

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD – RIGHTEOUSNESS

David C. Brown

1 Corinthians 1: 30; 2 Corinthians 3: 9, 5: 21

The verses that I have read make reference to righteousness and that is what I would like to speak about tonight. It is one of the great themes in the gospel, righteousness. It is a great thought from God's side, but it may be if you come to the gospel preaching and find it is about righteousness you might think it is not a very comfortable subject. Perhaps you would prefer a preaching on grace. But I will tell you why I like righteousness -because righteousness is a free gift. If you read in Romans – you will read more about righteousness in Romans than in Corinthians – one thing that it tells you is that there is a free gift of righteousness (see Rom 5: 17). That is very attractive. The gospel comes to you to present to you righteousness, not as a demand upon you, but as something from God's side, God's supply to you of righteousness.

Where we read first is addressed to persons who were believers, and it speaks about, "Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God and righteousness". So for persons who have trusted in Jesus, who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour, Christ Jesus has been made to them righteousness. So when I speak about righteousness in this way it is not a demand upon you, but it will bring out the fact which is very clear that the righteousness, which the gospel speaks about, is "in Christ Jesus". Whatever righteousness – or sinnership – attaches to you is not of any value in the sight of God. If you come with any thought that your own attainment or anything of your own worth has value before God, we have to tell you that it is not so. God is not interested; He is not going to be satisfied by anything that you can provide by way of righteousness because He has only one standard. It is a far better standard than any one of us can attain to, and that standard is Christ Jesus. I think it is a wonderful thing that God never has a second class. He never has what is second best. He never has what is

below par. He always has His standard, and His standard is Christ; and what He is going to have in believers, those who trust in Him, is Christ. The righteousness that they are going to have, the righteousness that God has towards us is “in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us ... righteousness”.

If that righteousness is to be upon us, if it is to be given to us as a free gift, what has to be taken up is the fact that you and I are sinners. We can do nothing to amend that from our side. We can do nothing to improve that. That applies however great or small a sinner you are. In the parable the Lord tells about the two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii; one owed fifty (see Luke 7: 41): neither had anything to pay. It may be that you feel as the woman in Luke 7 felt, that you are a five hundred pence debtor, that is what you owed. You may say, Look, my condition is helpless and hopeless – that is my condition before God. There is only one hope: turn to the Lord Jesus. I trust that anyone who feels like that will do that. But it may be that you are a fifty pence debtor, or think you are a fifty pence debtor; you may think it is not too much, and you do not see your position before God: you have nothing to pay.

The gospel is not, of course, only about righteousness – we cannot continue in the gospel without speaking about grace. Grace is from God’s side too. It is through the grace of God that righteousness is extended to you. It is a wonderful thing that these persons had nothing to pay, and God says to you, as a sinner, you have nothing to pay to get into this. You have nothing to pay: nothing is demanded of you to get into the blessing; it is all from His side. There is nothing to pay – “he forgave both of them their debt”, He showed grace to them: that is His attitude. And God’s attitude towards you and towards the whole world, ever since the work of Christ was completed, is that there is nothing to pay. It is all from His side; it is a free gift of righteousness: there is a righteousness to be had and it is in Him, “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us ... righteousness”. It is based, of course, on redemption. One of the other references in that verse is redemption. This means that there has been a cost and if we refer to the last

scripture which I read, it speaks in a wonderful way of what that means because it speaks of Jesus – “Him who knew not sin”. Sin was no part of His being, no part of His make up, no part of His activity. You are not only a sinner because you sinned, but you sinned because you are a sinner. What you do is the effect of what you are, the way that you behave as a sinner away from God; that is your position before God. Here was a Man who had no desire to sin, no cause to sin. Satan came and he spent forty days and forty nights thinking of any way in which he could divert this Man from the path of righteousness. Every temptation that has been thought of has been applied to the Lord Jesus. But when he had finished every temptation (see Luke 4: 13), there was a Man who had been plied with every temptation, and there was nothing in Him that was linked with any temptation. If the temptation was to be spectacular in throwing Himself off the edge of the temple that might appeal to us, that might seem a good thing to you or to me. People might see us and think of us as famous because of what we had done. The Lord Jesus did not have that impulse at all. The impulse to be spectacular or to be famous for what He had done was not there. Think of that! We can refer to any of these other temptations and it was not in Him – “he knew not sin”.

And yet think of the glory of the way that He had come! Think of the glory of the fact that here was One who was personally God. I have been thinking about the fact that it says about God in the Psalms that He humbles Himself (see Psalm 113: 6). You could understand perhaps that He humbles Himself to look at the earth but it says that God humbles Himself to look at the heavens. Even to look at them – and the Lord Jesus has not only humbled Himself to look at them, but to come into His creation. He has come into the creation which He made to give to you this free gift of righteousness, so that He could become righteousness to you. It is wonderful that He has come that way, but if He was in this scene He was here as a sinless Man, as revolted by sin in whatever way it was. Yet He had to go the way in which He had to take the cup. It came to a point when He was again assailed by Satan, who would have diverted Him

from the path. But He did not, as has often been said, take the cup from Satan, and He did not take it from man, He did not take it from the nations. He took it from the hand of the Father, “not my will but thine be done”, Luke 22: 42. He went forward – and what was it that affected the Lord Jesus as He was before the Father in Gethsemane? Why was One who had been in such perfect links with the Father so affected by having to do something that the Father wished Him to do? Perfect in relationship with His Father, perfect in Gethsemane in relationship to the Father, yet recoiling from what was before Him. That is what we read here. “Him who knew not sin he” – that is, God – “has made sin for us”.

There is much that we can speak of about the way in which the Lord Jesus suffered – a righteous pathway. Especially as He suffered from that time in Gethsemane onwards, men did many wicked things to Him. He was not unaffected by that, in fact we get some of His feelings in the Psalms. “Reproach hath broken my heart”, Ps. 69: 20. The very fact that they had reproached Him affected Him, and yet that did not have an effect in atoning. It was, in fact, a Man suffering for righteousness. As He was in the hands of men He suffered as a righteous Man, and men did the worst that evil men can do to a righteous Man. But, when it came to the three hours of darkness, which is what this scripture refers to, this same Person suffered not just the worst that Satan or man could do, but He suffered as a sin-bearer. He was made sin. I would not pretend to be able to understand fully this scripture, and I do not think anyone would, but think of the wonder – we can only wonder and worship – that this One went the way that meant that He was to be made sin. But God treated Him as if that was what He was. The wrath of God is against sin, righteously the wrath of God is against sin, and if you or I are to be blessed we are not going to be blessed by God forgetting sin, and we are not going to be blessed by God overlooking sin. We would not want it that way because if God simply overlooked it we would never be satisfied that He would not raise the matter again. But here, in the way that finally satisfies Him, He has dealt with the question of sins and sins. God is satisfied with

the work of Jesus on the cross. God is satisfied with it. The Lord Jesus is satisfied with it too. He could say, "it is finished" (John 29: 30) -that is, that He was satisfied with the work. So that at no time will God ever raise the question of sins with a person who has trusted Jesus, because they can say that the work of Jesus is sufficient. It has finished it. God could not righteously charge me with one of my sins because the work of Jesus is so full and so perfect.

The Lord Jesus is an advocate with the Father now, and He is pleading before the Father for His own. It has been spoken of, the Lord Jesus saying to God, 'You know what I have done' (J.T. Vol. 92 p.122). The Lord Jesus can draw attention to His finished work.

The Father is satisfied, delighted by the fulness of the work of Jesus. It was not easy, it was not anything other than the greatest agony that there has ever been known in the history of time, when that cry went up, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me", Matt. 27: 46. That is a word that no one will ever in the fulness have to say again. No one had ever said it before in such fulness of the knowledge of what it meant. One who had a perfect right to call God, "My God" -yet forsaken by God. Why was that? It was a bearing of sins; it was taking on that judgment of sin so that I might be free. It was so that the sinner who has trusted in Him should be free, so that the sinner who has trusted in Him should know that righteousness conferred upon him, so that we as believers might "become God's righteousness in Him". I do not fully understand this scripture, but I think that it is wonderful.

We have thought of Satan; he accuses persons. We see that in the book of Job – he comes and God speaks to him about Job, "Hast thou considered my servant Job", Job 1: 8. God had something to work out with Job, but Satan is still interested in believers. He would do anything to divert them from the pathway, but he cannot remove them from the safety of the hand of God. He cannot do anything about that. He would divert them from the path if he could, for the time that they remain in this scene. But God could say, these are My righteousness, these people. Satan might, if you

are a believer, speak about you: God could say, My righteousness is there; My righteousness is in display on that person. You cannot challenge that, you cannot take him out of My hand. Nothing can take you out of the hand of God. Not only is the righteousness “in Christ” but it is God’s righteousness which is displayed so that we should become God’s righteousness in Christ. That is the position of the believer. Where is Christ? We have spoken of Him on the cross, but that is not His position now. He is now at the right hand of God, that is His position in glory, and the believer is in Him. I am secured eternally in my salvation because I am in Christ. Satan cannot take me out of Christ; I cannot take myself out of Christ. “In Christ” -what a wonderful place! There is nothing that can challenge it, nothing that can remove me. That is the position of someone who has trusted in the Lord Jesus. Do you know that as your position?

We could speak of many other things that are necessary, and there is much else in the gospel. We have gone straight from the cross to the glory, but there were others things that had to be gone through. Jesus had to die, because that was the penalty of our sins. He had to shed His precious blood for the remission of your sins, He had to go into the grave for the removal of the person who had sinned, and He had to rise again to introduce you, if you are a believer, into the fulness of the blessing and into relationship with Himself with a new life that cannot be affected by death. That is the way He has gone. All this was for His own glory; all for the Father’s pleasure: all is for my benefit. Can you say that? Are you assured that these ways, that path that the Lord Jesus went, the depths that He went into the grave, to be bound by it for these days, were for your benefit? So that in the risen, glorified Man you can know your place, “that we might become God’s righteousness in Him”.

I am sure that you will understand why it says where we read in Chapter 3, “the ministry of righteousness abounds in glory” – I can hardly think of anything that abounds in glory more than what we have spoken of. How great it is! How full it is! There is a ministry of righteousness that, is, a word of righteousness, a speaking in righteousness, an administration in righteousness. It is being doled

out, righteousness for those who wish to take advantage of it, “the ministry of righteousness abounds in glory”. There is righteousness and glory to sustain you for the pathway here. There is righteousness and blessing to be with you.

I would like just to refer to a few other references to righteousness in Corinthians. In the next chapter Paul is speaking about his ministry and the way that he served, and having much against him, prison and riots and all sorts of contrary things. But then he says, “through the arms of righteousness on the right hand and left”, 2 Cor 6: 7. So that you can go forward as a believer through the arms of righteousness on the right hand and left. What a way forward for a Christian, a way forward protected and cared for through the arms of righteousness; whatever is testing you on the right hand or challenging you on the left hand, you can go forth in the power of God.

But then righteousness has to be worked out practically. It is not in God’s mind that He should confer that righteousness upon you and that you should have no change in your behaviour, that you should go on just as you did before. So Paul brings in later in chapter 6 practical question. “Be not diversely yoked with unbelievers; for what participation is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship of light and darkness?” (6: 14). That is something that each one of us has to be careful about – our company. It has been referred in a very appropriate way to actual associations, but it is not just that. It asks “what participation is there between righteousness” -remember, that is the believer who has been made God’s righteousness in Him – “and lawlessness? Or of fellowship of light with darkness?” That is a test every day – are we participating along with lawless persons? We need to work, we need to do duties, all these things are necessary; but what about our participation? The Holy Spirit would give us grace that we should be maintained according to the divine standard, and the divine standard is Christ. Always Christ. Are we maintained according to Him?

It speaks later about giving as a particular example of righteousness; “He has scattered abroad, he has given to the poor,

his righteousness abideth for ever” (9: 9). Think of the righteousness that is displayed in the righteous person because he scatters abroad and gives to the poor. So God is affecting the behaviour of those He has secured. They are going to be helped by Him along a path that is a path of righteousness. It does not secure your eternal salvation – although it does save you from what is in the present world. But for your eternal salvation you depend on that work of Jesus on the cross at Calvary. Eternally nothing can add to it, nothing can take away from it, nothing you can do can affect it; it is sublime and it is complete. It has satisfied God, it has satisfied the Lord Jesus, and it has satisfied the true heart of the believer. Nothing to be added to it. But He would give you a pathway to walk in pleasing to Him, so that if we speak about God’s righteousness, persons are going to see that – a righteous person, somebody distinct from the way the world is running on. It would be something attractive to the heart of those who are affected by God’s grace when we see someone who is walking with God in that pathway.

So I trust that every one of us is assured of the righteousness upon us. We are clothed in it, and we can go forward and be in the presence of God clothed in it. It depends on Christ’s work, it depends on you laying hold of it, being sure that you have trusted Him for yourself, being sure that you know for yourself that you have trusted the Saviour, that He is your Saviour and your Lord, and that you have a right to the tree of life because of what He has done.

May it be so that each one of us is fully in that assurance. For His Name’s sake.

EDINBURGH

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD – THE BONDMAN

Rodney Brown

Exodus 21: 2-6; Zechariah 13: 5-7; Philippians 2: 5-11; Romans 12: 1,2

It will probably be evident from the scriptures that I have read that I wish to speak about the bondman. We see it beautifully in the Lord Jesus and I would seek to draw out something in these typical scriptures of the way in which the Lord Jesus was here as a bondman. As we are affected by that it is to have an effect on our lives. The thought of the bondman is to do the will of another and that was shown supremely in the Lord Jesus. He came from the highest heights of glory as we read in Philippians 2 and He came into this scene. There is ample testimony to it in the prophetic scriptures and the beautiful narrative in the gospels, how the Lord Jesus was here in a lowly and humble way serving men, serving mankind, giving Himself in death. That was the result of His pathway of service, it led to the cross and He was there as bearing our sins. I trust everyone in this room knows what it is to have their faith in the finished work of the Saviour, who bore our sins in His body on the tree.

I had an impression this morning of the Lord Jesus the bondman saying distinctly. I think we see in the Lord Jesus' life the way in which He was here entirely for the will of God. He had His own will, but it was always in perfect accordance with the will of His God and Father. Think of Him in Gethsemane saying, "if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt", Matt 26: 39. His will was submitted to the will of His Father. He was perfectly in accordance with the will of His Father. What an object He is for our affections! I trust He has captivated your heart and I trust you have come to know Him as a friend, because I believe that this would be the outcome if we are affected by the Lord Jesus as a bondman when we come to it that He has given His all for us and He has drawn us to Him with cords of love. What effect has it on our lives? What has been effected for God through this pathway of lowly

service? He “shall say distinctly”. The Lord Jesus has said distinctly, “I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free”. It has been said that the Lord could have gone out free from the mount of transfiguration; we do not want to misunderstand what that means, but the Lord Jesus, because He was here as the perfect Man and sin did not attach to Him, could have been received up into glory at that point, but, “*he* stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem”, Luke 9: 51. It is not that there was any question that He would not complete the work, that He would not continue in the pathway of the Father’s will, but such was His personal excellence that heaven could have received Him at that point. At the time when He was delivered up He could say, “the Son of man indeed goes as it is determined” (Luke 22: 22). There was a way set out for the Lord Jesus, it was a way of humiliation and outward weakness, but the Lord did not deviate from that, He went through with everything for the pleasure of His Father. He did the Father’s will in every deed and in every day. We often are affected by the words of the hymn:

No thought of His e’er moved apart from Thine (Hymn 119)

Think of the Lord Jesus here absolutely given up to the will of His God and Father. How He excelled, you might say, as a bondman in that. He could have gone out free, but He said distinctly, “I will not go free” and He gave his life “a ransom for all”, 1 Tim. 2: 6. What a wonderful Person we have to do with in the glad tidings.

We have been reading Zechariah locally and we had this chapter before us. Think of the Lord Jesus not taking any high ground, saying prophetically, “I am no prophet”. He was the Prophet of God. Think of who was there in the Lord Jesus as Man who could say, “I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground”, taking very lowly ground. It is interesting that Adam was set in the garden to till it. A bondman’s service is hard work and the tilling is necessary before the seed can be planted. Think of the Lord Jesus operating here as a tiller of the ground. You might say, He was here to undo the works of the devil, all that had come in in the fall, all that sin had brought into the world, the Lord Jesus was here as undoing the works of the devil. Think of the way that He worked unheralded, He was here

doing what was necessary and was available to do what was necessary. What a wonderful Man He was and is! I trust you have a link with Him; I trust that He has tilled the ground in view of the seed being accepted into your heart. What arduous service; with all the weeds and everything that has sprung up, as the Lord Jesus came in and took this on He was starting again. What had been there at the outset when Adam was placed in the garden responsible to till it, become overgrown. The first man had not achieved anything, but the second Man – think about what the Lord Jesus has done – He started again, He has undone the work of the devil and He has done so in this way of lowly service, “acquired me as a bondman from my youth”. Think of man, think of the Lord’s service manward. He speaks of Himself – in fact it is one of the titles that He uses most of Himself, “the Son of man”. Think of everything that is involved in that title and everything that has been affected by the Son of Man for the heart of God. “Man acquired me as a bondman from my youth ... What are those wounds in thy hands? And he will say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends”. The Lord Jesus’ pathway of service brought on Him these wounds, there was nothing in the Lord Jesus that merited them. The sufferings which He endured were not on His own account; He was a perfect and sinless, spotless victim, but in this path of lowly service He came into the condition where He could be wounded.

This speaks prophetically of what the Jews did to the Lord Jesus, “What are those wounds in thy hands? ... Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends”. It was not an enemy that had done it. It would remind you as to what He says prophetically as to Judas, “For it is not an enemy that hath reproached me – then could I have borne it ... But it was thou, a man mine equal, mine intimate, my familiar friend”, Ps 55: 12,13. Think of the Lord Jesus receiving these wounds in the house of His friends. He “came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God”, (John 1: 11,12) and then “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd”, not only was He wounded by man, by those who had acquired Him as a bondman,

those whom He had served, it came to the point on the cross when God's sword awoke against Him. I think this speaks of the cross, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts". Think of the Lord Jesus and the devotion of His service and in His love towards His Father going to the cross.

We read in Philippians 2, "becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". What a death of humiliation! Man's hands put Him there, but it was in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God that He should go that way (see Acts 2: 23). He was wounded there, He was forsaken of God. Think of what it cost the Lord Jesus to go that way. What affects me, as thinking a little about it, was that the Lord Jesus knew that this was before Him, and He did not deviate from the pathway of service, not in the least degree. He went through with everything, everything that was set before Him. He went through in perfect submission to the will of His Father, even though the cross in all its terribleness lay before Him. The suffering that He faced at the hand of man was terrible, but think of what it was for Him to be forsaken of God. Have you thought of that? The One who was just, the only One of whom that could be said, the One that died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God", 1 Peter 3: 18. All of us as sinners deserve death; the only One who did not deserve it went that way vicariously, dear friend, for you and for me. The gospel would draw our hearts to that blessed One, set out His pathway of perfection, set out too who it was that hung on the cross, the One who, "subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself". Think of the Lord Jesus as emptying Himself, taking a bondman's form, "taking his place in the likeness of men ... humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death". That was the extent of the Lord's committal that He was "obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". How wondrous He is as an object for our hearts and affections. The Lord Jesus went into death – there are those who would try and say otherwise – but the Lord Jesus died. His blood was shed on the cross; He bore my sins

there, I trust that you can say that He bore your sins there. He is available as a Saviour to all who call upon Him. How necessary that man should recognise this and come and own Him as their Saviour.

The Lord Jesus as going this way, was qualified to become the Offering for sin. His perfection was such, indeed it could not have been otherwise. If anything had attached to Him that was marked by sin, and thanks be to God there was nothing, He would not have been able to be the sin offering, but God, as a result of the perfection of that sacrifice, was satisfied and He laid our sins upon Him. We read in Isaiah, “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed”, Isa. 53: 4,5. There is no other way into salvation but to have your faith in the One that went this way, who was here as a bondman, for the glory of God, who died on the cross and went into the grave. He is no longer in the grave. The satisfaction of God in the work of the Lord Jesus is such that He raised Him, “even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father”, Rom 6: 4. He had been in death, in the heart of the earth, for three day and three nights, but is no longer there. He has been raised and He has been granted a Name “which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow”. This is going to happen in a day to come – publicly the Lord Jesus is going to be vindicated but we have this opportunity to accord Him this place of exaltation in our hearts now. We are tested by this. Is Jesus exalted in my heart? Is He given the place of which He is worthy? Sometimes I fear a mental assent to these things without the reality of it having its way in my heart, but the fact is that God has highly exalted Him. What a wonderful answer to the pathway of devotion to the Father’s will that God has exalted Him. He has been raised and He is ascended and glorified and seated at God’s right hand and He has this place of exaltation in glory. What an answer to the pathway of shame and humiliation, but how worthy He is of it.

I read in Romans because I believe that as we are taken up with the Lord Jesus as the One who did the will of the Father, so we

may be encouraged to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. I can see the necessity of it in the days in which we are, "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". How important it is to keep our minds pure and clear of what would trouble us in the world. I was affected by this expression, "by the compassions of God" -think of the interest that God has in the glad tidings and in you personally. As you come to the gospel I think you need to be reminded that you are addressed as an individual and you are responsible to answer to the word however feebly it has been presented. These scriptures speak for themselves of the glory and of the beauty of the way that the Lord Jesus has gone and of the compassions of God. Think of the feelings of God as entering into it, the love of God, everything that God has expressed in the gospel is towards you and the responsibility on you is to answer to that and to put our faith in the Saviour and in His finished work and by being obedient to the word.

It speaks of the obedience of faith (see Rom. 1: 5), That may relate to the thought of the bondman, "by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous", Rom 5: 19. That is what the work of the Lord Jesus has effected, that many shall be constituted righteous. It depends on us accepting the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, accepting that we need a Saviour, accepting that there is nothing in ourselves that can please God. To be saved we have to come and own that the Lord Jesus is the only way to salvation and He has shown the love of God in such a beautiful way. He has said distinctly, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free". What answer is there from my life? This chapter in Romans 12 beseeches us to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God", so that in our lives, in our thoughts, in our pathway we are here for that One, "a living sacrifice". We do not have much, you may think there is not much you can do, well we all have bodies and they can be held here in devotion to the divine will.

There is resource for it, the Holy Spirit is here, and the Spirit would help us in this. If we are not going to be conformed to the world, the Spirit is essential. There is no other way that we can be kept from

the stream of things than by the Holy Spirit and the renewing of our minds too. The Spirit is surely necessary for that, and if we are to prove what the “good and acceptable and perfect will of God” is, how necessary the Spirit is. I trust that everyone has some knowledge and some consciousness of the Spirit in their lives and if there is anyone who does not, ask the Father. The Father would delight to give the Spirit to those that ask. Again, obedience comes into it as it says, “and the Holy Spirit also, which God has given to those that obey him”, Acts 5: 32. I feel the necessity of it in these days, “the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”. It may not always seem that way, but as we prove God in our circumstances and in our lives I think what we come to is that it is acceptable and it is perfect.

The Lord Jesus was here as a Model for us. He suffered in a way in which we will never be called to suffer, and He has been given a place of exaltation and glory which is His alone but, dear friends, we can be here as giving God pleasure in a simple way, poor perhaps in the world, but rich in faith. I believe it is open to every one of us and I want to be in it more livingly. I trust that there may have been something in the word for every soul here, that the Lord Jesus would be freshly before us in an attractive way in the devotion of His pathway to the Father’s will and perhaps too we could be stimulated to be more in that pathway ourselves. May it be so, For His Name’s sake.

DENTON

20 October 2002

FROM THE BOOKSHELF:

THE MINISTRY THAT PROSPERS

“As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the things whereto I send it”, Isa 1: 10,11.

What are the characteristics of this ministry that is divinely prosperous both in itself and in its effects? It is a *present* ministry, for it “cometh down”. It is not a ministry which has come down and the gain of which still abides: nor is it a ministry still in perspective and which will meet future requirements. It is a present ministry, sufficient for present need, ministering the One it comes from, who is equal to all the exigencies of the moment. It is a ministry coming from Him who is as surely the same to-day as He was yesterday and must be for ever.

Consequently it is a *heavenly* ministry, it “cometh down from heaven”. It ministers a heavenly Christ to a heavenly people here that a heavenly testimony may be maintained on earth for God. It does not attempt to patch up the old garment, nor to fill the old bottles (see Matt. 9: 16,17). It is not from man nor according to man, nor does it please men (see Gal. 1). It is an entirely new vesture. It clothes the saints with the true Joseph’s coat of many colours – the moral qualities of Him who is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens”.

Consequently it is characterised by divine *charity* and *purity*, which need a corresponding state of soul to apprehend and appreciate it. It is likened to the rain which cometh down, and the snow from heaven. What is clearer than the raindrop or purer than the snowflake? How gently they fall! The rain and the snow descend in particles. “Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a

little and there a little". That is the way of divine ministry. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain", yet the drops must blend and effect much. "The storehouses of the snow" (Job 38: 22 New Trans), are at the disposal of God's ministers, and they can never be exhausted. This is the ministry that prospers, "giving seed to the sower", because it is productive of its own kind; and "bread to the eater" – strengthening and satisfying.

"So shall my word be", says the ever blessed God, "that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall do that which I *please*, and it shall accomplish (or make to *prosper*) that *for which I send it*" (New Trans). It is fraught with divine *prosperity*, *pleasure* and *purpose*. These things identify it!

Lord, continue such a ministry to Thy dear people. Amen

S.J.B.Carter

Words of Grace and Comfort

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