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“OF GOD”

1 John 3: 1-9; Romans 8: 9-15; 1 Corinthians 1: 1-3, 27-31

P.M. I have been thinking a little as to this reference in 1 Corinthians 1. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus”, and I wondered if we might get some help together by looking at what is of God. We are conscious constantly of what is of ourselves and what is of nature, but to get some impression of what is of God is important in the day in which we are. What is of God is perfect; it must be so; it was so in the creation. What God created was perfect; you could not think of it being otherwise. It is so too in new creation. We are in mixed conditions, because what is in ourselves according to nature is not perfect, but what is of God is perfect. John speaks as to the children of God, “now are we children of God”. The footnote helps us – it is not the diminutive thought, it is character, what takes character from God. We are here in the scene of testimony as the children of God.

He says, “what we shall be has not yet been manifested” – I think we would get some impression of how Christ in His excellence and perfection will give character to that which is according to God when He is manifested. Then he goes on, “Whoever abides in him, does not sin” – I believe we shall get some impression of the glory of Christ as we speak of these things. You can never say that He was a child of God, scripture does not say that, but He was *of* God and as *of* God gives character to all that God is securing for His own pleasure as here in the scene of testimony.

In Romans 8 we are “sons of God”, we are not living according to flesh (they that live according to flesh are about to die), but according to the Spirit, and he says, “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God”.

When we come to Corinth it is the “assembly of God”. We need hardly say that we could not claim to be the assembly of God, but the character of it remains, “the assembly of God”. It is not presented here as Christ’s assembly – that brings out His ownership – but the character of God is seen in the assembly of God. It may be basic but I wondered if the Lord might just help us because

sometimes when seeking to aim for the heights of the truth we need to be brought back to what is fundamental; we can never leave it behind.

P.L.J. I suppose as children of God it would not only be derivative, but moral character. Sonship is more established.

P.M. That is helpful. The children of God brings out the character of what we are, not exactly in the Father's house, but what we are in the scene of testimony. It is really the moral features coming into expression which are in keep with the holiness of God.

P.L.J. Sonship would be more in connection with what we are in the house of God, would it not? That is not so much as to what we are as to moral character in this world, but it is what we are as to our status.

P.M. In relation to our heavenly portion, the bondman abides not in the house for ever, but the son abides for ever. Sonship relates to our place in the Father's house. From one point of view we are never outside the Father's house, we live in the enjoyment of it. The children of God relates more to the testimonial sphere. So he says, "See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God. For this reason the world knows us not, because it knew him not". There is that character in men and women here that is like Christ that the world does not know.

P.L.J. I think the important feature is that as children of God we are derived from God rather than human nature. In other words an unbeliever has nothing other than what is derived from human nature, but we have a different character derived of God.

P.M. We might ask how that has been formed because in verse 9 he speaks as to "his seed abides in him". He says, "Whoever has been begotten of God does not practise sin, because his seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God".

P.L.J. There is that in every believer that cannot sin.

P.M. Yes, and the practical entrance into and enjoyment of that is dependent on our abiding in Christ.

D.M.W. Does the thought of representation enter into the children of God?

P.L.J. That would be involved in it, do you think?

P.M. Representation in the scene in which everything is against God morally, but there is that here in men that is representative of God, there is that in them that cannot sin.

D.M.W. Is it the life of God coming out in them?

P.M. I wondered that. That is why we have the reference to what is yet to be manifested. John is looking on to what we shall be actually when Christ comes, but morally that is already here in expression. Is that what you are thinking?

D.M.W. I was wondering too if we could relate to what is natural. We come from the house and carry it with us, the character of the family and what is normal, the love of the Father would motivate us in remaining in the character of what we honour in the house.

P.M. As linking on with the family side which John develops in this epistle. The family side is most important because John's presentation of it relates to the moral work of God in the souls of the saints so that there is that here which is really taking character from God Himself and disseminates in relationships in the family of God.

H.G.H. The word "called", would involve the thought of calling, our calling?

P.M. I think it is more than that. It is what God Himself is pleased to own as His own, that we should be called the children of God. You get a similar thought as to the sanctified, "not ashamed to call them brethren", Heb 2: 11. I think that is more what is involved here. God loves to claim His own work because it is perfect here.

P.L.J. What would you say in regard to the fact that in scripture we do not have 'child of God', it is always "children of God"? I know in Christendom it is a common expression, 'child of God', but I do not think that expression occurs.

P.M. No, because John presents it in the family. It involves what God is working out collectively in men. We are children of God. We are not just taken up here as individuals, although we come into everything individually in Christianity. But what God has in view is the collective representation of Himself in moral character.

P.L.J. In a sense it could not be just an individual.

P.M. No. It requires more than that. There is that here in the family side in John. John is not giving us the teaching of the assembly, he does not give us the doctrine of things. We were saying this privately the other evening, John does not give us the teaching of the assembly, but he gives us the character of it. It seems to me that there is moral character coming out in men and women here collectively that is representative of God Himself and finds its expression in the assembly.

D.M.W. Could we think of one another as belonging to this family? It is right to refer to one another as beloved, not as child.

P.L.J. As being the children of God?

D.M.W. Yes, it says "Beloved, now are we children of God"; we are together in it. Is it a representative thought more of the family as referring to one another as beloved?

P.M. And it would help us in the respect that is due to one another. We would look round a company like this and men would say, 'what a mixed bunch', but what is here is of God. We look at one another, we are not looking at what is natural, we are looking deeper than that – "the children of God". There is what is great in the work of God. What could be greater? It would help us to respect one another, how we speak to one another, how we hold one another.

K.A.K. Is that really what caused Israel to miss Christ? They observed a lowly man and saw Him as someone who was nobody, even seek to look at His origin, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?", John 1: 46. They missed that moral character and what underlay it, not looking at that side of things. God looks at the heart.

P.M. That is helpful. Isaiah 53 “there is no beauty that we should desire him” (v.2).

K.A.K. We have to look at one another that way. We have to view the work of God in every person.

P.M. I think it would help us to hold the saints at the true level. The Lord sees fit to pass us through exercises collectively and individually and if we are not careful we may lower our view of the saints, but the Lord would raise it. What He is working out is of Himself. The reason that those exercises arise and tests arise is because the work of God is here. If it was a company of persons in whom there was no work of God, the enemy would not seek to touch it, but it is because what is of God is here that the enemy is intent on spoiling it, because he is seeking to rob God. That should help us in the way that we face things and the way we speak of one another, in our homes particularly, that we are speaking of those that are the children and the sons of God.

D.M.W. It would help us, not only in our conversations, but when perhaps we might disappoint one another, to look through that, in a sense, and know that the work of God is there. We may not have measured up to that, or perhaps not maintained that moral character of the family, yet we would know in our minds and in our hearts that the work was there. Would that help us elevate our thoughts and not just be critical of the failures or the disappointments that we might have of what persons might do or not do?

P.M. If I could just give something of my own experience, when I was a young man we were going through a difficult time, and my father said to me, ‘speak to the Lord about the brethren, and speak to the brethren about the Lord’. There is safety in that and there is safety in that in our homes. It would help us in what you say. You cannot criticise the brethren to the Lord because he says they are mine, “now are we children of God”. What moral dignity is marking the saints of God, “now are we children of God”; what we shall be has not yet been manifested, but the moral character is already here in expression.

K.A.K. I remember a time when there were certain hymns that were not sung because perhaps of the status of the person, but the hymn was written in the appreciation of the person's love of the Lord and even though the person may fail, that hymn goes through. I am just using this as a practical illustration of what you are drawing attention to.

P.M. When the temple was being built and the tabernacle constructed, what individuals brought was consecrated in view of that. The persons themselves failed. You see that particularly in relation to the tabernacle; those that brought the offerings of gold and silver failed afterwards, and in fact their bodies were strewn in the wilderness, but what was consecrated remained there for God. I think that bears on what you say.

K.A.K. There is something that is to be found in us of that character, "of him are ye in Christ Jesus", coming back to what you started with. Do you think that would go through even though we may fail outwardly?

P.M. I think so and who of us does not find that? Some of us can look back at our histories – what failure there has been, privately, and collectively, and yet you can come back to that verse, "of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God". We will come to that, if the Lord helps us. That there is that here which is in the work of God which cannot fail, "because his seed abides in him".

D.M.W. I think it has been said, and I repeat it because I believe that it is right, that this is the greatest thought that there is on our side because it is a generation of God. You cannot get anything greater than that.

P.M. I think we need just to dwell on that for a moment, that there is what is here that is of God and it is morally in conformity with what He had in Christ. Now, could there be anything greater? It touches our walk as we go out into the world in which we are, we are going out as children of God, and there is that in each believer that is unable to sin because His seed is there. We need just to dwell on

that for a moment and make way for the work of God that has been put into ourselves. It is God's seed, it is there, it has come from Himself and is not dependent on man, and it cannot sin. What a triumph!

T.v.d.H. I was thinking of how direct it was that when the Lord said to them, "ye are of your father". It is a question of the right seed. I think what you are bringing out is very helpful in order to manifest what there is now that is of God.

P.M. It is derived from God and is divinely maintained in the believer as we abide in Christ, but it is directly from God. No one has put it there but God Himself, "his seed abides in him". It is what God has put there. It is more than new birth.

T.v.d.H. I think you are touching on something very helpful and important to us. New birth is the beginning of this coming into the fulness of being the seed, is it not?

P.M. Yes. I think new birth is like the farmer, he turns over the soil and prepares the soil for the reception of the seed. I think it is the preparation in view of the seed that I begin to find in my soul a longing that was never there before. That longing can only be satisfied by His seed being implanted and therefore it leads on to being born of God in that passage in John 3. I think this is more than new birth, it is what is substantial in the believer that has been put there of God and is formed by the Spirit as abiding in Christ so that He is able to stand here in the absence of Christ, morally in conformity with Him.

S.S. Is character connected with the seed in the sense that that fruit is the same in the next generation, you might say? A seed planted would be a seed of particular fruit, the seed would bring forth that fruit.

P.M. It can only bring forth that fruit and therefore in John the need for abiding in Him that we might bear fruit. That underlies the truth of deliverance. Man according to the flesh can never be fruitful for God. The fruitfulness to God is abiding in Christ and being led by

the Spirit of God. There is another order and it links with this, that the seed is in him. We need to locate that in ourselves.

S.S. If I might pursue the thought I had as to the fruit being characteristic, relating back to the testimony being manifested. The thought that was expressed earlier as to the fruit being a testimonial thing, the children of God, that the fruit would bear what is characteristic of that seed.

P.M. I think that is right, what has been begotten of God can only display what is of God morally. There is no mixture attached to it – the mixture we find in ourselves, but I need to locate what God has put there that is of Himself and locate it in my soul and find that that needs building up and it needs nurturing and it comes through abiding in Him. I believe it is important what we are touching because it would preserve us from lower thoughts as to what God is doing in the present day.

S.B. I was wondering about the verse in John 1, about “the right to be children of God” (v.12). How would that fit in to this for us?

P.M. That helps because, “He came to his own, and his own received him not” (v.11). They could not receive Him according to nature, but “as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God to those ... who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh’s will, nor of man’s will, but of God” (vv.11-13). It is a similar thought to what we have here and it came into expression there that persons were born of God, because they received Him.

S.B. I was thinking as to what you have said as to being “in Christ”, I wondered whether it would be helpful to see that the right there is not the right as we know it, that we are familiar with, ‘my rights’, and so forth, but more the right to take a place.

P.M. “To them gave he the right to be children of God”.

S.B. Taking a place of dependence, a right?

P.M. Yes, it is not anything attaching to us according to nature. As you say, men are claiming their rights all the time, but He gave them the right to be called children of God.

S.B. I was thinking as to “being in Christ”. We have that and it is a great matter to be able to take that place with God, to be dependent and to be sure, to be steadfast in the matter.

P.M. Yes, and to see that what God has done in us is of Himself and will remain. The danger I find in myself is that if I lose sight of the seed that God has placed, I say anything will do, I will do the best I can; but the seed must remain faithful to the One who has put it there. It is of that character and it cannot change and that would hold us, not just to follow our thoughts and our desires and longings, but also to answer to the One who has put the seed there and to represent Him in the scene of the absence of Christ.

D.M.W. It is interesting in that particular reference, God is coming out in Christ, it is received from God in Christ. People speak of God, but unless we receive God in Christ, it is a false God, but as we receive God in Christ, God coming out in Him – that is the thought in John especially – then we have the right to take the place of being in that family, the family of God.

P.M. Yes, there are many religions that claim God as their source. John’s epistle helps us to prove the spirits, and the unction would help us to distinguish, but it seems to me that in this section the very reference to “when he is manifested” is reference to the One in whom everything is centred, but it is now shining morally in men in whom God has put His seed. It must take character from Him. As we have said, you could not speak of Christ as a child of God, that is not scriptural, but He is the Lamb of God. Everything must take character from that blessed Person so that as abiding in Him that is maintained in us.

D.M.W. Would you explain abiding in Him?

B.S. Are these the things that are going through to the end?

P.M. That must be so because it is of God, it cannot be destroyed. I might lose my way because I am no longer abiding in Christ, but the seed remains and if I am not faithful to that seed in myself and in what I do, God may discipline me to bring me back to recognise what

that seed is and to appreciate it and to bring me back to abide in the One who is able to maintain what God has put in the soul.

D.M.W. Abiding in Him is an important matter, it indicates dependence and association.

P.L.J. And restfulness?

P.M. It does, and would it not mean that I prove that I am deriving everything from another source? We were touching last weekend as to the reference in John, “because I live ye also shall live” (14: 19). I think abiding in Christ is really living in the power of His life where He is. Everything that I have I am deriving from another Man. It is dependence, but it is not dependence in relation to our circumstances only, it is that one order of things has been set aside. That is involved in this section that we have read – one order of things has been set aside; what is natural will never sustain God’s work. Everything is being derived from another Man, so John says, “abide in Him”. It is complacency in the presence of One who is able to sustain us in life.

D.M.W. I think the thought of generation is derivative. As we continue in that character of being born of God, we would have always to refer to its source, the derivative side of things. Would you think that association was the practical side of it?

P.M. I think so. In secret and in company, association with Christ, but what is secret must come first. Where the weakness begins in our responsible histories is in secret. It does not begin in public, it begins in secret, it is because I have let go of the One in whom I am to abide. Abiding in Him is that Christ eclipses everything and becomes so precious to my heart that I just want to be entirely in His company and deriving from Him. What we are has not yet been manifested, but when He is manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. How wonderful! I think it helps us in the abiding, that we are looking on to that which is actually going to be manifested in Christ. We shall hear His voice first, and then we shall see Him.

H.G.H. And in the fruit is peace. I was linking on with what has been said, peace is with Him – if there is not peace in your conscience, peace in your spirit, you are not abiding in Him.

P.M. No. That would lead on to how we come out – am I a son of peace? That comes out in our relations with one another and the way we move through this scene. We are to go into a house and enquire whether there is a son of peace there. You might come to Colchester and ask if there is a son of peace, or I might come to Chicago, Is there a son of peace? If there is I can abide there. It is an important thing that we are to convey that, because abiding in Christ there will be that expression in our relationships with one another. We would be morally superior to all that is proceeding here.

P.L.J. Son of peace – that would be what would characterise one. I think when you are son of something, you are characterised by it.

P.M. That is helpful. So it is not just overlooking things, but it is the character of the person, that in all his movements he would be characterised by peace.

I wondered whether in Romans we might get some impression as to “ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God’s Spirit dwell in you”.

T.v.d.H. You referred to this as an inside position. Would you explain that?

P.M. Only what we have been taught that sonship is in relation to the Father’s house, it is the enjoyment of relationships with the Father. It is not that we are no longer sons here in the scene of testimony – that dignity marks us – but sonship belongs in relation to the house and it comes into expression as we move here in that heavenly dignity.

T.v.d.H. Would we see that in Luke 15, how the son returned to his part and place with the Father? Was it full liberty and joy in the house? So it is all inside, in that sense, it was not outside testimonially.

P.M. It was what he was for the father. Even while we are moving here the Father is looking for that which would satisfy His own heart,

so that we do not live two lives. The believer does not have two lives, he has one; Paul says, “the life that I now live”, Gal. 2: 20.

What is inside is to be commensurate with what is outside and if we are moving in the enjoyment and dignity of what belongs in the Father’s house, it will find its expression in the way we live.

P.L.J. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God”. This is not saying how they become sons of God, but it is what is characteristic of sons of God.

P.M. In that they are led by the Spirit.

P.L.J. It is not how one comes into sonship, but that is what characterises those who are in sonship. So that if we are not led by the Spirit of God we are not characteristically sons.

P.M. This is different from Galatians. In Galatians we have “that we might receive sonship” (4: 5), but here it is what the sons are, that we are sons of God as being led by the Spirit of God. It is coming out. There is a witness of it, it is seen. The dignity of it is seen in persons who are led by the Spirit of God. The importance of making way for the Spirit is something I am sure we feel, not just for the opening up of light, we often appeal to Him as to that, but the communion with the Spirit is in view of the features of the sons of God being seen.

P.L.J. So they can only be seen if the Spirit is working.

P.M. That is just it.

P.L.J. That is what I see in this, and it is only by the Spirit, that it would characterise us in sonship.

P.M. It is how it comes into expression.

P.L.J. If we are not motivated and moved with the Spirit sonship will not characterise us.

P.M. We are all sons through faith in Christ Jesus, that is our standing, but what is in view is that we might come into the enjoyment and practical expression of what sonship is through making way for the leading of the Spirit.

K.A.K. Would you say then that the seed is guarded by the Spirit of God? I was thinking of the Lord speaking to His own in John's gospel about the sending of the Spirit, "the world cannot receive him" (John 14: 17); they would not have the need for it, the seed was not there. The Spirit has come to lead us and guide us into all the truth which is what the development of the seed has in view.

P.M. That is helpful because in these chapters there is the sorting process which is so necessary in our own experience in order that we might locate that seed. When you come to chapter 8 there is the power for that seed to be maintained in life. Chapter 8 has often been spoken of as the Spirit's chapter in relation to the believer, that I have come to appreciate what the seed is. Then He says, "There is now then no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death" (v.1). There is there now what the believer has located in himself which is of God. That is the seed that you are speaking of, but the Spirit immediately comes in that that might be maintained and strengthened and able to stand in relation to all that is from God Himself.

K.A.K. So the Spirit joins His help to our weakness and in that sense is supporting and guarding what is there.

P.M. Yes. How much we feel the need of that! We do not know what to pray for as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession with groaning that cannot be uttered. It is in that setting.

K.A.K. It is remarkable that God so thought to encompass the whole creation, not to allow anything to develop apart from His own work, His own overseership of every aspect of it, the development of that in the believer. We can trust that, can we not?

P.M. Yes, we can, and what is of God in the believer here is entirely dependent on divine activity and power which we get in Romans 8. It is not dependent on anything else. We were saying in the house this morning, and I feel it keenly for myself, I am in danger of being only dependent on what there is in the company without dependence on divine Persons personally. If I am only dependent on the

company, I shall not survive, and I will be a drain on that company, but I must come back to my own links with Christ as abiding in Him and with the Spirit and then I shall rightly take up my part in the company and be a contributor in the company.

K.A.K. So the woman in John 4, in that sense, is able to move apart from dependence on an outside source, she derives her source of power from the Lord Himself and the Spirit. She leaves her water pot and is able to be an influence in the company.

P.M. In that section for a moment she is superior to what was there in the disciples. They had gone to buy food – the Lord had not told them to do that – and they came and wondered that He spoke with a woman. But she had left her water pot; the resources that they were looking for she had left entirely behind because she had found the One of whom she could say, “a man who has told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?” (v.29). What a Man!

K.A.K. The evidence of the seed in that woman must have been striking especially in view of the course of history of that she had had. Someone looking naturally would have missed that.

P.M. It was completely apart from all that had been there, and that woman may have had a very public history. We may not have had such a public history, although we have all had a public history of some kind, but what has been placed in us of God is completely apart from all that that was according to nature, and is dependent on God Himself, on the Spirit, and on the One in whom we are to abide. Unless I am grounded in my personal links with divine Persons I shall not know what it is to be in the enjoyment of sonship; indeed what will happen, and we know it from our own experience, is that I just become a critic of those in whom the work of God is.

S.B. I was thinking of what you mentioned in Corinthians, the things that are not esteemed, the things that are not well thought of, that we are brought into that intelligently to see the wisdom of God and He would bring forth such things (see 1 Cor. 6: 4).

P.M. How thankful we are for the Spirit to open up to us the things that God has prepared.

S.B. It is an amazing matter to consider that a few have an understanding of God's mind and His thoughts, a few insignificant persons, who can see the whole matter from beginning to the end, His wisdom and His grace.

P.M. Yes, and the Spirit would open up for us the whole vista of what has come out from God. It has been said that in Romans 8 the whole extent of the land is on your view. You are led by the Spirit of God. You have come out from Egypt, gone through the wilderness and you are caught up to get a view of the land as Moses had it. He could not go into it, but we have been brought into it and the whole scope of it is on our view. We can go right from there into Ephesians because the Spirit is the power for it and He is opening up the greatness of what has come out from God.

S.B. And the amazing part of what was mentioned is to see the Spirit protecting what is according to God, to see the Spirit bringing it forth and bringing us into the intelligence of it to see the wisdom of God.

P.M. I wondered if we might get a touch of that from Corinthians, "But of him are ye", that is of God, "are ye in Christ Jesus". How dignified! What a heavenly calling!

D.M.W. The leading of the Spirit in this connection is a constant thing as to the scope of all that has come out in Christ. He is leading us always in that direction?

P.M. I thought that. It is not just one hour a week or so, He is moving onward leading us into the purpose of God! It is not just to help us to get by in the scene of testimony, He has brought the witness of the land into our hearts and He is leading our hearts in relation to the land, He is bringing us right in, and the movements of the Spirit are in view of our moving with Him into the purpose of God.

D.M.W. I wanted to grasp for my own soul the thought of being led by the Spirit. I think He has things in mind and He is always moving in that direction. It would be an exercise not only to identify in ourselves the work of God, but to move with the Spirit in the way that He is leading. He is leading us through things; it is not exactly how

you get along in the wilderness, but He is leading us with something on the horizon. Perhaps we arrive at that experimentally as we sit down at the Supper and begin the service of God. Christ would be leading us at that point, but the Spirit is always leading us into this, is He not?

P.M. He is. I am glad you have referred to it because it would keep us in exercise in our links with the Spirit as to where the Spirit is leading. I believe there is a great deal of exercise among the saints in relation to that very matter. Where is the Spirit leading? Not that we are here without direction, we are never here without direction, He is leading the company, He does not lead one believer in a different direction from another. The exercise that I have is as to whether I am conscious of His leading so that we can move forward together. I think that every time the enemy attacks it is at the point where the Spirit would lead us further into the purpose of God. Often we find that we become more occupied with the attack of the enemy – it has to be met – than we are with the direction in which the Spirit is leading. I believe the Spirit would touch our hearts in the consciousness that He is moving forward and that we would be exercised to be with Him.

H.G.H. And in that company, the assembly, the Spirit has given gifts.

P.M. Why do you say that?

H.G.H. It is Ephesians. You took us back to Romans, but we need the gifts and we need to appreciate them, and to value them. They are given to the assembly, all in view of the perfecting. The history of the assembly is going to end in that perfecting, in a sense.

P.M. We need the gifts. We should pray for the development of gift, and pray that there might be right exercise that gift might be given.

H.G.H. It could be given to any of us.

D.M.W. The gift would lead us to Christ, not to men.

P.M. I thought that, “who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness”, and in being conscious that we are of God in Christ Jesus we have all the resources in that blessed

Man. He is the Man who has given the gifts, He has ascended up on high and given gifts, but the resource is in Himself and the gift is, if one might say carefully, a channel through which the mind of Christ can be known and the power of Christ known, but everything derives from Him. In Corinthians they came short in no gift, they had it all, but they did not realise that the resource was in the One in whom they were established. We have known a time when we have depended on gift and have not traced the source right back to the One who has been “made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness”. What resources we have!

H.G.H. That is true, and because we have failed in that way the danger is to go the other way, not appreciating the gift.

P.M. I think if we are held in relation to Christ we shall recognise and value what He gives.

DENTON

26 October 2002

Key to Initials

S.Barela, Denver; P.L.Johnson, Denton; H.G.Holt, Chicago;
K.A.Knauss, Indianapolis; P.Martin, Colchester; B.Selman, Denton;
S.Selman, Denton; T.v.d.Hoek, Denton; D.M.Welch, Denton

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Edwin Mutton

Luke 23: 39-43; 1 Samuel 22: 23

I want to use these two scriptures to raise a question which I believe God would raise with each one of us. We sang in our hymn:

The world to doom is passing,
And you are passing too. (Hymn 220)

We are all passing through life and are passing, as far as our natural life is concerned, to an end. The end of the world, the Bible tells us, is doom. This world as a system is doomed. The question I would like to ask you is whether you are passing to doom with the world or whether you have another hope. The two men we have read about in Luke 23, one died with the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the other, seemingly, died without Jesus. That is what God presents to you in the gospel – a very simple question – are you going to finish your life here with Jesus, or without Him?

Everybody here is in one class or the other at the moment. Thank God that in His goodness the gospel is being preached so that if you are without Christ now, you do not die without Him. It is a very solemn thing to die without the certainty of the Lord Jesus as Saviour. I seek help just to bring that message home to you and then in the second scripture to raise the question as to whether you are trying to live without Christ. It is one thing to die without Christ, but there may be someone here who will die in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, but is trying to live their life without Him meanwhile. That is very sad too.

These two men in Luke are put together, as so many in scripture, by way of contrast. They both had the same opportunity; they were both next to the Saviour of the world. It says, “one on the right hand and one on the left”, when the Lord Jesus was crucified.

They could not have been nearer salvation, and you could not be nearer salvation than being in a place where the word of God is being preached; where the Name of Jesus is being preached,

because there is no other Saviour; “for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved”, Acts 4: 12. Comparative religion is a snare of Satan. There is no religion, there is nothing and no one to compare with the Lord Jesus. There is no other way to have peace with God than to accept the Lord Jesus as your Saviour. These two men had equal opportunity. It is a great thing in the world these days, equal opportunity; everybody must have the same opportunity. Dear friend, in the gospel, you have the same opportunity as anybody else, you are at no disadvantage, you can hear God’s word and you can hear what concerns God, “God’s glad tidings ... concerning his Son”, Rom 1: 1-3. Christianity, as we so often say, is centred in a blessed risen, glorified Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. These two men had equal opportunity to accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, one embraced it and the other one seemingly missed it.

One took it and became a preacher straight away. Think of that! A man who was saved and immediately preached the gospel, one of the most potent gospels that have ever been preached, “this man has done nothing amiss”, Luke 23: 41. You say, That was a short word! Ah, but what was in it? The Lord Jesus, the One presented in that preaching is a Man who did nothing amiss. You could not point a finger at Jesus and find any fault in Him at all. Even Pilate had to say that, “I find no guilt in this man”, Luke 23: 4. A centurion said, “In very deed this man was just” (v.47); even these unlikely persons had to say that. You will find men in the world that will admit that the life of Jesus is a very good model. The life of Jesus is something that ought to be imitated by men. Of course it should, but show me the man that has been able to do it. Show me a man who apart from putting their faith in Christ and receiving the gift of the Spirit has been able to live like the Lord Jesus lived – there would not be one. Men admire what they see in the Lord Jesus, but they will not come to this that what they deserve is death. That is what this malefactor came to, “we indeed justly”. That is how you will get the blessing, by coming to God in repentance, “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ”, Acts 20: 21.

This malefactor had both and he was there, so close to salvation. God has come close to you too. I love that hymn:

Sinner, see thy God beside thee
In a servant's form come near (Hymn 112)

This malefactor saw Jesus at that lowest point in His humanity, he saw Him at “the death of the cross”, Phil. 2: 8. He actually saw Him crucified and he was next to him. Think of the grace of God that has bought the gospel just where you are. You may be a malefactor, yet God comes right beside you where you are.

I was reading recently about some of the Nazi criminals in the Nuremberg trials. In the hours before they were shot because of what they had done, they had the gospel preached to them. Men did not forgive them, they condemned them to death, but God drew alongside them, and in His mercy several of them received the gospel in the closing hours of their wicked lives. That is what this malefactor did. Man would say, It is not fair that a man who has lived a life of crime is saved in the last minutes of his life? We do not have to do with men, no, we have to do with God. Thank God we are not judged by our fellow men, we have to do with God, a God who is infinitely fair, but a God who is not willing that any should perish, even a criminal a few hours before he dies, God is not willing that he should perish.

God does not take delight in the death of a sinner. You read things in the paper of wicked people who have done wicked things and men rejoice to see them die; they say, thank goodness they have gone, they deserve all they are getting. Dear friend, you and I deserve the wages of sin, we deserve to die. Why? Because the wages of sin is death and there is not one of us here, not a man or woman in the world who could stand before God and say I have not sinned. But this man was next to the Saviour of the world – the only One who was not worthy of death, and yet He was about to die, about to shed His blood, about to bear God's judgment against sin.

Think of what that involved; what it meant to the Lord Jesus to be made sin, “the just for the unjust”, 1 Peter 3: 18. All those terrible

things that have happened in world history, all those things that have happened in your life, the Lord Jesus bore God's judgment against them all. Did He bear your sins? He bore the sins of many. Thank God that there are many in this room who can say that Jesus bore their sins. I trust everyone in this room can say:

I could not do without Thee,
O Saviour of the lost (Hymn 220)

Maybe you do not think you are lost. One malefactor did, the other one obviously did not; he made a mockery – he was as near the gospel as the malefactor who was saved and yet he missed the blessing. We do not know what God could have done in the closing minutes of his life, but scripture starkly records that he did not respond to being so near the Saviour and hearing this appeal from his fellow malefactor. Dear friend, you have the chance now to hear the gospel about the saving power of God's grace. A Man that has been here, provided of God, the God who "has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Rom 8: 32), and here He was facing death that you and I might go free. Dear friend, dear young friend, Jesus has paid the price. There is a price to be paid to God for your history and mine and the price has been paid. No doubt many of us have read that tract about the little girl, an orphan, whose mother had obviously preached the gospel to her and she got on the tram and when asked for her fare said, 'there is no fare, Jesus has paid the price'! Can you say, that Jesus has paid the price? If only we realise what that price was. If you read the history of the apostle Paul you will see that he had an increasing sense of the price that had been paid for his salvation. He could say, Jesus paid the price, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. Can you say that?

Are you delighting in the saving power of the grace of Jesus that met you where you were; came right where you were, when you could do nothing to save yourself? Without it you will pass with this world to doom.

You say, that is not very twenty-first century. Dear friend, one thing about the gospel, God's word, is that He never needs to change it. Men would love to change it, men in Christendom are trying to change the Word of God, they are trying to say that sin is not sin, that certain things are just something that applied when the Bible was written several thousand years ago. Dear friend, God does not need to revise what He says. God is God and you have to do with Him as a creature. God is not changing His standards, God is not changing His view of sin. What you see at the cross, what men saw at the cross, is what God thinks about sin – he has condemned it. “He who, yea, has not spared his own Son”, Rom 8: 32. That shows what God thinks about sin. Men may say that shows God's love, yes it does. God's love and His judgment of sin are seen at the same place, at the cross. You see there what God thinks about sin. If you and I thought as seriously about sin as God does we would be kept very humble and preserved in a sense of mercy. God in His mercy has met us where we were. I love what the old preachers used to say, that Grace has met us where we are because Love wants us where it is. That is the gospel. God takes you from the dunghill of your lost estate, however wretched you may be. I do not know what you have been up to this week or during your life, but however far you have gone, living maybe in debauchery, maybe going on with things that no one else knows about. Grace has met you where you are. Grace is God's love away from home. Love is what we will experience in heaven in the Father's house:

With its love and light and song. (Hymn 154)

That is where God's love is free, where it rests upon Christ, where God wants you to enjoy the very best, but love has come away from home and in grace has met you where you are. You have not loved God, no, but He loved you.

Why does God do that? To relieve us of our sins? Yes, but also because He wants us where He is, God wants you in His house. He wants to give you an inheritance, to bring you into the fulness of what He has in mind for men. He does not only want to relieve you of the burden of your sins, wonderful thing that that is, but God wants

to bring you right into His house. Mr John Welch said to us in a preaching in Frinton, 'popular evangelism brings God to men, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that, but he said the full gospel brings man to God'. God has not just come to meet you to relieve you of your need, He wants to meet *His* need which is to have you and thousands more like you, men women and children, in His presence eternally, the ransomed throng. That is what God is securing, far greater than my need or your need, that is God's need and because God has a need He has sent His Son to die, to be a propitiation for our sins. Jesus has paid the price and you and I can go free. God wants to bring you into the glory of what it is to stand before Him in a known and enjoyed relationship. That is what this malefactor got, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise". Those are the two words I want you to take home with you. Are you with Christ or are you without Him? One malefactor seemingly died without Christ, without God, without hope, lost. There are only two classes of persons in this room, the lost and the saved. In the old meeting room where I was brought up there was a gangway down the middle, and I remember the preacher saying, if the lost sat on this side and the saved on that side, would you be sitting on the right side of the room? I can remember an old brother who used to say that every time he preached, but it eventually went home, because I was lost then, and I was sitting on the wrong side of the room. Thank God that you do not need to be lost, you can come to the Saviour, He will come to you, He came to this man. The whole of his life this man had no respect for God at all, and right at the end of it God placed the Saviour next to him. That is what God will do in your experience.

The apostle Paul had that experience. What did Jesus do? He came just where He was on the Damascus road, and arrested him in his path (see Acts 22). God can do that. Would to God that there were more dramatic conversions among us. Some of us have been brought up in Christian households, and we thank God for that. Do not ever cease thanking God, dear young brother and sister, for being brought up in a Christian household. We do not know the half

of what goes on in the world. Sometimes our work brings us into contact with persons who have not been brought up in Christian households. It is a very, very great blessing to be brought up in a Christian household. But one of the downsides is that sometimes we can think we are converted when actually we are not. We can slide into things very easily, and in that sense I say that some of us have needed a second touch just to show us exactly how far away we were from God. But, however far away you are from God the Lord Jesus will meet you where you are. If you resist His message like the apostle Paul did, maybe He will come into your life dramatically.

Why? Because God does not wish the death of a sinner. Every time you see a funeral cortège going down the street and maybe you have feelings of sadness or sorrow, think of God's feelings if it is an unsaved sinner. Think of God seeing that cortege going to the grave with a lost soul. Do you not be a lost soul, Jesus is waiting to save.

That is why the preaching has been arranged here this evening. There are brethren in this place who are concerned that lost souls should be saved, and God is speaking again and saying that you can have a living personal link with the Saviour.

We need to maintain a strong moral element in our gospel preachings. I think the Lord has spoken to us in various things of recent years to show us that. We cannot take things for granted, even among the people of God. You may have been brought up in a Christian household and you may have the most godly parents that anyone ever had, but if you do not have a personal link with the Lord Jesus you are lost. The faith of your parents, your brothers and sisters, will not save you, but God is saying you can have it. You can have the joy your parents have, you can have the joy your brothers and sisters have, by having a living link with the Lord Jesus.

However bad you have been, however bad you feel you are, or however good you feel you are, God would say, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3: 23), and the Saviour is available for every one.

The other malefactor seemingly had no time for the gospel, but the Lord Jesus says to this one, "Verily I say to thee, To-day shalt

thou be with me in paradise". Think of that! Today you can be as fit for heaven as the apostle Paul. You say, Impossible – no it is not, because his acceptance is the same as yours will be if you put your faith in Christ. The apostle Paul, the apostle Peter, Mr. Darby, Luther, all these men will be in heaven on exactly the same basis as you and me, no difference, no preferential work, no, the shed blood of Christ is the only basis for the salvation of sinners and it can be yours. Mr. Stoney said that when you accept Christ in the gospel you get everything God has to give. You may understand very little and some of us still do after many years of knowing the Lord Jesus as Saviour, but in accepting the Lord Jesus you have everything that God has for you. You say, I do not understand the wonderful gift of sonship, I do not really understand eternal life, but you have it by faith in Christ, and as you make room for the Spirit in your life He will unfold more of these glories and what there is for the believer to enjoy. Maybe you have never understood justification, maybe you have never known what it is to be really in the liberty of the Spirit, but as accepting Christ you *have* everything. And as you give your life to Jesus and prove the power of the Spirit, you will be expanded in what you have got.

The Israelites went over the Jordan, they were in the land but sadly they never took possession of very much of it. If you look at the map and see how much they actually possessed it was very little, even by the end of the Old Testament. But it was theirs and, dear believing friend, you have the title deeds to the greatest blessings that God has. Do not just leave them in some dusty solicitor's office, get them out and go and see your inheritance and enjoy it. It is God's inheritance too, God's inheritance in the saints (see Eph 2: 18). Think of that. What we have enjoyed today, the Lord's Day, is not only our inheritance, it is God's inheritance, His investment in the saints and as you accept Jesus as your Saviour, think of the investment that God has in you. Think of the value you are to God. He sent His own Son to die for you and to bring you into eternal blessing. That is how much God values you.

In the second scripture I want to say a word about being with the Lord Jesus *now*. David says to some of his followers, “with me thou art in safe keeping”. In the Lord Jesus you have an ‘all the way home Saviour’. God is not only saving you for the sweet by and by! He wants you to live with the Lord Jesus now. To know what it is to enjoy the company of fellow believers, the Christian circle where the Lord Jesus is revered and where God is served and where there is so much for the pleasure of God and where we can experience eternal life, a character of life which is eternal enjoyed down here, even in these mixed conditions. He wants you to enjoy all that and to be a testimony for Him in this world. I want to raise this question with all of us, young and old alike. We may be with Jesus if the Lord were to take us to heaven tonight, but if He leaves us here, are you still going to be with Jesus tomorrow? In the sense of your eternal security of course you will be; that is the wonderful character of our acceptance before God. As we were saying in the reading, it does not depend upon what I think of Jesus. My love for Jesus by one o’clock Monday afternoon may have gone down from what it is now. I go out into the world and temptations come and if my acceptance depended upon what I thought of Jesus and how much I loved Him, my acceptance would go down too. But your acceptance depends upon what God thinks of Christ, what He thinks of His work, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you”, Exod 12: 13. So you have not got to worry about your eternal acceptance before God. If you have accepted the Lord Jesus as your Saviour you are safe and you will go to heaven when you die, and if the Lord comes tomorrow you will go up with all the other redeemed saints. Your acceptance as you put your faith in Christ is absolute and secure, but this time tomorrow, will you be with Jesus in your personal life? Will my life tomorrow, when we go to our normal employment, or to school, be with Jesus? David says here, “with me thou art in safe keeping”.

It is only by being with Jesus that we can be kept safe and kept from falling. I want to ask you that question too, Have you Jesus with you in your life? Do you keep with Him? Scripture says, “keep yourselves in the love of God”, Jude 21. There is a responsibility on

us to keep ourselves near Jesus and in the area where He is known and loved. The Lord Jesus would love to be with you every day. Do you start the day that way, do you ask the Lord Jesus to help you? Do you speak to the Spirit? The Spirit's mission is to keep us in touch with the Man in the glory. Do you start the day like that? Or do you go out in the day thinking you can get through it in your own strength. Sometimes we do, things come up and we think we can handle them ourselves, David says, "with me" you have nothing to worry about. It is a wonderful verse, "Abide with me, fear not; for he that seeks my life seeks thy life". Have you ever thought about that? All that reproach and all those temptations and things that come upon you, the Lord Jesus would say, I have been in these situations, I have been in this world, I know what you are facing, I know what these temptations are. It says of Satan that he tempted the Lord Jesus with every temptation (see Luke 4: 13). I doubt there is anyone in this room who has been tempted by every temptation. We have to be careful when we speak about the life of the Lord Jesus because He was separated from sinners, in Him sin was not, but we do not have a high priest who, to put it simply and I trust reverently, does not understand what we are speaking about. When you go to the Lord Jesus with your problems and your exercises, the Lord Jesus understands them, and the Holy Spirit, resident in a believer's life and heart is here linking us with Him. Think of that, a divine Person in the heart of a believer to help him through this difficult time. The Lord Jesus never promised that this waiting time would be easy, but what He did promise was that He would be with us all the days until the completion of the age (see Matt 28: 20). What a wonderful thing to be with Jesus. Without Him you will not stand in this world, rely on your own strength and you will fail. That is not theory, that is personal experience and I am sure that it is echoed in many hearts, that if you try and get on without Jesus you will not succeed. Stand in your own strength and you will fall, you will fail, the enemy will tempt but, "with *me* thou are in safe keeping".

So, dear friend, do not just let it stop at your eternal salvation. Ask yourself the question, am I going through life day by day with or

without Jesus. He would love to be in your life. He would love you to be a pious person having a life that He can come into and in which He can be with you. There are many scriptures where it says persons, “walked with God”, (see Gen 5: 22). Enoch was one, he walked with God, Abraham was another. Noah was another man who was with God in his daily life. All these great men we read about, but you can have that experience, you can walk with God, you can have the Lord Jesus in your life, you can be here and you can be helped to be a testimony.

The Lord Jesus is not here now corporeally in the world, and nor is the Spirit corporeal. The testimony in this world is men, women, boys and girls who have Jesus in their hearts and the Holy Spirit in their lives being here in testimony. Are you a testimony to a risen Saviour? Are you a testimony too to a rejected Saviour? Do you expect a better place in this world than the world gave to Jesus? Sometimes we feel that we are hard done by when we suffer and then you see that if you follow earth’s rejected King you will be rejected too. It is not a surprise that the world does not want you, it is not a surprise that if you are true to Jesus they make fun of you and deride you, but think of the inheritance you have. Think of the love you have in Jesus. Have any of your worldly friends got a friend like Jesus? Have any of your friends a resource like you have in the Lord Jesus and in the Holy Spirit? What a wonderful resource it is.

You see men when a sorrow comes into their lives and they are devastated, absolutely knocked over – *you* have a friend in Jesus.

You may have a catastrophe in your life, but thank God you have one who is with you, “with me thou art in safe keeping”. I had a colleague who lost a little girl of five, he had no link with the Saviour. You wonder how people get through a thing like that without Jesus.

It brings home to you what a resource you have in One who is not only a Saviour, but He is a friend, an all the way home Saviour with all that resource. Then the resource of the saints, those who are like-minded, what a resource we have in the Christian circle as we go through the exigencies of the testimony and the trials and tribulations of life. A believer is not exempt from the sorrows and

sufferings and part of the groaning creation, but he has this wonderful friend in Jesus. What a friend we have in Jesus!

If you have a link Him, you have a friend in Him, but do you spend time with Him. You are not much of a friend if you never spend time with your friends. If you have a friend you want to spend time with them, and what is more you probably want to do the same things as they do and to become like them. Well, if you keep in the company with Jesus, “with me thou art in safe keeping”, you will become like Jesus. You become like the company you keep. You can tell a man’s friends by the company that he keeps. If you keep company with Jesus you will become like Jesus and you will be here as a testimony to Him and for Him.

It is vitally important that you know that if you die or if the Lord comes you will be with Jesus. Paul says, “with Christ, for it is very much better”, Phil 1: 23. He was talking about actually dying but it is true anyway. I am reminded of Spurgeon who said at the end of a preaching, if you do not feel you are saved, come back and listen to the preaching next week. A man walked out of the hall and was killed by a tram, and Spurgeon said, never again will I give anybody time to be saved, “now is the well-accepted time”, 2 Cor. 6: 2. Then for all of us, even if you have a link with the Saviour, make sure that you are with Jesus in your daily exercises, otherwise you will make mistakes and fall. May the Lord help us in these things.

KIRKCALDY

10 August 2003

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: HOW DO YOU WORSHIP?

John 12: 1-11

She came not to hear a sermon, although the first of Teachers was there; to sit at His feet and hear His word (Luke x. 39) was not her purpose now, blessed as that was in its proper place. She came not to make her requests known to Him. Time was, when, in deepest submission to His will, she had fallen at His feet, saying, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died " (John xi. 32), but to pour out her supplications to Him, as her only resource, was not now her thought, for her brother was seated at the table. She came not to meet the saints, though precious saints were there, for it says, " Jesus loved Martha. . . and Lazarus." (John xi. 5.) Fellowship with them was blessed likewise, and, doubtless, of frequent occurrence; but fellowship was not her object now. She came not after the weariness and toil of a week's battling with the world to be refreshed from Him, though surely she, like every saint, had learned the trials of the wilderness; and none more than she, probably, knew the blessed springs of refreshment that were in Him. But she came, and that, too, at the moment when the world was expressing its deepest hatred of Him, to pour out what she long had treasured up (v.7), that which was most valuable to her, all she had upon earth, upon the Person of the One whose love had made her heart captive, and absorbed her affections. She thought not of Simon the leper, she passed the disciples by, her brother and her sister in the flesh and in the Lord engaged not her attention then – "Jesus only" filled her soul – her eye was on him – her heart beat true to Him – her hands and feet were subservient to her eye and to her heart, as she " anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair."

Adoration, homage, worship, blessing, was her one thought, and that in honour of the One who was "all in all" to her; and surely such worship was most refreshing to Him.

The unspiritual (v.4) might murmur, but He upheld her cause, and shewed how He could appreciate and value the grateful tribute of a heart that knew His worth and preciousness, and could not be

silent as to it. A lasting record is preserved of what worship really is by the One who accepted it, and of the one who rendered it.

And now, dear reader, is this your mode of worship, or do you on the Lord's day go to hear a sermon, say your prayers, meet the saints, or be refreshed after your six days' toil? Oh! if every eye were on the Lord alone; if every heart were true to Him; if we were each determined to see "no man... save Jesus only," what full praise there would be! Not with alabaster boxes now but our bodies filled with the Holy Ghost – a stream of thanksgiving of worship of the highest character would ascend in honour of the blessed One that now adorns the glory as He once adorned the earth. Be it ours thus to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Amen!

D.T.G.

From Words of Faith 1884