

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE FATHER SEEKS WORSHIPPERS

Robert Taylor

John 4: 19-26; 9: 3-38; 11: 23-27; 20: 16-22

RT I was thinking of the expression the Lord uses to this woman in John 4, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers”. I think we can see that that was perhaps the main objective in the Lord's mind in His pathway. We think a great deal of what He did in meeting our needs, which He has blessedly done. There is a great tendency to make that the *end* in the gospel, what He has done for us, but the Lord says, “Were not the ten cleansed? but the nine, where are they?” Luke 17: 17. The grace of Christ cleansed their leprosy but there was only one who turned to give glory to God. The Lord felt that.

John takes a different approach from the rest of the gospels in that there are personalities in John in whom you can see the work of God coming into full bloom. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea, and these persons that we have read about, are not just lost in the numbers of those that were blessed, but they come through as personalities, in whom the work of God has taken a certain shape and character.

I read these verses that we might be encouraged to make room for that to be developed in us: worshippers - a character of person in whom there is something wrought that distinguishes them from the masses. It is not just for an hour in the week that they are worshippers, but they are characteristically persons in whom the work of God has developed, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers”.

I thought we would begin with this woman, where the first thing is that the moral question is settled. There is not much said about it but it is very quickly resolved as she comes to realise who it is that speaks to her - “I who speak to thee am he” - Someone who has come in from God who not only deals with the moral side of things very quickly, but is seeking to implant something in her soul that brings her into a new way of life. She goes back into her circumstances an entirely different kind of person, a personality that goes through.

It is the same in the man in John 9; you see the work of God being manifested in him. It says in that chapter that the very reason for his blindness was “that the works of God should be manifested in him”. Think of the Lord healing us, freeing us from our liabilities, so that there may be demonstrated in us something of the works of God. Then we

have the same in Martha, Mary and Lazarus, personalities who have gone through some exercises, and there is something substantial left in them so that they are different; they made Him a supper. In John 20 we come to the final touches, where they are brought on to new ground, a new world altogether opened up to them in which divine communications and relationships are enjoyed. May the Lord just help us so that as we are ready a word would come in that would strengthen our hearts as to the way we are here, and the great point in our lives should be, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers”.

Like the rest of us, the woman is a most unlikely person for it. That did not hinder the Lord Jesus and that should affect us. He reaches out to such as ourselves in spite of what we were as part of a fallen race. The power of grace would have things completed in us, not only relief, but to be set on another path, a different objective before us, worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth.

PJH It is His voice that brings out the attention of the One who can meet our need and brings out the desires of God, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers”.

RT It is interesting that He should reveal His heart about His mission here to a woman such as this. He would do that to us. We value very rightly how much we have been blessed, but it says, “yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things ...”. The next part is, “and we for him”, 1 Cor 8: 6. That is what I think the Lord's objective is in securing persons for the Father. We may rejoice in our blessing, but we are to come through to worship God. That is the great objective that God has set in mind, that He and He alone may become the supreme object of our affections.

MJW Part of the seeking would involve finding the people concerned? Would that be true today?

RT I think it would involve the pathway of Christ. The Father was seeking, but the Lord Jesus came to find the sheep. In John especially, He is dealing with us individually, each having their own exercises. We should have some sense of that in His word coming to us. The prophetic word would search us out as to where we are in our state and in our relations. This woman comes to apprehend Him first of all as the Prophet who not only makes known our state and our condition, but would bring in divine light that we may come into the light of being brought to the Father.

MJW It is very interesting how very quickly, as you suggest, the moral question is raised and resolved and He brings the Father before her, as to His greatness, and God being a spirit. He introduces the object straight away. It is remarkable.

RT It is, and it is something that should arrest our attention. We speak often of Nicodemus being a slow learner, but in three years there he was, identified with a rejected Christ at the end of the gospel. It shows from the divine side how quickly we may be brought to be a worshipper as the Lord specifies it here, “when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth”. That is a level beyond man’s arrangement of things and brings us into what we have at the end of the gospel, the Lord breathing into them, and in the power of the Holy Spirit they are worshipping “in spirit and truth”.

RDP-r Is the work of Christ essential to prepare the vessels, but then we are to move on into the purpose of God in relation to us as worshippers?

RT Yes, and the same One who clears the ground is the Mediator, the Minister of the sanctuary, the great High Priest; and the woman is developing, seeing Him not only as a prophet who would open the door, but as One who has the power to bring us in, “I who speak to thee am he”.

RDP-r He is the leader of the praise.

RT Yes, He is. He is developing in the soul something substantial, filling the heart with an object. I think that is the great need for our souls, that there is an object kept before us.

JAT John brings in the cross very early in his gospel, John 3: 14. It is wonderful that the ground is cleared for God’s purpose.

RT The ground here is cleared by making room for the Prophet. He raises it very gently, and the Lord deals with us very gently as we are patient and ready to answer to His word. He gives her a touch about this fountain of living water. There is something there for the soul that can never be provided anywhere else. She says, “Sir, give me this water”, v 15. If there is room made and a desire for divine light, how quickly things proceed to make way for the Lord’s work.

RH Do we see something of the true Joseph here? The allusion is earlier in this chapter as to the thought of Joseph. I wonder if we learn things sometimes by way of contrast? There was something in

Nicodemus in one sense that was commendable, but with the woman there was perhaps nothing commendable with her, but the Lord exercises His wonderful prerogative and comes in with a view that she might be affected in a way that there may be fruit for God. Would that be like the true Joseph, branches go over the wall, Gen 49: 22?

RT Yes, and I think there is a parallel with the way Joseph dealt with his brethren and the way that the Lord deals with the woman and deals with us. He causes us to feel our need and that is what Joseph did to the brethren; he made them feel the depths of their need and the wrongness of their position. I think the Lord does that with this woman. He just says about the husbands, and she is searched about it. She says, "I have not a husband". He says, "Thou hast well said", but there is much more than that. The Lord would have us to be open and transparent and have things settled in view of having this fountain of living water in us. If the ground is cleared there is very quickly movement to another fountain springing up into eternal life.

PJH In exposing what is in our own hearts and laying them bare He brings before us the desire of His own which enraptures us.

RT That is a feature of the way in which God moves. In the prophets in the Old Testament He brought home the guilt. He states the situation in its clarity, but He never leaves them without hope. The Lord speaks very faithfully and strongly to Israel, but then He also tells them about a day that is about to dawn when they will be coming into the glory and wealth of their inheritance.

JMcK She says, "I see that thou art a prophet". The Lord did not announce this to her but it was a question of what she came to as a conclusion by her own perception.

RT A consciously reached decision - God's word brings home to us where we are and why we are in the circumstances we are in. He opens the door that quickly there might be a change into new circumstances, if we make room for divine speaking.

JMcK The other thing that the prophets bear witness to is divine patience.

RT Yes, we can all witness to that. We would seek help in these days that we do not hold the Lord up. That is what happens in these persons we have read about, they did not hold the Lord up, by moving in response to His word. The woman, the man, and then Mary and

Martha, we can see how they move very quickly. They come in to make room for these responses, the Father seeking worshippers.

AEM Could you open a little what worship actually is? What is it that God is looking for?

RT I am more concerned that we should be worshippers; then we will soon learn the language. It has more to do with our state. We are very familiar with words and terms in quoting the scriptures, but worshippers really are fresh. Worship is spontaneous, it is not something rehearsed, but it is a fountain of water springing up in its freshness and vitality. I think worship is really coming to see that God is not only for me, but I am for Him, having an object outside of self. We are so much self-centred because of what we are, and it is very blessed what divine grace has made us, but the great object in all divine operations is that God Himself, as revealed to us, becomes the object of our affections.

BWB Are worshippers necessarily “to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8: 29), and therefore, as in association with that blessed One, worship will flow? It is one thing to have impressions of Christ.

RT I think the fulness of worship is from sons. We come to that in John 20, and it progresses in these scriptures; the more we enjoy the relationship into which grace has brought us, the worship will be deepened, and it takes us out of formality and familiarity that is so abroad today in Christendom. Persons speak very familiarly about God and about Jesus, but I think worship involves a depth and a spirit of reverence that becomes us in these days.

JMcK It has been said that worship is not necessarily expressed; it is the state of soul.

RT I think that is the truth, and you can see that in silence maybe, when the heart is going out to God. You get a touch of it in Chronicles. David is disappointed that he is not going to build the house, a very beautiful section. He goes in and sits before God and allows his soul to be filled with divine grace. He says, 'You have spoken about my house for a long time to come, regarded thy servant as a man of high degree', 1 Chron 17: 16-17. There is the divine light filling his soul, and he responds with a full heart, “of that which is thine own have we given thee” chap 29: 14. His soul is filled with a sense of divine grace and is responsive. It is not making much of him, but it is making much of the Giver.

BCB It says in the Psalm, “My heart is welling forth with a good matter”, Ps 45: 1. Is that spontaneity?

RT Not only what He has done for me, wonderful thing, but, “I say what I have composed touching the king”, a supreme object governing his affections, and worship flows from that. That involves the exercises of this woman and what the Lord says, “Ye worship ye know not what”, John 4: 22. It will not be in this mountain, not even in Jerusalem, but it is from our relations with a Person.

PJH She says, “Come, see a man”. In Solomon's day when the house was dedicated, “the trumpeters and singers were as one”, and then the priests could no longer stand “for the glory of Jehovah that filled the house. Then said Solomon...”, 2 Chron 5:13, 14; 6: 1 Is that where the service is found?

RT “Come, see a man”; there is Someone filling her vision. She is no longer hindered by conscience. The worshippers have no longer any conscience of sin. Her state is no longer a liability but divine grace is filling her soul and she is worshipper.

RH Do we see the nucleus of what is collective here in this chapter? I wondered if what the woman was able to do came out of her heart; she wanted to stick to what was of Christ. And they then say, “we have heard him ourselves”, v 42. I wondered whether it would be a good exercise that we might be a little on this line, that others might be exercised that we might be available to them with a view that there might be more worshippers.

RT We get that in the man in John 9; he became available to them, but they would not have him. But he becomes available to the Lord as they cast him out. As we are faithful to the work of God in us we will soon find the company. He is very forthright with the Pharisees, but he sees that there is a position there which cannot be tolerated. It says, “they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out”. He is very conscious of the exercises that we go through in these things, and He very soon found him. I think you can see through the teaching in John that He is bringing him into the fold, into the company, but that involves exercise and faithfulness that we may come into an area of things where divine formation is taking place and divine relationships are being enjoyed.

RDP-r Is there a right place for worship?

RT It could be in my closet.

RDP-r I wondered whether what we should realise is that worship is in the presence of God.

RT That is as near as you want it. We have spoken about David; it was individual. It is both individual and collective, but I think that individuals soon find their company, and it is very fine to be in a worshipping company, in a place where divine things are treasured, where things are proceeding in “spirit and truth”.

RDP-r In Hebrews it says, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies”, chap 10: 19. It is right into the very presence, face to face in that sense with God Himself.

RT Somebody asked Mr Taylor once, 'Where is that?' He said, 'It could be your closet', vol 39 p 351. The presence of God is always available, the door has already been opened; the thing is, am I in any state to go in? Am I clear in my relations with God? Here this man gets clear through being faithful to the work of God in him. In the beginning of the chapter they raise the question why he was blind. The Lord says that the reason for it is “that the works of God might be manifested in him”. You can see this man making room for the works of God to be made manifest in him. That involved him being cast out. Then he comes to believe on the Son of God, a glorious object in a new sphere altogether.

JMcK This is present belief - “I believe”.

RT It has often been said that John writes to make believers out of believers. It is not only to believe initially, our sins are gone and we have been blessed, but he writes to make us worshippers that we are set here for God, and for the things of God, and enjoying divine relationships as we are brought into such favour.

JAT Mr Darby writes:

Oh, suited now in nature
For Love's divinest ways,
To make the fallen creature
The vessel of Thy praise! (The Man of Sorrows)

It is how you started, the distance and the moral side have been overcome completely so that we should see ourselves that we have been cleared with a view to being worshippers of God.

RT This man is ready for the second touch. He not only knows that his eyes have been opened, but he is now ready to have those eyes fixed on the Son of God; “who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?” He is ready for the next movement, and the Lord says, “dost thou believe”, and says, “he that speaks with thee is he. And he said, I believe, Lord”. Are we ready to have this added impression, that now not only have we come to a Man who has forgiven us our guilt and our sins, but He is ready to bring us into another world altogether of which He is the glorious Centre, and Upholder of all things?

PJH It is bringing us into life here. He says, “I believe, Lord: and he did him homage”. He had found the Man who had done everything for him and he rejoiced in Him; “dost thou believe on the Son of God?”. That is the Originator and Sustainer of life.

RT He is the Centre of another universe, in which He is leading the worshippers to find their place. It would exercise our hearts that not only has God begun a work in us, we would all have some conscious sense of that, but He is seeking to complete it and bring in formation answering to the divine movements of grace towards us in response to God.

PJH This man was in a blind state, a state of seeing, and a state now of living. He is rejoicing in it, a new experience entirely for him. Where he had been cast out he was now received.

RT Knowing what God had done for him, and now he is ready and going to experience what God is going to do with him. He is going to bring him into a new set of circumstances altogether, that he not only sees, but that he has an object that fills his vision and his life.

SH What is the difference between worshipping and tabernacling? “The tabernacle of God is with men”, Rev 21: 3.

RT I think that because God has worshippers He is able to dwell, and the more we enjoy something of the dwelling, the more deep the worship will be. These things go on together. Mr Raven puts things very clearly; he says, 'He rules that He may dwell, and He dwells that He may bless', vol 12 p 352. Ruling, dwelling and blessing: so the ruling makes way for the place where He dwells among the worshippers. He dwells among the people that know Him and in that sphere we come into wonderful blessing. Not only about our sins, but the light as to the glory of God and all that has come out in revelation, and that, absorbed in the heart, promotes a depth of worship which is to

increase.

MJW That is very appealing. I was thinking that sonship would lead to the house, the Son over God's house. He introduced this man into the blessedness of sonship, but also the house where the dwelling is.

RT It is a wonderful fact to realise that God has a place prepared for us. He took us up from our sins in our guilt; it was not to leave us, but it was to emancipate us. I think if we are true to the work of God we will get delivered one way or another through confessing His Name, as this man does. We will find that the world has no place for us, we will find that the world cannot satisfy us, as the woman did, and now the Son of God is bringing us into a place where we can be at home in the enjoyment of divine affections.

BE Our blessings are so great that it is easy to see how they may become our chief occupation, but does not the Holy Spirit at some point of our lives say, "What must the heart of the Blessor be like?'. I was thinking of a man like Mephibosheth - the test comes and it is proved that blessings never meant more to him than the blessing. It was not that he did not care for the blessings when he said let Ziba take all. I was encouraged by what you were saying as to the Blessor, 2 Sam 19: 24, 30.

RT His heart was full of David. He did not trim his beard, he bore the reproach because of his affection for David. He was loyal and David filled his soul. That is a test for us, things come up that test us and the world would try to accommodate the believer. They would say, 'Come and help us', but the Son of God touching the heart shows us that this world can never satisfy, or feed or nourish the work of God. It involves a new Person and a new set of circumstances into which He becomes everything to us, as David did to Mephibosheth very much. He was like a worshipper.

JAT Why is it that John seems very often to give an individual that the Lord finds and works with?

RT He is seeking that the Father may have His portion,. You see it very beautifully as the gospel goes on that there are persons being developed to whom the Father can be revealed as "my Father and your Father". He is securing persons who are settled about their own salvation, about the world, and the breakdown in Christendom, and they are ready to have that revelation, "my Father and your Father".

JAT So does this time with the Lord Jesus, which must be blessed, prepare us for the company? I wondered whether the strength of things might lie in having to do with the Lord Jesus and then as we are together there is a wonderful increase, but there must be this as the basis.

RT It is a test to us every day - is the Lord becoming increasingly precious to us? We can put these persons together, first realising He was a prophet, then He is the Son of God, and "the resurrection and the life", and then that He is able to reveal the Father's Name to us. We can see these things and put ourselves in the picture. How great! Is our capacity increasing through these relations and experiences that the Lord is passing us through?

JMcK Could you say something about homage: "he did him homage".

RT I think he is beginning to get beyond his own blessing. What a marvellous thing it must have been for a man who had been blind all this time to see. Now he has an object that commands his life.

JMcK There is language which is proper to the divine presence, and I am thinking too of Moses, he had to take his sandals off his feet, Ex 3: 5. This would be of that character, would it?

RT Yes, and state. I am thinking of the word in Peter, "if ye invoke as Father him who, without regard of persons, judges according to the work of each, pass your time of sojourn in fear", 1 Peter 1: 17. We need a fear of God in these days. Men bring the Name down and it is treated very lightly, but it says, "pass your time of sojourn in fear". You have been redeemed from these things, but God is to be feared and the idea of homage enters into that. There is someone there almighty, glorious, majestic in His Person and that is who we are having to do with. He has been revealed as Father in all His grace, but He is God, and we need to be reverent as thinking about the Lord. He never ceases to be the glorious, majestic Person that He always was, but He has come in grace to be near us, but we must always remember that we are dealing with divine Persons and we are ever creatures and divine grace alone has come in to bring us into this wonderful sense of favour.

BWB So, worship involves our affections, but it also involves our knowledge of divine Persons. That is really the great point in experience now to learn more. The Lord says, "we worship what we know", or I suppose we might say, 'Who we know'.

RT That was coming out in those persons, the woman knew so

much, but here is a man who knows Him as the Son of God. That promotes reverence. He is the Son of God. Jesus indeed, but He is the Son of God, and that causes Him to be in homage:

The mention of Thy Name doth bow,
Our hearts to worship Thee. (Hymn 6)

GJR I was thinking of what had been established in this man's soul in the way he reasons, "But we know that God does not hear sinners; but if any one be God-fearing and do his will, him he hears". That principle was dug into his soul, and then that clear statement, "If this man were not of God he would be able to do nothing"; I was thinking of the character that was formed in him and he would be able to recognise One such as this.

RT We would never forget "with whom we have to do" (Heb 4: 13), who He is. "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared", Ps 130: 4. He has the right to withhold it, but in grace He has come near to us. The word of God is not to be treated lightly, and these persons did not treat it lightly. The woman said He was a prophet, she fully believed that what He said was for her good, and she came into the gain of it. Here this blind man sees Him as the Son of God. What a personage now to fill his soul. What capacity it would create in us for worship if we apprehended the glory and majesty and beauty of this Person, the Son of God.

JAT The highest part of man is his spirit. I often wondered about it, "God is a spirit", the Lord Jesus says, "and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth". Does that overcome the feigned side, somebody who would worship in another way? I am thinking of objects that the scriptures pour contempt on in the Psalms and in Isaiah, but we are worshipping the living God. I thought that would help us in the reverence that you speak of.

RT It helps us to get clear of formalities, or relying on tradition. Peter speaks of the "vain conversation handed down from your fathers" (1 Pet 1: 18); we are to learn from the scriptures before us to worship in spirit and truth. We cannot help using expressions, but they should be used in freshness so that it is not repetition. It is maybe the same words, but they are said in a freshness of spirit because there is a fresh urge from the Holy Spirit that gives a living touch to the response of a worshipper.

JMcK This man would fit in readily to a worshipping company.

RT That is what the Lord is preparing us for, that we are part of this company that He is leading to the Father. Think of the Lord having clothed these persons, the woman, this man, Martha and Mary, clothed them with wealth so that they are able to be brought into the Father's presence in all the joy of divine favour.

RH Could you say something as to the force of the resurrection?

RT It brought them onto entirely new ground. She says, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day". It was right what they knew, but a Person now becomes more to them than that. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life ... and every one who lives and believes on me shall never die. Believest thou this? She says to him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ the Son of God". You can see her growing. He was the Christ; the man had had the light of the Son of God, and now He says, "I am the resurrection and the life".

RH You mentioned in prayer, and brought attention to the thoughts and pressures and circumstances. If we are left here on the morrow, the Lord would have us to be with Him in relation to this circumstance.

RT He is greater than death. Nothing can press on our spirits more than death, the power of it, the sorrows and the finality of it, but here persons are brought into a link with a Person which death can never destroy. It is very beautiful. In the sorrows and pressures we are passing through, the Son of God brings us into another area of things. The pressures may continue and they will as long as we are here, but we also know that we have a place in another world of whom Christ is the Centre and He has brought me into the living joy and experience of it today so that I may be a worshipper.

KM What did you have in mind as to our being characteristically worshippers?

RT Just the danger that we say it is only on Lord's day morning - you get people who speak about a worship meeting; that expression used to be more common among the brethren, the worship meeting. The prayer meeting is a worship meeting, wherever the worshipper goes he is a worshipper. You see him at his work, the way he does his business, the way he prays: he is a worshipper. It is constitutional.

KM I think that is helpful. I was thinking of Enoch who walked with God. So characteristically during his walk he would have the spirit of worship in his heart even throughout the week, and characteristically

his heart would go up, and his voice would go up to worship God.

RT Enoch enjoyed communion with Him. He walked with God. What a walk that must have been. I think that is something we should seek, the maintenance of easy relationships with God, and the way is clear that it should be so.

BCB It says in the prophet, “princes, and they shall worship, because of Jehovah who is faithful”, Isa 49: 7. Because of their circumstances, because they had proved Him, it has led them to worship.

RT It has led us to a Person who is the source of the blessing. It has come from Him that it may return to Him. That brings us into easy relationships, not only with God, but with the brethren. We have spoken about coming to the company so that worshippers would not stand out. They merge with the company. That is what the Lord brings them into, that they may be one flock, He brings them into green pastures, easy relationships with one another, because we have a common object before our hearts.

PJH With Enoch he would wake up every morning, another day with God. He really enjoyed every second; should that be a guide to us? It comes right from the heart.

RT I remember a brother saying, ‘One day in his walk with God, God says, You do not need to go back, Enoch, just come with me’. It is easy relationships. These things would exercise us, that we have a good relationship with God. The woman's exercises show how these can be resolved, and promote relationship with the brethren. We cannot be worshippers where there is disunity; we may go on, and the form may go through, but I think worshippers would be unified, unified with one object and a readiness and preparedness to settle everything, that that worship may not be hindered through any disunity.

BWB Do the doxologies, especially in Paul's epistles, show how easily and instinctively he broke out in praise to God and to the Lord Jesus?

RT Romans 11 is beautiful, thinking of the ways of God with the Jews, unsearchable and untraceable, and Paul breaks out, “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?”, Rom 11: 34. These things flow out of easy relationships. They flow out of setting myself to see how God has moved in His glorious grace. It says, “O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! ... For of

him, and through him, and for him are all things”, Rom 11: 33, 36. These things are to encourage us that we may be helped to move forward.

RDP-r Do we see that God is more prepared for us to move into His circumstances than we are ourselves?

RT We see that with Mary and Martha; tradition holds us up. She says, 'I know that will happen', putting it off, but the Lord says, 'It is here and now'; “I am the resurrection and the life”. I think this culminates in the ointment, “Mary therefore, having taken a pound of ointment of pure nard of great price, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment”, John 12: 3. It is through understanding that He is “the resurrection and the life”.

RDP-r He would encourage her; He says, “Believest thou this?”. He would bring her into what is in His own heart and that sets her praises later in chapter 12.

RT It makes room for Lazarus to be free as well. He was bound and lay there, but, apprehending the Son of God as “the resurrection and the life” difficulties are quickly overcome. Things are not put off but there is an urgency; take away the grave clothes, and get the matter cleared as we see who this Person is.

PH Are you thinking that Martha arrived at worship in verse 27, or do think it was not until chapter 12 before she became a worshipper?

RT I think the full result is seen in chapter 12, but you see the work going on in chapter 11 and the full depth is reached through coming into the joy of sonship. I think you can see that there was worship in the woman in John 4. Yet you see a quality of worship in these scriptures.

PH We so often associate Martha with being distracted with much serving.

RT But not in John. I think she has got past all that, and I think we see growth coming in. The Lord is seen to promote it; He says, “Believest thou this?”. He would say that to us today. There is much ministry, and a great wealth has come to us, but do we believe it in our exercises? This was a very pressing exercise. Think of how crucial it is, how everything depended here on her believing that He was the Son of God, “the resurrection and the life”. Her believing on that made way for Lazarus to be set free, and made way for John 12.

GJR As we really believe these things, do you think that we will not be far from worship whenever we speak of it? On an occasion like this we are speaking wonderful things, there is a certain marvelling, and, I wondered, even as we speak of the truth together privately, if we really believe that there is a wonder about it, it is not far from worship.

RT That is what should be. Divine Names and Divine Persons should never become familiar to us:

The mention of Thy name doth bow
Our hearts to worship Thee ...

as we think of it. Everything here is dependent on her believing; “Believest thou this?”. I think the experience of the woman in John 4, and John 10, would help us. Somebody said, “help mine unbelief”, Mark 9: 24. The exercises would test us in these things that we may be expanded to apprehend that He is the Son of God and He is ready to reveal to us the glorious Name of Father.

BE It is very genuine and touching. I was thinking of that leading to blessing; she said, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”. I sometimes feel that in my private prayers I am so taken up with my form of address that genuineness becomes a casualty. She spoke to the Lord just as she felt it and that leads to a further revelation.

RT She was very simple, clear and true. Worshipping in spirit and truth means that we are transparent. He knows anyway. It is well to be clear with the Lord and transparent about things, and He develops a capacity and constitution with us so that we are ready to be led on into the depths of divine love that grace has for us. I think these persons are led on. They believed that He was “the resurrection and the life”, but when it comes to the actual thing they begin to be in doubt again. When the Lord, as raised, was ready to appear with the message to a woman who was seeking - where were the twelve? But here is one woman, the object she was longing for was missing, and she was longing to find Him. She not only finds Him but she gets this wonderful message, “I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”. She is brought on to entirely new ground, that gives liberty in worship, as she is brought into these relationships of divine love.

BWB So, is worship an ascending line? I was thinking of Solomon, “his ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah”, 1 Kings 10: 5.

RT You can see that in the Queen of Sheba when she came. She

says, 'I heard of these things'. She not only heard of them, she moved, and because she moved you can see that she says, "the half was not told me", 1 Kings 10: 7. We come to see something of His glory, and these persons here are coming into knowing Jesus in a new condition, the same blessed Person, but now in another condition beyond the limitations which were attached to Him before, and He is able to come and dispense peace and blessing, and to bring them into the enjoyment of an entirely new relationship.

BWB So the divine thought is the worship of God Himself?

RT That would be true and a big subject - but here we have the worshippers, persons who are ready for the revelation, ready for the next movement of divine love that promotes the worship.

RH Would "why dost thou weep? Whom seekest thou?" (John 20: 15) deliver us from formality?

RT It searches our hearts too. The Lord has already risen, the answer to the question is already there, and we are weeping, thinking of our own things, and the enemy would engage us with that. Yet even as she was weeping the Son of God was already risen and with this message, and she was ready for it, "Mary. She, turning round, says to him in Hebrew, Rabboni, which means Teacher. Jesus says to her ... go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father" - what words to come from the risen, glorious Son of God to a seeking heart to bring her into this relationship of divine love.

JAT So He makes us equal to it. It seems in each of the cases you have cited that we are made equal to the desire of the heart of God. I think that is a wonderful thing and He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

RT He does that here through breathing into them; He makes them equal to their relationship. I think that is a wonderful thing to come to, that not only has divine love prepared a place for us, but He has given us the power to enjoy that relationship now in all its blessings. He breathed into them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit".

JMcK She came to an immediate awareness of how the Lord spoke in relation to His brethren. This is easy access into collective awareness.

RT It is the worshippers worshipping in their own environment; it is no longer on a foreign soil, but they are brought to be at home in the enjoyment of a revealed relationship, "my Father and your Father". She had never heard those words before, but here they are uttered by

the risen glorious One. Then He comes to them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit". He breathes into them, and gives them a capacity and the power to enjoy their relationship. I think that is where worship in its fulness flows out, the enjoyment of an undisturbed relationship with the Son of God.

JMcK So the worshipper becomes part of the divine family. It is not just my relations with God, it is the whole effect of divine revelation in the souls of men and there is a wonderful response to it which is far beyond what I would expect.

RT It is opening up a whole dispensation of blessing. Think of the truth of Paul's ministry, all that we have had in the ministry of the recovery, think of that being opened up through persons being brought into the enjoyment of this relationship that divine love has purposed. It was not only purposed, but has come in grace into these circumstances which we are in, to give us the power in the Holy Spirit of God to enjoy that relationship now. It is very beautiful how divine Persons have revealed themselves in this dispensation in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The revelation has brought out an economy of love to bring us in, to be at home and at rest in the enjoyment of what divine love has purposed.

These things would encourage us, dear brethren, and exercise us and hold us that there may be an increasing depth, and there may be an increasing wealth for the Father who is seeking worshippers.

Newport

27th September 2008

B W Burton, Taunton; B C Bodman, Bristol;
Ben Eastwood, Worcester; P Hazell, Bristol; P J Herbert, Newport;
S Herbert, Newport; R Hodge, St Ives; K Marshall, Rotherham;
J McKay, Witney; A E Mutton, Witney; R D Painter, Yeovil;
G J Richards, Malvern; R Taylor, Kirkcaldy; J A Turner, Malvern;
M J Welch, Newport

THE MAN OF ISAIAH 53

R Taylor

Isaiah 53: 1-12

Many years ago there was a man who was troubled about his soul and he took a very long journey to try and find peace. He went to what we would call the churches today, heard the professors of religion speaking, but he still could not find peace with God, and when he was there he found the Scriptures and he was reading this passage. He was a very learned man. He had a high position in society, but could not understand as he read this scripture who the prophet was speaking about. He asked an evangelist called Philip, 'Who is the prophet speaking about in this chapter?'. He could not understand it. It just says, "He", "He", "He". It just repeats the word, "He". I want you to notice that, this passage repeatedly speaks about, "He", and "we". "We" is us all, but *He* dominates the chapter, *He* stands out, and the man asked, 'Who is he speaking about?'. Philip answered. You look at these verses in the chapter, and the "He" is "the man Christ Jesus", 1 Tim 2: 5. He came into this world, He grew up "as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground". There is the Babe in the manger, "a tender sapling". What happened to that tender Sapling? One of the most powerful men on earth at that time, I suppose, was Herod, and the way he reacted to the incoming of Jesus was that he killed all those children that were under two years of age. There is the hatred of man to this glorious Person. Did He do anything to deserve it? He came into the world to save sinners, and that is how the sinners reacted. My friend, He came into the world to save you. How have you reacted? Let me tell you how He came. Paul speaking about Him writes that He took "a bondman's form", Phil 2: 7. Here He is in the bondman's form, "he shall grow up as a root out of dry ground". He was here, growing up in spite of all that. What forces were against Him! At times, you know, He looked for comforters but there was nobody there, Psalm 69: 20. He was alone. Scripture says, "despised and left alone of men". Was there any reason for it? He says later on, near the end of His pathway, "for which work ... do ye stone me?", John 10: 32. 'What have I done that you are so bitter?' It is inherent in the fallen race that man is set against Christ because He brings conviction to your conscience. If you have not yet believed that you "have gone astray", I speak about Jesus that you may be convicted that there is nothing in you that would appreciate Christ, but oh, He is to be admired! You are young. You

may think that you have not done anything worse than perhaps your parents have ever done, or what you see the children doing at school, but the whole of humanity has gone astray. Not only that it says, “we have turned every one to his own way”. Now you do not have to be very old to be demonstrating that you have turned to your own way. One word shows it all, 'No, I will not do that'. There, you have turned to your own way. Jesus never turned to His own way. He had no outward show or ceremony. He did not have those robes that would appeal to men to make Him something great, but it says, “He is despised and left alone of men”. It is a very touching word that He was “left alone”. “For your sakes he, being rich, became poor”, 2 Cor 8: 9. I think it means He had no friends, He was alone. There was nobody there to comfort Him. He looked for it, you know. You see Him there alone at Pilate's judgment hall. I often think of that scene. Where were the five thousand He had fed? Where were they? Mr Darby puts it very well,

A Judas only owns Thee,
That Thou may'st captive be.

The rest would have nothing to do with Him. Pilate would wash his hands of Him, “despised and left alone of men”, rejected by all that He came to call.

Priests, that should plead for weakness,
Must Thine accusers be! (The Man of Sorrows)

He was alone, left alone. He “became poor”. He had thousands of angels at His behest to be there, to support Him, but He was alone. “He is despised and left alone of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”. It goes on in the chapter to say what men did to Him. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, but he opened not his mouth”. That is in Pilate's hall, as I was speaking about it; He was oppressed. That is what they did. They searched their imagination to try and find faults about Jesus. False witnesses came to accuse this Person who grew up as a tender Sapling. It says that, “he was led as a lamb to the slaughter”. Think of the feelings of Jesus there, but think of the awfulness of the human heart. You say, 'That is what they did', but it is what you and I have done, “All we like sheep have gone astray”. “He ... was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth”. Oh, how delightful to heaven. Those accusers, He could have answered them all, He could have justified Himself, but to effectuate redemption, to take on what it speaks about later in the chapter, our

iniquities and our sins, it required that He should be there, “and he opened not his mouth”. “He was taken from oppression and from judgment; ... for the transgression of my people was he stricken”. He was there alone because He was on the way to bear the sins of those sheep who had gone astray.

Now, the devil would encourage you to compare yourself with others and say you are not really too bad. We have all sinned, yes; we have all sinned and “come short” of this Man of Isaiah 53. So do not measure yourself with your friends to see how bad or good they may be and you are. It says that we all come short, Rom 3: 23. Here is God's standard. Many years ago the Scots Guards came to a village to try to recruit persons for the army, and at that time to be in the Scots Guards you had to be six feet three inches, or something like that; so the boys in the village, comparing themselves with themselves, said, 'Well I am the biggest man in the village, I will get in', and, 'I am bigger than you, I will get in. You might not get in, but I will get in'. The recruitment officer came along and he had the standard. Six feet three inches was the standard, and every one of them fell short. Comparing themselves with themselves they were quite good, and they were better than others, but “all have sinned”. “All we like sheep have gone astray”. We are short of the Man Christ Jesus. That is God's Ideal, and God would have been righteous if He had closed the books at that and said, 'You have had the law, you have had Christ presented to you, the perfect Standard'. The grace of God shining in His face, touching the leper, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind there He was the perfect administration of divine grace, and man refused it. God could have closed the books, but what did He do? He “laid upon him the iniquity of us all”. Blessed be His name, Jesus was able to bear it. Had God laid upon men at that time their iniquity, they would have been eternally lost and God would have been robbed of man, but God laid it upon Him, the One who “opened not his mouth”, the One who was “as a sheep dumb before her shearers”, and there He glorified God. So it says that God “hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all”. Wonderful grace, that there may be the gospel of blessing and of forgiveness preached to you tonight. But I just say this word of warning, that the judgment has been suspended. It will yet be executed. God will not allow in anybody's heart the despisal of Jesus. The judgment will be executed on those who have despised the appeal of divine grace. But let me go on, the judgment has been suspended because God “laid upon him the iniquity of us all”. Where did He do that? He did that at the cross. After men had done all that

they could to Jesus, they could do no more.

Every mark of dark dishonour
Heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow ... (Hymn 302)

What a Saviour!

This is what God has done about those sheep that have gone astray. This is what God has done about your sins and mine. Are you convicted about them? Are you convicted that you have fallen short of this Man of Isaiah 53? Do you admit that you have fallen short? Well, God has a message for you. That same Person that men despised, God “hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all”. Was that the end of the matter? No, while He felt that men despised and left Him alone, how much more it pressed on His spirit that God “laid upon him the iniquity of us all”? What does He say? He says, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”, Matt 27: 46, Mark 15: 34.

Was there any reason for it? Only your sins and mine, only that God's heart might come out in blessing to the sinner. Jesus died for our sins, and He was buried, but it does not stop there: He was raised. Glorious dawn! What a day it must have been for heaven in the resurrection of Jesus, when all that had come into the race from Adam right down was cleared in God's sight in the offering and the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus. Glorious morn, and the brilliance of that morn has shone from that day to this in the preaching of the glad tidings. Do you want a witness of it? Well, the first time it was preached there were three thousand souls converted. There is the delight of heaven in finding a Man who has borne the iniquity of us all. Three thousand souls coming to trust in a risen, glorious Saviour, their sins forever gone, forever removed from God's sight and removed from their conscience. Oh, my friend, that is something you have, a conscience. You feel it in your life very early. In your disobedience, something works in you. You cannot define it but you know you have a conscience, and you know that you are wrong, and you know that you are a sinner. Well, God would meet that tonight that you may no longer have a conscience that you are guilty of that debt because you have put your faith and trust in the Man whom God is presenting who has borne the iniquity, borne the iniquity of us all.

But now it speaks about another group of persons in the chapter. It speaks about the “many”. While Christ has borne the judgment that was due to men, not all have believed it; and that is why

the judgment is only suspended. But for the moment God is waiting upon persons to come to acknowledge Jesus, as that man did when he heard the glad tidings that Jesus was such a glorious Person and had done such a work. It says that the man “went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8: 39), no longer with a guilty conscience. I would like to have seen him when he went back to his country. He went out seeking peace. He came back with peace in his soul, his conscience met. Not only that, but he was rejoicing. Are you among the many spoken about in this chapter? It says, “He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness”, “many”. That is not “All we” exactly. It may even divide persons in this room. The “many” are persons that have put their faith and their trust in Jesus. I ask you tonight, whatever age you are, where do you stand? Are you among the “many” or are you still among those who have gone astray? You know what sheep are like, they get lost through going away on their own with their own ideas. But here it says, “shall ... instruct many in righteousness”; that is, those who have acknowledged their guilt, confessed their sins before a righteous God with their eye on Christ. Oh my friend, God speaks to men from the mercy-seat. The mercy-seat in the type was a meeting place. It was where God would meet with man while looking on Christ. That is how He speaks to you tonight, with His eye on Christ saying, 'Here it is, all that guilt on your conscience, all the debt that you owe, it has all been cleared to my satisfaction in the death of Jesus'. So He gives you a new standard of living. It says, “ ... shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness, and *he* shall bear their iniquities”. You know, that is something else that comes up in your life. It is not saying you will not sin again, but you have peace, you are settled as to your sins before God. Past circumstances will come in and disturb you, but it says that He “shall ... instruct many”: the many persons who confess Christ as their Saviour. The same blessed Saviour is ready to instruct you in righteousness, “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2: 1), who is Leader of our salvation. “Therefore will I assign him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong” - what a company those “many” are. They are instructed in a new way to go. God looks upon the many referred to in the chapter as quite different from the sheep who have gone astray. You are ready to be obedient, instructed in righteousness, because your heart has been won by the Man who bore your sins and your guilt. You are ready to hear His voice, and that is the sheep in John's gospel; they hear the Shepherd's voice. It has often

been said that the sheep in John do not go astray - because their guilt has been met, and they have been attracted to this Man of Isaiah 53, and they are keeping close to the Shepherd, and He is instructing the many in righteousness. He will guide you in your path, He will guide you in these exercises that come up. He will take you into His confidence and instruct you in the way you are to go. It says, "he shall see a seed". He is looking for "the fruit of the travail of His soul". Will He find it in you tonight? It just means this, the Lord Jesus is looking for somebody to appreciate the work that He has done and to listen to His voice; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth", Isaiah 45: 22. He is crying that out tonight, and He is looking for somebody to be "the fruit of the travail of His soul". A coming day will display it, and that will be the day of the great divide. On the one hand there will be persons who have acknowledged Christ as their Saviour and who will go into eternal blessing. On the other hand there will be persons who have rejected Christ, and that is when the judgment will come; they will go into eternal judgment. That is why I say, and I repeat it, the judgment is only suspended. The wrath and judgment of God will fall upon every Christ-rejecter. There was a man whom I knew, and he was asked, 'We know where heaven is, but where is hell?'. He said, 'At the end of every Christ-rejecter's life'. There is the answer; that is where it is. At the end of every Christ-rejecter's life is hell, eternal judgment and banishment from the presence of God. But that is not what we are preaching, it is only a warning against despising the grace of God in Jesus, who has come to meet your every need, to God's eternal glory.

Now, I want to speak for a moment about what God has done with Jesus. He has not only set Him forth as a Saviour. The chapter is full of what men did, and I have spoken already about what God did to Him on the cross. There are some very fine 'because's' in the chapter. I say again, we should read it, pondering it, the "He" and the "we" and the 'because's' in the chapter are most interesting. It says, "And men appointed his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence". God had a man in reserve who would see that He was with the rich in His death, "because he had done no violence". God does not leave Christ to the imagination of man's awful designs. He raised Him, and that is the basis of the gospel we preach: what God has done with Him. And He is setting Him forth today as a Saviour to meet you in all your need. I say again, the next view the world may have of Him will be as a Judge, but tonight He is a Saviour, who is gathering in, calling loud and clear in His voice, "Come

to me, all ye who labour and are burdened”, calling to those who may have a guilty conscience, “Come to me ... and I will give you rest” (Matt 11: 28), that you may find your part in this wonderful company, instructed in righteousness with persons who have come into the gain and blessedness of His present service. He has not only met our sins, but it says, “he bore the sin of many, and made intercession”. That is going on now. If you are exercised about your soul, if you feel guilty about your sins, He is interceding tonight. If you have confessed Him as your Saviour but you are troubled about your past, and the exercises and the sorrows, He is an Intercessor. What power He has to speak about you to God as one who has put your faith and trust in Him. As one has said about Him already, He is an all-the-way-home Saviour. He has not only cleared our debt, met our guilt, but He has joined His help to our weakness. He is interceding for us tonight in our weakness to sustain us in the joy and the blessing of our sins forgiven that we may be like that man I began to speak of, going on our way rejoicing, awaiting the time of His soon return to draw us to Himself in His own surroundings, worthy to be there, because we have put our faith and our trust in His finished work.

May we be like that man, every one of us tonight, going on our way rejoicing. For Christ's Name's sake.

Glasgow

26th April 2009

THE LORD JESUS AS SHEPHERD, NEIGHBOUR AND FRIEND

Bob Gray

1 Samuel 17: 40

Luke 10: 33-35

John 15.13-16, 26-27

These scriptures speak of the Lord Jesus either typically or directly. I would seek help by the Holy Spirit to speak about the Lord Jesus as a Shepherd, and as a Neighbour, and as a Friend. He is all these three things, and many more. The scripture presents things in such a way that we can take account of the Lord Jesus in a particular way; that is, we can think of Him for instance as a Shepherd. It might be said that we should begin by speaking of Him as a Saviour. In one sense that is right, because that is where our conscious spiritual history begins, when we come to know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. But what I have found, and I think others here would confirm it too, is that the Lord Jesus began to look after me a long time before I thought about Him. When I was still thinking of things like cars, football, lots of other things, He was looking after me. He was arranging things in my life, things I did not understand. And yet you look back and you see that His hand was there, like the one we read of this afternoon, Jacob. He said "the God that shepherded me all my life long", Gen 48: 15. You might have said to Jacob, 'Well, what about Padan-Aram, what about the time you cheated your brother?'; other things could be said about his early life. But Jacob looked back and he could see that God was watching him at every step; not to find fault but with a view to his blessing.

Now that is how I would like to present the Lord Jesus to you, as a Shepherd. We read about David. I just read that one verse out of this well known account, because what I want to bring out briefly is the fact that He is a Shepherd at all times. You might say that David was going into a very serious battle. Well, he was, he was going to fight Goliath, no ordinary enemy. We must understand that the opposition that the Lord Jesus met on our behalf was no light matter. The enemy He met was an awful one, a dreadful one. So here David was going down to meet Goliath, going down into the valley of terebinths. Now Goliath was big. If he came in at that door at the back of the hall, he would have had to bend his head away down to get in under the lintel. He was a giant, very, very formidable. He was armoured, he had a helmet of bronze, a spear, the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam. If that giant had struck you once, it would have meant instant death.

Now, I am not just telling you an interesting story. I want you to understand the opposition that the Lord Jesus met when he had to do with Satan at the time of Golgotha, and at the cross. He met a dreadful foe, an apparently unbeatable foe. Jesus met him alone. Those friends He had taken with Him, the disciples, had come and had done well. He had disposed of them in the garden: He had said to some 'You wait there'; He had taken three of them on, and said 'You wait there', and He watched them. They were not all that far; Luke's gospel says that they were "about a stone's throw", chap 22: 41. I say reverently, they could see that Jesus was under awful pressure, that His sweat was as great drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. I want to convey to you that what Jesus did for you and me was real, and it cost Him much.

Another has said in ministry, that when Satan came to meet the Lord in Gethsemane and afterwards, he ventured everything he had. He did not want any mistakes; he did not want this opportunity to pass. What did Satan have? Well, he had the Pharisees for a start, they were fully with him. There was the crowd, they supported him. Eventually he had Pilate; he managed to turn him from his sense of duty and service. There were others, but his master stroke: he had Judas as well, one of the Lord's own friends and fellows. Satan had all that, and he brought it all to bear on the Lord. And last of all, he came himself; that is Satan. It says that: "then entered Satan into Judas", John 13: 27. I am speaking of what happened when Jesus, our Saviour, faced up to the whole question of sin and of sins that lay ahead of Him. He knew what that meant. He had seen it amongst men; He had seen the ravages of sin. And much more than that, He knew God's wrath, He knew God's hatred of sin, One who was "of purer eyes than to behold evil", Hab 1: 13. The Lord Jesus was carrying all that, when He met Satan first in Gethsemane. A wonderful thing to think of. He anticipated there what the sufferings of death and the judgment of sin meant. There is a great lesson book in that. He accepted all from the hand of His Father. A remarkable thing. In fact, Mr Darby goes so far as to say that the Lord Jesus went out from Gethsemane perfectly calm, vol 25 p301. The whole thing had been put to the test, and then He said, "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. That is the Saviour we are speaking of, a Man who has been tested to the utmost, a perfect Man.

His perfection shone out when he was supposed to be under trial, during that night when He was under pressure. It speaks of an

officer abusing Him; they gave Him blows on the face. Remember when the apostle Paul, great man that he was, was under pressure, and one of the soldiers struck him. Just for a moment, he lost his spirit, and said "God will strike thee, whited wall!", Acts 23: 3. But when the Lord Jesus was smitten unjustly, he did not turn away in fear. No, He stood there like a Man, and He said "If I have done evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me", John 18: 23. That was a perfect answer from a perfect Man under pressure. Now that is the Saviour whom we know, that is the Saviour whom we trust.

What about David in that connection? I read about him because David went through in type a similar experience with Goliath, with all the dread which that involved, and eventually overcame him. The point I want to carry forward is this, that David had his shepherd's bag with him. He never forgot the sheep. You might have said to David, 'that will be an encumbrance if you are going into battle - leave the bag behind'. But not David, he took it with him. And so did the Lord. I do not mean literally, He did not carry a bag, but what He did carry was His love. He carried His own in His heart when He went through it all. Remember the time when Peter failed Him so badly. Peter was hopelessly overwhelmed, as I would have been. Peter denied Him, with oaths and curses. He was as far down as he could go. It says of the Lord Jesus that he "turning round, looked at Peter", Luke 22: 61. That was the Shepherd - He had not forgotten to be a Shepherd. It says that "Peter, going forth without, wept bitterly". You see, it was like the lamb in the paw of the lion, but the Lord rescued him, the Lord turned round and looked at him. What did His look convey? 'You are wrong again, Peter'? No, I think rather that it conveyed that He had not forgotten him. He was still thinking of him, on account of what He had told him earlier. He had prayed for him that his faith would not fail, Luke 22: 32. That was the Shepherd thinking for His sheep.

Later on, He spoke to His mother from the cross. I do not want to enter into sentimental detail, but the Lord was hanging on the cross, with all the weight of His body on his hands and His feet, hanging on the nails. From that position, He looked at His mother and said to her, indicating John, "Behold thy son", and said to John "Behold thy mother", John 19: 26, 27. I am saying that because it brings out that the Lord is never too pressed, or too busy, to care for His own, to think about them. And not as we do, a kind of a hasty arrangement; His mother was placed in the very best place possible. She was put, as it were, into the

family of John. He said to John, "Behold thy mother" and to Mary He said, "Behold thy son". That was the Shepherd, caring for His own. That is the Person we present to you, Christ.

In Luke's gospel chapter 10, we have the Neighbour. We only read a little part of this, we know it so well. This comes a little closer. You might say this man who had fallen among thieves was helpless. They beat him, and took anything of value that he had, and left him. Sometimes the Lord has to make things difficult for us before we come to realise how much we need Him. This man was lying in the road; it looks as though he had lain there for some time. Two others at least had passed, and had had a look and had gone on. He was not able to help himself. Then this person came. I wonder what the man thought. Lying there, he would be sore, maybe half conscious. He would hear the steps, I suppose he would see the shadow, then this person would lean over him and have a look. I am quite sure he spoke to him; he would touch him. What I am trying to get at is this, that the time comes in our lives when we *have* to do with the Lord Jesus at close quarters. The man went right up to him there; he would touch him, he must have done; maybe moved him a bit to take account of his wounds. There comes a time in our lives when the Lord Jesus has to do with us in this way. One of the ways you will find out is this, that when you hear scriptures that you have heard many times, suddenly they take on a keener edge. They make you feel 'That is for me!'. It is not new; you have heard it many times, but something begins to touch your conscience, to touch your heart.

That is the Neighbour that I am speaking about, having to do with you, laying hands on you. Think of what this man must have felt. I do not want to be imaginative, but he would be sore, he would be smarting, his wounds would be hurting. You know how it is, when you even graze yourself. What does the Samaritan do? No lectures, he just poured in oil. That must have been tremendous - what a relief! He poured in the oil and the wine, and bound up his wounds. That is what the Saviour will do. Do you not feel you need Him? Maybe everybody here has a link with the Lord Jesus - maybe. I trust it is so. But if you have not, come to Him it is time you came. He is looking for you, He is looking after you, He is caring for you, He is close, and He wants to help.

The first thing the Lord Jesus does is to come alongside you, wherever you are, whatever you have got involved in. I am not lecturing from a great height of superiority. We have all been young,

and we have all done some foolish things in our time. But the Lord Jesus knows about them, and He is not reproaching. Do you know that? He is just looking to bless. We began with the hymn:

“Come unto Me,” yes, God Himself says, Come!

(Hymn 252)

Well, the Samaritan came up to this man, and dealt with his immediate needs. I have often been struck by this “having put him on his own beast”. Have you ever tried to lift someone who is completely inert, who cannot help themselves? It is very difficult. The Samaritan did that, he lifted him and put him on his own beast and took him to the inn. If you commit yourself to the Lord Jesus, He will deal with you, He will meet your immediate troubles, He will bring in healing, He will bring in help, He will carry you. Think of this wounded man sitting on the beast, with the Samaritan walking beside him. What would he be thinking then? He would be beginning to think, 'What sort of man is this? He has done all these things for me, a person I never knew, and put me on his own beast, and he is walking'. Is that not a Saviour who is worth knowing? Surely! He “took him to the inn and took care of him”. You could write volumes about that, “and took care of him”. You look at everyone's face in this hall, you could write about every one “and took care of him”. That is me, that is you, that is every single one of us from the youngest to the oldest: “and took care of him”.

Well, here he is, he took two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, “and said to him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shalt expend more, / will render to thee on my coming back”. Two denarii - many interpretations have been given as to what that might be. I like to think of them as faith and hope. But anyway, whatever the interpretation might be, what the Samaritan says is, “whatsoever thou shalt expend more”. You might say, 'If I try to commit myself to the Lord Jesus, what will happen then? How will I get on? I am not up to it'. That is the thing that hinders many, 'I am not up to it. I would fail'. This is the answer. You are in a place of safety, with someone who has taken care of you, and at the back of all that lies, “whatsoever thou shalt expend more”. What about next week? and the week after? There is still more. God's giving is very full and very free. You may depend on it, as Jacob said, “the God that shepherded me all my life long”. Jacob was speaking as a man who had discovered experimentally just how much God had by way of resource.

In John's gospel the Lord Jesus speaks of His own as friends. I

know that this is special; He was speaking to the twelve. But I think that we can apply it to ourselves. What the Lord Jesus says in the gospel is that He will take on the liabilities. That is the negative side, and many, sadly, are content with that. Their sins are forgiven - let me not take it away from them that they can put their head on the pillow at night, without a qualm. But there is more than that. What God wants, in Christ, is not only persons who are relieved of their sins. He looks for companionship. When God planted the garden in Eden, He put the best He had in it, "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food" and He put man in it, Gen 2: 8, 9. What then? It says that He came down "in the cool of the day", chap 3: 8. He was looking for company. God looks for persons that He can keep company with, persons who are made fit. Christianity is a very real thing. I used to think of it, as a boy, as something like a museum, with a lot of interesting things to look at and talk about, that usually belonged to old people, or those who had gone before. Christianity is not like that at all! Christianity is a living system. Christianity does not preach dead heroes. It preaches a living Saviour - remember that. We preach a living Saviour.

Well, when the Lord Jesus was here, He spoke of His disciples in this dignified way, "I call you no longer bondmen ... but I have called you friends". What I wanted to touch on was what He said, "all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you". The Lord Jesus will bring us in to the greatest things. You may say, 'Surely forgiveness of sins is sufficient?' But it is by no means all that the gospel offers. The Lord would bring us into His own sphere of things, into His own links with the Father. He tells us the secrets. We used to sing:

Yea, He has told us the wonderful secrets,
Father of glory, once hidden from man.

What are these secrets? One of them would be that we who are flesh and blood, are saved and redeemed, blessed with sonship, an eternal, indestructible link with God Himself. It is a very dignified thing to which the Lord would bring us.

Well, these are some things to explore. I cannot set out all that the Lord Jesus would bring us into, as He has our confidence, and we His. So He says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have set you that ye should go and that ye should bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide". I know that this was said to the disciples, but I

believe it includes us too, and remember this, that what we are engaged with in Christianity is eternal. People talk about life-changing decisions. A man may take a decision about a career, or marriage, or whatever. What about making a decision that will affect you for eternity? That is what Christianity is engaged with; it is something that is eternal.

Just a word about the Holy Spirit. “When the Comforter has come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from the Father, *he* shall bear witness concerning me”. We have said already, and it is a very real thing, that we might fear failure, 'I am not up to it' and so on. What I would say from experience is that I have proved that the Holy Spirit is a present help, and is One to whom we can appeal at any time. In good times we can give thanks, and in bad times we can appeal to Him. We do get into trouble, every one of us does at some time or another. I know what I am talking about, to my shame: I should have known better. That is the time when we need God most. The Lord says through the psalmist, “call upon me in the day of trouble”, Ps 50: 15. Do not be afraid to come to God, to call on Him at any time, because as John said in his epistle, “your sins are forgiven for his name's sake”, 1 John 2: 12. That is what God is thinking, He is thinking about the fact that Jesus has taken away your sins and He always has a ready ear for you.

I trust these things will be for our encouragement, and that everyone here has, or will have, a living hope in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, for His Name's sake.

Linlithgow

10th May 2009