

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 182

May 2022

CONTENTS

Windows

Bill S Chellberg
Page 1

A Bondman's Form

Robert I Webster
Page 4

Do You Know These Things?

Richard A Smith
Page 11

"Come, See A Man"

Sylvain Perret
Page 17

The Lord's Promises

Kevin J Walkinshaw
Page 25

Faith

David A Barlow
Page 28

WINDOWS

Bill S Chellberg

Genesis 6: 22, 8: 6, 20

Joshua 2: 8-15

Daniel 6: 10

I would like to say something, dear brethren, about windows; not so much about the windows but about people who had windows. There are three of them in these Scriptures; Noah, Rahab, and Daniel. The idea of a window is outlook; generally, that is so in the Scriptures. There are a few other times they are mentioned, but basically it is in regard of outlook.

These three people I have read of had windows, and I would like to say something about their outlook. I am talking about our outlook - our life, that is, how we look forward. Are we taking into account our current place in the world? These persons' place in the world was a very difficult place, as is our place at the current time. It always will be for the believer: "all indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted", 2 Tim 3: 12. But these persons are interesting to us in that they had faith.

If we start with Noah, he is an interesting person, because he never questioned God. God says to him 'build a boat', and he did not question it. In fact, for nine-hundred and fifty years, I do not think he is said to say anything; the Spirit has not recorded any of his words for nine-hundred and fifty years. *But he did it*; that is what I want to emphasise. James says that "faith without works is dead", chap 2: 26. Noah was a man of faith, great faith. And in chapter 6 it says, "so did he"; I think that is a wonderful sentence, and it should energise each one of us, old and young - when convicted of the truth, to do it. We must have a right view at the world around us. Noah no doubt did - it says he was a just man - God found him to be just. He was a righteous man, he is called a righteous man, and he moved forward as having a judgment of the world around him. He must have had a judgment of the world around him, and when God spoke to him to build a boat, an ark, for the saving of his family, he started building - *he did it*. And that is an important thing for all of us, for the young people here who perhaps are thinking of having a household sometime. Are you going to be like Noah and build a way for your family to be saved? That is what he did. He made a window as he was told. I think that it is an interesting thing,

and I do not want to say much about it, but it is never said that Noah opened his window to look out and see what was happening, or to see which way his boat was going. He is a picture of a person who has faith and does not question God. Noah did not question God.

It is important to know that he built the first altar in Scripture. Another altar is possibly referred to earlier when God told Cain that a sin-offering lieth at the door. But this is the first of the altars mentioned as such and God smells a sweet odour. I would just like to entice the brethren to have that kind of outlook, the kind of outlook Noah had.

I read what Rahab said to the spies who were with her - her words are recorded. She said certain things, and in one sense her faith was extraordinary, because it was forty years earlier that God had opened up the Red Sea for Israel to come across. That was in one sense historical. Now, her faith had a certain roundness about it that is not mentioned in Noah. She had heard about what God was doing with His people. Have you heard what God is doing? She did, and she said, 'That is the God for me, that is the God I want: whatever it takes, I want that God'. And thus she let them down through her window. She had a window and she had, no doubt, been looking out of that window and thinking about what had happened in Egypt, and what had happened at the Red Sea, and what had happened to the Amorites, to Sihon and Og. They were huge men; the size of Og's bedstead was nine cubits, Deut 3: 11. She thought about all that and she said, 'That is the God for me'. That is the outlook she had, that she wanted that God. Rahab was a Gentile and later on, there is another Gentile named Ruth, and she says, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried", Ruth 1: 16, 17. These are persons who challenge us about what our outlook is at the present time. Is God going to continue the testimony? Is God going to continue the assembly? That is the question you need to answer.

And then I just wanted to say in closing a short word about Daniel. It is interesting that, when he knew that the law was signed by Darius, he went and prayed "as he did aforetime." The law was that he must pray only to Darius, but he went and prayed *as before*. He went three times a day, and prayed, and prayed. I think this is a clue for us to consider in regard to our outlook. There are governments, and economics, and politics, and all this that is going on at the present time. You might say, 'What is the point of it all, why should I be concerned?'. Well, I think this passage contains a good word for us - prayer. Daniel,

too, was remembering something that he had heard many years ago. He was thinking: He was thinking about Jerusalem; he had God's purposes in mind, and he was thinking about what God's plan was. And that should be our outlook: what is God doing? What is He doing at the present time, what is He going to do? Where will each one of us be in the days to come?

Thank God for this weekend, and we desire that it might be fruitful in this place and in every place represented here, and that we find our part in the wonderful plan that God is moving forward. He is not giving up! The testimony will go through; the assembly will go through; there is no question about it - it will go through. If the testimony could go through the Red Sea, it will go through! As the people approached Jericho, and the government had sealed up the city; nevertheless, there was a window in the wall; there was something in that city that the king could not shut up, and that was Rahab's window.

I wish to encourage us all to have our window open to what God is doing.

Indianapolis

26th November 2021

A BONDMAN'S FORM

Robert I Webster

Matthew 20: 28

Luke 18: 35-43

Those that were out at the reading here last Wednesday would remember that a prophetic scripture was referred to in Zechariah. It speaks prophetically of the Lord Jesus and says, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground; for man acquired me as bondman from my youth", chap 13: 5. I was thinking about that: it is quite a remarkable thing - that such words are said of the Lord Jesus, being who He is, in the greatness of His Person: "man acquired me as bondman from my youth". I think it brings before us the greatness of the stoop that the Lord Jesus took. We read in the Scriptures that He "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men", Phil 2: 6, 7.

Now we can understand that the Lord Jesus came here to serve God; He was God's servant. He came here in order that He might do God's will, and every movement of His while He was here as a Man was for the Father's will. He came for that reason. So we can understand that He was here found serving God. God was His object in His life here. He could say, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him", John 8: 29. As a result God found His intrinsic delight in Him. Another prophetic scripture in Isaiah draws attention to Him as God's Servant; it says, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!", Isa 42: 1. As being found here, amongst men, His life was given up for the service of God, and we can well understand God finding such delight in Him.

But then we find that bondman's form; He took a bondman's form. We have read here in Matthew 20, where it speaks of "the Son of man". Now that is an interesting thing, that the Lord Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of man, and for the most part it appears in the gospels that that is how He referred to Himself - the Son of man. We are often reminded that as the Son of man He has a claim on every man, but it also meant that every man had a claim on Him, and He evidently rejoiced in that title of His. Being known as the Son of man, it meant that He was available. The Lord Jesus coming into manhood, came within reach; it meant that the heart of God would be told out and

He was available to all. He was going to serve God and also serve men. That is a wonderful thing to think of, is it not? When He says the Son of man did not come to be served, you think of the glory of the One who was God coming into manhood. Coming in and being found in this world, the world He had made, surely the whole world would be given up to Him, as the Creator moved into the sphere that His own hands had made? But because of that place, He took the bondman's form; He looked for nothing for Himself. He served His God and Father, and then it says, "man acquired me as a bondman from my youth". I wonder if that speaks particularly of the way in which the Lord Jesus was available to men, and what I would like to draw out is that He is still available. And He is able to serve each one of us.

Of course, He is no longer here. We sang -

... behold thy Saviour,
Seated on the Father's throne; (Hymn 112).

I think God loves to show us that that Man that was found here, given up for His will, the One that accomplished everything, is now glorified on the Father's throne. He has placed Him there in supremacy. That man we read of in Luke's gospel felt his need of Jesus. Despite being where He is now in glory, if there is a need felt, a heartfelt need of Him, He would love to draw near and serve us; that is His heart. We were reminded yesterday that the Lord Jesus could say, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt 11: 29); that means that there is nothing that is too much for Him. He will meet the sinner at his lowest point in order to bring in what is needed. That is the man Christ Jesus, the One that took a bondman's form, and could say that He had not come to be served. He sought nothing for Himself. How rightly He could have laid claim to the whole world, the whole created sphere. You will remember in the temptations, how Satan tempted the Lord; he said he would give the world to Him, Luke 4: 6. Think of the pride of Satan's thoughts. Of course, it all belonged to this One to whom he spoke, and yet He was found in a bondman's form, found amongst men.

We know that most of His life, a large part, was for God in secret, but the last three and a half years of His life were spent in service amongst men too. I do not know how many days that involved. You think of the gospels and what they record, "the days of the Son of man", Luke 17: 22. He announces as He comes into His public service in the synagogue, as He takes that scroll, the book of Isaiah, that "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad

tidings to the poor; he has sent me to preach to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And having rolled up the book, when he had delivered it up to the attendant, he sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. And he began to say to them, To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears", Luke 4: 18-21. The Lord Jesus was announcing that He was going to become available for men, to serve men as they were, as He found them. You think of what He found as He came here amongst men. He did not frequent the palaces and the religious high places; He had to do with those who were sinners and tax-gatherers. One could say, "a friend of tax-gatherers, and of sinners", Matt 11: 19. And they who opposed could not understand it. God's heart was being expressed and demonstrated towards people who were at an extremity. He had not come to call righteous ones, those who felt no need of Him, but those that had a need of Him. What they found was that the Lord Jesus was ready to serve: a wonderful thing to speak of! We sang -

Sinner, see thy God beside thee,
In a servant's form come near (Hymn 112).

That is how men are secured, by having that personal experience, personal transaction with the Lord Jesus. We perhaps do not appreciate quite how interested the Lord Jesus is in each one of us. There were those that the Lord Jesus expressed an interest in; perhaps they had even been treated as outcasts. We see lots of homeless people on the streets today, and perhaps we even ourselves would give them a wide berth, but the heart of Jesus was such that He would draw near to them.

The blind man in Luke's gospel is perhaps an example for us. It says Jesus was drawing near; you think of the man who sat begging. I suppose it speaks of the extremity of our condition that the Lord Jesus has to meet. That is a picture to us of our moral state before God, a beggarly one. That is the effect of sin; it corrupts and destroys, and brings in distance from God so that nothing of Him is known, and His love is not enjoyed. That is not God's thought for us. That is far from what God desires for each one. And yet Satan is so active. Satan has one object, and that is to destroy everything that is for God, and we would do well to remember that. This man speaks of the extremity, the way in which Satan works and how sin can leave us - by the wayside begging! We might not actually be by the wayside begging ourselves,

but it speaks of how we are in our souls before God; what a state!

This man had heard of Jesus passing by, and an opportunity was afforded him. It is a bit like the opportunity presented in the gospel; it did not appear that Jesus was to pass this way again. The appeal in the gospel is that things need to be resolved now and we need to be clear as to that. We perhaps come to the gospel and we hear that God's heart is towards us, and we heard that last week, and perhaps the week before, and that is a blessed reality, that God's disposition is one of blessing. He is desirous that we might be saved and is providing the means by which that might be so. But there is also another reality in the glad tidings, that that opportunity is not forever. Shortly it is to come to an end, we do not know when, but I do not think it will be long. That therefore means that an opportunity has been presented to us, Jesus Himself would make Himself available. It was not by chance that Jesus was passing by this way, and there was a man who had a need of Him. He cries out for mercy. That is a cry of one who is marked by faith, one in whom God is working, because he recognises all he can appeal for is mercy. That is true of us as sinners, as we are in that beggarly condition: all we can do is appeal for mercy. God is merciful; God is extending mercy. There was nothing else this man could plead for. "Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be led to him". Then He says, "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?". What words of grace they are, putting Himself at service to a poor, blind beggar. "What would you like me to do for you?" You think of that! The Lord Jesus is able, and would ask the question of each one, "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?".

I think this is a particular time where Jesus would draw very near. He would draw near to those that feel that they have a need. There are maybe things in our hearts, in our experiences, that nobody else knows about, maybe even our parents or our friends do not know about, things we keep to ourselves. But there is One who does know. Jesus knows everything: He knows our thoughts; He knows when we are thinking something we should not be; He knows when we are doing something we should not be doing; He knows everything. That may mean an element of fear creeps in, but there is no condemnation with Jesus as He draws near. He knows that He can meet your need. "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?". Whatever it is, Jesus knew within Himself that He had power and could meet whatever the need that was there. That is why we present the Lord Jesus, and that is why

God is presenting Him.

In Him there is One who can answer whatever need it is. The preacher can present Him, and he does not have to know or understand what we may be feeling or the depths of our soul experience, but what we do know is that Jesus is able to answer it and meet it. Not only that He has power to do so, but His heart is such that He desires to bring in healing and blessing. Think of one who said to Him, "if thou wilt, thou art able to cleanse me", Matt 8: 2. It shows a remarkable touch of grace: Jesus does not criticise the way the man had spoken, but simply says, "I will", v 3. He brings in tremendous grace to that situation and demonstrates that He is willing, and His desire is to meet what there is by way of need. So He puts Himself at the service of this man. We should perhaps take such a question to ourselves, "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?". The question might be raised in the hearts of each one. We perhaps mask things, we do not like to think about them, we do not like to think about the consequences, but the gospel is a time where we need to deal with the realities and their consequences. We should not gloss over them. Jesus is drawing near in order to remedy these things; He can bring in help, bring in what is needed. He is the sinner's Friend, and as turning to Him if we have not yet already, and having to do with Him, we are having to do with One who has put everything right as far as our terrible sinful condition.

The Lord Jesus has effected everything and to God's satisfaction, not for our approval. But the gospel tells us that the Lord Jesus Himself in His work on the cross has accomplished everything entirely to God's satisfaction, not just for time but for all eternity. The matter of our sins need not be raised again because the work of the Lord Jesus and His precious shed blood has settled everything. Jesus has paid the price, paid what was due. I think of my sinful history and Jesus has paid it all; what an awful price that was. But He has done it, and God has said He is satisfied with it. We know that because Jesus is enthroned in glory. Jesus is no longer in death, no longer here, but is living and ascended. Would God do that if there was any question as to the efficacy of that work? No, He says, 'I am satisfied with His work' and the proof of that is that Jesus is now, as we have sung, seated on the Father's throne. The Father has placed Him there as a witness for all that have faith that He is satisfied with the work of Jesus. He can resolve everything in an instant, but what it requires is faith, "thy faith has healed thee"; the Lord Jesus said. It is a remarkable thing to think

of; it brings before us the importance of faith. Through faith in Him and His finished work, everything can be resolved. It can be met, never to be questioned again. There is something we can begin in our experience to rest our souls on, because there are things that come in and we realise that we still sin and that brings in a sense of distance from God. We have to come back to God. These are things that enter into the experience of a believer, but it begins by resting on the fact that Jesus has met our need and effected everything to God's glory. So you think of that question, "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?". He has done the greatest thing for us. He has accomplished that which you could not do, I could not do, nobody else could do. Jesus has done it. That pathway was given up to the service of His God and Father, He was obedient, and it led to the death of the cross. Such was His devotion of love; such was His obedience to the will of His God and Father. It led Him there, it led Him to offer Himself up, "by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless", Heb 9: 14. Think of the perfect offering of the Lord Jesus, and it was made in order that sinners in having to do with Him, might know perfect peace within, and know that as far as their sins are concerned they are gone, 'gone evermore' (Hymn 238) as the hymnwriter says. Well, you think of all that, the greatness of what the Lord Jesus is able to bring in, and He says, "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?". He has everything that you need, not only for your salvation but for your joy, and hope and peace. Everything can be resolved. And these things are not just for a time but for all eternity. As He did with this man, He draws near. You think of the gentle way in which the Lord Jesus approaches.

One of the things the gospel shows us is how skilful the Lord Jesus was in drawing near to persons' hearts. Think of the woman in John 4: she was an outcast. Nobody really had to do with her, but the Lord Jesus sits there and waits for her to come out when she was apparently ashamed to come out otherwise. The Lord Jesus just gently makes Himself available. Think of the skill of the Saviour. That scripture shows He would not seek to cause any further distress to a sin-stricken soul. He was able to bring in healing, able to bring in happiness, able to bring in that which is not offered or found in this world. "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?". I wonder if we are all conscious of having to do with the Lord Jesus, and answering His question. This man says, "Lord, that I may see", and He says "See: thy faith has healed thee". You think of that, instantly! That is the wonder of the gospel; it is not something we have to prove ourselves for or go

through a process for.

As having to do with Jesus, we can know that everything is resolved in an instant. As our faith lays hold of Him we appeal for mercy, recognising what we are. Things are resolved. We can have peace in our souls. You think of the greatness of it. And the Lord Jesus draws near. I would just leave that with each one, that we might be conscious of having this question asked of us, and answering it. We perhaps need to cry out to the Lord Jesus. Sometimes we worry how we say things, but the Lord Jesus knows our hearts. He understands our intentions and motives; we can have it as it were all out with Him, knowing there is a loving heart with Him. There is a desire from His part to settle everything and bring in what is needed. That is not just for initial salvation but all the way through our lives, whatever it might be. There may be various needs, things that come up. The Lord Jesus is able to draw near, able to provide what is needed.

Well, that was just my impression: “man acquired me as a bondman from my youth”. It just shows His lowly heart. We can trust His intentions, His motives; they are pure. He desires the very best for us. We sometimes wonder about motives of others, but the Lord Jesus: His motives are nothing but blessing for us. We can be assured of that and as having to do with Him, we can actually prove it and know it for ourselves. That was my impression. We perhaps get very familiar with what we hear, but it is an amazing thing, that such a One came into such lowly circumstances. Jesus will come again publicly and there will be no question in anybody's minds as to what He is before God. God will see to it that He is glorified before men. His glory will shine forth from the east to the west, Matt 24: 27. You think of the display of glory that will be seen when He comes out triumphantly and publicly. The Person that is there will be unchanged. It is the same Person that was found in lowly circumstances, making Himself available to all. May we all have some experience of having to do with Him.

For His Name's sake.

Buckhurst Hill

21st November 2021

DO YOU KNOW THESE THINGS?

Richard A Smith

John 3: 16

John 19: 17-18

John 19: 32-35

John 16: 7

Revelation 1: 5 (from "To him") - 7

We spoke in the reading this morning about the gospel of John chapter 17 as to the prayer of the Lord Jesus to His Father, and one of the things that He said was "thy word", the Father's word, God's word "is truth", v 17 and my simple desire dear friends is to convey to you a few of the truths as to the gospel.

It is very apparent in the world around us that men know very little of the truth. They would challenge you if you said that; they would speak of their technology and their learnings and their science and their commercial acumen and so on, but, beloved, if you take a long hard look at the world around you, you will see that men know very little, and the reason for that is that they leave God out. The chaos and the confusion in the world around us is because God is left out, and despite this I would like you to know for yourself the simple truths of the gospel. There are so many of them I could not cover them all in their depth - who could? - but I would like you to leave this occasion, especially our young ones, knowing certain truths for yourselves. You must know them! Because when you know the truth everything else can be measured against it.

The first one here in John is in probably the most well-known verse in the Bible; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son". It is not the world's *system*; God does not love that, but He loves the *persons* in the world, and that is you and me.

God is towards you and that is the wonderful thing in the glad tidings. For all your failings, all of your shortcomings, God is towards you, and the gospel is preached because He is towards you, and His appeal towards you tonight is in love. You might ask how we know it is in love. Because He sent His only Son to die. What greater expression of God's love could there be than the fact that He sent the Lord Jesus, His only beloved Son, to die for such as you and me. Someone once said that God gave heaven's best for earth's worst! What a God He

must be! How long has He spoken with men? In the Scriptures you can read of the prophets, how they spoke to the children of Israel time after time after time, and every time they were ignored to a greater or lesser degree, and eventually the whole nation was carried away. Israel was carried away, scattered and dispersed among the nations, and then as the parable tells us, God says finally, "I will send my beloved son", Luke 20: 13. What a God He is! Do you know that in your heart, that He is towards you? He is towards you and He is for you, and that is the reason that He sent His Son, so that it says, "whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal".

Now, do you know the Saviour for yourself? Your friends may know, they may not; your parents may know, they may not; but do you know Him? Do you know the Lord Jesus as One who saves, as we read in this verse here? God would not have us perish; His desire for us is eternal blessing. That is what He has in mind for you; that is what He has in mind for the preacher and that is what He has in mind for the listeners. I would like you to remember that, that God is for you, He sent His Son for you that you may have eternal blessing.

You may ask what Jesus did. Why did He come? He came to die. Do you know that? Do you know that Jesus came to die? We read here in John 19 at the end of His life and it says, "And he went out, bearing his cross, to the place called place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha". It was drawn to my attention the other day that the word Calvary is not actually in our Bible; it is in the Authorised Version, and it means the same thing. We read that text this morning at home, and Golgotha means "place of a skull". What is a skull? It is the empty head of a man that is dead. That is what we are naturally, as away from God, as there is no room in our minds and hearts for God's things; but still, God in His grace appeals to us, and Jesus went to this place and was crucified there.

It was at the end of a pathway of perfection that He went this way. He was cast out, He was rejected, He was betrayed, He was denied, and He was slain. He was betrayed and denied by those that loved Him, or professed to love Him. What a pathway the Saviour took! He went that way for you and me - God sent Him and He went that way in perfect obedience. Think of the power that Jesus had! In the Old Testament just one angel slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in one night (2 Kings 19: 35); think of the power that the Lord Jesus

had! He could have stopped what was happening to Him at any moment in His own power, He could have wiped the Romans off the face of the earth, but He did not! He went this way because He loved you and He loved me! Be assured of that!

He also loved the two on either side of Him, and one of them as we know from another gospel got the blessing, Luke 23: 39-43. What the Lord Jesus suffered! We did not read all the verses, but you can read them for yourself, and at the end, Jesus said, "It is finished". It is a completed work! He suffered for sin and sins and took on His own head and shoulders what was due to those who trust Him; He suffered at the hands of man, but He suffered from God. Beloved, the eternal judgment that was due to you and me was poured out upon His head until He exhausted it, and we can be thankful for those blessed words, "It is finished". The atoning work never needs to be done again as it was a work done in perfection. It is not only to my satisfaction: I cannot ever value the work of Jesus as it should be valued, but it was done perfectly in God's sight and the witness to His death was what we read of a little bit further on, that His side was pierced with a spear and "there came out blood and water". The apostle writes, "his witness is true, and he knows that he says true", and he writes this that you and I "may believe". That is why John wrote the gospel, that we may believe. I think one has said it is written to make genuine believers of nominal believers! Have you accepted the Lord Jesus for yourself? He shed His precious blood for you; what a price the Lord Jesus paid. And why did He shed His precious blood? Because of the words in the first epistle of John, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin", chap 1: 7. None is left out! There is no sin so great or so small that we cannot come to Jesus, and believe on Him and confess our sins; as we read here now He can forgive us each one of them! What a Saviour He is!

We will have to answer for our sins! Each one of us will have to answer to God for them. Now are yours going to be covered and washed away by the precious blood of Jesus tonight, or are you going to have to stand before God in your sins and answer for them? I pray that that will not be your portion. It is not mine: mine are washed away! I have come in repentance, however feeble it might be, to the Lord Jesus, and simply asked for forgiveness. What does it mean to confess our sins and to repent? I believe it simply means that we align ourselves with God's view of us as sinners and acknowledge the need

of a Saviour.

Beloved, you probably cannot remember them all! I certainly cannot! But we can confess that we are a sinner and need a Saviour, so that we can be like that man in the parable who could not even lift up his eyes to heaven but who said, "Have compassion on me, the sinner" and who "went down to his house justified", Luke 18: 13. What a Saviour He is; He forgives them all, and while God knows them all the wonderful thing is, that having put your faith and trust in the work of Jesus and being cleansed by His precious blood God will not remember them any more! That is a wonderful thing. It has often been said we cannot 'not remember', we can forget things, but take a sin of yours and try to not remember it, and it will come to the forefront of your mind. Yet they are all washed away in the blood of Jesus as we come to Him, acknowledge our need of a Saviour, and ask Him to forgive us. He is willing to do it! All we need to do is come to Him. The enemy will bring them up before us; he will try to accuse us; he does that: he accuses us, and he seeks to make us uncertain, but once our faith and trust is in Jesus our salvation is secure for eternity! It cannot be taken away from you; do you know that? Once you put your faith and trust in Jesus, once your sins are forgiven, you are safe and secure for eternity; nobody and nothing can ever take that away from you, beloved. Some preach that you can be saved today and lost tomorrow; that is untrue. Saying things like that means that your salvation depends on you, and your salvation does not depend on you: it depends on the precious work of Jesus, which is perfect in every way. All we need to do is have faith and believe.

I read in chapter 16 of John because once you know your sins are forgiven, and you know that Jesus is your Saviour, He gives another Comforter to you. The Lord is not here any more; not only did He die and shed His precious blood and lie in the grave but He rose again! You read of it further on from where we read in John 19 which shows you that, that Jesus rose again. He is living and glorified, and that is where the word of the preaching comes from; it comes from heaven. It is God's word, God's glad tidings, and it speaks of a living Saviour. There would not be much point me preaching here of someone still in the grave. What would be the point of that? We may as well all go home if Jesus is in the grave! But He is not! He is a risen, living and glorified Man. In our scripture in John, Thomas says in that passage, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the mark of

the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe". That is what Thomas said, and it is where that expression comes from, 'doubting Thomas'. **But** then Jesus showed him, and said to him, "blessed they who have not seen and believed"; that is for us! We cannot see Him just now, not actually (we will, but not just now), and the blessing now is in the believing and knowing that He is a living glorified Saviour.

It says here, "It is profitable for you that I go away"; the Lord is gone, but be assured of this: He has sent the Holy Spirit. Do you have Him for yourself? It is a simple matter of asking, and the Holy Spirit would magnify the Lord Jesus to us. He comes and makes His abode with the believer, and He makes precious to us the things that are of the Lord Jesus. He strengthens our faith; He helps us in our pathway, He is always there and He will not leave us forever! He will be with us now and He will be with us then! What a precious gift it is; do you know Him for yourself? Do you have the Holy Spirit? If you are not sure just ask the Father, He will give Him, and He will be with you every step of the way.

I finish in Revelation; it is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" which John was given to write down. It says, "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins"; that is the One who we have been speaking of, the same blessed living Man, and it says, "Behold he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him". That is another thing to be assured of and to know in your heart that the Lord Jesus will return. This moment that we are speaking of is what we speak of as His appearing, it says "every eye": the world will see Him again. The last they saw of Him publicly was on a cross, yet they will see Him again: "every eye will see him"! Every knee, we read elsewhere, will bow to Him (Phil 2: 10), but before that He comes into the air to call His own (what is known as the rapture); all who love Him are caught away. Beloved, do not be left behind. Do you know that your name will be called? If you have put your faith and trust in Him and you know Him as your Saviour you will go! You will go to be with Him and nothing and nobody can stop that! Wherever you may be, you may be at school, you may be at work, you may be on holiday, you may be sitting in the preaching; if you belong to Jesus when He comes, you will go! What a hope we have. Do you know these things? Do you know God is for you! Do you know Jesus has died and shed His precious blood for you? Do you know your sins forgiven; I trust you do! Do you know the Holy Spirit's presence? Do you know that your name will be called when He

comes for His own? What a hope we have to look forward to; may it be yours. May that hope be magnified in our hearts; what a Saviour He is and, what a God we have to do with. May we indeed belong to Him and know Him for ourselves, the Lord Jesus Christ, our personal Saviour.

May He bless the word for His Name's sake.

Strood

28th November 2021

“COME, SEE A MAN”

Sylvain Perret

1 Timothy 2: 4-6 (to “for all”)

Acts 17: 30-31

Matthew 8: 27

John 19: 5 (from “And he says ...”)

John 4: 29 (“Come, see a man”)

In thinking about the gospel at this time of year, it is quite solemn always to think that such an occasion is the last one to be held in a particular year. I suppose the assumption of men is always that, as they come to the close of a year, they will go on to see another one; they come to the close of a day and they are going to see another one. But we can never make that assumption. Maybe it is because of God's patience and long-suffering in His love, that has allowed for this dispensation to go on for so long, that you think that there will be another day; because there has always been another day so far, but we just do not know. There are a few things that we do know.

My simple impression tonight, dear friends, was to speak to you about “the Man”. It is good to start the occasion by stating the desire of our Saviour God, which is that all men should be saved. One of the most wonderful things about the gospel is that it is an invitation. Have you thought about that? God Himself, the Creator, in whose hand alone the question of whether we can see another day is held, invites you. He invites you to take up what He has to offer to you. What a God! He would reassure you by the fact that He is a Saviour God. If He goes on in patience it is that all men may be saved.

Maybe He has gone on in patience just to make sure that you are included, dear friend, in those that are saved; I do not know that, but God does. He sees each one of our hearts; He knows each one of our hearts; and He has worked in each one of those who are present, otherwise you would not be here. The only thing to say about that is to let God work, for it is for your blessing. He is a Saviour God who desires that all men should be saved, but He has a way to salvation. And the way to salvation is through His Man, the One that we read about here. That is the thing that will always set you right, to see that everything for God is in Christ. It does not matter what stage you are at, or where you are, it always is true that whatever there is for God it is in Christ. And so it is stated here; “God is one, and the mediator of God and men” - “men” includes all of us, men, women, children - “one, the man Christ Jesus”.

The word “men” is in the plural but “the man” is alone.

I read in the Acts because we see there that Paul speaks of the Lord as “the man whom he has appointed”; God has appointed Him “to judge the habitable earth in righteousness”. Now that is a solemn point, dear friends, but it is one to make us realise that God has given Him that place, and it is by *Him* that He will judge the habitable earth. We do not know if we are going to live another day. We do not know if we are going to see another year, but we *do* know that there is a day coming in which God will judge the habitable earth, and He will do so by the Man whom He has appointed. And if you turn to the end of the book of Revelation you find that day: a very solemn day. I was struck by the fact that when the apostle speaks of resurrection some mock him, Acts 19: 32. And I am sure that there are still people who would mock the idea of resurrection, but in that day all will be raised.

And the other thing you find if you read it is that it says that there are books, books written. And if the scripture had stopped at the fact that there were books written we would all be without hope. But it says there was another book, and that other book is the book of life. And that is the urgency of the gospel, dear friend. It is what you find where it says, “if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast in the lake of fire”, Rev 20: 15. The privilege that you have now is to make sure that your name is written in the book of life, and to come to know for yourself the Man that He has appointed, God's Man, dear friend. But it is a very solemn matter, and if you have not had to do with God about your sins, *now* is the time. Now truly is the time. Salvation, forgiveness, are available; your guilt can be removed from you *now*. I do not know about tomorrow; I do not know even in about an hour's time, but I do know that now it is available. What is written in these other books will not save you; the one thing that will matter is if your name is in the book of life. It is a blessed matter that there is another book! What has entered into your history, what is to be found in these other books, will not condemn you if your name is in that book. God will do all that through the Man whom He has appointed to that end. You can come to know Him now.

That is why I have read a little in the gospels, as I would desire to speak to you a little about that Man. It is a subject that we never tire to contemplate, the way that God Himself came down. It is such a wonder, the wonder of the incarnation, the wonder of the fact that God chose to make Himself known in this way; through the Person of His

Son. The circumstances in which He came are most affecting. You go over His life and the circumstances of it, how affecting they were. He started in life in the same way that we all started - except perhaps that it was in much more modest circumstances. There was no interest in His birth with most around, but I can tell you there was the greatest interest in heaven. There was the One by whom all God's purposes were going to be fulfilled. The message that filled heaven in that day was peace with men. And peace with men on account of that little Babe that was there. What a wondrous thing that is; the One who was there. We are reminded that the joy in heaven then was greater than when earth's foundations were laid, God being able to rest finally with man because of the One who was there. His circumstances were modest. There was another instance where men could say, "Is not this the son of the carpenter?", Matt 13: 55. There was nothing that would distinguish Him particularly.

It says, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey?". Again, Mr Darby has a wonderful turn of phrase as to that:

We see the Godhead glory
Shine through that human veil (Hymn 188)

It is as if, although He was Man there, the fact, of who He was as God as well was shining through. When faced with the circumstances, when faced with the suffering and the difficulties of man, He intervened; after this passage you see Him facing demons! You see Him facing disease; you see Him facing death: all three circumstances, circumstances which *no one* had been able to meet. And it is one of the marks of the Lord Jesus, of "the man Christ Jesus", that He can meet what no one else can meet. The question of your sins is something that no one else can meet. There is nothing that you can do, no acts of righteousness, of bravery, of valour would *ever* be able to atone for your guilt. It is too great, it is too big, and remember only Christ satisfies God; only He satisfies God. But the Lord Jesus is able.

We could have thought that He could come here and just accomplish the work that was ahead of Him, but He lived a life before that. What benefits men had from His presence. Think of the countless numbers that came to Him with illnesses, with problems, and He was able to meet them all; there never was a man like Him. There never walked here a man like Him; He stands alone. And God would work in your soul that you would come to appreciate something of that, what we refer to as these moral glories, the qualities of the Man. What shone

through what He did and what He said was who He was. And the men that were with Him there were beginning to wonder at who was there. They were beginning to realise that He was no ordinary man. "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" The One who was there was the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the One through whose word the worlds rose, who had such power as was displayed when the earth and everything that is around it were made. This was shining through, but He did not come in that power, He came here to be the Man of sorrows, the One who was acquainted with grief. What shining out; what glories belong to that Man.

He did not just come to the earth to display what Man according to God is. He did that, and as such He has also shone a light on every other man. If you were to compare any man's life with His from God's standpoint, you would see that every other falls short. And that is true of each one of us. But God's heart of love would not have been told out if the Lord had just come to display what manhood according to God was. The Lord Jesus came so that the manhood that was displayed in Him, the kind of man that was displayed here, would be secured in myriads of men. And God wants to include you in that. He desires for you to be saved and to belong to Him, and to know Him, and to be near to Him. What a God He is.

I read at the end of John's gospel, and no doubt the man we find there, Pilate, did not measure in any way the words that he was using. He did not appreciate who was there, and you get the sense that he felt that the sooner the whole thing was over the better he was. But those words have been allowed to stand nonetheless. And how precious it is that he says, "Behold the man!". The Saviour was about to suffer. It is a subject of contemplation that, despite the fact that He knew exactly everything that He was going to face, it did not make Him turn aside in any way. He went on as the hymn writer says,

Thou chocest still, blest Saviour, to obey. (Hymn 318)

What a wonder that is. There He was about to go on and to suffer, to be put on a cross. He was about to suffer at the hands of men, terrible sufferings, but He was also about to suffer from God. There He was made sin, that very thing which had never ever entered into His soul - that is something that we cannot understand; we cannot comprehend that at all. Sin and everything that goes with it, and the whole system of sin, never influenced Him in any way. It says that He was "undefiled, separated from sinners", Heb 7: 26. What a wonder

that He was made sin. We cannot measure what that means; we cannot measure what that meant to Him, but we can come to the blessing of it. For the blessing of it is that, if you believe in Him, and if you put your faith and your trust in Him, you can say that your sins were borne by Jesus then. And you can be entirely and fully relieved of any guilt. Christ has removed the distance which sin had introduced between man and God. The distance at which I was at because of what I had done Christ has removed, and He has removed everything that would hinder me from being with God.

You see it is a wonderful thing to grasp in your soul that *everything* has been settled there. It is something that we come to again and again, because it is essential that we may be at liberty to lay hold of the fact that everything has been met there. And it is Christ who has done it all! He suffered during those three hours of darkness, and then He died. He was in perfect control, again a subject of wonder; for He could commit His spirit into His Father's hands. He entered into death. We were speaking of "the Man", and it was as Man that He suffered and died. Maybe sometimes, at least it is my experience, the way that my mind works means that I think, 'Well, I am used to the story'. We are used to thinking of the Lord Jesus as Someone who stands apart and somehow, maybe, we think that these things were not quite as much as they were; but He suffered as Man; He went into death as Man. He knows what it is; He has been in the heart of the earth, and the domain of death. This was the first time during those hours of darkness when that communion that He had with His God and Father was interrupted. Blessed matter that at the end of those three hours of darkness He could speak to the Father. He knew that the work that He had been given was finished. The whole question of sin is fully settled to God's eternal satisfaction. And it can be the same for your sins; all that God asks you to do is to believe. God could not have made the salvation more accessible and simple than it is; He just asks you to believe.

Maybe it is so simple that sometimes we struggle, but there was someone who said to the Lord, "help mine unbelief", Mark 9: 24. Even that is available, dear friend: "help mine unbelief". You can speak to the Lord in this way, "help my unbelief". The Man Christ Jesus has done everything else; you only need to believe. What a Saviour God! He not only desires that all men should be saved, but He has worked to the end that every man, every person can be saved. Sometimes, people wish for certain things, or they wish for certain things for other

people, but they do not have the means to make them to happen. God has certainly done everything, and He has done everything whilst we were all still afar off. The writer to the Romans tells us that "God commends *his* love to us" (chap 5: 8) in this way. It was whilst we were still afar off.

I read finally, in John 4. It is a remarkable experience that this woman went through. And what she says is quite different. It is, "Come, see a man". And in some way, it is what the preacher would seek to do, to draw you to this Man, to say to you, "Come, see a man". It is not just a matter of wondering who He is or beholding Him but, "Come, see a man". Come and know Him for yourself. It is what the people of the city say to this woman afterwards as well, v 42. They have come to know Him for themselves. God desires for you to know Him. In the new covenant in Hebrews it says that no one will teach his brother, "Know the Lord; because all shall know me in themselves, from the little one among them unto the great among them", Heb 8: 11. Think of the closeness that God desires to have with you.

We spoke of the Lord Jesus entering into death, but the blessed matter is that He triumphed over the power of death. He came out of it. He could say that He had authority to lay down His life and to take it again, John 10: 18. And He did that. And God was pleased also to raise Him, and not just to raise Him but to exalt Him. And the Man that we speak about now, right now, He is in heaven. The Man that we have contemplated in His life down here, He is now in heaven. And He stands before God, and that fact means everything to you, to me. If He stands accepted before God, it means that you can stand too if you belong to Him. And this woman is drawn to an appreciation of the Man. The Lord Jesus is the only one that can truly satisfy you. The knowledge of Him by faith is the only thing that can bring peace and satisfaction to your soul.

We often think that our satisfaction and happiness depend mostly on circumstances. We do not like to think that it might depend upon us, but we prefer to think it depends on the circumstances; if something is wrong, we think maybe if circumstances could be changed, then things would be better. It never works out like that. This was the experience of this woman. How often had her circumstances changed in the pursuit of happiness, but she never found it until she came to meet the Man. And the Lord Jesus is still waiting as He was then at Sychar's well. He is available in the same manner as He was

available to this woman. He is available to you that you may turn to Him and come to know Him. Speak with Him. She asked Him questions. She wanted to know more; that is what the Lord Jesus wants from us in simplicity, that we have a desire to know more of Him. And He tells her about quite remarkable truths, blessings that God has in mind for you. He tells her about the Holy Spirit who is available. What a wonderful thing it is that God has been pleased, and He is ready, to give you of His Spirit that you may have a new power in yourself to walk in newness of life and to be able to enjoy divine things. And the Spirit works in your heart as well. If you have come to Christ He has worked in your heart, but maybe you have not quite appreciated yet how He dwells in you, how He is always with you. You see in the Old Testament, in the previous dispensation, the Spirit acted at certain points through certain people. In the present time He desires to dwell in you. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in world", 1 John 4: 4.

He speaks to this woman too about the Father and the Father's desire. What a wonderful thing it is that God has come to be known in this way. The Son was brought to light first, but He was the Son with the Father. And what the Lord Jesus would like to take you to is a knowledge of the Father. He speaks of the Father in most affecting terms, of the care of the Father. Maybe the simplest way in which we come to prove the way that He is our heavenly Father is in the way that He cares for us. It says, "Or what man is there of you who, if his son shall ask of him a loaf of bread, will give him a stone?", Matt. 7: 9. He cares for you in many ways; recognise it in your life. It is a blessing but more than that what this woman is led to see is that this Man would like to bring you to the Father's presence to be a worshipper in His presence. You need to have your eyes open as to what God is doing: what His purpose is, what His plans are, the place that He has for you, beyond everything of this scene.

"Come, see a man". What an experience. We have often noted that she leaves her waterpot behind. I like to think that every time that she went to this well, she proved that the well was deeper; it would satisfy her that little bit less, but she came to find the One who satisfied her fully. And that Man is available in the same way today. He is the Man that God has appointed in view of the day of judgment. He has given Him, and He will see to it that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He will secure that testimony, that in the scene in which He was rejected, in which none cared His name to know, all will have to acknowledge who He is.

But the blessing is to come to know the Man now. What a Man He was in His life down here; how precious that is. What a man He was in being ready to go and face the whole question of sin, and may you ensure that the question of your own sins is included in that too. Do not go out of this room without having settled that matter. It is settled for eternity if you have settled it. But the whole end in view is for you to come and appreciate the Man. Come and have a relationship with Him and be able to say in those simple terms, "Come, see a man".

May we all be drawn to Him for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh
26th December 2021

THE LORD'S PROMISES

Kevin J Walkinshaw

Matthew 18: 20

John 16: 7

Matthew 28: 20 (from "And ...")

Following on from our brother's thought in the gospel yesterday as to the promises of God, I thought about some of the things the Lord Jesus said to His own when He was here, that I think we can also call promises. I am sure there are many that I could have read, but these three are the ones that have been laid upon me to speak about.

We also were encouraged at a recent meeting by this thought of the Lord being in the midst; so again I felt led to read this first verse: "where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them". How encouraging that is, is it not, dear friends? How encouraging all these scriptures are; but how encouraging that verse is. We have gone through times of limitation, and our brethren on the Continent have felt it more perhaps than we have, but this is always an encouragement. What the Lord said He would do, He does in faithfulness. My grandfather used to say that if God says He will do something, or promises something, it is as if it has already happened. And that, dear friends, is the character of what the Lord said to His own: "there am I in the midst of them". It does not even say, 'there *will* I be in the midst', it says, "there **am** I in the midst of them". How many times we have proved that, even in our households, even when there are just a few of us in this room, or when we are away visiting localities that are very small in number; it says, "where two or three are gathered together unto my name". If we gather unto His Name, if we come together having affection and love for our Lord Jesus, He will be there. What a promise; how encouraging to our hearts! If we do gather in that way, no matter how large the company, or how small the company, the Lord Jesus will be faithful to this promise, and He will be in the midst. What joy, what peace we find when the Lord is in the midst. Again, and this is what we were encouraged with, the Lord would say, "Peace be unto you", Luke 24: 36. That is what the Lord would say to us, as He is in the midst; as He is our Object, the Lord would bring peace and joy. And He would be the Object of our hearts.

I read next in John's gospel, and this also came into the gospel yesterday, but again, what a promise. He says, "if I go I will send him to

you”: what a promise of the Lord Jesus to His own. The Lord knew what His own would feel. The Lord knew the sorrow and grief and the confusion that would come in. I do not think His own really would have understood this at this time, I do not think I would have understood this if I had been there and the Lord had said these words, “It is profitable for you that I go away”. How strange that would have sounded, but I think it emphasises the greatness of the One who was sent. It emphasises the greatness of the gift of the Holy Spirit. It emphasises the greatness of this promise; “if I go I will send him to you”. And again, as I said, it was as if it had already happened. It was a sure thing. There could be no doubt when the Lord said that, that this would happen, “if I go I will send him to you”. And we know it happened, we know that happened, that the Holy Spirit was sent to these lovers of the Lord Jesus. And many of us, all of us I think, would pray to know this for ourselves that the Lord Jesus has been faithful to this promise, “if I go I will send him to you”. It is available to all, as we heard in the gospel yesterday. But what a promise from the Lord Jesus: “if I go I will send him to you”. We rejoice that we know that He has done that. We have spoken of the Father sending the Holy Spirit, “he will give you another Comforter” (John 14: 16), but here it is the Lord Jesus saying Himself, “I will send him to you”, and He is faithful to that promise.

I read finally in the end of Matthew's gospel, and what a word this is to the disciples. The Lord told them what to do, “make disciples of all the nations ...” (Matt 28: 19); but what a word this is at the end: “I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age”. And we prove that, how the Lord Jesus is with us. How faithful He is in every way. We can prove this collectively as we come together. We can prove that the Lord Jesus is with us until He comes again. I had that in mind as well and we will touch on that in this section. “I am with you all the days until the completion of the age”. There is a time coming that the Lord said of Himself that He is coming again. He speaks of His leaving, but He speaks of His coming again. What a promise that is, that the Lord Jesus is coming again. He will come again; we can have no doubt about that. He is faithful to His word, and He will come again. We have sung about our home above. You think of that scripture, “I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again”, John 14: 2, 3. You think of that, the Lord Jesus in His own words, “that where I am ye also may be”. What a promise that is, what a joy, what an encouragement to our hearts, to think about all that the Lord Jesus has promised for us. All that He has prepared for us, yes,

but all these things He has promised that He has already fulfilled and will also fulfil, like, “I am coming again”. May we be looking for that time, when the Lord will fulfil that promise. But until that time, as it says here, “I am with you all the days until the completion of the age”. May we take courage following on from the gospel yesterday as to God's promises, thinking as to what the Lord has promised for us.

May we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

In a meeting for ministry at Sunbury

10th January 2022

FAITH

David A Barlow

Matthew 21: 18-22

Mark 9: 20-24

Luke 9: 13-14

James 1: 2-6 (to "... doubting")

I seek help, beloved, to speak about the matter of faith. I would also like to draw on what we had yesterday. We were looking at the end of Matthew 4, seeing that there was a certain progression of the demonstration of the Lord's healing power. In verse 23 the Lord healed every disease and every bodily weakness, and then after His fame went out in the whole of Syria, in verse 24, they brought to Him all who were ill and suffering under various diseases and pains, persons possessed by demons, lunatics, and paralytics. And He healed them. It is suggestive of an increase in faith on the part of the crowds as to His healing power, and thus an increase in the exercise of that power. I just want to touch on the premium, if I can put it like this, that divine Persons place on faith, and the greatness of this dispensation of faith.

And so we have in this first scripture an illustration of that. We have here the fig-tree in the way, and the Lord came to it, hungry and desiring something from it, and there was "nothing but leaves only". This fig-tree really speaks of God's earthly people, the children of Israel, and how the Lord found them. Those in Jerusalem were going on outwardly, as they would see it, according to the law, with the temple rebuilt such as it was. The Pharisees were abiding by all the laws of Moses, and being particularly zealous in relation to them. But the Lord desired something from them; He desired fruit and He found "nothing but leaves only". And so the word is, "Let there be never more fruit of thee for ever. And the fig-tree was immediately dried up". Think of the disciples wondering at that.

At another time they drew attention to the great stones and buildings of the temple complex, and the Lord says to them "not a stone shall be left upon a stone", Mark 13: 2. Perhaps the disciples thought there was something for the Lord in those buildings - but there was nothing, and they wondered at it. The Lord here does not exactly explain to them why the fig-tree dried up, but instead He brings in the matter of faith: "If ye have faith, and do not doubt, not only shall ye do what is done to the fig-tree". So, we find that faith is superior to all that

has gone before, it is superior to all men's systems, it is superior to anything that man can set up, and it is even superior to the law of old. It is not only just superior, it is far superior, because the Lord goes on to say, "but even if ye should say to this mountain, Be thou taken away and cast into the sea, it shall come to pass". And it comes to pass because of faith. The great obstacles that men find impossible are moved by faith; faith moves mountains! That is what faith can do, and that is what this dispensation has. I am sure the Lord would delight to have us prove Him in this way. Our brother said that the Lord is always with us, and this is true. But how He would delight for us to prove His power and that is what I wanted to draw attention to in these next three scriptures.

In Mark 9, this man by his own confession doubted the Person before him, saying, "if thou couldst". How I know that in my own heart: knowing the condition that I was in, and how far it was from a holy and righteous God, the question comes, could the Lord's work really be sufficient for me? - "If thou couldst": if only He could. But the gospel goes forth that we might come "nothing doubting". And the Lord would work that it might be so. There is no suggestion of being partly saved in the gospel; we come just as we are with all our need, to be saved completely. And the Lord would work to that end, nothing doubting. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ", as the scripture says; "and thou shalt be saved", Acts 16: 31. That is the standard of faith, that we come nothing doubting. And we see how the Lord in His grace brought that man to this point, it was no longer "if thou couldst"; it was, "I believe"; and that is faith, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. What a start that is, what a start we have all had in putting our faith in Jesus. We have come to the Lord and found no place for doubt, we have cast all upon Him and Him alone. If we have come nothing doubting, He in His grace has brought us to that point, and how He values it. I do feel that this man's reply delighted the Lord's heart. The man knew his failure: "I believe, help mine unbelief". This man knew his failure, but he came in dependence. And if there is a sense of doubt rising in my heart in relation to anything here, I must cry to the Lord for help: "help mine unbelief". How he would confirm us, "nothing doubting".

Where we read in Luke 9, I wanted to draw attention to faith in relation to service. The Lord says to the disciples, "Give ye them to eat". If we look at the beginning of the chapter, we see that they had just been given power and authority over all demons and to heal diseases and to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick, and we also see that they had no staff, scrip, bread or money, Luke 9: 2-3. The Lord

speaks of that period later on in the gospel, just before they went to Gethsemane; the Lord spoke to them about that time when He sent them out, and He asked if they lacked anything, "And they said, Nothing", Luke 22: 35. So they had proved the resource of the Lord in their previous experience. Well, now the Lord has asked them again to do something. He has given them something to do, and they immediately look to their own resources, "we have not more than five loaves and two fishes". How much that is like my own heart, beloved: I have proved Him in faith so far, but if the Lord gives me something to do, I find I am insufficient for it; I do not have the resources for it, and so I decide I cannot do it. And that is not relying upon faith. The Lord would have us to trust in Him implicitly. It was not a question of their resources: they would never have been able to feed five thousand by themselves; it was the Lord that was to do it. So it is in relation to service, and in relation to what the Lord would have us to do here; we do not rely on our natural abilities: they would only fail. But if the Lord has given us something to do, He will give us the power with which to accomplish it. It all belongs to Him; so the Lord would have us to move in faith in any service that we carry out, nothing doubting, and thus prove Him in it. We did not read it, but the story goes on as to how the Lord here fills them all, and there are enough fragments left over to fill twelve handbaskets, suggestive of perfect administration, v 17. But that was not really what I wanted to draw attention to; the point is if we are given something to do, the resource is from the Lord. Let us move forward "nothing doubting".

In our final scripture, in the epistle of James, we find we are to count it all joy when we "fall into various temptations, knowing that the proving of your faith works endurance. But let endurance have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing". It is wonderful that God delights to prove His work in faith. And although there are tribulations here, temptations and testing, it is in view of a perfect work, and that perfect work will have its completion. There will be a perfect work presented, secured through faith, in a coming day. But we also have this word, "if any of you lack wisdom". We may find this in the confusion of the time and the difficulty in understanding why certain things are happening, maybe in taking account of the general failure around, or the smallness of the number of those whom we gather with. Perhaps things outwardly do not seem right; things do not seem like they are going as we expect; what are we to do? The scripture says to ask for wisdom. Ask that God might show you what He

is doing, ask in full assurance of faith, “nothing doubting”: “let him ask of God, who gives to all freely and reproaches not”; that is a lovely touch, is it not? He reproaches not; He does not say, 'Well, you should already know, you should already understand what I am doing'. No! He would say to ask freely, “nothing doubting”, and God would give freely. He would answer that request. Wisdom is from God. My mind goes to what we can read in relation to Abraham: God says, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?”, Gen 18: 17. How He would delight to share with us the view of what He is securing, what He is accomplishing, but we are to ask in faith nothing doubting.

It says later on in James, “he that doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed about”, v 6. Perhaps we should take that as a word of warning - how I know it in my own heart. I begin to bring in my own natural thinking into matters and difficulties, and effectively doubt the God who brought me thus far, and thus how unstable I find myself to be. Alas, such a course has been a stumbling block for many, and some who we know have gone away from the testimony because of it. How we pray for them, and we have prayed for them already today. But we are to go forward “nothing doubting” with our eyes upon “the leader and completer of faith” (Heb 12: 2), the blessed Lord Jesus Himself.

May we prove the power of it beloved, for the Lord's name's sake.

At a meeting for ministry at Sunbury

10th January 2022