

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE JUBILEE TRUMPET

Jim Gray

Leviticus 25: 8-11 (to “unto you”); Mark 1: 1-3; 16: 19, 20; Romans 1: 1-4; 16: 25-57

What was in my heart to speak about was the blowing of trumpets and particularly one trumpet. You get the blowing of trumpets in Numbers chapter 10, and it is for various reasons. The one I want to speak about is the jubilee, the blowing of trumpets for the jubilee in Leviticus 25. You know, young friend, it must have been a great day in an Israelitish young person’s history – I am speaking literally here of the day in the life of an Israelite. One day in the life of an Israelite was the beginning of the fiftieth year. The day came about when this blowing of the trumpet was sounded. It was a great day. If their parents had got into problems or into debt, everything was eliminated on the day of jubilee. If they had to give up their homestead or their farm because they had got into debt and another had taken it over, when it came to the year of the jubilee, they all went back to their possessions, everything. What a day that was!

There would be joy and happiness in every family in Israel because they had gone back to the old homestead, back to the farm. They would go back to take it over again and start a new life, and it was all on the basis of the work of atonement. In Israel’s history the day of atonement was a great day for them because their sins were atoned for, taken away, in the two goats – that is in Leviticus chapter 16.

One of the goats was slain, the bearer of sins, typically speaking of Christ; the other one went into the land of forgetfulness. So God went on with them for another year; their sins were forgiven, and on the same day every fiftieth year, they could get into the land of their possessions. If they had forfeited their right to their farm, they could go back to it. Nobody could stand in the way of their inheritance.

Another thing God had in mind was the millennium. Israel is back in their land today and they are fighting for it. I am not giving an address on Israel, but just bear with me. He is not recognising the nations so they are having to fight for it, but the day will come

when Christ comes and they will go into their possessions. That is the year of jubilee, the millennial year, when Christ comes, when He appears, takes up Israel's cause again and they will recognise Him as the One whom they pierced. They will see the marks in His hands and the mark in His side. They will say that is the Nazarene we crucified. What a time for them! It says in Zechariah that the families will weep and mourn family by family (ch 12: 12-14), deeply disturbed, deeply wrought in by the Spirit of God, that they had crucified their Messiah. When He comes back, He will make way for Israel getting into their land. There will be no problem with the West Bank. Everything will be set in order and the nations will be around Israel too. They will be around Israel and they will get blessing (see Deut 32: 8). God's mind was that the nations should be around Israel and get a blessing. Well, that is the year of jubilee in the Israelitish setting.

But I want to speak about it to you from the Christian point of view. That is why I read in Mark's gospel. It was a wonderful day when the Son of God came on to view. I took this up because I think you get two men here who sounded the trumpet of jubilee: one was John the Baptist, a messenger sent before His face, and the other was Mark. Mark takes up the trumpet after John the Baptist has left the scene. What a day it was! What a day it was for Israel: "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God". What a day for Israel! What a day for the world when Christ was born and when He reached manhood! "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God". God is moving to liberate the whole race, the whole race of mankind. No matter what colour our skin is or what blood we have, God is going to liberate the whole race of mankind and He is beginning here with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, moving in power. That trumpet was not only a time of joy for the prisoners, but it was a time of fear for the enemy. Christ faces the devil out in this book here in a few verses (vv. 12,13), where it says, "And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted by Satan". The Lord bound the strong man. How the devil must have feared that blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Christ! He bound the strong man. He was going to

plunder his goods (see Mark 3: 27). He is desiring to plunder his goods tonight in this gospel preaching, liberate persons, set them free from bondage, from sin and lawlessness, set them free from that, and make them “bondmen to God”, Rom. 6: 22. That is what is in mind. The Son of God is going forth in power here and what a power He had! Just read through Mark’s gospel. He met the man who had the unclean spirit, “what have we to do with thee, Jesus, Nazarene?” (v.24). He liberated him from the power of the devil, a sample of what He was about to do. In verse 40 you find a leprous man, a man in type bound and tied under the bondage of sin. He liberates him and sets him free. In chapter 3 you find a man with a withered hand. The Lord says, “Stretch out thy hand” (v.5) and He made it as strong as the other. Liberating persons, setting them free, that was the life of the Son of God.

Then there is the great day of atonement – you find it in chapter 15 of the book. Mark brings it out in its sobriety, the giving of that cry of Christ on the cross: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (v.34). Why had God to forsake Christ? He took upon Himself all the liabilities. If the Israelite has to come into his possession, into his inheritance, someone had to pay the liability.

Christ did it. If we have to be liberated from the snare of the devil and set free for the will of God, Christ has to pay the penalty and He paid it on the cross and He paid it in the price of His precious blood.

The Lord Jesus Christ was made sin. “Him who knew not sin ... made sin”, 2 Cor 5: 21. Who can fathom the depth of that statement, “made sin”? The spotless, heavenly Man, sin apart, took upon Himself, vicariously, what was due to God and the liability of fallen man, and He bore the wrath of God and exhausted it. The wrath of God revealed from heaven was revealed at the cross.

And then He “bore the sin of many”, Isa 53: 12. Now, do you come into that class? He bore *my* sins. I can say that. I cannot say it for you, but you can say it for yourself if you trust Christ as your Saviour. He became the Saviour of sinners, the One who can set you free in liberty, from the bondage of sin. The Lord Jesus went forward in the power of the Holy Spirit as anointed by God and on

that cross He died; He was buried. Do you know what the burial of Christ means, young friend? It means that the man who sinned, that is you and I, our sinful history, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, ended in the death of Christ and His grave. Persons who trust Christ as their Saviour, their sins are gone, never to reappear. God has seen to it that they were left in the death of Christ. He had to be buried. It was a necessary part of the day of atonement. Atonement means covering. They had to be covered, and the death of Christ did that, and His burial. It says, "that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures", 1 Cor 15: 3,4. But He was raised in glory.

Well, the pathway of the Lord Jesus was a pathway that was straight. He met the enemy, defeated him, both in the wilderness and in the garden of Gethsemane and at the cross finally. He is a defeated foe. The Son of God annulled death and "him who has the might of death", Heb 2: 14.

What a day it was when John the Baptist speaks about Him! What a day it was when Mark speaks about Him, because Christ had completed His course and yet he takes you back to the "beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God". Mark says, I want to look at it again, look at it again, friend, look at the pathway, that holy pathway, sin apart. There is no generation after Christ in flesh and blood condition. "Who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth", Acts 8: 33. That is not out of His death. I am not referring to that. I am referring to His life in flesh and blood. There was no generation after that. He was alone, unique, a Man out of heaven. He did not draw anything from Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit: "the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God", Luke 1: 35. What a distinctive Person He was, who alone could present Himself by the eternal Spirit to take up the matters on the cross. That is Christ, the Son of God.

I should just refer to the end of Mark's gospel. He "sat at the right hand of God". What a place He took! "Sat at the right hand of

God”, a place of power, and He is still interested in the glad tidings. It says there, “The Lord therefore, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they, going forth, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs following upon it”. He is still active but He is in the place of power. Satan can do no more. There is a Man up there in power who is going to have the last word. Every enemy will be dealt with. Be assured of that! He will finally take the man of sin, represented by the prince of the revived Roman Empire, and the antichrist and cast them into the lake of fire. He will do that Himself. What power He has! He is going to subdue everything to Himself (see Phil 3: 21). The Lord Jesus is doing that. He is in the place of power that no one can interfere with. Meanwhile He is subduing persons by the glad tidings. What a Person! The very city that crucified Him was the first to hear the gospel. That is God coming out in grace. They crucified His Son, crucified the Son of God, yet He says the first city that is going to hear the glad tidings of release is Jerusalem. Thousands came to Christ – three thousand one time, five thousand another time – came to Christ. It was the day of release for Israel at that time.

It is the day of release for humanity in the western world – Paul here is writing in Romans 1 to the western world – the day of jubilee for the western world, addressed to Rome, the capital of an empire that lasted four hundred years and more, and into that empire came the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Into that city came that gospel. There were some few believers in it already and Paul writes this letter and he says it is for assurance for us. He says, Christ has been here, He has had His life here, He has suffered, He has died, He has been buried, He rose again and He is in heaven and the gospel is going out now to all mankind, persons like ourselves. What a day when the citadel of your heart is brought down in favour of Christ, when you open your heart’s gates and say, I surrender, surrender to Christ, and prove liberty. Well, this epistle tells you that it is “God’s glad tidings” and Paul says he is not ashamed of it. “It is God’s power to salvation”, (v.16). This gospel

letter tells you how you can be set free from sin, first by the confession of your sins. What was your life before you came to Christ? A bondman of sin, a lawless person, bound up by sin, not able to look up to God at all, and then you get relief – that is chapter 6 of Romans – and become “bondmen to God” (v.22). Your head is not looking down when you are a bondman to God. When you are a bondman of sin, you are looking to the earth; you are earthly. When you are a bondman to God, you are looking up to the One who is your resource and whose servant you are, you become a servant of God, and you look up then. You can stand up and look up to God, whereas as a bondman of sin you are grovelling, looking down to the earth. Your pleasures are all down here, no joys except earthly joys, and there may be temporary pleasures in sin, but they are passing; but when you get your relief, you have a heavenly outlook. You know, the only creature that God made to look up was man. All the other creatures look down. Man looked up; he looked up to his Creator; now, you are looking up to your Saviour God. What a moment that is!

Then you find out more than that. You find out, yes, I am Christ's yes, I am saved, I am a bondman to God, but I need power. I cannot go through the wilderness here in my own strength; I need power. Where am I going to get that power? God says, I will give you that power. I have forgiven you your sins – that is one transaction with God, wonderful one! – then you say, I need power. In chapter 7 of Romans you find you have no power. You cannot do what you desire to do. You find in yourself that sin is still there in the flesh. I still have evil thoughts but I do not want to express them. I still have evil intentions, but I do not want to express evil intentions. I want to be here for God and what does He do? He says, I will give you the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8 you have power: “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God” (v.14). We are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus. That is fundamental. Sons need power and you get that power in the Spirit: “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God”. You become sons characteristically in being led by the Spirit. What a day! Have

you proved these things in your history, young friend? Do you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you? Ask then for the holy Spirit! Ask God for it! It means you are dependent on Him. You realise, I cannot go through in my own strength. He may have given you the Spirit and you are not just too sure, but if you ask Him for it, He is very pleased because He says, here is a person who feels he needs strength for the wilderness way, needs strength for life and also for enjoyment.

The spirit of God is not only with you in conflict but He brings you into rest. The Spirit of God is needed to enjoy your Christianity. The Spirit of God is your link with Man in the glory. It is a real and living system. The Lord Jesus in conversion has imparted light to you.

You have been quickened into life. You have a link with Him then as Saviour and, as having received the Holy Spirit, you have a link with Him livingly. Sometimes we use the word 'organic' and it is maybe not always understood, but it means living. You have a living link with Christ. Christianity is real and living. Do you know it? Every believer should know it. Now, I ask you again, have you got that link? Do you know Christ as Saviour? Thank God if you do! Do you have the Holy Spirit? Ask God for the Holy Spirit!

Well, that is Romans and then in the end it says, "Now to him that is able to establish you" – that is what I have been speaking about. "Now to him that is able to establish you, according to my glad tidings and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, as to which silence has been kept in the times of the ages, but which has now been made manifest, and by prophetic scriptures, according to commandment of the eternal God". Those prophetic scriptures, as I understand it, are New Testament scriptures. And what we have in our hand in the New Testament discloses to us the truth of the mystery. Do you know anything about the truth of the mystery, friend? You get established morally in the glad tidings which I have been speaking about in the Roman epistle. Here he whets our appetite. There is something else: there is the truth of the mystery. What is the truth of the mystery? The body, what a thing! Every believer is bound up together by the Spirit in what scripture calls the body of Christ, and that body has a link with

Christ by the Spirit. It is a collective thought. It involves others. I am not just myself. Do you know, young friend, the truth of the body is inviolate? By that I mean, it is not subject to breakdown. In the public body in Christendom, saints have been scattered; there are many denominations and many groups; that is public; that is sects.

But the truth of the body remains and everyone who knows the forgiveness of sins and has the Spirit of God indwelling them is a member of the body of Christ. That is in scripture, treasured things; so if you meet a believer, you have a link organically in Christ with them, no matter what the divisions are – and maybe we are not all agreed in the same thoughts – but basically you have a link organically in Christ by the Spirit because you belong to the body of Christ. I cannot go into the truth of the body this evening and open up other matters in other epistles, but Paul whets our appetite as to the mystery. He said, “as to which silence has been kept”. It was not disclosed in the Old Testament. It is a new thought. The mystery, of course, also includes the assembly, that vessel that is for His heart, personally for Christ’s heart. It is a feminine thought, but I do not go into that, I just pass it on briefly.

And then he says, “Now to him that is able to establish you ... the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever, Amen”. It all goes back to God. You know, friend, there is a mind that is greater than the human mind. That is God, the supreme Being. He is infinite, but His mind has come into expression in a manner that is within the range of human beings. God always existed in Trinity. There were always three Persons in the Godhead. Scripture discloses that in the New Testament, but the relationships they came into as Father, Son and Holy Spirit were new and taken when Christ was born. “*Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee*”, Heb. 1: 5. The revelation of God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit is for human hearts and human minds, persons that know Christ as their Saviour, have the gift of the Holy Spirit, are equal to coming into an understanding of the revelation of God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May it be your portion as a believer in the Lord Jesus, and all of us, to grow in the knowledge of these things and

experience an appreciation of Him. If you do not know Christ as your Saviour, young friend, find Him tonight! May the Lord bless the word!

EDINBURGH

1 February 2004

“ONE THING”

Colin Seeley

Mark 10: 17-22; John 9: 24-38; Luke 10: 38-42; 2 Peter 3: 8, 9

I wish to speak simply tonight – all the portions I have referred to make reference to a little expression, “one thing”. I think the time of the gospel is a time when God would point us to specifics, not generalities, not even what we would refer to as what we enjoy together, but the gospel is a time for individuals and a time for specifics. It might just be one thing that is hindering, and how sad that would be, because there is no need for anything to be in the way of you, or me, getting a blessing. God wants you, God has done everything in order to have you for Himself. God has provided His very best. Mr. Coates said, true glad tidings is that God needs you and God wants to have you for Himself.

The Lord looks on this man that we read about in Mark 10 and loved him, but He says to him, “One thing lackest thou”. Dear friends, how sad it would be if one thing got in the way of the blessing. I am glad to be able to tell you tonight about a Saviour who held nothing back. It says, “having found one pearl of great value, he went and sold all whatever he had and bought it”, Matt 13: 46.

The Saviour whom we present to you tonight held nothing back. This man here, unfortunately, held something back, but Jesus held nothing back. From the moment He stooped from glory’s heights into this very world – not just any world, but the world that He had made with His own hands – He held nothing back. Jesus spent everything. His life here was a life of perfection, life where every step gave fresh delight to His heavenly Father – as I said, a life where He gave everything. He could not have given any more, nothing held back. Does that affect your heart tonight, that we present One to you who held nothing back? His whole life was just an outflow of love and grace from heaven. What a Person! From the moment He stooped from glory’s heights, every step, every action glorifying God, He healed the sick, everything He did was good, but He exposed what man really was. He exposed the sin in

man and the judgment of the world was, "Away with Him, we will not have this man to reign over us" Luke 19: 14. This One who lived a life here that was apart from sin, One who lived a life here of complete perfection was rejected by men and was crucified – He held nothing back. What a Person! He went to the cross, suffered unspeakable things at the hands of men, sufferings that you and I would not have been able to cope with, but He went that way and at each stage He was forgiving, until he was on the cross and He could say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 24. Is He your Saviour? Not only sufferings at the hands of man, but sufferings at the hands of a righteous God in those three hours of darkness when the face of the earth was covered, that holy transaction between God and Jesus when He was made sin. Does that affect your heart that One so perfect, One who knew no sin became the sin offering that you and I might go free? He held nothing back.

After that momentous transaction, after that awful judgment, God's wrath against sin had been exhausted. The Lord Jesus said, "It is finished; and having bowed his head, he delivered up his spirit", John 19: 30. What a Person! Then it says, "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear". Think of that – love's answer was the precious blood and water flowing from the side of a dead Christ.

What an answer! The blood really is for God, but you need to shelter under it. The precious blood of Jesus was shed in order for atonement to be made. It says, "without blood-shedding there is no remission", Heb. 9: 22. Are we all absolutely sure and secure in the knowledge that we are sheltering under the shed blood of Jesus? He held nothing back.

Then He went into the grave, this One who knew no sin went into the very area of the strong man, into death itself, into the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, setting out that the man who had offended God so much was removed for ever. What a Person! What a complete work! What a wondrous work! Dear friends, God would not have His loved One see corruption and He was raised from the grave by the glory of the Father. The glory of

the Father raising His Son, what delight He had in Him and then He appeared to those who loved Him in those days after He was raised. Then He was taken up into glory. The One we present to you tonight as a Saviour is available and desires to fill your heart. My impression is that He was the One who held nothing back. He gave His all. God has given His all, God has given of His very best and the point of the glad tidings is, What is your reaction?

The Lord Jesus is a great test. There are a lot of men, women and children who say they believe in God, but the Lord Jesus is the test, "But, ye, who do ye say that I am?", Mark 8: 29. Do we all have our trust and faith in Him who has finished the work, who shed His blood, who has been taken up in glory, who is on high? I trust that we all do. It is the most important thing that you have to see to in your whole life, to know that you have had to do with Jesus. If we have not we are like this man here and our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; they will be no use to us when our life ends. We need to have a living link with Jesus, we need to be sheltering under the precious shed blood. It would appear that this man missed the blessing. Just "one thing"; the Lord would get at the one thing that may be keeping you. I do not know what it is for you. I might know what it is for me, but for this man here it was his riches, "One thing lackest thou: go, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven". What an invitation from the Lord! Anything that you give up as you commit yourself to Jesus tonight will be repaid ten fold. It has often been said, the Lord is no man's debtor. God has provided everything for your blessing, but what is required in the glad tidings is for each of us to accept what God has provided.

I do not wish to be negative and that is why I wanted to read about the man in John 9: it is such a positive scripture. It has been well used in the preaching many times, but it is another "one thing" and this man held on to it. In the face of a relentless cross-examination he held on to this, "One thing I know, that, being blind before, now I see". Dear friends, he was a believer. Are we all believers here? Think of what it means to God to have believers,

those who know that Jesus has done something great for them and will not let go of it, irrespective of the questioning, irrespective of how tough it gets, “One thing I know”. How wonderful to be like that, to be a person who will not let go. He goes within the space of one chapter from being a man who does not know very much, apart from the fact that he had had his blindness cured, to being a worshipper.

“Jesus said to him, Thou has both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he. And he said, I believe, Lord: and he did him homage”. What a result! What a result that would be in the gospel tonight, if, not only we became believers, but also we became worshippers. That is the result that God has in mind in the gospel, that we become worshippers. There are many wonderful examples in scripture of people who have become believers after having had a touch from Jesus. Think of the woman in John 4. What a believer she became, what an evangelist, but the impression and the burden of my heart tonight was that it is individual – “One thing I know”. Is that something that we can all say? The men of the city in John 4 said, “It is no longer on account of thy saying that we believe, for we have heard him ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world” (v.42). Dear friends, have a personal transaction with Jesus tonight. Then you can say, “One thing I know” and it will be something you can look back on that will be a stepping-stone to the greatest blessings. But, you need to have a start, “One thing I know”. There are others as well and the Lord is able for any problems that we might have, the Lord is able for any exigency. Think of Thomas – often spoken of as ‘doubting Thomas’ – the Lord showed him His hands and His side. If we are concerned about our beliefs, the Lord would assure us tonight, He would call your attention to His hands and His side, and then He would say, “blessed they who have not seen and have believed”, John 20: 29. Be a believer, be able to say, “One thing I know”.

In Luke there is another “one thing” and, without wishing to be critical of Martha who came into great things, the Lord was not going to deny the good part and He says to Martha, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but there is need of one,

and Mary has chosen the good part". Dear friends, once we have put our trust and faith in Jesus, once we are sure of our beliefs, is there going to be a return flow? Think of what it means to Jesus to have those who sit at His feet. There is nothing wrong with service in its own place, but just to have time with Jesus! Mary was having time with Jesus and what that one thing meant to Him, sitting at His feet and listening to His word. I think now it would include remembering Him in the breaking of bread, an answer to His request. Think of what that means to God to have those who are answering to the Lord's request in a world where He has been rejected, to sit at His feet, to worship, and to be involved in the whole flow of the worship of God. That would be another great end in the glad tidings that we come to have our active and vital part in that vital occasion, the breaking of bread and the worship of God.

Finally, there is another 'one thing' that Peter refers to in this solemn chapter, "But let not this one thing be hidden from you, beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some account of delay, but is long-suffering towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance". The mockers mock and they say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3: 4), but just hold on to that one thing. You might say it is two thousand years that this dispensation has been going on, but with God that is as two days. The Lord is coming again, I can assure you of that. Mr. Coates wrote about a lost hope; let it not be a lost hope, but let it be a glorious living hope with us, and if it is a living hope with us, it will regulate our lives in every way. We cannot live lives here that are pleasurable to God in our own strength, we need to have the blessed Holy Spirit indwelling our hearts. That is another gift available, another blessing available in the glad tidings. There are so many blessings available in the glad tidings, forgiveness of sins, justification, reconciliation and the gift of the Spirit. Make sure we ask, and if we do ask the Father for the gift of the Spirit, He will be freely given to us and we can live the rest of our lives here waiting for this blessed event to happen, in a

way that will be pleasurable to God. If it is a living hope with us it will be regulate our lives, “Let not this one thing be hidden from you”. The Lord’s return is near; let us be looking for it, let us be living our lives in a way that shows that we expect it each day.

I trust that what I have said is intelligible and that each of us may be assured, like the man in John 9, that we can say tonight, One thing I know. Let us at least have that tonight. One anchor for the soul, “one thing I know”. I trust we all do know that Jesus has done something wonderful for us. If He has, that is wonderful, and we can go on to the greatest blessings, and be looking for His return, a glorious living hope, not a lost hope.

May the Lord bless the word.

GLASGOW

27 July 2003

THE KINDNESS OF GOD

Roland Brown

2 Samuel 9

I have been drawn to this passage because I think it sets out illustratively the operation of the grace of God in the glad tidings; and we learn from illustrations. In the scripture we not only have set out for us the doctrine or teaching of the glad tidings but we have them illustrated for us in men and women like ourselves. In the passage we have read David was settled in his kingdom. It says, "Jehovah had given him rest round about from all his enemies" (2 Sam 7: 1).

His kingdom had been established. That is the position with Christ. His kingdom has been established. He has been given a Name which is above every Name (see Phil. 2: 9). Soon to be publicly displayed, but already established, and to the eye of faith, we can already see Him crowned with glory and honour. We do not yet see all things made subject to Him. We shall see that. Believers shall see all things made subject to Him. But, already we see Him, by faith, as crowned with glory and honour.

His kingdom having been established, the king says, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" The house of Saul were David's enemies. King Saul had tried to smite David to the wall with his spear, and he had hunted him like a partridge on the mountains (see 1 Sam 26: 20), and yet David says, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness". How affecting to think that God is showing kindness in the gospel to His enemies. We have to come to it that that is what we are. Whether we were born into a Christian household and brought up in it or not, the writer to the epistle to the Colossians speaks of us, "You, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works", Col. 1: 21. You might think that is a strange thing to say that I am an enemy of God, but each of us has within the mind of the flesh which is enmity against God. That is man as activated and animated by his natural will. I wonder if each of us has made that discovery that there is within us what is violently

opposed to God and to His grace. It is a solemn discovery to make, but the king says, “that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake”. That is, kindness was to be shown to his enemies for the sake of another. How true that is in the gospel. The believer knows that his sins have been forgiven, not because he deserved to have them forgiven, but “for his name’s sake”, 1John 2: 12.

If we confess our sins God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins. He is faithful to Himself and to the work of Christ, and He is righteous. Those two attributes of God, His faithfulness and His righteousness are referred to – “to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”, 1 John 1: 9.

So the man who is put forward from the house of Saul is Mephibosheth. David says, “Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God to him?” I wonder if each of us here has been shown the kindness of God? Scripture speaks of “the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God”, Titus 3: 4. The scripture also tells us that, “The charm of a man is his kindness” (Prov. 19: 22), and that was seen supremely in the life of Jesus – the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God.

I wonder if you think of God like that, as being kind? We are exhorted in the epistle to, “be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another”, Eph. 4: 32. That is an exhortation to believers to be like God. That is a feature that is characteristic of God. The kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared in the Person of Jesus. It was not that God began to be kind then, He has always been that, but it came on to view in the Person of Jesus.

The object of His grace in this passage that I have read is Mephibosheth and I wanted to speak about him typically because we are told about his condition and we are told about his position and God addresses both. We are told earlier in this book how he became lame, “and his nurse took him up and fled. And it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame” (2 Sam. 4: 4). It does not say that she dropped him. He fell. Each of us if a fallen creature of God. All have sinned and come short, a

fallen creature of God. Mephibosheth fell and the result of his fall was that he was lame on *both* his feet. That is there was no power with him to walk as the scripture says, “to walk and please God”, 1 Thess. 4: 1. There was no power to do that, he was lame on both his feet. People try to get by with the admission of certain shortcomings and so on. Someone said to me today, ‘We all make mistakes’, but it is a solemn thing to realise that I have no power to walk so as to please God. No power at all. The scripture says in Romans 5, “we being still without strength” (v.6). That is a very striking reference. It is speaking of the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, “for we being still without strength”, no power to fulfil righteousness, no power to walk so as to please God, lame on *both* feet. We have a picture of him and it is really a picture of us as an enemy: that was his state, and unable to help himself, totally helpless.

Then the question is, where is he? He is found in Lodebar. I think if you care to look that up you will find that Lodebar means a place of no pasture. Nothing there to nourish life according to God. I think that is a picture to us of what the world is, what the scripture speaks of as the “present evil world” (Gal. 1: 4). There is nothing in it that will nourish life according to God. Some of us were reading in John’s epistle and the apostle says, “*all* that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2: 16), and I was very struck as we read it that he sums up everything in the world as coming under those three heads. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. There is plenty in the world that ministers to the flesh in me and to my lusts and to my pride, but there is nothing that ministers to life according to God. “All that is in the world”. John says there is nothing morally in the world that is outside those three things. He says, “And the world is passing, and its lust”. It is going on to judgment but, “he that does the will of God abides for eternity”.

The picture that we have in this passage is of a man who was an enemy and a cripple and living in a place of no pasture. God grant that by the Holy Spirit you might be convicted of that, because

it is only as we appreciate the helplessness morally of our condition that we appreciate what the scripture speaks of here as the kindness of God. Because however great the need – and it was great and that the sinner is great – the grace of God is greater than the need.

The scripture tells us that where sin abounded, grace has over-abounded (see Rom. 5: 20). If we think of the world as the place where sin has abounded, the grace of God has over-abounded and God said long ago, “Is my hand at all shortened that I cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver?” Isa. 50: 2. You get the thought in overabounding grace of *reach*. God is able to reach and it says of Christ supremely that He is able to save to the uttermost.

There were none when He was here, who were too far gone, as men would say, to be reached by divine grace. He lived and moved on earth among the meanest and the poorest. He was found as a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners. He met with a woman of the city who was a sinner. Persons who you would say were so far gone in sin that they would be despised by their fellow men and women, but the grace of God over-abounded. Paul speaks of it like that in relation to himself. The grace of God over abounded towards him (see 1 Tim. 1: 14), proud, arrogant, religious man that he was, seeking to do his utmost to stamp out the name of Christ, an enemy of God if ever there was one, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. How extreme he was in his animosity against God and against Christ, and yet the kindness and love to man of a Saviour God reached him. Thank God for everyone of us in this company that can say consciously that it has reached me.

David says, “Where is he?” and he is brought from that place. The gospel has in mind not only that our sins should be forgiven, but that we should be delivered from this present evil world. “Who gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world”, Gal. 1: 4. God has another world in view. He has something much greater in mind for you and me than simply the meeting of our sinful condition and our need. Nothing less than a portion with Christ eternally, a heavenly portion. Nothing less than

that you and I, as believers, should be conformed to the image of His Son; what amazing grace that is! Mephibosheth is called and he is given to eat bread at the king's table. He is given a portion, a portion on which he had no claim. The effect of this grace upon him was to acknowledge that. He says, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?". The scripture speaks of the goodness of God leading men to repentance. One of the tests as to whether you have known something of the goodness of God is whether it has moved you to repentance. That is the effect that it has. The goodness of God produces that effect upon the soul. The threat of judgment does not produce that. Romans tells us about persons who, "knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death" (Rom. 1: 32) – *knowing* that – "not only practice them, but have fellow delight in those who do them". Even the threat of punishment, the threat of judgment does not bring about a softening in the heart of man. What produces a softening in the heart of man is the goodness of God. It leads men to repentance. It led that woman of the city to repentance, the goodness of God. She loved much, she came and covered His feet with tears and wiped them with her hair (see Luke 7: 44). I wonder whether the grace and goodness of God has led *you* to repentance towards God. It is what God enjoins in the preaching, "all men everywhere to repent". I have already quoted the passage that says, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive them. What a wonderful thing that God is able to forgive sins. Someone said that to the Lord when He said to the woman, "thy sins are forgiven thee": he said, "Who is able to forgive sins but God alone?", Luke 5: 21. How true that is, but God was there in the Person of Jesus and He is righteously able to forgive the sinner.

I wonder, if each of us in this room were asked how it is that God could righteously forgive the sinner, who would know why that is? Why should He be righteously able to forgive me? He points us to the cross of Jesus where the sins of all who believe were borne by Jesus. One great lover of Christ said, "He bore our sins in His body

on the tree” (1 Peter 2: 24). What grace that was, that He should take *my* sins upon Himself, that He should take them upon Himself as though they were His own, He who was sinless, and that He should bear the judgment of God due to me on account of them. How surpassingly gracious that is! He has borne the judgment due to me. He has borne the penalty due to me in going into death. His precious blood was poured out. There could be no remission of sins without it. Scripture says, “without blood-shedding there is no remission” Heb. 9: 22. Blood had to be shed and blood *has* been shed. “Precious blood as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1: 19), God’s beloved Son. His blood has been shed and as a consequence of that God is able to approach the sinner with forgiveness and with all that the sinner needs. But not only what the sinner needs, but *more* than the sinner needs. God is approaching us in Christ with all His purposes of love. They involve meeting our need, but they involve much more than that, because we learn that, as we have to do with God, as we are reconciled to God, we who once were enemies have become reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we learn that it is not only to meet our need, but it is to meet the desires of the heart of God Himself.

This is what David says, “thou shalt eat bread at my table continually”. He was given a place among the king’s sons, given a position, and the wherewithal that belongs to the position, not only a position of favour at the king’s table, but the wherewithal. God has not only given us sonship. He *has* given us that. “We are all God’s sons through faith in Christ Jesus”, Gal. 3: 26. As you put your faith in Christ Jesus you become one of God’s sons. You come into relationship with God Himself, and as a son you have the liberty of God’s house. A son does not have to ask to come into the house; it is his house, he has the liberty of the house, and as one of God’s sons the fulness and the fatness of His house is yours, but not only has He given you that in His grace, but He has given you the wherewithal to enjoy it.

That refers to the precious gift that God gives, the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a very intimate matter that God should give to *us* of His own Spirit (see 1 John 4: 13). Do you not think that is a remarkably intimate matter that God should do that? That His Spirit should take up His abode in us and shed abroad in our hearts His love. The consciousness of being loved by God, and the power to respond to Him and to worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Mephibosheth is given this inheritance and he is given servants to bring in the wealth of it in order that he might have the wherewithal to fill out the position that grace had given him as one of the king's sons. Somebody once said, you would never have known that he was lame on both his feet as he sat at the king's table. He sat among the king's sons as one entitled to be there, but all of grace.

The scripture tells us that as a result of this he became *very* attached to David. The great blessings in the gospel are not simply to be enjoyed by themselves, but the effect of them is that you are to be brought into attachment and attraction to the giver of them. David is only a type, and like all the types he fails, and the scriptures tell us later on that Mephibosheth was wronged by him. A wrong that it appears was never put right in his life time. But Mephibosheth said of Ziba, a man who had slandered him to the king, "Let him even take all, since my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house", 2 Sam. 19: 30. I only refer to that because it shows the place that David had acquired in his affections. He had the privilege of sitting at his table and of eating of his bread, he had the inheritance and the wherewithal to be a prince of the royal house – all that. But in *his* heart the most important thing was that David should be again in peace in his own house. How attached he was to him. God intends in the preaching that we should become *attached* to Jesus, the One who has loved us and given Himself for us. John says in writing in the Revelation, "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father", Rev. 1: 5. He has done all that, and he says, "to him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages.

Amen". I am challenged in my own heart as I speak of it as to how much Jesus means to me. How much does He mean to you? The One through whom the kindness of God has been expressed to you. Meeting your sinful state, meeting your need, delivering you from this present evil world, securing for you an eternal heavenly portion with Himself, what grace! You say how wonderful is the believer's portion, but how wonderful is the One who has secured it *all* for you. God desires that those of us who are believers as we hear the gospel week by week, and love to hear it, let us challenge our hearts as to what place Jesus has, the One in whom the kindness and love to man of a Saviour God has appeared. Paul writing to Titus says of the "grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared", Titus 2: 11. It came on to view in the Person of Jesus. It was seen in His life; in His healing power and sympathy. It was seen supremely in His death, in His intercession for those who crucified Him – the kindness and love to man of a Saviour God. May our hearts be attracted to Him, may we be found here in greater committal and fidelity to Him until He comes and in the words of Mephibosheth, "Let him even take all, since my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house". I wonder if Christ has assumed that place with us? You read those words of Mephibosheth, "Let him even take all", and they were said in relation to a man of like passions to ourselves. How supremely should we be prepared to relinquish everything here, on account of Him, on account of Christ.

The apostle says, "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ; and that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness, which would be on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith, to know him, and the power of his resurrection", Phil. 3: 8-10. This is the language typically of Mephibosheth, that he was prepared to relinquish all that David might be again in peace in his own house.

The Lord is going to take up His rights, and all who love Him long for that, not simply to be with Him, but they long for the day when He will come into His own publicly and take up His rights and exercise them

to God's glory. But may our hearts increasingly be affected by the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God, first of all leading us to repentance, but then to giving Him the supreme place of which He is infinitely worthy.

For His Name's sake.

ST ALBANS

4 January 2004

HAS SOMEONE SEEN CHRIST IN YOU TODAY?

Has someone seen Christ in you today?
Christian, look to your heart, I pray,
The little things you have done or said –
Did they accord with the way you prayed?
Have your thoughts been pure and your words been kind?
Have you sought to have the Saviour's mind?
The world with a criticising view
Has watched – but did it see Christ in you?
Has some one seen Christ in you today?
Christian, look to your life, I pray,
There are aching and blighted souls
Being lost on sin's destructive shoals,
And perhaps of Christ their only view
May be what of Him they see in you.
Will they see enough to bring hope or cheer?
Look to your light! Does it shine out clear?

Author unknown – before 1897