

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 258

September 1994

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PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD - THE CUP WHICH HE DRANK

Alex Craig

Galatians 3: 7-20

I sometimes think that Paul in writing this epistle was like Moses in coming down from the mountain with the two tables of stone on which God had written. In approaching the camp he saw the golden calf and them dancing round it, and it says his anger burned. I think Paul is like that in this epistle. The great blessing in this epistle is Abraham's blessing, consisting of two parts: eternal life and sonship. There was an attempt in the Galatian assemblies to neutralise the glad tidings about this great blessing, and Paul says, 'If we come along another time, if we come back to you again and preach another glad tidings, it is not another glad tidings, or if anyone come preaching another glad tidings, it is not the glad tidings, let him be accursed.' He says, 'If even an angel out of heaven comes and preaches another glad tidings, it is not another glad tidings: let him be accursed' (see Gal 1: 8,9). I think Paul's anger is burning because of the attempt to overthrow the blessedness of what has come in in Paul's glad tidings, the blessedness of what is involved in the blessing of Abraham consisting, as I said, of two things that Abraham in type fills out: eternal life and sonship. There is nothing better, dear friends, than to have these things in title, but also in their enjoyment, and for that the Spirit has to be given as it says here: "that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". The Spirit is necessary for the blessing of Abraham to be understood.

Before the Spirit could be given, there must be the great work of redemption wrought out by Christ on the cross and that involves His drinking the cup. I want to speak to you, before I come on to my subject about the Lord Jesus drinking the cup, and the Spirit tells me that this is a very holy subject, a very sacred matter as to the Lord

Jesus drinking the cup. Nobody speaks about it but the Lord Himself. Paul never speaks about that cup, nor John, nor Peter. Only the Lord speaks about that cup. He never calls it 'My cup' because it was not His cup. As we sang, it was our cup. I hope you take these things in. The gravity, the solemnity of what lies at the basis of our enjoyment of divine blessing is this great matter of the Lord Jesus drinking that cup. In the three synoptic gospels he calls it "this cup"; in John He calls it, "the cup which the Father has given me", chap 18: 11. It was not His cup. Involved in this great matter is the fact that He was made a curse. I trust these things ring in your heart as they will in mine. Blessed, sinless Son of God, but He was made a curse! That is how Paul opens this epistle, as I said: "let him be accursed", for he is going to speak about One who came into this scene, the sinless Son of God, and maintained that all His life through, but He drank the cup, and He drank the cup on the cross. He did not drink the cup in the grave. He drank the cup on the cross and emptied it on the cross.

I want to bring forward the scapegoat in helping me to speak about this sacred matter of Him drinking the cup. What it meant to Him to drink that cup and empty it! The day of atonement - I expect you know all these things - was one of Israel's greatest days, the day when they had the assurance from God that He was going to go on with them for another year. God in the glad tidings today is assuring men that He is prepared to go on with them for eternity, but in Israel's case it was for a year, a year's blessing, and, according to the epistle to the Hebrews, the writer shows that it was not really absolute forgiveness they received, but the assurance from God on the ground of the sacrifice on the day of atonement.

Now I speak about the scapegoat. There is much which precedes the scapegoat which is greater in a way. Perhaps I should not have said that because what is greater than a type that would witness to you of what the Saviour has suffered to remove what stood against us? So the scapegoat was brought forward and Aaron put his hands on it. Aaron represented the people, and he put his hands on it, and all the iniquities and all the sins and all the

transgressions of Israel were put on the head of the scapegoat. Think of that animal standing there innocent, not one of those liabilities and sins or iniquities its! - it had none - all confessed on its head: one moment they are on the people, the next they are on the scapegoat, and it is led away "by the hand of a man standing ready". It is all Jesus! He is the scapegoat. He was the man standing ready, but it is led away "to a land apart from men". I will tell you that at the cross when God transferred the sins of His people on to the sinless head of the Substitute, He was not led to a land apart from men. He was found in a land apart from God! Who could open that up to you? Who could? - a land apart from God! That is what the forsaking means. He was forsaken of God; not the scapegoat: it had its limits. It serves as a type. But when you come to Jesus, the real Substitute, the real Sin-bearer, He was forsaken of God. The point came on the cross when there was the transfer. God transferred from His people on to the sinless head of Christ all their sins. That point came on the cross. That point came at the sixth hour, not at the third hour, at the sixth hour. What a momentous moment, dear friends, for Jesus and for us! Do you appreciate this? Do I appreciate it? Do I appreciate as I should do, that this is what was meted out to my blessed Saviour, your Saviour, in the cup? I cannot tell you when it was actually given him - He says, "the cup which the Father has given me" - but I can tell you when He was forsaken and when He drank the cup, forsaken of God. What a moment! I am certain, dear friend, that we do not ponder this sufficiently. Do you go into your room, do you open your Bible and put it down before you and on your knees do you read about the types and transfer them with your intelligence to the cross? Do you open your Bible at the gospels and read about the cross? What effect has that upon us? What a moment when the cup was accepted and drunk by the Lord Jesus! He drank it. As I said, it is a sacred subject, and He is the only one who speaks about it.

We can see them wending their way to the cross. We can see that crowd. We can see the Roman soldiers. Here is one carrying the hammer and the nails and the superscription. We can see all

that taking place as they wend their way to Calvary. They come to the cross. They lay it down on the ground, they stretch the Saviour on it and nail Him to the cross and nail up the superscription, hoist it up and put it in the hole in the ground. He is there for three hours, jeered at, mocked: "let him save him now if he will have him", Matt 27: 43. What mockery! But then there was the sixth hour and darkness came down! I see Another. There is nobody ever speaks about the cross like Paul, not even John or Peter. Nobody speaks about the cross like Paul. And it is not mentioned in Romans: that was tender consideration for the Romans because it was a Roman cross. But I see Another there at the sixth hour with the hammer and the nails and the writing. Nobody sees Him. Paul speaks about this in the second chapter of Colossians: "the handwriting in ordinances which stood out against us ... he has taken it also out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (v 14). Who did that? God did that. I would invite you: Come up to the cross! See if your signature is on that handwriting! That handwriting means that: it is the signature of certain people, the signature, illustrated in Israel when the ten commandments were given. They endorsed it and put their signature to it. They said this: "All the words that Jehovah has said will we do!" Exod 24: 3. They signed the writing. Have you found your signature to all that was written out there, that stood out against us? Mine was there, thank God! It is as if God said to the Saviour at the sixth hour, 'Here it is. Here is the list of all that they are guilty of. Are you, my beloved Son, prepared to accept on their account what was due to them? Here are all the signatures. Are you prepared to accept what was due to them on their account?' It is as if the Saviour said, 'I will'. God said, 'I'll have to leave You. I'll have to abandon You. I'll have to forsake You.' And for three hours, dear friends, He endured the wrath of God. That cup was a cup of wrath and He drank it during the three hours of darkness on the cross and He exhausted it - He drank it to its last dark dregs. Is that how you prize the Saviour? That is how I prize Him, the One who has gone this way, gone to this limit, gone to this extent. He was forsaken by God. And all this happened, dear friends, in these three hours, still alive. He had not yet died. He accepted too the death penalty. but

the drinking of the cup was during those awful hours. May the thought of it imprint itself on your heart and mind more than ever before!

That is perhaps the main factor in my preaching, but I must speak about what flows out of that: Abraham's blessing. Paul shows in this scripture the full extent of the transgression, the full extent of it is seen in the fact that He was made a curse. I speak with the tenderest of feelings and with the warning from the Spirit of God about this holy subject, that it was necessary, that He was made a curse, but it was all in view of absolute removal. I was going to say in connection with the scripture I referred to in Colossians when God nailed things to the cross - and if you know your Bible, you will see that the context all through that section is God, what He did, what God did at the time of the cross - and if God nailed things to the cross, what Paul is showing is that the thing is final. It can never be brought up again. God nailed it to the cross. That is final. That is eternal. I say this, dear friends, that the removal of our sins and transgressions is such that God cannot find them. God Himself could not find them. So thoroughly have they been dealt with at the cross when He drank the cup that they cannot ever be found again. They will never come up. The psalmist says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgression from us", Ps 103: 12. No one could bring the east and the west together. They are irreconcilable. They are apart. So far as the east is from the west our sins have gone, beyond the finding of even the holy, righteous God! He is completely satisfied with their removal and they are removed finally. I hope we enjoy that! That is the basis upon which the glad tidings goes out. That is the basis upon which everything proceeds and nobody can enjoy the blessing of Abraham apart from the sense that everything is on righteous grounds before God and that there is no come-back. God will not come back. "For the gifts and the calling of God are not subject to repentance", Rom 11: 29. He will never repent, and that is all due to the finality of the work done by Christ and the drinking of the cup.

But then, as I said, there was the question of the penalty of death, and burial had to be met as well as the curse. Of course, the curse exists all the way down from Genesis chapter 3. There is no curse in chapter 2, but in chapter 3 the curse is introduced and it is on the ground. God curses the ground. The last reference to the curse is in Revelation 22 and comes in in connection with the river that goes out from the throne of God and the Lamb: "And no curse shall be any more" (v 3). So I gather that not only is the curse removed by the Lord Jesus becoming that and drinking the cup, but the Spirit is communicated - the Spirit is given - that all trace of it in our consciences might be for ever removed. The Spirit of God would serve us in that connection, that every sense of that is removed with the appreciation of what has been done by Jesus and the finality of His work; and it will not be repeated. I could go to other scriptures for that. It cannot be repeated - once for all - and the Spirit would be here bearing testimony to that fact and brings us into a situation where everything is cleared before God and the way is open for our enjoyment of these two great matters of eternal life and sonship.

Paul brings forward here the argument in proof of it by speaking of Abraham. He refers to two scriptures: Genesis 12 first of all where God promises blessing to the nations through Abraham; and also Genesis 22 where Isaac is offered on the altar and God confirms the promise to Abraham that there would be blessing. And that is what Paul refers to. He says, "even man's confirmed covenant no one sets aside, or adds other dispositions to", v 15, no codicils, no amendments. Even in human affairs. Paul says, that if a man makes a will, that is done. Nobody can change it. Well, God has come out in that way. He made a promise to Abraham, then He confirmed it, and He confirms it in a risen Christ. That is where the confirmation is. Not only did He drink the cup and accept the death penalty and the burial penalty, but God raised Him, and in the resurrection God is confirming His promise that there will be blessing. That is how you are to regard the resurrection of Christ. God is confirming it in raising Christ. That is what Paul is saying here. It is a wonderful thing, dear friends, to have these foundations

in our souls, to get some impression of God's disposition. That is the idea of the covenant, God's disposition, His mind towards us. What is His mind towards me, towards us, towards men? - that they might come into the blessing, the blessing He promised to Abraham. Eternal life! That is a wonderful thing! Eternal life! Now you need a sphere to enjoy eternal life. That involves the inheritance. You might say that is first with Abraham. God says, "Arise, walk through the land according to the length of it and according to the breadth of it", Gen 13: 17. He says, 'It is all yours; I am going to give it to you'. That is where the blessing of eternal life is enjoyed. What a portion! That is what he says – "that the blessing of Abraham". So that is what God has given to us once the ground is cleared no obstacle is in the way, God brings out the wealth of His provision in grace. The glad tidings would convey that and give the title of it to you, but He gives the Spirit that you might know something about it; and we do know something about it. That is by the Spirit. That is what he says, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". All this is brought in, as I said, to maintain the purity and blessedness of the glad tidings that come from the apprehension and appropriation of faith, not of works. That is what he is bringing out; and the Spirit is needed, not only to bear testimony to the fact that we have the title to it, but too that there might be the enjoyment of it. That is open to us. I am not saying that the Galatians were up to it; they had the title, but they had the means in the Spirit, and that comes out in Abraham - wonderful situation! The whole land was his. What a wealth of things! How rich, dear friends, does the glad tidings make us, and the Spirit would come in and give us that assurance. More than that, He would give us the experience of what this is. Now, eternal life has a great delivering effect. It is not only something nice to talk about, but it has a great delivering effect; it has a satisfying effect, and that in itself is a delivering effect. Those who are in the gain of eternal life, or in the enjoyment of eternal life in any measure, are contented people, satisfied people. They are not longing for great things in the world. It is a great matter to be somewhat in the gain of this great blessing. What did Abraham require from the king of Sodom? What did he want? He needed nothing. He was quite

satisfied with the portion God gave him in this land: wonderful land it was, where God's love is known! That is where eternal life will lead you to, to the centre of God's love, the land over Jordan. God espied it for them. It was the blessing of Abraham. We can enjoy that and be delivered from the whole world's system and all that appeals to us as natural people, people in the flesh if you understand what that means, just ordinary people. It has that effect of bringing about satisfaction in your soul and enjoyment of the love of God, two great testimonies in John 3 and John 4, and the object is eternal life. The great testimony is this that God gave His Son and God gave the Spirit. These are the great testimonies to God's love because in chapter 3 it is: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son", v 16 - that is His love lying behind it all. Then it says in John 4, "If thou knewest the gift of God" (v 10). A gift does not come by any way but by love, and the testimony to God's love is the gift of the Son and the gift of the Spirit. These things both lead the way into eternal life that these people down here might be satisfied with their portion. What portion do you want? What can the world contribute to us? Nothing at all. As I said, eternal life has a great satisfying and delivering effect!

Just a word about sonship. Abraham had the promise of the land: that is eternal life; but he was also brought into the great light and blessedness of sonship, and this epistle develops that too. In chapter 4 Paul says, "God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law, that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship", (vv 4,5). There is nothing greater in this epistle than these two things: eternal life and sonship. God has opened His treasures and He has brought us into this great sphere of satisfaction, a sphere of relationships. That is the idea of sonship where there is status and also relationships held out to us. We have them all in title, but the Spirit is given that they might be real to us. I hope I am not in any sense over-emphasising this matter of the Spirit: "But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father", chap 4: 6. The reality of these things is maintained by the Spirit. So things are not only in

title. I think most of us rest there with what is in title, and it cannot be questioned because that goes back to the work of Christ and the ground being cleared. Our title to everything lies there, but our peace and satisfaction must come by what the Spirit is doing at the present time. I hope you take that in, that the Spirit of God has come in to bring us into the enjoyment of what we speak of as sonship where there is a whole new system of things opening up. Eternal life involves the kingdom, the whole land with its blessedness and enjoyment where there is satisfaction, but the house involves the sphere where Christ dominates as Son over God's house, brought into the house, the whole economy of divine love, such a portion as that! The Spirit of God would give us the conviction of it and the sense of it and the blessedness of it, and we cry, "Abba Father! "

I think I should stop there, that the Lord Jesus drinking the cup and clearing the whole ground was all in view of God's people coming into the wealth and blessedness of what lay in the mind of God for them, the promise of life in Christ Jesus. God had promised that. Great obstacles stood in the way. Our deserts, what we were liable for, have been freely and fully accepted by Christ Himself and the Spirit has been communicated that the blessedness of divine things might be known by us. May He bless the word!

EDINBURGH

30 August 1992

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD HOPE

Willie Dickson

1 Peter 1: 3-5; 3: 14,15; Romans 5: 1,2; 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-18

I would like to speak to you, beloved hearers, about one of the great blessings of the gospel. There are many blessings in the gospel. In fact, it would be rather lengthy to attempt to enumerate them, but I want to speak tonight about hope as one of the great blessings that God ministers in the glad tidings. God is spoken of in various ways. He is spoken of as the God of love, the God of grace, the God of glory, the God of peace, but He is also spoken of as the God of hope. What would this world be like without the message of hope that the glad tidings offers to men? Nothing ahead, nothing to hope for! As to everything materially, as far as this life is concerned, there is no perpetuity attached to it. It dies. But a message of hope, beloved hearers - what a gospel for men! - is what I want to speak about simply tonight.

Sometimes, when you speak to persons about their souls, they say, I can only hope for the best. Hope for the best, beloved hearers, when God in His infinite grace, the God of hope, is sending out the message of His wondrous love and grace to you so your horizon can be broadened and opened up as you think of the bright hope that God would offer you in the glad tidings!

So Peter here says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope" - "a living hope"! These Jews to whom he writes were dispersed all over the Roman earth at that time and they thought that every hope nationally had been extinguished, that there was no prospect. The nation had gone into ruin and, while they had the Scriptures that promised the Messiah to come, they were, so to speak, at difficulty in understanding what it was all about. But Peter says, God has begotten you again to a living hope. Can I ask everyone in this room at this time, do you know what that living hope is? He says, "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among

the dead", a living and glorious Man raised from the dead in whom to put your hope. That is far better than hoping for the best, is it not? It is far, far better to put your hope in Christ Jesus, risen from the dead. What a hope! Has He ever let any soul down that has had that hope? Think of the myriads, millions of souls that have passed through time into eternity with that hope! Were they ever let down? No, they were never let down! And you will not be let down if you trust in Jesus. If you take hold of that living hope you will come into something that this world cannot give, cannot offer. Excuse me for repeating it, but having been so long a believer I find it difficult to envisage a person that has no hope. It must be morally awful to wake up in the morning and to say, Well, the Lord may take me today or death may take me today and I have no hope. Have you hope? I remember, a long time ago, when the submarine 'Thetis' sank off Birkenhead with a hundred and nine seamen aboard and they went down. The conning tower was blocked and there was no exit for the sailors. The divers maintained a contact with the sailors inside by tapping on the hull, and as long as they heard a return tap they knew there was life there. But one day the tapping stopped, and the newspapers the next morning - I remember it still - right across the front page, 'No hope!' Think of that! No hope! A hundred precious souls lying in a tomb on the bed of the ocean and no hope. Far better to have a living hope in Jesus Christ, raised from among the dead, beyond death, beyond all sorrow, beyond all grief! He is there, that blessed Rock, that living hope in whom we can find our joy. Peter says, "to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens for you, who are kept guarded by the power of God through faith for salvation". "Guarded by the power of God"! If somebody says to you, Of course, you cannot show anything, you only have hope, how are you going to get through if you just have hope? "Guarded by the power of God through faith for salvation". Do you know, you youngest child, you youngest believer, that you are guarded by the power of God Himself? As going through this world the mighty power of God encircles those who trust in a living hope.

So in Romans 5 we find this wonderful part of the gospel. It says, "Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God". "Peace towards God", no 'peace with God'. I trust everyone in this room has peace with God. You know what the hymn says:

'Can point to the atoning blood
And say, This made my peace with God? '
(No.357)

Can everybody in this room

'... point to the atoning blood
And say, This made my peace with God?'

But that is not this. This is "peace towards God". Oh, think of it! - the whole outlook is clear, "a living hope", "peace towards God", not a shadow, not a cloud, nothing to hinder your view of that blessed Administrator of blessing, the Lord Jesus Christ, up there! "Peace towards God"!

'When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul'.

(Hymn 238)

That hymn was based on this verse, "peace towards God". And it says, "access by faith into this favour in which we stand". The children here may not know, but there is a house in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, which is given to the Secretary of State as a token of grace and favour, the favour in which he stands with the Queen. He has this magnificent house in Charlotte Square. But a believer has much more than that. Oh, yes, a house up there and a house down here! "Access by faith into this favour in which we stand": could you better it? Could you offer anybody anything better than the gospel - "a living hope", and a house up there, waiting for

you, and a house down here in which you can enjoy the favour of God. And it says, "and we boast in hope of the glory of God". Once you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, a lot of things come in. Trials come in; sorrows come in; persecution comes in. But I would like to tell you this, there is a day coming when the glory of God is going to fill this scene, and it is going to be filled with the Man after His own heart - that is Christ - and everything about it will vindicate God's choice in blessing amongst men. It says, "and we boast in hope of the glory of God". Men boast; they think of their achievements, and you have to say to yourself, What achievements they are! Some of these scientific things, and medically and in engineering and in other spheres of life, you have to own that man is a wonderful creature. I would not question that for a moment. Man as a creature is wonderful, and God unfolds to him His secrets as far as they benefit mankind. But they are nothing to compare with the glory of God into which you have access by faith at the present time, and you are going to have a part in it if you confess the name of Jesus. Does that hope burn in your heart? I think of the Lord's people gathered as they do. What keeps them in serenity of spirit amidst all the persecution? The martyrs in the time of the church of Smyrna and ever since, these martyrs up in the High Street in Edinburgh or St Andrews, what kept them going? They boasted in hope of the glory of God! They knew that the stake was not the end. They knew as the faggots were lit that that was not the end. They boasted in hope of the glory of God. Could you do that, boast in hope of the glory of God?

Now I want to use this other scripture in Peter, if I may, just to have a little word to the young ones amongst us to encourage them. He says, "But it also ye should suffer for righteousness sake, blessed are ye; but be not afraid of their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord the Christ in your hearts, and be always prepared to give an answer to every one that asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you". Dear young people, you go to school and your classmates say to you, You are not like other children; you do not sing the songs that we hear on the radio; you do not use the

language, the naughty language, the wicked language sometimes, that they use; you children are somewhat different from us. What is it? "Sanctify the Lord the Christ in your hearts"! Young people, have you a little chamber in your heart that is exclusively for Christ that you can enter, that you can turn into? Every believer should have a place in his heart, a little temple, a little sanctuary, held for Christ. That is the secret. If they ask you about these things, you say, I will let you into the secret. You do it "with meekness and fear": you do not try to show off. You say, The Lord Jesus Christ is my Saviour. He has a place in my heart, a little sanctuary reserved for Him, His own place; He is my Lord; He is my Saviour; and I am ready to give an answer as to the hope that is in me. I would encourage you young people: have a little, special place in your heart for the Lord and be always ready, if your schoolmates ask you these questions, to say, There is a special place that no one else has; He won that place in my heart because He died for me; He shed His precious blood for me; He suffered the agonies of Calvary for me, He has that place in my heart, and I am ready to give an answer why I am different, glad to be different! Why? Because the Lord Jesus has a place in my heart.

I just want to speak for a moment on the church's hope, the bright hope of the church, that hope that has sustained the church for two thousand years, that living hope. It says, "for the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air". Have you that hope? Is that hope burning brightly in your heart, the hope of the Lord's coming? It has been the cherished conversation of believers right through the dispensation. That was one thing they always spoke about, the hope of the Lord's coming, that bright hope. When that hope is fulfilled, will you be there? Is it your hope? Will you be amongst those myriads that will rise to meet their glorious Lord? Will you be among them? Will you be among that heavenly host that will sing His praise?

'Hark! ten thousand voices crying
'Lamb of God! ' with one accord;
Thousand, thousand saints replying
Wake at once the echoing chord.

'Praise the Lamb! - the chorus waking,
All in heav'n together throng
Loud and far...'. (Hymn 14)

The song proceeds. Will you be there? I will be there. Oh, yes! I know many here will be there. But will you be there when the Lord answers the hope which has been in the church's heart for two thousand years? He will come Himself. Will you be there? I just leave it with you, the awfulness, the sorrow of passing from time into eternity without hope, whereas if you accept the gospel, if you accept Jesus as your Saviour, you will be there, waiting for Him now, and you will be there with Him for all eternity. May we prove it for His Name's sake! Amen.

7 February 1993

(Minor revisions but not by Mr. Dickson)

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD WHAT HE BECAME

Willie Lamont

John 1: 14; 2 Corinthians 8: 9; Revelation 1: 17,18

It will be obvious, I think, that what is in mind today is to speak of the Lord Jesus as the One who became flesh, who became poor and who became dead. I am sure it touches every one of us that One so great as Himself is described in this gospel as "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". When we are speaking about the Lord Jesus we should always remember, never in any degree forget, that He is God as to His Person. That is the background to the glad tidings. It has often been said that only God could make God known, and yet He became flesh, He became poor, He became dead. One so great! It is very affecting. I trust all our souls, all our hearts, are touched to the depths as we contemplate such a One and the greatness of His stoop.

In chapter 8 of John's gospel, that poor woman was in His presence along with those self-righteous Pharisees, and He stooped and wrote on the ground; then he stooped again and wrote on the ground. These two stoops speak to us of the fact that He came into manhood - that was the first stoop: "and the Word became flesh" - He took that condition. The second was that He stooped right into death. One who as to His Person is God, I repeat, became flesh, became poor and became dead.

First we must understand that the Word became flesh. What a change! John tells us that He came into this scene among the Jews who were recognised outwardly as His own. "He came to his own, and his own received him not", John 1: 11. Think of persons refusing One who as to His Person was God, the awfulness of it, the terribleness of the heart of man away from God, God appearing, appearing in love. Paul in his epistle to Titus tells us that: the "love to man of our Saviour God appeared" (chap 3: 4) - the appearing of the love of God in all its fulness in the Person of Jesus, yet He came

to His own, the full presentation of the love of God, and "his own received him not". Have you received the Saviour, my friend? It is a critical point for every human being today. Have you received Him or are you a Christ-rejector? The world is full of Christ-rejectors. I trust no-one here is a Christ-rejector. Receive Him into your heart! That is why the glad tidings are preached, that you should open the door of your heart and let the Saviour in. It is so simple: let the Saviour in, embrace Him as your own, make Him your own, confess His name, own Him as Lord. Do you know that small rhyme:

'Romans ten and nine

Is a favourite verse of mine'?

"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". There is nothing complicated about the glad tidings. Messages in this world are often confusing - no sense in many of them - but there is a simplicity about the glad tidings. So He came into manhood, into a scene that was totally foreign to Him, coming from a realm that was free from sin, the love that we spoke of this afternoon existing between three divine Persons, not in the relationship that we now know, but three divine Persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - living together eternally in perfect love, and yet the Word became flesh. I often think about what the Lord must have felt - a babe, born in the inn where was no room for them, He grew up, He preached in the synagogue where He was brought up, preached the glad tidings of the grace of God. That is what He did. If you read Luke 4 carefully you will find that He stops, in His preaching, in the quotation from Isaiah, at "the acceptable year of the Lord". If you read Isaiah, you will find that it is followed by "and the day of vengeance of our God", chap 61: 2. Jesus, in all the grace of God, the vessel of divine grace, did not go on to that. It is a time of blessing, my friend; it is a time of the grace of God, a time of the favour of God, the world held provisionally in reconciliation, this awful world that we are speaking about, yet held provisionally in reconciliation, the tide of God's judgment stayed for the moment on account of one blessed Man who stood in the

breach. You will remember that Moses stood between the dead and the living (see Num 16: 48). What a time this is, a time of God's favour, and God is urgent that you should accept this blessed One as your Saviour. Think of Him coming into the temple. John presents it early in his gospel: "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise", chap 2: 16. He saw the sin that existed and knew in Himself that He would have to bear the whole thing and shed His precious blood to accomplish the work of atonement.

Matthew and Luke tell us that He came into manhood as a babe. Oh, the wonder of that! Luke tells us He was "wrapped in swaddling-clothes", chap 2: 12. The One who owned the universe, owned heaven and earth, created them, yet there He was, "a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger", confined, a helpless babe seemingly, and yet, as to His person, He was God. Oh, the grace of God that He came in in such a way! Mr Darby could write:

'We gaze upon Thy weakness -
The manger and the cross'. (Hymn 188)

Think of it, points of extreme weakness, "a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes", a Man, a perfect Man, nailed, apparently helpless, to a cross. It appeared that way, absolutely helpless, and yet He was the Creator of the universe. That is the One, dear friend, who is presented to you tonight as a Saviour. He "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God" (Phil 2: 65) because He was on an equality with God and He never ceased to be what He always was on account of what He became. But He was here as man. The first thing it says in Philippians 2 is that He took a bondman's form. Someone has said, that was excess. It would have been sufficient to have said that He took manhood's form, but He took a bondman's form. That is, He was here to serve. He was here to serve His God, to be faithful to His will, and He certainly was, and it cost Him His life. And He was here to serve His own. He could say that: "But I am in the midst of you as the one that serves", Luke 22: 27. What a service! What a sacrifice!

That leads me on to Corinthians. Paul is writing to Corinthian believers: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might be enriched". What volumes lie in that, dear friends! As I have said, the Owner of the heaven and the earth, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, how rich He was! Even as to this earth: "The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof", Ps 24: 1. So many scriptures we can quote! The "cattle upon a thousand hills" (Ps 50: 10) are His. Think of men squabbling over a few square miles of territory! It is happening all over the world: armed conflicts said to be in 93 countries of the world -wherever you like to mention, men squabbling over a few miles of earth, yet it does not belong to them. "The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof". It will be seen to be so in coming day when He will claim it for Himself. Every Lord's Day morning we do that: we claim the whole thing for Him. Mr Raven once said that, if the world knew what we were doing every Lord's Day morning, that we were holding it for Him and claiming it for Him, they would not tolerate it for an instant. The world is ready to treat the Lord's own in the very same way that they treated Him. Do not let us delude ourselves that man has changed, that the world has changed; they would treat the believer in the same way as they treated the believer's Lord. History has proved this in times of terrible persecution. And man is unchanged. Nevertheless, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ". Oh what grace marked Him! It was seen in that woman we were speaking about in John 8. According to the law of Moses they were right; she should have been stoned to death, but He turned it round on them: "Let him that is without sin among you". Sometimes that is quoted as, 'Let him that is without sin cast the first stone'. His own blessed hand would have cast the first stone because He was without sin. How accurate Scripture is. John quotes the Lord as saying, 'Let him that is without sin among you first cast the stone at her'. The Lord puts it on them to cast the first stone. They "went out one by one beginning from the elder ones until the last". Then the Lord says, "Neither do I condemn thee". Some people like that part but do not like the rest. The Lord says, "Go, and sin no more".

I think that is a perfect illustration of what John writes in His first chapter: "full of grace and truth". When the Lord says, "Neither do I condemn thee" - that is grace; when He says, "Go, and sin no more", that is truth. Well, "for your sakes". How that would affect the Corinthians! "For your sakes", not for His own sake. Paul says to the Corinthians, "for your sakes". Dear friends, we might add, for our sakes He became poor, for a certain reason: "in order that ye by his poverty might be enriched". The glad tidings has an enriching effect. We have proved it this day in our gatherings, a richness and wealth amongst the saints that is divinely provided and sustained in the power of the Holy Spirit that nothing in this world can give. I would challenge the universe at this moment, if there is anything that the world can give which could come near the riches that are provided in the grace of God. There is nothing like it as the soul experiences it: "that ye through his poverty might be enriched". But it has been secured for us at great cost. It cost Him His life.

In Revelation there is a change of scene. John was the one who, when the Lord was here in blood and flesh in manhood, leaned on His breast and lay in His bosom, very much loved by the Lord. John would think of that, but here he says, "And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead". No wonder! - "the Son of man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle; his head and hair white like white wool, as snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire; and his feet like fine brass, as burning in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters; and having in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword going forth; and his countenance as the sun shines in its power" (vv 13-16). No wonder John fell at His feet as dead, the Lord appearing in judicial garb. That was in relation to professing Christendom as Revelation goes on to tell us, and the Lord pronounces His judgment on these seven assemblies, to each of them He says, "I know". He cannot be deceived. We cannot as individuals deceive Him and we cannot deceive Him collectively. So He appears in judicial garments. "And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me". What assurance!

The same blessed Man, on whose breast he had leaned and in whose bosom he had lain, laid His right hand upon him. What a touch that would be! "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not". No doubt John would be full of fear as he saw the Lord like this. "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one". Then He reminds John - John would know it well - "and I became dead". What a thing that was that the Son of God went into death, entered the tomb for three days and three nights, not one pulsation of life Godward when the Son of man lay in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights and then was "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4. The Father loved Him so much that by His glory He raised His beloved Son from among the dead. He has exalted Him, given Him the highest place in glory.

So the Lord says, "Behold, I am living to the ages of ages". That, my friend, is absolute. It is unchangeable. Beyond the power of death, beyond the power of Satan, beyond every evil power, He is living to the ages of ages, and He has the keys of death and of hades. No-one dies but the Lord uses that key and He also has the keys of hades and He is in perfect control, as it says in Romans, over both dead and living, chap 14: 9. Wonderful thing to know there is a Man in the presence of God who is in control of the powers of good and of evil. There is an address of Mr Taylor's when he was a young man that you young people especially should read: "Christ in Control of the Powers of Good and Evil" (see Vol.1, p.256). So Satan can only go as far as God allows him. There is a Man in the presence of God in perfect control. Things seem to be - and they are publicly - going fast out of control down here. I think men in power know it, that things in this world are fast slipping out of control. The believer, my friend, and you, if you are one - and I trust all are - can rest your soul on the fact that there is a Man in heaven in the presence of God in perfect control with the keys of death and of hades. And tonight you can come to know Him as your Saviour and believing in Him, as Peter says, you will have remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2: 38). It is a wonderful thing to have the forgiveness of sins; it is a more wonderful thing to enjoy the

forgiveness of your sins. I think there are many believers - I trust none here are among them - who know the forgiveness of their sins but are not in the enjoyment of it. To enjoy the forgiveness of your sins you need the gift of the Holy Spirit. Well, I trust we are all in that category tonight. May God bless His word for His Name's sake!

KIRKCALDY

8 May 1994

WORD IN MINISTRY MEETING

Eric Burr

Deuteronomy 34: 10; Joshua 1: 5

The end of Deuteronomy is a remarkable section of Scripture in relation to the last days of Moses, as the brethren will know. What it must have meant to a man to be told to go up the mountain and die is something that I suppose has been experienced by hardly anyone else. The simplicity and obedience in which Moses evidently did that is quite striking. God said to him: "Go up ... and die", Deut 32: 49,50. It has struck me before how that contrasts with Jesus who, as it were, came down from the mountain to die.

But it says, "And there arose no prophet since in Israel like Moses". That is interesting because Moses had been quite sure that God would raise up a prophet like him. He said earlier, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet ... like unto me", Deut 18: 15. That was perhaps a fairly bold thing to say, but that was Moses' view. I suppose Moses felt the necessities of the children of Israel with

whom by this time he had had very long experience. He said, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet... like unto me", but God says, "And there arose no prophet ... like Moses". It impresses me, beloved, at the present time with the thought that God does not deal in replacements. Other services are going to be needed and the people of Israel are going to need not only leading into the land, which was committed to Joshua, but from time to time other circumstances would arise and in no circumstance was a prophet like Moses raised up: men were raised up for the necessities of the time. This book and then the book of Judges - especially the book of Judges - is filled with men whom God raised up from time to time: Ehud and Gideon and Samson. They all had their own characteristics. God does not therefore deal in exact replacements of those who are no longer here. I wondered whether that was a word for us at the present time because in this city the Lord has taken two very much loved brothers and we might wonder - and we in this part of the city particularly wonder - what God will have in place of them. He does not deal in specific replacements. What He does, though, is to promise His own presence. I think that is quite affecting to us and it should reassure us that, if in one sense the Lord takes some from among us and there is a feeling of loss (and rightly), there is something that continues in whatever circumstances: "as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee". I think the Lord would say that to us. Whether we feel sufficiently deeply the way in which the Lord takes one and another from among us is perhaps a question, because we feel the obligation to continue, and we cannot dwell too long in a specific way on those that the Lord has taken from us. What they were amongst us is to be continued: I think that is important. As I say, God does not directly replace what He has had, but what He looks for is the continuation, in perhaps a distributed way, of what has been among us.

We think of ourselves here. We might also - and that in a wider way - think of our beloved brethren in Edinburgh and of the saints generally. The Lord has taken men whose service to the saints hardly needs comment, and they cannot be replaced. I do not flatter

their memory by saying they cannot be replaced, because you would have to look for men who had for perhaps sixty years addicted themselves to the truth and to the ministry and had lived in days when there was a distinctive ministry amongst us and had absorbed that and extended it among the brethren in their own service. The possibilities of that are beginning to run out because the men who knew those days are no longer with us; to read things is not the same as being there. Nevertheless, what the Lord has had in men who have come through that history and have been serviceable to the saints in relation to that history and in the extension of what the Lord gave at that time, is to be maintained among us by those who have themselves learned the truth, not only by studying the ministry, but by studying the Scriptures. You will notice in the verse preceding that which I read in Deuteronomy 34 that God says, "And Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom". It is the spirit of that ministry which the Lord will have extended among us. We shall not get into that unless we submit ourselves both to study and to teaching, and if we do not get into it, another generation is going to grow up untaught. I think of the remarks that were made at Sunbury on Saturday as to different stages of history that are among us at the present time. There are those who, like the brothers to whom I refer whom the Lord has taken, have come through a very long history and who have, I trust, left something with us all, but there are others whose main part of the history does not begin there. It begins in a period of very great difficulty among the brethren. There are those among us now - brothers and sisters growing up who are now parents, the foundations of whose history lies in that period. And there are others - thank God there are others - whose history dates from after that time of sorrow. Very thankful we are that the Lord has maintained some after that period of sorrow with no roots in that history. The Lord is therefore serving us in carrying these things through, but carrying through all these stages: those who have had their roots in conflict and have found peace afterwards; and those who have not yet known war - and may the Lord preserve them from knowing it in the way that some of us have had to learn it! All these things subsist, and the Lord and the Spirit would use every

opportunity to ensure that what has been here in another generation continues in the generation that is to follow. If I refer also to beloved brothers whom the Lord has taken from us here, will the spirit of "giving no manner of offence in anything" (2 Cor 6: 3) continue among us? Could that spirit be distributed among us? You remember that, earlier in the history God said to Moses, I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee, and I will put it on seventy others (see Num 11: 17). Think of that! - "giving no manner of offence in anything". Think of the word that we had at our beloved brother's burial as to a man of God. Is that growing? It is not exactly that one man of God will replace another man of God, but the characteristics of the man of God that have been seen in some will be seen in others as they commit themselves on the lines on which Paul was exhorting Timothy. God is not dealing in replacements but He is not going to lose anything in the testimony as a result of taking one and another to Himself. The call, therefore, is to see what characteristics were developed in those that the Lord has taken and consider that they might be continued, and are to be continued, in our own time.

We can think of our other beloved brother who was with us here and who spoke often to us. I think one could say that whatever he said left something of the spirit in what he had said. Is his readiness still here? On Tuesday nights is that readiness here? If our brother whom the Lord has most recently taken had said, 'Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet ... like unto me who will be ready to speak', is it then going to be said, no such prophet arose? God is looking for the continuation of characteristics. Think of our beloved brother's committal to what was in this city! Think of remarks which I quoted publicly only because I was asked to do so that his widow said, 'He could not have

lived if he could not have got to his meetings'. Is that spirit now to be lost? It is not that someone else is going to say, 'I will be like that', but is that character going to be here? Moses said, someone like me, but God says, No, there is nobody like you, but I will have these characteristics continued; I have raised up Joshua and I will have My

purpose for My people completed; he will cause them to inherit the land.

I refer to these things, beloved, because I am sure we all, both locally and in a wider way, feel the loss from what the Lord has done in His own actions as to which we can say nothing. As to that, I just refer to my conversation on Lord's Day with a staff nurse in the hospital in relation to our sister who was in there. She said to me, 'She will either go to a better place or to a nursing home'. I said, 'It would be a great mercy from God if she goes to a better place'. And the nurse said, 'But we cannot dictate to Him'. Think of that! We cannot dictate to Him. Moses almost tried to dictate to God that there should be someone else like him, but God says, 'No'. I suppose the fulfilment of what Moses had looked for waited for Christ. The desire that there might in a certain way just be a simple, straightforward replacement is not God's mind. God will seek to ensure that nothing that has been in those who have had their part in the testimony whom He has taken to Himself is lost. I just add that that applies just as much to sisters as it does to brothers. It applies to all the Lord's people, that He will have nothing lost among them by what He takes to be with Christ.

I say these things just to encourage us to be going on. God said to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee". God would say that to us still: as I was with you when so-and-so was among you, going back further when so-and-so else was among you, when you had distinctive ministry, when all these things were amongst you, as I was with you then, so will I be with you still.

I trust the Lord will encourage us, not only to be going on, but ourselves making sure that nothing is lost among us by what the Lord does on His own part.

LONDON

19 April 1994