

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 133

April 2018

CONTENTS

The Resurrection and The Life
Page 1

God's Honour For Christ
Robert Webster
Page 23

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

John 11: 25, 26; 14: 1-7; 15: 1-8

PAG Our enquiry together is as to features of Christ in John's gospel, particularly related to Him as the "I am". We considered yesterday the matter of food as found in Him, "the bread of life" (John 6: 35); then light, "the light of the world" (John 8: 12) and shepherding (John 10), noting that He says, "I am the good shepherd", v 11. This morning, the subject of life should be before us in some of its particular manifestations. We have spoken of life already, of course, in our enquiries, but what is in mind here are these features of life, "I am the resurrection and the life" bringing in the thought of resurrection and the power associated with it; and then the Lord says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life", and what seems to be particularly in view is coming to the Father. He says, "No one comes to the Father unless by me"; so coming to the Father would be a manifestation of life. Then in John 15 He says, "I am the true vine"; the manifestation of life there would be bearing fruit. He says that explicitly, "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples of mine". I wondered if these thoughts would be sufficient for our enquiry this morning.

JTB I am sure that would be helpful and constructive. You might say more about resurrection. Does it suggest irresistible, inherent power? The Lord Jesus could not be "held by its power", the power of death, Acts 2: 24.

PAG No, He could not. It says in the book of Job, "but what a whisper of a word do we hear of him! And the thunder of his power, who can understand?", chap 26: 14. The "whisper of a word" comes to us in the gospel, like "a soft gentle voice" referred to in 1 Kings 19: 12. When we hear that voice, we come into contact with irresistible power. So that the reference in Ephesians 1 is, no doubt, in your mind as to God, "according to the working of the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead", v 19, 20. Resurrection was an exercise of power, but it was also a work.

JTB Can you say something about life being inherently in the Lord Jesus? He rose, but then there was the Father's work in operation in resurrection as well. Could you draw some distinction in that?

PAG We have at the beginning of John's gospel, "All things received being through him" (chap 1:3); so that is the One who had life inherent in

Him and, of course, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (v 4), or 'the light of men was the life', as the note says. So there was what was inherent in Him, but then He was "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4. Does that not bear on the fact that He says, "I and the Father are one", John 10: 30? The life that was in Him, and the glory of the Father reaching out in power merged into one in the resurrection, did they not?

JTB It is helpful to see that. Joseph's "sheaf rose up, and remained standing" (Gen 37: 7), and his brethren came round, but really the product of resurrection is that there should be something for the Father's pleasure, and Christ in that glorious unity would have that in mind, do you think?

PAG It would and I think that is why He says, "I am the resurrection and the life"; so the initiating power is there, but then the sustaining power for life is also there. And when the Lord says through the psalmist in Psalm 22, "Yea, from the horns of the buffaloes hast thou answered me" (v 21) that anticipates the answer in resurrection; but life was there inherently in Christ. "It was not possible that he should be held by its power". The answer came, and then there was the public testimony to His resurrection. He was seen by certain ones, and then "appeared to above five hundred brethren at once", 1 Cor 15: 6. There was testimony to the fact that He was truly alive.

DCB Say more about the fact that He *is* "the resurrection". We know He is raised, and Martha says, "I know that he will arise again in the resurrection in the last day", but He says, "I am the resurrection", and He could say that even before He had gone into death.

PAG It connects with Him as Son of God, as I understand it. He is "marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead", Rom 1: 4. He also says, "an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live", John 5: 25. That is not the final resurrection; that is the power of life in the believer; but it must be so because this is the One who is "the first and the last, and the living one", Rev 1: 17. He says, "I became dead". Death did not overtake Him: He "became dead" and He is alive "to the ages of ages", v 18. This Person, the Lord Jesus of whom we are speaking, is inherently life in Himself. Is that right?

DCB So He is life in Himself in the face of death, which is what

resurrection is.

PAG Yes, but He was life before death came in, because everything that received being received being through Him; so He is not life in answer to death; He is not life because of death; He is life before death and life after death. When death is annulled, He is still life.

GAB Peter said in Acts 2, “it was not possible that he should be held by its power”; that is because He was the Resurrection.

PAG That is exactly it. I believe it would strengthen us to recognise at the present juncture of the testimony that there is nothing, no power, not even death itself, that could overtake the Lord; it was impossible. It was not going to happen, and we should have that in our minds now, do you think? It is impossible that any power can be greater than this One because He is the One who made these powers. We see Him in 1 Corinthians 15, “Then the end, when he gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father; when he shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that is annulled is death”, v 24-26. This is the Person of whom we are speaking, who says, “I am the resurrection and the life”.

JCG In chapter 5 there is the quickening power given by the Father to the Son. That is His role in manhood, but what you are stressing is His own personal ability as having life. That bears on what you said as to His voice, everyone who hears the voice of the Son of God; I am referring to chapter 5: 25. In relation to Lazarus His voice was heard, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11: 43), so that the power is expressed.

PAG That power is specific and explicit. He said, “Lazarus, come forth”: He calls Him by name; otherwise, such was His power, that every one of the dead might have come forth. When He comes “with archangel's voice and with trump of God ... the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up” (1 Thess 4: 16, 17); so the power is there to raise every dead person. There will be a first resurrection and a second resurrection, but it will all be on account of the power inherent in Christ.

JCG Do you think Isaiah was in the light of that in chapter 26 of his prophecy? “Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing in triumph, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is the dew of the morning, and the earth shall cast forth the dead”, v 19. Was he in the

light of the resurrection and the power of Christ?

PAG Yes; the spirit of Christ that was in these Old Testament saints gave them the light of resurrection. Abraham had it; David had it; Isaiah speaks about “the sure mercies of David” (chap 55: 3) Ezekiel had it; they knew. Job had it, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and the Last, he shall stand upon the earth”, chap 19: 25.

DHM Is it important to see that death had no claim on the Lord Jesus?

PAG That is important. That is what I had in mind when I said He was not overtaken by it. In John's gospel it says in chapter 19: 30, “When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and having bowed his head, he delivered up his spirit”; so there are two important things there. The first is that He “bowed his head”; it is as if the portal of the grave was not great enough to claim Him: He had to bow His head to go into it. He did that in manhood in wonderful grace. But also He “delivered up his spirit”; He was His own spirit. You and I have our spirits from God, but He was His own spirit and therefore He had the right to deliver it up. He was perfect and supreme in every way, and death had no claim on Him, and yet He went into it, because it was the will of God; and He went into it for you and me so that we would not have to taste death. He tasted “death for every thing” (Heb 2: 9), but we do not have to taste death because He has been there and broken its power.

DHM Hymn 152 says, 'Death had to bow!'.

PAG Yes. So He broke its power, and He came out again. In John's gospel we see, “Simon Peter therefore comes, following him, and entered into the tomb, and sees the linen cloths lying, and the handkerchief which was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a distinct place by itself”, chap 20: 6, 7. He came out of death in power, with no sign of any struggle. He had come out of it in power, and in perfect dignity and, one might say, left even the grave itself with the testimony of His own authority.

NJH In Philippians Paul says, “becoming obedient even unto death”, chap 2: 8. That was obedience to God's will.

PAG It is important to stress that. He did not obey death, because death had no claim on Him; He obeyed the Father. He says, “My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as *thou wilt*” Matt 26: 39. The extent of His obedience was that He would

taste that which had no claim on Him, that He would go into an area that He had made, and yet was not made for Him. He went into it because the Father's will required it. The purpose of God would be fulfilled in what He would produce as a result of His going into death.

JL While He is the resurrection because of His own inherent power, is there also the thought that He has fully met the judgment God imposed, and on that account has vanquished death for us?

PAG Yes, He has; so, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6: 23), and yet the sinless One paid the price.

JL Death had no claim on Him personally, but vicariously He took a place in the grave and lying in death in order to fully meet God's judgment, to liberate us and bring us into the power and enjoyment of the life that is in Himself.

PAG He did. So we have the two aspects of it: "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15: 3); so He took that place that you and I should have taken; but also He "has been raised for our justification", Rom 4: 25. We are not justified in a dead Christ; we are justified in a risen Man, a Man out of death, and that is very important to understand because it means our justification lies in a Man who is the Victor.

RB Is that then the reason for resurrection?

PAG It is one of them. The scripture says, as you know, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins", 1 Cor 15: 17. Bearing the penalty without the victory would have been an incomplete work. There could be no thought that there was an incomplete work. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life". He has completed the work but He sustains what is available now to God as a result of His work.

RB As a result of Christ's death and dealing with the whole sin question, it does not mean that a converted person just goes on as they were before, but resurrection puts us on entirely new ground altogether. Is that the whole idea?

PAG It does. We were speaking yesterday about drinking His blood. That is maybe a difficult thought, and it is necessarily a spiritual one. A brother remarked to me in the interval that drinking His blood is a matter of self-judgment. We recognise that there was an order of things that had to be ended. The Lord has come out in a new condition to bring us

into the heavenly order, the first order having been taken away, as has been said, vicariously in the grave; so we are brought on to new ground.

JCG The reference to believing here puts us into the area in which life comes from contact with Christ. It is stressed twice, is it not? Then He asks the question of Martha, "Believest thou this?". So it is a very important matter that our faith is current. It is not just believing when we first came to the Lord and confessed our sins, but it is a continual thing that we might understand the power of life.

PAG That is important. I was hoping we might just refer to that, "Believest thou this?" You might say that you believe on the Lord Jesus as your Saviour; well, that is essential. But do you believe that He is "the resurrection and the life"? Do you believe that "he that believes on me, though he have died, shall live; and every one who lives and believes on me shall never die"? If we stop short of this, we stop short of life.

JTB What a comfort therefore it is to the believer that "every one who lives and believes on me shall never die". The believer in that sense does not die; he falls asleep. What a comfort that is: the work of God, the work of Christ, so blessed, takes us right through the article of death. Man did his vilest to Stephen but "he fell asleep", Acts 7: 60. The scripture does not put it that "he died". The language of scripture is very poignant in that sense.

PAG Yes, and the apostle Paul speaks about remaining for the sake of the brethren, but he says, "being with Christ ... is very much better" (Phil 1: 23) as though passing through death was a mere moment when he passed from one place to another. I think the fact that the Lord has been into the grave - Job says, "By the breath of God ice is given" (chap 37: 10), that He has experienced that stillness of death, that "he should taste death for every thing" (Heb 2: 9), and also that God has "loosed the pains of death" (Acts 2: 24), should comfort us in that He has done all that, so that we might not have to do it.

WMP Is that what is referred to in these verses then as resurrection life? The apostle says, "but if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer", 2 Cor 5: 16. In that sense we have no connection with His life as it was here, but our connection is with His life above.

PAG That is why it is important that we understand that when we

come together on Lord's day morning to remember the Lord Jesus, we are calling Him to mind as He is. We do not forget His sufferings; we do not ignore them; the loaf and the cup are there, a testimony to the fact that He died and shed His blood; but we are calling to mind a living Man in the glory.

JCG In relation to Martha again, do we need to follow the experience she had? The Lord really affected her heart here, did He not? Her confession coming out from what the Lord says, "thou art the Christ, the Son of God", is a step forward in spiritual progress, is it? And there is understanding that there is power in Christ to maintain us in this life, would you say?

PAG There is, and she does make a step forward, but do you think she also recognises that Mary is more spiritual than she is? It says, "And having said this, she went away and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, The teacher is come and calls thee". In that sense, she was saying to Mary, 'You will understand what He is saying'. I only say that for our encouragement. We might not be sure if we understand all of this, but we are surrounded by brethren who are spiritual who can help us with these things, and the Holy Spirit can help us with these things too.

AMB I was thinking of an aspect of the Lord's resurrection, in that He annulled "him who has the might of death, that is, the devil;" and it goes on to say "and might set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage", Heb 2: 14, 15. Are these two further aspects of His resurrection, the demonstration that "he might annul him who has the might of death", but then He sets free those who are in the good of the work that He has done?

PAG Yes, and they were "subject to bondage" "through fear of death". They were afraid of death. The power of Satan has been broken, but it is a greater thing to recognise that he himself has been annulled; annulled means made nothing. That does not mean to say that he is not still there, and that he still does not have power, but in the sight of the believer he has been annulled because Christ has broken his power.

AMB I think to be in the good of His resurrection and in the enjoyment of what He has secured by rising again, we know that He is ascended and glorified, but He is the risen One who has won the victory, and we are in the good of that. We need the blessedness of that to get into our

souls. It is a fine thing, but it is also a very practical matter. There are brethren that we know, speaking simply, who are facing the dissolution of the body, but they know the One who has annulled “him who has the might of death”.

PAG We do indeed. It is very blessed to see that coming through. There is a verse in 2 Samuel 23 about Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. It says, “he it was that smote two lions of Moab; and he went down and smote a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day”, v 20. You could look and see two sets of footsteps going into that pit, the footsteps of the lion and the footsteps of the man, and one might think that the man was in great trouble, but it is the man's footsteps that came out. The lion was left in the pit. Satan has been annulled, and there was a testimony to that. These footsteps in the snow showed you that the man had come out and the lion was gone.

NCMcK Is this Christ in manhood? All the life that we know is in a Man.

PAG Say more about that.

NCMcK All that we know of the Lord is in manhood. It says in John 1, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”, v 4. Something came in when Christ became a man; it was available for man to apprehend. Everything that Christ has done in manhood is available.

PAG That is right. What is in my mind in reading these scriptures is the matter of availability. He says, “I am”, but if He had simply remained “I am” - He says, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8: 58) - that would have been His right, but He came into manhood so that certain things could be made available to us, brought near to us, so that we could take them up. How thankful we should be that a divine Person became Man and remains a Man for ever, accessible to us in that condition.

TWL I was just wondering whether the apostle Paul is speaking of this in the life of Jesus in Philipppians 3. He starts in verse 10 to say, “to know him, and the power of his resurrection” and then goes on to say, “if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead”, v 11. He functioned as a Christian according to the Man he knew who is in resurrection.

PAG Yes, so “to know him, and the power of his resurrection” in that sense would give us impetus to go on to “the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death”. His sufferings were infinitely greater than anything I could experience, and yet He calls us into “the

fellowship of his sufferings". We are called, as Paul says, to take our "share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 2: 3): "the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death". Why would we want to be "conformed to his death"? Well, His death took Him out of the world. He came out in resurrection power, "if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead". Paul was pursuing these things, "Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus", v 12. The Lord would give us impetus in our affections. He does not ask us to do anything that He has not done Himself first. He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life". He has shown us the way.

GBG Can you say something about the Spirit in relation to this life? We need the Spirit for that life, the enjoyment of that life. The Spirit is related to this also, is He not?

PAG He is. We referred to the Father quickening and the Son quickening, but the Spirit also quickens. The Lord brings this life into expression in manhood but life is inherent in the Father and also in the Holy Spirit because they are God. The Spirit is indwelling and is providing the source of life for the believer. If you go through the truth of Romans, you find the application of death. How are you going to live then? It is by the Spirit: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death", Rom 8: 2. That is how you are going to live. Do not stop short of God's thoughts! I appeal to everyone, especially to my younger brethren, do not stop short of God's thoughts for you! God's thoughts are that you should live in the life that Christ lives. It says, "in that he lives, he lives to God" (Rom 6: 10), and the Spirit is here as power to do that.

NJH There is a big difference between "resurrection in the last day" and "the resurrection and the life" because the Son of God has in mind that persons now in spirit will touch perfection before the literal state of perfection. Is that right?

PAG Yes, and you get just a little hint of that in John 12 where it says, "Lazarus was one of those at table with him", v 2. Lazarus, you might say, had been brought into life and into the enjoyment of the Lord's presence; He was there when the Lord was there; he was there when "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" (v 3), so that is the way the Lord is working to bring us into the present enjoyment of life,

and it is by the Holy Spirit.

NJH It makes room for the great formation of the assembly.

PAG As we have said, John does not give us the assembly officially but he gives us the personnel of it. The question is, what are we going to do with that life? I think that is where we come on to John 14. There is a place of enjoyment, but there is an objective too: "No one comes to the Father unless by me". The Father is supreme in the economy, and the Lord is leading us to the Father; so life manifests itself in movement.

JW This verse seems to go back to chapter 11, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes on me, though he have died, shall live". That would be a present matter, would it?

PAG That is right.

JW It will be literal, no doubt, but it should be a present matter.

PAG Yes because believing and living seem to be connected very much with one another. We believe on Him now. Soon, the time of faith will be over. We believe on Him now - so we live now.

JW So our links are with a Man who is out of death and alive.

PAG Yes, a living Man. We spoke yesterday of the "life which is in Christ Jesus", 2 Tim 1: 1. He is a living Man at God's right hand. Think of what comes out as a result of His life: "always living to intercede" (Heb 7: 25) for us, for example.

JW I was thinking of Colossians, "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above", chap 3: 1. That is where our life is.

PAG Yes, and "Christ ...who is our life", v 4. Is that so of us: "Christ ... who is our life"? He will be manifested in a day to come, but He is our life now.

DCB You referred to Ephesians 1, and you see that it is the apostle's prayer that the "greatness of his power" of resurrection should be known by the Ephesians, and by each of us now. Would prayer be important for us to enter into what you are bringing before us?

PAG It would, because with the many exercises in the hearts of the saints we might wonder what we should be asking for. I think we could reasonably ask for every saint that they should have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of" ... "the God of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the Father of glory”, Eph 1: 17. We could ask that they should “know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (v 18), and we could ask that every saint should know what is “the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead”, v 19, 20. Paul asks for these things. We are entitled to ask for them too and if that is what we are asking for our brethren, do you not think that that would elevate them in our eyes?

DCB Paul speaks of it as “the surpassing greatness of his power towards us”; it has a known and practical effect.

PAG And again, with the earlier reference to the Holy Spirit, there is the reference that you get in chapter 3: “in order that he may give you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man”, v 16. That is the same character of power. The power that “wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead” is the power that the Spirit has and, as it says later on, “according to the power which works in us”, v 20. Well, that is by the Spirit that it works in us.

JCG Does the power of Christ in our lives deliver us from living to ourselves? Paul says to the Corinthians, “one died for all, then all have died; and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised”, 2 Cor 5: 14, 15. There is a danger in living to ourselves, that we might not know the power of Christ in new life, do you think?

PAG The intention is that we should have an Object outside ourselves. When the Lord says, “I am”, He is drawing attention to Himself. Divine Persons have a right to draw attention to Themselves; we do not have a right to draw attention to ourselves. Indeed, it would generally be harmful to do so, but divine Persons have a right to draw attention to Themselves. So when He says, “I am the resurrection and the life”, and, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”, and, “I am the true vine”, He is drawing attention to something that we should take account of so that we might not live to ourselves.

JCG Have I diverted you from your thought as to moving to the Father? What was in your heart about that?

PAG The brethren know best what we should speak of. It was simply

this, when Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me”; so “the way, and the truth, and the life” must lead to the Father. I have heard this verse quoted often, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”, but we rarely add this point, “No one comes to the Father unless by me”. What is the object of “the way, and the truth, and the life”? It leads to the Father.

JCG Does it bring us back to what was said as to chapter 6? He speaks of “the living Father”, v 57. The Lord has in mind that the power of His resurrection as affecting us as believers would lead us in that direction where life is in its beautiful existence.

PAG It does, and it was also in my mind that we have been taught, and rightly so, that resurrection relates to the earth, but it is not the end. It is not the end that is in view. Of course, there is power to raise us, and there will be victory for God in that, but resurrection is not the end; it is a step on a journey.

BWL So the Lord is the way to the Father and in relation to the truth, He has made the Father known. Does “the life” link with the hymn we began with:

Where the saints in glory thronging (Hymn 206)?

It is an undisturbed area where this life is enjoyed.

PAG That is right. John says in his first epistle, “(and the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us;) that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we to you that your joy may be full”, chap 1: 2-4. There was what was distinctive, of course, which the apostles had, but there is that light, you might say, that the Father and the Son enjoyed and continue to enjoy, and the Lord is leading us into that. There is an area of life where the relationship between the Father and the Son is known and enjoyed.

JTB In the beginning of chapter 12, which is often called the resurrection chapter, do you think that Mary anointing the Lord's feet was indicative of the way the Lord would take as going through death and into the Father's presence, and therefore the verse we have read in chapter 14 is an answer to that?

PAG That is a helpful way to think of it. So the Lord came out of death. We have spoken of John 20 and the order that marked it, but what He is leading on to is, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", (v 17); He comes out in wonderful resurrection power, but I do just suggest that when He says, "I am the resurrection and the life", that is really Him leading on to the Father.

NJH Do you view this then as a continuing matter, "I am the way"? I was thinking of John 17 where He says in speaking to the Father, "And I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known", v 26. We often refer to that as opening up in John 20, but is "the way" a continuing matter for us?

PAG If we look for direction, the Lord says, "I am the way"; if we look for instruction, He says, "I am ... the truth"; and if we look for the area in which life is enjoyed, He says, "I am ... the life". That is what He is now. He was not just that when He was here.

JD I wondered if what we spoke about in chapter 11 and the greatness of the Lord really links with "the order of Melchisedec" as we have in Hebrews 7, but then towards the end of that chapter it says, "For such a high priest became us", v 26. Is that One who could sustain His own in that area of life that leads to the Father?

PAG That is very good. Do you not think that dignifies the saints in our eyes, "For such a high priest became us"? Well, who are we, we might say? Of course, like David, we can say, "Who am I, Lord Jehovah, and what is my house" (2 Sam 7: 18), but on the other hand "became us", I think, relates to "both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren", Heb 2: 11.

DAB How much does the service of God come into your thoughts? It must have been a wonderful time when teaching came in as to the order of the service of God. I was thinking of what would be in the Lord's mind when He comes to us, what would be in His mind on His way to the Father would be to take us there with Him, and He really opens that up as the true "minister of the holy places", Heb 8: 2.

PAG That is helpful. I suppose one of the features of enquiries like this is that they may give us substance that will come out in the service of God. It is not exactly a matter of repeating what we might have heard in the meetings, but rather that something might be formed in our souls

to which we can give expression. I think your expression the 'way to the Father' is very important. We have been taught as to what that way is; so on the 'way to the Father', the Lord comes in. We break bread in the wilderness, and the Lord comes in and seeks a response from His brethren; we recognise His glory, His place as King of kings and Lord of lords; and He seeks the response of His assembly. Now, there is order in that. He says, "I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises" (Heb 2: 12); so we see there is an order in the brethren, and then the assembly; and then there is the appreciation of the Holy Spirit. We are not detached from the Lord as Head when we are responding to the Holy Spirit. It is He who is motivating and prompting the response to the Holy Spirit, and why do we do that? Well, it says, "through him we have both access by one Spirit" - so it is Christ and then the Spirit - "to the Father" (Eph 2: 18); so it is Christ and the Spirit and the Father. The truth of it is there in Scripture, and I think your expression the 'way to the Father' is very important. You may have more in mind.

DAB The Lord had this in His mind in becoming Man. His way back to the Father was always there, held in His affections, and what He was going to really secure for the Father's heart was in the mind of Christ as going into death and coming out in resurrection, as we are saying now.

PAG We often quote the scripture in John 13 which says, "he came out from God and was going to God" (v 3) but in John 16 He says, "I came out from the Father and have come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father" (v 28), but, do you know, He did not contemplate leaving the world alone? He said, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17. It says of the Hebrew bondman, "If he came in alone, he shall go out alone" (Exod 21: 3), but the Lord does not go out alone, does He?

VC I was just thinking about resurrection being a present matter. We never lose sight of the present time. In the Lord's introduction, He says, "I am". It is in the present tense; so if we believe on the Lord Jesus as the One who says it, we are in resurrection now, not like some believers think that it is yet to come, but we enjoy it now. We depend on one another. He says, "In my Father's house there are" "there are" at present - "many abodes", John 14: 2.

PAG That is very helpful. That helps to illuminate the thought of "I am". He is now, and always will be: "Before Abraham was, I am". But

then there is the “I am” we have quoted, “I am the first, and the last, and the living one”, Rev 1: 17. He will always be “the living one”; He will always be “the first, and the last”; and the Holy Spirit would help us in our present enjoyment of these things.

AMB The Lord credits His own with knowing where He was going, “And ye know where I go, and ye know the way”. Thomas did not get that and therefore the Lord responds to him as we have been speaking of in verse 6, but the Lord credits His own with knowing where He was going and the way. What would you say about that?

PAG I suppose they would know it because He was there, but do you think it is also anticipative of the incoming of the Holy Spirit: “And ye know where I go, and ye know the way”. That would really require, for its full appreciation, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thomas speaks of the Jew; really there is a touch of unbelief there, but it is interesting, that both here in chapter 14 and also in chapter 20, the Lord uses Thomas's remarks to bring out something important? Jesus says to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me”, and then in John 20 when Thomas has to be shown His hands and His side, He says, “blessed they who have not seen and have believed”, v 29. Do you think that really that covers these remarks too, “And ye know where I go, and ye know the way”? We have not seen Him but we believe.

AMB Does that bring out further the blessedness of the present time and also the vital importance of the Holy Spirit within us, the One who shows us the way? He guides us into all the truth, John 16: 13.

PAG He does, and so, “No one comes to the Father unless by me” as we have been speaking just a moment ago of the way to the Father. Through Christ but then “by one Spirit” we have access to the Father. Without Christ it would not be possible to have access to the Father, but then in the present dispensation the Spirit is the power for it.

AML In chapter 17 the Lord says, “And now I come to thee”, v 13. Would that suggest bringing us to the Father along with Himself?

PAG Yes, that is helpful. “And now I come to thee”. The “now”, I suppose, suggests that at least anticipatively the work was complete. He would not come to the Father with something that was incomplete, would He? He says, “And now I come to thee”. That was His object as Man. The Father was His object as Man, and I feel that the Lord would,

as it were, as we focus our attention on Him, make the Father our object too.

GBG That is also involved in the Lord Jesus coming. The Father was His object as Man. That is involved in Him being the truth; He sets out what God has in mind for men.

PAG Yes, He does, and that is very important because Colossians speaks of “growing by the true knowledge of God”, chap 1: 10. How are we going to grow “by the true knowledge of God”? It is only by looking at Christ, but then in Ephesians you are taken a step further, “as the truth is in Jesus” (chap 4: 21) so it is in the Man Himself, “as the truth is in Jesus”, so that you do not grow ‘in the true knowledge of God’; you grow “by the true knowledge of God”; but you find that “the true knowledge of God” is in a Man who says, “I am ... the truth”.

DHM We were helped recently to see that the Lord presents the service of the Holy Spirit as something additional to His own. He tells us later on in John 14 that He is “another Comforter”, v 16. It was drawn attention to in a reading recently when we saw that while we have our links with the Lord Jesus in His present condition, and our links with the Father, there is something additional in the believer’s links with the Holy Spirit.

PAG That is very important. The Holy Spirit is not a replacement for something. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person in His own right, and therefore we can have direct links with Him, and direct response to Him, because He is God in His own Person. Is it not interesting that the Lord here says, “No one comes to the Father unless by me”, and then He says in verse 16, “And I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth”, v 16? The Lord is not jealous of His place with the Father. He speaks to the Father about something that would help us. He does not seek the only place in our affections, and the great thing about divine power is it makes room for affection for the Father, and affection for the Son, and affection for the Holy Spirit, and none is displaced by the other.

TJC The Lord says, “my Father is greater than I”, John 14: 28.

PAG That is good. Do you not think that that really is a sign of the perfect oneness of divine Persons? Whereas men would be troubled by the idea that somebody might be greater or lesser, that never enters into the matter. The way in which divine Persons have arranged the

economy is intended to make their affections known, and if that involves places relative to one another, that is what They take up, and They do it with perfect complacency. Maybe you have more to say.

TJC I was just looking at the verse where that comes out later in John 14, “Ye have heard that I have said unto you, I go away and I am coming to you. If ye loved me you would rejoice that I go to the Father, for my Father is greater than I”, v 28. We should rejoice that the Lord is before the Father. He would seek that our place is there and we have light, not only the Lord Jesus is great, but the Father is greater. What resource is available to us!

PAG So the arrangement of the economy is designed to bring us into greater things, which are inexhaustible.

JL Equally we would never detract from the co-equality that exists in deity.

PAG That is the wonderful thing about it. We have quoted it already, but when the Lord says, “I and the Father are one” (John 10: 30), that involves their co-equality in deity, and the Spirit is God. He too is co-equal in deity. The reference in Hebrews to “the eternal Spirit” (chap 9: 14) would tend to emphasise that. The Persons of the Godhead are eternal, and they have taken up certain relationships in time that we know about. As the Lord came into manhood, there was a relationship taken up, but They are equal in deity, so They each have their own right to act, and They each have their own power and They each have life inherent in them. Is that suitable?

JL Yes, very much so, and makes us marvel at the love that has been manifest in the way that divine Persons have taken these arrangements in the economy so that we might be embraced into all the blessedness of what God has had in mind from before the world's foundation.

PAG In Romans, there is a passage which applies to what we are saying, “O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him? For of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen”, chap 11: 33-36. Only God could have conceived these things and brought them about.

NJH The divine arrangements that divine Persons have taken up will go into eternity.

PAG That would be borne out by the scripture we have already referred to in 1 Corinthians 15. It says, "Then the end, when he gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father": so that remains.

We should maybe touch on "the true vine"; so not only do we come to the Father, but the Father is glorified.

JTB Does the vine suggest what is fruitful and productive Godward? I was thinking of the grapes pressed into Pharaoh's cup, speaking of what is for the gratification of God's own heart, Gen 40: 11.

PAG Yes, that is helpful, and God is first. There is what "cheers of God and man", Judg 9: 13. We are gladdened because God is first gladdened, do you think?

JTB The drink-offering was poured out in the sanctuary. It was really for the gratification of the divine heart, do you think?

PAG That is helpful, and it came in by way of augmentation of the offerings. It added something. We would not want to overstress it, but when we take the cup on a Lord's day morning, it augments what has gone before in the loaf; it adds to it in that sense. Although it is the Lord's supper, I think there is something distinctively for the heart of God in the cup as it speaks of the new covenant.

JCG "Abide in me" is stressed; is that not only important for us as being maintained in what is living and fruitful, but it stresses the glory and greatness and value of the vine?

PAG If the branch did not abide in the vine, it would become quickly dried up, would it not? It would be unfruitful and, worse still, if it abode in something else, it would draw from that source instead. The word given yesterday was helpful and prophetic in relation to the way in which the world may have access, if we allow it. Well, if we abide in that the world, we will draw from it, and we will become like it, but let us not do that; let us abide in Christ and draw from Him and become like Him: "I am the true vine". There is plenty around that is not true. John lays emphasis on what is true because he writes for the last days in a world where what is not true gains prominence.

WMP Does Aaron's rod give us an example of what is in mind in this, the vital connection with the true vine?

PAG Aaron's rod, it would seem, had life in itself. It was there and it budded, but it came into fruitfulness, Num 17: 8. It was not just buds. I can remember as a child, brethren speaking of Aaron's rod that budded. It did, but it went further than that, did it not?

WMP That is what was in my mind, that there was progress. You have said there was a lack of progress in becoming dead, but what is intended in connection with Christ in this way is that there *is* growth and eventual fruitfulness.

PAG Yes, and I was thinking of the fact that it says at the end of verse 5, "He that abides in me and I in him, *he* bears much fruit". We are not speaking about something minimal here; we are speaking about something that is abundant; but then there is that salutary word, "for without me ye can do nothing".

AMB Say something about the matter of fruit and what it conveys. It is not the branches; the vine has to be there; but bearing fruit seems to depend upon the branches as abiding in the vine.

PAG It does. God established this principle in creation itself, "fruit-trees yielding fruit after their kind", Gen 1: 11. That is what God established, "fruit-trees yielding fruit after their kind". Well, the "kind" that we are speaking about here is "the true vine", which is Christ, but the fruit is on the branches, which would suggest individuals bearing fruit. Each of us can be a branch in the true vine.

AMB What you say is right. God is going to be glorified in the "much fruit". Would the idea of fruit-bearing or fruit itself encompass both what would be seen in our walk, therefore in testimony, and also what is returned to God in appreciation of Christ?

PAG The fruit of our testimony and the fruit for God must necessarily be consistent with one another; they cannot be different. They have to be the same, and persons will notice if they are not, and I do not mean the brethren: I mean the world will notice. It is a very simple and practical matter: if they see me walking into the meeting room on a Lord's day morning, and then they see me going somewhere else during the week, the world notices that and might ask why I go there on Lord's day, and to this other place during the week? Well, they would see that. I do not go any further than that, but the fruit has to be consistent.

AMB The fruit is "after their kind", that is of the "kind" of the vine. As

we draw from Christ, things become apparent in us, and we should be exercised that what comes out in us is for the glory of God whether it is in testimony or in praise.

PAG In Philippians, Paul speaks to the saints there, “in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world”, chap 2: 15. That is one side. But he also says they are “holding forth the word of life” (v 16); so they are a testimony in what they do - that would be the “lights in the world” - but they are also “holding forth the word of life”.

JL I was just reflecting on the expression we have used once or twice concerning the Lord Himself that life was inherent in Him. That is not true of us, hence the necessity now of abiding in the vine because we essentially must draw from that source of life in Him. Whether for fruit, or for growth, or for testimony, or whatever it may be, it must essentially come from Him in whom life is inherently.

PAG That is right; so when you see the Lord spoken of in Isaiah 53 it says, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground”, v 2. He was not drawing His life and resource from down here. He was drawing it from heaven but He had life in Himself, but we are given our lives. It says, “Jehovah Elohim ... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living soul” (Gen 2: 7): so God gave us our lives. He expects us to draw the source of our life and vitality from Christ, and He has given us the Holy Spirit so that we can do that. Is that what you had in mind?

JL Yes, that is right. The life that was given to man was forfeited; death came in; but a new source of life, of a new character altogether, now has to be drawn from Christ Himself, hence the necessity of abiding in Him.

PAG Indeed, and that would bear again on the reference we made to Romans chapter 8, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”.

JCG Your reference to Isaiah 53 is good because it goes on to say, “He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul” (v 11); that is the feeling side coming out there. Do you think we need to accept this matter of travail? It bears on the pruning of the branches. That is ourselves. If we accept discipline, it is to bring forth more fruit, that is, there should be spiritual increase as the result of accepting discipline as it comes.

PAG Yes, and it is not easy, but we must needs accept it because it

comes from the Lord's hand in faithfulness, and it comes from the Father's hand, "for whom the Lord loves he chastens" (Heb 12: 6), but the end is to be in view, the fruit is to be in view. What you have referred to in Isaiah 53 is helpful because it also says, "he shall see a seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand", v 10. Now, the seed would be like the source.

RB Does the comment of Paul's in Ephesians 3 link on with what we are saying: "being rooted and founded in love" (v 17); so what is really coming to light in testimony now is what flows from the revelation of God?

PAG Yes, it says in the Old Testament they "Shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward", 2 Kings 19: 30. Well, this true vine is bearing fruit upward.

DCB I wondered if you would say more about the Father, because it is the Father who is the husbandman.

PAG You have a thought about it.

DCB I was thinking really of the tenderness that is involved in the One who is the Father, but purging is a severe thing. Do we have to see the Person who is doing that? And, of course, it is not the only duty of a husbandman to purge.

PAG As you have noticed, there are some severe things said: "As to every branch in me not bearing fruit, he takes it away;" - well, let us not be like that - "and as to every one bearing fruit, he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit". Our natural tendency might be to say, 'Why the suffering, why the sorrow, why the difficulties? Are we not doing enough already?'. It is not really a question of whether I am doing enough already; it is a question of whether the Father knows that more could be produced, and He knows best.

JCG Hebrews 12 brings in what is being referred to: "the Father of spirits ... For they indeed chastened for a few days, as seemed good to them; but he" - that is, "the Father of spirits" - "for profit, in order to the partaking of his holiness", v 9, 10. Now, that is really to bring us into the presence of God.

PAG Yes, and it is important too that we bear the admonition of the word, "be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live". I only speak for myself; maybe my spirit becomes ruffled about things; but "be in

subjection to the Father of spirits, and live” would help us in relation to what the Father is doing. I have a real impression that divine Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are active in love to produce fruit for Themselves.

GBG “The Father of spirits” is operating in our spirits. He knows what is going on in our spirits. We do not know what is going on in the brother next to us; the Father does.

PAG That is right. It is good to make it practical, that God is operating now. I believe that would have a settling, calming effect on our spirits, to recognise that the Father is operating in them now. He is operating with Christ and with the Spirit in order that there might be much fruit: “In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples of mine”. The Lord does not present this as doubtful or conditional. He does not say, The Father will be glorified 'if ye bear much fruit'. He says, “In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit”.

GAB “Abide in me and I in you”: I was wondering if you see that set out in John the apostle himself, the one who was “in the bosom of Jesus” (John 13: 23), who was abiding there; then “I in you”, he was known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, chap 21: 20. The Lord was really dwelling in him in that sense, abiding in him. In that respect is it significant that the Lord does say as to John, “If I will that he abide until I come” (v 23), as though that feature is intended to continue throughout the dispensation?

PAG Abiding is important. It is an old word, a familiar one to many who are familiar with the Scriptures, but not one that is used in the world much, but it suggests that the Lord is restful in me and I am restful in Him, and it suggests that there is a free flow of affection and conversation. We sometimes call that communion, and so it is, but communion is more than just a conversation. Communion is a mutual enjoyment of affection at home and at rest, where what is said or what passes between one and another is completely unhindered, and external circumstances for the moment are put in their place. “Abide in me and I in you”: what better thing could there be than to abide in the true vine that produces fruit for the Father?

VC Would “the good part” give us the impression of communion? “The good part” is the exchange of thoughts in mind with the Lord Jesus.

PAG I have been thinking of that, “Mary has chosen the good part”, Luke 10: 42. She chose it. She could have chosen something else but she chose “the good part”, and one thing about the Lord is that we can all choose “the good part”. He does not just have some for some persons and nothing for anyone else; He has “the good part” for every one of us and we can all choose it.

GAB John characteristically is “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. It is not a specific incident; it was what is current all the time: that is abiding.

PAG The consciousness of that is very important. The Lord loves every one of His own, and He loves them individually. Every one has a favoured place in the heart of the Lord Jesus, and each of us has title to that, but am I taking it up?

GAB It is the way John speaks about himself, as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. The Lord loves every one of us, but John was particularly conscious of that because he was in His bosom and leaning on His breast.

PAG Indeed.

NJH What is meant by becoming, “ye shall become disciples of mine”?

PAG I think in the context in which the Lord was speaking that implies the gift of the Spirit. They were His disciples because He had chosen them, but they would become His disciples through the gift of the Holy Spirit. I think that is what that suggests, but what would you say?

NJH Discipleship was needed here, and I just wondered as to what has been said already that, through discipleship, part of fruit-bearing will become public testimony. The Father is glorified, but He is glorified because they were walking in the Spirit.

PAG Yes, so “ye shall become disciples of mine”. It says that “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”, Acts 11: 26. They had “become” His disciples in that sense publicly as well as privately.

JTB “They abode with him that day” (John 1: 39) without exception. It was a divine invitation, “Come and see”. The note 'a' to “abode” says 'abides'; they “saw where he abode”. He is constantly there and we are invited to take up our place with Him, do you think?

PAG That is right. Well, that is maybe a good place for us to close. It

says, “No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him”, John 1: 18. “The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father” that is who we are speaking about. The “I am” is “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father”.

JTB A great realm of affection.

PAG Indeed.

At three-day meetings in Edinburgh,

21st October 2017

Key to Initials:

R Bain, Buckie; AM Brown, Grangemouth; DA Brown, Grangemouth;
D C Brown, Edinburgh; G A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown,
Edinburgh; T J Campbell, Glasgow; V Cimmino, Castellammare;
J Drummond, Aberdeen; G B Grant, Dundee; J C Gray, Grangemouth;
PA Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; J Laurie, Brechin;
A M Lidbeck, Aberdeen (ID); T W Lock, Edinburgh; B W Lovie,
Aberdeen; D H Marshall, Edinburgh; N C McKay, Glasgow;
W M Patterson, Glasgow; J Webster, Fraserburgh

GOD'S HONOUR FOR CHRIST

Robert Webster

Genesis 41: 41-44

Acts 3: 6, 7

Matthew 22: 1-14

I seek to speak of the way that God honours Christ. The gospel presents an opportunity for God to do this. You might say that you thought it was about the meeting of our need, and that is true, but God, in everything that He does, in all His ways, will honour Christ. The scripture in Genesis shows that God desires that we all may honour this One. He sets the matter on and leads the way in honouring the Lord Jesus. The scripture read in Acts would be an example for us of the way in which God would honour the name of Jesus, and it is for the blessing of men. The needy state of man is an opportunity for God to honour the Lord Jesus. The scripture in Matthew reminds us that God is very jealous when it comes to the Lord Jesus; let us never forget that. God is extending mercy and grace on account of that One, but He will always guard His honour.

When we look around, we see that men seek a place for themselves in this world. They seek to make a name for themselves, whether it is in the field of sport or entertainment or politics. We know that the Queen has honours lists; that is of no consequence in the gospel. What is of eternal consequence is that God has set apart one Man and given Him a place of exaltation, "granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow", Phil 2: 9, 10. That is of eternal consequence, and in having to do with Him lies the blessing of every man, woman, and child. We need to get our view right in relation to the gospel; it is all about this blessed One. God's eye is upon Him as it always has been. There He is, now installed in glory. Men may seek honour from men; one Man has received honour and glory from God; He now fills the highest place in the universe. A Man does that, one Man. God's desire is that you might have to do with Him, and as having to do with Him you might give your heart and your life to Him here, and be secured for Him eternally to His praise and glory.

In the passage in Genesis, the impression I had was that the exaltation of Christ is God's matter. We see here a great type of what God has done with the Lord Jesus. If anyone of us is secured, if God in

His grace works in the heart of anyone and draws your heart after Him, so that you desire to honour Him, you will see that God has led the way; He has given Him this distinguished place. Joseph was given a place of prominence over the land of Egypt: Pharaoh set him over all the land. We read in Hebrews of the Lord Jesus, "Thou hast made him some little inferior to the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him over the works of thy hands", chap 2: 7. That is God's matter. Ephesians tells us "he set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies, above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named", Eph 1: 20, 21. What that One means to the heart of God! God is desirous that we might be brought into accord with Him. First we need to see the thing from God's standpoint; see what God has done. What men do is of no consequence in the gospel, but *God* has given Jesus this place. Despite what might be apparent around, despite the fact that you may hear His Name taken in vain as an object of scorn and mockery of men, God has "highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name", Phil 2: 9. What that Man must mean to God! Man might seek glory from men, but this One has been glorified by God Himself. Although He is rejected here on earth He has been received up in heaven. There will be a time when He will have public sway on the earth as well: His glory will be seen. God will vindicate such a One.

Why has God given this One such a place? Why is He so precious to God? Everything that God has set His heart upon in man is found in this One. It has been perfectly expressed in the Lord Jesus. Every other man one way or another has failed. We must consider for God's feelings, what it is to God that everything that He set His heart upon was found in this blessed One. We do not have to look very far within our own hearts to see that what is there is not what God would have. We find sin in our own hearts; there are things which flow out from that which are not pleasing to God. In contrast we have One who not only expressed God, but was in Himself everything that God set His heart on. He was the object of God's pleasure in His life here. What was seen was a different kind of man, a different order of man. God looks upon the lowly, Ps 138: 6. Some people are naturally very humble people, but there is pride in every heart; the Lord Jesus stands apart from all that, the One who is lowly in heart. Only He could say, "I am meek and lowly in heart", Matt 11: 29. We are exhorted in Philippians to have a lowly mind, but Jesus is lowly in heart. There is One who in lowliness and obedience took on everything that was given

to Him to do. His dependence on God meant that God was glorified. What a life; what a Man He is for God!

He has accomplished everything for God. He has settled everything that became an issue between man and God. We know that sin entered into the world through Adam. Everything that has become affected by sin coming in has been settled by this One. It involved the giving of Himself, the sacrifice of Himself in order that eternal issues might be resolved; in order that blessing might be preached and mercy offered to sinners. It is all on account of what this One has done. What He has accomplished is like no other accomplishment you will read of in the history books. There have been many achievements that men will admire but, on the basis of what the Lord Jesus has done, God is going to secure a universe altogether pleasing to Himself. We shall be for His own heart eternally. Hebrews says, "having made by himself the purification of sins" (chap 1: 3); it was all His own matter. What it must mean for God that One Man has undertaken and accomplished such a work through circumstances of suffering; offering "himself spotless to God" (Heb 9: 14), in order that He might become the Sin-bearer. He took it all upon Himself, that great matter, in order that God's righteousness might be satisfied, and His judgment of sin exhausted.

Not only has everything been settled, but God has been glorified in the very place in which sin was seen. The feelings of God enter into this. Christ was awarded the cross by man, but God has had His say. This world has no place for Him. It is very affecting when the Lord speaks as to the extremity of man's heart towards Him, "he shall be delivered up to the nations, and shall be mocked, and insulted, and spit upon. And when they have scourged him they will kill him", Luke 18: 32. We are speaking about the same One! The One that God has set His heart upon, the One who in all that He was, and all that He did, glorified God; the One whom God sets forth, that was the treatment afforded to Him by men. He will be publicly vindicated, but for the time being we have the world, a place that has rejected Him, and we have heaven where He has been received. He has been received up there; God is able to extend mercy and grace towards the sinner and offer forgiveness because the One who has been here and done everything for Him is now exalted in glory. The same blessed Person, the same lowly Jesus, the One of whom it could be said when He was here, "For the Christ also pleased not Himself", Rom 15: 3. He did not seek anything for Himself. He could say prophetically, "the reproaches of

them that reproach thee have fallen upon me”, Ps 69: 9. That which in the enmity of man's heart was directed towards God fell upon Him, and in the meekness of His spirit He accepted this. What a Man He is for God. You may begin to see why God has set this whole matter on; how right He is to honour this One!

We have spoken of the life of Jesus on earth, but the Acts gives the commencement of our dispensation. We have this poor man here where I have read. At the time he was looking for something from Peter. Peter did not have silver and gold. You think of the place in which this was, Jerusalem. I suppose some here had seen the Lord, some maybe had seen the treatment He had received at the hand of a despising people, the mocking at the hands of man. Maybe some had been witness to that scene at the cross, and many may have thought that was a done matter. Through the faith of his own heart, Peter says, “Silver and gold I have not; but what I have, this give I to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ ...”. I would suggest that the moment that Name was mentioned all of heaven's resources were available to this man. It afforded God opportunity to honour Him, the One, who had not long before become the object of man's game, amusement, mockery, scorn and spitting; and the one that came into the good of it was a poor needy man; what grace!

If there is anyone who feels they have a need, God would present Christ to you so that you might reach out to Him in faith; you might lay hold of the work that He has done. The work which has done everything for God is available to you, to meet every need that you find in your heart. The work of Jesus is enough to settle everything and He Himself is enough to fill your heart. God would be setting Him forth. If you reach out to Him tonight, God would love to honour His Name. He is honoured through those who come to Him. At this point, it was not the faith of the lame man, it was the faith of Peter, who understood what the name of Jesus Christ meant to God. This dispensation of peculiar blessing for men was really set on here on account of a Man in glory. Faith in Him and faith in His work brings in blessing; brings in blessing for men. Lay hold of it: your salvation is all bound up in it. God is desirous that you might have to do with Him because He knows you, He knows your heart. He knows the fears and the doubts and the questions you may have. He is setting forth One who can provide all the answers. The One who now fills the highest office in God's universe is not only available for you but He is willing you to come to Him. He is desirous that you might come to Him. It is almost too wonderful to think

that such a One is able to draw near to you; the same blessed Person; the same lowly in heart. He fills that place of glory, but He has a lowly heart. He looks at you; He takes account of you. Sometimes what we see inside ourselves might disgust us, and cause us to despair, but He will draw alongside you. He alone is able to meet your need. He binds up the wounds; that is a service that He would provide, and He would draw near in order that He may serve you. A personal service is available for all. He is lowly in heart. Your blessing is bound up in such a One; have to do with Him. God has honoured, and He is continuing to honour Him and one day all will see this. Come to Him now; it will be to His honour and glory. Young and old can lay hold of Him. We need faith, which is granted as a gift of God. Faith would draw us outside of all that we find in ourselves and it has one object and it is this blessed One of whom we speak. The One of whom it says in our hymn -

On His Father's throne is seated
Christ the Lord, the Living One, (Hymn 404).

In Revelation, it says, "I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages", Rev 1: 18. We cannot measure all that it cost Him to go that way, the way of the cross, to become the Sin-bearer, to be exposed before God's judgment of sin and - as such - to bear it, and to shed His precious blood and to go into death. He went into death as One that had power over it; that could be said of no other. He went into death as the invader, and conquered its power. The proof of it is that He is raised and is living -

Christ the Lord, the Living one.

God presents such a One to you. It is a wonderful blessing for men that He does.

We must remember that God is very jealous as to Christ. This passage in Matthew says it is "a wedding feast for his son". When we think of weddings, we often think of seeing the bride, but this is for His Son; making much of this One. God is making much of Him; He is jealous as regards to Him. There were those who despised the invitation and there were those who did not come; we know that they made light of it. It would be a very solemn thing if anyone was to make light of this One. I remember a preacher speaking of the mockers that you read of at the cross of the Lord Jesus. They were walking by, but stopped just to mock. He said that if you reject this One, reject God's overtures of grace, you are really a mocker. You are making light of all

that Christ has effected and all that God has done with Him. God will not have it. What is said to the man who is found without a wedding garment is severe; God will not have His Son dishonoured. He is presented to you; it is an opportunity. He that brings joy to the heart of God is presented in order that He may fill your heart. Your blessing is wrapped up in it, but He will not have such a One dishonoured; the consequences are very severe.

We preach blessing to men, but there was a time when the Lord Jesus suffered at the hands of men. Think of the feelings of God. It says of Him that He was “given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”, Acts 2: 23. The Lord Jesus says to those who came to take Him, “this is your hour and the power of darkness”, Luke 22: 53. That was for a limited period. God has now exalted Him and for those who despise or mock or make light of such a One there are consequences. It is not trying to scare anyone, but God will not have it. He has to do with those who have rejected Him in a most severe way. This One who was not found with the wedding garment really was not honouring, was not fitting, was not suitable. I trust that none of us think we can do things our own way. We are cast upon this One; faith lays hold of Him: God would view us as in Him. There is no room for individuality; we all come in on the same basis - vessels of mercy, objects of grace, and as such our hearts are won by Him. Let us not despise Him; let us not say He is not for us: God will not have it. It is a very solemn thing, and must be soberly considered. He would have you to do with Him, prove Him for all that He is. The Saviour, Saviour of sinners, He is there, His work is available. Do not pass it by; do not pass the opportunity by.

What a sober thing it would be if anyone of us here has to do with Him as a Judge, when He is available to us now, freely available, making Himself available as the One that can answer every issue; settle every matter. Have to do with Him; it will be for His glory and honour; and then you find as having to do with Him your motives change. He has done everything for you: what is there we can do for Him? What is there we can do that will honour Him? Your motives change, and the Spirit will help you in anything you do for Him. It is something that involves our affections; He is able to secure the heart, and fill it in order that we might be held by Him. Then you find that your taste and your motives will change, and you will do things which are honouring to Him. You come into accord with God, and come under His moral sway. There will be a day when it is seen publicly. What a day

that will be, when He will be vindicated. Be here for His honour now! I trust that we all might have some sense of what this One is for God, what He can be to us and come to acknowledge and appreciate God's desires as to Him.

May it be so, for His Name's sake.

West Norwood

9th July 2017