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## **“WHO LOVE HIS APPEARING”**

### **2 Timothy 4: 8-11; Psalm 45: 1-5; Titus 2: 11-15**

R.F.W. I have been attracted by the expression that Paul uses in 2 Timothy 4 as to those “who love his appearing”. I wondered if we might enquire about it. I suppose the appearing of Christ is the great hope that should animate the soul of every believer. But I suppose it is something to come to *love* that thought. There is direct contrast immediately in 2 Timothy 4 in the scripture we read with Demas who “loved the present age”. The “present age” may seem very attractive, but it is only for a time; it passes. The age that existed which Demas loved would hardly carry much attraction for us now; this world has moved on. But the hope of the believer is the appearing of Christ and all that that will bring. I suppose the idea is, then, that it is to have some kind of moral effect in us. I thought that the writer of Psalm 45 was really one who loved the appearing, speaking prophetically there of Christ in His majesty and splendour; and you can see that there is a moral thought coming into the verses as to truth and meekness and righteousness. No doubt these are the features that will be seen in the world to come. They will be valued then when the Lord Jesus appears. These are the features that will be publicly, we might say, enforceable. They are hardly publicly enforceable now as we think of the government of the world and the things that go on in it; there is little room there for truth and meekness and righteousness, but these are the features that will mark the world to come under the blessed reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. But these features are to be worked out in us, I suggest, as we love His appearing. I read the scripture in Titus just to connect with that because I think you see the moral answer there to Psalm 45 in Paul’s teaching. He says, “teaching us that, having denied impiety and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in the present course of things”. It seems to me to answer to what is set out in Psalm 45 when he says, “awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”. I suggest these thoughts that we might enjoy them together.

I think one purpose of an occasion like this is to enjoy the truth, and I suppose there is hardly a thought that we enjoy more as believers than the thought of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

J.S.G. That should help us a good deal. I would just like to enquire whether loving His appearing suggests that He is out of sight at the moment. The scriptures that you bring forward suggest, do they not, especially in the New Testament, that an effect of His absence and the prospect of His appearing is to be seen in those that love Him? It is an effect of our looking for Him, is it, and feeling His absence, would you say?

R.F.W. The present time is a unique period in the history of God's ways, when the Lord Jesus Christ is absent. According to Hebrews 2, "we see not yet all things subjected to *him*, but we see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour". That is a unique view that we have, is it not, as believers at the present time? We are, we might say, in the inside secret; faith enables us to "see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour". So from that standpoint there is absolutely no doubt as to what will work out publicly. We have the blessed privilege now of seeing the One who is to be manifested, and being in the secret appreciation of His greatness. As you say, that is to have a moral affect on us.

R.H.B. Is it your thought that loving His appearing is more than simply looking forward to being released from the sorrows of the present time and the exercises and difficulties that attach to our present condition, but it is the thought of what it will be for the heart of Christ to come into His own and to have His own associated with Him?

R.F.W. Yes. It is a remarkable expression, to "love his appearing", and Paul goes over this as he reviews his own course, "the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord the righteous Judge, will render to me in that day; but not only to me, but also to all who love his appearing". Paul is reviewing his own course. It has been said that he anticipates the judgment-seat when he speaks of the Lord laying up the crown or righteousness for him. I suppose Paul

was governed in all of his life and service by the thought of the appearing, what would be manifest when the Lord Jesus appears publicly.

R.H.B. What is your impression as to that, “the crown of righteousness”?

R.F.W. What would you say about it?

R.H.B. Well, it seems from what you have been saying that it is related to our course here. It is one of the features of the kingdom, is it not, and our place in it? It is not unrelated to our part in responsibility in the testimony here. Is that right?

R.F.W. Think of what Paul’s life was outwardly; what a life he had. He tells us in the Corinthian epistles about the things that happened to him. It seemed to be a life of rejection and failure, as men would look at it? He was a man who could have had a great place through his education and his abilities. I suppose there never was such an able man as Paul, and yet what a life he had, but he is content to leave all that with the Lord in view of “the crown of righteousness”. It is the vindication of Paul and his service and what he was for the Lord in that day; and I take it from this scripture that it will be so with the saints; there will be a day of vindication. The saints will come out with Him, too, when He appears, according to other scriptures. But what a day it will be of vindication publicly of those who have been faithful to Christ now.

T.J.H. Is there a sense of glory in the appearing? Paul speaks of “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed”, Rom. 8: 18. Is it the *glory* that is about to be revealed rather than us being released from the sufferings of this time?

R.F.W. Yes. It is a wonderful thought, the appearing of Christ, the manifestation of that blessed Man. Think of what it will be to have part with Him. I sometimes wonder if I really believe it that He shall actually appear and be seen, here, and we will be manifest with Him in glory. The scripture in Psalm 45 appealed to me as to His majesty

and splendour. That would be like the glory that you refer to, “majesty and splendour”?

R.M.B. Why does the apostle speak of loving “his appearing”? For us, what we speak of as the rapture might seem more attractive to us. Could you distinguish between what we speak of as the ‘rapture’ and the ‘appearing’ and why he speaks of loving “his appearing”?

R.F.W. I wondered about that. I suppose we all know that the rapture is not spoken of much, once definitely (see 1 Thess 4: 17) and perhaps one other time (see John 14: 3). But the appearing is the great thought, is it not, in the New Testament and I suppose the Old Testament too. The rapture will be, as we know, when we are taken to be with Christ, and that is a wonderful thing that the Lord will come for us. But the rapture will not immediately solve anything publicly. It will not change things down here, in fact things here may change for the worse; but the appearing will change everything, will it not? It will change everything here when the One who has been rejected will be seen.

E.O.P.M. Is that involved in loving “his appearing”, that those who do would be concerned that what will then be publicly displayed in the beneficial reign of Christ should be what is predominantly reigning among the people of God in the individual lives of believers?

R.F.W. Yes, that is what I was thinking. We have come to the acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord, is not that so, as believers? That is, that He has rights and a place with us that none other has. He has, you might say, sway in our lives. That is to produce a moral effect in us, is it not, to form us in a way that nothing else does?

E.O.P.M. Yes, I am just attracted by what you are stressing as to *loving* His appearing. Not just looking for it, which might be the side of relief and being taken out of a scene where there has been so much suffering and where the Lord’s Name is in rejection and where things publicly are broken down, but the man of Psalm 45 would be living in the light of the glory of what Christ will bring in when He is publicly vindicated, and that would be a great source of joy and encouragement and strength, would it not, in the while that remains?

R.F.W. Exactly, yes. I suppose we are sickened as we think of the things that are going on in the world, what governments are doing and what men after the flesh are doing, the bitterness and evil and hatred that the world seems to generate endlessly. And there is only one answer to that. It is not legislation and it is not the nations getting together, it is not the prosecution of this or that. It is the appearing of Christ, is it not, that is the only answer to it?

Q.P. In one of the other accounts of the appearing it says that “every eye shall see Him and they which have pierced Him”, Rev 1: 7. I wondered if that allusion to His suffering would draw out our affections towards Him, that it is the public vindication of the One who was pierced and who suffered.

R.F.W. That is how the world saw Him on the cross – pierced. Israel pierced His hands in service, they rejected His service to them; but then He was put on the cross, the last this world saw of Him, our Saviour. They did not see Him in resurrection; they know nothing of that. He was put away there, hung on the cross, and buried. But how blessed to think that all that will be reversed and that blessed Man will appear.

L.A.B. The Lord Jesus is the effulgence of the glory of God, and that is all going to come into manifestation, is it not?

R.F.W. Yes, what do you understand by that, the effulgence?

L.A.B. I do not know that I can say much about it, but it is the glory of God shining in the face of a Man, is it not?

R.F.W. Exactly. What a Man, that He is great enough to do that. What other man could be the effulgence of His glory, all that is adequate for the display of the glory of God? But this blessed Man is great enough for that.

D.E.B. Do you think that the word “all” here would take us out of any thought of what is sectarian or limited? We know but a few, do we not? But Paul in the Ephesians speaks of love to *all* the saints (see Eph 1: 15), and *all* who love His appearing. It gives us some

impression of the great extent of the result of the Lord's work, do you think?

R.F.W. Yes, I think that is helpful. We need to be moved out of those kinds of thought. I suppose *all* who love His appearing really covers Old Testament saints as well and perhaps those of the Jewish remnant of a time to come who will be looking for Him. They will be looking for His appearing, will they not? They will love the thought of what awaits according to prophetic scriptures. But they will love it too because His appearing will be for their salvation and deliverance.

J.S.G. The Lord says, "Your father Abraham exulted in that he should see my day, and he saw and rejoiced", John 8: 56. Would that be a hint of it, do you think?

R.F.W. Yes, exactly. It is the appearing that is the vindication of the Old Testament saints as well, all that in faith they stood for and held. So there has been a long line of faithfulness on this earth, and the appearing of Christ is the vindication of all.

J.S.G. Yes, it seems remarkable that this thought of what is "laid up" should come in here, "the crown of righteousness laid up", as if it is like – if it is not too simple a thought – a prize in relation to how we have been identified with the Lord Himself here in His absence.

R.F.W. Yes, these things are brought in as an encouragement for us, are they not, rewards and prizes? It has been helpfully said that rewards are brought in to encourage those who have committed themselves.

D.E.R. Is true love for His appearing seen in clinging to Paul?

R.F.W. Yes, say more.

D.E.R. Well, Paul's appeal is "come to me quickly". He had earlier said, "all who are in Asia ... have turned away from me", 2 Tim 1: 15. Others had gone off in service to Thessalonica and Galatia and Dalmatia, but the test of the present time really is clinging to Paul, Paul's glad tidings.

R.F.W. Exactly, yes. I have been struck with the fact that the appearing is mentioned several times in this second epistle to Timothy. As Paul thinks over the state of things in the church publicly and the breakdown that had already come in, he looks forward to the appearing. I think that is to help us. Paul's line of teaching is essential for us. I have been struck in reading through Titus how often he stresses the thought of teaching. How much we need teaching and help to be preserved in steadiness, especially in days such as the present.

J.W. Would the Lord's appearing include the fact that the saints will be with Him? They will also be manifest, will they not, then? I wondered if that is a lever to be identified with Christ now in His reproach and suffering.

R.F.W. Yes. I sometimes wonder if I really believe it. We are to be manifest with Him in glory. We are speaking about the rapture and the judgment-seat for us lies between the rapture and the appearing, does it not? So that when the saints come out they come out in all that grace has wrought in them, as seen there without a blemish or without anything that can be raised against it. But it would seem that there is to be a moral effect upon us as we think of the appearing. The scripture in Titus would help as to how we should live in the present course of things, as influenced by the light of the appearing. What do you say?

J.W. Yes, I am sure of that. We really cannot be apart from Christ, and Christ will not have His own apart from Himself. I was thinking about what our brother was saying about Paul being the test. That is the present way we are identified with Christ, is it, by adhering to Paul's teaching?

R.F.W. Yes, quite so. Paul says here at the end of the chapter that all left him but the Lord stood with him. That would indicate that the Lord will help us as we cling to Paul's line of things, I suppose. He said, "the Lord stood with me, and gave me power". That is, the Lord had taken him up, and He stood with him although everyone else had deserted him. That is an encouragement for us to cling to

Paul's line of things and Paul's teaching. We will have the Lord's support on that line.

M.W. Would what Paul himself says as reviewing his course, these three things, be evidence of the way in which in his life the loving of the Lord's appearing had had its effect? He had "combated the good combat", "finished the race" and "kept the faith". Would they be three things that we can take up too?

R.F.W. Yes, say more about those.

M.W. I do not know that I could, but I suppose the combating the good combat would involve a little of what has just been said as to Paul's line of truth and the maintenance of it; and he takes up elsewhere the matter of the race, does he not, running with endurance the race (see Heb. 12: 1)? Keeping the faith, that would be the Christian faith, as I understand it. Is that right, and all the tenets and the Spirit and the characteristics of the Christian faith in expression in our lives?

R.F.W. It would have been a great victory for Satan if he had been able to overthrow Paul, would it not? But how encouraging it is to see that he continued and finished, as you draw attention to this verse. And then to take account of Timothy who was to be left. Paul was such an extraordinary person – we all feel very small when we think of Paul and what he was able for, and what he was able to carry and the burdens he was able to bear, and not give up. But we can take encouragement from Timothy, that these things are said to him to help him. At the start of this epistle he was starting to get a bit droopy and needed to be rekindled and revived. I suppose we need that frequently, perhaps more than we care to admit, to be revived and rekindled. Paul would encourage him by setting his own example before him.

D.J.H. It says in that day He will be "glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed", 2 Thess 1: 10. Is something of that to be seen at the present time as Christ is in expression in us as we accept His approach and stand here faithfully in the testimony?

R.F.W. Yes. You think of what the brethren have endured and yet they go on in spite of difficulty. That is something to be wondered at, is it not? You see young persons coming forward and taking their place in the testimony. That is something to be wondered at, I think. It is the operation of divine grace that brings it about.

D.J.H. I was just reading recently, I think it was Mr Stoney, saying that nothing should come into expression in a Christian but Christ. It is very searching, but that is what is in view, that as loving His appearing that line of things would be promoted with us, would it?

R.F.W. Quite so. Demas loved the present world. At times he seemed to be going on well. He is mentioned three times, but here it says he “loved the present age, and is gone to Thessalonica”; whatever he would do there I do not know. I suppose some element comes into our soul as the light of the glory of the appearing of Christ and would overshadow everything here.

T.J.H. We can all in our minds think what the things of the present age might be, or what, as you say, he might have found in Thessalonica, but can you help us some more as to what the features may be of one who loves the appearing?

R.F.W. Well, I think the features are seen in Titus, but also in the scripture that we read in Psalm 45. You could not love the appearing without loving the One who is going to appear, the Beloved. So, I suppose the first thing is that we really should be lovers of Christ. Is that not so?

T.J.H. His heart is welling forth. Would that be suggestive of somebody at the service of praise whose heart was full of this matter, and says what is composed touching the king, so he is fully occupied with the Man that is before us, and He has presented Himself in His glory? He presents Himself in His glory at that occasion as He comes in among us. That would be a feature, would it, of one who loves the appearing?

R.F.W. Exactly. It starts off with the Person, “I say what I have composed touching the king. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer”. Well, how much would we say, and how much could we write

about Christ and what He is to us, what He is in His blessedness? The writer there could say things about Him.

J.A.B. We often use this scripture on Lord's days, but do you think that if we are loving the Lord's appearing and waiting for it, we would speak about Him more in our personal conversations too?

R.F.W. Well, that is a test to us. How much are our hearts occupied with Him? I suppose it is what our hearts are occupied with that we speak of.

L.A.B. We have to keep in touch, do we not, with the Man in the glory? Our links with the Lord Jesus as the glorious Man is an important thing is it not, all the time?

R.F.W. Quite so. I was reading a remark of Mr Raven recently, that the service of the Spirit is to keep us in touch with Christ. That is very simple, but it is very blessed. The service of the Spirit is to keep us in touch with Christ, the Man in the glory. That is a precious thought, is it not?

P.W. In Hebrews it is, he "shall appear to those that look for him", Heb. 9: 28. Do you think that is a kind of active thought? It is almost as though, if you do not look for Him, He will not appear for us, but is that in line with what you are thinking; it is the Spirit would keep us looking for Him actively?

R.F.W. It seems to me it is to be characteristic of believers, He "shall appear to those that look for him". I suppose it may have some direct reference to the Jewish remnant, they will look for Him and He will appear and they are amongst those, as we were saying, that love His appearing, but it is to be characteristic of us, is it not, that we are to be looking for Him?

L.A.B. The effect of that is to deliver us from the present evil world, it is not, too, if we are looking for His appearing, waiting for Him, waiting for His coming?

R.F.W. Well, it gives us a perspective on what is happening. We are not without hope. There are many in the world at the present time without hope, and full of uncertainties and doubts, but we have a

blessed hope. That is what it says in Titus, “the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”.

R.H.B. Peter calls it a “living hope” (1 Pet 1: 3), does he not? And the hope itself is purifying, according to John’s epistle, “every one that has this hope in him purifies himself”, 1 John 3: 3. It does not say he should do it, but the hope kept alive in the affections has that effect. Is that the force of it?

R.F.W. That is helpful. Please help us about it more.

R.H.B. If you think of much of professing Christendom, the hope that we are speaking of has gone. It is not really expected or believed in by many that may well profess to be believers and we know and can see the consequences of that. But it seems as though early believers spoke about it, the “world which is to come, of which we speak”, Heb 2: 5. And Paul uses the expression, “let him be Anathema Maranatha” (1 Co. 16: 22). I think it has been suggested that that expression was a greeting among the saints, Maranatha - the Lord cometh. It was a subject of conversation among the saints, and that is how the loving of it is expressed, is it not, and kept alive in our hearts as a real prospect before us?

R.F.W. Yes, that is all very helpful. The process of time tends to dull us all, does it not? We may say like the servant in the gospel, “My lord delays to come” and take up other things, but what you say is interesting and helpful. So perhaps the Lord would revive the thought of it in our affections. The “world to come, of which we speak”, it was something commonly and frequently spoken about.

J.W. The writer of this Psalm seems to be occupied with the moral qualities of Christ, and would rejoice that the Man with those qualities should have dominion and reign.

R.F.W. Yes, “Thou has loved righteousness and hast hated lawlessness”, Heb. 1: 9. What do you say about them?

J.W. It is a wonderful thing to take account of the moral qualities in Christ, and be formed by them, do you think?

R.F.W. Yes. The will of God and the thoughts of God would govern Him. That is righteousness, is it not? And so it says, “And in thy splendour ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness”. These are the moral qualities, are they not, that are to be formed in us as we are occupied with Christ?

L.A.B. The matter of faithfulness is important too. God is faithful; Christ is faithful. The question is whether I am faithful, is it not?

R.F.W. Yes, quite so. Well, that is always a test.

J.S.G. I was glad of the reference earlier to the fact that the appearing will involve that the Lord will have His saints with Him. Does that link with what is being said as to the working out of things in us to be in accord with it? Our local places should involve that things are in accord with how the Lord will appear. Would you say that?

R.F.W. Yes. You mean our local gathering are to be places where the Lord is recognised, His rights are recognised, where the Lord Jesus has His place, and I suppose as we are set together we should be marked by these beautiful features – truth and meekness and righteousness. There would never be any trouble in any of our localities if we were all marked by these features - truth and meekness and righteousness.

J.S.G. I suppose we may sometimes be in danger of leaving the man behind, as it says in one of the Old Testament passages (see Exod. 2: 30), but, for example, in the care meeting we ought to have the Lord’s appearing especially before us, should we not? And our desire is that things should be now, as He will have them publicly. Is that right?

R.F.W. Yes. In Malachi it says, when He comes He will sit as a refiner, and everything will be tested and sifted, “who shall stand when he appeareth”, Mal. 3: 2. I suppose, as you say, that is what is to be before us. We are given the privilege of administering now in His absence, are we not? We should desire to do things as He would do them. Our administration should be marked by the grace

and truth and meekness and righteousness that will characterise the day to come.

R.W.F. Are these moral qualities, as we speak of them, to become attractive to us with the help of the Spirit? We sometimes think that truth and meekness and righteousness is unattainable when we are younger, perhaps even forbidding words, but as seeing them displayed in Christ they are to be attractive to us, do you think? I wondered if the wording of the Psalm would encourage us to realise that. Shoshannim means lilies, and “Thou art fairer than the sons of men”.

R.F.W. Yes. As you say, these features do seem forbidding to us, and of course they do not mark the world, and you could not run the world at present on these principles. You could not administer the world, as it is at present, using these features, in the absence of Christ.

R.W.F. Is it the prime service of the Spirit to cause us to find Christ attractive? We think of the Spirit perhaps in connection with difficulties we have in the flesh, but His first service is to cause Christ to be attractive, we might say infinitely attractive, do you think, “shall glorify me”?

R.F.W. He is, “fairer than the sons of men”. So we learn by contrast, do we not? We learn the features of Christ by contrast. We are all familiar with the features of the flesh and they are native to us, but we have to learn from Him and take these features on. But “fairer than the sons of men” is not exactly a comparison with man in the flesh. This is a comparison with godly men, this is a comparison with the great men of the Old Testament, and He is “fairer than the sons of men”.

J.R.W. I was wondering about the scripture where it says the power that He has “to subdue all things to himself”, Phil 3: 21. That would be evident, would it not, when He appears? How does that relate to the thought of truth and meekness and righteousness?

R.F.W. It says, “who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, according to the working of the power

which he has even to subdue all things to himself". What are you thinking about it?

J.R.W. I was just wondering how that fitted with the qualities of truth and meekness and righteousness; along with that there is power, is there not?

R.F.W. Yes, quite so. What always strikes me about that scripture is that it says it is the power that He *has*. He has it now. He will not have to assume it when He appears, He *has* it. So according to this scripture "we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour". The blessed Person that we know now and are linked with now *has* that power.

G.C.B. In connection with Mark Webster's question my mind went to the thought that what applied to the suffering Man down here, meekness and lowliness, is still resident in the glorious Man up there and when He will appear. Can you help us as to that? These features of meekness particularly apply now in a scene of suffering, and did to the Lord Jesus; they are still there. Can you help us as to that?

R.F.W. Yes, I think He is the only One who could say, "I am meek and lowly in heart", Matt 11: 29. Have you ever looked into your heart and found meekness and lowliness there? The Lord Jesus could say that, "I am meek and lowly in heart". So I suppose all these blessed features have been carried through. It is striking to think of meekness connected with the blessed Man in the glory but it is a moral feature that is of value to God, is it not? What do you say more about?

G.C.B. Yes I think that is right. I think I myself have a lot to learn as to what are the features of manhood that will go through in Christ eternally, and I think what you say as to what is of value to God, and will be eternally, is what is in Him.

R.F.W. "Behold the King cometh to thee meek", Matt 21: 5. It marked the Lord when He was here according to that scripture. But meekness is impregnable, it cannot be overthrown. It is a feature of Christ that will carry the day.

P.M. Would the reference to Paul, “I am Jesus, who *thou* persecutest” (Acts 9: 5) bring out that character of man, and that there was power to subdue all things in Him?

R.F.W. Yes, that is very fine.

A.P. Would loving the brethren involve seeing what is formed to the Lord Jesus in each one?

R.F.W. Yes, that is very wonderful, is it not? To be able to love the brethren I think is a wonderful thing. I was thinking of John’s epistles in that connection recently as to loving the brethren. How much he makes of it. We are to learn to value these features in one another, and to love them.

R.H.B. In Romans the apostle says, “knowing the time” and “The night is far spent and the day is near; let us cast away ...”, but then he says, “As in the day, let us walk becomingly” and “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”, Rom 13: 11-14. It seems to be a sense in that scripture that the appearing is anticipated in that way, because we shall be like Him when we see Him (see 1 John 3: 2). And that moral conformity that you are speaking about is very much what that epistle is directed to, is it not?

R.F.W. Romans works it out in detail in us, does it not? The Lord Jesus has a place with us, and in the working out of the teaching of Romans He acquires a place in our affections and in our lives. The epistle has been said to be the personal teaching of Christ of righteousness to us. I can remember once (not to refer to myself in any way but just for the encouragement of the younger brethren), reading the epistle to the Romans and it seemed so difficult and incomprehensible, but I think in the course of time the Lord helps us to understand it and take in the teaching. I suppose it really means that we learn things as we are ready for them. It is not just a question of taking it up and reading it like a book and trying to learn it off in some way, but the epistle to the Romans is to affect and form us to make the truth of Christianity and the blessed Person real to us.

R.H.B. The greatness of the coming day is to eclipse the present age in the soul of the believer, is it not? That is the way it works. It is not brought about by legal prescription, but the greatness of the coming day of Christ's display. The Spirit would enhance that in our souls, would He not, so that the things of this age are eclipsed by it? Is that the way it works?

R.F.W. Exactly. It thrills your spirit to think that the blessed Man that we know and love is the One who is going to be manifest, He is going to appear and have universal dominion here, that Man, "this Jesus".

Q.P. Is there a moral link with the manifestations of the Lord Jesus at the present time? They are really in secret whereas His appearing is in public, but His manifestations to us at the present time would have the same moral affect on us would they not?

R.F.W. You mean that the Lord would look for these features to be there? It says in Psalm 45, "Thine arrows are sharp ... in the heart of the king's enemies". As I understand it that means that when the Lord appears publicly there will be power available to Him to enforce these features. There will be enemies to be dealt with and that will require the application of power and force publicly, whatever it will take. But I suppose the teaching that we have in Titus is to form us now to be ready for the manifestations of Christ. It says, "the grace of God ... has appeared, teaching us". So the Lord comes in amongst us. He desires to see these blessed features, does He not? I suppose Psalm 45 is really to suggest that. You have the idea of the queen and the companions behind her, and that is a fine suggestion that there is that behind what appears publicly.

J.H. Do you think that, in Psalm 27, David gives a fine expression? He says, "One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in his temple" (v 4). It does go on to speak about the days of evil that will come, but his main occupation and desire was to know what it was to dwell in the house of Jehovah.

R.F.W. Very fine. The “beauty” or the ‘graciousness’ of Jehovah. What would that mean for us practically?

J.H. Well I would like to know it better, but it was his one desire, “One thing have I asked”. He wanted nothing else, as it were, just that one thing and that would not doubt lead him on to loving His appearing.

R.F.W. Yes, well, we shall be ever with the Lord. It is a wonderful thing, and when we see Him “we shall be like him”, 1 John 3: 2. I think I read once in Mr. Darby that he said that the blessedness of that was that when we shall be like Him, there will be nothing to distract or to divert us, as there are now plenty of things to divert us and distract us. But when we shall be like Him, there is no hindrance to dwelling on His beauty, beholding the beauty of Jehovah. There will be nothing then to divert us, will there?

C.J.G.B. Does the matter of being sober and sobriety both in relation to Timothy and in relation to Titus have an important bearing too on your subject?

R.F.W. Soberly, yes. What do you say about it?

C.J.G.B. Well it is quite challenging what Mr Darby says in the note to 2 Timothy 4, having a sober clearness of mind, a sober judgment. Do you think that these particular features should be seen amongst us in all matters at the present time?

R.F.W. Yes, well you see everything is influenced by the way that the Lord Jesus has come into our lives. There was a man in the gospels who was sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and sensible (Luke 8: 35). I think it is the same kind of thought. Everything was different with that man who had been extreme in one way and extreme in another way, in the tombs and so on. Mark says he could not be subdued by anyone, he was so extreme and irrational (Mark 5: 4) but he comes under the influence of Jesus and is found sitting clothed and sensible at His feet. That is what we want. We want that sort of spirit, do we not? We tend to run to extremes, it is characteristic of us. But to be sober means that things are balanced and weighed and everything is given its right value. In times of

difficulty we tend to stress things unduly either one way or another, but sobriety would give things their proper value and their proper weight.

R.H.B. The passage in Titus speaks of “awaiting the blessed hope”. The first scripture was loving the appearing, but what is involved in awaiting? It is not simply a passive thought, is it?

R.F.W. I suppose not. You mean it is not just sitting around doing nothing, but we have a present occupation, have we not, with this blessed Person. What are you thinking?

R.H.B. Well I wondered that, because it is something that comes into the Scriptures, is it not, waiting? There are things that we wait for, and we speak of the present as a waiting time, but it is not waiting in the sense that you would wait for a train, that you have nothing to do, it is passive, it is events beyond your control; but the passage seems to convey the thought of what is active, that you are active in preparation for the immensity of what is before you, like the preparation for a journey, I suppose, that you are prepared for translation. Is that the thought?

R.F.W. It is a blessed anticipation, is it not, “awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”?

E.O.P.M. Paul links what the Lord told him about the Supper with this, does he not? Linking with what we do, “ye announce the death of the Lord” (1 Cor 11: 26); something active, is it not? No doubt we have often wondered why Paul links the Supper with the appearing rather than the rapture, because we shall cease breaking bread actually when we are taken to be with the Lord. But I just wondered whether there is some link between the Supper and what you are bringing before us.

R.F.W. Well I suppose we could enquire about that. The Supper involves that we give place to that blessed One who has been rejected here. I suppose really the Supper is subversive of all that is here, is it not? Partaking of the Supper and honouring Christ in that way, remembering Him, and giving Him His place, is subversive to

the whole course of things in this world. So is that really why it is linked with the appearing in that way, “until he come”?

D.E.B. The two uses of the word ‘appear’ in your passage in Titus really encompass the whole dispensation of grace, do they not, “has appeared” and then “awaiting ... the appearing”? That is the whole dispensation of grace in which our present part exists, and there is something to be learned from the appearing as first mentioned, something to be learned and worked out in view of the attitude of power to await the appearing.

R.F.W. Yes, that is helpful. You can see in the early Acts they were expecting the Lord to come again almost at once. They were looking for Him, it would seem, almost at once. But then “the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared”. So we can take account of that now, that there has been this great manifestation of the grace of God, coming in as a Saviour God available for all men. That period has extended, as we know, two thousand years.

R.H.B. The difficulty with the length of it is that, as Peter says, the present age is marked by persons says, “Where is the promise of his coming?”. But the answer to that question, Where is it? is that it is in the hearts of the saints, is it not?

R.F.W. Well that is a great thought, Where is it? This blessed hope is to be held, as you says, in our affections.

G.C.B. Is not the word, “I come quickly”, in the hearts of the saints?

R.F.W. Yes, “Amen; come, Lord Jesus”. I think that word would be interpreted ‘come now’. That is the answer in the saints, is it not, to the Lord’s word, “I come quickly”?

R.W.F. It means He is ready to come now, He just awaits the Father’s word. We await, but He awaits the Father’s word, He is ready.

R.F.W. He has that power to subdue all things to Himself. Then there is this teaching, and I suppose the teaching is to be maintained amongst us. I suppose there is a moral edge to it, and whilst it

encourages us yet it challenges us, teaching us that “we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in the present course of things”. We cannot change the present course of things, but we can be changed in it, “awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”.

R.W.F. Peter links hastening with waiting. We cannot make someone’s train come faster but for ourselves we can hasten the coming of the day of God, as it is in that context, but it applies to His coming (see 2 Peter 3: 12).

R.F.W. Yes, well that is a challenging scripture too. You have mixed feelings, I suppose, do you? The coming of the Lord Jesus will bring an end to the present dispensation of grace. You think of men and the myriads who are unconverted still. I suppose it is hard to know what to feel at times when you think of this poor world going on in its ignorance of Him and its ignorance of God, but what is it that awaits this world? It is a sobering thought, is it not? But the appearing will bring blessing to the world. Our brother in Belfast, whom some of us will know, was speaking recently of Paul preaching in Acts 17, it says, “God ... enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent because he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed” (Acts 17: 31), and I always thought that was a kind of threat. But he pointed out that you would not want to miss out when the day comes! It is not a threat, it is glad tidings, is it not? You do not want to miss out when that day comes and miss seeing the habitable world administered in righteousness by the Man whom God has appointed.

D.E.R. Why is so much made of “our Saviour God”, God our Saviour?

R.F.W. I suppose we could not make too much of it. What do you think? That God has come out in this way to us as a Saviour God is a wonderful thought, is it not?

D.E.R. It would have a delivering effect on us from this present evil world. The light of the coming glory would have a particular effect on us in that way.

R.F.W. Quite so. Galatians says, “who gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world”, Gal 1: 4.

R.McC. I was just thinking of what has been said as to “waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God”. These features would relate to the hastening, do you think? These features that you read of, denying impiety, and so on, we should live soberly and justly, and so on.

R.F.W. It must mean something to God that these features are formed in believers now. They are precious and valuable to Him, a tribute too to the work and service of the blessed Spirit who is here. It is wonderful to think of the Spirit’s presence and the work He has carried on, faithfully maintaining the testimony to the Man in the glory that there may be formed in us features like this.

J.S.G. Is one thought of the hastening that in a way, to the extent that they are formed in the saints, the public day is anticipated? The thought that our brother brought in as to a Saviour, should we be helped as to our view of things that are unjust in the world? In the present age things are upside down, are they not, but the day to come will manifest that everything will be put right and the Lord’s rights will be maintained publicly,.

R.F.W. That is a great thing to hold. The Lord came to take away the sin of the world. He went to the cross to deal with that great question sacrificially, but in a day to come He will deal with it judicially that things might be brought into accord with the mind of God here in this very scene.

T.J.H. Is joy something that is included in what you are bringing before us? It is a great joy to us to anticipate the appearing of the Lord Jesus, but also what a joy it would be to the Lord Jesus at the time of His appearing when there is no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. But also as to the Lord Jesus in His salvation, was not the joy lying before Him when He suffered and went to the cross? The joy was lying before Him of what He looked on to.

R.F.W. Quite so. We were reading Psalm 21 this morning, “thou hast filled him with joy by thy countenance” (v 6). The Lord Jesus is

in joy now, is He not, in the presence of God? He has joy in being there as accomplisher of all His will, bringing in the saints and securing the assembly. He has established through His death in righteousness the means by which God will work out all His thoughts. It looks right through to the establishment of the world to come and to the day of God, eternity. All has been accomplished from that point of view, that which lays a basis for it all in righteousness. Think of the joy that marks Him as the accomplisher of it all.

P.M. Would there be a public witness that God has headed up everything in Christ?

R.F.W. Yes, well, that is a good thing to think about.

## **EAST FINCHLEY**

**3 November 2001**

### **Key to initials**

*(local if not otherwise indicated)*

C.J.G.Brodie, Ealing; D.E.Burr, Buckhurst Hill; G.C.Bywater, Buckhurst Hill; J.A.Brown, Grangemouth; L.A.Burton, Merton; R.H.Brown; R.M.Brown; R.W.Flowerdew, Sunbury; J.S.Gray; D.J.Hutson, London; J.Harvey; T.J.Harvey; E.O.P.Mutton, Walton; R.McClean, Grimsby; A.Poore, Swanage; Q.Poore, Swanage; D.E.Remmington, St. Albans; J.Wright, Havering; J.R.Walkinshaw, Bexley; M.Webster, Buckhurst Hill; P.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; R.F.White, Londonderry

## **THE GOSPEL - FOR THE INDIVIDUAL**

**Robert White**

**Acts 2: 37, 38; 3: 26; Romans 10: 8, 9; John 7: 37-39 (to “receive”);**

**Romans 1: 5, 6**

I just want to touch lightly on these scriptures to seek to underline something that I am sure we all know, that the gospel is individual, that God in His grace in the glad tidings is speaking to us as individuals; and if we come into the blessing that the gospel presents to us we come into it individually, each one of us. Every one of us here is an individual having his or her own history that God knows about, and in His grace He speaks to us as individuals. It is a great matter, that. If you think of this great city of which this is a part, and the millions of people who are here, it may seem that the sins of one may not matter very much, set against all that is going on in such an area as this. People say there are things that everybody does so it does not much matter what I do. But yet God knows us all and He knows every individual in this great city, as He knows every individual in the world today. How great He is! But in His grace in the glad tidings He has taken account of us each one, and He would desire, I believe, to assure us of that, and He would desire to present the Lord Jesus to us as Saviour individually. How precious it is to come to know a Saviour for yourself, to know the Lord Jesus for yourself! That is the intent in the gospel; indeed it is the only way of salvation; that is the way of salvation that is open to us, every one. Sometimes when we are younger we wonder who we really are and what is before us, and so on, but it is a great thing to come to this, that the blessed God has an individual interest in me and in you and He has provided a Saviour just for you and just for me. I sometimes think of Paul when he says, “the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me”, Gal 2: 20. Think of the wonder of that! You would hesitate to say such a thing, but Paul says it, “who has loved me and given himself for me”; as if there was not another sinner, the Son of God came and gave Himself for Paul. Think of the grace of

that, the wonder of it, and that same grace is extended to us in the glad tidings. I sometimes think in the gospel of that word in 2 Kings, when one of the sons of the prophets was sent with a message to Jehu and it says he came and “the captains of the host were sitting. And he said, I have an errand to thee, captain. And Jehu said, To which of all of us? And he said, To thee, captain”, 2 Kings 9: 5. That is like the gospel. You sit in a company, a large company or a smaller company, and the gospel comes in that way as a message for *you*, “To which of all of us?? ... To thee”. It is for you, it is for me, how blessed it is!

So Peter sets it out in this first scripture we read when they said, “What shall we do ...?” I do not know how many people there were that asked that question; it says, “And having heard it they were pricked in heart, and said to Peter and the other apostles, what shall we do, brethren? And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptised, each one of you”. How important it is, “each one of you”. Each one of us has our own history, our own sins, and God would say, “Repent, and be baptised, each one of you”. Each one of us is before God, we might say, at this time. When the gospel is preached He looks upon us, and He looks upon us in grace. Let us come into it each one of us, “in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. This is the setting out of the gospel in this verse. It is the divine proposal. It is God’s proposal for every one of us, “Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. Peter says this with full certainty, with full assurance, that those who listened to him and accepted his word and believed would receive remission of their sins and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is divinely given assurance. It is not just the word of Peter, it is the word of God through Peter. You know what the word of God is? It is the expression of what is in God’s mind and heart that comes to us through what is spoken or what is written, but it is from God Himself. And here Peter gave expression to what was in the heart of God for these persons at this time. They were great sinners they had just

crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. They had an enormous amount to take account of, there was enormous guilt lying upon them at this moment, but Peter says to them, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you". Have we each taken it up? That is God's proposal, you might say the proposal of His grace, that my sins, your sins, might be forgiven that you, that I, might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so later on he says, "To you first God, having raised up his servant, has sent him, blessing you in turning each one of you from your wickedness", Acts 3: 26. How individual it is, blessing you and turning you, blessing in turning. Think of these two things being put together by Peter in that verse, blessing and turning. Think of being blessed and turning to the very God against whom you have sinned. That is the gospel, the God against whom we have sinned is blessing us as we turn to Him. Think of offending somebody and having it on your mind and conscience that you have offended. It is the very person you do not want to meet, the very person you want to avoid, but the grace of the gospel is expressed in this that God blesses us as we turn to Him. How precious! Have we turned? Has there come a point in our lives when we can say we have turned? I suppose we speak of it as conversion in that way. Here it would definitely be so that persons who opposed God and all that He had done through Jesus, now definitely returned to Him in repentance and they accept what He is offering in the way of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. How important it is to think of that! For these persons it meant a complete change in their whole attitude and in the whole course of their lives, but that may not be exactly so with those of us brought up under the sound of the word.

That is why I read this passage in Romans, because it says, "The word is near thee". I think that most of us here have heard the word from our earliest times. We have heard it in our father's houses and our mother's houses, we have heard it at the meetings, and we have heard the gospel often. We might say, it has been put right into our mouths. It has been put as far into us, we might say, as our fathers or mothers or the brethren could have put it, but then, have I accepted it? You see that is the point here in the scripture

that we read in Romans. It is for me as an individual to take it up. My father and my mother could not have believed for me. No doubt they accepted in faith that the Lord Jesus would bless me, as every believing parent would, and no doubt they put the word before me. Paul says, "The word is near thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart". Something in you then, it may be, responds, as the word of God is preached and the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of and His precious work, the blessedness of what He has accomplished on the cross. Oh the wonder of that work! "The word is near thee". You have heard it, have you not? Perhaps every one of us here could say that, we have heard it all our lives presented to us; he says, "that is, the word of faith, which we preach". But you come to this, "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth". You see how it comes down to each one of us. There has to be the point of accepting it, "the word of faith, which we preach". Have I got faith to accept it? Have you got faith to accept it? In God's wisdom He has put things on that basis that the blessing comes to us as we have faith to accept it, "the word of faith, which we preach". Paul presented it in faith, fully believing it, accepting it himself. He would bring the word down right into our mouths and into our hearts. He says, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord". These are precious words, are they not, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord"? I sometimes think of that, Have I ever called Jesus, Lord? I mean, have I ever actually said it? "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord", that is, He has become precious to me. He is my Lord, I have accepted Him as my Saviour, I have come under His blessed sway, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved". How real these things are. We were speaking about Him in the reading as the living One, the One who is out of death. But you see it requires a distinct act of faith to accept that. All the current of things in this world is totally against that. The Lord Jesus as a living Man is something that never enters the consciousness of this world, "and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead". You see, that is in your heart and my heart, you look in there and what do you find?

Unbelief, doubt, all that the flesh would promote. Yet how precious it is to come to this, "and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead". That blessed One who died for my sins, He hung there and He suffered, He was buried, He has been raised from the dead. It is buried persons who are raised. The Lord Jesus was buried. Think of that. He was put out of sight. But it says, "God has raised him from among the dead". How selective is the resurrection of Jesus, "from among the dead". How many millions there are that lie in death. Who can count them? God knows. The population of this world, all through history, is lying in death. The Psalmist says, "Death feeds upon them", Ps. 49: 14. Think of death feeding upon the population of this world, but God operated to bring one Man out of death, "God has raised him from among the dead". That blessed One could not be left there. How blessed to think that He is out of death, a risen blessed and living Man. And He is available to every one of us as a Saviour. He says, "thou shalt be saved". How blessed it is to be saved! It is a wonderful thing. What does it mean? It means first of all that our sins have been forgiven. We will never come into judgment, our sins will never be brought up against us. How precious to be here in the consciousness that our sins have been forgiven. It is not only that we believe it, and that is true, but God by the Holy Spirit would give us the consciousness of it, that our sins have been taken away and that they do not exist in His sight. As it says in Romans, "we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ", Rom. 5: 1. We have absolute peace and certainty in our relations with God because our sins have been taken away and never exist again. How precious that is! Salvation goes right on, it goes right on to apply to us in every aspect. God will take us through salvation out of this scene altogether and place us with Jesus where He is. Salvation is a wonderful thing. God will relieve us from everything. He will take us out of death if we have died, He will change us if we are living when the Lord comes. He will take us from every other claim and every other force that might act upon us, and place us in glory with Christ in His own presence. That is salvation. How precious it is, and it is available to us now as we believe, "thou shalt be saved". He says,

“with the heart is believed to righteousness; and with the mouth confession made to salvation”. Well, these things are practical. We have heard them often and we know the scriptures, but then it is a great thing to come to reality in our souls, in a definite link with the Lord Jesus Christ to confess Him as Lord and to believe in our heart that God has raised Him, that is, to have a link with a living Man. He is my Saviour. Is He your Saviour? That is the message in the gospel, and He can only be your Saviour on an individual basis. I cannot believe for you, nor can anyone else, but God is speaking to you about faith in this blessed Person that you might accept Him and that I might accept Him and together we might be blessed.

I just read this verse in John where the Lord Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit. How precious to hear the words of the Saviour Himself! There is something distinctive and special about the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel writers record them for us that we might delight in Him and love Him, and here, as has often been pointed out, in this, the great day of the feast when things might be at their best here, the Lord speaks of those who might be dissatisfied and says, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink”. Do you know what it is to thirst and be unsatisfied in your spirit? You have everything you need physically, everything materially that you need for your comfort and enjoyment, but perhaps you have an unsatisfied spirit, an unsatisfied state within you, discontented, not settled, whatever it might be. You know what it is, you know it in your own life as I have known it in mine, He says, “let him come to me and drink”. How precious it is to hear the words of the Saviour Himself, “if any one thirst”. This is not *en masse*, this is not exactly the company, this is individual, “let him come to me”. How definite a matter this is to come to the Lord Jesus for satisfaction, “let him come to me and drink”. You have come to Him in respect of your sins. Your sins have been taken away through faith in Him and in His finished work, but are you satisfied in your soul? Are you satisfied in your life or are you striving for something, always looking for that which is beyond? He says, “let him come to me and drink”. How blessed it is to think of these references the Lord makes in the

gospels to coming to Him, “let him come to me”. He says elsewhere, “Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened”, Matt 11: 28. But here, “let him come to me and drink”. And the provision here is the blessed Holy Spirit of God who puts us in touch with the blessed living Man. He says, “let him come to me and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”. I have been struck recently, and I may have mentioned before, that in the writings of John he does not mention the word ‘faith’. He never uses it except once in the epistle, but it does not mean it is not needed because he does not speak of it, but he speaks often of *believing*. You see even words can become hackneyed, they can lose their force with us. The word ‘faith’ can lose its force with us. The Lord Jesus says, “He that believes on me”. It is a living thing, it is real thing, it is from day to day and moment by moment, “He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”. We are put in touch with a living Man, a Man in another scene. The Holy Spirit puts us in touch with a living Man, “He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”. We have often tried to explain what that means. I am not sure that I can, but it suggests an immense source of satisfaction and joy in having a living and precious and vital link with a living Man in another scene by the Holy Spirit given to us, and it is individual. We can enjoy it individually. We are meant to enjoy it individually, and that is why the Lord Jesus speaks of it.

I just finish with this reference in Romans because it is precious to see that having come to Him individually the Lord Jesus sets us together. He sets us together with our fellow-believers, He sets us together in local companies, and it is as set together as believers in Him that the local assembly really functions. There is this unique expression that Paul uses in the first chapter of Romans, “the called of Jesus Christ”. How precious to think of that! Look around our local company, what do you see? You see the called ones of Jesus Christ, that is, that the Lord Jesus Christ has personally called each one. He has had to do with each one of them

as individuals. Each one has a history with Him, each one knows Him in his or her own way, they are “the called of Jesus Christ”. Paul is speaking about the greatness of his mission, having “received grace and apostleship in behalf of his name, for obedience of faith among all the nations”. That is a great and extensive thought. What a scope the apostle had before him in his service, to preach the gospel for the obedience of faith, and he is writing to these believers in Rome and he says, “among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ”. How important it is to take account of your local brethren in that way. You see God sets us together. The Psalm says, “God maketh the solitary into families”, Ps. 68: 6. We are taken up individually in the gospel, but the Lord sets us together, sets us together in the enjoyment collectively of the knowledge of Himself and His love, sets us together in local gatherings for the working out of the truth. But who are we? We are “the called of Jesus Christ”. Is there a company like it in the world? There is not. Think of them, each one, known of Him and loved by Him, knowing Him and knowing His love. What a strength this gives us, as we take up matters collectively together. It says, “to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints”. How precious the saints are to God. How precious every believer is to Him. We have the privilege of going on together. In His grace He has given us some to go on with, but how precious these local assemblies are because they comprise the called ones of Jesus Christ.

May these things encourage our hearts, for His Name’s sake.

**EAST FINCHLEY**

**4 November 2001**