

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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CONTENTS

John 1

Page 1

The Longings of Jesus

David A Smith

Page 11

The Man of God's Choice

Rodney Brown

Page 17

God's Choice

Scotie W Selman

Page 22

JOHN 1

John 1: 14-51

DCB I thought it was as well to make sure we went over the paragraph beginning in verse 14 since it brings out the distinctiveness of the glory of the Lord Jesus. We see the One whom we have been reading about before, the Word, “In the beginning was the Word” (v 1), and what glory attached to Him even before worlds were. But then “the Word became flesh” - how wonderfully God has approached us in that way! - “and dwelt” or 'tabernacled' (note 'c') “among us”, and then we have a company of His disciples, initially, who “have contemplated his glory”. That would give us an incentive to contemplate the glory of this One, and to see Him in the distinction that He has with “a glory as of an only-begotten with a father”.

NRC That is helpful. There are many characters and glories of the Lord that come out from verse 14 onwards, are there not? Say something as to the section from verse 14 onwards that brings out the thought of “grace and truth” being together here. What can you say as to that?

DCB Well, you see how remarkable it is that God Himself should come in, and come in in grace. How righteous it would have been for God to have come in in judgment, but coming in in Christ it is in grace. But “grace and truth” are so very closely attached together in this section, the singular verb that is used for them that shows that they cannot really be divided. They have one essence in Christ: grace and truth are displayed perfectly in Him.

NRC So the truth that Moses brought before his people in relation to the law is one thing, but this is completely separate to that. This is “grace and truth”, which is seen only in the Lord Jesus. Would it be right to say that the truth that Moses brought before us is really what man's position should be before God, but God has revealed Himself in grace and truth through the Lord Jesus?

DCB The law therefore made its demands upon men, and Israel was rapidly found to be unable to meet the demands of God, His righteous demands; so the only way that we can enter into blessing, the only way we can know God, is as He has come out in grace.

JTB That is really the significance of “the Word became flesh”; that is a new order of Man. That is the only way we could come before God acceptably, as we have in the epistles “Jesus Christ come in flesh”, 1

John 4: 2. That points forward to a Man who supersedes Moses, to whom you have referred, and the whole approach Godward is dependent on the manhood of Christ. We have it in Hebrews: we approach “through the veil, that is, his flesh”, chap 10: 20. That is, what has come on to our vision now is a Man who has secured our approach to God on a perfect basis.

NRC That is helpful; so would it be right to say there is a lot to contemplate in these four or five verses with regard to “the Word became flesh”. God really had to reveal Himself in this way through coming “in flesh”. He brought out the law through Moses with regard to how man should be in relation to viewing God, but in relation to it being in truth and grace it had to be shown through a Man, did it not?

JTB None of that weakens the fact that He took human form, taking part in flesh and blood; that condition was given up, but the order of that manhood went through and, as of that order, we can be acceptable to God.

KRC It is “man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1: 26) in the opening of Genesis. It looks on to that order of Man that God had in mind, the perfection of what has been seen in the Lord Himself. Heaven declares its delight in relation to this One.

JTB The expression to which reference has been made, “as of an only-begotten with a father” is, I suppose, that He exhibited in perfection all the qualities and characteristics that an only-begotten should express. The Lord Jesus did that. Later in the chapter there is a direct reference to “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father”, v 18. That is a direct reference to His position and His status, “the only-begotten Son”, but in verse 14, which we started with, it is “as of an only-begotten with a father”. I was thinking of the counterpart, the bride: she comes down from heaven “**as** a bride”, Rev 21: 2. That is greater in a sense than the direct appellation of the bride because you can have a bride who does not fulfil all the qualities of a bride, but “prepared as a bride” means that she expresses everything that pertains by way of quality and characteristic to what is proper to a bride.

DCB So you see what is moral. It is certainly shown before the official glory comes out. The official position rightly is He is “the only-begotten Son”, but His excellence has become clear to His disciples before that.

THB I was wondering if more could be said about these two qualities,

“grace and truth”; why it is that these two qualities are drawn attention to here? There were lots of other qualities that came out in the Lord and were resident in Him, but I just wondered why it was these two here.

NRC Note 'e', to “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”, is helpful; I was reading that as you were speaking, it goes on to say there, 'They began to exist *de facto* down here. The verb is singular, and “grace and truth” go together in the person of Christ. Nothing subsisted by the law, it was a rule given; but grace and truth actually commenced to be, not in God's mind of course, but in revelation and actual existence down here'. So, they go completely together in the Person of Christ. It is something that was completely new, and I think that is the difference between the truth given by Moses and what we see here in regard to Christ. It was a completely new order of things which was seen solely in a Man. Is that right what I am saying?

JTB The Lord Jesus Himself is the Truth, is He not? That is always the case, and He refers to Himself in that way: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”, John 14: 6. But grace is really the way in which it has been made known to us in this same blessed Man. Grace is sometimes referred to as the oil which makes things work. You find that that the Lord's pathway exhibited that, the expression of grace to its fullest, and expressed the heart of God in that way. It brings out the way divine love has taken in order that what is for God, the answer to His affections, should be secured.

THB We speak of this as the dispensation which is in grace. This was the beginning of a new dispensation and it is centred in Christ.

NRC I think that is good. I think that is important. Perhaps we can contemplate that more, if the Lord will, as we go through this gospel, as everything being centred around Him. That is really the dispensation we live in today that there is such a Man in whom grace and truth subsists, solely in that Person. It is a wonderful time we live in, where we can see all of God's workings and the way that He has been revealed through a blessed Man.

JTB One of the great characteristics of the dispensation, as Ephesians tells us, is “ye are saved by grace” (chap 2: 5); that is very wonderful to contemplate. Of course, we are saved by virtue of the finished work of Christ and His shed blood, but Ephesians is the summit of the expression of God's blessings for men, and you have this interjection, “ye are saved by grace”; so it flows through every divine

thought in that way of blessing for us, do you think?

DCB I was thinking about the two statements about God, that “God is love” (1 John 4: 8) and that “God is light” (1 John 1: 5), and wondering whether that really was something of a background to the way in which this has come out. Grace is love in operation in the sphere of what is contrary; truth is the light in operation in the sphere of what is contrary. The Lord as coming in displayed here what the heart of God is, but He displayed it in a way that is appropriate to the sphere of contradiction to God.

RCT Would it be right to say there were moral qualities?

JTB It has often been said that grace makes us fit for the position into which we are introduced; so there must be a moral aspect to it that provides the ingredient by which we can be introduced into these positions so blessed.

RCT We are still in the dispensation of grace.

KG What would the significance of “grace upon grace” be? I was thinking in Romans there is grace overabounding (chap 5: 20); I wondered if that linked.

JTB It has often been referred to (JT vol 85 p 90) as wave upon wave of divine grace flowing towards us and, in one sense, overwhelming us, but on the other hand sustaining us in what pertains to our privilege as before God.

THB I was thinking of your reference to these being moral qualities. I think it has been said these moral qualities in the Lord Jesus could not be hid; they were to be taken account of in those that came into contact with Him.

JTB You often refer to David; he expresses this, do you think?

NRC This was the first time there was a Man who was morally fit to manifest both of these. We see so many great examples of men in previous dispensations. What a man David was, but really this was the first time - and I think what you said about what is moral is helpful - that there was a Man in the scene who was morally fit for both truth and grace.

DCB Is it wonderful to see what did come out in the old dispensation, and persons with certain moral qualities, and so many of them looked forward to Christ, and were typical of Christ; but we see that really

something comes into being in the incoming of Christ that had simply never been in this scene before; it was seen in God coming near in manhood?

NRC It is interesting how quickly John the baptist sees that; he says about Jesus, “the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to unloose”. So John really sees that, and we see that in relation to the way that he viewed Jesus as being the Lamb of God, and so on. I was impressed this week in reading this chapter as to the many different titles and characters that are shown in this one chapter that John the evangelist refers to; so he must have had a clear view of the moral greatness of the Person that was before him.

DCB And John the baptist says twice, “he was before me”. He has some impression of One that is God come near, One who existed before John existed. There is an impression that this is the “I am” come in to be seen in the creation which He had made.

SCL Do you think as well the biggest difference between the dispensations, the old dispensation and the coming in of the Lord, is that in the old dispensation the children of Israel were given something to strive for, but when the Lord came in there was a visual representation of what was pleasing in the sight of God that had never existed before?

NRC I think so. It is quite clear that even in John's account they were visibly taken with the moral greatness of the Person. That was really the thought in taking up this book, to contemplate the Person, who He is. We read and were speaking in the house before we came out as to the Lord's death, of those three hours of darkness; but what it must have been like to have actually see the Lord. It must have been such a remarkable thing to see Someone who was morally perfect in every way, and I think that is obviously what John saw here. It is a great dispensation that we live in because we can still see Him in that way. One of the glories of Christ is that we see Him in His current position as ascended on high. We may not have seen Him, naturally speaking, as they did in this short dispensation of the Lord's life, but we can still see that Person where He is now.

GB Is it right to think that the Lord still maintains this position, standing: “In the midst of you stands, whom ye do not know”? That would be right there. The Lord is the test to every man.

NRC I think so. It is quite a thing to contemplate. Do we see Him?

That is the question. Do we see Him standing before us? Is He in our view? Perhaps gathering together in meetings, as we do, is one thing, but do we see the Lord before us? That is something in itself. And do we see Him for who He is as John does?

GB It also says of Jesus “having looked around on all things”, Mark 11: 11. He was taking account in His lifetime, short as it was in this scene, of what man had made of the blessedness of what God had in mind should be the conditions.

JTB I suppose positionally the Lord has “set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high” (Heb 1: 3), but in terms of His place in our affections He should occupy that place. Is that what you had in mind? Joseph's sheaf “rose up, and remained standing” (Gen 37: 7), and “Jesus came and stood in the midst”, John 20: 19. In that sense He is prominent in our affections aside from what He is positionally as seated at God's right hand.

KRC Is there a sober side to this too in what has been highlighted, if I am reading it right, “In the midst of you stands, whom ye do not know”? Is that something we can take to ourselves in the context of what has been highlighted?

DCB Earlier there is a reference “and the world knew him not”, v 10. Really, you see the contrast there. Someone like John could see Him and glorify Him. He says, “Behold the Lamb of God”; so, as you say, that would be a test for us whether by faith, by the Spirit, we see Him.

SCL When it says John sees Him, it says, “he sees Jesus coming to him”. I had never noticed that before; I always had the impression that John just bore witness to Jesus, but here it says, “On the morrow he sees Jesus coming to him”. There almost seems to be a personal interaction there. Speaking reverently and respectfully, it is not just a seeing of the Person but also an interaction with the Person. Would that be right?

DCB Yes, because it is interesting that John has to say, “I knew him not”. It would seem from Luke's gospel that there are family connections. We do not want to speculate, but it is as if John might have met Jesus before, but he has not had that transaction that you are suggesting until this point. There is a point where all he has been speaking about really comes to him personally. He comes into the virtue and the value of “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”.

NRC Say more as to the section from verse 29 onwards. John says, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. The last time we were here a brother spoke about the sacrifice, the offering, the Lamb of God. John saw that. Does this section from verse 29 onwards bring out the character of Himself as being the perfect Offering? It goes on to speak about Israel in the next section as well. What would you say about the Lamb of God?

DCB Well, it does bring out something of His excellence as the Sacrifice in the sight of God. He has rights though as the Lamb of God, so that taking away the sin of the world encompasses not only His sacrificial service but His taking up His rights in the world to come, and everything being cleared and set according to the divine view at that time.

NRC What you say about “the sin of the world” is helpful, and that is important, is it not? It is not sins as such: it is “the sin of the world”; so before God it is cleansed. Our *sins* are one thing, but God has been completely satisfied through the work of Jesus for taking away the *sin* of the world.

JTB We are never to lose sight of that. The reference in Revelation to “a Lamb standing, as slain” (chap 5: 6) is very affecting. The sufferings of Jesus and what it cost Him to take away “the sin of the world” would always be in our affections, do you think?

SCL Do you think there is also something in it that Jesus comes to a man that affords Him His place, His titles? Our brother mentioned His rights. You see everything about John here is all about the Lord. It is what is due to the Lord. There is nothing about John. As a result Jesus comes to him; is there something in that?

NRC I think so. I cannot say much about it, but I think, going back to what was mentioned about “In the midst of you stands” means He stands because He has the right to do so, and John recognised that.

SCL You almost get the impression that John wants to see this Person and as a result the Lord can come in. Would it be right to say there is a certain liberty there because John is really a person that is prepared to give the Lord everything that is due? Does that create a sense of liberty?

NRC Yes, I am sure it does. In knowing Him, there is a desire to know more about Him, and there is a liberty there to want to know that Man, and I suppose in some ways John would have felt the same way. It

must have been something to be in this time when the Man of glory really was in their midst. Why would you not want to know more of that Man?

JTB In chapter 3 John says, “He must increase, but I must decrease”, v 30. It is a fine position to take there. But what wonderful light he appears to have as to the bride and the bridegroom, “the friend of the bridegroom” (v 29) too. I suppose John would have some sense of that, would he not?

SCL It is quite a contrast. I do not want to bring in what is negative, but the Pharisees, for instance, had no desire to give the Lord His place and they had no desire to know anything more about Him; but John here gets all these wonderful impressions and insights, and I suppose that can be our portion as well. It just requires a person that is prepared to put themselves aside and let the Lord have His place.

DCB I wondered about the significance of baptism, therefore. I was thinking about the importance of baptism if we are going to come into what you are suggesting. It involves, really, that what there is according to the flesh is dealt with. The Lord has been into death, and we would accept that as the place appropriate to us. It is the baptism of repentance here - it has not quite reached on to Christian baptism - but still that principle is shown, and it is those who take up that principle that are going to come into the benefit of the knowledge of the Lamb of God.

THB In chapter 3: 16 it says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son”, and I wondered if the reference to the Lamb of God just showed how closely the Lord Jesus was of that same mind. There was going to be a need for Someone to provide the basis for God coming out in blessing in the sacrifice.

JTB I suppose Abraham and Isaac bring that out: “Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest” (Gen 22: 2), just bringing out the intimacy of affection that existed between the Father and the Son, and what it cost the Father to relinquish what was most precious to Him. Is that what you had in mind?

THB Yes, it was just the reference to God, “For God so loved the world”, but here was One who was to provide that sacrifice whereby God could come out in blessing and make His heart of love known to mankind.

KRC In relation to what you said as to Abraham and Isaac, and the giving of the Son, did Isaac not carry the wood himself? There is

something drawn out there in the greatness of the thought of the Lord and the fact that He gave Himself in that sense.

JTB That is interesting. It says, “Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and the knife, and they went both of them together”, Gen 22: 6. It is very interesting that the wood was laid on Isaac, was it not? And then they proceeded to the place of sacrifice. If we look beyond Isaac himself, would it bring before us the fact that the Lord knew what was before Him?

KRC That is helpful. That is what I had been thinking; so it really draws out the perfection of His manhood, the fact that He knew what was before Him. Even as a young boy He was occupied in His Father's business, Luke 2: 49. The Lord Himself was intelligent to these things, what would become of His own life, and not just the giving of His life but the fact that He would become that perfect Offering and be forsaken of God. He knew these things would happen, do you think?

JTB There are some very interesting highlights in the gospels where the Lord draws attention to the fact that He was going to be delivered up and suffer; then that very affecting reference, “Rise up, let us go hence”, John 14: 31. What that would entail for the holy Sufferer! You referred to these three hours on the cross, the conscious sense of the relationship to be broken during these three awful hours; what going hence meant for Him!

RCT There was no “ram caught in the thicket” (Gen 22: 13) for Christ. He went into death.

JTB It is very affecting to think of that. He alone, the One in whom “grace and truth subsists” had to lay down His life. It makes it doubly affecting to our spirits that such a One, in whom these qualities existed, had to lay down His life.

DCB This really is as soon as the Lord appears before men as He does in verse 29. As soon as He appears the fact that it is a pathway to death is brought before us in that He is the Lamb of God. The whole pathway really has in view the issue He has to take up, when everything is finished.

GB Could something be said about the presence of the Spirit in verses 32 and 33? “I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it abode upon him”, and then, “Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him, he it is who baptises with the

Holy Spirit”; it brings the Godhead into view in a certain way. The Lord Jesus was led of the Spirit in relation to the temptations, led into the wilderness, Luke 4: 1, 2. The presence of the Holy Spirit is significant here. Would you say something?

KRC I had been thinking that too, and I had just been contemplating what it says in Matthew's gospel because it is interesting there. In Matthew's gospel it draws out the fact that John wavered slightly in relation to that the suggestion that he would baptise the Lord. Why would he baptise the Lord? But the Lord corrects him there. The Lord speaks about fulfilling righteousness and so on (chap 3: 15), and it is only from then that the heavens are opened when the Lord ascends from the water. This will be John's view, “he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him” (v 16) and then the voice. I wondered if there was something of the perfection of righteousness being fulfilled, and then heaven's delight being displayed, but that was for John's benefit, was it not? It is not presented as being noticed by others. It was only John saw “the Spirit descending as a dove”.

GB It was only such a One as the Lord Jesus upon whom the Holy Spirit could descend and abide; this continues. Going back to the days of Noah, “the dove found no resting-place for the sole of her foot” (Gen 8: 9), but there is a perfect reception of the Spirit and distinction by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

NRC Referring to what you said about the fact that the Godhead was witnessed here in relation to the Spirit descending, I was impressed with that last verse of the section, “And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God”. It is interesting to see that, that John really had the knowledge of seeing these things. My mind was taken to the centurion who at the cross said, “Truly this man was Son of God” (Mark 15: 39), but here this is seeing Him as the Son of God in a completely different realm. He is seeing Him as part of the Godhead really.

EDINBURGH

27th September 2020

Key to Initials (all from Edinburgh):-

G Bailey; T H Bailey; D C Brown; J T Brown; K R Cumming;
N R Cumming; K Grant; S C Lock; R C Trotter

THE LONGINGS OF JESUS

David A Smith

Genesis 3: 8,9

Luke 23: 29-36

Matthew 23: 37

John 17: 24

We had a distinct impression this morning (I have to speak for myself, but I think for others also), as to what the Lord's supper meant as responding to the longings of the Lord Jesus. That is, as we know, what He has asked us to do. We were all assembled at that occasion this morning and we gathered, I believe, because all of us had affection in our hearts for Christ and a desire to answer to His longings. But the simple impression I was led to in my thoughts was the longings and feelings of the heart of God. I suppose they are no better expressed, or so attractively and beautifully presented, as they are in the gospel. I think we would perhaps see that in a section of the hymn that we read -

Hark! hark! the voice of Christ, the sinner's Saviour,
In glory seated on His Father's throne,
Telling of love and everlasting favour
For sinners far from God, by sin undone ... (Hymn 202).

'Telling of love ...': whose love? God's love. I was encouraged to read these scriptures so that God might impress upon us, in a particular way, His feelings, divine feelings, in relation to the blessing of precious souls. God's love lies behind it. The fulness and wonder, and glory of divine love lies behind the gospel. The gospel is preached to persons such as ourselves, men, women, boys and girls, that He might make known that love and that it might be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

I read the scripture in Genesis. We often refer to this scripture in relation to Adam's fall, the incoming of sin into this world, and all the consequences of it which we know, both in ourselves, and around us. I wanted to speak from this scripture a little that we might get some apprehension of what it meant to the blessed God Himself. The consequences for Adam we well know - he was banished from the garden and he was told, "For dust thou art; and unto dust shalt thou return", Gen 3: 19. That is not what God had in mind, I do not think, when He created him. God created man for His pleasure. Of course, what God has primarily in mind is not just man, but man in Christ: that

was God's thought in His purpose. But, nevertheless, in making man, if you go back to chapter 1, God says, "Let us make man in our image", v 26. That is quite an extraordinary statement. In whose image? The image of *God* - "after our likeness". There is something distinctive about the human being, about you, that is above all other creation; man is God's top stone. He is quite distinct from the animals, great and powerful as some of them may be. God did not make them as He has made man, men and women, boys and girls, created in the image of God, and "after our likeness". That is a wonderful thing to apprehend. What God had in mind was to secure a creature that could answer to Himself - in some measure of intelligence, to answer to God Himself; and in some measure of affection to answer to God Himself. What God is seeking to recover man to in the preaching of the gospel is that relationship. Think what it must have meant to God, when He came down in the cool of the day to commune with His creature. It was the voice that was heard; God wanted to speak with him, to commune with him. What God might have said the scripture does not indicate, but Adam was a man created in intelligence, and no doubt in affection. That must be true because God says later, "It is not good that Man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate, his like" (chap 2: 18), a counterpart. All these thoughts are full of meaning but show that man was capable of affection, of love; and God desires an answer from His creature, an answer in intelligence, and an answer in affection. How wonderful that is. So God addresses His creature in the gospel. He does not preach to animals, the gospel is preached to men, women, boys and girls, because God desires that He might find an entrance into your heart and that He might win your affections for Himself.

I read the scripture in Luke's gospel, not wanting to dwell on Adam's failure; we know that story so well and all the sad consequences of it, but God had in mind that He should recover man to Himself. In Luke 23:39 we get a picture, so affectingly, of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was a man in all his sin, lost and far from God. How God must have felt that; how He must have felt the distance and the break in communion that He so desired from His creature man. I wonder if we think about that, how God felt it? A response in intelligent affection He desired from His creature and He came down, and finds him in a state of alienation, far from God, undone by sin. What it must have meant for the heart of God Himself. He had provided for Adam and his wife, the animals were slain to provide coats of skin, and God clothed them. He had done everything for man

initially, set him in the garden, everything provided, because He cared for him; he was precious to God, the top stone of His creation, the centre of His thought that he would be for His pleasure. God created man for His pleasure - created all things for His pleasure. I wonder if that could give you an impression of God's longings after you, what it means to God that anybody here should be at a distance from Him. Let me assure you that God feels it, and His love is towards you. He desires that you might be restored into blessed communion with Himself and that the guilty past of each one of us should be atoned for so that we should be amongst those redeemed through the precious blood of Jesus "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24.

Luke 23 is an awful chapter in one way, the mockery of those around Him, those He had come to save, their violence, the bitterness, and the cursing: "He has saved others; let him save himself if this is the Christ". The hymn reminds us of that:

Himself He could not save,
Love's stream too deeply flowed (Hymn 240).

The feelings of God had not changed; Adam had changed, but God has not changed. His desires had not changed and His purpose in blessing had not changed, and the only way, beloved friend, that the situation could be remedied was that there needed to be a Mediator. What hope have we as lost and far from God? God in His mercy has provided a Saviour, as He provided clothing for Adam, typically speaking of the fact that death had to come in, and how blessed that this scripture speaks of the way that God has effected that salvation. There were two malefactors here; one continues the rebuke and the opposition, "save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost *thou* too not fear God, thou that art under the same judgment?". This man was coming to himself; he was coming to repentance. He does not say that his judgment was not just; I think he recognised that it was. They were malefactors, they had done something that was wrong, and this man recognised that the judgment was due, but he said of Christ, "this man has done nothing amiss". What words, what meaning those words must have had to Christ as He hung suffering upon the cross, the Sin-bearer, "the just for the unjust", 1 Pet 3: 18. Why did He do it? He did it to bring us to God, to recover man to God, and here was this man, as he hung there upon a cross, saying, "this man has done nothing amiss. And he said to Jesus, "Remember

me, Lord, when thou comest in the kingdom". What blessed words they were. That man was saved; the other was not.

What about you? I wonder whether everyone here has come to Christ, put their faith in Him, and put their faith in His precious blood that has secured our redemption. There is peace that way. This man died, but he died in peace. What words the Lord Jesus spoke to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me". Was joy just for that man? I think it was for the Lord too. "Shalt thou be" not just 'in paradise', but "**with me** in paradise". He had secured a soul who was alienated from Himself, no doubt a wicked, lawless man, but his conscience was reached and there was the Saviour right by his side, just like He is today.

The Lord Jesus comes to every preaching; I believe He does. We seek His help as we speak about Him, but then His eye is on all of us as to what the answer is going to be. This man was brought to repentance, and he died a man in peace.

But what was entailed in those three hours of darkness? Words alone would not have saved Him; the Saviour had to go this way, He had to endure those three hours of darkness, and He had to bear the judgment of a holy God against sin. What can we say? I feel tested about it, except that intense divine feelings entered into these things. If you read the Psalms you get some impressions of them. Read Jonah and some of things he said prophetically, "The weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms the mountains; The bars of the earth closed upon me forever", chap 2: 5,6. What those feelings of Jesus were. We can never *comprehend* them; we can perhaps have some *apprehension* of what the sufferings of Jesus meant to Him. He went that way for this man, and also for you, and His longings are towards you that you might come to know Him and to trust Him and to put your faith in Him.

I read the scripture in Matthew, and these again are the words of the Lord Jesus. He is referring to Jerusalem, and I suppose His longings were in relation to His earthly people and His testimony to them in those three and a half years of His pathway here upon earth. He was conscious that He was rejected, and He says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those that are sent unto her". In times past, they had had plenty of prophets sent to them. They say earlier, "If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets", v 30. Yet, they were rejecting the One of whom the prophets spoke. Perhaps we

might say that if we had been there 'We would not have treated Jesus like that'. They did not know their evil, wicked, wayward heart! But the longings of Jesus in relation to His people are plain, "how often would I have gathered the children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!". I hope there is nobody here would use those words as the Lord Jesus appeals in love and grace, that someone should ever say, 'I will not'. What about the feelings of Jesus? We have spoken of His sufferings, the movements of His precious love in relation to your salvation and blessing - and someone could say, 'I will not'.

His feelings have not changed, beloved friend; His love is still the same and the preaching goes on and appeal after appeal goes on too as some of us have well known in our histories - we put it off and put it off until we yielded to that precious love of Jesus and let it flood into our hearts. Know Him as a blessed Saviour; come to know Him as Lord. It is the way of blessing, the way of happiness, the way of peace, and it gives joy in heaven over repenting sinners. That is where He is now, at God's right hand in glory, precious Saviour. Will someone here give their heart to Him? Commit themselves to Him? Answer to that love of Jesus? Many of us did this morning; answered to the love of Jesus. Maybe He is appealing to someone here to answer simply to that love. His love it towards you; how deeply it flows. He is looking for a response; far be it that anyone would say, 'No'. How better to yield our hearts in full submission and allegiance to that One who has done so much for us.

I close briefly with the scripture in John's gospel. I suppose this is one of the most precious scriptures because it is the prayer of the Lord Jesus to His Father, and it is expressing His deepest longings; and I think it would be right to say His deepest feelings. One of them is this, "Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me". He is glorified: not only has He died, but He is risen and glorified and the Holy Spirit has come to magnify the Lord Jesus to our hearts - blessed service of the Holy Spirit that He would give to those who obey the glad tidings and then to know something of the depth and fulness of divine love. But here is the Lord's desire to have those that belong to Him *with* Him where He is. He is coming soon. In the previous scripture there where those persons who said they "would not" and the Lord had to say to them, "Behold, your house is left unto

you desolate”, Matt 23: 38. There is no hope without Christ. There is no real hope for you if you will not answer to divine entreaty in the glad tidings. The Lord Jesus does not want anybody's house left to them desolate. He wants you to come and enter into the enjoyment of the Father's house with all its richness, joy and blessing, which is available to the repenting sinner. Here it is Christ's longings to have His own; He will have His own. Everyone who puts their faith and trust in Christ will be with Him in eternal glory. His love will secure it, His love has desired it, and His love will have it. Will you be among them? How could anyone elect themselves out of this? How could anyone refuse the entreaties of the love of the Lord Jesus, who has done so much for us? He says, “I desire that where I am they also may be with me” - where He is at the moment is in heavenly glory, but I think there is also a testimonial side to it. The Lord Jesus said, “I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age”, Matt 28: 20.

Would you like to be where Jesus is now? That is a very precious privilege. You will certainly be with Him where He is when He comes for us, but it is a great privilege to commit yourself to being with Jesus where He is and where He is known at the present time. I believe He is known in the company of His saints. It means that we commit ourselves to Him and we commit ourselves to those that love Him. The Lord desires that we should. May the simple appeal of His love be answered in each one of our hearts afresh.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

Sidcup

1st November 2020

THE MAN OF GOD'S CHOICE

Rodney Brown

Acts 3:14-15

1 Samuel 16:6-7, 12-13 (to “that day forward”)

Acts 17:30-34 to (to “him believed”)

I have been thinking since our reading on Thursday night about what God has chosen. We read in James 2: 5, “Has not God chosen the poor as to the world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to them that love him?”. It would be true to say in the gospel that God is not presenting you with a choice. He is not: God is presenting Christ for acceptance. Nevertheless, it is also true to say that *you* in hearing the word have a decision to make. Are you going to accept it or are you going to reject it?

Everyone here has heard the gospel many times; everyone has had an opportunity to turn to Christ as their Saviour; everybody has had an opportunity to take God at His word. I was reminded in our reading earlier as well, that faith takes God at His word. And if faith is operating in your heart, dear friend, take God at His word, and accept Christ as your own personal Saviour, if you have not done so already. It is a matter of the greatest importance; indeed there is no more important decision to be made today if you have not yet accepted Christ. That is an important decision for every man, but *you*, as under the sound of the gospel again, are responsible to answer to it. It is imperative that you do so. So, if there are any here who have not yet accepted Christ, I would urge you in all seriousness, and with urgency, that you do so today.

Who of us know what tomorrow will bring? Surely the circumstances of the present time would bear that out. Things happen suddenly; things happen swiftly. Who knows when there will be another opportunity granted to hear the glad tidings? It is also true to say that man away from God will always reject Christ. This mockery of a trial which is gone over in the first scripture that we read, the fact that man chose Barabbas over against Christ, would surely bear testimony to that. And man's heart as away from God continues to choose the wrong man. It continues to choose what appeals to men naturally, and impresses man naturally, which is far removed from the meek and lowly Christ. That Man does not appeal to men away from God, that Man does not appeal to me in my sinful nature, but I have had to come to it that God's Man will be my Man. I trust that today, if you have not done

so already, you may be prepared to make that decision and put your trust in Christ and take God at His word. Why do you think to know better than God Himself? If you think there is a God, if you believe in God, and I am assured that everybody here does, why do you think that you know better than God, and reject the Man that He is presenting for your acceptance?

The Man of God's choice is such an attractive Man, such a loving Man: He has done everything for God, and He has done everything for *you*. He is presented for you; accept on the basis of what He has done. He would seek to endear Himself to you. You think of what He has done, the way He has gone in walking that lowly pathway here on earth: what a Man He is for your affections. If you do not know Him I can say very clearly that you are missing something; you are missing out. No one can compare with Christ. You might put your trust in things here, you might put your trust in men, but that is not the Man that I am presenting. I am not trying to present persons that man would normally put trust in. The helplessness of man is testimony to the futile way in which men operate, but there is one Man who will never let you down. We have heard of him recently: "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov 18: 24), and He is available tonight as a Saviour. He has done everything for you, dear friend, and He seeks your heart. What a matter that is, that the One who so pleased God in His pathway here, and in going into death, and in His present position, should be presented to you. Think of God really beseeching you that you might receive His Man, the Almighty God Himself drawing alongside of you, presenting Christ, the Man for your affections. I would urge you to take God at His word and come into the blessing of doing so.

We see what appeals to man, even appealed to Samuel in 1 Samuel 16, what might impress men outwardly, but God does not look on outward appearance: God looks upon the heart. God knows your heart, dear friend. He knows whether there is a place in your heart for Christ and He is seeking, He is perhaps knocking on the door of your heart, and seeking an entrance, that Christ may have the place in your heart that He is worthy of. And He is worthy of it because He has gone to the cross for you. He has not gone there on His own account; He has not gone there to do anything other than follow what was in God's heart, in order that God's heart should be made known in such a full and free way. Dear friend, I would commend the Lord Jesus to you. How perfect He is; how perfect He was in His pathway here, that lowly pathway. He was rejected by men at His death but He met opposition all through that pathway. It could be said prophetically of Him, "the

reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me”, Ps 69: 9. What did the Lord Jesus do to deserve that? Walking here among men, healing, bringing in relief, answering the questioner as well as the question, bringing in God's word, bringing God into persons' circumstances, appealing to men, speaking of those that laid burdens on men unjustly, speaking against the Pharisees. Think of the compassion that was found in the Lord Jesus. What a perfect life it was: how pleasurable to heaven! All this has been displayed; we have been reminded of it recently that when the Lord Jesus was here there was a green spot on the earth. That is a spot, a Man, on whom the Father's eye could rest complacently. And we see that as He came out of the waters of baptism at the Jordan, when the heavens were opened to Him, and the voice came, “*Thou* are my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight”, Mark 1: 11. There is no disputing who God's Man is. There is no disputing that this is the Man of God's choice, and God has been justified in His choice in the way that the Lord Jesus has gone.

It was always in God's mind that the Lord Jesus would come into manhood and take the place that He did in lowly grace; but, dear friend, does not the pathway of the Lord Jesus demonstrate that God was justified in that choice? What a pathway of perfection it was. It ended: in man's eye it ended in the cross. Yet such a life had to be given up there; the perfection of the life was not sufficient for salvation, which required it to be given up in death, and the Lord Jesus went through with everything. He did not let anything turn Him aside out of that pathway of devotion to the will of His God and Father: He went through with it all. He suffered from sinners; He suffered the contradiction of men against Himself. What matters these were: these are things that I could not have withstood. The Lord Jesus went through with it all. He suffered far more grievously at the hand of God when He was made sin in these three hours of darkness on the cross. Think of that, the perfection of that One, the One in whom there was *no* sin. He was made sin. Not on His own account, but “made sin for us” (2 Cor 5: 21), and as made sin, He suffered and He bore the whole wrath of God against Him. Sin was the thing that God hated, and the judgment of God poured out on the head of the sinless One. My substitute, He took my place there. The One who glorified God on the earth in the work that He did here: think of how He glorified Him in that death. It has been said 'Never was He more perfect, never more acceptable to God, than on the cross', JND Collected Writings vol 34 p379. It is difficult to understand that, perhaps, but you can see what ascended to God as a result from that blessed holy perfect Man.

We sang in a hymn this morning about the 'pathways sore', Hymn 5. These pathways were necessary, and necessarily sore, in order that you and I might come into blessing, in order that the Lord Jesus should be available as a Saviour; and He *is* a Saviour. But His pathway did not end in death, His pathway did not end on the cross. He went into the grave, and He is no longer there. He was there for three days and three nights. Prior to that, on the cross, as we know, He died and His blood was shed. Think of these last moments in the malefactor's life when he turned to Christ. Jesus said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise", Luke 23: 43. Well, if a person like that, in extremity, could turn at the end of a sinful life, dear friend, the Lord's work is sufficient for you if you will only take God at His word. He is blessedly available, and we see here God's thoughts as to this One, typically seen in David, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he". There is no other person that God is presenting tonight; He is presenting Christ and Him alone. And He is worthy of your affection. He is worthy of your trust, and if you have not trusted in Him, I would urge you to do so now. He is available, and you may think you have heard all this before, and there will be another opportunity, like these persons did in Acts. But the decision that you have to make tonight is to accept Christ or to reject Him; there is no third way. These persons who said, "We will hear thee again also concerning this" were Christ rejectors. They, in not accepting Christ, were rejecting Him. Some mocked. Really those that said, "We will hear thee again also concerning this" are classed alongside the mockers. But then, blessedly, "some men joining themselves to him believed". "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved", Acts 16: 31. That is the message from heaven tonight. That is the message for you.

I have been interested recently to read about somebody that had died at the wreck of the *Titanic*; this man was a Baptist pastor, called John Harper, and he went down with the *Titanic*. One of the accounts is that while they were trying to compel the woman and children to go onboard the lifeboats, John Harper, would shout out, 'Let the women, children and unsaved into the boats'. And then in the water, one of the accounts stated that he gave his life jacket to somebody who said they did not believe. In the water this man was still asking persons if they were saved; he was asking them if they knew the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The preacher had drifted up to a man in the water, and asked him if he was saved, and the man said, 'No'. John Harper gave him his life jacket and said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved". When the preacher asked him again, that man

was saved and at a memorial service, about four years later, he stood up and gave his testimony. And he had written a tract called 'I was John Harper's last convert'.

So, if you doubt what God can do, if you think that perhaps there is not sufficient opportunity, who knows what effect that man had in the last hours of persons' lives, and in the most unimaginable of circumstances. Think of the strength that he was given. We know of one person who was saved as a result of his testimony, seizing opportunities to present Christ as a Saviour. Clearly this man was able to do that, and what he had in his heart was a yearning for souls. That was the salvation of many, no doubt. And you know he could have made a choice. Perhaps to get into a life-boat and to save himself, but like his Master he sought to be available to save others in their extremity. What that brought home to me is that some persons have not had opportunity to say, 'We will hear thee again concerning this'. Would anyone that was in the water that night who was on the edge of eternity have said, 'Well, I will think about it and maybe consider further'. The urgency of the glad tidings, dear friend, requires a decision now. That is what mercy made available to these souls and in God's mercy He is making an opportunity available to you.

I read further that on the quayside where the rescue ship came in there were two signs: 'Known to be saved' and 'Known to be lost': the names were written. What a sight that would be: saved to the left, lost to the right: two classes of persons. We are in a situation now where that is not yet fixed, but there is a day coming when He will judge the habitable earth in righteousness, where things will be fixed. And God will judge by the Man whom He has appointed. There it is again, the Man of God's choice. Make Him your Man tonight; put your trust and faith in Him; choose the Man that God is presenting. It will be for your blessing, your eternal salvation, and your present joy as well. And the Holy Spirit will give you power in this scene to walk here in keeping with that Man.

May you make Him your Saviour today if you have not done so already, and if you have, may you draw closer to Him. There is no one to compare with Him. I commend Him to you for His Name's sake.

Linlithgow

15 November 2020

GOD'S VIEW

Scotie W Selman

Genesis 22: 1-2, 6-8

John 6: 5-13

Revelation 3: 7-8

I have been thinking to continue what we considered in our reading meeting about God's perspective, His outlook, His view of things. From God's perspective, you are very precious, each one of you. You mean so much to Him. Often when I seek to speak about the Lord Jesus, and speak about the heart of God, I feel quite overwhelmed, because I know I could never adequately express the greatness and the extent of His love. I can only say to you, right now, that He loves you, and cares for you so much. My heart has been touched, and I thank God for it. And I thank God for each one of you; and that I believe that the Lord has touched your heart, in some way. To what extent, I do not know; that is between you and the Lord. He knows your heart; He knows your state; He knows where you are right at this very moment. What is so wonderful about the love of God is He will take you up right where you are, right now, today. I reflect on my own experience and think of the many times God took me up right where I was. He did not pass me by because of where I had been, or what I had done, or because He was disappointed in me or for certain things that would need to be resolved. No, He took me up right then and right there. I think it is wonderful to take that up, because, again from God's perspective, His heart is a heart of love. His desire is towards you; you are precious to Him and you mean everything to Him.

In reading this particular portion in Genesis, I am not going to go into its typical application, or all the different verses. What struck me in this particular portion at this time was that simple expression: "My son, God will provide himself with the sheep for a burnt-offering". Think of what God has provided in order to meet your need, in order that you might know His love, and in order that He might express to you the depth and extent of His heart of love, to you - it is to *you*, and it is to *me*. God has taken us up, each one individually. His eye is upon you; His heart is towards you. It says, "My son, God will provide himself with the sheep for a burnt-offering". What a wonderful thing to consider, beloved. God's love for you was so great that He gave His *own* Son - He gave His *own* Son. I can think of nothing greater. I can contemplate love but I cannot think of a love that was greater than that kind of love, a

love that would go to such depths, a love that would go to such lengths to secure your heart for Himself; the love that was seen in how God spared not His own Son.

In this particular portion, we have the preciousness of Isaac emphasised as a type of Christ. How precious Isaac was to Abraham; how much Isaac meant to Abraham, and to Sarah too: he meant everything to them. They had Isaac at a late age. It is important to realise that, in that day, having offspring was everything. Every measure of blessing was centred on one's offspring - producing fruit, in that sense. And they could have none. But God comes in in grace and mercy and He gives them a child. He gives to them Isaac, and Isaac meant *everything* to them. Think of all those years that they no doubt had longed for a child; they had yearned for a child. And finally, God provides for them and blesses them with this little boy, Isaac. What he must have meant to them! But Abraham, in obedience to God, is willing to deliver him up, and to sacrifice him.

Dear beloved, the thoughts and the feelings of God are no different; in fact, they are even far greater than what Abraham could have ever touched. We may touch on things in some small way. We may have some understanding, even in personal relationships that we have with one another, with family, in marriage and so forth. We touch these things, and we can touch them in measure, but we can never touch them to the extent that God has Himself, and I say that reverently. God has experience; God has feelings; God's heart of love is real and it is true. We could never reach the depth of His love. We could never understand and comprehend what it meant to Him to give His own Son. We could never fathom the feelings of Christ Himself, in going to the cross - oh, how that should touch our hearts: the preaching of the cross; what the cross means. Let us think what it meant to Christ; how it showed *His* perfect love; how it expressed *His* commitment and *His* devotion; the way that He went to the cross for you. He went there for *you*. He was nailed on that awful tree for you. He went willingly. Oh, what commitment, what devotion of love was seen in Christ in the way that He went to the cross.

I want to be careful in the way I say this, but what Christ endured at the hands of man - the suffering that He endured at the hands of man - served to demonstrate the hatred and the wickedness of man's heart - *my* heart! *My* heart is no different. The wickedness of my heart, the flesh in me, is no different than the very hearts of those who took Christ

and nailed Him on the tree. And there is no difference in any one of us; that is something to lay hold of. But it is something not to dwell on, if our hearts have been touched, and it should magnify in our hearts the greatness of God's grace and love, that He would take up such a one as me; He would take up such a one as you, in all your sin, and in all of your hatred and wickedness. Dearly beloved, God's own Son, there on the cross, has taken you up and shown love. Think of the Lord Jesus Himself, in commitment and love and devotion, going to the cross - *for you*; the One whom God has provided, to show His love. Christ proved that love; He demonstrated that love perfectly. He went to the cross, and He suffered, and He died. Think of what He went through in the three hours of darkness; it is something that we could never understand; not even in a small way could we understand.

We can understand to some extent His sufferings at the hands of man, which served to prove the hatred of man's heart. But what He endured in the three hours of darkness when He exhausted the wrath of God against sin - think of that. God is a holy and righteous and perfect God; He is a sin-hating God. Sin is in complete opposition to everything that God stands for, if I can say it in that way, and God is the sin-hating God. Christ exhausted His wrath. God can now be propitious towards man. In other words, God has been satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ. God has been perfectly satisfied with what Christ has accomplished because He has exhausted His wrath and if we believe on Him, there is nothing, nothing to be held against me or you. There is nothing for me to add to that work; there is nothing for you to pay: the price has been paid. Think of that! What liberty there is. Our hearts can be set free. When we look on the cross we can say that it was there that He hung and He died, and it was there He went through and endured the wrath of God during the three hours of darkness, and it is *there* that He could say, "It is finished", John 19: 30. There is nothing left to be done. How wonderful that is. What peace there is in that, to be able to know that there is nothing for me to add to that work. I know that there was nothing I could do in my own power; I am completely incapable. I can look back at my own history even as a *believer*, and know that. I think of my ups and downs and my failures and my weaknesses and my detours and so forth - as a believer! And so I know - it has been confirmed in my heart - that in the flesh I am utterly incapable of pleasing God. But, oh how I can rejoice in my heart and spirit that, as in Christ, I can come before Him clothed in His worth. How wonderful it is.

I often think of the younger son in Luke 15, the prodigal son as we speak of him, and I think about what he must have felt when the father saw him from afar off and ran to him, and took him in his arms. How he dressed him and gave him the best robe, and the ring on his finger, and the sandals on his feet, and said, 'Come in, come in to the house, we are going to rejoice. We are going to celebrate together. This my son was dead, now he is alive'. Think of what the prodigal son must have experienced in his heart. He did not anticipate that. He said, 'You know, I have not done well. I do not deserve anything. Just make me a servant'. Someone once said to me that on the basis of what he had done, that he did not even deserve to be a servant. But he had gone back with at least that expectation: 'Well, maybe he could make me a servant'. Dear beloved, from God's perspective, God's view, God's desire for you is not that you might merely be a servant in His house. His desire is that you might be clothed in the best robe with the ring on your hand and the sandals on your feet. His desire is that you should be in His presence, that you should be near to Him, that you would be in the enjoyment of a relationship with Him. How wonderful that is. There is nothing more precious to God, there is nothing that means more to Him, than to have you near to Himself, as a son - to be in a relationship with Himself.

We often get occupied with what we can do, and what we are doing. And so, we think of our relationship with God as serving Him, and worshipping Him, and all of those things are right in their place. But the way that we are to serve is in the dignity of that wonderful relationship that we have with Him as sons, so that we are completely free. We are at liberty in God's presence - nothing is held back, and how wonderful that is. That is *His* desire. But it all begins with this wonderful thought of what He has provided. And I trust that we would continue to be encouraged in this. May our hearts be touched; may your heart and my heart might be touched as to the greatness of God's love as seen in what He has provided in His Son. There it is nothing greater than that. There is no greater demonstration or example of love than what was seen in that. I keep saying it, and I am going to say it again: it was for you. Has that touched your heart? Has that affected you? Does that not cause you to have this desire to respond to Him, to rejoice in your heart, to reach out to Him in thanksgiving and express your love to Him? That is what God is looking for. He is not looking for great feats. He is not looking for acts of greatness and glory. He is not looking for someone who can stand up here and be a great preacher or

for a young man who is tirelessly serving doing this and doing that. What He is looking for is for you to walk in faithfulness, simple faithfulness to the light that you have, what God has provided to you in the way of truth, to be faithful to that, to walk in it, to walk in the light to whatever extent that might be.

We are all growing, dearly beloved. We are all at different stages; we should all be progressing; the point is, *are* we progressing? Are we walking in the light that we have? Are we remaining faithful and true to what God has made available? God does not present it to you simply as, 'These are my requirements'. No, what God is saying to you is, 'You are so important to me, and you mean so much to me, and I love you so much, I am going to give you light. I am going to make that light available to you, and you are going to have the privilege of taking that up. You will have the privilege of walking in faithfulness according to the light that I have given to you in love'. Does that not change your perspective on light and truth? We often look at the truth just from the perspective of requirements, and rules, and what we are to be governed by - to some extent that is important - but, dearly beloved, view it from that perspective, that God is speaking to you personally. His desire is for you to come into the greatness of all that He has made available to you, all that He has secured for Himself. His love is so great that He would speak to you and say, 'I am giving you this so that you have the great privilege of being able to take it up for yourself, that you might be for me'. There is no greater gift from God than that, than to make that available to you.

He has made everything available to you so that you can take it up: Christ has secured it, the Spirit makes it good in your heart. How wonderful the gift of the Holy Spirit is! He is available to us each one. How wonderful it is, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit - that One who tirelessly serves the saints to make these things real to us, to bring us into the full enjoyment of what God has purposed in His heart. The Spirit is ever serving in that way, working with us, in us, working with us collectively. He is here, and He is seeking to help us come into the power and the good and the gain of what God is doing - turn to Him; speak to Him. I would exhort each one of us to avail ourselves of the Spirit's presence, and His service, and His desire. There is nothing the Spirit wants to do more than to open up the Scriptures to you, nothing the Spirit desires to do more than to help you come into the gain of truth and the light that God has given to you. There is nothing that means

more to Him in His service than being able to make these things very real to you. You are not having to think for yourself about what you should do next, or how you should do it, or if this is the right thing or the wrong thing. No, you are just to walk responsively because of the reality of what you hold in your heart. Think of the many things that you do that you do not even think about. Why is that? It is because that is part of who you are; it is part of what you have come into; you no longer have to think about it. The Spirit of God would desire that you would come into His things in that way.

We had in Genesis the simple impression as to what God has provided and I truly desire for us, each one, that we would lay hold of the greatness of what God has provided, so that we would have some understanding of the extent and depth of His love. That would be my desire for each one of us, to truly lay hold of that. Is it not wonderful that in John 6 we continue this thought of what He has provided in this wonderful account of the crowd being fed? I am not going to spend a lot of time on this particular portion but I have enjoyed it of late. It is a very well-known portion here as to this little boy who had some loaves and fishes that he made available to the Lord, but it is wonderful and encouraging to see how God has provided what we need to come into the gain, and some understanding, of the greatness of His love; and to secure us for Himself. He provides what is needed, whatever it is, wherever you may be this very day, whatever the state of your soul is, wherever you may be in your own heart. You may be struggling with things, and there may be circumstances and situations that none of the rest of us even know about that you are going through - God knows. God knows what you are going through; God knows what is in your heart. He knows what you are thinking; He knows what you are going through: speak to Him about it. Remember that He already knows. Sometimes we go through things, and yet we do not get on our knees and speak to the Father about them; we do not open up our hearts. Why? He already knows, but He wants you to speak to Him about them. He wants to be able to make Himself available to you to bring in what you need in the way of comfort and encouragement and strength. These things are real; these are not fanciful things. We have to avail ourselves of that wonderful opportunity to sit down, I say it reverently, with God, with the Father, to speak to Him, to open up our hearts. He knows what is in our hearts and He will provide what is needed. In this particular portion, the Lord knew what was needed; He knew that this crowd needed to be fed. And then you see His desire for His disciples.

He knew what He was going to do, but He was trying His disciples.

The Lord allows certain circumstances and situations to come in; He uses those things. He uses those circumstances and those situations to teach us, to form us, to develop us, so that there might be progress in our soul, that there might be a greater appreciation in our hearts for His things, and that we might fully come into the things of Jesus Christ. He uses those things. He sees this as a teaching moment, an opportunity to further develop in their own hearts the reality of what He had been teaching them all along. And so, He knew what He was going to do. His disciples here, Philip and Andrew, seemed to have recognised that this little boy was there, and he has five loaves of bread and two fishes but they question if that is sufficient. Dearly beloved, it is so wonderful to realise that God is not limited. I enjoyed this recently and it was helpful to me, that this is really an example of how important it is not to get occupied with the outward smallness of things, the confusion, the ruin that has come in - that is all the result of man's mind and man's thinking and what he has done. The greatness of what God has purposed in His heart has not changed at all. Now, outwardly, you may not see it. Outwardly, it may be discouraging, because things are small: we are not to despise the day of small things, Zech 4: 10. In some sense, the disciples were despising the day of small things, in not appreciating what this little boy had. What is five loaves of bread and two fishes? "What is it for so many?" - that is like despising the day of small things. May we be preserved from that. May we not get occupied with the smallness of things. May it be that we understand that God uses the smallness of things to bring us into something in a greater and fuller way. It is all part of His work for us.

What we want to continue to do is to have God's perspective and His outlook, just as we spoke of it in the reading, to see things from His perspective. Look at the Lord here: they said, "There is this little boy here", but they did not appreciate what this little boy had. Jesus said, "Make the men sit down". That was His response, "Make the men sit down". He was going to show what this little boy had, and He was going to use it. In fact, He was going to use it to an extent that it is going to be a miracle. That was quite a miracle really, when you think about the thousands being fed by five loaves of bread and a couple of fishes. But you see that God desires that we would understand and appreciate what He is doing in persons, and not get occupied with outward status. Think of what the Lord can do; in His hands there are no limits

whatsoever. So, what we may feel to be small, what we may believe to be weak and insignificant, in the hands of the Lord, becomes great. And that is the thing to hold and never let go, to look at things from that perspective. What will it accomplish, what is available in *His* hands, not my hands? I might think, 'What can I do with this? I do not have much, I am just an insignificant brother, I cannot help with anything'. A sister may think, 'Well, I do not have much of an opportunity to be much of a help'. Do not look at it that way. Look at it what God can do with you, through Christ and by the Spirit and the way that He can use you. I am sure that this little boy did not think when he left home and took up five loaves of bread and a couple of fishes, 'I want to go down the road because I know there are thousands of people down there and I am going to feed them'. I am quite sure that never crossed his mind. I am sure that he had a simple desire, there was some appreciation in his heart for Christ, and he had a simple desire for it. It is as if he would think: 'This is what I have; it is Yours. Take what I have and do what You will with it. I have confidence and faith in that'. It is as simple as that. We must come to this realisation, that whatever I have came from Him to begin with. So, who am I to look down on it and treat it as though it is a small thing? No matter how small a thing may seem outwardly, if it is of Christ, if it is from the Lord, it is a great and wonderful thing. So we are not to despise a day of small things. Every little thing that each one has is very precious and so important to Christ, and He can perform miracles with it as in His hands.

I am thinking as to this passage in Revelation that I want to end by encouraging each one of us to go in for these things. We know what God has provided. We know His love - I trust that we would come into it more, that we would have a greater appreciation of His love, that it would truly touch my heart in a deeper and fuller way. We know God's love and what He has provided. We know and have experienced what He continues to provide in the way of support and help. I trust that each one has experienced that in some way, form or fashion. Each one's path is different; each one's experience is different. No doubt we know that, but, dearly beloved, what I want to end with is to encourage us, each one, to go in for these things and to realise there has been an open door set before us. We have only scratched the surface in what we have touched on. In any appreciation we have of the greatness of God's love and what He has provided, we have only scratched the surface. There are great and wonderful and marvellous things available to us, as seen in this open door. It is an open door that Christ

has set before us. How wonderful that is. I often think for myself how I would desire to enter in through that door more often. Think of it like this, that opened door - and everything that is beyond that door - would represent God's heart and what He desires for you; everything that is available for you in the way of an inheritance. And ultimately, our inheritance is to come into the gain of God's inheritance; that is our true inheritance. I cannot think of a greater inheritance than that - to be taken up in the reality of what God has secured for Himself in the way of inheritance. It speaks of that in the Scriptures - God's inheritance, "his inheritance", Eph 1: 18. Our inheritance, again, is being part of that, being part of God's inheritance. There is nothing greater than that.

Well everything that is available beyond that opened door represents what God has purposed for His own heart, and the fact is that it is available to you. Have you so much as even stopped and looked through the door, just to get a glimpse of what is there? If you have not, then I would encourage you, I would exhort you, I would plead with you to take a moment to be before Him in prayer - ask Him for help, to give you heavenly eyesight. At least, take a moment: think about what He has done for you. Is He not worthy, on account of what He has done for you, that you take just a moment to stop and at least look through the door and get a glimpse of all that God desires for you? Nothing means more to Him than you availing yourself of what He has provided. Do you want to show your love, do you want to provide response to God on the basis of what He has done? Then continue to take things up in exercise, progress in your own heart and soul in relation to what He has made available for you and ultimately for Himself.

I ask the question again: have you looked through that open door? He says, "I have set before thee an opened door, which no one can shut". No one can shut it - it is available if you desire to go in for it. God will provide the means and everything that is necessary to enter into it. Have you looked through that door? Have you seen the precious things that God has purposed for you? How wonderful it all is.

May the Spirit of God encourage us, each one, to not only to simply look through the door, but to walk through it and take advantage of what He has provided to us. I trust we would be encouraged with these things. How wonderful what God has provided is, the way He has proved His love in the giving up of His beloved Son, the way He continues to prove His love and what He provides for what we need, the

way He continues to work with us, the power of the Holy Spirit that we might grow and progress in divine things. How precious it is that there is an open door, dearly beloved. Just take a moment, look through that open door. Get a glimpse of the wonderful things that God is making available to you through Christ in view of what is for Himself. I trust that you might have some glimpse, and that it might touch your heart in such a way that there is movement in faith to go in for these things in a greater way. I speak for myself in this as well.

May the Lord encourage us, for His Name's sake.

Wheaton

15th November 2020