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PILLARS

Jim Gray

2 Chronicles 3: 15, 16; Galatians 2: 9

It is evident that I wish to speak about pillars. The passage in 2 Chronicles relates to the building of the house: then pillars are made, pillars to go in the entranceway. They seem to be decorative, refined work attached to them. Solomon is given the credit for building them: "he made two pillars", that is Solomon. If you went along to the house, the temple, in Jerusalem at that time, you would notice these two pillars. He set them up in front of the temple. It does not seem that they are for strength in the house. They are an addition to the house. Christ is the great Builder, dear brethren. It says in Hebrews 3 that He is Son over the house (v 6) "but he who has built all things is God", v 4. Christ is the Son over the house, but He is also the Builder. Matthew's gospel brings Him out as the Builder: "I will build my assembly", chap 16: 18.

But in addition to the house He in the type makes the pillars. He must have something in mind in two pillars. They are there as a testimony to the One who built the house. It says that the meanings of their names are 'He will establish' and 'In Him is strength'. That is, the pillars are a testimony to the Builder, a testimony to the One who built, that is Christ: these pillars represent persons. Two is quite often witness in scripture. As you pass those pillars, they are a witness to the work of God, to what the Builder has in mind. 'He will establish' and 'In Him is strength': there they are, persons at the entrance to the house. The Lord would have us to be those kinds of persons, dear brethren, persons that are for adornment. Their strength is in Another, 'He will establish' and 'In Him is strength': that is in Christ, but it is wrought out in the pillars. The work of God in us belongs to God but it is worked out in ourselves and it is a refined work. It is something that comes on to view. There is something in the saints that comes on to view and is meant to come on to view for our consideration. The glory would be His. The glory would be the

glory of the Builder; nevertheless it is wrought out in man. The great thought in the divine mind is men: it is worked out in men. So that as coming into the house of God, you come in contact with persons in whom there is a divine work, in whom there is refinement. There is also a capital, the crowning touch, which would suggest the Philadelphian thought: "that no one take thy crown", Rev 3: 11. There is a crowning touch, that adorns the house of God, adorns the doctrine.

In Galatians we have it illustratively. It was quite an exercising time concerning the matter that Paul brings up. The truth was at stake, the truth as to whether Christianity was being cumbered by Judaism, cumbered by circumcision. He speaks about conspicuousness. There are two kinds of conspicuousness in the chapter. Earlier on he speaks about "those who were conspicuous as being somewhat – whatsoever they were, it makes no difference to me ...", v 6. That is conspicuous as men, men after the flesh. It speaks about persons who came in to "spy out our liberty" in verse 4 of chapter 2. That is the wrong kind of conspicuousness, dear brethren, not the kind that the pillars represent.

In verse 9, we have "conspicuous as being pillars". That is commendable. It is noticeable too that Peter's name is not given as Peter ; it is given as Cephas, which is instructive, because the Lord brings out, in John's gospel, "thou shalt be called Cephas", chap 1: 42. It is the work of God in him, so I think it is commendable, "James and Cephas and John, who were conspicuous as being pillars", that is they adorned the doctrine. Acts 15 brings out their conspicuousness as being pillars, how they were able to influence the brethren into the truth and adorn the doctrine. There they were like pillars at the entrance of the house, how God used them to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" , Eph 4: 3, and the unity of the faith, to maintain the unity of the faith. These men were helped of the Lord to maintain the doctrine, they were conspicuous as being pillars. You could look to them. It was not for their own aggrandisement. There was a witness to what Jachin and Boaz bring out, as we have said already: "He will establish" and "In

Him is strength". These men counted on the Lord that He was able to establish the truth and establish the testimony because at the time of Acts 15 there was a serious situation in which there could have been cleavage in the church, but through the influence of these pillars - not just the setting out of the matter doctrinally, although they were helped in applying scripture - setting the truth out in their persons, "conspicuous as being pillars", that is the influence they carried in relation to the work of God in them.

That is why I suggested that Cephas rather than Peter is mentioned. It is the influence of the work of God in persons. What an influence we can have, dear brethren, at the entrance of the house. When persons come in amongst us, what do they see? - conspicuousness as being pillars, I trust, not conspicuousness after the other order of man. That man has been ended in the death of Christ, but the conspicuousness in relation to being pillars, new creation, something shining out testimonially that is God's handiwork, the Lord's handiwork.

So they gave to them "the right hands of fellowship". What a strengthening bond amongst brethren, to be able to extend "the right hands of fellowship", the dignity that attached to it. That is what persons who are conspicuous as being pillars can do, they can extend that hand with all the affirmation that marks it. What an affirmation is in "the right hands of fellowship", confirmation and affirmation, the signal of the consecration of the heart to Christ.

These are dignified thoughts. I just commend them to the brethren in relation to their gatherings, that this kind of humanity comes into evidence which displays something of the dignity that attaches to the Lord. May it be so for His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

19 March 1996

PERSONS OF INTEREST TO HEAVEN

John Mitchell

Daniel 9: 1,2,20 -25; Malachi 3: 16-18

I had an impression today as to persons who are of intense interest to heaven. Another has said that heaven has its favourites and, no doubt, we would, each of us, desire to be among those. It is remarkable that currently there are persons on earth who are of interest to heaven. I have read of such persons in the past, first Daniel, an individual, and second, those spoken of in Malachi, who would suggest a company. One's desire is that we should be among those who are of interest to heaven and whom heaven regards. Much is going on in the world and most of it causes a good deal of grief, but nevertheless there are persons that are of great interest to God Himself and that cause great joy to Him. It is said of Daniel that he was "one greatly beloved", v 23. That is said about one man. It shows that heaven is pleased with such a person. It says of him that he "understood by the books", chap 9: 2. He was interested in the welfare of God's people. He was in captivity and it would have been easy for Daniel to have said, 'Well, what is the use? We may as well just go along with the stream of things here in Babylon'. But it is clear from his history (and that of others with him) that he set his face at the very beginning against that order of things, and he maintained in himself the divine thought of manhood right through, until Cyrus, which suggests the recovery.

Think of a man like that. Scripture speaks of him as "this Daniel". The Spirit of God brings him out in a very beautiful way – "this Daniel" - and the king said, "Art thou that Daniel?" That is, that man, a man who, in the midst of all the decline and departure and what really spelt the overthrow in a public way of God's people,

maintained the divine thought in his own soul and whose walk and conduct was wholly in keeping with that. Think of such a man. He was feelingly with God about all that had come in and he was interested. You might say he was anxious that these seventy years, of which he read by the book, would be completed and that there would be recovery of God's people. I wonder sometimes for myself how deep the sore departure of the church publicly is in my own soul. As the sorrow of departure is taken on by us we will be kept from pride. Some of us were helped on Saturday about the need of preserving the distinctiveness of Christianity in a broken day. That involves maintaining the truth of the assembly and standing by it and not being afraid to take assembly ground; at the same time feeling the departure is something that would keep us very humble and very sober. We should never forget that we are part of that departure and we should feel that.

I have no doubt that Daniel felt the departure and it had led him into this prayer, this great confession. He speaks about "my sin and the sin of my people". Wonderful that in his own mind his sin comes first. He does not hide behind the failure of the leaders or of others. He takes the matter upon himself. You wonder what Daniel's sin was. From what is recorded of him in this book, you might think he does not have any. I have no doubt that Daniel's sin was what he took upon himself as to the sin of the people. It was his: he made it his own. To use the expression, he eats the sin offering in a holy place. That was Daniel, and he brings out the intense delight of heaven.

He says that "the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision" – "the man Gabriel". We know he was an angel, but it does not say the angel Gabriel; it says "the man Gabriel". That is to bring into focus the sympathy of heaven with this beloved man - a man who was feeling things and agonising before God in relation to God's people. It is very beautiful that he says to God, "thy city and thy people", and when God speaks to him, God does not say, My city and My people; He says to Daniel, "thy city" and thy people", as though Daniel had made the whole matter his own. God gives him

credit for that. I believe there is great room for such men at the present time. There is great departure on every hand. The truth has been given up. I was quite struck at coming across a remark of another that the Anglican church is the custodian of the doctrine. Think of that! Who would say that at the present time? It shows the terrible decline that has come in and the tendency is for that to come in where there has been recovery to the truth. We need to maintain divine things according to the divine will.

Daniel was such a one and he gets this beautiful touch, "the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, flying swiftly". Daniel had sympathy with God. But what is brought out is that God had sympathy with Daniel in his exercises. What a wonderful thing that there should be men and women at the present time who are carrying God's full thought as to His people, as to His assembly, and feeling the public state of things, in such a way that God can come alongside in divine sympathy. God is looking for such at present. It says, "Know therefore and understand". Such would have divine disclosures of God's mind. What a wonderful thing that is!

Now there is no Daniel in Malachi, no Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. There is no distinctive person in the book of Malachi, but there are persons, in the plural, that were pleasing to God. How many there were we do not know. It looks from the beginning of Luke as though they could have been very few. They were there at the time of the recovery under Cyrus to which Daniel was looking forward. There had been great spiritual and moral energy in the beginning of the revival, but it had waned. That is the situation in the book of Malachi. Is that not the present time, beloved? The initial energy has very soon waned. And yet it says, "Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another". I have been impressed with that today, "they that feared Jehovah". It is one of the most sobering things to see persons who are displaying in their conduct that they have no fear of God. In our conduct, in our walk, in the part that we take in the assembly, let us always be demonstrating the fear of God. The scripture tells us it is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:

10). Joseph, in Egypt, when he was dealing with his brethren said, "I fear God" (Gen 42: 18). The fear of God is a great preservative and here are persons who are not prepared to go on with the loose ways marking the generality of those who came back from Babylon. They fear God and are committed to go on with what is right. It does not say that they had meetings: it does not say that they assembled together. I have no doubt they did. It just says simply that they "spoke often one to another". How beautiful that is! How unofficial, how simple. They were marked by the fear of God, and desired to maintain the truth, and spoke often one to another. "Jehovah observed it, and hear, and a book of remembrance was written before him." God is just as interested at the present time. We are being reduced almost daily. Numbers are getting smaller and smaller. Week-night meetings are extraordinarily small. But am I among those who fear Jehovah and speak often one to another?

Well, there is a book of remembrance. That will never be forgotten. Their conduct is recorded in heaven and that can never, ever be erased. Think of heaven having such delight in these persons that there is a record there which can never, ever be erased! It will be there for time and for eternity. There it will be, that record, "a book of remembrance ... for them that feared Jehovah". The fear of Jehovah comes in again, "them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure, saith Jehovah of hosts ". That is very affecting. When He brought them out of Egypt he said to them, 'Then shall ye be my own possession" (Exodus 19: 5), despite all that intervened in the period from then until we read of it in Malachi God never gives up His thoughts. He secures them in some who fear Him. And I have no doubt He is securing His thoughts at the present time. May we be among those in whom he is securing them!

EDINBURGH

19 March 1996

FEATURES OF WHAT IS PRINCELY

James Cumming

Ezekiel 46: 8,9; Philippians 4: 8,9

This scripture in Ezekiel was referred to on Lord's Day at the Supper so I wondered if the Lord might give us something a little further about it. Our brother has been speaking about God's thoughts. He has not given up any of them: God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

There is a touch here as to the prince. For us, speaking simply, that would involve Christ. This scripture in Ezekiel says "And when the prince cometh in, he shall come in by the way of the porch of the gate, and he shall go out by the way thereof". This brings to us a view as to the man of God's choice, the prince; there is no variation in Him. There is variation in the verses that follow, but we could leave that for a minute. What it is to get a view of God's thoughts and what is princely in Christ! There are not many references to the prince in the New Testament, but there is one in Revelation chapter 1. It speaks of the Lord Jesus as "the prince of the kings of the earth", v 5. That refers, I suppose, to the day to come, but the supremacy of the Lord Jesus should always be before us, and the singularity of it. The distinctiveness of Christ is what marks Christianity. So there is this touch for our souls that what has come to us at this time has focused our attention on what is in Christ. Everything there would satisfy God and everything there carried through in that Man, and the One that come in that way goes out that way. There is no change and or variation.

I would apply the remainder of these verses to ourselves. If you come in by the north gate, you go out by the south gate. This is where I think there may be a link with what has already been said about the pillars being made. This is where formation takes place, the north gate. The rigours and the sorrows and the matters which afflict the saints - that is the north gate. But where that is felt and known, the direction here is that we go out by the south gate. There

is spiritual compensation. Wherever or whatever we suffer in the way of what the testimony involves, the formation in our souls is such that men enter into what is for the pleasure of God. That keeps us buoyant.

That is why I linked it with Philippians. We have a heavenly company here. Scripture tells us about these princes. One was Abraham: he is called a prince of God. That was said to Abraham in the midst of sorrow. He lost his wife. He was asking for a place to bury her. It is interesting in that chapter to see the politeness - I do not mean that in a social way - of the conversation between Abraham and these men. The one said, Take what you need, and he said, No, I will buy it. The dignity of the prince comes into that. And then the price was agreed by Abraham, four hundred shekels. That is what the man asked for and he gave it to him. I think the Lord would encourage us along this line of the dignity that marks a prince. The dignity that marked Christ personally should be in us: it should be carried forward. A man like Jacob, there he is; he had his own way so often in business and all that kind of thing, his family responsibilities and concerns and then there came a day when he had to do with God. He wrestled right through the night, and then the morning came and he was touched on his thigh. Something there put out of joint, you might say, something touched, but his name was changed, no longer Jacob but Israel, prince of God. So you can see how adverse circumstances are not to bring us down. They are rather that we might prove God in them and something more be established in our souls in the way of formation after Christ.

So, as our brother has been saying, the day is marked by decline, but what God would put before us is constructively there in the pillars and what is here precious in these persons in Malachi who were thinking for God. That is how we will be kept and maintained and sustained in the power of the Spirit rightly.

In this verse in Philippians, I suppose you might say this is princely diet, "whatsoever things are true". Here are the Philippians, heavenly persons on the earth, as I understand. "Whatsoever things are true ..." - we do not need to read them all, but it is a very lovely

section. You think of all that is happening in this world, the sorrows that come in amongst men and all that kind of thing. How much we are preserved from! How thankful we should be! But we feel things and it is right that we should feel and pray about them that men might get a touch in their souls as to what the prince of this world is against. He is against the things of God and at the moment he has almost the full reign, not quite, but he has almost the full reign. You think of men's minds given over to the activity of what Satan would put in them. That is where evil comes from. Think of "what is true", it says here. "Whatsoever things are noble": as we have said, a prince would not trouble himself with ignoble things. We were reminded in the reading on Lord's Day that the features of forbearing with one another, and forgiving one another, should deepen us in our desires to see prosperity in what is for Christ in our locality, in the place where we are responsible. I noticed a remark the other day, that a man's place in his locality is not by intelligence; it is by action, the action of a prince.

Well, can I leave these words with the brethren: "amiable ... of good report"? How we have to confess that we gravitate towards all the things in this world and they are not of good report. The Lord Jesus, by the Spirit, would help us to see that we concentrate our minds on the things that are true and are of good report. He goes on to speak about the peace of God. That is one of the titles of Christ: "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace", Isa 9: 6. That is how we prove Christ. May we be more and more in this! That verse in Malachi links on with a hymn we used to sing, probably all did when we were very much younger

"When He cometh, When He cometh,
To make up His jewels."

That is where it came from, "mine own treasure", that is His appreciation of what the saints are currently to Him. May we be more and more in this for His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

19 March 1996

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Tim Vanderhoek

Luke 8: 26-35; Hebrews 11: 23-27; Philippians 3: 3-9; Mark 10: 13-16

I have it on my heart to speak of history. Three of these persons of whom we have read had a history, some very long, but when we come to this last scripture, we can think of little children as not having a history. I would like to suggest that the three would represent three ways in which we have a history before we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, the history of man in various ways, and then that the only way we can come to know God and come before Him and be blessed and have our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour is to start as little children with no history. We begin our history anew as it were.

In the first Scripture in Luke 8, this man of the Gadarenes would, I believe, bring before us man in his natural flesh, man unregenerate before God, man who needs a Saviour, a person who knows not the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. And this is from God's side: I would like to apply it that way. We might think that we are better than this man of the Gadarenes but in God's judgment, in God's way, this man is typical of man in the flesh who needs a Saviour. He had a long history. In the middle of verse 27, it speaks of him as a person "who had demons a long time". Evidently he was well known by the people of the city and the people in the country round about, but his history was one that would be typical of man in the flesh. The first thing we read of him is that he put on no clothes. Before God the flesh is evident. It is not very pretty, the flesh in and of itself, and we each have it in our hearts. We each need to come

to know the Lord as our Saviour and then that flesh has been judged, all the sins of the flesh have been judged and the sin of the flesh, that which would be the root. After we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, by faith, we can look on that time when the Lord Jesus went into death and know Him as our Substitute. He was the One who put all our sins away and I would have very much before me the verse in Hebrews 10 - "and their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more", v 17. That would be God's sentiment, spoken there really as a quotation as to Israel, but we can apply it to ourselves. We know that as to our own history, after we come to know the Lord as our Saviour, it could be said of us, "Their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more". It is not a case of their being covered up - we have used that expression perhaps; our sins have been covered by His precious blood - but it is not even that they are covered up but they are completely washed away. There is no remembrance of our sins: we are completely forgiven.

This man of the Gadarenes would be typical of a man in the flesh, his flesh evident and open, and there is a disorderliness about him. "And did not abide in a house" would bring out that that man did not have an orderly nature in his rebellion and insubjection to God, but he dwelt in the tombs. We know and we see this insubjection all around us. It is very sad to see death all around us. It is prominent in man's mind and there are things that highlight it. Yesterday we drove by the place where the children were all killed just a few weeks ago. It is very evident that death is all around. And God would pronounce that judgment: "the wages of sin is death", but we see that man in his natural flesh would be occupied with death. This man dwelt in the tombs. And yet, man would have a consciousness, being a moral being, of God. We see that even in this man: he saw Jesus and he cried out and he fell down and he said, "Jesus Son of the Most High God". He addressed Him with something that sounded fine, but what a contrast it is to what we have recorded in Acts where Saul of Tarsus said, "Who art thou, Lord?" chap 9: 5. He would own His lordship, His authority, not just

who He was in His Person, perhaps. We know that in those we might work with, go to school with, have had some contact with, there is an awareness of who God is, even a slight consciousness of who God is, but in coming to know the Lord Jesus as Saviour we would own His authority, His lordship. By faith we would come to know Him.

That was not the case with this man of the Gadarenes when he first addressed Him. We see that man's history as a man in the flesh, even as verse 29 bears out, that man was often under the influence of Satan, the influence of these demons, and man would attempt to bring himself into order. Regulations would come in: this man in the flesh was kept with chains and fetters. We know that society would have rules and regulations to try to make people nice and we are thankful that we live in Christian nations where the influence of the Spirit of God and the influence of Christianity has brought in some degree of order. But we know that the natural flesh of man would get into such disorder that we see even here this man breaking the bonds. Man is unable to take and apply regulations in a way that he can be cleaned up and made acceptable. Before God man is found wanting. Even the best of what man could be is found wanting. We know that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" as Isaiah says (chap 64: 6). This man had to come to the end of that history and begin a history anew. That is borne out in that there would be that sovereign work in his soul and he would come to know the Lord Jesus. If there is one here that knows not the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, there would be a need to come to know Him Himself, to own His lordship, and by faith come to know Him as Saviour.

This man was one who by faith came to know Jesus. It is appropriate that he would be found then in verse 35 "clothed and sensible, at the feet of Jesus". We come to know the Person. We come to know the Lord Himself personally as we come to know Him as our Saviour. Then we can be found, as it were, "clothed and sensible". Man in his ordinary, unfettered way, unbound, would not be "clothed and sensible" in a manner of speaking. But as we come

to know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we are clothed with righteousness. We are found sensible, in our proper place at the feet of Jesus, the One whom we love. There would be that attractiveness in the Person and being found at His feet.

What a testimony it was! The men of the city and of the country went out to see what had happened. That is a common expression that we might use, that we would go and "see what happened". Here, when they went out to see what had happened, they found one who had come to know Jesus personally, and that is where we need to be. The history that we have is to be a past history. We are to be as little children, to begin that history again, a history anew, to come and be at the feet of Jesus. It is similar to what I referred to in Hebrews 11, the history of Moses. We take that up and apply it as a history in the world, of what is the best of the world, not what is the best of the flesh as we saw in the man of the Gadarenes, but what is the best of the world. Egypt would speak to us of what is of the world and there is no denying that there is a certain pleasure in the world. There is no denying that there is a certain greatness in the world and we see this Moses. He had a history that was very long, a history here of forty years we know from other scriptures of being in the world, but it is striking that that history in the world does not come to an end until he became great (chap 11: 24): "By faith Moses, when he had become great ..." It was not that he aspired to be great; it was not that he did not quite make it. We think of the prodigal son who took all of his living and went out into the world and he came to himself when he came to an end of his living. But here Moses came to the end of himself when he came, we could say, to the pinnacle of the world, and we trust there may not be one in the room who is aspiring to be at the top of the world. We trust that you will not have to get to the top before you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

But Moses had forty years of history that had to be completely discarded and set aside, and he had to begin again. We know that it was a work in his soul - we can take it up typically as a work in his soul - that at the end of these forty years when he had become great

he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as His Saviour. We would apply that in a way to any who needs to come to know the Lord as their Saviour, not to wait until you have become great in this world. It is a responsibility that each one of us has as to how we conduct ourselves in our secular responsibilities, in the home or at school or in our employment. We would do that as before the Lord righteously.

But I would like to apply this as one who had all the best of the world. He became great. It speaks of "the temporary pleasure of sin" (v 25). There is no denying that there is pleasure in sin, but it is temporary. It is not of eternal weight, does not last for eternity, and Moses took all that aside, "esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt". There are treasures in the world by man's standards. We look around and see some who have acquired more than others. All of that has to be set aside. All of it is of no consequence before God. You have to enter in as that little child and begin a history anew. We know from the history of Moses that it took him forty years of undoing in the wilderness, in the backside of the wilderness, before he was suitable, and how thankful we are that it has not taken forty years for many in the room to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. But we would address any who have a short or a long history in the world of becoming great, of enjoying those pleasures of sin, enjoying the world and the treasures of Egypt. Those are all perhaps the best that men can offer, but they all have to be set aside. They are all of no use before God. They all have to be judged. And we would enter in as a little child and start our history with God.

And Moses did set all of that aside. He would take on the reproach of Christ and we, by faith - there always is that work of faith, a sovereign work in our souls - come to know the Lord as Saviour. We see that "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; ... By faith he celebrated the passover", perhaps an allusion, if I could apply it this way, to how we would then take up and go on to better things. Having come to know the Lord as our Saviour, we would go on to better things in the way of being before God and in the service of God, all we would have before God.

I was thinking too of Saul of Tarsus in Philipians. He had a history as well, perhaps we could say, of the best man could be in taking up God's religion. Here in Philipians 3 Mr Darby in his translation uses italics to emphasise how Paul before his conversion could say "f" - capital "f" - "have my trust even in flesh; if any other think to trust in flesh, / rather". The emphasis is on his own person. He was very proud. Many would be very proud of how they go on in a religious way, outwardly fine, upstanding people in the community, outstanding neighbours, outstanding at their work, God-fearing in the sense of being upright, but not ones that know the Lord as their Saviour. And Saul of Tarsus had to come to the end of that, and he could speak of it as being "loss", all of that history. That history began as a young man. We read of him in Acts as holding the cloaks of those that stoned Stephen, so he was zealous from the very beginning. He was a very religious person. And on that road to Damascus, all that history had to come to an end. There was a sovereign work in his soul that led him, by faith, to address Jesus as Lord: "if thou shalt confess ... Jesus as Lord", Rom 10: 9. He confessed Him as Lord and he came to know Him as his Saviour. And that was the end of that religious history. It had to be set aside. He too, as it were, had to come in as a young child and begin his history with God.

We know that Saul then was led away blinded. He was in effect like a little child, had to be cared for, had to be led about, and his history had to begin again. He would be typical of those who would go on in a religious way and religion is of no account to God. It is only as one comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, confesses their sins, and by faith accepts Him as Saviour, that we have a history on which God could count. Here he was the best of the best. I think of that expression. It has great import: "Hebrew of Hebrews", the best of the best, and yet all that was counted loss: "but what things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss". That religious history had to come to an end. We would all probably be very happy for fellow workers, schoolmates and neighbours who were the best of the best and yet they need a

Saviour. Each one of us has to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. We might even have had the privilege of being brought up among faithful brethren, in Christian homes, had the word of God open and before us. That has created some history with us, but we each have to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour personally. It is an individual matter. It is an individual matter with God and we would beseech that if anyone does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, all of your history that you have has to be judged and set aside and you begin again a history with God and through faith in Christ come to know Him as Saviour.

And so we have the expression, and how attractive it is in verse 8, that he counted "all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus". Think of the excellent glories! In the reading meeting that we had a little while ago, we had the excellencies of Christ before us; we had the Father's love; and how it is attractive to our hearts. Our hearts are drawn out to know the Lord as Saviour.

Then in the chapter in Mark 10 we referred to those little children who in type would bring before us the history that we would begin with God. We would come in as little children: "Suffer the little children to come to me ... for of such ..." The character of the little children would be that of those who would come to know the Lord as their Saviour. We would have our history, whether short or long, in this world judged and set aside, and we would come in and be "of such is the kingdom of God". We think of God's kingdom, perhaps in its broadest sense, all that would come in under God's authority and sway and nurture, and the only way that we can do that is by faith, to come to know the Lord as our Saviour, to come in as a little child. And what a privilege it is and what a place of peace and joy it is to begin that history with God. What a challenge too it is to our souls as to what is our history, what is our history with God. It would challenge us. Do we have a history with God or do we have a history that is of the flesh, purely pleasing ourselves, going on in this world? Before God that flesh is very evident; before God that flesh is untameable, it is wild. We know there are many types in scripture as

to the flesh. Or we might have a history such as Moses had where we are going on with the best of the world and great in the world. That would be of no value and no weight before God. Or even in religion, we might think that religiously being upright, religiously being the best, might have some weight, but that has no weight with God. All of those histories have to be judged and set aside and we must begin our history again by faith in Christ Jesus. We come in as a little child, and we have that history with God, and then we go on. How thankful we are for those we can see as we look around that have had a long history with God! What an encouragement it is to us to go on with a history before God and how God would have all men to be saved! We know that God is not willing that any should perish. He would desire that all come to repentance. And so we would look to each one to examine your own hearts and ask what kind of history do I have? Do I have a history in the world? or do I have a history that is the best of the flesh? or would I have a history that is the best in a religious way? Or simply do I have a history that is before God that I have begun by faith and have come to know the Lord as my Saviour? May God bless this word!

KIRKCALDY

7 April 1996

This poem from which Hymn No 312 is taken, was written by Mr Champney in memoriam of Mr J.Revell who departed to be with Christ on 10 April 1900.

THE HOME-CALL

[in memoriam of J.R.]

How sweet the Home-Call to Thyself above,
To be with Christ in everlasting love,
Before Thyself, our God, in perfect rest,
In Thine eternal presence ever blest!

Oh, wondrous thought of Thine, that we should be
At home, O God, in all that suiteth Thee,
Where all is of and for Thyself alone,
And finds its glorious centre in the Son!

Where all's apart from death, apart from sin,
Where what defileth cannot enter in,
Where never was, nor ever will be care,
But sweet relief from all the pressure here!

Where, heavenly peace possesses every breast,
Where naught disturbs that sweet, eternal rest,
Where love abideth and pervadeth all
The happy subjects of that blest Home-Call.

And to that call, O God, we answer now,
As in assembly we before Thee bow,
And worship Thee, the Father and the Son,
With all Thy saints, O God, in spirit one.

'Tis by Thy gift, our Father, we are His,
That we may be with Him, and where He is,
That we may hear Him tell Thy love untold,
And may the glory of Thy Son behold !

Beholding it, we worship and adore,
The more we see Thy love, we love the more!

Thou art our blessed God, our hearts exclaim!
And glory, glory, glory in Thy Name!