

# **A WORD IN ITS SEASON**

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## LOVE UNDERLYING PRIVILEGE

**Exodus 21: 5, 6**

**John 17: 24-26**

**Revelation 21: 1-7**

**GJR** We have known something today, beloved, of the immense privilege of having part in the service of God in the assembly. We are greatly advantaged by the hymns we have, and I was thinking of the golden cups which the princes of Israel brought in Numbers 7, one from each prince, amounting to twelve, each of them filled with incense, and I liken them to the hymns that we have: originally compiled by individuals, as an expression of their personal appreciation of divine Persons, but retained for us for fresh - and repeated - use in the power of the Spirit: "twelve golden cups full of incense", v 86.

We had a touch this morning from 1 Corinthians 15 as to "the end" - one of the very few scriptures where eternity is actually touched on - "Then the end, when he gives up the kingdom" (v 24), and how the love of the Lord Jesus for God will be expressed in that. These are immense matters and what a privilege that we should have access to them and have some living part in them!

I suggested these earlier scriptures - from Exodus and from John - so that we might be freshly reminded that what underlies all these privileges is *the love of a Man*. I might say firstly, the love of a Man for His God: because it is a blessed truth that the Lord Jesus as Man has a God, and He loves that God. He has love too for His assembly and has love for His own individually. I was touched that the individual thought goes right through into Revelation 21, "I will be to him God, and he shall be to me son". That is the individual thought going right through. Is that not touching? And then from John 17 I thought we would draw a fresh impression of the strength of the *desires* of this blessed Man. For our enquiry in chapter 21 of Revelation, we will need to wait on the Spirit to unfold that to us. Those are the thoughts, beloved, that I had to share.

**JTB** Exodus 21 brings out the absoluteness of His committal to the fulfilment of what is in the mind and heart of God.

**GJR** I think we were touched by that this morning. Each feature of the Lord's devotion and indeed, every feature that came out in Him was pleasurable to God in an absolute way. You enlarge on that please.

**JTB** I was just thinking of what we sang:

Told in answ'ring glory now (Hymn 302).

We can know it now. We will know it eternally, but it is a wonderful thing if we can know it now.

**JCG** The Spirit says that “the bondman shall say distinctly”. The Lord's devotion did not begin at the cross, did it? What would you say about the distinctive love of Christ in the passage we have read?

**GJR** I suppose we would need to remember that it is distinctive in that no one else has ever done this. I remember a brother remarking that when the British government introduced legislation to abolish slavery, no provision was ever made in that legislation for a slave who would not go free; so at the simplest level, this is outside of human consideration: that someone who had the opportunity to go free would turn it down. Then as to the teaching, we would need to bring in the mount of transfiguration. “Six years shall he serve”: I have heard it said that the Lord Jesus 'could have stepped from the mount of transfiguration into glory', and we know what we mean by saying that. However, that could not be because the counsels of God involved that He would go to the cross: but do you agree there is the sense in which He had 'served the six years'?

**JCG** Yes, I am sure that is right. Even the prophetic reference in Psalm 40, “Behold, I come ... To do thy good pleasure, my God” (v 7, 8) involves a certain distinct speaking and committal.

**GJR** Yes, it does, so we also need to remember what we read at the end of Leviticus, “Nothing devoted, which shall be devoted from among men, shall be ransomed: it shall certainly be put to death” (chap 27: 29), so that would be confirmed by the scripture you have helpfully brought forward, that there could be only one way out, and that was by way of death. Do you have an impression of this word “distinctly” for us?

**AMB** One thing we can say about that distinct speaking is that the master and the wife and the children would hear it, would understand it, and would be affected by it.

**GJR** Yes, they would hear it.

**AMB** One thing we can say about the Supper that we had the privilege of participating in this morning is that it provides a tremendous assurance to us of the Lord's love. It came out fully demonstrated at the

cross, but it is as sure and distinct now as it was then and will go into eternity, will it not?

**GJR** Yes, so the thought of what is *current* is implied in the Lord's words, "This is my body which is given for you", Luke 22: 19. He gave that body once and for all. We know that work was once and for all, but the way that is presented "which is given for you" suggests what is current.

**GAB** Would it be fair enough to say that the master, wife and children would not be surprised to hear what they did hear because they were in the current enjoyment of his love?

**GJR** We do not want to be sentimental, but certainly the master and the wife would know that the days were counting down to this great moment of decision. Persons would have been aware that this time was approaching, and wondering what would be the result; and your point is that the master, the wife, and the children would know. I think it is really touching what you say, that they would not have been surprised. I think that is expanded by what you have just said, that the master and the wife and perhaps the children would not have been surprised because this decision was in keeping with the person they had known. I will, in that connection, just add the touch, if I may, as to Revelation: when John saw this amazing vessel coming down "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", he did not express any wonder. I just submit that the way John welcomed this, easily absorbed, and later expressed, the vision that he saw - as to what had come down from heaven - was because it was entirely in keeping with the Christ whom he had known, the One in whose bosom he had lain. It was a worthy answer to that One.

**ADM** It says in Revelation 21, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega*". Really Exodus 21 is like the beginning and Revelation 21 is like the end, but it is the same Person that carries it all through in the same glorious power, and we can say too that all were motivated by the same commitment, do you think?

**GJR** That is very touching.

**AML** Would this word "distinctly" suggest what has been noticed in heaven?

**GJR** Well, in the case of the Lord Jesus that moment would be central, and surely it does relate to the mount of transfiguration, but it

anticipated all that that commitment would involve. That would certainly be noted in heaven.

**AML** I was thinking “whom heaven indeed must receive”, Acts 3: 21.

**GJR** Yes, that is a moral necessity “till the times of the restoring of all things”. That is good.

**PAG** The cups that you mentioned from Numbers 7 “each cup of ten shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary” (v 86): do you think “the shekel of the sanctuary” involves what is distinctive? It is not common currency.

**GJR** Enlarge on that, please.

**PAG** Well, really *all* the speaking of Christ is distinctive, and it sets a new standard for man. “According to the shekel of the sanctuary” means that every speaking of Christ was according to the divine standard, and it forms in souls who are indwelt by the Spirit what answers to that. You mentioned the cups as suggesting the hymns; I am sure that is so. There is what is formed in the hearts of saints that is distinctive, and answers directly to the distinct speaking of Christ. Is that so?

**GJR** That is very helpful. Something of that distinctiveness comes to the surface; it did in what we had part in this morning. I think the expression has been used that in the service of song the saints' best feelings are brought out. Maybe that links with what you say as to “the shekel of the sanctuary”, the best feelings, and, as we spoke of what is noticed in heaven, the word here is “his master shall bring him before the judges”; they were going to be witnesses. Can we think of the angelic hosts as witnesses to this great matter? I am sure there is more.

**PEH** Is the reason that the Lord's words were distinctive because they are eternal. I was thinking about what Peter says, “thou hast words of life eternal” (John 6: 68); so that in turn marks Him out as being distinctive.

**GJR** Yes, I think that is very helpful. There are allusions in the Old Testament to the salt of the offerings. I think there are other scriptures where it comes in, suggesting, I think, what is eternal in character. But you could enlarge on that.

**PEH** I was just thinking the words themselves express the Person,

because Peter then goes on to say, “and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God”, v 69.

**GJR** That is not exactly the result of a revelation to Peter there. I see that more as an acquired appreciation, what had grown on them as they companied with Him. It may touch on what was suggested, that this would have been no surprise.

**JCG** Do you think that the distinct speaking was in Gethsemane? “**But not as /will**, but as *thou wilt*”, Matt 26: 39. But then the cross and the three hours of darkness were the *test* of that.

**GJR** Well, we are moving on to holy ground in this consideration, but we are approaching the 'boring of the ear' at Gethsemane. I think we are right to suggest that the mount of transfiguration and the setting of His face to go to Jerusalem was the distinct speaking, but actually He had His ear bored going into death.

**JCG** You are thinking that the reference to the door and the door-post, and then the ear bored: what is in your mind?

**GJR** I had not thought of bringing in the thought of atonement. I thought more the ear bored was His commitment in death that He would be a bondman for ever, but these are holy matters.

**DAB** The Lord's love for His “master” and for His “wife” and for His “children” would be the same, or does the love that He had for His master have anything distinct in mind?

**GJR** “But if the bondman shall say distinctly, I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free”: it is one love. You are stressing it is one love. I would respect that.

**DAB** I was just linking it in my mind with the end of the section you read in John 17, “that the love with which thou hast loved me” - that is, the Father's love for Christ “may be in them” - that is us - “and I in them”.

**GJR** That confirms what you are suggesting. Thank you for that.

**DAB** Very blessed then it is that we are brought as saints into the circle where divine love is known and enjoyed. We are drawn into that circle of divine love which exists between divine Persons - brought right into the blessedness of it, do you think?

**GJR** Then perhaps we should go onto chapter 17. We had a touch this morning as to the unselfish love of each divine Person for the Other.

Is that not wonderful? I am not suggesting any of these scriptures directly refer to the Holy Spirit, but in His service He is present with and is in us, and we depend on that Person and His service. What you are bringing out is that this is something immense secured in men, that there can be this capacity to love. This is privilege.

**DAB** I was just thinking it is a wonderful ingredient, we might say, for the working of the divine economy, and we have a living part in it.

**GJR** The economy involves the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and all those who are the objects of God's grace - subjects of His purpose. It is good to have this in our hearts. Deity is in three divine Persons, the Holy Trinity, and there is no encroachment by the creature on that: divinity is in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The title "Lord" equally applies to each divine Person. But love's economy - which I understand literally means something like a household arrangement - is that divine Persons have arranged themselves as Father, Son and Holy Spirit - equal in Godhead - but coming into these arrangements of love that God might be fully known.

**JAB** Remembering that these words were uttered a few hours before Jesus went out and was taken by the band in Gethsemane, I am thinking of what we have been speaking about in Exodus 21; He says, "these have known that thou hast sent me"; He was talking about the men whom the Father had given Him, for whom He had already given thanks to the Father, and referred to in that way. I was just thinking of what was said earlier: all through that time of service, the Lord had had those with Him who were able to take account of Him in His service: "these have known that thou hast sent me". It is a test to me, as having been brought up in a Christian environment all my life, how much I have absorbed of this blessed One.

**GJR** Well, you *have* absorbed something. Whatever we have been able to absorb is through divine grace. I am thankful for what you say as to the moment in which this was expressed. I wonder if considering that would help us to appreciate this word, "I desire". "Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me". The circumstance which you emphasise would strengthen our appreciation of that: "I desire". But you were emphasising also how great this Person is.

**AP** You have drawn attention to, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me". It is not 'I desire that where I shall be', but it is "where I

am”: that is the present tense. Can you open that up for us?

**GJR** Well, what you read earlier in this gospel is that “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him”, chap 1: 18. He could say the Father “has not left me alone”, John 8: 29. He was conscious of the Father being with Him right until that moment of the forsaking, which John does not actually give us. But you have a fuller thought.

**AP** It is the first time I have really noticed it. Do you think it maybe links on with what was touched on as to being brought into the economy?

**GJR** This is pure privilege. Elsewhere in this prayer He says, “And I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on me through their word” (v 20); so we can think of ourselves. “The men whom thou gavest me out of the world” (v 6), I suppose, was literally the eleven, but the Lord extended His request to include us.

**JCG** We are brought into the glory that the Lord speaks of in verse 22, “And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one”. Earlier He speaks about the glory which He had with the Father “before the world was”, v 5. But this in verse 24 is different again, is it not? This glory seems to be peculiar to Christ alone.

**GJR** Enlarge on that, please.

**JCG** He says in verse 24, “That they may behold my glory which thou hast given me”: He does not exactly say it is the same glory He has given us, the glory of sonship. There is something special about what God has given to Christ to mark Him out, is there?

**GJR** Well, I think that is good. He is the only-begotten Son, and He is the Beloved. I could not say more than that.

**PAG** The scripture says “the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus”, 1 Tim 2: 5. There is only one Mediator; there is only one Creator; there is only one Redeemer; there is only one Saviour. These are glories that are His distinctively. He says, “that where I am they also may be with me”. We are *with Him* because He is the Creator and the Redeemer and the Mediator and the Saviour. That is how we can be with Him. We are with Him in dignity because He has given us the glory of sonship. It is made possible by Him to be with Him where He is.

**GJR** Well, that fills the heart to think of how great He is.

**DS** “That they may behold my glory”: is that an added glory to the thought of the bondman?

**GJR** Well, you enlarge on that.

**DS** I am looking for help in my own mind to understand this. This is something now that the Lord has distinctly that has been given from the Father as completing His committal as the bondman. I just wondered: there is a glory that relates to the Lord as a Bondman, but there seems to be a glory that relates to Him now as One who is in relationship with the Father, “that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me”. This is distinct between the Father and the Son, but I am looking for help.

**GJR** Well, the hymn distinguishes:

Great the glory Thou art given,  
And the glory Thou hast won; (hymn 181),

but in His Person He is greater than both what He has been given and all that He has done. These thoughts bring us to worship.

**PEH** Does glory bring about change if it has an effect on persons? Can you say something as to that?

**GJR** Paul says, “But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord ... are transformed”, 2 Cor 3: 18. He does not say that we might be but that we are! If we really look on that glory, *we will be changed*. In Ezekiel 46, the worshippers will go in by one door and they will always go out by a different door; not so the prince: when he goes in, he goes in by one door and he goes out by the same. That suggests the greatness of Christ, the One whose glory never changes, but the thought of the worshippers going in by one door, and always going out by a different door, suggests they had been affected by the glory of that One. I would love to convey that: that as we all long for an improved state of soul; we all long for brightness of spirit; we all long to be like that blessed Man whom we love and to whom we belong: the way to be like Him is to see Him through the eyes of our heart.

**JCG** Your reference in Ezekiel is very helpful. You earlier spoke about the glory on the mount of transfiguration. Peter wanted three tabernacles, but the Father's voice was, “*This is my beloved Son: hear him*” (Mark 9: 7), and Jesus was left “alone with themselves”, v 8. That is distinctive, is it?

**GJR** Yes, and that account can be regarded as presenting the highest truth. That was Mark's. Matthew tells us, "they saw no one but Jesus alone", chap 17: 8. That is a necessary experience for us, but it is not the full thought. The full thought is what you have quoted, "Jesus alone with themselves". Christ associated with His own and His own associated with Him, is the purpose of God.

**GAB** This glory we are speaking of would relate to the economy. There is a glory of Deity which we have in John 17: 5. We do not share in that; that is His alone. But this one, we can behold it; so for us the bodies of glory will be needed; and being part of the divine economy it will be ours to behold this glory, without sharing it.

**GJR** That is helpful.

**AMB** It has been said already that there are glories personal to the Lord and revealed so that means they are made known to us. Our brother spoke earlier of His glory as the Creator and the Redeemer and the Mediator and the Saviour, and we have benefited from the display and the exercise of these glories, but the Lord wants us to be onlookers, and come into the enjoyment and appreciation of these glories of His and, as we do that, we would take up His praise on our lips. Is that the thought here? The whole context is because the Father loves Him from before the foundation of the world. The divine thoughts, the glories of this One who has come into manhood (although the glories extend back to pre-incarnate activities), should be appreciated by those who have been given the capacity to enjoy and admire them.

**GJR** Well, that involves the indwelling Spirit. It must do.

**JSS** Can you help further as to this glory that is given, "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me"? What is your impression as to that?

**GJR** Well, I am limited but we have a hymn which says,

And to know the blessed secret  
Of His preciousness to Thee (Hymn 277).

What a privilege to be given some appreciation of that. It reminds me of the need to ask the Father to show us what He has found so precious in His Son and, indeed, what He finds so precious in Him now.

**PAG** Does the scripture in Hebrews 1 help where it speaks in verse 2 of Him being "established heir of all things". An heir is given something

that he has not had before. You would not be an heir if you did not receive anything. “Whom he ...” - that is God; so these are the glories given to Him by God, and they are listed there, “by whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, having made by himself the purification of sins, set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high, taking a place by so much better than the angels, as he inherits a name more excellent than they” (v 2-4); so the glories He is given and the glories He has won are all encapsulated in these few verses. I would not make that exclusive; there are others too; but an heir inherits something he did not have before, and God gave Him that; He established Him “heir of all things”.

**JAB** I was thinking of what you said about the longings of Christ that He might have those who can respond to this desire “that they may behold my glory” and as beholding it, the result would be worship and response. You spoke at the beginning of these hymns we have and we sometimes sing,

And, responsive to Thy longing,  
We would now abide in love; (Hymn 161),

and we do that really in the area that we were enjoying this morning. What is being brought out in this conversation about these glories of Christ is for a purpose and that is that there should be an answer to His heart. Many of us here will be saying that we do not fully understand everything that is being said about the glory of the Lord Jesus, but if we love Him, we want to know more about Him, and every little thing more that we absorb of Him, for instance, an impression received this morning, would cause an answer to His longings.

**GJR** First let it bow our heart, and then let us commit ourselves to understand it better. If our heart is bowed, God gets something.

**RB** Reference was made in thanksgiving this morning to that passage in Esther where it is asked, “What is to be done with the man whom the king delights to honour?” chap 6: 6. Is that a question we could each ask ourselves, and the consideration of it would relate to your exercise in terms of more for Him?

**GJR** Yes, I think so, and the first word which comes to mind when we think of the Lord Jesus is His *moral* worth. I recall that in Esther “the man whom the king delights to honour” was someone who had earlier acted with moral uprightness, and that underlies everything for God.

**DAB** You have mentioned once or twice the mount of transfiguration and there were the three men that were taken, Peter, James and John, not all the disciples, but these three. It is obvious that the glory that was manifest there had an effect on them. Peter speaks of it in his epistles (2 Pet 16-18); John speaks of it as contemplating His glory (John 1: 14) - that would include the mount of transfiguration. So they were affected in their experience by it, and I just wondered if our experiences, such as we had this morning, are to inculcate something, to form these characteristics of Christ with us, do you think, as appreciating His glory? I was thinking the Lord spoke this prayer in the presence of His disciples. He was not alone here. It says, "These things Jesus spoke, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said ..." (John 17: 1); so He was in the presence of these men, was He not? I was thinking as to learning as to His desires, and the disciples being drawn into the bosom of Christ's affections for His Father; do you think that is how it works with us? So in the blessedness of having part in the service of God we begin to appreciate the greatness and glory of divine Persons and, too, what we are able to say in the presence of the Father as to Christ. I think it is wonderful that we can bring that forward. We do not leave things behind; it is cumulative; and I just wondered if we see something of that in John 17.

**GJR** Well, these disciples were witnessing service at the golden altar. What was ascending was incense; this prayer was incense to the Father, and they were witnesses of it.

**ADM-e** It says of the queen of Sheba, "there was no more spirit in her" when she beheld the glory of Solomon, and finally, "his ascent by which he went up", 1 Kings 10: 5. Do you think that is one result of beholding glory?

**GJR** I am thankful you bring that in, "his ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah". The knowledge the Lord Jesus has of God is unique; His knowledge of God as a Man is unique. Am I right, brethren, that nowhere in the gospels is the Lord Jesus presented as leading His own in prayer? This was *His* prayer to the Father. Somewhere it says, "as he was praying alone, his disciples were with him", Luke 9: 18. I think in the gospels His prayers were always *His* prayers to the Father. That was "his ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah". One of the wonders of Christianity is that He sings "in the midst of the assembly", Heb 2: 12. That is one of the marvels of the present time, of this dispensation.

**JAB** I was thinking about that this morning. I was affected this week in my reading that the Lord does what you have said through the affections of the saints. His singing in the assembly is as we sing, and our affections are moved. It challenged me as to how often my affections are moved. Sometimes I sing a hymn and shut my book and can hardly remember what I have sung of it. If the Spirit helps us as we are singing as we did this morning, the Lord is singing through the hearts of the saints as moved by these things that you are speaking of; is that right?

**GJR** That is very helpful. There is the suggestion that “having sung a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives”, Matt 26: 30. It may have been a psalm; but the suggestion is that He led in that; we can only think of Him leading in that. You are emphasising what He now does through the affections of His own.

**JAB** He did not lead His own in prayer but He sang with them, and it happened immediately after these words that we have read as we know from the other accounts. That hymn must have been sung after He had prayed to His Father, and He led in that singing.

**GJR** Well, what is described in Revelation is special and even includes the most intimate service, of God wiping “away every tear from their eyes”. There have been and there are, many tears, but what a precious, detailed, intimate service this is.

**TJH** Would these tears be the precious tears that would be in the bottle? There are tears that are not precious at all, but these tears are wiped away. These are precious tears, the feelings of the saints coming out.

**GJR** I am content to think of the embracing grace of God that will wipe away every tear.

**DAS** It says, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”. Now, all we have been saying surely is by the power of the Holy Spirit; He is doing that work. Is He not preparing a bride for Christ? Would that be right to say that?

**GJR** I do believe that. You enlarge on it.

**DAS** It is a very wonderful thing that we have power available; so any small impression we have, He can enlarge it and make it suitable for Christ. It is part of His service, part of the preparation that goes on, the result of which will be eternal.

**GJR** And do you see the thought of freshness in the bride? This is a simile, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”. Historically, she would have been a wife already; she is presented as “the bride, the Lamb's wife” (v 9), and she will share in His administration; but she is presented now as a bride, in freshness!

**JCG** Why is it repeated as to being with them: “and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God”? There is something special in that, is there?

**GJR** So special that if that was all we knew that would be enough. For God to be with His people is really all we need to know, for it is infinite blessedness.

**JCG** The idea of the tabernacle involved nearness, but it seems to be emphasised in a distinctive or double way, “God himself shall be with them, their God”, as if to say there is absolutely no uncertainty about it in the nearness to which God has declared Himself through Christ.

**GJR** The overwhelming need of creature man is God. Men, women, boys and girls may spend their lives hiding from God, but man's overwhelming need is God, “and God himself shall be with them, their God”.

**PAG** Does the expression “God himself” mean there is no distance?

**GJR** Are you contrasting that with God sending a servant, sending a prophet? No distance: this is immense!

**AMB** The matter of no distance is confirmed in the use of the word to “tabernacle”, which means, I would think literally, to dwell in tents, that is, with no distance known. It is an unusual word to use, “the tabernacle of God is with men”; His dwelling-place is with men; “and he shall tabernacle with them”. That would confirm what is being said.

**GJR** The first tabernacle, I suppose, was that made of boards and skins and so on, and there the word is used as a noun, but here it is used as a verb, God “shall tabernacle with them”; it is a *doing* word; it is what the blessed God will do.

**TJH** Do you think it is of note that what we are speaking of now as to the tabernacle and the nearness of divine Persons to men comes before what is said as to the tears? There are tears in accord with the feelings of divine Persons, which are not merely sentimental. If they

are in accord with the feelings of God, they have particular value.

**GJR** I should like to have feelings that are in accord with those of divine Persons.

**JAB** You have spoken about the longings of divine Persons. I want to be careful in what I ask, but is God longing to do this? As the blessed God, He has longings, does He? He has desires. Would that be right?

**GJR** I like that suggestion. I think we know that the Lord Jesus as Man is longing for the Father's word, but I like that wider suggestion.

**JAB** I am just thinking of what we sometimes say as to the purpose of God. His purpose was in a past eternity that there should be an answer to His love, and I wondered if that would fit in with the suggestions you have been making during the reading as to divine desire. We know what we want and what we would love to do, and in a spiritual sense we have been speaking of that and enjoying it this morning, but that is in response to a God who has longings: "The Father seeks such as his worshippers", John 4: 23. That is in answer to the desires of His heart.

**GJR** That provides a good background for the gospel preaching.

## **Grangemouth**

**11<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

### **Key to Initials** (*from Grangemouth unless otherwise stated*):

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## **TRUSTWORTHINESS**

**Mark Grant**

**John 3: 35**

**Philippians 3:3**

**2 Timothy 1: 14; 2: 2**

**1 Corinthians 11: 28-31**

I have been thinking about what is trustworthy. When thinking about what can be trusted, our thoughts would immediately be drawn to the Lord Jesus as the One who can be trusted. The verse we have read in John's gospel speaks of how the Father has given all things to be in His Hand. It is a wonderful thing to contemplate that the Father can trust the Son and give all things to be in His hand. It would help us to trust that One, the Lord Jesus. Of course, as in everything, the Lord Jesus is the perfect Model for us; He trusted in God; the Psalms speak of that, the way He trusted in God. Scripture also speaks of Him doing the will of God: "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will", Heb 10: 7. The Father trusted the Son to do His will; the Son trusted the Father in the doing of it; He was here as a dependent Man. As I said, He is the perfect Model for us. He is perfect; we are not. There is that in us that cannot be trusted.

This is why I read what Paul says, as to not trusting in flesh, which is obviously the negative side; but we need that, and we need to come to it that we cannot trust in flesh. I was encouraged by what our brother who has spoken brought in as to Romans 7 and 8. We need to identify what there is in us that we can trust and what we cannot trust. We cannot trust any feature of the flesh; even its most refined features cannot be trusted. The Lord Jesus while He was here was "in likeness of flesh of sin" (Rom 8: 3), but He was here in perfection and sin apart. There was no feature in Him that needed to be judged, or that could not be trusted. He was altogether that which He said and did; every matter was perfect and fully in accord with the will of His God and Father. In that way, He is the perfect Model for us, but He is also the perfect Object for us, for our affections and our contemplation. In this section in John's gospel it is put in the present tense and I think I am right in saying that the writer, John, puts this in: "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand". That was true when John wrote it, and it is still the case at the present time; the Lord Jesus is in the position of all things being in His hand. In Revelation 1 it says, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am

living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades”, v 17-18. Even the keys of death and of hades are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. What follows, is that He “holds the seven stars in his right hand” and He “walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps”, Rev 2: 1. So everything that proceeds at the present time is also in His hands and under His control; there is nothing that proceeds that is not under His control. We feel tested as to that; I certainly do myself; sometimes we wonder why things are happening, or why things are allowed. It would help each one of us to see that the Father has entrusted all to Jesus, and we can too.

When we come to Philippians, I do not want to dwell on it too much, and there are other scriptures we could have read, particularly in Romans, but there is this simple reference that, “we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh”. What is of the Spirit and what is of the flesh, Scripture says, “the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal 5: 17); they cannot be mixed at all, and our confidence is to be in Christ, not in ourselves according to flesh. My simple impression, in relation to ourselves, is that we are to be able to identify in a greater way the work of God in ourselves that can be trusted, and too, to come to a greater judgment of the flesh. It is easy to think that certain features of the flesh are more acceptable than others, but even the most refined features of the flesh cannot be trusted. I did not read it all, but what follows was also in my mind: Paul sets out the things that he could have trusted in; if anyone could have trusted in flesh, he could have. He says, “these I counted, on account of Christ, loss”, Phil 3: 7. He speaks too of counting them “to be filth, that I may gain Christ”, v 8. Even the most admirable features of the flesh, Paul has come to count them as filth that he may gain Christ. He must have come to it that he could not gain Christ fully unless he counted these things to be loss and to be filth, and so with us, we may not let go of some of the features of the flesh, and it may hinder us in our appreciation of the Lord Jesus and may hinder us in being more like Him. The more I have judged the flesh the more I will be able to appreciate Christ and what God has done in me. Of course, the more I appreciate the work of God in myself and the more I rely on the Spirit, the more I will be able to put aside the features of the flesh.

I was thinking of an example of this in Timothy. He was one to whom Paul entrusted certain things; he was one whom Paul could speak of as caring “with genuine feeling”, Phil 2: 20. We see, as our

brother has referred to, that the moral basis and foundation was there. No doubt Timothy had been formed; not only did he know what Paul had said, but he had been formed by it, so that he could be entrusted with the good deposit, as Paul refers to here. Think of all that Timothy would have heard; it speaks later of “the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses”. Timothy had heard much in the company of Paul; Paul could entrust these things to Timothy. It would be a good feature for myself and for all of us, to be more like this, to be persons who can be trusted; as was said, our Lord Jesus is the perfect Model for us in that.

At the present time, I am sure, divine Persons would be looking for those who can be trusted to carry forward the testimony, and to maintain the Lord's rights here, and to be absorbed in Paul's ministry, then also, as it says in chapter 2, to “be competent to instruct others also”. I am sure we all feel our weakness in that, but I think this competency would be based on a moral foundation; but also persons who are spiritual. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians speaks of the attractive features of a spiritual person. “The fruit of the Spirit” - it is put as singular as these features would blend - “is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control: against such things there is no law”, Gal 5: 22-23. You might say those features are so trustworthy that there is no law that applies to them. Being of the Spirit, they can be fully trusted. I was encouraged by what was referred to earlier by our brother in Romans 7 and 8, where the man comes to it; “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7: 24), and “in me ... good does not dwell”, Rom 7: 18. He is then immediately set free by the deliverance of Christ Jesus; he is set free in relation to all that the Spirit would bring us into. Divine Persons would be seeking this for us. The more we judge the flesh and the more we make way for the work of God in ourselves, the greater liberty we will have; liberty with each other, but too, greater liberty in the service of God.

This is why I read in the first epistle to the Corinthians. I used to think here of the proving in a negative way - the judging of ourselves. I was helped to see that it is not only judging what is of the flesh, but it is also proving what is of the work of God in yourself. “Let a man prove himself”: that would be one way in which we can be more trustworthy and become more spiritual. We may wonder how to become more spiritual. You can only become more spiritual in the presence of divine Persons, and that is where we would prove ourselves. It would be to be before the Lord in relation to what I might need to judge, but also to be

before the Lord in relation to the work of God in myself, all that divine Persons are doing, all that the Holy Spirit is doing. Especially when we are younger, it easy to be occupied with our failings, and how weak we are, how unworthy we are, but divine Persons would love to set us free from all of that. As our brother has said, we need to go back to what we are as in Christ Jesus, linking on with what is positive in each other, and in ourselves. As doing so we will have greater liberty with one another, and in the service of God. The scripture here says, “as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord, until he come”, v 26. Paul goes on to speak of eating and drinking “unworthily”; then, “But let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup”. I used to think of this as something you would do on a Saturday night, but I do not think that is the case. It should be a constant exercise to be before divine Persons and proving ourselves. It may involve self-judgment, but also proving what is of the work of God in ourselves. I feel for myself that I need divine help in doing that. We can perhaps think some features of the flesh are not as bad as others, but my simple thought is that only the work of God can be trusted. In looking to the Lord Jesus, and to all that He is to the Father, we can see, you might say objectively, there the thing is in perfection, and therefore we can be helped ourselves to work this out subjectively. The Roman teaching would clearly help in relation to this.

These thoughts may have been scattered, but I was just encouraged by what our brother brought before us as to being in Christ Jesus, and that to enjoy that position really we need to be able to identify the work of God in ourselves; and it can be trusted. That is a great matter for our encouragement - what God is doing in me can be trusted and relied upon.

May the Lord bless these thoughts.

**Word in the Ministry Meeting, Grangemouth**

**21<sup>st</sup> November 2017**

## **RESTORATION AND REVIVAL**

**Colin Seeley**

**Isaiah 57: 15**

**Exodus 3: 1-8 to “spacious land”**

**Luke 22: 31-32**

**2 Timothy 4: 11 from “Take Mark”**

I have been thinking about Isaiah 57: 15, which was referred to in a recent fellowship meeting. It is a remarkable verse of scripture; there is a lot in it. It begins by speaking of the greatness of God and then it speaks about the wonderful fact that He desires to dwell with persons, and that He desires to revive us.

I would like to start by briefly speaking about the greatness of God, and I would like to ask every precious heart in this room if you have a link with God, if you believe in God. He is “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy”. There is no other God beside Him: He is the Creator God, and testimony has been rendered even in the creation as to “his eternal power and divinity”, Rom 1: 20.

What a God we have! How wonderful He has been! You may have noticed in the news this week that a famous scientist died. I would not like to be critical of people, and we are thankful for brilliant men and women that can help us. He was a physicist and very intelligent, and he spent a lot of his life trying to understand the origins of the universe, but he was forceful in saying that God had nothing to do with it. Now that is very sad, though we do not know what happened between him and God on his deathbed, but I can tell you on the authority of Scripture, and in the faith of my own heart, that God created the universe. I would say to lay hold of that in the faith of your heart because it is a very stabilising thing. It say in Genesis 1: 1, “In the beginning God ...”. Mr Coates makes an interesting comment: 'Man's mind leaves God out, and wearies itself in endless speculations; faith brings Him in, and everything is simple', Outline of Genesis p1. I would say to young persons here, down to the youngest that can understand me, to lay hold of that in your hearts; in the simplicity of your heart lay hold of the fact. Do not give ear to what you may be told at school that is against this; God created the heavens and the earth, and He created you.

He created everything in the universe, and we all have to do with God. He is a wonderful God! Not only is He omnipotent and all-

seeing, but He is a God of love and grace and mercy. He is a God who has worked to restore the creation that was ruined by the incoming of sin. This Bible that we love so much is a recovery story. In verse 2 of Genesis we see that the earth was “waste and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering”, seeking a response, and then God moves in recovery: “Let there be light”, v 3. What a God! And so all the animals were created, men and women were created, and then something appalling came into the creation. By way of the serpent, sin came in to spoil what was so delightful to the heart of God, and I would say, speaking reverently, that God was not taken aback. He always had the answer in Jesus, and He is the One I would like to speak about to you tonight.

That is why I read in Exodus because that is a striking allusion to the incoming of Jesus. What a thing it was that God appeared in that way to Moses, and Moses turned aside. I would say to you tonight not to turn aside to listen to other men, not even, in one sense, to listen to me: listen to what God is saying. Moses turned aside to see this great sight. If you show interest in God's things He will show interest in you; God is interested in interested persons. So you see in that wonderful interaction between God and Moses the heart of God coming out: “And Jehovah said, I have seen assuredly the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and their cry have I heard on account of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.”

This looked forward to the time when God did this through the down-stooping love of Jesus, the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour. It was His own move to come into this scene. Thanks be to God that He came in!

And when at length the Son on earth did stand (Hymn 300).

And we thank God for His life. How perfect it was! He came in at the weakest point; He came in as a babe: He came in fully dependent. He grew up, and every stage of His life, every stage of His development, speaking reverently, was absolutely perfect. He was different from you and me; He was sin apart, and “in favour with God and men”, Luke 2: 52. And then He commenced those three and a half years of public service, and He was a green spot on the earth for God. We have been thinking about the matter of restoring and revival, and that was what Jesus was: He was a Restorer. When He came across persons who were blind He

restored their sight; if person's hands were not working, He restored their hands; if persons were dumb and deaf, He restored them; He healed lepers. What a Person! It says in John's gospel, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written", chap 21: 25. Do you understand the magnitude of what it meant for God to have the Lord Jesus here on earth? Yet the cry of the world was, 'Away with Him': "We will not that this man should reign over us", Luke 19: 14. Why was that? Well, He was the Light of men; He exposed what was in the heart itself. Naturally I do not like that. Maybe you do not like to have your heart exposed, but the Lord Jesus became the perfect Sacrifice and Sin-offering.

When God operates things are unmistakable. Moses saw that thorn bush that burned but was not being consumed; it was an unmistakable experience. There were persons who were healed by Jesus and their lives were changed; it was unmistakable. You will know if Jesus has touched you : your life will be changed. Not only did He live here in a life that was of such delight to God but He went all the way for you. You think of the Father opening the heavens upon Him at the waters of baptism, and declaring His delight in Him, and the Spirit descending as a dove upon Him. That was before His public service commenced. Then on the mount of transfiguration again the Father declared His delight in Him, "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 17: 5. Meanwhile the world's cry was, "We will not that this man should reign over us".

Do the sufferings of Jesus affect your heart? You can read about them at the end of Matthew's gospel. We have spoken today about suffering for righteousness sake, 1 Pet 3: 14. The Lord could say to them, "but this is your hour and the power of darkness", Luke 22: 53. I often wonder about that; I often wonder about what God allowed men to do to His beloved Son, "suffering for righteousness sake": the shame, the scorn, the spitting, the mockery, the crown of thorns, the purple robe, blows on the face. There was a person there - and, of course, God Himself witnessed it - who witnessed the sufferings of Jesus, and I think he witnessed the way that he suffered; he would not have seen a crucifixion like it. And then, after those three hours of darkness the Lord Jesus, the One who was the Sin-bearer, died. He could say, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit", Luke 23: 46. Men did not kill Jesus; He had the authority to lay down His life (John 10: 18):

but He did die. We need to understand the reality of the death of Jesus. But I was thinking of the testimony that was rendered by that centurion. You may say that it came from the most unlikely of sources. What did he say? He said, "Truly this man was Son of God", Mark 15: 39. What a testimony rendered to the greatness of the Lord Jesus! I think that centurion's life had changed for ever, and maybe the lives of others as well.

But the work was not finished then; another soldier came and pierced the side of Jesus. Think of the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus! If you read further on in Exodus you will come to the different plagues - for the Egyptians they were plagues; for the people of God they were signs - and the tenth sign was the occasion for the passover lamb. It is no different tonight - in order for you to be saved tonight you need to know for yourself that you are sheltering under the precious shed blood of Jesus. He shed His blood; wicked hands put Him on the cross; loving hands took Him down. Think of Nicodemus, and the way that the Lord worked with him. He initially came to the Lord in secret; then he intervened to try to mediate things in John 7: but in the end he comes with Joseph of Arimathea. The Lord has His reserves; God has His reserves and Jesus "was with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was there guile in his mouth", Isa 53: 9. What a Person! So He was placed in that "new tomb in which no one had ever been laid" (John 19: 41), for three days and three nights, and in being there He removed the man that had offended God, and He was "raised up ... by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4,

One of the other signs was that the gnats came out of the dust. In the first two plagues of Exodus, when the rivers and the waters were turned to blood, and when the frogs covered the earth, the sages and sorcerers were able to imitate those signs, but when it came to the gnats they had to say, "This is the finger of God!", chap 8: 19. It speaks of resurrection; it speaks of life out of death. The finger of God is involved in the resurrection of Christ, the selective resurrection of His Son, "according to the working of the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead", Eph 1: 19, 20. We have been speaking tonight about creation, and creation is very wonderful, but it has been said that the power that God extended and exerted in raising Christ from among the dead was greater than the power He used to create the universe. "The working of the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among

the dead”: what a matter! What a foe death was; yet its power has been broken by Jesus. He went into it and He broke its power; He has come out triumphant, a Prince and a Saviour. He appeared to His own, and He was taken up. Do you believe that? Do you believe that the heart of a Man beats in heaven? It says, “And having said these things he was taken up ... and a cloud received him out of their sight”, Acts 1: 9. He has the central place in heaven at God's right hand, a Prince and a Saviour.

He has a great interest in you. If you are needing restoring tonight, if you are needing revival - that is what we read of in Isaiah 57 - the Lord Jesus would do that for you tonight. I love to think of the way that He interceded for Peter. It was quite strong language: He could say to Peter, “Satan has demanded to have you, to sift you as wheat; but / have besought for thee that thy faith fail not; and *thou*, when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren”. Do you know that the Lord has besought for you? He loves you so much that He intercedes for you. That prayer of the Lord Jesus for Peter was answered. Think of the preacher that he became! We see those preachings of Peter at the beginning of Acts, and how powerful they are. What a changed person he had become. He was a believer, but he failed - and have we not all? - and yet he was steadfast; he was a stone. He wrote those epistles. We have been thinking about things that are unmistakable, and he could speak about what he witnessed on the mount of transfiguration: it was not a cleverly imagined fable. He speaks of “having been eyewitnesses of *his* majesty, 2 Pet 1: 16. What a Restorer the Lord Jesus is, and how Peter confirmed his brethren!

I was thinking of Mark as well. If we are thinking of revival, John Mark has a remarkable revival. There was a time when he was with Paul's company, but in Acts 3 it says that he went back to Jerusalem, v 13. And then in chapter 15 there was warm feeling between Paul and Barnabas in relation to Mark; Barnabas went one way and Paul continued on, v 39-41. He got the call from the Macedonian man to come over to help him, and the gospel spread westward, chap 16: 9. How thankful we are that the gospel has come to us! I just love that thought! Yet in 2 Timothy Paul was able to speak about Mark as a recovered person, “Take Mark ... for he is serviceable to me for ministry”. That is really what God has in mind, that people are not just left; He has recovery and revival in His heart: what a God, so great! “From eternity to eternity” (Ps 90: 2); yet His interest is in man. He is

interested in you and me, and wants to dwell with us, but He cannot dwell with us if we do not have a contrite heart. We have that by coming to Jesus in repentance and asking for forgiveness, knowing that we are saved and then receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is how we have a new and changed heart; that is how we are restored.

I trust that it may be the portion of each heart here that we may know that we have a real and living link with Jesus. If you are needing revival or restoration, the only Person that can give it to you will give it to you tonight. In Psalm 69 it says, “then I restored that which I took not away”, v 4. The Lord Jesus is the great Restorer for God. The gospel, and all God's dealings with men, is the story of recovery and restoration. That is what He has in His heart for you tonight, your recovery and restoration, your salvation.

May it be so - for His Name's sake!

**Loanhead**

**18<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

Note – on page 28 of No 142 (February 2019), the scripture reference in para 3 line 1 should be to Zechariah 2 – it was mis-transcribed from Roman numerals.

## THE LAMB OF GOD

Craig A McKay

Isaiah 29: 1

John 1: 29, 30, 35-39 (to “day”)

We have read about a proud lion and a lowly Lamb. I do not want to speak too long about the proud lion. I want to focus on the Lamb - the Lamb of God - the One we sung of in our hymn together, and I would like to attract your hearts to Him. We read about this lion, Ariel, at our midweek reading locally, and this verse struck home to me. It really means, if you see the footnote 'c', 'Lion of God', but the people had strayed far from that. They were proud and, dear friends, a proud person will not get blessing in the glad tidings. You have to come down and see that you are a sinner and repent before God, and He would love to receive you. God would love to receive you as a repenting sinner: He loves repenting sinners. The gospel goes out so that persons might repent and receive Jesus, and receive remission of their sins: remission of *your* sins, dear friend. You are a sinner. Are you too proud to admit that you are a sinner? These persons were proud. Year to year they had had their feasts and they had forgotten all about God. Well, I do not want to focus on that, but do not be like that: do not be like the proud lion. Men would place a lot of stock in a man or a woman who can stand up and be firm and lead things forward and all that kind of thing, but in the glad tidings you are called upon to accept that you are a sinner, and to come to know Jesus as your Saviour.

You might wonder why I would read such an obscure verse in Isaiah, but remember that this is the great gospel prophet. This is someone that, before Jesus walked on the earth, had the heart of God towards these people. He said in chapter 1, “Come now, let us reason together”, v 18. They had nothing to reason with; they had no basis to reason, just as you do not, dear friend. You have nothing you can offer God, but do not worry: it has all been done, the cost has all been met. The precious blood of Jesus has been shed. In chapter 6, Isaiah records what was said, “Holy, holy, holy”, v 3. Isaiah had an impression of the holiness of God, and some understanding of who God was, although a full revelation awaited the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. In chapter 9, he speaks about the Lord Jesus: “his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace”, v 6. What an apprehension this gospel prophet had of the Lord Jesus and His glory: “his name is called Wonderful”. Then we get to

chapter 53. Have you read Isaiah 53? The prophet knew something of the sufferings of Jesus. He could speak of the One who would bear “our griefs” and carry “our sorrows”, who would be “smitten of God, and afflicted”, v 4. That is the Lord Jesus; that is the Lamb: that is the One I want to speak about.

We have read in John's gospel. I see, looking round the room, that most here would be believers - thank God for that - but perhaps there is one here who is not: perhaps you have never opened the Bible before. There is a young woman at my previous work who is about twenty-five and she knows nothing about the Bible, and cannot even name the four gospels. How sorrowful that is! I hope there is no one here like that, but if there is, do not worry, it is not a complicated matter. Jesus died for you, dear friends. He hung on the cross, and you need only put your faith and trust in Him and that precious blood that was shed from the side of the Lamb of God. So it is not complicated, and also this gospel is thought to be the last book of the Bible written so, in that sense, it is very *current*. It has not lost any of its meaning or depth. What a gospel it is! But the man who wrote this gospel is writing about another John, John the baptist. He was a man who lived a very simple life: he ate simple food and wore simple clothing, but what an appreciation he had of Jesus! Though, by nature, he was related to the Lord, he does not make any mention of that. Instead he says, “A man comes after me who takes a place before me, because he was before me”. John had an appreciation of Jesus as the Son of God - God's own Son - a divine Person.

John begins this paragraph by saying, “On the morrow he sees Jesus coming to him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. Probably most of us here were privileged to be at a fellowship meeting recently when the brother said that these two references to the Lamb of God were like the passover in Exodus 12, and like Nathan's lamb that he spoke of to David, 2 Sam 12: 1-4. I was struck by it, and it has not left me since. I just find it quite wonderful the way we can get an impression of the Lord Jesus, something simple that can lay hold of us, and I would just like to develop that thought if I can in my measure, in the Spirit's power, as to what it means that “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” is like the lamb in Exodus 12. Let us read it together! Scripture is far more poignant and able to convey God's mind than the preacher because it is the living word of God. I suppose these verses have been read many, many times, but

they never lose their currency and value, and the Lord would say something freshly to us.

It says in Exodus 12: 1, "And Jehovah spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you". By Isaiah's time they were just set feasts; it was just a pattern; it was just routine. Is your life routine? Is your Christianity routine? Have you settled down? It is not to become routine; it is to remain vital and real. May you be revived, dear believer, if you are a believer in Jesus! May we be revived! May these things not become routine to us! "Speak unto all the assembly of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month let them take themselves each a lamb, for a father's house, a lamb for a house". You can see how practical God makes things for us. "And if the household be too small for a lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls". God is considering for "the number of the souls". He is doing that tonight. Christianity is wonderfully practical. God does not make things complicated for us. Perhaps you have heard God spoken about as an austere God of judgment. Far from it, dear friend! Judgment, as Isaiah says, is "his strange work ... his unwonted act", chap 28: 21. That is not how God is presenting Himself: He desires you to know Him as a God of love. He is presenting this lamb; it is figurative; although for the Israelites it was a literal lamb. It says, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a yearling male", and it goes on to say, "and the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel shall kill it between the two evenings. And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two door-posts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it", v 6, 7.

The Jews were in captivity in Egypt. They were slaves and they were made to make bricks, and then when the king became displeased with them, they were made to make bricks without being given straw, Exod 5: 18. God felt their slavery; dear friend, you are a slave to sin if you are still in your sins, and God feels that too; He wants to set you free. The Lord Jesus came that He might set us free. People are in the bondage of sin. What does that mean? The only way that people today use the word 'sin' is when they speak about 'living in sin', perhaps there might be an edge of the word in that, that men and women might understand how God feels in relation to things. It is not how *men* feel; it is not how others look upon you or what they think that is important; it is how *God* feels. Are you clear with God? If you were to die now, if the

Lord were to come for us now, would you be among those He would take to be with Himself? If you were to die, would you be able to face a holy God with a clear conscience, dear friends? That is what is offered in the glad tidings.

It is five hundred years since Martin Luther got his conviction in relation to faith; five hundred years have passed. How many persons have been liberated from the thought that they can pay for their sins? You cannot pay for your sins. I would be terribly afraid if I thought I had to pay for my sins. Would I have enough? I surely would not. They have all been met in the precious blood of Jesus of whom this lamb is a type. That means it is a picture for us to help us understand it. They took the literal blood of that lamb and they put it on the door-posts and on the lintel above the door, and that house was saved. God passed over that house, and the firstborn did not die. It is not just the firstborn that is under judgment now: it is all of us, every single one of us, and God wants to pass over.

Perhaps we might be able to eat of the lamb: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire". Perhaps even in this time we might be able to eat, might be able to take in something of the wonder of that One, the Lord Jesus as Saviour. It is more than just accepting it. When we have to install new software, we just click 'accept' to the terms and conditions and on we go: we do not even read it. It is not like that in the glad tidings. We are to eat something of this Lamb. Roast lamb is very flavoursome dish, is it not? And so spiritually, we are to taste something of it and apprehend something of the Lord Jesus in His glory and His greatness as our Saviour; that He died, and died for us.

There is more than that too: it says there is nothing to be left until the morning, v 10. This is a type. At the cross the Lord Jesus exhausted the judgment of God. Once God had dealt with the matter of sin in Jesus, the Lord said, "It is finished", John 19: 30. With a loud cry He went into death. Jesus was not consumed by the judgment of God. What a wonderful One He is! Do you have a sense of your heart going out towards Him, to Jesus? Do you have a sense of being drawn to Him? If you feel even the slightest inclination that way, give yourself wholly over to Him. You will not regret it. He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".

Note these two disciples; after John the baptist said about Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God", they went away and followed Jesus. How attractive He was! There was attraction there, and it seems that

John lost two disciples. Was he troubled by that? Not at all! The One who was before him was rightfully followed by these persons who came to abide with Him, which suggests affection. You have to have affection for Jesus; you have to love Jesus.

But then it was also said, as to the second reference - "Behold the Lamb of God", that this was like 2 Samuel 12. "And Jehovah sent Nathan to David". (How good of God to do that! God would be doing that tonight: He would send the word to you that you might receive it.) "And he came to him, and said to him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing at all, but one little ewe lamb which he had bought, and was nourishing; and it grew up with him, and together with his children: it ate of his morsel, and drank of his own cup, and slept in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter. And there came a traveller to the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that had come to him; and he took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that had come to him. Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this thing is worthy of death; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man!"

I think the brother I heard was suggesting that Jehovah had calculated what would touch the heart of David. David was a shepherd, but by this time he had moved on a long way and he had sinned terribly, had done a terrible thing: He had taken another man's wife and sent that man - a faithful and good man - into battle, resulting in his death. It was an awful thing, a wicked thing in the eyes of God. People say, 'What does it matter if these things go on in the world? Live and let live.' Well, we *are* to feel them, but we are to feel them as *God* feels them. We are not to be self-righteous about things that happen or take high ground, but we feel them as God feels them. Nathan was with God in this matter, and that is why he was so effective; he went with this story about a lamb.

David had been a shepherd. Literally in those days there were not green fields with fences all around them, and the shepherd sitting in his vehicle with dogs to bring the sheep in. David would have lived with his sheep, searched out pasture for them, slept out with them; he would have known them all and he would have been close to them, and, in

type, he gave his life for them. A lion came at one point and he fought and killed the lion; a bear came and he killed that bear too, killed them both, 1 Sam 17: 34, 35. David loved the sheep. So this man came to him with a story about a man who had a “little ewe lamb”. The lamb we read about earlier was “a yearling male”. The thought of a lamb, I should say, is not like lambs we see in early spring, skipping about. The “yearling male”, in reference to the Lord Jesus, is an adult animal, you might say, in its prime, like the Lord Jesus at age thirty when the Father could say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”, Matt 3: 17. That is like the “yearling male”; it is a mature thought. But here we have a “little ewe lamb”. That is a female. This detail was calculated to extra-specially draw out the feelings of David. How he felt this! His indignation came out, but his indignation was right. It was founded not on hatred but affection. He would have loved that lamb and what was done to it in this story drew out his indignation, and then Nathan says to him so skilfully, “Thou art the man!”. God would say that to you tonight. If you are reading about this thinking, 'How awful! What a thing to do!' God would say, 'You are just like that' if you are in your sins. 'You are causing offence to Me'.

It is a great mercy that God is faithful towards us: “Faithful is the word”, 1 Tim 1: 15. God would tell you directly, 'Friend, you are a sinner'. He would not hide the truth from you. He would not, as men say, beat about the bush. God speaks to you directly and He would tell you you are a sinner and He would say immediately, 'Accept the Saviour. Here is my well-beloved Son. Here is the Lamb of God'.

What does David say? Does David offer a whole load of excuses? Does he draw upon past history with God to say what a right person he had been? You know, and I say this sympathetically, you are probably trying to do the best that you can. You probably do not feel you are a gross sinner like many that we read about in the papers and so on. You are probably feeling that you are doing the best that you can. Well, today God would say to you that you are a sinner, and if you are without Christ, you are lost. Dear friend, you need a Saviour. So David does not defend himself. “And David said to Nathan, I have sinned against Jehovah”, v 13. And here is the wonderful news: “And Nathan said to David, Jehovah has also put away thy sin: thou shalt not die”. What wonderful grace! Not much wonder David could write about the “loving-kindness of Jehovah”. I meant to look it up in the Psalms, how many times David speaks about the “loving-kindness of Jehovah”. It is like grace; that is the word we would use today. Loving-kindness is

not just love. You might stand at a distance and love someone, but this is loving-kindness: it is love that would make a move, would show its kindness towards you in giving its very best.

And so, just to go back to John, these persons, “the two disciples heard him speaking”, heard John the baptist speaking about the Lamb of God. Notice it is not now “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”, but it is “the Lamb of God”, conveying the wonderful affection that John had for him. “And the two disciples heard him speaking, and followed Jesus”. Oh that that would be the result from this preaching tonight, that there would be someone who would follow Jesus, that would go after that One, give their heart to Him, perhaps for the first time or perhaps in renewed committal to follow Jesus, to go where He would go, where He would lead.

Where would He lead? The first chapter of the epistle to Ephesians is so full because it conveys God's thoughts for us. God has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ”, v 3. He would lead you into that area; that is where the Lamb of God would go. He would lead you into that area that you might become a worshipper. It is a great thought, not only to be a repenting sinner but to become a worshipper, to worship God and to give an answer to Him, and to worship the Lamb too. What things could you say about Him? We heard last week in the preaching about “my beloved”, most affecting. Think of the Song of Songs, how that espoused one could speak so feelingly and so affectionately about her Beloved, chap 5: 10-16. I am sure each one here could say something about the Lamb of God. It does not matter how eloquent it is. You might not stand up on a podium and get an award for what you might say, but in the heart of the Saviour, in the heart of God, He would delight to have one who is able to speak attractively and affectionately of their Saviour.

Well, may that be the portion of each one here for the Lord's name's sake!

**Dundee**

**25<sup>th</sup> June 2017**