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Contents

WHAT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO JESUS

THE POTTER, REFINER, WINNOWER AND MERCHANT

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

WHAT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO JESUS

Philippians 2: 5-11; Genesis 2: 18-25; 24: 61-67

W.L. One's exercise is to seek help that we might be freshly impressed by what has been given to Jesus personally. First, in His exaltation - "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name". That is what is personal to Himself. I have wondered whether, while it is not mentioned here, Paul would be thinking of Exodus 15 when he wrote this - "Jehovah, for he is highly exalted: The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (v 1) - a celebration of Christ's victory. So Philippians 2 is what has been given to Him personally. And in Genesis 2 we might see what has been given to Him personally in the way of a helpmate His like. In Genesis 24 we have one whom He received personally that He could love - and "led her into his mother Sarah's tent; ... and he loved her."

L.McF. A very timely suggestion. In Philippians what is moral underlies His exaltation. Is that so?

W.L. It is indeed, although we do get who He is, a clear statement of His Deity; which needs to be stressed today. In the day in which we live His Deity is being challenged more than ever, an attack against the Person of Christ. But as you say, Paul develops the passage in regard to His bondmanship and His manhood. It is quite clear that He has been exalted, as you rightly say, because of what He is, the kind of Man He is.

J.A.P. In Thessalonians it says the false man exalts himself (2 Thess 2: 4) and Mr Darby says in his note it was arrogance, the devil opposing that kind of man.

W.L. The Lord's own words are significant, "Whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled," Matt 23: 12. God will do that. But here One who humbled Himself. I suppose this passage here is well-known to every lover of Christ, the greatness of who He is - "who, subsisting in the form of God". What that would mean no human mind is capable of understanding. The hymn puts it well, 'The

creature mind, howe'er sublime, Thine Essence cannot know' (hymn 199). It is far beyond us. So that if we are to know anything at all of God, who He is and what He is, it was necessary that One who is God as to His Person should come into manhood.

C.F.D. What would you say about the expression that He emptied Himself?

W.L. As you know, Mr Raven said that he preferred the Authorised Version - "Made himself of no reputation". He said 'emptied Himself' raised the question 'emptied Himself of what'? No doubt Mr Darby's translation is accurate. Jesus never ceased to be what He always was on account of what He became. You have something to say about it.

C.F.D. That He 'emptied Himself' is a very interesting expression. It shows that He had the power to do that. You and I would not have the power to do that but the Lord had. I was wondering whether, while the Lord never ceased to be what He was on account of what He became (as you have quoted), what He did in essence was to lay aside for the moment what belonged to Him from the viewpoint of Deity so that what man saw in Christ was a humble Man taking a very lowly place. What do you think?

W.L. I am sure of that. It was quite obvious, when He was here, that He was not recognisable as to who He was in the essence of His being. Although Mr Darby's hymn puts it well, 'We see the Godhead glory shine through that human veil' (hymn 188), generally, if I am right, He acted as a dependent Man according to the will of God. There are other instances, for instance in John 18 when they came to apprehend Him, He said, "Whom seek ye?" and He said, "I am he", and "they went away backward and fell to the ground", John 18: 5,6. That was the assertion of His Deity. But even in that context Judas had to identify Him with a kiss; He obviously looked no different from the others around Him. Would that be right?

C.F.D. I think it is right to hold to that. Judas, doing what he did in treachery, had to identify Him because the Lord looked like other men. He would have looked like the other eleven. I suppose all that

is involved in the fact that He emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form. The bondman's form would be a lowly form outwardly, would it not?

W.L. It is remarkable that that is the first thing that it says. Probably, if we had been writing it, we would have said first "found in figure as a man" and then "taking a bondman's form," but the stress first is "taking a bondman's form", showing the extent in humility to which He went - most impressive, I think.

C.F.D. Does the Lord set out a pattern for us in what He does? I think you said that, if we are to be exalted, it is as we know how to be otherwise. We were noticing locally that Gideon took a very lowly place, and he is really exalted as a type of Christ, is he not?

W.L. Exactly. That is the way of spiritual blessing, we may say the only way. So Paul prefaces this section by saying "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". The mind which was displayed so vividly and so beautifully in the Lord Jesus Himself is to be seen distinctly and clearly in the believer. Now is that so? Is that mind that is seen as Paul portrays it here seen in me, seen in all of us here? The mind which was in Christ Jesus. A most remarkable thing.

L.McF. Romans 12: 2 "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Would that link with what you are saying?

W.L. Yes, I am sure it would. The epistle to the Romans is essential to that end, so we should learn to identify the kind of man that never could have the mind that was in Christ Jesus. That man has to go. It is easy to say that he has gone before God, but he has to go for me and for you.

L.McF. "That ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." So the will of God enters into what we are saying.

W.L. "Acceptable" has been described as 'the meat in the sandwich'.

C.F.D. You must explain that.

W.L. "Acceptable" comes in the middle. There is the 'good' and there is the 'perfect'. That stands, that is beyond any kind of dispute as to God's will. The thing is, is it acceptable to me? So "acceptable" in that passage comes in the middle.

L.McF. Now we are to prove that.

W.L. That is right, and we prove it by evidencing that we have this mind in us, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" that is the going-down mind. Very many problems would be settled if we all had going-down minds. Difficulties would vanish quickly, things that loom large in our minds, sometimes becoming an obsession. It is the mind again - persons who become obsessed by things come to a point when they cannot even think clearly. "Let this mind be in you" is, as you say, what leads you to think clearly. So when anything comes up, if you have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, you see things as they are, not as someone may think they are.

L.D.P. We were reading in Luke 22 where there was a strife amongst the disciples as to which of them should be held to be the greatest, and the Lord says, "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves", Luke 22: 27. Does that fit in here?

W.L. That fits in very well. He was here as a bondman. What a spirit that is! It is absent in the world, very much so. That spirit cuts right across human ambition, which is a terrible thing.

J.A.P. The remark our brother made underlies the Supper and how we come to the Supper. The Lord instituted it in that manner; then how do I come to the Supper?

W.L. That is most helpful. What a privilege it is to come with a mind like that to the Supper. I was thinking, as we progress in the passage, that it is necessary - "Wherefore also...". That is as a result of it. It was inevitable that God should exalt such an One;

speaking reverently, God could do no other than highly exalt such a Man, One who had emptied Himself and humbled Himself.

K.N.P. It says, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. Is that coming into manhood, as we have here, giving up of Himself? The basis there is in love. What do you say about that?

W.L. I am sure that is right: it is a matter of affection. The Lord as Man here gave the Father every reason to love Him. Not one thing in the Lord's life, not one thought, was out of accord with the love of the Father - not one step, not one action. It is remarkable how He drew out, we might say, the affections of the Father. That is what happened at the Jordan, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17.

A.S.H. Men gave Him the grave and the cross, and they also said, "When will he die, and his name perish?" Ps 41: 5. But here He has "granted him a name that which is above every name", the exalted Name, the exalted place that He now fills.

W.L. Those quite remarkable chapters in the book of Esther come to mind, where Mordecai had saved the king's life and Ahasuerus - it seemed to suddenly dawn on him - said, What has been done to this man? And the answer is one word, nothing. He says, That is a terrible thing. Then he says, "What is to be done with the man whom the king delights to honour?" Est 6: 6. This is the answer to it. God has highly exalted Him, and granted Him a name, that which is above every name.

J.A.P. Every knee involves, finally, unbelievers too, all men. Is that right?

W.L. Yes. And even infernal beings - "heavenly and earthly and infernal beings". One thing I look forward to, I trust I will see it, is Satan bowing the knee to Jesus and calling Him Lord. What a thing that will be. The one who opposed Him in everything He said and did down here, opposed everything that God has done since the beginning, yet there is a time coming when even Satan himself will bow the knee to Jesus and confess that He is Lord to God the

Father's glory. So it will include every animate being, heavenly, earthly and infernal beings and every tongue - none left out - will confess and every knee will bow. It is morally right that it should be so.

L.McF. We get in verse 5 the mind which was in Christ Jesus, while we get in verse 11 "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory." Is there some different thought in the way that is presented?

W.L. You are meaning the use of Christ Jesus and Jesus Christ? It is the same Man. Christ Jesus is the exalted Man, the Man where He is; Jesus Christ is the Man who was down here - the same Man, no different, in a different condition but the same Man. Is that how you understand it?

L.McF. Yes.

J.A.P. Your reference to Esther is interesting because even Haman had to bow down. He did not like it.

W.L. Yes. He had to bow down and then he went up fifty cubits. He was hanging from his own gibbet. He had to bow first and acknowledge that Mordecai was right.

C.F.D. What do you think is suggested in that, anything in particular?

W.L. I think it is the absolute evidence that all could see, that it was the kind of man that God had rejected. It is the total contrast to the Son of Man lifted up.

C.F.D. One was the government of God and the other was the blessing of God.

W.L. Exactly. That is just what we have here, "highly exalted him". As I said, Paul would have in mind Exodus 15 as he wrote this, "for he is highly exalted: The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Now in Genesis 2, there is something else that has been given to Him. God says, "I will make him a helpmate, his like." We are

obviously speaking about the type of the church, the assembly which is His helpmate, His like, one who is like Him. Further down it says, "And Jehovah Elohim built the rib that he had taken from Man into a woman; and brought her to Man." What a thing that was! Adam looked at all the items of creation and found no helpmate his like, but it says God brought her Man. The Lord Jesus has been given a companion, a helpmate; one who is His wife, His bride, His fulness, His complement. What glories belong to the assembly! The variety of the glories that are His we have briefly touched, He has been highly exalted; what other glories He has - personal, official, mediatorial, moral - all belong to Him personally, but then there is this great vessel, His helpmate, His like.

C.F.D. Is the secret of being his like related to the fact that she was out of himself? She is of his order; it is his rib that was builded by God.

W.L. That is most helpful. I think that would link with John 12. The deep sleep would be like the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died and brought forth much fruit. The brethren will observe there is no mention of the blood here; it is flesh and bones. The blood would relate to the moral side but what we are touching here is a very deep spiritual matter, a sinless scene. It is not Eve here in Genesis 2.

C.F.D. This is before any breakdown is introduced.

W.L. That is most important. It is *Ishshah* here, *Ish* and *Ishshah*. She was called Eve after the breakdown. We speak about Eve, we know it is the same person, we do not need to be too technical, but we speak about Eve as being a type of the assembly before sin came in. It is not exactly that, it is *Ishshah* that is the type before sin came in. Is that right?

J.A.P. I see that. Therefore there is no sinful history connected with that.

W.L. It is the same person.

L.McF. Would you say something about likeness, "his like"?

W.L. It says in the note 'counterpart'; it is out of himself, from his rib. It is quite remarkable, to give this a practical turn. Paul uses this matter in Ephesians, "I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", Eph 5: 32. He brings it down to the very practical matter of relationships between husband and wife, inserting it in the Ephesian epistle, which is very important.

J.A.P. What do you mean by that?

W.L. Every true marriage has as its standard the great truth of Christ and the assembly. This is man and woman, *Ish* and *Ishshah*. So a believer's marriage should be a reflection of this great truth of Christ and the assembly. Paul develops that in Ephesians 5, love in the marriage; he develops the thought in the human relationship, but then quite remarkably he says at the end of it, "but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly." He does not use Christ and the assembly there as a figure of the human relationship; he uses the human relationship as a figure of Christ and the assembly - "but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly." How practical these things are!

A.S.H. As to the activities and thoughts and plans of divine Persons, the woman being brought to man, Jehovah not only gave him but He brought her to Man and he says, "This time" as though there was nothing greater than that.

W.L. That is helpful, because man according to God involves both Christ and the assembly. It is important to see that. As to the acme of things in Ephesians – "the assembly in Christ Jesus", Eph 3: 21- we might say, speaking reverently, they are inseparable; Christ in manhood and the assembly are inseparable. This is something to lay hold of. It says, "This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: this shall be called Woman, because this was taken out of a man." I think we need to be enhanced in our minds and enlarged in our thinking about the greatness of what in God's purpose has been provided for Christ as His companion His like. It is a tremendous concept that God has provided for the Man, the One who subsisting in the form of God emptied Himself. God has considered so much

for that Man that He has given Him one who is exactly His like, bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. That is the great light of our day, the great truth of Christ and the assembly. That is what laid hold of the saints, as we well know, in the beginning of the recovery, the greatness of Christ, the Head on high and His body here below.

J.A.P. In the readings in New York on the Assembly, in regard to the passage about which you are speaking, it was said, Eve was a whole new person, another person come into Adam's view. It is beyond me to understand that, but it is Christ and the assembly, is it not?

W.L. That is very helpful. "And he took one of his ribs and closed up flesh in its stead." As far as grammar is concerned there was no need to say "and he slept"; it brings out the glory of the obedient One, the Man who was here in perfect accord with the will of God. There was no resistance to the deep sleep. Then it says, "closed up flesh in its stead". I think that is a careful guarding of the glory of His Deity. "No one knows the Son but the Father," Matt 11: 27 -"closed up flesh in its stead," a careful guarding of His Person. Would that be right?

L.McF. Yes. "The Word became flesh," John 1: 14. Is there a link with what we have here?

W.L. Yes. He came into that condition and that substantial condition remains; the condition of flesh remains. We speak about the condition changed, but the writer to the Hebrews tells us quite clearly that we have access through the veil that is, His flesh (Heb 10: 20).

L.D.P. "Built the rib" - does that have in mind formation; the assembly formed after Christ's likeness?

W.L. Yes. He built the rib that He had taken from Man into a woman. Man was not built, Man was there; the woman was built from that rib. "And Jehovah Elohim built the rib that he had taken from Man into a woman; and brought her to Man." That does not contradict what Paul refers to in Ephesians that He will present the assembly to Himself (Eph 5: 27).

C.F.D. He presents the assembly to Himself glorious, without spot, or wrinkle or any of such things. So the perfection seen in Christ will be seen in the assembly as the Lord presents it to Himself.

W.L. Very fine that. Here in the type she is brought to the Man. That would be, as we were saying, God's consideration for Christ in manhood that He must have a helpmate His like. It may well be that that passage in Ephesians is an allusion to His Deity, "present the assembly to himself". I think there is an allusion to His Deity there.

C.F.D. You mean only a divine Person could do that?

W.L. Does that carry you?

C.F.D. Certainly. He, presenting it to Himself, involves the whole power of what was in Christ from the viewpoint of His Deity. Another has said (I am only repeating) that only a divine Person could do that.

W.L. I think that is fine. These things are very important.

C.F.D. As to this matter of "This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: this shall be called Woman " - the Lord came into a flesh and blood condition, in His manhood here He was in a flesh and blood condition. He died, His blood was shed and in resurrection it is flesh and bones. Is there in any way a link with this? The flesh and bone condition is what is referred to here and He is in flesh and bone condition after the resurrection. Put that together for me.

W.L. Is it not in that condition, although Mary in John 20 did not recognise Him, that He said to her "Woman"? He saw the potential there in Mary and the affections of Mary, and I think the Lord would say there to Himself, if it is not being irreverent, "This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: this shall be called Woman," because He calls her "Woman". He saw there in her the whole assembly, I think.

C.F.D. Does that in any way link with the fact that when the woman was presented to the man he saw himself over again? Now in

resurrection He sees in Mary in principle in type Himself over again. Is that right?

W.L. There is no mention of the blood as we were saying (although John mentions the blood in ch 19: 34) because the blood relates to the moral question, the question of sin and redemption. These are important things - the assembly does not need redeeming. We as individuals need redemption but the assembly as such does not need redeeming because the assembly is sinless. I am not sure if we have grasped that: it is in the good teaching and it is right. The assembly is purchased.

C.F.D. Do you have in mind that the assembly in total represents the finished work of what the Lord has accomplished, and that what is seen in the assembly is marked by perfection. Therefore there is no need for redemption to be applied to the assembly as a vessel.

W.L. As individuals we need redemption but the assembly as an entity does not require to be redeemed. So the passage we have quoted in Ephesians – “having no spot, or wrinkle” and “the washing of water by the word” - does not suggest that the assembly was an unclean vessel and needed to be purified. The service of washing of water by the word is to keep her in a state that properly belongs to her.

J.A.P. What do you say about the passage which says, “to shepherd the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own”, Acts 20: 28 and then what you get in the book of Ruth 4: 10 “have I purchased”.

W.L. That does not relate to the moral issue, the question of sin and sins. It is not a question of sinful history, it is the price that has been paid, “purchased with the blood of his own”. We know there is a difference between purchase and redemption there a difference between ransom and redemption. He gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Tim 2: 6) but all are not redeemed. These are important things to understand.

C.F.D. You want to clarify that; all are not redeemed.

W.L. To break it down further, because of the work of Christ - I suppose it would be the difference between propitiation and substitution - John says, the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. That is as to the whole matter of sin and sins God has been propitiated, but substitution is that if I want to get the gain of that work of Christ Godward, I must lay claim to it by faith for myself. Is that how you understand the truth?

C.F.D. That is good.

W.L. Genesis 24 is another aspect of this thought. Abraham as a type of the Father was seeking a bride for His Son. In Genesis 24, as you know, the aspect is more the journey through the wilderness in the company of the Spirit. In the beginning of the Acts, the incoming of the Spirit, the baptism of the Spirit, which only happened once - there is only one baptism of the Spirit, I think we are all clear? that. Paul says, "For also in the power of one Sp1nt we have all been baptised into one body," 1 Cor 12: 13. That does not mean that every time a person believes there is a fresh baptism of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit was once for all at Pentecost when the body was formed. Anyone who believes since is brought in to what has existed since Pentecost. So this is a journey through the wilderness. The servant is a type of the Holy Spirit. The Lord says in His own ministry, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and will love the other," Matt 6: 24. The servant says Abraham is his master. Then when Isaac comes on to view and Who is the man? Rebecca says, he says, "That is my master! " A wonderful type of the economy, divine Persons in these relative positions They have taken; the Father as supreme, the Lord having taken as Man a relatively inferior position. And then the Holy Spirit is subject to both the Father and the Son.

L.McF. Rebecca would be a product of the Spirit's work during the wilderness journey at the present time.

W.L. Quite so. It is remarkable there is no suggestion of growth with Rebecca. The first time the servant sees Rebecca she is, we might

say, a mature person. He sees in her, even before he knows who she is, the very features he was looking for. The Spirit of God can take account in ourselves the features that are according to God, that are so pleasing to God, assembly features.

J.A.P. What you say regarding the Master is interesting, because there is a reference to the brethren praying in Acts 4 to the Lord (v 24), and Mr Darby's note is 'the master'. From one point of view the Lord is our Master, is He not? The Spirit would help us to accept that. Sarah called her husband lord, that is also said in Scripture. I do not think that is much understood amongst us. Not that we are worthy sometimes for our wives to do that, but there is the idea of subjection which has publicly been lost in the world.

W.L. That is very true. That is a feature that comes out in Rebecca. Bethuel and Laban they were a bit rebellious, "You are not going with this man," just delay ten days, "Let the maiden abide with us some days, or say ten; after that she shall go" - delaying tactics. That is what the enemy is at. He is at that today lest the saints take on the full truth of Christ and the assembly and what the Spirit of God is labouring for. The enemy says, Just delay, you have plenty of time. She says, "I will go".

C.F.D. Is that not very current - just wait a little - not so quick - not just now - a little later on. You find this coming in in relation to the glad tidings. The gospel is presented to men, Christ an object of faith and then to move responsibly in relation to that. It is what we would call the dragging of the feet, we drag our feet. The result is it gives the enemy an opportunity to work.

W.L. That is very true. We were told when we were young, procrastination is the devil's recruiting officer. Put things off and the devil will get you. And it is the same when moral issues crop up among the saints, if they are not taken up rightly, quickly, the situation usually deteriorates and it becomes more difficult to handle and solve. Would that be right?

C.F.D. I fully agree with that.

W.L. So let us be in the spirit of Rebecca, who said, "I will go." This man has a mission and I will be fully in accord with that, "I will go", I will not hinder his mission. He is eager to get back to his master and fulfil his mission. I think we could read into this, The Spirit and the bride say, one word, Come - perfect unison between the Spirit and the bride. And Rebecca comes to that when she says, "I will go."

A.S.H. You spoke earlier as to maturity. Is it right to say that that is seen early with the maiden? When the question is asked she spoke right out, she is a mature person; "I will go."

W.L. He says, 'send me away and I will go to my master.' And they called Rebecca and said to her Wilt thou go with this man? And she said I will go. The very same words the servant had used. You might say, bringing it down to our day, this creature vessel is in perfect accord with the Spirit of God. Now that is the biggest challenge of today that we are in accord; to bring it into Revelation language, when the Lord addresses these churches He does not end up by saying Hear what I am saying, He says, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies."

D.McF. Would you say a word as to the veil and covering herself?

W.L. I think it is comely. That is another feature of the assembly. A feature that is proper to the saints is comeliness and she is showing clearly with the veil that she is exclusively for Christ. Have we come to that? Have I come to it? Have you come to it? Have we all come to that, that we are exclusively for Christ with an eye for no other? "And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, camels were coming. And Rebecca lifted up her eyes. Both Isaac and Rebecca lifted up their eyes and they saw each other, and the veil, as you say, was an indication - "Then she took the veil, and covered herself." She is saying quite clearly, I am exclusively for Isaac. I think it is the beginning of Romans 7, "to be to another" v 4. I think that is in figure what Rebecca came to here. She says I am going to be to another. Would that we were all like that and use that language of Romans 7, we are going to be to another exclusively.

L.D.P. I wondered if Ruth fits in here. It says she was stedfastly minded to go with her (Ruth 1: 18).

W.L. A fine word that, "stedfastly minded". That links with how we began, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". "He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem", Luke 9: 51. In the words of the prophet, "therefore have I set my face like a flint," Isa 50: 7. How stedfast that was, no thought of turning aside.

L.McF. What do you say about the camels? Isaac lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, camels were coming.

W.L. I wondered if we could link that with verse 61, there is Rebecca her maids, the camels and the man, all these elements. The maids would be those who were supportive of Rebecca. That raises the question, Am I a supportive person? Am I a support in my local assembly or am I a hindrance? Am I a trouble-maker? All these things enter into this. The maids would be for Rebecca 's help, not to hinder her. Then the camels, power for movement. There came a point when they were no longer needed; "she sprang off the camel" when she arrived at her destination. We have the comfort of the Spirit on the journey - there comes a time (He will always be with us of course) when the wilderness journey will be over.

A.S.H. Would it be right to say that the camel is the carrying power?

W.L. That is good. Power for transport, for carrying. The end is "And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done." I love to think of communications as to the whole dispensation between divine Persons themselves. The servant told Isaac all things that he had done. What a wonderful thought that is, and it leads to Isaac leading her into his mother Sarah's tent. For the time being Israel is set aside.

C.F.D. It makes you wonder what proceeded amongst divine Persons during the ten days. You think of the Lord ascending and the Spirit did not come until a period of ten days - the communication, what must have been proceeding in heaven at that time.

W.L. How wonderful it must have been! We are not told anything about it. It must have been a wonderful time.

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Key to initials

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THE POTTER, REFINER, WINNOWER AND MERCHANT

William Lamont

Jeremiah 18: 1-4; Zechariah 13: 7-9; Matthew 3: 11,12; 13: 44-46

I want to speak of four things - the potter, the refiner, the winnower and the merchant. We will speak about ways in which God is working, making vessels, refining, winnowing, and as the merchant He has purchased - four important aspects of the work of God.

God presented as the potter is a question of God's sovereignty. I trust we all realise that we are here because of God's sovereignty; it is not on account of merit in you or me that we are where we are. I am not setting aside the side of our responsibility, but I am stressing the side of God's sovereignty. God has taken us up and made vessels out of us. Paul speaks about that, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels," 2 Cor 4: 7. I trust everyone here has a work of God in their soul. You cannot expect too much from the young ones but we can rightly expect a lot from older ones. That is a question of our responsibility. If God takes us up in His sovereignty He expects an answer from us in responsibility. If God blesses us in His sovereignty He expects that we take up a responsible attitude in answer to the way He has taken us up, that is, we act responsibly. Mr Darby was once asked, 'What is Christian responsibility?' His very wise answer was, 'The responsibility of being a Christian'. So if we are Christians, and I trust we all are, we have a responsibility. But first I want to speak of God's sovereignty as to the potter; the word comes to Jeremiah, Arise; that is, do something, be active, do not sit there idle. He says to Jeremiah, Arise, get down to where things are happening, down to the potter's house. Not the potter's factory, you will observe, the potter's house. God is working in a realm of affection, He is working in His house. He wants to draw us into the affections of His house. It is the realm that God is working in today; He wants to draw us into the greatness of the love of His heart - Oh, the heart of God! The illustration has been used that, when we are brought into the kingdom, we are brought into the rule

and influence of God; brought into the city, brought into the sphere of privilege; but if we want to know His heart we have to be brought into His house where we can know Him personally. So the potter here is working in his house. It is very significant that the first vessel was marred. Oh, the tragedy of the fall! We sang of that, 'He saw us ruined in the fall' (hymn 107). The vessel was marred. A terrible thing that was when Adam failed; Adam sinned and the vessel was marred. God had to do a new thing. Not that the Lord Jesus was a creature, far be it, but God began in a new order of man altogether; an order that never failed Him and never would fail Him. And we are privileged to have part in that, taken up in a new way.

So Jeremiah went down to the potter's house and took account of what he saw. It is a wonderful thing in a local meeting to see God working, God in the figure of the potter forming that malleable clay. I trust we are all malleable. Do not be hard. Some of us develop a very hard veneer sometimes, a hard shell. What is underneath it sometimes we wonder. But the clay is malleable, material that God can work with. That is what He is doing at the present time, working with material to form it according to His own thoughts, not according to human thoughts. What a mess men are making of things, I need not expand on. We are not speaking against governments or those in authority, but it is so obvious, things in the world are in a terrible mess. What a mess men have made of things. We have been told and rightly told that everything man touches he ruins. It is the same with the church publicly, the church publicly is in ruin. Why? Because man has interfered with it. The mind of man has entered into it; cathedrals, dress, all these kinds of thing are man's own ideas, religious ordinances and observations, not according to God: Oh, how simple this is when God uses to Jeremiah the figure of a potter in his house. As we said, not a factory, not mass production, one vessel at a time. That is how God is working. He is forming the whole - we will come to that - but He is working with you, and with me. I raise the challenge, dear brethren, to every one, Are we malleable? Are we formable like the clay? Can God take us and form us? Can He work with us or do we have a protective shell

around us? There are instances, like Pharaoh in the olden times, of whom it says God hardened his heart. It proved what kind of man he was; he developed that hard shell and he said, No, I am not going to yield, and he ended in disaster. Dear brethren, if you do not yield to the work of God it will end in disaster, I can assure you of that. Many here have proved that if we do not yield to God it will end only in disaster. It is what has happened to Christendom, men have not yielded to the way God was working, they have opposed. Paul speaks about that, "the opposers" (see Phil 1: 28). It is current today, persons who oppose God, persons who have opposed the truth and have made shipwreck of the faith. "He made it again another vessel," - I like this - "as seemed good to the potter to make." God working for His own pleasure and He found it. O, beloved brethren, He certainly found it, found it in the private life of Jesus, up to the Jordan. The Father's delight in the private life of His Son, "my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." He found it in His public service; on the mount, again He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 17: 5. He found it perfectly in Jesus, a Man of God's pleasure. As He Himself could say, no idle boast but the truth, "Altogether that which I also say to you", John 8: 25. He said also, I do always the things that are pleasing to the Father, (John 8: 29). I challenge myself as to that, do I always do the things that please the Father? We spoke today of the human will in contrast to proving the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 2: 12). Our own wills, if exerted, will lead to disaster. It is evident in the world and it has become evident in certain lives. I repeat, beloved brethren, if I allow my will to work it will end in disaster. It has led to endless troubles, it has led to the disruption of relationships, human relationships, relationships among the saints. Let us submit to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and I am sure we have proved and will prove that blessing will result. It is good, it is acceptable and it is perfect. Well, that is the potter, "as seemed good to the potter to make."

Now I come to the refiner. I almost read in Malachi but this portion in Zechariah portrays a very sad day. The prophetic word,

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts". Who is that? It is obvious that it is a prophetic reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, "the man that is my fellow". I thought of this in the reading: He "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God;" Phil 2: 6. It is a clear statement prophetically by God Himself, "against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow", a clear statement of the Person of Christ. He says, "smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered". Oh, what scattering there has been in this city, in our area. Why? you say. Because human will was active. Persons were acting and speaking and moving out of accord with the mind and will of God. Here we have the refining and the reduction; it comes down to a third. "It shall come to pass in all the land, saith Jehovah, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein." That is a reference to the remnant. I like that positive reference by the Lord to Sardis, "But thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments," Rev 3: 4. I trust we are among those that have not defiled their garments. I suppose everyone knows what your garments mean - your surroundings, what is close to you, what you identify yourself with, what you are known by. You are known by your garments, your associations, what you belong to, what you identify yourself with. The Lord says, But there are a few names left in Sardis; that is Protestantism. I suppose most here would know that, Sardis speaks of Protestantism. Well, there are a third left here. I suppose there has been greater reduction than this. In Gideon's day, thirtytwo thousand reduced and reduced. They were tested and those who lapped like a dog were chosen. A brother left a deep impression on me when I was a young man; he said, These men who lapped like a dog and the others were being tested and did not know it. That is our lives, dear brethren; we are faced with situations, sometimes we shrug them off, sometimes we skip around them instead of facing squarely up to them. We sometimes do not realise that God is testing us. These men were being tested. God says, "The people that are with thee are too many for me" Judges 7: 10, one of the most remarkable statements in Scripture. He did not say to Gideon, There are too many for you, but

They are too many for me, He says. He reduced them. The same with the lepers in the gospel, ten of them, (Luke 17: 17,18). That may be nearer to our own day. In our area it is almost exactly that, one in ten survived in the testimony properly. One returned to give glory to God, that is the test today. What line are we on? Luke is the evangelist but he is not concentrating only on evangelical activity, he concentrates on glory to God. So one leper returned. I am not saying anything against evangelical activity - would that there would be more of it, would that we were more evangelical - but the great end in Luke's gospel, and what the Lord valued, was that one who returned to give glory to God. It is one individual linked on with the testimony, which culminates in the end of Ephesians 3 so brilliantly, so sublimely, "to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen", Eph 3: 21. Is that your main occupation? God has acted for Himself in blessing you and me to the end that we should serve Him. He said that in Egypt, "Let my son go," not to do what he likes, but "let my son go, that he may serve me" Exod 4: 23. That is the end that we are on the line of serving God. So this refiner "I will bring the third part into the fire". That involves discipline. As I look round this room I see brethren who have been the subject of much discipline. It is necessary in our lives; let us accept it, let us accept from God's good hand that it is for our blessing. That scripture in Romans 8 is hard to accept: "all things work together for good to those who love God," v 28. "I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." I understand that the refiner refines and removes the excess that is not properly gold or silver. He gradually clears it off until he can see his own reflection in it. What a remarkable thing! That is God's thought for us; also in Romans 8 "to be conformed to the image of his Son," v 29. God is working in His goodness to bring about persons who are like Christ - that is God's object. So the refiner says, I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. One would speak for one's self, but we are often very coarse; sometimes in our language even, in our habits, our actions, our relationships with one another, but what the Lord is after and the Spirit of God in His sensitivity - the

Holy Spirit is very sensitive, He can be grieved, He can be quenched - is after features of spiritual refinement. Would that there was more of it. I think that is what He is working for today, to bring about in the saints features of spiritual refinement. So the Refiner says, "and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name". Think how Paul opens up that wonderful epistle, 1 Corinthians, "with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," v 2. Do we call on the name of the Lord or do we go on in our own way, seek to move and work out things in our own devices, in our own thoughts, or do we call on the Lord? Like 2 Timothy 2: 22 "those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", those that follow the path of separation, not only from but separation to. As the Lord says in John's gospel, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free ", John 8: 32. The truth sets us free. It has a purifying effect just like the refining. Then He says, "If therefore the Son shall set you free, ye shall be really free", v 36. The Son sets us free, free for another world, because the Son is the Centre of another world. So the refiner is at work here. Then God says, "They shall call on my name, and I will answer them". Think of that time, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow." Think of the time, the three hours on the cross when the Lord Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt 27: 46. He had to bear the whole weight of sin. As we were saying, it affects a holy God but it is also for your blessing and mine. He says here "and I will answer them; I will say, It is my people". How God loves to have people in a relationship with Himself. Then "and they shall say, Jehovah is my God" - the intimacy of it, God saying, "It is my people" and His people say, "Jehovah is my God." How wonderful it is! We can say that, we are in the joy of it; we hear God saying "It is my people". He would look upon us today in this small setting, obscure, secret almost, He would say, "It is my people". Our answer from the heart would be, Jehovah is our God. That is the Refiner. God is working to bring about these features of refinement with us.

Now the winnowing in Matthew. John the baptist is speaking; he is speaking about the axe, "already the axe is applied to the root of

the trees". We sometimes quote it 'to the tree' but it is "to the trees" - every detail, not just a generality but every detail. The axe is applied right to the root so that there is no repetition of the thing. That is the idea of the axe to the root, it will never grow again. If you cut a tree some way up it tends to sprout again, but if you cut the roots it will not reappear. That is what God has done in the death of Christ, finished the whole order of things that cannot yield fruit for Himself. That is what John the baptist is saying; he urges them to repentance. Then he draws attention to Christ, "he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to bear; he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire; whose winnowing fan is in his hand". What a thing that is, hard work, winnowing! We had a reference today to Gideon, he threshed wheat in the winepress - a very unusual thing to do - to preserve the food supply from the Midianites. That is a job we have to do today, in regard to people who are after the food supply, who cut off the food supply. The Lord deals with that in John's gospel, "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me," John 4: 34. The enemy would have cut that off, cut it off at the source; he would prevent communion, would prevent anything that is for the benefit of the saints also - food supply, he would cut it off. "Whose winnowing fan is in his hand", and that is to separate the chaff from the wheat. Matthew deals with that line of things, the wheat and the tares, and the parable of the virgins, the foolish and the wise. Matthew helps us to analyse things and put them where they truly belong, whether it is wheat or chaff, whether it is the work of God or may be the work of the devil. It is important that we learn to do that. Things come up in our lives, come up in local meetings, come up generally among the saints - can you identify the thing where its source is? It is important. Crises come up, what is the source of the thing? And also important, where is it leading? We need to identify these things. So the winnower here shall thoroughly purge his threshing-floor, that is to keep it pure, keep a pure area for the Holy Spirit. That is why He is called the Holy Spirit, to preserve a holy area for God. Then it says, "and shall gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."

I draw attention now to the merchant. God is operating on a wide scale. The field is the world. Think of the scope in which God is operating - a very wide area - in His blessing. But what the merchant is after is the beauty of the pearl. We have been rightly taught that the pearl speaks to us of the assembly, its entity. You can cut a diamond, as we all know, but if you cut a pearl, you will ruin it; it is one beautiful entity. The Lord here is speaking figuratively of the assembly in all her glory. The value of it, not the price exactly - price would suggest something monetary - but its value. "One pearl of great value;" it is not many pearls. This merchant - the Lord is speaking typically of Himself - saw this one pearl of great value. It is like what we had in Genesis, the beauty of the woman, the beauty of the assembly, in all her dignity and glory. Again the pearl, as we know, is formed through suffering and will come to light at the wonderful time of the marriage of the Lamb, "his wife has made herself ready", Rev 19: 7. Then in the eternal setting it is the bride. Oh, the beauty of the assembly; it is wonderful to have part in the greatest of all families. There will be many families, we know, all named of the Father, in heaven and on earth, in the eternal setting. There will be no nations in eternity; there will be nations in the millennium; there will be families in eternity and every one will be named of the Father. Every one will stand in relation to the Father and will be named of Him. What the names will be I do not know - there is so much we do not know. Paul says, "If any one think he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know it", 1 Cor 8: 2. I think that applies to all of us, there is so much we do not know. But we will know, we shall know according as we have been known (2 Cor 3: 2); that is another thing. The greatness of this one pearl will come out in all her beauty in the day of display. It is not yet the day of display. The pearl is formed in secret. You cannot see a pearl being formed, it is inside that oyster in secret, it is that grain of sand, and all the time that oyster is suffering. An entity formed through suffering, that is the assembly. Oh, what suffering there has been right down through the dispensation since Pentecost. Oh the feelings of Paul when he says, Thy martyr Stephen (Acts 22: 20). How Paul's feelings go out. Oh the suffering there has been! In our

area hills are dotted with monuments to martyrs who gave their lives because of their love for the Lord Jesus. It will all come out in the beauty of the one pearl, the assembly in all her glory for the heart of Christ. That is what it is for, for the satisfaction of the heart of Christ. What does He do? His heart satisfied with the assembly He uses that great vessel as a vessel of praise, "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises", Heb 2: 12. I trust we have all been encouraged by these few, simple thoughts, beloved brethren, to the glory of the Potter, the Refiner, the Winnower and the Merchant. For His Name's sake.

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PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

J.D.Gray

Luke 4: 16-22, 24-31; 5: 3-8, 10 ("And Jesus...), 12-14 Acts 3: 6; 4: 8-12; 22: 6-8

The Lord Jesus was brought up in Nazareth. He became known as the Nazaraean. It was not a title or recognition of what was attractive in character to men: it was a term of reproach. When He came to Nazareth on this occasion, Luke records that "he entered, according to his custom, into the synagogue." I suppose He was known there. The Lord would be known in the synagogue at Nazareth. In chapter 2 He was in Jerusalem for the passover and He says, "Did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" We would take it that the Lord was customarily engaged in His Father's business. It says here, "and he entered, according to his custom, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read". It would seem that He had done this before, but I would say to you, friend, He had never done it in the same way before. It is remarkable that He did not ask for the book of Esaias: they gave Him the book of Esaias. I suppose the divine hand was in that.

Why did I say that He had not entered into the synagogue in this way before? Because in chapter 3 verses 21 to 22 it says, "and

Jesus having been baptised and praying, that the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon him; and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight." Then again, in verse 14 of the chapter we have read, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit..." He is a Man anointed by the Spirit. It seems that He went in the power of the Spirit, through Galilee, preaching before He came to Nazareth. I think the Lord is gracious in giving them an opportunity in Nazareth to hear of His works of power which He had done in Capernaum and other places in Galilee.

But He comes into Nazareth where He was brought up. He would be known there. As it says, "and he entered, according to his custom..." He entered in a distinct manner, a Man anointed by the Spirit of God. It would seem as He stood up to read that He was acquainted with that procedure. They gave Him the book. They must have listened to Him before, but not in the same way. There was something distinctive about Him. You marvel. "And all bore witness to him, and wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth." I think God was distinguishing Christ. The Spirit of God was distinguishing Christ. If I could speak with reverence of the Lord. I think there was something added. It says He was anointed by the Spirit. There was added power because it says He "returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee", v 14. There was a Man in the power of the Holy Spirit, although a divine Person in His own right. There is evidence of the distinctiveness of the Lord Jesus in His humanity. He says, "he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; he has sent me to preach to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He is speaking to a people that were under oppression, under the heel of imperial rule. The whole of the world at that time was under imperial rule, the world in which Christ walked and moved. Here was a Person coming in with deliverance. What was going through their mind?

But then they missed the blessing. It is a serious thing to miss the blessing, dear friend. I trust that we will all get blessing from the

word. "And they said, Is not this the son of Joseph?", the carpenter's son. What reasoning! The Lord was known as the carpenter's son. How puny are men in their thoughts! The demonstration of another Man, another kind of humanity, a preaching that would bring about their release, that would bring about healing for men, deliverance, "the acceptable year of the Lord", God coming in on their behalf, yet almost immediately the devil has scope in their hearts. The word of God discerns between "the thoughts and intents of the heart." I do not know what is in your heart; you do not know what is in my heart. The word of God discerns, according to Hebrews 4: 12 "the thoughts and intents of the heart", soul and spirit and thoughts and intents of the heart. The word of God here made apparent what was working in this company of persons.

They could not see past that He was the son of Joseph, the carpenter's son and they missed the blessing. Prejudice came in. The section I read about Elisha in regard to Naaman brings in their prejudice. The Lord brings Naaman in to show that if I miss the blessing, someone else is coming into blessing. If they were going to miss the blessing of the Physician who was in their presence in Nazareth, someone else was getting the blessing. If Israel missed the blessing in Elias's day, the widow woman of Sarepta got the blessing. If the lepers in Israel in Naaman's day missed the blessing, Naaman got the blessing. Oh what a thing it is to be in the presence of the word of God and miss the blessing! We do not want to miss the blessing. We can put up a resistance. We know what that is in ourselves naturally: we put up a resistance to the word. Do not put up a resistance! The "words of grace which were coming out of his mouth" had blessing in mind for man, healing in mind.

Now I come to Peter, and Peter got the blessing. The people of Nazareth missed the blessing. No doubt they spoke of Christ as the Nazaraean, no distinction, nothing in Him that we should desire, no lordliness in Him. The prophetic scriptures bring out the state of our soul: they are a very important section of the Bible. Isaiah 53: 2 says "He hath no form nor lordliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." There was nothing in Christ

that they should desire: to them He was the carpenter's son. They did not enquire any further and they missed the blessing. It was an opportunity for man to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus, to take account of His demeanour, take account of His words, take account of what went out of His mouth, and yet they missed the blessing. They were really saying "He hath no form nor lordliness ... that we should desire him."

But Peter is brought into the presence of Christ. He gets the blessing. The Lord Jesus takes an unusual way to reach Peter. He goes into his boat. "He asked him to draw out a little from the land; and he sat down and taught the crowds out of the ship." But He had someone specific in mind for blessing. The Lord's word is always specific, dear friend. It is never a bow at a venture. It is drawn specifically. When the Lord spoke to the crowds, He had Simon in mind for blessing. He has you in mind for blessing. You may say, I know Christ as my Saviour. Thank God if you know Him as your Saviour! He still has you in mind for blessing. He has in mind to bless you, bless you further. So He says, "Draw out into the deep water and let down your nets for a haul." He says this after He had taught the crowds out of the ship. It does not say what He said. Luke is fastening on the specifics, fastening on the fact that the Lord is interested here in one person, Simon. He is of course interested in others too. The scripture brings forward Simon to help us, to show that the Lord is interested in me and interested in you, each one of us. You count for something, friend. You are of value to Christ. He said to Simon, "Draw out into the deep water and let down your nets for a haul. And Simon answering said to him, Master,..." - he is very respectful: "Master" involves one who has authority over others - "having laboured through the whole night we have taken nothing, but at thy word I will let down the net. And having done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes. And their net broke ... But Simon Peter, seeing it..." What did he see? He saw a great net of fishes. That is what he saw. He had laboured the whole night. He had been out there on the lake of Gennesaret, the sea of Galilee, the whole night, toiling, actually, physically, toiling, and took nothing,

never caught a fish. The sea was full of fishes, but he never caught one. Here is a Person who could fill his net full of fishes. Who is this Person? He did not say, the carpenter's son. Maybe he knew he was the carpenter's son. He was known in Galilee, and this was in Galilee. I am sure he must have known Jesus as the carpenter's son, but he did not say, this is the carpenter's son. He said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord." He gets the blessing. The people of Nazareth missed the blessing. You know, friend, Nazareth at the present time, today, has shrines to where the Lord was brought up. The tourist industry is thriving, but there is no blessing in that. This man, Simon Peter, got the blessing when he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord." Peter was really confessing that he was a leper morally.

That is why I read in the next section as to the leper. Peter was the leper and Jesus met him. The Lord says, "I will; be thou cleansed: and immediately the leprosy departed from him." He was cleansed. The Lord has had to handle us, dear friend, and cleanse us from our leprosy. I suppose we know that in Scripture leprosy is the evidence, typically, of sin in the flesh, the working of the poison in our system. Sin in the flesh brings about rebellion in us to the will of God. The people of Nazareth really were in that state, in rebellion to the will of God. It was really a leprous state. They did not avail themselves of the Physician who was available to heal their leprosy, but Peter recognised that there was someone there who could control the fishes, someone there who was greater than what He appeared. God was there. Peter recognised that God was there. He had control over the creation.

The curing of leprosy is a divine prerogative so the Lord says to the leper, "Go, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing as Moses ordained, for a testimony to them." How gracious He was! "Go, shew thyself to the priest": I suppose that would be in the temple. Here was a man cleansed from his leprosy. Who cleansed his leprosy? God. It was the evidence that God was there, God was among them. He was more than the carpenter's son. Jesus the Nazaraean was more than the carpenter's son. He could heal him of

his leprosy. What would the priest think? When the leper is to be cleansed in Leviticus 14, the blood is put on the tip of the right ear and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot. What would he think in relation to the cleansing of the leper? What was being enacted was a demonstration of how Jesus the Nazaraean had the power to heal the leper and establish man in all the dignity that belonged to God. Friend, if you have to do with the Lord Jesus regarding your sins and your sin, He would have you to know what cleansing is, what it is to be clear of it. And there is a power He gives you to help you to be established here in the scene where you were once a leper. He does not bring you out of the scene where you were once a leper immediately. He leaves you in that scene, the scene in which you were a sinner, where you walked in sin and obeyed its lusts. He leaves you in that scene but He gives you the power to walk now, no longer as under the bondage of sin, but dignified, in the power of the Holy Spirit, which, in type, the cleansing of the leper involved.

He was anointed with oil. I like that touch in Leviticus 14, "And the remainder of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put upon the head of him that is to be cleansed", v 18 (pour it over the head of the leper) as if God delighted to anoint the man after the blood had been put upon him. Why, after the blood? Only Christ was anointed with the Spirit in manhood before His death. Every other person is anointed with the Spirit on account of the shed blood of Christ having brought in moral cleansing, cleansing us from our sins. After that we can be anointed with the Spirit and with power. That is a wonderful thing. So He brings this in as to the cleansing of the leper and that is Peter, so one man got the blessing. Have we, each, received the blessing? Wonderful thing to have the blessing!

Peter says in chapter 3 of the Acts, "Silver and gold I have not; but what I have, this give I to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean rise up and walk." Remarkable that he brings in the Nazaraean! He might have said, 'In the name of Jesus Christ rise and walk.' The Lord must have been known as the Nazaraean and Peter was showing that whatever the scorn and reproach was

concerning Christ and His crucifixion, there was power in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean to heal. So Peter says in chapter 4 before the whole Sanhedrim, the Jewish court, the religious court "If we this day are called upon to answer as to the good deed done to the infirm man, how he has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that "in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean, whom ye have crucified" - that must have reached their consciences, "ye" emphatic - "whom God has raised from among the dead, by him this man stands here before you sound in body." Friend, the name of a dead man effects nothing. They thought Christ was dead. They did not believe in the resurrection. What this brings out is the power of Jesus the Nazaraean as a living Man out of death, "whom God has raised from among the dead, by him this man stands here before you sound in body." It was the confirmation and affirmation that Christ was out of death, a living Man! Power is associated with life - "whom God has raised from among the dead." That is when the change took place. They crucified Him. They thought that was the end. What power was there in the name of a crucified man? - none! But there is power in the name of a Man who is out of death, a living Man, who is available. It is Christ's power - (it is not the power of Peter and John) - transmitted from heaven to heal the lame man at the gate of the temple.

God would have us to be those who can walk. Walking with God is a wonderful matter. God came into the garden in the cool of the day and walked in the garden. He wanted man to walk with Him. He did not find man suitable to walk with. Now, through the work of Christ, there are men who can walk with God, women who can walk with God, children who can walk with God, young people who can walk with God. How? Because they have been healed through the power of the name of the Nazaraean. "This man stands here before you sound in body." What a thing that is to be "sound in body"! Cured from leprosy, cured from the power of sin in the flesh working in your members, and become in subjection to Christ. What a relief! In Nazareth the people missed it. What a thing to think of that! They missed it, missed salvation, so near to them and yet they missed it.

They were in the presence of the One who had the authority to heal them and missed it. But we do not want to miss it. Peter says, "He is the stone which has been set at nought by you the builders which is become the corner stone. "And salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved." Only one name! Whatever may be said in comparative religions of this world, is of no avail. There is only one name, only one glad tidings and that concerns the name of the Lord Jesus the Nazaraean. There may be reproach attached to it, but there is power attached to it.

In Acts 22, Saul of Tarsus (Paul) says, with respect to his conversion, "There suddenly shone out of heaven a great light round about me. And I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said to me, I am Jesus the Nazaraean, whom thou persecutest." Remarkable that the Lord should take that name! Of course it is associated with those on the earth who were His - "I am Jesus the Nazaraean, whom thou persecutest." He was persecuting the saints, and the Lord identifies Himself with them. Paul says in chapter 26, "I indeed myself thought that I ought to do much against the name of Jesus the Nazaraean", v 9. That was the line he was on, "against the name of Jesus the Nazaraean." That would be the name expressed in persons. How the Lord identifies Himself with His saints! The Lord says in this chapter, "I am Jesus the Nazaraean." Paul sought to do much against the name of Jesus the Nazaraean. Do you know something about Jesus the Nazaraean? Have you ever met Him? What an experience in life when you meet Jesus the Nazaraean, not in His flesh and blood condition. You meet Him as the One who is in power. This is Christ in power, no longer in humiliation. "I am Jesus the Nazaraean, whom thou persecutest." Paul was met by Christ in glory. What a distinction! He did not see Him in His humiliation. The Lord does not say, I am Jesus who am all-powerful or in glory. He says, "I am Jesus the Nazaraean." It is the same Person. Oh, friend, if you come into submission, you will find that He is the great Physician.

He is the Healer. He can heal every state of soul. He can deal with every problem we have, every thought we have, every concern we have. He has not changed. If He met a Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road tonight, He would still say, "I am Jesus the Nazaraean, whom thou persecutest." He is taking account of persons opposed to His saints, but He is available to His saints. We are in the day of reproach, of shame and suffering and scorn. There will be persons here who feel that. We all feel that in our various circumstances. Some may feel it more than others, the reproach of the Christ. He feels it with you, dear friend. The Lord Jesus feels it with you. "I am Jesus the Nazaraean whom thou persecutest." If you are persecuted for Christ's name's sake, He feels it with you. Thank God if you have known what it is to be healed and then the blessing that He would pour into you. The words of grace that came out of His mouth did not fall to the ground. What He gives in the glad tidings is not spilled on the ground like water that cannot be collected. It finds its entrance into vessels, to our vessel. How blessed He is! He would give us a word that would encourage us in the scene of the testimony. May it be so for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

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