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THE PLEASURE OF GOD

Gordon McKay

Ezekiel 18: 23; Luke 2: 8-14; Hebrews 10: 4-10, 38

What I have in mind to speak about is the pleasure of God. I want to raise the question whether each individual here might be one in whom God finds pleasure. Certainly, it is God's thought that you should be so, that you should be one that God finds pleasure in. I do not know whether that has entered much into your exercises and thoughts and plans, whether you have any desire to be pleasing to God. I believe that if God is working in your soul, something of that must come into your mind. And I suppose your conscience in any case – for everyone has a conscience – bears a certain testimony as to whether you are pleasing to Him or not. I read the verse in Ezekiel 18 to point out that if you are on a wicked course, death is the end of that, and judgement. God has no pleasure in that. His righteousness and holiness demand it, that if you go on in a course of self-will and sinnership without listening to the glad tidings, in the end death is going to come on you as a penalty, and after death judgment. God would assure you that even though that is so, He does not have any pleasure *at all* in the death of the wicked. The death of the wicked is a most solemn thing. The life of the wicked is a terrible matter: it says elsewhere that God says He takes no pleasure in wickedness (see Ps. 5: 4); but think of the death of the wicked. It would involve that they are going into a lost eternity. There is a finality about that. There is something altogether different about the death of a saint, a believer. It speaks about the death of the righteous in scripture. One wicked man in scripture, Balaam, looked at the saints of God, and said he wanted to die the death of the righteous: "Let my soul die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his", Num 23: 10. But he died the death of the wicked, and God had no pleasure in that. You see an immense difference in the death of a believer, for "Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints", Ps 116: 15. Think of that wonderful thing, God taking a person who belongs to Him. A believer falls asleep in

Jesus, and divine pleasure enters into that. A life has been secured for God, and his pathway has no doubt been reviewed, and that person is taken as pleasurable. Not so the wicked. But God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. It gives Him no satisfaction nor pleasure *at all* He says, but that the wicked should turn from his way, that he may live. So these are solemn things. The gospel is a solemn matter, a matter that can make an enormous difference to you. Nothing can make more of a difference to you than the gospel. You might think of many things that can happen in your life, and many decisions that you might make, many moves you might make, many committals you might make, but *nothing* has a greater effect on you, for time and for eternity, than the glad tidings, one way or the other. Receive the glad tidings, come into the pathway of faith and blessing and the knowledge of God. And if it so happens that you die, then you die the death of the righteous, you go to be with Christ, and God has pleasure in it. But if you reject the gospel, you go on in sin. You cannot get clear of your sins without the gospel. You cannot proceed then into divine blessing without the glad tidings. And what a death that is, and what a thought, the death of the wicked. God has no pleasure in that.

What I have in mind is that you might understand something about what God does find pleasure in. What do you find pleasure in? I suppose we would all have to say that we have thought about pleasure generally in regard to ourselves. It is very remarkable in God's sight what a sinner finds pleasure in. Heaven would wonder at it that men should find pleasure in the things they find pleasure in, for as sinners we find pleasure in sin. Have you ever thought about that? People actually find pleasure in things that are displeasing to God, in sin. The fact that it is a temporary pleasure, as the scripture says, does not seem to deter us in our natural state from going on in sin. There is a pleasure, but it is temporary, the pleasure of sin. In fact it says in Romans that not only do men take pleasure in sin, but they have a fellow-delight in those that commit sin (see Rom 1: 32).

That is one of the things they enjoy, seeing others sinning. They would associate themselves with that pleasure. That tells us the

depths of depravity of the human heart (and that is your heart and mine) and what sin has done to the human race. God had in mind of course that man should be for His pleasure, and He made man upright, it says. He did not make him a sinner, He made him upright, but he turned many devices to the ways of his own will. How disappointing to God when He went into Eden to walk with Adam and to talk with him in the cool of the day and to discover that he was hiding himself because he was a sinner. The communion there was interrupted and God found no pleasure then in Adam. God brought in certain things for Adam and Eve that speak of the death of Christ, the coats of skin, but what God had in mind was lost. Do you know that a few generations later God got what He wanted? God is always going to achieve His end. You find the seventh from Adam was one who walked with God, Enoch. Adam could not, as a sinner, be taken from the garden of Eden, but you find through discipline and through God's workings, a man appearing on the scene called Enoch, and it says of him that he walked with God. And God took him, he was so pleasing to God that He took him. He walked with God and then it says he was not, for God took him and He took him because He found pleasure in him. That is the way the saints will go. The Lord Jesus is going to come, in what we call the rapture, which we are looking for very soon, and He is going to take the saints out of the world. The living saints are not going to die, and those who die will be raised and taken at the same time. Every saint will be taken out of this scene on the very same principle as Enoch, because he is pleasing to God. God has on earth persons who are pleasing to Him, and they are so pleasing to Him there is going to come a time when He is just going to take them, *all* of them, all of the dead in Christ, not the sinner, not those that have died the death of the wicked, but every righteous person. All that are covered by the blood of Jesus are going to be taken. He is going to take what He has pleasure in. Are you going to go? If that happened today or tomorrow, would you go? Would you be taken as pleasurable to God? Or would you be left behind in your sins? What a solemn question that is. Well, God is looking to find pleasure in you. He found a measure of pleasure in Enoch sufficient for Him to take him,

but really in the history of mankind God has not found pleasure. He has tried man in every possible way, and He has found him a great disappointment. Have you ever found yourself a very great disappointment? I have. It is an experience I think we have all got to go through, to find you are really disappointed with your self, because you cannot follow in a path that is pleasing to God in the power of the flesh. You find what sin is. However, that is another matter. It is something you have to discover, once you are a believer, how one ought to walk and please God, as it says in Thessalonians. There is a way of doing it, but you cannot do it as a sinner or an unconverted person, you have to begin with the glad tidings and then you might discover what it is to be walking and pleasing God.

Now the reason I read in Luke was because of the last two or three words we read, "good pleasure in men". The narrative in this chapter in Luke 2 is as to the wondrous birth of Christ and the angelic announcement of it to these shepherds out there at night watching their flocks. They were honoured by this angelic appearance, and this angelic word that a Saviour had been born, "born to you". He says as it were, 'It is for you'. I suppose it has a meaning here as to Israel, but we can say this, the gospel is for you. The sign was in a lowly babe in swaddling clothes, and the heavenly host in remarking on it, give glory to God, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men". In other words they were setting out as they looked on that babe, that what God had in mind was that God was to have glory and there was to be peace on earth and God was to find pleasure in men. You cannot, yet speak about peace on earth. One glance at the newspapers shows that peace has not come on earth yet. It would have done, but men rejected Christ. There is peace in heaven, but not yet peace on earth, until He takes up His rights. But good pleasure in men was in view. And that came into view because there appeared on this scene the Lord Jesus as One in whom God had His delight. The heavens were opened upon Him, and that was the testimony "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. A

blessed man appeared here who was completely pleasurable to God. There was nothing in Him that brought forth anything except divine pleasure. There had never been that before. Enoch walked and he did please God because God took him, but never like Jesus, because Jesus was perfect. A perfect blessed Man appeared here, beginning in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes, beginning in dependence and in human weakness you might say, but the angels could see that God had in mind to bring about good pleasure in men. God has found such pleasure in Jesus that He is going to surround Himself with people like Jesus so that His pleasure will be filled out.

He is going to fill out heaven with persons like Jesus. And so the life of Jesus is outlined in the gospels and worthy of your study.

Luke's gospel presents Him in the greatness and the beautiful grace of His manhood, the words of grace that came out of His mouth and the wondrous actions of the Lord Jesus, what He did and what He said. But that perfect pathway of Jesus, the inward and outward perfection of Jesus was not enough to save you or me or bring us into the pleasure of God. Jesus was entirely pleasurable to God. It was not just that outwardly He conformed or did what was right, but inwardly, in His heart, in the outgoings of His blessed spirit, of His thoughts and soul, everything was pleasurable to God. Think of God looking down and seeing that. Morning by morning and day by day, all the time He saw nothing but what was pleasing to Him.

There was a fragrance to God in that. There was something wonderful for God in that life of Jesus. The life of Jesus stands as unique, that life in the days of His flesh. Never was anything like that, but by itself it would not bring you or me into blessing. It required His death that we should come into blessing. That precious life had to be given up, delightful as it was to God, and rejoiced in by Christ Himself. "Take me not away in the midst of my days" (Ps.

102: 24), He was conscious of having to give up a life that He enjoyed, because He was in communion with God always. He suffered here as a man of sorrows, rejected and hated and contradicted, and He suffered because of what He saw in sin around, but all the time He was sustained in wondrous communion with God. But if you and I were to come into the good pleasure in

men, if we were to become those in whom God had pleasure, it necessitated the death of the Lord Jesus.

That is why we read in Hebrews because it brings in the Lord Jesus as establishing the pleasure of God in you and me. It is not something transient. What this passage brings out is that the old system of sacrifices for sin did not please God. You might find that a surprising statement because He, God, set it up. He set up a wonderful system of worship and of approach to Himself among His people, selecting Israel, redeeming them from Egypt and giving them blessed light and reassurance as to His concern and love. He gave them the law, their inheritance. There was a system of things in which they could have an ordered life surrounding the tabernacle where God was and where they could approach God, and serve Him and bring their sacrifices of various kinds. It mentions in this section burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. Yet when we come to the New Testament we find that God did not really find pleasure in sacrifices.

He ordered them, and they were conformed to by Israel to a certain extent at any rate, yet that was not what God had in mind at all, because the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins. God had set up a system where there was a foreshadowing of what was going to come in. And what was going to come in was One whose blood is capable of taking away sins, a sacrifice much more excellent. All these sacrifices, every one of them, pointed to Christ.

Scripture is full of Christ, full of pointers to Christ, sometimes shadowy, sometimes definite and clear. Even those Old Testament scriptures that some would say are dry and difficult to read through, when your eyes are opened you see Jesus in them. You discover that the Holy Spirit has filled the Scriptures with tributes to Jesus and with teachings about Jesus. God thinks so much of Christ, that He would fill the whole book, His whole word with Christ, and He would fill your heart with Christ. He is going to fill the world with Christ, and with those that are like Him. He is going to do that because that is His pleasure, the good pleasure of His will. What I am speaking about is coming about, and no power in heaven or earth can stop it, not all the power of Satan and his legions. God is bringing about a

universe of glory for His own pleasure and it is going to be filled with persons who know Christ and are like Christ. That is what God has in mind, "good pleasure in men". He is going to fill a new heaven and a new earth, where there is not going to be anything out of accord with Christ. God is going to do that, for it is His will, the mighty and blessed will of God. Then the question is whether we come into it. Oh come into it, be exercised, be desirous to come into this, to find the way into this. Find the way to become among those that are pleasurable to God and are going to be so eternally.

And so as to these systems of offerings, it says here, "Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not". This is Christ speaking prophetically in Psalm 40 as coming into the world. It was not really sacrifices and offerings that God wanted, but instead it says, "thou hast prepared me a body". Where everything else fails, Christ comes in. God brought in His people Israel, and they failed, and went away into idolatry. Then Christ came in, and He was the true vine. What God did not find in Israel, He found in Christ. And all these sacrifices that were not capable of taking away sins, God would take them away because Christ would fill out what God really had in mind, that is in His body here, in manhood, He was able to do the will of God, and to suffer too, because verse 10 involves the offering of the body of Jesus once for all. Look at these offerings, burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. The burnt offering represents very much what I am speaking about, God's entire delight in Jesus, because the whole of the burnt offering was offered. In some offerings only part of the animal was offered. In the burnt offering, all was offered, except the skin which the priest kept. I suppose it would remind him of the perfection of the victim that had been slain. The burnt offering is what was delightful to God. It was cut into pieces. The priest did that, and laid them in order on the altar. That is to help us to understand a little the perfection of Jesus, you might say, piece by piece. The inwards were washed with water, to bring the type up into the perfection, or to bring the type a little nearer to the perfection, of what was in Jesus. It was a burnt offering of fragrance to God, and it was for man's acceptance. It was Christ in His

acceptability. What that foreshadowed was the entire acceptability to God of the Lord Jesus. But also He came in to fill the type of the sin offering. The sin offering was not all offered to God. Certain parts were, the fat and so on, and the blood were taken into the tabernacle and placed there before God to point to the efficacy of the death of the victim, the death of Jesus. That blood availed before God. The body was taken outside the camp and burned, consumed entirely, speaking of the awful wrath of God against sin that Jesus had to bear on Calvary.

And so Jesus has filled out all these matters. All these precious things that are displayed in the Old Testament, Christ has filled them out in reality. The first is taken away that the second may be established. The old system of offerings is taken away, and instead we have this wonderful living system that now exists through the Lord Jesus' death. And it says as to believers, in verse 10, "by which will we have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". Believers are sanctified by the death of Jesus: not only are their sins taken away and covered by the death of Jesus but they themselves are secured for God, for His pleasure, set apart from everything that is set against God's pleasure. That is another thing, I would mention simply, that you may be a believer but if you are tangled up in things that God hates, you are diminishing God's pleasure in you. God's pleasure is fully secured in persons that are clear of all that is against God and all that is wicked in this world. Sanctification would involve that. The second to last verse of the chapter indicates that the way into this is by faith: "the just shall live by faith" (v.38). It is addressed to believers, because some of these Hebrews were doubtful kinds of persons and might have been in danger of giving up Christianity. "The just shall live by faith". Oh, to be among the just. "If he draw back, my soul does not take pleasure in him" (v.38) is a negative statement. God has no pleasure in someone drawing back from Christianity. God has pleasure in the just, those persons who are in the pathway of faith.

As in that pathway of faith we can be found as those that walk and please God. And God has provided for us. He has provided

completely in the gospel for our blessing and salvation, and I might say completely for His own pleasure, because these two things coincide. Our complete deliverance from sin, our salvation and blessing coincide with God's pleasure being secured in us. Our utmost happiness and blessing exists in this, that we become pleasurable to God.

If you read the epistle to the Romans you can see that there is nothing that God has not thought about, no condition of soul, no part of your life that the gospel does not meet. And one of the great provisions that you will discover in Romans that God has given to us so that we might become pleasurable to Him, is the Holy Spirit.

Believers sanctified by the death of Christ are able to receive the Holy Spirit. How could an unsanctified person receive from God the gift of His Holy Spirit? But as cleansed from our sins, we can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is a great matter in your life when you receive the Holy Spirit. It is a wonderful time when you receive Christ and you come on to sure ground as knowing you have faith in the work of Christ and in the person of Christ and you are sanctified through the blood of Jesus, but then there is also this other wonderful matter. Romans 5 speaks of, "the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (v.5). The Holy Spirit springs up into eternal life in your soul, so that you find that instead of your corrupt desires that lead you in the way of the pleasures of sin, there is another power in you that strengthens every right desire in your soul, and moves upwards. In what we are according to the flesh and as sinners, there is a downward trend in our emotions and in our feelings. In all the lusts and all the things that pour out of man, there is a downward movement. You can see it in the world, the debasement of man.

Even the most sophisticated and even the most intelligent and educated men, have most debased minds. Men's entertainment and all that kind of thing, it all goes down, but the believer has the Holy Spirit and there is something in him going up, moving towards God, the power of the Holy Spirit springing up into eternal life. And in the power of that Holy Spirit, you can walk and please God. The Holy Spirit would give you power, fresh spiritual desires, to help you in

your link with Christ. Indeed, He would be your link with Christ, and help you so that you might become pleasurable.

Well this is what God is doing. As I said, nothing is going to stop Him. The only question in the preaching is whether I am in it. It is already happening. The Lord Jesus is seeing to it. Not only has He provided the basis for this being secured but He is now in charge of it. You know that God has put Christ in charge of things. We sang in our hymn:

God has given all to Jesus,
All shall prosper in His hand (Hymn 219)

That alludes to Isaiah 53 verse 10. Christ has provided in His life and in His death for the basis of God's pleasure to be secured, and now He is administering that; "the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand", Isa. 53: 10. He gives persons the Holy Spirit, He deals with us, leads us on in our souls, so that the pleasure of God might be established in us. The Lord Jesus does wonderful things, far more than we could ever put into one preaching, but one of the things He does is He secures our hearts so deeply and feelingly, that we want to have part in the service of God, in praising God. That is going on at the present time and it is in the hands of Jesus. Well, these were the thoughts and it is a question then as to how we come into it. But the door is open, the way is clear, the question on our part is exercise and desire and acceptance of the glad tidings. For His Name's sake.

GLASGOW

October 2002

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Kenneth Robinson

Ephesians 4: 32; Acts 5: 30-32; Romans 8: 30

Each of these scriptures has references to God. I trust everyone in this room has some knowledge of God. I would like to speak to you about God and the blessings which God has in mind for you and for me. There is no greater matter to occupy you. These blessings centre in His Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We could go out and we could tell to every man that God is interested in them for blessing. That is the attitude of God today. "Now is the well-accepted time ... now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6: 2); tomorrow may never be. God may close the dispensation of grace tonight.

This could be the last gospel preaching in this room, which is a sober matter. It is so important, therefore, to know such a God, and to know the fact, to understand, that you have a knowledge of God, such a God, the God that has revealed Himself in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The first is what God has forgiven you, the second is God giving the Holy Spirit and the last scripture is God calling, justifying, glorifying. Does that arouse your interest? There are no doubt other blessings that could be referred to, but this is the desire of such a God that everyone in this room would have these matters for personal blessing, belief, understanding and enjoyment. It is remarkable that such a gospel can be preached at this time. God desires that not one person should be without the knowledge of Him. He is "our Saviour God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim 2: 4. That means that God desires also that none should be lost. What a God! God has decreed to use the glad tidings and the presentation of His Son for the acceptance of faith of every man, woman, boy and girl.

Hebrews tells us that it is necessary to have faith to believe that God is (see Hebrews 11: 6). Everyone needs to have faith to believe that there is such a being as God, who is both omnipotent and omnipresent.

I remember hearing of a person down in Ayrshire who was very anxious to get away from any thought as to the existence of God, so he thought he would become a miner. On the first day he went down to work on the shaft and at the first break the person next to him took off his cap and gave thanks for his sandwich. That soul was immediately broken down, because even though he was down there in the mine, God was there. These are real things to come to. Have you a faith and a belief in God? The God that He is, the God who is before you, the God who is not bounded by time, not bounded by man's imagination, by man's constraints, by man's science, by anything of that nature – God is God. What a great privilege for men, women, boys and girls to have faith that there is such a Person as God. But more than that, to have faith in a God who has come near. In the wonderful facts of the gospel, He has come near in His own beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What a wonderful matter, “the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2: 5), the theme of the gospel. Every soul needs to have faith in God and faith in the Man Christ Jesus and to realise that the basis for us to be able to talk about a God who forgives is on the basis of the work of His Son. The only basis for forgiveness is the finished work of God's beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Now, every one of us has to say to God. This is the God in whose very hand our breath is, the God indeed with whom we have to do, according to Hebrews 4. Every soul will have to do with Him in one of two categories: – as a believer placed before the judgment seat of Christ, but for the unbeliever who rejects the glad tidings, a word of warning, that such souls will stand before the great white throne. What an atmosphere that will be, with not a trace of divine grace. Pure, holy judgment as God has to say finally to evil and to every man who has rejected the presentation of grace in the glad tidings. God will say to that, but we preach the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work at Calvary, that God may have the joy of saying, and I trust He has had, over every soul here. ‘I forgive you, because you have faith in the finished work of my

beloved Son'. How wonderful! The God who has been offended by sin now has the basis for forgiveness. He has been justly and righteously appeased by the finished work of God's beloved Son. Do you realise that? It is not by an amount of money, nor by any act as far as what is philanthropical is concerned or anything of that nature, but the basis for all our blessing is the sacrifice of Jesus.

The parable in Mark it says "Having yet therefore one beloved son, he sent also him to them the last, saying, They will have respect for my son. But those husbandmen said to one another, This is the heir: come, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours", Mark 12: 6,7. Consider what it meant to God to look on and see His Son rejected. He had come out in the law in Moses and had a relationship with the people on one principle, but in Christ He came out in the principle of grace and righteousness and this was presented both to men, and also to the Jews, "He came to his own, and his own received him not", John 1: 11. Think of Him presenting grace even to the Pharisees and the scribes, various conditions of learned men, as it says, "which none of the princes of this age knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory", 1 Cor.2: 8. But man in his responsibility put Christ on the cross. No place for Jesus, no place for God's beloved Son, the stone that had become worthless to them has now become head of the corner (see Matt 21: 42). Judas was prepared to betray Him when someone offered him a particular sum of money (see Matt. 26: 14-16) – solemn fact – he was prepared to take that sum of money in his hand and to receive it and for that he was prepared to betray, "and Judas Iscariote, who was also his betrayer", Luke 6: 16. These things are very sobering as we realise the cost that it has been to God to be able to reach and secure and recover the creature that He loved, the creature that He created in the world that He had created, into which sin had entered. God has demonstrated in a magnificent way in the incoming of Jesus, the life of Jesus, the sacrifice of Jesus, what He was prepared to do to find a righteous basis in order to dispense forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the blessings which are available in the gospel.

Christ suffered; He went to Calvary. That was the place that He was given, He was hanged upon a tree. As we referred to yesterday, “humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death and that the death of the cross”, Phil. 2: 8. The public spectacle of the cross was there for all to see as the Lord of glory was placed upon a Roman gibbet, with a malefactor on one side and a malefactor on the other. Was He there because of any penalty on Him? No, He was there vicariously in the perfection and glory of One who in love committed Himself and was devoted to the entire will of God. What a matter! What a committal! Abraham saw a ram caught in the thicket (see Gen 22: 13). This all looked on to the Lord Jesus having been held in the full committal and obedience to the will of God. How much is in these words in Gethsemane, but it does touch your heart as a believer when He says, “not my will, but thine be done”, Luke 22: 42. Luke emphasises it by saying, “And his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth” (v.44), and “an angel appeared to him from heaven strengthening him” (v.43) – one of God’s creatures, one of God’s agencies who ministered to the will of God, looking down, seeing the Creator there in manhood. How much was bearing in upon the spirit of the Lord Jesus, knowing that the whole matter had to be faced. He endured much at the hands of men, but far more when He was made sin. “From the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour” (Matt 27: 45). Man cannot apprehend it, we cannot apprehend or understand it. These are deep matters between Christ and His God. As He could say at the ninth hour, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?” (v.46). Dear friend, dear believer, is there an answer in your heart to that cry? Is there an answer out of deep conviction to that cry that you can say, ‘For me Lord, for me’? It says, “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities”, Isa. 53: 5. The Lord Jesus in the perfection of His offering was able to sustain the judgment of God in the perfection and holiness of His humanity. The fire of God’s judgment came against the victim, but the victim was able to consume the fire. The judgment of God, you say, was it held back? It was not held back. The full fury of the judgment of

God on sin came upon the head of His beloved Son, and yet the Lord Jesus in the perfection of His manhood in John's gospel could say, "It is finished", John 19: 30. How preachers rejoice in the fact that they can present tonight a completed work to God's glory and to God's righteousness. This is what Jesus has accomplished.

Then He went into death, and having gone into death His blood was shed. The basis of God forgiving you is the blood of Jesus.

This is the basis for every one of us to be brought into the joy of forgiveness of sins. If we confess our sins then God is ready to forgive us our sins because of the availability of the blood of Jesus.

It is what God thinks of that blood that matters and eternity will show that. I stress it is what God thinks of that blood. How wonderful, and our faith can rest peacefully and complacently on that. It is not what I think of the blood, it is what God thinks of the blood and this will deal with my history. So the Lord Jesus completed the work, His blood was shed and He died and was buried for three days and then He was raised from amongst the dead by the glory of the Father.

God has raised His Son and now God can set forth that Person according to Romans 3 as "a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood" (v.25). Has everyone here faith in the blood of Jesus? Has everyone here faith in that God who has a right to forgive you and who will forgive you? Do hasten to take advantage of that. That would be the word in every gospel preaching tonight, hasten to take advantage of the fact that if you have faith in the finished work of Jesus God is ready to forgive you your sins. The woman in Luke 7 is just one example of one who hastened to take advantage of the fact that Jesus was available. For us we would say the work of Christ is available and the Lord says to that woman, as He could say it to every one of us at some point in our history, "Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace" (v.50). Have you got faith? Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Do you know the God who has forgiven you your sins? Have you got that assurance? I do not ask you if you know it as light, I ask you have you got the belief in your soul in a God who has forgiven you your sins and that for eternity, and that you know that the enemy can never question it because God has

done it and God has forgiven you your sins on the righteous basis of the completed work of His Son. These things are wonderful. These things are great stimulation and joy to speak of. It is a great privilege to present such glad tidings, to present such a God, such a Christ, such a work that has been accomplished. I cannot convince you by argument, God has to work in your inner being, He has to operate, as He will do sovereignly we trust in new birth, giving you the capability to respond to these things, but then God also reaches your conscience to bring you to the point that you repent towards the God who has been offended by your history, and then you claim the finished work of Jesus and go out of the presence of God as a forgiven sinner for eternity. What a glorious gospel it is! “so as God also in Christ has forgiven you”. I trust every one of us is in that “you”. I trust every one of us can say Amen in inward conviction, and in enjoyment and peace, of knowing that God has forgiven us our sins because of the finished work of Jesus.

Then the believer goes on. In Acts 5 as Peter is going over and giving another of his powerful preachings, he brings out that, “God must be obeyed rather than men. The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus” – that we have spoken of, we have referred to the slaying of Jesus, “having hanged on a cross. Him has God exalted by his right hand as leader and saviour”. God has exalted His Son and given Him a position at His right hand. He could not have given Him any other position, no higher place for Him could He have found. He is sitting there at the right hand of God. Your Saviour is there! My Saviour is there! God is proclaiming as Lord and Christ for the believer. Then Peter says, “the Holy Spirit also, which God has given to those that obey him”. The gift of the Holy Spirit of God, following on the exaltation of Jesus, is to be received. Man is now in glory, where God is down here in the Spirit. In the air? No, in believers who are covered by the redemptive work of Jesus. Does everyone here know about the truth of the Spirit? Does everyone here have the joy of the reception of the Holy Spirit? Have all the young believers received the Holy Spirit of God? God is ready tonight to give you the Holy Spirit. God is ready, if you ask. Luke’s

gospel tells us, “the Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (ch 11: 13). When you obey the glad tidings, you realise that Christ is exalted, but God gives you the assurance of these things by the power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps even an older believer might be reached to give a greater place to the Holy Spirit.

Take your bearings, take your soundings, so that you are sure of the reception of the Holy Spirit of God. As we touch on these things, does it bring joy in your heart, a confirmation in your soul that you have belief in a Man who is in heaven exalted and glorified and you have a resource in the Holy Spirit within that changes your taste down here, changes the principle of your life in many aspects, gives you a power over evil? How great and important these things are for all of us irrespective of age to realise the power of the Holy Spirit and to be able to say ‘No’ to evil, to overcome both outward things and our innermost thoughts and desires. The Holy Spirit desires to fill our hearts with the love of God and to fill our hearts and our beings with the greatness and glory of divine things. Another has said, ‘The greatest friend we have in heaven is Jesus, the greatest friend we have on earth is the Holy Spirit of God’. Have you proved that? Are you proving that? Is that your experience? Moments in time may come upon us when we are in some anguish of soul, or some situation, or circumstance, and you sense you have no one to turn to. You do have someone to turn to. You have the Lord Jesus in glory and have the Holy Spirit inwardly to turn to as a resource and a power?

Then in Romans 8 we have a God who blesses. I cannot explain them all, but they are very attractive. You begin to realise that God had a place in glory in mind for you. He predestinated you so that your destiny is glory. Do you realise that? The only future for the Christian, as another has said, is glory. Your final destiny is glory. Mr. Stoney’s hymn finished:

Yon heaven is our home (Hymn 7)

How wonderful that is, God pre-destinating you, taking the time to personally select you for glory. Who has done it? God has done it. Who can challenge it? No one can challenge it. God is supreme

in His own affairs, and if God has predestinated you for glory, dear believer, let me tell you, it will happen. He has sovereignly called you. Have a sense of that and treasure it. He may not have called your next door neighbour, yet you would pray that that may be so: He may not have called people that you work beside, and yet you can go through daily matters realising that God has called you for blessing. God has called you out into the testimony, out of a world which is going on to judgment. He has not only blessed you in relation to eternity, His call is in that, but more “and whom he has called, these also he has justified”. He has blessed you in justifying you. Your history is gone completely as far as God is concerned.

How wonderful is the truth of justification. God looks at you now in Christ. But you say, I am just a forgiven sinner. That is true and thank God for that, but God looks at you now as justified in Christ for another world altogether. No sense of penalty or fear! And more still – “these also he has glorified”. God has glorified us with the gift of the Spirit, and glorified us also with the light of the truth of the assembly and a heavenly calling and a heavenly inheritance. Such a God! Do you know such a God? Have you a knowledge of such a God? May I encourage each one of us to enjoy and develop in our link with such a God. It is our knowledge of such a God that we take through to eternity. May these things just encourage us all. God has done it all in Jesus and He desires the blessings which are there for us in the gospel in His beloved Son, are there for our enjoyment now. For His Name’s sake.

LONDON

November 2002

Ministry Meeting

(i) Words

David Scougal Snr.

Jeremiah 15: 6

I read this remarkable verse this week. The people of God were in difficult days. Sometimes we say we are in very difficult times and that would be true but not as difficult as the days of these dear captives. At the beginning of the chapter it says, "And Jehovah said unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, my soul would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go forth" (v.1). They had pleaded: "Jehovah, we acknowledge our wickedness, the iniquity of our fathers", Jer. 14: 20. How serious things were with them! "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me". What a man Moses had been! What a work he had done for God's people! He was one who was a mediator, one who was prepared to be blotted out of God's book as long as the people were saved – a type, of course, of our great High Priest, the One who gave His life for us. "Though ... Samuel stood before me": what a man Samuel was! What words he gave, what prophecies he uttered! It says, "Jehovah was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground", 1 Sam. 3: 19. Where did that word go? That word was treasured in the hearts of those who heard.

That is where they went. It did not fall to the ground; it fell into their hearts and souls in the day of Samuel. We have had a lot of prophets in our day, we tend to say prophets of the recovery, and that is true, but we have the prophets of the New Testament: Paul, Peter, John, James. Think of these great men, great prophets!

Think of the greatest Prophet of all, our Lord Jesus Christ, a Prophet, a Priest and a King. What about His words? He says, "let these words sink into your ears" (Luke 9: 44), into the depths of your soul. That is where Samuel's words went, into the depths of the souls of God's people. That is where the Lord's words were to go.

That is where Paul's words were to go. We have had many

prophets in the days of the recovery – ministry, Oh, dear brethren, read it and cherish it and speak of it with affection!

I just thought of this verse following what our brother has said: “Thy words were found”. A word has come to us, beloved brethren.

The Lord *has* spoken to us tonight. Do not anyone say that is not so. It *is* so. The Lord has spoken in His word. “Thy words were found”, now are we going to eat them? Are we going to make these our own? The old brothers used to tell us when I was a young man, ‘Make it your own’. Let us make this word our own! “And I did eat them, and thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart”. Oh, the joy that God’s word gives us as we make it our own, our hearts stimulated, our souls quickened, our spirits set forward.

These people of old, at the end of the chapter it says, “yea, I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible” (v.21). Think of it! At the beginning of the chapter things looked very difficult: ‘if Moses and Samuel stood there, I would not have anything to do with you!’ But then they found the word and they took the word and they ate it. You know, if you eat a thing and masticate and swallow it, it becomes part of you. That is simple dietetics. You appropriate something and you eat it and it forms part of your being. When the word of God comes to us, the thing is to accept it and to eat it and to make it our own and become formed by it so that we become, as our brother has said, good neighbours.

It says at the end of the chapter for these people of old, “I will deliver thee ... and I will redeem thee”. We would be helped out of these difficulties, problems that we have, the problems that should not be amongst us. I do not specially mean locally; but I mean throughout the fellowship there are problems that should not be there. We are thinking different things, thinking different ways, but the way to get the benefit is the appropriation of the word of God, the prophetic word as it comes to us. In the latter days of Mr Taylor’s ministry, if he stressed one thing it was the prophetic word. It had not been always in the days of his service that meetings for prophetic ministry were arranged, but he suggested such meetings,

possibly in the late thirties and early forties, stressing the need to listen to the prophetic word coming amongst us, and this was taken on and proved of great help, and that will help us and set us forward and bind us together, now, today.

Well, there is not much more I can say, but it says, “and thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by thy name”, God’s own people. He names us, calls us after Himself. You say, what do you mean? Well, we come to know Christ as our Saviour, come to know what it is to have part in this wonderful vessel, the assembly, and that vessel is named after the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12 it says, “so also is the Christ” (v.12), the anointed vessel. What a vessel, what an inn, what a place of security, what a place of rejoicing, what a place of happiness, what a place of gladness of heart where we can be at rest and peace and joy together! But then there is always the neighbour that needs help. I remember I asked a dear old brother locally, who is the neighbour? Oh, he said, that is simple, that is the brother that is near you. He said, it is not the brother in America or the brother in Australia; it is the brother that is near you. He is your neighbour. Well, may we be helped by this word to have good neighbourly relations together for His Name’s sake!

EDINBURGH

3 December 2002

(ii) Care

Robert Trotter

Luke 10: 25–37; Deuteronomy 6: 4–11

The previous section to the one we read in Luke's gospel, beloved brethren, is taken up with what is heavenly. I think there is a certain order in the chapter. In the verses we read we find there is tremendous need, in fact a need that we know only one Person can satisfy, that is the Lord Jesus. What we find here is that there is a certain lawyer who remains nameless, but known as a lawyer and he "stood up tempting him", that is the Lord Jesus. He is not only tempting but he is "desirous of justifying himself". I suppose if he had left off earlier and not wanted to justify himself, would the rest of this have come out, I wonder? It certainly brings out the need of the neighbour, a very great test to us because we are set together as brethren and that is God's ordering; God has done that, a company so diverse as natural persons yet set together as brethren. So what comes out first of all, of course, is this great matter of the Lord putting back upon him what is written in the law, and he certainly knew that. He knew what was written in the law, so it is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart", wonderful matter that it begins with the heart, "with all thy heart". I suppose that makes it safe if it is a heart-matter, "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul", bringing out, I think, that tremendous feeling has to enter into this. "Soul" would remind us of that. "With all thy soul"; it is not just a part. These are simple things and just to read the scripture the brethren can see, and then it goes on "and with all thy strength". In one sense it seems to take up the whole person. All our faculties have to be employed in this way. Then the part that really tests us, I suppose, is "and thy neighbour as thyself". How well-worded these things are. "And he said to him, Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live". And then it says, "But he, desirous of justifying himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" How pertinent this question is, beloved brethren! I feel it. I am not laying it on anyone else. We have a neighbour.

As the verses unfold, of course, we find that the Lord brings out this great matter of “A certain man descended from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who also, having stripped him and inflicted wounds, went away leaving him in a half-dead state”. We are entering now the great area of need. What a need this man has! As I mentioned earlier, I think we approach this from the heavenly side. That is the test to us, the test to me because, beloved brethren, that is where all the resources are. They are in heaven. But, of course, as we know, they have to be administered down here amongst us.

So we have the “certain priest”. It says he “happened to go down that way”. Well, this is old ground, of course. I cannot say much fresh in relation to it. It says, “and in like manner also a Levite, being at the spot, came and looked at him and passed on on the opposite side”. They looked at least, but they had no resources. It has been said and I may as well say it now – I am quoting when I say this – that the Lord is seeking to transfer us from lawyers to neighbours. I suppose the lawyer would say, Well, I know what is wrong. I know exactly what is wrong, but have we the resources, beloved brethren?

Then it goes on to say, “But a certain Samaritan journeying came to him”. There is direction in this. This Samaritan is journeying. Oh what journeys were His, beloved brethren! Think of where He went to supply the need! Think of where He went to supply the resources, to make the resources available! “But a certain Samaritan journeying came to him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion”. What compassion, the compassions of the Saviour! We have all, I trust, experienced something of them. It says, “and came up to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and having put him on his own beast, took him to the inn and took care of him”. What a verse this is! Of course, we know according to teaching that there would be some indication of the Spirit in these matters, “pouring in oil and wine”, putting him on his own beast, some fine thoughts as to the Spirit! And then he is taken to the inn. I have been thinking a little bit about the inn. Wonderful

place the inn! Someone else said in relation to Mr Coates that he had said that he was cured and carried and cared for. These three things, beloved brethren, what matters they are. Each one of us has been a recipient of them. He was cured and carried and cared for.

Well, I think there is a great need for this to-day. It is easy to point the finger and say, Well, why is so-and-so not exercising more care? Because these features, beloved brethren, have to find their place amongst us and in us. What the Lord Jesus Himself in type showed in this parable in the journeying and being moved with compassion and the pouring in of the oil and wine, I think that is to be found among us. There is a need and we are to be persons with resource. Oh how I am tested by that! Have we the resource, resources to care for persons? It says, "Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shalt expend more, / will render to thee on my coming back". That reminds me of Paul, beloved brethren. He speaks of being spent, to "spend and be utterly spent", 2 Cor 12: 15. How he lived like that! Paul could speak about "these hands", Acts 20: 34. How he had lived! What a test these things are!

That is why I read in Deuteronomy because there is a link between these two scriptures, and what it brings out to me is that while verse 5 is more or less what we have read, then it says, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt impress them on thy sons". These things have to be continued. There are generations and it says here, "and thou shalt impress them on thy sons". I suppose it means that they are spoken about and the importance of these things is stressed, and it goes on to say, "and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou goest on the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up". It is like every area of our lives is covered by this. "And thou shalt bind them for a sign on thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates".

Well, I just feel the importance of these simple words, beloved brethren. I feel that there is a need in our day especially. We tend to drift along, and these elements of care, caring for one another, the

neighbourly features, are to be seen in us and are to be exercised by us. Well, may we be encouraged for His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

3 December 2002