

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

WEALTH

INFLUENCE

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

WEALTH

2 Corinthians 8: 9; Luke 22: 14-20; John 14: 25-27; 17: 6-8

J.McK. There was a touch, as we were gathered this morning in the service, of great wealth, an impression too as to the distinctive service of the Lord Jesus. A brother gave a word reminding us that the time of singing is come. All makes way for the distinctiveness of the leadership of Christ. What impressed me was that, as He sings, He sings in an area that is already enriched. I wondered if together we could explore that a little.

The passage in Hebrews 2, often before us, “in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises” (v 12), is preceded by the statement, “I will declare thy name to my brethren”. The Lord invests something in the saints before using the environment which He Himself creates to engage in God’s praise. These things are very great, and as we have sung, ‘In this weak mortal hour’, we need some sense that the Spirit of God is able to strengthen us for them. The Lord’s Day reading is a time for drawing out from the saints what relates to this sphere in which our real portion is. I thought we might get some impression as to how wonderful it is to have a link with Jesus. What these disciples received from Christ was tremendous. The giving of Jesus is referred to in the passages in both Luke and John. Now, the way that it has all become possible is “that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor, in order that ye by *his* poverty might be enriched”. Thus we begin every Lord’s Day with the emblems on the table, and realise the sweetness, incomparable in its character, of direct links with Him. From that comes the enrichment that enables us, poor creatures as we are, to have part in what is suited in God’s praise.

E.C.B. He has become rich again?

J.McK. That is wonderful. Through His stoop there has been the acquiring of this great wealth so that as He appears now in God’s presence, as we sometimes sing of it, ‘love’s return’, is a very wealthy thing.

E.C.B. I was thinking about “the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ”. It connects with Genesis 24 and therefore with John’s gospel - “to him has he given all that he has”, and “all that the Father has is mine”.

J.McK. God has acquired the greatest return by entrusting everything to the Man of His choice. What we reached this morning in our spirits was a universal outflow of response, and that we should have part in such a thing is all of God’s grace, and the way it has been reached is through the humanity of Jesus. The fact that He is the Creator of all things remains; the fact that He gave being to all things and they all belong to Him, all remains blessedly true. But had He not stooped into manhood’s place there would not have been this personal link with Himself, that results, not in us simply being informed about things, but being made wealthy in respect of them. One of the hymns we sang this morning expresses it well:

Yield we riches, wisdom, power

How can we, creatures of God’s hand, yield riches in relation to God Himself? I think the answer is in 2 Corinthians 8.

D.J.H. The emblems peculiarly remind us, we may say because the scripture uses the word, of His poverty - it has been translated, ‘He lived in poverty’. It was an extended matter which would touch our hearts in view of this enrichment.

J.McK. The scripture is profound - He “became poor”. He took a condition that as to its outward form had that character in the eyes of men, “The Son of Man has not where He may lay his head - foxes have holes, birds of the air roosting places”, Jesus came into a condition that as far as this world was concerned was homeless:

A houseless, homeless stranger.

D.J.H. Then it is “in order that”. That is amazing! That is what you have in mind that we should speak of today.

J.McK. I was reminded at the Supper this morning of Mr Darby’s poem, The Man of Sorrows:

Oh suited now in nature

For love's divinest ways,
To make the fallen creature
The vessel of thy praise!

That is wonderful. If the Lord Jesus had not come into manhood that would never have been possible, but He is in a nature as having become Man that is suited to the greatest things that God has in mind. To lift the fallen creature to become a vessel of God's praise.

D.J.H. That will remain eternally. We had a peculiar touch at the Supper this morning as to the stability that this brings to us, He having taken that nature, that relationship, and remaining a man, not now in poverty, but now enriched. We have a point of stability throughout eternity in relation to these riches, do we?

J.McK. They all come to us through Christ. Earlier in this epistle Paul says, "ye have been enriched in him". That is very precious - not exactly by Him, but "in him". That is the secret of all the wealth that comes to us. It is infinite as we hold it in relation to its source.

D.A.B. I am reminded of the way that Mr Evershed used to speak about the parable of the merchant and the pearl. He said, to outward appearances the man would appear to have nothing, but if you became his friend, one day he might take it out of his pocket and show you, and you would become enriched by sharing that secret with him.

J.McK. He was prepared to relinquish other things in view of it. Becoming poor was a real matter.

D.A.B. The things He gave up are in a sense not yet taken back. The world does not see His glory, but are we near enough to Him to share the secret of what He enriched Himself with in return for what He gave up? Our enrichment is in our part with Him in that way is it?

J.McK. That is right. I thought we could speak about Luke 22, the inauguration of the Supper. We sometimes dwell on the sorrow side and of course it was very real. We sang this morning:

On that same night Lord Jesus,
When all around combined

When the waves rose the Lord felt every detail of that. But I think there is a tranquillity in this immediate circle where the Lord is that relates somewhat to the time of singing. I think there was a sweetness in the link between the Lord and His own that in some sense was undisturbed and that the Supper introduced in that context is very precious.

D.A.B. Is that perhaps suggested in the interposition of 'this cup' in verse 17? The Passover did not have a cup, and it is not exactly the cup of the Supper, but it is something that comes in in between; it brings with it the idea of communion with Him, they shared it with Him. It was not the cup of the Supper which they passed among themselves, but this one they shared with Him.

J.McK. That is very interesting. The intensity of the Lord's desire is stressed, "With desire I have desired". There is emphasis on His desire to be among them indicating that He wanted to share something with them just at this point. I think this might help us about the Supper in the realisation that in its inauguration the Lord has not only enriched the little company that was gathered at that time in the city of Jerusalem but He has enriched the whole dispensation.

D.A.B. The cup of sorrow He never offered to anyone else. He asked them to watch with Him, but not to share His burden. This cup almost suggests that He would share joy with them, even in that dark setting.

J.McK. I think there was something that He wanted to realise in the enclosed area of His relations with His own before He proceeded into the wider area of His sufferings.

E.C.B. The continuance of the Supper, as far as we know ever since this time, would set us in a spirit of tranquillity. We become over-occupied with the way in which the Supper is taken here and there and amongst others, and there are things which might fairly be said in relation to that, but the Supper itself has continued like a rock.

J.McK. What marks it is the prevailing power of the Lord's love. If these waves were rising publicly there was something in the Lord's

initiative that was greater. It was the prevailing power of His love that furnished the Supper.

E.C.B. It is a great thing to contemplate “I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do”; and the Supper anticipated the completion of that work, but I was just impressed with what you are suggesting that there is, as it were, as we gather for the Supper, a focus of great steadiness in the face of everything that is around.

J.McK. I am sure it is very important to seize that, and the fact that the Lord had not yet gone into death, but He was drawing the disciples into His own state of mind as to what was before Him. There was no question as to the outcome, He would feel it. Mr. Darby says, for Him death was death, and its awfulness cannot be overstated, but there is something here that in its sweetness really gave the Lord grounds for proceeding in the initiative of love, in the strength of what He was to secure for Himself.

E.C.B. I like your expression that He would draw the disciples into His own state of mind, and I think He would do that for us.

J.McK. I am sure He would.

E.C.B. I think John 20 is on that line, “my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God” (v 17) drawing the disciples into His own state of mind.

J.McK. It would not have been the same if He had inaugurated the Supper after His death. If He had done that, to remember Him would still have been right, but it would not have related in the same way to current affection; it would, in some sense, have related to what was past, whereas this is the realisation of the immediate link and the present affection that He has and the direction in which He is moving. “This is my body which is for you”. What a precious thing! I think in giving His body and His blood in this context, He was enriching the assembly.

H.A.H. I think we had some sense of divine joy and that He comes in with a view to having us in a place where that joy is known,

not only that He brings it here, but He would have us there where it is realised in the fulness of bliss.

J.McK. We quoted this morning the Psalm which says, “blessed is the people that know the shout of joy”, and I believe in some sense these disciples must have got some impression of that. As far as they are concerned in this weak mortal hour of which we have sung, they would have been overpowered, but the initiative of love is so great that they are lifted right out of that and they see that He is actually giving them something that is intrinsically precious.

J.A.B. It says, “he placed himself at table, and the twelve apostles with him”. We prove that do we, the Lord coming in amongst us?

J.McK. We do, and how dignified and how deliberate it was. It is as if the Lord could not have proceeded without this. It is as if the circle of the saints formed the point of departure for Him in relation to the great sacrifice that He was about to make. As we were saying yesterday, His death bears upon everybody, but what happened here bears on the assembly. There is something special in the Lord’s link with His own, and to be in such an environment is a great privilege.

B.H.C. I think it is very attractive. The writer could say, “the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land”. I was thinking of what is shared and enjoyed together and of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the previous chapter you read - how that grace is still known and proved that we might share His joys.

J.McK. Paul says, “ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”. I think we gather to celebrate the Supper as knowing that grace. It is because of it that the saints are already enriched. We do not come together as completely empty vessels, but as persons who have a knowledge of Christ, and His coming among the saints releases what is there for Himself. He appropriates the whole thing in view of the service of God.

H.T.F. Grace has been spoken of as supply. I was thinking of that in the context of where you began to read. Supply from Christ must involve the wealth that you spoke of in spite of the very

circumstances of outward poverty and so on that we touched this morning.

J.McK. Who can tell the extent of what is in Him? John's gospel says "of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace". The wealth that not only has come, but is coming from Him: this is Christianity. This is why the Lord's Day is so distinctive in our experiences. The time of the Supper is wonderful. Is there anything to compare with the enjoyment of the saints as, under His influence, they engage in God's praise? The way we reach it is through the Supper.

D.A.B. Is that as true for Him as it is for us?

J.McK. His joy is something that we might speak of a little in relation to chapter 14. I think the Lord expects us, in some way, to enter into His joy. He has richly provided for ours, but I think the full confidence of love, and that is what is proper to the assembly, anticipates what is for His enjoyment.

D.A.B. I do not want to anticipate, but it gives us something to rise to if we have some sense of His own desires, "I will see you again".

J.McK. How fully He associates them with Himself. He is not simply a channel of benefit for them. What the Lord is looking for is persons who come into the current of what His mind is and are therefore responsive. It must be a great pleasure to His heart as the saints are in liberty under His touch. It is like David; he says, the musical instruments that I made. Each of the saints is of divine making; the Lord as minister of the sanctuary brings them into function with the skill of his own hand. It is really this that constitutes what is pleasurable to God.

A.A.C. In His presence we are set at liberty. He takes us up and brings us into His own mind, but He draws out what He has put there.

J.McK. I like that thought, that the Lord is actually investing in the saints, love's expenditure is very great. The giving in chapter 22

of Luke is complete. The Lord actually gave up His life. The condition of flesh and blood into which He came was terminated, but the context of it in this chapter is that 'it is for you'.

E.C.B. Does the structure of the scripture in Luke suggest that in instituting the Supper the Lord has something in mind greater than the kingdom?

J.McK. You will need to explain that please.

E.C.B. There are two references to the kingdom in relation to the Passover, and then the Lord having said all that, He turns to the Supper. I think in the occasion on the Lord's Day morning, while we have His kingdom and His throne in mind, the Lord has more in mind the intimacy of His own relations with the individuals that He has secured through His death? "A calling of me to mind", 1 Cor. 11: is individual, is it not?

J.McK. Yes. So that what you suggest is that He is drawing them into an area of abiding and affectionate relationships. The idea of His authority is something that we have known. We come together and it is the Lord's Supper. We come together as recognising kingdom truth, but the Supper is the doorway into what is greater.

E.C.B. I was wondering whether we need to arrive at the sense that the relationships are greater than the status.

J.McK. That is abundantly true. Around us we see persons who have dignity as far as title is concerned but because there is not the warmth of relationship, the whole thing becomes diminished, but where relationship is properly filled out according to God, the dignity proper to that relationship is seen.

P.F.E. In John 14 it says, "and will bring to your remembrance all the things". There is nothing left out, everything is freely available. Do you think that is right?

J.McK. I think it is: that relates to the Spirit's service. The Lord's giving is prominent and the things that belong to Him. He says, "*he*", that is the Spirit, "shall teach you all things, and will bring to your

remembrance all the things which I have said to you". Now the Spirit in this chapter comes in Christ's Name. It is very precious to think of the Spirit being here in the Name of the One we love, and His service is a complete one, so that nothing in these intimate communications between the Lord and His own is to be lost. The Spirit is equal to bringing these things forward.

K.M. The Spirit is referred to as the Comforter. Is that to make us comfortable where Christ is, where there is sweetness and tranquillity, and a sense of liberty?

J.McK. As the Comforter His prime service is to come where Christ is absent. He says, If I do not go away, the Comforter will not come. The presence of the Spirit involves what is additional. I think it links with what we are saying about enrichment, because He is another Comforter. The Lord Jesus had been amongst them as a Comforter and the Spirit was another, and His service in occupying them with Christ was very enriching. As the Lord comes amongst us, the Spirit as already here having prepared the area for Him, we can see how He appreciates what He finds. From one point of view He brings everything with Him, from another point of view He finds something in the saints that answers to His heart.

E.C.B. In the type in Genesis 24 the Spirit is familiar with everything that the Father has and everything that the Son has.

J.McK. That is confirmed by the fact that in chapter 14 it is the Father who sends the Spirit. Here we have the wealth of the divine economy operating for the enrichment of the saints. That is not too much to say, because God's inheritance is His people and unless we apprehend something of the greatness of how God views them, we shall be diminished in our apprehension of the wealth that is pouring in.

D.J.H. We get the expression, "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints". It has all come from Himself, by this route?

J.McK. Yes. Let us be enlarged in our appreciation of it, let us not be overpowered by our sense of public failure, the day of small

things, and all the things that afflict the testimony with which we are so familiar. Let us realise the greatness and wealth of what is in the inside place. The Lord's giving is enriching the saints. He has furnished the Supper for us, and He comes Himself in relation to it and that giving is extended because He continues to impart things.

D.J.H. Paul prays in Ephesians 1 as to knowing these things – “what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” - but the basis of His prayer is your faith in the Lord Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints. It seems as though we need, an expanded view of what the Lord has here and of Himself, in view of our entering into these things.

K.M. In relation to the Comforter, we sing:

Holy Comforter divine,
Fullest honour now is thine,
Godhead glory thine own sphere.

Would the Comforter have some desire to bring us into that sphere?

J.McK. He is the power for our entrance into things. The touch of Christ and the power of the Spirit is what we prove. We become vessels available under the touch of Christ, but in the power that the Spirit gives. The Lord says earlier as to the Spirit, “whom the world cannot receive”. The Spirit has not come to the world, but He has come to the assembly. We need to remind ourselves too, that His presence in the assembly is greater than His presence in us as individuals, so that there is a greater wealth proved in the collective side of our experience than if we were simply sitting at home, however committed in affection we may be.

E.C.B. In John's gospel, generally speaking, the Spirit is viewed in relation to ourselves here. The opening of a place prepared is largely through Jesus Himself.

J.McK. I think that is right and, as Mr Darby puts it, He puts us in His own place before the Father and then in the scene of testimony. What I thought we could consider in John 14 is verse 27, “I give *my*

peace to you". What a precious thing that is if we think of it as part of the Lord's enriching of the saints.

D.A.B. It was His legacy; not as the world gives. He could not leave property, but He left something that had served Him well in the scene of adversity which you might say, speaking simply, He no longer needed but they needed, and it would serve us as well as it had served Him.

J.McK. I think that, and the context of this, "not as the world gives", is very interesting. It has been said that the world gives away, that is it parts with things, you give something, you do not have it any more. But the Lord says, I am not giving like that; so in a sense He still has it, and therefore it is something that the saints share with Him.

A.A.C. I love the hymn:

Shares all it possesses with its loved co-heirs.

J.McK. So the Lord says, "I give *my* peace to you". That is the tranquillity that He knew as the man of God's choice here in dependent circumstances, drawing on His Father for everything and seeking His Father's approval in everything, and finding it.

E.C.B. Has it not been remarked that in His giving you can have it all and I can have it all, and everyone else can have it all, and it is all still there?

J.McK. That is fine! This is different from the giving of His body in Luke 22. He gave His body and that was a gift, as we have already said, involving that something was terminated; it had to be, we understand that. But this is different, this is giving where love shares all it possess with its loved co-heirs, and the wealth of the Lord's own input into this situation is remarkable and stimulating.

J.S.H. I was thinking of collective experience and what you were saying earlier about each of us having a knowledge of God. We each have something, but it is as together we are able to unite, to bring something fresh; something would have touched each one of

us through another week, some extra knowledge individually, but as we are gathered we are able to bring things which are very precious.

J.McK. And we realise, as bringing something of the sweetness of our collective links with Him and begin to realise that Christianity is a lot greater than you ever thought it was. What will heaven be? The link we have with Jesus is not confined to the scene of testimony, it is going to go right into heaven, and the sharing that we know in our spirits already is going to be extended until it fills the whole of our lives. "I give *my* peace to you".

D.A.B. It was something He had brought from another world and used in this one, but it is not to be understood simply as confined to the needs of this world is it? It is something of heaven that clearly has its application here, but we must not limit it to that setting.

J.McK. That is right. Psalm 16 would confirm that, He says, "I have a goodly heritage" (v 6). Think of what the Lord Jesus enjoyed as a man. His life was not all sorrow; He was here as glorifying the Father and what joy was in that.

D.A.B. It is the peace that slept in the boat, the peace that stayed two days in the place where He was, but that was because, in a sense, the circumstances were incidental demands upon His peace; it belonged to a plane above the circumstances.

J.McK. There was something in the Lord's link with the Father that all the opposition which came against Him could not touch. The Lord says, "I give *my* peace to you".

E.C.B. That is Matthew 11. 'In that hour Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father'. The cities had rejected Him and John the baptist had questions. In that hour, He lifted up His eyes and said, Father. "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened" (v 28).

J.McK. "And I will give you rest". The impartation of something from the Lord Jesus personally is what really gives character to the saints. Where does spiritual personality come from? Is it not here?

B.H.C. The thought of peace is found only in Him. We cannot find this peace at a distance; we cannot view it abstractly. If you give

a person something you must be near to them and the recipient must be near to the person that is giving to him. We cannot think of peace as being automatically enjoyed at a distance. It must be entirely bound up with Himself. The Lord Jesus could say, “abide in me and I in you”, reciprocal love and affection for each other.

J.McK. So that it is His peace, it is not simply the absence of disturbance. We think of that sometimes as peace and it is a very empty way of describing it. This is a rich thing, it is “*my* peace”; it involves wealth and will build something into the saints that is of Himself and therefore can be responsive to Him.

F.S.P. Those present may be viewed as apostles, disciples, or His own. I have never really been struck perhaps as much as this afternoon with, “with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you”. It is something coming from the Lord. I have never thought about it quite like that.

J.McK. We get some impression of how much He valued these men, to share the greatest things with them, and things that were personal to Himself, things that belonged to Him in a unique sense. He says, I will give it to you. There was a touch in what you said this morning in speaking to the Lord Jesus, I think you said that He was ‘more than worthy’. I think that is enrichment. We can say that He is worthy, and that it is abundantly true, but I noticed that expression, that He is ‘more than worthy’. That is an evidence that what we are saying is real amongst the saints, and that there is the release of what is spontaneous and what of itself is in character according to Christ.

We should refer to the Lord says in verse 28, “Ye have heard that I have said unto you, I go away and I am coming to you. If ye loved me ye would rejoice that I go to the Father”. What does that mean? The Lord is surely suggesting that they should appreciate what His joy is. He had joy on the earth, but the fulness of His joy was in going to the Father. He said, “If ye loved me ye would rejoice that I go to the Father”. Sorrow had filled their heart because He was going away. That is because they had been occupied with Him

and found everything in Him, but here He is saying if you love me, you would actually rejoice in this.

E.C.B. "In thy presence is fulness of joy". The counterpart of that is "thou wilt fill me with joy by thy countenance". You have a sense in those scriptures of the Lord looking at the Father and the Father looking at Jesus.

J.McK. So that the Man who sings is the Man who has returned into the presence of the Father and realised there the fulness of His own joy, and what He is doing is drawing the saints into such things as that.

D.J.H. So that chapter 13 precedes this. We do not actually get the Supper there, but you get a sense of His peace, that with all that was before Him - it says he was "about to depart out of this world to the Father" - it is at that point that He speaks of "part with me".

J.McK. In chapter 17, I thought this reference "for the words which thou hast given me I have given them, and they have received them", would link with what we are saying. This is further giving on His part and what is suggested here is capacity in the saints to receive what He gives. The source of the words is the Father, the One who is giving them to us is the Son, the Lord Jesus Himself, and what is given finds a place in the hearts of the saints. This is communication at a very high level.

E.C.B. The Lord speaks of the disciples in John 17 as beyond failure, they will need support, but they are beyond failure. You wonder how much it could be said of us that the words that the Father had given Him we had received.

J.McK. Our experience at the end of the service would link with what you are saying. Some sense comes into the soul of divine supremacy, the unreached greatness and infinitude, the majesty, of God Himself and you see that no failure can ever intrude there. But that we as creatures of God's hand should be furnished so that we can be in such an atmosphere was all traced back to the service of Christ Himself. He has enriched the saints so that the area in which He now sings is a very responsive.

E.C.B. Do you not think that in what you are saying now we should have more sense of what we have arrived at than whether we have put our feet on all the stepping-stones to get there? I think we need a bit of a sense of transcendence.

J.McK. A sense of wonderment. The detail of that we can leave to God, the concept of our blessing initially is His and He has furnished us with all that we need.

E.C.B. He says to the Father, I will that those that those thou hast given me may be with me where I am. "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee" is the wilderness, but it is not quite this.

J.McK. We referred to simplicity yesterday, and this is simplicity of a very high order. It relates to the end of Revelation where it says, "the tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev 21: 3). The reference is to the immediateness of the link between the saints and divine Persons. It does not require the trammels of orthodoxy, it is a direct link formed by God Himself and sustained in divine power so that the spirit of worship rises up within us. Mr Darby says somewhere that worship is the rest of the soul. I have pondered that. It is not a question necessarily of activity, it is the rest of the soul, and we come to it that not only has God done everything but He is everything, and you can just rest there.

D.J.H. We have often commented that there is no activity spoken of in the beginning of Revelation 21, to which you referred, "the tabernacle of God is with men". He is with them, they are His people and no activity is mentioned.

J.McK. So, what will eternity be? How shall we reach it? We shall reach it as enriched through the service of Jesus.

D.A.B. It is very beautiful how this chapter is followed - He entered into a garden, He and His disciples. It was beyond the torrent. It is almost as if all the darkness melted away, that they went into something prepared, a place which you might say was a matter of private enjoyment between Him and themselves. I wondered if

John puts that in just to leave us with some impression of what the conversation in chapter 17 had left on His spirit.

J.McK. So that the Lord's joy had become extended and it included them all. A passage in Nehemiah which has often attracted me says, "The joy of Jehovah is your strength". We have come back now into the scene of testimony. Where is our strength? Where is the real resource of the heart? The joy of Jehovah.

E.C.B. It is remarkable what the Queen of Sheba said when there was no more spirit left in her. She touches very high levels: then as if she has some sense of "in thy presence have I rapture and sit down", she says, blessed be God, and her whole heart goes out to what Solomon is in his glory. She says, "It was a true report I heard in my own land ... I gave no credit to it until mine eyes had seen, behold the half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me. Happy are thy men and happy are these thy servants who stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be Jehovah thy God who delighted in thee to set thee on His throne to be king to Jehovah thy God, because thy God loved Israel to establish them forever. Therefore did He make thee king over them to do judgment and justice". There was no more spirit in her and she says all that.

J.McK. That is fine!

LONDON

19 November 2000

Key to Initials

J.A.Burnett; D.A.Burr; E.C.Burr; B.H.Clark; A.A.Croot; P.F.Eagle;
H.T.Franklin, Grimsby; D.J.Hutson; H.A.Hutson; J.S.Hutson;
F.S.Pittman; J.McKay, Witney;
K.Marshall, Rotherham

INFLUENCE

Eric C. Burr

John 1: 40-42; 18: 15-17, 25-27; 21: 1-6, 21,22

Some impression came to me, as to these scriptures, of the way in which influence entered into the life of Peter. What our beloved brother has just spoken about is the greatest influence which is available to the believer inwardly at the present time. Not that the Spirit Himself is to be spoken of just as an influence, the Spirit is a Person and He works, His deity is characteristic of power and although He may graciously come and dwell in people like you and me, He is however, God, and the seriousness of what our brother has drawn attention to as to the possibility of hindering Him, or of quenching or of grieving Him in any other way, is to be very seriously regarded because of who He is as God. I expect everybody else is like me in this, that we do not give enough honour and place to the Holy Spirit day by day. He is to be honoured and we are to make ourselves susceptible to what He would lead us in. One thing He will do is that He will lead us to Jesus.

I was thinking about Peter and the way he comes under the influence of other men. I was struck by this because I could have read more scriptures still, to bear on the way in which Peter comes under the influence of other men. It is interesting in Genesis 24, that the servant, to speak of the literality of that scripture, will not come under the influence of Laban. Laban says stay ten days, and he says, no, send me away to my master, see v 56. He will not be susceptible to the influence of other men. But Peter is.

In the first scripture I read in chapter 1 Peter comes under very good influence. He comes under that of a man who has heard the voice of Jesus; one of the two who heard Him. His brother Andrew goes away and says what he has found and then it says, "And he led him to Jesus". What better influence than that could there be! How could we influence one another better than by leading one another to Jesus? It is always well to bear in mind the little anecdote; 'I was converted by Mr So and so, and they said, No, you

were not converted *by* him, you were converted *through* him'. Through Andrew, Peter is brought to Jesus. He is led to Jesus, He does not give any commands or dictate to him, he leads Him to Jesus. You see the power of influence in a positive way. I would hardly need to encourage the brethren to seek to be like that, to be both influential and susceptible to that kind of influence, the kind of influence that leads you to Jesus.

Much could be said about the other scriptures I have read, but in chapter 18 Peter comes under another influence – the influence of another brother, not his own brother but a man who was very close himself to the Lord Jesus. He is referred to here as 'the other disciple', but it is himself, the disciple that Jesus loved, and he has this special access because He knew the high priest. It says, "Now Simon Peter followed Jesus, and the other disciple. But that disciple was known to the high priest". He had access into a place where perhaps he himself would have been safe, but he influenced Peter. It is as if, instead of leading Peter to Jesus - of course Jesus is already in the hands of the Romans - he leads him into a place that Peter is not able to sustain. What a thing to do; and we do it innocently, we influence one another in ways in which we had the best intentions, but we lead someone else into a place that they could not sustain. I refer to this because we are susceptible to all kinds of influences. One thing I remark about this is that it was a brother. Transferring it to our day, it was another brother and Peter came under his influence and he was led into a position not only that he could not sustain, but which created a trap for him, brought into an environment where even a young girl influenced him and he was lead into circumstances where he denied Jesus. How sad! The first of the apostle, "first Peter", and here is the first of the apostles denying Jesus in front of people like this. Having done it once, he went in and warmed himself by the fire, a very nice warm comfortable influence, and having denied him once, it says again that he warmed himself. There is an influence of this kind that is pervasive. I draw attention to it because we are all susceptible to influence, but we need to be careful what influence we submit

ourselves to, even from the brethren. That was John, submitting to influence a brother which led that one into circumstances into which Peter would not have wished.

In chapter 21 Peter is the one who influences. You would have thought he would have learnt better. It says "After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples" and instead of maintaining in his mind the fact that Jesus was there alive, Peter says "I go to fish", and he took these other six people with him. His influence embraced more than half the apostles. Think of the spread of an influence like that: he influenced these others and the whole mission under that influence was abortive. The very purpose for which he had gone and influenced them failed. "I go to fish", and he spent all the night, and they toiled and they caught nothing. The influence was abortive. How was the situation remedied? Jesus stood on the shore and He took command. He did not reprove anybody or anything like that; He just took command of the situation. It is far better to let the Lord take command of the situation than to let anything else influence us, or anyone else influence us, and it draws us back to the question whether I have personal links with the Lord Jesus.

We have come not to like the word, but one thing we need is *independent* links with Christ. That is links that are not dependent on someone else's links with Him, but links of our own with the Lord Jesus. I expect everybody here knows but, beloved, nurture your independent links with the Lord. Do not give up the brethren, do not depart from them, do not diminish the value of them, but make Christ first, let Him come in and stand on the shore and take command. They were all the better for it.

Mr Lyon used to say, perhaps quote, about Peter, 'night, nakedness and nothing', and that is what it was. But when Jesus comes in there is a fire with fish laid on it and bread, and He says, "Bring of the fishes which ye have not taken" (v 10). Jesus gave them that meal. What a meal it was! But Peter is not quite clear. Jesus speaks to them, he tests Peter about do you love me, and Peter asserts that He loves the Lord. But he is still concerned about

what is going to happen to another man. There is a brotherly way in that, "Lord, and what of this man?" - there is brother - and sisterly regard for the way in which we think about one another - but Peter is not entirely free about the principle of influence in relation to somebody else, "Lord, and what of this man?" and there is hardly a more dismissive remark from Jesus than this, "what is that to thee? Follow thou me" - you follow Me yourself!

I did not want to read any more scripture but I just refer to two others. In Galatians Peter is still susceptible to influence; he has not finally learned the lesson that you must have the lesson from Jesus. How all this comes into our daily lives, into our assembly lives, into our administrative lives, all these things, it comes into them all! Peter has not yet learned the lesson of what has happened because Christ has been glorified. When some came from James and the circumcision question was raised, Peter falls to their influence. You see how hard it is to learn that you draw your influence from Christ, even when you get older. But in the end Peter comes to it, he says, "The Lord Jesus Christ has manifested to me", not the disciple whom Jesus loved, or Andrew or anybody like that. He says, the Lord Jesus Christ has manifested it to me. There He is subject to one influence and you can tell from that verse in his epistle that that is now a controlling influence in his life that the Lord Jesus Christ has manifested to me. Most of us would say, what a pity we did not recognise that earlier in our lives. Peter is about to put off his tabernacle, but he says, one thing I know now, I know what the Lord Jesus Christ has 'manifested to me'. Beloved, may we learn it early and may we learn that the Lord has given us brethren and company in order to help us and support us and strengthen us, above all He has given us the Spirit, but let us be sure that the prime influence and direction in our lives is 'from the Lord Jesus Christ as He has manifested to me', and He says to Peter, "Follow thou me", an independent bond with Christ, security. May the Lord help us!

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PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

John Strachan

Isaiah 9:6; Romans 15: 12, 13

There is only one Person to whom this verse in Isaiah could refer, that is our Lord Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son. I want to speak of Him tonight. This message from Isaiah was presented to God's earthly people, perhaps seven or eight hundred years before the Lord Jesus came. When He did come, He was refused and rejected. Now God's earthly people are waiting for the day to come when He will be recognised by them. The present time has become our opportunity, we of the nations. That is why I read that verse in Romans, "in him shall the nations hope". The door has been opened for us to come to know this wonderful Person. He was refused by His own. "He came to his own, and his own received him not" (John 1: 11); but there are persons who receive Him; there are persons who believe. The point of God going on with the preaching is that persons should believe, believe in this wonderful Person, and that the God of hope should fill such persons "with all joy and peace in believing".

I think he would do it by filling our hearts with the glory of this wonderful Person who is presented to us in this verse in Isaiah. What a Person He must be to carry these titles! No one else could carry them. You can scan the whole history of mankind. You can look at great leaders on the earth, but you could not find any one who could carry these titles. I know this will come out publicly in a day to come, when He will take up the reins of government: "the government shall be upon his shoulder". And for a thousand years He will accomplish on the earth what no one else has been able to do. Rulers are raised up and they rule for a little time, but He is going to reign for a thousand years. Just think of that! Someone who is capable of holding the whole earth in a condition of peace for a thousand years! That is the Person, our Lord Jesus Christ. So it says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given", that is, He came here amongst men, came here into the condition of humanity

as a babe. How wonderful that is! He came here, a child born, a son given, and, thank God, there are persons who recognise Him. Although He was not recognised by those He came to immediately, there were some who recognised Him and got the benefit of His incoming here.

Now, it says, "his name is called Wonderful". I just want to go over these names He is given. There is no one to compare with Him, no one: "his name is called Wonderful". Let us consider the greatness of this Person. Although He has been rejected by the people He came to, His earthly people, He has been received in heaven. He is in heaven tonight, a living glorious Man in heaven. That is who we are speaking about, His name is called Wonderful and persons have proved that. The point in the preaching of the word is that others should come to know it. If there is anyone here who has never come to realise what the Lord Jesus is as Wonderful, here is your opportunity right now. God is towards you, presenting Himself in this Person whose name is Wonderful. I wonder why He should have such a name. Because for one thing He is the Saviour of mankind, a Saviour who is available for everyone on the earth, without distinction of class or creed or social status or any other kind of distinction you like to think of. He is the Saviour of mankind, He is available for everybody because He has given Himself a ransom for all.

So God is presenting Him to men under this name Wonderful. I want to say something about how He has suffered. He has died here and the sufferings were no ordinary sufferings: His sufferings were atoning sufferings. He suffered at the hand of God, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God", 1 Peter 3: 18. He suffered on the cross. For three hours in darkness on the cross He took up the whole matter of sin and sins that stood between man and God and He dealt with it completely. He removed the whole matter from the sight of God before the universe, so that God can be righteous in coming out towards men in blessing in full and free forgiveness. What a free hand God has because of the work of Christ! And He not only suffered for our sins but He died, He delivered up His spirit.

No one else could do that. His name is Wonderful. He has done things that no one else could do. The great work of redemption He has accomplished and no one else could do it. Because of that we can have full and free forgiveness of our sins.

Is there anyone here this evening still conscious of being troubled about their sins? You can have full and free forgiveness. You can come to know this Person as your Saviour. Just think of what it means that you will be saved from eternal banishment from God. Sins keep men at a distance from God, and if men remain in their sins, it will keep them at a distance from God eternally. They are facing nothing but the judgment of God. But God has found a way by which He can forgive sinners, and have them back in His presence, and bless them according to His own thoughts; that is all through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great work of redemption gives God a basis, a platform, to come out in the fulness of His heart towards men and declare that He wants to bless men, He wants to forgive them. He wants us to enjoy the blessing of the forgiveness of sins. It is available for each one of us, available for you in this room tonight if you have never known it before. God is ready to forgive; "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared", Ps 130: 4. Now it involves that we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and come in repentance towards God. That is, you come to see that you have been a sinner and you take sides with God against yourself. What a day that is when you can take sides with God against yourself! You can see that God is for you in the fulness of His grace and you can acknowledge that you are a sinner. That is where you stand before a holy sin-hating God, but you put your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. You accept the terms that God sets out. We do not come to God on our own terms. God has set the terms, repentance towards Him and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Now persons can come into all the fulness of divine blessing that is being presented in the glad tidings.

First of all the forgiveness of sins: we must have the question of our guilt settled. So He was "delivered for our offences", Rom 4: 25. I wonder if you are conscious of that? Could you put yourself in

there and say, He was delivered for *my* offences? You may come into the blessing of the forgiveness of sins. Remember how the Lord Jesus spoke to Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7. There was a woman who was a sinner who came to Jesus in repentance, taking a very low place in His presence. Luke says, "Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee. And he says, Teacher, say it. There were two debtors of a certain creditor: one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty; but as they had nothing to pay, he forgave both of them their debt", Luke 7: 40-42. That was the attitude of the creditor. That is like God's attitude, He is ready to forgive. And the Lord said, "say, which of them therefore will love him most?" And Simon answering said, "I suppose he to whom he forgave the most", (vv 42,43). It is a great thing to be conscious of being forgiven, and whether you are a great sinner or a lesser sinner, owing five hundred denarii or fifty denarii, then to have your heart drawn out to Christ as the One through whom forgiveness has come. So you love Him because you have received forgiveness through Him. How much that woman loved Him. "Seest thou this woman?" He says. How the Lord would love to call attention to a forgiven sinner, someone who has come to take advantage of what is being presented in the gospel.

Following that He "has been raised for our justification", Rom 4: 25. There was only one Man, selected by God and raised from among the millions that lay in death at that moment when Jesus was raised. Is this not a wonderful Person that God selected out of all the millions in the graves at that moment and raised Him for our justification? So God wants us to have a place before Him that is perfectly suited to Him. Forgiven sinner, yes, but more than that, a justified believer. You are given a standing before God that is equal to the standing that Christ has. He has accomplished the work of redemption. It does not have to be repeated. So now as believers we have a standing before God, we are brought into such wondrous favour in the presence of God and can stand in His presence like Christ can. That is not going too far. That is the place that God would give us in His own presence. What tremendous favour is

available for men, and therefore we can have peace towards God. We can be conscious that everything in our history is settled before God, and we can have “peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ”, Rom 5: 1. How it magnifies this Person to us.

Through what came in by Adam, the whole race became involved in sin, and death is the penalty for sin; through one man’s disobedience the whole race was brought down; and not only through Adam’s fall, but because of our own sinnership too. Let us not forget that! Let us not blame Adam for everything! We have to be convicted in history that we have been sinners before God and the penalty for that was death. There was one Man Jesus Christ who came in here and could meet all that and bring in life for those who believe on Him. “For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man, the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous”, Rom 5: 19. So we are brought into justification of life, that is we are made to live in relation to Christ. He must be a wonderful Person indeed to set persons free from their sins and bring them into life in relation to Himself, life according to God. People talk about life in this world, but really God wants to see persons enjoying life according to His thoughts of life. So we are brought into these things through our Lord Jesus Christ. What a Person He is! Have you proved how wonderful He is in your own history? It is all right about Him in the Scriptures, but you can prove these things in the faith of your own soul, by coming to trust Him. He wants us to share in the wonderful blessings that He has made available for men.

Now, one other thing I want to speak of is the gift of the Holy Spirit. John the baptist was a great person. The Lord Jesus says of him “there is not arisen among the born of women a greater than John the baptist”, Matt. 11: 11. What a distinguished person he was and yet John says, “I indeed baptise you with water, but the mightier than I is coming ... he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”, Luke 3: 16. There is nobody else who could baptise with the Holy Spirit. Only the Lord Jesus is able to do that. He was glorified on high, but on the way to that He lay for three days and three nights in

the heart of the earth. He was buried, then He rose again, and was taken up to heaven. He was glorified and from that glorified position He gave the Holy Spirit so that persons should be set up here in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. What a gift that is! God is proposing this to men as a free gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Think of having a divine Person indwelling you. How wonderful that is! The Lord Jesus is the Person who has made that available; through the work of redemption and His glorification, those who believe can have the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is our contact with the Man who is in heaven and, in addition to that, it is power in the world to live here in a completely different way, to live here in newness of life, to live here in life and righteousness. Believers can discharge every obligation that might be theirs as believers and live in the power of that life by the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus has made that wonderful gift available, and not only is the Spirit the means for contact with Christ, but also for contact between believers down here, because "in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body", 1 Cor 12: 13. How wonderful it is that there are persons here who, on account of having individual faith in Christ and having received the Spirit, are baptised into one body and are linked with other believers. It is the same Person who has become wonderful to us, who is the means of putting us together and holding us together in contact with each other in this one glorious entity, the body of Christ.

There are many other things I could mention, but I will speak of what He is as a Counsellor. The writer of Psalm 32 spoke about the blessedness of having our sins forgiven: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (v 1). And he did not stop there: he went on to say, "I will instruct thee and teach thee the way in which thou shalt go; I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee" (v 8). How fine that is for a believer in his pathway here. The Lord would say, "I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee". Do not be like a horse or a mule that need bit or bridle for restraint. I will serve you; I will keep my eye on you and I will counsel you. He sees the pathway before you. You do not know and I do not know; but He knows. And He says, "I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee". Do you know a

Person like that, “Christ God’s power and God’s wisdom”, 1 Cor 1: 24? Oh the wonder of it, that you can have such a Person giving you counsel. You could go to the most intelligent people in the world and they might be able to give you counsel up to a point, but they could not give you counsel like this. He says to the assembly at Laodicea, “I counsel thee”, Rev 3: 18. That is really a word for the last phase of the church’s history here on earth. They were claiming that they were rich and in need for nothing, and He says, “I counsel thee to buy of me”, have a transaction with me, buy things from me that you need, gold, clothing, eye-salve, whatever it might be you need. The ability to see things you can obtain from Me. How He opened people’s eyes in the gospels! You remember the man in John 9, how He put ointment on his eyes. It may be said, humanly speaking, that is making things worse; but the man was obedient and he had his eyes opened. Then it came to the point where the Lord Jesus made Himself known to Him saying, “Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God?” (v 35). How the word must have opened his eyes to see that. It was not only natural sight, but beyond that, to see who was there, the Son of God. So it says, “And he did him homage”. “I believe”, how right that was, how fitting to do homage to such a Person! He is ready to give counsel. Do you feel you need some guidance for your pathway? The Lord Jesus is ready to be your personal Counsellor. I would encourage each one of us to take account of that. Then whatever problem may come up, whether in your everyday life, at school, at work, in going through the world as a believer, or in relation to other persons, He will have the answer. Let Him be your Counsellor, prove it for yourself!

What power there is in Him, the Mighty God! He is able to make us stand. Romans tells us that. Are you concerned about someone else? Well, his Master is able to make him stand! We were talking this afternoon about persons going to Galilee, to a despised situation, and He says, “All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth”, Matt 28: 18. So we just accept the reproach of the small situation in Galilee, knowing He has all power to see it through. He brought the worlds into being and He sustains

them all by the word of His power. Is He not able to sustain the simplest, feeblest believer? He is able to do that, He is able to strengthen and sustain us.

Father of Eternity means Father of the age. He will be seen to be that in the millennium. People talk about someone as being the father of a country and he imparts a certain direction to it. He gives a certain support to what is in the country, but you think of the Lord Jesus as the Father of the age. How fine that is! Remember how in John 21 there were a number of believers who went off on a little expedition of their own. The Lord had just been crucified and put out of the world and I suppose they were concerned about how things were going. They went off on this fishing expedition and the Lord called to them, "Children, have ye anything to eat?" (v 5). Think of the fatherly, tender care of the Lord Jesus! We often associate care with God as Father, but this is the care of the Lord Jesus for His own and He says, "Children, have ye anything to eat?" They had nothing. It was night and they had nothing to show for all their efforts. He told them where to cast their net and they did that. There was a multitude of fishes in that net and they had to draw it to the land. There were a hundred and fifty-three great fishes. Before they came there, He was there on the land, and He had a fire of coals there and fish laid on it and bread. He had everything ready for them. I suppose they were cold and tired but He had everything ready for them. That is the Lord Jesus in His fatherly concern. Think of how He will appear in millennial conditions, how perfectly He will do everything; but He is ready to do things for believers even now. So He says, "Come and dine". It was a dignified word, meaning it was not just a snack. He had everything prepared, and that is how the Lord Jesus would treat us as the Father of the age. And He had said, "Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken". How gracious of Him! He would say, Now you can contribute something to this. Through His service they were recovered to what He had provided and also were able to contribute something.

Now, finally He is the Prince of Peace. The whole scene on the earth, which has been so troubled over many, many years, He

will hold for a thousand years in peace. The Prince of Peace, what a personality He has! I think that is what the title Prince of Peace conveys, that He is personally equal to doing this. He would bring peace into the souls of believers now, "in him shall the nations hope". The God of hope is ready to fill us with all joy and peace in believing. He is able to do it through this glorious Person. He is able to establish peace in our souls in relation to God. We can have peace with God, that is one thing. And He is able to establish peace between men on earth. Think of the great distance there was between Jew and Gentile, but He broke it down and He has proclaimed the glad tidings of peace. Whatever may come in between persons on the earth, between believers on the earth, He is able to provide the answer to that. He is the Prince of Peace. It is recorded in John 20 how, on the first day of the week, the disciples were gathered and He came into the midst. What did He do? He declared peace: "Peace be to you". What an experience that was! What an experience we can have as this glorious Person comes into our midst. Then it says, "he shewed to them his hands and his side". There was the evidence of His own service to them; there was the evidence of where they were derived from, derived from His death; and He brings in peace Himself personally. How wonderful it is to be in a setting like that where you can prove the peace that comes from the Prince of Peace!

Well, this is not just intended to be a verse of scripture. It is intended to be something that is real to our souls, that we prove this Person to be as wonderful and as glorious as Isaiah is presenting Him, so that, like those here we can say, "For unto us a child is born, unto to us a son is given". May we prove the reality of it by faith in Him and by the power of the Spirit so that we come to know Him personally in this way. May the Lord bless the word!

BO'NESS

18 June 2000