

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 68

November 2012

CONTENTS

The Exaltation of Christ

Page 1

Ends and Beginnings

Jim M Macfarlane

Page 15

Truly Alone

Robert D Painter

Page 22

“Save One Loaf”

Peter J Mutton

Page 27

Learning The Christ

Walter M Patterson

Page 29

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Revelation 5: 1-14

RMB I thought we might speak together as to the exaltation of Christ. We know that God has put the Lord Jesus in the very highest place. That is a wonderful thing for our souls to take in. We need to understand, too, that God has a moral reason for everything that He does. I thought it might help us to consider why it is that God has given that place to Jesus. In other words, why is it that He has given that place to one blessed Man and to no-one else? I thought this chapter might help us on that line. The chapter begins with this question, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to break its seals?", but it concludes with glory being given to God - He is the One "that sits upon the throne" - "and to the Lamb". So by the end of the chapter we see that the whole universe is brought to recognise, on the one hand, the place that God has given to Christ, but also the *rightness* of what God has done in giving Him that place; thus there is glory to God as well. I thought that if we worked our way through the chapter we might perhaps cover some of the exercises that are important for us in order that our souls may be established in the *moral reason* why it is that the Lord Jesus, and He alone, is worthy and able to take this place.

FSP In His ways God does not have a succession of people taking over the throne. It has been given to one Man for good.

RMB That is what is arrived at in the first place. John says in verse 4, "I wept much because no one had been found worthy" - "no one". It was not that there was more than one person to choose from. There is no-one else. I suggest that the search that is initiated in the opening verses corresponds to an exercise that we all have to go through, a searching exercise, whereby we come to it in the experience of our souls that there is no-one else.

FSP I was wondering why John, who had these visions, was upset, and why he wanted to know what was in the book.

RMB That is an important question because let us not forget that John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved", John 21: 20. None of the disciples, in that sense, was nearer to the Lord than he was. Yet when it came to this question he did not have the answer. It caused him distress to think that there was no-one. It brings to mind how easily we may get our eye off Christ. All of us here, I suppose, would accept that

God has given Jesus the highest place; but God not only wants us to accept it as a matter of doctrine, He wants us to reach the rightness of it in the experience of our souls. What we often find is that we have had other men, even ourselves, before us, and that has led to disappointment. God would bring us to see that there is only one blessed Man who is worthy and able, and the reason for that.

DAB It is interesting that we have been spending the last few readings here talking about Joseph. I wonder if we see two sides in Joseph. I would be glad if you would say how they come together in your mind. Joseph was loved and distinguished at the beginning of the account. He had the coat of many colours and he meant something to the father, in the same way as the Lord Jesus answered to the Man of God's purpose; but by the end of the account there are additional moral reasons which lie behind his exaltation, and the blessing of the family depended on those. It was not just the father's appreciation being recognised, but those moral reasons also being acknowledged.

RMB I think there is a parallel, because it was made clear to Joseph at the beginning through his dreams that he was going to be put into a place of supremacy. So we can say that, according to God's eternal purpose, it was always in His mind that one blessed Man should occupy the highest place, Eph 1: 9-10. Then, as the sequel with Joseph shows in figure, the Lord reached that place by a suffering pathway. And it was in that suffering pathway that He demonstrated His moral qualification for the place that God had in mind that He should occupy.

DAB There are many references in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus as "the Christ", which seems to perhaps relate to what He is as the Man of God's purpose, as, for example, in Ephesians 1: 10. But in this chapter He is referred to as the "Lamb", which brings out what He has been through to display the moral basis of God's choice.

RMB Yes, indeed.

PMW He is introduced initially as "the lion which is of the tribe of Juda", and then as "a Lamb": two very contrasting thoughts. What would you say as to their order?

RMB Well, if I could repeat something that has been said before: He was as a lion in relation to everything that related to God, but He was a lamb in regard of everything that affected Himself. In relation to the will of God the Lord Jesus was just like "the lion ... which turneth not away

for any”, Prov 30: 30. He was unflinching in the pathway of the will of God, and could not be diverted from it. But in regard of what was directed at Him personally, He bore the sufferings that were heaped upon Him as a lamb.

FSP Would you say strength and meekness are the two things?

PMW Yes; I think they would be the two outstanding characteristics of the symbols that are used. The Lord, as is being said, had the strength of purpose, strength of committal, to carry through everything that was there in God's will. But He subjected Himself in order that the Lord's own meekness might be displayed.

RMB The Lord Jesus is distinctive. He is an incomparable Person. But in this regard He is an example for us. There should be no compromise when it comes to the rights of God, and we need to seek strength to maintain that in practice. But then, what about the lamb-like side? Are we ready to forgo everything that touches us personally? Are we prepared to suffer what may be directed at us personally, content to leave it with God?

PMW Both these sides are testing in our day-to-day lives: to be able to stand for the truth when we need to, but to do it in a spirit that gives a good testimony; but also, as you say, we set aside things that might be for our advantage here in the interests of what is right for the truth.

RMB Mr Darby points out, in note 'h' (to Revelation 5: 6), that the word used for “lamb” is a distinctive one. It only appears in the book of Revelation, and once in the gospel of John. A different Greek word is used elsewhere. As he indicates, the word that is used here is a diminutive: it could be 'a little lamb'. It brings out what the Lord Jesus was as, for example, liable to persecution. Persons were very ready to do things against Him when He was here, but He suffered it. How patient He was in suffering!

AAC The word used here, “worthy”, is at the heart of your exercise, is it not? Attention has been drawn to Joseph, where we have been reading. He says to the house of Pharaoh, when he was going to bury his father, “If now I have found favour in your eyes”, Gen 50: 4. You wonder at the request, given the favour that Pharaoh had towards him. You think of the greatness of all that Joseph had accomplished in those years. You may say it was almost a strange question to ask, because Pharaoh would have been so pleased with all that Joseph had done. I

just wonder whether you could help us as to this word “worthy”. It is not often used in everyday language. There are a lot of young ones here. Help us to have some view of the Father's appreciation of this.

RMB Well, there are two words that are brought together, “worthy” and “able”. The question was raised initially, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to break its seals?”. Then it says, “And no one was able in the heaven, or upon the earth, or underneath the earth, to open the book, or to regard it”. We speak of moral qualification, and what we mean is that honour in God's world depends on moral worth. A high place in this world is often accompanied by moral corruption. Sadly we have seen that increasingly in recent years. We have to speak respectfully of men in high places because of the offices they occupy, but often they have shown that they are not morally equal to exercising their office. Here we have the complete contrast, where greatness in God's world goes with moral worth.

AAC Can we consider this without holiness? Is this not right at the heart of it, moral perfection?

RMB I think holiness is one of the chief aspects of it.

AAC And that is an absolute term, is it not?

RMB It is when applied to Christ. But tell us what it is.

AAC I struggle to think of it as a question of grades. The Lord Jesus was holy. He was perfect in every respect.

RMB One of the things that has been said about holiness is that it is a perfect shrinking from evil and a delighting in what is good.

What do the brethren say about this book that is referred to?

DAB What is in it? What is it about?

RMB I suggest that it includes the title deeds to the earth. It was always in God's mind that man should have dominion. It was not His mind, for example, to give that to angels. The question is: who is great enough to take possession of the earth for God? God committed dominion to Adam: he disqualified himself. He gave government to Noah: he disqualified himself. And so it has been down through the centuries. We are left with the question: who is great enough to answer to God's thought and take possession of the earth for Him?

DAB I am glad of that. I was going to give a different answer, but the

Lord has laid claim to everything. It is His, and His kingdom is universal. Corrupt things have come into His kingdom, but you could not say the kingdom itself is corrupted. More than that, as we see through this book, and as we see also in Matthew 13, the Lord has the power and the right to remove the corruption from His kingdom; and that is because it is all His.

RMB The rest of the Revelation shows how He is going to do that. He has title to the earth, but things have come in, and things have been set up, which are contrary to His mind. Before He can take possession of it according to His mind, He must clear it in judgment.

DAB It has been pointed out that the parable which is called the parable of the darnel (Matt 13: 24-30, 36-43) is really a foreshadowing of this book. A man owned the field; that is the Lord. He had the title deeds, as you say. He planted a crop in it for His own pleasure, and then wicked men came and planted something else to choke what He had planted. The bondmen ask if they should try to do something about this, and He says they cannot. We see in that parable and in this book that He employs angels to cleanse the kingdom so that He can come into it in glory. Is that right? It is helpful to see, as John found, and as the Lord teaches in that parable, that these things are beyond men to do. The cleansing of the kingdom and the establishment of His title and His rights have to be entirely from Him and from heaven. Is that right?

RMB Yes.

GHH Why do you emphasise the dominion over the earth?

RMB Do you think that is right?

GHH I think so. I am just interested in it. There is “spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies” (Eph 6: 12), for instance, but could you say why you are specifically referring to earth?

RMB I think it is the earth that is especially in mind in the book of The Revelation. The Revelation shows us how there is going to be a great unravelling of the tremendous chaos that evil has brought in. And the universal dominion of the Son of man will be displayed on the earth. God has in mind to subject the habitable world to a Man. That is the first thing to understand. You might say that angels would have been very efficient. But He had in mind that dominion should be committed into the hands of a Man, and the question is, 'Who is worthy and able to take that place?'. My point is this: God does not simply put Christ in that

place by an arbitrary decree, but He wants to bring us to see the rightness of it. In other words, the first lesson is that no one else can occupy that place. This great search is made. You think of some of the outstanding men there have been in the history of time: why was it that none of them could have been chosen?

PFE You spoke about “worthy” and “able”; it also says, “or to regard it”.

RMB Well, that brings up another point. What came out in the garden of Eden is that man cannot touch these questions of good and evil without being defiled by them. He cannot even regard it.

PFE I was just thinking of that. It is not that you can even look at it from afar off. There is nothing you can do. It just shows the weakness of the creature.

RMB We all accept, as a matter of teaching, that every other man has been removed in the death of Christ; but it seems to me that it is a great thing actually to arrive at that through experience. To illustrate, we might come across a man who has a very able mind naturally, and we say, 'That is just what we need'. We might come across a man who is a very powerful speaker and say, 'If only he were preaching the gospel'. What is it that we are admiring? It is the first man. We have to arrive at the character of man that God would exalt. There have been some very great men, some outstanding men, but “no one had been found”. What is the character of the man that God would exalt, and have I reached that in the experience of my soul?

PFE That is why we have a Lamb here.

RMB That is the point, “a Lamb standing, as slain”. Outwardly it was a picture of weakness and defeat. But the very thing which appeared to be such a defeat to the world was what qualified Christ to take the highest place in the sight of God.

RMF So in Matthew 11 the Lord invites people to Himself and presents Himself as “meek and lowly in heart”, v 29. Is that really what we find attractive as having judged the first order of man in ourselves?

RMB Naturally we do not find it attractive. Men would not appoint a meek person to a high position, would they, whether it be in government or business? A meek person is not the kind of man they would choose. I think the process that John goes through in this chapter is to bring us

to see what true moral worth is in the sight of God, and to value it.

DAB Would it be right to say that all God's ways are applied to vindicating the choice He made of Christ? It is a huge plan when you think of God's ways and the complexity and immensity of them, but He has taken the greatest pleasure in the way that their unfolding has vindicated the choice He made.

RMB Now, it seems to me, that God is not content simply with having Christ in that place, but He wants to bring us to own the rightness of it.

DAB This may relate to an alternative view of this book. You say that this book includes the title deeds of the earth, but we also all have a story, and there are problems in our own lives that we cannot settle. There are fields in various parts of our lives that we would not know how to deal with. How many of us have tried to deal with them and, in the search for someone to solve the problems, we have not looked beyond ourselves. We have to acknowledge that, just as He alone is able for this immense unravelling you referred to, so He alone, at God's appointment on moral grounds, is able for the challenges in my own soul and my own life.

RMB Well, may that lay hold of our souls more!

JSH I was going to ask, especially thinking of our younger ones here today, whether you could say something as to the "Lamb standing, as slain".

RMB The fact that He is "standing, as slain" shows that He is viewed with His death as accomplished. But the point here is that it was through His precious sufferings and death that Jesus has demonstrated beyond doubt that He is worthy to take this place.

JSH That is very helpful. I was contemplating it and thinking that, naturally, we might wonder at this expression. It shows the victory that He has won, and how worthy He now is to be there as the One who can open this book.

RMB Verse 6 would exercise us to seek to see things from God's point of view because outwardly it was a picture of defeat. Outwardly it seemed as though the world had got rid of Christ. But the very thing that appeared to be such a defeat was what qualified Him to take the place of God's appointment. That shows us - and I say this especially for the benefit of our younger brethren - that things are not as they

appear in the world. We need God's help (and He is ready to give it to us) to bring us round to see things as He sees them, and to value what He values.

PMW Reflecting on the seals, I wondered if you could say something about them. Seals are not used very much nowadays, but in the day that this writing took place, the seal could only be opened either by the sealer, or by the addressee who was authorised to open the seal. Here we have One who is permitted to open the seal. What would you say as to the sealing, and why are there seven, not just one, on the book?

RMB Well, the only thought I had was that it shows that the contents of the book were completely hidden. That it was sealed with seven seals shows that there was no way, apart from this, that the contents of the book could be disclosed.

PMW If the book had had only one seal it could have been broken and everything would have been opened up, but it is done in a sequence here with a distinct separation between each of the revelations of what is contained within the seals.

RMB There are open books in the Bible. There are things which God opens, which He brings out for all to see. But until this point the contents of this book were hidden.

RMF Can you say something as to “the prayers of the saints” coming in at this point, in verse 8?

RMB What were you thinking about them?

RMF I was just thinking that it would indicate, at least, that our prayers are not forgotten, are they?

RMB That is true, although it is important to understand that the saints that are referred to here are those who will be on the earth between the rapture and the appearing. We shall be with the Lord. The saints of the assembly are included within the twenty-four elders. The twenty-four elders represent all the heavenly saints, who include, but are not limited to, the assembly. It is a very touching suggestion that, in some way, we shall handle those prayers. It speaks of “golden bowls, full of incenses, which are the prayers of the saints”. It does not say that the twenty-four elders offer the prayers, but they have them in these golden bowls. I think it suggests that the heavenly saints are to

enter sympathetically into what the people of God on earth will be passing through during that period.

RMF I think that is helpful. I was going to ask too about the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, but what you have said has helped in relation to that as well.

RMB One thing I could perhaps add, as to this reference to “the prayers of the saints”, is that I wonder whether we think as much as we ought to of what those who will be coming after us in the testimony, after the assembly has gone, will be called upon to pass through. It is one of our privileges as belonging to the assembly, not only to be able to look back, but also to look forward. And I think we need to enter in feelingly to what the beloved people of God are going to suffer during that period.

DAB At the same time there is nothing in this book that does not have a present moral bearing. I wondered, in relation to our brother's question, if we maybe need some instruction about how we pray, and the sense of support there was amongst the twenty-four elders for what individuals are passing through. It links the prayer meeting to the private exercises of people who may be in the company or may not even be there. But then also it seems that to have in our spirits that the answer to every prayer is the exaltation of Christ, would help to direct our hearts, as Paul says, into the love of God, 2 Thess. 3: 5.

RMB Well, this verse suggests that heavenly saints have the capacity for that. Those who have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit should have the capacity to enter feelingly into the exercises of others. The prayers are described as “incenses” here. Heavenly saints have the ability to appreciate what may be offered to God in the way of prayer. It may be something that is difficult to express because of what is carried in a person's spirit, but heavenly saints recognise that it is incense.

DAB May I go back to what you said about the twenty-four elders? The Lord will claim all that are “the Christ's” at what we call the rapture, 1 Cor 15: 23. The centre-piece of that gathering is the church, but it is not limited to the church. It encompasses every blood-bought saint back to Abel, and they all enter into a heavenly position. The twenty-four elders cover the diversity of those people. So, for example, going back to what you were saying, Abraham prayed for his brother Lot, and that is this kind of character of things. He had access to the presence of God as we will, but he was able to pray for someone who had a position

in the world under judgment.

RMB It requires spirituality to look beyond one's own needs and to enter into the needs and exercises of others. Intercession is not in view in this scripture, but to be an intercessor is a very great thing.

DAB It is not as if, as we were saying, we have the answers, because John did not have the answers, did he? He could still hold one of these bowls. He could still associate himself with the prayer that only Christ can answer.

RMB The Lord is referred to in verse 6 as “having seven horns”, which we understand refers to His perfect power, “and seven eyes”, which is perfect discernment. Nothing escapes His eye. That is another thing that we need constantly to bear in mind.

FSP We could not see what is in the book, but it does say in verse 1, “on the back”, so perhaps that bit was visible. I was wondering what it might have said. I also thought the point was good that man could not even look at the book, let alone open it.

RMB The opening of the seals commences with the next chapter. One by one the seals are opened, and the judgments are unfolded. That begins the process by which the Lamb will, to put it simply, sort everything out in the earth with a view to establishing His wonderful reign over it, which will be manifested in the world to come.

FSP We referred to the 'new song' this morning and we have here, in verse 9, “And they sing a new song”, and I just noted it is very close to talking about their prayers.

RMB This song is celebrating the work of redemption. One of the chief things which makes the Lord Jesus qualified for the place that God has given to Him is that He is the one who has accomplished redemption. He is the only one who could. Perhaps we should ask some of our younger brothers what redemption means. I remember Mr Eddy Walkinshaw making a very simple distinction. He said that redemption means being *bought* back; reconciliation means being *brought* back. We belonged to God in the first place because He is our Creator; but we became lost to Him through sin. Redemption means that a price had to be paid in order that we might be bought back to God. We have reference to the price in verse 9: “Thou . . . hast redeemed to God, by thy blood”.

DAB It is important that it does not just mean '*put back*'. It is not as if we are all restored to the condition in which Adam was in the garden of Eden, are we? Having been bought with precious blood, we can now be put on the ground of God's purpose, can we not? You might say that was only possible because this price had been paid.

RMB One of the things I think we are to be impressed with in verses 9 and 10 is the *scope* of redemption. It is not we who are specifically in mind here. They sing, "thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them" - not us - "to our God kings and priests". They are celebrating the scope of what has been accomplished through redemption. You think, dear brethren, of the greatness of one blessed Man whose precious blood is sufficient to redeem to God "out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation". The blood of one blessed Man was sufficient as the redemption price to buy back to God millions and millions of precious souls.

DAB It stands in contrast to Exodus 19. The people of Israel had been redeemed by the blood of the passover lamb and God said, "Ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests", v 6. That was just one nation, Israel; but the work of Christ embraces "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation", and they are actually brought into something much better even than Israel was going into then. It shows that Israel was just a foretaste of the magnificent fulness of what the work of Christ was going to accomplish.

FSP So when we sing hymn 156 on the Lord's day morning, we are exalting the Lord, because it includes what does not only apply to us.

DAB I think that is good. It is helpful to see all our blessings as an occasion to glorify the Lord.

RMF Do you think too, that the other side of redemption, which perhaps we sometimes miss out, is that having been bought back, we are therefore divine property? That puts the responsibility on us because we are not free to do as we would do otherwise.

RMB In verses 9 and 10 it is not exactly our blessing that is in mind but what has been secured for God. "Redeemed to God", it says in verse 9, and then "made them to our God kings and priests", v 10. What would you say about being "made . . . kings and priests"?

RMF It is interesting the way it is put, as you have pointed out. It is

“to our God”. As natural men we would like to think this puts us on some kind of pedestal, but that is not the point. This is really God's side. We have been talking about prayers, and I have been impressed recently as to whether we pray for our own benefit or from God's perspective. We might want things differently, but how is God seeing things? Is that not important? But help us more as to these “kings and priests”.

RMB I think we get some impression of the saints as “kings” in the previous chapter, verse 4: “And round the throne twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones twenty-four elders sitting, clothed with white garments; and on their heads golden crowns”. It is remarkable, is it not? There it is the twenty-four elders. This is wider. But I think it conveys to us the place that the saints will have as reigning with Christ.

RMF I have just noticed that note 'I' (to Revelation 5: 10) links it to the first chapter of this book, “made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father: to him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen”, v 6.

RMB That was what God had in mind. It is what He had in mind even in regard to the children of Israel. Exodus 19: 6 says, “and ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation”. But that never worked out in practice because, as we know from the history, due to the failure of the people, only one family within one particular tribe from among them became the priests. But what God had in mind was a kingdom where everyone in it was a priest. Is that right?

DAB As I understand it, yes. And that is God's plan. The unravelling of the ways of the world is one thing, but the successful achievement of God's purpose is another; and the worthy One is the only Person able to accomplish either.

RMB So, if “kings” refers to the special place the saints have as reigning with Christ; “priests”, do you think, brings out the special privilege that they have to draw near to God?

DAB Yes, and as chapter 1, which was referred to, brings out, that access and that title are blood-based.

RMB It links with what you said before, that redemption is not to put things back to where they were because God had never had this before. You might say, 'How could He take lost and guilty sinners that were deserving only of death and judgment, and make them fit to share in Christ's government and have the special privilege of drawing near to

God?'.

DAB To put it simply, Adam was not a king or priest in the garden - he was a gardener; but what he did made it morally impossible to promote him to such a status. It is only the intervention of God in Christ that has allowed God to go on with that thought.

AAC Those that sing a new song do so "because thou hast been slain". This is why He is able to open the seals, because He has "been slain". Just to go back to verse 5, the elder says, "the lion which is of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, has overcome so as to open the book, and its seven seals". Can you say something about that, please?

RMB Well, I think it is a precious allusion to the sufferings of Christ. In spite of all that was ranged against Him by Satan, and the way that he worked on the hearts and minds of men, the Lord Jesus overcame everything.

AAC That helps. I was thinking of the holy strength that there was in the Lord Jesus. He was able for all that was set against Him. And it was done, in a sense, in quietness, and yet all overcome.

RMB How patient He was in suffering, and how meekly He went to the cross!

PMW If you think of the earlier references to overcoming in the addresses to the assemblies, would this draw together all of those into this single Person? We overcome through Him and what He has overcome.

AAC Is He not a wonderful example to us in that, as in everything? We may have little to overcome; and yet what He has accomplished, in that spirit which we have been speaking of, is very wonderful.

RMB At the end of John 16 the Lord Jesus says: "In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world", v 33.

DAB We know from the way the band fell back (John 18: 6) that the Lord could have so addressed the opposition that it would have melted away, but He allowed it to range itself all together against Him: sin, man, death, judgment, God's wrath, all those things came together, and He overcame.

RMB Well, I trust that we can begin to see why it is that God has so

exalted Him. This song is especially the song of the redeemed. No-one can sing like the redeemed. The redeemed are sweet singers. They have much to sing about. But we see from verse 11 onwards that every creature is brought into this great response, to recognise Christ and the place that God has given to Him.

DAB The redeemed do not wait to sing until all the problems have been solved, do they? The singing is not at the end of this book. But there is enough for a song in identifying the One who can resolve them, and is worthy to do so.

RMB When we take account of what Christ has accomplished, and of the place that God has given to Him, we can say that these things are as good as settled. Of course, it will take time to work out in practice, but there is no question that these things are going to be settled to the satisfaction of God. In verse 12 it is, "Worthy is the Lamb". They are ready to declare the worthiness of the Lamb personally. But in verse 13, it says, "To him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb". So it is not only a matter of giving glory to the Lamb, but glory is also given to God. I think that involves the recognition, by the whole universe, of how right it is that God should have exalted Christ as He did.

London

11th March 2012

Key to Initials (London unless otherwise stated):-

R M Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr; A A Croot; P F Eagle; R M Fry;
G H Hurt; J S Hutson; F S Pittman; P M White

ENDS AND BEGINNINGS

Jim M Macfarlane

Acts: 2: 14-17(to “all flesh”), 22-25 (to “before me”), 31-41; 3: 1-8, 12-19; 4: 1-14

I would like to say a few words about ends and beginnings. That might sound a rather odd way to put things, because, in the usual course of events, beginnings come before ends. However, I would like to speak about the end of one arrangement and the beginning of another, because I think that we get a view of this in Peter's preaching in Acts 2. For each of us, individually, there must be a termination of one course, involving a resolution which is satisfactory to God, and the beginning of another. God gave indication in the Old Testament, over the centuries that preceded the incoming of Jesus Christ, that His salvation would involve the end of one arrangement and the beginning of a completely new one. You can see this, for example, in the history of the children of Israel. Exodus gives some detail of the way in which they had suffered under Pharaoh's oppressive regime. The taskmasters of Egypt were all that they had known until the passage of the Red Sea but, when they emerged from the passage through the sea, they could sing of a prospect as great as being brought into the place of Jehovah's dwelling: a decisive end and wonderful new prospect! The Red Sea is a symbol of the death of the Lord Jesus and the song celebrates a very full salvation through His death. The people of God were delivered from all that Egypt represents and brought on to new ground, where there is freedom from Pharaoh's oppression and also from dependence on him. The Israelites' lives had been sustained by what Egypt produced and they were brought into a wilderness, which would appear unable to sustain them in the smallest degree. They would learn to live exclusively on what God provided, a new principle of complete dependence on God, with all the blessing associated with it. Throughout the Old Testament there are examples of God's intervention to bring situations of hopeless weakness and failure to an end, and to bring in new arrangements of blessing by His sovereign mercy and grace.

These interventions in the Old Testament were symbolic of what God had in mind for the whole of humanity. The passages which we have read are from three of Peter's preachings at the beginning of Christianity. In chapter 2, Peter speaks about the end which is marked

by the death of Jesus. This is, morally, the end of everything that related to one kind of man. Peter speaks about the circumstances in which Jesus had died and the way in which those who were listening had been involved in this. He refers to the life of Jesus and talks about the impact of His life among them, “a man borne witness to by God to you by works of power and wonders and signs, which God wrought by him in your midst, as yourselves know”. He was talking to people who had known directly the healing and blessing of the presence of the Lord Jesus among them. These, however, were also immediately responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus: “ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain”. Peter says to them, 'You got the blessings which Jesus brought, and you crucified Him!'. What a reflection of the unspeakable perversity of man; and how necessary that God should bring an end to man of this kind. In spite of the manifest power with which Peter spoke, there were still those who resisted: “Be saved from this perverse generation”.

The death of Jesus involved much more, however, than the depth of evil in humanity. He was “given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”; and the satisfaction of God meant that a promise could be fulfilled: “For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God may call”. How grateful we should be that for the reference to those who are afar off. I think that means that we are justified in proclaiming the word here in Kirkcaldy, where we are all afar off, not only in geographical terms but also in terms of two millennia of time. Everyone here is afar off. I would ask you, 'Do you have the sense of the call of God?'. I would desire that God might be able to use what is said to stir concern as to this and to bring you into the company of those who accept the word.

There are two strong elements in this preaching by Peter. One of these is that the power which was evident was the power of God by virtue of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The other is the resurrection of Jesus. Peter speaks firstly about the advent of the Holy Spirit because of the question, “What would this mean?”, v 12. The power that was so evident was the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit of God. It was a matter of surpassing wonder that God should have been manifested in flesh in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a measure of God's commitment to mankind. He confirms this commitment by sending a second divine Person, not this time in the way in which He came in the

Person of Jesus, but as indwelling men, according to the evidence before their very eyes. Peter's address deals firstly with this evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit because it was the pressing matter of the moment. In the order of things in the ways of God, however, the gift of the Holy Spirit is the consequence of the glorification of Jesus, following His resurrection and ascension.

The significance of the resurrection of Jesus is that God has been satisfied in respect of the issue of sin. In the second half of his address, Peter refers to the words of David in Psalm 16, and the point of what Peter has to say is that David's words had prophetic reference to Someone else. David had died and been buried and a monument had been set up for him. He remained in death and Peter's point is that David was speaking as a prophet about the resurrection of the Christ. Much later, Peter wrote, in reference to Jesus, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. Paul says that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6: 23), and also that "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us", 2 Cor 5: 21. Sin was righteously removed by Jesus' death and His resurrection is the great witness to this. The sin which had been put upon Him no longer attached to Him and, by His resurrection, the benefit of this is communicated to man. You can know salvation from sins and can be brought into a position where sin is not an issue between you and God. It is not simply that you can have reassurance that your sins are forgiven as often as you might need it but, rather, that sin is put completely out of the way. That is the full measure of salvation that is spoken of here. Peter speaks of the healed man in chapter 3, saying, "the faith which is by him has given him this complete soundness in the presence of you all", v 16. The word we preach offers, by faith in Christ, a complete soundness, not only "in the presence of you all" but extending even to perfect suitability for the presence of God. Those who are justified can stand there.

The powerful testimony of the moment was that Jesus had risen from the dead and that those who stood with Peter were witnesses of His resurrection. More than this, He had "been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which ye behold and hear". Those who were listening to Peter could not deny the power among them of the Holy Spirit of God. God was distributing among men the blessings of the accomplishments of Jesus. It is wonderful that God should have become manifest in flesh in Jesus Christ! It is beyond comprehension

what He accomplished for the satisfaction of God; and equally profound that another divine Person should be sent from heaven to promote its blessed consequences for mankind! To whom did Peter address this immediately? It was to those who had been personally involved in the crucifixion of Jesus. This is the kind of God that we have. This is a measure of the favour of His disposition, that those who crucified His Son are those to whom the first offer of salvation is given. The word that was addressed to these dreadful men is addressed to you tonight.

The word came, initially, as a strong reproach. "Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ". "Ye" is emphasised. Peter did not relieve them of responsibility but he did proceed to indicate how they could be the first beneficiaries of the salvation which is in Jesus Christ. First of all, they had to be convicted. "And having heard it they were pricked in heart". Can you imagine how they must have felt? Their purpose was to remove Jesus by killing Him. Where did His resurrection leave anyone with a purpose of this kind? This triumph was a fearful reproach on those who had crucified Him. The extent of what was involved in being "pricked in heart" we can scarcely imagine. What was the extremity of their desolation when they said, "What shall we do, brethren?". Peter's immediate answer is, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ". Repentance means that I renounce all that has gone before and I have a direction that is completely different. You might feel that if what has ruled your life until now has to be renounced, then you are going to have to give up a great deal. Do you think that these men listening to Peter viewed it in that way? They had had it put upon their consciences with such force that they were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus and Peter was telling them that this awful burden could be removed simply by repentance. What immense relief they must have felt. The opportunity to repent became a provision of surpassing blessing. Peter adds, "and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ".

We might turn, for a moment, to the way in which Paul spoke about the glad tidings which he had preached in Ephesus, in chapter 20 of this book. He testified "to both Jews and Greeks repentance towards God", as we have here, "and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ", v 21. I think that this is the way in which the word of the glad tidings comes to us. I would suggest that Peter's reference to baptism may have had

particular reference to the Jews - "men of Judea" - in his audience. For them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ was, effectively, to put them on ground other than their Jewish heritage and to embrace Jesus Christ by faith. Salvation is in His Name, as Peter announces clearly in chapter 4: 12. We might not consider ourselves to be sinners such as those who crucified Jesus but sin of any kind makes us unsuitable for God. Restoration to the blessing of God's favour comes by repentance towards Him and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the beginning of something new for every soul who embraces the word. This is a fresh beginning and one which has no end. We have spoken of the experience of God's people at the Red Sea and the new prospect which was opened there. It spoke symbolically of deliverance by the death of Christ. It gave an aspect of the principle of the way of salvation that is fully declared in the word of the glad tidings.

We read the section at the beginning of chapter 3 that refers to the man who was healed in order to give the context of Peter's next two preachings. The man was healed with the words "rise up and walk" "in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaræan". While the healed man was relieved from a condition from which he had suffered from birth and became a joyful worshipper, I think that the point of this act of healing was to give fresh testimony to the power of the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaræan, in which it had been accomplished. The power of this Name is at the heart of Peter's next two preachings. Peter addresses the people in chapter 3 and their rulers in chapter 4. As in his earlier word, he reproaches the people severely: "whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when *he* had judged that he should be let go". By any standard of justice, Jesus should have been released. His reproach continues for another two verses. In verse 19, he offers a way of salvation for them, but conviction of sin must come first. God's reply to the evil action of man was to raise Jesus from among the dead. The insistence on the resurrection is emerging as a fundamental feature of the word of the glad tidings. Testimony to the resurrection is one of the key themes in the book of the Acts, and it presented difficulty. The people of Athens listened to Paul until he spoke about the resurrection (chap 17: 32), and Paul has to ask Agrippa, "Why should it be judged a thing incredible in your sight if God raises the dead?", Acts 26: 8. To anyone who might express difficulty about the resurrection of Jesus, the reply is simple: there are witnesses to it. Peter states emphatically at the end of verse 15 that he and those with him were witnesses of Jesus in resurrection. We have referred

already to the “complete soundness” in the lame man, who had been “made strong”; and this comprehensive healing was “by faith in his name”, and “the faith which is by him”. Jesus is the antecedent to those two references to faith. As Peter preaches the word a second time, having pressed the need for repentance, he proclaims the other great theme of the word of the glad tidings: salvation is by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The characteristics of the new beginning are emerging and the transformation associated with it. It is complete soundness. It is not simply a way of dealing with the consequences of yesterday's follies or a solution to tomorrow's problems. If Peter reproached the people earlier in order to bring conviction, he now addresses to them a word which reflects the grace of God: “I know that ye did it in ignorance, as also your rulers”. Again, in line with his first preaching, he offers the provision of repentance, with the immediate prospect of “the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”. There is the prospect of immediate blessing, but sins must be removed. The preacher cannot avoid the issue of sins. He has to say to those who are listening that, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom.3: 23), but their sins can be blotted out completely by repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter's third word is to the rulers. They are compelled to ask, “In what power or in what name have ye done this?” What was the authority for this action and where did the power come from? Evidently, Peter and those with him were seen as “unlettered and uninstructed men”. They had not this power of themselves and, when the rulers put the question as they do, they open the door for Peter to say exactly what he wanted to say to them. “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we this day are called upon to answer as to the good deed done to the infirm man”. How representative of Him who went about “doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil”, Acts 10: 38. That is what Jesus did and His servant is operating in the same way. The rulers wish to know by whose power and authority this was accomplished. “Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaræan, whom ye have crucified, whom God has raised from among the dead,” - notice how these two things are put together - “by *him* this man stands here before you sound in body”. How must they have felt to be in the presence of the consequences of God's having raised Jesus from among the dead, when they had crucified Him? Peter presses the reproach: “*He* is the

stone which has been set at nought by you the builders, which is become the corner stone.” These words were addressed directly to those who had the greatest responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus; and what is so striking is that Peter proceeds immediately to speak - still to those same people - of salvation. Salvation is proclaimed to them “in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved”. This word remains today. There are those who say that there are all sorts of approaches to the knowledge of God from different cultures and different parts of the world. We are told that we are all taking parallel routes to heaven. Not according to Peter's word here, at a time, when opinions on God were as numerous as they are today. “For neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved.”

May the power of that word come to each one of us and may we have a fresh sense of the magnificence of God's way of salvation.

Kirkcaldy

25th December 2011

TRULY ALONE

Robert D Painter

John 16: 28-33

Mark 15: 33-39

John 5: 1-9

Psalms 68: 4-6

The Lord Jesus knew what it was to be lonely. I want to speak tonight to those who may be feeling lonely, about the Lord Jesus as One who understands and has the answer to the loneliness of the heart that is without salvation. A few weeks back we had a preaching here reading from Isaiah 53, about the Man of sorrows. The verse that speaks of that says, "He is despised and left alone of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief", v 3. What loneliness the Lord Jesus knew in His pathway here! We have twice today had reference made to the words:

Love in thy lonely life
Of sorrow here below; (Hymn 235).

It has encouraged me to speak of the loneliness of Jesus, and how it results in the blessing of those that are lonely.

You might think that you are not lonely. There are plenty of persons around you and a lot going on, and so on. You may not realise where you stand in relation to your soul and God. In relation to the salvation of your soul, you are very much on your own, because it is only you that can receive the Lord Jesus to be your Saviour. We are very privileged to be surrounded by those that love the Lord Jesus and that would encourage us to look to Him as the answer for all our need, but, in order for us to receive blessing from Him, it means that we have to be alone, and alone with Him.

Humanly, I do not think anybody has ever been as alone as the Lord Jesus has been. He knew what true loneliness was, and that is what I want to start with. He was on a pathway here on this earth; He had persons around Him, crowds followed Him, and yet there was none, no man, with whom He could have true, close companionship. The reason for it is that He was a Man of a different order from every one of us, a blessed sinless Man. He was truly unique; He took part in flesh and blood in a unique way, as sin apart; and no other man could be associated with that perfection of the Person of the Lord Jesus.

Every one of us is marked by sin. In a certain way there is companionship with every other man, because we have all sinned. We all come into the same category because we are sinners. The Lord Jesus was never in that category. He could not be. "In him sin is not" (1 John 3: 5); so He was alone. No other man could understand the feelings of Jesus; no one could fully enter into them because He felt them in a way that no other man could feel them. His feelings in relation to sin, His feelings in relation to the condition in which men were, He was alone in them. None could enter into those feelings of His in relation to the state of man as away from God, and the feelings of God in relation to it. He alone could enter into those feelings because they were from the heart of God Himself, and no one else could touch that.

When He was here He was separate from everything that was marked by sin. He could not be contaminated by it. He could not be associated with it. He was by necessity separated from it. But not only that, men did not want Him. As referred to in Isaiah, it speaks of "left alone of men". There was one time when He had healed a man: you will remember that there was a herd of swine feeding there on the mountain, and the demons that had been in this man went and entered into the swine, and the swine rushed down the slope into the sea and were drowned. The persons they belonged to, and the persons of that country, came to the Lord Jesus and they begged Him to go away. They did not want Him in their country; they did not have room for Him, Matt 8: 30-34. That is just how the world is now. It has no room for Jesus; they have no room for One who can bring in blessing through His perfection and power because it exposes what man is. It deprives him of what he puts all his confidence in, like man's commercial system, and his independence of God, and all these things that man takes such pride in. He may not necessarily put a name to it in that way, but man has no room for the Lord Jesus. He has no room for God. If the Lord Jesus were here now, as far as this world is concerned, He would be as lonely as He was before as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". It is no different now, and you are no different either. If you do not know the Lord Jesus as Saviour, you are no different from the world that will have nothing to do with Him. The Lord Jesus went through - we would speak very carefully - supreme testing in His circumstances, alone. There were those that had been with Him, as I said, and although they were gladly with Him, there was still that distance that marked Him off, separate from everything else.

He tells them, where we read in John, that they would be “scattered, each to his own”, and leave Him alone. What was going to happen was that the matter of sin was going to be taken up by this One who was the lonely Man of sorrows, and He says, “ye ... shall leave me alone”. The hymn says:

None could follow there, blest Saviour,
When Thou didst for sins atone; (Hymn 298).

There was none that could follow Him. Peter, we read of; he would have followed but he would have followed in a way that was neither for his own blessing nor for the glory of God. He could not follow. None of us could have followed. None of us in our own strength could follow Jesus, even now. But at that time the Lord Jesus was going a way that no one else could go. He must go alone. He was going on to Calvary's cross. We have read of Calvary's cross, and we have sung-

On that cross alone, forsaken,
Where no pitying eye was found; (Hymn 302).

Think of that! This was that lonely Man of sorrows, now to be the Victim, the Sacrifice for sins before God. Only He could go that way and He must be alone. He was going to be alone before God, and He feels those circumstances in a way that we could never enter into. He gives this cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He was left entirely alone. Our hymn says:

Did Thy God e'en then forsake Thee,
Hide His face from Thy deep need!

Oh the loneliness of Calvary! Jesus was there, alone, bearing my sins “in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2: 24), alone, such loneliness as you and I would never need to know, to be without God. He knew the awfulness of being alone under the judgment of God, when God drew a veil of darkness over that scene. He anticipated it in Gethsemane, the awfulness of what it would mean to be alone under the judgment of God, and yet He said, “not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22: 42). It was obedience full, unquestioned. I believe that there was a joy in the heart of the Lord Jesus despite that, because it was “in view of the joy lying before him” that He “endured the cross”, Heb 12: 2. He had in view not loneliness but companionship; He had in view the securing of persons that were sinners but, as redeemed by His precious blood, were being made suitable to be the “companions of the Christ”, Heb 3: 14. He had that joy lying before Him and He “endured the cross, having

despised the shame”, but the reality of it was He was there on that cross alone. He went that way and He bore that judgment; He took it all upon Himself. Oh, the loneliness of Calvary! I do not think we can understand it. We cannot dwell on it enough in one sense, but He is not there now. We sang in our hymn:

Gazing on Thee, Lord, in glory,

That is where He is now He is no longer alone in the darkness of Calvary's cross; He has come through triumphant. He bore the judgment and He expired: as it says, “Jesus ... gave up the ghost”, Matt 27: 50. He can speak to His Father (Luke 23: 46), and so lay down His life in communion with Him (see JND's Letters vol 3 p196). The forsaking is passed; now He has been through death, and He has come out the other side victorious; and tonight He would seek those who are lonely and lost, those who have no hope and no helper. He has come to be the Helper. He is the Hope; He is the way of salvation.

Think of that man lying by the pool of Bethesda; thirty-eight years he had been there on his own. He knew loneliness to an extent perhaps that none of us have. Sometimes when we are away on business, and maybe in a foreign country, and there is no one around that we know, we can be quite lonely, but this man for thirty-eight years had been there with nobody to help him. The Lord Jesus knew he was there. The Lord Jesus knew his loneliness and his helplessness and He came in to help him, to bless him. Now, this man is a picture of what every one of us is like. We do not have any strength. It is interesting to think that he was in this place where there were five porches. I think that that would suggest the weakness of man, human weakness, our inability to do anything for ourselves, and certainly it was true of this man. What drew me to the scripture was that he said, “I have not a man”. 'I have no-one; I am on my own; I am lonely'. Well, the Lord Jesus came to save just such. We used to have a hymn -

Art thou lonely, heavy laden?
Has thy heart despondent grown?
Seems thy path to lead in darkness,
Where no ray of hope is known?

That man would probably have felt like that. There was no hope for him and a Friend appears, a Man who is prepared to be a help to him. The Lord Jesus would come into your life like that at the present time. Maybe you are feeling very lonely. Maybe you feel that no one is there

to help, no one knows, but Jesus knows, and Jesus comes, and He would help dispel the loneliness.

Do you know what He does? He not only blesses you, and forgives your sins, but He sets you with others who love Him. The psalmist speaks of God setting the solitary in families, Ps 68: 6 AV. God has no intention whatsoever that persons who are saved by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus should be left alone, but that they should be set together, they should be sharing together in the great things of the One that has died to save them; so "God setteth the solitary in families". They are persons of that character, solitary persons, but they are brought together, and that is just like the saints are at the present time, persons that have been brought together by God. The word of God comes to each one of us individually, and it meets us in our need, and God would have us set together as those that can share the great things of God. There is no thought at all of a lonely Christian in divine things. Even if you are on your own, by the Spirit you can touch something of the fellowship of God's Son. It is a wonderful thing that God has this in mind, and in a day to come He will have all those that have been redeemed set together in His presence, to be occupied with Him eternally.

I would just ask you, dear hearer, have you started on the road? Have you come to know the One who would meet you in your loneliness, meet your need, and then set you together with those that love Him? May each one of us know what it is to have our sins forgiven, and may we know too what it is to be set together in families, and enjoy the blessings and the great things of the God who has come out in this wonderful way, who has sent His only begotten Son into the world, to actually taste the awfulness of what it was to be totally alone, in order that you may never have to be alone! May you come to know Him as your Saviour, for His Name's sake!

Taunton

8th April 2012

“SAVE ONE LOAF”

Peter J Mutton

Mark 8: 10-21

I came upon this passage this morning in reading, and rather took to it. The Lord Jesus was grieved because of the Pharisees. All of us may be in danger of becoming pharisaical, but it is striking to see that the Lord Jesus groaned. The Pharisees had the light, they had the truth, they had the scriptures; and had set themselves to protect them, and to preserve them, and to enforce them. That was their religion. They believed in spirits, they believed in angels, they believed in the resurrection; they had the light. Jesus has to do with them, and He groaned. And, changing His company for what has been called heaven's aristocracy, He gets into a boat and departs. It says, interestingly - and I had not really noted it before, that they only had one loaf. We have all been impressed recently, I think, and the home-going of our sister has reinforced it, that we live - especially as we grow older - in circumstances of reduction. Our brother who spoke first has referred to it, circumstances of reduction. What a huge adjustment it is for someone who has been, we might say, at the hub of things, has been involved in travel and entertaining, and had a husband who has had a vital part in the testimony, suddenly to face a degree of isolation. And some here have experienced this, and have experienced too the humiliation of old age and faculties going. Suddenly something makes you think that you are short of a provision that you may have previously taken for granted. We should all be making provision; but we should all be valuing what we have in Christ, because whatever was lacking in the boat, He was in it. I like to think of our sister with her Saviour - whatever she had come to lack, He now makes up.

We need to be with Him in our circumstances. Scripture exhorts us: “who hath despised the day of small things?”, Zech 4: 10. You say you would like to have been at Pentecost, to experience growth and enlargement. Jesus says “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees”. How naturally we want to inflate things, but let us be in the boat. It is better to be in the boat with one loaf, so long as *He is the loaf*. He is our bread; He is the One who has come out of heaven to save us; and He is still our food where He is now in heaven. Let us feed on Him; let us partake of Him. We were reminded this week in our reading that the shepherd's responsibility was primarily to provide food for his sheep;

and the Lord Jesus was the great Shepherd who led His own out to find pasture. Our sister has passed through the valley of the shadow of death. Maybe she feared the evil; her mind troubled her. I have seen it in others. But, whatever we feel, we are in the boat with the One who has committed Himself to us, to take us to the other side. I do not want to be fanciful: the Lord Jesus here is in testimony; He is going to this place where there is a man who is blind. He seeks such. Oh, may we not be blinded; may we not fail to see the privilege and opportunity that we have to be in the boat, to be with the Man who makes everything possible. It says they had forgotten: how easily we forget! We have some enjoyment of divine things, and then we think we have no resource, we have forgotten; we have only one loaf and there are so many of us in this boat. We forget that the One we have with us in the boat is able to make things happen. "Nothing shall be impossible with God", Luke 1: 37. Nothing is impossible in the hands of the Lord Jesus. He can take a few loaves of bread and turn them into a banquet, so that there are twelve baskets to carry away. I trust that, as we contemplate what He is, and what He was to our sister, we too will have something to carry away, a fragment. We may not be able to contain much, to carry much, but let us not forget that He is the One who has taken our sister to be with Himself, the One who has broken the power of death, and who with archangel's shout and trump of God will cause her to live again. We give thanks to God for the life of our sister, and for the fact that she is now with Christ.

Colchester

13th April 2012

(At the meeting for the burial of Mrs Ruth Burr)

LEARNING THE CHRIST

Walter M Patterson

Psalm 22: 1-3, 30, 31; 23: 1-6; 24: 7-10

Our brother spoke in his prayer about the Person, the knowledge of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul writes to the Ephesians, he speaks about their learning the Christ, how they had “heard him and been instructed in him according as the truth is in Jesus”, Eph 4: 21. In thinking about our dear sister and all that has entered into her Christian life and her assembly life, I was struck with that thought of how she had “learnt the Christ”, and these Psalms set that out for us, I believe. We may recall that when the Lord Jesus met two of his disciples and was instructing them, He spoke to them about two matters, that the Christ should suffer and that He should enter into His glory, Luke 24: 26. Dear brethren and dear friends, that enters into two of these Psalms: that the Christ should suffer - that is Psalm 22; and that He should enter into His glory - Psalm 24. I believe that in her Christian life here, her life as a believer, our sister had come to learn the Christ in these ways. Our brother has spoken about the *example* seen in our sister, and I would like to say how vital it is for your eternal future and happiness that you should come to learn the Christ in these ways.

We began with the suffering One. Our sister came to appreciate the Lord Jesus as the One who had suffered, the One who had gone to Calvary's cross and suffered and died and borne the judgment of God in relation to sin in order that the whole question of *her* sinful history and *her* sinful state might be met. She had come to appreciate the Lord Jesus, the One who had gone that way, not counting the cost, but suffering and dying in order that *her* salvation might be secured. She had come to appreciate that, to *learn* the Christ in that way, and to love Him for all that He had done for her in going that suffering way; and at the end of Psalm 22, we find that those sufferings of the Lord Jesus and His death have accomplished something very great. They have secured another generation, “a seed”, a generation of persons who are to be here for the pleasure of God, who are to be secured for God. And that was our sister. She entered into that. Having put her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and appreciated that that suffering work was essential for her, she came into this company of persons, a new generation, that were available for the service of God and for the Lord Jesus. And so, having come to love the One who had

gone that way in love for her, she learned too that that blessed Man was out of death. He had gone into death but He had come out of it again. "Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lifted up ... Who is this King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle". She knew that the One who suffered and died for her was the One who had come out of death, triumphant over it, and entered into *His* glory, entered into His glory above, the Father raising Him out of death and acclaiming Him, the very heavens themselves acclaiming Christ, entering into glory. *This* was our sister's blessed portion. Is it yours? Have you known Him as your Saviour, and do you know the Lord Jesus as the blessed Man who has come out of death and who lives above? And so we are to be brought into this appreciation of the Lord Jesus, the One who is so glorious and so great.

This Psalm 24 has a long association with the first day of the week (see eg CAC vol 31 p178). That was something that entered into our sister's Christian experience. She knew what it was to individually trust the Lord, and then to be brought into a company, that company of persons that was the assembly; "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises", Heb 2: 12. She was brought into a company of praising persons, and that was her delight and her desire, to be there to remember the Lord Jesus on Lord's day, and to enter into the service of God, and to be led by Christ Himself into the Father's presence. What would she learn there? His glory; the glory of the Son of God.

Well, this is the blessed portion that our sister had. The Lord Jesus spoke about the sufferings and the glory, and I have often wondered: why this Psalm 23 comes in between them. Since He is out of death and gone into glory, why do we have Psalm 23? Well, dear brethren and dear friends, this is what our sister proved. She had learned the Christ as the One who had suffered and died for her; she had learned the Christ as the Man of God's choice, the Man who had entered into glory; and she had learned that that same blessed Man was available to her in her life here. I do not think she could have known it in its fulness without these other two experiences. There are many persons who read Psalm 23 and find comfort in the words, but our sister would have experienced the blessed comfort in her life here in this town of Hamilton, and in her assembly life in Airdrie and then in Glasgow, and she would have proved what the Lord Jesus was to her.

Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh **me** to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth **me** ...

That was her experience, that that same blessed Man was available to her to comfort and to be a resource and to help her in all the circumstances of life. Through the loss of her husband, through the years of her widowhood, this is what she proved, that He was available to her to restore her soul, to lead her in paths of righteousness.

And then it says, “Thou preparest a table”. What our sister enjoyed most of all was the fellowship of the saints. Our brother spoke about her interest and desire to be here among the saints at the meetings. “Thou preparest a table”. That was a divine provision for our sister in her sojourn here, that there should be a company, a fellowship, where she was able to enjoy the truth and enjoy a shared appreciation of the Lord Jesus. And then in John 10, which corresponds with Psalm 23, the Lord Jesus says, “I know those that are mine” (v 14), and “he calls his own sheep by name”, v 3. And so He has done that. The Lord Jesus has called our sister by name, the One that loved her while she was here and proved a support and help; she is now with Him above in a scene of bliss. For her “it is very much better”, Phil 1: 23. May these words encourage us that we ourselves might know the Man that has suffered and died, and might know the Man that has been glorified, and that thus we might prove His present help, and that the family might prove it as we go forward, for His Name’s sake.

Glasgow

2nd August 2012

(At the meeting for the burial of Mrs Peggy Newberry)