7. Have no doubt about it. Do not let anything make you feel that it is hopeless as far as you are concerned. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from every sin and it is available to you tonight. We are not promising you tomorrow. There is an urgency upon the preacher. We can tell you now that God is willing to accept your account if you simply accept Jesus as your own personal Saviour. It is not automatic. Everyone must give account of himself. Has everybody here given account? Have you simply told God that you accept Jesus as your own personal Saviour? It is the only way, whatever the atmosphere you may be in. However much your parents may love you and bring you to the meetings and pray for you, in itself it can do nothing; you must give account of yourself to God.

Oh to see that your debt, however great or little - God alone knows - is met. The blood of Jesus would have been necessary if you had sinned only once, that you might come into favour and be able to give an account of yourself which would be acceptable to Him. We all deepen, I think, in the sense of what our histories have been, of the tremendous debt that we owe, but that page is not just ruled through and left there. You are justified, as clear from guilt as if you had never sinned at all, and yet you are in a better position than if you had never sinned at all. What a wonderful triumph! Adam when he fell was positionally lower, Mr Stoney says, but morally higher, because he was capacitated by the fall to enter into a moral understanding of God and to come into the knowledge of God, and it made way for the outgoings of the heart of God.

'Soon as the reign of sin began,
The light of mercy dawned on man,
When God announced the blessed news,
The woman' s Seed thy head shall bruise'. (Hymn 366)

Satan's greatest apparent victories always contain the seeds of his overthrow. When sin was brought into the heart of man - "By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus death

passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom 5: 12) - it made way for the greatest moral triumph that has ever been or ever will be, and made way for man to be brought into a knowledge of God that he could never have had in innocence. So, justification is not just a clearing of the slate and leaving you as if you had never sinned, but it brings you into a knowledge of the love of God which you could never have had unless you had sinned. Oh what a triumph! Not to put any premium on sin! Far be the thought! If only we had a deeper understanding and judgment of it as it has found expression in ourselves we would never even suggest it, but it is all part of the wonder, the infinite mystery, of the ways of God. None can call them into question or say to Him, What doest Thou? But thank God He has brought in this wonderful way of salvation so that you might be able to give an account of yourself. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth": complete and full salvation available for every one who will but look to God. "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20: 21), that is the blessed Saviour who shed His precious blood - (that blood which cleanses from every sin) and who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. I can have no greater assurance that God is satisfied with all that Jesus has done than that the One in whose precious body my sins were borne is now in the presence of the God against whom I had sinned, in infinite unclouded favour, raised again for our justification. He is a living Saviour, a Saviour who has the same feelings as when He was here - the Saviour who wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Saviour who cast out demons, the Saviour who sat at Sychar's well - the same Saviour, with all those same feelings towards you. You may have come a long way and He is interested in you, like that young man of whom it says, He looked on him and He loved him. Jesus saw something that was there and yet he went away grieved because he had great possessions. There is nobody here, I suppose, in that position, but is there anything that is holding you back from surrender to Jesus; from going the whole way and just giving your heart to this One who has done so much for you? You will never measure all that He has done for you. As we were saying, eternity

would come to an end, in a sense, if we could measure these things. We shall ever continue in the appreciation of divine grace and divine love and divine Persons and these wonderful relationships of which we have been speaking and of which some of us, I trust all, have had some experience in this day that we have spent together.

So He goes on to say "There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides me", and it is then that He swears by Himself as to the certainty of every knee bowing and every tongue confessing; as it says in Romans, "So then each of us shall give an account concerning himself to God". So you see how blessedly glorious and simple the gospel is, that before it says that, it says that He is a just God and a Saviour. How is He just, how has His righteousness been made known, the righteousness of God which is towards all and upon all those who believe? God is setting forth "a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood... that he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus". Are you of the faith of Jesus? Do you believe in Jesus? Not do you believe about Jesus but do you believe in Him? Is He an object of faith for your soul?

Have you put your trust in Him as your own personal Saviour? If you have, then there is no doubt about it that God can justify you.

No one else can justify anybody. You can go to the court, and you can be represented by counsel, and maybe you can hear the verdict "not guilty", but it does not make any difference to what you have done. But God can justify you, give you a complete clearance so that you can stand before Him on new ground as taken into favour in the Beloved; and He would look upon you as in Christ, in the same way as He looks upon Jesus. That is wonderful. None of us will ever know what Jesus is to God, and yet He would look upon you with the same favour, the same love as He looks upon Jesus. These things are real. Has everyone here a sense of God being able to look upon you in favour and complacency and that you are able to look up without a cloud to give account of yourself to God? "Only in Jehovah, shall one say, have I righteousness". I wonder who that would be. What a triumph if someone said it here tonight. It is open to every one of us. It is not any one but every one of us must give

an account; and "Only in Jehovah, shall one say, have I righteousness". What a triumph if someone here should put their trust in Jesus tonight and find that God has provided Him as righteousness! You can be clothed in all the worth of Jesus, as trusting in a living Saviour who is out of death, having met everything for God, for when He said "it is finished" everything was finished for God. And then, so that you and I might be associated with Him in glory, He went the whole way and died, shed His precious blood and was buried to make a complete clearance of the state, the condition, the man, so that there should be nothing remaining before God apart from what was in Himself; and God is prepared to take account of you as in Him "Taken... into favour in the Beloved" (Eph 1: 6) in the same relationship in which He stands and to give you the Holy Spirit to shed abroad His love in your heart and that you might have the Spirit of His Son to understand what it is to be brought into this relationship. Then to strengthen you by His own Spirit so that you might be able to fill out your part in this wonderful realm of divine purpose in which divine love would have you. So it says "Only in Jehovah, shall one say, have I righteousness and strength". What is offered in the gospel? Remission of sins, you say. Thank God for that, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and inheritance among the sanctified through faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit is given so that you might enter into it now and that you might have strength. Is anyone here holding back because they feel that if they committed themselves they would not be able to continue? Oh how we all know what that is! Who of us would commit ourselves to anything if we were left to our own charges? It is pathetic to see men who are convicted as to their need and as to the right path and yet they do not take it because they feel they are unable for it. In the army once, as we were coming away from a meeting, a sergeant came out of the public house and walked back to camp with us. He said, You know, I ought to be where you have been tonight but it is no use, because if I went there I would have no power to keep it up, and I would only go again where I have been tonight. He needed strength. He had not the realisation that God who is prepared to give the Saviour and the God who has given Him will withhold nothing: "No

good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly", Ps 84: 11. If only you would commit yourself to this pathway, commit yourself to a living Saviour and let His position in relation to this world determine your position. There is no complex doctrine as to separation from this and that and as to associations. All these things have to be faced but how simple they are. We read earlier in Romans 14, "For to this end Christ has died and lived again, that he might rule over both dead and living". "According to thy commandment shall all my people regulate themselves", Gen 41: 40. How simple if my position in relation to anything in this world is determined by the position of the Lord Jesus in relation to it! Professional associations - would they have Jesus in them? They ask you to sign a paper sponsored by two existing members: "I certify that so-and-so is a fit and proper person to be a member of the Institute of this or that". Would they say that about Jesus? Is it right for me to put my name there, and ask Christ-rejecters to deem me to be a fit and proper person for their company when they would not have Jesus? It all becomes so simple. His position determines my position. "Therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing His reproach", Heb 13: 13. That is His position in relation to everything, be it the profession in Christendom, be it the world with all its associations, He is outside of them all, He has died to it all. "He has died to sin once" (Rom 6: 10), that is He died to the whole system in which sin has operated, and "in that he lives, he lives to God. So also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus". We were talking about giving account, and there is another account, another reckoning to do: "Reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus". Do you feel weak about it? "Only in Jehovah, shall one say, have I righteousness and strength". Oh that we might come to see that God has provided everything in the gospel. He has provided a Saviour so that you might be able to give an account of yourself; and that Saviour is, as another has said, an all-the-wayhome Saviour, so that you can find in Him all the strength that you need for the road. And He has given the precious gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the exalted Man. Have you your eye upon that Man? "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so to thee", 2 Kings 2: 10. So

with our eye on the exalted Man and the power of His Spirit here below we can go through, and we can find in God - this God to whom we have to give account, a just God and a Saviour - we can find in Him righteousness and strength. It is provided in Christ and in the gift of the Spirit. These are the infinite blessings of the gospel.

Today is the time when you can have the privilege of giving account, of anticipating what all will have to face sooner or later, and you can give account today by simply accepting Jesus as your Saviour. May we all know what it is to do it and have the joy and peace which comes in believing, for His Name's sake.

GRANGEMOUTH

28 July 1974

"REDEMPTION OF THE ACQUIRED POSSESSION"

M.J.Welch

Ephesians 1: 14

I am thinking, beloved, of how the Spirit may be preparing us for the Lord's coming. What our brother has said is right, we need to keep near to the Spirit in His activities in preparing us for the Lord's return and the imminence of it. One thinks of the beloved men and women in the beginning of the gospel of Luke that were prepared (no doubt by the blessed Spirit) so that there would not be surprise. Think of Simeon as he comes into the temple; there is no surprise as he takes the Babe into his arms and blesses God and utters that prophetic announcement. I think we need to keep near to the Spirit so that we are prepared. If He is giving us a sense of urgency at this moment as to the imminence of the Lord's coming and the imminence of the redemption of the acquired possession, we should be sensitive. What sort of ministry meeting will we have just before the Lord comes? What sort of morning meeting and readings will we have just before the Lord comes? Will we believe the content of them, will we believe that it will be the last time or will we think, Well, we have had this before and therefore we do not need to be on the alert? I think the Spirit of God would stir us; and the confirmation of this would be that more than one of us, in fact all of us, are conscious of the urgency of the movements of the Spirit. There should be the witness of the Spirit with the saints generally and the alerting of the saints and the preparing them for the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus and the imminence of the redemption, as it says here, "of the acquired possession". How touching that is! The possession has been acquired, we have been redeemed by precious blood; but, beloved, our bodies are about to be redeemed, we are about to be changed and we shall have bodies of glory like His own body of glory. So we need to be alert, (I do not presume to tell the brethren anything) but we need to be alert as to the urgency of the Spirit, as to how He would move us in respect of the coming of the

Lord Jesus. May He help us, the blessed Spirit, to be sensitive, to be ready, in our affections and in every sense, for the Lord's coming.

LONDON

4 March 1975

SOME FUNDAMENTALS -

THE PERFECTION OF THE LIFE OF JESUS

The life of Jesus stands in marked contrast to the life of every other man. He was a Man of another order altogether. Every day of His life was filled out for the pleasure of God, and how full those days were! His disciples contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father, full of grace and truth. The four evangelists have written their gospels from different aspects, but all set out His perfection, whether as a Babe, a Child or a Man; He was absolutely unique.

Jehovah looked down from the heavens in David's day and His comment was, "There is none that doeth good, not even one", (Ps 14: 3). There is not a righteous man, not even one. But when He looked down more than a thousand years later He saw Jesus, a blessed Man who went through all quarters doing good, the only one who fulfilled all righteousness. He was the embodiment of goodness and righteousness. God had set out in the law of Moses His standard of righteousness, but all men had fallen miserably short. In Jesus, however, not one iota of the law was allowed to pass; all was fulfilled to God's entire satisfaction. The Lamb of God must necessarily be without blemish and without spot.

As to holiness, He was "holy, harmless, undefiled", Heb 7: 26. Before His birth His holiness as a babe was testified to by the angel, Gabriel; in His pathway He was hailed as "the holy one of God" (John 6: 69) and later He was described in prayer to God as "thy holy servant, Jesus", Acts 4: 27. How He must have shrunk in the intrinsic holiness of His Person from the unholiness and sin in this world around Him; and what it meant to Him to be "made sin" we shall never fathom.

As to sin, when faced by a strong force of opposers, He was able to challenge them with the question, "Which of you convinces me of sin?", John 8: 46. Writing under the control of the Spirit of God, Peter (who was so fully acquainted with the Lord) clearly spoke

of Him as the One "who did no sin"; John testified that "In him sin is not", and Paul wrote of Him as "Him who knew not sin". These were not empty comments, for Satan himself had come forward to test Him with the most skilful temptations his experience could contrive, but Jesus proved completely victorious. The ruler of this world came and in Him he had nothing.

The Lord Jesus was fully devoted to God's will. His food was to do the will of Him that sent Him and finish His work. The Father's will involved the sorrows of Calvary but He could say° "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. Ever in communion with the Father, He did always the things which were pleasing to Him. He was marked by perfect love to God and perfect love to man, and in love He laid down His perfect life that He might take it again. The hearts of all His saints are moved in adoration to Him.

W.E.Ellis

THE CHILDREN'S CREATOR

Although it is a happy thing that believing children know God as their heavenly Father, it is necessary for them to realise that He is also the one who created us all. Indeed Solomon, one of the two men whom Scripture calls preachers, wrote that we should remember our Creator in the *days* of our youth. Thus every day - and every night too - has something to teach us through the creation.

For one thing, the heavens declare the glory of God with a voice and speech that persons of every race and language can understand. A desert-dweller was once asked how he knew there was a God. He pointed first to the track of a camel in the sand, and then to the sunrise in the sky. He had not seen the camel but knew he had been there: he had not seen the Creator but knew Him by His glory. God will be very severe with everyone who does not glorify Him. The Scripture says that He is "blessed for ever, Amen." This is called a doxology which simply means a 'glory-word'.

The other preacher, Noah, preached "righteousness" and this no doubt included that God is "a faithful Creator" which the apostle Peter also tells us. God will always be true to His creatures. The promise of mercy, of which the beautiful rainbow is the sign, was made with every creature, even the small crawling things that went into and came out of the ark! This is recorded in the first book of the Bible: the answer is in the last book where every creature in heaven, earth and sea give glory to "Him that sits upon the throne".

Another sign of God's faithfulness is that the gospel has a message of hope for the whole creation although it is, of course, the men, women and children who hear and understand it. The book of the Acts shows especially the *preaching* of the Word of God, and the epistle to the Romans the *teaching* of it. Then the Gospels show its results in *reaching* persons. What effect has His word had upon you?

J.C.Evershed