

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 288

March 1997

Contents

GRACE- V

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

GRACE- V

Ephesians 3: 14-16; 1: 1-7

R.T. We would count on the Spirit serving us so that something of the atmosphere of love that we have already enjoyed may be among us. I think that generally what we experience at the Supper is, in a sense, difficult to formulate: we cannot put labels on it exactly. John deals with things in that way too. These passages may serve for the Spirit to give us some impression of the Father's pleasure and His delight in having sons before Him. Other families, I think, are, in a sense, waiting to be named but I think we already come into the experience of the Father naming us. The Lord says, "the Father himself has affection for you", John 16: 27. We come to know that already. We spoke this morning about Jacob saying to Joseph as to his sons, Bring them to me (Gen 48: 9). Earlier, Jacob had sent Joseph out to look for his brethren to see after their welfare, and they, in principle, crucified him. The Jews crucified Jesus: that for the moment has shut them out from their blessing. The next time Jacob saw Joseph he had these two sons with him. Think of his joy in seeing them, as we apply it, and he says, Bring them to me, and he blesses those two sons before he blesses the other tribes. That brings us to the present time, while Israel awaits their blessing. Jacob blessed, embraced and kissed those two sons. Later on he goes over Reuben and Levi and the others. I mention that to show how at the present time we have come into the blessedness of what other families will come into later.

I thought in chapter 1 we might get some impression of what that blessing is, as being chosen and marked out and taken into favour. I think there is some sense there of the Father's delight in this family at the present time. We are to feel our way in these great things, which are, as I have said already, beyond what we can formulate, but we count on the Spirit giving us some touch that would remain with us and help us to move here in the light of the Father's favour. What a thing to enjoy in present circumstances and surroundings the sense of the Father's favour!

J.A.P. Hebrews 2, "Bringing many sons to glory", v 10 - is that the Father's operation?

R.T. Yes it is. As that passage says, it involved the sufferings of Christ and the place that Christ has in God's ways of love. Think of His delight in bringing them to glory! It says, of the Father - "of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named". I think at the moment we come into some experience of the Father's distinctive blessing.

J.S. He says of these two sons, They shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon (Gen 48: 5). Does he elevate them to the full status of sonship?

R.T. Yes, 'they shall be mine'. I think they come into a privileged position. Every family will enjoy sonship, but at the moment there is only one family that has already come into the joy of the Father's blessing. As I said, those two sons were blessed before the others. It is interesting, in the passage in Genesis, that Jacob says, Bring them that I may bless them, but the first thing he does is to kiss them and embrace them; he blesses them afterwards. The first thing is he kisses them, it is like the Father's joy in being able to open up the wealth of His house to those that Christ has brought.

E.F.C. We are sons by adoption, are we not, and yet we are taken into such favour? Would that be to distinguish the sonship of Christ personally as distinct from the many sons who are like Him?

R.T. I think so. He must ever stand out in His uniqueness. The greatness and the distinguishing of the many sons only adds to His distinction. As you say, He has it by right, and He is the firstborn in relation to them all. So it was as Jacob saw Joseph that he says, Who are these? They had some particular character of his features: he must have seen that and he says, Bring them to me.

E.F.C. That links with the thought of 'taken into favour' - the specific request for these sons - like ourselves, would you say, taken into favour in the Beloved?

R.T. Yes. There is great wealth in these passages; we would feel measured as to what we can touch. But the Spirit may just give us some impression of what joy the Father has in us to open up His house. 'Thoughts eternal are unfolded;' (hymn 133); such is the blessing that the Father brings us to enjoy.

L.McF. "Bring them to me, that I may bless them". I was thinking of Ephesians 1 - "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ". Is that not a very great matter?

R.T. It is: we speak carefully; it is not only that the Father has come out to bless us, but 'Bring them to me'. We are brought to where the Father resides, we are brought to His realm. In Christ, He came out to where we were to bless us and met certain circumstances and brought out the best robe and the ring. He brought them out, but here we are brought to Him where He is, as you say, to what is in the heavenlies. We are brought to this realm which the Father has never left.

L.McF. So Naphtali is full of the blessing. Can that not be our portion too?

R.T. "Full of favour". You can understand Naphtali's prayers on a Monday, and his word in the ministry meeting and his part among the brethren; he was full of favour. He was not envious or jealous, no bad feelings, and the Father, as naming every family, would give us to have some sense of the distinction of the name that He places upon us, that we might be acting in the dignity and the favour of that name.

K.A.K. In connection with the scope of the blessing, all the other sons have specific details given as to the blessing, all related to what is earthly, whereas this is simply a blessing. Does that link with the scripture referred to - "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies"? It is not spelled out in an earthly way, is it?

R.T. It is not, and yet the wealth of it is to be known. The scripture that was referred to in Genesis is most interesting. As I said already, before he blesses them he kisses them, and really the kiss and the embrace is more than the blessing - in that sense that is the

blessing. The others were blessed but they were not kissed or embraced. What he gives those two sons is to know his kiss and to know his embrace:

'Embraced in Thine unchanging love,
Its holy stimulus doth serve
To wake our richest songs of praise,
And claim our hearts without reserve.' (hymn 116)

That is the embrace: we are enfolded in a love that is eternal, a love that is not exactly serving us as to our needs but a love that is embracing us into the wealth and the fulness of what the Father's presence is.

P.E.M. We sometimes sing the hymn which contains the line, 'Of love divine the choice.' (hymn 199). Does that give the setting?

R.T. Yes. I think it is something to get just a sense upon our spirits that we are brought to where the Father is: He does not come out to name us. Paul says he bows his knees to the Father of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named. And these two sons were brought to where he was - "Bring them to me that I may bless them." So that we are blessed in the environment of the Father's house in heaven. And that was purposed before time began.

G.D.R. Do you think that if we have a sense of being blessed ourselves, we come out as blessers? Is it not needful to be blessers of one another? It is evidently vital because the apostle is speaking of his bowing the knees. There may be a tendency to droop from the glory of all that is before us here, this great matter of the Father's blessing.

R.T. Yes. I think the apostle is conscious, as we would be in speaking of these things, of limitations, but he is conscious too of a link with One who is beyond limitations who is bringing us into a sphere that is His own. We are accustomed to man's sphere, but I think the apostle here had some sense which he would impart to us of the Father's realm and the riches of His grace. I think we are to live in some sense of our favour because the other families will come into their place as they see the assembly's place.

G.D.P. As to Ephraim and Manasseh he guided his hands intelligently. Is that, so to say, the superiority of that area of things in relation to what is heavenly?

R.T. That is very good. So the Father makes no mistakes, "of whom every family". As you say He, we may say, guides his hands intelligently as to every family. Each has its own impress from the Father. I think we can say He has guided His hands intelligently in the present time, that in the gift of His Spirit He has brought us to know something of the wealth of His house that is to be named upon us.

J.S. Does the family especially bear on the eternal side?

R.T. I think so, but explain that.

J.S. I was thinking of this sphere in comparison with that in chapter one where a whole mediatorial system is headed up in Christ. I wondered if the family idea touched finality, the Father's disposition to set the families in relation to Himself. Is it the eternal side that is in mind?

R.T. Yes, I am sure it is. The passage goes on to that - breadth and length and depth and height; it is beyond finite measurements. But I think, as you say, here it is the family idea; the Father will put a name on every family. So that love pervades in the family; the family link is in love. It is not covenant, it is not an arrangement that can break down, but the link in every family is love from the Father. How wide and how glorious are His thoughts; it says, "of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, in order that he may give you ... to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man". "Give you", I think, is an indication of what we are brought into. He has not yet given it to Israel, but He has given to us to be strengthened to apprehend something of the wealth and the depth and the richness of His blessing that is upon us.

P.E.M. "The riches of his glory" is immeasurable, is it not?

R.T. It is. It is His glory, it is beyond what human mind could ever envisage. "The riches of his glory." It was there in purpose, before

the world began - 'that he may give you according to the riches of his glory, ... by his Spirit'; a divine Person there to bring out the wealth and store of love upon this family in which the Father sees Christ and sees those sons, who are worthy of being in his eternal home.

J.A.P. As we would say, they were really grandsons, but the Father's grace elevated them to full sonship.

R.T. Well, at one time we were without hope, and without God. It says that we were aliens, strangers, having no hope and without God in the world (Eph 2: 12). It is the work of Christ that has remedied that situation, the Christ that Israel rejected has become our Saviour: more than that, He has served us in His grace. But now the Father sees something of the grace of Christ and the effect of the work of Christ in these sons, and He says, Well, I have a place for them, bring them to me.

K.A.K. The Lord Jesus assures us that the Father Himself has affection for us because we have had affection for Christ (John 16: 27).

R.T. That is an interesting verse. The Father's affection is 'because ye have had affection for me'. That is how Israel will come into it, they will come back into their blessing when they see the Messiah, and they will begin to repent that they crucified Him. And the Father's affections are stirred because 'ye have had affection for me'. In the present time we have been awakened to affection for Christ and that affection, I think, has produced something of His character and His features, and the Father says, Bring them to me. The Father does not need to adjust these sons, He does not need to do anything for them. They are suited to the Father's house through the work of Christ. It says, Through Christ by one Spirit we have both access to the Father (Eph 2: 18). We have been made suited to be in the circumstances of eternal love. I think these things are very wonderful and more than language can adequately convey, but they do convey a sense of the Father's delight and the Father's favour to have us, receiving us from the hands of Christ.

E.F.C. From our side it requires spiritual inwardness, would you say? It is with a view to our being strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, and then that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in our hearts, and then verse 20 "But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us". Would you say something as to the need for spiritual inwardness in us to be able to apprehend these blessings which the Father has in mind for us?

R.T. I think the whole economy, as suggested in these passages, has come into activity, that we may be at home in what the Father has purposed. It necessitated the work of Christ, as we said earlier - through Christ by one Spirit. It required the service of these divine Persons, but the end is that the Father is free to embrace and to kiss. There is nothing to be done, the Father has his delight in bringing the sons into the wealth of His house. And as you say, we have the power of His Spirit so that we are not strangers there.

G.D.P. The Lord says, "Fear not, little flock, for it has been the good pleasure of your Father to give you the kingdom" Luke 12: 32. That is the assembly, is it not, in place of Israel?

R.T. You had better explain that to us.

G.D.P. I thought all the love comes in there after that.

R.T. The Father's good pleasure to give you it.

Yes, that is very fine. That is Ephesians, the Father's good pleasure to bring out the wealth of His house and His love upon these sons. As we have said, He will name every family. He will leave every family with some impress of His delight in them because each family will have some link with Christ and have affection for Christ. I think, at the present time, the assembly is the great vessel that has loved Christ, His bride, His brethren; and the Father has delight in seeing this family and He gives them according to the riches of His grace and of His glory to come into this wealth.

D.M.W. Is this the only family that is marked out beforehand?

R.T. You could say more about that.

D.M.W. I was thinking of the greatness of the Father, the source of it all, but the greatness of the family. It is as though this family was in the eternal purpose. We know that, in regard to Israel, it is not before the foundation of the world, but from it. Is there something in that?

R.T. I am sure there is a great deal in it, to emphasise the depth of His love and His joy in those two sons. It takes us back beyond what we can compass. 'Beforehand' is beyond what we can penetrate into. But the wealth of it comes to rest on our spirits, to awaken fresh songs of praise and glory to the source of all.

D.M.W. To me it is very precious, just to contemplate the wealth of it and too to consider, in the Lord's own earthly ministry, that on the last day of the feast He cried: He was speaking of the waters that would flow, in reference to the Spirit (John 7: 38). It is as though His ministry particularly at the end would be to prepare His disciples for this day which He referred to as 'that day' and the blessed relationship into which they would come in His absence, which would be the same as He had. Of course He is always in the place of pre-eminence.

R.T. I think it is very beautiful the way the Lord speaks and especially as He leads on to John 17, to bring them to see that the place that He had was to be their place. As you said, in that passage He is assuring them that the Spirit would come. Then in John 17 He says, The place that I have is your place, that they might be before the Father in Him. So the first of the things to which he refers in chapter 1 is "he has chosen us in him". Choice is a very fine thing. I think it would connect with what you have said, that it is "beforehand". Choice is selective; He will name every family, as we have said, but at the present time He has chosen us. His love would exercise itself in choice. That is what Paul is saying here, "he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation".

C.F.D. I think this side that you are speaking about is very precious, because in the beginning of Ephesians you go from what is chosen in Christ before the world's foundation, but then in verse 7 you come

back to the side of responsibility, "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences". These first few verses relate not only to the fact that we were chosen in Christ beforehand for adoption but the full thought of sonship is coming to light. I think what you have said about John 16 bears a little opening up. Chapter 13 begins that He came out from God and was going to God, but chapter 16 involves that there is cause for the Father loving Him. There is leverage. Why? Because He came out from God and they believed that. And you go on to chapter 17 from that point, do you not?

R.T. Yes, I think so. "Because ye have had affection for me", produces likeness. Affection for the Son produces sonship's features, and you may say that that is what catches the Father's eye, and He says, Bring them to me. There is a place for them. The world has no place for them, but "he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love". Nobody could ever make themselves holy and blameless, it is only by the Father's love, that He gives us a sense of how what came in in time has been removed.

C.F.D. This section is all according to the purpose of God, is it not? It is not a question of being morally qualified or something like that, but God operating from His own side according to His own grace.

R.T. Yes. In the first chapter in Ephesians the work has all been done, and now in this section the doors have been opened and there are persons who through Christ by one Spirit are worthy to enter in, and what they enter into is the wealth of love that we are "holy and blameless" - is a very fine combination of these two things - "before him in love".

G.D.R. So that "taken us into favour" is from the divine side. Would you enlarge a little on the matter of likeness, because that seems to suggest formation, that we have been engaged with? The responsible side is not altogether lacking, is it, if we are going to reach to this?

R.T. No, I think it is reached in love, "Because ye have had affection for me". I think affection for Christ has removed the unholiness and the features that sin has marred and it brings us into this realm of the Father's love. You think of what sin brought into the race; the way love has moved out from God has brought us back to Him to enjoy what was there before the introduction of sin. It says, "before the world's foundation".

C.F.D. Is this the way divine love appropriates us, so to speak, as we approach God in the service? You are approaching, and you are without stain, without spot, without wrinkle, it is all according to the purpose of God.

R.T. Mr Darby says, 'He, who to His rest shall greet thee, Greets thee with a well-known love' (hymn 76) - a love that has served us in the circumstances of the wilderness, but now a love that is able to open out its storehouses as He brings us into the wealth of those heavenly blessings that were purposed before the world's foundation . It is a very fine thing to get a sense that what we have come into was purposed before ever sin came in, and we were chosen. It is something that David enjoyed; when David was speaking to Michal he says, It was God who chose me instead of your father (2 Sam 6: 21). He passed by Saul, and chose David. What a sense to have in our spirits that we have been chosen! Saul was passed over; and He has passed over many others, and at the moment other families are in abeyance, but He has chosen us in Him. I think the sense of choice would give us a fresh sense of the love of the One who chose us.

L.McF. Would you say a word as to the spiritual blessings - that is the character of the blessings, "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ"? Maybe you could enlarge on that, please.

R.T. No, I could not. But it is all you will need for eternity. You will not need earthly blessings or material blessings, you will not need a new suit in eternity or any of these things. All that you will have through the eternal day are the spiritual blessings and they are all coming out of the Father's storehouses.

L.McF. It all lies in the Spirit.

R.T. And they exceed all other blessings - spiritual blessings. I think that is what we need for the environment in which we are going to be eternally, but the sense of them is on our spirits and conveyed to us by the Spirit now while we are in this condition. Spiritual blessing is something that time and feelings can never destroy, because He has blessed us with every blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

A.S.H. We were speaking about "he has chosen us in him", I was wondering about the end of the verse - "before the world's foundation". What can you say as to that.

R.T. You can only bow in worship to the One who was there. God was there in His own environment and in the counsels of His love and before He founded the world, He chose the persons. We may say the world was only the stage in which He was going to work out His thoughts and that stage will be removed. But before ever the stage was set up He had the persons in His mind and He chose them.

H.G.H. So these spiritual blessings come down to include eternal life as we can enjoy it today?

R.T. Yes, there is a great range of them enjoyed today. All that was in my mind was to convey something of the Father's heart. The blessings, you may say, are endless in the great range and wealth that attaches to them, but we are brought not only to the blessings but to the Blesser. The Father is the source of them all.

H.G.H. Knowing the place we have before the Father and knowing His love is all part of the spiritual blessings.

R.T. What Paul says here, "Blessed be the God and Father" - however great the blessings are, what he is engaged with is the Person, the source from whom all the blessings are flowing. So, as blessed, the response is "To him who loves us". Response is to the Father the great source of all.

H.J.G. Is Paul especially able to bring out the wealth of this because of the impression he had in his own soul, when he said, "the Son of

God, who has loved me and given himself for me" Gal 2: 20. Is this traced back to that, and it specially fitted him to be able to bring out His will?

R.T. I think so. In eternal conditions we will never be outside our link with Christ or our appreciation of Christ, because it says, "in the heavenlies in Christ". If it was not named like that, we would be lost. Even in Ephesians 3 where it speaks about the great wealth of things it says, "to know the love of the Christ". There is what is immeasurable in the breadth and length and depth and height, but there is a point of identification, and will be through all eternity, and that is Christ in His varied features and glories. So that things are made tangible; they are heavenly blessings but they are in Christ.

J.A.P. What the father did in Genesis, kissing and embracing, would instil confidence in those young men; they would not be afraid, they would be welcomed in the father's presence. Would that be experienced on the first day of the week?

R.T. It would. Yet the kiss and the embrace is only the introduction to set them at ease. The wealth of the house is open to such persons. You go into the recesses of the house and what you find is that there are things that were before the world's foundation. Think of the great wealth that has come into time of the knowledge of the Father and of God! What a fresh sense it gave David of His love, that He 'chose me instead of your father'. I think Michal was ridiculing him at that time, criticising his liberty. But he says, The liberty I have is because He chose me instead of your father.

G.A. How would the younger son in Luke 15 fit in? "The father said to his bondmen, Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it" Luke 15: 22. He would be coming into this position?

R.T. I think so. The best robe was the sense of what the Father had purposed for him. It was not only for the son, but I think the best robe, and the ring and the shoes, in one sense, were so that the Father might have His full joy in him. He saw him as suited and in the full liberty of the house and embraced in the love that belongs to the house. So He has brought these things out to us in the gospel -

the robe, the ring and the shoes- and He would have us to be moving in the true dignity that He has placed upon us, and in the joy of the ring and the shoes.

K.A.K. Do we learn this by experience? I was thinking of Paul's own experience, and Israel too came into it through experience. God says, Jacob have I loved (Mal 1: 2).

R.T. We have a foretaste of the fulness of it, have we not? I think the experience would be at the Supper, and, as we speak of it like that, we have a sense of being clothed, as our brother has said, with the wealth that belongs to the house. So it awakens a true response, a suited response to the outshining of such a love.

G.D.R. Does the apprehension of the wealth of the blessings - "who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing" - involve transformation in 2 Corinthians 3? Is there not a need for the transformation? It never says that we are changed back again, but being transformed involves something permanent. Would that be necessary in view of the apprehension?

R.T. That is how we come into it on our side, in experience from glory to glory, but in Ephesians you come into the full blaze of things. You get some sense of the fulness of the sunshine coming out, and we are not blinded by it because it is in Christ. And then it says it is "through Jesus Christ to himself". So that the experience is that we are alongside Christ, and He is alongside us, you may say. 'Bring them to me'; Joseph brought them to him. It was not that they were there alone but they were there in that One well-known, and sustained to take on the glory to which you refer.

J.S. Would you say something about the part the Lord and the Spirit play in bringing us in? I was thinking of "through him we have both access by one Spirit", as if not only things have been brought out to us but the way has been opened up, and the Lord and Spirit are active in bringing us into the present enjoyment of it. It impresses me the greatness that this is not to be deferred. Not only has the way been cleared by the death of Christ but the Persons are there to take us into the very greatest of the heavenly blessing.

R.T. In that verse you get the impression that "through Christ and by one Spirit" the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit have stationed themselves at the threshold, as it were, so that we come into the Father's house as enriched. I think the words 'through' and 'by' would involve that there is something imparted, so that we come into a realm that is immeasurable, but we are there at home in it. So it brings out the service of love of divine Persons, that the great end is that the Father may unfold the eternal wealth of His house to rest on our spirits to awaken praises to His great name.

K.N.P. Is the impartation that you are referring to more than "holy and blameless"?

R.T. I think the "holy and blameless" enables us to enjoy the full wealth of the house. It reminds you of the heavenly city and that certain things will be done away. There will be no more crying, no more tears, the sea will be done away; the things that have come in in time and through sin are eradicated in the power and ways of His love and we are there in a new condition to enjoy the fulness of what was there before the world's foundation. You feel the limitation of language, but we count on the Spirit leaving some impression of the wealth of what the Father would bring us into as He has His delight in what has been formed in the grace of Christ.

J.Mcl. I think it is helpful what you are bringing before us, the thought of nearness. I was looking at, "having made known to us the mystery of his will". That should impress us and greatly help us to be more in the gain of these things, would you say?

R.T. Yes, indeed. The hymn says, 'Thoughts divine conceived in purpose ... There expands in glory's light' (hymn 83). That is something of the wealth we come into here. 'Thoughts divine conceived in purpose', no man had a hand in it; it is according to the great purposes of His will. They are conceived in purpose, but the hymn says, 'There expands in glory's light.' They take on a new meaning. Those thoughts were there in purpose but here there are persons coming into the purpose and the glory that is conferred upon them. These references, "chosen us" and then "marked us out

beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ", are the operations of divine love.

E.F.C. The two sons of Joseph seem to fill out in the divine plan what God had in mind in their progress into the land; they filled out the circuit around the ark, that was one thought in the divine mind, and then taken in even as Reuben and Simeon. They are given that same position as the others.

RT. So if men adopt sons they could never impart their nature, but God imparts something of His nature through adoption. He places us beyond the legal position; He imparts something of His nature.

So it says, "for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself"; there is something of the character of that Man imparted.

E.F.C. Divine sovereignty lies behind all this, does it not, in the choice?

R.T. Mr Taylor made a remark that choice is greater than sovereignty. Sovereignty enters into it but there is a distinct sense of love in choice, is there not? There is love in sovereignty too, but choice gives you the sense that you are selected. There is that difference in it, I think.

E.F.C. I have always understood that sovereignty is linked with His purposes and counsels and we had no part in it.

R.T. But in choice there is a definite object. David said, He chose me. It was not only He had passed over Saul; that was one thing, but He said, He chose me. Sovereignty no doubt enters into it, but the sense of choice was what rested on David's spirit. And when David went in to speak to God he says, You have thought about me according to those of high rank (1 Chron 17: 17). He had a sense of choice that he was brought into the purposes of divine love.

E.F.C. God makes no mistake in His choice because He chooses persons who will be constituted morally as well as spiritually equal for the position in mind for them.

R.T. So that it says, "he has chosen us in him". God looked on to Christ in His manhood as able to effectuate those purposes and

bring them all to pass. So He chose us in Him; it was not an indefinite thing, but He chose us in the Man of His choice, to bring us into these counsels of divine love.

P.E.M. It says, "through Jesus Christ to himself"; that is like bringing them 'to me', is it?

R.T. That is a very fine expression. Not only to bring us to heaven but "through Jesus Christ to himself" and "according to the good pleasure of his will". You get the impression as Paul is writing this that there is one wave after another coming into his soul and he feels, as we feel, the insufficiency of language to describe the glory and blessedness of what love has opened up to us.

J.A.P. The Lord says in John to the Father, "the men whom thou gavest me", John 16: 6. That would be the Father's choice. But then the Lord Jesus says, "Have not I chosen you the twelve?" John 6: 70. What do you say about that?

R.T. What a sense of favour it must give; choice imparts a sense of His delight. As our brother says He makes no mistakes; it is well thought out, and choice implies something in the persons that are chosen. David sets that out. There is something in the persons. I think that conveys the idea that it is more than sovereignty, there is something in the persons that attracts the Father's eye. He chose us; there was something there that He is going to have for His own pleasure and His own eternal delight.

D.M.W. Is that where "through" comes in - "through Jesus Christ"?

R.T. What would you say about that?

D.M.W. I was struck by your comment with regard to choice. There was something there, and as you said, the Lord Jesus in the mind of God in purpose and counsel was always a Man in that respect. It would be through Him, it would be something imparted like that One. Does that have to do with choice?

R.T. Yes. I think that is very beautiful. What He saw was Christ; something there that, as the hymn puts it, 'Thou gav'st us, Father in Thy love, To Christ to bring us home to Thee,' (hymn 88). What He

saw there was something that Christ has imparted and it moves the father and he saw those two sons, Bring them to me. The Father, as we apply it in the type, was there in His own home and he says, Bring them to me.

S.E.MacC. Did Paul have something of this experience when he was struck down on the way to Damascus? The Lord said to Ananias, "Go, for this man is an elect vessel to me," Acts 9: 15. Would he have learned something of that choice at that time even though he was in the exact opposite direction?

R.T. I am sure he would. I think it deepened with him as time went on, because he said, God, who set me apart from my mother's womb (Gal 1: 15). He did not realise that at the time but as he looked back he saw that God chose him, set him apart at that time. And He operated on that occasion you are speaking of to establish what He had chosen.

S.E.MacC. That is what I thought, because Ananias said directly afterwards, "Saul, brother".

R.T. It reminds you of the psalmist, he said, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! ... When I awake, I am still with thee" (Ps 139: 17). He could not count the greatness and grandeur of God's counsels of love, but he says, "I am still with thee". How wonderful those thoughts are and we are embraced in a love that has brought them all to pass and given us today by the Spirit some foretaste of the richness and wealth of that inheritance that we are called into.

R.B.H. "Chosen us in him", but then the later title "the Beloved"; Joseph was the father's beloved.

R.T. I was hoping we may get some touch on that, "taken us into favour in the Beloved". He does not say His name there. Does it bring out some idea of how precious this Person is to the Father? It just says the Beloved. It does not say Jesus or Christ but "he has taken us into favour". It is difficult to distinguish some of these things, choice and favour, but the sense of their grandeur and

greatness all flows from the One who is the source of all - "chosen us in him" and "taken us into favour in the Beloved".

E.F.C. The two sons of Joseph really represent himself. We do not have the tribe of Joseph mentioned later on; it is his two sons that fill out that position.

R.T. That amplifies the thought of adoption, because the two sons fill Joseph's place, do they not? That is John 17, that they will come into Christ's place.

E.F.C. Then there is one standard of manhood that God ever has before Him; the divine standard of manhood set out in Christ, would you say?

R.T. So the need for being taken "into favour in the Beloved", is the standard, is it not? He gives colour to the whole scene, and as He says in John 17, That they may be with Me (v 24). Now there is never equality, but we come to touch something of no disparity. There is a fine distinction but it needs to be maintained; in the Beloved there is no disparity, we are taken into favour. His distinction is maintained, He is the Beloved, only one Be loved and only one in whom we are taken into favour, but we are taken into a position where we enjoy that favour without alloy.

J.S. Is it not so that He was the only one who knew the Father's heart and the only one who could impart something of the Father's feelings to them?

R.T. That is John 17, is it not? He opens out something of His own heart and the Father's feelings. So He says there, "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them", He does not say 'on them', but He says, "the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them". And that is "taken into favour in the Beloved", is it not, Christ's place is our place.

A.S.H. The voice from the holy mount, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight" (Matt 3: 17). Hear Him, the word was, no other.

R.T. Here is the effect of hearing Him, that we are brought into favour that belonged to Him. He brings us to share that blessed place that was really His place, but through grace it becomes our place.

NEW YORK

3-5 November 1995

Key to initials

(all meetings)

G.Ashby, New York; E.F.Cary, Los Angeles; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; H.J.Glass, Toronto; A.S.Hinkson, New York; H.G.Holt, Wheaton; R.B.Hill, Toronto; K.A.Knauss, Indianapolis; S.E.MacCready, Rio Grande, NJ; J.McIntyre, London, Ont.; L.McFarlane, New York; P.E.Munn, Barnet; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; K.N.Pye, New York; L.D.Phillips, New York; G.D.Rosenberry, San Francisco; J.Spinks, Grangemouth; R.Taylor, Kirkcaldy; D.M.Welch, Denton

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Robert Taylor

Genesis 3: 4,5,7-11; 2 Corinthians 5: 18-21; Luke 8: 43-48

The passage in Genesis is speaking of a time when sin had just come into the world; that it is still rampant today hardly needs saying. There are fruits of it all around us. What I would like to speak about for a moment is how man has attempted to meet the matter and on the other hand how God has settled it. The relationship between God and man became disturbed at the incoming of sin. The first thing it brought to man was a guilty conscience. God had been there before, speaking to them; they never tried to hide themselves. God had communed with man, said many things to him; there was perfect relationship. But what sin has given man is a guilty conscience. And every man has that, whoever he may be. If the matter of your sins and peace has not been settled between you and God, the conscience remains guilty. The first thing they did was try to satisfy their conscience. And that is what people are doing today. There are all kinds of things. Sin, because of its abundance, may in people's eyes have lost its seriousness. Some things that in the days of our fathers were considered very serious, today are taken as commonplace. There are even some things that required a penalty in law that are no longer so regarded. That brings out the deceitfulness of sin, working to dull the conscience. My friend, if your conscience has been dulled, may it be stirred tonight that you must have to do with God - you must. That is one great certainty in life or in death that man must have to do with God. There is no escape. These aprons were very poor, what man made. Oh, there are many aprons being made today. We could speak of the apron of entertainment that man has brought in; the apron of sport, that man has made to try not to think about God. Just put it behind us, sweep it under the carpet, do not think about it and it will go away. These are the aprons that men have made. They sewed fig leaves and made themselves aprons. I suppose they thought it was all right. Maybe you think it is all right. Well, everybody else has sinned,

everybody else does this or does that, you may think it is commonplace and it is all right, you have your apron and you are hiding. Where did they stand, my friend, when God came in and He said, "Where art thou?" Where were their aprons? Could they hide from those simple words? Could they hide when God raised the question, "Where art thou?" The whole thing is exposed. The whole working of what men have erected as a barrier is exposed. He brings in one excuse after another. But the aprons that they had made were no use. There is no hiding place, my friend, for man today save in Christ. What a multitude of hiding places has sprung up in the world. My friend, there is only one hiding place that I know; it says, "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind", Isa 32: 2, a man, the Man Christ Jesus, God's Man. It says, a Man shall be a covert from the storm, a hidingplace from the wind, as the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. A Man, who is a different man, a Man who has come in from God. God has come to remove the distance and settle for time and eternity, for you and for me the question of sin and our sins. And, my friend, He has done it to perfection. There was a man of old who raised the question, "How can man be just with God?" Job 9: 2. What could he do? What could Adam do? Very hastily, I suppose, he made those aprons, and through the course of time how many attempts have been made. But what can man do to be just with God, a God whose holiness is intrinsic in His being, a God who is of purer eyes than to look on sin. How could a man be just with God save that God from His own side has come in; in the Person of Christ. It says, "God was in Christ", God was there. The history books would tell you there was a man who was here called Jesus, they would tell you something about Him without distinguishing Him perhaps from other men. But it says more than that here, it says, "God was in Christ" - God was there. One of the prophets looked on to that; as he was looking for salvation he says, He will come Himself. Oh, how precious! He will come Himself and save us (Isa 35: 4). He did not only send Isaiah, and the other prophets, but the prophet had some sense that He will come Himself. And what a difference when He came Himself. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself". Oh, what power,

what grace, what love was there when God came in in the Person of Jesus. He did not come with angelic forces or power to frighten man, but it says, "God was in Christ"; the most approachable of men. The One who could lay His hands upon the children, who would take a journey to meet one woman at Sychar's well - God was there in Christ. He was there, my friend, as another writer tells us, undoing the works of the devil (1 John 3: 8). That woman that we read of came to touch something of that. He was there bringing men on to true ground and true relationships that sin had disturbed and made irreconcilable, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself". Friend how did He do it? He did it in His death. From heaven's point of view the world was never more beautiful than when Jesus was here, because on this earth where every man had dishonoured God, where sin had made such inroads, there was a Man that was in perfect accord with heaven. God's eye was there on Christ and His grace was going out to men to bring them all to that one Man. The effectiveness of that as the writer here is speaking, was all accomplished in that He removed the distance - removed it. How could it be met? You think of the distance that sin had brought in, perhaps not so great between Adam and God, although it was the same in a sense, but in the course of time there is no doubt the gulf had become widened in the things that had come in. Because sin, as the scripture says, became exceedingly sinful (Rom 7: 13) as the race went on. How was it going to be met? It could only be met, my friend, by it being removed. And that is what God has done in Christ, He has removed the distance. That is what reconciliation means, that the distance had to be removed. As most in this company would know, if it was only bridged it could break down, the gulf would still be there. A bridge between two things is a very narrow connection, and the distance and the guilt would still be there. But in reconciliation God has removed the distance because His Son went into the distance. Oh, how dark, my friend, how deep that distance. This passage tells us how deep He went, "Him who knew not sin", He did not know it.

That is why I said there was one spot on this earth of brightness when Jesus was here that had never been before. There was a Man here who did not know sin. There were writers that loved Him, who went over it time and again; one of them said, He did not know it as here, another said, He did not do it, "Who did no sin", 1 Peter 2: 22. That was a man who knew Him, who had been with Him most of the days of His service and seen Him in every circumstance. As he looked back he says, He did no sin. What a Man. He did not know it, He did not do it. Another one who loved Him says, In Him sin is not (1 John 3: 5). How precious these testimonies to the Man who went into the distance. Sin was foreign to Him in His character and in His movements and in all that He did; "Who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth". Oh, the sinless One! How beautifully Peter speaks about Him: "when reviled, reviled not again;" 1 Peter 2: 23 - no sin. "When suffering, threatened not;" and perhaps most beautiful of all he says, "but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously". When suffering, that is what He did when He was there tasting the distance, not only measuring it but when He was removing it He gave Himself over into the hands of Him who judges righteously, "Not my will, but thine be done," Luke 22: 42. Oh, what a Saviour. God was in Christ settling the matter Himself to His own glory by a Man who was sinless. It says He was made sin for us. I cannot explain these words; it was what God laid upon Him. We sinners in our being and in our practice, but there the sinless One He was made it. Oh, how dark the world became, my friend, how dark it became. If in earlier days, as I said, it was at its brightest, in those hours it was at its darkest when He was made sin for us. There was the darkest hour in one sense in the world's history; when the perfect sinless Man was made sin. The scripture explains it, it says it was for us. The word vicariously is used; it means He was there in place of us and the judgment of God against sin was poured upon Him. Can you understand it? No, save that it is an expression, an appeal, of the love of God to you and me as to how He has settled the sin question and settled it for time and for eternity for those, I trust you, who put their trust in Him now. So it says, "he has made sin for us".

That means that for you and for me the matter is settled. When God does something it is done to perfection. If another had done it there would have been imperfections in the work, but it says, "Him" that is Christ "who knew not sin he" - that is God - "has made sin for us". Oh, what an expression of His love. If an apron would have done for Adam this was what God required. God required that the distance would be removed and He removed it Himself in the Person of Christ. It says, "that we might become God's righteousness in him." What a change. But that "we", I raise the question, Are you among them? "That we might become", the work has been done, but I think the "we" is the persons who come into. You can be among them through exercising faith, and putting your trust in what Jesus has done.

And that is what that woman did that we read of in Luke. She tried the aprons, she tried the physicians, year after year she tried one thing after another. I suppose the remedies poured out in her day just as they do today, every week something fresh coming in but only bringing out the insufficiency of the previous remedies. But the root question still remained. Maybe she got better nights from some remedies but the root question still remained, she was still troubled. Indeed it says she became worse (Mark 5: 27). But she comes to touch the hem of His garment. That is a reference to what is here tonight, the hem of His garment is here in the preaching. Christ Himself has gone into heaven after He bore the weight of sin on the cross, after He bore God's judgment. He exhausted that judgment to God's satisfaction. You say, How do you know it? Because God raised Him from the dead. He who knew no sin was made sin, but the matter was settled, the sin question was met and God raised Him from the grave to the highest place in glory. But the hem of His garment is here in the Spirit's voice in the preaching. God has found His delight in what Jesus has done and in the Spirit's grace and power He is proclaiming His name tonight that you and I may find how God has met for His satisfaction and for our peace, the question of sin and of sins for time and eternity. This woman did not need any more remedies, she found an answer, she found the remedy when

she found the Saviour. But then it says, "immediately her flux of blood stopped." My friend, one act of faith and it is done for time and eternity, she touched the hem of His garment. 'Only a touch' the hymn writer says, the Lord Jesus was there within her reach. It says only a touch, but oh, how much was in it - only a touch, would she the venture make? She did. Will you make it tonight my friend? Will you put out your hand tonight to touch what has come to you? It says, The word is near you, in your mouth, the word of faith, which we preach (Rom 10: 8). "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." Oh, those precious words of Romans 10: 9, how precious they remain. And here this woman, believed in her heart, she put out her hand and it says, "immediately her flux of blood stopped." There is the answer to social reform, moral reform and all the rest. It says immediately it was stopped; through faith and touch with the Person, immediately it was stopped. 'My sins - Oh the bliss of this glorious thought - My sins - not in part, but the whole - Were borne on the cross, and are gone evermore, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!' (hymn 238). She did not have to wait like the lepers of old seven days outside the camp, but it says it was immediately stopped, never again to be raised. My Saviour, my friend, He bore the whole matter for me. He met God about the whole question, but only if you touch the hem of His garment, only if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, do you come into the blessedness of the way that God has made. O my friend, do not try any more aprons, do not try any more of the remedies that man has brought in, but tonight reach out to touch the hem of His garment. But you know there is much more. It was immediately stopped. You say that would be enough. Ah, no, He has a lot more in His heart for you than just to forgive you your sins; He said, Who touched Me? He felt it, you know. My friend you may be one of many, one of fifty or whatever it is in this room, you may be one of millions in this city, but if you exercise faith in the work of Christ tonight He knows you. There may be only one in a great congregation, as there was here, there were crowds thronging Him. Peter says, They are all touching Thee, Lord, and you say

'Who?' Yes, He knew that woman's touch of faith and cry of need that was so different from the cries of all around, in the mixed multitude. And He knows your cry, He knows what you would be saying in your heart tonight; He says, Who touched Me? Not to give her a sense of shame, no, He says, Who touched Me, to bring her into the family, because the next word He says is "daughter". That is where grace would place you, my friend. Oh, to come from the distance to come into the family. That is what He does with her, He says, "daughter". No longer a bowed-down daughter, no longer someone crippled. The same woman in the same circumstances but she has come into another family. He says, "Be of good courage, daughter; thy faith has healed thee". You could have said it was His work that healed her, true it was, but she got the gain of it through touching the hem of His garment. His work stands there before God's eye and you are brought into the eternal gain of it through confessing His name as this woman did. And He says, "daughter; thy faith has healed thee; go in peace." What an answer to all man's puny efforts that God has come in and done things according to the power of His grace and of His love and He is appealing to you tonight. The garment is within your reach; 'Only a touch. Will you the venture make?' tonight. He was within reach, that is how close His garment came to her. We do not know how many were there, but the garment was within her reach and that is where the gospel comes, within your reach. The reach of your hand, however short it may be - the power is in the hem of the garment and it is just within your reach wherever you are tonight.

My friend, may you reach out not only to know the peace of your sins forgiven but to know the joy of being brought into the family of God. What a family daughter. Oh, how precious these words. Maybe nobody had called her that before. I suppose they would not own her before. The man in John 9, they would not own him. But here is someone who owns her, "daughter". How precious it is to know the Saviour's voice for the first time: calling your name, esteeming you in His love, and leaving on her heart, as He would

with yours tonight as you exercise that touch of faith, "Go in peace."
May it be so for His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

5 November 1995