

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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FIDELITY TO CHRIST

A.Macdonald

2 Samuel 15: 21, 22, 32, 37; 17: 7, 8, 10, 18 (last sentence), 20; 11: 11; 19: 30

In our earlier meeting reference was made to the ladder of grace mentioned in one of Mr Stoney's Letters of Interest titled Grace and Practice (see Vol.12, p.312). We touched briefly on the seven steps on the ascending line leading up to being 'lost in wonder and in praise in the knowledge of Himself'. The descending line, which I desire to speak about now, has five steps relating to practice, which brings us down to the sphere of testimony. The ascending line is objective I suppose, but the descending line is more difficult, involving working out of the truth. One would rely on the help of the Holy Spirit that what one says may point to Christ. Mr Taylor said that he did not know of any better subject to speak of than Christ and the assembly. You wonder at some who have said that they were following in the steps of these men, as to whether they ever really knew them. I am not speaking of the saints here, but I believe we need to view these things in a sober way and to examine ourselves, our own hearts, to see if we really are walking in the steps and in the same spirit as these men of God who have taught us. I understand that the words of Mr Taylor, as he left the Nostrand Avenue meeting room for the last time, were, Grace is reigning through righteousness. Then he said, Did we not have a good meeting? Grace was reigning. How quickly those words were forgotten!

David's reign would be a foreshadowing of the reign of grace. What grace! "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness?", 2 Sam 9: 1. He did not need to do that, but from his side he initiated such a move. You can see in it the standard that David had before him; no wonder it was a reign of grace. Mephibosheth was a recipient of that grace; we may come to that later. Beloved brethren, may we in no way in our spirits or in our thoughts cast a shadow across the dispensation of grace; let us not

misrepresent this dispensation. I was struck with that just the other day when reading a passage of Mr Taylor's in which he said that we should *make* it our business. He put it that simply and plainly so that we would understand - we should *make* it our business not to misrepresent the thought of grace.

Well, as has been said by one who was indeed a heavenly-minded man, that while the ladder of grace has seven steps on the ascending line there are but five descending steps. The first step of the descending line relates to what we know of Christ; do we know Him? Do we have affection for Him? I believe the more we become acquainted with Christ the more we will know what devotion is. That is the first step down, devotion to Christ. That is something in which we all can grow. Ittai might illustrate this, he is called "the Gittite"; it is remarkable the kind of men David took on and who became assets to his kingdom. And I believe it is the earnest desire of everyone here, old and young alike, to be an asset to the testimony. We do not want to fail the Lord. Some of us have done that. Peter did; he denied the Lord; some of us have been like that and we have had to learn what it is to weep bitterly, and yet knowing all the time that the Lord's eye was upon us. Oh! that look of the Lord to Peter, it just melted his heart. It says he went out and wept bitterly. I believe we are in a time when there is much bitter weeping; there never may have been such tears with us before. We are in a time when there is still pressure, when the saints are going through much; they are going through deep waters, but they are going through them. We want to be sympathetic with that, and I believe we realise all the more why we need to draw near to the throne of grace, why we need to enter there, why we need to be dependent. Ittai the Gittite came to David when he was in rejection and was fleeing from Absalom. There is no better time to come to Christ than now while it is still the day of His rejection. I appeal to any heart in this room, if as yet you have not come to Jesus, come to Him now; this is still the day of His rejection. Ittai was tried and tested; we will be tried. David said, Why do you come to me now, I have nowhere to go? It is like Naomi's challenge to Ruth. Naturally speaking what is there

for us? Ah! but we see in Ittai devotedness to David, devotedness to Christ in type. What an answer Ittai gives to David: "As Jehovah liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be". I believe that Ittai knew what it was to be measured by David: "Two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive", 2 Sam 8: 2. He is speaking of the one full line to keep alive; "As Jehovah liveth, and as my lord the king liveth". Also, I believe that he knew in mind and heart, and had accepted, the two lines to put to death. "Surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be". What a fine answer! As the challenge comes to us what kind of an answer can we give? Am I prepared to go the whole way? Can I say "In what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be"? It was devotedness to David, devotion to Christ typically. Not that we could ever follow Jesus where He went: 'None could follow there, blest Saviour' (hymn 298). Christ alone was great enough to go into death, and that the death of the cross. None was great enough to follow Jesus there; the Lord Jesus Christ is unique; we have to remember that there is none like Him, none to be compared to Him. I think the enemy would try to divert by comparison and he has done it publicly. I do not think such a thought will stand the light of Scripture, the word of God. Take the sword and bring it in and allow the edge of the word of God to have its way. The Lord Jesus Christ is unique, He has been anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions (see Heb 1: 9).

Ittai would be a good man to have in any locality; he would know how to *merge* with the brethren. That is a great thing to learn; he did not want to be number one. Joab always wanted to be number one, but Ittai did not mind one little bit if he was put over the last third of the army. He would work along with Joab and Abishai who were not too easy to get along with. Do I know how to merge with the brethren in order that the rights of Christ may have the right of way? It is well worth it.

I now go on to the second step of descent, which is testimony.

These steps represent practical matters which bring us down to earth. What kind of testimony do I render? I question if any other man in Scripture rendered exactly the same testimony as Hushai the Archite. I am impressed with these '-ites'. What a man David was to bring about conviction and conversion in men's souls and hearts! The attractiveness of David was able to take a Gittite or an Archite and turn them right around: no more Archite or Gittite but persons made to fit into David's kingdom; that is what he did. And, beloved brethren, what a kingdom we are in! It is the kingdom of the Son of God 's love. We want to be on that positive line, the one full line to keep alive. What a testimony Hushai rendered! He was in a place where he was vastly outnumbered. It reminds you of Elijah the prophet being outnumbered eight hundred and fifty to one, but what a testimony he rendered! And what a clear testimony Hushai renders! Right in the very presence of the enemy he uses language which never let David down, and he did not let David's followers down either. That was a tremendous test. We are tested almost every day in regard to testimony which we render. How often we have missed the opportunity to speak a word for Christ. But the blessedness of doing it! This man did it. How well he spoke of David: "thy father is a man of war" and "Thou knowest thy father and his men, that they are mighty men". What a testimony! And he becomes bolder as he goes on. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. Strength comes in as we confess Christ; we will find strength flowing in. I do not know whether Hushai ever thought of saying this before but, he is bold enough to say right in the teeth of the enemy: "All Israel knows that thy father is a mighty man, and they that are with him are valiant men". Is that not a fine testimony? You see how bold he is and how well he speaks of David. That is a test to each one of us when we are in the enemy's camp as to how well we can speak of Jesus and of His beloved people.

The next step down on the ladder is renunciation of the world, of its tradition and rudiments. I believe that this unnamed man and unnamed woman at Bahurim did that. They have no part at all with

Absalom. Absalom would not know anything about this. Think of him growing hair so long that he was proud of it and had it weighed! And he sat in the gate; he thought he knew something about administration but he did not have divine principles before him, he had himself before him. One of the things Mr Taylor strove to get into our affections was that we put divine principles first. But Absalom was just the opposite; he was not governed by divine principles. He sat in the gate and such and such an one would come along and he would say, Oh well, you are fine, your case is all right; and another one would come along, Oh that is so-and-so, we will just gloss that over, you are all right too. He would make everybody feel fine, and he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. He was unprincipled. What a sham! How empty! I think this man and woman of Bahurim settled for nothing less than the real thing and they were prepared to remain hidden. How unlike Absalom! You could not hide him, his hair would be all over the place; in fact finally it would seem that it was his undoing, for he was caught in a terebinth by his head. But I want to speak about David, and these unnamed persons in a local setting who could be depended upon in a crisis. Are you prepared for that in your local meeting, just to go on quietly, unnamed, unheralded but ready to stand in a crisis? Absalom would never be like that. He had fifty men to run before him and horses and chariots to herald his coming. How different this man at Bahurim! And what a locality he was in! It was not an easy locality because Shimei was local in Bahurim. He was the one who cursed David and cast dust as he went opposite to David when David was fleeing and in rejection. Shimei, as local in Bahurim, would be a difficult brother to get on with, if you can call him a brother (you could hardly call him a brother) but he was local there. But a certain man at Bahurim was hidden, we might say, but he had a well in his court which, I believe, refers to his resource in the Spirit. We could not proceed rightly in this meeting apart from the Spirit. We cannot have part in the testimony aright apart from the Spirit. Let us give more room to the Holy Spirit and count on Him for His help. We may be few and weak, and we feel it, but I think we have the sense of the support of the Holy Spirit and a sense of the Lord's presence. That

is what makes the difference. No matter how few or how weak we are, it is sufficient for God to come in and bless. This man and woman had a well in their court, and the woman covered the well's mouth and spread ground corn on it. I believe they knew what it was to renounce the world, and they knew what it was to renounce Absalom and his world, and were prepared to go on hidden and unnamed in the support of the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ in type.

The next step, the fourth descending step, brings Urijah the Hittite to one's mind. He was one of the staunchest, spiritually-minded men of the Old Testament. It has been suggested that, as David was preparing his list of mighty men, he put their names down one after the other until finally he comes to the end. Then the Spirit of God caused David to include Urijah the Hittite. He was characteristically what is set out in the fourth descending rung of the ladder. I understand it to be the ability to enter into the nature of the body and the house as each is in God's sight. The language Urijah used as he spoke to David about the battle in chapter 11 is remarkable. The first thing he mentions is the ark: "The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in booths; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields". I believe he understood the ark and what the ark stands for, and he appreciated the body and the house as God sees it. The ark, of course, speaks to us of Christ, but his reference to Israel and Judah, I believe, would show that he would understand the body; he would have body feelings. Do we all know what body feelings are? "if one member suffer, all the members suffer", 1 Cor 12: 26. These feelings follow our understanding of how to fit into a local meeting. We take on body feelings. And if there was ever a day when we needed it, beloved brethren, it is at the present time. As we think of the sufferings of the saints and how persons are misunderstood, we realise how much patience and body feelings are needed: "Israel, and Judah abide in booths; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields". He had no personal feelings against Joab; he recognised the place that Joab had

because David put him there. Paul tells us that we need to esteem each other as better than ourselves (see Phil 2: 3). It is not an easy thing to do sometimes. It may not have been an easy thing for Urijah to do but he did it. And he would understand the two lines to put to death and the one full line to keep alive: "As thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing".

We just want to touch on the fifth, or last step down, which calls to mind what is set out in Mephibosheth. This last rung of the ladder is the heavenly man coming into expression down here; I believe Mephibosheth would point to that. I do not know of a man who was so misunderstood and yet was prepared to be misunderstood as Mephibosheth was. There were no complaints. He was a non-complainer. Some of us can remember Mr Taylor speaking of a non-complainer. During World War II he received letters from Mr Spiller of Portsmouth which he kept with him in his inside pocket and treasured. Once in a while he would bring one out and read it during a time of extreme pressure. He said that that dear brother was a non-complainer. That is something to aim for, beloved brethren, in a time of pressure, when we may be misunderstood or even slandered, can we be like Mephibosheth? Ziba slandered him and David misunderstood him but there was not a word of complaint from him. Oh, what a heavenly-minded man he was! He said "Let him even take all". He was not influenced by this world's goods because he had a foretaste of what it is to sit at the king's table, and he valued the grace he had been shown. I believe, if we just lay ourselves out to ask the Lord and the Holy Spirit to give us a foretaste of heaven, we will get it and we will not want the paltry things of this world. Mephibosheth just said "Let him even take all", and he is at perfect peace and his heart is full of joy and gladness in that the king had come back in peace to his house. Beloved brethren, that is what we are aiming at, that Christ may have the right of way in our hearts and in relation to the testimony in this city.

That is what counts, not our personal likes and dislikes. I believe God's sovereignty enters into it, and He has chosen us and has set us together. We may say, I do not like this one or that one; but let us

learn to get on with one another and realise that the Lord has chosen us; the Lord has made us to sit down in companies of fifty; He has put us together in our local settings. Let us learn to get on together and be like Mephibosheth. Never mind about what is going on down here, but as we have a taste of the heavenly land let us carry it in our hearts. You may say that I am touching on the millennium now. Mr Taylor said we are to carry the spirit of the millennium in our hearts; do not let us forget that. Let us carry the spirit of the millennium in our hearts, where the wolf and the lion and the lamb lie down together.

Naturally we may be like a bear or a lion, or we may be timid like a lamb, but let us judge these tendencies. Let us learn what it is to be at peace and lie down together, and surely the Lord will feed us, He will see us through and He will open the heavens upon us and will shower down a blessing. Was Mephibosheth any less wealthy? I do not think so. The wealth of Mephibosheth was in his heart; he was no less wealthy than before. David appears to have been remiss in what he did but Mephibosheth shines in this passage: "Let him even take all, since my lord the king is come again in peace". As He has His right of way in the hearts of His people He will surely come in in blessing. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

20 October 1979

FAITH

N.T.Meek

2 Kings 7: 1, 2, 16-20; Malachi 3: 10; Luke 2: 25 -32

I am thinking, dear brethren, of the need of faith, not only initially in the acceptance of the gospel, preached as it is "for the obedience of faith" (Rom 1: 5), but faith maintained and entering into our outlook, always being governed by faith, reckoning on God and not on man or on ourselves. It is a very real thing to be maintained in the present world in faith. Paul said that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5: 7), and yet we have to confess that we walk a good deal by sight, we are governed by things around, we are governed by things as they appear.

Such was the man whom we read of in Kings; he was governed by how conditions appeared to be. Those were famine conditions; that was how things appeared to be, and when good news was presented to him he said it could not be, not even if Jehovah opened the windows of heaven. It is easy for us to get like this in our souls, to think that the prophecy that the measure of fine flour would be at a shekel and two measures of barley at a shekel was impossible. The famine had been with them long enough for this man to have got accustomed to it and to think that things would never change.

Conditions had got low and life had become difficult enough, and the poor man could not visualise the possibility of change. And it is very easy, dear brethren, for our outlook to become so fixed that we cannot visualise any change. It may be in relation to a circumstance, or to a person for whom we may be praying, that we cannot visualise a change, we cannot visualise the circumstance becoming different, certainly not overnight. These scriptures come nearer to us than we

think. Maybe at some time this man had prayed for the siege to be lifted; maybe he had, I do not know; but things had got down to a pretty low ebb, and conditions can do that, even in a locality. And certainly in one's soul one can get down to quite a low ebb so that one is only just kept alive.

We go through these circumstances at times, periods when everything seems to be in decline and the situation seems to become more and more limited when the outlook becomes blacker and blacker, Then it maybe there is sorrow after sorrow and disappointment after disappointment. Sometimes we go through that in our lives when there is hardly any ray of light, hardly a single ray of hope within sight. It speaks of that kind of thing in the shipwreck in the Acts - that "all hope of our being saved was taken away", chap 27: 20. How dark it must have become! That is how things may seem, but the situation can be changed overnight by the power of God. Dear brethren, that power is the same as it was in the book of the Kings and in the Acts, the power of God is the same. It has been often exerted and it has lost none of its power by its being exerted; that power is infinite, the reserve behind it is as great at the end of the days as it was at the beginning. We often say this in relation to the gospel and preach it, that God's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, yet in our circumstances we may feel that we are in this kind of hopeless position where we cannot conceive of an answer, we cannot conceive of relief.

The situation changed here; it changed overnight by the power of God. How wonderful! One would yearn to have faith in God in this respect; one would long to know what it is to learn to trust Him when all is dark, when outwardly everything may seem to be hopeless and without any break. There was no relief army on the horizon, no distant war cry, no drums, no message, they were beleaguered, the city invested. The prophet says "Tomorrow about this time". Dear brethren, we must always reckon on the morrow. "Tomorrow about this time": that is the word here. The man could not see it, he could not grasp it.

We read these scriptures and it always does you good to put yourself in the position of the worst offender in the scripture. Never think that you are above that; never think that you are not the elder son of Luke 15, for example, nor the younger son; whoever was worse you take that place. It is possible for you and it is possible for me to be like this man. I think one has known this condition, where one becomes almost totally disbelieving in relation to the power of God. I suppose I have not been through much pressure really, not compared to some of the brethren, but I know that one faints in the day of trouble. Yet the Lord would sustain us because the situation can change quickly, it can change very quickly by the power of God. That power is still the same, whatever the darkness is, whatever the problem is, whatever the difficulty is that you are facing. Whatever the anticipated trouble, always reckon with God.

This man did not do that; he is marked, it seems, by total unbelief. O thank God for just a little bit of faith! The Lord spoke about a grain of it, the smallest particle (see Matt 17: 20). Thank God for the element of faith. Dear brethren, it is God-given and it is part of our treasure, part of what we have received that we should value. Faith trusts in God and reckons on God being able to come in; it was seen in Abraham, he staggered not at the promise through unbelief (see Rom 4: 20). How often we do, but Abraham did not stagger. You wonder if you put yourself in Abraham's position whether you would ever have believed what God told him. The situation can change if God comes into it; and that is what happened here, God did come into it, but this man died in the midst of plenty.

O for the ability by faith to hold on in difficult circumstances, and what might seem to be hopeless circumstances, what might seem to be circumstances of such long duration that you cannot visualise any alternative. This man just could not visualise it happening. I suppose he looked at the gate and the enemy just the other side, perhaps right at the gate, maybe with their faces at the bars of the gate, and he could not visualise the barley being sold there. O no, he says. How unbelieving our hearts are, dear brethren, are they not? When we are put to the test how unbelieving we are! The

situation here was tested, it was tested to the limit. Certain persons got the gain of the pressure, but this man did not; he died in the midst of the plenty. And it is possible to do that. I think it can stem from an attitude of mind that does not reckon on God. I am sure God *has* opened the windows of heaven; He has not shut them up.

Whatever we may feel, and however black the situation has been, and whatever our part in it has been, God has not shut fast those windows. They are open and it is possible for us to enjoy it as these people did. They proved that "the measure of fine flour was at a shekel and" I love these expressions) "two measures of barley at a shekel"; the people went out and found it was so.

So one would like to encourage every heart that, however dark the situation may be - and unbelief would say it is hopeless - faith in God says that food is available. I would that all our hearts might know what it is to exploit the faithfulness of God and the provision of God, even though outwardly the time may be one of much scarcity and barrenness. This bears on how we gather together, small and weak and none of us knowing much, yet we come together in faith that these measures of barley will be there and the fine flour will be there; we come together in the expectancy of it. I think the Lord loves that, He loves to see us coming together expecting; it is like "prove me now herewith" as the word is in Malachi. You put it to the test, you prove it. In a certain sense the Lord is almost obligated, if one could use that word, to honour faith. That is how I would like to gather, on the basis of coming together expectantly, not only as seeking to bring something but also expecting that God will honour His word. I am sure we shall prove it. He invites us to prove Him: "prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I open not to you the windows of the heavens, and pour you out a blessing, till there be no place for it".

I suppose that is what happened in Luke. For four hundred years or so the brethren went on. In the period between those two books a few came together, they *endured*. Anna continued, it says, night and day, and there are many like her still; they endured, they just go on. Conditions were bleak at that time, they must have been

really bleak; things happened historically that were frightening, but these saints went on. What must have been their experiences together? One day they went to the meeting and what happened was greater even than what God said in Malachi; Christ Himself was there! Christ Himself was there at the meeting, brought in and received by Simeon. Oh! for arms of faith that would receive Christ as He is brought in, that could hold Him and retain Him, that could hold an impression of Christ. It must have been unique. You think of the literality of it, these persons, most it seems older ones, going time after time, and now having this unique experience. The literality of it was once and for all but in the application of it we can have part. It is how the Lord can be brought into every gathering; so that every gathering becomes unique. It has been said that no priest in the whole of the Old Testament was ever so consecrated, ever had arms with such a treasure, ever had arms that were so filled as the arms of Simeon here; he actually held Christ. You say, What does it mean? In one impression of Christ, beloved, there is almost an entire world. Like a single dewdrop on a petal; when you look at it you can see reflected all that is around embraced and held in that sphere, a great vast area is all contained in that single dewdrop. It is just like a single impression of Christ. How large it is, how much it contains, a living impression of the Lord Jesus! I suppose these persons, as they came week by week, must have been maintained in some way in faith because Simeon at least had the promise that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came, and he came and he came and it happened. That is to be your experience and mine. I would like to encourage every one of our hearts therefore to come together in faith, to gather expectantly, to gather on the basis of the Lord's promise and not just relying simply on the text of Scripture, but in our souls and our outlook expecting to receive some fresh appreciation of the blessed Lord. It may be only one outshining feature, but in it there is a whole world; a whole world of bliss really exists in one impression of Christ.

May the Lord encourage us so to gather, to assemble, not in despondency but in faith and in hope, to assemble with this outlook.

If faith is there and if it is expectant I am sure God will honour it. I say these things and I am tested by them. I do not speak as having fully attained but I can see something in it, that God honours the right expectation and outlook of His people. May it become brighter and more powerful with us in all our gatherings. For the Lord's Name's sake.

NEW YORK

1 September 1979

SALVATION THROUGH A CALL

N.T.Meek

Isaiah 21: 11,12; Matthew 20: 29-34; Romans 10: 8-13

These scriptures all speak of a call, and the idea of urgency is in them. As Christians get older they perceive more clearly the state of things around and the dangers of the world and the artifices of Satan. Hence older ones normally become urgently concerned about the salvation of their young and call on God for their preservation. With young persons it is different; the facade which the world presents is not unattractive and a young one can come under its power. Maybe they do not realise it, youth has not gained the experience to comprehend its depths and subtleties. Hence when we are young we may think we can cope with life ourselves, we can master our own circumstances and pursue our own path. So we become bent on forging our own progress, we think we are carving our own way. Young people say that - Let me live my own life, let me carve my own way. But persons may have spoken to God about you even before you were born, and that fact may be influencing your history, unknown to you it may be influencing your history and your life.

This place of Seir links with a boy whose name was Esau. Even before this boy was born his mother spoke to God about him. It may be that happened to you; you did not know. It may be your father spoke to God, he may have called to God about you before you were born; and if he did not, or if mother did not, perhaps your grandparents did. Most of us here I think have been children of prayers in this sense. Perhaps persons who are not related to you, persons maybe you have hardly ever noticed, have called in the manner of the call here. It does not say who does it: "He calleth to me out of Seir". Someone has called about you. I would think it is true of every young one here that someone has spoken to God about you and you never realised it, but it is true. In the nights, in the silent time (this word "Dumah" means "silence"). "The burden of

Dumah" - silence. Maybe when you did not come home, father and mother were in bed lying awake. In the stillness of the night someone is calling, What about him? "He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night?". What is going to happen? What will happen to my child? How many parents have done this about their children and their grandchildren! Other persons too, not only relatives, others have called in the hours of darkness when you were unaware, you were enjoying yourself maybe, or perhaps at the time you were asleep - mostly when we are young we sleep well, when we get older we do not sleep so well. How many prayers go up in the silence of the night! "He calleth to me out of Seir". What will this boy be? This mother had two boys, one turned out well and one did not. The gospel, dear friend, is addressed to both. The grace of God is towards you.

But there is a greater call even than the call of the parent, a greater call than the call of your grandparent or even of the brethren, and that is the call of the Lord Jesus we read about in Matthew. The Lord is going through Jericho and up to Jerusalem. This is His last visit to Jericho. One can never say, dear friend, that you will have another opportunity to hear His call; one cannot say that. He is going up to Jerusalem to die; the blessed Lord Jesus is going through Jericho, leaving it, going through the world, you might say, going through this town, going through your town. The Lord as it were is moving through a preaching like this, and as He is moving through He calls these persons. But firstly these persons call for Him. I do not know whether you have ever done that, whether you have ever called. It says "And as they went out from Jericho a great crowd followed him". You say, There is a crowd here today. But dear friend the crowd in that sense will not help you, you must call on Jesus for yourself. These persons had a need and they knew their need, and the actual need was that they were blind physically. But every person has a moral need, every person has a need in relation to their sins and their state. Whoever you are, whatever nationality you come from you have a need, dear friend and there is only One who can meet that need and that is this Person who is passing

through. He is within reach. That is the blessedness of the present moment. It says "The word is near thee", Rom 10: 8. And Jesus is available for you. We were speaking about Chicago, how when an evangelist preached there in the old city he told his converts to go home and think about it but that very night the city was burned down. He said he would never do that again. They did not even have that night to think about it; all went down before that fiery hurricane; you will have to read about it, how it swept the whole city. Dear friend "The word is near thee", that refers to this present moment. Are you going to call upon Him? You have a need; are you conscious of your need? Are you conscious of your sinfulness? Are you conscious of the burden of your sins? Are you conscious of the weight of them? You could be ushered into God's presence before the day is out, within an hour. One cannot promise you anything. Your life is not in my hand, it is in God's hand; He is holding the very breath that you breathe; He is sustaining your very body in life and could call you into His presence at any time. How will you go? How would I go if I was called into God's presence? Would I go with my sins upon me or would I go with them forgiven? Dear friend, you can go with them forgiven, you can go with them cleared because this very Person of whom we are reading, Jesus, was going to the cross and He was going to bear my sins in His body there. He was going to exhaust for me God's righteous judgment. God could not have a sinner in His presence eternally; how could He? God, in His righteousness, in His holiness, how could He have sinners in His presence? How could He surround Himself eternally with sinful persons? How could any element of sin remain in the presence of God? It could not be, dear friend, it would be a moral impossibility. But God has provided a Saviour for sinners, that those sins might be cleared and removed entirely and that person come into His presence; and not only into that realm of holy light where all is spotless, all is clear, but to enjoy the sweetness of divine love, the sweetness of divine provision, to tread those courts above, the very prospect of which fills the heart with enthusiasm. Surely it does; who would not like to be in heaven now? I would. It is a much better place than New York, or London, or the little town where I come from. Who would not want to be in

heaven now? The thought of it! Someone said 'The heart within us leapeth' - the very thought of it! Have you ever thought of being in heaven? Have you ever thought of being in the company of Jesus, the only One who can satisfy your heart, who can hold it, 'draw and win, and fill completely till the cup o'erflow the brim'? Some hymn writers, sisters and brothers, have anticipated it. Mr Darby anticipated it in a most remarkable way: 'Who shall to us that joy of saint-thronged courts declare...?' (hymn 74). If you want to know what heaven is, if you want to know what the presence of God is, if you want to know what it is like where Jesus is now, once on the cross but now in glory, read Mr Darby's hymns. How wonderful! 'With Thee in garments white, Lord Jesus, we shall walk; And, spotless in that heav'nly light, Of all Thy suff'rings talk' (hymn 270). Have you ever thought about it? And there is a place there for you, dear friend; it is for you, a place in that presence.

Does it thrill your heart? It does mine; there is a place for me and Jesus has won it for me. He has gone there and there is a place reserved for me. It is as sure as can be. I am expecting to travel home tonight and I have a ticket and there should be a reserved seat. But the organisation of men is such that it could be that when I get to the airport the seat may not be there. But, dear friend, there is no question about my place in heaven, it has been won by Another whose work is perfect. Are you going to call upon Him? These persons called; they were conscious of their need. It is important that you are conscious of a need. It may be your very conscience is accusing you; you know what you have done, you know what your life has been, you also know your hidden life and you have a need. You are aware, I think, that you could not come into God's presence just as you are in your sins; those sins must be met. The penalty for them will have to be paid by another because you are under penalty yourself. How could God accept me a sinner to atone for my own sins? It needed someone who was sinless. There is only one Saviour. I tell you, whatever men may tell you, there is only one Saviour and that is Jesus. There is no one else. You could search the universe, you could search every continent high and low, search

among the rich and the poor, the great and the small, but there is only one Saviour and that is Jesus. "There was nothing in the ark," it says, "save the two tables", 2 Chron 5: 10. That meant that God's will was the only thing that you could find there, and the filling out of God's will was the only thing that you could find in Jesus. There was nothing extraneous; there was no thought of self; there was no element of sin; in Him sin was not; not only did He do no sin but that very element was not present in Him; He was absolutely unique.

Dear friend, whatever you may have heard, there is only one Person who is absolutely sinless and that is Jesus. He is qualified to be your Saviour. It is part of the gospel to speak about the qualification of Jesus to be your Saviour. Satan could find no foothold in Him. He can in you and me. and how often we have proved it that Satan has found a foothold. He has come to you in some way and has found something in us that answers to temptation, he has found a foothold. But when he came to Jesus he had to recoil. He tried it, he came and he came and he came but he could not find even a single foothold. From that blessed Man he had to recoil: "The ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing", John 14: 30. Nothing! He is unique, dear friend. I tell you your only hope of salvation lies in your faith in Jesus, your trust in Him and in His work upon the cross. He calls thee. You may have called to Him, but you will find He is calling to you with the grace of His heart. He was going up to die here, but He was not too busy in that journey, I was going to say, that fateful journey of His. When I say fateful I mean the eternal fate of millions depended on it that journey up to Jerusalem. And He went up steadily and unfalteringly; He was going up to die and He knew in every step the moment of His death was nearer, the moment of His suffering was nearer. He knew; even the disciples, although He told them, could not grasp it. But even in that journey, even in all that was upon Him then, He was prepared to stop and call and He calls you. Are you going to hearken to His call? That is what we sang; 'Hark! the voice of Jesus calling' (hymn 266). He calls you in the stillness of your heart. It is a greater call even than that of your parents. There were persons here in this setting in

Matthew who would fain quench that call. But that is not so here, I do not think, not in this room. There is a sympathetic atmosphere here; there are persons here who would even bring you. That is what they did when Jesus was here; there were persons who would bring others who were in need, persons who could not walk were brought to Jesus.

Now Paul says "The word is near thee", as if it is brought right to you; the word is almost put into your mouth. "The word is near thee... that 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". And then it says in verse 13: "For every one whosoever, who shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved". Oh that is wonderful! Have you done that? There is none else to call on, dear friend, there is nobody else. He is your only hope and He is near. I am sure He is near. Call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. It is a wonderful thing to have the relief. It is not the only part of the gospel we preach but it is a wonderful thing to have the relief from the burden of your sins. Whenever you think of them and you think of the future, you think of what lies ahead inevitably. Every person will have to do with God; every person who has ever been born will have to do with God. You say, How will it be? I could not tell you, but they will. There is no problem for faith, God can arrange that in the greatness of His power; every person will have to do with God. Many here have had to do with Him already, at some point in their history, maybe on their knees, they appealed to Him, they called upon Him for forgiveness and they claimed the work of Jesus for themselves, claimed the benefits of that work that was wrought upon the cross. Have you done that? Have you ever asked God to forgive you, saying, I would like to be covered by the blood of Jesus, I would like to know forgiveness for myself, I would like to have the assurance that all is well?

How could you be happy with your sins upon you? They will always nag you, they will always be there in the back of your mind, like a cloud even in the moment of your greatest natural brightness. They will be always there and they will keep coming back. Why not

get relief from them, claim the work of Jesus for yourself? It is a wonderful thing that if Jesus suffered for my sins, if He bore God's judgment against them, then I never shall, because God is fair, God is righteous and if *Jesus* bore the judgment I shall not. It is a wonderful thing, is it not? Blessed Saviour, how much He bore! I could not even remember all my sins, but He bore them all. How wonderful!

'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' (hymn 357)

Why not call upon Him? Why not make it your own? Dear friend, it does require an action on your part. It is available for you, it is nigh thee, it says, it is almost so to speak brought to your door. It is put right alongside of you, but it does require a movement on your part, a call, a cry of need. God will not fail to answer that cry of need of yours. Maybe you will need to pursue it, maybe initially you will feel you cannot get through. I would say to you, Just pursue. God may even deepen your sense of need. The relief will be all the greater.

Think of the wonderful character of the work of Christ that He bore my sins in His body on the tree. He went there, dear friend, in love for my soul, in love for God and in love for me, in love for the creature; "the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared", Tit 3: 4. How wonderful it is, is it not? "That 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".

Salvation is a very real thing, a very great thing, a very wide thing, and it does not only involve salvation from the penalty of sins - it does involve that and that is a great basic feature of it - but it involves too salvation while you are left here, salvation in a world that actually crucified Jesus, salvation in a world that rejected Him. It is not easy going to be a believer, to be a Christian. You do not really need me to tell you that, do you? It is not easy going. You find that at school, it is not easy going to be on your own, just by yourself.

Everyone else has a different outlook, everyone else does different things in their free time. Sometimes you wish you could be like them, you wish you could go with them, you wish you could enjoy what they enjoy. You feel the pressure, the kind of mental pressure of it all, it is not easy. We are in a world that is hostile and difficult.

We need salvation in that world. How much we need salvation in the present world! Sometimes Satan comes with his temptations, sometimes he will crush you, sometimes the pressure is of that kind, sometimes it is subtle. You need salvation. The answer is to call on the name of the Lord. If you get your eye on the world you will go under; if you get your eye on the power of the world and what it has to offer, for the moment at any rate you will go under. That is what Peter did; even Peter found that and he was an apostle. He once walked on the water; a very difficult thing to do, you say, it is like going through the world with all its instability, lack of support for the Christian, and yet he was actually walking on it. But he took his eye off Jesus for a little while and he began to sink. He saw the wind, he saw the waves, he looked around and he took his eye off the Saviour and he began to sink. The answer is to confess His name, to run up the flag. It is amazing how you overcome if you confess His name.

There has been many an incident of that. There was an old person here in the civil war, was there not, named Barbara Frietchie? I seem to remember reading a poem about her. It is what she did in principle, she ran up the flag, did she not?

On that pleasant morn of the early fall
When Lee marched over the mountain-wall,
Over the mountains winding down,
Horse and foot, into Frederick Town.

Forty flags with their silver stars,
Forty flags with their crimson bars,
Flapped in the morning wind: the sun
Of noon looked down, and saw not one.

Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then
Bowed with her fourscore years and ten;

Bravest of all in Frederick Town
She took up the flag the men hauled down -
In her attic window the staff she set
To show that one heart was loyal yet.

It was the action of one person against fantastic odds. In principle she showed she was loyal and she proved salvation against fantastic odds. And that is what a person does who confesses the Lord's name. I am sure every one of us here who has done it has proved it so. We may do it ever so falteringly with nothing like the natural bravery she had, but because it is the Lord's name it is morally greater. The Lord's banner is greater than the American banner or the Union Jack: it surely is. It is a greater kingdom, a more powerful kingdom; it is an everlasting kingdom, the kingdom that is going through. And the way to go through in a world of opposition, even when other persons are hauling down the flag, is to confess His name, and that leads to salvation.

May the Lord bless these words to us. It is a question of a call, dear friend, it is an urgent matter; call upon Him, He is near, the Lord is near. Oh, dear friend, do not let it go. It was the last that Jericho saw of Him; He never was going that way again. And it could be, dear friend, this will be the last gospel you shall ever hear. Call upon Him while you can. For His Name's sake.

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THE CHILDREN'S CLEANSING

Maybe we have all known times when we have tried to cover stains or other marks in our clothing so as to hide them from ourselves and keep them out of sight of others. Maybe too that our very efforts have but drawn attention to them! How like the garment of life this is when God is speaking to the conscience. Not long ago handbills were issued offering a new and wonderful fluid for getting stains out of cloth - 'sure to do it, never known to fail'. Perhaps it came up to expectations but, in any case, nothing that human science could produce could ever remove the stain of sins. The stain may be very deep in the texture of the soul but the same holy God who makes us aware of it has Himself provided the remedy - the precious blood of Christ. This gives us the relief of being cleansed and thus only could it be that "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool".

Through the name of Jesus sins committed can become sins remitted. If He has borne them they no longer belong to us. They have been 'sent away'. The type of this in Israel's history was the goat sent into a land far away from mankind, bearing on its head the sins of the whole nation - of children as well as of grown-ups. This had to be repeated every year whereas the sacrifice of Christ was once for all. The apostle John, writing as a father to his children, stressed the joy of being freed from sins by confessing them to God who has been sinned against. It is to our great loss if we do not confess, but God waits in grace. He had to speak against Ephraim who ought to have been a child of delights to Him. But all the time God was watching him and yearning for him, as He does for you.

You will remember that when Jesus had died on the cross His side was pierced and there flowed out water as well as blood. This was a sign that believers would need and should have the means of being purified in motive and thought as well as have a covering for sins. As a hymn-writer has well put it:

Let the water and the blood,

From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleansing from its guilt and power.

This cleansing acts largely through the word of God in the Scriptures, by daily and family readings and by the Father's discipline. It is the way of holiness. Are you in it?

J.C.Evershed