

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 339

June 2001

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CHRIST EXALTED

GOD ACTING SUDDENLY

AT A BURIAL

CHRIST EXALTED

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Acts 2: 36-39; 1 Peter 3: 15; Colossians 2: 6,7

One is impressed to speak a little as to the exaltation of Christ. No doubt most have heard, all in this room have heard, of the place of glory that the Lord Jesus fills. Exalted, as it says earlier in this chapter “by the right hand of God”. And the gospel proceeds from the standpoint of the Lord Jesus Christ exalted – a wonderful consideration and it gives one joy to speak of it, that that blessed Man is exalted.

Peter in his preaching says, “this Jesus whom ye have crucified”. That is the Jesus who was here who men refused and eventually crucified, the Jesus who suffered the abandonment of God in the three hours of darkness, who completed the work under the eye of God, a holy God. That meant that God was totally satisfied with the complete judgment of evil, the judgment of sin, that Jesus would be glorified. Wonderful matter! And the preaching, as I have said, goes out in the light of that, goes out from that glorious standpoint, that there is a Man exalted, that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. That is something peculiarly attractive, I think. He has made Him both Lord and Christ.

Now what the gospel really is is an announcement of the most wonderful administration that has ever occurred in this world’s history. And that is the administration of the fulness and wealth of divine blessing that is flowing from heaven to men. It is in the hands of a Man, it is in the hands of Jesus: God has made Him both Lord and Christ. It is a wonderful thing to get that into your soul – especially if you are a believer – that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. You may say, what does it mean? Well, in my simple way to express it, it means His lordship in blessing and full blessing, not part blessing but full blessing. The full blessing involves many different blessings but it eventuates in the greatest of all blessing, and that is that God is prepared to give men the gift of the Holy

Spirit. That is the wealth of the fulness of divine administration that is flowing from a Man in heaven. As we have often been reminded in the preaching, and it is good to be reminded of it again, His first great administrative blessing was to shed forth the gift of the Holy Spirit. In fact in this very book, in this very chapter of the book, if you want to read, (you young boys and girls, if you want to read it, read it freshly), you will find that in Jerusalem, in this city where Peter was preaching, already men and women and no doubt young people were indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. They had received the tidings in the announcement of the most wonderful administration, divine administration that has ever occurred in the world's history. What an administration it is! It is full of divine wealth. It involves many other blessings.

Later on Paul in his preaching could say that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. Everything is through this Man. It is the only thing preached in the world, the only proclamation in the world that stands or is given in the light of a Man glorified. There will, for instance, be many speakings in this city today and all are centred in men down here, some refined men, some otherwise. It is all man under the bondage of sin whether he is refined or otherwise. But this word, the preaching of the glad tidings, is centred in a Man up there, in the presence of God.

Now I do not feel able to be too long, but I want to get this through to you, even if I have to labour to get it through, that the gospel is centred in a Man up there. What a thing it is that these blessings come through that Man. There is no blessing of God unless it comes through the hands of this Man. But what an administrator He is! He has pleased the Father. It says, "the Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in His hand". It has pleased the Father to put everything in the hand of Christ. And he has made Him both Lord and Christ: that is, the fulness of administration is in the hands of this blessed Man. And if you are going to be blessed it must be through Christ. Paul later on in his preaching says, "that through this man is preached unto you the remission of sins". What a preaching that is, what a blessing that is!

I trust we all know what it is to have received the forgiveness of sins through Christ, through this Man. No dignitary in this world could give you it. I do not speak disparagingly but the Pope exalted in Rome could not give you the forgiveness of your sins. Nor could the Archbishop of Canterbury or all these men who occupy places of high rank in religious circles. Not one of them could give you forgiveness of sins. But the Saviour can give it to you. The hymn says:

‘Hear Him speak the word of pardon,
Trust in Him who died,
And thy heart will lose its burden,
By His side’.

Have you ever known it? It is a wonderful blessing, to know that your sins are forgiven. How can He do it? Because He has borne them all in His own body on the tree. What a Saviour He is, what a precious Saviour He is. He is precious to me and I know persons in this room to whom He is precious. Is He precious to you?

Have you received the forgiveness of sins through Christ? Paul says, “through this man remission of sins is preached to you, and from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses”, Acts 13: 38,39. The law could never justify you. The law could condemn you; the law could prove that you are a sinner time and time again. It could never justify you, it could condemn you, but the glad tidings bears this glorious message that through Christ and in Him you can be justified, not only be forgiven, not only your sins forgiven but justified, set up in the righteousness of Christ before God Himself.

How blessed these things are! How glorious they are! They are the result of Christ occupying this great place of administration. I suppose it is seen in some type in Joseph. He became the administrator in the realm of Egypt and any blessing or anything that man could get in the way of blessing had to come through his hands. It is only a type; Joseph was like you and me, a man, but nevertheless a wonderful type of Christ. Oh to come to the fulness

of the thing! For that you must come to Christ Himself. And God has made Him both Lord and Christ. I want you young boys and girls to remember His Lordship in blessing. That is why these two titles are combined, Lord and Christ. In a coming day He will exercise judgment, for God has not only placed the administration of blessing in the Son's hand, but He has placed the administration of judgment in His hands. That will be Lordship in judgment. I do not want to speak about that. I am glad that I do not at the moment need to speak of it: I am glad I have this word of blessing to preach to you.

There was one man who received a word for another man and he says, "I have a word from God for thee". And what a solemn word it was; it was a word of judgment. But my word tonight is a blessed, glad word. It is a blessed word to tell you that the administration in all its wealth and all its bounty is in the hands of the One who has been made both Lord and Christ. What an administration that is! If you want to see the administration working out, read Romans chapter 5. You will see it there in Paul's language – through this man, through Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord. It goes on and abounds. That is the kind of blessing it is.

The foundations of the preaching were laid we might say in chapter 3 of Romans. We cannot ignore that. It says in the Psalm "he has established His foundation in the mountains of His holiness". Oh what a thing that is! To speak of those three hours of darkness, just for a moment, a solemn matter, the time when the Lord Jesus took the place before God as the sin bearer and when God judged in an unmitigated way all that was due to sin against the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of that cry: one's heart is always touched to refer to it, for He says, "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?" Who could speak of it, who could speak of it further than I am speaking of it? What a matter it was as the judgment of sin. My holy sin-hating God against the sinless One. The Lord Jesus had no sin of His own.

I was hurt very deeply, you could say, to speak very simply, possibly two or three years ago. On a side of a big building in Cumnock where I live, the large side of a house, no windows in it,

just a gable end, someone had printed on it in huge letters, 'Christ died for His own sins'. I felt that keenly, that someone had the audacity, the complete lack of conscience to paint that on a wall in large letters. I looked at it for some time and I spoke to the Lord Jesus: I said No, Lord, that is not true, you died for my sins. That is the truth, Christ died for your sins, and He died for my sins. Peter says, "He bore our sins in his body on the tree". What a thing that is, one's heart is always touched as speaking of it. But what a thing it is that Christ died for you, the One who had no sin of His own. "He who did not sin", He knew not sin, in Him sin was not. Pure, spotless, holy Lamb of God. The hymn says:

Lamb of God for sinners wounded,
Sacrifice to cancel guilt.

What a Saviour He is! He and only He could speak the word of pardon. I love that sight in Luke 7 with that woman. He says, "Thy faith has saved thee, go in peace". That is the Saviour speaking. Only He could have spoken those words. And He is prepared to speak them to you tonight. If you have never heard Him speaking before, come to Him repentantly and acknowledge your need of a Saviour and find that He is ready to speak to you the word of pardon. What a thing it is to find your burden rolled away. Have you not felt it? I can remember a time and others can tell you of their time too, when the burden grew very, very heavy: it increased day by day, and I used to put my head in the pillow at night and there it was again. What a joy it was to find that the burden rolled away, and why did it roll away? because my sins were forgiven for His Name's sake, the sake of the Saviour. What a great matter it is, the great matter of justification. Some say 'just as if you have never sinned'. But that is not good enough. It implies innocence, as if you have never sinned at all. But you have sinned. The great truth of justification is that you are set up before God in the righteousness of Christ, accepted in another Man. God is looking at Christ instead of looking at you in all your sins. Are you there in Christ before God? In Mr Darby's translation, you will find where I have quoted in Acts 13 that it is, "In him every one that believes is justified", not merely *by* Him but *in*

Him you are justified from all things. That is, you have a standing before God in righteousness.

There are many other blessings. There is the great blessing of reconciliation, that where you were at the distance of a sinner, and the distance that sin had brought in, away from God – it speaks of here to those who are afar off – but then *through* the work of Christ reconciled to God through the death of His Son. Where there was distance there is now nearness. That is a peculiar kind of nearness, not just as you are near me and I to you tonight, but a peculiar kind of nearness. You say, What do you mean? It means that you are detained before God for His pleasure. You say, that is teaching; well it is wonderful teaching. It is holy experience, that you are so near to God, but are near to God for His pleasure. Instead of God taking account of a sinner in his sins, He looks at persons who are justified and reconciled. They are brought near to God and they are there for God's pleasure. God can find delight in such. How glorious the work of Christ is, how complete the work of Christ is!

There are many other blessings we could speak of – the blessing of sonship. Paul speaking of Christians says, "Ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus". Think of being a son of God! Think of being brought into the blessing of sonship! It is all part of this wonderful, bounteous, divine administration that is coming through the hands of Christ exalted. Again, you are a son not only for your own delight, you are a son for the Father's delight. As we have often been reminded and often enjoyed, sonship is for God. It is a wonderful blessing. In some sense it is the highest blessing for man, that God should look on you as a son. But you are a son for God's pleasure, to give the heart of God delight.

Finally as we have seen in this chapter, the greatest blessing is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The first touch I got in my soul in a definite way as to the reality of the indwelling Spirit was in Edinburgh. I was there for meetings and Mr Taylor was serving. I was nineteen at the time and I had the Holy Spirit but it had never come into my soul with definite reality what it meant to have the Holy Spirit. During one of these meetings he began to speak of the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and of the rightness of raising the question in the preaching as to whether souls had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Well, have you? Have you received the gift of the Holy Spirit? You say, I have been breaking bread for a long time now. Yes, but that is not what I asked you. I asked have you received the gift of the Holy Spirit since you believed? I got such a touch in my soul was almost tangible. I had a definite touch as to the glory of the matter, to be actually possessed of the Holy Spirit of God. Between the meetings another young brother and I used to have a walk and a man says, What are you boys doing in Edinburgh, you have been here the last couple of days? We said, We have been in the hall up there for meetings with Christians. Oh, he says, that is interesting; I am a believer. I said to him, That is interesting; have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? He said, I am not that kind of believer; I am a rationalist believer. It found the man out, he was a materialist, he believed in the facts of the gospel in a certain sense but he had no sense of the blessing of them.

Dear young friend, my simple word tonight is that I want you to come into the blessing of the glad tidings, to know your sins forgiven, to know you are justified, to know you are reconciled to God, to know you are a son of God and to know in your soul, in your heart, that you are a possessor of the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful blessing it is! No wonder the Lord in John 4 says, "It shall become in him a fountain of living water springing up into eternal life". It is a wonderful blessing. This is a wonderful administration. There is nothing like it, but friend, are you in it? Oh you say, I would like to know the way. That is what these people wanted to know. What shall we do, they say? Not what shall we do for our salvation; you could do nothing for your salvation, the Saviour has done it all. But you can find your way into the blessing – repent and be baptised, each one of you for the remission of sins. Repent - is it not a wonderful thing to be in the time when you are allowed to repent? God will close the door of repentance. But the door is wide open. There is not a man nor a woman nor a boy in this world who cannot repent today, because God has the door wide open. It is open for

people to repent: it is open for you. You may have got out of the way, you may have got into a bit of trouble, but I can tell you that the way for you to take tonight is the way of repentance. That is the word, Repent. It was a definite word, repent. Repent while you are allowed to do it, repent. As I say, the day will come when the door will be shut, and people will not get in. They will knock at the door and there will be a voice from the inside saying, Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, I do not know you. They will not be allowed to repent then. The day of apostasy is near and the door of repentance will be closed. But, friend, it is open. Take full advantage of it. I appeal to you to take full advantage of it. It is the way into this blessing. Repent and be baptised. You may say, I was baptised when I was a baby. That is true. The people who were addressed here were Jews that were coming into Christianity and they needed to change their ground, they needed to take up a new moral stand. Baptism was the way in that sense for them. But it was all towards the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I commend this word to you; it is a very simple word. I just wanted to add two or three more thoughts in the other scriptures I read.

Peter says, "Sanctify the Lord the Christ in your heart". God wants to give you a part in the system of Christianity. It is an anointed system. You might not understand that, but it is divinely anointed. It is a dignified system; it does not bear the stamp of a particular kind of man of this world, even though he is a refined man, even though he might have the greatest education in this world. Christianity does not bear the stamp of that kind of man. It bears a divine stamp. It is an anointed system; it is anointed with the Holy Spirit. God would love you to have part in that. But you will find that, when anointing takes place anywhere in the scripture, always Satan attacks it. He has attacked the anointed system today, and he is attacking you to keep you out of the anointed system. Maybe you once had your part in it. Maybe you have lost your part in it and Satan attacks you to keep you out of it.

When David was anointed, as you will find in 2 Samuel 5, the Philistines began to attack immediately. If you read Psalm 2 you will find that when God has His anointed there is an attack. That is what Satan is doing today. Even the Lord Jesus, when He was anointed, very soon was carried of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The devil is seeking to undermine and erode the working of the anointed system, and to destroy your part in it. How can you secure it? Sanctify the Lord the Christ in your heart. The safeguard is in there beloved brethren. It says, "Keep your heart more than anything that is guarded for out of it are the issues of life". We are speaking of something that involves the issues of life. Outside of that there is nothing but moral death. Down, down, down, that is how it goes. I have seen it in persons; I have seen it in persons who are believers. They get a little away and a little further away and a little further away until they are in the grip of Satan. It is a sad thing; I would say to you sanctify the Lord the Christ in your heart. It is a word for you, a word for me. But is a word in affection, a word of appeal. Do you know anything greater than to have part in an anointed system? Are you really in it or are you out of it? Friend, sanctify the Lord the Christ in your heart. What does it mean? It means that He has the chief place in your affection. It is pure area, sanctified, and sanctified no doubt by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God. It is one of the great operations of the Holy Spirit, to bring you to purity, purity of affection for Christ.

My simple appeal to you is, "Sanctify the Lord the Christ in you heart". Then finally, as you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him. That is that love for Christ, and the very fact that you have received Christ, means you have to walk a different way. Your way becomes regulated, not because of some kind of law that you are under or some kind of arbitrary rule, but your steps become regulated because you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord. Think of walking that way. We have all known people who have walked that way. One would delight to be among them in these days. You can take account of my walk; no doubt Paul would speak of it as newness of life. You no longer walk the way you once

walked but you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, and then you walk in Him. Your steps are covered by Him. In a simple way the test for everything would be, What would Jesus think of this? What does it mean for me to walk in such a way as having received Christ Jesus the Lord? I think you become simple; you can test a person out by that simple test. I trust that God will bless the word and that there will be fruit for God from the word, for His Name's sake, Amen.

EDINBURGH

13 August 2000

GOD ACTING SUDDENLY

Paul Martin

Luke 2: 10-14; Acts 2: 1-4, 9: 1-9; 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58

I expect everyone here, and not only everyone here but everyone in Sunbury, has been affected this past week by the fact that things happen suddenly. The people boarded that Concorde flight, said goodbye to their families; they thought that in three or four hours they would arrive safely. Things happened suddenly, and things do happen suddenly. You cannot say that God made that plane crash, but He allowed it. He did not make it; He allowed it happen. There are things that happen in the lives of men in which God speaks. He allows them to happen in order that He might speak to men. It may be that He has spoken to somebody here through it. I think He has spoken to me through it. God can do that.

But I have read these passages because there are things that God does suddenly. He does not do them for the destruction of men. That is not the God that we preach in the gospel. God does everything for the blessing of men. That is the present dispensation. God's attitude is one of blessing. He has your blessing in mind, dear friend. You say, why should He do this, why should He allow that? Why should so-and-so happen? It happens because He has your blessing in view. It happens not only for your blessing but the blessing of men. He has in view that you should come to know Him and know the heart that lies behind all that He has done Himself. What comes out in these passages is that the blessed God was moving. He is moving in relation to men. Think of the wonder of that! Before the creation, God was there, before there was time, before there was a heaven and an earth, God was there. I marvel as I think of that One so great, self-existent, needing nothing - Paul says in this book of the Acts, "Himself needing nothing, giving to all life and breath" - one so great as that found an interest in me and should have found an interest in you. Why should that be? We may touch something of it as we go through these scriptures that we have read.

When the Lord Jesus came into this scene, think of all that had taken place before! God had been waiting for four thousand years upon men. Is that not a long time? It is a long time. Has God got that patience in relation to His creature? Yes. The blessed God has patience in relation to His creature. Why? Because He wanted to make known His heart. He wanted to make His love known to men. He wanted you, however young or old you are today. He wanted you to come to know His love, to know that He loves you. You could say that to every person, every man, woman and child, that God loves them. I do not think you can say it of animals but you can say it of men. The kindness and love to men of our Saviour God appeared; it came to men. Oh the wonder of it! God's love is towards man. He made the animals and He saw what they were like and it says that they were very good: but they never called out His affections; as man called out His affections. His kindness and love to men has appeared. How distinctive man is in God's sight!

You may be very young, you may be very old, and you may think you are not worth anything, but you are valuable to God. You are very valuable, so valuable that He sent His own Son into the very world in which we are. The Lord Jesus came into this world. He walked in the streets; not these streets in Sunbury, He came into the streets in Nazareth. He walked those streets. He grew up as a boy. What a wonderful thing that men saw Him growing up and they wondered at Him. There was something there in the Lord Jesus that they had never seen before. When He was four years old and when He was six years old and when He was eight years old and when He was twelve years old there was something in the person of the Lord Jesus that they had never seen before. It says that when He was twelve they wondered at Him. Oh who was here, who was here? None less than the blessed God Himself in the person of Jesus, come so near to the creature that He might win the heart of the creature and hold it for God. Oh what a Man!

This passage that we have read in Luke 2 speaks of the angels speaking to the shepherds. It says, "This is a sign to you". It says, "Today a Saviour has been born to you in David's city who is

Christ the Lord". When the Lord Jesus came in after four thousand years of God dealing with mankind, men were living here. What hope had they? What were they looking forward to? What did they expect? Israel was under Roman rule. The Roman Empire was spreading itself throughout the known earth. But what hope had man? There was no hope until Jesus came. The godly remnant of Israel looked on to this. What a moment! Into that very scene of darkness, into the very scene of illness and sickness and death, came the Son of God. What a moment - coming into the very world, (we touched on it a little this morning), He had made Himself. The hymn writer says:

Came to the world His hands had made
And stooped to take the sinners place.

Oh the wonder of it, that the One who is not less than the glorious Son of God should come to the very scene He had made Himself. Come into the world, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That is why He came; He came to save sinners. The angel was saying to these men, a Saviour has been born. What light for man! I can tell you tonight that there is light for you. If you have never come to know Him there is light for you. A Saviour has come into the world. Oh what a moment! A Saviour who is available to you has come right near to you. Paul says, "the word is near thee ... in thy mouth ... the word of faith, which we preach". Oh how close the word has come in the Person of Jesus. A Saviour has come. It says, while the angel was saying this, suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. Think of that! He came in: there was no room for Him in the inn. Men said as to Jesus right from the moment He came into this scene that they would not have that Man, there was no room for Him in the inn. The angelic host, the heavenly host, acclaimed Him with glory as He came in.

Dear friend, the world has rejected Christ. If the Lord Jesus had not been rejected there would not be the preaching as it is today. He would be here Himself. The Lord Jesus has been rejected and the preaching goes out in grace. But here the angelic host, the

heavenly host, were praising God with singing. What a moment! The whole of heaven was stirred when Jesus came, because of the One who was lying there in a manger, coming in as the Saviour of the world, great enough to be the Saviour of the world. John, looking at Jesus as He walked says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". Think of the volume of sin that had come into the world. By one man sin came into the world and by sin death and thus death passed upon all men. It comes to you, dear friend, and it comes to me. It may come fast and it may come slow but it comes. It is the portion of all once to die and after death the judgment.

But Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He came in that you and I may never taste the judgment. He came in and not only lived here in perfection. The perfect life of Christ showed man what He was as away from God but He came in to take upon Himself all that was due to me according to the judgment of God and He took it upon Himself in love. What a wondrous person the Lord Jesus is! Not only were the heavenly host stirred but think of the fact that the One who was here was moving onward to the cross. He came in for this. He says to Pilate, "For this have I come into the world that I might bear witness to the truth". He came in to bear witness to all that was in the heart of God for you. He did that and He did it in perfection. Oh the wonder that man should know what was in the heart of the blessed God and be held by it, not repelled by it but held by it, in the presence of One who was no less than God, but here as a blessed Man, found here as a lowly Man, moving through this scene through which we are passing. He went onward to the cross. If He was to be the Saviour of the world it did not mean only that He should come into manhood but it meant that He should stoop into death. What a stoop that was! I wonder if you have ever contemplated it, that the Lord Jesus Himself, the One who is so great and glorious in His Person, yet as Man should stoop into death, should go that way, should Himself be the subject of the ridicule and hatred of men. Men hated the Lord Jesus. It was not just that they ignored Him but they hated Him. He says that in the

prophetic writings, "They hated me without a cause". He never gave man a single cause to hate Him. He had never done anything against man. He had done everything for the blessing of men. He says, "They hated me without a cause". What was He going to do? He said, "I could call for twelve legions of angels". Was He going to call for so many angels to remove the whole of mankind? Was He going to do that? He could have done. I think the Roman Empire had twelve legions of soldiers in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus said He could call for twelve legions of angels. One angel could remove the whole of the Roman Empire. He had the power to do it. If the Lord Jesus had done that where would you and I be? What gospel would you and I have heard? The gospel of judgment.

Thank God we are not preaching a gospel of judgment. Judgment is God's strange work. Men say, I do not understand how you believe in Christianity because God is a judge. Dear friend, it is His strange work. He will execute judgment later. But He will execute it on those who have judged in themselves to reject the Saviour. He will execute judgment upon such. But God's judgment is His strange work. He is towards man in blessing. Man could have been removed from this scene before the Lord Jesus went to the cross. Oh the wonder of it, that the One who went to the cross and suffered at the hands of man was the same blessed Person who could say, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do". Have you ever contemplated why it was that He should do that? Why was it that He should say that of those Roman soldiers and of the Jewish rabble? They hung round the cross in their hatred for Him. Why should He say of them, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do"? Was it something in their heart that was worth the forgiveness? Was it something in mine? Nothing, it was everything that was in His that caused Him to say, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do". What a cry! It says in the book of Joshua in the Old Testament; "There was no day like it, from that day to this, when Jehovah hearkened to the voice of a man". God has hearkened and He is hearkening tonight to the voice of a Man. He is holding the whole world tonight in provisional

reconciliation because of the work that has been done on the cross, because of that cry that had been uttered from the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do". The Father has hearkened to that and He is hearkening to it today. He is holding the whole world in the light of what Jesus has done. And He is doing it in view of your coming into the blessing of what the Lord Jesus has affected in His dying on the cross.

What has He affected? Has the Lord Jesus done anything for you? I ask you that. You may be young, you may be old. Has the Lord Jesus done anything for you? You say, He has done a work. Yes, but has He done it *for you*? Did the Lord Jesus die *for you*?

Did the Lord Jesus shed His precious blood *for you*? You can answer that. I can answer it, thank God. I can say, Yes it was for me. I have put my faith in that precious blood, not because I am any better than anyone else but because the grace and kindness of God has stirred my heart to lay hold in faith and accept the blessed Saviour when I could do nothing for myself, and to lay hold of the One who has done it all, removed all that stood against me, all that would have caused the judgment upon myself, and laid hold of the One who bore the judgment for me. Oh, blessed Saviour, hanging there upon the cross, bearing God's judgment for me and bearing it in order that I might know what it is to have a place with Him, not upon the cross in judgment but in the scene of glory where He now is. Oh how wondrous! He bore my place on the cross that I might share His place where He is in heavenly glory. And He has nothing less in His heart for you, for every man, that you and all might share the place that He has in scene of His own exaltation.

What a man! Think of the wonder of it, that God came into the scene that had gone on for four thousand years. He came in suddenly: it says, "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host". You can understand the heavenly host rejoicing in the One who came in who was going to secure everything for God and bring in for man eternal blessing. Dear friend, there is eternal blessing, eternal salvation in Christ. Not saved today and lost tomorrow. That is impossible if you put your faith in that blessed

Person. I might lose the joy of my salvation or the joy of communion with the Saviour, but the work that He has done and the Person who has done it will remain eternally whatever my feelings are. They will never alter God's feelings as to Christ. It says in Philippians 2, "Wherefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory". I ask you tonight have you bowed the knee to Jesus?

You say, I have been brought up and my parents took me to the meetings: mine did too and I shall never cease to thank God. My parents brought me up, my mother prayed with me from before I could even remember and they brought me to the meetings and I sat under the sound of the gospel. But there is a moment in your life when you have to come to it yourself that you cannot stand on your parents' faith. I would appeal to you tonight. The Lord Jesus came into the world. He came in to save you, that you might stand on your own faith in Jesus, have faith in Him and in His precious work and prove the attractiveness and the beauty of the Man who has been into death, has broken its power and come out of it victorious, and He is there at the right hand of God to be a Saviour.

I read from Acts 2 because not only is Jesus glorified but also the Holy Spirit is here. He has come to the very scene where the Lord Jesus had been. How wondrous that is! It says, "The day of Pentecost was accomplishing and they were all together in one place". They could do that in that day, all the believers were together in one place. Thank God for the spread of the glad tidings and the spirit of believers who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus. But at that time they were all together in one place. It says, "There came suddenly a sound out of heaven". The Spirit of God has come from heaven. He has come from the Lord Jesus, from the presence of the Lord Jesus. He has come forth from with the Father. Think of the wonder of that, that the Lord Jesus was received up in glory, made Lord and Christ. Oh what a place He is worthy of! Every true lover would say that He is worthy of the place that has been given to Him,

worthy of the honour that has been given to Him. It says God has given Him glory and honour. How worthy He is of it. Man sought to humiliate Him, to dishonour Him. God has answered to it by giving Him glory and honour. Oh the wonder of it! There has never been more honour heaped upon the head of any man. There could be no more honour heaped upon the head of a man than has been heaped upon the head of Jesus, and He is worthy of it all. He can bear it with dignity and with affection. It does not make Him at a distance. Persons in this world are honoured: they are removed to a distance. They are on a different social stratum from the rest of mankind. The Lord Jesus has been given glory and honour. He is as available to the man lying in the gutter in Calcutta as He is to the king in the highest kingdom of the world. What a Man! He is available to them and he is available to you.

He is there at the Father's right hand and the Holy Spirit has come from the place where Jesus has gone. I love to think of that. It was not that the Spirit came to believers before Jesus was glorified. No, it had to be that the Holy Spirit came once the Lord Jesus was glorified. Oh the glory of it, the Spirit of God bringing first hand with Himself the greatness, not only the report but the feelings and the atmosphere and the affections of all that was proceeding in heaven between the Father and the Son, bringing that into the very scene where those who had put their faith in the Lord Jesus were assembled. They were together, it says, in one place. Suddenly there came a sound as of a violent impetuous blowing that filled all the house where they had assembled. Think of the distinctiveness of the presence of the Holy Spirit. We have often spoken of this. The Holy Spirit has come from a glorified Christ. There has been witness that the Spirit has come from a glorified Christ. There has been witness that the Spirit has come. There was witness that the Saviour came, in the angelic hosts praising God. There has been witness publicly that the Spirit has come in the sound of the violent impetuous blowing and with men speaking with tongues. Think of the wonder that men were able to speak. It says, There appeared to them parted tongues of fire sat upon each of them and they were all

filled with the Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth. We are not on the day of the speaking with tongues but this was the inauguration of this dispensation, the Spirit's day. There was a public witness that the Spirit of God had come. God gave a testimony to the world that there was a divine Person here. And He is here still, a divine Person, the Holy Spirit.

I would like to ask you and to ask myself, how well do I know Him? He has come. The earth rejected the Saviour, they were gathered together (we read of it earlier in the day in John 20), the door shut and the whole of the world's system kept out. And then after forty days they are still gathered together in one place and the Spirit comes. How well do you know Him? Is the Spirit just doctrine to you - I ask myself this question - is it just on the page of scripture or do I know Him? He is more than a power and an influence, he is powerful. He is influential but He is a Person, He has come to occupy you and me and to fill the heart of the church. He has come to fill the heart of the church and those that comprise it with the glory and affections of the love of Christ. And He would have a place in your affections. Is He not worthy? He is giving power to men, women and children to move through this world in the light and dignity of a heavenly calling, linking them with a Man in the glory, causing that the love of that Man should fill their hearts. He is causing that it should be so. You can understand that immediately the Lord Jesus was received into glory – I say immediately – that suddenly and consequent upon that the Holy Spirit should come. Suddenly He came. And He is come. He will be here until the Lord comes to take His own, and then the Spirit will go. He will leave this scene when the church leaves this scene. But He is here at the moment, and my exercise in reading this was to raise the question with myself and perhaps with someone else as to how well do I know Him, this divine Person who is so great, so glorious, equal in Godhead glory with the Father and the Son, and yet come to take up His abode with us, to have a place in your affections and in mine that

you and I might be here as fruit-bearers responsive to God, attached and united to the Man in the glory.

I come to Acts 9, because Paul was journeying. You see how God works. The Spirit came suddenly. Here is Paul going about his business in hatred and opposition to the Lord Jesus. And it says, "Suddenly there was a light out of heaven". What happened to Saul of Tarsus was distinctive to him. The Lord Jesus entered into the life of that man. Has the Lord Jesus ever entered into your life? He may come into it suddenly. Things happen suddenly in Christianity. They happen suddenly in our lives. The Lord Jesus can do that. He can wait in patience upon us; He waited in patience on Saul of Tarsus: I do not know how many years but He waited in patience. He says to him, Saul it is hard for thee to kick against the goads. Think how the Lord felt every kick that Saul had made. He says it is hard. He waited in patience upon him. But a moment came in Saul's life and I trust that moment will come in your life when the Lord Jesus will come into it suddenly. Not that He was not going to come in before: He had spoken to Saul. Saul says, "I was present at the martyrdom of Stephen". They laid his clothes at Saul's feet. He was present there; the Lord was speaking to Saul. Be he did not answer Him then. The Lord came in suddenly in a way which Saul could not do anything but answer. Oh how wondrous the grace that bears with us until the moment when divine Persons see it to be right and come into the circumstances of a man's life as they did here. It says, "There shone about him a light out of heaven and falling on the earth he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul why dost thou persecute me?"

Have you ever heard a voice saying anything to you? You say we are sat in a room here, forty persons sitting here tonight – the voice is speaking to us all. We preach in faith that there may be a voice to you tonight. He heard a voice saying to him, Saul. The Lord Jesus wanted Saul, He wanted him for Himself. He wanted him to come, not only to be an apostle, great as that was. That was important, the Lord took him up as an elect vessel, but there was what was greater than that. He wanted him to come into the

enjoyment of all that was in the heart of God, not only for Saul but the greatness of God's thoughts in blessing, that were being wrought out because Christ was in glory and the Holy Spirit here. Saul's apostleship was great; I am not bringing it into question but speaking of what he was as a person, not officially but formed according to the divine nature as divine Persons would have each of us formed according to the divine nature. It is what gives delight to the heart of the blessed God and the heart of the blessed Saviour who appeared to him on the Damascus road. I would say to you the Lord Jesus would speak to you tonight. He would call you by name; He would speak to you just as you are. "Saul, Saul why dost thou persecute me?" It says, "And he said, Who art thou Lord?" He came immediately under the authority of the Lord Jesus, came to prove what it was to find that there is blessing in coming under the sway of Christ. What blessing there is? The hymn writer says:

'Tis the truest joy and blessing,
Jesus as our Lord to know,
Here to yield Him full allegiance,
Follow in His steps below.

You may say to me, it is all right for you to say these things but it means that I have to surrender. You are not surrendering to what is inferior. You are not surrendering to what is against you. In accepting the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you are surrendering to what is for your blessing that you could never have thought of yourself. Someone referred to it in prayer this afternoon – "things which eye has not seen, neither ear heard, which have not entered into the heart of man but God has prepared for those that love Him".

Think of the glory of what you have been brought into through submission to the Lord Jesus. How wondrous! Everything that the Lord has done for you could not be better. He has brought you into an eternal inheritance. He has given you the gift of the Holy Spirit. He has given you the forgiveness of sins. He has given you a title, not only of sonship, but also as an heir. That affected me recently. Paul says that in Galatians 4, that "when the fulness of the time was

come, God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law, that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship ... but if son heir also" (vv 4,5,7). There are persons who are sons never inherit anything, but in the divine thought we come into the enjoyment of relationships, we inherit everything that is in the heart of God. You come into the enjoyment of relationships with the blessed God Himself, know what sonship is and inherit the fulness of what is in His heart.

Now I just want to touch on this briefly – it says we shall not all fall asleep. This is the apostle speaking of the Lord Jesus coming for those that love Him. We are waiting for that. We are not going to be here for ever. Thank God for that! We are not going to be in these bodies for ever – we can thank God for that too – these bodies of humiliation which express the fruit of the working of sin. It says, "We shall not all fall asleep but we shall all be changed". We are all going to be changed. There are those that have died who are lying the grave, their bodies are in the grave, they are with Christ. There are those that lie in the grave; they are going to be changed. They are going to be raised incorruptible. It says, "We shall all be changed". What a wonderful thing! You do not have to be old to feel the limitation of what the human body is; you can feel that when you are quite young. We all have limits. Even the disciples had limits. It says as to two of them, one could run faster than the other; he had a limit. You do not have to be old to prove that. But it says that we shall be changed.

"In an instant" – that is what I wanted to speak about – "in the twinkling of an eye". Is it going to take long for the Lord Jesus to change these bodies when He comes? He that has raised up Christ from among the dead will quicken these mortal bodies. Our brother referred to that in the reading. These bodies will be quickened and they will be changed. Will it take long? No, no. How will it be done? We shall not all fall asleep but we shall be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. There have been trumpet sounds right down through this dispensation. What sounds they have been! There will be the last trumpet: that would suggest that

there have been others. "For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible". They will be raised incorruptible. Oh the wonder of that! Some, tomorrow, will be placing the body of a sister in the grave; it is corruptible. But it will not be raised corruptible; it will be raised incorruptible. There will be nothing then to which decay could attach in the believer's body, nothing at all. It will be raised incorruptible. It says, "The dead shall be raised incorruptible and we" – that is those of us who are alive today – "shall be changed". The Lord Jesus when He comes for His saints will come out of heaven. That is the next occasion that we are looking for. We are looking for Him to come. And it is going to happen. It will not take long. It is as if He is on the way; for faith He is. He is ready to come. And He will come out of heaven. Is that not wonderful? We have never seen Him yet. Peter says, "Whom having not seen ye love". We have not seen Him but we are going to see Him. And when we see Him we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. One view of that perfect glorious Man will change everything. You might say it changes everything now. I have often thought that about the Supper. The Lord Jesus comes in and you get an impression of the glory of that blessed Man. He changes everything; He eclipses everything. We come away and everything is put in its right place in your mind and in your affections, because of the One whom we have not seen. We shall actually see Him. When He comes everything will be changed. We shall be changed. These bodies shall be quickened on account of the Spirit of God. Think of each of the divine Persons working in relation to the bodies of the saints that we might be, not suitable because of our moral history, no, but taken out of a condition that would be unsuitable for eternal enjoyment of the presence of God and changed to eternal conditions, changed from conditions in which we are into eternal conditions like unto His own. A body of glory like unto His own body of glory. And this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility. Oh the wonder of it, that we shall be suited entirely for the presence of divine Persons, suited for eternity, never to get old, never to get feeble, never again to prove the limitations of what the flesh is. Only the limitation of what belongs to creature, but

never again to prove the limitation of what the flesh is. But we shall be eternally in the presence of Jesus.

How wondrous. Are you looking forward to that? Are you speaking to Him about it? He loves to hear His own speak about His coming. Have you spoken to Him about it recently, perhaps spoken to Him about it today? He loves to hear you speak about His coming because that is what is in His own heart. What a moment for Christ when He has the result of His own death and what He has secured for His own heart with Himself eternally. What a moment for Him, and it is going to happen in an instant in the twinkling of an eye. It will not take long. It do not want to be fanciful as to it, but divine Persons will work together in view of the translation of the saints into glory and as there, to be suited to the realm into which we are brought. Who has done it? What is it based on? The blessed Saviour has done it. The woman said in the hymn:

My soul shall yet still praise Him,
And loud His grace extol,
Thou hast thyself redeemed me,
Yes, thou hast done it all.

What a wonderful Person Jesus is! How wonderful, not only to save us from our sins but to come into the very scene to take us out of it and make us suited to the very presence of God. That is the full work of the gospel to make man suited to the presence of God, as suited as Jesus is.

I have touched on these things very briefly; I have not put them very well. There is much more that could be said about them in much more clarity, but things have happened quickly from the divine side. They have happened quickly from man's side and it has always led to failure and sorrow. But things have happened quickly from the divine side and they have been in view of your blessing. The work of Christ coming into the very scene to secure you for Himself, the gift of the Holy Spirit that you might know what it is to have a living link with divine Persons, the Lord Jesus Himself appealing to you in grace. All these things have happened and they

may have already happened in your soul. But then there is what will yet happen. He will come Himself in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. There will be no struggle. Myriads upon myriads of the saints, going right back in history, how many hundreds and hundreds of thousands will be raised and changed, myriads upon myriads. The sky for the moment will be full of the bodies of the saints meeting the Lord in the air, in rapturous adoration of the One who Himself has become the alone object of their hearts. May He become that increasingly with each one of us. For His Name's sake, Amen.

SUNBURY

30 July 2000

AT A BURIAL

(i) Eric Burr

Acts 26: 22, 23

I am encouraged to read this scripture by the prayer. Paul does not speak here as an apostle, he speaks as a simple Christian, but all the characteristics of which Paul speaks here as having been found in himself by way of witness I think we could identify in our beloved brother.

It says, "Having therefore met with the help which is from God". None of us who knew our beloved brother would deny that that was true of him, "Having received the help which is from God". Our brother had received this help circumstantially, as all of us have; from day to day, we receive the help which is from God. But our brother had a history with the Lord which led him out of the Church of England, from which he was brought into fellowship with us, and none of us can deny that, not only had he received help which was from God, but we have received help through him. That continues even with ourselves with the exercises and sorrows, and on the other hand the joys and celebration, which mark the company of Christians. They had marked our brother and he had received the help which is from God. Even in his last illness in the home where he was cared for – and we give thanks to God for the care which is available and which our beloved brother received in the home where he was – he was still receiving the help which is from God. Many among us are infirm and experience the frailties which go especially with old age, but the help which is from God is there. What our brother received is available to you, available to me, the help which is from God. Everything that is available to one simple Christian is available to every simple Christian. Paul is not here as an apostle, he is here as filling the place of a simple Christian.

Then he says, "I have stood firm unto this day". That is another characteristic of our brother. He stood firm to the end; the days go by one after another, but our beloved brother stood firm unto

this day. I cannot recall, and I have known our beloved brother for a very long time, an occasion in which our brother had not stood firm; he stood firm until the day the Lord took him. May that encourage us to stand firm as long as we are here.

Then he says, “witnessing both to small and great”: that is our brother. It did not matter to whom he spoke about the gospel, it did not matter who they were, he would speak. Hardly would you enter into conversation with him than he was speaking about Christ, “witnessing both to small and great”; it did not matter who they were. Let these characteristics mark us all, “witnessing both to small and great”. Then Paul says, “saying nothing else than those things which both the prophets and Moses have said should happen”. Another characteristic of our brother was that he would not go outside the scripture. Paul here is referring to the Old Testament scriptures because they fitted the circumstances, the environment and the day in which he was speaking, but he says; I will not go outside the scriptures. It is another characteristic – let these come out in us - nothing outside the scriptures. Ministry we value, the truth as it has been brought out by one and another, but nothing is to be outside the scripture, “saying nothing else than those things which both the prophets and Moses have said”. And then he says, “whether Christ should suffer”. That is the basis on which we are here, that Christ suffered. He did not have the path of honour and distinction and promotion in the world, He came in order that He might suffer. He bore our griefs and He carried out sorrows, but He carried them in suffering. That was the testimony of our brother, that Christ suffered, and above all that He suffered for our sins, He suffered from God’s hand for our sins. He suffered from man’s hand by His rejection, but He suffered from God’s hand for our sins. May it be true of us all that we know that and that we believe it. Paul was concerned that his gospel should reach into everybody. The truth of the gospel was developed by Paul more than by anybody else; if you go through Paul’s ministry you will find one reference after another to aspects of the gospel. Then he says, “whether Christ should suffer; whether he first, through resurrection of the dead, should announce light both to

the people and to the nations”. Our brother entered into that too. Our brother preached the gospel, he preached it formally in a meeting room, but he preached it in his life, and he preached it every day. He preached to everyone with whom he came in contact, but what he was doing was announcing light both to the people and to the nations, no discrimination of race or nationality, or anything like that – “announce light both to the people and to the nations”. That is our brother. I find our brother in this verse, and I find him because Paul is not speaking as an apostle, Paul is filling the place of the simple Christian. You may fill it and I may fill it, and on the line of our beloved brother’s prayer we would be strengthened in an occasion like this by committing ourselves to the pattern that has been set out in one amongst us whom we loved and in whom the light of the Lord shone, but, beloved, the word is for us. Paul was going on and he was going on to prison: our beloved brother has gone on, and he has gone to be with Christ which is very much better. But, beloved, what Paul says before Agrippa here, just as I say as a simple Christian, is open to every single one of us. May the Lord encourage us to take in on.

For His Name’s sake.

(ii) Roland Flowerdew

Joshua 23: 1-3; 24: 13-15

Not long after I heard of the home-going of our brother, I was reading these chapters in Joshua, and it is from that that I feel led to say a few words as to them. As one who has known our brother for all of my life, I think it would be right to say that he has been something of an inspiration to me. He is one who appeared to have this declaration on his heart, “but as for me and my house, we shall serve Jehovah”, or serve God. I have been encouraged by the previous word about the help that is from God, since our brother was very much one who received help that was from God. In addition, in what he said, and what he did, he was one who, in himself, served Jehovah. This was not necessarily as a declaration in word, but as a declaration in deed. In everything he did (of which I am aware) he was one who declared that he would serve Jehovah. I think that would be an inspiration to each of us that we should serve Jehovah.

Our brother once told me about a teacher who had spoken to his class at school. The teacher said to the class, ‘You are the *crème de la crème*’, the cream of the cream, but went on to say, ‘but like all cream, you need a good whipping’. I do not refer to this in any light-hearted way, but I would like to encourage myself and each one of us that if we are to be devoted to the things of God, we need to be stimulated by and exercised about them. They are to be challenging to us, but we need to take up the challenges, as I believe our brother did.

Here in Joshua 23, it says, “ye have seen all that Jehovah your God hath done to all these nations because of you”. Our brother was able to express what Jehovah his God and the Lord Jesus had done for him in the glad tidings. In the word, “God hath done to all these nations”, think of the way in which the peoples were dispossessed by the children of Israel as they came into the land. That is another point I would like to touch on just briefly: our brother was one who had experience of the land. We need to have this experience; we need to know what it is. Think of the way that

Joshua and Caleb were able to say to the children of Israel that “this is a very, very good land” (Num 14: 7). In his preaching of the glad tidings and in what he said, our brother was telling us about the good land that is before us.

“Jehovah your God is He that hath fought for you”. Think of the way that the Lord Jesus has gone before us! We know that He has given Himself for each one of us, and we need to consciously accept that. He is the One who has fought great battles. He fought the power of Satan, he fought the power of death. Our Lord Jesus is the One who was victorious, and who has broken the power of death; who has burst the grave, and has risen and ascended to the right hand of God. Does each of us know that? Our brother certainly did: he had his faith and trust in the One who had fought for him. May each of us be encouraged as we have our faith and trust in One who has done so much for us. No one else has done so much. Our brother was so well able to express these things.

It says later in the chapter “And be ye very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses” (v 6). We have the things that are laid before us. Our brother is one who kept them, and I would seek to encourage each of us to go in for these things.

In verse 15 of chapter 24, we have “choose you this day whom ye will serve”. Will we serve the Lord Jesus, the One who has died for us? Or will we serve the things that occupy us in the world, or the things that would seek to take us away from the things of Christ? Whom will we choose? Our brother was one who chose the things of God, “as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah”. May this be a stimulation and encouragement to each one of us.

For His Name’s sake.

(iii) Andrew Burr

1 Thessalonians 5: 9-11

In my experience, we do not often sing the hymn we had at the beginning of such an occasion, but it is singularly rousing:

Hearts awakening, Saviour great thee.

(Hymn 380)

It fills our spirits with the glory of a day that is at hand when we shall meet Him in the air. The Lord has given us an inkling of what that day will be which is recorded in this very letter, at the end of the previous chapter. On that day, the Lord will have all *those* that are His. It is not the day when He will have all that is His; it is not the day when He will be publicly acclaimed in the world, although that will follow shortly afterwards. It must follow afterwards, because when He comes out to reign in glory, those He has gathered up will be with Him, but He will have all those who are His, those who are the Christ's. These are not limited to those who have lived after His death here on earth, but those for whom He has paid with His all. It is hardly possible for any who are in that number not to be stirred by the prospects of that day, but in the waiting time, I believe that the Lord would punctuate our experience with moments of awakening. Naturally, we become inattentive and dull, but the Lord would bring in moments of awakening. I believe He would use this occasion for that purpose.

We have spoken of a brother whose part among us shines in our memories and someone for whom the coming day was a governing principle. I wonder, as I look at my own life and the way I order it, how far I could say it is governed by the day for which my spirit waits. I believe we need to be reminded of it from time to time; we need to be aroused up. Paul even says to the Ephesians who were remarkably intelligent believers, "Awake up thou that sleepest and arise from among the dead and the Christ shall shine upon you". You might say that the receipt of that letter in Ephesus was an awakening moment. I believe we are to be affected in this way. Paul

in this chapter speaks first of those who sleep as if it is a poor thing to do, although he goes on to refer to those who sleep as a very attractive way of speaking of those who are with Christ; but he says, “whether we may be watching or sleep”. Our brother now joins the number of those who in this sense sleep. We should all be among those who are watching. There should not be any among the living who are sleeping.

The stimulus that we have for maintaining this brightness of spirit is found in our fellowship together. It says, “we may live together with him”. That may be a day still to come but I do not think living is spoken of in scripture as something that is only future. How wonderful to be governed in our relations together with Him. Then Paul says, “Wherefore encourage one another ... even as also ye do”. What a remarkable company the Thessalonians were. They were very poor, persecuted, shaken by the hostility of their neighbours and no doubt erstwhile friends, but in the circle in which they gathered to the Name of the Lord their faith increased exceedingly, and the love of each one of them all towards one another abounded. These are wonderful features of a waking, watching company. Our brother has provided quite a stimulus to this end while he has been among us, whether at our gatherings or not. This need not fall just to one, it could be taken up by us all to continue that spirit of activity among us.

May He bless the word.

LONDON

February 2001

Burial of Mr. Ernest Palmer