

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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NJH I would like to take up the matter of the custom or practice of priesthood. It relates to the greatest part of a Christian's life. Every person linked with Christ is part of the priestly family. Aaron's sons were priests because of their relationship with him. Sonship underlies it. It is the highest part of any service that is left to us; it is greater than any other service that we take up. As we go through these scriptures we will find that every other service is governed by priesthood. Speaking simply, the priest was within. It raises the whole matter of our relations with God and, as we know from the scripture in Numbers, the Levite was given, united to the priests. So that any service that we do amongst the saints - or even manward - flows out from our relations with God. I think this is critical in the time we are in because if you separate the two you are going to lose the power of the truth. I am not saying that you will lose the truth, but the power of it is lost if it is not subordinate to a person's direct relations with God.

While I want to carry all - especially our young - forward, the priestly side of a believer has enormous effect. If every brother and sister, young and old, exercised their priesthood before the meeting, it would advance the very atmosphere and power in the meeting itself. While we love doctrine and we love the truth, the persons that have opened up the truth for us - the accredited ministries - were persons who themselves were priests. They were near to God and they could bring what they had from God. The priest was in the presence of God and in the old system the Levite then took out that heavenly influence to the people. As these men of God ministered and laboured in the work, the first and prime thing was what they were in the priesthood Godward. If we do not hold to that - and it is searching for all of us - we will lose the effect of the truth in our souls and eventually the power of it over us, and we will drift as many of our dear brethren have done. It starts from within.

Therefore, I started in Hebrews 3. What overturning they had in their lives, these converted Hebrews saints. The writer goes through

and uses the typical references from the Old Testament to strengthen them. You come to chapter 3 after such a worthy outline of the glory of the Lord Jesus as the Son in chapter 1, and he says, "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" - our confession. That is how Christ stands related to us in our time, because while on earth He was not of the priestly family according to Israel. He did not go into the inner temple. The Lord recognised in His precious life that He was not of the tribe of Levi; He was of the tribe of Judah. It is sad of course that Judas went in (Matt 27: 5), but we are speaking of the "High Priest of our confession, Jesus". What a Person He is, while not of the priestly family, or the tribe of Levi by birth! He had unique relations with His God, and liberty to draw near to God in priestly service. We have His prayer in John 17, pouring out His heart into the ear of the Father in the presence of His own. What a Person He was. We often use the expression that 'the approach is equal to the revelation' (F E Raven vol 2 p70). That was in Christ. The approach was in Christ and that is the liberty that He had like no other. He is brought before these Hebrews to say, "We have such a one high priest" (Heb 8: 1), and you have liberty that you never could have had in Israel, and they will not have in the millennium either. You have a liberty today, dear brother and sister, to draw into the very presence of God and that is your greatest service. You have your own knees: use them; it will give power to your local meetings, it will give freshness, and the brethren will look different to you if you do it.

The scripture in Numbers has reference to the gift - the priest was not given to the Levite, the Levite was given, or united to the priest. You see here the pre-eminence that is given to priesthood. Then it says, "behold, I have taken your brethren, the Levites, from among the children of Israel". As we know, the Levites were taken up in place of the firstborn. The firstborn in Exodus 13: 2 was what God laid hold of, He claimed it, and then the Levites were taken up in Num 3: 12 in the place of the firstborn; and here they are given to the priestly family. What a matter it is. Nothing is to infringe on your relations with God. So the Levite is given to the priest.

In John 9 we have a man that is brought through to priesthood. I think the works of God manifest in a person must have to do with the priestly side of the person. He knew what it was to be cast out, every other support removed, and he came into the very presence of the Son of God; and he worshipped. Where did he get that? He had probably

not heard of that before, he did not have the teaching of John 4, the teaching of worship; it is instinctive in the priest, and he worships the Son of God.

In Revelation it is a kingdom, "made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father". It involves protection in the presence of an evil world where sin pervades; that protection is there. It is "made us a kingdom". Nothing is meant to interrupt priestly function.

In Nehemiah you have the high priest beginning the building. Young people, do not elect yourselves out of it, because joining the priest in the building were the men of Jericho. What a disadvantage you might say they would have, but there is no disadvantage here, they are following the priestly guidance in the building of the wall and every person is responsible for the protection of what belongs to God. The wall is everyone's responsibility. You remember in Mr Raven's outstanding address (vol 2 p268), that it is not just those who minister who are responsible to maintain the truth, but it is the responsibility of all. These men of Jericho came in right away, at no disadvantage. Young people, commit yourself in your daily life to protect what is of God in the principle of the wall in Nehemiah. We know in Ezra it is the elders that built the house, but in Nehemiah it goes down to persons like you and me that build the wall.

DAB We are called into a living association with Christ and, having been called, we not only take character from Him, but we follow in the service that He carries on before God. I was thinking of the scripture, "Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God", 1 Peter 3: 18. That was His objective.

NJH He gives character to it. It always remains the high priest and the family. It is carried forward in Christ. God has never departed from it. While Aaron never regained ground after the occasion of the golden calf, Christ gives character to the family.

DAB I think it is helpful to see the priesthood from this point of view because there is an administrative side to priesthood, the care of the lepers, and matters of judgment. They were in effect the judiciary in Israel, and maybe we are attracted to that side of things because we like administration; but they only did it as an adjunct to their service to God. Unless that is the bent and focus of our lives, it seems to me that our administration will not be rightly directed.

NJH In a certain sense, the way it is presented is that everything is going to be preserved in the priesthood. The Levite might go wrong, but according to how things are presented, what is priestly cannot go wrong. You might lose the power of it yourself, but the priestly character in the believer is very real and very safe. That is why I think the Levite becomes subservient or given to the priest.

DJH We are not to exclude ourselves from this. We cannot say it is just for certain ones, we are all in this. It is important to see that.

NJH We are all in it, and we need each other. We need to convey to all the sense of need. When it came to Corinth it became evident that those that had their own groups in Corinth had disregard for many of the brethren, those "who are little esteemed", 1 Cor 6: 4. If we feel the responsibility of it, we will stimulate one another. I think if there is anything that we can do today, it is to stimulate priestliness in the coming generation. I am not saying it is not there, but stimulate it: your relations with God are the greatest privilege a creature can have.

JRW Did you say that the priesthood cannot go wrong?

NJH It did go wrong in Aaron, but we come into priesthood through Christ, and thus what is priestly cannot go wrong. We have got to be kept priestly; if that is maintained it cannot go wrong itself. It can take up administration; it can judge righteously, assembly meetings can be according to God and so on. I think what is priestly underlies that.

JRW It demonstrates what you said earlier, how important the priestly service is and as we maintain that in our own links with God we will be safe.

NJH Yes, exactly - "if indeed we hold fast ... firm to the end", Heb 3: 6. It is something to be maintained but if we are under Christ and absorbing His character that is given here in Hebrews 3 we cannot go wrong. I think that is how it is presented. Failure comes in; that is because we have departed from it, but it, in itself, is sterling clear.

DAB You made a remark as to failure. If we think of Eli, the priests all failed, and the priesthood was carried through in Hannah and Ichabod's mother. Hannah maintained the service of praise, and Ichabod's mother preserved the rights of God in relation to the ark. It was the priestliness of those two women that brought the next generation through.

NJH That is a good reference. These women were priestly. Zadok involves the safe priesthood. There is what has happened, persons may be committed in themselves yet lose their way because they have ceased being priestly. But Zadok carried it through. In Ezekiel 44: 15, when Israel turned aside, Zadok maintained it. That is the safe line as I understand it. There is a certain line which goes down through Zadok, a faithful line of priesthood.

JRW It is interesting to see earlier on in Hebrews 2 it says, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God", v 17. That is the line on which things are preserved. There is the mercy, but there is the faithfulness in things relating to God.

NJH That is interesting because I think you will find in scripture that what is behind the references to faithfulness involves a priestly state in a person. It is to faithful men things are handed down. These men were priestly; it was not because of gift. I think that is why there is a pressure on us now to maintain real priestly practice and conduct amongst us.

RHB When he addresses the saints in Colosse, they are addressed as "holy and faithful brethren" (Col 1: 2), but here "holy brethren"; but faithfulness is ascribed to Christ.

NJH Does that confirm that the family is taking character from Christ?

RHB There was a tendency among these persons to draw back. They are not saluted here as faithful brethren, but the faithfulness of Christ is referred to, "who is faithful to him ... in all his house". The faithfulness that is referred to is an essential feature of priesthood, that He comes out from the presence of God and He is faithful to what He has learnt there.

NJH That is exactly what I was seeking to get at. Faithfulness is the characteristic of priestliness. Here he is bringing Christ before these Hebrews, and he is saying, such a One, "Jesus", to draw their hearts away from all that they had learnt earlier as to failure and inability. Aaron's departure at the golden calf was awful and it has been said that he never recovered the state of priesthood, but everything is taken up in Christ and here it is Jesus.

PM It is an affecting reference here, "who is faithful to him that has constituted him": not only was He faithful in all His house, but He was

faithful to Him. I thought it was to touch our affections that the One who is the centre of this priestly system is faithful to the One who constituted Him. Does that not underlie the relationship that each of us are to take up with God Himself?

NJH It is, faithful to Him. That is the kernel of continuity in the testimony. I cannot see how we are going to continue in the testimony without this living act of relationship with God. You might rely, as we did when we were younger, on the company - it is good to keep amongst good company, spiritual company, always seek it; but there is nothing like developing your relations with divine Persons.

QP Is it instructive that the apostle is put first? I wondered whether there is preservation on our side in recognising the principle of authority in Christ and in His word.

NJH We all need it, but especially the Hebrews needed the reference to the authority of Christ being brought in. You have Moses and Aaron in the old system. Moses had greater liberty than Aaron in his relations with God, he had far more; but when you come to our day it is all in one glorious Person; so He starts with the true Moses and the true Aaron.

DAB Is the first thought of apostleship that he is sent? I wondered whether that linked with what you are saying, "He came out from God". We see that in John 13 - that would be priestly service there - "knowing that ... he came out from God and was going to God", v: 3. Is that the compass of priestly activity?

NJH What we have said about the revelation and the approach was all in Christ. The authority was bestowed on those of old and as Christ left He gave to His bondman the authority. He is now in the position of authority He has been made Lord and Christ.

DAB We get rather drawn out in Hebrews that the honour that Aaron had was conferred, but Jesus has always had a heavenly character. There is nothing in that sense conferred in relation to His character although He has office and honour that He has been given on account of what He has done; but the Man who is presented here has always had that heavenly character. He came out from heaven with it.

NJH What He was in Himself is in chapter 1, and then all the wealth that was in that Person is brought to us in chapter 3, it is made available. And it is not made available indiscriminately, but made available in the family. You could not speak about priesthood in relation to the world, it

would be beyond them to take that in; but amongst persons who are related to Christ, we are brought into it and are meant to develop in it. Coming to a knowledge of the truth is a development of priesthood in the saints.

RDP-r Could you say something as to the partakers of it because that is where we come into this? We are partakers of something which is outside of this world, partakers of the heavenly calling; and that has to do with this heavenly line that you are referring to and it brings us into heavenly places where He is and where God is Himself.

NJH It is another source and another area to be productive in. You are to develop in it. It is going to change and then our relations will be perfect with God. The tabernacle of God will be with men, Rev 21: 3. I know we cannot take priesthood, as we are speaking of it now through, but the character of the person, what is formed in them, will go through in divine work.

PJM The word “constituted him” is interesting. Is it not striking that God has chosen men for this relationship? It is not angels; we might think in a vague kind of way that God is served by the angels, and He is; but when it comes to priesthood it is men that He has chosen - Moses and Aaron are types; but the Lord Jesus Himself is “constituted”. He was morally equivalent, He was perfectly suited and fitted, but just as God acknowledges Him as His perfect Son at the baptism of John. There is only One who has really been constituted.

NJH In chapter 1 He bypasses the angels. He does not take the angels by the hand. He bypasses the angels, He had men in mind. That is the purpose of God, and the purpose of God was that you and I might be related to Christ - “Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that He should be the firstborn among many brethren”, Rom 8: 29. Predestination is for Christ first, and then it speaks of our part. We are brought into it, the priestly family. As we get in these scriptures, we are brought very close to Christ, and that is according to the purpose of God.

MRC From what you are saying it would appear to me that there is urgency about this matter. We cannot afford to put it off can we? The opportunity for this priestly service will soon be gone? The rapture will come, and we will be with the Lord in glory; and then the opportunity to be faithful and maintain what is due to Himself will have passed. So, is your exercise and burden therefore that we should not delay but take

these things on vitally and livingly from this moment?

NJH That is the point in Hebrews; it speaks about how easy it could be to fall away. The reference to apostasy comes in. No true believer can be an apostate, but we might be marked by a certain spirit of going back in things. Knowledge will not hold us. Judas went out with the external knowledge of the Lord's customs and places. We have to leave that there, but we need to be maintained ourselves in our link with this One, "Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus".

RDP At Aaron's failure at the calf, they had lost sight of Moses, "we do not know what is become of him!", Exod 32: 1. They had forgotten him. But here it is all in one, "the Apostle and High Priest". It is a remarkable combination: the One that inaugurated it, and then the One who sustains and maintains the working of it. But it is all in One, so that our eyes are to be fixed upon One.

NJH That is very good, because the departure there was at the very most for forty days when Moses had gone up the mountain, and yet they fell away and said, "we do not know what is become of him!". That has happened. Nearness to Christ is the way things are maintained. The faithful side is maintained in nearness to Christ - that is Hannah. With Eli, there is no reference to him praying, he sat in the temple but he did not seem to serve there. His sons were allowed to bring in the most awful corruption and theft of what belonged to God, but during that there was a priestly system: she was praying, 1 Sam 1: 10-14. She was accused for it. You might be misunderstood, young brother and sister, do not worry, heaven hears your supplication. Daniel had confirmation that his prayers were heard above, Dan 9: 23. Cornelius had confirmation that his prayers were heard above (Acts 10: 4) - keep going and you will get stamina, you will get solidity in your soul that you will be amazed at with God working.

DAB If we look at the tribe of Levi, you might say, I am either a Levite or I am not. Of course Levi was chosen for a reason, because he had been faithful in a difficult time. I wonder whether it would be right to say that that service comes, to an extent, on the principle of desire. I am not saying you should desire a particular character of service but a desire to serve the Lord is a right thing. The Lord would take account of someone like that and add them practically to the priestly family.

NJH I would take it up as if priesthood was there first, we are in the priestly family first.

DAB But, the preacher gave them desire.

NJH Mr Stoney says that if there is more devotion there would be more gift, vol 5 p139. Where did the gift come from? Gifts were brought down by the Spirit; when the Spirit came down He brought the gifts. If I am more devoted to the Spirit then there will be more gift.

RHB I think that is right. If there was devotion and desire to serve the Lord, the Lord would answer that because He is looking for servants. He says, "The harvest is great and the workmen are few", Matt 9: 37. He is looking for servants.

NJH I do not want to set aside at all levitical service; that is essential to the promotion of the truth amongst us, and should be respected; those labouring in the work. You might think there would be days off in levitical service, but you never get days off in priestly service. There are no holidays for priestly service; priestly service is a continual matter Godward. You will be called upon, young brother, in gift in the preaching, but you retire from service into the presence of God.

PJW I was wondering whether Isaiah was a priest before he said, "send me", Isa 6: 8. He saw the Lord, "high and lifted up" (v 1), and he had to do with God as to his state, but after that he was able to say, "send me".

NJH It was no doubt priestly discernment that said, "I am a man of unclean lips ,and I dwell among a people of unclean lips", v 5. He must have felt that. The thought of what is priestly answers in the New Testament to what is spiritual, but we want to see what that service involves. I think the more priestly or spiritual we are the more aware we are of things that previously we tolerated. We might find now that we cannot proceed with that. I am not talking about anything immoral or anything wrong , but something that may just be a waste of time to you, instead of being before God.

EOPM One thing about being in the presence of God - you made a reference to the fact that we all have a pair of knees - is that you see things, if you are honest in the presence of God, as God sees them. It is "our confession" here, not our profession, but our confession. I was thinking what we used to say to our children -

Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

That is where everything in me that is going to be pleasing to God starts. If I am going to have power in any little service that I do then it begins on my knees. We can all do that, the simplest of us. We teach our young people to pray from a very early age, and maybe some of us have not been maintained in that and that is where we feel the weakness has come in.

NJH What you say is very searching because it is the way for freshness to be maintained. I cannot see how we can remain fresh unless our relations with God are fresh.

DJH A brother advised me when I was younger that you may not always know what to say, but get on your knees, get before God, and you will find something imparted to you.

NJH Romans 8 helps you as to that, that when you are in that priestly state you will find that the Holy Spirit comes in because "he who searches the hearts" - that is God - "knows what is the mind of the Spirit", v 27. I know that Saul of Tarsus was praying before he got the Spirit, but it is normal practice in a person with the Spirit that if they pray in genuine dependence on God they will find that the Spirit comes in right away.

DJH It may not be necessary to make it clear, but we are including all in this, sisters as much as brothers.

NJH Hannah was referred to earlier, she is priestly, she is thinking for God.

PM Do we find the divine standard as we are on our knees? Does not God delight to show us what Christ is to Him and everything is measured in that light? I may not go into the divine presence because I have a problem, but I can go into the divine presence because God would delight to show me what Christ is to Him.

NJH That is Hebrews 3; you find the glories of the Person coming before your soul and all your requests or needs are abundantly met.

DAB Mr Ernest Palmer often used to recite a poem:

And now the need is told
That brought me to Thy knee,
But here I linger still
To worship Thee.

NJH John 9 is going back to the works that are proceeding in the person, it is not only that he has been linked with Christ and brought into the priestly family, but he is actually constituted, he is brought into something formed by God for such a position. That is the man in John 9 - everything that he would rely on is gone, and what is left in principle is an innate desire that only God could fill and He did it in the Son of God.

PJW We used to hear a lot about building up a priestly constitution.

NJH It must be in the presence of divine Persons. It is how God looks at us. Remember what has been said - I know it is not priestly food exactly but it helped me to know - that when God looks at a believer He never looks at him below sonship. When we look at ourselves we rarely look up above service; we think of our service. When you get into the presence of God you are formed constitutionally after the High Priest. John 9 - the works of God being manifested - I believe is taking on the character of the true High Priest.

JRW It says that Jesus found him: the man was cast out, but Jesus found him. It is not exactly put that he found Jesus.

NJH It was through his faithfulness he was put out to where Christ was. Christ was already outside; He was not accepted in any circle. His very mother and His brethren, He refused them, He looked at those who were morally brethren, "those who hear the word of God and do it", Luke 8: 21. The man is cast out of the synagogue, he was cast out to where the Lord was and the Lord found him there.

JRW As to the scripture in Numbers, what is your impression of the Levite being given to the priest?

NJH If the priest was given to the Levite it would make too much of service manward. The Levite was to serve manward, but the priest was to serve Godward. I think that is a protective thought of God in His wisdom, that the Levite, in all that he was to face in carrying out heavenly influence amongst the people, would be subordinate to the priestly function.

RHB There is a New Testament example of that when Paul says, "For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the glad tidings of his Son", Rom 1: 9. As he preached the gospel he was conscious first of all that he was serving God, there was a sweet savour of Christ arising. It had men in view, but God was served in the preaching of the gospel. It is a good thing to remember that as taking up that service.

NJH In certain parts of scripture as to the priests and the Levite, it would be hard to tell who is being referred to; often it is the priest referred to as a Levite. Levitical service is a right one that we should thank God for: think of the ministry we have, and what is maintained amongst us. But I am pointing out that what lies behind it supremely is a person's relations with God and the saints' relations with God. What would the point of this meeting be unless we are all related in our spirits to God? If we have the Holy Spirit we stand in relation to God. In the assembly we come together to be worked on by God. My spirit would have to be right for that.

JSG Could something be said as to what is instinctive in connection with this? The blind man and his separating from what he had been with seems to act instinctively. I wondered whether what you are speaking of rightly entered into would lead to a greater strength of discernment and consciousness of what is pleasing to God as holy.

NJH That is an important thought to maintain. This man is stepping forward without presumption. He does not say he knows a lot; he has not read a lot; he says, "One thing I know", verse 25. We will be more simple and deeper the more we relate to God. The man is going step by step.

PJM Verse 31 says, "if any one be God-fearing and do his will, him he hears". It is almost as though the Father has chosen this man because he was fearing his God and seeking to do His will.

NJH The disciples thought they would make it a different issue at the beginning of the chapter, they thought of a different reason, but that is not the main reason with God. God will attend to that; He can deal with the moral side and it has been done, thank God, at the cross; and He does it in our lives, and thank God for it. It is not the work of God, it is the works of God here, every step is showing this person standing in relation instinctively with the light he was receiving.

PJM This man becomes more and more exposed. He would have been on the periphery of society and his parents back away from him, saying, 'We do not know anything, he is able to answer for himself'. Eventually he is excluded, but he is put in the middle, and he comes out with something which is profound.

NJH He is thinking for God at that point. They said, "Thou hast been wholly born in sins, and thou teachest us?", v 34. His instincts were

there, that "if any one be God-fearing and does His will, him He hears".

PJM I often think of that, this man speaks five words with his understanding, "being blind now I see" (v 25) - explain it.

NJH They could not explain it, but he could. The Lord says, "Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he".

RDP We have spoken about what is constitutional. This man's environment included the Jews, his parents, and the Pharisees - we have an environment, the brethren, our parents. This is where he took all his bearings from and they are all taken away here because ultimately he proves that they will fail, that they will not be adequate. He is cast in upon himself, so that what is developed is something with himself and God. That is the priestly side. We are influenced, even in our Christian lives, by the environment we are in.

NJH Exactly. The Pharisee is a person difficult to be helped. Nicodemus was one, and another was Saul of Tarsus. The Lord knew what would be needed: it would need such an intervention. What was needed to change us? Think of what salvation is, what change was needed in our lives which in a sense was unique to every person. The Lord puts His own stamp on every person that comes to Him. In this man the works are proceeding at every step.

RDP We are all here, and we all come under influence. Maybe we lean upon it, depend upon it, but priestliness involves that we move away from that and we draw our reference and our strength from God and our links with God. That is what this man was brought into. A brother once said to me, 'If I had known of such and such conditions in a place I would have ministered on something differently'. I thought at the time, surely your service comes from your links with God, not from the external circumstances that might be perceived. The priest and the Levite together would be conscious of that. In the parable in Luke 10 the priest and the Levite were separate people, they had become divorced from each other. If levitical service becomes divorced from priesthood there will be no power, which is what you find there.

NJH John himself in Revelation 1 had to turn round. John had to find out his relations with Christ, but in the first thing that was taken up in the book, he would get levitical wisdom. He would get help in the writing to the assemblies and so on. He would get the Lord's assessment, but it starts with his own relations with the Lord, Rev 1: 12, 17. John is an

example of what is constitutionally developed. John was formed in a priestly constitution so he accepted everything from the hand of Christ and he is taken through all those dark chapters of God's ways with the world, and the winding up of everything including the universe of sin, and he comes to a view of the assembly probably like no other.

RHB He writes of himself not as an apostle or a servant, though he was that, but as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21: 20), and at one point as "the ... disciple, to whom Jesus was attached", John 20: 2. It is a very blessed thing to be in the consciousness of that.

NJH He did not need to be told to follow. Peter had to be told to follow, but John was instinctive. I think it goes back to the priestly side of the person; there are certain things you can rely on. Sometimes you refer to certain brethren as being "the salt of the earth" (Matt 5: 13); there are certain brethren who might be quietly going on, but there is something which is steady and firm with them which is needed in every place. Someone going on quietly in their relations with God; that is what I understand to be a priestly person.

JW You referred earlier to the works of God being manifest in this person, and that must begin in a sovereign way; but is there anything from our side which we can do to help it forward?

NJH Do you think obedience would help?

JW He was obedient, and then he was true to what he knew. We are no further on than the Spirit's work in us in our souls. It must begin in a sovereign way, but if we are obedient to the truth, and we are true to what we know, that would help us work forward, would it?

NJH I think our will does more to hinder what God is operating in than we would admit, and our will so readily reappears. I might be getting on all right and then suddenly there is the awful evidence of my will. The man in John 9, his will was judged and dealt with, he was obedient and he went through true to the One who had taken him on and who was working in him.

PJW Somebody said once there is more to be done in us than by us.

NJH That comes up to the constitutional side referred to earlier. We need to be built up in what is priestly in our relations with God. What goes through will be God's work.

DAB It is very rich that the work of God appeared in this man. It was not simply that the Lord found him and said, 'I will make you a disciple, and you follow'; but he is converging morally in his testimony on what had already been seen in Jesus, so that when they meet each other there is a correspondence.

NJH And it is "the works of God". We speak about the work of God in a person and there is a certain mystery about it. It is true, of course, and actual, but the works of God seem to be the development of something morally and spiritually in the person so that the light of the believer is personal. None are the same, but the same Person is doing the work, continually working and forming something that is delightful and finds an affinity with the Son of God.

PJM There is an interesting shift now. The Lord had done something for him, He had given him his sight and there is grace in that. "Thou hast both seen him", you have seen Him, "and he that speaks with thee is he"; now there is a matter of relationship and forward movement has been highlighted, and he is going to be priestly. He has already been acting outside of his comfort zone, but now whilst grace has met him where he was, love wants him some place else.

NJH He is introduced to the highest level because the highest relationship is association with the Son of God. That is the highest, it is greater than the thought of bride. The bride is a relationship with Christ, a glorious relationship, an eternal relationship; but association with the Son of God is the greatest thought and he is brought into that. It shows how the works of God are in this direction.

AM Can you say something about the title of the Lord's that is presented here - "the Son of God"? We think of the Son of God as the centre of another world where everything is for God's pleasure and our association is to be with Him. It brings out the greatness of the Person, and also lifts us out of all that is around to another sphere.

NJH What did this world mean to this man? The world has influence over us, some feature of it. I am not speaking of immorality or anything like that, but the influence of the condition which we are passing through. There was no link between what Christ was presenting in Himself and what that man had proved here. He is weaned away from the world into another scene in which Christ is the centre - the Son of God. No wonder he worshipped.

PM Was it not the culmination of priestly service that he became a worshipper? He had not only turned his back on the system here, but he became a worshipper of the Son of God.

NJH That is glorious, caught in the whole theme, the whole world of response. That world is a world of response; and the more you are weaned away from this scene, even on your knees, waiting on God, you will find that some impression will come into your soul that becomes a bulwark. God imparts strength into the soul that you would never have found otherwise and you are linked with the Son of God.

RDP-r Is the wonder of this that the stimulus is love? It is not fear that causes the worship of God but love.

NJH That is formation.

MRC The fact that He is the Son of God links us with the highest level of priesthood does it?

NJH Yes. It is the soul's outpouring to God in worship. It has been said that in worship there is a movement, worship involves you are moving forward. The fact that he worships the Son of God shows he is moving in the right direction. He is not moving out of something, but he is moving into it. I think the thought here conveys that he is moving in his consciousness into the world in which Christ is the centre. What a height of service.

DAB In a sense there is more than just continuing. The wall that we have in Nehemiah represents what is substantially formed in the believer in that world of evil. So it is not simply that he has survived, but the contrary conditions in which he has been and the exercise that that has promoted, has produced something which is substantial and abiding. Is that what we see in the man in John 9; he is really like a stone in Nehemiah's wall?

NJH He would not go back; he would not go back to the Pharisees and try to compromise and be friendly: he was now built into another system.

DAB He would not only fit in a wall but in a gate too; so that this kind of person is what is needed in local meetings.

NJH It is needed in every local meeting, and it is the one work but persons each having a part in it. I thought it was interesting in

Nehemiah that, “the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they built the sheep-gate. They hallowed it, and set up its doors”. You might say, 'I am not the same calibre', but that is not the point. Whatever disadvantage you might have in your mind, you cannot take it into what God has in mind. The men of Jericho previously had a wall to keep God out - that was the wall of Jericho. They were preserving an independence of God in the favoured area to keep God out. Here he is having part in what is protective of God, and the men in Jericho link on right away with the high priest. Coming down to localities I think it is the influence of priestly activity and customs. The apostle says, "we have no such customs" (1 Cor 11: 16), we are protected from that; why should we return to things we have left? Brethren, why should we drop the level? Men have laboured and laid down their lives for the testimony, they laboured and kept the city pure and the wall was built. You may say, 'Things have changed, and today is not like those days' - the wall is continuing to keep the city clean and pure, and the persons with the greatest disadvantage learn from the priestly persons.

DJH The note says as to 'next to them', 'next to him', but it seems to be specifically related to the high priest, chap 2: 3.

NJH The high priest gives character. Christ gives character to the family, and here it is in the building.

EFW I feel very exercised as to how true these things are in me. Further on, in Nehemiah 4, the enemy increases his opposition, “And it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobijah, and the Arabians” and others all mass against it, v 7. It shows how vital it is that we maintain the link you have been speaking about even though we may feel so small. That link will never be broken.

NJH That is true. Sanballat and Tobijah come in at the beginning, and if Nehemiah had somewhat placated them and had easy words with them, the work would not have proceeded as it did; but they come back again and again. It becomes more intense, but the wall was built and the doors were set up; there was everything there now to keep that element out.

JSG It says, “Then we prayed to our God”, chap 4: 9.

NJH That priestly service comes in in this book. You see what the enemy is at, and then he says, 'Come on out; we will meet in the valley of Ono', chap 6: 2. He could not get in, so his desire all the time is to

compromise the wall.

DH I was thinking of the bread of God; it is what is marked by life. It speaks of Himself but it is the appropriation.

NJH That is how the constitution is built up by appropriation, and the oblation is the major diet of the priesthood; they are feeding on Christ.

DJW The collective side of things is only as strong as the individuals in it, so that everything proceeds from that. What you are in your life away from the brethren is dependent on your priestly links with God. You are guided in that and you maintain separation, yourself personally, if the testimony is to be maintained.

NJH That also has a bearing on the meeting when we come together. You might by your actions somewhat rob the local meeting if you have not maintained things that you should have done, but if you use your knees before the meeting as a simple practice, and bring God in, you will find greater enrichment in the meeting. You will find the truth becomes more attractive to you, you will find everything for your well-being and satisfaction.

London

16th January 2010

Key to Initials:

R H Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr, London; M R Cook, Maidstone;
J S Gray, East Finchley; D Hawgood, Bexley; D J Hutson, London;
N J Henry, Glasgow; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; P Martin, Colchester;
E O P Mutton, Walton on the Naze; P J Mutton, Walton on the Naze;
R D Painter, Yeovil; Q Poore, Swanage; J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone;
P J Walkinshaw, Gillingham; E F Woodford, Dorking;
D J Wright, Havering; J Wright, Havering

“A CERTAIN SAMARITAN”

J Bruce Ikin

Luke 10: 25-37

Galatians 2: 20

This parable we are so familiar with was in answer to a question, but the question was not in faith: the question was in self-justification. How much we find in our own hearts trying to justify ourselves while ignoring the rights of God. This man says, “And who is my neighbour?” It is very evident in asking such a question he had never thought of being a neighbour to anybody. He only thought of pleasing himself, justifying himself. How like my own heart, what I find in my own heart. I might be able to say good things, I might be able to recite the Scriptures quite accurately and yet find in myself that which is not neighbourly, not caring, not caring for others, not caring for those who are in difficulties, but there is One here who in a marvellous way has proved Himself to be the Neighbour.

So He speaks of “A certain man”; “A certain man descended from Jerusalem to Jericho”. It was not somebody who was named, it was not somebody in the history books, it was “A certain man”, and therefore I am entitled to put my name there as having experienced that, that I have been on this road. Every sinner has been on this road. It is a very familiar road, is it not, the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Jericho? We may say, 'Well, the problem was the robbers. The problem was the state of this world. It is not my fault that I got robbed.' The first thing the Lord Jesus says is that he “descended from Jerusalem to Jericho”; that is, I went my own way, did I not? I tried to please myself. In doing so I was going in the wrong direction, I was going downwards, downwards from the place of favour to the place that God had put a curse upon. We know that Jericho, as we look back on Scripture, was vehemently opposed to God and to His people, vehemently opposed to the people going into the land, Josh 6. Jericho was overthrown, was it not, overthrown after the ark went round carried by the priests? Think of how the Lord Jesus has gone into death to remove the power of the world in men's souls. The world is overthrown in our hearts as we truly put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. Jericho has been rebuilt in direct opposition and neglect of God's word as to it. Despite all, this man was on his way down to Jericho. It is a well trodden path; it is a broad path that leads to destruction. He ran into

trouble, he ran into the robbers, he ran into those who would rob him of all that he had, and he is left with nothing. It is all seen in your course and mine. Go on your course as a sinner, neglect what God would put to you in His claims through His wonderful glad tidings, and you will end up with nothing. You will end up wounded; you will end up in a half-dead state away from God, hopeless and helpless. I trust there is nobody still on this road, on this road of sin. There is an answer. There is an answer for every sinner and that is in the One who has drawn near. There were those who looked on him and could not do anything. Perhaps they took pity on him but they could do nothing, but there is One who is a Neighbour. There was the Lord Jesus as seen here in figure as “a certain Samaritan journeying”. For Him it was a deliberate journey, for Him it was a different journey to that which we find ourselves on in our sinful state as trying to please ourselves; He was going in the opposite direction. He was not pleasing Himself. He was journeying. We began this morning with hymn 230 which refers to His pathway, a pathway marked by grace and love and faithfulness. That faithfulness took Him right to the end of that journey for you and for me, ending at the cross, the grave. Think of what it was for Him to be made sin. Think of what it was for Him to take on the whole matter of the curse, “Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree”, Gal 3: 13. “Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him”, 2 Cor 5: 21. Think of that! He took on the whole matter that I might be delivered, delivered from the power of the robbers, delivered from the power of death, delivered from sin, delivered from what I find in myself. So the Lord Jesus has drawn near, “journeying came to him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion, and came up to him”. Think of the depths that the Lord Jesus has gone down to. He would come up to you. Think of His lowliness, His meekness. Think of the simplicity of the glad tidings, that you can speak to the Lord Jesus at any time. Make it an urgent matter. If you have not done so already in your life, speak to the Lord Jesus and you will find that He will come up to you immediately, address your needs and He will look at you, “moved with compassion” for every sinner that cries out to Him. How available He is! How meek and lowly He is! So it says, “moved with compassion, and came up to him and bound up his wounds”. Think of how the Lord Jesus would feel the fact that you are wounded. There is this man left by the robbers. They had done all they would, “stripped him and inflicted wounds, went away leaving him in a half-dead state”. That is what the world would do, it is what Satan

would do, and when he is finished with you would leave you with nothing, wounded, lifeless and hopeless. The Lord Jesus entered into it all and He would bind up your wounds, pouring in oil and wine, bringing in that healing power of the oil, that joyful sense that you are liberated from the power of sin; and it says, “put him on his own beast”. He laid it down ...Think of what the Lord Jesus has done. He sacrificed Himself and His rights as the One here so beloved of God. Think of what He has laid down: He laid down His life in which He had walked in perfection before God, and here we see that He “put him on his own beast, took him to the inn and took care of him”.

I would like to speak a little about the place where this man was taken - the inn. It was a place where neighbours are found. You see the friends and neighbours in chapter 15. You see the Lord Jesus there as the Shepherd taking the sheep on His shoulders, taking it to the house, taking it to the place where the friends and neighbours were there to welcome Him. Think of how He rejoiced there with those people. He is saying, “I have found my lost sheep”, Luke 15: 6. What a thing it is to come into a place where neighbours are found, where the friends are found. That is where you will be cared for, where salvation practically is to be found. Not only are you taken off the road of sin, not only are you taken off that road which can only end in destruction, but you are brought into an atmosphere where you are cared for and loved and, not only that, but you are given a provision of great wealth under the care of the Innkeeper. It is remarkable the wording here. He is first seen taking out two denarii and he gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him”. Think of how the Holy Spirit has taken on that charge of taking care of the saints, taking care of believers on the Lord Jesus. You know, it is not an automatic thing that you receive the Holy Spirit, but it would be normal, normal as putting your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus that you receive the Holy Spirit as desiring Him if the gospel is presented rightly. It is a wonderful thing that the Holy Spirit is given, but on your side you need to receive Him. What you will find as you prove the help of the Holy Spirit are tremendous resources, because here you see, “Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shalt expend more, / will render to thee on my coming back”. Think of how much the Holy Spirit has under His charge and how much He is prepared to give to take care of you. He would give you the benefit of the very best, to give you the benefit of all that God has in mind for you, salvation proved in the assembly, in a practical way to be saved from the effects of this poor evil world that would rob you, rob you of your joy, rob you of your

life, rob you of your vitality in relation to response to God.

So the Lord Jesus is coming again and accounts will be given of how much the Holy Spirit has spent. What a wonderful reservoir of grace there is in this dispensation in which we are. This dispensation it is going to end when the Lord Jesus comes. It began as a result of His going into death and His rising again. Think of what is available to the forgiven sinner coming into the enjoyment of all that God has in view of blessing, and being brought into an atmosphere where wealth and enjoyment is known, where there is tremendous expenditure, and it is taken account of. It is not spent in a careless way - I would speak very carefully. It is spent in a calculated way that there should be a response from you and from me, that there should be a response towards God. God loves to hear what you think of the Lord Jesus, what you have proved in your own life, what you have proved of the care of the Holy Spirit. Do you speak to the Lord Jesus about your matters, about your heart, about what is troubling you, your griefs? Not only is He able to take away the effects of sin but He is able to take away the guilt that you find in yourself in relation to what you have done. You come into the enjoyment and the blessing of chapter 15 where you see that the Father's heart is such that He would bring you into a place where you are loved, where you are loved in the same way that He loves His beloved Son. He would look upon you in that way, justifying you because He is looking at Christ, He is looking upon His qualities. It is a wonderful thing to come into. Well, that is the inn.

So Paul speaks from his own experience of the cross. He speaks of what it is not only to have his sins met at the cross, but he says, "I am crucified with Christ". It is a remarkable statement. I wonder how many of us could say, "I am crucified with Christ". You may say, 'Well, I have read this scripture'. But can you say, "I am crucified with Christ"? What a relief to see that all that is so obnoxious to God and hateful to God - and then to me also as judging by the Holy Spirit the flesh in me - has gone, never to be raised again. Have you accepted the fact that being on that road, that downward road in self-will, is being an enemy of God? But now you have come into divine favour because it has all gone, it has all gone at the cross. "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I", that which is so horrible to God, "but Christ lives in me". Can I say that? Paul could say it, "but Christ lives in me; but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God". I think that is a wonderful thing, "the faith of the Son of God". For the man in John 9

that was an additional thing. He knew what it was to have his eyes opened through obedience, but then in his faithfulness as he proclaimed in simplicity what he knew in a loyal and wonderful way, he found immediate hostility against what he said. He was not wanted, he was cast out. The Lord Jesus found him and He revealed to him that He is the Son of God. It is a wonderful thing to come to in your soul that there is that Man who is the Son of God in His full glory. I think we had a touch of that this morning, the Lord Jesus in His glory, the Son of God. The knowledge, experience and enjoyment of that is to be found as found amongst the saints in the assembly. So he goes on to say, "who has loved me and given himself for me". How touching that is. The Lord Jesus has given Himself for me. Paul said it. Can you say it? Such a glorious Man, and yet you can say of Him, He "has loved me and given himself for me". All that He was, He gave Himself for me. Well, can each of us say it in reality? I trust it will be so. For His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy

8th November 2009

“A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR”

Sylvain Perret

Isaiah 45:18-24 (to strength)

Romans 5: 6-10

1 Corinthians 2: 9-10

I was struck this week by reading this verse in Isaiah 45, “And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides me”. I would just like to say a few words about that. We referred indirectly to this chapter during our reading, and it speaks prophetically as to what God was going to complete with Cyrus in bringing back the people of Israel to Jerusalem to build the temple. This brings out in a very interesting and attractive way what God has done, and what God is doing in His own ways and in His own wisdom. I just wanted to say a few words in relation to this thought “a just God and a Saviour”.

I started to read in verse 18 where it speaks of the way that God has created the earth and the heavens. It says, “God himself who formed the earth and made it, he who established it, - not as waste did he create it: he formed it to be inhabited”. It is a remarkable touch here, “not as waste did he create it”; God does not work like that. So you can read in the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis, how God has formed the worlds by His word, the way He has placed man in the creation; and how He has blessed him in the midst of the garden. You can read too the way failure came in and how man sinned. It is important to take account of that in the preaching, in relation to the fact that God is a just God, God is righteous. It says here, “I am Jehovah, speaking righteousness, declaring things which are right”. God is holy and you can see that all through the scriptures in the way that God acts. Everything He does is in perfection, everything is holy and right, and marked by righteousness. That is God; therefore when sin came in, man's place could not be any more in nearness to God, could not be any more in the garden; he was cast out. You get a strong reference in Genesis 6 as to what sin means to God. It says, “Jehovah repented that he had made Man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart. And Jehovah said, I will destroy Man, whom I have created, from the earth - from man to cattle, to creeping things, and to fowl of the heavens; for I repent that I have made them”, v 6, 7. I think that gives us an impression of what sin means to God, what it meant for God that man had sinned. He looked on the earth, and He could take account of the

sinful state of man, and of the wickedness of man's ways and of man's heart. And that is true for every man, everyone in this room - the preacher first - is marked by that, by a sinful state and a sinful condition. We can but sin, and cannot please God. God in His righteousness cannot tolerate sin. Sin is not a state that God can tolerate in His own presence, because God is holy and His ways are perfect. Therefore, as you can see with the flood, judgment had to come in. Judgment had to be exercised and, as a result of sin and the sinful state of man, death has come in and all have to die. That is the truth and everyone has to take account of that; and also of the fact that everyone will have to do with God - sinners or saved, all will have to do with God.

So you come to have to do with God in the preaching. It speaks here in Isaiah 45 as to this fact in verse 23, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear". God is the Creator and God is above all. God has created all things and has power over all things; and therefore all will have to do with Him. All will have to recognise that He is God and He has this place. He has that power, and He is the One who has created all things. He is the One who is holy; He is a just and righteous God; and all will have to recognise that. But the wonder of the gospel is that, although the state of the sinner means there is nothing that we can do from our side to please God, or cover in any way the distance that has come in by way of sin, God is also known as a Saviour. It says here, "And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour". I was touched in relation to that in verse 20, "They ... pray unto a god that cannot save". That is the characteristic of men who have created gods for themselves. It speaks here of a graven image carved out of wood. These are gods that cannot save. They are not real, they do not exist, but God is a Saviour God, as has been referred to, and "there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour". I would like to say a few words in relation to God as a Saviour, and the wonder that this has not compromised in any way His righteousness or that He is a just God. It says in v 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else". This is the message of the gospel, this is what comes out, this is the glad tidings. A Saviour is presented and the message can be extended to all - it says, "all the ends of the earth"; "Look unto me, and be ye saved".

This brings me to the scripture I have read in Romans 5. It is a very touching scripture indeed in relation to salvation, bringing in also

what God has provided from His own side. He has provided a Saviour. We could do nothing from our side, we could not provide anything that would be able to satisfy God, to satisfy His righteousness as to the matter of sin or our sinful state. But the wondrous thing is that God has acted from His own side. That is one thing you can see the whole way through the scriptures, particularly in relation to the people of Israel. They are a striking example of the way God works from His own side. You see that in God taking up persons, individuals, right from Adam on, Noah, and then Abraham. Then you have Isaac and Jacob, and then the people of Israel taken from Egypt and so on. It is the way God has worked from His own side to secure souls. He has worked with souls, and He has worked with people, to secure what is for Himself. That is what He continues to do. You can read about the first days of the church, and the apostles, how things were secured and God has acted from His own side right unto this day; but the central point to all this is how God has acted as a Saviour God. And so here we have this wondrous expression, "for we being still without strength, in the due time Christ has died for the ungodly", and then it goes on to say, "For scarcely for the just man will one die, for perhaps for the good man some one might also dare to die; but God commends *his* love to us, in that we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". That is the greatness of the gospel! While God would look at the earth and see only men characterised by a sinful state who can do nothing else but sin, God has intervened from His own side to provide a Saviour and that Saviour is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the Son of God. He came upon this earth, and He was sent. You can read about it in Hebrews - it is touching as to the way He has come in. It says, "wherefore coming into the world", Heb 10: 5. What a wonderful matter that the Lord Jesus has come into the world. He came not only to live but to die, He came to take up the matter of sin, and He came to settle it to God's perfect satisfaction. You can read all through the gospel about the way that the Lord Jesus Christ was the only Man in whom God found His delight. He was the only One that walked in perfection, He was the only one whose every movement, everything He did, was Godward and pleasing to Him. Sin did not characterise Him; He was perfect and holy the whole way through. What a wonderful matter. How perfect was the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can contemplate that reading through the gospels and the references in many other scriptures too; the perfection of the humanity of the Lord Jesus. He was one over whom death had no power. Death had no

power over Him in the way it has over us. It is upon us as a penalty, as a result of our state of sin. But it was not upon the Lord Jesus; He was perfect. The voice could be heard out of heaven, “*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him”, Matt 17: 5. What a wondrous matter that such a voice could be heard. It brings out the perfection of the Lord Jesus, the way He was accepted in the perfection of His humanity. That means that He was the only One who could be the perfect offering to settle to God's righteousness the matter of sin. And so He came here to die: “in the due time, Christ has died for the ungodly”.

It says, “but God commends *his* love to us, in that we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”. What took place there on the cross was that God's judgment as to sin came upon the head of the Lord Jesus. It came upon Him. We cannot go into the fullness of what that meant. Darkness was over the land: the human eye could not behold what was taking place there, but God's judgment as to sin was fully exerted upon the Lord Jesus - what a matter. God has been fully satisfied as a result. He was the perfect Offering, He was the only One who could take up the whole matter of sin to cover the whole of the distance; the entire matter of sin. It meets the sins of those that put their trust in Him, but the entire matter of sin is also met so that God's righteousness can be maintained; judgment against sin has been exerted. What a matter, God's righteousness has been maintained and as such God can now present a Saviour, and God can now forgive. We sang in our hymn at the beginning of forgiveness, and what a matter it is that God can forgive. God can forgive the sinner, and God loves to forgive the sinner - He can forgive on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ because the judgment against sin has been borne by the only One who could bear it.

What a matter of contemplation it is too that the only One who could bear it, came to do so. He was perfect, He was the only One who could take it up and He came to do so. He came for souls that were far away, that were in a state that was most displeasing and hateful to God, a sinful state - what a matter. I just desire that this would come into our souls afresh, this great matter of the way that God has moved in His love. It says, “but God commends *his* love to us”. You might say, 'Well, why? Why would God have moved in such a way? Why would God have moved for me as a sinner?' We referred to the condition and sinful state at the beginning of Genesis, and that God repented; well, why

would God move in that way, why would He go to the extent of providing a Saviour from His own side? His own beloved Son would be there on the cross bearing the judgment. Well that is His love: you touch God's love there. God *is* love, and that is the wondrous matter, that God commends His love to us. It is a testimony, a witness to the greatness of God's love, that the Saviour, His own beloved Son, was hanging upon the tree while we were still yet sinners, and in a sinful state.

But the greatness of it is also, dear friends, that the Lord Jesus was then in the grave for three days and three nights. The work was complete as He was raised from among the dead. Death could not hold Him and the victory is complete. And as a result of His resurrection, and His ascension to sit down at the right hand of the Father, the gospel can go out. A Saviour is provided in the gospel, and souls can put their faith and trust in Him.

These things are simple and I trust that everyone here has put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. The Saviour is presented in the gospel, and God is a Saviour God. He is able to save. It is not as it says in Isaiah a god that cannot save; but the God that we know is a God that can save. He has done everything so that He could forgive and that souls could be saved today. It says here, "Much rather therefore, having been now justified in the power of his blood, we shall be saved by him from wrath". The judgment day comes, and the day draws to a close when the gospel is preached. This dispensation will come to a close and the opportunity given to souls to come and to be saved will not be any more. Souls that do not know the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour will have to do with God and they will have to do with God as a just and righteous God; and as a judge. God's righteousness means that souls who have not accepted the opportunity to put their faith in the Saviour will need to be confined, and that place is the lake of fire, Rev 20: 14. So that is the first thing from which the soul can be saved, the coming wrath. He can have full faith and confidence in his soul that his place for eternity will be in the full acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ before the Father. What a place, what a message indeed, and what a salvation that souls should be saved by Him from wrath; and it says "in the power of his blood". Oh, what a touching expression! I think one of the most striking references to the blood is with the people of Israel in Egypt, when it was applied to the lintel and on the door-posts. When the angel of God saw the blood he passed over the house and judgment was not exerted in that house, Exod 12: 23. Well, that speaks of the

power of the blood, and the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus, shed once for all. It is able to save all that put their faith and trust in Him; what a power there is in the blood as illustrated for the people of Israel. The angel of God can pass over the house when he sees the blood. What a thing! So it says here "we shall be saved by him from wrath".

But it goes on to say as well, "For if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of his life". We spoke of being justified in the power of His blood, and now saved in the power of His life. There is a practical side too to salvation. There is the fact that the soul can rest assured that he is saved as to the coming wrath, and that his place will be with God in eternity, but there is a practical side to salvation too. As the dispensation goes on, and time goes on, the believer can find too that he can be saved in the power of Christ's life and live here - not any more according to sin and guided by sin and the sinful condition of man, but "in newness of life", chap 6: 4. He is going on in the power of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and knows what it is to live for God. That which the sinner could never do before, that is, to live for God, the saved soul can come to know. I think we have touched something of that, in the practical sense of it, what it is to live for God. What a wondrous matter it is for the sinner who could only sin, who could only do what was hateful to God, that he can now live for God and know what it is to come into relations with divine Persons, come to know the Saviour for himself as a Person. It is not some distant assurance. It is blessed that you should know that you are saved for eternity, but come to know Him in nearness today, as your own Saviour. Know that Person that came here to die, whose love constrained Him to go to the cross, and to go there for me and for you. What a matter it is that you can come to know divine Persons.

That takes me on to the next scripture I read in Corinthians. They are remarkable verses. "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart"; well, that is what God does. His thoughts - and you can read that in Isaiah as well - are so much higher than ours, Isa 55: 9. God's ways are so great, and God has acted from His own side, in His own wisdom according to His own time to bring souls to salvation, to provide a Saviour to bring souls to salvation to secure what is for Himself. So it says here, "which God has prepared for them that love him". What a touching verse it is, what comfort it gives to the soul indeed, to know that God has prepared

things for them that love Him. What a wondrous matter. Do you know that, that God has prepared things for you, that God has a place for you, God has a house and God has a place there? What a wondrous matter it is that God has prepared a place for you. He would like you to take it up today, and to know and to come into the enjoyment of it now. It is not only for a day to come - this will take place without doubt; but that you should know the blessedness of what God has prepared for you today. So it says here, "but God has revealed to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God".

The scripture goes on to speak of the greatness of what the Spirit can do, and that is the next blessing of the gospel, dear friend. You can have the blessed assurance in the blood of the Saviour, that you are saved from your sins and that you can be reconciled with God, fully accepted as the Lord Jesus has been, who is now seated at God's right hand. What a witness to the full acceptance of the work of the Lord Jesus; and that can be your portion. But God desires to bless you with His own Spirit so that you can enter into the enjoyment of what He has prepared for you today. He is available; He is a gift, a gift of God, the Spirit of God. What a wondrous matter that He should have come. I did not read that but it just precedes the passage in Romans 5, that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" v 5. Just ask, and God will gladly give you of His Spirit. You may possess the blessed Holy Spirit, a divine Person, who has taken His abode in the hearts of the saints. He has come from the place of the exaltation of Christ in order to work in the souls of those that have been redeemed. What a wondrous matter. May each one in this room be certain as to the fact that he has received the Holy Spirit, to get to know the service of this wondrous Person for himself, and come into the enjoyment of what God has prepared for him. What power to know there is in the Holy Spirit. It says here, "for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God". What a matter. There is no limit to what the Spirit of God can make you enter in to, and this is the way; it is through Him. We owe all that we can enjoy today to the Holy Spirit and His blessed presence among us and He can lead you on to live for God. What a wondrous matter.

So these are just simple thoughts, dear friends, and I trust that each one would have a fresh impression tonight as to the way God has worked from His own side. God is a just God and a Saviour, and He has provided from His own side a Saviour to meet our state, our sinful state,

and to bring us into what He has prepared for us. He has given His own blessed Son, and He would like to give us of His Spirit too, and He would like us to enter more and more in to these matters, and to take up all that He has prepared for us. May He bless the word.

Port Seton

27th December 2009