

# **A WORD IN ITS SEASON**

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## **HOLINESS - 2**

**John 17: 14-20**

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**AMB** We were speaking in the first reading about God's holiness and how, in order that God's holy love should be able to come out to us in blessing, it was necessary that Christ should go the way that He did, in suffering, being forsaken, and being made sin. We were occupied too with the holiness of the Lord Jesus, the One who loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, and upon whom the Holy Spirit was able to descend and to abide. We also spoke about the Holy Spirit coming upon believers at the beginning.

In this reading we might speak about holiness, or sanctification as it is often referred to in scripture, in believers; but in preparation for that, it might be helpful to say that there is a great matter for our souls between the subject that we had before us in the first reading and what we are considering now. I refer to the need for each one of us to make good for ourselves the work of Christ. Reference was made this morning to the shedding of His blood. After He had exhausted the holy wrath of God, Jesus delivered up His spirit, and then His blood was shed. It was precious blood, precious in the sight of God. It spoke of the life of that beloved One in whom God so delighted being given up. That blood was shed so that you and I could lay claim to it and come under the shelter of it. If the Lord will we will speak about that in the preaching of the gospel on Lord's day. It is immensely important that each of us comes under the shelter of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by believing in Him for ourselves. We can only do that individually. The work has been done. The blood has been shed so that you and I can lay claim to its great virtue for ourselves. Just as the children of Israel were told to put that blood on the lintel and the doorposts of their houses in Egypt (Exod 12: 7), so we by believing put the blood on our lintel and our doorposts personally, and God passes over. He said to the Israelites, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you", v 13.

What an absolutely vital matter that is, to put our faith in the blood of Christ! If you have done that, then, praise be His name, God has worked in you in new birth and by giving you the gift of faith so that you have put your faith in Christ and His work. And if you have not yet

done it, dear friend, do it now! Believe in that blessed One, and make the virtue of that blood your own. How infinitely valuable and precious the blood is in the sight of God.

When we become believers, there are certain questions that arise for each of us. If I believe in the Lord Jesus, I will love Him, because He gave Himself for me. Then we learn that the world, which rejected Him and cast Him out and killed Him when He was here, still rejects Him. The world as a system still rejects Christ. And so the question that we as believers in Him and lovers of Him must face is, 'What does it mean to us that the world rejects Him now? And what have I to do with the world?' That is one question to face.

A second question is, 'What do I feel about myself, when I find thoughts arising in my heart that would express themselves, if they could, in the deeds of my body? These are thoughts and deeds which are not consistent with Christ and His death, and with my love for Him. What do I do about that?'. These are significant questions that arise for all believers. To reassure all our hearts, and particularly every young heart here, God has anticipated all of that, and He has made provision that we might be kept from the evil in the world, and that we might be purified from the things that arise in our own hearts.

I think it is important to make the connection between what we were speaking about this morning and what we are going to speak about now. We have to understand - we see it set out where we read in John 17 - that Christ is not of this world. The blessed and glorious system of which He is the Centre, having been made so by the Father, is not of this world. He in glory has set Himself apart for holy purposes: that is, He has sanctified Himself. He has sanctified Himself for believers, so that we might be sanctified for the purposes that God desires for us. By faith in Him, and through attachment to Him and love for Him, we can have the benefit of that sanctifying power of Christ as our Object to keep us in this world. We are not of it, but we are in it; we are not taken out of it. That is what the Lord says: "They are not of the world". Then the Lord speaks about His own being sanctified by the Father's word - "thy word is truth". We might get help as we speak about that, the sanctifying effect of the word.

Then where we read in Peter's epistle, there is reference to sanctification of the Spirit. That is the effect produced, sanctification of the Spirit operating in the heart of the believer. Then there is a different

word used where we read in Corinthians and in John and that is purifying. Sanctification is presented in the scriptures that we read in John and Peter as being undertaken by the Lord Jesus Himself and by the Father through His word, and by the Holy Spirit, and we come into the benefit of it. Purifying is something that is presented in the scriptures we read as something that we are responsible to do ourselves. We might get help to open these matters up.

**WMP** Is it important for anyone who turns in faith to Christ and gets the gain of that finished work that you have spoken of, to understand that they have a new standing before God? I wondered if it might just help in seeing the rest of what follows, that my standing before God has changed because of that.

**AMB** When we put our faith in Christ, we are redeemed, and that means that we do not belong to ourselves any more, because we acknowledge that Christ paid a price for us, and He bought us. He bought us for Himself, and for His Father. So we do not belong to ourselves, and it is righteous for me to acknowledge that claim that my Saviour has over me. I do not belong to the world and I do not belong to myself: I belong to my Redeemer. That is part of our new standing. But then it goes beyond that, does it not? The believer in Christ is regarded by God as being 'in Christ'. Could you say something for our help about that?

**WMP** Well, there is much that is opened up for us in the epistles in relation to that, but my simple thought was that as I actually grasp that in my own soul it changes everything; it changes my outlook; it changes my disposition.

**AMB** It is my whole life, is it not? Instead of my life having one source, which is in my own will, it has a different source altogether which is in Christ. It is in another Man in the glory!

**DCW** "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren", Heb 2: 11. So it is a challenge to each one of us whether we are doing something that would bring shame to the name of Christ or to our brethren.

**AMB** In that scripture, the footnote to the word sanctified says, 'simply the character of the persons, without reference to done or doing'. Now if we put our faith in Christ we are "all of one" with that One who is the Sanctifier. In God's sight that is the fact. Would you go with

that?

**DCW** Yes. So that was true at the outset. I was thinking as we were speaking this morning of the incoming of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire. That never needed to apply to the Lord, did it? There was nothing there that marred or hindered the Spirit's dwelling upon Him.

**AMB** There was that perfect complacency that we were speaking about.

**NJH** "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you", John 14: 20. In other words, the conscious knowledge of these things is the way to sanctification and holiness.

**AMB** Yes, the way that it is worked out in us is by having Christ as the Object for our hearts' affections, the Object of our lives. The word "know" that you are referring to in John 14 could only be by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**NJH** "In that day" is the Spirit's day. I was thinking that righteousness is by faith, but holiness is brought about by affection; it is love.

**AMB** We spoke this morning about God's holiness: it is a matter of His love. If sanctification and holiness (they are in many cases the same original word, I think) are to be worked out in us then it absolutely requires the activity of the Holy Spirit to move the affections of the believer.

**JL** A good deal was said in the first reading about character according to God, His own character, and the character of His love. Is the subject now equally one of character formed in the believer? It has to be formed in us, but is that what makes the believer unsuited to this world? John in his first epistle tells us what the character of the world is, and shows it is inconsistent with the Father. It would be equally inconsistent for the believer to find his home there.

**AMB** That is absolutely right, and while we do not want to be occupied with the world, it is right for us to remind one another that the world as a system systematically rejects Christ and will not have Him. It is active rejection of all that Christ is and all that He stands for, and therefore the world is against the Father too. But Christ is the One who stands in total contrast, "I am not of the world". The question arises, what am I of? And what we are of really characterises us, does it not?

**JL** Yes; you said rightly that what marked Christ in the perfection of

His holiness as Man was inherently there and thus was expressed, but what is now secured in the believer, bringing such a person into correspondence with Christ, is the work of God forming us in love.

**AMB** There is a great change. Before we were converted, we were our own object. Now I have come to Christ, I acknowledge that in His love for me He laid down His life for me, paid that price by His redeeming blood. Who do I belong to? I belong to Him! Who do I want to please? I want to please Him! And who do I want to be like? I want to be like Him!

**JRW** The Lord refers to His Father as “Holy Father”, v 11. He says, “keep them in thy name which thou hast given me”, and what He goes on to say seems to flow from that. Does that link with your impression as to holiness?

**AMB** Yes it does. Perhaps we should have started to read in v 11 because that is where Christ really begins to speak about what is going to be. The Lord begins to speak about a system to which the Holy Father gives character. It is not in this world, or connected with this world at all, it is heavenly, and the Father gives character to it, and the Lord is gathering material for that system.

**JRW** Would that my heart laid hold of it more! He says, “these are in the world” which from one standpoint is an awful place to be, most unholy, an ungodly place. Yet the answer to it is to be kept in the name of the Holy Father, and all that is necessary has been done, “I sanctify myself for them”.

**AMB** I am glad that you bring in the Holy Father's name. There is a very blessed and powerful relationship expressed there. Believers are able to speak to God as our Father, and He is the Holy Father; what resource there is. The position of the believer not finding a place in the world, and feeling that Christ was rejected here, is all anticipated by the Lord when He is speaking to the Father.

**GBG** What is involved in the Lord sanctifying Himself for us?

**AMB** He was about to go on high and there He sets Himself apart in activity before the Father, for the preservation of believers in His priestly intercession and grace. I would be glad of what you say.

**GBG** Does He set forth in Himself God's mind for us? “That they also may be sanctified by truth”: that is the truth that is in Himself. The

exercise is not exactly to be occupied with my holiness (or lack of it); that leads to self-occupation. "I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth". What you are saying is very exercising, but I do not think it is a healthy thing to be occupied with my state or the moral features in myself.

**AMB** That is right. Sanctification for the believer is the fruit of occupation with Christ, and by occupation we mean our affections and our minds being taken up with Him, concentrated on Him. As we are so, we will be helped by the Holy Spirit.

**GBG** That leads to exercise.

**AMB** Mr Stoney said it was not merely the expulsive power of a new affection, but of a new Person, that is, Christ, JBS vol 6 p353. Things that are not according to the One we love will be put in their place - and that is outside altogether - if our hearts and our minds are occupied with the Lord Jesus in glory.

**TRC** Is that what occupied the Ethiopian eunuch? It was affection for the Man that had gone that way: "Behold water; what hinders my being baptised?", Acts 8: 36. He quickly associated himself with a Man that had gone out of sight; the world had no attraction for him therefore.

**AMB** They had just come to that passage, "his life is taken from the earth", and the man over all the treasure of Candace wanted to identify himself with a Man whose life was taken from the earth. Really the world did not mean anything to him any more. His interest is taken up with Another. He says, "concerning whom does the prophet say this? of himself or of some other?". He was feeling after this One! And when the gospel was preached he accepted it and the effect was immediate, v 27-36. That is a fine illustration.

**JCG** Christ's high priestly service is to intercede. He and the Father are together in relation to bringing about holiness practically amongst the saints, would you say?

**AMB** Yes. I have a lot to learn about the activities of the Lord Jesus as Priest. We have typical teaching in the Old Testament which is very attractive. He is the One who now intercedes in the presence of the Father, and that is to maintain us in this condition of suitability for the Father's presence.

**JCG** While that is proceeding in heaven for the benefit of the saints,

the Holy Spirit is receiving communications in view of making His priestly activity good in our souls in a spiritual way.

**AMB** The Holy Spirit is in so many ways essential to the believer. We spoke about the challenge of what is around us in the world and the challenge of what we find within. We need to be occupied with Christ: having Him as our Object is the solution, but we cannot do that without the help of the Spirit. Another question that arises in the mind of any exercised believer is, 'How am I to be maintained in faithfulness to the Lord Jesus in this scene of His absence, and how am I to be maintained in what is suitable to Him?', The answer is, by the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling us.

**JCG** Do you think too that the Spirit's guiding - He is guiding us into all the truth (John 16: 13) - bears on this matter of being sanctified by truth? The idea of the truth becomes a standard for the believer, does it?

**AMB** Yes; what a preservative the truth is! It preserves us from what is around, and it preserves us from what is within. This is the living truth, as has already been said, in Christ. We have the record of it on the page of scripture, and we thank God for that. Our way into it is through the reading and understanding of scripture, but the truth is living in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**DCB** Would you say more about the fact that this is a request of the Lord to the Father, and He is saying to the Father, "Sanctify them by the truth"?

**AMB** You get the impression of divine resources, and of divine Persons working together as to this. The Lord speaks of Himself, sanctifying "myself for them" and He appeals to the Father to "Sanctify them by the truth". Although it is not spoken of here, we know the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, so that the whole resources of the Godhead are towards the believer! It is good also to remember v 20: "And I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on me through their word". John 17 is a most wonderful chapter, and in v 20 you and I are brought right into it. Here, immediately before the Lord Jesus was going on to His suffering and death, He was thinking of us and He was speaking to the Father about us and our sanctification in the time after He had been glorified and the Spirit had come.

**DCB** Sanctification involves a setting apart for what is holy, and you see how the Father would distinguish those who in one sense Christ

has already sanctified, sanctified by His work. The Father is setting them apart so that they are to be suitable for Him and able also to provide a suitable answer to Christ.

**AMB** It is very helpful to point out that the Lord, in asking the Father to sanctify His own and all those that believe upon Him “through their word”, had in mind the securing of a great sanctified company for the Father, to approach and to enter in, and to provide a response for the Father Himself. It is only a sanctified company that can respond to the “Holy Father”, and that was what was in the Lord's mind here.

**DCW** So would “the washing of water by the word”, (Eph 5: 26), which is a constant service of the Lord, come in here?

**AMB** That is in connection with the assembly itself, sanctifying and purifying it by “washing of water by the word”. What is in mind there is the removal of any defilement that might be picked up in the journey through the world, so that the assembly is without spot and wholly suitable for Him.

**DCW** The priests in the old dispensation had to purify themselves by washing before they could enter into the service. So it is encouraging that we are brought in: “those who believe on me through their word”. We could think of Peter in his second epistle speaking of those who “have received like precious faith with us”, chap 1: 1.

**AMB** So God has the highest things in mind for us. He desires our being made holy, our sanctification, so that He can have us for Himself in His presence.

**PAG** Is this word, “Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth”, consequent on what the Lord says in John 14, “I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive”, v 16,17? The Lord was not of the world but the Spirit is not of the world either and if He was sanctified because of who He was, we are sanctified because the Spirit of truth is here.

**AMB** That would connect with what we were speaking of this morning as to that name or title of the Spirit as the Holy Spirit. The reception of the Holy Spirit is so fundamentally important to Christianity. Without the Holy Spirit there would be no Christianity, and Christianity is what answers to God. What has been established here as a result of Christ's work, and is maintained by the power and service of the Holy Spirit, is

what is according to God. It is the product of divine counsel and purpose. The Spirit must be at the heart of it, maintaining what is according to God in holiness. Would you go with that?

**PAG** Yes. It follows from what you said earlier: we are reckoned righteous by faith in Christ's blood, we are constituted righteous by the gift of the Spirit, but then we are sanctified, we are set apart. We come to that in Romans 8; "the Spirit life on account of righteousness", (v 10); our life now comes from a different source altogether, a sanctified source.

**AMB** It is fine to see that we as believers in the Lord Jesus derive our lives from a different source, and it is a sanctified source. The source is Christ in heaven, but the power for it is the Holy Spirit.

**NJH** Does the Father then see the saints in Christ where He is?

**AMB** Yes, I believe that.

**NJH** The greatness and the wealth of what has just been said lays hold of you. It is righteous and due to God that when He sees One sanctified for the saints, He sees them in that One.

**AMB** That is the truth, and the truth itself is sanctifying. It is important for us to get the truth of that into our souls, that when the Father looks on me or you, He sees Christ, He sees us as being in Christ. We might not always be true to that place in our behaviour, but that is what God sees.

**RT** When the high priest went in he did not go in alone, did he? He took the saints in on his breast. You get the impression that our place is there already, and it helps us to walk here in the light of that, does it not?

**AMB** It is good to grasp the thoughts of God as they have been established in Christ, and to know the truth of them as brought to us by the Holy Spirit. The truth is made real to us, and it is beyond failure. There is nothing that can get in the way of the fact that I, as one of the saints, am carried by Christ in the presence of the Father.

**RT** Mr James Taylor says that what we see in the Hebrew bondman: "I love my master, my wife, and my children" (Exod 21: 5), underlies the priesthood and becomes the great Priest later on in that book, JT vol 88 page 216-7! We see typically that Christ takes us in with Him. If that laid hold on us it would bring out a different character.

**AMB** It is good to go over that: the true Hebrew bondman, who said, "I

love my master, my wife, and my children” is in character with the high priest in the same book. The names on the breastplate speak of the high priest carrying the saints in before God in his love. That is what the saints are in the sight of God and in the affections of the Lord Jesus.

**RT** Part of the Spirit's service is to make us conscious of what we are and thus He helps us to continue.

**AMB** Yes. God always works at that level, does He not? We do not, but He does! And He never looks for anything from us that He does not also give us the power to fulfil, and that power is in the Holy Spirit. So what you are saying is true, and it is true of us, but also there is the power for it to be true *in* us.

**RJF** Do you think we need to remember that sanctification has a purpose? It is not an abstract process. It is brought out in this chapter, “that they may be all one” (v 21), “that they also may be one in us”, “that they may be one, as we are one” (v 22), and then, “that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory”, v 24.

**AMB** Yes, sanctification is a means to an end and the end is glorious! And the final end is saints with Christ in the presence of the Father, in glory. And we have the foretaste of that at the present time. As sanctified we can be taken there. That is the objective, the end in view.

**RHB** When the Lord says here, “They are not of the world, as I am not of the world”, is that standing or state?

**AMB** Standing and state are words used often by Mr Raven in his ministry. Are you using the idea of standing to mean the position of saints in God's view?

**RHB** Yes; you have been speaking of both, have you not? You were speaking of the way that God views every believer as in Christ, but then in your opening remarks you spoke of the side of responsibility, in relation to purifying ourselves. I want to learn more about what is involved in that verse, when the Lord is speaking to the Father: “They are not of the world, as I am not of the world”. There are many believers who are the Lord's but they are worldly, speaking simply; that is the sad fact. Is this verse referring to what they are in God's sight as in Christ, or is it referring to what was substantially seen in these men? Probably in the case of the men it directly refers to there was not any difference because they were substantially seen to be not of the world, and they suffered at the world's hands because of it.

**AMB** Yes, they were in the good of the Lord's ministry personally and so it was both God's view of them, and what they were. Truly they could not have anything to do with the world that was rejecting Christ, and they had seen Him rejected. The reassurance for us is that this is indeed how God views every true believer - every one who believes in their heart and has received the Holy Spirit. So it is a matter of standing, what is true of us; but our desire surely as loving Christ and being occupied with Him, would be that this would also be our practical state; it would be our practical moral condition. We would feel deeply the sorrow of the fact that the world has rejected Christ and will have nothing to do with Him. What can I have to do with the world in the sense of being of it? We have to go through it, we have to do with it in that sense, but my resource is not in the world.

**RHB** And it says, "who gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world", Gal 1: 4. The forgiveness of sins is vitally important, but it is a means to an end. It has in mind our emancipation not only from sin, but from Satan and from Satan's system.

**AMB** It is to make us Christ's. Who do we belong to? It is a question that we can all challenge ourselves with.

**JRW** I was wondering whether we should seek to identify something in ourselves that is not of the world. The Lord Jesus says, "I am not of the world": there is something absolute about that. But is there something in me that can be identified as being not of the world? John says in his epistle that what is of God "cannot sin" (1 John 3: 9), for instance. There is something of God's work that can be identified in himself or herself by the believer. John says, "We know that every one begotten of God does not sin", chap 5: 18. There is something in me that is not of the world, but the question is how far that is in evidence.

**AMB** Every one who knows Christ as Saviour can be reassured that it was God's work, the gift of faith, that led me to believe - it was God's gift, "so that no flesh might boast before God", 1 Cor 1: 29. So there is what is of God in every true believer. Now the reception of the Holy Spirit is vital to strengthen that bridgehead that God has established in the soul of the believer and we need to sow to the Spirit. That means making way for Him in our hearts and in our lives, because where our hearts are, that is where our lives will be. We can reassure one another that there is a true work of God in every one who believes. The Holy Spirit is

available to those that want Him and want to obey Him, to strengthen that work of God and help it to grow.

**NCMcK** I was thinking about the Lord's words, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me". What has been said about the Lord's present position is helpful. While the Lord was here He was given that name, the Father's name, and He appreciated it, He valued it, He held it, and it was a treasure for Him. Is that not something that we ought to be maintained in, the name of the Father, all that the Father is, and would that not help us in maintaining this line of sanctification?

**AMB** Yes. The Lord loved to make that name known. He spoke about His Father, and then on the morning of resurrection He sent that message to His own: "I ascend to my Father and your Father", John 20: 17. You are referring to the sanctifying effect of the Father's name. It is a name of relationship, a name of grace; it is also a name of derivation, who are we derived from, "the Father"; what a name that is, what dignity that brings in for a believer here! It lifts us out of this world, and reminds us that we belong to something that is infinitely greater.

**PM** These expressions "of the world", and "of the Father", would exercise us as to our origin, would they? The believer's origin is not of the world; we are of God. Has the Spirit come that not only should the origin be known by us, but that the character that is in keeping with the origin might be seen?

**AMB** We should hold on to that: it is the kind of thing that I would like to write down. As believers we are "of the Father" and not "of the world". A great service of the Holy Spirit is to help us to be true here to the work of God in us, to be true to that origin which is immensely dignified and elevated; it is a heavenly origin. There are immense things in mind for those who are "of the Father". God has wonderful blessings in mind, and that should energise us, and lead us to want to know more of them. It is the Holy Spirit that helps us in that.

**PJW** Is it illustrated in Gideon? He said, "What sort of men were they ... ?", and he was answered, "each one resembled the sons of a king", Judg 8: 18. Gideon said, "They were my brethren, the sons of my mother", v 19. I wondered if that could be said to illustrate the side of origin and then the side of what is worked out.

**AMB** And there is affection involved. Gideon spoke with affection in

that passage, so we can think of the Lord Jesus thinking and speaking with affection of those whom He has secured, those who have put their faith in Him. Could we also think of what the Lord says earlier on in this book, that “No one can come to me except the Father ... draw him”, chap 6: 44? What a matter that is! Everyone here that has put their faith in Christ has done so because the Father drew us to Jesus, and the Father and the Son are working together for our blessing. How much we owe! And we belong to the Father. We also belong to the Lord: He has rights in redemption. It is wonderful by the Spirit to get the reality of these things in our souls.

**DCW** So the making known of the Father's name had something in view, had it not? “That the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them”, chap 17: 26.

**AMB** Yes; there is tremendous blessing in view. Being in the good of the sanctifying work of Christ and the sanctifying activities of the Holy Spirit enables us to enjoy the blessings that you are drawing attention to.

**DCW** We could not enjoy them in any other way. The natural mind of man cannot enjoy the things of God. It can know nothing about the love of God, nothing about forgiveness, sanctification, justification: all of those things are foreign terms.

**AMB** Yes. We want to make sure that things are within the grasp of young believers here. If the heavenly blessings that the brethren speak about are not yet clear to us, then we can ask. One of the great services of the Holy Spirit is to bring spiritual things to the minds of those whom He indwells; He brings truth and the words of the Lord into our minds. He also helps us to appreciate and enjoy the blessings that are in mind for us. We can ask the Spirit to help us in this.

**DCW** Does the Spirit sometimes brings back to us things that we have missed? We can see evidence of that for example in John's gospel; what was seen in a certain way at one time was seen very differently in the time of the Holy Spirit.

**AMB** What Peter recalled of the holy mountain afterwards (2 Pet 1: 17, 18), is an example of that.

**PAG** In John chapter 1 it says, “He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God”, v 11, 12. That relates to the matter of origin

that we have been speaking of, but it says in chapter 7, “But this he said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified”, v 39. Receiving the Spirit is essential to the formation of the character that we have been speaking about, but it is the character of the Man where He is; Jesus is glorified.

**AMB** That is very important. The Spirit would always point us to Jesus currently, that is, in His present position of glory, and what He is doing in glory. He is maintaining the saints before the face of the Father, and He is singing in the midst of the assembly. These are the things that Christ is occupied with now.

**JCG** What is characteristic is very important; it is the practical effect of walking in the truth before God. It is basic Roman teaching: “if Christ be in you, the body is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit life on account of righteousness”, chap 8: 10. It is one thing to be in Christ, that is our standing before God as has been said already, but 'Christ in you' is what the Father sees. We were remarking the other Lord's day that that is what He brings to the Father: 'Christ in you' is what He presents to the Father.

**AMB** So that Christ formed in us is a different kind of Man altogether; it is a “new man” in the saints, by the Holy Spirit. The question is whether I am with the Holy Spirit in the work that He is doing within me, and can identify His work there, and give place to it.

We should touch on these other scriptures that are before us. We have spoken of the sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit. It is referred to where we read in the first two verses of the first epistle of Peter. Writing to the saints, he addresses them as sojourners, and “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”. The saints - we among them - were in the mind of God beforehand; that is what “elect” means. Then the practical result comes by “sanctification of the Spirit”. There is a footnote to that: '*hagiasmos*', referring to footnote *i* to Romans 1: 4: 'the practical effect produced, the character in activity, translated ... sanctification in ... 1 Pet 1: 2'. The Jews had been dispersed. But those among them who were sanctified by the Spirit would stand out; they were different people; their manner of life was different. The footnote refers to that: 'the character in activity'. The sanctification of the Spirit came into expression in these saints. In these first verses the apostle does not expand on the way in which

sanctification came into expression, but he does in the rest of the epistle. He says of these dear believers that they were linked up with Christ in glory: “whom, having not seen, ye love; on whom though not now looking, but believing, ye exult with joy unspeakable and filled with the glory”, chap 1: 8.

**NCMcK** Are persons who receive the Spirit sanctified persons?

**AMB** Yes; the Spirit comes into hearts that are obedient to Christ, to repentant hearts, accepting hearts, and hearts that have the desire to receive the Spirit. The Lord refers to the Father giving the Spirit to those that ask Him, (Luke 11: 13), but also obedience comes into it (Acts 5: 32); so there is a basic sanctification in such hearts. The Spirit comes in in His power to strengthen, reinforce and expand the initial work in the believer's soul.

**NCMcK** I am glad of help. It seems the Spirit links on with and supports what has been set apart in the work of Christ in the believer, the initial work of God. It says as to the Ephesians, “having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”, chap 1: 13. It is consequent on them receiving the word of truth, receiving salvation, and then as being sanctified in that way they receive the Holy Spirit.

**AMB** Yes; receiving the Spirit is consequent upon believing and being subject. Another point comes out from what you say, and that is that we do not get the Holy Spirit to do things for us that we ought to do ourselves. We come under the sound of the gospel as responsible persons; we place our faith in Christ, we take for ourselves the benefit of His shed blood: we are responsible to the One that owns us. But at the same time we could not fulfil that responsibility properly if we did not have the Spirit to help us.

**RT** One of the names of the Spirit is “the Comforter”. Is that not what helps us to establish things in our souls, that there is Somebody who takes our position up and He comforts us?

**AMB** Very good. There is a very close identification between the Spirit and the believer, expressed in the phrase “dwells in”, Rom 9: 11. As well as bringing in comfort in our walk here He also takes up our cause; that is what the translator explains in using that word you refer to.

**RT** So if we knew something of that comfort it would establish us and lead us into the full enjoyment of what we are in Christ.

**AMB** Do you think the objective of the Spirit's service at the moment is to make real and living to us that link that we have with Christ in glory, so that we derive our life from Him, in the power of the Spirit?

**JL** Sometimes sanctification is viewed as a process, is it not? But for the moment does "sanctification of the Spirit" here correspond with the election?

**AMB** Do you mean what is in God's heart for us?

**JL** I think it is partly why the expression "according to" is included in the whole sentence, as if to show that for the moment this is how God views us - as entirely set apart through the dignity and fullness of the Holy Spirit's service, in complete answer to God's thoughts in purpose in relation to election.

**AMB** So the thoughts of "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit" are joined together. Is that what you are bringing out? There is power in the Spirit as received in the believer to bring us into conformity with God's thoughts, and power in Him for us to enjoy these thoughts fully. There is another question and that is how much room we give the Holy Spirit, and the answer to that must be more and more, and that is the process to which you referred also.

**WMP** It is an interesting injunction then to Timothy, "Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit", 2 Tim 1: 14. You said that the Holy Spirit does not do things for us; so we have to "Keep by the Holy Spirit"; it is communion, is it?

**AMB** So in a reverent sense, we have to use the Holy Spirit: we have recourse to Him.

As you speak about that, it may bring us on to these scriptures as to purification. The Spirit is the Friend of the believer. We have been reminded that He is the Comforter, conveying the thought of Friend. He is near to us; He is within us, and He could not be nearer than that. If things arise affecting our moral state, things in our lives and in our minds and hearts that we know are not right, we are able to turn to the Spirit because He is so near. Speaking personally and practically, if temptations arise (and they arise in the hearts of everyone), the Spirit is the answer. That is a practical matter. It is very important because we

are responsible to keep ourselves pure and to purify ourselves.

**NJH** What is the difference between 'flesh' and 'spirit' when it says, "every pollution of flesh, and spirit".

**AMB** I suppose pollution of flesh would be carnal things, and fleshly temptations; we might be tempted to do things that are impure. But pollution of spirit would lead away from fervent and pure love for Christ in our spirits, as a result of things that affect our spirits. What would you say?

**NJH** What relates to our spirits might be the thing we particularly have to watch. We might have a judgment of what is outward, the flesh and what is obviously polluted, but pollution of spirit is something to be warned as to; it is an inward matter.

**AMB** Yes, indeed! It would be anything that distracts or takes us away from fervent love for and devotion to Christ.

**BWL** In the cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14 there is oil put on the right ear and the right hand and the great toe of the right foot; the blood is there and then the oil is put on the blood, v 25, 26. Then there is a reference to the remainder of the oil: "And the remainder of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put upon the head of him that is to be cleansed", v 29. Would that link with what our brother has just asked? The right hand and the right foot and the right ear suggests the Spirit's activities in relation to what we do, where we go, and what we hear, which is perhaps outward; but when it comes to the head, does that really involve the mind?

**AMB** Yes, and that relates to our spirits. For some of us, pollution of flesh may be the thing that would divert us from devotion to Christ; but for others it may be music, for example. That could be a pollution of spirit. There are certain things that appeal to your mind or your spirit, and you could get enthusiastic about them, but if Christ is not the origin of them we cannot find our lives in them. Therefore we have to purify ourselves from such things.

**JTB** Does the Spirit bearing "witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Rom 8: 16), suggest that the Spirit's service helps to maintain us at the level of what befits children of God?

**AMB** Yes, and the spirit of the believer is the avenue that the Holy Spirit uses. Now the spirit and the mind are very closely related; so

would you encourage us to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, Eph 4: 23? It is an interesting expression, and if we make way for Him, the Holy Spirit would maintain us in being renewed in the spirit of our mind.

**JTB** The Spirit would certainly help us control what occupies our mind, would He not? Bearing on all this is the fact that believers are not of this world. It suggests we are citizens of another world. Is that what should help us and galvanise us in this exercise, do you think? Is it almost a Colossian touch, “have your mind on the things that are above”, (chap 3: 2), and “your life is hid with the Christ in God”, v 3.

**AMB** That is helpful. We have been speaking about derivation, which is where we are derived from morally and spiritually. We belong to where we are derived from, that is, God's world, which is so much greater than any of the poor things that go on down here. They are all marked by corruption anyway and they will go on to worse things, they will eventually go on to destruction, but the world that God has in mind for us is eternal. Who is at the centre of it? It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

**APG** It says, “Having therefore these promises”. Does that refer to the previous verse, “I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters”, chap 6: 17, 18? That is very fine! Being separate from the world might seem to bring a disadvantage, but we can count on the Father for support, can we not?

**AMB** Yes. There are infinitely greater things in mind for us, that are spoken of as the things “which God has prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor 2: 9), and which are brought to us by the Spirit. These last few remarks have brought out that the enjoyment of the real and tangible blessings that God has in mind for us puts everything else in the shade! That is a great motivation in keeping ourselves pure, because otherwise we will not enjoy what God has in mind for us. What is in God's mind for us is that we should enjoy unpoluted the blessings that He has prepared for us.

**JAB** I wonder if what you have just said is key to what the translator's note in Romans 1 says, 'the practical effect produced'. If I am in any way in the enjoyment of communion and then I do something unbecoming, or read something that is polluting, then the 'practical effect' for the moment is lost to me, and I should feel that. So that I might go through a day feeling a bit miserable inside because I am not in the good of what we are speaking about: that in itself is a moral

lesson. It is striking that even sanctification of the Spirit in the previous scripture is 'the practical effect produced'. So that the Spirit's work in sanctification comes out in how I dress, and how I am, what possessions I have and how I use them. You can see in these things 'the practical effect produced', can you not?

**AMB** What is according to God - which is what we have been speaking about as to holiness - when it is worked out in the believer produces a wholly different life. That is our inward life, and the outward expression of it, including our associations and the company we keep and how we spend our time, are 'the practical effect produced'. The challenge for me is whether 'the practical effect produced' in me is a true testimony to what God has done.

**JAB** And we have a Model, do we not, "even as *he* is pure"? I used to read that verse and wonder how that could be possible, that I could purify myself "even as *he* is pure". But the meaning is that we have Jesus before us as the Model, do we not?

**AMB** Yes, I am glad you bring us to 1 John 3. What you say also links with a comment made earlier as to Christ being before us as our objective, thus delivering us from occupation with ourselves and our failures. What John in his epistle refers to is the purifying effect of the hope of seeing Him: "we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him". The apostle John is speaking about the coming of the Lord here, including the rapture of the saints. "We know that if it is manifested" - this is the 'if' of consequence and not of doubt - "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". What an occupation that is for believers who have given their hearts to Christ and desire to be here for Him. We have the hope, and therefore the certainty, of seeing Him as He is and being made like Him: "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"! And then the apostle adds that, if you have that hope in Jesus, in *Him*, then you will have the power to purify yourself according to that standard - "even as *he* is pure".

**GBG** This exercise of purifying ourselves will only cease when we do "see him as he is".

**AMB** We will not need to be sanctified in heaven, because there will be nothing to spoil or corrupt there! The words sanctification and purification imply that there is a counter case, something else is active that is contrary to what is pure and what is sanctified. But in heaven that will not be so. So that this is a current exercise.

**GBG** It is an exercise as long as you are here. Every feature of the flesh is unholy. We might think some features are a bit better, but every feature of the flesh is unholy.

**AMB** That is necessary instruction. We are not exactly occupied with the flesh, but we must accept the truth of what you have just said. When we are younger especially, we may spend quite a lot of time and effort looking for good in ourselves. We will not find it after the flesh or nature. We also look for good in one another. Now it is commendable to look for the product of the Spirit's work in each other. But a word of warning: let us not confuse natural ability or amiable features in people with the product of sanctification and purification that we have been speaking of

**RHB** It is not exactly here responsibility; it is more consequence; "every one that has this hope in him purifies himself". Is one effect of the sanctification of the Spirit, that the Spirit keeps the coming of the Lord before us as a hope? In much of professing Christendom that hope has vanished, and the consequence is a worldly Christianity, but the expectation of the coming of the Lord and its imminence has its own purifying effect, does it not?

**AMB** Yes. You are describing purifying ourselves as a consequence of having a living hope in the coming of the Lord. No doubt in practice that would involve exercise, but the apostle is asserting that 'purifying ourselves' is a moral consequence of expecting the imminent return of the Lord and looking forward to that keenly and affectionately; "we shall see him as he is" - the glorified Man! We shall be like Him when we see Him and are with Him. The period of purification and sanctification will be complete, and we shall be forever with the Lord. And because we will be like Him we will be holy; that is what the saints will be. The Lord's saints are holy; He will "come amidst his holy myriads", Jude 14. What a prospect that is! And what a contrast to this poor world. It would keep our hearts attached to Him, do you think?

**RHB** He will not only be glorified personally but He is going "to be glorified in His saints, and wondered at in all that have believed", 2 Thess 1: 10.

**DCW** Something of that must have come into expression at Antioch where the disciples were first called Christians, Acts 11: 26. They did not call themselves that, but something was seen in them which was reflective of the Lord Himself.

**AMB** It would be a great thing if that could be said about me: 'Yes, he is a Christian'! Do you think that is a working out of 'the practical effect produced' of sanctification?

**DCW** It is important to be disciples in all this; it involves not only instruction, but also subjection.

**AMB** And that would bring about conformity, likeness to Him.

## **Glasgow 3 Day Meetings**

**10<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

### **Key to initials:**

A M Brown, Grangemouth; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown, Edinburgh; R H Brown, East Finchley; T R Campbell, Glasgow; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury; A P Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee; J C Gray, Grangemouth; P A Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; J Laurie, Brechin; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; N C McKay, Glasgow; P Martin, Colchester; W M Patterson, Glasgow; R Taylor, Kirkcaldy; D C White, Sidcup; J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone; P J Walkinshaw, Strood

## **DIVINE WILL**

**Andrew E Mutton**

**Matthew 6: 9-10**

**Hebrews 10: 35-37**

**Ephesians 6: 5-7**

I would just like to say a brief word as to divine will. I was encouraged by what our brother who has already spoken said as to that which God looks for in a household. Maybe the primary bearing of this occasion is to encourage our brother and sister in these things, and I trust that will be so, but it is also that all of us may be encouraged with them in respect to what is referred to in these scriptures as the will of God: the will of God which is based on something so stable that it will never for eternity be shaken; the will of God that the Lord Jesus places here in this moment where He is teaching his own to pray right in the centre. He says, "let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth", the will of God being done upon the earth as it is in heaven.

Our brother has spoken about what proceeds in our households, and how they are to be held for God, and I am encouraged by what he has said, the will of God being done upon the earth as it is in heaven. What a standard, beloved brethren: what a standard that is! And the more I have thought over this scripture, the more I have recognised how far short I fall of that. How is the will of God made known in heaven? How is it being carried out? How is it being seen in heaven at the present time? I cannot give an exposition as to that, but what I can see is that there is an area where nothing, nothing at all, is out of accord with God's own will. What He desires, what He wants for His own heart, what He wants for us, what He wants in terms of what responds to Him, what glorifies Him: all is the will of God. And Jesus says here as He teaches them to pray, "let thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth". Heaven comes first in this account: "as in heaven". May we all in our own lives and in our households - and our brother and sister setting out on married life - seek to find what it is that proceeds in heaven, seeing that God is looking for a correspondence to this will here on the earth. There will be a time, of course, when all will be in accord. There will be a time when God will be all in all. I think that probably sets the standard for our households and our lives, that the will of God is everything - really everything - to us.

In the second scripture we read in Hebrews, we find that the word is set for a time when endurance is needed, and when times are difficult. I am aware that we meet today, as our brother said in his prayer earlier, when circumstances maybe appear very difficult. There are things upon the hearts of the brethren, sorrows and difficulties, whether personal, household, or testimonially; things that are difficult. The writer says here, "Cast not away therefore your confidence". Do not cast it away. Why? Why can we still have confidence, beloved brethren, at the present time? Why can we encourage and set a young husband and wife on their pathway with confidence and with certainty? Because the will of God does not change. And the will of God is (and I suppose we look at it as the working out of His purpose) that there should be a man and a wife. There will be a Man in heaven who has a wife. And this marriage today speaks to us of that. Now that is no less a standard than the will of God; it is no less a standard. Maybe we feel humbled, and slow in even speaking about it when we realise how far short we come, but he says here, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense". Whether it be in matters of our households, or whether it be in the sorrows that bear upon us, there is recompense from the One whose will is to be done. He says, "that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise".

We have spoken about Abraham; he was to receive the promise, the will of God having been done. Will we overcome in the strifes that are referred to earlier on, and the afflictions, the prisons, and the plundering of goods? What is the result of that? If the will of God is done you receive the promise. He goes on to say a little after that what may be part of that promise is. Part of that promise is that in a very little while, "he that comes **will** come, and will not delay". I think that doing the will of God hastens that day in our hearts and affections, as we seek to find out and work out what is the will of God for us. We have been very blessed in Witney that we have had several young households set up recently: set for the testimony of the Lord. And I might say simply, the pathway for our brother and sister will not be exactly the same as the pathway for the other households in the company. What they have to do is to seek to find the will of the Lord in *their* marriage, and in *their* household, and in *their* company, as we all do. If the will of the Lord is done, "having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise".

And finally I just touch on the reference in Ephesians. You might say the will of God, as in Hebrews, is quite broad and the thought of the promise goes far wider than I have just touched upon. But here

there is a depth to the will of God that reaches to the soul, the spiritual depth of those who do the will of God: “doing the will of God from the soul, serving with good will as to the Lord”. I would leave with each one of us: How deep does my understanding and desire to do the will of God go into my soul?. Maybe I know the right thing to do or say, and it might be the right thing according to God, but do I understand and know His will - His will for me today? You might ask this about the circumstances in this company here right now - our sister's grandfather having been taken and to be buried next week. I cannot imagine that there is anyone in the room who would have chosen the circumstances of today or this week for this occasion. However it says here, “doing the will of God from the soul”. None of us would say that God makes a mistake. All that has happened has been in His will and in His ways and, therefore, it is up to us; and I would especially commit it to our young couple, to find in the exigencies of life and in the way that God leads us, what is His will, and do it; do it from our souls, and it will be of the greatest blessing for us and the greatest glory to God.

For His Name's sake.

**At a marriage meeting in Grangemouth**

**3<sup>rd</sup> August 2018**

## **“PRESENT WITH THE LORD”**

**Roland H Brown**

**Hebrews 9: 24-28**

We are gathered here this afternoon to bury the body of one that most of us have known and loved, one who will be much missed, particularly by his family, and of which he was a husband and father and grandfather, and by those with whom he enjoyed Christian fellowship locally. And by all of us, for our brother had an influence that extended beyond his family and his locality.

As I say, our brother was much loved, but there was One who loved him more than any of us in this room; One who loved him enough to die for him. One great man could say, “The Son of God who loved me”, Gal 2: 20. He was conscious of being loved by the Son of God. I wonder if everyone in this room is conscious of that. “The Son of God”, he says, “who has loved me and given himself for me”. It was as if the apostle Paul would say that, even if there was nobody else, He loved me enough to die for me; and He suffered and died for him in order to atone for his sins; so that he might dwell with Him eternally. It was not just that the matter of his sins should be dealt with. That is so important; it is so essential for every person in this room that the matter of their sins should be resolved with the Saviour. But He had in mind that he should dwell with Him eternally.

Now I understand that it is common in the world around us to have what is called a 'memorial service' on these occasions, where people gather to give thanks for the life of somebody, where it is customary to hear eulogies of them - the things that they said and they did in their lives. The effect of that is simply to emphasise the immensity of what we have lost, whereas if it is comfort we are seeking in a time of sorrow, it is to the resurrection world that we must look. There is to be found no comfort elsewhere. One of the remarkable features of our brother's departure is that it was anticipated by him and provided for, and one of the things that he was most anxious about was that the eulogy on this occasion was not to be of him, but it was to be of Christ. And he was anxious that all present here this afternoon should enjoy the favour that he enjoyed; that the portion that was his might be the portion of everyone in this room.

That is why I read this passage, because it speaks of Christ. It speaks where I began to read of His present position. It speaks of His

offering “in the consummation of the ages”: “He has been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice”. And He has “been once offered to bear the sins” - He does not say 'of all' but the sins “of many”. Some of those many are here today. And the question I would raise with you is, 'Are you among them?', dear hearer? Are you among the many whose sins He bore and removed? The putting away of sin and the bearing of sins was done once for all. It is a work that will never need to be repeated. And so this passage speaks of that; it speaks of His present position, it speaks of what He did in the sacrifice of Himself, and it speaks of His coming again. The great hope of the believer is that Christ is going to appear the second time. He came once and He was not wanted. He was not wanted then, and He is not wanted now in the world around. He “came into the world”, the scripture says, “to save sinners”, 1 Tim 1: 15. What grace, that the One who in His Person was intrinsically holy and sinless, should come down from heaven! He says, “For I am come down from heaven, not that I should do *my* will, but the will of him that has sent me”, John 6: 38. And that will involved that He should suffer, sufferings that to us are unfathomable, that He should suffer, that He should die, that His precious blood should be shed that God might be glorified in respect of sin and sins. It was that the challenge that sin is to God might be met and fallen creatures like ourselves might have a means of escape, a means of salvation, an opportunity for eternal blessing.

You see, the book that we have in our hands, the Holy Scriptures, tells us about the great issues of life. It tells how evil came into the world. People think about these things; some people consult philosophers, but the Scriptures are very plain, that by one man sin entered into the world. He was a disobedient man: “And by sin death; and thus death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”, Rom 5: 12. But the Scriptures close with the great heading up of these issues. All evil finds its place; it finds its place in the lake of fire. And all good is gathered up, in “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness”, 2 Pet 3: 13. That is where God Himself will tabernacle with men. It must be righteous, you see. Righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and the new earth. There could be no rest for God if that were not the case. But God is going to tabernacle eternally with the objects of His grace. He has reached out in His grace and provided a Saviour for sinners. As one of our hymns says,

Christ is the Saviour of sinners (Hymn 122):

*the* Saviour of sinners. There is only One and He saved them not just that they might be rescued from judgment but that they might be brought into the greatest privilege and blessing in dwelling with God, tabernacling with God eternally in a new heavens and a new earth. Are these things fanciful to you, dear hearer, or are they real? To our brother they were real. They affected his walk and his ways; they were the joy of his heart. And now we have before us the burial of his body. Our brother is no longer in his body. The scripture speaks of his position as “absent from the body and present with the Lord”, 2 Cor 5: 8.

I would like to speak of that, briefly. He is absent from the body. The body that we bury is very precious; it is the body in which we have known and loved our brother. It is the body in which all that he is has been expressed. The work of God in him came out in expression in the body that we bury. But above all, it has been the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God took up His abode in our beloved brother, and there was abundant evidence of that in the way that his own spirit was formed in divine grace. I would say that there are many in this room that knew our brother better than I did and for a longer period and more intimately, but from my own contact with him, one of the abiding impressions that I will retain is the graciousness of his spirit, the clarity with which he saw things. The grace of his spirit is something that I will treasure in remembrance of our brother. But our brother is no longer in the body; he is absent from it. We are gathered here today to hear, I trust, the word of God and that is for those that are living. Our brother is beyond the reach, or the need of that now; he is present with the Lord. What can that be dear hearer, but ecstasy?

Peter speaks of the portion of believers; he speaks of that in his epistle: “Jesus Christ: whom, having not seen, ye love; on whom though not now looking, but believing, ye exult with joy unspeakable and filled with the glory”, 1 Pet 1: 8. What Peter is describing there is what should be characteristic of a believer in the Lord Jesus. Now if that is the portion of a believer living here by faith - “whom, having not seen, ye love ... ye exult with joy unspeakable”, what **must** the portion of that brother be as in the immediate presence of Christ. One could say, “in thy presence is fulness of joy”, Ps 16: 11 (KJV). He is awaiting, of course, his final portion. There is another remarkable passage in chapter 11; it says, “these all, having obtained witness through faith, did not receive the promise, God having foreseen some better thing for us, that they should not be made perfect without us”, v 39-40. Our brother's portion is intensely blessed. It is not a state of oblivion or

unconsciousness, but it is the state of conscious enjoyment of the love of Christ and the enjoyment of it without any distractions or sorrow. But he awaits, as we all do, we who love Christ, the final portion, because God has foreseen some better thing for us.. Jesus is coming again, as this passage says. It goes on, "it is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment". I do not think that is in the sense of condemnation, but it is a reminder for all of us that death is not the end. Persons would like to think that death is the end, but there is what is after death, and that is our responsibility to God, responsibility that rests upon everyone of us in this room, as made in the image and likeness of God. There is a responsibility to Him.

Now our beloved brother was among those whose sins have been borne by Jesus, who are looking for His return; the Lord has taken him before then. But when He comes He will never more have to deal with the question of sin. It has been dealt with to God's eternal satisfaction. God will say of our brother, and myriads like him, "their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more", Heb 10: 17. You think of that, the assurance that it brings, the peace with God that it brings into the heart and into the conscience to know that. To look ahead, as John said in his epistle, "with ... boldness in the day of judgment" (1 John 4: 17) in the knowledge that "as *he* is, *we* also are in this world. God would clothe us with nothing less than the righteousness and the virtue and the acceptance of Christ: think of being clothed like that!

Well, our brother's body that we bury today is going to be raised, and it is going to be very different when it is raised. Our brother is going to put on incorruptibility; he is going to put on immortality; he is going to be conformed eternally to the image of God's Son. In a word, he is going to be glorified, but all with a view to the distinction of Christ; "so that **he** should be the firstborn among many brethren", Rom 8: 29. Our brother will be among that vast company that will contribute to the glory of Christ personally. Christ is going to be glorified personally, but He is going "to be glorified in His saints", and He is going to be "wondered at in all that have believed", 2 Thess 1 10. Dear hearer, are you sure that you will be among that company? Are you sure of *your* destination if you were called upon to pass through death? Our brother was sure. For him it was not a leap into the unknown; he knew the Saviour that is seated at God's right hand, the One who has entered, as this passage says, into heaven itself. Once He was the Sin-bearer, once the bearer of the judgment of God, but that matter having been resolved so entirely

the One who was the Sin-bearer has entered into heaven itself, and He has entered in there to serve His own, to appear before the face of God for us.

I believe He Himself would appeal on an occasion like this. We are in the presence of death, the solemnity of it. We see the finality of it as regards all that is here, but where human life ends, where all indeed of this world comes to an end, that is God's beginning. God begins with resurrection. And the resurrection of Christ as the first-fruits is the anticipation of what God will secure in a time scene: myriads, myriads like Him for God's glory eternally.

I just leave that word, dear hearers. May we be comforted, those of us who are believers, in the assurance of these things. And if there is anyone here that is in any doubt at all about them, have to do with the Saviour for yourself. "The same Lord of all is rich towards all that call upon him", Rom 10: 12. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved", Acts 2: 21. You can call upon Him; you can prove what He is as a Saviour, as a mighty Saviour. He is One who has been into death and vanquished it. He has brought to light life and incorruptibility. He is One who is seated in heaven; One who is serving there on behalf of His own.

May He bless the word.

**St Ives**

**28<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

(At the meeting for the burial of Robert Hodge)

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Philip F Eagle

Acts 17: 11; 8: 26-38

I wanted to say a word from these passages about searching the scriptures. One of the passages refers to a company, and the other refers to an individual, both searching the scriptures.

I was thinking that this company, the Bereans, received the word “with all readiness of mind”. It is good when we are together in occasions like this one to have a “readiness of mind” to receive and to hear what is being said, a readiness of mind to hear what the Lord would say today. We get a lot from reading the scriptures. We may read the same scripture a few times, but something different comes out of it each time. The Holy Spirit delights to be able to bring something fresh and living every time you read a passage. These people here were “more noble than those in Thessalonica ... **daily** searching the scriptures”. What an exercise that is, to search the scriptures daily! There may be some point in the day when you just have the impression that you should read a passage of scripture in a certain book; you may hear something said in a reading which makes you think about a certain passage, but it says, “**daily** searching the scriptures if these things were so”. You feel they had a joy about it - we have spoken already this evening about celebrations, and you can feel the eagerness, the enjoyment of these people here, searching the Scriptures. Perhaps they imparted something to one another, perhaps rejoicing to find out that these things were the truth; and the light that was found in the Scriptures. You may read a passage of Scripture and you may have read it a few times, but you might see something you had never noticed before. I am not wanting to be fanciful at all. They would have heard Paul preaching, or Silas preaching, and then they got something from searching the Scriptures. Are we ready in our pathway here? We have busy schedules, and there are things to be done, matters to be attended to at work, and we are busy. But do we leave the door open for Christ and for the things of the Christ? During the day, you may get an impression, perhaps just a small one, something to enjoy; and then you have to search the scriptures if these things are so.

I thought of this other passage because we have a man here, an individual this time, and he was searching the Scriptures as well. He was reading, he was reading a book in the Bible, the prophet Esaias; I think we might say he was searching the Scriptures. I think the spirit of this man was humble: “How should I then be able unless some one guide me?”. How wonderful it is that we have the Holy Spirit to help us!

There are some passages of Scripture which are hard to understand. It has been said that you would always pray to the Holy Spirit before you read the Scriptures. It is a simple truth, a simple fact I have often thought about; how much sense it makes to get the help of the Holy Spirit to understand the meaning of a passage.

This man wanted to understand what this meant, he had a desire; you might say he had a “readiness of mind”. He read this passage, well-known to us, and the questions were there. He wanted Philip to come up and guide him. Philip gives him a different aspect, a different impression, a different view; we know this because the eunuch asked to be baptised. Philip was ready to help him; he was guided by the Holy Spirit: “opening his mouth and beginning from that scripture, announced the glad tidings of Jesus”. Think of what it led up to for that man, what a joy it must have been to be baptised. It says, “he went on his way rejoicing”. It should be a matter of rejoicing to us if we get something from a passage of scripture. This man may not have been reading a vast passage of the scripture; we are told of something he was reading that just struck him, and it changed his life. You might be able to read something, it might be a small passage, and might never have seen what is contained in it before. You may see a different aspect, you may see something that is new or living about it; and it may help you in your pathway here. Reading this passage here that was explained to him by Philip changed the eunuch's life.

What an exercise it would be; as we read more in the Scriptures, and get the Holy Spirit's help, it can change our life, how we see things, how they are in our eyes. Around us things are unstable, very unstable; people wonder what is going to happen, but the Scriptures are stable, and they can help in our pathway here, reading them and knowing the encouragement that is in them.

This is an exercise to me because I feel I need to read the Scriptures more and more; but the encouraging thing is that if you only have the opportunity to use a small portion, there will be something for you like there was with this man, that will make you rejoice.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

**Word in a ministry meeting in London**

**12<sup>th</sup> February 2019**