

A
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THE WORD OF MY PATIENCE

Andrew Burr

Revelation 1: 1-3; 3: 8-11; 1 Corinthians 4: 5

We spoke in the reading about the way the Lord presents what He did in John 13 as having a special blessing connected with it (see v.17): and now we have a whole book with a blessing. It says here, "Blessed is he that reads". It does not say blessed he that understands, but he that keeps it. The Revelation is a magnificent book. I do not suppose anybody could read it without being impressed by it: even the unbeliever would be impressed, I think, by the book. He might dismiss it as a dream. He might not understand that it is a revelation. It has come to us in a very remarkable way. It was given by God to Jesus Christ, to His angel, to His bondman, and so to us. We can trace what we have in this book to God Himself. It is not easy to understand. I do not suppose there are many people – or have ever been many people – who really understand it. But it is much easier to get some impression from it about what God had in His mind from the beginning. The Lord says first that the things "are shortly to take place". And then he says, "the time is near". It is not only that the time is soon but also the time is near. I think He uses that word because he wants us to understand how this book helps us now. This book is not just written to tell us what is going to happen. We might say it could have been much clearer if that was what it was about. I suppose men and women are always very curious about what is going to happen. One of the big differences between God and His creature is that He knows what is going to happen next and we do not. But men and women would very much like to know what is going to happen. Of course, the reason they want to know is so that they can change what is going to happen. So the Lord says that if the man had known that thieves were going to dig through into his house, he would not have gone to sleep (see Matt 23: 43). I think it is also true, beloved, that if we knew everything that was going to happen, we would be overwhelmed. If we look back over even our own lives and think of some of the things

that have happened, perhaps we might say it is just as well that we did not know that that was going to happen. God gave us grace for it when it happened, but it would have been very difficult to face things if we had known that certain things were going to happen.

This book is not history written in advance in detail, but it tells us something about the God whose revelation it is. It tells us, first of all and simply, that He is in complete control. If we look at this book and see in it an account of things that are about to take place, we might ask who is able to write a book like that? This is not just a forecast. The Person who has given this revelation knows what is going to happen; and He must be Someone who is in complete control. If He did not have complete control, He could not say that this is going to happen, because somebody else could stop it happening, or make something else happen. It is very comforting to us in our weakness that we have God who is in complete control.

The world is in fear at the present time. There is a war on. Those who are fighting the war do not know if they will succeed: they hope they will but they do not know; and they do not know what will happen afterwards. The nations say that the peace is sometimes harder to win than the war. And what other problems might this war cause? What other hidden evils might come to the surface? I heard of one who was so afraid about his personal safety that he was worried about coming to work. People said he is worrying too much, but they did not say they were not worrying at all. The believer, beloved, knows he is sheltered by the hand of a God who is in complete control.

Another feature of His control is that He governs the time at which anything is going to happen. He is able to decide exactly what will happen when. He does not have to wait until He is presented with an opportunity to do something. He can choose the time at which He does anything. He says these things "must shortly take place". You may say they have not, but they could have; and it is His decision that they have not. He has chosen the moment at which everything spoken about in this book is going to happen. And that is another lesson in this book. I think it is a very interesting study how

the time of things is prominent in this book. God begins to unfold the events in this book, and we might say, Now You have started, You had better get it over. No God says, We will do this – and then We will wait; and We will do this. You do not get the impression from this book that God is in a hurry, or – as we say – that He is at the mercy of events. There is a very solemn moment in this book when there is silence in heaven for half an hour (see Rev 8: 1). I think heaven recognises that God is able to choose His time. It is not exactly that heaven keeps God waiting, but that solemn, silent, half an hour is recognition that God is completely in control. Then there is the very solemn word later on, that “there should be no longer delay”, Rev 10: 6. The judgment is about to fall, the world’s moment has come, and yet judgment unfolds in stages; first one thing and then another comes under God’s judgment. As I say, you do not need to understand the pictures in this book; you do not need to interpret it.

There is a word here for the simplest, that we have to do with a God who has everything in His hands. Then let us remember that what He has told us about the things that are going to happen are things we need to know now. It is not as if we will take this book to heaven with us and then in the time of judgment be able to look up what is going to happen next. But He has given us a certain outline of what is going to happen because we need that outline now; and we need it so that we can learn about the way that God deals with things.

After all, it is the way He deals with us. It is also so that we should have confidence in God. The Lord Jesus says to His own, “Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God”, John 14: 1. Beloved, I say to myself, what does my belief actually do for me? It gives me peace about the day of judgment; it has given me faith in the death of Christ and His precious blood; and it has given me a hope and prospect for the future. It has taken away from me the fear of death. Well then, God says, why do you not trust me more about your life?

Why when there are things that I bring into your life do you keep forgetting Me? Why do you keep doing things as if I could not help you? You almost seem to behave sometimes as if I was not here.

And to attract me, to bring Him in, He has given me this book and promised me a blessing from keeping it.

I read in chapter 3 because there is an interesting contrast in what the Lord says. I was thinking especially of verse 10; the Lord refers to an hour of trial. It is about to come He says, upon the whole habitable world. There will not be a nation on earth that escapes this hour of trial. No one is going to get caught up in this by accident. The hour of trial is to try them that dwell upon the earth. It is quite deliberate on God's part. It is before the judgment itself. It will be a time of terrible trouble. It will be especially so for Israel, but this is not limited to Israel – it is the whole world. The scripture speaks about Jacob's trouble (see Jer. 30: 7), because Israel was in a special relationship with God and did not recognise His Son. They chose that a man that was a murderer should be granted to them (see Acts 3: 14). God says, if that is your choice, I cannot own you. And so, when trouble falls on the world, Israel suffers especially. But the whole world made that choice. People worry about terrorists and so on who are hiding in our communities. We do not know who they are and we do not know where to find them. The world has asked that a man who was a murderer should be granted to them. He is out there and he makes the world afraid, but the world does not repent of its choice and turn to the Man who it crucified.

So there is to be an hour of trial for the world. It is very interesting that it is an hour. It does not exactly say that this is going on indefinitely. It is very wonderful in relation to Israel that at the very point where the trouble gets unbearable, when even the remnant wonders who will be saved, and they must think they cannot go on a day longer; in that very day the heavens light up like lightning and the Lord they crucified appears as their Saviour. That is not an emergency for God; the moment of the Lord's intervention for His earthly people is already a decided matter. They do not understand that, because they do not understand the prophecy that refers to Him coming as a lowly Servant; but their unbelief does not change God. He has not re-written His timetable because Israel has not believed. As it happens, it is at the moment of their worst extremity that the Messiah they are looking for appears. What a solemn thing this is that although the world seems easy about its

attitude to the future, I have not detected any turning to God after the outrages of recent times. The world goes on to trial and judgment.

Beloved, let me say this with complete certainty to every believer – you will not be there. You say, Why will that be? Because the Lord loves you. The world may not know that the Lord loves you, but in that day it will know. It might then say, Why is so-and-so not here?

The Lord loved them. It says here, “shall know that I have loved thee”. Of course, it is not that the believer only finds out then that the Lord loves him. I trust everybody here understands that the Lord loves them. I say for myself that I do not know how much He loves me. I would like to, but I am sure He loves me. He does not say that they will know how much I love you: so whatever you may feel as to measure, think of that fact. One thing I know – Jesus loves me. And one of the consequences of that is that all this trouble that I have spoken of will not involve you. The One who is in complete control is also entitled to make promises. You see, I might make a promise – for example to my daughter – and then something may come in and I might not be able to keep it. It was not that I did not mean to, but I was unable to. But the One who has made this promise is the One who is in complete control: “I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial”.

While that is true, there is another trial, and it is the trial we pass through in the present day. It is not for long. It might be over today. We have to keep the word of His patience. Perhaps I am not so good at this as others, but that is a real trial. To have my patience tested is a great trial. I am not suggesting that it is anything like the trouble that the world is going to be in, but I just want to bring out this, that the present time is a day in which we are under test, and it is extended for that reason. The thief on the cross was quite expressly excused this. He spoke to the Lord about the coming day and the kingdom, and the Lord said to him – Today. You see, there is no waiting, there was no thought of patience on the part of the thief. He was promised something today. Well, we know that not everything happens today and we have to wait. The Lord Jesus says here, “thou hast kept the word of my patience”.

I would like to say a simple word in the light of what I have said about the word of His patience. The patience of Jesus was not something that was seen only in big tests, but it marked the whole of His life. I think it is right to say as to Jesus that He had a will of His own. In the garden, He speaks of “my will” (Luke 22: 42), but He did not assert it. I might say, if I want to what is right, is that not all right? But that is not the word of His patience. He waited day by day on God for what He should do. It has been remarked that, when there was nothing from the Father for Him to do, He went to sleep. He was Somebody who was willing at every turn on every day to wait for the will of Another. I might speak of the time when Lazarus was ill.

It is very beautiful from the sisters’ point of view. Jesus had disappeared from the public eye, but the sisters knew where to find Him. I trust we all know where we could find Him. They sent Him a message – “He whom thou lovest is sick”, John 11: 3. There is no need to give his name. I wonder something about how we pray; our prayers may be just a list of names, and really from the Lord’s point of view it not necessarily required to give the names. Of course, the Lord likes us to mention one another’s names. It might have been said to the sisters, That does not make things very clear, because the Lord will say, Which of many are you referring to? No, the sisters knew that the Lord would know exactly who they meant. And they appeal to His love. I trust we had an impression of His love in the reading, and as we have noticed in Revelation 3, He speaks of His love to Philadelphia. We might have said, the message to the Lord, appealing to His love, will be enough to make Him act. Surely, I only have to touch the Lord’s heart and He will do something? Well, the messengers came back, and the sisters might have said – What did He say? He did not say anything. Did He say He would come? –

No. Do you think He is coming? – We do not know. The Lord waited: He waited for a word from the Father. We know that His deep feelings were stirred by this illness. He knew that by the time He arrived Lazarus would be in the grave, and that the one He loved would stink. It might have been said, Lord here is an occasion surely when you ought to hurry. No, He says, this is for the glory of God. He says that He did not come for His own glory but the glory of Him

that sent Him (see John 8: 50). Even His deepest, firmest feelings for me give way to the will of God. We may think that on many other occasions the Lord's actions seems to be spontaneous, and immediate, but the fact is that there was no act that was not fully in accord with the present mind of God, understood by His communion with the Father. I believe, we would say that it was only in that spirit that the Lord Jesus was prepared for what the cross and the grave were going to mean. We cannot imagine someone like us, who has become accustomed to doing our own will, submitting so fully and freely to the will of God in that extreme hour. Many of us would have said, "Let this cup pass from me" – but who of us could have said in that same breath, "But not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt", Matt 26: 39? What a thing, beloved, the patience of the Christ is. He does not ask us to pass through the depths through which He has gone: He speaks of the *word* of His patience. It is as if He would teach us – do it this way. Beloved, we can taken account of the brethren in this local meeting in Bethany and they were doing things this way.

I just conclude with a word that brings in what I have read in Corinthians. The Lord present Himself throughout Scripture as the Coming One. He says, "I come quickly". Notice, not soon but quickly. So that He is never far away. He presents Himself in these addresses to the assemblies as the One who is coming. That would give some of them something to worry about. Take for example Sardis: He says I am coming as a thief. He treats the professing church as if it is like the world. He is going to come upon the world like a thief. In other words, the world will be caught unawares. What a sorrow it is that the profession will not be ready either. He also says to Philadelphia, "I come quickly". It impresses me especially that He presents Himself to Laodicea as having come. He does not say, I am coming to Laodicea but, "I stand at the door", Rev 3: 20. Everything seems to have failed in Laodicea – what is going to be done? It seems as if everything has gone to ruin and the love of the many has grown cold (see Matt 24: 12). The Lord says, I am right here at the door. I trust we feel this, that the more difficult and acute things seem to be the nearer the Lord really is. If one was in

Laodicea, one might say, If you are here, Lord, you deal with this. I would want to be faithful in the absence of Christ; I would want to do what I could, but here is something with which the Lord only is able to deal. The Lord knows what is too much for us, and here He knocks at the door. The Laodiceans were not going to give Him much of a welcome, but He had come with everything they needed.

There has been so much failure that we might think we can enjoy only a little of what is left from the beginning, but the Lord says to the overcomer, You sit on the throne! How wonderful that is. So, Paul says in Corinthians, do not judge anything before the time, until the *Lord* shall come. This brings together some of the things I have said. He refers there to the Lord, the One who is in control and he speaks of Him as One who is in control especially of the time. He sees not only what is right but He sees what is wrong; especially He sees things that are hidden. It is not possible for us to deal with anything if something is hidden: if we could see it, it might change our whole view of the matter, and of course we do not know if something is hidden or not. But the Lord knows. In the day He chooses to judge any matter, then the secret and open things will be dealt with together. One might say, Well I never realised that was part of this matter. But the Lord has dealt with it; and is it not wonderful, beloved, that He will manifest the counsels of hearts; I do not think that is simply to expose people who have been acting bad motives. I think the Lord is very careful to credit people who have approached any matter relating to His interests with right desire. He will make that obvious and then He will distribute the rewards. Could you think of the greatest reward you could have? Could anyone think of a greater reward than praise from God? That is the reward that Jesus Himself has received; and He promises it, beloved, to those who wait for His time.

Beloved I trust that these Scriptures will be a blessing to us; that they will serve to renew our confidence in the God we know; and bring to our spirits a sense of rest about all His interests here. The world is very occupied with itself. It is really insignificant to God.

The nations, it says, are like dust in the scales (see Isa 40: 15).

That is, they do not affect the weight at all. God's chief interest on earth is His saints, and anything that affects them is of even greater interest to Him than the whole course of politics in this world. He has been pleased to make our needs His chief interest. Peter refers to the mighty hand of God. He says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God ... cast all your care upon him, for he cares about you", 1 Peter 5: 6. I trust that we might seek an opportunity to prove this. I was going to say, choose a matter and bring it to Him, and learn from God how great and wonderful He is. May He bless the Word.

Bad Endbach

March 2003

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

John Bellamy

Luke 4: 16-21; 13: 10-13; 18: 35-43

This morning in the room where I was we sang a hymn at the end of the meeting:

Thine own Son, the joy of heaven,
In Thy bosom dwells (Hymn 377)

and it occurred to me, dear friends, that that is what God is seeking to arrive at with each one of us in His glad tidings, that what He finds His joy in, we might find our joy in and as the One who fills the heart of the blessed God in His bosom, that that blessed Man might find a place in the affections of each one of us. With that in mind I refer to these three scriptures in Luke's gospel. Luke alone of the gospel writers gives us this first passage that we read and then throughout his gospel he proceeds to give us examples in men and women of the very ones that the Lord Jesus was speaking about here, those that are "poor". He preached "to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord". We have not time this afternoon to read all the examples that Luke gives us but he gives us these two that we have read. You may wonder why we are speaking of persons that are "poor" and "captives deliverance" and "the crushed delivered" and "the blind". There may be those here this afternoon that think that they are not among such. Well, let me say this to you: the region in which the Lord Jesus is working is that very region and it is necessary that you and I find our place among these if we are going to come into the gain of what the Lord Jesus has in mind in the glad tidings. You say, Well, I am not poor. There was a man in Luke 7 that thought he was not poor. I suppose he really prided himself in what he had in the way of material possessions. His name was Simon. But the Lord Jesus says to him, "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee. ...There were two debtors of a certain creditor: one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty; but as they had nothing

to pay, he forgave both of them their debt” (vv. 40-42). You see, Simon had to put himself in the place of being a debtor and not having anything to pay if he was going to come into the gain of what the Lord Jesus had in mind for him. Psalm 49 tells us something similar: “None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, For the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be given up for ever” (vv. 7,8). You and I, dear friends, have to find our place as really bankrupt, having “nothing to pay”. There is nothing we can contribute to God for our own salvation, nor for that of our brother, but there is One, let me tell you, who *is* the Redeemer. He is here in the section we read and He has the resources with which to meet that need. The scripture in Corinthians tell us that: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor, in order that *ye* by *his* poverty might be enriched”, 2 Cor. 8: 9. How wonderful that is! The hymn tells us that:

He who was rich in glory
Came down to earth below
In love, O wondrous story! (Hymn 246).

What a story the glad tidings is, God finding us here without the resources or means to do anything for ourselves, but the Lord Jesus has come to preach to the poor – “glad tidings to the poor”!

And then He says that He has come “to preach to captives deliverance” and that brings us to the first scripture that we read in chapter 13. This poor woman had been a captive for eighteen years, we are told. The Lord Jesus tells them that Satan had bound her for eighteen years. Well, the Lord Jesus has come “to preach to captives deliverance” and so He calls to her. It does not say that she sought Him out. It says that “Jesus, seeing her, called to her, and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity”. Well, the Lord Jesus is looking around this room this afternoon. He is looking for persons in need of help and blessing and, in His grace, He calls to us. It says, “seeing her, called to her, and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity”. The Lord Jesus is preaching “to captives deliverance” this afternoon. Then it says, “And he laid his

hands upon her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God". You see, dear friend, as we come into touch with the Lord Jesus in a living vital way, what a transformation, what a change takes place! Here this poor woman had been in the synagogue and the synagogue could not do anything for her.

Eighteen years like that and she comes into the presence of the Lord Jesus and in a moment of time He calls to her, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity"! Well, you may say, I am not a captive. I am not bound. It reminds me of something our brother Mr Gill told us once, that he was speaking to a man about his links with God and the man said to him, Oh, I am not interested in becoming a Christian. He said, Christians are all in bondage. He said, they cannot do this and they cannot do that. I do not want any part of that. Mr Gill said to him, has it never occurred to you that God in the glad tidings so affects the hearts of believers that they have no desire to do the things that you are speaking of? And he said, what is that in your hand? The man said, that is a cigarette. Mr Gill said, so have you ever tried to give up smoking? Oh, yes, he said, but I cannot give it up. Mr Gill said to him, who is in bondage? These things the enemy uses to captivate us. Young people in this world largely sport is their idol. They are attracted to it, pleasure, other things, some things no damage perhaps in themselves. A lot of people spend their lives up on the mountains in our part of the world but it becomes *an idol*, inoffensive in itself, but Satan uses these things to hold us from coming into the wondrous blessing of having to do with God and the knowledge of His grace and of His love. Both Paul and Peter touch on this. Paul says, I think it is in Romans chapter 6, "Know ye not ...ye are bondmen to him whom ye obey" (v.16). Well, what are you obeying? Are you obeying God? Are you obeying Satan and his world? Peter tells us too in his second epistle. He puts it a little differently but nevertheless it has a similar bearing. He says in chapter 2 of the second epistle: "for by whom a man is subdued, by him is he also brought into slavery" (v.19). Well, men in the world around us, men and women, do not realise it but they are slaves to sin and the Lord Jesus has come to bring in deliverance, "to captives deliverance".

Oh, what a transformation, what a change took place in this woman. It says “and immediately she was made straight”. Being straight, I think, suggests righteousness. She is made righteous, “made straight, and glorified God”. Indeed she is qualified immediately to have her name written in the book of Jasher. You say, what is that? Well, God has a book. He keeps books and one of them is the book of Jasher and what it means is the book ‘of the upright’ (see note ‘b’ to Joshua 10: 13). And this woman was made upright; she was qualified to have her name in the book of Jasher. And that means one other thing, something else. It means that she became a lover of Jesus. Mr Taylor wrote a tract – a brother reminded us of it in our meetings a couple of years ago – and the tract said the upright love Jesus. This woman was made upright and she became a lover of Jesus. Are you a lover of Jesus this afternoon? I trust you are. I trust there is none here who is not a lover of Jesus because let me assure you, dear friend, there is no place in heaven for a person who is not a lover of Jesus. Heaven will be filled with lovers of Jesus and God has in mind in His glad tidings that you and I might become lovers of Jesus. How wonderful that is! Well, the grace of the Lord Jesus comes out into this. He says to them, “And this woman ... whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, ought she not to be loosed from this bond ...?” How many, alas, poor creatures, poor souls, are bound in this world! They are all around us. You see it and your heart goes out to them.

Then we read of another man. This man was a blind man and we often speak of him because it is beautiful the effect, the transformation, that came in as the result of coming into touch with Jesus. So the Lord Jesus preached “to the blind sight” so He knows all about this man. He knew he was there. Indeed, it may be that that had something to do with Him going this way, a certain neighbourhood of Jericho. Preached “to the blind sight”! Well, you say, I am not blind. Are you not blind? Isaiah tells us in chapter 53 – I will read the passage; it is well known but I just want you to see that what we are saying is based on the authority of scripture. It says in chapter 53, “For he shall grow up before him” (v.2) – that is speaking

of the Lord Jesus growing up before God's eye – “as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor lordliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him”. Are you among those that do not see any beauty in the Lord Jesus? I think we have all found ourselves there at one time but through the operations of divine grace we have come to see attractiveness and beauty in Jesus and God has in mind in this meeting this afternoon that everyone in this room should come to see beauty and attractiveness in Jesus.

This man was blind. He knew he was blind because the Lord Jesus said when He came to him, “What wilt thou that I shall do to thee? And he said, Lord” – He said “Lord” to Jesus. Have you ever said “Lord” to Jesus? This man was well on his way to blessing. He knew something about Him. I do not know where he had heard of Jesus, but he had, and you have heard about Jesus. You have been at the gospel preachings week after week and you hear about Jesus but have you ever come to have a living link by faith with that blessed Man? First of all he calls him, “Jesus, Son of David” and then he says, “Son of David, have mercy on me”. The Lord loves to hear such a cry. He loves to answer such a cry. His ear is attuned.

There was never a cry such as this that went unheeded by the Lord Jesus. Let me tell you, dear friend, whatever the need may be as you cry out to Him, the Lord Jesus, just as sure as I am standing here, will answer your cry. “And when he drew nigh he asked him saying, What wilt thou that I shall do to thee? And he said, Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him, See: thy faith has healed thee”.

Then look at this again: “And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God”.

Well, the woman we read of, “she was made straight, and glorified God”. This man follows Jesus and glorifies God, and Luke would help us in that. His gospel preaching has in mind that persons might be secured in view of God being glorified, that there might be a result not only in blessing for the persons involved, but they may be secured in relation to a world that is for the pleasure of God, and that you might be numbered among them, that you might glorify God. I

read somewhere that the woman really represents Lydia in the Philippian epistle and the man here represents the jailor in Philippi.

The two together were the seed plot of the assembly in that locality, and that is what God is interested in, that persons not only might be blest but they might come to have a living part in His assembly, and that is what is in mind, that is what Luke has in mind, that there might be a result from the preaching of the glad tidings, of this character. Very fine!

You found yourself in the company of such this morning. How wonderful it was, your soul, your spirit caught up, out of this material order of things altogether. It did not even come into your thoughts, engaged with that wonderful world that God has secured for His pleasure. Are you enjoying that, dear friends, young persons? We appeal to you! We long for you to have a part in it and to be enjoying it with us! I know on a practical level, dear young people, that our localities are very small and it might give rise to feelings of disappointment. I heard one person express one day that the smallness of our gatherings was *pathetic*. Outwardly that may be so. That doubtless is man's view. If they saw our little gathering in Vancouver, half a dozen people there, of no account in the world at all. We pass a church on the way to our meeting-room, fifteen hundred people there on a Lord's Day morning, great in the eyes of many. But let me tell you this, what God is working out in the company of the saints is infinitely precious under His eye and He wants it to become precious to you and me. Do not allow the smallness of things to discourage you or dissuade you!

I want to tell you a story briefly about Mr D'Arcy Champney. He was attending theological college in Cambridge, England, and he was boarding in the home of an old sister. One day he said to her – and this is to her credit – I would like to come to your meeting. And she thought, well, we are only just such a few and there is that brother there that is illiterate and has trouble expressing himself, how can I invite this gentleman who is going to Cambridge to the meeting? And he said, No, I want to come to your meeting. And he came and this old brother got up and prayed and afterwards Mr

Champney said to his landlady, who was that gentleman that prayed? And she said, that is Mr So-and-so, and he went over to this old man and Mr Champney said to him, *how do you do it? How do you do it?* Here is a man in the joy of speaking to God and Mr Champney sensed there was something there that he wanted. The old man said to him, When I comes 'ere, I leaves myself outside.

That is all he said to Mr Champney, but that spoke more to Mr Champney than he would have ever found in any theological college. He came into fellowship and served effectively amongst us for many years. If you search your hymnbook, you will find there are 11 or 12 hymns of his much used by us and that old man was used for his blessing. Do not despise the smallness of things! Indeed, the first chapter in 1 Corinthians tells us that, that God has chosen certain things. We need to remember this. It says, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world, that he may put to shame the strong things; and the ignoble things of the world, and the despised, has God chosen" (vv. 26–28). I think we need to be encouraged to think of what is of value under God's eye. What we have been speaking of together these last three days, beloved, is of *infinite value* and precious under God's eye, of no account to the world around, but let us get our eye off the material world of sight and sense for all these things are just going to go. They are not abiding, but what God is working out in the souls of His people is going right through, beyond death, to fill eternity, God's presence eternally.

Well, I speak these words, beloved young people, for your encouragement, that you *go on* because there is infinite blessing to be found as you continue faithfully amongst the saints. That is the area of salvation for you, the area of salvation for me. Wonderful area that God has a company of persons here on earth in which I am safe and preserved because I am not exposed to all that is going on outside that naturally, as in the flesh, appeals to my heart. God has sent these things. What a provision! God had waited for four

thousand years for this day when the Lord Jesus says, "To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears". It says too "and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him". Let me tell you too that the eye of heaven was fixed upon Him! God had waited four thousand years or longer for this moment when He had a man here on earth. I think in one of the earlier meetings here our brother Mr McKillop spoke about a Man here in consonance with God in heaven, and that is what it necessitated, that is what God awaited. Before He could open the floodgates of His grace, He had to have a Man here that answered perfectly to what was in Himself. That is what He was waiting for. We sang at the beginning:

O God, Thy grace no limit knows.

God was waiting all those years to pour out His grace in the glad tidings, the gospel, to men. We also sang:

Jesus, the Lord, our ransom paid
In matchless, condescending grace!
Came to the world His hands had made,
And stooped to take the sinner's place (Hymn 407)

What grace that was, dear friend! Does it not appeal to you, does it not lay hold of your affections? That is the way God has gone to secure each one of us. Well, may He bless the word for His name's sake!

Denton

20 April 2003

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS – A FRAGMENT

There is a divine wisdom stamped on every page of the precious Word of God, which only requires divine light, and a heart subject to God, in order to its being perceived and enjoyed. But in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the rays of this wisdom are concentrated, making the ever-interesting subjects on which it treats, glow with its heavenly brightness.

Sacrifice, priesthood, and religious ordinance, are elements for which there appears to be a natural affinity in the human mind, almost independently of the adventitious circumstances of rudeness or intellectual culture – the possession of a divine revelation, or the glimmerings of traditional notices of truth – and the immense practical importance of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in such a day as this, is found in its object being to define the character of these elements, to show their necessity and bearing in regard to a sinner's intercourse and relationship with God; and above all, to give them their just place and force according to the light of the gospel of the grace of God.

Everything in the shape of a divinely-appointed ordinance that ever had a claim upon the conscience and the soul, is in this epistle taken up, and the limit of its continuance is marked, and the manner of its abrogation indicated with a wisdom that proclaims itself to be divine.

It is shown especially, that the original constitution of these ordinances, whether relating to sacrifice or priesthood, or ritual service, no latitude was allowed to the mind or thoughts of man.

“For See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern which has been shewn to thee in the mount”. But, in the next place, it is as plainly shown that, in their original constitution, they were but the “shadow of coming good things”, which had their verification in the perfected work and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ; and not, as many imagine, by an arrangement of more

spiritual ordinances, but in these ordinances having their whole meaning, and harmony, and force, in the person, and work, present position, and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when it is considered that all which is ordinarily called religion in these days is but an imperfect, humanly-devised compound of these ordinances, it will easily be conceived how unspeakable is the importance of it in understanding of this epistle, that men may not blindly imagine they are serving – not by attending to what are called “meats, and drinks, and divers ordinance, imposed until the times of the reformation”; and in another Scripture, called even “beggarly elements” by the Holy Ghost.

The express object of this divine treatise is to take up the whole means of God’s own appointment, by which man will have to do with God, and to show that in their abrogation the believer is brought, through the very means of their putting away, into the nearest possible connection with God, and into an entire dissociation from the world in which these ordinances had their place; so that now a believer’s position is (toward God), “boldness by the blood of Jesus to enter into the holiest of all”, and (toward the world, and all the religion of the world), “going without the camp, bearing Christ’s reproach”.

J.C. From: The Present Testimony 1855, p. 347-8