

A
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Contents

THE WAY OF SALVATION

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Luke 2: 25-32; Acts 16: 16,17, 25-34, 40; Philippians 2: 12, 3: 20, 21

A.M. What is in mind is the great matter of salvation. The poor woman in Acts 16 spoke the truth, although maybe on a much lower level than she might have done, but Paul and Silas were announcing the way of salvation. I have been thinking of "the way of salvation" and wondering whether in Philippi we may see something that may direct us in this way. Salvation is a very big matter - it warrants far more than a reading - but we have in Philippi some scope of it. We have the question of the man's need, then an area, his house, and then it goes on to the word of the Lord and the circle of the brethren. We have much in Philippi, and Paul writes to them many years later exhorting them to work out their own salvation in his absence.

Ultimately the fulness of salvation awaits the coming of the Lord Jesus, when we shall be saved from these very conditions in which we are.

We often speak of salvation as relating to our sins, and leave it there. We speak of somebody and we say they were saved, saved from the wrath to come, but we need salvation all the way, we need it through the whole pathway. Those that have gone before taught us much as to what we need to be saved from and where we find salvation practically in the present day, but I feel that firstly, perhaps, we should look at the Lord Jesus Himself as God's salvation.

Simeon, I take it, was not told how he should see the Lord's Christ, in what form he should see Him. Doubtless he frequented the temple, many times saw people coming and going. Doubtless he often went home in the evening a disappointed man; he did not see Him today. Until the day came when there was One brought in, just a Babe. He would have seen many babes brought in, but one day He came in. Simeon does not say, I have seen the Lord's Christ; he says, "I have seen thy salvation". Think of him day after day having been disappointed, seeing men according to the flesh going into the

temple, all sorts of men - he says when the Lord Jesus came in, 'it is God's salvation', God's answer to the state of men, God's answer too to the appearance that what He had in His mind might have been thwarted by Satan's efforts; God had an answer to that, it was God's salvation.

R.D.P. This is a good line, it is all embracing here, "thy salvation". The whole of God's movements in time will be covered by this great matter of salvation, do you think? Even Jacob of old, after speaking of one of his sons, says "I wait for thy salvation", Gen 49:18. When it says "mine eyes have seen thy salvation", it gives you an impression of the vastness of its scope.

A.M. He is not limited to Israel - "a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel". To the Jew at that time the Gentile was nothing; I suppose from Abraham's call the Gentile was one who was looked down upon. I remember being impressed here once before with the way in which the Jew looked down upon the Gentile. David speaks of "this uncircumcised Philistine", as if it was a matter of scorn. He was not one of God's people. The Lord Jesus comes in as a light for the revelation of the Gentiles. They had come to light, God's thoughts were wider than one nation upon the earth.

R.D.P. So as to the Gentiles it could be said that they were without God, and the thought of God's salvation extending over such - without hope, without God in the world - you can understand that Simeon feels eclipsed, he is ready to go, in the light of such a glorious thought.

A.M. That is interesting. You might have said, why did he not want to stay? God's salvation had come in in the person of Jesus, why did he not want to stay there, but no, he says I have to go out of sight.

He would have seen that the world was condemned doubtless he would have had some sense that the One who had come in as God's salvation would not be accepted in the world and of the wickedness that was going to come to light in the gospels. But he says, I want to go, I have seen Thy salvation; it is time for me to go.

D.J.W. The expression, "thy salvation" is interesting - God's salvation. Does that involve breadth? I was thinking of the children of Israel. They were not really saved even in the wilderness. They were not saved until they were planted in the mountain of His inheritance.

A.M. That is right. In coming into the wilderness, Moses said to them when they reached the Red Sea, Stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah. Their eyes were limited, and what they saw then was Moses, and they saw his rod, they saw the sign of authority, they saw the power of death giving way in the Red Sea; what they saw was authoritative, but here as coming in in a man, in a babe, "mine eye have seen thy salvation". It had drawn so near to man.

R.D.P. If you look at His mighty acts, such as the Red Sea, you can see part of that great matter; even the salvation of our bodies is part, but when you see the Person you see it all. What you said is interesting about Simeon ready to go out of sight because of the glory of Christ. John was ready to go out of sight. These were men of some moral stature, but they were ready to go out of sight, they wanted to go out of sight, that Christ might come into pre-eminence.

A.M. Is that not always the case when the Lord Jesus comes before us? The Ethiopian eunuch was a man who knew nothing before he read "his life was taken from the earth", and then he heard about Jesus; he said I must go out of sight - "here is water what hinders my being baptised".

J.A.T. "It is very touching that God should think of man's salvation at all. One says "Jehovah was minded to save me"; it was in His mind and heart. It is a wonderful thing that God should set His heart upon man, and then, as lost, He should set His heart upon saving him.

A.M. His thoughts are not our thoughts, and we can be thankful for that. But God would not be God if He had given up man. He said, Let us make man in our image. Could God ever be thwarted in anything He had set about? Satan would have thought He had. He appeared before God in Job. He said, I have been going up and

down in the earth. God said there is a man you have missed. Have you considered Job? and Satan said, Well, You are protecting him.

So God took away his protection, but he still reached His end. God could not be thwarted.

J.A.T. "What is man that thou hast set thy heart upon him?"

A.M. Very good.

G.R. We often think of what we are saved from, but is there a great thought as to what we are saved to? We are really saved to God, are we not? Salvation is for God. I was thinking of God saying "let my son go", not for his own liberty, but that he might serve Me. That was before the Passover lamb.

A.M. That is right. Israel had been serving Egypt, had he not, and God said that is not good enough, "let my son go that he may serve me", not to serve Egypt. God was saving His people from the clutches of Egypt in order that He should be served.

P.J.W. I was thinking of that. In the house this morning our brother read Psalm 98, "Sing ye unto Jehovah a new song: for he hath done wondrous things; his right hand and his holy arm hath wrought salvation for him" (v 1). It is what is for God, do you think - "salvation for him"?

A.M. That is what I thought about this expression. I find for myself that I relate salvation to myself. It is a wonderful thing to know that I can be saved, saved from the wrath to come, saved from the present evil world, it is all available, and saved from these conditions too: it is a blessed thing, a blessed hope. But it is not just for us, God thinks first for Himself, He is entitled to do that, and His way of salvation has been brought in in order that He should receive what He has set His heart upon.

D.J.W. Is it significant that he takes Him into his arms before he says this? It is what He has there, capable of infinite expansion.

A.M. Yes, "he received him into his arms". Say more as to what is capable of expansion.

D.J.W. The worthies used to tell us that in conversion and the reception of the Spirit, you get everything that you will ever need. It is then a question of entering intelligently into what is true of you and true for you. I was thinking of this little babe, but what was there was capable of a very great expansion as he apprehended it.

A.M. He received Him. The Lord Jesus took babies; they brought children, and He took them in His arms and laid His hands upon them. The Lord Jesus has a right to do that, but Simeon received Him. He was available thus to receive what was infinitely great that was here in the form of a little babe. He received him into His arms. Blessed matter! It is a wonderful thing to hold a babe in the arms anyway, it is a joy; but think of one who was able to receive into His arms the Lord Jesus Himself, the Lord of Glory, but God's salvation, God's answer to every problem that has arisen.

D.J.W. It implies that He received Him into His affections. That is the key to the whole of Christian privilege, our affections.

A.M. Yes. If our hearts are not stimulated after the Lord Jesus then we are nothing.

A.C.C. The promise by the Holy Spirit was that he would see the Lord's Christ, but, as you said, when He does come in as a babe, he does not call Him that; he speaks of Him as God's salvation. Why would that be, why should he change that?

A.M. I am not sure.

A.C.C. I thought that 'the Lord's Christ' carries certain limitations, but I wondered if the salvation was a total matter.

A.M. It is a greater thought. I am sure that is right. You think of all that he had seen. I suppose Simeon did not know what to expect but he was expecting a man, a man to whom God was committing Himself, and yet when he saw Him, he said this is the answer to everything, the whole question of the universe, God's salvation.

R.D.P. Simeon's outlook was the consolation of Israel and the Lord's Christ would perhaps be in relation to that, but as soon as He comes in that is eclipsed so that his first thought is the revelation of

the Gentiles. I was thinking of the greatness of Christ, personally able to galvanise thoughts and move us in our affections. I like this reference to "prepared before the face of all peoples". I was thinking of what has been said as to what was for God's heart and I would think there was something of His infinite joy in preparing Him before the "face of all peoples". I suppose there is a lot of detail in that, but it is as if His joy was in that, that His salvation was "prepared before the face of all peoples". It is this expansion of thought. I wondered if that is something of the glory of Christ, that as He comes into our view there is the capability of tremendous expansion of thought.

A.M. Simeon really links on with what God had in His mind in the outset, does he not. In His ways God had dealt with a more restricted field in Israel but the thousands of years had gone by and i came One who was God's salvation, the answer to all that had gone before, the answer to all that was yet to come, God's salvation.

Q.P. Even the meaning of the name Jesus involves salvation - "thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins", Matt 1: 21.

A.M. Jah, the Saviour. That is how He was known upon the earth; people said that, Is not this Jesus, Is not this Jah the saviour?

D.B.B. Do we get the full gain of salvation only as we accept Him as Lord?

A.M. Yes. Simeon, I suppose, was addressing God here, but he says "Lord", that is the Despot in this setting. He owned his rights, His claims over him. Addressing Him as Lord is the way into salvation. Other lords have had dominion over us. but now we own Him as Lord. ·

R.D.P. I suppose it would be true to say that Simeon had represented something that was for God here. There seems to be almost a link between the Old Testament and the New in these two persons to that long period of silence, but he says "now thou lettest thy bondman go". He had been here in God's service, but now there is something greater than his service in this glorious One that was seen as a child here.

A.M. Anna is more the side of continuance down here, but Simeon can see that his service is complete. John the Baptist says that "he must increase, but I must decrease", John 3: 30. There, as the example servant, he says that there is the answer to everything and I must go out of sight.

J.M. Awaiting the consolation of Israel, he was clearly a man who felt things according to God. He felt the state of Israel, and then as receiving the child into his arms, he saw the end of everything for God in Christ.

A.M. God's thoughts have never changed and sometimes when we are young, certainly when I was young, we think that the world had got so bad and there was no hope for man and then a new plan was devised in which the Lord Jesus came in. That is not right at all. Christ was always before God. God did not expect anything from Adam. When he said "Let us make man" (Gen 1: 26), He had Christ before Him. He has come in now as the answer to everything, everything for God's pleasure.

J.M. We possibly feel the state of things in the world, and it is right that we should, and then we feel the state of things in those who are outwardly walking in the truth, but Christ in our affections is the answer to it all.

A.M. He is. I feel very measured as to how much we can say about it in practical experience, but it is the answer.

P.J.W. Do you think the woman in John 4 began to get into this. She said "I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ" (v 25): then when she went to speak to the men of the city she said "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ? " (v 29). Do you think she saw in the man all that God had in mind?

A.M. I think so, and the result of her testimony was that the men came out and they said "It is not 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). I am sure that is right.

D.J.W. Is there anything in your mind as to this expression "for mine eyes have seen thy salvation"? It is not just his intelligence, but his outlook.

A.M. It is affecting to think the Lord Jesus coming in in such a way. God had His mind, He conveyed His mind to the prophets, but when the Lord Jesus came in there was that which was substantial. John says "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; ... and our hands handled", 1 John 1: 1. In the in-coming of Jesus the solution to every issue which has come up, the answer to all God's plans, was there and it was seen in a babe. He had come as close as that in a little babe and there was the answer to everything, and Simeon said I have seen that, my eyes have seen it.

D.J.W. The world is as it is because of its outlook, it is self-centred. This is Christ as the centre of God's world. Such a new objective, a new outlook, would revolutionise our lives would it not?

A.M. That is right. Sin came in when the woman used her eyes, she heard the serpent and then she looked and she saw the tree that it was good (see Gen 3: 6). Then she used her hands and she took it. Here is a man whose eyes looked on Christ and his hands held Him. What an answer!

A C.C. In regard of being with God at the present time, I suppose we all have thoughts, but with regard to being sympathetic with God in regard of the world, do you think that what is said about him, a man in Jerusalem, and the threefold reference to the Spirit having to do with Him, that when Christ appears it comes home to us that Christ is God's answer to everything.

A.M. Yes.

A.C.C. I was thinking of the day of Paul's ministry in a man in Jerusalem and each of us being entirely at the disposal of the Spirit. You are sure to be with God in regard of the whole situation and to understand that Christ is God's answer to everything.

A.M. In a sense it is easy to see that the world lies in the wicked one, but this man received communications from the Holy Spirit

regarding Christ, the Lord Jesus. That is a blessed thing! That is open to us.

J.M. That makes you restful, not unexercised, but restful. You do not get agitated, because you can see the divine answer to everything is in a man, and it is secured in a man. It will never fail.

A.M. We were speaking in the house about believers getting worked up about government and things which take place in the world, but it is not our business. I may be very exercised about men with whom I come in contact as to whether they are the Lord's and what can I do in order to be available to men, but the world as such is finished it has been finished in the cross.

M.M. The announcement in verse 11 of Luke 2 says a Saviour has been born to you, with a capital S. That would appear to be one of His titles would it?

A.M. That is interesting. Some of the judges were described as saviours, but they did not have a capital S; there is One who is a Saviour who was born. He was born a Saviour, and born to you. I love that expression, "has been born to you". You sometimes see in the notices that to so-and-so has been born a son, but you can say to all men that, To you has been born a Saviour

Perhaps we should move on to Philippi. I had the verse read as to this poor woman because of the expression, "the way of salvation". The woman really was a hindrance inasmuch as she would call attention to the servants, she would call attention to Paul, and Paul would not have that. She says "these men are bondmen of the Most High God". That is absolutely true, but it is not a very high standard. In fact when Paul wrote to Philippi, he refers to himself as a bondman of Jesus Christ, the One who came in as the Babe, the One who Simeon held, Paul was a bondman of Jesus Christ. But she speaks of "the way of salvation", and I thought that as we look at the way in which the jailor was helped we can see something of this way of salvation. It starts with believing. I suppose it starts with vessels being available to speak the word to him and they were evidently in the good of salvation themselves - at midnight ... in

praying, were praising God with singing, and the prisoners listened to them", men in the good of salvation who are an influence to others. They were able to point this poor man to the One who was God's salvation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house".

D.J.W. Would one evidence of salvation be the way they were superior to their circumstances, able to praise God in singing in the prison? Everyday circumstances test us, do they not? But here were two men who were superior to them.

A.M. It was a great test, but they could overcome: whatever they had been through in their spirits they overcame. It says "praising God with singing". It does not just say they were singing. People might sing to cheer themselves up, but not Paul and Silas, they were praising God with singing.

D.J.W. I was thinking that they not only announced it, but they evidenced it in the practical way. Perhaps that is the more effective evangelism, to be living salvation.

A.M. That is right. They took account of them in Antioch, that they were Christians. They had been with Christ, they were first called Christians in Antioch (see Acts 11: 26). I am sure that is the only way of effective testimony.

D.B.B. When Paul, as Saul, was travelling to Damascus it says he was going to take any who were of the way (see Acts 22: 5). It would link a little with this way of salvation would it not?

A.M. It is the Christian way. I am sure it would, because the Christian way is the way of salvation. It starts with believing and that is what Saul had to come to.

D.B.B. It is called the way of salvation as if there is going to be progress. You start on it but then you carry on. God's thought is not that there should just be initial salvation, but we should carry on in that way and get the full gain.

A.M. How can I have part in God's thoughts eternally and be happy to have part in what lies in the wicked one? God would have us

saved from it, they just do not mix. God would have us saved from it.

R.D.P. What this scripture seems to show is it that they were immediately, and the jailor too, above the circumstances they were in. Salvation had that effect upon them, immediately. The jailor still had a lot to worry about when the morning came, but it says he "rejoiced with all his house". That is quite a change from a few verses before where he was suicidal.

A.M. That is right.

R.D.P. I was thinking of how there is an immediate and lasting on-going benefit from salvation. It is not just future.

A.M. What he found out was that God looked after the morning. When the morning came that was all in the Lord's hands. He could enter into the joy of salvation. That is a great thing to have, the joy of salvation. But first he needed the Object "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved". Faith in the Lord Jesus is the great first step that we can take. People want to do something, but you cannot: faith in the Person is the first step.

J.M. It is "thou and thy house", so that there is not only salvation for the jailor but there is now a sphere of salvation. There was a sphere of salvation in the prison, was there not, but it is extended now to the jailor's house and in the last verse you read it is clearly in Lydia's house.

A.M. And the brethren. That is what I was thinking. The jailor's house being saved was one thing, that the members of that household should come into salvation that is wonderful but then that house itself becomes a safe place. Having washed Paul from his stripes and been baptised, he brought him into his house. It is a place where he could bring him. He would not have wanted to do that with a prisoner before this, but now he brings him into his own house.

J.M. Then there is the local assembly and, as we have been taught, that is a sphere of salvation. We perhaps need to emphasise in

these days that the local assembly is a sphere of salvation.

A.M. That is where we practically find it. We do find it too. You go to work and have to do with people who have no care for the Lord or the Lord's things at all, hear language that you would rather not hear, things said and done - you come back in the evening and there is a sphere where you can come in and feel safe, feel at home.

J.M. I think there is a beauty about divine operations in Acts 16. Persons are secured households are secured, and then there is the jailor and his house and Lydia; that is a local assembly secured.

A.M. That is what I was thinking as to the way of salvation. It starts with the individual and his links with the Lord, expands to his household and then to the local assembly, the company, the brethren.

K.M. It is interesting in relation to salvation that the jailor himself was obviously in the good of salvation; it had altered his life. So what he was like at home would change the lives of those that were at home with him, do you think? Is that how things work out from persons in whatever sphere we are that we are in the joy and good of salvation?

A.M. They must have wondered at first what had happened to him. He came back to his house a different man, he would behave differently. You think of the way he treated the apostles too, Paul and Silas; he washed them from their stripes. He put those stripes on them. What his feelings must have been as washing them from their stripes! 'I caused this suffering', but now he was a man who had seen the way of salvation and he was changed.

D.J.W. Would you say what you understand by his saying "and thy house". Salvation was not only for the jailor, but salvation was for his house.

A.M. The jailor was responsible for his house; there was a sphere for which he took responsibility and he would be concerned about that. What he was entering into was that his whole household was to be held in that light. The Lord honoured that. I think it is a great

thing among us that very largely households are held together. It is an institution that God has established and we need to value that.

D.J.W. I was thinking that the gospel did not go out until God had established His house and the Lord preached the kingdom. Really the salvation involves the three things, the house, the kingdom and the city. Perhaps the jailor's house was to take character from those three things.

A.M. I am sure that is right. He could not preach salvation before the house of God had been established, because there would be nowhere to be brought to. The preaching did not go out until then.

D.J.W. And the kingdom, too. Salvation involves that I am a subject person. The city involves that you have new associations.

A.M. So we are translated from the authority of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

A.C.C. I suppose that prison was the safest place in Philippi that night, heaving foundations and tumbling rocks and so on. They had a chance to run away and they did not, they stayed, because they had found salvation in these two men who were singing. I suppose that is where it exists, it is found in persons.

A.M. It was a remarkable earthquake. Earthquakes generally in Scripture demonstrate God's power, but I think that those in Scripture that relate to our day are invariably connected with liberty, setting people in liberty. The Lord Jesus went into death; there was a great earthquake and many of the dead arose. Here we have an earthquake, there is no damage. Earthquakes in the Old Testament took lives as in the case of Korah, and in a day to come there will be earthquakes that are a demonstration of God's power, but in the day in which we are God's power is manifested in bringing men into liberty.

J.M. Is there something very special about Paul connected with salvation. I was thinking on to chapter 27 where he says "ye ought to have hearkened to men (v 21), and then the vision that he had was that all who sailed with him would be preserved. As to Lydia's

house, she says "if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there" (v 15). That is the way salvation is reached in a house, do you think? I was thinking of Paul abiding there.

A.M. That is right. Paul's ministry is greatly discredited today publicly and it should be a matter of sorrow to us that even professing believers will discredit Paul's ministry. He says all in Asia have turned away from me, but Luke is with me and he says to Timothy to come. Luke and Timothy were here in Philippi.

P.J.W. Do you think in regard to what has been said, that the effort of the enemy through this woman was to prevent the light for the revelation of the Gentiles? She would have confined it to Israel, do you think? She speaks of "the Most High God". That is really a Jewish title, is it not? Abraham used it. I wondered if the enemy was attempting to stop the spread of this salvation to the Gentiles as it spread into Philippi and the result in local assemblies.

A.M. I am sure you are right. I suppose it is significant that this was a Roman city. The communications were going to carry the testimony out, were they not, and Satan will do anything to stop it. What this woman found was that she was saved from the power of this demon. He actually came into her own life. It refers to her masters; she had been under the power of others.

Rem. These verses in Psalm 118 would be the jailor's experience, "My strength and song is Jah, and he is become my salvation" (v 14). The individual experience first and then it goes on to say "The voice of triumph and salvation is in the tents of the righteous: the right hand of Jehovah doeth valiantly" (v 15). That was seen in the jailor at Philippi, "the right hand of Jehovah doeth valiantly". Then the voice of triumph and salvation in the tents of the righteous seen in Lydia's house, and the jailor's house?

A.M. That is very good. The jailor could have written that, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of Jah" (v 17). The whole power of death was upon him at one point and then in a moment, as it were, he is brought into the realm of salvation.

R.D.P. Something comes in in this man instinctively as becoming one who had gained salvation. He brought them into his house and laid the table for them. This was not necessarily an automatic thing for him to do but it is as if as experience in salvation there is a new range of things in which he moves instinctively. I wondered if we might see if that is true of us, it opens up opportunities. All the doors were opened, all the bonds were loosed, we do not hear any more of the prisoners, but certainly with this man, all his doors were opened and he operates in way he had never thought of before.

A M. When the power of sin is broken and the soul has a link with the Lord, there is an attraction. Does the prophet not say that "the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hill; and the peoples shall flow unto it" (Micah 4: 1) as if there is an attraction. The power of Satan is broken and there is an instinctive flow towards the Lord Himself.

K.M. When, after the shipwreck, Paul gathers a certain quantity of sticks and the conditions there were mixed - there were those who had been saved from the ship, and there were the barbarians - Paul's thoughts never lost that touch. It is like the jailor; he was a practical man, he had laid the table. Paul gathers the sticks to keep the brethren and those from the ship warm.

A.M. One thing about someone Who is in the good of salvation is that he does not think of himself. I am sure that if I had been in that shipwreck I would have found myself somewhere safe on the land and maybe have sat there and shivered or got near to the fire or whatever. Paul does not do that, it does not even enter his head; he goes out 'What can I do to help? ' He thinks of the brethren, thinks of those with him, makes conditions better.

M.M. What do you think will help us be preserved in the joy of the salvation? The jailor was in the initial flush of what it was to be set free from all that had held him. But, do you think sometimes we flag a bit? David says 'restore unto me the joy of thy salvation". What do you think will help us as to that?

A.M. I feel very tested about that myself; it is so easy to lose it. It is part of the Spirit's service to keep Christ before us. It is 'thy salvation' there - restore unto me the joy of thy salvation". That is Christ. The joy of having the Lord Jesus constantly in our hearts.

M.M. It is a test to us. Provision is made for us to be maintained in the joy of salvation.

A.M. It is. In the Holy Spirit.

A.C.C. The slave of the spirit of Python said "these be the servants of the most high God, who show to us the way of salvation". That is a deflection. There must be some way which Simeon saw which would bring you through. The introduction of God's salvation in the Person of Christ must continue through some way. It is through what we have here in the taking up of Paul's ministry, and indeed the book of Acts finishes with him turning away from the Jews and saying this salvation shall be sent to the nations showing that it comes through; Paul's own hired dwelling would be the sphere of salvation.

A.M. That is very good. If there is a sphere of salvation to be known, it is not because of the personalities that meet together; it is because there is a divine Person. That is the reason.

J.M. This is the entrance of the gospel into Europe, is it not? 'Before all the peoples', is says in Luke's gospel. The Spirit has been here ever since Pentecost and this salvation is still available in the assembly at the close of the dispensation.

A.M. It must be so. The Holy Spirit's service could not fail. It has to continue and we have an exercise to be in it. We can meet together and not feel the sphere of salvation.

J.M. I think that is right. I think we are in days of very serious breakdown, but sometimes the breakdown perhaps looms too large in our minds. Sometimes we need to get away from it and see what is resident in the Spirit of God here. There is no breakdown there. The salvation that you see in Acts 16 is the power of the kingdom of God, and is just as available today as it was at that time.

A.M. Salvation is more realised when there is greater deflection around. It is more needed and it is more realised. We see it in Noah, the whole earth was going under, the whole earth was corrupt; they came unto Noah into the ark.

T.P. Can we learn more about confession? It says with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. We come into something of the joy of it then, do we not? "Let the redeemed of the Lord's say so". If we have it, we express it, do we?

A.M. I think that is very good "with the heart is believed to righteousness". That is eternally secured. We often confuse righteousness and salvation. If I am a sinner and I am going to appear before God I need righteousness, "with the heart is believed to righteousness, with the mouth confession made to salvation". That we realise now. We confess Jesus as Lord before men, but also in our walk, we own Him as Lord; that is salvation.

R.D.P. What has been said earlier as to David being conscious of losing the joy is a real matter. I suppose there are not many of us who do not know about that. I have always thought it links on to those words "and let a willing spirit sustain me". I wondered if there might be some clue in that as to how we might be helped as to being maintained in the joy of salvation. This man was willing, all his energy, everything that he had, was now put in a completely different course and I wondered if we need to be maintained in willingness. I think even amongst the saints there is a need practically at the present time to be maintained in a willing spirit so that we might enjoy God's salvation.

A.M. Perhaps that takes us on to the epistle. We read in chapter 2 as to working out our own salvation with fear and trembling and it goes on "it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to his good pleasure". If we are to be maintained, if we are to work it out here, we are relying on the One who is working in us. His work in us is providing the willingness. He is providing the power for the working.

D.B.B. And it is to be for a result. I was thinking of the reference at the outset, "let my son go that he may serve me". That would be a certain result in working out the salvation.

A.M. That is right. Pharaoh said "let them serve in Egypt". That is no salvation - just let the men go and come back again. That is no salvation, you do not go back to Egypt. There is not salvation in that. God said "let them go that they may serve me".

P.H. Why does it say "with fear and trembling", work out your own salvation?

A.M. I would be glad to know what you have in mind. It seems to me that we will never be maintained in salvation in our own self confidence.

P.H. When Paul went to Corinth, he was with them in fear and trembling as if, I suppose, he saw that there were persons confiding in their own ability, so I suppose we have to learn to have no confidence in flesh, do we?

A.M. That is amazing. He spent eighteen months in Corinth. Eighteen months in fear and trembling. He was there in much weakness of the flesh. You would think Paul's personality surely must have asserted itself, but no, he was there in weakness and trembling, knowing nothing among them "save Jesus Christ and him crucified".

R.D.P. This is not working out eternal salvation obviously. Would it be working out the practical experience of Christian life, here in the difficult times that existed then and now involving the moral side of things. Just tell us what you see the bearing of this working out your own salvation as over against what we could not work out as to salvation from our sins, for instance.

A.M. I think that what Paul is saying to them is, you have the ability, the resource, to do this. When he was in Philippi he was only there for a short time but he set out something. I suppose if Lydia, or any of the others had questions that needed to be answered, had difficulties, they would naturally turn to Paul and his company and

say what do you advise me to do? Now he is saying, You have to work this out, now you have resources for this, it is God who works in you. You have the resources yourself, do it. You can do it in my presence, you can do it just as well in my absence, work it out. In day-to-day life, you need salvation.

H.T.F. What do you see as the significance of it being in Paul's absence?

A.M. I think that the Philippians were not to feel disadvantaged by the fact that they did not have the apostle with them, but they had resource in divine Persons. Paul is absent today. They in Paul's absence would treasure his legacy, what he had left behind. You can understand when they met they would say, 'do you remember how Paul sang in that prison, do you remember the way in which he did things, remember what he said when he was teaching us?' We have the teachings of Paul, we have his manner of life, we have that left. Paul is absent, but how do we value it, how do we treasure it? In his absence can we work out our own salvation. He says, 'I have left you a model'.

D.J.W. Do we get some idea of how it was done in chapter 3? He says "things that were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss" (v 7), and later on he says "that I may gain Christ" (v 8). We work it out by counting things.

A.M. His natural benefits, all that would have stood him in good stead, and yet he thinks of the brethren's feelings too. You notice amongst this list of things he does not include his Roman citizenship. The Philippians were Roman citizens. He does not say, well I am counting that loss, you ought to do the same. He lists his natural benefits that he had distinctively, and he says it is all nothing.

D.J.W. It is interesting that the word is "work out". We do not get everything on a plate. That is part of our knowledge of God: we begin to work things out, part of the salvation is that we learn God.

A.M. Do you not find that in your experience day after day things crop up and you think, Oh not something else! Work it out. Work it

out with God, you have salvation, you have divine Persons for you, God working in you, "both the willing and the working", work it out.

D.J.W. That involves giving God time to work things out. We need to give the brethren time to work things out.

A.M. It is a question of our priorities.

A.C.C. Would the jailor laying the table be an example of working out their own salvation, because his household were there as well, having believed in God. With the company of Paul and Silas and a saved person himself and his household, surely that is an example, that salvation should be realised. We are confronted today with the difficulties of our younger people, and what you are bringing up is appropriate as to the need for salvation to be known practically. As far as I see, it is to be found in the circle of the fellowship where the saints are together.

A.M. There is no circle like it. Sometimes when we are young we may not value it and the Lord may bring us to a point where we begin to appreciate the love that is among the brethren. There is no circle like it and there is salvation to be found in it.

J.M. It has been said that Caleb and Joshua were typically Philippians; they had experience of the land, but traversed the wilderness. They were working out their own salvation. For all the carcasses that were strewn in the wilderness, these two went right through, and not only did that but there were the daughters of Zelophehad, perhaps the product of the influence of these men. Do you think it is a great thing at the present time to preserve the saints in relation to the heavenly order of the truth? That is where salvation really lies.

A.M. They valued what was there; they had not come into it yet, but they valued it. The daughters of Zelophehad said 'we want our inheritance'. Caleb went to Joshua and he said "give me this mountain", he had been there, he had seen it, but he said I want it.

J.M. The word in Timothy is "the Lord knows those that are his", we can leave that in His hand. Our responsibility is to work out own

salvation and the maintenance of the heavenly order of the truth as established in Christ up there.

A.M. So our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens. These are our associations of life, our commonwealth?

J.M. That is where they are.

A.M. It has its existence in the heavens, apart altogether from this order of things which is coming to an end, but that is going through and our associations of life are there. "Our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens from which also we also await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour". Blessed hope that is before us!

J.A.T. In a sense we are already enjoying these things in the company of one another. That may be what has been spoken of practically as to getting cold (and we all know, as we have already said, what these things are, discouragement and diversion to other things), but we experience, as we are now, what the commonwealth is. We know where it belongs, but we are enjoying these things already, heaven is enjoyed here in this sense already.

A.M. That is right, and the measure in which we enjoy it should grow.

J.A.T. I was thinking that the tendency is to get away quietly on our own. We do have to work out our own salvation, but that what is so important is the households of the saints. The Lord gathered His own together; He says "with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you". It is so easy to become isolated and get away.

A.M. The tendency amongst men is for a household to consist of disconnected individuals: that is not right at all. If there is to be salvation known in a house, it is more an organic matter, and that is to be known in the circle of the saints too.

D.J.W. It is a beautiful expression, "our commonwealth". I suppose the word has lost some of its meaning with the collapse of different empires, but the commonwealth has a Head, we all have a common Head and what everyone has is for the good of one another. It is a great wealthy system of things we are brought into. I think perhaps,

as young people, we need to see the wealth into which we have been brought, not the things we have had to give up.

A.M. We were referring to what Paul accounted as loss. He did not put a price on that, he had given it up, it is nothing. He says "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". There is something of surpassing value. But we are connected with another sphere and I think the commonwealth, as you say, is a good example. We understand that in days of old you could go anywhere that was painted pink on the map, and if you had a British passport it was assumed you had a right to go in. We have a heavenly passport and our associations of life are connected with that, the fact that we have our heavenly inheritance together.

R.D.P. When God gives us His salvation He not only does something for us, but He changes something in us. Perhaps we have not all explored that side of things, that it is not only that we have safety and security eternally, but He has changed something in us. That is something that, under the touch of the Holy Spirit, is a wonderful power which we are to know at the present time, and indeed without which we shall not perhaps be preserved, because the outside forces are so great.

A.M. That is true. The forces around us are stronger than us, but there is One within us who is greater than he that is in the world. That involves that there is a change, there is that wrought in our souls which is entirely different and to be in the good of salvation we must be conscious of that.

D.J.W. You referred to "we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour". You realise that the things that you have in the commonwealth are so great that you will need a new body and a new condition to enjoy them to the full. We have them now, we have the earnest of it now.

A.M. Paul was caught up to the third heaven and he said that human conditions are not able to convey what he heard; he says it is just not given to people in this condition. But we will be changed to be able to understand, to be suited to that place, and yet the sense of the blessedness of what is there is our portion.

A.C.C. If we have a commonwealth, what are the resources, what is the military power, what is its policy? All this should work out to salvation should it not? That is the great object in it all that these resources of the commonwealth work for the salvation of his people.

A.M. That is very good.

BIRMINGHAM

10 January 1998

Key to initials

(Local if not otherwise stated)

D.B.Bodman; A.C.Craig, Chippenham; T.Franklin, Grimsby; P.Hazell, Preston; P.J.Herbert, Newport; A.Martin, Redbridge; J.Mitchell, Liverpool; K.Marshall, Rotherham; M.Matthews; T.Penny; Q.Poore, Swanage; R.D.Plant; G.Richards, Malvern; J.A.Turner, Chippenham; D.J.Willetts; P.J.Walkinshaw, Gillingham

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

Gordon McKay

Acts 3: 26; Galatians 3: 6-10, 13,14; Revelation 20: 5,6

I would not simply like to preach, as it were, a subject. I have a theme in my mind, but I would like to be sure that I preach the gospel, and preach Christ. He is the great theme of the glad tidings. But perhaps you have noticed that these scriptures allude to blessing, and I would like to speak to you about the blessing that is in the glad tidings. It is really in Christ. Everything that is in the glad tidings is in Christ and through Christ, through Him and through His work, through the shedding of His blood, what we were singing of: "atonement made". God has wonderful blessings under His hand and in His heart and in the preaching of the glad tidings, in the sending out of the glad tidings, He has all these blessings in His mind. I do not know what you have in your mind, whether you are interested, I suppose you are. You may have your thoughts as to what you would expect from the glad tidings, but I would like to tell you that God has very wonderful things in mind for you in them. He does not have limited thoughts as to what He wants to do. He wants to bless you according to His own heart and His own thoughts.

Some of the blessings you might think of that you would like and would covet to be in the gain of - well, they are in the glad tidings.

You might want peace of conscience, and a sense of security as to the time to come. Much is in the glad tidings, but God would bless you according to His own heart and He would like to bless you richly. He is just such a God, our Saviour God. He would love to embrace you with His love and secure you for Himself, bring His love into your heart, install Christ in your heart, the One who is installed in heaven the One that fills God's heart. He wants to find a pathway into your heart and mind and install Christ in your affections so that He is the One that you believe in, your Saviour and your Lord too because that will be for your salvation, that you should acknowledge Jesus as Lord. He desires that you should find out what a wonderful Saviour you have and what a wonderful person Jesus is, and how worthy He

is of the place that God has given Him, and Just discover the joy of having Christ; not only the benefit of His work, but that you should have Him, Himself, for yourself. One of the gospel hymns says:

I could not do without Thee

You cannot do without Jesus: you really cannot. You cannot do without Him as a Saviour, to save you from your sins and from a lost eternity, you cannot do without Him at all for your present satisfaction or whatever you wish to set forward whether it is your pathway, your circumstances, or whatever it might be, you cannot do without Him.

God has arranged things so that everything is for you in Christ. He has graciously and blessedly set forth a Man in whom is everything for your heart and affections and through whose work you can be completely cleared of guilt and sin, and your history can be dealt with. He has all these things, and now He wants to find an avenue into your heart and mind so that He might bless you and bless you according to His own thoughts, not according to your own thoughts.

Whatever your thoughts are, God has greater thoughts and He wants to bless you. But He has to find an avenue in, He has to find access to your heart. If there is access to you, to your heart and the depth of your being in the glad tidings, one of the routes that cannot be bypassed is your conscience. It is a very pointed thing. I am speaking in, I trust, appropriate terms of the blessings that God has in His heart, and what He has in mind for you. But if there is going to be this blessing that will descend on your soul, God has to find an answer in your conscience. He has to reach your conscience. It does not matter who you are or how far away you are from God or whether you have faith or not, you have a conscience, because God gave man a conscience. It is a link that He still has with man. I know that men's consciences can become seared, they can become so hardened that their consciences hardly work, as if they are shutting up that avenue, and the devil would do that, shut up even that avenue, and cut off even that link with God. But God would touch your conscience and would move your heart. He wants to turn you to Himself, He wants to affect you.

That is why I read this verse in Acts 3. The first blessing in the glad tidings is that God would turn you from your wickedness. Your wickedness? Your wickedness, turn you from your wickedness. It says that here, "turning each one of you from your wickedness". You have to turn, there has to be a turning point in your life. There has to be a moment of repentance. I say a moment, but it is a blessed point that is reached, and God would deepen it. He would reach your conscience as to your sinnership, as to your wickedness. You say, I am insulting you. I do not think so, because each one here that has come under the shelter of the blood of Christ has had to come to their own wickedness, that they themselves were sinners.

This is not an abstract thing; sin, what separates from God, is not an abstract thing. It is a real thing, it is recorded in all these sins you have committed. They are done, you cannot undo them, there they are, they stand. You can forget them, you can cover them up, you think they are lost and forgotten and never to be raised again, and yet God knows about these sins and He has provided for them, that if you turn to Christ in faith they can be covered by the blood of Jesus, there can be covering for them, and cleansing for you. Sin is a real thing. These sins that you have committed are real, and there they are until they are covered by the blood of Jesus as you have faith in your heart. Do not think that they will ever go away just by forgetting; they will be there. God requires that which is past. He will bring it up with persons who refuse the glad tidings. They will eventually face Jesus as a judge on the great white throne. All these matters will come up.

There is something else to touch your conscience, and that is that not only have you a record of sins, as we all have, but you are a sinner. You say that is the same thing. It is not really, for you have these sins recorded, but you are a sinner. Where did these sins come from? They came from you, and therefore you are a sinner. "God be merciful", says one man in scripture, "to me the sinner".

That is what you have to come to, you cannot bypass things. If there is to be an entrance into your heart and affections, your conscience has to be touched and I have to try and speak a little of

this, trusting that God will reach your conscience, if for the first time in your history; or perhaps if you have already been touched in your conscience something deeper might be done so that God might find a fuller way, Christ might find a fuller place in your heart and affections. Tell me, are you going on in sin? Are you a sinner? We know what we are as belonging to that fallen order of man, Adam's race. But then what is your course? Could you guarantee me that you will not sin tomorrow? What a thing it is that comes into your heart and mind: not only have I committed sins, but I am a sinner, and I cannot even stop. I do not have enough power to stop sinning. It speaks somewhere about the man who corrupts himself, goes on in corruption, that is he is so wicked and corrupt that he cannot stop sinning. You might say, is that me? Well you can answer the question. Is it you? Apart from the divine grace and what the gospel does, you are not only one who is marked by sin, but you are a sinner and you cannot even stop sinning. What a state to be in!

When God begins to work with you, He alerts your conscience as to this, and things that you had forgotten begin to come up in your soul and you begin to realise that this has to be settled, and I tell you it has to be settled. This matter of your sins has to be settled. You cannot bypass this. You say, I would like to receive Jesus. You can receive Jesus as your Saviour, but you cannot bypass the matter.

God is not going to bypass this matter, but thankfully we can say that He has provided a remedy. He brings up the great issue of your sins to solve it in your heart forever. It does not actually take very long. If you are honest and listen to the glad tidings. God can do it quickly, but it has to be done. Has it come up? Has this great moment in your life come up and the question of your sins and your position before God come to an issue, a point where you have to make a decision, you cannot bypass it any more? God eventually says, I am going to hold you now. Have you ever felt that in the glad tidings? Many of us have, that God would say, I am going to hold you now. You cannot get an escape, the word of God comes in and you cannot escape, you have to face up to this issue of your sins. Then as you are broken by that, there is a surrender in you, and you turn

to God and you find, even perhaps in distress of your soul, that He has brought up this question, not to condemn you but to save you, just that the whole matter should be solved. It is a blessing that God turns each one of us from our wickedness. He sent Christ to the Jews for this. This whole section is a preaching to the Jews. It says "To you first God, having raised up his servant, has sent him". That is a preaching to the Jews, but the Spirit of God through the preacher, puts in the word "first", that is that others are going to come in too. It says that in Romans, that the gospel is preached, "both to Jew first and to Greek", and so it comes to us as well. That word "first" is inserted to show that God is wide in His affections, for He has not only His earthly people in view, but He has the nations in view. He is broad in His affections and His thoughts towards men. It is embrative of them, "To you first". God would desire to embrace you, not to exclude you from His thoughts, for He wants to bring you into the blessing. Are you going to stay outside? I would say in all earnestness, Do not stay outside one blessing that God has in His heart for you, do not miss any of it. Do not be satisfied with relief from your conscience and then go away. Do not miss any of the blessings. God's heart is full towards you. But you have to make a start in this path in repentance.

So, blessing comes in "to you first". Did not Lady Powerscourt mention that there was a single letter in scripture that she was very thankful for because it let her in? It was a relief to her to find that it says in Corinthians as to the Christian calling, "there are not many wise ... not many powerful, not many high born". Her problem was that she was high-born; she said that she was very thankful for the letter M - it does not say 'not any' high born, but "not many". So you have to see that God wants to include you. He is not out to exclude you: you can exclude yourself, He wants to include you. Tell me, are you excluding yourself from any of God's blessings? Are you excluding yourself in your thoughts or in your path, or even in your committals, from any of the blessings that God has in His heart for you? He has a place for you, He has thoughts for you, thoughts that are heavenly and blessed. He will bless you in Christ, and He will

have you before Him eternally. He has thoughts for you now for your present salvation and blessing and enjoyment, and thoughts for you too that He might take you up for His testimony. He begins with this blessing, that He turns you from your wickedness, and each one who is saved is turned and experiences that great blessing. What a God! Have you ever thought this: What if God just let me go on my own path, my own will? Thank God I can say, He did not just let me go, He turned me. Have you been turned? Has the point been reached in your soul?

Where we read in Galatians there is another blessing mentioned and it is connected with Abraham, an Old Testament saint who has great influence in God's ways, because in him first the principle of the gospel was shown. It says, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness". That is an allusion to what happened in Genesis 15, that God spoke to Abraham and Abraham believed God. That was a moment in Abraham's history. No doubt faith marked him from the outset in some sense, but "not many". So you have to see that God wants to include you. He is not out to exclude you: you can exclude yourself, He wants to include you. Tell me, are you excluding yourself from any of God's blessings? Are you excluding yourself in your thoughts or in your path, or even in your committals, from any of the blessings that God has in His heart for you? He has a place for you, He has thoughts for you, thoughts that are heavenly and blessed. He will bless you in Christ, and He will have you before Him eternally. He has thoughts for you now for your present salvation and blessing and enjoyment, and thoughts for you too that He might take you up for His testimony. He begins with this blessing, that He turns you from your wickedness, and each one who is saved is turned and experiences that great blessing. What a God! Have you ever thought this: What if God just let me go on my own path, my own will? Thank God I can say, He did not just let me go, He turned me. Have you been turned? Has the point been reached in your soul?

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who has great influence in God's ways, because in him first the principle of the gospel was shown. It says, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." That is an allusion to what happened in Genesis 15, that God spoke to Abraham and Abraham believed God. That was a moment in Abraham's history. No doubt faith marked him from the outset in some sense, but the glad tidings is announced, and who receive the glad tidings; they believe in Jesus, they believe in His work, put their trust in His shed blood, and what was accomplished at Calvary: they rest in that. Have you stability in your soul, are things established in your soul? From God's point of view things are established, established in the work of Christ. He has signalled Christ by raising Him from the dead and by highly exalting Him and giving Him glory at His right hand. He has indicated to the universe His pleasure and satisfaction in Christ, and now Christ is beyond this scene. He is in heaven at the right hand of God and we can point to Him a glorious Saviour. Everything is established there at the right hand of God.

You could not think of anything more powerful than the right hand of God, and that is where Christ is and through Christ God is acting in the glad tidings to bring in stability to a soul. Have you faith? Abraham had faith. God spoke to him and he believed. Not only did he believe the glad tidings that God brought to him, but his faith was tested too, and the more Abraham was tested the more his faith came out. Features began to appear with him that show the characteristics of this line. One of the them was obedience. God spoke to him and immediately he obeyed. Another thing is that he was asked by God to take his son, his only son. God spoke to him feelingly, "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest", and he told him to sacrifice him. Abraham took him on the journey to the mount, took the wood and the knife and his son and proceeded in view of the sacrifice. He even bound his son and laid him on the wood, he even put out his hand to take the knife to slay his son.

God did not allow it. But what scripture teaches as to that is that Abraham was moving in faith. Faith is a wonderful thing in your soul. It reaches beyond everything that is natural. I am not going to try to convince you as to the glad tidings through signs; I do not believe

that what is set out in the gospel and in the Scriptures contradicts facts, or reason either, but I am not basing what I am saying on this, I am basing what I am saying on faith. When Abraham acted like that, he trusted God so much he believed that if he sacrificed his son, God would raise him from the dead. He believed in resurrection.

That is another thing in the glad tidings, not only to believe on the work of Christ and the Person of Christ, but to believe that God raised Him from the dead. Have you thought of such a Christ? We were speaking in the reading of the different aspects in which we can know Christ and His blessed features, the ways which we can know Him. In what ways do you know Him? Do you know Him as your Saviour, the One who was a sacrifice for you - your Substitute because you believe in Him, the One who bore your sins, the One who actually went into death for you and broke the power of death for you, to relieve you of the fear of death? Do you know Him as the risen One? Have you faith in a risen Christ, a living Christ, and an exalted and glorified Christ? You can know Him in different ways. It is best to seek to know Him, as we were saying in the reading, in every way. Find more out about this blessed Person in the faith of your soul. When you reach resurrection, everything is established.

That is what Scripture teaches us, solidity for your soul rests in Christ risen from the dead, His work complete and the satisfaction of God with His work, with His Person, attested by the fact that God raised Him from the dead. How could Christ have been raised from the dead by the Father if the work was incomplete? The work was done. It is not a question of works, as Galatians points out. You cannot add anything to the work of Christ. Nothing can be added.

Even your faith does not add to the work of Christ, but you just lay hold of the work of Jesus. You cannot add to it. You can try, for our natural instinct is to try to add something, something of ourselves, in some way to merit blessing. But we just have to submit in the obedience of faith, and understand the glory of the work of Christ.

How blessed this is then that there is a gospel preached. It was announced beforehand to Abraham, and there is the idea of being blessed with believing Abraham. You become one of the line

of faith and you come into blessing. There is a curse, of course. We are speaking of blessing and the Jews were very much acquainted with this thought of blessing and cursing. It is in the Old Testament.

Are you going to come in for blessing or come in for cursing? The curse is attached to the law, as Paul brings out in Galatians.

Persons like the Jews who were under the law, and bound under the law, and did not keep the law, therefore came in for a curse. "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us". He bore everything, he dealt with every situation that lay upon man. If it is a question of your sins, He shed His blood, so that your sins should be forgiven, so that God had a righteous basis to justify you. If it was a question of your state, He died and went out of sight in the grave to remove even that from the sight of God, so that you might be in God's view, not in Adam, not in a sinful order, but that He might view you as in a risen Christ, He might see you altogether differently. Indeed a believer is authorised by Scripture to reckon himself dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus, as he apprehends a risen Christ. How precious these things are! And then, if it was the law, if that was what burdened the Jewish conscience, a broken law, Christ died for that too. That was a severe thing, that the nation so blessed of God, favoured by the divine presence, and given the oracles of God, and given the law should have brought on themselves a curse. How dreadful! Christ became a curse for them on the cross. He did that! It says in the scripture, Cursed is everyone hanged upon a tree, so Jesus was hanged upon a tree, hanged on a cross, and he bore the curse of a broken law. He bore things, He bore our sins in His body on the tree. Things were dealt with in every aspect of our dreadful condition, everything that would burden and hold us down and keep us in bondage in conscience and heart, He died to remove it, to remove it eternally, to take away the guilt of your sins. Are they gone? The guilt, has it gone? Your sins gone? Without you doing anything, you just repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, and your sins are gone and you have peace in your heart. You can sleep at night, you can waken with a fresh mind and heart and conscience, because your Saviour is the same and His work is eternal and

abiding, and He is a living Saviour, and your sins have actually been dealt with. You can say with other believers that our sins were borne. He bore our sins in His body on the tree. Where are they? He bore them and they are gone. You say they called for the judgment of God - yes they did. Christ bore the judgment, He exhausted it. It has been said that all that God is He is against sin, and that was all poured out on the head of Jesus on the cross. The work has been done, and now no curse for us, but blessing.

We drank this morning of the cup of blessing. That is one of the blessings of Christianity. Those that break bread, they drink into the cup of blessing. That very experience at the Supper is an avenue into a greater sense of divine favour, and relationship too: not only the covenant love of God, and the settled relationship in that sense, but a consciousness of a relationship with Christ as His brethren, blessed heavenly and eternal relationships with Christ and with the Father. These things in God's heart are all poured out to us and as we drink into the cup, we see the origin of everything in the death of Jesus, in the pouring out of His blood, and we drink the cup of blessing. A Christian knows blessing. I do not know who else really does. How can anyone else outside Christ? A Christian is marked by blessing. According to Scripture he is so full in his soul of divine blessing, that he is himself a kind of blessing. You meet him and he does not get you down, he does not damage you, he does not depress you, he is a blessing. It is said of Abraham, that he would be a blessing, not only that through him persons would be blessed. You find too, that what marks the believer is that he blesses, because "we have been called to this, that we should inherit blessing". How precious these things are! Heaven has been opened. There is a scripture in Malachi where God says to His people in the old dispensation "Prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I open not to you the windows of the heavens, and pour you out a blessing, till there be no place for it". That is how great the blessing is. He will pour out a blessing that you could not contain. Think of heaven having windows, and these windows looking upon the earth, and God pouring a blessing out of these

windows. In Revelation 20 we have an allusion to those who have part in the first resurrection. I want to speak about this because it would give opportunity not only to add to this suggestive list of the blessings that are ours, but also an opportunity for a warnin7777g.

We have here an allusion to the first resurrection. There are two resurrections, a first resurrection and another one. There are two deaths - you may not have thought of this – but there is death as we commonly speak of it, and there is the second death. What this scripture says is, "Blessed and holy he who has part in the first resurrection". The believer is looking for the Lord Jesus to come, and He will take us out of this scene without seeing death at all.

That is what we look for and hope for and desire and believe that the Lord Jesus will come and will take us entirely out of this scene all together. On the other hand, for some of us - or who knows, for all it might be - we might be allowed to go the way of death, we believe that this is just the closing time in this dispensation of grace. But we cannot tie God down to that, we cannot say it is going to be such and such a year, or such and such a time. God has His own rights and His own thoughts, and He has extended this day of grace out over all these hundreds of years. People speak about the millennium, two thousand years, as if things must finish there. It is in God's hands.

He will lengthen the day out until He has the full result that He has in mind. We long for Christ to come, we believe we are just in the last and closing days, but we do not know exactly, because God would lengthen out the day. Where we read yesterday in Joshua, where the sun stood still, it was about a whole day. It is a bit indefinite.

That is what it is like in this dispensation, things are just a little bit indefinite as to time. God is working to His own thoughts and He is extending out this day of grace. The question might arise as to death, and as to resurrection. It says that there is a first resurrection and blessed and holy he who has part in it. These are those who die in Christ, these are believers. They have part in the first resurrection. What a comfort to our hearts when we think of believers who have gone, and relatives who have loved Christ and have been taken. What a comfort for older brethren, for any of us who might face death, that there is such a thing as the first

resurrection. We read of it yesterday, "the firstfruits, Christ; then those that are the Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor 15: 23). The persons described in this paragraph in Revelation 20 come in a little afterwards, because they go through the time of tribulation and are beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus, but then they will still have part in the first resurrection. It is a wonderful thing to have part in the first resurrection. It is described as the resurrection of life. The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were completed, and the resurrection, if you can speak of it, of the wicked dead. It is a most solemn thing, to have part in the second resurrection; it means that you are going to have part in the second death. That is a dreadful thing. The second resurrection is of those who are unbelievers. It is hardly a resurrection to life, but they are called out from death to face judgment, and the judgment that they face is described in one sense as the second death. This is the second death - the lake of fire. How solemn that is! How blessed to have part in a living company. What it is going to be, to be among those who are redeemed and are in a living company! Whether we die, or whether we are taken to be with Christ when He comes, as among the living who are changed, we will be part of the same blessed living company. Most would be persons who have come out of the first resurrection, a living company out of death. The living that remain and are changed at the time of the Lord's coming, when death is swallowed up in life will be part of a living company. Our bodies will be changed, incorruptible, and we will be living with Christ and reigning too, according to this scripture. reigning for the thousand years. How blessed it is to have this in your soul, so that you are not afraid of death. Men fear death because of what lies behind and beyond death. If death was the end they would not fear, but they know in their souls and consciences that something lies beyond, and it does.

What blessings we have, and I would urge you again, do not miss out on any of them. The scripture we read in Galatians spoke of the blessing of Abraham, and went on to something else which I would just like to finish with. It says, "that the blessing of Abraham

might come to the nations in Christ Jesus". I understand that the blessing of Abraham in its essence involves eternal life. Then it says, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith".

I should really have given greater prominence to that, but I am thankful to bring it in, because it is one of the greatest gifts that God has, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Have you the gift of the Holy Spirit, "the promise of the Spirit"? That is to make it attractive. The Lord Jesus at one point speaks about the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. It is to attract our hearts to make us understand the preciousness of what God has in His heart for us, that He would love us so much and bless us so much that He would give us the Holy Spirit. God Himself in Spirit dwells here in the saints, and we have a divine person dwelling within, the Holy Spirit. We sang too of the Holy Spirit, His guidance and love and care. He is spoken of as the Comforter. He is the power for enjoyment, for a living link with Christ. It is a very blessed thing to have the Holy Spirit. Let us not miss out any of the blessings, for His Name's sake.

BIRMINGHAM

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