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HAVING GOD IN OUR KNOWLEDGE

THE TRUE GOD

AT A BURIAL

HAVING GOD IN OUR KNOWLEDGE

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Although I read the scripture in Romans at the end, I would like to begin speaking from it, for it is a very sobering chapter. Romans is a good book to read. I remember someone telling us that we should read Romans as a book, not only in sections; it is not so long that we cannot read it as a book. It is written to the believers at Rome with a view to their being established in the truth of the gospel. It does not exactly view God's people in heaven; it views them here on the earth, and it looks at man always in his responsibility. In the first part of the book you see man as alive in sin in his responsibility, and in the latter part as working things out here on the earth where he sinned, as having been met by the God who has justified him, but always in his responsibility. These first three chapters are very powerful because they set out man's absolute ruin, something perhaps that is not accepted in the world, but which lies at the root of all the ills and the sorrows and tragedies that afflict this world in which we are - man's absolute ruin. Then chapters three to eight bring in God's remedy; in nine to eleven we see the way that God brings in through one salvation Jew and Gentile, and from chapter twelve on is Christian practice and at the end there is a little touch as to the mystery which has been hidden in God - the truth of the church, the truth of a heavenly vessel here. Yet all addressed to man in his responsibility. I hope that everyone here young and old has faced up to that, for it is essential, if we are to know anything about God's remedy, that we know first of all about man's ruin. If you want to know peace in your soul, then God has the remedy but first you must be convicted about man's ruin, your ruin. What I wanted to bring out particularly is just that one verse which shows the arrogance of man; for it says in verse 28, "according as they did not think good to have God in their knowledge".

I wanted to speak tonight simply about the importance of keeping God in our knowledge. I want it to come home to every one of us, young and old, that it is very easy for me to read these scriptures and to give a brief outline, however poor it might be - as I just tried to do - of the chapters but it is not something that is true only of the world at large or of persons who are still away from God, but the truth of these verses needs to be worked out in me. The first thing in relation to your salvation, beloved, is to believe, because everything in Christianity comes to you as you believe. You believe the presentation of God as feeling your ruin and your wretchedness, but the second important thing is not only that you believe but that you become established, and God would have us not only to believe the great truths in our heart and thereby have eternal rest and blessing, but in the power of His Holy Spirit, to become established in the place where we sinned, so that we might walk here in some way representative of Christ and have part in His testimony. Are you convinced about the ruin of man, beloved young one? As you read these chapters you see three types of man - man away from God, the gentile without any law, without any control, and in this chapter that we have read the utter vileness of man away from God. In the next chapter, you see the philosophical man, the man who feels able to judge what is right and what is wrong but who continues to practice the things that are dishonouring to God. Then at the end of chapter two, you have the man who is under the law, the Jew, who found no greater delight than to boast in the fact that he was under God's law and yet spent his life breaking it and dishonouring the One who gave it.

I began with verse 21 "knowing God they glorified him not as God." Are you doing that? There is no excuse for any one of us, as having seen the testimony of God, not to be glorifying Him. There was a point in the Old Testament after the flood, where Noah came out of the ark, where we were once told that the whole population of the earth was gathered round the altar of burnt offering. Think of that! As they came out, Noah built an altar and he presented

offerings upon it and everyone that came out of the ark was gathered around the altar. They knew God in His delivering character, they knew the way that He had brought them through the flood, through the judgment, but in this chapter, as a contrast, it says "knowing God, they glorified Him not as God". What a history, the history of man, your history! Are you convinced about your ruin? Is repentance something that marks you, beloved young one? You may have been brought up in a Christian home, you may have heard the terms of the truth over and over again, but have you known what it is to repent? Repentance gives God a place in your heart where He can operate, and it gives Him the opportunity to open up to you the light of His remedy. I cannot go into the detail of all these chapters, as you will realise, but read them for yourself, read it like a book. I recommend that to all. There are plenty of young ones here who do plenty of reading; I know that because I have been young myself. Well, read the book of Romans and then read it again and ask God to help you with the reading, to show you how God came in when the situation was hopeless, when man was away from God in whatever conditions He placed him. And into that hopeless condition without law, without reason, God came in in Jesus through His shed blood to meet the sinner's need, and by believing you are free. Is there anyone here who does not know what it is to have that powerful transaction with God? Beloved friend, I would urge you to turn to God tonight as recognising the wretchedness of what you are, and the power of sin in you, turn to God and ask Him to show you His remedy, that He has made peace for you through the blood of the cross of Jesus. Wonderful! Then chapter 8 shows that He will give you the assurance of that, because of the resurrection of Christ.

All these things enter into teaching, but you know, beloved, how easy it is for us to acknowledge these things and to be able to speak about the truth. Yet I was in the staff restaurant at work this week and in a rush - which is quite common these days - and I was half-way through my meal before I remembered that I had not given thanks for my food; and this scripture came to me, that "they thought it not well to retain God in their knowledge", and that was in a way

what I was doing. I can talk to you about the truth of all this, but how easily we get caught out in the practice of it. How simple these things are. We have been talking at work about the importance of cutting costs and how in businesses these days you do not look for one cut in cost of a thousand pounds, you look for a thousand cuts of one pound. Then I thought, as I sat there having not given thanks for my food, that is how decline comes in as well; it is not in one huge defection of a believer, it is in a thousand one pound cuts, it is in the little things; though you may know the truth of the gospel, though you know about divine things, yet you have not allowed the Holy Spirit space to work with you in the reality of them so that you become established in the truth.

It is Laodicea I think, and if I asked you what is the difference between Laodicea and the assembly at Philadelphia, the most here would say that Laodicea is Philadelphian light without Philadelphian power. Yet how easy it is to become a Laodicean. There is no mention of power in Laodicea, but as to the Philadelphian assembly it says, "because thou hast a little power and has not denied my name." I am sure that one from the Laodicean assembly could have given you a better outline of Romans than I could, and could have opened up the truth in great detail, but they did not feel enough weakness to feel the need for God's power. It is as we prove God's power in our weakness that we take on the features which are pleasurable to God. I commend that to the brethren. I would like you to think, and ask yourself in your life, whether you practically retain God in your knowledge - not in the great things of life but in the small details of day-by-day things, is something of this feature that marked man in his great decline and fall away from God - that he thought it not well to retain God in his knowledge - marking you, not through deliberateness but because your senses are not sufficiently exercised that you might be kept at the present time?

Man in his arrogance partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden. God said to him, there is one tree in Eden of which you are not to eat, and that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There was another tree in the garden,

the tree of life. God never forbade man to partake of the tree of life. I remember someone saying to us that man even in his innocence had no desire for Christ, but he partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that God had forbidden him, and he took on the matter of judging between good and evil that manifestly he was not able to bear, and the world that we see is a result of man taking that on, yet wholly incapable of making a judgment between the two. What a world we live in, a world where there is no certainty, where evil is not defined, where everything is marked by grey lines or no lines, where the professing church seeks to make its profession broader to accommodate whatever might be here, where every kind of corruption finds its place, where things which a few years ago would not have been countenanced become normal and legislated for, because man partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and furthermore then decided not retain God in his knowledge. I would ask everyone here, young and old, to be exercised about this matter in their lives, be concerned to retain God in our knowledge.

This is why I wanted to speak about these three other scriptures, not to give some illustrations of persons who did not do it and the disaster that followed, but to try to bring out from them persons who did do it and the blessing that followed. You could speak about it in Joseph's day - the butler whose dream Joseph interpreted, he went back and he was restored to his office, but it says, he did not remember Joseph, he forgot him and Joseph was left in prison. Yet a few years later, as before Pharaoh, he has to say, I remember mine offences this day. That is a sober thing to consider, that if you do not remember Him and forget Him one day, you might be brought to remember your sins. You could go to a man like Samson, a man who was greatly favoured of God, a Nazarite of God, a man who was used powerfully in relation to the enemies of God, but allowed his conduct to become so slipshod that he became careless with the precious things of God and brought about his ruin and downfall. We could say of him that he did not think it well, practically, to keep God in his knowledge. We could speak about David the king as to Bathsheba and Urijah and how David allowed

other things to blot out from his mind what was right, and how disaster followed; many other examples I am sure those here could think of. But I thought we might look at these three sections which I read with a view to thinking about persons who did retain God in their knowledge and the blessing that resulted from it.

The first is Joseph in Genesis chapter 39. Joseph was a man who retained God in his knowledge and the blessing that flowed out of it was that of preservation, not only preserved personally but preserved to become a vessel for the salvation of God's people. But the blessing I wanted to touch on was that he was preserved personally. Do you think that is a blessing, beloved? I can think of nothing more necessary at the present time in this world in which we are than that God's people are preserved. I can see it for our young people, I can see it for myself, I can see it for old people, because the enemy of your soul, the devil, is set to destroy what is for God in you. I touch briefly on this scripture about the importance and blessing of being preserved. I believe that what brought it about was a man who retained God in his knowledge. You remember the story of Joseph, how he was beloved of his father, the favourite you might say of Jacob's sons, how his brothers were envious of him. He was a man who had dreams, he had impressions of the purpose of God which brought about their anger and their hatred. He was typical of course in many ways of the Lord Jesus. But I am speaking of him as a man, and going out to his brothers while they were feeding the sheep; in their hatred they cast him into a pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites. They dipped his coat in blood and took it back to his father and said that he had been killed, a fearful, cruel thing that they did to their father. Joseph was taken by the Ishmaelites as a slave and then he was sold again by them to the Egyptians and brought into the house of Potiphar, and he prospered there. You may have thought that Joseph, who was only seventeen years old when he was sold by his brethren, had good cause to be bitter, that life had served him badly. He gets into the house of Potiphar, who was a dignitary in Egypt, and he prospered there. And then comes this temptation. I wanted just to touch upon this temptation. I do not

want to speak of Potiphar's wife just as a woman, but she represents the world in its allurements. Beloved young one, remember this, the enemy would do anything in his power to secure you away from Christ. There is something very sad about a young person brought up in a Christian household who succumbs to the allurements of the world, but how very powerful is the influence Satan exerts, and here this woman sought to ensnare him. It says somewhere that we might wake up out of the snare of the devil. A snare by its very nature is not something that you can see; you are in it before you know it. The world in its allurements is trying to snatch young people away, and none of us is very strong. There is not really one of us here who, left to ourselves, is capable of resisting what the enemy will set before us; we need help to do it. This young man, despite all his disappointments and his sorrows and the bitterness that must sometimes have touched his heart as to the way he had been treated, never let God out of his thoughts. I would just commend that to you, beloved, that you cultivate habits that involve that God is kept in your thoughts. I am referring to God in the widest sense as we spoke of it in our hymn:

My song is ever God (Hymn 228)

The whole revelation of God, the whole blessedness of Him, the way that He has come out to you and met you in your lost condition, in your sin and your hopelessness, the God who has brought in Jesus for you, the God who has provided you with His Holy Spirit, the God who has given you Christian company and blessings, who perhaps has placed you in a Christian home, who has given you a hope beyond the grave, who has opened up glory to you - that is the God I speak about. I plead with you, retain Him in your thoughts. Whatever it may be and I referred to a simple thing, as to my weakness in not giving thanks for food, those are the kinds of things - it is in the thousand small things where we are in danger, like the Hebrews, of slipping away. It is not exactly that you may say in one dramatic act that you decide to leave the Christian company you are with - some may do that I suppose - but usually the decline comes in a thousand small things, and you know as well as I do, and perhaps

some here know it very well, that you are gone in your heart long before you have left your seat. Joseph says to Potiphar's wife "neither has he withheld anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife; and how should I do this great wickedness," - you can understand that - and then he says, "and sin against God." That was his preservation and we need preserving, from the allurements the world puts before us, the allurements in business, the allurements at school - everything is put before you. How easy it is, you may say, to see the potential of young persons from Christian houses as far as this world is concerned, everything is spread before them, persons of ability, personality, all these kinds of things. I plead with you retain God in your knowledge. May the Scriptures become part of it, may the blessings that have become your portion be part of it and when the test comes may you be preserved for Christ and what is His down here.

I read the second scripture in Daniel, which is most interesting, but I thought the blessing that attended Daniel's preservation was that the glory of God was extended. You may remember the remarkable history of Daniel. He was a young man when Jerusalem was sacked by Nebuchadnezzar. The kingdom of Israel had finished earlier, but Judah remained for a little longer in Jerusalem. There came a point where it also was finished and Nebuchadnezzar took them and transported them to Babylon. And among the people he took were certain young men who were obviously very bright, very accomplished, and Daniel was one of them. They were quite young - they were called children actually; I do not know how young they were - and Daniel was promoted during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar through various interesting matters and tests to a point where Nebuchadnezzar became converted through Daniel's intercession in his skill and his wisdom. He was helped during the reign of Belshazzar, who I think was probably Nebuchadnezzar's grandson. He sees the end of the Babylonish Empire and the scripture says he continued right through to Cyrus. I think Daniel was probably about 90 years old when he died and for 60 years of that I reckon he was serving in the various high offices of the Empire

- a remarkable story because Cyrus was the one who allowed the return to Jerusalem of Zerubbabel. Daniel lived to see that. Think of a man who lived through the time that Jerusalem was taken to the time when there was a return by a remnant, and through it all he was preserved. I cannot go into the full detail of Daniel's history, but one thing we do know is that his 'song was ever God'. The enemy used his tests, the test as to the food, the test as to the worship of the golden image, and in all these things there was preservation. Now we come to the reign of Darius the Mede, just before Cyrus took over the kingdom himself and here you find Daniel still in high office, still preserved, still a man of an excellent spirit and still, after all these years praying three times a day with his windows open towards Jerusalem. Is that not fine; I present him to you as a man who retained God in his knowledge. Here the attack is upon him. It is political. Daniel never resorted to politics, but here the politicians were trying to work so that he might be destroyed, so that he might be cast out of the kingdom. These wise men came to Darius and asked him to sign a decree that any man who asked a petition of any god or man except Darius might be killed. Darius signed it and as a result Daniel's life became forfeit. There is this lovely verse, "and when he heard that the writing was signed he went into his house, and his windows being opened in his upper chamber towards Jerusalem he kneeled on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime". I think all here, beloved, are persons who would like to extend the glory of God, would like to do something, we may say, that God's glory might be extended. Often we are tested and exercised as to that, for we do not feel that we can speak very well, do not feel that our testimony is up to what it should be. As far as I know, you never read of Daniel preaching to anyone or standing up and addressing them. The only times you get his addresses are in relation to the dreams of the kings. But what you get is a man who in his life kept God in his thoughts, and his testimony was sufficient to serve, we may say, in relation to what God was doing in the soul of one man, Nebuchadnezzar, the king, and to turn the heart of this king Darius so that he speaks about the living God. Think of these men!

Nebuchadnezzar was, I suppose, one of the greatest monarchs who ever lived; "Whom he would, he slew, whom he would, he kept alive", and Daniel lived through those days. He lived through the days of Belshazzar, a man who took the vessels of the house of God and used them for his own purposes, and God came in with the fingers of a man's hand and wrote on the wall that His kingdom was finished, and the Babylonish empire ended in a day. He lived through the days of Darius the Mede. He lived in the days of Cyrus the Persian, and in all of that time, he kept God in his thoughts. I commend it to you, that if you are able to preach, thank God for that. If you are able to speak a word for Christ, how thankful we should be. If you have some measure of ability of opening up the truth, then seek God's help and His Spirit's help to be able to use it. But above all, demonstrate in your life that God is kept in your thoughts. I believe that is Daniel. Daniel had to do with these great empires - read about it, you boys and girls here, get into these Scriptures, find out what they mean. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a mighty image; the head was gold, and then part was silver, and it went down to its feet, and its feet of iron and clay. Read about how Daniel explained it to the king. This image represents the great empires, the times of the Gentiles running right on to our day. He says "thou king, Nebuchadnezzar, thou art the head of gold". We come to our day and we are in the days of the feet of the image "made of the iron and miry clay" and it says "they will not cleave." Do not look for power, do not look, we may say, for strength in government because you will find none, because we are in the days of the feet of the image. Daniel was able to understand, he was able so speak about the scope of these things, but his greatest blessing was that he kept God in his thoughts, in his life personally; each day he prayed with his windows opened towards Jerusalem. Do that, beloved. If you have not started it, start it tonight. If you do it already, keep it going. Because it has been said that one of the greatest tests of reality is continuance. How we know that! If you are real, you will continue. Let us be persons who are marked by reality, and persons who continue. Remember that the truths of Christianity are for believing; they are for admiring, they are for holding in wonder, because they

are there in the Person of Christ, but let us work out the simple truth of them in our lives, in the simpleness of our life, because that is where we will become established, for if you are not established, you are in danger of being swept away, as far as the testimony is concerned.

Circumstances had changed. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch, Darius, once he had signed the order, could not change it. There was a change of circumstance. He had become what we would call a constitutional monarch, I suppose; he could not change the law. Nebuchadnezzar could. Our circumstances have changed, have they not? Even in twenty years, thirty years, circumstances in which we live have changed dramatically. I go back to my father's days, when I was a boy, and he hardly ever went any great distance. He lived near where he worked, and where he went to the meeting. The sort of things that we do now, where we travel all over the country, and people fly to various lands to do their business, were wholly outside his concept. But the God he served is the same. I wish sometimes that the simple piety of our fathers was ours. Some of these men and women never had much money, they never had much by way of renown or knowledge, but their names are registered in heaven. Sometimes we say things are different now from what they were, things are different from what they were twenty or thirty years ago, and so they are. But the great principles that belong to God are unchanging. The circumstances are different, but let us, like David, in our own generation, serve the will of God. I just commend it to you, beloved. I do not want to labour it, but Daniel was not only preserved, but through his life the glory of God was extended. This king, Darius, wrote to all peoples and nations, "I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God". I think that is greater even than Nebuchadnezzar's commendation. Daniel goes on to Cyrus and at the end, he speaks about the seventy weeks. He goes on to the full extent of God's dealings here, on to the time of Christ's coming, on to the millennium, He talks about the things that would come in, speaks about the beast, and so on and at

the end, God says to him, "and thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days". He kept God in his thoughts. Beloved, seek grace for that. You may not be a preacher, you may not be able to take a grasp of the fulness of the truth; none of us is, but in your measure, keep God in your thoughts and allow Him to shine in your life.

Now lastly in Acts 27, I think the blessing to Paul in the shipwreck was this wonderful reference that there shall be no loss at all of life of any in the ship. He was a prisoner - we know the story - he was going to Rome for his trial. He was taken on this ship and typically it speaks about the public ruin of the professing church, about the way that in the hands of men the professing church, as represented by this ship, has gone into disarray and confusion, and finally, to wreckage and ruin. It is a powerful example of the breakdown. At the end of it, the ship broke into pieces, but it says "the prow stuck fast, but the stern was broken by the waves. Look at Christendom today, at the proud profession of it that we see all around us, and we part of it. Yet as to its substance, what can we say? Sadly it says that the stern, the back of the ship, was broken by the waves. Everywhere the wreckage was, but here it speaks about all getting safe to land. The storm was violent, they threw the cargo overboard, they cast away the ship's furniture; they had thrown out the wheat and the food and all these things and ever more desperate remedies to try and keep the ship afloat, until it says "all hope of their being saved, was taken away". The sailors, the soldiers, the ship's owner, the helmsman, all recognised that there was no hope left. There was one man of whom it had not been recorded that he had spoken for a couple of weeks - that was Paul - and he says, "the God whose I am, and whom I serve, stood by me this night". Is not that fine, beloved? Through all this wreckage, and confusion and through all the panic of the shipwreck, here is a man who could say, "the God whose I am, and whom I serve." Paul amidst it all had kept God in his knowledge. I keep saying that because that is what I want to get over, and I would ask you, in whatever circumstances, to seek help from God, whatever you do,

wherever you go, keep God in your knowledge, because you will prove it for blessing, as a preservative, that it is a testimony, and here it proves that there will be no loss at all of life. Perhaps we might apply it, sometimes, even to things among the people of God where sometimes things can get pretty confused. Keep God in your knowledge. Be preserved in His thoughts, amidst all the confusion that sometimes come in, let God and His thoughts be in your knowledge. All His thoughts and His principles are to remain there, and perhaps you will be helped, we will be helped, that all might get safe to land. What a wonderful thing if this company could be preserved until the Lord Jesus comes! What a fine thing it would be, if not because of what we say, not because of any part we might take, but because of our spirit, our demeanour what we hold precious, what we hold true, our lives became a factor in holding the people of God together, until the Lord Jesus comes!

There is another scripture, at the end of Malachi chapter three, verse sixteen, which refers to what we are speaking about, "Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another: and Jehovah observed it, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon His name, and they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure, saith Jehovah of hosts, in the day that I prepare." What a blessing that is! Four hundred years were to elapse after Malachi before there is another utterance of scripture - in Luke's gospel, when the Lord Jesus came in. But the last words, you may say, before the interregnum of four hundred years is persons who thought upon His name. "They shall be unto me a peculiar treasure," I think in the King James' translation it says, "they shall be mine, in that day when I make up my jewels." Beloved, think of God, you may say, at the end of all the time, when all is gone by, when He picks up the most precious of His things, His jewels, and he puts them together and amongst them are persons who thought upon His name. May we be encouraged, beloved, and may we be preserved, and may we seek help from God just to remember to retain God in our thoughts. For His Name's sake.

BEXLEY

24 January 1998

THE TRUE GOD

David Beveridge

John 17: 3; 1 Thessalonians 1: 8-10; 1 Kings 18: 21-24, 30-39

What was impressing me was the expression of the true God. I suppose we are in a time when there is tremendous progress in man's abilities to do things, in the way of science and the like, so much so that the powers within the hands of men are becoming exceedingly great, the powers of destruction, the power to proceed to other worlds, which is an amazing thing. How great these activities are, and no doubt we have all been impressed with them, even the advances in simple things that have been made over the last few years, how quickly they are happening. Then there are other religions that are trying to establish themselves in the world, persons following other persons or other gods, or other idols, as the Scripture speaks of them.

I think in the glad tidings it is vital that we realise that the One we are speaking about is the true God. It is amazing that Scripture uses that expression. You would think that the word "God" was sufficient, the God who created all things as we get in Genesis, "In the beginning God ..." You would think, 'Well, that is sufficient - God'. But then you get the word "true" added. I understand it is like an engineering term that the thing is true through and through. It is a different word from truth, but it says "the ... true God", and that is the One that everyone here, including myself, needs to know, the true God. There is so much that surrounds us; I suppose the world is filled with speaking, it is filled with vision and so-called progress, and in the midst of that, what is important is this verse, part of the Lord's prayer, and He says, "And this is the eternal life" - I do not propose to speak about that - "that they should know thee, the only true God". Now, friend, there are many things to be gained by way of knowledge in this world. The amount of study that people do in universities is immense, the knowledge that is waiting to be searched out is immense, but it is the knowledge of God, the true

knowledge of this God, that counts at the end of the day. I have recently been in contact with people who have had to face death, and it does not matter what kind of goods they have, how big their house is or how much money they have in the bank, they all have to go this way, and what matters is their knowledge of the true God and, as the Scripture says, "and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". What a wonderful thing the glad tidings is! It is God Himself, the true God, speaking about Himself and about His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His desire is that the hearers of the glad tidings - that would be my audience - and the speaker as well should know that God Himself, the true God; not one of the other gods in the world - and there are many, gods many and lords many - but the God, the true God whom the Lord Jesus is addressing here. He says, "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God ...". I ask every one, do you know the true God? I think most do, I think most in the room know the true God, and I trust everyone knows "Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". The true God sent Jesus Christ into the world to accomplish redemption. The world is filled with sinners. The preacher was one; you were one, dear friend. God sent His Son into such a world as that that sinners like me and you might be saved, might come into the knowledge of God, might come to know something about eternal life. I could not say much about it, but I think it is a wonderful thing that there is such a thing as eternal life. But then the thing is, do you know the true God? And do you know Jesus Christ? You might say, 'How do I know?' A brother quoted that scripture in the reading, "He that would draw nigh to God must believe that He is". If a man tried to draw near to God and did not believe that He existed, it would not be intelligent. It would not be intelligent to try and draw near to something if you did not believe it was there. So it behoves us to believe in God. The very creation speaking of something infinitely greater than you and me. As the Lord prays here, He says, "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee" I think it is deeper than knowing about something. You might know about a thing, but you need to know consciously that you are having to do with them, and I trust you have had that experience; I am sure I have had it.

Maybe some event, some circumstance has come about in your life. No-one else knew about it, but you knew that God was having to do with you. That is a very favoured experience, to be consciously aware yourself that you are having to do with God and that you are gaining some knowledge of Him.

People had knowledge of God, but then there was the question of our sins. That is what stood between us and God. In the garden, in Genesis 1, we have Adam and Eve. There would be no need to go over that story for the company here, but sin, disobedience and deception came in through the serpent, through Eve, through Adam. By the sin of the one man, a whole race of beings, men, became sinful and sinners. Sin had been there before in angels, but it came into the human race. Oh the awfulness of that! There is then the reference to God, "the voice of Jehovah Elohim, walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen 3: 8). How God sought the company of men! What a God He was, He desired to be known. God, the great God I am speaking of, the true God, desired to be known by His creature, to have communion with man, the true God. I raise that question with myself, how well do I know the true God, and "Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"? I do not want to say much more about that scripture, but I would like it to remain on every heart. Do you know God? You know about all the other things of life, the business of life, household affairs, asleep for perhaps eight hours, but the thing is in our lives to get a link with this God, to know this God and to know Jesus Christ. You need Jesus Christ. It would not be sufficient if God was known; it is necessary if the question of my sins and yours was to be met that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners - the apostle says, "of whom I am the first". Perhaps we could all say that. Do you know Jesus Christ, the One who is Saviour of the world? There is eternal life involved in knowing these persons. I trust we all know something of it.

I read in the epistle to the Thessalonians because there again it speaks about the true God, but it says there, "how ye turned to God from idols". What a thing it is to come to a turning-point in your life! We have some amongst us who have been brought up in

households where the Lord Jesus was not loved, God was not acknowledged, they lived maybe a life of corruption and so on, and then they were converted, a turning-point comes. Like the apostle Paul who was on his own pathway, killing persons or authorising persons to be killed, dragging them off to prison and so on, and then he had an experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. He came into some living experience in his life with the Lord Jesus that caused him to tum round. It says of these persons in Thessalonica that they "turned to God from idols". Oh, there are things that can come into our lives, and the thing is to turn from them to God! It says here, "ye turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God". Oh, friend, there is not thought of death. We referred to Hezekiah today; he says "the living, the living, he shall praise thee" (Isa 38: 19). The God we are speaking about is the eternal God. There is no thought of weakness or fainting or tiring with God. He is the ever-existent One. We sang of Him this morning, the unchangeable One. Everything else that surrounds us changes. If you look around at some of the aged saints, you can see the frailty of the human vessel, in these sorts of vessel the blessed God works and convicts and brings them to Christ and to a knowledge of Himself. These people of whom we read here who were young in the truth turned to God. A point came in their lives when they turned away from other things, and turned to God. The glad tidings, as it comes in in all its power would make you turn, tum to God from idols to serve a living and true God. How wonderful that is! He is a living God! There is life connected with God that is wonderful, and I would not be able to speak about it in all its greatness. It says of Paul when he spoke about the Lord Jesus that he affirmed that He is living, Jesus is living. I could not show Him to you, but He is living in glory tonight, a glorious Saviour, a living Saviour. Everything else in this scene is bounded by death. People do not live till they are two hundred or nine hundred, as they did in the Old Testament "threescore years and ten; and if, by reason of strength ..." - oh, friend how brief is the life of the human vessel, appearing as a vapour and then disappearing, but in that time there is a knowledge of God that can be acquired by sinners through believing in the glad tidings. So

these persons "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God".

Do you find your links with God are living links, or do you feel that there is something dull and not alive about them? These people turned to the living and true God, "and to await his Son from the heavens". Jesus has been here, and it would not be right to call this the word of God if we did not speak about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". He was sent into the world, came in by way of Bethlehem's manger, was found there as a babe. We read about the infants, Jesus was there as a babe. God Himself, in that form, how near He came, livingly to be alongside His creature, and there was 'a life divine below' that we sometimes sing of. What a life was the life of Jesus! If we look at any day in it - you remember the day He sat by the well, He was wearied, Jesus knew what the weariness of humanity was. Some here may know something of the weariness of humanity. Jesus knew these things, how real they were to Him. There was the descent of the Spirit and the Father's voice saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight". What delight heaven found in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was taken by wicked hands and crucified, the blessed Lord Jesus, the spotless Victim. If the question of your sins and mine was to be met, it needed a spotless victim. God cannot overlook sin. There is no point in thinking that because I have been brought up a certain way I will be all right, because I have never done anything terribly bad or wrong or evil everything will be all right. Man is born in sin in that sense and he cannot escape the penalty. He has a sinful nature in him; there are sinful acts that we commit, and each one would know in his own heart what these may be, and God would know, which is more important because it is God we have to do with about our sins. But the blessed God has provided the spotless Victim, that was the Lord Jesus. "Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". We could have looked at any feature in His life, and all that God looked for He found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything there was just as the blessed God desired it; He found it in the Lord Jesus. What words of grace came out of His mouth. He suffered

and He was crucified and He died, and His precious blood was shed. These are the facts of the gospel, and these need to be held on to in faith if you or I are to be saved. The glad tidings is preached from faith to faith, and it is with a view that those who hear might be arrested, become affected in their conscience. It has been said, 'Aim at the conscience and speak to the heart', so God through our consciences reaches us vitally in our being. God does not gloss over things. We speak to people and we sometimes gloss over things; God does not gloss over things, He addresses men as they are in all their need. We spoke of that in the reading, what a need we have if we are sinners. We need salvation, we need forgiveness, and God has these things available because He sent Jesus Christ to accomplish the work of redemption.

So, dear friend, if you have become aware under the word that you are a sinner, I can tell you tonight that you can be forgiven. You can be cleansed from your sins, not because the preacher says it, but because the precious blood of Christ has been shed. You can come under the shelter of that blood and know your sins, which perhaps trouble you and burden you, are forgiven. I wonder if many in this room have known their sins troubling them? I knew that as a boy. Things that I had done troubled me and burdened me until I got to the Lord Jesus, and there He was, because of His own work He could extend forgiveness. Oh, how wonderful a Saviour He is! Do you know Him, friend, as a Saviour? What a Person He is! He knows your history inside out. He knows more about you than the person nearest to you. He knows your very thoughts are you think them. Oh how real it is to have to do with the living God!

These people turned to God from idols, to the living and true God, the God who has no beginning and no end. That is the One we are speaking about, and we are to await His Son from the heavens. He is coming back. Jesus is coming back, and how often we mention that in our prayer meetings, the imminence of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. God sent Him once, but He is coming again, and He is coming to take those who belong to Him, "to await his Son from the heavens, who he raised from among the dead, Jesus, our

delivered from the coming wrath". What a matter was the resurrection of Jesus! Perhaps one of the cardinal points in the glad tidings is the resurrection of Jesus. That He died was a miracle. God coming into the world in the person of the Lord Jesus, going into death, who can understand that? Who could measure the distance that He went into?

Thou didst measure then sin's distance (Hymn 298)

Jesus measured it. No-one here could measure it, no-one could grasp it, no-one could measure the love of God, but we know that Jesus measured the distance and tasted the bitterness of these things. The weeds were wrapped round His head, it says prophetically, the bars of the earth closed upon Him. These words were uttered by prophets, but how they express something of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. But then He rose from among the dead. How wonderful that is! He rose from among the dead! We have recently seen another beloved sister being taken to be with the Lord. How real death is! Dear young friend, death is very real to you. You might be going on enjoying life now and indulging in things that you want to follow but death is very real, and it does not touch only older people. I am not trying to terrify anyone, I just want to bring home the reality of the fact that there is such a thing as death. But here is the One who conquered death, the Lord Jesus. He annulled death and him that had the might of death; He laid its power low by rising out of the tomb, out of the grave. What mighty power was involved in the Lord Jesus rising again! It says, "whom he raised from among the dead, Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath".

I would just like to speak about that briefly because it came up recently with us that the glad tidings always need an element of warning. It is glad tidings, certainly it is glad tidings. For sinners there is good news that the Lord Jesus has come and accomplished the work of redemption, and He has laid a basis in divine righteousness, not human righteousness but divine righteousness, whereby God can freely extend forgiveness to the sinner. What news that is, and that stands tonight, but then there is a warning, because maybe people become convicted under the sound of the

word, and then they despise it, they turn away from it, they let the time pass. Friend, God will not always plead with man. It will not always be thus. A time will come when there will no longer be the glad tidings. Let us take the warning tonight and make sure for each one of us that we have this link in faith and that we are under the shelter of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, that there are no outstanding matters on our consciences and we can be perfectly clear in the presence of the blessed God because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why I read the scripture in Kings - and I will not go into detail on it - was that it shows in a very real and tangible way the greatness of our God. It is in a different dispensation, but there was Elijah with these prophets of Baal, who would worship what we would call a statue or a monument; the scripture speaks of them as having ears and they hear not and eyes but they see not - and people - so-called intelligent people worshipped something that was stone or devised from man's imagination, and they held that to be their god, and in the midst of that there is Elijah and he tests them as to the reality of their God. He says, "And call ye on the name of your gods" - he gave them opportunity, full opportunity, to call on the name of their gods to consume this offering, and he said, "and I will call on the name of Jehovah; and the god that answers by fire, let him be God". Now, I am not going to go into the detail of it, but these people prepared their altar with the bullock and so on, and cried to their god and nothing happened. Elijah prepared the altar, and he put all that water on it. "And he said, Do it the second time ... Do it the third time ... And the water ran round about the altar and he filled the trench ... the prophet drew near: and said, Jehovah, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant ... Answer me, Jehovah, answer me, that this people may know *that thou Jehovah art God!*". I stress that he wanted them to *know* that this was Jehovah their God. And it says, "And the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt offering ... And all the people saw it, and they fell on their faces and said, Jehovah, he is God! Jehovah, he is God!". What a testimony, what

power, undeniable power! There is undeniable power in the resurrection of Jesus. People cast doubt on it, but He was seen by above five hundred persons at once, a living, blessed Man. Oh, friend, he is living tonight, a glorious Saviour, and He can be yours if you put your faith and trust in Him.

I want to leave that impression about the true God. Remember that, that He is the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Have you your trust in Him and in His finished work? Have you received the gift of the blessed Spirit? Jesus is not here now, He is not in this world. We could not find Him here corporeally. He might be found in the saints. There are wonderful features of Christ to be found in the saints which have been formed by the work of the Spirit of God. There is another divine Person, I am not saying in the world, but He is here in the hearts of believers, and as in the hearts of believers He changes them, so that if you are put beside someone who is not a believer, I would expect there to be some difference. In a believer there would be something different as having the Spirit of God indwelling. I ask everyone here, are you conscious of the fact that you have the Spirit of God indwelling your being, your body - it says our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit - and have you known His activities? You might say, Well we know that in the meeting, but then have you known that when you are away from the brethren because that is very important. The blessed Spirit as indwelling us is here to give us power to be here faithful and true to our absent One, but the One who is returning.

May the Lord bless His word and may we all be conscious of our link with the true God, the living God, and with Jesus Christ, the One whom He sent.

KIRKCALDY

3 August 1997

AT A BURIAL

Jim Lovie

Philippians 1: 3-6

Paul is very happy and buoyant as he addresses the brethren at Philippi, thanking God for his remembrance of them in his prayers. We have remembrances of our sister in her path as she went in and out amongst us, having part in the testimony of the Lord. I would just say that one thing that marked her was consistency. Paul is rejoicing in his spirit and in his affections in the preciousness of the links of love that flowed between him and the Philippian saints "from the first day until now." How consistent they were.

Then he goes on to speak about their part in the glad tidings. What a precious thing that is. He speaks about the work that God had begun in them, "that He will complete till Jesus Christ's day". The work began early with our sister, the reception of the gospel, her part with the brethren in the breaking of bread and in the testimony of our Lord - a very wonderful thing at the present time. And there is a future day, the day of glory when Christ will "be glorified in His saints and wondered at in them that have believed". Paul is speaking of what has been done in the brethren, not just for them. What God does in us is a deeper matter. What is here in testimony now will come out in display in the day of Jesus Christ. Every soul who loves that day loves to be with the Lord in His testimony, in the maintenance of His rights down here.

In Psalm 147 - "He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. He counteth the number of the stars; he giveth names to them all." God made every star. Our sister shone. She has been a star here and she will have her part in the coming day of glory with the myriads of the saints. In the meantime we should be in the enjoyment of what is eternal and unfading and what is reserved in the heavens. Our sister's part in the testimony was unseen down here but heaven took account of it. She will have her part in the coming day of glory. What is our measurement of love, love for

Christ, for the people of God, for the testimony down here? The day of display will be public - completed until the day of Jesus Christ.

James Alex Gardiner

Judges 4: 4-5; 5: 6-9, 31

When I heard that the Lord has taken our sister, this scripture came before me - about Deborah dwelling under her palm tree. Our sister moved here in victory, an overcomer. In 1 Corinthians 15 we have "thanks be to God who gives us the victory". Christians normally move in a victorious way. Deborah was reigning in life. She has been consciously saved in the power of His life. We are to move here victoriously. How much humility and lowliness is needed in this day of brokenness but every believer is to have his own palm tree and dwell there. How blessed that is, to be saved in the power of His life. We can say these things about our sister. Who knows when they will be called to go? It is the Lord's prerogative. Then "death is ours". Death becomes a servant of the Christian. Let us be related to His victory, to His triumph, which the palm trees represent.

In chapter 5, Deborah has the spirit of judgment. What a matter that is, to be able to assess things rightly with the Lord as moving in the consciousness of His risen life. Her judgment of matters is in accordance with Christ's. At the judgment seat, the Lord will give clarification as to what was in His mind in the various matters we have had to meet in the testimony. This is the judgment of a mother in Israel. The sister was in the gain of the Tree of Life. "I, Deborah arose a mother in Israel". We can say that our sister was a mother in Israel. She was quite free to express her judgment of things in a mature way. Think of the influence she was in the meeting here! "My heart is towards the governors of Israel". The spirit of doxology runs through the lives of such persons. We need to be related to heaven. "Let them that love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might".

MACDUFF

15 March 1997

At the burial of Mrs Meta Mair