

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 91

October 2014

CONTENTS

Eating The Sin-Offering

Page 1

God Glorified

Andy E Mutton

Page 22

**The Maintenance of Right Conditions
in Our Localities**

Ron J Campbell

Page 30

EATING THE SIN-OFFERING

Leviticus 6: 24-26

Isaiah 53: 1-12

PAG In the scripture where we read as to the sin-offering, the word is: "The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it". I wondered if we might enquire together about that. It is not something that would be attractive to us naturally. Where we read in Isaiah, it says as to the Lord, "when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him". Israel took account of the Lord and, naturally speaking, they found nothing in Him that they desired, and so it is with us. But when exercises arise amongst us, I believe that the Lord would have us to take account of them, not only as they apply to others, but as they apply to ourselves; that we might search our own hearts to see what there is *in me* to which the Lord might be drawing attention, by means of the exercises through which He is pleased to pass us. I am not suggesting that this reading should be about self-examination because if we look at ourselves naturally, there is nothing there that gives pleasure to God and nothing there that would be food for our souls either. But, rather, if we look at Christ as God sees Him, and if by the Spirit we get an impression of the One of whom it is said, "Surely *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" and the One who, as it says, "was wounded for our transgressions ... was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed", we then come to the point when we say, "All we like sheep have gone astray". We recognise, as Paul says, in the epistle to the Romans, "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell", chap 7: 18. But after we have been converted, perhaps in our hearts we go astray again, and the Lord is there to bring us back. Why is He spoken of as "a lamb to the slaughter" and "a sheep dumb before her shearers"? The "good shepherd" who "lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10: 11) took the place of the sheep, took "a bondman's form ...having been found in figure as a man", Phil 2: 7, 8.

I am not suggesting that we take the scriptures up sequentially but rather, as taking Leviticus 6 and Isaiah 53 together, we might see that what we are naturally finds nothing in Christ but, by the Spirit, when we are given a *real* impression of Him and of His moral worth and glory, it would cause us to judge ourselves, having in mind that there should be something greater for God. It says prophetically of the Lord, "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied", and

then “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness”. It would bring us into something greater which would all have in view the glory of God and His service in praise. Could we take these thoughts up?

EJM In chapter 10 where the breakdown came in, the priests did not eat the sin offering; they burnt it. We have fine examples for our souls to feed on the sufferings of Christ. As it says here, “it is most holy”. Psalm 22 says, “And thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel”, v 3. Is there a link between our feeding and appropriating the sin-offering and the service of God?

PAG There certainly is; so when it says, “But let a man prove himself, and thus eat ...” (1 Cor 11: 28), what is in view in proving ourselves is that anything that would need to be adjusted can be adjusted, and the sin-offering is available so that it might be so. “And thus eat” is in view of the Supper; so if we examine ourselves and in that sense eat the sin-offering, we are set free to eat the Supper, and we are thus set free for the service of God.

RB Is eating the sin-offering a priestly matter?

PAG Well, that is how it would seem to stand here: “The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it”, but do you think we should all be priests in that sense?

RB I wondered if you would say something about that. You are eating the sin-offering as being sensitive as to the divine feeling regarding the matter. Is that how you understand it?

PAG I would say that, but I think it would bring in the matter of self-judgment. As the priest took up the sin-offering, he would know why it had been offered. If we go to the passage as to one of the people of the land sinning through inadvertence In Leviticus 4, it says, “he” - that is the one who sinned - “shall lay his hand on the head of the sin-offering, and slaughter the sin-offering at the place of the burnt-offering. And the priest shall take of the blood thereof”, v 29, 30. I think the offerer and the priest are to be seen as merged into one in the present dispensation. We take account of the reason *why* the sin-offering was made, but then we recognise that the Lord is asking me to look within myself and say, 'Is there anything that ought to be adjusted in me in relation to whatever matter may have come up?'. Do you think that?

RB Do you think that is in line with Matthew's presentation of how

the Lord presented the Supper to them? “Take, eat”, He says, chap 26: 26.

PAG Yes, so there was something to be appropriated there. That would have in view their strengthening, I believe, in the setting of the kingdom, so that kingdom principles and assembly principles can be rightly worked out.

RB Does not eating the sin-offering underlie the principles of the kingdom and the assembly?

PAG Well, if we are going to take up an exercise on the grounds of the teaching of Matthew 18, for example, I think the only way we could do that is if we are self-judged persons. That, of course, means that the whole of the resource of the kingdom is available to us because, as you know, at the end of Matthew 17, the Lord brings in the matter of the sons being free (v 26), and I think that would mean that we take up Matthew 18 in the light of sonship, and the fact that all the resources of the kingdom and all the dignity of sonship apply to our movements in relation to it.

BWL Could you say something about “the place”? “At the place where the burnt-offering is slaughtered shall the sin-offering be slaughtered before Jehovah.”

PAG You can help us, but one thing is that the burnt-offering involves our acceptance, and the burnt-offering, as you know, was exclusively for God. I think as we take this exercise up of eating the sin-offering, we are doing it in the light of the fact that we are accepted by God. There cannot ever be any doubt about that; so it would place us on stable ground as we take up the exercise, do you think?

BWL I think that is very helpful because Leviticus begins with the burnt-offering. You might say that is really what God has in mind, and it would assure our hearts that we have that acceptance, and then, we are working things out in relation to the sin-offering. But I think the same place is very suggestive.

JW Hebrews speaks of Christ “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”, chap 9: 14. That would perhaps be the burnt-offering. I was just thinking about this: “At the place where the burnt-offering is slaughtered shall the sin-offering be slaughtered”. That same offering was made a sin-offering for us in that sense, would that be right?

PAG It was striking to me that just earlier in Leviticus 6 where it speaks of the oblation, it says in verse 17, “As their portion have I given it unto them of my offerings by fire: it is most holy; as the sin-offering, and as the trespass-offering”. I am just linking it with your thought as to the burnt-offering and the sin-offering, it is all one Person.

JW So it is really affecting to think that it was in that offering which was so acceptable to God that God dealt with the sin there.

PAG Indeed, and at what cost. There was great cost involved. You get just a touch in the verse you have quoted in Hebrews of the operations of the Trinity: “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”; the Trinity involved in securing what would be suitable for the heart of God.

JW Say more about the cost.

PAG Well, the Lord offered Himself. That is one side of it. But then as to God: “He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?”, Rom 8: 32. Divine Persons have not spared themselves. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as being “poured out”: “the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which ye behold and hear”, Acts 2: 33. Divine Persons have not spared themselves in order to get a response.

JL The place that was referred to was in fact the side of the altar, was it not? Does that not link with your thought about the cost involved?

PAG Well, it would, and on that altar, as Leviticus 6 would teach us, the fire was kept burning all the time, v 9. The value of what rises up to God as a result of the sacrifice of Christ is never diminished. Say more.

JL I was thinking it was significant that that was the place where the slaughter of the burnt-offering and the sin-offering both took place, at the side of the altar, so as the priest was carrying that out, he would think of the intensity of the sufferings that the altar represented, would he not, and the cost typically to Christ?

PAG Yes, and he would be reminded in relation to the fire being continual that although there was an intensity of suffering at the cross, yet it says of the Lord “he learned obedience from the things which he suffered”, Heb 5: 8. That would be throughout His life, do you think? There would be a constancy of suffering. It speaks of Him in Isaiah as

“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”. There would be a constancy of suffering, all of which produced fragrance to God.

JL One other thing that interests me is that although the priest had to eat of the sin-offering, there was no provision for the priest to eat of the blood of the sin-offering. What are we to learn from that?

PAG Well, the life is in the blood. The life of Christ was exclusively for God in that sense and the Lord uniquely had the right to lay down His life and to take it again, but I think the fact that there was no provision for the priest to eat of the blood just reminds us that life is entirely God's matter; but say more about it.

JL I am glad of what you say. I think also it would remind us that although we participate in the benefits from all that has been secured through the sin-offering, we had no part in the atoning work. That was Christ's alone, which the blood particularly signifies.

PAG That is true and although the cup is given to us and the Lord says, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22: 20), the covenant was made in His blood and that was for God. Our enjoyment of the love of God is consequent on that covenant having been made, but we had no part in the making of it.

GAC It struck me as you were introducing the subject that this is all part of a very precious system of things. It has to do with relationships, has it?

PAG I think that is important. God has made provision so that even if anything came in that might mar these relationships, it could be quickly adjusted. So that you get what is for God in the burnt-offering, (Lev 1); then food for our souls in the oblation, really feeding on the Man that was here (chap 2); but then you get the thought of the peace-offering coming in which means that there is something we can enjoy mutually, chap 3. And then the sin-offering comes in to show that God is justified, and the trespass-offering so that if there is anything in the holy things or anything in relation to our relationships with one another (because the trespass-offering covers that), all can be resolved, chaps 4, 5. Then the consecration offering is also mentioned, having in view that there is what goes up to God as a result of persons, priests, being consecrated in order to engage in His service, chap 8. This wonderful system of relationships, you get, brethren, I suppose, in its fulness in John 17: “I sanctify myself for them”, v 19. He has set Himself apart in order that

whatever relationships God has in mind to bring us into, all can be protected and preserved in righteousness.

AGM It is interesting that it is to be eaten “in a holy place . . . in the court of the tent of meeting”. This is not something that is done just anywhere. There is a correct atmosphere for that. I was thinking of the righteousness of God and the holiness of God that underlie all these things.

PAG They do, and we recognise that the blood was the answer to God's righteousness. We have been taught that the cross was the answer to His holiness, and so all is met. Scripture makes distinctions and we do well to pay attention to them. There is the “holy of holies” or the “holiest”, as it is called, and then there is “a holy place” and then there is “a clean place”. A clean place, I suppose, would relate to our households, but to eat it in a holy place suggests that we do not carry these thoughts into a sphere that is marked by uncleanness, but rather the principle of eating the sin-offering means that we are kept in accord with God's holiness, and is it right also to say at this point, just to remind ourselves, that holiness is not conferred, nor is it worked up to, but it is by love? So really what was in my mind in referring to Isaiah 53 is that our affections should be drawn out towards Christ.

RB You had better explain that.

PAG Well, faith is a gift. Repentance is a gift from God. God grants repentance, as we know. It says He may give “repentance to acknowledgment of the truth”, 2 Tim 2: 25. But holiness, I believe, involves recognising God's standard. He Himself is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” (Hab 1: 13) and, therefore, in order to be brought into that atmosphere of holiness, it really has to be our affections that are brought into play. It says in Leviticus 19: 2 “Speak unto all the assembly of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Holy shall ye be, for I Jehovah your God am holy”. I am referring to that because it does not say, 'I am conferring holiness upon you'; He says, “Holy shall ye be”, but how are we going to be in that state of complete separation from sin? I think it is only by the attractiveness of divine affections. It is only by being drawn away from the sphere of things which would occupy us and drawn towards the One, that is Christ, who Himself was holy. It is not conferred.

RB I am appreciating what you have said. I was actually thinking of Hebrews 12 where the Father loves the son whom He chastens, but the

whole object of chastening is that we should be “partaking of his holiness”, v 10.

PAG It speaks too about being “partakers of the divine nature”, 2 Pet 1: 4. Now, that is love. But it immediately says, “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”, showing us that it is the drawing power of divine affection that enables us to separate ourselves from evil.

TM Is Psalm 139 an example of the priest not only offering but eating the sin-offering? In the last verse it says, “And see if there be any grievous way in me”, v 24.

PAG I think that is right and, interestingly, in verse 23 it says:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; prove me, and know my thoughts;
And see if there be any grievous way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.

So really eating the sin-offering involves us putting ourselves before the Lord; Paul says, “but he that examines me is the Lord”, 1 Cor 4: 4. It is not just for its own sake, but it is “lead me in the way everlasting”. There is something in view in doing this. It is not just an end in itself.

TM There is a wonderful objective lying before us as we eat the sin-offering.

PAG There is. We have an object for our affections, but then I think the intention is that there should be formation in our souls as a result of that.

JW I was thinking of Psalm 22. He says, “why hast thou forsaken me?”, v 1. Does that relate to the sin-offering? I was thinking that in one sense there was nothing in the Lord that the Father would have issue with, but we view Him as made sin there. It says, “And thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel”, v 3.

PAG What you emphasise is important. Scripture is very clear. It says as to Christ “in him sin is not” (1 John 3: 5); so He had to be made something that He was not; and He took that place for you and for me in relation to our sins, “who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2: 24); but then as Christ was made sin, God dealt with the root of the matter. We are going through Romans locally, and you come to the middle of chapter 5 and Paul in his teaching moves on from dealing with

sins to speaking about *sin*. I was struck by the fact that we may stop - I speak only for myself - at being content to having our sins forgiven without going on to recognise that there is a root principle of sin that cannot be forgiven; it has to be condemned.

JW So from God's point of view that had to be settled.

PAG And it has been, in righteousness: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh", Rom 8: 3. He has done it and He does not need to go back over that ground.

RB I was going to ask another question: does discipline then help us to arrive at the necessity of eating the sin-offering? Eating the sin-offering is not just a religious ritual.

PAG If it is only a religious ritual, ritualism has no place in Christianity, but I think the Lord passes us through certain circumstances in order that we might examine ourselves and in order that we might be free in His presence. Examining ourselves is not in view of self-occupation; it is in view of liberty in the service of God.

JL It says repeatedly in regard of the peace-offering, for example, he "may" eat of it, but that is not said about the sin-offering: he "shall eat it". There is a divine necessity to come into the gain of what has been effected through the sufferings of Christ in bringing about such settlement for God.

PAG I think so. The link is an indirect one, but I think John 3: 14 bears on it nevertheless: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up". There could not be another way, and there cannot be another way of coming into blessing except recognising that the Lord "bore our sins in his body on the tree". In other offerings there is "if any man of you" or "if any one". I hesitate to describe it as optional, but in that sense it is conditional on our desire, but there is no condition attached to the sin-offering.

DCB I was wondering about the fact that there is "the law of the sin-offering". The various offerings are gone through earlier in Leviticus, as they come in, but they have a law.

PAG Well, we have spoken about holiness, and another thing about holiness is that holiness becomes God's house, Ps 93: 5. There are

certain things that are operating principles. We speak about divine principles, assembly principles. It says very explicitly “God is not a God of disorder but of peace”, 1 Cor 14: 33. There is a god of disorder. If it says “God is not a God of disorder”, then it means there must be one, but it is not God. God operates in an orderly way in everything that He does. The creation, I think, is a demonstration of that and so the fact that there is a law attaching to each of these offerings means that God is setting out how He will be served. It says in John chapter 4, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers”, v 23. That is one side, the side of grace. But He says, “God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth”, v 24. The word “must” suggests the operating principle. Say more about your impressions.

DCB I am impressed by what is being said, that things can be taken up earlier in Leviticus in the offerings, but then God says, 'This has to be according to my order and standard', and what you say as to operating principles is important.

PAG “For neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved”, Acts 4: 12. That is God's principle. Each of the offerings is described as having a law, but then it is important also to notice that it says at the end of chapter 7 of Leviticus: “This is the law of the burnt-offering, of the oblation, and of the sin-offering, and of the trespass-offering, and of the consecration-offering, and of the sacrifice of peace-offering, which Jehovah commanded Moses in mount Sinai”, v 37, 38. So it is one law because it is one Man. We learn each in its phases or parts, but it is one law because it relates to one Man.

EJM The context of the believer having “fruit unto holiness” in Romans 6: 22 is our relation with the world. The “form of teaching” (v 17) as we know is baptism. As believers we have come to it to be dead to the world, a sphere where Christ has been crucified. Holiness is really built up from that point, “fruit unto holiness”.

PAG So John, coming at things from a different standpoint, sheds light on what you say when he says: “Love not the world, nor the things in the world”, 1 John 2: 15. So, if being freed from the influences of the world gives us “fruit unto holiness” and we “love not the world, nor the things in the world”, where are our affections? They will be somewhere.

AGM In chapter 11 Moses was wroth because they did not eat the sin-

offering. They burnt it. It has been said that it is easier to burn the sin-offering than to eat it (CAC Outline of Leviticus p115). Do you think the eating involves what is constitutional so that there is a result in the priest as a result of eating the sin-offering? I wonder if that links on with Isaiah 53. We can read it very lightly, but as we go over it and allow the full import to have its effect with us as in the presence of God, it forms us.

PAG This is what is in my mind. It is not simply an abstract statement of the truth. I remember when I was a child reference was made to verses 4, 5 and 6 of Isaiah 53 and we were asked, can you put your name in there? “Surely, *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”. Well, that is a general statement of the truth, and we are very thankful for it, but is my name in there?

JL Linking your thought with Isaiah 53, we cannot but be impressed by the numerous times the pronoun “he” is referred to. Is it good to keep before our affections that, not only has the work been most effective and satisfied God and provided for us, but the scripture occupies us with Himself, the Person. “He hath borne our griefs”, and so on. The pronoun comes in many times in that one chapter alone as if to focus our view on Him, do you think?

PAG I think so and my exercise is that as we are increased in our appreciation of Christ, then this matter of eating the sin-offering will not be something that we rebel against, but rather that we desire to do in order that we might be free from anything that hinders. I was struck that in Romans 5 it is a very succinct expression: “by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous”, v 19. I think that links with your thought of “he”. Who is it? Indeed, the man in Acts 8 had to ask, “concerning whom does the prophet say this?”, v 34. “By the obedience of the one”: who is it? It is Christ.

JAS Do you connect this with what we get in John's epistle as to “a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”, 1 John 2: 1?

PAG Well, if something has come in to mar the relations between myself and the Father, there is One who desires to restore these relations, but say more as to what is in your mind.

JAS As we have been saying, for us the sin-offering involves a Person, and that One is living in the presence of the Father, acting for our release that relationships might be restored.

PAG Well, that is a very important point. Let us not forget that the One who was the sin-offering is living; in the setting of Leviticus, the sin-offering died and that was the end of it, but the One who was the sin-offering, indeed, who brought out the fulness and beauty of all of the offerings, He consumed the fire. He was not consumed by the fire. He went through and He said, "It is finished", John 19: 30. Of course, He "bowed his head, he delivered up His spirit", He shed His blood and went into the grave, but He came out again, "raised for our justification" (Rom 4: 25), and He has been glorified and the Spirit has been given. The One of whom we speak who went that way for us is now our Intercessor. He "made intercession for the transgressors", it says, at the end of the chapter. Think of that! He interceded for the very people who nailed Him to the cross.

RB Does eating the sin-offering then draw us into a holy intimacy with the Lord so that we can speak of Him like Isaiah did in chapter 53? You need to know the Person before you can use this language.

PAG That is good. Chapter 4 begins with "the priest that is anointed" (v 3); and then "the whole assembly" (v 13); and then you get "a prince" (v 22); and then you get "any one of the people", v 27. Well, I would like to be expanded in my appreciation of the sin-offering because the prince offers "a buck of the goats, a male without blemish" (v 23); that is an advance on the "goat, a female without blemish" (v 28), for "any one of the people"; but then "the priest that is anointed" presents "a young bullock without blemish" (v 3), and what the priest presents is the same as for the sin of the whole assembly, v 14. Now, that brings up another thing. The priest would take responsibility for the whole assembly. You might say, 'That was the fault of that brother over there, he is not very clear about the truth; he ought to have known better; that sister, she did something that was not right'. Well, that might be true, and if such a thing comes in, the brethren have to deal with it, but then am I prepared to take some responsibility for that? Daniel confessed his sins and the sins of the people, Dan 9: 20.

RB That is how we grow, as we accept that, so that there is a sweetness in the service of praise as a result, is there not? As you have been contemplating the Man of Isaiah 53, I am reflecting on a question that was once put in a reading, 'What might we say to Isaiah about the Man of sorrows?' That is a challenge.

PAG Well, I think we will all have one centre and one theme when we

are in heaven, but we might have something to say to these saints of other dispensations who have had their own experiences with God: “the Spirit of Christ which was in them” (1 Pet 1: 11), it says. That is different from the indwelling Spirit in the present dispensation; nevertheless it says, “the Spirit of Christ which was in them”, so there is something formed, impressions of Christ, given to these saints of a previous dispensation.

RB So the Ethiopian eunuch reads, “his life is taken from the earth” and Philip speaks to him, and immediately the great matter of baptism comes onto view, Acts 8: 33, 36.

PAG I thought the hymn that we began with (Hymn 150) is in a sense a hymn about baptism. We have another Man in another world and we are walking here through the scene in which He has been rejected:

E'en now the Morning Star we see
Of earth's rejected King.

But then someone in the good of their baptism says, 'Well, I am finished with that scene that rejected Him and my mind is now set on “the things that are above, where the Christ is”, Col 3: 1. Baptism carried out in the household on the basis of the faith of the parents is not meant to be the end of the matter. We are meant to come into the good of it.

RB It says, “he was led”. Who led Him? Luke's gospel gives us two aspects of the Lord being led immediately after baptism.

PAG Well, of course, He was led by the Spirit, as you are suggesting, into the wilderness. That is, I suppose, His submission in dependence and in devotion to the will of His God and Father, but then He submitted Himself too to the hands of wicked men. It says of Him “becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross”, Phil 2: 8. He was obedient to His Father's will to the extent that He went into “death, and that the death of the cross”, and He says also to certain ones, “this is your hour and the power of darkness”, Luke 22: 53. He submitted Himself to that humiliation because it was His Father's will that He should do so, but the power is seen in that when “he said to them, I am he, they went away backward”, John 18: 6. They could not stand in the presence of the power. Had He exercised that power, they could not have led Him, but He submitted Himself in devotion to His Father's will and thus He was led.

RB The Spirit led Him out at the beginning of Luke's gospel (chap 4:

1) and they led Him out to be crucified at the end of Luke's gospel (chap 23: 26). That was the last time wicked men would ever lead the Lord; immediately He is risen, *He* leads His own. He led His own out as far as Bethany, chap 24: 50. Does not the eating of the sin-offering bring us into the area of Bethany, being led by the Lord into that area?

PAG Well, it certainly sets us free in view of coming into all that God has in mind for us, the scope of it. We are led a certain distance on the earth, and then He goes up into heaven. So we break bread in the wilderness, but really we leave the wilderness behind. We are not continually led in the wilderness; we leave that behind.

RB So the One on whom we are feeding as the sin-offering is now “minister of the holy places”, and He is leading the praises. It is the same Person.

PAG It is. We take up at different points different aspects of the Lord's glory and of His service, and it is good for us to be reminded it is all the one Person. It is good for us too to be intelligent as to what aspect of His glory is proper to a particular moment. We are helped to see that, as we are subject to the Holy Spirit.

TM John is different from the other gospel writers because he gives the burnt-offering, while two other gospel writers give you the forsaking. I wondered if Mark would be an example of one who had eaten the sin-offering because he begins with “Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God”, chap 1: 1. He is bringing the perfect Servant before us.

PAG Yes. So, as you say, you get the forsaking in Matthew and Mark. Mark speaks a lot in his gospel about unbelief, and I think that is evidence of his having eaten the sin-offering because really it was unbelief on his part that caused him to go away. If he can speak about something, it shows that he has judged it and he wants others to judge it in themselves. Similarly Peter says as to the Lord, “who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”, 1 Pet 2: 23. He had judged that in himself, and how did he do it? He saw in the Lord, the One who was perfect in these circumstances.

DCB I was thinking about our brother's question about the Lord as led, and about the Hebrew bondman where “his master shall bring him before the judges, and shall bring him to the door, or to the door-post”,

Exod 21: 6. We can think of the way in which the Father led Him; and see that as far as He could go, the Father went with Him. There came a time when He was alone.

PAG I think so; so His submission to being led by men really is, as has been remarked, all part of his “becoming obedient even unto death”. He was not in that sense being obedient to the men; He was being obedient to His Father’s will in allowing Himself to be led. They could not ever lead Him anywhere that was not in accordance with the Father’s will. Earlier they “led him up to the brow of the mountain” (Luke 4: 29), but He was not cast off because that was not the Father’s will for that moment; so they could not lead Him anywhere that was not in accordance with the will of the Father.

EJM I know it is the burnt-offering in Genesis 22 but it says of the substitute for Isaac, “And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind was a ram caught in the thicket by its horns”, v 13. It has often been pointed out the ram was not caught 'by' the thicket but he was caught “in” it. It was really the Father’s will that brought Him the full way.

PAG Yes; the horns speak of power. It was the power of the Lord’s affection that held Him. Outwardly He was nailed to a cross. You say that was man’s power; they had mastery over Him; they nailed Him to a cross. But it was not man’s power that held Him there; it was divine love that held Him there. The power of divine love is supreme over man’s wickedness.

AGM Is moral quality seen in the Lord here? “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers”. There was a moral quality coming out that was different from every other kind of person.

PAG Yes, there was, and the word “as” is important: “he was led as a lamb” and “as a sheep”. It bears on what was said about the Father’s leading. He was not put into that position by some weakness on His own part, but he took that position. He was “as a lamb” and “as a sheep” because it was the Father’s will.

PM We were reading in the Acts during the week and Paul tried to exploit the division in the Jewish council, chap 23: 6. I was just thinking what a contrast this is. It really highlights the perfection of Christ here, the One who was silent, “as a sheep dumb”, the lamb who “opened not

his mouth". It seems to me the perfection of the Lord is highlighted as He comes on to view. At the start of the chapter, we have "as a root out of dry ground": He comes onto view in a small way; then He begins to captivate our affections, do you think, the One who says, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened", Luke 12: 50? Do you think that baptism is along the line of being led?

PAG I think so. In the scripture in Acts you referred to, for the moment the apostle used what you might describe as a natural insight. The Lord never used any such thing. The Lord never used man's insight to gain an advantage in a situation. All the Lord ever used to decide what to do was the Father's will. That is all He ever needed to tell Him what to do, the Father's will. The will of the Father involved that baptism of which you speak, "a baptism to be baptised with". What a baptism it was! Men speak lightly of a baptism of fire. We know we cannot fathom the depth of the Lord's sufferings. That point was reached when the Father forsook Him. What can we say? We can scarcely touch it, but the hymn-writer says,

All the depths of Thy heart's sorrow
Told in answering glory now. (Hymn 302)

What sorrow it was, but what glory it is!

PM What is the difference between verse 4 and the end of verse 11? In verse 4 it is "Surely *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows", and then verse 11: "and *he* shall bear their iniquities". How does that bear on what we have been speaking about as the sin-offering?

PAG Well, as to "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows", when that is quoted in Matthew it says, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases", Matt 8: 17. He bore them in His spirit, I suppose. But then it says in verse 11 "and *he* shall bear their iniquities". In a sense our griefs, our sorrows, our infirmities, our diseases are a consequence of our being in a sinful condition, but the Lord bore in His spirit what He saw as the effects of sin. You will recall that He "groaned" (Mark 7: 34) and He "wept" at the grave of Lazarus, John 11: 35. He bore it in His spirit, but then as to bearing our iniquities, He bore these in His body. Is that all right?

PM There is something to think about. There is depth in that. I feel as Isaiah has written, he has not written lightly: this is a concentrated chapter.

PAG So in His spirit as He went along, He bore all that He saw. He

even wept over Jerusalem, but then it came to the point where it says, “who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2: 24), each one enumerated and each one dealt with.

RB Is verse 4 the oblation? There are three aspects of the oblation which are really the Lord's sufferings in His life, not His sufferings in death. They brought out the perfection of His humanity and one of them was verse 4, as quoted in Matthew. He was suffering in the power of voluntary sympathy as taking on the sufferings of the human family, and felt it as none other could feel it. I am quoting from Mr C H Mackintosh, Notes on Leviticus 2 p55-57.

PAG That is right. That point, too, that He felt it as none other could feel it because He was sinless. There is what is “baken in the oven” (Lev 2: 4), really the most intense side of the heat in relation to the oblation. We see “his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth”, Luke 22: 44. He was not yet on the cross, but He anticipated it there. I think the side of what was “baken in the oven” came out there in the intensity of suffering, and yet still at that point He could say, “Father”. He had not yet reached the point where He would be forsaken. It has often struck me that the Lord knew Psalm 22 before He went through it; He knew it was there.

RB Are we also to enter sympathetically into the sufferings of our brethren at the present time? There is a lot of suffering. Do we just pass it by, or can we enter sympathetically into the sufferings of the saints at the present moment? “And if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it”, 1 Cor 12: 26. As Paul says, “the fellowship of his sufferings”.

PAG Yes, saints suffering in their bodies draws out our sympathy, but I think we need to learn too to be sympathetic to saints who are suffering in their spirits. They might not be ill, but it does not mean the suffering is any less; sorrows locally and in families and in households run deep. It is not that we pry into what is going on in individual households of the saints, but we carry in our spirits and in our prayers the depths through which the saints are going, knowing that the Lord Himself has been into these very depths. We have been reminded recently in ministry of the One who “ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth”, Eph 4: 9. What depths the Lord has been through, and I think the Lord appreciates it if we seek to carry with Him the things that He carries in the way that only He can.

RB It is not necessarily something we enter into in public prayer: it says, “thy Father who sees in secret”, Matt 6: 4. There is, as it were, a secret link with divine Persons that results in formation.

PAG It does. It is the Father's love.

JAS I was thinking of the reference to “the travail of his soul”, do you think what you set on as to eating the sin-offering would deepen our appreciation of what it meant to Him so that “He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied”? That is a very wide scope and it is a great matter to see what is for His satisfaction.

PAG I am glad you bring that up because I think “the fruit of the travail of his soul” really comes into relief for us when we hear the Lord's words, “go to my brethren” - that was really “the fruit of the travail of his soul” - “and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”, John 20: 17. It says, “and shall be satisfied”. I say that because the side of travail is not so much linked with the assembly. There was the “deep sleep” (Gen 2: 21), but “the fruit of the travail of his soul” comes before us immediately at the Supper when He says, “go to my brethren”.

JAS I got a touch on it on Lord's day morning. I suppose this refers to the remnant primarily, “the fruit of the travail of his soul”, and will yet be seen there. But we are to think of what sonship is - it leads us to the Father; and to think of every family: “the fruit of the travail of his soul”. What a tremendous release there has been secured by Him as the sin-offering that there might be relationships for the Father's joy and satisfaction.

PAG And then the value of this thought will carry on, as you say, to the remnant. Think of the Lord having to say through the prophet, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain”, Isa 49: 4. That is how Israel was towards Him then, but He will have them. I lay hold of this: divine Persons are never defeated in their objectives. We come to the end of Luke 15, and get the father going out, and he besought the elder son, and you say, 'That seems to be the end of the matter'. But in Acts you find the elder son is being addressed again: “God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”. And they say, “What shall we do, brethren? And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptised”, Acts 2: 36-38. The elder son was not listening in Luke 15, but God did not stop the beseeching, and the elder son listened at the beginning of the Acts. It was only the remnant, I

accept; it was not the whole of Israel, but God never acts without result.

JAS I was thinking of that in relation to recent exercises, “that he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day”, Phil 1: 6.

PAG And we might not know how, but He *will* do it. I say this simply: there is much on the spirits of the saints but I have *complete confidence in God* that when He has started a work, He *will* complete it. *He will not give up*, and we should not give up either. Some of us here have had experience recently of having to say that we can no longer walk with dear ones. That is not the end of the matter. *That is not the end of the matter*. God will secure His own end in these matters. We must do what is right, and the sorrow involved is deep, but God will reach His own end in these matters, and our desire is to be with Him in it.

BWL Did Paul really encourage the Corinthians to eat the sin-offering? As you say, there were certain things that had to be done, but then they had to feel it, and in what he writes to them in the second epistle you can see that they felt it, their sorrow and repentance and ardent desire; and then they were to encourage the man that there is still love for him. If we have truly eaten the sin-offering are we in that sense looking for recovery?

PAG Paul has to say to them, “ye have not rather mourned” (1 Cor 5: 2), but then they did. “What zeal”, he says (2 Cor 7: 11); he acknowledges that. You think of the Lord when Peter denied Him. It says, “the Lord ... looked at Peter ... And Peter, going forth without, wept bitterly”, Luke 22: 61, 62. But then what grace. You get the word later on after His resurrection: “The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon”, Luke 24: 34. The Lord went after the one who had three days before denied Him. He went after him and He would reassure him that all was clear. Well, these are serious exercises, but I just have this impression, simply, the Lord is not finished yet.

BWL Peter “wept bitterly”; that was repentance: there was something in him that the Lord worked in bringing that about. God grants repentance: so there was that that He could link on with.

PAG Well, there was and that is what we seek, that there would be repentance. We can intercede with God for that. We can ask Him to grant it.

DCB You have referred to “He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his

soul”; there is an earlier reference to His soul: “thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin”. Could you say something of that in the light of the thought of the sin-offering?

PAG I wondered whether “his soul” would involve the depths of His feelings. The Lord says, “Now is my soul troubled”, John 12: 27. A hymn says:

No act of power could e'er atone,
No wonder-working word
Could, from the brightness of the throne,
Make love's sweet voice be heard.

If sinners ever were to know
The depths of love divine,
All Calv'ry's weakness and its woe,
Blest Saviour, must be Thine. (Hymn 431)

His very soul was affected. Sin was so foreign to Him, so utterly abhorrent to Him. Indeed, one looking on - not that you could look on exactly in the forsaking - through the psalmist commented, “A thing of Belial cleaveth fast unto him”, Ps 41: 8. It was an utterly foreign thing to Him, and yet there was that that was cleaving fast to Him that was abhorrent to His soul.

DCB We need to get that appreciation of how His soul was affected, and even the fact that “**thou** shalt make his soul an offering”; it is only God who could do that; men could not do that; but there was what there was in His soul that was touched and affected as He took on all these issues on our behalf.

PAG And so we should recognise that the feelings of God were deeply involved in this. You get some touch as to it in Genesis 22: “Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac”, v 2. God goes over the matter, “thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest”. Think of God's affections being involved as the One who “has not spared his own Son”, Rom 8: 32.

JL We have to come to the Person to find that, do we not, because none of the typical animals bring that out? There is no reference to the feelings of any of the animals slaughtered, or with the birds, is there?

PAG I agree with what you say. You get something of that, I suppose, in the typical scriptures, the spirit of Christ when Jonah says,

The weeds were wrapped about my head.
I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;
The bars of the earth closed upon me for ever, Jon 2: 5, 6.

You get the sense of the feelings there being drawn out, but you do not get it in the offerings, so really, that is why the perfect offering had to be a Man. If there was One who was going to be pleasurable to God and stand in our place, it had to be a Man, so that the feelings that were appropriate to God should be in some sense known by us.

JL I think that is very good. I do not say this lightly, but it preserves us from merely focusing our attention on the transaction completed by Christ, but helps us to get our view on Him who carried it out and Him who suffered on our account before God. It attaches our affections to the Person Himself, does it not?

PAG Yes, so even as to the assembly itself, it says, “Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it”, Eph 5: 25. He did not do it, you might say, because it was a requirement of righteousness, even though it was, but that was not the motivation that lay behind it. He *loved* the assembly; that is why He did it.

EJM At the end of Hebrews 10 where much of the sacrifices and offerings come in, the apostle finishes by saying, “But the just shall live by faith; and, if he draw back, my soul does not take pleasure in him”, v 38. Do you think in that reference “my soul” it is really Paul expressing God's feelings?

PAG That would be an important thing for us. I think eating the sin-offering has in mind that we feel things as God feels them. Now we cannot, of course, enter into the strength of God's feelings, God being who He is, but, in character, we feel things as God feels them. Speaking for myself, I often feel things as they might affect me, but we need to feel things as they affect God. If someone wanders or strays, how does God feel about that? His affections are active. The question is, are *my* affections? I believe the affections of the saints are active, and I think the matters we are passing through, locally and generally, are intended to stimulate our affections for one another. The Lord says, “A new commandment I give to you, that ye also love one another “, John 13: 34. He would act to stimulate that affection amongst the saints because one of the things that abides eternally is love. Think of that! God is giving to us now to experience something that will be our eternal portion.

JB The Lord said in John 6, “Will ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord to whom” - not 'to what'; it is the Person - “shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal”, v 67, 68. He really shows how we get a touch of the value of the offering.

PAG That is good. “Will ye also go away?” As we eat the sin-offering, we say, “All we like sheep have gone astray”, but the Lord is saying, 'Now, what is it to be?' As you quote, “to whom shall we go?” - not 'to what', not 'to what denomination or what circumstances' - “to whom”. We are going to Him. “Thou hast words of life eternal”. It is interesting that that chapter in John 6 is much taken up with what we eat, what we feed on. Well, if we feed on Christ, then we will want nothing else and no-one else, because it is the food which abides; it is not transient food; it is food which abides and forms a heavenly constitution.

RB Do you think Paul served practically as having eaten the sin-offering? So for example in Acts 20 he could descend and bring with him the feelings of heaven in embracing Eutychus.

PAG Yes, I think so. It says, “Paul ... enfolding him in his arms”. Paul was able to identify that “his life is in him”, v 10. It is a great thing, however small a spark of life there might be, to be able to identify it. “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench”, Isa 42: 3. We need to be spiritually insightful in identifying life where it exists.

Buckie

28th June 2014

List of Initials:

R Bain, Buckie; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J Buchan, Peterhead;
G A Coull, Aberdeen; P A Gray, Grangemouth; J Laurie, Brechin;
B W Lovie, Aberdeen; A G Mair, Cullen; E J Mair, Buckie; T Mair, Cullen;
P Metcalfe, Glasgow; J A Shearer, Aberdeen; J Webster, Fraserburgh

GOD GLORIFIED

Andy E Mutton

Daniel 4: 28-37

Luke 17: 11-19

The great message in the glad tidings, dear friends, is that God should be glorified; and that is what I would like to speak about. You may have thought it was about salvation; the salvation of those who are lost; and of course, it includes that, and thank God for that; but the great end in the glad tidings is that God should be glorified: "Let my son go, that he may serve me", Exod 4: 23. If you are under the bondage of sin and enchained in the grip of the enemy of your soul, Satan, you are never going to be able to serve God. In the glad tidings God presents you with the only way by which you might be released to glorify and to serve Him. It is a wonderful message. You may be a bit disappointed that it is not all about what you can gain from of the gospel; but I know that if you think about it for not very long, you will find that there is no disappointment whatsoever in the glad tidings. God does not only bring you into the greatest favour, by bringing you into the place of greatest privilege, but He also brings you to a point in your life where you are able to glorify God. If you are weighed down with sin, you cannot do that, because if sin has its way with you, the enemy has control over you, and you will never do what God wants. You will never do what it is in the heart of God for His creature to do, and the way His creature should be.

I would like to use these two men that we have read of here to demonstrate this thought - and I chose these two deliberately because one was at the height of his power, and the other a leper. One was probably the greatest king at the time; he was at the height of his power and his dominion was great and he celebrates it. Where we have read, he celebrates how great he was. Most of us here probably know of someone who spends most of the time telling you how great they are, and they are not necessarily a very nice person because of it. The man that we read of in Luke's gospel was not able to tell anyone about himself because he was not allowed to go near anyone. He was a leper and the only company that he had was nine other lepers; and they would not want to hear about *his* problems; they had enough of their own.

So, the two men that we have read of are right at the top and

right at the bottom of society. God brings them both to give Him glory; a great king and a leper - and you could say that is what God seeks from all of us in between. God would have us to come to give Him glory. God wants to give you many things in the gospel - what a God He is, a God with a heart of love, a giving God, One who has nothing in His heart for you but good. We spoke in the reading about the *good* seed; God has nothing bad to give you, it is all good, it is all rich, it is all for your blessing; and He has a whole array. Some of us were struck last week that you will never come to know any of them unless as hearing the glad tidings you deal with the matter of your sin first. What a thing that is. God tonight, then, wants to arrest you for a moment to deal with the matter of your sin, because even if it is not troubling you it troubles God. You may not be worried, you may be doing fine, but your case troubles God because He has His eye on you. We spoke of that again today; God can see the good harvest, and He can see all the darnel too, and He can see the difference between the two. He can see the saved and the unsaved here tonight. He wants to speak to the unsaved in particular, and He wants to encourage the saved and to share more of His heart for them. The gospel is for everybody, sinner and saved alike.

But let me just speak first with those who are yet in their sins. If there is anyone here who is yet in their sins, anyone - and I put it in the simplest language - anyone who has not accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, God would have you to do it tonight. It is a wonderful message proceeding from heaven tonight, the whole world over, and it is the same message. It announces that, if you are chained in the bondage of sin and the weight of your sins are entangling you, if you are tied down by these things, then God has the answer for you in Christ. He has the answer. It is not in anyone else, not in some kind of theology, not merely in a company of Christians; He has it in Jesus. There is the answer in the glad tidings, God's answer. You may say that you do not believe in God. Well, there was a man here who did not own God either. There was a man here who believed in himself. It says that "he was walking upon the royal palace of Babylon", what a picture it is. If you ever get an opportunity to look in a history book at what the royal palace of Babylon looked like, you will be amazed at what Nebuchadnezzar built. He says, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of **my** power and for the glory of **my** majesty?". Where was God in that? - "**my** power ... **my** majesty". What a man this was, totally taken up with himself. Now, you may not have a kingdom and a palace but you can be just as taken up with yourself as

Nebuchadnezzar was, as I can be, completely consumed by our own circumstances and what we have done and what we might want to do, just as those lepers were at the other end of the scale. You may feel, quite rightly too, that they would be occupied with their condition as they suffered, but this king here appeared to have no need of God. It reminds us of when Saul was walking along the road to Damascus with others going to the city to imprison Christians. He was walking on when suddenly there was a voice, Acts 9. Maybe tonight that there will be suddenly a voice to you; not my voice, not some other preacher's voice, not someone else in the room, not their voice - the voice of Jesus gently calling, ready to speak. Take note of the way that this word comes to the king. It is not said to be a great demanding voice. It is very interesting how scripture puts it, "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from the heavens". "There fell a voice from the heavens": think of that. That is not exactly how the same voice was heard on the road to Damascus; it is described there in a different way, but here there was a man utterly consumed with himself and how great he was and "there fell a voice from the heavens". There could have been no mistaking who was speaking. In the grace of God, He addresses him as "King Nebuchadnezzar". He could have just struck him down where he was. That voice also came to Saul in a slightly different way but the same grace was behind it; the Lord says, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?", Acts 9: 4. The voice from the heavens comes freighted with love and with divine grace, that it might draw you into the divine embrace and allow you to be relieved of the burden of your sins: "there fell a voice from the heavens". God could not wait to have to do with this man: what was He going to do with this king? How was He going to turn him? Well, what He says is, "The kingdom is departed from thee"; that was quite a thing, as this was everything that Nebuchadnezzar had, he had spent his whole time building it; he was the greatest king for far and wide. "The kingdom is departed from thee ...". What happens? - the scripture says, "The same hour was the word fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and ate grass as oxen; and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, till his hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws". This actually happened. We spoke of some things in the reading that were parables and stories that are used to explain things - this actually happened! God, the Creator of this king who thought he was so great, intervened and He drove him to become as the beasts of the field. God has not intervened in any one of our lives in quite that way - He can but He would prefer, in the dispensation in which

we are, which is one of grace, to draw you in by the attractive love and power of the Lord Jesus. Hosea speaks of God saying, "I drew them with bands of a man", Hos 11: 4. That is how divine Persons are acting today. You and I may think we are so great. I may think quite a lot of myself and what I can do, and my abilities, but God can see through all that. What He is interested in is not how great you are in this world, in whatever dimension it may be - intelligent, clever, smart, accumulating many things; He is not interested in that, what He is interested in is your soul, and He wants it for Himself. He wants your affections for Himself so that you will give Him glory. There was nothing returning to God from this man, and it may be that there are one or two, or even more, people in this room from whose lives nothing returns to God. What a thing that would be. We spoke in the reading about the claim that divine Persons have on us. The Creator God has a claim on you, He holds your breath in His hand, measures your way, knows your way; He has had it in His hand, even though you may have ignored Him throughout your whole life. Well, God knows you and He knows whether there is something going up to Him from your life. You may think you do not need God right at the moment. Do you think Nebuchadnezzar did not think that? What did he appear to have need of? Nothing. There are those in scripture who say that, they "have need of nothing", Rev 3: 17. Oh that your heart may not be like that, dear friend. You do: you have need of a Saviour. You have need of a Saviour of God's providing to deal with this matter of your sin and bring you to the realisation, as Nebuchadnezzar had, that there was only One who was great and most high; there was only One. He says here, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of the heavens, all whose works are truth, and his paths judgment". How perfect. His heart was turned to embrace the greatness of God and give Him glory. That can be the case in your life as it has been in mine, and for many of those sitting here. The person I was, who thought himself completely self-sufficient and having no need of God, can be turned to see the attractiveness of what has been presented in Christ and the glory of what is seen in God Himself. That is the message of the gospel; we will touch on a couple of other aspects in a moment but that is the kernel of it. How can God do that? How can He turn you? Why did the gospel become attractive to me and to you? It becomes attractive because it is all centred in the Person of Christ. There is nothing more attractive to a believer than the love and grace of God as expressed in Jesus. The attractiveness is beyond words to a believer, centred there in a Man who has done everything for God. I

was thinking of these words, as someone quoted them in thanksgiving this morning, “not my will, but thine be done”, Luke 22: 42. What a thing. Even when we have been saved and come under the shelter of the precious blood of Jesus, we find that we still want to do our will, but there was a Man who never ever wanted to do His own will, “not my will, but thine be done”; He was someone whose life was utterly devoted to doing what it was that God His Father desired Him to do.

Another man who thought he could do things for himself was Peter, and in Luke's gospel he says to the Lord Jesus, “Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death”, Luke 22: 33. No doubt he meant that but he was not able for it, neither was it his place, but as to the Lord Jesus saying, “not my will, but thine be done”, He was able. Thank God it was His place and He took it and He went into death. He went to the cross and suffered and died for you, I trust, and most certainly for me. He suffered and He died there, shed His precious blood that you - by trusting in it and repenting of the way that you have come and beginning to see your sins in the same light as God sees them - you may rid yourself of that past because Christ has done it for you. He has borne those sins and you may now come to trust upon Him both for now and for the future. There is the glory of the gospel and the simplicity of it all centred in Jesus.

Nebuchadnezzar lived long before Jesus came to the earth, and he came to know the glory of God in a different way than the way we know, but he came to acknowledge it with the whole of his heart. He says as to God, “none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”. None can do that; we cannot question God. We like to sometimes, we find that things come up in our lives and we question God, 'Why are You doing that, why is my life so awkward, why do all these problems come up, why is it so difficult?'. Nebuchadnezzar came to it that he could not ask God that sort of thing. He is so great and His ways are so perfect; His judgments are so perfect. I cannot question what He is doing. I simply accept it, and if He wants to bless you and to save you, as He does tonight, if He is speaking to your heart tonight, do not question Him. Allow the love of God and His grace to flood into your affections and accept the great privilege that God has chosen you for salvation. What could be greater? God having had it in His heart even from before time that you should be saved and should give Him glory. He wants you to do that.

There were these ten men in Luke's gospel - these were

different from Nebuchadnezzar, and they had a different attitude. In the modern world in which we live, we are well aware what people mean when they use the word 'attitude', we see it in many people. Nebuchadnezzar had 'attitude' in the modern sense of the word, but these men did not. They were ten leprosy men and they met Jesus. They were those "who stood afar off". Why did they stand afar off? Nobody would go near them. Nobody should really want to have to do with you in your sins. Nobody should want to have anything to do with you or me as still marked by sin, by the degradation of everything that is about it, but Jesus does. These men stood afar off. A leper had to cry "unclean, unclean" (Lev 13: 45); people could hear him coming and they could get out of the way when he came near. Imagine having to do that; no friends, no acquaintances, despised by everyone you came into contact with. Jesus took a place like that - "became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might be enriched", 2 Cor 8: 9. He became poor that by that poverty, by what He became and what He made Himself, making Himself of no reputation, we might be enriched. Then there was what God made Him; that is, He made Him sin for us (2 Cor 5: 21); by that, and by going into death, and by going out of sight, by *that* poverty, "ye by his poverty might be enriched". God is handing to you the greatest riches in the universe, what is available in the gospel; and it was available for these lepers. They did not know it; in fact it appears that only one of them really got to understand it to any degree. These ten men came up and, "lifted up their voice saying, Jesus, Master, have compassion on us" - that was a good start. Do you realise that you need the mercy and compassion of God? I can tell you that you do, but it is no good me just keeping telling you, you have to know it for yourself in your heart and open up your affections to God, allow Him to speak to you through Jesus. I could tell you until I was blue in the face but it would make no difference; the preacher cannot do it for you, no preacher can - open up your heart to Jesus. These ten men made a good start, they said, "Jesus, Master, have compassion on us", and Jesus spoke to them and it says as they were going to the priest, "And it came to pass as they were going they were cleansed". I expect they had wanted this their whole life; they had waited for this moment their whole life long.

Now, I come to the point where we are dealing with those who have been saved, who do know Jesus as their Saviour, because all of these ten were cleansed. They were all cleansed, they could mix now in society, they could go about their lives as normal, they could do all the

things that normal people could do: they were rid of that horrible disease. As knowing Jesus and as accepting Him as your Saviour, as repenting of your sins and knowing how God loves to forgive the sinner, you can come into the same position as all of the ten of these lepers, but now what are you going to do? What am I going to do? God wants something more from those who are saved, and one of them understood that. He returned, he "seeing that he was cured, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice". That is what God wants from forgiven sinners; He wants glory to return to Him. There are many things that He wants us to do and many things that He wants us to come into the privilege of. One of them is remembering the Lord in the breaking of bread, and a sister here did that this morning for the first time. That is one of the things, one of the ways to glorify God. Many of the rest of us here did it this morning not for the first time, but how real was it? Did we really glorify God or was it simply something that we did by habit that we do every Lord's day? You see how much notice Jesus took of this man? This man, "fell on his face at his feet giving him thanks ... And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but the nine, where are they? There have not been found to return and give glory to God save this stranger. And he said to him, Rise up and go thy way: thy faith has made thee well". Jesus was identifying in that person the faith that God had placed there. This was a real moment of triumph for divine activity: the blessed Son of God upon the earth available to men, available for salvation, here doing the Father's will, able to identify the work of God in a poor cleansed leper at His feet in front of Him. That brings rejoicing to God's heart.

May that be the portion of our hearts today, that from those in whom God has worked by planting faith by the work of the Holy Spirit, and where that faith has answered to the message in the glad tidings, glory to God results . That may be in the taking of your privilege in breaking bread, it may be in your participation in the service of God, it may be something that none of your local brethren or your family ever see, it may be just something in your life that makes you rejoice, and returns to God something of what He has given to you. It is our privilege to be able to take that up until the Lord comes. Then we will glorify God forever, throughout the millennium and in eternity, but until the Lord comes, it is our privilege to take up glorifying God now. Nebuchadnezzar must have done that for the rest of his life; he would never have forgotten his experience. Would you forget such a moment, going from the greatest king in the world to eating the grass

and growing your hair and your nails like the beasts in the field? Would you forget such a moment? This one leper would never have forgotten this moment when he was cleansed, and I suppose the other nine would not have either, but there was one who glorified God. May we each be another one, may all of us take up that privilege of being another who glorifies God in our life until Jesus comes; for His Name's sake.

Dorking

2nd March 2014

THE MAINTENANCE OF RIGHT CONDITIONS IN OUR LOCALITIES

Ron J Campbell

John 13: 12-15

1 John 3: 16-17

I just thought, beloved brethren, of the way to maintain good conditions in our localities. It is a great challenge to have things maintained at the divine level, with an appreciation of one another: a real appreciation of one another!

I have read these scriptures because they have the word 'ought' in them, and I think it is an obligation on us, that we should carry out these things. It is not a command, it is an obligation of love. And the Lord Jesus is setting out an example here; He washes the disciples' feet. He gets down to their feet and He washes them. How condescending of the Lord to stoop down and wash the disciples feet! But He was teaching them something; there was instruction in it. He says, "as I have done to you, ye should do also". I believe that it is the way to the maintenance of good conditions amongst the saints, if we are prepared to stoop down and wash one another's feet. It is an obligation on us as I say; the Lord does not issue it as a command here, but He says "ye also ought to wash one another's feet". I believe, beloved brethren, as we stoop down and wash one another's feet, we have a real appreciation of one another. We value one another. I believe this is incumbent on us to maintain our affection and love for one another, that we might stoop down and wash one another's feet as the Lord has done to the disciples. He is giving them an example. And if the Lord gives an example, it is a perfect example. There is no flaw in what the Lord does! He stoops down and washes the disciples feet, and He says, "If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also". Well, the Lord is giving them a perfect example. But how we need to value and appreciate one another, to seek to maintain one another at the right level, and to seek to maintain one another in relation to the company, in relation to the continual blessings and encouragement that we get as we are together. It is good to keep one another in that area, that order of things.

I just thought of that 'ought' that the Lord says here; He desires that these kind of conditions might be maintained amongst the

disciples, and we would seek to maintain these conditions amongst ourselves.

Well, John says in his epistle, “Hereby we have known love, because *he* has laid down his life for us”. It is as if we would never have known love if Christ had not laid down His life for us. What a sacrifice! And we have known love; it has been expressed to us; it has been demonstrated by the Lord Jesus: “Hereby we have known love, because *he* has laid down his life for us”; what a Saviour He is! What an example He is, beloved brethren! He has laid down His life for us! What a sacrifice He has undertaken. It also says “and we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives”. Well this is another of John's 'oughts' in his gospel and his epistles; here. “**we ought** for the brethren to lay down our lives”. I believe the maintenance of one another in right conditions in our localities, to maintain one another in relation to divine things vitally, needs the sacrifice involved in laying down our lives for the brethren. We should be encouraged in this, beloved brethren, so that conditions are maintained that are suitable that we might enjoy divine things, we might enjoy the company of one another, and we might prove the blessings that are to be had in our comings together as we are with one another.

I just seek to encourage our hearts; we 'ought' to wash one another's feet, and we 'ought' to lay down our lives for the brethren. I believe good conditions will be maintained as we exercise these things.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

Glasgow

22nd July 2014