

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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IS IT REAL?

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Psalm 90: 1-4, 11, 12; Hebrews 11: 6 (from "... For he that draws near);

1 John 1: 1-4; 1 Corinthians 3: 16, 17; 6: 19, 20

Some of us have been impressed of late and challenged by the question as to whether things are *real* with us, and I raise that question as to how real things are with each one of us. We can know the terms; we can know the scriptures; we can know the ministry. Does it bring to us what is *real*, or is it just something which might be laid hold of academically, so that we know the terms and maybe outwardly we answer to the terms and have an appearance of what we should be? Or is it *real*?

So I read in Psalm 90 as to God Himself, in the light of what it says in Hebrews that everyone that comes to God "must believe that he is". In one sense, you might say that is a paradox because you would not come to someone if you did not believe that they were there. It says, "For he that draws near to God must believe that he is", but I believe that in the words "that he is" there would be a reference to the name by which He made Himself known to His people of old, the "I AM". So those that have come to God in past ages have believed "that he is", and we who are privileged to draw near to God "believe that he is", the same God, unchanged. We have spoken of things that have come in in Christianity which are unchanged, that are going through, but it is all because God Himself is unchanged. It says in the Psalm of Moses, the man of God, "from eternity to eternity thou art God". "Before the mountains were brought forth, and thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from eternity to eternity thou art God". There is another glorious name by which He was known, "thou art the Same", (Nehemiah 9: 6), and we need, beloved, to remember that in the light of all that we know of God according to the scriptures. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" We have a word that we could have read in

Hebrews, “For also our God” – “our God”, not a different God, the same God – “is a consuming fire”, (chap 12: 29). He is no different, and how do we know the power of His anger? It was seen at the cross, the unmitigated wrath of God falling upon the head of my Saviour when He cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matt 27: 46. Where would we have been were it not for that cry, and who knew God like that blessed Man, being who He was in His Person and yet a real man? And God’s unmitigated wrath falling upon the head of my Substitute so that I might draw near to God and know Him as a Priest who “is able to save completely those who approach by him to God”, Heb 7: 25. Let us be sobered, dear brethren. Dear young people, I would appeal to you particularly to be sobered because this is the God with whom we have to do. How we joy to sing:

Our God, we bless thee for Thy love
Made manifest in Jesus (Hymn 456)

How He has drawn near to us in the Person of His only begotten Son! It is the God who “so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal”, John 3: 16. But it is the same God. We are to be sobered by these things, but I think it would help us in our conduct, in the fear of God. Beloved Mr. Renton of this city left a legacy with us, I believe, in the south. At the last fellowship meeting with him, as I recall, he spoke to us about the fear of God. He said God’s eye is ever upon us. Indeed Job, if I may say aside, refers to Him as the “Observer of men”, (chap 7: 20). But the fear of God, our brother said, is the consciousness of His eye upon us. Would it not make a difference to the things that you do and the way that you do them, and where you go, if you thought that the eye of God was upon you, preserving you in His fear? “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom”, (Prov 9: 10), and you will find that there is resource with God in order that you might walk here so as to please Him.

I pass on to John. How *real* is *Jesus* to us? How real is He? John is particularly concerned that we might have the joy of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus as He was here. He is not here now;

He is in the glory. God has “highly exalted him”, as we read in the earlier occasion, “and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ...” – I trust every knee here has bowed to Jesus – “and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father’s glory”, Phil 2: 9-11.

Does everyone here own Him as Lord? “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, “Rom 10: 9. That would be “to God the Father’s glory”, God Himself being the great end in it all. He has “washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1: 5), and we are “built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit”, Eph 2: 22. God is the great end in all His operations.

But John is concerned that we should know what a real man He was. So he speaks of “that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life”. It is not a capital ‘W’ here but no doubt in John’s mind he would be thinking of what he wrote, or was to write, in his gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. *He* was in the beginning with God”, John 1: 1,2. Glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in flesh! John said He was *real*, so real that they could see Him and hear Him and even handle Him. He says Himself, “Handle me and see”, Luke 24: 39, but that was out of death. There was a time when He would say, “Touch me not”, John 20: 17, no longer to have relationships with them in a way that He had as being among them, the lowly Jesus, in His pathway here, but now the One who was to ascend to His Father and our Father, to His God and ours. And as coming in, as the ascended Man, who could limit where He had been? He could say, “Bring thy finger here”, John 20: 27. He could say to Thomas, suggestive of the unbelieving Jew and his conviction in the coming day: “And the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us”. We speak of eternal life, do we not, as an order of

relationship and being? Oh the wonder of it, the relationship that we see there! “And Jesus lifted up his eyes on high and said, Father”, John 11: 41. What a relationship! And, beloved, He has gone right through in relation to the great matter of sin which had come in to bring in distance between God and His creature, so that you might have the same blessed relationship. He the only-begotten, you taken on by adoption, that you might be able to cry, “Abba Father”.

How wonderful these things are and they are *real*. He was a *real* Man and He is a *real* Man in the glory. The Holy Spirit is here to bear witness to Him, but He has been seen there. Stephen could say, “Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God”, (Acts 7: 56), a real man. Jesus is *real*, beloved. He is not an historic Jesus. He was here in blood and flesh, but, of course, as to His Person, we cannot limit Him, being one with the Father and the Spirit, in relationships unknown to human mind, “from eternity to eternity”. “In the beginning was the Word”. I like what we were reminded of once as to Him, that He was in the beginning before the beginning began. We cannot compass these things. We are finite. Our minds are limited by time. Oh the glory of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ and yet a real man!

“That which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us”. Their fellowship, the apostles’ fellowship, was something distinctive as they were here in the days of the life of Jesus on earth. Paul could speak, as has been said, in a distinctive way as to what has “shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”, 2 Cor 4: 6. It has been said it was a *direct* shining as to the apostles, actually, personally, you might say, shining out from that blessed Man into the hearts of the apostles “for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. It is a shining out now in the gospel, having come down to us. That was their fellowship. “And these things write we to you that your joy may be full”. Is your joy full, dear fellow believer? I believe our joy would be more full if Jesus were more real to us. “That your joy may be full”. Does Satan bring in doubts? I know what that is. Who does

not? But if Jesus is real to us, the Holy Spirit of God is in us to bear witness to His place in glory and “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” (1 John 4: 4), that our joy may be full in the knowledge of the place that He has secured for us and where God regards us even now as in Christ before Him. How wonderful these things are, beloved! They are *real*. And He is real. His sufferings were real. His death was real. His precious blood that flowed from His riven side was real and its value abides, as John says later: “and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin”, 1 John 1: 7. It is *real*. Do you get doubts as to that sometimes? Can you

... point to the atoning blood

And say, This made my peace with God (Hymn 357)?

It is real. All these things are real. I do not apologise for stressing it because they can so easily become academic with us, something that we have known from our mother’s knee, and we can recite the scriptures, quote them, tell people about Jesus. But is it *real*? Is your joy not only full in the knowledge of your Saviour and what He has done for you, but in what He has done for God to bring you to God, that God might find His pleasure in you where once you were far in the distance in sin?

The Holy Spirit is real. Paul had to raise the question. Would he have to raise the question here with any? “Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God?” It refers to the inner shrine. The inner shrine was where the very presence of God was known, the God whom we were speaking of at the beginning, the God who is “from eternity to eternity”. But we are “built together”, as we read in Ephesians 2, “for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (v.2), “the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you”. “If any one corrupt the temple of God, *him* shall God destroy”. They are challenging words. There is no qualification. And yet some of us were reminded at a meeting earlier in the week, “If thou, Jah, shouldest mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared”, Ps 130: 3,4. Oh that we might be preserved in the sense that His eye is upon us and conduct ourselves accordingly, not with slavish fear, but with reverent fear of

the God with whom we have to do. And He dwells in His temple by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is here. "Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God?" It could be said of Corinth, before the breakdown publicly had come in but, characteristically, as we seek to walk in the light of the assembly, this is the truth that the Holy Spirit is here in our comings together. How do we conduct ourselves? How do we come? There are reasons why we might be late, but surely it would affect our punctuality if at all possible. How do we deport ourselves? As Mr. Taylor said, would we sit in the assembly as we sit in a railway station? All very practical. "Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" How do we dress? How do we come together in the light of the assembly of God which has not broken down, which is "the pillar and base of the truth" (1 Tim 3: 15), finding its expression in our local companies?

Paul goes on to say in chapter 6, "Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God?" In John's epistle he speaks of the Spirit which we have, "that he has given to us of his Spirit" (1 John 4: 13), that is His own Spirit. We have it of God. "And ye are not your own". What are you going to do with your body? That is what Paul is at here. I know it is in relation to a specific sin, but what do we do with our bodies? Where do we take them? What do we engage them with? It is no part-time matter, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

I do not apologise, I say again, for being plain because this is the truth. The truth is to control and govern us among other things. How it would make Christianity simple for us! That is how I like to think of these things. They seem very profound but, as accepted in dependence upon the Lord Jesus and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, how simple it makes Christianity! You do not need a book of rules as to where you can go and what you can do and how you should behave. This in itself is sufficient so that in a sense you can just be a simple Christian. Did I refer earlier to what I came across in Mr. Darby, 'What is a Christian'? It is one of whom it says in the second epistle, "Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle", 2 Cor 3 :2,3.

“Christ’s epistle”, Christ written upon you so that what is seen is Christ and that man – that was judicially removed from before God at the cross and put out of His sight in the grave – that man is gone. “If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth”, Col 3: 1,2. It makes Christianity very simple. So I appeal again to the young. If it is a question of whether you can do this or that, whether you can go here or there, can you take the Spirit of God with you? It is not anything part-time. “Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own? For ye have been bought with a price”. Oh the price with which you have been bought! What it has cost Him! We sang in the hymn:

‘Twas all for us – our life we owe,
Our hope, our crown of joy, to Thee;
Thy suff’ring in that hour of woe –
Thy vict’ry, Lord – hath made us free. (Hymn 437)

Free for what? Free to do our own thing? Far be the thought! To be free for God that there might be that “known and read of all men”, Christ written upon us, so that what should be coming into evidence is Christ.

I confess, beloved, that what I am saying is a very searching matter to myself. I do not hold up myself as an example. I should be able to. It would give more power to the word if I could, but “the word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword”, Heb 4: 12. It has been said that it does not have a handle so that, if you handle it, it cuts you. I feel the edge of the word, beloved, but I just leave it with you. Are these things *real* because if they were, it would make a tremendous difference? May God bless the word!

EDINBURGH

18 August 2001

“WHERE NO WOOD IS ...”

Kenneth Pye

Proverbs 26: 20; John 1: 9-14; 2 Timothy 3: 14-17

We read this chapter in Proverbs locally on Thursday night and I was affected by this verse, “Where no wood is, the fire goeth out; and where there is no talebearer, the contention ceaseth”. Sometimes there are lots of stories told, sometimes we say things, speak about things – are they profitable? Man after the flesh likes to live on gossip. You just need to look at the newspapers and you can see that – gossip, talebearers, just saying things. If nobody tells any tales, the contention ceaseth. If there are not tales, if there are only facts there is no contention because facts cannot be refuted. The problem occurs where there is talebearing. But that is not what I want to talk about from these verses.

What I want to talk about is “where no wood is, the fire goeth out”. I would like to apply this to the work of God in you and if you do not feed it, the fire is going to go out. Do not let the work of God be hindered in any way; you need to feed it, it needs to be fed with wood. What is wood? It is the manhood of Christ, that blessed holy One who came into manhood’s form. He took that upon Himself – “Having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself”, Phil 2: 8.

Oh what wood was seen there! That is the wood that you need to feed the fire with so that it does not go out. Do not allow that fire to go out, keep it burning by feeding on Him. Do not feed on anything else. There are so many things in the world that the enemy would make attractive, so many things that we can feed on. The enemy would try and allure you, try and take you away with something else so that you are not feeding on Christ. What is your occupation? Is your occupation with Christ? You say, I go to all the meetings. Well, that is fine, but what about when you are not in the meeting? What about when you are not with the brethren, what about when you are on your own? Is your occupation with Christ? Make sure you keep the wood on the fire – “Where no wood is the fire goeth out”. It needs to be fed and fed the right kind of material.

I read in John to show that, because here the disciples were confused. Oftentimes we get very confused. Here the Lord had been with them; they had enjoyed these three and a half years, they had Jesus to turn to at every instance. When there was a storm on the sea and they were upset; what did they do? They find Jesus sleeping on the ship, they go and get Jesus. They had a reliable source of supply and solution for every exigency; there was a solution because Jesus was there. But now they are tested, and so are we, dear brethren, we are tested because the Lord is no longer here corporeally, He is not here physically. It speaks earlier about Simon Peter, he “girded his overcoat on him for he was naked, and cast himself in the sea”, John 21: 7. He was away looking for fish, he could not find any; then Jesus appears and the answer was there. Dear brethren, how much room do we make for Jesus? That is where we find all the answers to everything that we have a problem with individually, collectively, or household-wise. The answer is to look to Christ, the perfect Man, the Man we spoke of in the reading who was wholly dependent on His Father. Are we relying on Him, are we feeding on Him? Verse 7 says; “That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It is the Lord”. Here is a man who knew Him. I think John was feeding on the humanity of Christ, he was feeding on that Man who had come, that Person, the Son of God who had come in manhood’s form. One who had never deviated one iota from the perfect righteousness of God. That is the One that John was feeding on, and as a result he is able to recognise Him. So what did they find? They find there is a lack. If we make room for Jesus, make room for Christ in our lives, there will be no lack. You say, how did this fire get there? How did they know there were going to be fish there? How was there going to be food? They had fished all night and caught nothing. The Lord had said put the net on the right side of the ship, and there they come, all these fishes, and when they get to the fire some fish are already there. Jesus has an abundant supply, but we have to partake of it – “where no wood is the fire goeth out”. If we do not take the food we will perish. People go on starvation diet; some people in prisons, they go on a water diet, that is all they take, water. They are starving

themselves. What happens? They weaken and weaken and weaken. "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out". That is true of the natural element. What is happening to the work of God in you?

What is happening to the work of God in me? Is it growing, or is it going to die? "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out". Let us not allow that to happen, let us make sure we are feeding it, feeding it with Christ. Here is the fish, it was there. The sovereignty of God is there and it should be known by each one of us. God in His sovereignty has chosen you, He has chosen each one of us. Coals, a fire of coals, a hundred and fifty-three fishes. People talk about having a barbecue; are you going to have a barbecue with a hundred and fifty-three fishes, not just small fishes, great fishes. What a fire that must have been! What is available is the hand of Christ Jesus who is able for every exigency! He is able for everything that may occur in your life, He can take care of it, but you have to depend on Him. You have to come to it that it is the Lord. That is what John said, he said to Peter, "It is the Lord". And if you make room for Jesus you will find all these other things will be put in their place.

What did Peter do? He immediately put his coat on and cast himself into the sea. Why? Because he knew it was the Lord. Do we make room for the Lord in our lives, in everything we do, everything? Not just when we come to the meeting. We need to do that, too, of course, but in everything we do, do we make room for the Lord? Do we look for Him in our circumstances? If you bring Him into your circumstances you find that everything will be under control. Why? Because you are feeding on the right kind of food.

Do not be occupied with other things, do not be occupied with all these things the enemy would seek to occupy you with. Some things you might enjoy naturally, the enemy knows that; do not be over-occupied with these things. We have to be righteous, there are things that have to be done, but let us not be over-occupied with them, let us be occupied with feeding on Christ, the right kind of food.

So here is this fire of coals and fish laid on it, and bread. He says, "I am the bread of life", John 6: 35. There He is, He is the One

who is to be fed upon by each one of us. We need to feed on what He has gone through, what He went through in suffering, what He went through as He went into death. Then He says, "Bring of the fishes which ye have not taken". What have you wrought in your experience, day by day, that you can bring for food? What impression of Christ have you had? You go through the wilderness setting, you come across circumstances, what of Christ do you learn from them? Do you learn anything of Christ out of the circumstances in which you are, and find that there is something there that can be fed upon, something there that can be enjoyed because it is of that character of man. "Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken".

Peter toiled all night and caught nothing. He cast the net to the other side of the ship and it was almost broken. Do we recognise Jesus in our circumstances? Things happen in your life and you say, why is this happening to me? Where is the Lord? Look for Him. We mentioned that in the reading, go into your closet and ask the Father in secret so that you may find out where the Lord is. Let Him into your circumstances and you will find that there is an answer, there is something to be secured for His glory. Here they have a hundred and fifty-three fishes; they are available now, and it would indicate the sovereignty of God. What does Jesus say? He says, "Come and dine". It is not just a 'push-me-by'! Sometimes you end up with a 'push-me-by'. You drive along the road and you need something to keep you going – a snack – but this is, "Come and dine", the fulness of God's thoughts. Christ is available, not just as a 'push-by' but it is a complete meal, "Come and dine", enjoy and enter into it.

How much you can enjoy by partaking of Christ because you are built up, and there is sustenance for the soul as we feed on that blessed One. None of them dared to enquire, "Who art thou?" because they knew it was the Lord. Well, we need to know the Lord in our circumstances. Jesus comes and takes the bread and gives it to them, and in like manner the fish. How fine that is, to experience being served by the perfect Servant, the perfect Bondman, the One who did everything to satisfy the heart of God. How He would long to feed each one of us. He would love to feed each one of us with what is of Himself. What perfect humanity, what a pathway He laid

out in example for us, “I do always the things that are pleasing to Him”, John 8:29. Always. “Did ye not know that I ought to be occupied with my Father’s business?”, Luke 2:49. There He was constantly occupied in His Father’s things. We need to feed on Him because “Where no wood is, the fire goeth out”. Let us not let that fire go out. Let us feed on Christ. The fire, you might say, was diminishing with Peter. There he was, “I go to fish”, the fire was diminishing. But it was rekindled, because he fed on Christ. Let us feed on Him, let us be found being served by Him. How He wants to serve us, how He wants to give us food. He gives us food, but He says, “Come and dine”. The food is there, are we going to partake of it? If you do not come to the table you do not get the food. You have to come to the table, you have to come and dine. We have to partake of it ourselves. We referred earlier to Jairus’ daughter in Luke’s gospel. It says, “He commanded something to eat to be given to her”, Luke 8: 55. Food is necessary so that the fire keeps going. “Where no wood is the fire goeth out”. We need to feed on the humanity of Christ, the One who has done everything in perfection, in manhood, for God. He has done it and He alone has done it. But the characteristics of that blessed One can be found in us as we partake of that food that He would supply.

I just refer to Timothy, because he was a young man who was exhorted to abide in the things which he had learned. This was so that the fire would not go out. He was exhorted to “abide in those things which thou hast learned, and of which thou hast been fully persuaded, knowing of whom thou hast learned them”. Timothy learned things from Paul, and he has to abide in them, he has to know something of what is of Christ in Paul. Paul says, “Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11: 1) – not what is of the flesh, Timothy was not to become like Paul after the flesh. He was to become like Paul as Paul was like Christ, and that is so for each one of us. We are to become like Christ, not like anyone else, but we have to see where we have learned them, “knowing of whom thou hast learned them”. Do we know something of that, it is Christ Himself. Where do we learn things? We learn things at His feet.

Mary sat at His feet, listening to His word. How fine that is, to listen to His word, and then to abide in these things. Not just to let them go, not just for a passing glance – well I will do that when I go to the meeting – abide in these things, that means it is taken on, it is characteristic and then day by day that is how you live. It becomes something that is characteristic in each one of us and we become as those in Antioch were, Christians, those that were first called Christians in Antioch. They were like Christ. Are we more and more like Him as the days progress? To become more and more like Christ is a challenge for each one of us. To become more like Him we need to abide in these things, abide in the things that we have learned “and of which thou hast been fully persuaded”. “Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted”, 2 Tim 1: 14. The work of God in our hearts, we have been entrusted with it. What am I doing with it? We have been entrusted with the work of God placed in our hearts and affections. Am I smothering it or am I putting wood on it, because where no wood is the fire goeth out. We do not want the fire to go out. We want to allow that fire to continue burning. “Was not our heart burning in us as he spoke to us on the way” (Luke 24: 32) – these two on the way to Emmaus recognised that their hearts were burning. Why? Because they were feeding on Christ, they were making room for Jesus in their hearts and affections and their hearts were burning. There was a fire there because they made room for that blessed One as He spoke to them from the Scriptures, “having begun from Moses and from all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself”, Luke 24:27. They were feeding on Christ. Do we feed on Christ? It is so easy to feed on other things, to be occupied with other things. Let us make sure we are using the right kind of wood, the right kind of wood so that the fire does not go out. So here is one “that from a child ...hast known the sacred letters”. We spoke in the reading about encouraging the young ones to read – even though you do not understand, keep reading. “From a child thou hast known the sacred letters”. It speaks earlier about what was in his mother, “calling to mind the unfeigned faith which has been in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in

thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim 1: 5), unfeigned faith. There is something that is being fed. I think Timothy was feeding that unfeigned faith, and he knew the sacred letters. How fine it is to lay hold of these things, “able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus”. It is not just knowledge, knowledge puffs up (see 1 Cor 8: 1). It is not just knowledge, it is the sacred letters which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. So it is all in Christ, everything is in Him. Where do we learn more about Christ?

We learn more about Him in the Scriptures, that is where we learn about Christ. The Man in the gospels, the glory of that blessed One, the manhood of that One shining through in everything that He did, the perfection of His walk, to satisfy the desires of His Father. They way that He was occupied in doing good and healing the sick and bringing men to an appreciation of what God had in mind for them.

How fine it is to know the sacred letters! Take these things on because they are able to make us wise but it is through faith which is in Christ Jesus. It is not a mental thing, it is something we have to give our hearts to. It is a heart matter. We have spoken of that as far as the Proverbs are concerned. It is always the heart. Solomon wrote the Proverbs but he asked for a wise and understanding heart. That is where it is to begin, where our hearts are occupied with Christ as Timothy would show us, one who had known the sacred letters. Every scripture is divinely inspired. You cannot go wrong reading the Scriptures. Every scripture is divinely inspired – every single one, and profitable. We need to be exercised to read what is profitable, “profitable for teaching”, so we can learn, learn more of that blessed One. Learn more of what He is for God, what He means for God. If we know what He means for each one of us He will mean more to each of us. He will be the One who would be magnified in our hearts. Then it is “for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”. We need to be convicted of things.

We spoke about the eunuch. He was convicted by reading the Scriptures, and he was corrected on the pathway that he was on, “for he went on his way rejoicing”, Acts 8: 39. He was a different man. I think that is what the Scriptures would do, bring in conviction and

correction, and then instruction in righteousness, so that we can be occupied in doing the things of God, so that “the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work”. Well, it is available for each one of us, those that are complete, complete as to qualification (see note ‘b’, v.17). There is no doubt as to what this man of God is able for, “fully fitted to every good work”. What are the qualifications? It involves holding fast what thou hast, abiding in those things which thou hast learned. “Hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown”, Rev 3: 11. That is what the Spirit says to the assemblies. “Where no wood is, the fire goeth out”. Let us keep that fire burning, let us keep the work of God active at the present moment. If we do not grow the work of God in our heart and affections now it will never grow. It does not grow in eternity, it grows now, so we have to feed it now and we need to feed it with Christ, feed it with the humanity of that blessed One, the One who came into manhood’s form, and did everything to satisfy the heart of God. The One who “loved righteousness and ... hated lawlessness”, Heb. 1:9. Let us make sure that that is the food we are partaking of so that the fire continues to burn. We want the fire to burn strongly so there is an answer for the glory of God, so that the man of God may be complete, complete in all his qualifications. He has done everything that is necessary, he abides in those things, and there is that secured for God so that he is fully fitted to every good work. So he can appear before God. It says, “none shall appear before me empty”, Exod 34: 20. The vessels are full as they go in before God. Why? Because Christ is there, the great High Priest. He is there, and whatever little we may have, it is enough. Maybe we have just two small fishes. The little boy had five loaves and two small fishes, but it was enough. Why? Because it was in the hands of Christ. As we go in before God, the great High Priest is there, Christ is there, and God sees everything through that blessed One, in perfection. No matter what problems you and I may have, there is perfection in that. The testing time is now. What are we doing? What are we feeding on? We must keep the fire burning. “Where no wood is, the fire goeth out”. Let us make sure we feed on Christ and we grow in

these things, and we abide in these things so that there is an answer to satisfy the heart of God. May it be so for His Name's sake.

TORONTO

30 June 2001

DESCENDING

Charles Remmington

Ephesians 4: 9, 10

Paul the writer to the Ephesians is speaking here of the Lord Jesus, the One who has descended – descending, Paul could say here, to the lower parts of the earth. He could also speak of Him as the One who has ascended, One who has ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.

I desire this afternoon to speak a little as to what descends from heaven. As we read the scriptures I think we can see that the greatest descending of all was the descent of the Lord Jesus as coming down to this scene in which we are. How beautifully Mr. Darby put it in his hymn with which we began:

We see thee, Lord of glory,
Descending from above,
And learn the wondrous story
Of God come down in love.

O love, all thought surpassing!
That Thou shouldst with us be,
Nor yet in triumph passing,
But human infancy! (Hymn 188)

I would like to pause for a second and consider this. The One who was so great, so glorious, on an equality with God, should be found here, as Mr. Darby puts it 'in human infancy'. As I have been considering what has descended from heaven, I would desire to draw upon other scriptures to illustrate what I have in mind. What descends out of heaven, as I see it, is what is gentle and what is feeling, and what is of benefit to mankind. Think of the benefit of what has come about from the descending of the Lord Jesus to be here in fashion as a man, taking His place as a man, as a humble servant.

The contrast is that which falls out of heaven. You can read in the scriptures that which falls out of heaven. One would delight just to make the contrast with that. Think of the way in which Isaiah speaks of that. "How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer", Isa 14: 12. There was one aspiring to be as great as God and Isaiah could see him fallen from heaven. "How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer". Think of the activity of sin, dear brethren! The activity of Satan. How there was sin in the universe before there was sin in the world. Think of how Satan could fall. We can see from Revelation too, the sign of the seventh seal being opened (see Rev 9: 1).

Remember those seals in Revelation and the judgment that falls upon the earth. You get the seventh seal and the fifth angel sounded his trumpet. John was able to see a star fallen to the earth, and locusts came forth out of the pit. Think of that which is spiritual but satanic in character, that which has fallen to the ground. I draw upon these things to make the contrast between what is fallen and what has descended. Think of the activity this afternoon, we say sadly, the activity of this scorpion-like character, the locusts. The seventh seal was opened and then the awful judgment that fell upon this earth. There have been others before. These judgments are perhaps not so far away from us. They are nearer than perhaps we realise, and then those locusts with a sting of a scorpion will be let loose upon the earth tormenting men so that they sought death but could not find it.

You might wonder why I am saying these things but think of the activity of Satan, the activity of the devil. Let me tell you, his activity is very real. How many persons go down certain routes or channels and they suddenly find, to use an expression, that there is a sting in the tail. It is a scorpion character of the work of the devil. You might say, well where do you see it? You see it on every hand. You see it in the colleges, the schools, the universities, in the homes through various means. What we will say this afternoon perhaps to the older persons is, pray for the children, pray for those that are younger.

The activity of such a one as I am speaking of as having fallen out of heaven is everywhere. Pray for them, pray for the children of the

saints certainly but pray for the children of families of people all around. They need our prayers. They are subject to influences that are terrible, that are of the scorpion character, as of the devil in essence. He is very busy. But one would desire just to leave that, for his end is surely a terrible end. Think of the way in which that one I am speaking of, Satan himself, will be taken and will be bound. He will be bound for a thousand years. But at the end of that time he will be loosed, just for a little time. It is almost as it were just to test his credentials again that he will be let loose. And he will go out through the nations and deceive the nations again. And what will his end be? He will be cast into the lake of fire and then he will be there, with the beast and the false prophet.

But after that books will be opened. You young people, do you know that there are books in heaven and there is writing going on? Names are being written. At the time I am speaking of there will be a great company, a company of great and small, of every nationality and tongue. They will stand before the Lord Jesus as a judge. And books will be opened and those pages will be turned and they will be judged each according to their works. And it says, "If anyone was not found written in the book of life he was cast in to the lake of fire". And who will they have company with? They will have company with Satan and his angels. That is a terrible thought.

The gospel goes out this afternoon not for you to be occupied with what has fallen out of heaven. I go over that just to give you the solemn background and to form a contrast for what I want to speak about, a wonderful glorious Person:

We see thee, Lord of glory,
Descending from above

I want to begin with the way in which He has come. Think of the incarnation! Remember the way in which He could be found here wrapped in those swaddling clothes. Each one down to the youngest will know the story of the incarnation. That is the Lord as taking the form of a man, but found initially as that babe. Think of Him there with His mother. Just stop for a second and think of the

Lord Jesus Himself where He was in His glory – yet he should have a mother. One was just impressed with this: it is not my thought: I have read it, but I will pass it on. One has spoken of the fact that the Lord's mother was a divine provision. Now that is wonderful. Think of the way that the Lord had a mother, as you have or I have. But there He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, dependent upon her.

The Psalm speaks of that; he is spoken of as trusting on his mother's breast. Think of Mary, the mother of the Lord. She could see the child grow up; he had brothers we are told. She could see him growing up and at the age of twelve asking questions in the temple and they were astonished at His understanding and His answers. Think of the Lord about the age of thirty. There was the marriage in Cana with the deficiency there; they had not enough wine. The Lord's mother could say, Do whatever He says. I wonder what was going through this woman's mind. Think of Him too a little later on as hanging upon the cross. How she could look up and see her son, the Lord Jesus, hanging upon that cross. The sword would go through her soul. I am saying these things because I want to illustrate the descent from glory of this One who ever remained God, yet taking this form of man walking as a man amongst the persons that He came in touch with in the streets of Nazareth. A man as you and I, sin apart. Harmless, separated from sinners, feeling the way in which He had come, for much had been laid upon Him.

Think of all that was upon Him. He knew – we spoke about it this morning – setting His face steadfastly as going to Jerusalem.

That was not to reign, no. Rightly He should have reigned. He was the King of Kings, Lord of Lords. It is left to the little children to cry out, Hosanna. If they had not cried out the stones would have cried out. He should have come in to take up His place, but they crucified Him; He had to be stricken and to be smitten. He came into this condition into which He could even taste death. He could even experience death itself. I like just to think of the way in which the Lord Jesus could move forward and with cruel hands could be crucified. Outside the city of Jerusalem, a place called Golgotha, being interpreted the place of a skull, there on a hill were three

crosses. I would like you to be affected by this afresh tonight; there were three crosses. The Lord Jesus was hanging in the middle and either side of Him were two persons who had done wrong who were rightly there. One got the blessing: the other did not. "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise". That was on account of a work that was going to be transacted, there between the Lord Jesus and His holy and righteous sin-hating God. Let me ask you this afternoon, dear friends, Has anyone here the burden of sin upon them? I spoke about the torment of the scorpions. I know no greater torment than the burden of sin, the guilty conscience. Sin would weigh you down. It brings in distance, brings in distance from your parents: above all, it brings in distance between you and God. You know things are not right. It is the wonderful grace of God that He has given you a conscience to know what is right and what is wrong. You feel that with the days going on, darkness coming in, so much darkness. You wonder about man's conscience sometimes, but it is still there.

There is such a thing as a seared conscience of course but in the room this afternoon we can say, thank God, we have consciences and God is working. God will work with your conscience and work through your heart. So listen to the preaching, listen to the word and the word will come to you just where you are. For God knows where you are; I do not, the preacher does not. He is able to set on a few simple words from the scripture, but God knows just where you are and He will be speaking to you tonight.

Dear friends, you are in the presence of the word of God; listen and answer to it in faith. What would happen? God would not point you to your own sinfulness; He would not point you to your own waywardness. No, He would point you to a finished work. How was that work transacted? It was transacted in those three hours on that cross when the Lord Jesus was there hanging, bearing the sins of many in His body on the tree. The Bible tells us that, that the Lord Jesus bore the sins of many. Think of that, that before the three hours of darkness He had been subjected to the ridicule of men.

How He would have felt that. But what was that to the darkness of those three hours when darkness came over the whole face of the

earth and He was there suffering at the righteous hand of a sin-hating God? He was suffering in bearing our sins. He was the sinless One, He had done no wrong; He had not even thought of anything wrong. You might say you have done nothing wrong but I tell you that you have thought wrong things even if you have not done wrong things. The Lord was perfect. If God in His anger and His judgment against sin was to be satisfied it meant that there had to be a pure sinless offering and the Lord was just that. And there He was lifted up. He could say I, if I be lifted up will, draw all to me.

God is now giving you a centre away from yourself, away from anything you might think of yourself, good or bad. He is giving you another centre and that is the Person of the Lord Jesus. He could say, Look unto me. That is the word of the prophet in Isaiah (see Isa 45: 22). We need to look away from ourselves. Look unto the Lord Jesus and there you will see that on account of that work, God is satisfied. What was the proof of that? The veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. What does that mean? That means that you can now go into the presence of God on account of the work of the Lord Jesus, "he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins", John 1:9. He could say as He died that He committed His spirit to the hand of the Father. He could say, "It is finished". The work of redemption, the work of atonement was finished.

Of course He had yet to go into the grave. He had yet to be raised. But the point that I am making is that He had actually died and the witness of the fact was not only that the veil of the temple was rent and God was satisfied, but the soldier in cruelty came and pierced the side of the Lord Jesus. It was the witness to the fact that He had died. He had actually expired. We have John's own word: he actually saw that soldier piercing the side of the Lord Jesus. And what does He say? He says he writes of it that ye might believe. I trust as looking around this room that each one of us are believers, believers on the Lord Jesus. Not just as a good man, many persons will be like that, even churchgoers. Believe upon Him as the Saviour, as your personal Saviour. The One who took your place

and bore your judgment, as you are unable to bear it. Put your faith and your trust in Him and no other.

But then it says that He descended into the lower parts of the earth. Think of that. I feel that I cannot find words to express what we are touching here. There is something very deep about this.

Think of the way in which the Lord Jesus actually died. Think of the way He was then taken down from that cross and buried, in the heart of the earth according to His own words. The Jews asked Him for a sign. He said, you will not have a sign save the sign of Jonas.

Jonas was in the belly of the fish, three days and three nights, thus must the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights (see Matt 12: 40). Think of the Lord Jesus actually being buried. He was placed in that grave, by one who loved Him, His body wrapped up, with pure linen, and He was placed there by loving hands in that grave. Men appointed His grave with the wicked but He was with the rich in His death because He had no violence, neither was there guile in His mouth (see Isa 53:9). Think of the words of those that were concerned that He might rise, for He said that He surely would do. They took that stone and sealed it, secured it. These are some things you can read of in Matthew. That brought out yet again another descending from heaven. You know what it was this time; you can read it for yourself at the end of Matthew. It is an angel. There were those dear saints who came to look at the sepulchre seeking the Lord. An angel descending out of heaven rolled away the stone and could say He is not here. What use was a seal for a guard or securing the stone? No use at all. I almost think of it like a child getting a marble and with just one finger moving the marble. That is the might of one angel. And what did that prove? In the moving of that stone it was not to let the Lord out, no, it was to prove that He was no longer there. He could not be held by the power of death. He was buried, He was out of sight and the work was complete. How wonderful, how glorious that was. But here it says He descended into the lower parts of the earth. I am speaking, you will understand, not only to draw attention to the depths but to

the height as well. What a descent of the Lord Jesus; He had come here, He had descended into the lower parts of the earth.

But He is no longer there, He is raised. He is now ascended and is in heaven. After forty days in a different condition, he could take the disciples outside of Jerusalem and was taken up from them. It says here that He that descended is the *same*, the *same* Person, the *same* ascending up above all the heavens. I would like to inquire how many heavens there are. Scripture speaks of three. But the Lord Jesus has ascended up above all the heavens. He has gone through them all, to take His place at the right hand of God. And there He is raised and ascended, there for our justification. God is satisfied. He is now crowned with all glory and honour. Well may we say, Worthy of all acceptation is He who was once the Lamb slain but there now, having ascended through all heavens.

Now as a result of that ascension I want to speak of another descent and that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let me just inquire tonight, beloved, do you know the forgiveness of your sins? Is all clear between you and a righteous and holy God? Everything clear? Have you the gift of the Spirit? You might say, why do we speak of the Spirit in the preaching? I think it is very simple, because the Spirit would make the things I am speaking of real to you. They would not just be like a picture on the wall. He will give you the reality of the thing. He will enable you to enter into it. He will give you the most wonderful thing, that He is the link; the Spirit of God is the link, between you here on earth and the Lord Jesus in heaven.

Man is not just body, but soul and spirit. You might think about an animal, but man is a spiritual being. God is a spirit and those that worship Him do so in spirit and truth. What we are dealing with are spiritual things. Men think about what is purely natural and our natural bodies. Remember there is that which is of the soul and of the spirit. But the gift of the Spirit is our link to God in heaven, our link to the Lord Jesus above. Have you the gift of the Spirit?

Sometimes I think of the time in the Acts when certain disciples said they did not know that the Spirit had come. Sometimes we perhaps act as though we do not know that the Spirit has come. The Spirit's

service to us is wonderful. He will shed abroad the love of God in your hearts. He would make these things real to you. That is a consequence of the ascent of the Lord Jesus. There is now the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Now dear friend, I just want to remind you of one last descending of the Lord Jesus. Maybe that will be this afternoon. You may not even go home. Have you thought about that? The One whom you love and whom you trust will come for you. It says in Thessalonians that the Lord Jesus Himself shall descend. Think of that! It says here, "He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens". This very same One that I am speaking about, the One who has suffered, the One who has died, the One who is your life here in whom you have put faith and trust, He is coming for you. Think of the Lord Jesus coming! How many there are who love Him. Those that have died, the Lord knows those that are His right down the dispensations, right from the very earliest days of Abel. We know the Lord will come at the Father's time. And all those that have died, the many millions that there are, I know not, the Lord knows every one. He will visit every one of those graves and they will be raised and be given bodies of glory. We who are living will be changed. Think of the activity of the Holy Spirit even in that service, changing us. These very bodies that we have, corruptible, mortal and subject to pain, subject to wrong-doing, all these things will be changed. But the Lord Jesus Himself, I want to emphasize that, the Lord Himself is the same Person. He will descend. Where? He will descend into the air, the dead will be raised, and those that are living will be caught up to be with Him forever. Thus you will enter on your eternal portion with the Lord Jesus. Think of that. The Lord will come very near, as I understand it the atmospheric heaven is the air; relatively according to the universe, it is not very much, and the Lord will actually come into that very realm. He will descend there. So that you and I as living, along with those who have died and have put their faith and trust in our Lord Jesus, will be caught up with Him. That is the hope of the believer. Is it your hope, dear friends, tonight? It is maybe the hope

for those that are older, leaving the hardship of the way and the struggles of one thing and another, but is it the hope of every one of us whether we are young or old? Will you be there? Will you be caught up? As I said you may not even go home this afternoon, the Lord may come for us and we shall be with Him thus forever.

As I said at the beginning, what comes out of heaven is very blessed, is very wonderful, and it defies all human thinking. Human intellect would never have thought of it. Who would have thought that God would have come in such a way as this?

O love, all thought surpassing!
That thou shouldst with us be,
Nor yet in triumph passing,
But human infancy!

God with us, Emmanuel, God with us. It is wonderful to think that here in this very scene there is One who descended from the highest heights, descended to be actually here with us as walking amongst men, but who will come again, will descend into the air and will take us to be with Himself. Well, may this be the hope and glory of each one of us, for His Name's sake.

SUNBURY

15 October 2001