

A
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THE HELP WHICH IS FROM GOD

Gordon McKay

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I want to speak about how we receive help from divine Persons - the help that comes from God. It is direct. We are also surrounded by a system of help, in persons, but making full allowance for that, - and God provides persons to help us - I believe we should relate ourselves directly to what comes from God. The gifts themselves are given from Christ and set in the assembly by God in view of our help, but not as an end in themselves. It was remarked in the reading that the gifts in Ephesians 4 are in view of "the perfecting of the saints", in view of the body being able to build itself up in love. We know that the gifts are provisional and will not go into eternity; they are very necessary but are provisional at the present time to help us. 'Helps' is one of the gifts referred to in 1 Corinthians 12 (v 28). But no matter how great the gift, or how effective, we must relate ourselves, even as listening to a gift, to divine Persons Themselves. Mary sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to His word would be a picture of how we would all seek to be today, sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to His word. In one sense it is not a question of the person who is speaking or through whom the Lord might speak; what we covet is that the Lord's voice might be heard. Not only would the speaker covet that, but the hearers would sit at the Lord's feet. There are many who can help us, but in listening to them I believe we ought to be inwardly related to the Lord Jesus Himself and to the Holy Spirit, and thus we will get the gain of what is proceeding, the word that is coming from Christ. I might say many good or right things but the great matter is to get what is coming from Christ and to touch it, in our own soul, like the woman who touched the hem of His garment, to know the virtue and the power that comes from Christ. So that things are not outward but something proceeds inwardly with us in our relations with divine Persons; the

system of help, therefore, is availed of but it is not independent of what the Lord Jesus would do and of what the Holy Spirit would do.

I read in Thessalonians because of the contrast between the first few verses and the last one referred to. In chapter 2 Paul alludes to the very beautiful and close link which existed between these young believers and himself, the entering in he had to them. It must have been a wonderful time - the great change that took place in them, the affection that was lavished on them as the apostles were gentle in the midst of them as a nurse would cherish her own children. Then they laboured night and day and conducted themselves in such a blameless way, and Paul says "as a father his own children we used to exhort each one of you, and comfort and testify". That was beautiful, that there should be such a link between the ministers and those who received help through them, and a paternal and filial relationship, so that these persons were loved by the apostle. But when he comes to verse 13 there is something else to give thanks for: "for this cause we also give thanks to God unceasingly that ... ye accepted, not men's word, but, even as it is truly, God's word". Even in such a setting as this the great matter was that the Thessalonians were attached in their affections to Christ and to God Himself, and that there was something received - "the report of God by us" that they accepted, "as it is truly, God's word". Now it is very important, I think, that we should do that, and understand that while there may be vessels, even great and distinguished vessels through whom the report of the word of God comes, nevertheless from one point of view they are simply instruments, as it says here, "the word of the report of God by us". We should understand that it is the word of God we have to do with. If it is only men's thoughts and man's will that we have to do with, we have nothing to go on with, but it is the word of God we have to do with. In our meetings we should be conscious of that, that what we are handling are holy things. What we are desirous of is the living word of God, not only instruction and help, but the word of God. It says here, "ye accepted ... God's word, which also works in you who believe". If it is man's word it might attract your mind; and it might

enlighten you in a certain way; if it is God's word it will work in you. How wonderful that is! The word of God works, God's word "works in you who believe". I would like to ask then, Is the word of God working in you? Can each of us individually say we are conscious of God's word having entrance with us and working in us? Is it having an effect in heart and conscience, finding a lodging place and forming something in our affections and in our intelligence so that we might progress? Are we proving what it is to receive something from God Himself? It is a mark of babyhood that you are dependent on others, utterly dependent on others for everything; but it is a mark of manhood that you are able to choose and to act for yourself, and to have your own links with God. No one else can have them for you. How important it is that we should have our own personal link with the Lord Jesus and with the Holy Spirit, and that we should prove the help that comes into our souls as we are thus directly related to them.

In Christendom, where there is very much a babe state and a lack of full growth, very much is made of men of gift. The clerical system is based partly on that, persons who have gift and are distinguished are followed, but the result for the hearers is that they remain stunted because way is not made for the Lord Jesus Himself; so much is made of the persons. I am not speaking in detriment of those whom the Lord has given to help us, but the point is that it is God's word. If we value these ministries as we ought - the ministries of the recovery, as we speak - we value them because *the Lord* gave them. It is obvious that from time to time there is an attempt to reduce these ministries to just what such-and-such a person said, but *the Lord* gave them. I say that with conviction, and thus they are cherished. They are based on Scripture and have authority over our souls. The recovery of the truth was not a movement of men; what proceeded was a movement originating in the Spirit of God, a movement among the saints widely, not the fruit of one man's labours, although, thank God, there were found those who could labour in the field, those who were under the Lord's hands. So these distinguished ministries that were given came from the Lord, and if

we quarrel with them and seek to reduce them in our minds we might find we are against the Lord or undervaluing what the Lord gave. The important matter is to see that everything of value comes from Him. The gifts come from Him, from the ascended Christ, and they are for our help, but always we must relate ourselves to Him. So the Thessalonians received "even as it is truly, God's word". I am speaking on this line because of the sense that, while we are surrounded by help and are thankful for it, it is so important that in our souls we ourselves find help directly from God.

That is why I read in Psalm 18. David was a remarkable man and had remarkable experiences, and for our benefit many are put in Scripture in detail, poetically, and portray his link with God. What marks the first part of this Psalm is the actions of God Himself. How great He is! It says in verse 7, "the earth shook and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains trembled and shook, because he was wroth". Then it says, "he bowed the heavens, and came down", and then in verse 13, "Jehovah thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice: hail and coals of fire. And he sent his arrows", it is all what God did: - "the beds of the waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were uncovered at thy rebuke, Jehovah" - what God did. We might say, Where in the history of David do we find these wonderful rebukes, these powerful actions of God? But what David is alluding to is the way God was with him and the way God dealt with his enemies, and the way that God eventually set him on the throne. At first it is simply what God did. Let us not underestimate, dear brethren, the greatness of the power that is towards us who believe. In this psalm it is spoken of largely in relation to creation, the rebuke of Jehovah and what He did, but think of the mighty power of God that is exerted towards us. We look to God for our help. How much help He has, how much strength He has! Is there anything He cannot do? All things are possible with Him; His power is infinite, His grace and His wisdom. How wonderful to have God among our helpers! How wonderful to have divine Persons for our help! At the beginning of Colossians there is an allusion to the great might of God being exerted for the benefit of the

saints. Paul speaks there about the saints as "strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory unto all endurance and longsuffering with joy", chap 1: 11. What a result! The saints are enduring, they are getting on, they are not moved away from the truth, they are not deterred by the enemies and the opposition that there is; they are marked by "longsuffering with joy", that is, they are triumphant in it, they are victorious, they are overcoming, but that end is produced by the might of God, the power and "the might of his glory". That is available to us, not just a little power. In the address to Philadelphia it speaks from our side of "a little power" (Rev 3: 8) and that is valuable too. How important it is to have a little power and not deny the Lord's name, but how great the power is that is for us. David speaks about that, but as he goes on in the section that I read it is noticeable that, while he still speaks of what God does, he begins to speak about things that he did. He did things with God's help. Where we began to read he speaks about his own righteousness and the cleanness of his hands, how he was upright with God and kept himself from his iniquity. That would have a voice to us, too, that in looking for divine help it would be important that we ourselves are sincere, that we preserve a good conscience and have our hands clean. It would appear from Hebrews that the writer felt that, when he asked the brethren to pray for him, he could do so only as having himself a good conscience (see chap 13: 18). So if we ask the brethren to pray for us it is quite an exercise because we know that God would listen and would take account of what is sincere and real with us. Thank God He comes in when we err, but that is not what David is speaking about here; he is speaking about God coming in for someone who is himself upright and pure. How much God was to David: "it is thou that makest my lamp to shine: Jehovah my God enlighteneth my darkness". It is all personal. David kept himself from his iniquity: we all know the iniquity of our own hearts. Then he speaks about "my darkness" - "Jehovah my God enlighteneth my darkness". How wonderful it is to have a sense of light from God in our souls! It is fine to see it in the ministry and to see others in the good of it, but, oh! to have the light of God shining in your own soul! It is a wonderful thing as you read the Scriptures

or the ministry to feel a flood of light. Have you ever experienced that - as if a flood of light comes into your soul, an apprehension of Christ and of divine things. God enlightens our darkness; naturally we are marked only by darkness. How much David did by God- "by thee", by Jehovah, "I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall" - remarkable phraseology. We speak of God doing something by us; we would seek and covet that, but here David is doing something and he says it is "by my God", using the resource he has in his God. You can go through the section at leisure and see how much God did for him. "Who maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places". God gave him help to overcome, help to be a psalmist. We were speaking about Samuel and the difficult conditions in which he grew. David's life was marked by that, by contention and persecution, by hostility; he was chased by Saul and his life was at hazard. There were certain stages when his own brethren were hostile to him, but he proved what it was to be a psalmist.

Then he says (and I wanted to speak about this): "Who teacheth my hands to war". If we did not have this record in Scripture you might say, Who taught David to be such a warrior? Surely somebody else would demonstrate the use of weapons to him and some other warrior would help him. Perhaps his older brothers or his father would teach him to be a warrior. But no, David says that God taught him: "Who teacheth my hands to war". The way to learn things is to learn them from the Lord. The best example is His; there are other good examples too among the saints, but the great example is His, to learn from Him, the blessed meek and lowly One. If you are to do anything, learn to be under the Lord in doing it. He teaches me. Jeremiah writes of a day when no one shall say, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me in themselves (see chap 31: 34).

Surely we are at the time when we can know in ourselves, when we have our own link with God and He will teach us. Paul says, "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things", 2 Tim 2: 7. He will teach us, He will give us the skill, He will help us to do the things we did not think we were able for. There is a

remarkable passage in Isaiah 28 where it says that even the farmer is taught by God: it says "His God doth instruct him" (v 26). You might say that a farmer would go to an agricultural college, or learn from his father and from other farmers. That scripture says that God teaches the farmer, not only how to plough and sow but different methods of threshing too. It says, "This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts". So God would teach His creature how to handle creation in view of a result. It brings out that the great matter is to have divine teaching, to know what comes from God. If it comes mediately through a gift, that is fine too (and how dependent we are on that), but yet always remember that it comes from God. That would preserve us from simply being able to quote. It may be good to be able to quote but there is something else, something that God has taught you Himself. Oh, to have something that the Lord would teach you Himself.

David dilates on how God girded him with strength, how God helped his steps, but I would like to allude to verse 35: "thou didst give me the shield of thy salvation, and thy right hand held me up; and thy condescending gentleness hath made me great". Think of the right hand of God holding you up and sustaining you, the right hand of God. That is where Christ is, at the right hand of God. What wonderful power is available to us! Jesus is at the right hand of God, and from that place He has poured out the Holy Spirit, and there is power down here which is commensurate with the power on high. The power in Christ's hand at the right hand of God is answered to by the power that is down here in the Holy Spirit and is thus available to us. Think of that, the Man at God's right hand. Here David says, in his dispensation, "thy right hand held me up". Let us not waver, let us not collapse. The enemy attacks and things get difficult, but there is no need to waver, no need to give up the service of God, the high places need not be deserted. In the time of song God will hold us up and He will help us in our path.

Now where we read in Psalm 118 the word is, "Jehovah is for me among them that help me". One of these verses is quoted in Hebrews 13 in connection with material things. In these days of

widespread unemployment we might be concerned as to material things; the writer of the Hebrews speaks about that, about our conversation being without the love of money, "satisfied with your present circumstances, for he has said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee. So that, taking courage, we may say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid: what will man do unto me?", chap 13: 5, 6. So even in connection with our material circumstances we come down to that: "The Lord is my helper". There are circumstances which cast us on the Lord, and He can help us in material things too. The cattle upon a thousand hills are His (see Ps 50: 10). Everything is under His hand and He can help us in all our exercises. So that word here is, "Jehovah is for me among them that help me", and I read it to say that, wherever help is available, make sure that Jehovah is among your helpers.

In 1 Chronicles 12, which is a great chapter of help, persons are coming to help David in difficult circumstances. I suppose it is more a chapter to read if you were speaking about how we might become helpers, and that would be good too - to be a Phoebe, a helper of many, or to be able to do something for the Lord. David went out to meet the children of Benjamin and Judah, and "the Spirit came upon Amasai, the chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, And with thee, thou son of Jesse: Peace, peace be to thee! And peace be to thy helpers!", but then he said, "For thy God helps thee". In the midst of all that chapter, where there is a list of the mighty men who helped David, where David's challenge is to persons whether they are coming to help him, where people are coming day by day to David to help him until it is "a great camp, like the camp of God", in the midst of all that, Amasai, speaking by the Spirit says, "For thy God helps thee". How important that is, that amidst all the help that we look for from one another, we should not forget to look directly to the Lord Himself. And indeed, as exercises arise, how important it is that we go direct to the Lord. It is a sign of maturity, a sign of manhood, that we have our own links formed with divine Persons, and that we can formulate our own judgment in the divine presence, and we can receive help, help in anything we need

skill for doing, and teaching where we need it. Everything we can receive from the Lord, He will give it to us.

Where I read in Romans 8 it is an allusion to the Holy Spirit, and we can hardly speak about divine Persons as available for our help without speaking about the blessed Holy Spirit. He is spoken of here as joining His help to our weakness: "the Spirit joins also its help to our weakness". We sang at the beginning, 'Holy Spirit, Helper nigh' (Hymn 453), the writer of the hymn thus designating the Holy Spirit. This scripture would be one we could allude to to support that expression 'Helper nigh'. There is no help nearer to us than the help of the Holy Spirit. The psalmist could speak of God being a help in troubles, very readily found (see Ps 46: 1). In our dispensation how readily the Spirit is available to us, indwelling us. I think that is the thought, the Holy Spirit being so near us. To be with us, that is very near, but to be in us means that He can help us immediately. Immediate help is available from the Holy Spirit. No distance is involved, He is near you, He is with you, in you. He would help you, therefore, in all matters. He can help you in internal exercises; matters of soul you have to work out for yourself. If you are going to make progress in growth you have to develop in your soul yourself, you have to go through your own exercises. While you can refer to others and to the ministry for help, and to the Scriptures, how blessed it is that you have an internal Helper, if I may so speak of Him, the Holy Spirit within, able to help and guide. In another allusion in this chapter He "bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (v 16). He is there in a confirmatory way, having to do with our own spirits, helping us, confirming us, teaching us. He is the One who guides us into all the truth, which would be more collective, but He is always available. We can do things by the Spirit. David did certain things by His God, by His God he leaped over a wall. In Romans we can do certain things by the Spirit: "if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (chap 8: 13), and there is no other way, I think, than that, that you do it by the help of the Spirit of God. So here He is alluded to as joining His help to our weakness, our infirmity as in this condition, our lack of

knowledge not knowing what to pray for as is fitting. "But the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered". I do not take it that that is as separate from the saints exactly, but it is that, even as the saints pray, the Spirit would make intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. So that these prayers take on a depth and there is something rising to God which is in keeping with the divine mind. How comforting that the scripture goes on to the things that we do know! There are certain things that we do not know. We read about the children of Israel pouring out the water on the ground, acknowledging their weakness, and how often the Lord allows us just to feel our weakness.

Sometimes we might be at a loss even to know what to pray for as is fitting as we feel the pressure of the testimony and of the time that we are in, but the Spirit Itself joins Its help to our weakness. He would help us at the weakest moment; He would help us where our intelligence fails, where the way ahead and how to articulate a matter might fail. We might have feelings in the depth of our souls which we can hardly bring to the fore. How much saints have gone through! The psalms show certain experiences of saints, but through the dispensation how many psalms have never been recorded, but treasured in heaven, the out-breathings of saints. What depths of soul exercise there have been, and in it all the Holy Spirit has been the Helper, Helper in prayer and intercession, helping us in regard to the depth of our feeling as before God. What a Helper He is! How available He is, very readily found indeed! I just commend these thoughts to the dear brethren for encouragement, for His Name's sake.

REDBRIDGE

11 July 1992

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

J.N.Grace

Revelation 1: 3-7; 22: 14-17

The preaching is all about Jesus, my Saviour. This word in the gospel, dear hearer, is for you, not for the person next to you, not for the one who you think has been a Christian for five, ten, fifteen, twenty years; the gospel is for you. In other words it is for everyone in this room. The same gospel has been preached for years. It is still being preached today. God has not changed. This world has changed for the worse; you might have changed too. You can change again today, right now. The best change you could have in your life is to put your trust in Jesus; He does not change. Maybe you have heard the gospel preached far better than I can preach it. The point of it is, have you received Christ as your Saviour? Is Christ your Lord? He is mine, thank God! It is a pleasure to bow the knee to Jesus and call him Lord and to recognise that in your walk and life. He is Lord; do not make any mistake about that, Jesus is Lord, God has made Him Lord. Whether you get the gain of that is another matter, but the time will come when every knee will bow. Things in heaven, things on the earth and things under the earth will bow to Jesus and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory. That brings you in - every tongue and every knee. I wonder if you have done it yet. Have you called Jesus, Lord, yet?

Have you bowed your knee to Jesus and owned His authority over your soul? If you have not done it yet, friend, you had better do it right now; this may be the last time the gospel is preached - I do not know - but it is being preached today. Today is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, and in the chapter that we read it says "the time is near". What time? The time of fulfilment of all prophecy; and that prophecy for one thing is that the One who suffered, was humiliated and died on the cross at the hands of men, is coming again in glory to the very world where He has been rejected, and is rejected and refused; He is coming again. It says

"every eye shall see him and ... all the tribes of the land shall wail because of him" because, when He comes again, it will not be as Saviour but as judge. We do not want you to see Him as judge, we want you to bow the knee to Jesus now when He is wholly for you, wholly on your side. He is not holding a thing against you, whatever your history might be; He wants to be your Saviour now. It is not only from the wrath to come: wrath is coming on this world because of the refusal of Christ, God is going to visit this world with judgment. God will be glorified in this world in the very scene where men have put Jesus to death by way of the cross, saying, Away with Him, crucify Him! What will you say when Jesus comes if you are here? Every heart that puts their trust in Him now will not be here; they will be with the Saviour because, first of all, He is coming to take out of this scene everyone who puts their trust in Him and has received the forgiveness of their sins.

What hope that is! Well might we say, Lord Jesus come. The time is near; it may be before this hour is finished that the Lord will come and the day of grace close. Where will you be when the day of grace finishes? Will you be with Jesus? Find an answer to that in your heart before you leave this room! This is an hour in which God is for you, completely for you. That is why He has brought you here. You say, I came of my own choice, I came because my father or mother came. You came because God wanted to speak to you, He wanted you to get one more opportunity of hearing about the Saviour and accepting Him as your Saviour in repentance. How blessedly simple the gospel is! God is not looking for any works, not looking for you to set right all the things that you have done that you should not have done. Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are the terms of the gospel. There is not another thing to be done because it has all been done by Jesus when He died on the cross and His blood was shed.

What a wonderful thing it is that the precious blood of Jesus has been shed! That is the basis of all our blessing. It is a basis upon which God can come out as a Saviour God, because of His own blessed Son: He "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up

for us all", Rom 8: 32. Are you in the 'all'? You can be by repentance and faith in Christ. How wonderful it is that a Saviour God is not thinking of you in terms of judgment but He is ready to bless you right now. You may have done all sorts of things in the past twenty four hours, and God says, repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus, and the whole thing is settled, once and for all. That is the gospel. You may have been in the Christian pathway for years and gone back, turned your back on the Saviour. What about it? Is God against you? The wonder of the gospel is that God is for you; and the terms of the gospel are the same, they have not changed - repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is because of the blood of Jesus. Nothing more, nothing less than the blood of Jesus, would suffice for your salvation for eternity and for now. God is not putting off the question of your salvation until you have finished your pathway on earth. Salvation is for the present, now is the day of salvation. Have you proved it? You say, somehow or other I have made a mess of things, I wanted to do what was right and I did everything that was wrong. Do you think that God is against you? He is for you. It is the very thing that Christ died for, to meet all your mistakes and meet all your failures and settle it all, not to your satisfaction but to settle it to the satisfaction of God.

Is God going to raise any questions about the blood meeting all the failures of men? Could it be that anybody could raise a question about the failure of mankind when the blood of God's own Son has been shed? That has settled every question before God as to the matter of sin. Whether you get the gain of that is another matter. The groundwork has been laid for the gospel to be preached to all men, irrespective of who they are, irrespective of their nationality, irrespective of where they are, the gospel is for all men. God's desire is that all men should be saved. When I say all men I mean you. All men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Do not miss it, do not trifle with God. You do not have to answer to me, but you do have to answer to God, every one must give account of himself to God. You put your trust and faith in the

blood of Jesus and that meets everything. No one will be able to raise a charge against you if you put your faith in the blood of Jesus. That is a wonderful thing; nothing less would do, nothing less than the blood of God's own Son. Every man has sinned and come short of the glory of God. That is what we are told in the letter to the Romans by Paul. But then the gospel is for all; that is God's answer.

All that men have done is to sin. God's answer to that is that you can all come in, all men can be saved. What does it say? (it is fine to be able to turn to the words of Scripture, you cannot find fault with them): "righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those who believe", Rom 3: 22. *All*: that means you; "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood" (vv 24, 25). His blood, Christ's blood, is the basis of all our blessing. "For the shewing forth of his righteousness": you say, I thought the blood was that I should get the forgiveness of sins. True enough, but it is not the full thought; the full thought is that God could be just. It sets God free. He can pass by the sins of Nebuchadnezzar or Ahab, all those who have gone before; "passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; for the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just". That you should be forgiven, yes, but that God should be just, "and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus". Is that not wonderful? You have not to do a thing, it has all been done; it has all been done in the blood of Christ. What you have to do is to come by way of repentance towards God and put your faith in Christ and His blood, because that meets the question of your salvation eternally. Your salvation while you are down here is another thing that you need; God has taken care of it all. There is not one thing that has happened in your history or the history of this world that God has not provided for in the gospel. If men would only receive it, if you would only turn to Christ and put your trust in Jesus and call Him Lord, you would prove that there is nothing in your life that can come into it, or has come into it, that cannot be met by the gospel. Things that you have not thought of God has thought of long before

you came on the scene; the work was finished, the perfect work of Jesus on the cross; the death of Jesus and His resurrection and His glorification was all done before you ever appeared and it is perfect. Thank God for that! I had nothing to do with it nor had you, but I can stand here and preach that the work has been done and that you can get the gain of it just by faith in Jesus and repentance.

The scripture I read first goes on to say, "To him who loves us". The gospel is not about judgment to come, it is about God's love. His love requires that sin should be put out from His sight, and that would involve judgment upon all those who refuse the gospel, but behind all that is His love: "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood". Can you put yourself into that word 'us'? "washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father: to him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen". Can you say Amen to it, friend? The wonderful work of Jesus and the wonderful attitude of God towards us is in His love. Come into the present enjoyment of the love of God.

Did you think that the gospel is being preached in order that you might find your way into heaven? That is not the gospel. The gospel is preached that you might be free from your history and free from your sins, the domination of sin, the devil and the world and be free for God and come to know God. What comes into your soul is doxology. It is a wonderful thing to know God. You cannot help worshipping God, our Saviour God who gave His Son in order that you might be free and enjoy Him in all the thoughts of His heart.

You have heard this before. I appeal to you right now to put your trust in Jesus. Friend, this is not just the filling out of an hour in the preaching of the gospel. You did not come here to hear a good address. You came here to hear the gospel preached, about Jesus and His precious blood. Having died and gone from this scene He has gone into heaven. It is wonderful news, Christ died for our sins, but He has been raised. All that the enemy could do through wicked hands was to put Him on the cross, put Him to death. That is as far as the enemy could go, and God raised Him from the dead, and

there were plenty of witnesses to it too. Christ today is not on the cross; He is in heaven at the right hand of God, a Prince and a Saviour. God has made Him both Lord and Christ. If God has done that, how thankful we are that men cannot interfere with Christ where He is! God has made Him both Lord and Christ. Friend, have you bowed the knee to Jesus? Have you the gain of the place that Jesus is in in the presence of God? All power in heaven and upon earth has been put into the hands of Jesus. Presently it will be exercised in judgment. Thank God at the moment that it can be exercised in your deliverance - the forgiveness of your sins, the deliverance from this world where Christ has been refused and rejected, and your deliverance from the power of Satan.

He has given Himself for you. Now what? The wonderful thing is that He is prepared to give His Spirit to you. Could He do anything greater than to give His Spirit to you, the sinner who has rebelled against Him, maybe gone back on your profession of Christianity, gone back to the world? The gospel is still the same - repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. God is waiting to forgive you your sins and to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit. He could give you no greater gift, a divine Person Himself within you in order that you might be here in the world where Christ has been refused and rejected and crucified. God wants you to be here to represent Him. That is the whole of the letter to the Romans: God takes up the sinner where he is, with his history and misrepresentation of God, and delivers him from his sins and the power of the world in sin, and his companionship and everything else, and sets him up in the power of the Spirit to represent Himself as a Saviour God. That is why I am here; it could not be anything else because God has been so good to me and He wants to be so good to you. Will you accept Christ as your Saviour now? You say, Well, I will think about it. Stop thinking about it and do it, friend! Bow your knee to Jesus before you leave this room and confess Him as your Lord; that is why you have been given a mouth and a voice. The prime thing in giving you a mouth is to confess Jesus as Lord. You say, I do not know how to do it. God has given you a mouth and

the power to open it, and what you have to do is to say, Lord Jesus. If you have never done it before, do it tonight. Just say Lord Jesus, and a sense of victory will come over your soul. You have met companions in the world who are too strong for you, there is something that has held you in bondage and you have not been able to break with it; I say, Go to the Lord and say Lord Jesus, and the power will be broken in your soul, you will have a sense of victory in your soul because the Spirit will help you. He will help you to carry out the will of God in the very scene where Christ has been crucified. Would you not like to be amongst those who are in the victory of God, more than conquerors through Him who loves us? It is up to you; God has done everything on His side. He has given His Son for us and He is prepared to give His Spirit to us. He has followed you all your way, in the self-will that has marked you. He has brought you into this area of blessing and He wants you to confess Christ as Lord and receive the gift of the Spirit. He gives the Spirit to all who obey Him. I am not ready for that, you say, I am not prepared, I want my own will. You can do your own will, God may let you do your own will, but it will lead to disaster in your life. God is offering you free and full salvation right now in the forgiveness of your sins, and the gift of the Spirit can be yours if you obey Him. Let that will of yours go, find yourself on the path with others that will want to bless you too. How thankful we can be for others around us who know and love the Lord Jesus and have proved Him. I say, He is well worth knowing and well worth proving.

Set your own will aside. It may be that the Lord has said, Not that way, you come this way. Well, come this way with Christ and that will be a day of blessing. You say, but the difficulties are too great, I will have to leave this or that. Friend, you just bow the knee to Jesus and see what He can do for you. He will dismiss your thoughts and open the way; He will open doors that you might think can never be open. That is what Jesus can do, He can open doors that are shut; He has done it and can still do it. He is doing that now; He is not shutting doors at the moment; the time will come when He will shut the door. It would be a terrible thing for the door to be shut

and you to be outside. The Lord is not doing that at the moment, He is opening doors: "I have set before thee an opened door", Rev 3: 8. He has set before you an opened door tonight; see that you bow the knee to Jesus and accept His will, go through the door that He has opened for you in repentance and identify yourself with those who have washed their robes.

That is why I read that passage at the end of Revelation, "Blessed" - do you want to be blessed? "Blessed are they that wash their robes". Who wants to be dirty? Who wants to have soiled clothes on them? There is a means in the death of Jesus for you to wash your robes that you may have a right to the tree of life. That would be fine! Not the deadness of things around us - we touch them every day - but there is the means in the death of Jesus to wash your robes; and in the power of the spirit you can be free and enjoy life have a right to the tree of life. Would you not like that? Well, have to do with Jesus. Maybe you have been along here under the sound of the gospel time and again; this may be your last opportunity, friend, tonight, to receive the gospel and accept Christ as your Saviour and bow to Him as Lord. Let me plead with you not to let this opportunity pass by, bow your knee to Jesus, confess Him as Lord and you will find an entrance into an order of things where the enemy has no place at all, but an area of things where Christ is, full of blessing, the centre of it, the tree of life. Would you not like to eat of the tree of life? The world is marked by death. Think of it today, think of all the confusion, think of all the strife amongst the nations; think of all the violence in this city, we have no need to go further than that. The gospel is here to meet it all in your heart if you will surrender to Him. You say, I did once walk rightly; maybe you used to, maybe you used to break bread, in fellowship as we say, and you have gone back. Accept the gospel that God is presenting to you right now, repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and it can all be yours. Is that not a good gospel? Is that not a good God that we preach? Could we preach anything better? Has God changed His mind because of conditions in the world? Has God changed the gospel to bring it up to date? No, dear

friend, God foresaw all that has happened in the world and all that has happened in Melbourne; He has seen it all and He has provided for it; and He has seen your history and, what is more, has provided for that in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Put your trust in the Saviour. For His Name's sake, Amen.

MELBOURNE

7 October 1990

JUSTIFICATION

James Johnston

How can vile man be just with God?

The question asked by Job:

With man it is impossible,

It rests alone with God.

Poor fallen man depraved by sin

Has not whereon to stand,

Seeking to gain God's favour by

The labour of his hand.

The love of God misunderstood,

Man labours in the dark;

And those who labour so in vain

Will surely miss the mark.

Could we but entertain the thought

That God the Author is:

God justifies and God alone:

O, what a thought is this!

Justified freely by His grace,

We have the source made known;

Man's labours can but mar God's grace,

'Tis grace and grace alone.

But God must have a righteous ground
On which to justify;
The blood of Jesus must be shed,
Our Surety for us die.

No condemnation can be laid
On us since Christ has died;
The resurrection is the proof
That God is satisfied.

Faith is the means whereby we come
Sinless before our God;
Now being justified by faith
We have our peace with God.

Works is the evidence of faith,
Faith without works is dead;
Our faith is proven in our lives
By what we've done and said.

WOODSTOCK, CANADA

Approx 1943

With the Lord, 17 December 1984

WISE CHILDREN

A statue was once made, called 'Opportunity', and it was of a man standing on tiptoe and with wings on his feet. His hair was long in front, but the back of his head was bald. It was as if he stayed only for a moment, and whosoever should meet him could seize him, but once passed he could not be taken. Certain small creatures, namely the ants, are a scriptural example of the way in which an opportunity is taken of gathering food in summer in view of the lean part of the year. They are written of in the Scriptures as "exceeding wise", although they are "a people not strong".

For our interest there are further examples of wisdom in the Scriptures such as the rock-badgers who are "a feeble folk ", yet they can find refuge in the cliffs which God has provided for their

safety. This is like the protection of a believer in confessing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are also the well known locusts which have no king yet they "go forth, all of them by bands". The fourth wise creature is the lizard, which may be easily taken in the hand and dealt with, but nevertheless is "in kings' palaces".

Do you seek to be wise?

J.C.Evershed