

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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A NAIL IN A SURE PLACE

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Isaiah 22: 22-24; John 10: 9; Revelation 3: 7, 8, 14, 15, 19, 20; 1 Kings 6: 31-34

I would like to speak from this verse in Isaiah first of all as I think it is suggestive of the position that the Lord Jesus is in at the moment, "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place". We live in a world where things are very uncertain and unsure – the older you get the more you find that wherever you look in connection with this world things are very uncertain. Governments are having to cope with problems that they have never had to face before, for instance terrorist threats and so on, but in the gospel, the preacher can speak convictingly and convincingly that what is offered is absolute, it is certain. What is connected with Christ is sure, you can trust it, you can trust Him and I want to speak about what God has done, "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place". It is a direct reference to the position the Lord Jesus is in at the moment and I would like to speak about the place that the Lord is in.

You know, men will accept the Lord Jesus, His pathway down here and moving through the streets of Palestine, they will admit that, but when it comes to believing where the Lord Jesus is and the position that He has been given and holds, that is another question.

We all need to arrive at that – the place that the Lord has now. We sang a hymn this morning to Him as the Son of God. He has been the lowly Jesus, and we will speak about that maybe in the course of the preaching, but the Lord Jesus now is a living Man, in heaven.

He knows what is going on in this room, He knows about every preaching which is proceeding today, He knows the make up of every audience – how many men and woman there are and how many boys and girls. You say, well that is impossible! Oh no, dear friend, we are dealing with the Son of God, we are dealing with a Man who has been crowned with glory and honour. There is a Man in heaven now! "A nail in a sure place".

We all know what a nail is – there is a nail up there on that wall and it is carrying a thermometer. This scripture goes on to speak about the nail; there are things to be hung on it, it can hold things. The thought of a nail, from one point of view, is not a very sensible piece of ironmongery to hold things. I mean if I came into your house and stuck a nail into the wall and said, 'you hang your coat up there', you would not be very pleased – I certainly would not be very pleased if it was my house. We would prefer something nicer and more presentable, would we not? But this is just a nail, nothing very attractive about a nail, is there? I just have a simple impression about it, that the Person who has been exalted has been here, to the outward eye, as a very ordinary man. The Lord Jesus Christ came into this earth, came into this world in which you are living now, two thousand years ago, and outwardly He was no different from any other man. But there was a big difference, a huge difference, there had never been a man like Him on the earth and there never has been since. From an outward point of view He was just ordinary, He did not have any official garb on or anything like that, He appeared as an ordinary man, moving amongst men, but what He did, what He was, was totally different. This Man was no ordinary Man, He was the King of Glory, He was the Prince of Peace, He was the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, but He was not in that capacity when He came here. He will be that. He will be the King of Kings and He will be the Lord of Lords, that day is to come, and we do not know when it will be, but you can be absolutely sure of this, dear friend, that God has already given Him a position of pre-eminence, and He is going to give Him a position of public pre-eminence. That is that the whole earth, the whole universe is going to acknowledge that He is the only worthy one to reign. God is going to do that, He is going to do it publicly, but that day has to come.

Now is not that time; if you mention the Name of the Lord Jesus publicly, you will be derided. We know that from our own experience that you sometimes do not want to be connected with that Name, and that is a shame for a Christian. But what a privilege to have a fresh opportunity to put our full trust in Him, because this nail is what this speaks of. God has given Him a position of power and pre-

eminence and everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus, and there have been countless millions, from the first time the first preaching went out around two thousand years ago, when three thousand souls were converted in one preaching, all these personages have trusted that nail in that sure place.

He is no longer here, He is in glory, and I want you to believe in that, dear friend, you must believe in it. You say I cannot accept it. Well, God has put Him there, that is the situation as it is at the present time and He says, "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place". That is the Person who is in the glory, the Person who is in that place – it is a sure place. The Lord Jesus when He was here, allowed Himself to be scorned, to be mocked, He allowed Himself to be spat upon. Think of the awfulness of that, that men spat in His face. How would you like that? How would you react if someone did that to you? I would want to retaliate, but that is not right. The Christian way is a different way. The Lord Jesus has shown a different character of manhood and it is a manhood that is pleasing to God.

The Lord Jesus showed a suffering way, He suffered rejection, He suffered humiliation. Why did the Lord take up that position?

Because He was going to prove His moral suitability, to take on the universal reign that God was going to give Him. This Man is fitted to rule! Men get positions of power in politics and all the rest of it, and they are not fit for their position, but God has brought in a Man who has been thoroughly tried and tested. He passed through all the temptations, He endured all the dishonour that men could heap upon Him. He endured the wrath of God, He did that. Why did he do it?

Because you and I, dear friend, needed salvation. We needed to be saved from our sins. Sin was an issue, before the sight of God from Adam onwards. Man had failed totally, time and time and time again. Man had proved his incapability of not sinning. Bringing in the law only proved that man was incapable of keeping the law. The whole human race is affected by the issue of sin. But dear friends, God has resolved the issue, He has resolved it completely to His satisfaction and His glory. God has done that, He has done it in the Lord Jesus, not by a great miracle, although as our brother said this

morning, 'it was a miracle'. A miracle that the Lord Jesus should die. It was a miracle but it involved His suffering, it involved the One who was prepared to take on the ignominy and the shame, bear the matter of the cross, bear the issue of sin, it was dealt with in the three hours of darkness.

I want to turn to John 10 because these other scriptures refer to the door. You might say the door is not a very important part of the structure of a house but it is quite an important part. It is useful for keeping draughts out and keeping the heat in, keeping criminals out and keeping a safe place for young people to be. The Lord speaks of Himself as a door here. Think of the Lord saying that about Himself, "I am the door". I want to speak about this just for a minute, "I am the door: if any one enter in by me". You know there is only one way to salvation, and that is through the Lord Jesus. Some think if I do good, if I behave myself and try and lead a good life and do not murder anybody and just get by and try to please God as much as I can and be kind and compassionate, I will get to heaven.

No, dear friends, there is only one way to blessing, to be saved. It is very simple what I have read here, "I am the door: if any one enter in by me, he shall be saved". I will tell you one thing that I am coming more and more to appreciate, that is that everything hinges on the coming in of Christ, everything. Our eternal blessing, our current blessing and joy and satisfaction. Everything hinges on the coming in of Christ. If He had not come in, the gospel preaching could not go out tonight, or for the last two thousand years. The coming in of Christ is crucial, it is crucial to your blessing and my blessing, to your joy and my joy; it is crucial. Without Him we are nowhere. Man was and is in a lost condition. God could do nothing for man. It all awaited the coming in of Christ.

One feature of a door is that it has hinges. Tell me, young people, how does a door operate? It operates on the fact that there are hinges. A door is no use if you cannot open it. You could not open a door if it did not have hinges. Another not very attractive piece of ironmongery, a hinge, but it is necessary to open and shut the door. These hinges are secured. What are they secured to?

They are secured to doorposts. When you put a door in a house you do not just knock a hole through and then put the hinges on the wall that is left. You have to put doorposts in and put a lintel in. If you do not put a lintel in, the brick work would fall down on top of your head when you went in through the door! That would be no use, would it? The doorposts, what the hinges are attached to, and the lintel gives the strength that keeps the thing from falling in.

These doorposts are very important. I know that some of you younger ones could tell me the importance of some doorposts and lintels in Exodus 12. They had to be smeared with blood – the blood of the lamb that had to be taken into each household and kept for four days. You can understand the children being attracted to the lamb as it was among them, so tender and harmless. It speaks quite clearly, I believe, of the way the Lord Jesus was down here moving among men, holy, harmless, undefiled. But then that little lamb in the household in Exodus had to be killed, in order that the firstborn of that household might be protected from the destroying angel. This no doubt speaks of the Lord Jesus when He was taken and crucified and His precious blood was shed. The basis, dear friend, of your being forgiven, is the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; nothing else.

Peter and these great men spoke of the blood. In the old dispensation, in Israel, bulls and goats and all these sacrifices had to be slain to satisfy a holy and righteous God, but it all pointed forward to the time when Jesus came in, the Lord Jesus Christ: everything hinged on that. His life was perfect, that wonderful life of His, going about doing good, healing all who were oppressed of the devil.

Think of the labours of the Lord Jesus from morning till night, then spending a night of prayer and starting all over again. Healing, bringing in blessing, blessing to soul after soul, no situation that He could not cope with, these are all very wonderful and precious things.

But beloved friends, what was necessary was that that Man should die. When men thought that they had Him on that cross, pinned there, mocking, saying, If thou be the Christ come down,

come off that cross, show us if you are the Christ. What mockery, what provocation (see Matt 27: 42). The Lord Jesus, nothing could bring him down from there, He was held there. It was not the nails that held Him there, it was love that held Him there, love for *you*, love for the sinner. God does not love sin, He hates sin but He loves the sinner. You wonder how that is possible. That is the heart of God, reaching out to you, appealing to people in their sinful condition to repent and to come to Him on the basis of the great work of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who atoned for sin, met the issue of sin, cleared it from the sight of God, for ever, on the cross in the three hours of darkness. Nobody could look upon that scene. That was something that was worked out between God and Man the Mediator, the One who stood between God and man – God on one side and sinful man on the other. Who was going to intervene? “For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all“, 1 Tim 2: 5,6. Think of that. You love the Lord Jesus, He loves you. This door, "if anyone enter in by me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and shall go out and shall find pasture“. Think of that! Not just being saved. There is that wonderful matter of being saved, a saved sinner. Wonderful matter, joyful! Oh that we might enjoy our salvation more! There is more than that, “he shall go in and shall go out and shall find pasture“.

I was thinking of Psalm 23, the psalmist, David. I had an impression this morning as to what Psalm 23 envisages, the suggestion there that David is going in, "Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters“ (vv 1,2). That is going in. That is the restful, peaceful conditions to enjoy. "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness" (v 3). That is a man going in and enjoying the company of his Saviour, his Shepherd. Then he goes out, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil“ (v 4), that is the outside position. We are all susceptible to disease and death in the world, indeed in our own person because death lies on us. Why has death come in?

Because of the disobedience of one man and through the obedience of the Other we can know life. He goes out, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (v 5), that is the outside position and yet God is a shepherd. The Lord is a shepherd, He looks after you, cares for you in every situation. Then he goes in again, "Surely, goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for the length of the days" (v 6). That is a man going in and going out, finding pasture, finding solace, finding food, finding refreshment.

That is what you get from the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh that we might know him in that way, not just as a Saviour for sinners, great as that is, but to know him as a friend, a companion. He wants you. That is what we will come to in Revelation. He wants your companionship, a wonderful matter!

Revelation is a very interesting book. In chapter 4, it says, "After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven" (v 1). A door open – you think of John, the vision that he had. You read through this book – it is frightening the things that are written in this book, and most of them have still to take place. When God takes up His dealings of judgment against this world, He will take issue with the whole system of it, the religious world, the business world, all that uncertain condition, God will deal with that and this book of Revelation tells us how. But before that John has a word for all these assemblies and they all have significant meanings.

I have read from the address to Philadelphia. Here we have the same scripture as in Isaiah, "These things saith the holy, the true; he that has the key of David, he who opens and no one shall shut, and shuts and no one shall open". This is the Lord Jesus and He is Head of the church and He is in control of this door. He has the key of David and He has set before this assembly an opened door. This is an opened door; no-one can interfere with that opened door and that is a great comfort, amid all the exercises that we may have to pass through. It may be that in some exercises, it is thought the door is closed. Well, I would think again, and be careful about that, because this Man has control of this door and things will happen in

His time. Oh that we may be among those who keep His word and not deny His Name. These are very important features in the day that we live in, keeping the word of the Lord. How precious these things are. He is going to come, He is going to bring these persons out, the enemies and they are going to bow before the feet of these saints, "and shall know that / have loved thee", Rev 3: 9. That is the great feature of Philadelphia, overcomers, and that is what we need in the present time, we need to be helped to overcome. Going through assembly exercises, and all that enters into them, we may get disheartened by some of these things, but this door, this Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has the key of David, He is the Holy and the True. A wonderful thing that the Saviour, the Shepherd, the Saviour of sinners, is also the One who is true.

Anything that is false will not be allowed to pass, anything that is of a lie will not be allowed to pass, because we have the one who is the Holy and the True and He will maintain these things. But if we slip away from that, and it is very easy to slip from Philadelphian conditions to Laodicea, and I want to be very careful when we speak about Philadelphian conditions, because we can so easlily slide – I am speaking for myself – into this Laodicean condition. The Lord Jesus has a word for them – think of the grace of the Lord Jesus.

The lukewarm condition was apparently a reference to the hot water supply to the city, which came from a distance, but the Lord is pointing to a moral state, and we can find this in our own heart, we are neither one thing or the other. The Lord is very strong in what He says, "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth" (v 16), it is distasteful to Him.

These are solemn things and it is an exercise for me not to be found in this state and yet the Lord in His grace tells us about another door. This is a door over which *you* have control of because it has been suggested that there is only one handle and it is on your side. It says, "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking", the Lord patiently knocking. Wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus. The Lord will not impose Himself on you, He will not do that. He may bring in discipline, He can do that, He says, "/ rebuke and discipline

as many as I love". He may do that, He has been bringing in discipline, severe discipline amongst the saints for a long time now.

This is Him appealing in His love to each of us, "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him". Think of that, He wants our company, He wants to enjoy this fellowship with you and me! Yes, the Lord of glory wants you to open this door so that you can enjoy communion and companionship, enjoy all His things, because this Man is living in heaven and He is administering a great system of wealth and treasure. He has the whole of heaven, glorious condition, and He wants to impart something of that to the likes of you and me, who go through difficult times, who go through a barren scene, a world that knows Him not, and He wants to be available for you. You need to open the door. It has only a handle on one side, and He just knocks, He knocks patiently. How long has He had to knock with some of us? Well, we can all answer that for ourselves. It is a very attractive result when we do open the door, very attractive, the Lord is an attractive Person. There is nothing in you or in me that would be attractive to the Lord Jesus naturally. That is a solemn thing. But God having begun a good work in you, He will bring about something in your heart, something in your life, something in your make-up, that will be drawn to Christ. That is the work of the Spirit.

That is what I wanted to refer to in Kings, in closing. I think it has been said, but again I am open for correction, that these doors were made of olive wood which is suggestive, I think, of the service of the Holy Spirit. Another wonderful matter! God's giving has been remarkable and it has been unstinting. He gave the gift of His beloved Son and it was a gift. We have all been recipients of various gifts, but God has given, not just once a year or at your birthday time, but given of His best. He could not give anything better than His beloved Son. "Who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2: 6), but He has given something else, the Holy Spirit. A divine Person down here, come from heaven, and He takes up His dwelling place in believers. Think of that! Your body, not your own, you are bought with a price; your body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. How

great these things are! A temple of the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit dwells in us and He helps us to overcome and He brings what is of heaven down to us down here in all our weakness and maybe frailty, but here is a strengthening power, “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world“ (1 John 4:4); there are other forces at work in the world, and you and I are open to them. The power of Satan, the power of the devil is specially active when persons set themselves to follow the Lord, to become disciples. The power of Satan is aroused, because he wants to turn us aside, but the gift of God’s Spirit is a more powerful thing than the power of Satan. It is a great thing that, and may we be helped to prove it.

So, at this entrance into the oracle, he made doors of olive wood, folding doors, not hinged doors, and I believe it is suggestive of the service of the Holy Spirit to open things up to us. The Lord Jesus said that, “The Comforter, the Holy Spirit... *he* shall teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you“, John 14: 26. These disciples had known the company of the Lord Jesus, witnessed these wonderful miracles, watched Him, listened to Him, taken account of His walk, everything they took account of. What a thing it was, just for a short time, three and a half years! Think of the time when He said, I am going to leave this scene. Thirty three and a half years old, how young, it must have been a great wrench for them that He said, No, it is necessary that I go away, but I am going to send another Comforter (see John 16:7). Sent from the Father and sent by the Lord Jesus, this Comforter will open the door, this oracle. That is the entrance into the holiest where divine speaking is to be known. The oracle is the innermost part of the temple, I think, and the Holy Spirit is available to open up to us the great treasures of what is contained in this wonderful area. The Holy Spirit has come and He is able to help us to overcome too, overcome the wicked one. This power is great, but “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world“, 1 John 4: 4.

So, these folding doors are suggestive that things are opened up in a gradual way to us in the temple. We prove these things, but

may we be helped to give more room to the Holy Spirit, value who this great divine Person is as a gift, a gift of God, indwelling us, helping us forward, helping us in the testimony, helping us with one another. May we not be negligent of these wonderful gifts that have come from God Himself. May we all be helped to be true believers in the Lord Jesus. The Son of God is that Man, that nail is in another area, it is in a sure place. Nothing can touch Him. He is in a settled place. What a wonderful area heaven is, glorious conditions there and no-one can touch that! He waits there in patience. All these enemies are going to be put under his feet; He awaits that, He awaits the call from his Father – what a wonderful day that is going to be when the Lord is going to come out in kingly glory. This earth, these towns, these cities that have known so much corruption and confusion and awful conditions are going to be transformed by the rule of Christ. May we be helped to know something of these things in our personal lives now, for His Name's sake.

PULHEIM, GERMANY

1 January 2006

GOD'S CONSIDERATION FOR MAN

Charlie Brien

1 Samuel 15: 22, 23; 13: 13, 14; Matthew 21: 28-31; 45, 46; John 10: 9-11; Acts 5: 32

I cannot say much about these scriptures but they support a few thoughts that I hope we might consider today in the preaching of the glad tidings. As was said in the reading today, it is wonderful how God has considered for man and how God's desire is to have man know Him, His feelings, His desires and to come into a relationship with Him. It has been His desire from the beginning.

The gospel is being preached today and God's desire is still this same. As mentioned in prayer it is His power to salvation, it is God's glad tidings. It is good news, a good message and it is meant for each one of us, each one here. As we were coming up today to the preaching there were a number of cars and we wondered whether there was going to be a problem with parking. The thought crosses your mind, would it not be nice if they were all in this room coming under the sound of the glad tidings? But it is not so, there might be only a few of us here in this room, and maybe we have heard the sound of the gospel many times, but it does not change the fact that God is interested in each one of you and that each one is here, including myself, for a reason and that is that we might listen to His word, that we might hearken to it, just to listen to it and to respond to it; to understand what He is saying and to answer to it.

That is what we will be left with at the end of the day and even through the week, yet there is a time when there will no longer be an opportunity (and I hope that each person in this room will not be left behind), to hear this good news about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today we are left to ourselves as personally answering to God as to whether we have answered to His glad tidings; whether we have responded to it, whether we have hearkened and whether we have obeyed His word.

His gracious call obey

(Hymn 332)

God is calling you and me to come into wonderful blessings and wonderful things in order to have life, a new life. What a busy life we have these days, there is a lot of hustle and bustle especially in this city; everything is busy, there is a lot to think about, life does not seem to be relaxed, there is always a lot going on, even many trials and tests as we know with ones that we love, but He desires us to have a different life and we can have that life, it is available now.

God's desire is that we might believe with our hearts and have faith that that new life is available and come into it.

I read in Samuel having been affected recently when reading these verses. They are really strong verses, but it is amazing how God puts things so simply. Sometimes we get caught up with how complicated things seem and there is so much to understand about God's ways and the scriptures themselves, but we can see that it is quite plain, that it is a simple thing that He desires. He says here, "Has Jehovah delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, As in hearkening to the voice of Jehovah?". I understand these verses to mean simply that outwardly things do not mean anything to God unless there is something inward, unless there is something that is real in your heart. If you were living in these days it was the common thing to sacrifice, that is what brought you into a relationship with God and made you acceptable to Him. When you sinned, you gave a sacrifice and went to the temple and when you were feeling pleased about things in life and things were going well, you would go and give a sacrifice, an offering. But what God is looking for is still the same today, even though these things are not necessary any more because of the Lord Jesus Christ (He was the perfect and final sacrifice). You can see, as in all the scriptures, God's feelings and what His desires are. They are still the same.

What He desires is that you hearken to the voice of Jehovah, that you listen to what He is saying in the scriptures, in the gospel message that goes out today, what is said in the meetings, things you might read, what His voice is saying to you. He has an interest in you, He is calling you today, He wants to say something

specifically to you, but He would desire to have a response in your heart for Him.

Therefore He says, “Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice” – obedience I was thinking simply – as a fairly new father myself – a child might obey their father or their mother because the parents have given some sort of condition or consequence for not obeying, that may be why they obey, but I do believe it is not just that, (that they are going to come under some sort of punishment or discipline if they do not obey), but also because of the person who is telling them – their father or their mother. They have authority over them, the child knows that and so they obey. I wonder whether that is how God feels about obedience. It is not just that you come to meetings, or go to church or read the scriptures; those things are good, but are you really obeying Him with all your heart? That is what He delights in. Our brother and sister have a scripture in the house that says, “for man looketh upon the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh upon the heart”, 1 Sam. 16:7. That is what He is looking at today, He is interested in you obeying His word with your heart.

He says, “rebellion is as the sin of divination, And selfwill is as iniquity and idolatry”. As you read in the Old Testament you understand how strong that is when you see how God feels about idolatry and about iniquity, He cannot tolerate it. Here it is associated with self-will, not sin, as you would think it might be. It might be that iniquity and idolatry is sin but here it is self-will. What a thing that is. I would put before each one of us, including myself, what can you think of in your life that you are doing in self-will, very simply what you want to do and what is pleasing to you? Whether it is in accord with God or not determines whether it is self-will or the will of God. He then goes on, “Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, He hath also rejected thee from being king” – it is interesting to read about Saul because he was a king that God chose for the people even though He was not really happy about the fact that the people wanted to have a king; nevertheless He set Saul up and his desire was, “Jehovah have established thy kingdom over

Israel for ever". What grace, what a patient God He is! He is the same God today, just the same God who was speaking here about Saul, He would speak to you today. He goes on to say, "Jehovah has sought him a man after his own heart, and Jehovah has appointed him ruler over his people; for thou hast not kept what Jehovah commanded thee" – you might say, as I would say, if I can identify far too many instances of my going on in self-will and that I know that I do a lot of things wrong and I do a lot of things that I want to do, and then you read of Saul here, a person who was appointed by God, and he failed, you might say it is hopeless for me. Who could be a man after His own heart? We will speak about that, the One who is the subject of the glad tidings, the Lord Jesus Christ. You can read on about David and see all these different characters in the Bible that would have certain characteristics about them that would be like God and would be after His own heart, but you find that they all fail in different ways. That is the same as each one of us here, that there is no hope if we are to continue on in that pathway of self-will. There is nothing that we can do, even though it is done with good intentions, like Saul. He thought he was doing good, but actually he was not, he was disobeying God by going on in self-will.

You can see by these persons and ourselves, that the only one who could answer that scripture, "a man after his own heart" would be the Lord Jesus Christ. God Himself would have to be here as a Man and He would have to come to this earth after all this time. I am always struck by the first chapter of the Bible where God looked upon all that He had created and saw that it was very good (see Gen. 1:31). How wonderful that must have been to God to see everything that He had created and it was very good. We can read on and find out what happens after that, it is no longer very good, but you see at the beginning what God's desires are. They are still the same.

We see the answer in the Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we come to Matthew 21 we have that Man, the Lord Jesus speaking. No matter how good your intentions are, no matter what you feel is doing right, being kind, or whatever it might be, you do not have to

be a murderer, a thief or anything like that, but are you just simply going on in self-will? I am sure that you will find, as I have, that that is the case. What can you do? You realise that you cannot do anything because you have something in you that you are born with: think of a child, how innocent they are, yet they are born into sin.

That is the state that we are in and therefore we are lost and have no hope except to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and to repent.

That is why I read these scriptures. I was helped last week when someone commented after the preaching that repentance is coming in your heart and in your soul to feel in regard to what is in you as God feels about it. To come to it for yourself what He has done about it and that He has given up His only begotten Son for you and me, you individually and me individually so that we can have a relationship with Him. That is the answer to what you read in Samuel and the answer to what you read in the Old Testament scriptures, that is who you find speaking here in this parable. I was struck by this scripture, "A man had two children, and coming to the first he said, Child, go to-day, work in my vineyard. And he answering said, I will not". How often do you and I come under the sound of the gospel? I could probably easily count how many times I have come under the sound of the gospel and come to a preaching like this because I have been coming to the preaching since I was the smallest little boy! But the question is whether I responded to those preachings? May be I was a young boy and did not understand it fully but there came a time when I was fully able to respond to the glad tidings, but how many times do we say when something comes before us as to having a choice to do what is God's mind and what would be pleasing to Him or to do what we just enjoy ourselves, do we say 'I will not' or our actions, feelings and thoughts. This is what this child says, but there is repentance. He knows the desire of the father and what would be pleasing to him, the child said "I will not", but then he repents and he goes. He has fully accepted that he has been disobedient and that he is a sinner, he is then free to go and do the father's will. What a contrast to the second son who says, "I go, sir, and went not". What an example

this is for each one of us to see in our own experiences and our own circumstances how we have been just as this second child saying, 'I will accept the Lord Jesus is my Saviour and I believe in Him, but I will not follow Him, I will follow my own footsteps'. I am simply speaking from experience, but may we be able to see for ourselves the truth that is coming out in this scripture in what the Lord Jesus is saying about this first child.

We also see a different side with the chief priests and the Pharisees. This is who He was directing it to and I am using this as an example to apply to ourselves, but it says at the end of the chapter that, "having heard his parables, knew that he spoke about them". Do you know that the Lord Jesus died for you and that He wants you to come to know His Father, the One who created the heavens and the earth that the Lord Jesus Christ is seated in heaven and He died on the cross for you so that you can come into a relationship with Him that you could have a new life with Him?

These ones knew that He was speaking about them: they start to lay hold of Him! How awful man is. You can read these scriptures and feel these things, and you can recognise them right away, you could say I do not understand how they could be this way, but what can you see in yourself of these chief priests and Pharisees; what can you see in yourself that is similar to these ones? I can tell you that there is something in each one of you today that will not listen to the glad tidings and yet there is One who has made everything available to overcome that today. Only by answering to that One, the Lord Jesus Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit will you be able to overcome that. That is how you will be free to be one that is pleasing to God.

I read in John 10, thinking of the Lord Jesus speaking about Himself as the Shepherd, it is not just that each one of us as being a sheep, being lost would simply come to Him but you see here, "and shall find pasture" and "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly". What is on my heart is that you will not just come to accept the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, but that you will come into the full enjoyment of all the blessings that He has for you;

that I may come in to all these blessings that He has for me because of what He has done for me and what He has done for you. He has all of this available for you and all you have to do is come in to it by following Him. It is only through Him and by Him that you can come into the enjoyment of these things. Think of a pasture – you have wonderful scenery, fields and a lot of sheep grazing in this country, so it is easy to see a literal working out of these things – but a pasture is an area where things are enjoyed, the sheep are able to graze and eat the new grass of the pasture and to enjoy an area of peace, rest, enjoyment, food and nourishment. This is what is available now and that is perhaps why He says, “I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly”. God in His love and grace has not just given you a way to be saved from perishing eternally, but He has come that you might have life and have it abundantly! He has come so that you might be able to experience something that is of that new life now. You might wonder what does that mean? I go through my daily routine every week, I have my responsibilities and I do not know what that means. Very simply it means coming to Him and feeding on Him and following Him, listening to Him and hearkening to Him. That is all that I know that it is but then perhaps He can come in by the Spirit.

That is why I referred to the scripture in Acts, it says, “the Holy Spirit also, which God has given to those who obey him”. Dear friends, may you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, may you understand what God’s feelings are in regards to man and how He has dealt with that in the giving up of His beloved Son. Always think of the words of the Lord Jesus, the obedience of Himself. Think of what it means to obey, and about the Lord Jesus, the One who came and who was a Man after God’s own heart and He obeyed His Father, “not my will, but thine be done”, Luke 22: 42. The Father would say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him“, Matt 17: 5. Now God has a Man before Him and is pleased because men have been found acceptable to Him because of that Man, the Lord Jesus Christ who was the perfect Man, and that Man gave Himself up for you. He said, “Father, into

thy hands I commit my spirit”, Luke 23:46. Jesus gave His life for you and He gave it for you so that you can have life and that you can have it abundantly. Who would want anything different? I can tell you that even though we would desire to come into these things there is something in us that has to be overcome and the only way that can be overcome is by the power of the Holy Spirit and by asking for Him in the Name of the Lord Jesus; through that One who was perfect in every way, who conquered death. We had a lot of that this morning about Him being victorious and defeating death.

He has done that, He is risen and come out of the grave and seated in heaven looking down on each one of us and desiring that each one of us will come to know Him in a personal and in a real way.

God has given us the Holy Spirit in addition to all of these things, who we can have with us here, One that we cannot see but we know in us because we are able to move beyond the things that before we had no power to control. Now there is all this available to us.

May we just come into it. Perhaps the words have been spoken feebly, but I just desire that we each might come to know Him in a personal way that we might desire truly to have this life, not the life of the one which He speaks of, “the thief comes not but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy”. You do not have to look very far to see these things happening literally now, but what about what he is stealing, killing and destroying in relation to God? Is he being successful in your life in taking you away from God or are you overcoming him by depending on that One who has overcome him Himself by shedding His blood for you?

May we come to Him and may we obey His word; may we hear the word, may we read the scriptures, perhaps read about Saul, Samuel, all these scriptures, learn from them, listen to them and take them into our hearts so that we might live by them and live by the Spirit. May it be so for His Name’s sake.

WEST NORWOOD, LONDON

8 January 2006

THE LOVE OF GOD

Paul Hutson

Romans 5: 8; John 4: 4-10; 28, 29

I wanted to touch on the greatness of God's love which is towards us. I believe we had some impression of that this morning as we were assembled together to break bread, the greatness of divine love and the way it has been expressed. The verse I read in Romans says, "God commends *his* love to us"; that is present in its bearing and application. It is not simply historic matters that we have to do with in the glad tidings, although it does relate to events in reality on this earth some two thousand years ago, but God's love being commended to us – He commends it to us – it is present, real and living, the opportunity is today. "God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us" – the One of whom we have sung in our hymn:

We see thee Lord of glory,
Descending from above,
And learn the wondrous story
Of God come down in love. (Hymn 188)

We were reminded in our reading this afternoon – we were reading in early Genesis (ch 4) – of the effect of sin and the way it has come into the world, "through one man sin has entered into the world and by sin death". I hope there is no one here who would say, 'that does not apply to me, I am not a sinner'. God's word tells us that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and that includes me as a sinner; I stand before you as a sinner saved by grace. I look on the company here and I see persons who I know have been saved by grace, God's grace and mercy. The kindness and love to man of our Saviour God has appeared. It speaks there of His mercy reaching out to us as needy sinners at a distance from Himself that we might have to do with the Man that He is setting forward, Christ Himself. We may say that He is the One who is the great theme; the great Object, in the glad tidings. God is pointing

you to Christ, commending His love to you in Christ. Christ has died for us, while we being still sinners. Not when we had come to some understanding of things, but He has died for us when we were still sinners, still at a distance from God (see Rom. 5:8). When we were unlovable we may say, God is commending His love to us. He commends it to you tonight, dear sinner friend. If you have not yet had to do with Christ, have to do with Him tonight.

What does it mean that He died for you? It means that He has laid down His life on Calvary's cross, and shed His precious blood. That blood of such value in the sight of God that it cleanses from every sin. We read in the Old Testament of all the sacrifices that were made. We read of the sacrifice that Abel presented and how God looked upon that sacrifice, the firstlings of his flock and the fat, what was so precious to God because it spoke to God of what was to come in its fulness in Christ Himself. The sacrifice that He was to make – as the writer of the Hebrews says, “once in the consummation of the ages for the putting away of sin” – that great sacrifice has been made and it is effective and abiding. God looks upon the blood of Jesus that has been shed.

In the Old Testament in the system that was given under Moses, the law of God was given to His people Israel and the tabernacle system was set up and the blood was to be taken in and it was to be sprinkled – the blood of animals – upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. Paul says in Romans, “God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood”, Rom. 3:25. That is that you put your faith and trust in the blood of Jesus. There is no other remedy for what we are in our sinful state, away from God as sinners. There is no hope for anyone unless you put your faith and your trust in that precious blood of the Lord Jesus that was shed on Calvary's cross. That great momentous event, that pivotal event in the history of the world, took place some two thousand years ago.

The Lord Jesus died, laid down His life and shed His precious blood, that life that was so precious in the sight of God. He lay in the stillness of death, removing forever, before the sight of a holy and righteous God, that order of man that could never please God. The

apostle Paul speaks of that, being buried with Him in baptism, the symbol of going out of sight. The Lord Jesus Himself has been into the very realm of death itself, and He has come out triumphant and glorious. The One whom we present in the glad tidings tonight is not a dead Christ, He is living now, seated at God's right hand in glory, and God is pleased to present Him as a living Saviour tonight. We may say, using the words of a hymn, that He is there at God's right hand:

With hands outstretched to bless

That is God's attitude in the glad tidings, God is desirous of blessing, each and every one. God does not rejoice in the death of the sinner, God's desire is not that men should be at a distance from Himself.

We see the way how God quickly moved when that distance came in at the outset in view of Him providing those coats of skin for Adam and his wife Eve, clothed them with coats of skin (see Gen. 3:21), speaking of what was to come in in the death of Christ Himself. That is the only basis that we have for appearing before God, but God desires the company of His creature, He wants you and He is commending His love to you tonight.

I read the scripture in John's gospel, a scripture that appeals to me and one which I did not really want us to think of simply as an historic event. It was a real event. This was the Lord Jesus in His pathway as we have sung of it in our hymn, the pathway which led from the manger to the cross The Lord Jesus was on that pathway here, a pathway of service to the will of His God and Father, displaying the love and grace of God to men. We see here the way that He comes, it says, "he must needs pass through Samaria". I wonder whether we might apply it, that He must needs pass through Loanhead tonight to have to do with you, to have to do with each one of us, in view of us each being freshly affected by the greatness and the worth of the One who loves us so much that He has laid down His life for us. It says, "Jesus therefore, being wearied with the way he had come, sat just as he was at the fountain". Think of that, the reality of the Manhood of the Lord Jesus, a real Man wearied with the way He had come. We may think of the physical exertion of His

walking through the roads of Palestine, going about serving men.

Today it is easy; with the modern transport we have we get quickly from place to place. Here the Lord Jesus is presented in all the reality and preciousness of His manhood, wearied with the way He had come. He sat there at the fountain in view of having to do with this woman who came out to draw water.

Maybe we are like that, we continue to try and draw on things around us to keep us going through life, but, dear friends, God would have you to do with Jesus, that you might have a transaction with Him, that you might find the resource in Him, the living water, in view of your being able to find that refreshment which this woman came to find. The Lord Jesus appeals to her to give Him by way of a drink, but He moves on quickly to speak of the living water.

Although we did not read it, I had in mind also that the Lord Jesus had to do with her in detail, knowing her history. Dear friends, He knows each one of our histories. We read this afternoon about Cain and how he had slain his brother Abel and he had tried to cover it up. That is one thing we cannot do in the presence of God, we cannot cover things up, we cannot hide things from God. It may be that we can hide things from one another, from our nearest and dearest, from our parents, we try and conceal things perhaps, but you cannot hide things from God. He is the all-knowing God, He sees you exactly as you are, and He is commending His love to you tonight. He would have to do with you in the Person of the Lord Jesus. Jesus is available to you tonight and He would have to do with you so that you can simply speak to Him about your affairs, what it is that is troubling you, the burdens that may be resting upon you. I do not know what they are, but He knows and you can have to do with Him about the pressures and burdens that maybe are upon your soul. Have to do with Him primarily, I would say, in relation to the question of your sins and your sinful state, that you might be assured in your own soul in simple faith that you are sheltering under the blood of the One who has died for you. Can you say that, that 'He has died for me'? To know that you have your faith and trust in that precious finished work. We sing that hymn:

Thousands have fled to His spear-pierced side;
Welcome they all have been, none are denied (Hymn 169)

He will not turn anyone away, however bad you may feel, whatever you feel you may have done that you could not speak about to anybody else, you can take to Jesus, you can talk to Him about it, you can come to realise that His precious blood cleanses from every sin. You can have peace with God because of the work Jesus has done.

Jesus had to do with this woman in relation to the most intimate matters of her life. He says to her, "Go, call thy husband", she replies "I have not a husband. Jesus says to her, Thou hast well said, I have not a husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom now thou hast is not thy husband: this thou hast spoken truly" (vv 16,17). She had to do with the One who was going on to carry her sins on the cross. He was on His way to the cross here, the steps of the Saviour taking Him on, but He has to do with this Samaritan woman by Sychar's well.

We preach now in the light of the fact that the work of Christ has been accomplished once in the consummation of the ages; it has been done, it is complete, and the Lord Jesus tonight is available to you now, where you are. He would have to do with you and find you to put your faith and trust in Him. That you might come, as this woman did, to recognise that you have had to do with One who had told you all things you had ever done. "Is not he the Christ?" (v 29). That is what this woman came to in her own soul, she left her water-pot, she was no longer drawing from the resources of things here, she had now found One who was able to give her living water, that would flow out in testimony. That is another thing that flows out from the glad tidings – as you put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ you will find that you want to confess His Name. It may be difficult – I would have to say for myself that I do not confess the Lord's Name enough, I miss opportunities – but, dear friend, do not miss opportunities. How can we miss opportunities to speak of the One who has given everything for us,

laid down His life for us, shed His precious blood? If you put your faith and trust in Him you will want to speak to others about Him.

We spoke this afternoon of Cain and how he denied his responsibility in relation to his brother. What do you think about your friends at school? Where do you think they are going to spend eternity? What about your colleague in the office, where is he or she going to spend eternity? These things come home to me. I work with people, one of whom I know is a practising Buddhist, another is a Muslim. Can I bring in a word as to Christ, is there something I can say to them? We have to be careful about what we do in work circumstances – we are not paid to preach there, we are paid to get on with our work – but maybe a word can be brought in. This woman goes back to the men of the city, the place where she had been in reproach, where her history would have been known, and she was able to point to a man, “Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?”, the anointed One, God’s Man. All other men have been put aside, she now had God’s Man before her, Christ.

May it be that as a result of the word going out tonight each one of us has some fresh impression of Christ. The effect on the men of the city was that they came to Jesus and they said later on, “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), the One who had come in in view of laying down His life, a pathway of reproach and suffering. What opposition He endured from sinners, everything set against Him, but the Lord Jesus set Himself in committal to the will of His God and Father, that pathway of devotion such a delight to the eye of heaven. God would engage us with Christ where He now is. No longer here, He has laid down His life, that precious life has been laid down in death, having endured the suffering, the hatred, the betrayal of men, betrayal of one who was close to Him in His own inner circle, one of the twelve. Betrayed by such a one, spoken of prophetically, “a man mine equal, mine intimate, my familiar friend“ (Ps 55: 13). Taken by the envy of the Jews, delivered up to the Roman power, the violence of men

against His person, the mockery, the spitting, the buffeting, the crown of thorns placed upon His head. What do these things mean to your heart, dear friend? This is what the Saviour endured from the hands of men, and then having been scourged He was taken out to the place of crucifixion there to be nailed to a cross, the most cruel death devised by men. Persons taken living and nailed to a cross of wood and then held up a spectacle of ignominy and public shame, that was the place that men awarded to Jesus. As we were reminded this afternoon, the inscription over the cross, "written over him in Greek, and Roman, and Hebrew letters: This is the King of the Jews", Luke 23: 38. Every class of man represented. We are no different; that is the place naturally that we would have awarded to Jesus. But for the grace of God which has come in in His mercy to touch our souls where would we be? These things are meant to affect our hearts, God would use these things which He has recorded for us by the Spirit in the scriptures, His word, not to be taken up merely as a matter of history. These are real things, historical events, but what God presents in the glad tidings is living, it has to do with a living Man seated at His right hand in glory. He would have each one to have to do with Jesus afresh tonight, in fresh committal in relation to Him in the scene of His absence and the scene of His public rejection. That is the situation, we see it all around us, Christ is rejected. Maybe there is a veneer of things in the area of the world in which we live, referred to as a Christian land, but how quickly things are turning aside, false religions come in all around us and yet God in His grace is continuing to appeal to men despite the indifference, despite the apathy we see around us, everyone going on with his own affairs. God is commending His love in view of souls having to do with Jesus, putting their faith and trust in Him and His finished work, and being found here for Him in the scene of His absence awaiting His return, because that is the great outlook for the believer. If you have come to put your faith and trust in Jesus who is now absent from this scene, you will be looking for Him to come, that you might find your part and place eternally with Him.

But in this waiting time we are not left alone, the Lord Jesus having ascended up into glory has sent from the Father the gift of the Holy Spirit, that precious gift to indwell the hearts of each one who puts their faith and trust in His finished work, in view of there being a present and living response to Him, in view of our being maintained in our Christian pathway, in His absence, in view of our being strengthened. How quickly we get deflected! Speaking for myself I know how easy it is, and the week goes by, and if I am honest how much time do I give to the One who loves us and has died for us? How much time do I give to Him in the course of a day? How much thought do we have for Him? These things are very testing, but the Spirit within our hearts prompts us, maybe at a time of difficulty, maybe some pressure upon you, whether at school or at work, and the Spirit would touch your heart and cause you to look towards Christ that you might be sustained and encouraged in the circumstances of testing. Then too, as we have opportunity, as we have had today, to gather in the Christian circle with those who love the Lord Jesus, there is the opportunity to show our allegiance to Him in a simple and practical way that He Himself has appointed and set on, to remember Him in the breaking of bread. These are practical things which we can say have come right down to us all these two thousand years. We can be thankful that these things are available to us and that we can gather in circumstances of peace and quietness. We think of many areas on the earth where there is much unrest and disturbance and where Christians meet in fear of their lives, where even today those who call upon the Name of Jesus are persecuted and suffer physical violence and abuse. We see something of this; there are two people coming along to the meetings in Grimsby at the moment, who come from Africa. One a Nigerian, the other from Ghana and they are both victims of persecution because of their faith in Jesus. These things are very real. We can be thankful in the circumstances in which God has set us that we have these opportunities to be together, and may we make the most of them. Do not just take them for granted. Do not just come along to the meetings because father and mother come along, do not just think of it as another round of things to do on a

Lord's Day. May it be that you have to do personally with the Saviour. God is commending His love to you. It is real, it is living, vital, and, dear friend, it is urgent. It says, "today if ye hear his voice harden not your heart". How many times have we sat under the sound of the glad tidings, how often have we put the word off? We will think about it, we will wait until next week – dear friend, do not leave the room tonight without having to do with the Saviour. If you have not yet put your faith and trust in Him in simple faith, turn to Him where you are, commit your life to Him in simplicity. Maybe we talk about things as we are together which are very deep in relation to the scriptures, and maybe some of us struggle in our understanding of things, but the Spirit would help us in our understanding. What we present in the gospel is not complicated, it is not difficult, it is simple – we turn to Jesus, we acknowledge that we are sinners, we need a Saviour, we recognise and accept the work that He has done, that His precious blood covers, cleanses from all sin, so that the whole question of sins and sinful state has been dealt with. So you can stand before God as justified because God does not look upon you in all your wretchedness, He looks upon you as in Christ. He has Christ before Him, and it is what is formed of Christ in your heart that God looks upon and takes delight in. May it be that some fresh and fuller expression of what is for Christ, what reflects His glory is formed in every heart under the sound of the word tonight.

For the Lord's Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

29 May 2005