

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE RADIANCY OF THE GLAD TIDINGS

David H Bailey

2 Corinthians 4: 3-4

John 9: 34 (from “Thou”)

Acts 6: 15; 8: 36-39

I have just a simple impression carried over from what we had in our local meeting at the weekend. This scripture in Corinthians was referred to, and what struck me was the expression towards the end of verse 4: “the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ”; what an expression that is, “the **radiancy** of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ”. It is such a full definition, we could say, of what the glad tidings contains, “the radiancy of the glad tidings”, and it raised a challenge with me as to whether or not that is the case with me in relation to the glad tidings. I hear the glad tidings Lord's day after Lord's day, but what is the effect on me? Is it this expression that Paul uses here, “the radiancy of the glad tidings”? It means there is a shining forth. It strikes me that there is a sad backdrop to this verse; it says, “should not shine forth for them.” There are those in the world today who know nothing about “the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ”, they do not know anything about it. How privileged we are, dear brethren, to have in our hearts and in our souls this precious thought of the “radiancy of the glad tidings”.

Perhaps we can go back to the day of our conversion, and we can think of a gospel preaching that might have affected us, and then we might think perhaps of this expression and how much we enjoyed the gospel, “the radiancy of the glad tidings”. But does it remain? Does that thought, that experience we may have had when we were converted, that precious thought of the “radiancy of the glad tidings” remain with us? Does it dim, does it grow a little cold? Perhaps it does: in our experience the radiancy of the glad tidings may grow a little cold. It is never the thought that the glad tidings change; it is my appreciation of the glad tidings that may change, but God in His goodness would bring us back to this thought of the “radiancy of the glad tidings”, God shining out in the Person of the Christ towards each one of us.

I thought in relation to the effect of the “radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ” in me. And I have read about this man in John 9, after he had to do with the Lord Jesus: as he speaks to those

that were criticising him, it says in that verse that we read, “And they cast him out”. I wonder if that would be one of the consequences perhaps, if I faithfully demonstrate the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, then I would not have a place in this world: I would be cast out like this man was. Am I prepared to be associated with a rejected Christ, a Christ who was not given a place here but was ultimately crucified and slain? This man was prepared to be associated with Him, and it says they cast him out. But then it goes on to say, that “Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him”. That is a lovely thought: the Lord Jesus would never forget somebody who demonstrated even in some little way the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ. How am I prepared to be associated with that in practical terms?

And then in Acts it says of Stephen that his face shone, “And all who sat in the council, looking fixedly on him, saw his face as the face of an angel”. So not only would my place in the world be finished as I seek to demonstrate something of the glory of the Christ, the radiancy of the glad tidings, but there would be something visible to others, and certainly there was with Stephen. We get that to its full extent later in the book, in chapter 7 when he is stoned, but it says here that they “saw his face as the face of an angel”. He had a link through the Spirit with Christ, and he was prepared to be recognised as having a link with Christ, whatever the cost may be.

I also thought of the eunuch returning from Jerusalem. It has been said before, that he had a book that he did not understand, and Philip, it says, “opening his mouth and beginning from that scripture” - that scripture in Isaiah - “announced the glad tidings of Jesus to him”. I think in that preaching there would be something of “the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ”. What an effect that had on Philip, but what an effect it had on the eunuch. He was prepared, very quickly it would appear, to be associated with a Christ who had been rejected here on earth, and crucified, and given a place in heaven. He said, “what hinders my being baptised?”. It suggests to me perhaps, that he *had* to be baptised, he had to be disassociated from the world and all that it stood for because he wanted to be associated with something of the glory of the Christ.

These things are just some simple impressions, but what is the effect on me, in my practical life? Do I demonstrate, do I show anything

in my bearing as to the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ? May we be encouraged thus.

For His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

10th August 2021

GOD'S PLAN

David Martin

Genesis 2: 1-2 (to “made”)

Acts 3: 16

Revelation 20: 15

Philippians 1: 6

Revelation 21: 9 (from “Come”)-10

Last week, we were affected in the gospel by the thought of God's rest; the rest that God has desired and has sought throughout the history of time. In connection with that, I have thought a little as to the fact that what God does will always be completed. This means that, for whatever God does, there must be a plan. There must also be knowledge of every question that could be asked as to that plan, and that those questions can be answered. Everything that needs to be built can be built, and everything that opposes can be answered to; all the resources that are needed, God must be able to provide.

Everything that God does has started with a plan and has been perfectly designed. Despite the overt opposition to what He has sought, God will fulfil what He has planned. What confidence we can have therefore in the gospel and in our knowledge of God. We may contrast that, topically, with the plans that man has: we are seeing today the effect of man's actions in situations such as Afghanistan, where governments went in without a plan, without the resources, without the questions being understood. And twenty years later, they are left in a situation with little secured and the same difficulties as when they began.

God presents to us something that, as we can see in Revelation, has a plan and is real. John was shown the end result; he was shown what the glory of the coming day would look like. I am sure if we were able to have the opportunity to speak to John now, we might ask, 'Was it a dream; was it something that was imagined?' He would say, 'No, God showed it to me, it was real'. Dear friends, I would ask you in the gospel preaching, how real is God's plan to you, and also, how complete do you feel your salvation is?

We have started by reading in Genesis, at the end of the period of the creation, when it reached a completed state where God was able to rest; “God had finished on the seventh day his work”. In the creation, in the vastness and the power of it, in the smallness and the detail of it,

God had a plan. It was created through His power. Man was placed in the midst of it and God had a desire to have to do with man. All I wanted to say as to this was that the plan God had as to creation was that it was to serve an end; this was the stage that God was setting upon which to speak to man about His greatness and His love. The creation was to be a stage upon which He would place man in order to have to do with man.

Persons may seek to find the end in creation itself; to find the answers in the universe and the things that are in the universe. God created this stage upon which He could be made known and demonstrate His love. His power is shown in the wonder of that creation. Man estimates fourteen billion light years to the edge of the universe. Persons try to fathom the depths of the oceans, and as far down as they go they find the tiniest of creatures, able to survive pressures which are almost immeasurable; and yet these little creatures are able to see, their hearts beat; God has created the detail of them. God set this stage to show how great He is. And uniquely, He has sent His only begotten Son into this world to demonstrate His love for man.

That love we can see in Genesis, as Jehovah put man in the garden. He sought man; He sought to have company with him. But we know that sin had come in, and man hid from God. The creation itself was complete; everything that God had designed in it was complete. And whilst man tries to find the full scope of it still, for God there was a point reached, in the very first chapter of the Bible, where having designed it and formed it, God was able to be at rest as to it.

In Acts 3, we read of a time many years later. We see a man in this section living under the effects of sin, as we all are; "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", Rom 3: 23. The man had needs for his own sustenance, and here were Peter and John who came past, and he called out to them. Here is a man who lived on the stage that God had set, a man who had needs that none had been able to answer. The provision from man was inadequate, and yet Peter and John came, and they had resource that was of God and was full. These were persons who were able to demonstrate the love of God towards man, in Christ, and immediately pour the knowledge and power of Him into the circumstances of this man.

For this man to come into the fulness and completeness of salvation, it required that one Man, Jesus, should suffer. We see in

Jesus that He was the fulness of God; the fulness of His power, the fulness of His love, His wisdom and His mind. And in this simple transaction, we see the power of that Person, the salvation that is available only through Him, given to a man who was under the effects of sin. The fulness of the salvation offered was available because of a Man who was perfect, a Man who became the sacrifice for sin, entering into death, shedding His precious blood. How many sacrifices have been offered in the generations past, where blood had been shed? They provided for a time the satisfaction of conscience, but they were not complete; they were not full. And here was a man who came into salvation, because of the efficacy of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

I ask whether your appreciation of Christ is such that you can see in Him - what He said, what He did, the lowliness of His pathway - that there was a sacrifice presented to God from a Man of love and righteousness. Having a glory which no other man had and going a way which no other man could go. He was nailed to the cross, entering even into death itself.

This man came into the blessing of that salvation. He stood and entered into the temple “walking, and leaping, and praising God”, Acts 3: 8. This was a man into whom life had come, a man into whom the love of Christ had entered. He was a man who realised now that the resources of this world were not what he needed, and were not what he wanted. He had needed a salvation that was complete, and as it says here, “by faith in his name, his name has made this man strong whom ye behold and know; and the faith which is by him has given him this complete soundness”.

Dear friend, that is the answer in the glad tidings; acknowledging your sin before God and feeling what your sin is; the hopelessness of it, as this man must have felt his own personal hopelessness. Lay hold of the blood of Christ for yourself, and you will know what it is to have complete soundness.

So, when we think of completion, there needs to be a plan, everything that was to oppose must be answered, everything that was needed in resource, provided. Here was a man for whom God had a plan. Here was a man who did not understand the questions, but God understood them, and He provided the answers to those questions, in fulness. And, as laying hold of that and having faith that God knew the questions and was able to answer them, this man came into blessing. How wonderful it is then, that the glad tidings and my salvation, are not

dependent on me understanding everything, or on me doing anything; it is simply dependent upon the faith that I have in Christ, that the work and God's plan is sufficient. How wonderful, and what grace there is in the presentation of Christ in the glad tidings.

I read in Revelation 20 because, as God has provided completeness of salvation, He has also provided completeness as to the judgment of sin. The work of Christ on the cross answers every question as to sin and the horror of sin for those who believe. It is complete and it is full in the eyes of God. For you if you are a believer, and for me, there is no further question to answer as to sin: the work is complete. But we pass through a world which has largely turned its back upon God, where sin is rampant and where man is blinded to the whole question of sin. And you may think it is out of control.

I touch on this briefly, but as to that also, God has a plan. There is a place, and there is a time, and there is a judgment which God has designed for that specific purpose. And it is the place in which every one that has not put their faith and trust in Christ will be contained; in a place where judgment will be eternal, it will be full in its answer to the unfaithfulness of man and the incoming of sin.

So there is a complete blessing - in salvation there is complete salvation, and there could only be rest if everything that was not faithful to that offer of salvation was also addressed completely and fully. I would urge you in the gospel to realise and to accept your place with Christ, rather than find yourself in the place that God has established for the judgment of everything that has opposed Him. God's plan is complete; there are no grey areas, there is no negotiation, there is no alternative path, there is no 'plan B'. God has established salvation, and all that is not saved will come under judgment. The plan is perfect. The execution of God's plan is perfect.

Then we read in Philipians, because God is still working with those who believe. A person may say, 'Well, I am a believer in the Lord Jesus and that is sufficient, because I know I will go to heaven'. What a wonderful blessing and certainty that is. We might say, though, that God is not satisfied with that alone, because that was not the fulness of God's plan. God's plan is greater than that; God's plan is that He should have a universe of persons who are made like Christ and who appreciate the glory and greatness of the Person of the Lord Jesus. And He continues to work with them. If you think of somebody that you are near to and you love, you do not just have one initial interaction with

them and accept knowing them as your friend. No, if it is somebody you love, you want to stay near to them, you want to keep conversing with them, and you want to share interests and you want to share thoughts. And that is how God operates. God's love is perfect love, and the completeness of your relationship with Him will only be fulfilled as He continues to work with you, to demonstrate Christ to you, to demonstrate what eternal blessing is, to make Himself known through the power of the Holy Spirit. And what we have here in Philippians is the assurance that "he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day". The result of the gospel and the establishment of a relationship with Christ means that there is certainty that God's work in you will be complete. We have the Holy Spirit to help us, we have the scriptures, and we have occasions of gathering together. We have prayer, the opportunity for prayer, whether individual or collective. We can say that God has provided every resource. He has a plan for you. He knows the temptations that you need to overcome, He knows the blessings that are available to you, and He has provided you and me with every resource that we should enter into them. The completeness of God's work with us is a completeness that will be fulfilled at the end of time. There is however completeness now in His operations with us; there is nothing wanting. We cannot say we do not have what we need for God to complete His plan with me. That cannot be said because it is God who is executing the plan. And my faith, as with the man in Acts, and my obedience towards God, is what will bring me into the good of what God has in view, and that work will be complete and I will have my part with Him.

We then read in Revelation as to what John saw, as to the heavenly city. We could have read these two chapters and got a sense of the glory of the completed work of God in relation to both the millennium and to eternity itself. Everything that is of this sinful scene will have been judged as we have in the beginning of Revelation 21. The effects of sin will be removed, the tears and the sorrows no longer existing. There will be the glory of a company of persons secured who have been made like unto Christ and in whom God's work is complete. It is formed in us, united as one in the assembly; the heavenly city that will be seen having the glory of God. Think of the wonder of that vessel descending and the effect it will have upon the earth. We then read in chapter 22 of a time where Christ is at the centre, and we see there that the centre of everything is in Christ. Neither the sun or the moon is now needed; Christ is light and is the centre. There is the river that flows

forth from Him; there is the nourishment that is needed.

All of the things that man will need, even in his condition in eternity, God has provided, and God has established. And again, we have confidence that this plan was established before time, was secured in time and will be fulfilled in eternity. John was able to look at the living blueprint in a time period. But the fulness of it, and our entrance into it will be in that day, which is certain. It is a day that has been set, the timing of it has been set, when the Lord Jesus will return, and we will be taken to be with Him.

So, I leave these few thoughts with us; may we contemplate a little and draw confidence a little, from the fact that what God does, everything God does, He completes. Everything that He does, He has a plan for. Everything that could oppose it, He knows and has answered to. Everything that needs to be built, He is building. And ultimately, with every resource that He has, the eternal scene is set and will be perfect with nothing lacking. How wonderful this is. How great the God with whom we have to do! May our portion be for ever more with Him.

For His Name's sake.

Colchester

15th August 2021

THE BLOOD OF JESUS

Andrew Martin

Genesis 4: 9-10, 42: 22

Exodus 12: 21-23, 24: 3-8

Leviticus 1: 1-5, 16: 11-14

It will be evident from the scriptures that have been read that my impression is to speak of the blood of Jesus. It is a subject which has been spoken about so many times - it was not so long ago in this very room that we had a word about the blood of Jesus; it is an inexhaustible subject. It is something, I believe, that God loves to hear spoken about, because it is only spoken about by those who love Him. You may hear people speak about the Lord Jesus, but has anybody heard an unbeliever speaking appreciatively about the blood of Jesus? It is something which is treasured by His own, His loved ones.

We read first in Genesis 4. In the book of Genesis, the blood is presented as the evidence of man's guilt; in Genesis there is not the solution to that guilt. In chapter 3, we find the fall of man; Adam was driven out of the garden. In chapter 4, we find the first of his seed coming to light, and one of them is righteous and the other is a murderer. The righteous one, Abel, speaks to us of the Lord Jesus: He is the righteous One; He is called that. In the New Testament, you will find references to the Lord Jesus as the righteous One. There was even one, whose background and history we do not know - neither do we know about her state of soul - who sent her husband a message to say, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man", Matt 27: 19. Pilate, her husband, was about to condemn Him to death; the righteous One condemned to death. She said, 'Don't do it!'. As I say, we know nothing more about that woman; I do not even think there is much about her in history, certainly not in the Scriptures. But one thing she did know, that there was One who was appearing before men's judgment seat and He was the righteous One. The judge, the one who sat upon that judgment seat, was certainly not a righteous man. The righteous One was before Him.

And here we have Abel; he was a righteous one; he brought an offering for God. Someone might say, 'Well, Cain was the first one to bring an offering for God', but Abel brought an offering that was *suitable* to God. What Cain brought to God was the fruit of a cursed earth; could that be acceptable to God? What Abel brought to God was a life laid

down. Oh, beloved, think of the Lord Jesus, in all His holiness and perfection, a righteous One indeed, but He laid down His life, in accord with the will of God; yes, in order that men should be accepted before God His life was laid down. And the circumstances in which His life was laid down, were circumstances in which men had a responsibility. They said it themselves; when Pilate remonstrated with them and said that he found no ground for putting Jesus to death, they said, "His blood be on us and on our children", Matt 27: 25. How fully that wild statement has come about in the history of Israel; His blood has indeed returned upon their heads and upon their children's. How much they have suffered because of their rejection of the Lord Jesus. God looked upon Abel, but He did not look upon Cain. But He said to Cain, "What hast thou done?". God knew well what Cain had done; he had slain his brother; he had killed the righteous one. He said, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood is crying to me from the ground". Oh, think of that, beloved, the blood of the righteous one, crying to God. It has been crying to God for six thousand years. Will God come in, in relation to that cry? Indeed, He will. He has come in already, actually. Yes, the One of whom this speaks - God raised Him from the dead. You think of how long that time had been, and the answer came in resurrection. He raised Him from among the dead; He could not leave Him there. The Lord Jesus laid down His life; men did not take it from Him. Men were responsible for doing so - if they could have taken His life, they would have done, and indeed, what they did was because of that. They were responsible for the murder of One who was righteous.

Well, I do not want to dwell on man's responsibility. I just want to touch on Genesis 42. Joseph had not actually been slain, had he? Joseph was alive, and there was Reuben; I find him a most unlikable man. He may have intervened so that Joseph's life was spared, but then when he gets to this situation he says, 'I told you so'. He says, "Did I not speak to you, saying, Do not sin against the lad? But ye did not hearken". I do not know whether what they did to Joseph was made known to Reuben. It seems that he was not present at the time. He came back to the pit where they put Joseph, and he said, "The child is not; and I, where shall I go?", chap 37: 30. It seemed as though the other brothers had carried out their devious plan and not even told their brother about it. Reuben says now, "his blood also is required". Think of this; this was Joseph. Joseph appears to my mind as a type of the Beloved. He was the beloved of the father. "Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age, and he made

him a vest of many colours”, chap 37: 3. The Beloved, the Lord Jesus, is the One in whom every divine thought is established, and in whom it all centres - Joseph, the beloved - and this is the one of whom Reuben speaks, “his blood also is required”.

We read in the epistle to the Ephesians that we have been taken “into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood”, Eph 1: 6, 7. The blood of the Beloved was the price of our redemption. The One who meant so much to God - it was *His* blood. There was no other being, no inferior being, who could have secured redemption; no one could have brought to God what was suited to Him. It was the Beloved, the One who was entirely in accord with His own heart and mind in every respect. We read of the blood of Jesus in other ways - it also speaks in Ephesians of “the blood of the Christ”, chap 2: 13. But I find that touch peculiarly affecting, that it is the blood of the Beloved. Well, these men were found guilty; their guilt rested upon them; they could not evade it. Man is guilty in relation to the blood of Jesus.

There was a time in the history of the world, for many hundreds of years in fact, when people, especially in the western world where the light of Christianity had come, would persecute the Jews, and they would justify it by saying that the Jews were the slayers of Christ. But every class of man was implicated. The Jews had a prominent place, and that is why they were persecuted throughout the Middle Ages, but all classes of men were implicated. Take account of the gospel account, and you find there is the Jewish hierarchy - the priests, the Levites, the scribes - they were all involved. You find there were the Gentile powers - the Romans, the authorities were involved in the crucifixion of Jesus; the military powers were involved. It even speaks about the passers-by reproaching the Lord Jesus. Every kind of man was involved in the rejection of Christ - everyone. And yet, God has an answer. The whole world is under judgment because it has rejected Christ. How can there be an answer if the whole world is under judgment? God used the very means by which His beloved Son was rejected, to bring about the means of salvation for those who have rejected Him. What a God we have!

It has often struck me, that when we bury a saint, we are conscious of the fact that we are having to do with something which is very precious - with that which has been the vessel of the Holy Spirit, and consequently there is a great deal of respect and care. And that is

right, it must be so. Think of the Father when He saw His beloved Son treated without care, put to death, and even when He was in death His body was abused by that soldier. Think of the awful callousness of that. Normally a person would recoil from it. And God saw that soldier using that spear to pierce the side of Jesus, His beloved. God saw that take place; how the feelings of God must have been involved in that, and what does He do? He says, 'This is an opportunity in which I am going to display my love to men', because at that point the blood of Jesus flowed, and it gave God a basis to show how great His love is towards men, that souls should be saved on the basis of that shed blood, in spite of man having committed such a foul deed. God, as it were, said, 'My love has now a basis to express itself to the worst sinner'. What a God we have! What love was displayed in the death of Jesus and in the shedding of His precious blood. You might say He could have come in and cleansed the whole scene in judgment; but what would He have secured from that? Instead of which, He has secured men, women and children who have an impression of His great love that they would never have had in any other way.

In Exodus 12 we get a picture of the world under judgment. It is just like the world as it is today. The sentence is passed, waiting to be carried out. And the word was that God was going to extract people from it. In Exodus, the blood is presented as securing the people for God. It is not a question here of man's responsibility - that was Genesis. In Exodus, it is a question of securing people for God. We have this section in Exodus 12 where the blood was to be upon the lintel and upon the door post. We referred in the reading to the power of the blood that keeps us from the wrath to come; how precious it is!

We know well what happened: "Moses called all the elders of Israel, and said to them, Seize and take yourselves lambs for your families, and kill the passover." He does not dwell upon the four days they were to keep the lamb in the house. It just says to take the lamb and kill the passover; that was the most important thing. The four days in the house were important; we can feed upon those, can we not? The four gospel writers give us different aspects of the Lord Jesus when He was here. In that sense, He was 'in the house', and men can take account of Him, and His actions and His movements. But Moses, in type, is saying that the important thing for your salvation is not the life of Jesus, precious as that is; the important thing for your salvation is that that Lamb had to be slain.

He says, “take yourselves lambs for your families, and kill the passover”. “Take yourselves”, he says - we each have to do that, do we not? I trust that all here have, that we have each laid hold of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He says, “take yourselves lambs” and “kill the passover”, and then he says, “And take a bunch of hyssop”. Who told him to say that? Moses would have had some impression of the kind of manhood that is suitable to God. The hyssop that springs out of the wall is the most lowly kind of plant; it is not imposing like the tree; it is a bunch of hyssop. That is the kind of manhood which is pleasing to God. He says, 'You have to take it', that means 'take it on', that kind of manhood. It is not the assertive man; it is the lowly man. He says, “dip it in the blood that is in the bason”. I suppose the reference there to the bason shows that the blood had value; it was precious; it was not to be lost. He says, “dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and smear the lintel and the two door-posts with the blood that is in the bason”. There it was, beloved. And what Moses is saying is that the only salvation is in the house. It is in the house: “none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.” What a night that was going to be in Egypt - a night of mourning for the Egyptians, and a night of rejoicing for Israel. None would go out of the door of his house until the morning. The blood was there, not for the families to gather round and look at it; no, the blood was there for God, that He should see it. “And Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians: and when **he** sees the blood on the lintel, and on the two door-posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you.” The destroyer is coming to the world; certainly that is assured. But no believer in the Lord Jesus will suffer that. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation, but what an effective means it is.

In chapter 24 there is another step forward. God had spoken from the mountain. His people had come out of Egypt; they had been secured. They were about to go through the wilderness, but God wanted them to know that they were His. It is one thing to be saved, but do you have a sense that you belong to God? God says that He was prepared to make a covenant with them. And the people said, “All the words that Jehovah has said will we do!”. Poor people - little did they understand their own hearts! They could not keep the word, but they promised to do it; and Moses took the blood. This was the blood of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings that had been made. Moses took the blood and he sprinkled the words of the covenant and he sprinkled

the people, saying, as it were, that this was sealed, Heb 9: 19. Everything God has established with His people is sealed; it can never be changed. The covenant can never be changed, because God has entered into it. And God said that, if they had said they were going to obey, this would be the seal of it; it was sealed with blood. Beloved, we have a covenant. It was not made with us; it will be made with Israel. But we have the terms of it, and we have the blessing of it. We remember it every week when we see the cup on the table, do we not? The new covenant - it has been sealed with blood. As we partake of that cup, beloved, in a sense we are entering into the covenant. What is the covenant? The covenant is very simple; "their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more", Heb 10: 17. He says first, "Giving my laws into their mind, I will write them also upon their hearts" (Heb 8: 10) - to have the word of God written upon our hearts would affect everything we did, everything we said. God's words written upon our hearts; how can that be? That is the effect of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. The Lord Jesus has done the work - He has secured us, brought us out of Egypt. We have been sealed by His blood, but we have also been sealed by the Holy Spirit. He is the One who is able to write God's words in our hearts. And so, you have a people - they were His own; they were secured for Himself. It is a blessed thing, to have a people secured for Himself. But how am I going to serve Him?

In Leviticus it is not a question of a people being secured; nor is it a question of man's responsibility. In Leviticus the blood is presented as a means by which we approach to serve God. In the very first chapter of this book, Jehovah speaks to Moses and says, "When any man of you presenteth an offering to Jehovah". He is expressing confidence that the people will want to present an offering to Himself, the One who has done so much, brought them out of the house of bondage and secured them for Himself. He is expressing His confidence that they will want to serve Him, although, because of the state of the heart of man, the people did not serve Him in the wilderness as they should. Stephen tells us that; he tells them that the people had served other gods in the wilderness; and they should have just served Jehovah, Acts 7: 42-43. "When any man of you presenteth an offering to Jehovah"; this is a burnt offering. It says, "shall he present it, for his acceptance before Jehovah". We know we have been secured; we know that God has come out in grace to us: are we sure that we are acceptable to Him? We are acceptable to Him as we present what is of

Christ, as we tell Him about our impressions of the Lord Jesus; we tell Him of our love for Him, and we seek to follow Him. Our appreciation of the work of Christ and the shedding of His precious blood, in a sense ensures our consciousness of acceptance before God. The burnt offering speaks so much of the love of Jesus, and our appreciation of that, and it is for our acceptance before God.

In chapter 16, there is the basis on which we can approach God. We can come into His very presence. Where we have read in chapter 16, Aaron makes atonement for himself and for his house. Who is the house of Aaron? That is us; in type, we come into the house of Aaron. And he went right in. He slaughtered the bullock of the sin offering, and “he shall take the censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before Jehovah, and both his hands full of fragrant incense beaten small, and bring it inside the veil”. He went where no one else before could go; he went right into the holy of holies. He brought the incense into the holy of holies. That is the fragrance of Christ, the fragrance of our Lord Jesus, in all that He is in every trial, in every testing. The fragrance of incense was brought out by the fire - it did not involve death, but it was brought out by fire. And it is all taken into the very presence of God; it is placed there before Jehovah. “That the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat which is upon the testimony, that he die not”.

And then, “he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle with his finger upon the front of the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood seven times”. What does that mean? It means for us, beloved, that we have access to the very presence of God; not only are we claimed by Him as His people, not only has He entered into a relationship with us, we can know His favour towards us, we can even have access into His very presence, the presence of God. On what ground do you stand before God? The blood of Jesus - that is the ground on which you stand. In other scriptures the blood is sprinkled elsewhere - in one place, it is sprinkled before the entrance to the tent of meeting (Num 19: 4); in another place it is taken into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, Lev 4: 6, 17. But this is the highest of all, taken into the very presence of God and there sprinkled before the mercy-seat. What is the mercy-seat? It is Christ; He Himself is the Mercy-seat. He is the One in whom God rests; every thought of God rests in Him. And the blood is there. There was the mercy-seat and the two cherubim over the mercy-seat and their

faces were towards the mercy-seat. Of course, they were made of gold, they were not actually animate, but if you think of them as beings, what would they see? There were only three things they could ever see: one was the gold, one was the cloud of incense, and the other was the blood: three things. Their faces were directed towards the mercy-seat. Here we have the cloud of incense covering it, and the blood upon it. Every divine thought has been secured and settled and established through the shedding of the blood of Jesus. Man has been secured, extricated from all that would have held him, brought into a known and confiding relationship with God. Access has been given to men to come into the very presence of God, and every divine thought secured and settled for God's glory and praise by the blood of Jesus.

I have not said anything new, beloved. May these thoughts, as we go over them again, serve to endear the One whose blood it was, to our affections, for His Name's sake.

Buckhurst Hill

25th July 2021

CHRIST AT SYCHAR'S WELL

Alistair M Brown

John 4: 1-42

This scripture gives a remarkable account of an incident in the pathway of the Lord Jesus here. The conversation that the Lord had with the woman - as we have it recorded - would take perhaps ten or fifteen minutes. The chapter itself covers a period of two days, when the Lord in His grace stayed in Sychar. How much was accomplished in such a short space of time! It was accomplished by one blessed Man, who sat just as He was at the fountain. The apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, provides this view of the Lord Jesus in His gracious and lowly manhood, sitting tired and thirsty, just as He was, at the edge of a well. It was midday: the sixth hour is twelve o'clock midday. It would be hot, and the Lord had walked a long way. He is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world; yet there He was in His lowliness, and feeling the dust and heat of the journey; He sat just as He was. And yet what resource was there in Him: the Lord Jesus is wealthy. As far as the world is concerned, He was an insignificant figure here - a tired traveller at the well - but He was able to give what no other person could give. He had resource to impart that no one else could impart.

And then another person comes on to the scene, this woman of Sychar. You might say of her that she too came just as she was. She came at midday to draw water. Normally in the east people would draw water from wells early in the morning when it was still cool. She came at midday and it has often been suggested that she probably did this to avoid meeting other people. She may have felt ashamed of herself; or that she had quite a lot to hide. She came with her water pot; she carried her needs with her. The Lord in His grace addresses Himself to her and He expresses a need; He says, "Give me to drink". The Creator of the world was making that request to the woman: "Give me to drink". His grace was engaging her, and making a request that showed that He did not regard her as an outcast. The writer adds that Jews do not have anything to do with Samaritans, and the Lord would be known as a Jew. It would be evident to her that He was a Jew, but He asked for something from her. Her response is, 'Why are you asking me?'. The Lord begins to engage her interest and her heart; He speaks about something that He knew that she needed. He says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living

water". What a remarkable thing to say to this poor woman.

Of course, the Lord was speaking of something far more than water for physical refreshment: He was speaking about inward satisfaction and joy which only He can provide as the blessed Saviour. And His words stirred the interest of this woman because they touched a need in her. She did not have joy and she did not have satisfaction. She had had five husbands and now the man that she was with was not her husband. What a moral wreck - and the Lord offers her living water. He knew all about her. The Lord knows all about each of us; He knows all about me, and all about you, and He knows what our needs are. In one sense our needs are all the same: we all need Christ. As sinners far from Him, we all need a Saviour. We have to acknowledge that that is true. The Lord brings this woman to recognise her needs. In another sense each of us has our own needs and the Lord is able for that too. Every one of us is different, and the Lord is sufficient for everyone.

"If thou knewest the gift of God": the whole disposition of God is to give. What a Giver God is; what a Giver the Lord Jesus is. And we are in our need, like this woman. The Lord does not shun those that are in need. He did not shun a Samaritan woman who was morally helpless and hopeless. He reaches out to her, and speaks about the gift that He desired to give her. He longed to give her that gift, and He draws her in so that she is receptive. She asks Him questions at first that show that she did not understand the spiritual import of what He is saying. First of all she speaks about the Lord having nothing to draw with, and then she remembers something about the tradition of the place. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob ... ?". And the Lord says, "Every one who drinks of this water", meaning the water of the well, "shall thirst again; but whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever, but the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life". This was something that the woman would never have heard of before - eternal life. And she says, 'Lord, give me this; give me this water so that I might not thirst and I might not need to come here to draw'. She did not want to come to the well; to show herself in public; she did not want to have to do that. She thought that somehow she could get hold of this gift that was being offered to her and she would never thirst and she would not need to come to draw.

Friend, something was stirring in this woman's heart where there was need. She had met somebody who could satisfy that need,

somebody who was like no other person - like no other person in His humility and in His ability to speak to her, and in His ability to transcend the divide between Jew and Samaritan. Such a divide did not prevent Him from reaching any soul in any moral condition, no matter the depth of their need. He brought this woman to a realisation of her need. She expresses it: she did not want to thirst again; she did not want to come to draw. His grace was holding her and drawing her. It was reaching her heart. And then in His faithfulness He says, "Go, call thy husband". His grace held her and the truth searched her. That was a searching matter. She gives a bit of the story. She gives part of the truth, I suppose, and the Lord then states what the position is; not to condemn but simply to illuminate and to bring home to this woman what her case really was; what grace was in that.

It is in grace that the Lord helps us to see what we really are. We are hopeless cases as away from Him, sinners without any hope, sinners before a righteous and holy God. The Lord would bring us to see that and to understand what our need is, just as He did so graciously and yet faithfully with this woman of Sychar. And that brings out the confession. "I see that thou art a prophet". Here was the woman, not speaking now about the gift - what the Lord would give her, but speaking about the Person, the Man. Her appreciation for Him had begun to grow. "I see that thou art a prophet". She goes on to say, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where one must worship". I think her conscience had been touched. She saw what she was; it was illuminated to her. She would know what she was, but the Lord in His grace brought that before her - 'Here is your moral condition'. It is a touch of grace with truth. The Lord uses His grace to make the truth effective and to touch the hearts of those that He speaks to. How skilful He is. What a blessed Person the Lord Jesus is.

The woman also seems to recognise that there was much more here in this Man than she could put a name to, or that she could understand. She is led to speak about worship. She begins by speaking of Him as "a prophet", then she starts to think about worship, but it was bound by religious observance and tradition and these things. But her heart was stirred towards Him. She did not even know His name yet. Then a revelation is given to her as to true worship. What the Lord says to this woman is most remarkable. He begins to speak these words of life eternal that Peter spoke of. "To whom shall we go?", he said to the Lord, "thou hast words of life eternal", John 6: 68. The Lord

speaks to this woman, this poor soul with her moral condition so mixed, about the Father seeking worshippers and how they would be found, and in what manner they would worship. What tremendous grace! How faithful, too, the Lord was to the desires of the Father that He should find worshippers. Later on the Lord speaks about the sowing and the reaping. And He says, "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work". The Lord was taking account of a soul in whom the Father had begun to work, in whom the Father had worked hitherto. Now the Lord is working in His gentle grace.

Is it like that with you, friend? Maybe God has begun in you a work, a sovereign work, giving rise to a movement in your heart - you realise that you have needs and that you are missing some vital matter in your life, missing satisfaction and joy. If that is the case, it is because God has worked in your heart already. We sometimes refer to these first stirrings as 'new birth'. It is God by the Holy Spirit working in your heart so that you have some appreciation of what He is saying in the gospel. Then the gospel is preached, and you find that that need that you were just beginning to become aware of can only be met by one blessed Man, the Son of God: Jesus. He loves you. He has proved His love for you and for me by dying for us at the cross. He laid down a life that was perfect and flawless before God - the perfect sacrifice; and also a life of such goodness to man. He "went through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil", Acts 10: 38. People took account of Him, and said, "he does all things well", Mark 7: 37. The life of Jesus here in service to men is something to be contemplated. It was wonderful. What love He showed, what grace, to the people that He met; this woman included. That life was laid down. He allowed wicked hands to take Him and to crucify Him, but He Himself delivered up His spirit. And when He was dead His side was pierced and His blood was shed. The offering of that One and His precious blood gives God a righteous and eternal basis to confer full forgiveness on the repenting sinner. There is no small print, no qualification, no 'ifs and buts' about what God offers in the gospel through the work of Christ. Christ's sacrifice gives God the right to come out in forgiveness. What a wonderful Saviour Jesus is!

These Samaritans came to it that He was the Saviour of the world. He is the Saviour on a great scale, but He is a Saviour also for you and for me individually. How wonderful to be able to speak of Him. The Lord saw in that poor benighted woman a potential worshipper.

However deep-dyed we may feel our sins are, as we come to the Lord we are potential worshippers. “Though your sins be as scarlet”, the prophet says, and “red like crimson”, Isa 1: 18. How deep the stain of what sin is morally in the sight of God; yet as a result of Christ's work God can see us as “white as snow” and “as wool”. This woman felt that she stood out; she did not want to be seen; she did not want to come to the well when the other women filled their pitchers. She stood out, but she came to a Man who was able to wash her sins away.

The Lord speaks to her about the Father seeking worshippers. She says, “I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ; when *he* comes he will tell us all things”. The Lord was bringing her along, leading her into the recognition of who He was. Then He is able to say, “I who speak to thee am he”. The woman's response to that is remarkable. She leaves her water pot. The resource that she had, and the reason she had come to the well, are forgotten about and she goes right back into the city, to the men of the city, those who no doubt talked about her - she would not be spoken well of. She had a reputation; yet she went to these men. She says, “Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done”. She had Christ before her. She was no longer preoccupied with her sins and her moral condition; she was no longer ashamed of her reputation or that other people might see her and talk about her. She was occupied with Christ, and she was delivered from herself and her sinfulness; her vision was filled with Christ. She had found Him as the Man who could give her what she needed, and who had done so and had filled and satisfied her need. He had brought her into joy and told her about the desire of the Father to have worshippers. She had met Him, wrecked and impoverished. She came back into the city, leaving her water pot behind, to bear witness to the men of the city to One who was immensely wealthy and who had satisfied all her needs.

What a marvellous testimony to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus! This testimony is seen in persons. It is seen in this woman. And she says, “Come”: “Come, see a man”. She had gone back into the city, and the Lord was on the outskirts where the well was, but she identifies herself with Christ. In her thinking she was there with Him. “Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?” Of the things that she had wanted to cover up and conceal, she could say, 'Look, He has told me all about them, all my sins. He has seen to them. Is not He the Christ?'. She had come to appreciate that Person. He is the only One who could help her in her helplessness. He

had, in His grace, shone a light upon her need. He had so spoken to her that she confessed that need: "Give me this water, that I may not thirst nor come here to draw". And He had satisfied that need. He had drawn her to Himself and made Himself known to her, so that she recognised that He was the Christ. And she became a worshipper and a preacher, for the witness that she bore was remarkably effective.

It says that "many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him", v 39. That was how effective her preaching was - many of the men of that city saw the change in her and came to Christ for themselves. Then it adds, "after the two days", v 43. What two days they must have been. "And more a great deal believed on account of his word." We are not told anything about the two days, other than what the result was - that more, a great deal, believed on account of His word. Sychar would have been a city that was beneath the contempt of the Jews. There would be no Jewish religious activity in this city, but people in their need flocked to Jesus and believed, they believed on account of His word. People are still flocking to Jesus. And when we come to Him we find our needs met. However stubborn, however deep-rooted, however intractable and insatiable these needs seem to be, however much we have tried to help ourselves and failed, we find in one blessed Man that He is able for everything. If we lay things out before Him He has the answer.

It was grace that caused this woman to speak of her need. The Lord would speak in grace to our souls to draw out the need that we have. If we confess that to Him, spread things out before Him, He has the answer. "If thou knewest the gift of God"; there is nothing beyond the giving of Jesus; He can resolve every problem. Men can resolve many problems, particularly technical problems, but they cannot resolve the problem of the human heart; but Jesus does. He can and He does. It is a wonderful matter that myriads come to Him. How fruitful the Lord's death has been. Of course, He is no longer in death - He was raised by the glory of the Father and He is living, and He has been given a place that is above every place and a Name above every name. But how fruitful the Lord's death has been: He said, "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit", John 12: 24. Some of that fruit came to light in the Lord's time here; this woman was an example. And the Lord speaks of the sowing and the reaping. I believe He had in His thoughts the perfect, sovereign work of His God and Father in many hearts. The Lord experienced the Father drawing people to Him. This woman was

drawn to Him by the Father. And the Lord took up that work and brought forth the harvest - a soul secured as a worshipper for God.

What a transformation! From a debased and hopeless and unsatisfied condition, this woman becomes a delivered person who identifies herself with Christ, and is an effective preacher and a worshipper. That is what the Lord is able to do if we let Him. This woman let the Lord in; she accepted Christ. The Lord gave the gift He was willing to offer. She was willing to accept, and she found the blessing. And it is the same now.

Well, I commend these few thoughts to our hearts. May we be among those who accept Christ, who receive Him and know the joy and the satisfaction that brings. We find joy and peace in believing. That is what flows from the Lord's giving, the gift of God, the living water, the gift of the Holy Spirit; joy and peace are the result of receiving Christ and receiving the Spirit. There is nothing like it, nothing to compare with the joy and peace available from Christ. They are certainly not to be found in the world. But they are found in the Lord Jesus. I commend Him to you, for His Name's sake.

Glasgow

18th September 2021

GOD'S GREAT THOUGHTS

David A Smith

Isaiah 55: 6-11

Luke 15: 17-24

Ephesians 1: 3-8, 13-14

I have been thinking, beloved brethren, in relation to this occasion, as to God's thoughts in the glad tidings, in view of the salvation of the sinner and of the blessing of the sinner, and how great those thoughts are. I do not know what thoughts were in each of our minds as we came to the preaching - various thoughts enter into people's minds. No doubt the thoughts of the brethren were that we might have some word as to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, who is the One who came here in lowly grace and went to the cross, and shed His precious blood that we might be saved from our sins, saved also from judgment to come, and through grace saved from this present evil world. God's thoughts are very glorious and great. I trust that God in His grace might touch our hearts with the sense of the glory and wonder of His thoughts in blessing and mercy.

We read a scripture in Micah 4: 12-13 at home this week and it impressed me. God was speaking to His people in all their sinful ways: "But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah, neither understand they his counsel". Their thoughts had been darkened as to God and His great thoughts and purpose, and God grieves over such thoughts of men. It says in Romans that "they did not think good to have God in their knowledge" (chap 1: 28); this is the heart of man away from God. It speaks as to this in Genesis; it says that God repented even that He had made man, Gen 6: 6. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually (v 5): that is the heart and mind of the natural man as away from God, under the influence of Satan. What a sorry picture it is; there are no glad tidings, of course, in that.

But Jeremiah speaks differently; he speaks of the thoughts of God. In chapter 29, we read of God speaking in relation to His people and in relation to all that they were going to come under. God speaks to them of how He would work with them in His saving grace. He says in verse 11 that He will bring them back: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah". How blessed that is, as we consider all the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts, and all our wanderings and willfulness. Each one of us knows something of that, though we

may have been preserved from much in our actions. I know that for myself, and God knows it too; He feels it and He has His thoughts about it. The glad tidings of course would bring His thoughts to us - "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you in your latter end a hope." What a God He is; what a way He has taken to secure the desires of His heart, in blessing, in relation to sinful man. Think of the movements of divine love, providing a Saviour in our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the counsel and forethought of God in relation to the provision of a Saviour. In Peter's first epistle it tells us of His being "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world", 1 Pet 1: 20. God was not taken by surprise, speaking reverently, but He knew in His own mind and heart, in His thoughts of love and blessing, that there was to be a Saviour of His providing for sinful man. What a blessed wonder that is. We spoke of it this morning; our brother referred to it at the Supper, as to the wonder of the incarnation, the wonder that One so great and glorious, God Himself in the Person of His beloved Son, should Himself come into the world to suffer and die and shed His precious blood. What thoughts were in the mind of God! He was bringing in His own thoughts, the desires of His heart, desires of the heart of God, in relation to His sinful creature. We are lost through Satan's activity and man's disobedience as fallen into sin and the ways of sin. God deeply felt what He had lost; He had created man for His pleasure, we are told, and God *will* have man for His pleasure too. He has one Man for His pleasure in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, a glorious, blessed Man, unique, of course, in all the perfection of His manhood, God manifest in flesh.

How wonderful that God has taken such a lowly way to approach the sinner, manifesting as He did here, in all His wonderful grace, the love of God towards man. The Lord Jesus was perfect in His way, perfect in His movements, glorifying God in every step of His path, in Himself sinless, perfect. We have all of us many times grieved God. Here was One who never grieved Him, ever gave Him pleasure, perfect, sinless and holy. Such a One was delivered up for us as guilty sinners, "the just for the unjust", 1 Pet 3: 18. Why? That He might bring us to God.

That is the wonder of God's thoughts of grace. The Lord Jesus is presented to us as a Saviour, a Saviour of sinners. How much we all need Him. There is not a man, woman or child alive in this world who does not need Jesus. Therefore we pray for the gospel; we pray that it

may be blessed, not just to some but to all. God “desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2: 4): “all men”, He says, “should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”. The truth is that His perfect work has been completed at the cross. The judgment of our sins has been borne by Jesus. He was sinless and bore the sins for those who put their trust in Him. How much it cost the Lord Jesus. We read about it in the earlier chapter, in Isaiah 53. It speaks there of Jesus bearing our sins. How lightly we sometimes think about them; how lightly we may sometimes think about sin itself. Consider what it meant to the holy soul of Jesus; “*he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all*”, v 4-6. What was laid upon Him, upon the Lord Jesus, “*who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree*”, 1 Pet 2: 24! The weight of it all, the whole question of sin and sins, was dealt with by Jesus at the cross. I suppose it is quite impossible for us to have an apprehension of what that must have meant to Him. Think of the whole weight of sin and sins, from Adam onward. God has been glorified in the whole matter. Jesus has borne the judgment of sin, exhausted the judgment of a holy and righteous God. What that judgment must have been; the holy wrath of God against sin, Jesus bearing it there in His body on the tree. What a matter it is! The work is completed, His blood was shed: the soldier “*pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water*”, John 19: 34. Without the shedding of blood, the scripture says, “*there is no remission*”, Heb 9: 22. That life had to be given up. “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*” (Ezek 18: 20), God says the life is forfeit. Think of Jesus bearing the whole penalty of sin and sins and His life given up, His blood shed for sinners such as you and me. May it affect our hearts increasingly.

But then the prophet says earlier in Isaiah 53, “*Who hath believed our report?*”, v 1. The report goes out, the work completed. The question of sin and sins has been met for those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus. I trust you have. Are you among those who have believed in Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, who is proclaimed in the gospel? Isaiah says, “*Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?*”. The scripture says, “*Seek ye*

Jehovah while he may be found". There is opportunity in the day in which we are to be amongst the saved. Well, beloved friend, seek Him now. Maybe someone here is seeking Him. Do you have an exercise of heart, maybe a guilty conscience, a felt need, a desire to seek after God? Well, He is near. The scripture says, "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near". What a wonderful, glorious day of grace it is! We can say that God is near, Jesus is near. It has often been said that He comes to every preaching; His presence is here. Of course, Satan comes too, to take the word away if he could. But the word is near. What an opportunity there is when the gospel is being preached; the word is, "call ye upon him while he is near". Call upon that name, as the man did in Luke 18: 13, "O God, have compassion on me, the sinner". A simple call, is it not? How simple the gospel is, "The word is near thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart", Rom 10: 8. Call upon Him while He is near.

A time will come when He will not be found, not be near. The day of grace is going to close at some point; that time may be very near. If somebody is seeking God, call upon Him now. And then it says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts". How easily we hold wrong thoughts about God. God has His own precious thoughts and calls us to put our faith and trust in Christ. Many are the unrighteous thoughts of man: let him forsake them, let him receive God's word in the gospel, "let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him". That is the basis of the gospel, and all that will call upon Him, will find mercy. God is not imputing trespasses to the sinner; He desires that the sinner should be saved, and God is merciful; He is a merciful and gracious God. What a wonderful way of salvation He has provided in His beloved Son. And so it says, "he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways". His ways are glorious ways, ways of mercy and grace. Man's thoughts are earthly, bounded by earth. His blessed thoughts of mercy and grace come from the very heart of God Himself.

I just want to refer briefly to the scripture in Luke. Here was a man who knew something of God. Typically, I suppose, he represents a back-sliding Christian. Many of us have been like that too - back-sliding Christians. It is a sorrowful thing when we get away from God, a very sad thing. The point I wanted to note about this man is his thoughts. Typically, he knows God, he has some apprehension of God in His goodness and His mercy; and that he can count upon it. But what his thoughts rise to is just some low place within the door - some low

place How poor our hearts are, as if we believe that God would be satisfied with that, that He would have His returning son as a servant - some low place within the door! So the son here rises up and goes to his father and he thinks he will say, "make me as one of thy hired servants". The thought in his heart was that his father would be content with that. God could not be content with anything less than His own glorious thoughts that He has centred in His beloved Son. So this man returns just as he is. What is in the father's heart is the fulness of blessing and the glorious thoughts for the repentant sinner, who can be justified in the faith of Christ's shed blood; and that he should be clothed in all the precious worth of Christ, and be before God as a son. Nothing less is in the mind and heart of God. The father here rejoices at all these things that he has at his disposal, to clothe the returning son with everything that is in his heart for him. He represents a man as justified, justified by faith in Christ and set up before Him in all His precious worth. What a place for a forgiven sinner! Justified by faith in the blood, clothed in all the precious worth of Christ, so that he can be free in his Father's presence. God will display the wonders of His mercy and grace throughout the eternal day, every son there according to His own thoughts, clothed in the precious worth of His beloved Son, at liberty in His house and responsive to Himself. How wonderful, how glorious is the grace of God! The son has a ring on his hand, - sometimes it has been spoken of as the encirclement of divine love, a wonderful thing.

Well, these are glorious thoughts; may we rise to them; may we appreciate them, beloved friends and brethren. How often my thoughts drop below the glory and grandeur of God's thoughts in mercy and grace. Ephesians tells us He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", not 'some,' not 'most', but "**every** spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ". And it is all "according to the riches of his grace". How the Lord would have our hearts respond to the riches of His grace. God has clothed us too with the Holy Spirit: it says, in verse 13, "the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" - a divine possession, redeemed by precious blood, sealed by the gift of "the Holy Spirit... who is earnest of our inheritance". Well, we have a heavenly inheritance. What a wonderful thing that is, to be enjoyed in measure now while we wait for the Lord to come. For myself, I feel how feebly I enter into the thoughts of the blessings of God. We see "through a dim window obscurely" (1 Cor 13: 12), but we do see the glory of His beloved Son, and know the God who has redeemed us through the

precious blood of Christ, clothed us in His precious worth and given us of His Holy Spirit.

These are just some simple impressions I had as to the great thoughts of God, and they are available to every man, woman and child that will come to Him. Come to Him in simple repentance, seek Him, call upon Him, and find in Him a Saviour God. There is the divine putting forth: God's word goes forth out of His mouth and will not return unto him void. It will accomplish that for which He sent it, and the myriads in the eternal day will give witness to it, that His word has not been void. It has been received in the hearts of repenting sinners. May it be received fully into our own hearts. May no one miss the greatness and glory of God's thoughts in the glad tidings.

May it be so. For His Name's sake.

Buckhurst Hill

24th October 2021

THE PRESENT PROVISION OF GOD

Harold C Anstey

This I believe is joy and comfort by “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”, Phil 1: 18, 19.

He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that in which He lived as man down here, and if any one has not the Spirit of Christ he is not of Him. As to the apostle, his comfort in Christ (chap 2: 1) abounded, and his joy in the Lord was always. He wishes the Philippians to be fulfillers (that is, completers) of this his joy, by being “like-minded”. His comfort in Christ abounded at the very moment when lawlessness had shut him up in the prison at Rome and when all the saints in Asia had deserted him!

I think this is an unvarying principle with God. We see the Spirit of Christ in Noah, Joseph, Moses and David. God meets desertion and lawlessness always by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and thus the darkest days become the brightest. They become days when occasion is furnished for the display of His mind! Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. The Lord as man proves the point. In His joy and comfort, His people only act in His Spirit and only wait for Him “as Saviour”.

It is by the supply and display of the Holy Spirit *in that character*, that in which Christ walked as man down here, that God meets the present defection and lawlessness.

Luke presents the Lord as Son of man. In this gospel the anointed Man is seen in Him and in the Acts Luke gives the same man in the same Spirit, seen now in men on earth. They are the persecuted “me” of chapter 9: 4, and this is where we come in and live, if we come into the gain of the present moment. In Luke we have reached the “time of incense”, the second Man is before God, and Luke only therefore speaks of “the days of the Son of man”. These are present now, and the Spirit of the Son in evidence. We know “in the land” the “days of heaven upon the earth”, Deut 11: 21. They began with Christ the anointed Man and continue to the rapture, Rev 12: 5.

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