

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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HOLINESS - 1

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AMB What is in mind for enquiry is the great matter of holiness. Holiness belongs to God; it is what characterises God's nature. His nature is love and His love is a holy love; so holiness characterises that nature of His. I know it is a very deep subject. It is also testing for us to speak about, but I trust that the Lord will give us help in considering something of the matter.

We might speak this morning about holiness as characterising God Himself, and we see that in the first scripture read. God Himself is a holy God, One that dwells “amid the praises of Israel”. It is a very affecting scripture to every believer; every lover of the Lord Jesus would be affected by reading Psalm 22, including these words that the Lord spoke on the cross when He was suffering there. We might get help in speaking about the way that God's holy love was manifested at the cross, what it cost Christ and what it cost the Father, how effective that love was, and what the results have been. We read also about the Lord Jesus in Hebrews as the One who “loved righteousness and ... hated lawlessness”, which is an essential description of holiness. How blessed and holy a One He was and He is! That is further brought out in the scripture in Luke 3, a scene of holiness, where the Holy Spirit came down upon Him “in a bodily form as a dove” and marked Him out, and the voice of the Father was heard. We know it was the voice of the Father because it says, “*Thou* art my beloved Son”. It would speak to us of the holiness that was there. In the book of the Acts, the Holy Spirit is in activity towards men, towards believers.

This afternoon, if the Lord will and He indicates, we might speak about how holiness is worked out in us, in believers. We might also see that if anyone is to approach God, there must be holiness in the approach, and that there is holiness in the presence of God. These further thoughts might occupy us tomorrow if the Lord will.

One thing to bear in mind in our subject this morning is that in eternity past love was there, because the Lord speaks about it, in speaking to the Father in John 17: 24. He does not speak about holiness. Now God's essential nature has never changed, but I think

His holiness has been made known as He has made Himself known: He has revealed Himself as a holy God. Particularly as He has come into relationship, His holiness is emphasised. It is interesting to look at that. You do not find any references to holiness or to God being holy in the book of Genesis, but when you come to Exodus and God takes up His relationship with His people, He emphasises His holiness. It is always instructive to see the first reference to a subject in the scriptures, and holiness is first referred to where God speaks to Moses out of the burning bush - He says to Moses, "loose thy sandals from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground", Exod 3: 5. God is moving towards the people that He had chosen in the way of relationship. If God was to find an answer suitable to the character of His love then this great transaction that is alluded to in Psalm 22 must take place. I trust the brethren will help in bringing out this matter.

NJH Yes, very helpful. I was thinking of Christ's unbroken communion with His God. He was wholly and absolutely in keeping with the holiness of God while here. That brings out the intensity of this psalm, does it not, when He had to justify God in being forsaken?

AMB What you say as to Christ being the Holy One is helpful. Before His birth He is spoken of as "the holy thing", Luke 1: 35. It is beyond us really, but when here He was the One who was entirely according to God. It seems to me that holiness is being according to God, and Christ - in every thought and in every word and every deed, every second of every minute - was according to God. The scriptures read in Hebrews and Luke bring out the quality that was in Him as the Holy One, and the delight that the Father had in Him. Such a One uttered these words on the cross "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt 27: 46. That forsaking had to be if God's holy love was to be satisfied and find a way of coming out to us.

WMP Could you also say something about why you feel such an exercise is necessary for us in the present time?

AMB We live in a dispensation of grace. We give thanks that God has made Himself known in such a gracious way and has come out towards us in Christ. But that must never make us careless about the character of God's love. His love has come out towards us in grace, and it is a holy love. So underlying that blessed attitude of grace and mercy and forgiveness that streams from heaven is the fact that the holy character of God's love must be maintained. The suffering of Christ in bearing the judgment of God upon sin was essential, and we must appreciate that it

is essential if we are going to know the love of God. It is a gracious love, and it is a holy love.

Another thing to say - and we will come on to it perhaps this afternoon in speaking about how these things are worked out in us - is that we live in and pass through an unholy world, and we are separated from that because of the holiness of the love of God.

WMP We might just become accustomed to things at another level, you mean? It is interesting in Exodus 3: 2 that the thorn bush was not being consumed; so you might say there is the grace, but the ground is holy ground.

DCW Holiness becometh God's house (Ps 93: 5), so that it is essential that we should be in conformity with that, and not just take things for granted.

AMB That is a fine touch in Psalm 93; "holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, for ever". It is never going to be any other way! But He dwells "amid the praises of Israel"; so that house which holiness becomes is to be filled. God is able - as a result of what Christ has done and who Christ is - to fill that house of His with those who are according to Him, conformed to Christ.

DCW So what God had in mind for His people was that they should be a holy nation.

AMB That comes in early. God speaks of that in Exodus 19: 6, "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation". Such a people would be able to serve Him in His own environment, speaking carefully.

DCW So He brings that in before the commandments are given.

AMB Indeed.

GBG The words of the Lord on the cross, of which we have read in Psalm 22, were drawn out of Him as having been made sin, and feeling in His soul what it was to bear God's judgment as having been made sin.

AMB These were words drawn out of a completely holy soul. We need the Spirit's help to think and speak about these holy matters, but I trust the Spirit will help us all in our own spirits to contemplate these things and get the benefit of them. As to Christ Himself, His nature was sinless. He was a real Man, but His nature was not like mine; He was sinless. The scripture speaks of Him as the One "who knew not sin",

but has been “made sin for us”, 2 Cor 5: 21. It also says of Him “who did no sin”, 1 Pet 2: 22, and “in him sin is not”, 1 John 3: 5. There was nothing in Christ on which sin had any leverage whatsoever, He was entirely holy, and this utterance was drawn out of Him as He was made sin in these three hours of suffering and judgment and forsaking on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”.

GBG While we cannot enter very far into this as to what it meant to the Lord, it has an instructional bearing upon us, does it not?

AMB We are to learn deeply from this psalm and from the Lord's quoting of it on the cross. We learn God in it! If there was one outcome from these meetings, my desire is that at the end of them we would each feel that we had a greater appreciation in our souls of the nature and character of God Himself. So what you say as to this being instructive is right. It would remind us of the solemnity and awfulness of what Christ bore as being made sin. The contemplation of that is intended to have a deep effect on the soul of every believer. Is that what you had in mind in speaking about what is instructional?

JRW Could you help us as to the distinction between holiness and righteousness? Romans tells us that the righteousness of God is “towards all, and upon all those who believe”, chap 3: 22.

AMB It is important to have these things clearly in our minds and in our hearts. Good ministry is important, and I commend that to all of us, and to younger folk particularly. Mr Darby, Mr Raven and Mr James Taylor all speak about righteousness as having to do with relationships, and relationships being right. “Fidelity in every divinely appointed relationship” was Mr Raven's expression as to righteousness, vol 3 p210. For us it is doing what is right, what is according to God. It is, as it were, an outward expression of what is right. Holiness brings the heart in. God's love is holy and that is what is to mark us. In so far as holiness marks us as believers - I trust that we will get help together about that - it is seated in our affections as they are drawn out to Christ. It was God's holy love that led to this scene that is described in Psalm 22. God's love desired objects, and the objects were the creatures that He has made, mankind, and we know that God's love is towards all men, but it is a holy love. God cannot have men approaching Him and in His presence on their own terms, it must be on God's terms, and His terms are such that His holy love is satisfied. Does that help?

JRW Yes, it does. In relation to God it seems that holiness is intrinsic,

and therefore He can only do what is right. It is different with us because we are intrinsically unholy.

AMB Yes, God's holiness is absolute and, as you say, intrinsic. There is a very interesting footnote that Mr Darby puts in Hebrews 7: 26. The scripture says, "For such a high priest became us, holy ...". The footnote is worth reading as the commentary of a devoted and spiritual servant of the Lord; to quote part of it, 'This, when applied to God, designates him as holy, knowing good and evil perfectly, and absolutely willing good and no evil' (footnote i); that is what He is. But then that holiness comes out in the expression of His love towards its objects. He has made objects for His love, and therefore His holiness that characterises His love must be involved in the expressing of His love towards men.

RDP Holiness is not just sterile, is it? We think of holiness as characterising an area in which everything is according to God - everything else is excluded. But I do not think holiness is just sterile, like a sterile condition that men require for some of their operations, and so on.

AMB I very much agree. Where God's holy love is free to move out, all the riches and variety of blessing that He has in His heart of love come out. They are expressed and are effective towards those that have been made fit to approach by Christ into the presence of God. That is what God's holy love is bent on bringing about and the work of Christ that we read of in this psalm has made that possible. Would you agree with that?

RDP Yes; I was thinking of your reference to God's holy love, and of this expression, "thou art holy". He also speaks about God being "far from my salvation". Perhaps we have a limited conception of how far man's sin has taken him away from God. It was not just a temporary aside, but the Lord felt how far away sin had taken man from God. Then He says, "thou art holy". I was thinking of God's feelings at a moment like this as being holy, and yet surely not unmoved or neutral as to what the Lord was enduring.

AMB We get some impression in our souls of what the holiness of God is by contemplating the scene at the cross. All through the centuries since the creation God had looked for a Man who was entirely according to Himself, and He found that Man in Jesus! He was the One in whom God delighted, and we have that public testimony to His

delight in this One. But the One in whom God delighted was forsaken in bearing the judgment of God upon sin so that people could come into the presence of God. That was what the holiness of God and the love of God together required - such a transaction, if we could use that term. It should affect our hearts and our spirits deeply.

JL In simple words, is it helpful to remember that holiness shrinks from sin, whilst righteousness deals with sin? And both were displayed fully at the cross.

AMB Yes, righteousness is the action and the motivation of the action, but holiness repels sin; it shrinks from it. The affections are involved in it. God's affections were deeply involved in this matter.

JL However much it is necessary that we should be brought to holiness, we should not miss the glory of the point that is brought out here, "thou art holy"; that is what God is and what was seen in Christ in manhood too.

AMB God never reduces the standard of His holiness. He did not need to, for in Christ God found total complacency! You think of Him speaking to the Father as "Holy Father", John 17: 11. God's holiness and His love have been upheld, and have been made effective in relation to man, because of what Christ bore on the cross.

QAP Do we see it at Gethsemane, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me", Matt 26: 39? He recoiled from being made sin because He was holy.

AMB Yes. I think that bears out exactly what has just been said; that His holy soul recoiled from what lay before Him.

JTB The Lord Jesus was "the holy thing". Does Ezekiel's presentation of the sufferings of Christ bring out the contrast between the holiness of the Lord Jesus and man? He had to lie on his left and right side, and bore the iniquity of Israel. But the food that he was required to eat was perfect in its content, was it not? The wheat and the barley and so on, but it was baked in what came out of man, the contrast between the sin bearer and man's corruption and defilement is illustrated there, do you think, Ezek 4: 4-15?

AMB Yes, everything in the Lord stands in contrast to what man is as away from God. Of course He is also the Firstborn of a new race entirely, and we will come on to that. But the foundation of everything that is for God, and all that was necessary to make it possible for God to

enter into relationship with mankind, is laid here.

NCMcK Holiness comes into relief in the presence of God, does it not? If a person approaches God, all that God is comes to light. It is not enough to be righteous. God sees every defilement, every matter. In Christ there was more than righteousness: He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners” (Heb 7: 26); no influence of the world had any effect on Him, completely and altogether free of everything adverse and unsuitable to God!

AMB It was really His nature. God's nature was revealed in Christ - His love, and it is a holy love. It has been spoken of as the character of the love. This was seen perfectly in Christ because Christ's revelation of God, of the Father, was a perfect revelation. If anybody had seen Christ they had seen the Father! This included God's nature and His character, and also His attributes. Righteousness is an attribute: it can be attributed to God. It is the way in which He acts. The motive is love, and it is holy love.

JCG You were speaking of the sin offering, and in the offerings in Leviticus the oblation and the sin offering and the trespass offering are spoken of as “most holy”. Does that bring out the character of what was presented to God in Christ as on the cross?

AMB I think the types of the offerings in Leviticus are very helpful in reinforcing these matters to us, because they were prior indications of what God would find in Christ. Everything about the offerings was altogether according to God's instruction.

JCG The priest was to eat certain offerings, so that occupation with the way in which Christ moved and the character of the way that He moved is food for us spiritually, is it not?

AMB That is good. Lord willing we will speak about that further, that it is occupation with and affection for Christ that brings about holiness in the believer. You have also drawn attention to the offerings and their holiness, and to the priest too. The high priest would speak to us powerfully of Christ. The holy diadem - that thin plate of pure gold that was attached so that it was upon the forehead of the high priest - was “Holiness to Jehovah!”, Exod 28: 36. That was what would be seen, the high priest going in; that is Christ in figure, is it not?

TM Is that the difference between the cherubim and the seraphim? I was thinking of how the cherubim deal with God's righteousness, and

the seraphim presented in Isaiah 6 speak of holiness.

AMB Yes, it is interesting. Isaiah 6 is the only reference to seraphim in the scriptures. You get the cherubim right at the beginning in the garden of Eden, guarding the way to the tree of life (Gen 3: 24), so that what is right according to God should be done. But the seraphim in Isaiah 6: 3 say, "Holy, holy, holy". They are ascribing holiness as appreciating it, I think.

We might be exercised to have a greater appreciation in our souls and hearts of the holiness of God, how the holy character of His love has been expressed, and what that meant for Christ.

PAG Would it help us to see that every affront to God's holiness was met at the cross, and every affront to His righteousness was met in the shedding of the blood of Jesus? So now love can be in perfect liberty because everything that might have stood in the way has been dealt with by Christ!

AMB That is helpful. It would emphasise to our hearts that it is as coming to Christ that we come into the gain of what He has accomplished. The work of Christ does not mean that God is regarding the whole race as holy and therefore able to approach Him and come into His presence. It is those who come through Christ and in Christ that are so regarded. That is because of the work that Christ has done. And a corresponding change that is brought about in a soul by believing in that blessed One, and by receiving the Holy Spirit.

PAG I think that is helpful because really in order to come into the good of it we have to understand what God thinks about sin, and Christ gave perfect expression to that - "thou art holy". As being made sin He said that. It is sin that was condemned, but then we have to have the forgiveness of sins too for these were the acts; and then we also have "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin", 1 John 1: 7. It is only by that means that there can be approach to God.

AMB Yes, it is very important to be clear about these things. Your comment as to what sin means to God, being fully fathomed and understood completely by His Son, is so important. And the affront to God that sin represents - sin is independence from God and a challenge to Him. Christ perfectly understood that, and He was made what so offends God! It is beyond our comprehension that God did such a thing, but He did, and Christ bore the judgment and exhausted it!

RWMcC Would that link with the scripture that says Jesus tasted “death for every thing”, Heb 2: 9? I have heard that linked with the verse quoted from Ezekiel 4: 4. It just gives us a sense as to the awfulness of sin, does it not, and of what God thought in relation to it?

AMB Would you think too that that is also conveyed in the thought of the cup: “the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?”, John 18: 11. It suggests something dreadful being felt in the holy soul of that One, but, in perfect submission and blessed dependent manhood, He tasted and drank that cup. It was a dreadful judgment that He tasted.

RWMcC And it was received from the Father's hand.

AMB I think there is a great deal for us to contemplate in that.

JAB Should we get a sense of the blessed God's intense pleasure in the holiness of this One that we are speaking of? In Hebrews and Luke there is a divine pleasure expressed because of the holiness of Jesus.

AMB We should go on from Psalm 22, while keeping in our minds the deep meaning of it, and seeking to develop in our apprehension; I do not think we can say our comprehension, but our apprehension of what was transacted at the cross, and the Father's delight in Christ on the cross. Christ was forsaken there, He was made sin and bore the judgment of God, but there was deep delight for the Father in Christ on the cross.

JAB It has been said He was 'never so acceptable in obedience as on the cross', JND Collected Writings vol 7 p147. Nature cannot understand that.

AMB When we think of what Christ was working out in bearing that judgment, offering Himself spotless to God, there was no flaw, He was utterly impeccable in His flawless offering. How pleasing He was to God. He offered Himself to God and that holy judgment came upon His head, and because He was perfect and sinless He exhausted it! He could say, “It is finished”, John 19: 30. Because of that, all of God's holy will is effected, is made good! If it had not been for Christ doing what He did and bearing the judgment as He did, the holy love of God towards us, and towards the whole of mankind, could not have come into expression. More broadly, in the millennium there will be holy conditions on the earth where God's holy people will be for Him, and in eternity the whole universe will be a holy universe: all will be according

to God. None of that could be, except for what Christ has done. All the holy will of God is worked out!

PJW Not only was He personally spotless then, but the whole of His life was an offering of Himself. I wondered if that linked with this verse, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hast hated lawlessness”, and whether that was seen perfectly in His life here.

AMB I do not think that any prophecy as to the Lord was in any sense nominal. It was worked out substantially in every step, thought, word and deed in the Lord's holy life. And the Father took intense pleasure in it!

PJW And yet He could touch the leper (Mark 1: 51), and be in the presence of sin as hating lawlessness!

AMB He had nothing to do with the sin, but He loved the sinner, which is a remarkable matter; One who was in Himself holy could touch the leper.

RHB Is God glorified in that? His heart is free to flow forth without any compromise of His essential integrity.

AMB I like what you say! God is glorified in what Christ has done, and there will be a response to God eternally, a wonderful response entirely according to His holy desire, His holy love answered to eternally because of what Christ did in glorifying Him there on the cross!

RHB When He said, “Father, save me from this hour”, He then said, “But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name”, John 12: 27-28. You get the Father's response, “I both have glorified and will glorify it again”. What you are setting out is the way that God has glorified Himself publicly.

AMB That is a fine reference. I think it is good to open up the scope of what took place on the cross by bringing that in. So that the Father glorified means that every thought of His, and every feeling of His, is expressed and upheld, made good in one blessed Man. Because of that God's favour is towards us; we are brought into favour in that One.

RHB The question is raised earlier in the book of Psalms, “who shall dwell in the hill of thy holiness?”, Ps 15: 1. To an Old Testament saint it must at times have seemed impossible, God being what He is. God tabernacling with men is the ultimate vindication of His ways, and His own glory, is it not?

AMB That is the closest expression of the presence of God: tabernacling with men. It refers to dwelling in tents, with no distance. His holy love will be at home and complacently resting on men, all as a result of what Christ has done. How fully God is pleased! What a wonderful matter, God coming out in revelation in the Person of His Son, and that would include the revelation of His love in its intensity and in its holy character at the cross.

DCB I was wondering about the way in which sweet savour comes into the offerings, suggesting that the excellence that was always there in Christ was particularly for the pleasure of the nostrils of God.

AMB Yes, it was so in His life, and then never more so than in His suffering and death. The sweet savour came out particularly in those offerings that were subject to the fire.

RT We have spoken about the cross, but did it not really begin at the incarnation? The earth took on a different bearing altogether in Christ coming into manhood. The angels were affected by it, were they not?

AMB Very good; “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men”, Luke 2: 14. The whole scene shifted, it changed in the coming in of God's Man, a different Man altogether, the Man who would justify and glorify and satisfy God. And then to see that He is the Forerunner, He is the Firstborn of a race that is like Him, and we come into it! To rest our souls in the delight of God in that One is a tremendous thing.

JCG What would you say about “oil of gladness”; is that something extra? We know the Father's satisfaction in raising Christ and anointing Him, but “with oil of gladness” is an additional touch, is it not?

AMB It is a result of “Thou hast loved righteousness and has hated lawlessness”. It says, “therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with oil of gladness”. We are speaking of this, are we not; the Father's delight in Christ? He “has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father” (Rom 6: 4), and the Father has given Him a Name, which is above every name, Phil 2: 9. The Father is delighting in Him, and we could think of Christ delighting in having perfectly fulfilled the holy will of God. There is joy in heaven as a result of this; there is gladness. And then it is “above thy companions”; so it is with a view to a whole race being brought to God on His terms, which have been secured through the work of Christ.

JCG I was thinking of that expression that is used in Psalm 2: “And I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness”, v 6. God's satisfaction in what had been transacted by Christ flowed from accomplishment of what He had purposed before time.

AMB All this, the unfolding scene at the cross and what was accomplished there, was in God's counsels. His purpose was that He should have men before Him forever, and His counsels compassed what would be worked out that His blessed nature should be made known. The book has been linked to eternal purpose and counsel, that He should come to do God's will, Heb 10: 7; and CAC Outline of Hebrews, vol 23 p62.

RT The angels said, “for to-day a Saviour has been born”, (Luke 2: 11); that altered the whole course of history, did it not? “A Saviour has been born ... who is Christ the Lord”. It has been said that His holiness would have set Him apart from the race, but His love made Him the Servant of all!

AMB Thank you for that, dear brother! His holiness would have set Him apart from the race; His love made Him the Servant of us all! That is something for us all to hold in our hearts!

PM Did the angels witness the incoming of the order of Man who could not sin and in whose heart was the full expression of the love of God, and in every movement was in keeping with the love of God.

AMB Yes, the angels wondered at it! What is being said as to the blessedness of the incarnation is very affecting. There was no incoming, no birth like the Lord's. It was holy; it was guarded; it involved the activities of the Holy Spirit and the fulfilment of scripture so intimately. The will of God was involved in the whole matter. What was there was utterly unique, a real Man, and yet absolutely apart from sin.

PM Would it be right to say that, in the Person of the Lord Jesus, His holiness was not just the absence of sin, great as that was?

AMB That is absolutely right. He brought into manhood, speaking carefully and reverently, all the character of the Godhead; it was expressed fully in that Man, and in connection with others here. It was expressed in what Christ was, including in what He was among men. Would that be right?

PM Yes, and is that why Paul says in Colossians, “for in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell”, chap 1: 19.

AMB Yes, divine perfection in a Man!

DJW Does loving righteousness and hating lawlessness involve sensitivity? The degree in which He measured things was according to God's standard.

AMB That is right. The fact that it speaks of Him as "loving righteousness" shows that the affections of Christ were involved. His submission to the Father's will was a matter of affection. Another speaks of doing a thing to please a father as motive enough, JND Collected Writings vol 30 page 64. The Lord was motivated by love for the Father's will, love for righteousness. Because lawlessness is what sets itself against God - Christ hated that. It is contrary to God and contrary to what God is. And yet we solemnly remember from our first scripture that He was made that very thing.

DJW So He was drawn to the one, and He recoiled from the other.

APG The two references in Acts 4 to "thy holy servant Jesus" (v 27, 30) would suggest all that He did among men was marked by holiness.

AMB Would that link with what has been said as to Him becoming a Servant to all? It is a very sweet expression in these early chapters of Acts - "thy holy servant Jesus". Those that had eyes to see it saw One who "loved righteousness and ... hated lawlessness". What a sober matter that there were those that rejected this One.

PJW Peter felt it when he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord", Luke 5: 8. That was the last thing he wanted really in his heart, do you think?

AMB Yes; Peter had a sense of who Christ was, and then later on he says, "we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God", John 6: 69. That was something that Peter came to in his soul. We have to come to it that He is "the holy one of God"; all God's delight is in Him. We have that expressed in the beginning of Luke where we read - God's delight in Him. It is an exclusive delight: God does not take delight in anything that is apart from Christ. We give thanks that as a result of the work of Christ, and as the brethren have already been saying, a great number and a great area are secured for God's delight as a result of what Christ has done. He did not go the way of the cross for Himself, He was the sinless One as we have been saying, but He went that way for us.

BWL There is a reference to the throne in Hebrews 2: 8, just before

the verse you read. God's throne is eternal in character, is it not? Sin coming in was a challenge to that. The throne did not come into existence because of a challenge; it was there eternally. I wondered about what you said in your outline in relation to God's holiness; it is not mentioned in Genesis but it ever existed.

AMB That is right, and it is ever going to exist. His holy love is the character of love in which God will tabernacle with men. He will dwell eternally with them, and will be responded to in worship and praise by those who correspond to Him. We are not speaking about it so much in this reading, but we also remember that God's holy love is a present matter, and in His grace, wisdom and power He has made it possible for us to answer to His holy love now, through the work of Christ and through the action of the Holy Spirit - the One who so beautifully identifies Himself with Christ in Luke chapter 3.

JRW Does the anointing bear on this? The anointing here in Hebrews is the way in which God has marked Him out; it is a seal of God's approval. It is really a seal of God's acclamation. That also comes out in Luke, does it not, when Christ is anointed by the Spirit?

AMB The Spirit came upon Christ and at that point there was this expression of delight drawn out from heaven. It was a glad acclamation from heaven of the beloved Son in whom the Father had found His delight. It conveys such a scene of complacent rest - the Spirit coming upon Christ, and the Father's delight in Christ. What a Man He is!

JRW It has often been said there is a mutuality here. In Acts 2, there are tongues, as of fire, but here there is mutuality, is there not?

AMB Yes, and complete complacency! "The Holy Spirit ... in a bodily form" would remind us of the scripture that was quoted in Colossians as to "the fulness of the Godhead" dwelling bodily in Him. The Father's voice was heard from heaven rejoicing in being able to acclaim this unique, holy, sinless and blessed One. And love was expressed, "*Thou art my beloved Son*". What it must have meant to the Father, to be able to use that expression!

RJF Is that emphasised in John, where it says as to the Holy Spirit that "it abode upon him", chap 1: 32. The expression seems to imply that there was nothing that needed to be displaced; there was perfect rest and complacency.

AMB I am glad you brought that in. What you are quoting is very helpful because the Holy Spirit as a dove speaks of what is sensitive and discerning, and suggests that the sensitive soles of the feet of the dove - the Holy Spirit, as it were, descended and rested upon that One. There was entire consistency with the holiness of the Holy Spirit in that holy Man.

AAC This acclamation here in Luke relates to that part of the life of the Lord Jesus that we know almost nothing about, but is what we have here sufficient for us, do you think? It speaks of the perfection of those thirty years, which God knew in perfection and this is what He said as to it.

AMB That is a helpful insight into the matter. This was right at the very beginning of the Lord's public service. It says, "and Jesus having been baptised and praying". That gives some indication of what this Man was through all these years of private life, about which we know almost nothing. There is almost nothing said about the Lord's life prior to this, but it was all for the Father. Every sinless motive, every example of devotion to the Father's will, was taken account of in heaven. You might say it was pent up, and came into expression here. What more would you say?

AAC We do not know if man took account of it, but what God took account of gave Him tremendous joy, and was expressed in this way.

AMB So really it was for the Father's delight.

DCW The Lord's baptism was a matter of righteousness too - "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness", Matt 3: 15. It is part of the perfection of the Person and His work, is it not? So John's service was complete when the Lord was baptised. So no fault could be found in Him; His uniqueness is preserved always.

AMB Yes. He was also taking His place beside His people Israel, which is a remarkable thing, for He came to bring deliverance to them. Of course, He was rejected. But it says, "and praying"; it is a lovely reference to the Lord's perfection and yet His dependence and simplicity in the matter. You get some impression from that of His harmlessness and of His guilelessness that are noted in Hebrews and in Peter.

DCW So that has not been recorded of any of the others John had baptised. The Lord alone is said to be praying.

AMB Yes, as well as an object of our contemplation and deep affection, He is also a model for us, is He not?

JAB We have been speaking about the holiness of God, and also the holiness of the Lord Jesus as a Man has been before us, but this blessed divine Person who came bodily on Christ, and then in Acts 2 filled these persons in the upper room, He too is a divine Person who is intrinsically holy, and He too has sensitivities. I am just thinking of the importance of understanding that the Holy Spirit is holy, and that He is in us. He came upon Christ, but in Acts it says, “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”. I am now not so much thinking of us, but thinking of this blessed divine Person who came upon Christ and has come upon those who love Him.

AMB I am glad you bring us on to that. His characteristic title is “Holy Spirit”. The scriptures speak of Him as the Spirit, and the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the Father, but characteristically He is spoken of as the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures emphasise the fact that He is holy. He is the One who came entirely complacently upon Christ. But upon these believers at the beginning He came as “parted tongues, as of fire”, Acts 2: 3. So that whatever was not in accord with the Holy Spirit was judged before He sat upon each one of them.

JAB So just as the holiness of God induces in anyone who is spiritual a feeling of reverence, we are to have reverence for this blessed Person. He dwells in us but we are to revere Him as a holy divine Person, are we not?

AMB I am glad you bring that out. The matter of reverence in the presence and in the contemplation of God in the way that He has been made known to us in Father, Son and Holy Spirit is very important. The spirit of the present age is not one of reverence at all, but among believers who have come to know God in Christ and have received the Holy Spirit, the spirit of reverence is very important. Then there is also the tremendous resource that we have in this One, which opens up so much. We should end this reading with an impression of the holiness of the indwelling Spirit.

DCW The Holy Spirit was involved in that great matter - it is, “Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”, Heb 9: 14.

AMB Yes, we can contemplate the fact that it was by the Spirit who indwelt and abode upon that blessed One that He offered Himself in His dependent perfection as a Man.

JB “The dove found no resting-place for the sole of her foot” (Gen 8: 9), but the Holy Spirit found complacent restfulness in coming upon the Lord Jesus.

AMB What a blessed matter! We think of the Spirit in His activities with us; He searches us, He knows everything about us, He knows our motives and our actions and things that are hidden from everyone else, but He rested entirely complacently upon that One. Christ's every motive was entirely according to God; every thought of His was entirely according to God, and yet He was a real Man. We can feed on this thought, that God had complete satisfaction in that One, and that the Spirit rested complacently upon Him.

JTB In the law of the oblation there is a reference to the oblation being “saturated with oil”, Lev 6: 21. Would that bring out the Holy Spirit descending in totality on Christ? We cannot speak of individual believers in the same way; but in relation to the Lord Jesus, it can be said that God does not give the Spirit by measure; and, as has been said, the whole idea of the Spirit is in the assembly, JT vol 73 p171.

AMB There was no part of the offering saturated with oil that was not characterised by the oil. It has been said in one place in ministry that we cannot separate between the Lord and the Spirit, CAC vol 25 (Outline of Corinthians) p230.

JTB You think of Him being “led by the Spirit in the wilderness”, Luke 4: 1. There was a complete identity between the two.

NJH The Holy Spirit is holy, but it was righteous for Him to come in in Acts 2. It was an act of righteousness that He came in among a company that was the product of the death of Christ, and whose histories had been met. They were Christ's brethren and Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness in the midst of them. Is that right?

AMB That is fine! So they were that, and then the Holy Spirit brought His seal upon them so that they were maintained in what they were. Also it became a public matter; there was testimony, ample testimony.

PAG I wondered if you had a thought as to why the first thing that happens when the Holy Spirit comes is that they speak with other tongues. Why would it be that?

AMB My only thought is that it was what was needed at that stage in the testimony. The work of God on the earth now that Christ was in heaven was concentrated in an upper room in one hundred and twenty

or so persons. The need of the testimony was that that should be spread abroad, and the Spirit moved and gave particular power in that way.

PAG That is helpful. There were different tongues because of man's sin (Gen 11: 9), but man's sin is not going to inhibit the spread of God's holiness. God is not going to be defeated by the incoming of sin; so if something came in as a result of sin God is now meeting it, because Christ is on high and the Spirit is here.

AMB That is helpful, and magnifies the work of Christ in our eyes, that the way is cleared for God. Christ Himself came to “undo the works of the devil” (1 John 3: 8), and in completing the work and in going on high, the way is cleared for the Holy Spirit to operate here. We had reference recently to “that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified” (2 Thess 3: 1), showing that there would not be anything that would hinder the word of the Lord. You see that here.

JL Would you say that, just as it is truly right that the Holy Spirit should be respected because of what He is, and because of His holy character, so there should be respect for all that belongs to the assembly, because He dwells there?

AMB Yes, very good! He gives character to what He dwells in and that includes believers, but particularly viewed in the light of the assembly. It is an exercise that we might come to in the next reading, whether the Spirit finds something in me that He can be pleased with and complacent in.

Glasgow 3 Day Meetings

10th August 2018

A M Brown, Grangemouth; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown, Edinburgh; R H Brown, East Finchley; A A Croot, London; 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 B Ikin, Manchester; J Laurie, Brechin; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; R W McClean, Grimsby; N C McKay, Glasgow; T Mair, Cullen; P Martin, Colchester; Q A Poore, Swanage; R D Plant, Birmingham; W M Patterson, Glasgow; R Taylor, Kirkcaldy; D C White, Sidcup; D J Willetts, Birmingham; J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone; P J Walkinshaw, Strood

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Mark I Webster

John 1: 14; 4: 34; 5: 30; 8: 29

Romans 2: 1-4; 3: 21-26

The verses we read in Romans 2 speak of the judgment of God; they speak of the God who judges according to truth. That, I think, would raise a question with any concerned soul as to the standard by which God judges. I wonder if you have ever thought of that. Where do you stand, friend, in relation to that? I read the passages in John, not to dwell on the detail, but to draw on them to speak firstly about the One who *is* God's standard, the Lord Jesus. This gospel brings out not only the glory and the greatness of the One that was found here in manhood, One no less than the Son of God; it brings out too, the holy perfection and beauty in manhood of that blessed One. The One who, unlike you and me, who fall short of God's glory, was committed to, indeed came to fulfill the will of God; He took that great matter up. He alone, of course, *could* take up the full will of God; that is, in relation to what was given to Him to do, but as Man what was seen in perfection in the Lord Jesus was One that committed Himself fully to the will of Another.

The writer, John, starts by referring to the glory of the One that came in - the Word. Earlier in the gospel, at the beginning, he brought out the greatness of that One, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God", chap 1: 1. In the verse I read it says, "the Word became flesh"; that is that God was manifest there; the Word became flesh. You think of the wonder of that! The hymn writer refers to it so beautifully:

God manifest in flesh, O wonder of the universe! (Hymn 400)

There in holy manhood was One who in His Person was and ever remains God. There were persons who took account of Him; they contemplated His glory; they considered and took account of Him as the One who was full of grace and truth. What a Man! What a Man the Lord Jesus was "full of grace and truth". All that God is, was expressed fully in Jesus, and therefore we can say without doubt, that in the holy manhood of Jesus here on earth there was that which ever pleased God, and met the full divine standard of God in relation to man. How wonderful that is. It had never been expressed before, but it was expressed when Jesus came into manhood. There, you might say, for the eye of man to consider, was God's ideal, God's standard. What a

glorious Man! Dear friend, have you considered this glorious One that came in, that was found here amongst men, as the gospels bring out, serving men, drawing near to them in all their need, displaying in abundance the grace and kindness, to men as another scripture brings out, of the Saviour God, Titus 3: 4. How fully was expressed in Him all that man should be before God. His food, as John 4: 34 brings out, was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and that He should finish His work. Have you come across any other like that? What about you? I do not know about you; God knows about you, but what I can say as to myself is that what I find is the desire to do my own will. The Lord Jesus never had that desire, because He came from God with the objective of fulfilling the will of God. It has been said that, because of who He was, of course, and the holy character of that which was displayed in His manhood, had He exercised His will, it would have been perfect. But the Lord Jesus came in to do the will of God, not to exercise His own will. Some of us were reminded recently that that was a righteous necessity that was placed upon Him. It would not have been right for the Lord Jesus to exercise His own will because He came in order to do the will of Another. What a Man He is: how different to what you and I are. His food, His very sustenance even as Man, was to do the will of His God and Father. He drew upon it, sustenance for His soul, and He was found here in holy perfection. What a wonderful matter: His words reinforced by what He also said as recorded in John 5: 30, "I do not seek my will, but the will of him that has sent me". That which was ever before the Lord Jesus when here in manhood, was the will of God. He sought it out, and He did it; He fulfilled it in all its totality.

I desire to speak a little later about what that involved, but consider for the moment the great fact that He never turned aside for anything else; He was committed in full and complete devotion to the will of His God and Father. In John 8: 29 it is recorded that He said, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" the Father. Again, what a contrast between Him and what we find in ourselves. There is the inherent desire in ourselves to please ourselves, to do that which ministers to our own will and our own desires. That was never found in Jesus - and therefore never expressed by Him. How perfect, how holy, how attractive is that blessed One. Well, that One is God's standard; God's ideal, but God's standard.

Now God in the gospel, I believe, ensures that the Lord Jesus is set forth in order that the presentation of Him might have an effect upon

you and me. That is why I read in Romans 2: 1-4. The background and the context of what the apostle Paul writes in these verses is in chapter 1; I will not go into that, but it leads him to raise this question: “despise thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance?”. In the gospel God ensures that Christ is presented; it is a consequence of His goodness. I believe that any soul with whom God is working - and I trust every one here might be exercised from their side that this is the case - would in the goodness of God be presented with the Lord Jesus Christ that, if not hitherto, the presentation of Him would lead them to move in repentance towards Himself. How can I do otherwise, when presented with the divine standard so fully and perfectly expressed in the Lord Jesus, but acknowledge before God that I fall very far short? Now, what about you, friend? How do you stand in relation to that standard? Do you meet it? Have you ever thought of that? If like me you fall short of that standard, then I trust the realisation of that will cause you, if you have not done so before, to turn to God Himself and acknowledge it. God in His goodness would appeal to you; He would present Christ to you that the effect might be, if not hitherto, that you acknowledge before God that you have fallen short. The scriptures bring out that all have sinned “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”; that is indeed the truth, but is that solely a passage of scripture to you, friend?

I trust that some consideration by you of the glory and greatness of Christ Himself might cause you in your soul, if you have never done so before, to recognise how far short you come. God in His goodness would wait, and He operates in order that all who come under the sound of His word - all who are affected as they come under it - might be led this way of repentance. God is waiting; think of that, the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering causing Him to wait for you and me. How long has he waited for you? He waited long for me; I could not tell you how long He waited for me - that is His matter, and mine too - but what about you, friend? Is God still waiting in forbearance and long suffering upon you? The day in which we are, the day of God's grace, is extended. It is a wonderful matter - the long-suffering of God has kept open this day to the present moment. Think of that!

Now God, being who He is, could come in in judgment; He could exercise judgment. None could challenge the rightness of that, if God

was to exercise judgment. But, thank God, He is not exercising judgment; the reality of judgment in relation to unsaved souls alive at present has been delayed to this present moment. And the day of opportunity is still open. God in His goodness would operate with you that you might be brought this way of repentance. That is to say, your acknowledgement in reality before God that you fall short. Now I would add that you might have heard it said, 'Well, repentance is simply that you acknowledge that you have done some things that are wrong and you say that you are sorry to God'. No, repentance is more than that; repentance involves that you recognise that there is a divine standard that has been expressed so fully in the Lord Jesus, and as you are compared with that standard, you fall far short. That is God's view. But God does not look upon you and condemn you, friend; thank God for that. But as He looks upon you in your sins, if you remain in them, the question remains for you as to how do you stand compared with that divine standard? God would desire that you might come around to His view of yourself. And it is His goodness that leads you to do so. You might say, 'Is that all? Where does that leave me? That leaves me a hopeless case, does it not?'. But, thank God, as we read in Romans 3, that glorious One, He who *is* the divine standard, the Lord Jesus, has Himself effected that which was necessary in order that you and I might be cleared before God.

Now that is a wonderful thing, is it not? The scripture in Romans 3: 24 speaks of "being justified freely", that is, before God, "by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood". That One, that blessed One, that glorious One, has gone into death and has shed His precious blood. What a work has been effected by Him in obedience to God's will, to enable the sinner to be forgiven and to be justified before God. Only the Lord Jesus was able for it for He was without sin: "in him sin is not", 1 John 3: 5. And what a work it was that He accomplished at the cross. The One that was without sin alone was able to take up the great matter of the clearance before God of our sins and the judgment of sin itself. He alone was able to take them up and resolve those great moral questions that stood out against man. And He has done that, friend, at the cross; He has suffered there, suffered the just for the unjust. I trust you can say that 'He suffered there for me, the unjust'. He suffered and died and His precious blood has been shed. What a matter that is. That blood - God has taken account of it; He is fully satisfied. In the old system for God's earthly people Israel, the blood was placed upon the

mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. This reminds us that God has been fully satisfied in the work of Christ; that God can come out to man in forgiveness and man can approach Him as fully justified in the One who has suffered, has died and has been raised. Every claim has been met before Him and God is able in His grace to come out towards the sinner and justify those that are of the faith of Jesus. "Being justified freely", as it says, "by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood".

Where is your faith, friend? Do you have faith in the Lord Jesus, the One now in glory above, and in His precious blood shed at the cross? You might say you have come to that point where you recognise that before God you are a sinner; you have fallen short of that divine standard; you have fallen far short. What a moment it is to realise that the blessed God, against whom you and I have sinned, has Himself provided the remedy and it is available to you. The One who has fully expressed that divine standard is the One who is available and presented as a Saviour. What a wonderful thing! Now God acts righteously. He acted righteously at the cross and He acts righteously toward you. In the day in which we are, God's righteousness can be yours. It is presented on that basis, the righteousness of God revealed on the principle of faith, Rom 1: 17. As you stretch out in faith, and believe on the Lord Jesus, you are clear before God of all your sins, and justified before Him. How wonderful that is to be clear of all liability and need!

I trust everyone here has stretched out in faith and received the Lord Jesus. There are two necessities I have spoken about for you to arrive at and experience the blessing. I make no apology for speaking about them. How fundamental they are. May none of us be lulled into a sense of false security, or into the idea that just acceding to these things in our minds, is sufficient: no, it is *not* sufficient. The way that *is* sufficient, that is needed, is available to you, requiring as it does these two great matters so fully and clearly presented in the scriptures "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus", Acts 20: 21. They are essential, fundamental and most precious to experience. Your salvation from your sins, dear friend, rests in nothing else than that. The goodness of God is abounding towards you now. Now is the accepted time. There is opportunity given for any that may be uncertain or unsure to come that way. The divine standard is there in

that glorious One, our Lord Jesus Christ! We all fall short of it. But as acknowledging that in deep reality before God, a way of salvation is freely available to us in the One who not only is the divine standard, but is also the Saviour of sinners. It is an opportunity full of divine grace and it is available to everyone of us now.

Now in closing I just want to say that the day of judgment is coming. What a solemn time that will be. The One that I have sought to present to you, the One that has expressed the divine standard, is the One that will take up the reins of government and will also act in judgment. Only He is able for it. Morally, He is the only one qualified to take up everything for God, and He will take up all things for Him. He will take up the matter of judgment; all judgment has been given into the hand of the Son, John 5: 22. And there will be a day when those still in their sins will be judged by Him - what a solemn prospect that is for any unsaved. I trust none here will stand before Him there in that day of judgment. I am referring to that awful matter of the great white throne before which the unsaved will appear, Rev 20: 11. What a day, what a solemn day that will be. I trust none here will be careless as to that matter, because as I have said, now is the day of opportunity, the day of God's grace. I do not know how long it will continue; God knows.

May everyone here know what it is to avail themselves of the opportunity and move in reality in the acknowledgment of what they are before God; and embrace by faith that One, the Lord Jesus, by faith in whom, we are justified fully before God. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Sunbury

17th February 2017

KNOWING THE SON OF GOD

John C Gray

John 9: 1-3, 6, 7, 18-21, 24-38

I was thinking of the greatness of what it is to come to know the Son of God, and the steps that it takes to reach that. The history of this man is well-known and often used, but we must apply it to ourselves to see how we work out our spiritual history. The disciples are often like ourselves; we look at things historically and naturally, “who sinned, this man or his parents ...?”, but that is looking at the thing naturally. The Lord is intent on securing what is of the work of God. It is an exercise, and we are thankful that in this place and in this area that that has been encouraged and deepened in the present course of things. If there is conflict in the testimony, the Lord gives something to deepen our spiritual capacity and therefore add something to us: it will shine in the day to come. We go on patiently, but we need to see that we arrive at something specific, and in this chapter what is arrived at is the knowledge of the Son of God.

The work goes on: the Lord “spat on the ground and made mud of the spittle, and put the mud, as ointment, on his eyes. And he said to him, Go, wash”. There is a man here who was obedient; it is evident that God was working. The Lord says, “but that the works of God should be manifested in him”. Now that is a challenge for each one of us as to “the works of God” being “manifested” in us, and it is so that progress will be made as we appreciate Christ in all His greatness and what He has done for us. The greatness of His stoop in incarnation is the first thing; the spittle draws attention to that. John’s gospel says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (chap 1: 1), and then it says, “And the Word became flesh” (v 14); that is, that He has come into conditions where He can draw near to us and be with us. What a wonderful matter that is: the Son of God with us! That is who was there, and this man, although he is lacking in knowledge in his initial steps of spiritual growth, clung on to the fact that here was a Man who had given him his sight. How great that the light of God had shone in his heart, and that was the first step in his salvation!

But then he goes on because the parents, quite naturally, do not want to be excommunicated; so they say he will speak for himself, “ask *him*”. So we get this statement, “He answered therefore, If he is sinful I know not. One thing I know, that, being blind before, now I see”. That

is, he clings on to the fact that he had been saved by Christ and was making progress in relation to the understanding of what Christ had done to him.

But, as we go on, we find that the Pharisees ask him twice; they are perplexed; they cannot fathom this work of God in a man who was previously blind. We have all been morally blind. We come to that in the gospel, of course, and God gives light and we see and come into clear vision of what Christ has done in His work at the cross, and His being buried and raised again and glorified, the Spirit coming to make it real in our souls as to what has actually happened. If anybody knew Christ in the flesh, "yet now we know him thus no longer", 2 Cor 5: 16. We know Him in the capacity in which the Spirit reveals Him, bringing in the powerful idea that we are entering into a spiritual realm, and soon we are going to have spiritual bodies to fill that out, but in the meantime it makes no difference that we are in bodies of flesh and blood, and which are failing, because the work of God in the believer stands by itself in all its greatness and glory, and we see that in this man, and it goes on.

When the Pharisees ask him a second time, he begins to take issue with them. They had said, "we know that this man is sinful": what a thing to say about the Lord Jesus! They had no appreciation at all, and he begins to take up an attitude of maintaining defence of the testimony, because when they railed at him he says, "Now in this is a wonderful thing, that ye do not know whence he is, and he has opened mine eyes. But we know that God does not hear sinners; but if any one be God-fearing, and do his will, him he hears. Since time was, it has not been heard that any one opened the eyes of one born blind. If this man were not of God he would be able to do nothing". Wonderful thing now: he is able to give a testimony. The work of God in him is strong enough to bear testimony to these people who thought they knew everything about the law of Moses, and they probably did know in the theory of it, but they did not understand that what Moses spoke of was in type what Christ was Himself, so they were really blind. The Lord says that at the end but He leaves the door open that they should still see.

Then this man is excommunicated on that account, and as soon as we are able to leave what is religious and formal, then we will have a revelation of the Son of God, and that is what I wanted to come to, the greatness of what Paul says, "But when God ... was pleased to reveal his Son in me", Gal 1: 15, 16. "In me", not 'reveal His Son to me' that

was one thing - but revealed his Son "in me". That is what this man came to. Now it is a great thing when we come to it, I believe, and I would like to understand it more fully, beloved brethren, that we come to the knowledge of the Son of God; that is what we had as to "the full-grown man"; "the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man", Eph 4: 13.

How wonderful it is then that Paul was the one who immediately after his sight was restored "preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God", Acts 9: 20. How quickly he arrived at that in his soul! You say that this man took a while to arrive at things, and we all do. We have to say that we are slow learners, but God is patient with us, and the Spirit is patient with us that we should come to it that once we have left all this religious and formal background that relates to Christendom, which all of us have a judgment of, then the Lord finds him and reveals Himself as the Son of God. Wonderful thing that is! The greatness of the One who was here!

If He reveals Himself as the Son of God, it is that there is a Father. The Son of God involves that there is a Father, and making that known was the mission of the Lord Jesus. John's gospel particularly brings that out to reveal God as Father, and only the Son can reveal God as Father. It is a wonderful thing to come to that. It is important therefore that we have not only an affection for Christ who has died for us and risen again and been glorified, and an appreciation that He is able to help us in testimony and in every exigency of the way as High Priest, and maybe even as Patron, but that we understand Him as the Son of God because He will help us in our understanding and response in divine service. The sisters may say, 'We say nothing', but you enter into it, beloved sisters, in spirit, and it is very important to follow how the brothers respond, because the Spirit is with them in response. The sisters are together, it makes the singing richer, and it makes the response from the brothers richer. We need therefore to be together in the matter that there might be a unified response because spiritually sisters are sons of God just as the brothers are.

The Lord replied when the Sadducees, who said there is no resurrection, asked about the woman marrying seven brothers, which of them was going to be her husband, that they "are as angels of God", Matt 22: 30. It is a spiritual world where the sons of God are responding, one and the same, and the knowledge of the Son of God brings us into that because it helps us to understand that God is our

Father, and that is an area of love: “the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me”, Gal 2: 20. We need to understand the depth of that.

No matter what trouble comes to you, beloved brother and sister, the Son of God is there as the help and the entrance into what is spiritual and living, the knowledge of the Father. “The Father himself has affection for you”, John 16: 27. Think of what the Lord says about the Father's care: one sparrow “shall not fall to the ground without your Father”, Matt 10: 29! Does He not therefore care for you? Of course, He does. Far more! So the knowledge of the Son of God not only induces worship in our hearts because of who He is in His Person, but His entrance into manhood as the Son of God - He is never spoken of as the Son of God before entering into manhood - would give us to come to see the glory of who the Father is, and worship follows, and this man comes into a wonderful area.

Of course, in the next chapter, as we have often been taught, we can say he is there as part of the flock, and so are we, part of the flock: “and there shall be one flock, one shepherd”, v 16. How great that is! What an area that is that we were speaking of recently, as to the functioning of the body, the secret side of the assembly, the functioning side inwardly that makes way for what the assembly can do, and what it does do.

May our hearts be encouraged to come to the knowledge of the Son of God that it may enrich us and help us in divine service for His Name's sake!

Word in meeting for ministry in Grangemouth

5th June 2018

OIL AS A FIGURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Alistair M Brown

1 Kings 17: 10-16

Psalm 92: 10

Leviticus 2: 4 (footnote 'k' to “fine flour mingled with oil”, which refers back to Psalm 92)

I have been thinking about these two scriptures since the weekend, dear brethren, since in Scripture oil frequently refers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was brought before us as living water springing up, and as streams and rivers of water. Oil is a different type of the Holy Spirit, but it gives a view of the same blessed Person. One of the exercises that I have found raised in my heart by what we considered is whether I value the Holy Spirit enough. This scripture in 1 Kings 17 is about a woman who speaks of “a little oil”: “I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse”. We are thinking of oil as representing the Spirit: I wonder if I am like the woman, thinking of the resource of the Holy Spirit as something rather small, something I might even overlook. This woman perhaps thought in that way. She had oil - if we apply that to believers, she had the Holy Spirit; but she saw it as “little”, and she saw it as running out. But Elijah brings in God's view. He assures her that if she makes that cake for him first - we might think of that as the woman providing for the Lord, putting the Lord first, getting her priorities right - then the supply of the Spirit would continue for the whole year and would preserve life for the whole cycle of seasons. I think that is a lesson for the believer; as we have faith to rely upon the Spirit and to draw upon Him, we find that there is a supply there.

One feature of the Holy Spirit, who, as we know and as we were reminded at the weekend, is a blessed divine Person in glory and power, is that His activities are not in general marked by assertiveness. He can be grieved; He can be quenched. If we regard Him as unimportant or secondary, He can be grieved and, if grieved, He retreats. I do not think that normally the Spirit asserts and imposes Himself on the believer. The Spirit operates in such a way that we have to make room for Him. The scripture speaks about sowing to Him (Gal 6: 8), which includes making room for Him. We also have to draw upon Him and so use Him. If we are not exercised to use Him, the Spirit will not step forward and insist on being used, just to be simple about it, but if we use Him, we find that He is there. If we use Him one day and feel the benefit of that, we will find that He is there the next day too. I

challenge myself as I say this whether I go to the Holy Spirit within me for help or for enlightenment or whatever the need might be. One feature of the Spirit's service is its versatility; we can speak to the Spirit about whatever we need. It may be that we are then prompted to make a request of the Lord Jesus or to make a request of the Father, but we can go to the Spirit because He is the divine Person who indwells the believer and He is therefore available.

How available this oil was to the woman: it was in a cruse. She had provided the cruse; the cruse, in a sense, refers to herself. In any case, it was available to her in the house. She also had a handful of meal, "a handful of meal in a barrel". That would speak of some appreciation in a believer's soul of the Lord Jesus. It was a small appreciation, but when combined with what the oil speaks of, it formed the nourishment that was able to sustain this woman and her son and Elijah, the whole household, for a year.

I would encourage myself and all of us to depend upon and to draw upon the Holy Spirit day by day. The apostle Paul speaks to the Philippians about "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", chap 1: 19. It is not that you get a year's supply of the Spirit's help in one go, and you live on that, but it is fresh every day: that is the sense. And as this woman poured oil out of that cruse every day, she might wonder if there was going to be enough for the day, and there always was. It is like "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ".

Psalms 92 draws attention to the freshness of the oil and its invigorating character. The oil poured out of the cruse every day was fresh oil. The oil was not stale; it was new every day. "The supply of the Spirit" is new every day. It is the same blessed Person and it is fresh, and one of the results of the freshness of the Holy Spirit's service to us as believers, as we appeal to Him and use Him, draw upon Him and call upon Him, is that it invigorates us. The Spirit is invigorating and spiritually strengthening. The psalmist here says, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil". The translator's footnote *k* to Leviticus 2: 4, which opens out this verse in Psalm 92, says 'his whole system is invigorated and strengthened by it: it formed his strength'. Well, that is a challenge. I suggest that this is the normal service of the Holy Spirit - to spiritually invigorate believers in whom He dwells, those who love the Lord Jesus and who have Him as the Object of their affections and their minds. He is the One that we put first in our lives. The Holy Spirit loves to strengthen and invigorate such persons. You see that in dear elderly saints who are physically weak, and even approaching the end of their

lives. The Spirit within them invigorates them spiritually, gives them spiritual impressions which they are able to impart to others. That would be evidence of a person spiritually invigorated, drawing daily on "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", and we know brethren like that; they are amongst us. They are an example to us, even in their old age, "full of sap and green", Ps 92: 14. That is evidence of the invigorating power of the Holy Spirit.

And then there is strength, which goes with vigour, strength to resist what is not right, but also strength to carry forward what is according to Christ, to receive and to impart living impressions of that One. Vigour and strength are associated with life. Just as that woman and her household were maintained alive through the supply of the oil for a whole year, so we, as believers, are to be kept in life, vigour and strength through depending upon and drawing upon the Holy Spirit.

What a resource He is! How easy it is to undervalue the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, but what a wonderful resource He is, a divine Person within the believer. He could not be nearer to us because He indwells, thus forming a link with the spirit of the believer. The Holy Spirit's connection with us is through our spirits, and He invigorates, strengthens and quickens our spirits thus causing us to live spiritually. What a blessed matter it is! What a resource we have, beloved brethren! How readily available He is for us to make use of, to appreciate, to be thankful to, and to rejoice in.

May these few thoughts be for our encouragement!

Word in meeting for ministry in Grangemouth

4th September 2018

NOTE - The Lord has been pleased to take our sister Priscilla White, who served the publishers of both series of A Word in its Season for many years by packing the magazines for distribution ("she also has been a helper of many").