

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 341

August 2001

Contents

SPECIAL BLESSINGS

ACTIVE IN THE TESTIMONY

SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

SPECIAL BLESSINGS

Genesis 32: 24–32; Judges 1: 12–15; Philippians 3: 13, 14

A.P.D. We have all come into blessing, having received Christ and the gift of the Spirit. These scriptures suggest that it is open to each of us to seek personally a *special* blessing. Jacob says, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me”. Achsah said to Caleb, her father, “Give me a blessing ... give me also springs of water”. Paul sought the prize, “the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus”.

We may have come into the sphere of salvation and blessing in a general sense and be content to enjoy the many blessings connected with the fellowship. These scriptures would suggest what is special in the way of blessing available to us if we have the faith and the energy to go in for it.

P.L.J. So this is not an aspect of sovereignty: it is connected with an exercise on our part.

A.P.D. That is right. It says Jacob “remained alone”. Rachel was not there, Leah was not there and the rest of the family were not there. Sometimes we perhaps live in these family relationships among the brethren and enjoy them but it would be a most rewarding exercise to reach out for a special blessing.

P.L.J. I was thinking, when you mentioned that he leaves all these persons, that it is an individual and personal matter. Do you think that is where we have to start?

A.P.D. Yes, I do. Jacob had a family circle. The next chapter shows that after this experience he sets the members of his family in order with Joseph foremost, that is with Christ having the first place. But he sought a blessing that was special for himself.

D.M.W. That would be an inward matter, would it not? Faith would be one thing. We can acquire things through faith but this is the reality of getting a personal touch.

A.P.D. An experience with God resulted in blessing and the enrichment of Jacob spiritually.

P.L.J. I was struck too by how that the Lord knew just how to deal with Jacob here. He touched the joint of his thigh.

A.P.D. Yes, He weakened him in his natural strength. He was a very successful man naturally.

P.L.J. Would this be a part of that verse that “we are his workmanship”, Eph 2: 10?

A.P.D. The discipline would be that we might become spiritual. Jacob here becomes spiritual. His name was changed, involving that he had received the Spirit, but more than that, he acquired power with God and men. He became a prince of God. He could say, “for I have seen God face to face”. What a blessing!

P.L.J. I was thinking how that chastening is not negative. Do you think it is a part of that workmanship?

A.P.D. Yes, “whom the Lord loves he chastens”, Heb 12: 6. How many of us have sought a blessing? Esau sought a blessing. In Hebrews, “he sought it earnestly with tears” (chap 12: 17). But it says, “he was rejected, (for he found no place for repentance)”.

K.M.P. So this thought of blessing would involve an impartation from God in view of building up our own spiritual aspect.

A.P.D. That is exactly true. Do we earnestly desire to increase spiritually?

D.M.W. Do you think God really initiated what was happening here? I wondered if the man would in some sense be typical of the Spirit. It says, “And Jacob remained alone”, but then it says, “and a man wrestled with him until the rising of the dawn”.

A.P.D. Paul says in Philippians that “it is God that works in you both the willing and the working according to His good pleasure”. If there is any willingness, any desire to acquire blessing, we must trace it back to God’s work in our hearts.

D.M.W. I feel that that is the word that we should consider because we can perhaps live on externals. Sooner or later, I think, if we have the Spirit, something is going to transpire in our souls that

will lead us, as it did Jacob here, to ask for a blessing. Do you think the Spirit is set for that?

A.P.D. I think this transaction has in view Jacob now having spiritual desires which take precedence over his natural inclinations.

S.S. Do you think that there is something of sonship attached to the title “the prince of God”?

A.P.D. I think it is more the thought of personality, spiritual personality, rather than relationship.

S.S. I was thinking of the dignity of sonship.

A.P.D. There is certainly a dignity belonging to sonship, and also there is dignity belonging to being a prince. In scripture what is princely involves spiritual influence and personality.

S.S. Do you think that God brings in blessing to those who show themselves real?

A.P.D. Yes, I think Jacob was real. God says to him, “what is thy name?” and he said, “Jacob”. There is an immense amount just in that verse, as if he is saying, I am just Jacob, I have had a crooked history, You know all about me.

Rem. He would not let God go.

A.P.D. That is very fine. He said “I will not let thee go except thou bless me”. I think this was delightful to God.

P.L.J. Was God drawing Jacob out when He asked him “What is thy name?”

A.P.D. That was his name in responsibility. His responsible history must have come before him but God says, I am going to call you Israel.

K.M.P. When he says, “Jacob”, would you connect that somewhat with the thought “if we confess our sins”.

A.P.D. Yes, and his sinful history.

Rem. Is there a similar thought with Peter when he says, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord”, Luke 5: 8?

A.P.D. Yes, he says that when he fell at Jesus' knees involving the intercessory service of Christ. He became a product of the Lord's own work.

In Judges, we have a sister desiring something special. "And Caleb said to her, What wouldest thou? And she said to him, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a southern land; give me also springs of water". Have we desired such a blessing?

P.L.J. The blessings here are dispensed in the light of exercise and desire?

K.M.P. That is helpful because with Jacob it seems to be the thought is more general. He says, "bless me", but here it is "give me a blessing". It is more specific. This would be progressive: it has progressed a bit from what Jacob was taking on.

A.P.D. She had a specific desire: "give me also springs of water", something to sustain her in the southern land. This is written in a book where decline has come in. It is also referred to in Joshua, a more normal setting, but in Judges, in the midst of conditions of general decline, how are we going to be sustained in relation to our heavenly inheritance? It must be by the Holy Spirit.

P.L.J. This desire for the springs of water is in the light of what had already been given, would you say – "for thou hast given me a southern land"?

A.P.D. A place of great favour, "a southern land".

P.L.J. This should be an exercise even in a day of ruin and scattering, do you think? "Thou hast given me a southern land".

A.P.D. Yes, indeed.

D.M.W. Caleb is like the head here: things are dispensed by him. I wondered if it did not in some sense foreshadow the present period of time when we draw from our Head.

A.P.D. Yes, but he also is a type of the Father - "Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", Eph 1: 3. There is a great dispensing of blessing but then have we

entered into the blessings that are available in the energy of faith? What do you think the upper springs and the lower springs represent?

P.L.J. No doubt that is what is needed to really enjoy this wonderful portion.

A.P.D. I think so. The upper springs would be power in our souls to be engaged with Christ where He is.

K.M.P. And the lower springs would be in relation to what is down here.

D.M.W. It is like the double portion of the spirit of the heavenly Man. It is what Elisha got when Elijah was taken up, a double portion, so that things could proceed here that the heavenly side of things could be enjoyed.

A.P.D. Yes, it is a very full thought as to the refreshing and sustaining power of the Holy Spirit.

S.S. Do you think the upper springs are what sustains us and helps us in the service of God but the lower springs are what sustains us through the week?

A.P.D. That is good. Have we ever asked for this blessing, to know this as a conscious experience?

K.M.P. What she ultimately got was what she had originally in her heart because it says, "And it came to pass as she came, that she urged him to ask of her father the field", but she gets this blessing of the upper and lower springs.

A.P.D. She got a southern land. It is like Ephesians 3, "But to Him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think" (v 20). She has a desire and he gave her more than what she desired.

D.M.W. Do you link the southern land with the sphere for the upper and lower springs?

A.P.D. The southern land may be suggested in such scriptures as Ephesians 1, "wherein He has taken us into favour in the beloved"

(v 6), and also “to know the love of the Christ ...” (chap 3: 19). In the last reference “to know the love of the Christ” the previous verse refers to the “depth and height” (chap 3: 18). This may link with your thought as to both the upper and lower springs.

P.L.J. These go together, the upper and lower springs. It is not one and the other added but really all one thought.

A.P.D. Both referring to the Holy Spirit, a very full suggestion.

P.L.J. I wondered if you would apply that to the Spirit leading us into the heavenlies, heavenly things, as well as supporting us and sustaining us here?

A.P.D. Yes. We are maintained therefore in power and freshness. It is a very fine land which we come into as the Father’s gift.

D.M.W. “Taken ... into favour in the Beloved”.

P.L.J. That is the southern land.

D.M.W. No doubt it has to do with the sphere of the assembly.

A.P.D. That would be where we experience it fully.

P.L.J. It is wonderful to be led into the upper springs but we need the lower springs too, the Spirit, that is refreshment and strength for down here.

A.P.D. That is right. The Psalm says “They go from strength to strength” (Ps 84: 7). That would involve the help of the Spirit here.

Maybe we could refer to the scripture in Philippians, something very special to gain. “Stretching out” would be an athletic figure.

S.S. I think what you have said is helpful. I speak especially for myself, as to asking for a blessing. All three of these portions we have read involve exercise and persons specifically asking. We have been marked out for it, but we have to take it. We have to ask for it to receive it.

AP.D. That is just what is in mind.

K.M.P. When Paul says, "I pursue", it gives the thought of energy.

A.P.D. Yes it does. We know the scripture well. "Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected, but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus". That is a beautiful reference, "taken possession of by Christ Jesus".

K.M.P. I have been especially impressed as to what is for God and for His pleasure and in providing what is pleasurable to Himself, we are blessed. I do not think I have thought much about asking to be blessed. When we are asking to be blessed, it is really ultimately in view of an increase for Himself.

A.P.D. Oh, yes. It involves the impartation of something special from God. David says, "Of that which is from thy hand have we given thee", 1 Chron 29: 14. What we receive from God becomes available as substance to present to Him for His pleasure. These blessings are not easily acquired but they are all the more worthwhile.

P.L.J. I have not noticed before that the word "possession" is used three times in the two verses, 12 and 13. "If I also get possession of it", "I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus". "Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself".

A.P.D. In relation to the inheritance, the children of Israel had the light of it but had to take possession for their enjoyment. This involved dispossessing the inhabitants of the land.

K.M.P. Would you say that involves being in the good of things now?

A.P.D. That is what it means, I am sure. We have to make room for God's thoughts. It involves the displacement of what may hinder. This is not an easy exercise. I am struck by the reference in 2 Kings. This scripture was referred to earlier, "thou hast asked a hard thing", (chap 2: 10). We may readily take on what is easy and near at hand

but the exercise in Philippians involves the energy of faith; the determination to get the prize, not by human effort but by spiritual.

D.M.W. In one sense perhaps the Lord provides fellowship. He makes some things easy for us. The Spirit's activity, I would think, would be to have us conformed to His death and that would mean a displacing, so that there can be this possession. I understand that possession would be full correspondence to Christ involving what is spiritual. What would you say?

A.P.D. Very good, I would say that fully.

K.M.P. That is interesting. If we are wholly in correspondence to Christ, we could be no more pleasurable to God than that and that is the ultimate goal. I was wondering if this thought of "I pursue" is really the exercise to receive a blessing or a spiritual impartation that would enable us to continue to progress towards the goal.

A.P.D. Our eye is on the goal, but there is a prize; "the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus".

Rem. Paul say, "but one thing ..." I was wondering if that does not link on a little with verse 15 when he says, "as many therefore as are perfect, let us be thus minded".

A.P.D. It involves full growth.

D.M.W. I think John writes, "which thing is true in him and in you" (1 John 2: 8) abstractly but then there is the working out of it so you get the "willing and the working".

A.P.D. He says, "because the darkness is passing and the true light already shines". There is a manifestation of the true light even now.

P.L.J. Would you say this getting possession would be making it truly yours because it says, "seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus"?

A.P.D. I think that took place on the Damascus road.

P.L.J. Yes, he was fully His.

A.P.D. Yes, and He needs to be fully ours.

K.M.P. It would link with the thought as to the “calling on high of God in Christ Jesus”, that is to be in correspondence with Christ because he says, “if also I may get possession of it”. It seems that he wants to be in correspondence with the desires of divine Persons in relation to taking possession.

A.P.D. The great prize is “the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus”. What is this prize?

D.M.W. I do not know that I can say a lot about it, but it seems to me to be what God has in mind in Christ. “In Christ Jesus” is the position unquestionably but whether or not we are in correspondence with it is the present exercise. What would you say?

P.L.J. Do you not think in Philippians we have a lot of expression as to feelings, not just what you may have as objective doctrine but a subjective response? I was thinking of that in regard to it being a prize. The goal is an object but the prize is something you would be attracted to.

A.P.D. Yes, you receive it as having completed the exercise.

D.M.W. Do you think it is Christ?

A.P.D. I would suggest that it is the realisation of the full thought of sonship: “we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”, 1 John 3: 2.

D.M.W. I think so. It is to be like Him. That is the impression I had.

A.P.D. It is just a step. Paul had just a step to go into those circumstances actually. For us, is it just a step or is it a long distance? I think Paul came to the point that it was just a step to go into those conditions of finality and glory and he really reached it through exercise. It is not an easy way. Are we prepared for the path that leads to glory?

D.M.W. Does it involve what we had earlier, “to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death”? That would be one side but

resurrection is touched here so that we get over to the line of things where the humanity that God has in view is what is before us, that Person in that order of things. So, as you say, it is an exercise but Paul could not say he had got possession. He was pursuing so that he was just a step away from it.

A.P.D. The full realisation will be when we are actually with Him.

K.M.P. We have had the thought of correspondence with Christ. The prize would seem to have in mind the thought of perfect correspondence with Christ, the thought of perfection. I was wondering if it would be a similar thought that we have as to “the perfecting of the saints ... until we all arrive at the full grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”, Eph 4: 12,13. I wondered if that would be involved in this prize.

K.M.P. Although ministry would be one way that we receive blessing we may all hear the same ministry but all may not receive the blessing.

P.L.J. And sometimes ministry may come forth as beyond us and there has to be a stretching out for it.

A.P.D. It is good to see that. We may feel that the truth ministered is beyond us. Paul says, “Think of what I say and the Lord will give thee understanding in all things”, 2 Tim 2: 7.

S.S. So I should feel a bit better about the fact that sometimes I read ministry and do not understand what I have read.

A.P.D. I think we all have that exercise.

P.L.J. But you want to get possession.

A.P.D. You want it enough to go after it and that would involve surrendering other things. Paul tells us earlier in this chapter how must he surrendered to gain Christ.

At the end of this chapter he says, “from which also we wait the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory” (vv 20,21). No doubt that would be in his mind and heart as he stretched out in relation to

this wonderful goal, that the “prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus”, may be his. I think it is the full thought of sonship including our glorified bodies. No doubt we enjoy sonship now provisionally, but then it will be the full and final thought that we will enjoy without any hindrance.

D.M.W. It is not really becoming to us if we say, I wish we had something simple.

A.P.D. We may be trying to reduce the truth into kindergarten terms. We would certainly seek to help one another to understand. In ministry which is of the Spirit, there would be some spiritual depth and fulness which would promote exercise and a desire to understand. How ready the Holy Spirit is to open up the truth to exercised hearts. He “searches all things, even the depths of God”.

DENTON

28 September 2000

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ACTIVE IN THE TESTIMONY

Paul Devenish

Judges 5: 14-20 (to “fight”); 2 Timothy 2: 1-3; 1: 7,8

There is a great preservative for us in being active in the testimony. We have spoken about the efforts of the enemy in our prayers tonight. It came into several prayers. This section in Judges is like the Lord going back over what had happened in this conflict as He does in every conflict, I think. He says, *you* were available, but *you* were not. It is the Lord giving His assessment of our part in the conflict. The enemy is set against the testimony and the Lord has those that are available. This scripture shows who was available and who was not, and I would suggest that we should be concerned about that, that we are available to be used by the Lord to frustrate the efforts of the enemy to discourage and divide.

It speaks of certain ones: “Out of Ephraim came those whose root was in” – the note says ‘against’ – “Amalek”. That is, characteristically, ‘out of Ephraim’ would be those that were self-judged and available to serve and to take part in this conflict against the enemy who is against the truth. Are we characteristically self-judged persons who make room for the Spirit and judge the flesh and therefore would be available? It goes on to speak of others: Benjamin, Machir, Zebulun, “And the princes in Issachar were with Deborah”. That is a fine, fine tribute to them. She was the judge at this time and a mother in Israel and there were these persons out of Zebulun that were *with* her sympathetically, affectionately, and with her in the conflict, and I believe the Lord would help us to assess whether we are available to Him and *with* Him in the conflict.

It goes on to say, “In the divisions of Reuben there were great resolves of heart!” but then they did not do anything. How often we are like that! We make great resolves but we do nothing. It says about the woman in Mark’s gospel, “What *she* could she has done” (chap 14: 8). She was available at that moment despite the critical attitude that was there. The Lord defended her and she was available at that particular moment to anoint His head. Wonderful

thing to be available to distinguish Christ! What a frustration that is to the enemy's efforts to discourage and overthrow what is of God amongst His people!

It goes on to say, "Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds," - you should have been out in the conflict, not abiding in the sheepfolds - "To hear the bleating of the flocks?" Then it says again "In the divisions of Reuben there were great deliberations of heart!" Perhaps they spent sleepless nights thinking about the way the enemy was coming in to overthrow the testimony, but they did nothing. We want to be available to the Lord Jesus to frustrate the efforts of the enemy to divide and discourage and, if he could, to destroy what is of God in our places. I believe his efforts are increasing, intensifying as the day approaches. He knows he has not much time and if he can gain an entrance, it is a most solemn thing. I have thought about it recently; it says of Judas in John 13, "the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas" (v 2), that is he made room for the devil to put something into his heart, and in verse 27, it says, "then entered Satan into him." You see, one thing follows another. We may let the enemy get a foothold and get an entrance into our hearts in order to attack the truth and attack the testimony of our Lord, so we need to keep ourselves. "Keep thy heart", it says, "more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life", Prov 4: 23. May the Lord help us!

It goes on to say, "Gilead abode beyond Jordan; and Dan, why did he remain in ships?" Gilead, I suppose, would be part of the two and a half tribes that lived on the east side of Jordan, that is, settling down in comfortable circumstances with their cattle. They went over to fight, but would not be immediately available for every conflict. They went over to take up the conflict in the land, but where did they live? They lived in Moab. They lived in the land east of the Jordan. How sad it was that they did not enjoy the heavenly land! While they went over with their brethren to fight, they went back to live and, of course, it raises the question with us as to where we live in our affections. Paul says to the Colossians in that epistle, which

speaks of our entrance into the land; “Christ ... who is our life”, Col 3: 4.

It goes on to say “Asher sat on the sea-shore”, that is the commercial world would be in view. We may get lost, you might say, or get absorbed in the commercial world and not be available for the Lord Jesus. It says of Asher “And abode in his creeks. Zebulun is a people that jeopardated their lives unto death”. Now, we find persons that are ready to lay down their lives for the brethren, lay down their lives for the maintenance of the truth and they get full marks in this section, the Lord, we might say, looking back and assessing these persons, assessing them accurately and fairly and distinguishing persons that are there to be distinguished. It says they “jeopardated their lives unto death, Naphtali also,” and, of course, it goes on to say, “From heaven was the fight”. That is, it is not a fight that we start. We are not fighting against the brethren. We are not fighting against one another. We are fighting against an enemy that is seeking to destroy and discourage and divide God’s people.

May the Lord help us to be available to Him in the conflict, not to keep ourselves out of it. Many of us might like to do that, might like to sit on the sidelines and see it happening, perhaps even be somewhat sympathetic, but this chapter would help us as the reference in Timothy would help us to be active in the testimony for the preservation of what is of God. So he says, “be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” Then he goes on to say, “Take thy share in suffering”. It would seem that Timothy was a timid person. I have often wondered why he was not in the prison along with Paul and Silas. If you look at Acts 16, you wonder where he was during that time. Perhaps he was not quite equal to taking on the suffering. Many of us are like that: we are not quite equal, not ready for the suffering. Paul’s exhortation here is to “Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

Then he says, “For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice”. We are not to be cowardly; we are not to run. We have often been told that in Ephesians 6 there was no armour for the back. There was armour for the front but no armour for the back so

if you are fleeing, you are vulnerable. If you are moving against the enemy, you have the armour that Paul speaks about, the panoply of God.

Then he goes on to say, “Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony”. How many of us are often – I feel this myself – ashamed of the testimony and then we are ashamed of Paul and his chain. The limited circumstances at the present time of the testimony are represented by Paul and his chain. He goes on to speak of one who diligently sought him out. He says, “The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he has often refreshed me, and has not been ashamed of my chain”.

Well, I would just bring these things forward to help us to be active in the testimony. It would have in mind our preservation but too that the enemy may be frustrated and that there may be protection and care for what is of God. May the Lord bless the word!

DENTON

September 2000

SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY

Kevin Pearson

1 Thessalonians 5: 23, 24; Hebrews 4: 11–13; Romans 12: 1, 2

Just a simple impression, dear brethren. The thought has been with me for a while and our brother's ministry this last weekend made me think more upon this subject. He brought forth the thoughts of what God is doing inwardly, working inwardly. He also mentioned in one of the readings that man is a tripartite being, which brought this passage to my mind. We are spirit, soul and body and this passage in 1 Thessalonians says, "Now the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly". God is the One who does the sanctifying. He is the One who sets us apart. It is His work and He is working for the whole man, not just part of it. He is not after just our spirit; He is not after just our soul or just our body; but He wants the whole man, spirit, soul and body. That we may be "preserved blameless", that is, *ourselves*, that we would be "preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Those of us who have been in the pathway for any time know that it is through experience with God and His dealings governmentally and in other ways that He effects this sanctification. He also does it by the word of God. The Lord Jesus in His prayer in John 17 says, "Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth" (v 17). The spirit, I think, is the inner man, the one Peter calls "the hidden man of the heart", 1 Pet 3: 4. It is where God first does His initial work, where persons are born anew, where there is a breath of God that takes place so that a work can be done there. God works from the inside out.

But there is the soul also. That has to do with what we might call the mind, the will, intellect and emotions. The heart of man is to be found there, where attachments are and probably more so with what comes out in us. The body is how the soul and spirit are expressed and it is a process that God brings us through in sanctification, but His object is that we would be preserved. I think it is interesting too that it says "He is faithful who calls you, who will

also perform it.” It is God’s work. That is not negating the side of *our* responsibility because that is there as well.

I read the passage in Hebrews because it talks about responsibility. “Let us therefore use *diligence* to enter into that rest,” that is the rest of God, “that no one may fall after the same example of not hearkening to the word.” The word of God may come to us in different ways. We have enjoyed a time of fellowship this weekend in the meetings, on the Lord’s Day. The word of God can come to us in many different ways. It could come to us in the service, by the prayer of a brother. It could come in the prayer meeting through the prayer of a brother. It could come through a word spoken one-on-one to a brother or sister. It could come through reading the scriptures in our daily readings or maybe from your husband or wife being used as an instrument. It may come through the preaching. It may come at a ministry meeting such as this. But the word of God comes. He has sent it. “For the word of God is living and operative”. It has life attached to it. “And operative”, I would say, means that it works. It is working. It is doing what it was intended to do. “And sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating to the division of soul and spirit”: in other words God wants to get down to the heart of the matter and sometimes He may have to get through a lot of *us* to really expose the motives in the heart. The Word is, “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” And that is what we need. That is what the word of God is for, so that it comes forth in freshness, and you know that God is speaking to you when it has done that, when it has penetrated. You still have responsibility, though, to use diligence. You have the responsibility to be subject to the word. You have the responsibility to allow the word to have its work in you. God is doing His part in sanctification by bringing the word. We have our part to do in being subject to that word.

In the book of Romans in the twelfth chapter the body is also involved. Paul says to them, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice”. You see the responsibility there is not on God’s part. He has done and He is doing what He is going to do in sanctifying and bringing

the word, but you have to present your body “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service.” I have often thought of this “intelligent service” in a sense in which God may be saying that it is the least you can do “to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God”. Well, the intelligence comes into it because we have minds, we have a soul that God has given to us and He is working in us. He is using the word of God to penetrate, to get through to us, to bring conformity. So that what is expressed in our bodies truly conforms to the work of God in our spirit and the inner man, “the hidden man of the heart”, and in our soul. You see, God has, we could say, in one sense saved us and He is saving us now. He is saving our souls. He is doing it through the word of God and as we move on and we are subject to Him, we come more and more into conformity to Christ and more into His image and His likeness and then we will have an impact in the world and in the testimony to those around us.

And to be honest I do not know that I can say that I know very much of his. I do know it is a reality and I know dear brethren who have been faithful to the word and faithful to the Lord Jesus in their lives and that are living expressions of it. I desire for myself that I might be more conformed and allow the word of God to have its way with me, not set up the barriers that we so often may set up in our lives and in our hearts. We set up walls because the word of God is powerful and sharper and living and it penetrates and that penetration may hurt at times for we realise how far short we fall of God’s best for us. But He has not put on us burdens that are uneasy to bear. That is one thing we need to keep in mind, that His burden is light, and we *can* be here for Him, but we have to be willing vessels. We have to be willing to present our bodies, to present something. God is not going to take it from you by force. It is something *you* offer. *You* present it “a living sacrifice”.

I just submit these few thoughts. I pray that we can be touched and helped by them. I hope that we can be encouraged to be here for the testimony because we need to be preserved blameless until the coming of the Lord. That is the object. He is

coming and we want to be here for Him blameless when He comes.
May it be so for His name's sake!

DENTON

September 2000

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

E.Steedman

**Isaiah 50: 4-9; Matthew 26: 36-45; Ruth 1: 16-17 (to "buried");
Psalm 27: 4, 5**

I just want to speak about Jesus, and about His sufferings, and His committal, how He was here a perfect Man, the only Man in whom sin had no place, the only Man on whom death had no claim, the only Man who was here holy, harmless, undefiled and separated from sinners, the only Man whose will was governed by the will of His Father. He says in John 4 "my food", that is what He lived on. Day-by-day His food was to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. How wonderfully He did it and how completely He finished the work, and how committed He was to the will of the Father. Where we read in Isaiah it says, "The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of the instructed, that I should know how to succour by a word him that is weary". There are some tremendous things that the Lord Jesus had to face. It is speaking prophetically of Him in these portions in Isaiah - tremendous things that He had to face. He had to face the whole challenge of Satan, the whole power of the enemy, Satan's power over the human race - it was death - and the Lord Jesus in His pathway here took account of those things. He wept in the presence of the sorrow and the anguish that came upon the souls of persons weeping over their beloved ones, and yet He had the power to rise from the dead. What a power He

had, but it was as a result of Him laying down His own precious life, taking all the burden of your sins and my sins in His own body on the tree, He went into those things: it cost Him something.

The scripture we read in Matthew shows the terrible sufferings that He went through in His soul, but the start of His pathway was marked by what we have in this portion in Isaiah. Every morning you wake in God's will - you will sleep tonight and you will wake in the morning, and sometimes you wake early and you have plans for the day. They do not always work out, but you have something in mind that you are going to do, or somewhere you are going to go. The Lord Jesus when He woke up in the morning found that the Father was wakening His ear to hear as the instructed, or disciplined one - "The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear". There would be times when what would lie ahead of Him would not appeal, things He had to do, places He had to witness, and you think of those days at the end of His time, getting near to death, and how He shrunk from the horror of it. He was made sin on the cross. The thing He hated most, He was made to take on Himself, on behalf of you and me, and on behalf of countless other persons. How many myriads there are who have put their trust in Jesus, for He has taken the burden of sin. He bore it in His body on the tree. As His ear was opened, it says, "I was not rebellious". Have you ever been rebellious? Have you ever kicked against the goads? That is what the Lord said from the glory to Saul, "it is hard for you". Saul, as we know, was in a murderous spirit and He could not stand the Name of Jesus and it was coming out in persons in the way they lived and what they stood for, and how they adored their Saviour, and he could not stand it. He had this murderous spirit, but the Lord spoke to him. He must have had things that touched him, I am sure. As we often say, Stephen's death touched him, not just his death, but he would never have come across a spirit that was made plain in Stephen. It was the spirit of the Lord Jesus on the cross, the spirit of Christ in Stephen, when he prayed for his enemies. Stephen prayed there. I often think of Saul keeping the clothes. He confessed that to the Lord. When they came to put Stephen, "thy witness Stephen", to death, he says, "I

gave my vote". Perhaps you did not throw a stone but he had given his vote that Stephen should be put to death. His last sight of Stephen was on his knees, pleading with the Lord to forgive those persons who stoned him. Mr Taylor said that, if the Lord said to Stephen as He looked at those bruises on his face and his body, 'Who threw that stone, and who threw that stone?' he would say, 'I do not know: I was not looking at them'. He was looking at the glory, looking at Christ in the glory. Saul saw Stephen's face, as others saw his face, as the face of an angel. I think that would be some at least of the goads that entered into Saul. The Lord says, "It is hard to kick against the goads", but the Lord Jesus was not rebellious, Saul may have been rebellious. You may have been rebellious at times, I have certainly been rebellious when the Lord is saying something that was not quite in your mind to do, and He says prophetically, "I turned not away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. But the Lord Jehovah will help me: therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint". That is when that come into expression, when He came down from the mount of transfiguration. He set His face to go to Jerusalem, and He set His face to go to die. There was no turning back with the Lord Jesus. It was not to be put off for another month, or another year, or anything like that. If the Father had said, the time has come, He set His face to go to Jerusalem, set it like a flint, "and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me: who will contend with me?"

So in the scripture in Matthew He goes on into the place where the whole terribleness of what He has to face is concentrated in this cup. It says as to that, "Then Jesus comes with them to a place called Gethsemane", the place of His suffering, and he says to His disciples, "Sit here until I go away and pray yonder. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and deeply depressed. Then he says to them, My soul is very sorrowful even unto death; remain here and watch with me. And going forward a little he fell upon his face, praying and saying,

My Father". Think of a prayer like that, the Lord Jesus almost entreating the Father - is there no other way to go that sinners might be saved? "If it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt" - "I was not rebellious", "not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt". And he comes to the disciples and finds them sleeping, not able to watch for one hour, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation". The second time it says, "he prayed saying, My Father, if this cannot pass from me unless I drink it, thy will be done". Does it not affect you? Does it not touch a chord in your own soul? The whole human race lies under the penalty of sin. You say, perhaps this one has not done something very bad, or that one has not done something very bad, but it says, "all we like sheep have gone astray"; then it says something that sounds very simple to everyone, that we have turned everyone to his own way. They did not go God's way, they did not go Christ's way; they went their own way. Have you ever gone your own way? Have you ever done your own thing as the world speaks? That is made much of now, to be able to do just what pleases you, but the Lord Jesus could say that He always pleased the Father. His appeal here is, "And leaving them, he went away again and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then he comes to the disciples and says to them, Sleep on now and take your rest". The following verses touch on His betrayal, touch on the terrible hatred that there was against Him on the cross. They mocked Him, they said, "you saved others", think of that, that they actually acknowledged that He had saved persons. There had been a living testimony in person after person, He touched someone, He raised the dead, He opened the eyes of the blind, He caused the dumb to speak, He caused the paralysed to walk. All those things epitomise some feature of sin that the enemy had brought in to this world that was very good before sin came in, but He was able to show something of the love of the Father in the way that He came in with solace for the sorrowing and comfort for persons who had lost their way, He wrought that. Every time someone was healed, it took something out of His body. Remember the woman that touched the hem of His garment; it was faith that saved her. She had faith that if she could just get near enough and just even touch the hem of His

garment something would come from Him that would heal what had troubled her for many, many years. Sin operating, all those illnesses, all those things that relate to what He came into in the way of healing, they all speak of the result of sin, but He said, "power has gone out of me" - the crowd was pressing in, but He knew that power had gone out of Him. It suggests that everything that He did, either healing or caring for others took something out of Him, He felt it; He felt it when He wept because He saw the effect of sin, He saw death coming in on the human race.

I want to speak of the cross. Those of us who have sat under the sound of the gospel from childhood know what it was for Jesus to go to the cross, but to apply it to ourselves and to say, He died for sinners, but we have to come to it that He died for *me*.

Precious, precious blood of Jesus,
Shed for sinners, shed for rebels,
Shed for me.

"I was not rebellious". I remember when that word touched me when the preacher spoke about it, and then we sang the hymn:

Shed for rebels, shed for sinners

And it stopped you, was I ever rebellious? You heard the word, but you went your own way,

Shed for me.

The glad tidings are going out tonight that there might be an answer from some heart to say, He died for me. What a thing that is and what a change in the lives of persons who have known when they came under the sound of the word, when something was touched by the Holy Spirit, told them that all the sufferings on that cross were because of me, and they joined the 'me' and what a wonderful change and transformation has been in the life of sinners, when the gospel entered into their heart. It came home that the suffering that Jesus bore was that we might be free from the penalty and power of sin.

I wonder about this rebelliousness and I wonder what the answer is. I believe it is in committal to Christ and Christ's interests here. We know the story of Ruth; I suppose everyone here, even the youngest, could tell us something of the story of Ruth. It is a sad story. Naomi came with her husband; he seemed to lead them away from Bethlehem-Judah. There had been blessing in Bethlehem-Judah, and yet it says, "there was a famine in the land". That was in the days when the judges ruled, not quite the best time, but they went to journey to Moab and that was a downward, not an upward way, but a downward way to go to Moab. Naomi had a husband and two sons; Ruth was married to one and Orpah to another. But, during that journey her husband died, then one of the sons died, and then another son died, and there were left three widows. You might say, they might be bitter against God; why had that happened? But Naomi held on to something and she kept contact. She represents the people of God, and she kept contact with Bethlehem-Judah because it came to be known to her that God had visited His people and given them bread. Where did it come from? There was a famine there. It is like persons, and I have been one of them, who leave a sphere where the Lord is being made much of. It used to be said, why is there not more food for the saints? The food is in Christ, and you find that you go hither and thither and there is nothing to feed on. If you have had a taste of Christ there is nothing that can take its place, and Naomi's thoughts were going back to Bethlehem-Judah. She heard that God had visited His people and He had given them bread and she decided, I am going back there, and she said 'good-bye', you might say, to her daughters-in-law. Orpah kissed her. Beloved Mr. Lyon spoke of kissers and cleavers. Orpah was one; she kissed her mother-in-law, she was sorry perhaps to part with her, but she kissed her and went away. Jonathan did that with David, others did that. A certain appreciation of what might be there amongst the brethren, or dear Christians trusting themselves to Christ and there is something comes into the meetings, and it can fill the soul and be a guidance in your life, but perhaps the pathway would be too hard - to go back to Bethlehem-Judah to say I have been wrong in going away. You have come back and there is food

there. There was more than food there, far more than Ruth ever expected, but she would not go back. She kissed her mother-in-law too, and her mother-in-law said, Orpah is going back, you go with her: she had nothing to offer her. Ruth said, “Do not intreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried”. She was prepared to die. That is the answer to all the problems in each of us; you are to be prepared to die, to go down, to give up self, to give up your own will, to give up your own mind and in any things that come in that might be disruptive, you go back to Christ, and you find out the mind of God. What is God’s will in a matter, not what is my will or the will of another, but what is God’s will and Ruth accepted her.

When she went back, God had far more in mind for her than she would ever have expected because Boaz was there, “a mighty man of wealth”. What I am trying to say, beloved hearers, is that God has a way of working and He has an end in view and the end in view - one of the reasons that the Lord Jesus came here as He told that woman in John 4 - is that the Father had a heart, the Father sought worshippers, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. There had to be a change. That woman went through that change; she told others and they went through a change and I believe she was used to add to the worshippers. The worshippers comprise those who are in Christ’s assembly. She brought them back as worshippers.

It was a long journey, we know the story – Ruth went back with her mother-in-law, she met and married Boaz, had a child called Obed, which means worshipper or servant and “He is the father of Jesse, the father of David” (chap 4: 17). The worshippers had a line that has gone right down into our day and as we feed on that blessed One, on Christ, it stirs up a spirit of worship. We touched some of those things this morning, to remember Him in the scene of His absence. How it affects you that He went into death and He just asked one thing when He left on that night of betrayal, “remember

me”, when He took that bread and that cup and spoke of His body and of His blood poured out, and He said, “remember me”. There are types of Christ through the scripture and Joseph was one. He was falsely put in prison and he met the two men, the baker and the butler and told them, as they asked him, what would happen to them. The butler was restored to his position, and Joseph said “when it is well with thee”. Joseph was in prison for quite a while after, “when it is well with thee”. Oh soul, forgiven sinner, is it well with thee? Do you have a sense and knowledge that your sins are forgiven and you have been set free at liberty, the power of sin is broken through Jesus’ death of scorn, is it well with you? He said, “when it is well with thee, remember me”. It was not much to ask, but it says, “afterwards he forgot him”. But Joseph was called to mind and Joseph was liberated. What a thing that was, but Boaz is the mighty man of wealth, and the fruit of his word with Ruth was Obed the worshipper. I think it is a time for committals to Christ, committals to Christ’s assembly, committals to what is true and living, to what is for the heart of God.

I touch briefly on the Psalm. It starts with “Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (v 1). You may think that if you commit yourself to the pathway, it is a narrow path, that there will be opposition to it and how will you stand? It says here, “whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid”. In the verses that we touch on, there was committal. How many persons throughout the scriptures made committals! What a thing it is! After any time like this, on a Lord’s Day, it is a good time to make a committal before the enemy is able to turn you aside with the things around in the world. It says, “One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in the temple. For in the day of evil he will hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tent will he keep me concealed: he will set me high upon a rock”; the secret of His tent, to be there just in the presence of God. Matthew’s gospel speaks about going

into your chamber and shutting the door, and just alone with God and tell Him your troubles and your difficulties, tell Him about those things that concern you in assembly sorrows, and He will bring in an answer, “in the secret of his tent will he keep me concealed”. Then it says, “he will set me high upon a rock”, the rock which is Christ. In another Psalm it says, “set me in the rock which is too high for me”, and as the note says, ‘higher than I’, on a level of things that is above the sordidness and the greed and the vicious hatred that is around in the world, or even the fair face that some can present, and yet the heart hard against Christ. What a wondrous thing to know the way of being on the rock “which is higher than I”. We are lifted up out of our own small thoughts and our hearts are opened to see the glory of the greatness of the Saviour, but it is all as a result of His sufferings. He died for you and died for me; He laid down His life and suffered for you and for me, saved sinners.

May it be so for each one of us in this room and wherever the gospel is preached. For His Name’s sake, Amen.

EDINBURGH

25 February 2001