

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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MJK The exercise laid upon me for this occasion is here in Acts 16: 15. I was particularly interested in taking up the theme, "If ye have judged me to be faithful". So, I read in 1 Samuel 7 and 2 Samuel 6 about two households; one is the house of Abinadab, and the other is the house of Obed-Edom. These two households represent a very distinct difference in faithfulness. We see that the ark was carried over to Abinadab's house, and it seems that everything there is in right order, outwardly. It is a house on a hill; Kirjath-jearim might be considered to have a privileged position, and there, Eleazer was hallowed to keep the ark. I am particularly interested in this thought of, "If thou hast judged me to be faithful", that we would find the ark, or the character of the ark (Christ) in our house. But here, there is something interesting in this thought, "keep the ark". I ask the brethren's help because it is just a thought that has been impressed upon my own soul, but I think it goes along with what we read in 2 Samuel 6, where it says that David took thirty thousand men with him. My understanding is that those might be footmen or soldiers. The thought of keeping the ark by Eleazer, goes along with that thought; it is merely a military thought, and there was no blessing in that. This thought continues what was seen in the ark moving about amongst the Philistines; but it did not then need the help of any army. Dagon fell down before the ark; he was picked up and then he fell down again the next day; his head broke off, and his hands broke off. The ark was moved about among the five cities of the Philistines, and the men in each place got hemorrhoids, and men died, 1 Sam 5. Then you see that Abinadab takes it, and hallows his son and makes him a keeper of the ark. But, when you get to Obed-Edom there is not the thought of being a keeper. There is a man in the house of Abinadab that has to die; there was no respect for the ark of God in the house of Abinadab. Sadly Abinadab had enough influence that he even influenced David and they place the ark on a cart with his sons driving it; it says that David went with all the people, but it does not say that he took up the ark with joy. But, when he brought it from Obed-Edom's house it says he took it with joy. We find that Obed-Edom's house is

beside the threshing floor; I think that suggests what makes that house faithful and worthy. As Lydia says, "If thou hast judged me to be faithful"; Obed-Edom's house was judged to be faithful because there was separation from evil there, and therefore there was blessing because he revered the ark, a picture of Christ. I believe we could say he had perfect confidence and perfect respect and thus was bowed down in humility before what speaks to us of Christ, and blessing comes out. Abinadab's unfaithfulness results in the loss of a son; Obed-Edom's faithfulness yields the blessing of sixty-two sons that serve in the house of God, 1 Chron 26: 8. What a difference there is when there is blessing that comes in. Does that commend itself?

SWD I think that is very fine indeed, to consider our valuation of the Lord Jesus. It is interesting that Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts", Eph 3: 17. Is that similar?

MJK I think that is very helpful because if we find Him dwelling in our hearts, then there is a touch of headship, being under the influence of the Lord in relation to these things too. But then, the matter comes into our houses, and everything is governed by the ark. Think of the thought of the ark being set in Obed-Edom's house - I am not particularly interested in spending a lot of time on Abinadab's house, but just to show the contrast. Outwardly things could be all right, but when you come to Obed-Edom's house it is what is inward, Christ dwelling "in your hearts". There is not much said about Obed-Edom - a Gittite, maybe associated with one of the cities of the Philistines, but he is a Levite; you see that; he is amongst the singers (1 Chron 15: 16-18), and he had sixty-two sons that served. What more blessing could come out of the household than to have sixty-two sons serving in the house of God? John says, "I have no greater joy than these things that I hear of my children walking in the truth", 3 John 4.

HJK I would just like to add to what you said about Lydia. She says, "If ye have judged me to be faithful **to the Lord**". One might be faithful even to the brethren in a sense, but it says, "be faithful to the Lord". I think we see that when they went to move the ark the first time, they were seeking to be faithful, but it was not to the Lord. You can help us by telling us where they got that idea of putting it on a cart.

MJK Of course, that is helpful; it is indeed to the Lord. It is interesting, and I had not noticed it before, but the Philistines put the ark on the new

cart, and here we find that David had a *new* cart. I think the unfaithfulness came from Abinadab's house, a man who had assumed a priestly character outwardly. I do not know that he was a priest; he had been given a priestly function, and his house was in the right place, it was on the hill; everything appeared to be right. But I suggest that when David sought counsel, he got counsel from Abinadab's house; and we see that he falls far short; there is no joy. He played, and all those things, but it does not say that there was joy in relation to moving the ark the first time. As you say, there was a faithful thought, but it was not faithfulness as in inquiring before the Lord. David goes back, as we see in 1 Chronicles, and he sees that the Levites are the ones to carry the ark; he gets light now, and he gets that because of one man's faithfulness. Obed-Edom was faithful in his house. We see that, although David may have been misled by one man, he comes back and he is given strength because of the faithfulness of a man so insignificant as Obed-Edom.

RG It is sad today that so many Christians are not listening to what Paul has to say, especially bearing in mind what was just said about Lydia. Her faithfulness came through what Paul had said to her. That verse we read says, "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul". Unfortunately, today, Paul's ministry is in chains, but it is important to see that if we do not listen to what comes through Paul, the great teacher of the assembly, then we are in danger of losing ground, and not being faithful to the Lord. What do you say about that?

MJK I think that is helpful, because my exercise is that these things are first given up in the household. Once faithfulness is given up in the household then you see that headship has not its proper place, and undermines the whole thought of the assembly as being under the headship of Christ. That is what Paul brings in, that we would be brought into what is under the headship of Christ. That is the direction in relation to the body. Does that go along with your thought?

RG You bring back something that my father always drummed into us, that Christianity begins at home.

MJK That is right. That is particularly what I had thought. That is, that these things *must* begin at home. If you look at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 11, they must begin with God. And then it comes down, and you see the whole thing working out in headship in relation to the

way that the whole of the house is operated.

HJK I believe we could say that when one gets away from the apostle Paul's teaching the first thing that is given up is headship, is it not? You notice that the covering of the sisters is one thing that is given up, and it goes on from there! So, what you say is very helpful in connection with our homes. You mentioned that new cart; they were trying to be faithful in bringing the ark back, but it was on their terms; it is very typical of the systems in which man in the flesh operates, to have, shall we say, an order in which they say they would worship. But, God has an order, and the Levites alone were to bear the ark on their shoulders. So, we want to be careful where we get our ideas from, because that idea comes from the Philistines. The Philistines suggest those who want to enjoy the privileges of Christianity without the divine centre.

MJK I think it might be helpful in view of what has been brought up, that we see that the testimony of Christ can only be carried by that which is living. I think that is the thought in relation to the Levites carrying the ark, that it is that which is associated with what God has set up; and in today's terms, it is by persons who have been saved, obviously, and brought into the knowledge of the truth, and are filled by the power of the Spirit of God. That is the kind of persons that can carry the testimony.

GMC Is that why we get the thought of abiding? Does Lydia come in and abide? Our way of life is not something that we just touch once a week, but it is abiding in these things. Would that be right?

MJK I appreciate that because there is a condition suited in which the Spirit of God can find rest. I think of what it says in relation to the dove; she goes out and when she comes back she brings an olive leaf, it shows that now she can go and abide because there is life there. The next time she goes out she does not return, Gen 8: 8-12. We find that, as there is faithfulness to the Lord, there are conditions suited on which there can be an abiding by the Spirit of God, so that we might answer to the ark of Jehovah. Mr Raven says 'That is one of the wonderful things of the ark of the covenant. God has been glorified in Christ. It is said, "Thy law is within my heart"... We are conscious that all is there...You have no right to be there if you do not know these things in experience; they are the principles and means of God's ways with us in grace down here. If you do not understand them, you have no business in the holiest'. If we do not understand the three things in the ark, we cannot

enter in to the holiest. That helps in relation to what you are saying, that those are the conditions on which the Spirit of God can abide in the soul.

GMC I was just thinking that it is not that we take the ark up on the Lord's day and then put it back for the rest of the week.

MJK No, as I think was touched on, it would abide in the assembly, but the character of it comes from our household. And that is what brings character, even to the breaking of bread and the service of God.

KDD Do you think that has to do with your first scripture, as to Lydia: it says, "And when she had been baptised and her house"?

MJK Exactly.

KDD Conditions were such, as was said: "come into my house and abide there"; it was an area that was suitable and baptism had preceded that.

MJK One thing that struck me in relation to baptism there with Lydia's house, and in connection with my exercise, is that when it says in Samuel that Uzzah reached out and touched the ark, his life was taken from him; but the answer to that was at the threshing floor. There is not a lot said in relation to Obed-Edom, but Obed-Edom's house is by the threshing floor. Separation is found right there - from evil, from anything that is opposed to God. I think baptism helps; everything is taken care of in the death of Christ, but you see there that his house is in accord with that, so that when the ark is carried in to that house - it is not on the hill - it is just that which has been separated for the love of God.

RNH In relation to what was said about baptism, I was wondering about that being over against the new cart: in Romans we are "baptised unto Christ Jesus", and "have been baptised unto his death", Rom 6: 3. What is in view is walking in newness of life. Is that a line that would be over against man's innovation in the cart?

MJK I think that is good because, as we see, Uzzah loses his life, but there is an answer to it; there is an answer to it immediately; life comes in, and it comes in in the house of Obed-Edom. There is blessing. The blessing is so great that he has sixty-two sons serving in the house of God: what an answer of life in relation to this scene of death! David is upset; he had put confidence in Abinadab's house where the ark had been, maybe sixty or seventy years with no blessing. It says here that it was in his house twenty years, but it was also there the whole time that

Saul was king, was it not? Saul was king forty years. Acts 13: 21. But, yes, it was twenty long years before there was even an answer. Samuel was apparently silent as to it for those long years. As we read in 1 Chronicles, it says that they did not inquire of the ark. David says, "we inquired not of it in the days of Saul". What an answer there is now.

LJG It is interesting as to Lydia, when Paul speaks at the beginning, that it was, "where it was custom for prayer to be, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had assembled", Acts 16: 13. I was thinking as to the order that is there, but what I was thinking particularly is what it says first as to Lydia: she was a seller of purple but it says, "who worshipped God". I was just thinking about putting the Lord first, putting God's things first. She worshipped God; she was subject, not only in her mind, but her heart. I was thinking as to what is inward; the first thing it says as to her is that she worshipped God, and heard, Acts 16: 14.

MJK I think that was the character of Obed-Edom's house, even before the ark was there. Perhaps no one knew it, but God did. And here, when Paul comes, she attended "to the things spoken by Paul", but she was a worshipper even before that.

MG You drew attention to faithfulness in relation to Lydia; I was thinking about faithfulness; it is not only a matter of holding things in right order in a house, but it is also a matter of naming that which is not in order and the ability to eradicate it, do you think? Holding things in love, and righteousness too?

MJK I think that is true faith. Holding things faithfully before God involves that I first have been before God, in affection, and my own soul is set right. Then I can come in and make a right judgment of the ark, which produces worship. But it also gives me a right judgment in relation to the way in which the testimony ought to be carried. It is not to be carried by that which is merely outward, and really of a false pretence, and that which is dead - it even took Uzzah's life - but rather in accord with what is living, and that is that it is carried by the Levites. It does not name which Levites; it was not specific Levites that carried it, but rather it is carried by the whole. It is open for us each to be faithful and rightly carry the ark.

MG It is very encouraging and also very confirming. I had a conversation with another brother only yesterday on this very subject; that shows it is current.

SWD Sometimes we learn negatively. While we have been speaking about the house, it is interesting that David at one point, says, “Although my house be not so before God”, 2 Sam 23: 5. And in relation to the house of Saul getting weaker, David became continually stronger; it does not say his house did. So there was failure there; we learn negatively, do we not?

MJK Yes. Hebrews says, “But no chastening at the time seems to be matter of joy, but of grief, but afterwards yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it”, chap 12: 11. Discipline is not exactly positive, but it has the positive result, and that is the way in which we learn. Christ did not have to learn things that way; there we see a Man in perfection and that is the kind of man we want to have present, you might say, in our house - one that is willing to abide. The power of the Spirit has come in, and has opened up a way “more excellent” (Heb 8: 6), that we might be established and strengthened to go on.

RG You do not get Samuel mentioned between the beginning of 1 Samuel 4 and chapter 7, this chapter. It is very important that he appears at that juncture, and it shows the need for the prophetic word coming through, because if we are going to get help in the household, or local assembly, we must pay attention to the prophetic word from God. I am asking for help; I notice that Samuel appeared now - a very important point. When the ark is in Abinadab's house, it was not really the place for it, but it was there. But then the state was such that it needed Samuel's prophetic speaking to arouse them. What do you say about that?

MJK It is interesting that you mention that, because does not the priesthood more or less die with Eli? When the ark is taken, Eli dies, and the priesthood is more or less gone at that point. It should have been seen in the house of Abinadab; the Philistines only had the ark for seven months. But then Samuel comes in, not so much along priestly lines, but prophetic lines as you mentioned, and that was necessary in order that they might get rid of idolatry. The ark cannot operate for blessing in an area of idolatry, can it?

MTH Going back to your previous comment, I wondered if the house in Luke 24 was along the lines of what you are speaking of, “If ye have judged me to be faithful”. It says they constrained Him, and He stayed there; it has the sense of abiding. What was opened up to them is a

truly affecting thing, and it was because of that whole progression - the constraining Him, Him coming in to stay with them, and what He opened up to them. I wonder if that house was along the same lines.

MJK I like your connection. It says later on, after their time with the Lord, "Was not our heart burning in us" (Luke 24:32), and so I think you could take from that that they were attending to the things of God. In a sense it was negative because they were saddened as not knowing the Lord, but the reality of it was that there was something there in which their hearts were burning and they were desiring to have Christ. It is interesting that they go from their household then, although it does not say exactly whose house it was, but they go back and they find that there are conditions suitable for the Lord to be amongst the brethren. This whole opening up of the resurrection of Christ was coming out. I suppose that was a household in which He would have been free to be there, not in the condition in which He was, but in conditions after the day of Pentecost; it would have been a place that the Spirit of God would be free to abide.

RNH Jerusalem, where they went, was normal, was it not? It was a normal place, and they went "And found the eleven ... saying, The Lord is indeed risen", Luke 24: 33-34,

MJK You are speaking about those going back? You see what has been carried; our brother mentioned the individual side being set right to begin with, and as we take things up, and we understand them individually, then it works out in the household, but then it works out assembly-wise, does it not? There is great joy in seeing these things; even in Corinth. You think of the tremendous sad situation, the evil that was there, but the apostle mentions in 1 Corinthians two households and two individuals, and he attaches himself to what there was; in that way there could be recovery in Corinth, because he could attach himself to what there was, not with what there was not.

MTH I wonder if you would say something, particularly in relation to the ark. We must get to God's valuation of the ark. We have spoken about man's innovations and so on, in relation to what they have in the way they move the ark around, but I wondered if you could say something about getting to God's valuation of the ark?

MJK I would be happy to hear what you are thinking, but in Hebrews 9 it speaks about the three things that are in the ark. I know it has been said that the reason that we must have the ark is because God proved

that man was unable to contain the covenant, see JND Notes and Comments vol 3 p302. And so, God must protect His covenant. The ark comes forth, and it has been said that the ark is actually even greater than David himself. If you look at the three things that were in the ark - the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, I think in those three things that we see God's valuation of the ark. Does that go along with what you are saying?

MTH We get the protection of those things at the end of chapter 6. It says Jehovah "smote among the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of Jehovah" 1 Sam 6: 19. It was the protection of those things within; it may have been, you might say, natural, innocent curiosity, and yet God protects those things within the ark. It was said in ministry as to the ark that Christ has never ceased to be the Ark of God.

MJK Yes, I think that a revelation as to the ark has been opened up now in Hebrew 9, the three things in the ark are revealed. We now have access to Christ in revelation as having come out from the holy of holies, God coming out and us going in; we now have "the new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh" Heb 10: 20. Right from the very beginning Christ contained all of those things in which God was going to make provision for His people that He might be completely satisfied.

SWD "I said, Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will", Heb 10: 7. That is the anti-type, is it not?

MJK Exactly. You see there the fulfilling of the will of God, and not only is it that He is great enough to contain the covenant, He has fulfilled, righteously, every obligation that was laid upon Him in relation to the covenant. What a Man we have to do with!

HJK It makes you think, "if we are unfaithful, *he* abides faithful", 2 Tim 2: 13. Why did the Philistines want the ark? I think they saw the evidence of the work of God in the children of Israel, but when they opened the ark, as was said, they were slain. It is helpful to see that the Lord still abides faithful, even through the unfaithfulness of ourselves. So, He abides faithful, and so He is.

If you look at when the Lord came into this scene, it says of Joseph he was a righteous man, he was just, Matt 1: 19. The next one you find that handled the body of Jesus was in Luke 2: Simeon: it says he was a just man, v 25. The next time you see it is when He was buried

by Joseph and Nicodemus. It says Joseph was just, Luke 23: 51. It is interesting to see that God has committed the keeping of His Son to faithful and just souls today. And so Lydia's house would be a picture of that, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house". And so the idea of the house is to take us on to a setting like John 20, is it not? The Lord is pleased and He comes in. I think these are things that are helpful to our souls in exercises, to see that God remains faithful, even if we may be unfaithful, but we have the privilege of being with Him in connection with His thoughts concerning His Son, and how they are to be handled today.

MJK I was thinking about what you mentioned about the Philistines taking the ark; there are two aspects to the way that happened. One is that the Israelites take the ark out to battle, thinking as it were that, whether I am faithful or not, God will take care of me - so I will take Him out with me. I suppose that is an exercise in what we do. What we do day by day, evening by evening, night by night, whatever it may be; it is an exercise to understand that we are taking the Lord with us. The Philistines, on the other hand, thought that this was an opportunity to subdue Israel, by taking what they perceived to be their power, only to find out that the ark indeed has power and can operate on its own. The ark can operate on its own: God did not need the Israelites; He did not need David's army; He did not need the keeper in Abinadab's house. He was able to operate in judgment because that is the way He can operate in those kinds of conditions; He operated in judgment in relation to the Philistines, and in relation to unfaithfulness and denial of divine power.

RG That is very helpful, because that is what happened with their god; he fell before the ark. That scripture where both his head and the palms of his hands fell has been said to typify the ark moving of itself, out of the Dark Ages. Most important, that movement was solely of the Lord Himself. Is that right?

MJK I think that is helpful, because there you see that the ark moves of itself. You see that the operations of God are there, even though, as you say, there was a time that the ark was never inquired of, in the whole of Saul's reign. And yet, Samuel comes in here, and you get a prophetic touch that is in relation to Samuel's faithfulness to the ark, but not his inquiry in relation to the ark.

RNH I was thinking of when the Lord was going to the cross, and He

says He could have called on more than twelve legions of angels, Matt: 26: 53. And we see particularly in John's gospel the Lord doing things Himself, do you think, in His own power and authority?

MJK Yes, I think that is helpful. I actually had thought of that, at one point, that there He chooses not to bring in judgment although He could have done so. That is in relation to His affection for His own, is it not; that He would go forward, and He would go ahead into death? And we see too that God's hand is not short, because I think Peter cutting off the ear of the high priest's bondman (Matt 26: 51) is similar to David taking thirty-thousand footmen to protect the ark; it is outside the current of God's thoughts: it is unrighteousness. God will operate in the way in which He finds necessary. The exercise is that we might be in accord with that; Obed-Edom was in accord with that, was he not? There he was; he was separate, if I can use the word, from sinners. It was because there he was, right by the threshing floor, that the power comes in for him. What the ark needs is worshippers. That is the kind of house that Obed-Edom had, is it not?

GMC Could you say something about the musical instruments in 2 Samuel in relation to what you are saying? It calls attention to the fact that they are all made of cypress wood, and they come in just before a mark of failure. I am wondering in relation to what was said about the Lord remaining faithful. Do we see that the Spirit shows that there is going to be worship that goes through? Failure comes in, but we get that touch beforehand. Would you say something?

MJK I think like it was mentioned early on that it was not that David was moving exactly in unfaithfulness; he was seeking to be faithful, but he was under wrong influence or teaching; but there was something there for God because of the foundation found in his own heart. I would like to hear your thought, about the cypress wood - I see that as something substantial, and it is going to go through, because cypress or cedar is that which is not susceptible to rotting and that sort of thing. Therefore, I think it is that which, as you say, is substantial, and it will go through. In Chronicles, you get the instruments again, but here in 2 Samuel when David goes back you just get the trumpets, which I think helps and adjust us in relation to worship. The trumpet often brings in the sound of war, but it also brought in the sound of joy. Say something more about your thought in the cypress wood.

GMC I just thought if we did not have that verse about the musical

instruments, that if you had seen the failure that comes in at that point, you would say, 'Well, that is the end of it; there is no point in trying anymore to recover that'. But we have that little glimpse; it is something that is not marked by corruption, but these musical instruments also took a lot of time to make. They did not just pick them up; it was an ongoing process of faith. It comes in just before the failure; that is what I found interesting. I think the trumpets bring in unity also, do they not? They would all gather.

MJK That is helpful. It is interesting that he gathers together all these people, and you see that, in a sense, there is a right exercise, but I do not think there was an appreciation of the death of Christ, even with David. In Abinadab's house, I think there was the thought that *he* was going to take care of the ark, rather than understanding that the ark stood substantially by itself, and that it was to be revered. So, I think that comes through, that David put too much confidence in the way Abinadab handles the ark. Everything after the order of the first man - and the cart would really help to show that David was along those lines - had to be put to death. Uzzah reaches out and touches that which is living, only to find that it produces death in relation to everything that is of the first order. Then David comes a second time to get the ark from Obed-Edom and he comes in repentance and under the authority of the ark as a worshipper bringing with him in abundance bullocks and rams enough for a sweet smelling odour to go up to Jehovah.

HJK The first thing mentioned there is the harp. It is interesting to see that when David played the harp the evil spirit left Saul. I think that is one of the first things in coming together in this sense, that the evil spirit must be subdued. And then these other instruments will bring forth praise and worship along with it, but things must be in order.

GMC I suppose the many different instruments mentioned could be linked to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5.

PDB Just as our brother was speaking there, I was thinking how if there is any root of bitterness it can create a sense of disharmony as to ourselves and our ability to worship properly. I wondered if that might be a bit of a contrast and negative, but it can be something we all have to be tested with, any root of bitterness, but that we would have our hearts tuned to be able to worship in a way that is suitable.

MJK Yes, that is the thing about a man like David; he fails many times, but it does not take him long to get adjusted. "And David was indignant

because Jehovah had made a breach upon Uzzah". I think that is that root of bitterness you are speaking of, but you see that that too can be adjusted in the presence of God. He gets adjusted because he sees another man, who has taken up with the ark, and there is blessing in his house. And because of the blessing in Obed-Edom's house the whole of Israel comes into blessing. Does that go along with what you are saying?

MTH So the stringed instruments that have been mentioned such as the harp, are particularly those that need constant tuning. It is interesting then that tuning in the right hands has its perfect results. I was thinking about what is said at the very end of that wonderful section in Habakkuk; it says, "To the chief Musician", but it is, "On my stringed instruments", chap 3: 19. The chief Musician is the one tuning those stringed instruments that there would be that perfect result.

MJK Do you connect the thought of the instruments with ourselves? Is that fair?

SWD "... which I made, said David", 1 Chron 23: 5.

MJK And therefore each comes into tune in relation to the ear of the maker, if you will. So everything is in accord with the will of God, is it not?

MTH Full circle, so to speak, to your first scripture. I have been thinking about faith, and then faithfulness. It is, "If you have judged me to be **faithful**". You think of that wonderful chapter Hebrews 11; it starts off with what faith is, by definition, but then all of those 'by faiths'- that is *faithful*. And so, this is what we are really speaking about, even in this constant tuning; those are steps of faith. You can see the constant movement and process that is gone through in persons throughout that chapter; it is by faith; that is faithfulness. Faith, by definition, is at the beginning of that chapter, and that is something God has given to each, a measure of faith, but then to move by faith is what can be judged in Acts 16.

MJK So the thought that you are mentioning is that *faithful* is the activity of faith at work, and that is honourable to God; that is a sweet smelling odour going up. The alabaster box would bring us a similar thought as to what is found in Lydia's house. Paul is willing to abide there; the odour of the ointment has filled the house that had been found to be "faithful to the Lord." Now it is the glory of Christ that we are

taken up with.

HJK Why do you not say a little bit more about what David learned by Uzzah's death, and then, how did he learn to know to carry the ark with the Levites?

MJK I think we see that David, throughout his life, had many instances where he failed, but he was a man marked by prayer in those instances. And so here, even though he was indignant, he went and got before the Lord in relation to it. But then it was told him - others were watching too as to what was going to happen with this matter with the ark because he had brought all Israel into this whole matter of bringing it back - and they see blessing coming out of the house of Obed-Edom, and I think, David's focus has changed from the character of unfaithfulness that Abinadab's house had taken up with the ark, and was changed to the focus of the character of faithfulness with which Obed-Edom's house had taken up the ark. And that was in faithfulness and separation. It was apart from what the Philistines had done, and everything that had pertained to the flesh; death had brought in the end to the first order of things; Obed-Edom had come into that already. So then his faithfulness brings David over to the side of the living.

KDD It was just referred to, and I was just looking at it in 1 Chronicles 15: 2 that you read, where David says, "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites, for them has Jehovah chosen". Later in the chapter it says, "And it came to pass, when **God** helped the Levites that bore the ark". It is a wonderful thing to be conscious of having divine help in the exercises, in what you are doing or going through, is it not?

MJK Excellent thought: I had actually thought to possibly read it, but I did not want to read too much. In Samuel, when they picked up the ark, at six paces they sacrificed; and I think this brings in such a fine example of what produces worship in the heart. And when they sacrificed, as you read in 1 Chronicles it says, "And it came to pass when God helped the Levites that bore the ark of the covenant of Jehovah that they sacrificed seven bullocks and seven rams". If we connect the two scriptures, I think you can see that they sacrificed seven bullocks and seven rams by the help of God.

KDD As conscious of that help, there should be response in my heart, should there not? That is what is in mind really; it is what is due to God, is it not?

MJK That is what the sacrifice is; it has produced worship. First you have David ordering the carrying of the ark, carrying the testimony of God, the testimony of Christ on a cart, on that which was not living. Then the Levites under David's direction bore the ark and at six paces, he is sacrificing to God, and giving praise and worship to God. Then it comes in in blessing in relation to the whole of Israel. It is absolutely beautiful.

LJG I was thinking as to the heart. Samuel has to tell the people, Israel, to return to Jehovah; he speaks to them as to their hearts twice in that section in 1 Samuel. I was thinking of what is unifying in Acts 2, "And every day, being constantly in the temple with one accord, and breaking bread in the house, they received their food with simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people; and the Lord added to the assembly daily those that were to be saved", Acts 2: 46-47. I was thinking again as to this matter of our hearts; so there is worship and there is response that comes from that really because of our appreciation of God, and of the ark, of Christ Himself.

MJK I suppose that, if we look at what happened at the day of Pentecost, and we see how great a work it was, and how the assembly was growing, we might be a little disappointed in the day that we live in, but these things are going on today; there is a result for God every day! I think that the first thing that was adjusted, as was mentioned in relation to Samuel coming in, was idolatry. When the Philistines returned the ark, the first thing that was condemned in the land of the Philistines was idolatry. And so those things are set aside; they ought to be set aside in our own households so that what is present, and what is enjoyed in each household is that which is in accord with the Person of Christ. Now idolatry cannot have a place, because the two cannot co-exist. And there, you see that there is a great result for God; they are all together, and they worship.

LJG Earlier with David there was not that joy, but then when what is of man is removed, as you just mentioned as to the idolatry, then there is joy and there is liberty; so it is not a system of bondage, but it is the opposite of that. The Spirit can operate.

RNH I was thinking in relation to the instruments. In relation to what was just said, it says in 1 Corinthians 12, "Ye know that when ye were of the nations ye were led away to dumb idols, in whatever way ye might be led", v 2. Then the apostle brings in the manifestation of the Spirit,

the fact of the one Spirit, one Lord, and one God who operates all in all, v 4-6. I was thinking that what follows in that chapter may relate to the individual side, to the instruments, how God operates. It brings in what is cohesive really, in the body. Is that somewhat in line?

MJK I think that is excellent. Whether it is individually, or household-wise, or collectively, idolatry defiles, and I think the worst part about it is that it is connected with the affections. Idolatry destroys our love for Christ, but it also destroys our love for one another. It cannot come in and co-exist with the Spirit of God. But the Spirit of God is along the lines of manifestation, particularly when you get to the house of Obed-Edom. The ark can carry judgment with it, as it did with the Philistines; but when it comes to Obed-Edom's house, it carries with it the thought of love. Thus then the Spirit of God can fill the persons, and there is a manifestation of heavenly light that opens up in such a way that now there are worshippers, and the assembly of God comes to light that there might be an answer for the heart of Christ. Is that right? Am I connecting with what you are saying?

RNH Maybe just help us as to what idolatry is today.

MJK Well, it can be a lot of things, can it not? I think the first thing I would do, in seeing for my own self what idolatry is, is stop and say, 'What is it that I have affection for, that is not affection for Christ?' and test if that is something that is not in accord with the will of God. It is right for instance to love your wife - so we have to be careful in what we say - but if I have something that is taking up my time that is not in accord with the will of God - it might be something that is perfectly fine as far as any question of moral evil goes, but it occupies my time so that I have none for Christ - then I lose my desire for the love of God because I have been taken away into a realm which has no desire for the love of God.

RG It is very interesting you are speaking about idolatry: it comes to my mind in John 17: 3 that the Lord says there, "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God", which is deliverance from idolatry. Then it says, "and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent", which is deliverance from lawlessness. It epitomises these thoughts so well in that one verse. I understand the children of Israel learned idolatry in Egypt, and unfortunately it can cling to us if we do not watch what we are doing. What do you say?

MJK The other thing that they find about idolatry is that it is associated

with a dead system; that is why it is associated with Egypt, is it not? That system is not going to go through. "The temporary pleasure of sin" is connected with Egypt, is it not? But then God comes in: God is love; God is light, and life is in Christ Jesus. So when God comes in it completely sets aside that which is after the first order of things that cannot go through. Now you can have enjoyment in something that is going to go through to glory.

RG In 1 Chronicles 15: 25 we might make an application but might need help. It says, "David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the house of Obed-Edom with joy". To make an application, tomorrow morning we should come up from our households with joy, and we will enter into what is expanded on here in the service of song and the service of praise. What would you say about that?

MJK Death does not carry with it joy; that is connected with the ark being carried by a new cart and with Uzzah. Here you see that there is a change; David brings it up not by footmen and soldiers, but he brings it up by a living system. The levitical system is that which is living and answers in particular to the great high Priest. The Levites are those who answer to the priests, are they not? And so therefore we come from the house. Where is joy found? It is found in a living system and in a living Man.

RG That is very good; we come up joyful to the Supper.

MJK Yes, because the answer to the end of that is eternal life. It is the glory of heaven being brought in in a Man.

BB I was thinking of what is taught in Galatians and you just brought out, what is brought out in a living new way in Christ. We can go back, in Galatians, and ask whether Christ lives in me. As our brother has just brought out, it truly should be alive in each of us tomorrow morning, and therefore carry forth throughout the week, as was mentioned earlier in the discussion. This living Christ gives security, and faithfulness as marked by that earlier, carrying on with God's things.

MJK That is helpful because Christ living in me is me carrying the ark. And it is the testimony of God found in us. That is what brings joy now in a living way, because we must have the Spirit in order to be those who can have Christ in us. And that is carrying the ark, the testimony of God.

MG I was also just thinking too about what our brother drew attention

to about tomorrow morning. In the scripture here we have Chenaniah; he is the chief of the music of the singers, 1 Chron 15: 27. There is a refined thought there, is there not? There is what is skilful in one and another, the players coming together. It is a refined thought; it is what answers to the heart of God, do you think?

MJK Yes; if we read that whole of chapter 15 we find Obed-Edom is one of those - beautiful thought!

Reading at a fellowship meeting in Calgary

18th February 2018

List of initials:-

B Beck, Aberdeen ID; P D Brien, Calgary; G M Chellberg, Wheaton;
K D Drever, Calgary; S W Drever, Calgary; M Gardiner, Vancouver;
L J Gray, Calgary; R Gray, Calgary; R N Hesterman, Beachville, ONT;
M T Holland, Calgary; H J Klassen, Aberdeen ID;
M J Klassen, Aberdeen ID

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS

John Speirs

John 19: 33-35

1 Peter 1: 18-20 (to “world”)

Matthew 26: 28

Acts 20: 28

Hebrews 10: 19-25

I would like to speak, dear hearers, about the blood of Jesus. If I am going to speak about the blood of Jesus, I must first speak about Jesus Himself. Who is He? And why, where we read in John's gospel, is He seen crucified on a cross at Calvary? The Lord Jesus in His Person is God, and will always remain that, but He became a Man, He came into manhood's form to draw near to men, women and children like you and me. In His life here, the Lord Jesus always did what was good, delighting God with every step, never thinking a wrong thought, never taking a wrong step, never offending anyone, never hurting anyone. How different to me, the sinner! Think of heaven's delight in His whole life, always doing the things that pleased God. Why then, where we have read, is He on the cross? Why have men put Him there? Beloved, my sins put Him there. Can you say that for yourself that your sins put Him there? The only part I had at the cross of Jesus was my sins, J N Darby vol 16 p79. He had to go that way because God loved His creature; His love is towards man; His love is towards you. He does not want you to remain at a distance from Him because of your sins. We are all sinners, everyone here, and everyone in this town, and everyone in the world; we are all sinners, and I think we know that if we are honest. We are sinners, but God wants us to become saved sinners, and faith in the blood of Jesus is the only way by which you can become a saved sinner and have peace with God. So it says, “but coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead ...”. The Lord Jesus is the One who, because of who He is in His Person, had originated life itself; He created the universe; He gave life to creatures; yet it says, “when they saw that he was already dead”. How can it be,

The Lord of Glory crucified -

The Lord of Life Himself has died!

(Hymn 40)?

Beloved, such was the righteous requirement of God that if there was to be forgiveness for you and for me there had to be a sacrifice. There had been sacrifices before. Remember in the Old

Testament the volume of blood which had been shed; it was not sufficient. The blood of Jesus *is* sufficient. It is sufficient to cover you and me and everyone else who puts their trust in it. You can have peace with God on this basis and on this basis alone.

It says, “they did not break his legs”. You see, the scripture must be fulfilled:

He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken, (Ps 34: 20);

God sees to that, “but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water”. Jesus was already dead; He had already endured sufferings at the hands of man, the unthinkable cruelty of man against the spotless Victim, “he was led as a lamb to the slaughter”, Isa 53: 7. But think, too, of His sufferings from God, when there was darkness over the whole land for three hours. The scripture says that He made Him to be sin for us (2 Cor 5: 21). You can hardly imagine this but it was required if there was to be any hope for you and me, and God allowed that. God forsook Him there in those hours of darkness. The wrath of God was poured upon Him, He had taken that cup from the Father. And then He died, He gave up His spirit, and then His blood was shed. Peter tells us what kind of blood it is. This is incomparable blood, friend, “blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”. Jesus did no sin; He knew no sin, “in Him sin is not” (1 John 3: 5); He is the absolutely sinless One, the only Man who was ever so: that is the One whose blood had to be shed. So Peter speaks of it here, “by precious blood, as a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world”. Beloved, Peter could call it “precious blood”. How about you? Is it precious to you? Can you -

... point to the atoning blood

And say, This made my peace with God (Hymn 357)?

That would make it precious to you, would it not, to know that your eternal peace with God has been secured by it? How precious! May it become ever more precious to each one of us! Do not become hardened, do not become like the world, do not become disaffected or dissatisfied. Have your hearts softened afresh tonight by the contemplation that, as we sang in our hymn, the blood of Jesus was “Shed for me” (Hymn 167).

That is why I read in Matthew, because it speaks there about

sins. We are all sinners, and our sins are offensive to God. Those sins prevent us from enjoying God's company if they are not covered. The Lord Jesus speaks in relation to the cup, "For this is my blood, that of the new covenant, that shed for many for remission of sins": "remission of sins". Well, you have sins that you have accumulated in your life. You have stacked them up and you have probably come to the sad realisation that you are unable to do anything about them. You cannot remove even one of them from the sight of God for yourself or for your brother: none can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, Ps 49: 7. No friend: only by this blood, "that shed for many for remission of sins", can they be cleared from before the sight of God for ever. "That shed for many": are you among the many? You can be. There is nothing to prevent you, save perhaps your own will. Beloved, do not put it off, just believe that this precious blood was shed for you. It is available to you tonight. God gives you faith to be able to believe it. It is a wonderful Saviour God that we have to do with, who has provided everything that we might have peace with Him, and not only that, but so much more too, which is why I read these other passages.

I read in Acts, "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own". Do you realise that the blood with which God purchased the assembly, is the same blood that was shed for you? Does that make it more precious to you? Not only the fact that it has given you peace with God, but that it has secured a substantial, real result in this vessel, the assembly, for God's eternal pleasure? Do you realise that? Do you realise that that was the purchase price, the blood of Jesus, "purchased with the blood of his own"? Where we read in Matthew it says, "my blood". Here it says, "the blood of His own". How intensely personal this is. How God felt it when the blood of Jesus was shed, but think, too, of His delight! Think of the Old Testament verse where God says, "and when I see the blood", Exod 12: 13. God saw the blood of Jesus, speaking reverently and carefully. He saw it and His delight was in it because He saw not only that there could now be peace between His creature and Himself, the basis for reconciliation secured, but His eternal praise and glory was established on a righteous basis. There will be glory to God in the assembly, "which he has purchased with the blood of his own", to the age of ages, Eph 3: 21. May that blood and the One whose blood it is become more precious to each one of us!

Hebrews tells us another thing that the blood allows, "entering

into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way". Beloved, if you are a saved sinner God does not want you to go back to the place where you were a sinner. He wants you to go into His presence, into the holy of holies, and it is the blood of Jesus that lets you go in there. Does not that make it more precious to you again, not only that it has established peace, not only that it has secured a result for God eternally, but that it has secured our present access to Him by this new and living way? In the Old Testament, the blood was sprinkled before the ark seven times, Lev 16: 14. There is free access to the presence of God because of the blood of Jesus, "the new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh". Jesus, having died and having shed His blood, was buried to remove vicariously from God's sight the man who had offended God, the man according to the flesh, removed from God's sight for ever.

He did not remain in the grave though: He rose and He ascended; He is at God's right hand now, having entered in there for us. Do you realise that? He has not only gone there Himself, but He has gone there for you. Why? So that you might be there with Him. You may say, 'Yes, when I am in heaven'; that is true, but now, are you going into the holy of holies now? Do you realise that the way that has been opened up there is because of the blood of Jesus, and now He is there as a great High Priest for us? You might say you are finding things difficult. You have been a believer for a little while now and it is not easy. People say things against you; people treat you differently in the world; it seems difficult being a believer. Well, in Jesus you have a great High Priest, and He is not bounded by the things that limit you and me; He is in glory; He is in the "power of indissoluble life", Heb 7:16. Death has no access there. The things that we are going through, the sorrows, the exercises, the burdens on our spirits, the Lord Jesus is above these things, but He is available to us in them. We can be saved in the power of His life: that is, His present life. What an opportunity then that there might be this free access into God's presence. Will you not take advantage of it? Will you not go there? How would God feel if you had no desire to go into His presence? He wants you there; that is why He gave His Son. So "let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience, and washed as to our body with pure water".

God provides everything that we need in the present time so that our state might be such that we can go there. He gives the blessed

Holy Spirit. Do you know the Holy Spirit, friend? Have you received Him? If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, God desires that you should receive the Holy Spirit so that you might be able to stand in this world where everything is opposed to the believer as it was opposed to Christ, that you might overcome, that you might go forward; and not only that, but that you might have the experience of going into God's presence with Christ at the present time - because then you will become a worshipper, and that is what God is seeking. It is amazing to me that in John 4 virtually the first thing that the Lord speaks to that woman about is the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus was considering for God. He sees in the woman a worshipper that can be secured for God. If we are going to be worshippers we need the Holy Spirit, and God would give that freely, an "unspeakable free gift", 2 Cor 9: 15.

Beloved, the day is drawing near when we will see Jesus face to face. You will see the One whose blood was shed for you; you will actually see Him. Are you looking forward to it? I trust there is no one here who has not yet put their trust in Jesus, who has not yet accepted in faith that the blood was shed for them that their sins might be washed away and that they might have peace with God. I trust there is no one here in that state but, if there is, I plead with you now, have to do with Jesus, put your faith in His blood now before it is too late, because I do not know if you will have another opportunity. You will never regret it and, in the meantime, as you see the day drawing near, you can be here pleasing to God, be here frequenting His presence in the power of the Holy Spirit, and increasing in your appreciation, like Peter did, of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus.

May the Lord bless the word.

Kirkcaldy

5th November 2017

DIVINE LOVE

Peter S Barlow

John 3: 16

Genesis 22: 1, 2, 6-8

John 1: 29, 35, 36

Mark 10: 20-22

I had an impression, beloved hearers, to speak a little of divine love and its activity. It is a vast subject, a subject that will fill eternity, and I feel very measured in being able to say much about it, but I believe in the first passage read that we are shown the greatness of the love of God. "God so loved ...": such love, that love of a holy and righteous God which is extended towards you in the glad tidings this evening, such a love that spared not "his only-begotten Son". It is all in view of your salvation and my salvation. You may have heard the gospel many times before, but the question I raise, which I raise with my own heart - because I am continually much tested by it - is how much I really appreciate the greatness of the love of God that is towards me. It is witnessed to us, as John writes here, in the Lord's own words, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal".

There is life outside of this world; there is nothing in this world that can satisfy; I have proved it. I know what it was as a young man to try and find satisfaction, and sadly even as a little older you may still try to find satisfaction in the things of this world, but there is nothing to satisfy your soul except what God has provided, and that is in giving His only-begotten Son. Do you know that One? God's love is so great towards you that He was prepared to give the best, the very best, the One who was most precious to Him. His love is so great, and it is towards you tonight, that He has provided the answer to meet His righteousness and to meet His holiness, and He has done that in sparing not "his only-begotten Son".

You think how truly the scripture tells us: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way", Isa 53: 6. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3: 23) - no one can opt out of that. That man that we read of in our final scripture thought he had earned something, but every one of us has fallen far short of the glory of God. Sin came in at the beginning; we know the story well. Perhaps, speaking for myself, I may become a bit over-

familiar with it, but what it meant to God when sin came in, when man turned to something else and listened to the voice of the enemy of God, one that is ever set against God! Satan is set against God and he is set against you because he wants to rob God of what is rightly His. Sin has come in and we are sinners; we are marked by sin. Not one of us can opt out. We sin because we are sinners; we are marked by sin. But God's love is so great that He still desires to have us.

We see at the beginning of Genesis how He desires to have a relationship with man. He came in in the cool of the day to walk with man, but man had hidden himself. What that felt to God, beloved hearers! What it feels to God now as He sees a cold heart turned away from Him. Perhaps there is one in this room. I do not know; God knows, and He would appeal to you tonight to receive His love, love that is towards you, love that is towards all men, and His love was so great that He gave His only-begotten Son.

I think Genesis 22 is one of the most beautiful scriptures in the Bible because it brings out the divine feelings. We get God commanding Abraham here, and I believe we get, typically, the feelings of the Father as His Son was in this scene. It says here God tried Abraham. Think of what it cost God - and I speak very carefully - as a father sparing not his only son: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest". We speak often about the faith of Abraham in that he was obedient to God's will, but I think it brings out beautifully the divine feelings in type of when Jesus was here, the only-begotten One, His only-begotten Son, the One whom we see in the Scriptures, whom He could declare His delight in at His baptism by John and upon the holy mount. That is what the Son meant to the Father; that is what Isaac meant to Abraham here: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest". God has sent His only-begotten Son, sent the One whom He loves, loves beyond all measure, and He has not spared that One for me and He has not spared that One for us all who trust in Him, Rom 8: 32.

It says here, "and there offer him up for a burnt-offering": the perfection of the walk of Christ here, the perfection before the Father! It says here, "and they went both of them together". The Lord came in His subject pathway here as a lowly Babe, "the holy thing also which shall be born" (Luke 1: 35); God has come so near to man. God's only-begotten Son was sent of God into the world, John 3: 17. God might have started again when sin came in; but His love was so great and He

already had in His divine counsels and purposes a plan for bringing man again to Himself; and it involved the sparing not of His only-begotten Son, Jesus. The One who moved here in absolute perfection, spotless, holy, blameless One, moved here only knowing what it was to do good, only knowing what it was to heal, only knowing what it was to cast out demons, feeling in every step of His pathway here the bondage and burden of sin that lay upon men. We read of that glorious One groaning; we read of that glorious One weeping, weeping at the tomb of a friend, John 11. Beloved hearer, the Lord looks upon you tonight; those feelings that were towards those near Him then are the feelings that are towards you now, in that perfect One who went on here in perfect subjection to the will of the Father even though He knew what was ahead of Him, and that was death.

Isaac did not know what was ahead of him here but still we read of the feelings. I think God has given us this scripture so that we can get His feelings. Abraham knew what was ahead of him, but Abraham believed that if he was to fulfil what God had told him to do, that God would raise Isaac from amongst the dead. You wonder at that, the faith of Abraham. Is your faith like that? Do you trust God? Do you believe God can do anything? I am telling you of a God who gave His only-begotten Son because His love for you is so great that He wants you for Himself. That was the length to which He was prepared to go. In the perfect pathway of the Lord here I believe you get a sense of the Father and the Son going on together, and the Father's feelings entering in, in the walk of the Lord Jesus here. The Lord knew what was ahead of Him, and the Father knew what was ahead of the Lord Jesus in His pathway here, and that was that He was to go to Calvary's cross and lay down His life there.

Men would have you believe that it was one Gentile nation and the Jews that rid this world of the Saviour. No, beloved hearer, the Lord Jesus Himself could say about laying down His life, "I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again", John 10: 18. It was glorious love that took the Lord there to the cross; the wretchedness of man meted out upon Him mockery, scorning, and the violation of that glorious One, the only One in whom God could declare His delight, the only One ever perfect before God. Man cast Him out as worthless, cast Him out of this scene and they desired in doing that: "When will he die, and his name perish?", Ps 41: 5. It is the only Name that has lived on and on and on.

The enemy sought to get rid of the Scriptures and it is still the most produced book ever in the world. Think of that, all man has done to put aside the way God has worked, and yet God in wondrous love and grace is extending mercy towards each and every one of you tonight. He has extended mercy to me. I have come to know that glorious One as my Saviour. Have you come to know Him as your Saviour? Have you come to know the love of God that was fully expressed in that glorious One?

The Lord Jesus was here and went to the cross in absolute perfection. We get in John's gospel, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"; that spoke of the sacrifice of that glorious One who laid down His life at Calvary's cross. Abraham could say, "God will provide himself with the sheep", and God has provided Himself with an answer to all your needs. You might say, 'Well, He has provided it for me'. Ah, beloved hearer, the wonder of the glad tidings is not simply that you should be set free from your sins; the wonder of the glad tidings is that God desires to have you for Himself. You wonder at these things. Man in his philanthropy, in his good deeds, may come in and meet your need in this scene, but God has come in to meet your need because He has a desire for you for Himself, not just now, but eternally.

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world": John could consider that glorious One! God has provided Himself with a Lamb, and that Lamb was the Lord Jesus Christ. That Lamb gave Himself up into the hands of sinners. That One who "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form" (Phil 2: 6) in coming into this scene was delivered into the hands of sinners to be judged and nailed to a cross of wood. Why? Beloved hearer, I often say that it was not those nails that kept that glorious One on that cross of wood: it was His love for you and for me, and His love for God, that kept Him there, that One that was scorned and spat upon by man. Yet how much greater were the sufferings that He entered into when He "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet 2: 24), which He bore there for me in these awful three hours of darkness. God brought darkness over the whole land so that none should enter in nor understand in their fulness what Christ suffered at the hands of a holy and righteous God. In those three hours of darkness the sins of every believer were met to the full satisfaction of God. He bore them for me. Beloved, can you say that, knowing in the

depths of your heart that Christ has borne your “sins in his body on the tree”. Do you know that or is the gospel merely a wonderful story to you? Have you heard it so many times before that it has become too familiar, or can you say that perfect, spotless Lamb of God went that way for you, and was nailed to the cross of wood for you? He bore my sins there. It says, “Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”, Matt 27: 46. Think of the depths of that cry, when the Lord Jesus was entirely alone, beloved hearer! You can never be alone as He was alone; there is always a God of love looking towards you, always offering blessing, always with arms outstretched in blessing towards you.

There will come a day when this wonderful dispensation of grace will end, but it is the glad tidings we preach today. There is the warning in the gospel: beloved hearer, if you have not committed yourself to the Lord Jesus and taken Him as your own personal Saviour, if you have not laid claim to what God so freely offers, then awful judgment will come upon you. The gospel is not really a choice; God offers you Jesus: are you going to take Him as your Saviour? Are you going to claim Him for yourself? This dispensation will soon end when its overtures of grace will no more be available to men. Where will you be? Beloved hearer, where will you be? I thank God that through the precious work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I shall be caught up to be with Him in glory when this dispensation ends. Is that your portion? I would that every one in this room could say that is their portion. I would that every one in this city could say that. God would desire that, beloved hearer. That is God's heart; it is not me being charitable; that is what God desires. God “desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Tim 2: 4.

He reaches out to you tonight, with those depths of love, such feelings, and what He wants is that the Lord Jesus should become the distinctive Object of your heart. This was not the scripture on my mind before this occasion but it came to me in the few moments before and seemed to ring in my heart from when we mentioned it in the reading, “Behold the Lamb of God”. What God wants is for you to have Christ fully fixed in your heart. Yes, to consider the greatness of all that He has done because it brings out the wealth and greatness of the love of God towards you, but He wants you to have Christ as the Object of your heart! He is the Object of the Father's heart. On the holy mount when the Lord went up there, taking Peter, John and James, and was transfigured before them; Peter who is well-known, I suppose, for his

great love for the Lord Jesus, saying the things that others might be more reluctant to say. He wanted to build three tabernacles but God said, 'No, there is only one Man and that is Christ'. He says, "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him", Matt 17: 5. He is the Object of the Father's love, the Object of the Father's heart. Is He the Object of your heart? He is the One that died, the One who shed His precious blood, and that blood is witness that every need, every sin, has been entirely met, and it is witnessed that the Lord has died, but the tomb is empty. Christ is no longer in the tomb; even the Jews themselves have to admit the tomb is empty. They blamed others for having come and stolen His body. Beloved hearer, no! Christ came out triumphant! There was no disturbance in that tomb; the derision in which the stone was rolled away is witness to a power far beyond anything man can do. It speaks of "the handkerchief ... folded up in a distinct place by itself" (John 20: 7); there was no struggle for Christ coming out of death! He came out of it as its Conqueror! He entered it as its Conqueror, and He has come forth triumphant, and He has established something that is entirely new, and He wants to bring you into that, the enjoyment of eternal life.

You might say, that is another day; but it must mean that it is something God would have you to enjoy now, as having Christ dwelling in your heart and having the precious gift of the Holy Spirit; another gift that God has so freely poured out from above. He has held *nothing back*. We have turned our backs on Him in sin, but He has held *nothing back*. He has given His only-begotten Son. He has given His Holy Spirit to indwell believers. The wonder of these things is far beyond the comprehension of man, and they alone are what will satisfy. Is Christ having His place in your heart and the Holy Spirit glorifying Him to you and drawing you to where He now is, drawing you to where He is in glory?

This last passage brings out the feelings of the Lord Jesus as He looks upon each and every one of us today. It says, "Jesus looking upon him loved him". The Lord Jesus loves you, beloved hearer. He is looking upon you now. God has His arms outstretched in grace and love and mercy and blessing towards you tonight. The Lord Jesus is in glory, looking and longing for an answer in your heart to Him, that He may find that lodging-place in your heart forever, and your acknowledgement of what you are, and to come to know Him as the alone answer, the alone answer for a holy and righteous God. There is no other way into blessing; there are no short-cuts. There is nothing

you can do to earn your own salvation, but, as the apostle Paul said to the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved", Acts 16: 31. That is all it is; the gospel is simple; the gospel is wonderfully simple; and it is all coming from God's side. All He is looking for now is an answer in faith to believe on that glorious One, One who is most precious to Him, One whom He loved beyond measure; yet He was prepared to give Him up One for you. Are you prepared to give up everything for Him? This young man was not: "he had large possessions". I do not know what your possessions are, what it is that may hinder you coming into this blessing. I know what mine are, but what I know too is that the Lord has looked on me, and He loves me and He has brought me into the sphere of blessing. It is open to all. Is it your portion, having Jesus dwelling in your heart? Have you this precious gift of the Holy Spirit? Do you know the great and glorious depths of love divine that are towards you this evening? It is for you to claim for yourself.

May it be so for each heart tonight for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

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