

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE PERSON OF THE SON

Romans 9: 1-5

John 1: 1-5; 10: 29-30

AAC I suggest that we might speak together about the truth that Christ is, and always will be, God. That is the truth, and these scriptures bear that out. We can enjoy the Person of Christ in a positive way. There is mystery surrounding the way in which God has disclosed Himself to us, and it is not fathomable by the intelligence of man and our logic. We cannot work it out. All of us could study with the greatest minds of the day and be misled. It is not something that is worked through human logic. God sets out for us in these scriptures and others the way in which He has been pleased to reveal Himself, in the Person of Father, Son and Spirit. They are One; and the Lord Jesus, while in the form of a Man, who has come here as we know, and is now at God's right hand, is God and will ever remain so. The Scriptures bear that out, and there is something very blessed and attractive in it. It is outside what we can work through in our own minds, but as we apprehend it by faith it gives us a certain assurance; and there is a great line that runs out of truths like this one, which we need to lay hold of.

We read the whole of the first passage to get the context, but interestingly, one to whom Christ revealed Himself begins this paragraph with, "I say the truth in Christ". Paul, writing in accordance with that which had been revealed to him by divine Persons, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, sets out the truth as to the Person of Christ; and he concludes with, "of whom, as according to flesh, is the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen". It is very clear to me, and something we can lay hold of: the Person of Jesus, who was a Man here, as drawn out in the hymn we had (No 54), is very attractive to us. He is a Man who has come here with the feelings of a man, sin apart. He still retains those feelings; and He remains a Man at God's right hand. We know Him as a Friend, the One who would be ready to receive our appeals to Him in everything we might face in our lives. He is able to help us in them, as a Shepherd, as One who would care for us; and yet in the greatness of His Person, He is God. There is something very wonderful in that. We cannot fathom it, that God would manifest Himself in such a homely way to us; but He has done it in order to draw near to us, and in order to draw out our affections towards Himself. But He remains God.

This passage in John 1 is crystal clear to us: "In the beginning

was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. *He* was in the beginning with God". These things refer to the Lord Jesus: *He* is the Word. And it goes on to make it clearer. Some may say it is historical, but it is a present fact; He continues to be. And then we have in John 10, the Lord Jesus speaking of the Father, "My Father who has given them" - that is us - "to me is greater than all, and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father. I and the Father are one".. I wondered if we could enjoy the greatness of this truth; there is something hugely attractive about it. And it is utterly foundational for our faith that we lay hold of it and do not let it go: "hold fast what thou hast", we are exhorted, Rev 3: 11.

DAB It is a very rich subject. What struck me as the passage in Romans was read is that all the blessings we receive hang on this truth. Israel thought the Christ was the fulfilment of all their hopes - everything for Israel hung on that Person, which is true; but everything for God hangs upon Him as well. That is only possible because He Himself is divine. God has not entrusted the fulfilment of His purpose to a creature; He has entrusted it to His Son. I am sure we will get some help about the beginning of John's gospel, but the reason I thought it would be helpful to read in chapter 10 is that those are the words of the Lord Jesus Himself. If *they* are true, then everything *else* He says can be relied upon. We cannot pick and choose; He is either telling the truth or He is not.

AAC That is helpful. It was in my mind that these things are utterly foundational to our faith; they have been so to millions of souls down through the ages, and remain so today. If I can put it this way, this is not something held by relatively few brethren; this is held by all those who have faith in Christ, myriads of faithful souls whose names are written in the book of life. Indeed, I wonder if you could say your name is written in the book of life unless you hold this. So it is very foundational, but I also appreciate what you say, that everything there is for God depends on this. It was not that any other person could be chosen to work out what the Lord Jesus worked out. God revealed Himself in the Person of the Son, and He has worked it out. It was not something that could be entrusted to another, or something that any other could have accomplished. These things are so great that God alone could accomplish them. It has been asked, 'Well, then did God die on the cross?', And the answer to that is, 'Of course you cannot say that God died - that would be wrong - yet the One who died was God', JT vol 84 p95. That is difficult, it is mystery; but we need to be clear as to these

things.

DAB I hope we shall say more about the cross, but the work undertaken on the cross was in divine power; it is unachievable by anybody else. I was thinking about one of Job's friends, who asks, "Canst thou by searching find out God?", Job 11: 7. What that man is really saying is that, since God is beyond the range of man's scientific discovery, it is not worth trying to learn anything about God; we might as well put up with not knowing anything. And that was an infidel thing to say, as God Himself says at the end of the book, "ye have not spoken rightly of me", Job 42: 7. But it is the case that we as creatures may only know about God what He is pleased to reveal. That is simply the difference between a creature and the Creator. It is in the Creator's gift what He reveals about Himself. We read in the Old Testament about various names that God took, and various things that are associated with them; and the thrust of all those manifestations is that there is one God; because in the Old Testament the systems of idolatry had many. In the New Testament, the revelation of God is in Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and a key truth in the New Testament is that that "God is one". It is not right to speak about 'parts' of the Godhead; the Persons of the Godhead are equally in that position.

AAC So that it says, "Philip says to him, Lord, shew us the Father and it suffices us", John 14: 8. The Lord goes on to explain that He had shown them the Father in Himself. And God has revealed Himself in a way that He has chosen, in a Man, in Christ; but we find there a manifestation of God, because He is God. And that is why the manifestation is so pure.

DAB One thing to be borne in mind about every manifestation of God in the Old Testament is that they are all made by God: the manifestation was in the word of God. That is what we also get in John 1; and now the manifestation which we enjoy the light of has been made by God Himself in the Person of His Son. It would not be possible for any preacher or teacher to discover the means to reveal God, and if God is revealed it must be by God Himself. He has chosen to do that in the Person of His Son.

RMF It says that "he is a rewarder of them who seek him out", Heb 11: 6. Can you help us about how we do that without letting the human mind and imagination getting carried away?

DAB That is the second half of the verse, which begins, "For he that draws near to God must believe that he is". That does not mean that I

believe I can comprehend Him; I have to accept what God has revealed of Himself - we "believe that he is". And then one thing I believe we can infallibly take from the way in which God has revealed Himself is that He *will* reward those who take an interest in that revelation. It is not that the seeking procures the revelation, but it is the answer in the spirit of the believer to it.

RMF Yes, that is good; so that it is not for us to question, it is more to understand the heart of God, is it not?

AAC Your enquiry is helpful because, if we do not accept that God is, we might come up with some theory and look in the Scriptures for something that might prove it; and there may be scriptures that might appear to support what man's mind is thinking. That is just Satan trying to help us along. But if we accept that God is, and then we look at the Scriptures in that light, we find that the whole hangs together. And I think that is something very attractive, which all of us have proved in some way or another: through simple faith in Christ, we find that all of it hangs together. And man with his natural mind may say that this scripture contradicts that one - and even that we should change the wording itself - but it does not. If we hold to the truth of it in the light of the Spirit, we will be able to see that all of it hangs together, which is very attractive.

FSP You probably know some have changed this passage to say 'the Word was a god'. How dreadful!

AAC Yes, there are others that do that, and feel free to change the Bible; how terrible: this is the word of God! God has seen to it that various souls penned these words under His own inspiration. It does not need to be changed. The language in Mr Darby's translation may seem a little old-fashioned, but that is fine. In the depth of that language, there is a great attraction, and a great clarity which does not need to be amended or kept up to date. The laws of man need changing the whole time, but the word of God has stood the test of time; and however long we are left here it will not need to be changed.

JSH You mentioned just now about reading the Scriptures in the power of the Spirit; I think that is a very important thing. The Spirit who indwells, delights to show us the things of Christ. He brings us into the realisation of it. Sometimes, we find that for the finite mind these things are beyond us, but the Spirit is there to help to open up these things to us; and to strengthen us in our faith about these things.

AAC I think that is abundantly evident as we look back on the history of those we have known. There have been some tremendous pillars of strength among the saints, who have not had wonderful education, but in simple faith in Christ they have come to understand so much as to these things; it has been revealed to them. It is not a matter of 'IQ'; that does not feature in these things. In contrast to that, there are plenty of people who have been to university and studied the Scriptures who are not even saved; let alone have the detail of it. So we can have these things in an attractive simplicity in the knowledge that, where a soul desires to understand, in God's goodness, something of what He has set out in the Person of Christ, He Himself will help him in it.

DHB We may have had those words in Timothy in mind when we spoke of God as One, "For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all", 1 Tim 2: 5, 6. That is another reference, is it?

AAC Thank you for that. Again, it is very clear - the Mediator, the One whom God has provided; He is God Himself. How wonderful is God's grace and His goodness to us. He has not appointed someone else but He has done it Himself. It is one of the most attractive aspects of the gospel, that God has done it all Himself. He does not delegate; He has done it Himself, and drawn us to Himself in that.

DHB I was also looking at 1 Timothy 3: 16; it says, "God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in the Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations". That is another solid reference. It is not for us to question that; it is for us simply to believe.

DAB I was wondering if we might touch upon the teaching about the Mediator. If a brother and I were to fall out, we might ask someone else to come along as a third party; and because we trust him and like him, we might be prepared to listen to his proposed solution to the problem and go along with it. He would mediate the problem; and that is what Job wanted: he says, "There is not an umpire between us, who should lay his hand upon us both", Job 9: 33. He wanted someone who would give him a hearing when he said that God had not been fair, someone who would understand what he meant, and perhaps persuade God to 'back off' a little bit, and come to some happier position on his matters. That was Job's idea, but the New Testament shows that that idea is not right. Paul says, "But a mediator is not of one, but God is one", Gal 3: 20. God does not deal with third parties: the Mediator of God and men is the Man Christ Jesus. He can be a Mediator for God because He is

God, and He can be a Mediator for me because He is a Man. So as to these great truths, our whole relationship with God hangs on that blessed fact, that He is a Man as to His condition, and God as to His Person. I think what that passage goes on to say is very blessed too: not only does He take that position, but He has done the work too - He has given Himself. I am just thinking again about Job. Job said he wanted an umpire, but Elihu says, 'No, you do not need an umpire, you need a ransom' speaking for God, he says, "I have found a ransom" (Job 33: 24), and that is what the epistle to Timothy says. There is a Mediator, with a ransom; and therefore the work on which we rely is the work of One who represents God to us, and us to God.

AAC Just for clarity there: a mediator in this scene may be one who arbitrates in the sense of diplomacy, which has no place in God's things whatsoever. The Mediator is not taking one side and then the other and finding a way through; the Mediator here is helping us to know God; and He also serves so that what we may feebly utter He is able to present to God in purity.

DAB People think that being reconciled to God means that He meets us half way; He has no *need* to meet us half way, even if His holiness allowed it - which it does not. The Lord Jesus, being who He is, sees our condition perfectly, and He sees God's requirements in relation to that condition perfectly; and He is "a ransom for all". I think that is a very blessed thing: God has found His own answer.

DHB Would it be right then to say that a mediator according to man's mind would be to find common ground, but the work that Christ has done - and relying on that - would bring us to God's standard.

DAB Paul says, "we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Rom 5: 10); it is a very glorious truth, I think.

I would just like to go back to what was said as to the Holy Spirit as a resource, which is a very wonderful thing; and there is nothing like it as a gift. But there is also the gift of faith - faith allows you to see what the natural mind cannot see, and that is a gift of God. Mr Victor Brown here used to refer to 'faith and the Spirit', those two things; and one helps us to avail ourselves of the other.

GHH I was going to refer to the way Peter responded to the Lord's question about who He was: "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God", Matt 16: 16. The Lord said in answer to that that it was the Father who had revealed it to Peter. It is a wonderful thing, is it not, what we

get by revelation? That must have been a tremendous event in Peter's history and life. No doubt the other apostles had the same experience. Paul was able to preach the Lord Jesus as the Son of God immediately after his conversion, Acts 9: 20.

AAC I wonder if, in spite of our frailty, we have some sense of revelation ourselves? We must have, because when we came under the sound of the gospel, we may say we were converted by a preacher, but it was divine Persons reaching out to us that made the difference. It was not just somebody's word - or this passage or somebody's writings - it was divine Persons who reached into our souls. Each one of us has been affected by God Himself; and it is a work He loves to do, to touch souls and give them some sense of the redemptive power which we have been speaking of; and the way in which they are brought then to Christ, and through Christ to God in all His own worth. We cannot do it ourselves, but God has done it and He maintains, He goes on, doing it in the Person of Christ today.

DAB That links with what was said earlier about "seeking". I like that passage in John 6: 44-46: "No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him". But Jesus also says, "Every one that has heard from the Father himself, and has learned of him, comes to me". And then he adds, "not that any one has seen the Father, except he who is of God, he has seen the Father"; that is a reference to the Lord Jesus and is another proof of His divinity, that he "has seen the Father", He has seen God. I think what was said about seeking comes in here, because I do believe that the Father would give every soul here a direct and personal touch. And if you feel you would like that touch to be clearer, ask Him; ask Him to lead you Himself to Christ. And what He will give you is *utterly* reliable. It is the truth.

RMF I was thinking earlier that there is a scripture in 1 John 5: 11, 12: "And this is the witness, that God has given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has life: he that has not the Son of God has not life". This is key, is it not? If we do not understand the greatness of the Son, then we do not have life; that is where our life is. It says elsewhere, "your life is hid with the Christ in God", Col 3: 3.

AAC The whole divine supply is vital. As soon as we question these things, we turn it off in effect from our side. It is never turned off from God's side. But that supply comes in abundance to those who have faith in the word, and in Himself.

DAB What is being said raises the question of what we *are* seeking,

because if it is just something academic or theological, then we could get misled almost anywhere. There is only one place to get *life*: “this life is in his Son”. I do not suppose anyone here can imagine what their faith and Christianity would be if they did not feel it was living; if they did not feel they could live in it. That life is in His Son; “because I live ye also shall live”, John 14: 19. That is the fruit of the Spirit's presence in a believer.

If I may add a negative word, the opposite is corrupting, and John in his second epistle says if anyone comes on a different line, you do not receive them into the house, v 10. You may say you talked about something incidental, but that influence is corrupting and we need to be near the pure stream. I just say that by way of counsel.

FSP I was only thinking this morning of those words, “Behold the man!”, John 19: 5. Pilate said that, and he might just have been saying, ‘Here he is’, but God could have said it as well, “Behold the man!” - what a man should be, or is, in Christ.

AAC All God's thoughts are centred there. The hymn-writer says,

These words evoke an answering chord Hymn No 322.

And they do; when you think of those words, “Behold the man!”, there is something that answers in your heart; there is one Man, Christ, who is also God; God revealed in flesh, drawn near to us to draw out our affections and our commitment to Him.

DAB If we can just pick up a point in John 1; we could ask what might have changed. The answer is that “the Word became flesh”. That was a condition: Scripture speaks of it as a “form” into which He came; but that does not affect the truth of His Person at all. He took “a bondman's form”; it says that He was “found in figure as a man”, Phil 2: 8, 9. Then, in John 17: 5, He says, “and now glorify *me*, *thou* Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was”. None of those things affect what He is in His Person but He enters as Man to that world of divine glory and the home of divine affections; and His right to do that is the right of His Person.

AAC That is helpful and I wondered about drawing on Philippians 2 as well: “did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God”, v 6. He was God, and he remains God; and what could have changed? It says, “but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men”; but He remains God, and how can any but God take the place that He has taken now? He is at the

right hand of God, set down there as a Man in His presence; it cannot be otherwise.

DHB God took that form in order to come near to us. It was a desire on His part to draw near to man, but God could not come so near to man in any other way because He dwells in light unapproachable.

AAC I wonder if it would be acceptable to put it this way: the heart of God for man was such that He would not do this in any other, but in the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself. Such was God's desire to draw near to man that He did it Himself. It is very attractive; that is what I was seeking that we would get from this. There is something abundantly attractive about what God does Himself, which our souls should lay hold of, because nothing in this scene can change that.

DHB The hymn says -

God manifest in flesh, O wonder of His universe Hymn 400

DAB As to Philippians 2, there is a note there that what we read there is in contrast to Adam. The proposition that the devil put to man and his wife was, "ye will be as God" (Gen 3: 5), and they thought that that was something they could snatch; they thought that they could take that from God and have the wisdom and intelligence, and knowledge of evil, that God Himself had withheld. But the Lord Jesus does not have to be "as God"; He is God. There is no suggestion of any artifice or anything forced or illegitimate: He is God.

FSP That is what it means, "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God"?

DAB It was not something to covet for the Lord Jesus because it was true of Him. If I may explain the word 'rapine' with a very coarse example, we could imagine someone who would like to be a billionaire; who might be willing to steal money to get to that sort of position. But if you *are* a billionaire, it is a fact. It is not something to claim or to grasp at, because it is true of you. The word "equality" is very important as well, and the thought comes into John 10, "I and the Father are one". At the same time, the Lord Jesus has come into manhood; He says "the Son can do nothing of himself save whatever he sees the Father doing", John 5: 19. Manhood is a position of subjection in relation to God; and so the Lord Jesus also says, "the Father is greater than I", John 14: 28. That is because He has come into manhood; man's place is to be subject to God. But in John 10, He states the truth as to His Person, that they are equal: "I and the Father are one".

RMF According to Ephesians 1: 13, we are spiritual billionaires: “blessed ... with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ”. We have everything in Christ; we may not be taking advantage of it but it is there for the taking?.

DAB It is only accessible to us because of the truth of the Person of Christ.

RMF Yes, it is all in Christ: “every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ”. It is nothing to do with what we have done; it is what He has done.

PFE I am thinking of the hymn -

Father, Son, and Spirit - God in revelation Hymn 420.

It has kept coming back to me as this reading has gone on; it is a helpful hymn to speak about when challenged with some of these things. I was also thinking that life is a recurring theme in John 1; and that is something we should grasp, that life is found in Jesus only.

DAB The way that John puts it is very touching. He does not stop at an assertion of the majesty of Godhead, but presents the Lord Jesus as the source of life. And, of course, as far as the universe is concerned, He is the source of inanimate things as well. The universe is made up of things that are living and things that are not; but *nothing* received being without Him. That is a wonderful thought, and I like the way it is brought in in Hebrews, where Paul goes straight on from *that* truth to say, “having made by himself the purification of sins”, Heb 1: 3. Every soul here has started with that truth, the purification of sins has been made; and they need to understand that they are putting their faith *in God* in doing that; and the Person whose work they trust is God. That is why we can rely upon it; there is no point trying to rely on your own perception of it, or how you feel about it: it is immovable and unchangeable because it was One who as to His Person is God who did it.

AAC What we are saying goes back to the very beginning: *God* “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living soul”, Gen 2: 7. That was the source of it all, the Scripture is crystal clear about that. And then, as another hymn-writer says -

Life is found alone in Jesus Hymn 266

Surely that is in God; He is the One who began it and He is the One who continues it, and His purpose is that we should be before Him eternally

as made suitable to be in His presence. He is the One who has given us life, who sustains it; and that will be our portion eternally.

DAB There is an interesting point to be made in relation to what was said about the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father (Eph 3: 16), and He is also the Spirit of God's Son (Gal 4: 6), the same Person. That seems to me to confirm their equality: the Spirit has names that are linked to both the Father and the Son.

FSP I have also thought about the reaction we had to the suggestion we look at this matter at the beginning of this reading - it was not in defensive way, because it does not need defending, but in the joy of it all. The absolute truth of it is the Spirit's work. It is not just that we have learned this all our lives.

AAC I very much agree with that: the Spirit has given us life in these things. It means so much to us, it is a source to us; we have proved it. It is an on-going source when we get down or wound up, these things remain constant; and they lift us completely out of these circumstances. We have to recognise that, if we are to take account of any of this, we have to be put out of sight. It is only what is of Christ that is suitable for God's presence. It is helpful to think of it like that.

DAB This question that has arisen as to the Person of Christ is not the only matter of current concern among us; but if we grasp this truth, we are in touch with the Person who can solve the rest and bring His people through. Is that where our faith needs strengthening?

AAC Christ alone can bring us through. We can talk and work, but we need the answer from the Lord Jesus: He will lead us through.

DAB Maybe other troubles can be confounded by the reassertion of this truth.

AAC In one sense, it is so simple; all we have to do is to accept it, and that is good. We have received the truth from the Word - from the Bible - and we hold on to it. That is a perfectly sound position to be in.

RMF We have something for 'meditation' and it is good to think on these things. It says, "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things", 2 Tim 2: 7. It is one thing to accept a thing, but do you think there is benefit in just reflecting quietly individually on these truths?

AAC I do. There is a huge benefit, as long as we do it under the influence of the Spirit and, as you have drawn out already, accepting

that God is. It is not necessarily a natural contemplation. I fall back on my own logic and it pulls me up every time. But if we just submit to the influence of God - as we said, if we ask Him to give us to understand these things, He will.

DAB Our position is so much more advantageous than that for example of David. If we read the Psalms, we can see David contemplating the light he had. But now God “is in the light” (1 John 1: 7); the Lord Jesus is “the light of the world”, John 8: 12. It says, “in him was light”; there was something there to be taken account of; “we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father”, John 1: 14. They contemplated what was actually mystery, and yet it was there to be taken account of.

AAC And we have a resource which was not available to the Old Testament saints, and who is that but God Himself in the Person of His Spirit? Is he dwelling somewhere where I can go and get Him - no, *in me*, wherever I go He is with me. It is a resource which I suppose none of us uses properly or to the fullest extent - because it is limitless, but it is available to us, God Himself in us.

DAB The Lord says as to the Spirit, “he shall receive of mine” - which includes the truths we have been speaking about - “and shall announce it to you”, John 16: 14. I may think you need to read books, and right books will help, but *the Spirit* will show you the things that God has revealed.

RMF It says here that “the darkness apprehended it not”. There were times in the pathway of the Lord when the Jews could not understand Him, the Pharisees in particular; but there were those who accepted it in simple faith. Is that the line we have to take?

DAB That is not a natural thing either. If some of the lights in this room were not working, we would not have light and darkness in the room, because the remaining lights would do their best to lighten the whole room. But *moral* darkness is impenetrable except to divine light, and if that light is refused it goes on as dark as before. And there is darkness to hide in also. But what a wonderful thing it is that God is in the light! And our fellowship is in that lit-up place.

PFE The light appeared to these Pharisees in John 10 and they completely rejected it. The simple terms in which the Lord puts things are easily understandable, but they just did not want to know.

DAB It reminds me of a verse in one of the other gospels: “the Lord’s

power was there to heal them”, Luke 5: 17. It was there but they did not get the benefit of it. What you say is true: the light was here, but they could not see it.

PFE They were wrapped up in their teaching and they were not going to move from it.

RMF There is another scripture which says that he “did not there many works of power, because of their unbelief”, Matt 13: 58. Do you think there is an element of faith needed in this?

DAB That is right. That was in the very town where He had lived, in Capernaum. That is a solemn thing. I think we should look for these works of power - I am not speaking of miracles or that sort of thing, but the power of divine life working, the work of power that comes from association with the Son of God.

RMF I am just thinking too that, if we try and sort things out among the brethren for ourselves, it often makes a matter worse. If we have faith in the Lord, He can work.

DAB All these things arise to test our faith. I remember a word being given here about the three accounts we have of the water getting into the boat. I think a lot of the young people feel like that, that there is water in the boat and that the Lord is asleep. We might ask why is nothing happening? In Matthew, the Lord says, “ye of little faith”; in Luke He says, “Where is your faith” - it is mislaid for the time being; but in Mark, he says, “how is it ye have not faith?”, Mark 4: 40. That is very severe. I think some of these questions arise, and the Lord might have to ask 'have you *no* faith'; you are not *acting* as if you did? I remember someone speaking of prayer as that last resort when we have tried everything else. How sad that is when we know the Son of God.

London

9th April 2017

List to initials (London unless shown otherwise) :-

D H Bailey, Maidstone; D A Burr; A A Croot; P F Eagle; R M Fry;
G H Hurt; J S Hutson; F S Pittman

LIGHT AND WORDS

Jim M Macfarlane

Acts 26: 12-14

Matthew 17: 1-5

1 John 1: 7

In Acts 26 and in Matthew 17, we read of two experiences, one by Paul and one by Peter; and both refer to light of an exceptional kind.

In the verses immediately prior to where we began to read, Paul gives an account of his activities against the saints, describing himself as “exceedingly furious”, and he follows this immediately by speaking about this encounter with the Lord Jesus in glory; it begins with an exceptional experience of light. It has been observed and often repeated that, in his three accounts of this experience, Paul's description of the brightness of the light increases, until, in this passage, it becomes, “a light above the brightness of the sun, shining from heaven round about me”. Paul's experience was one of being completely enveloped in light. He probably thought that he had been walking in an enlightened fashion before this. He had all that came from God to Moses, and therefore he was enlightened in a way that others beyond Israel were not. He then has this transformative experience, where he is completely surrounded by light. It is almost an immediate announcement of the nature of his commission, by which there would be the enlightenment of men according to the way that God had made Himself known in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The light is followed immediately by a word. The substance of Christianity is conveyed in words and as soon as Paul and his companions “were all fallen to the ground”, he is addressed by a voice. This experience was to characterise his ministry, at the heart of which, of course, was the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who followed up this illumination of Paul with His word. So powerful was the word that he immediately addresses the One who spoke as “Lord”: “Who art thou, Lord?”. He did not need a formal introduction to Him. This experience that he had was sufficient to engage him in a way that put him immediately under the lordship of Jesus and made him ready for a commission. Note how it begins: “.... to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light ...”.

In the passage in Matthew, Peter is on the mount of

transfiguration, taken there with James and John by Jesus. Peter has something to say, but “While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them”. Peter’s words were superseded by light, from which a voice spoke. The way in which the Lord Jesus appeared on the mountain was as One transfigured before them, “And his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light”. Then “a bright cloud overshadowed them”, and then, in a way similar to the experience of Paul, a word follows: “*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him”. This remained immensely significant for Peter. When he writes his epistle, this, as far as I recall, is the only incident recounted that relates to his time with Jesus. He does not refer in his epistle simply to light, but he writes about the way in which those who were with Him on the mountain were “eyewitnesses of *his* majesty”, 2 Pet 1: 16. This was not simply brightness. This was something which engaged Peter and remained with him: the magnificence of the Lord Jesus and His distinction on the mountain, as drawn attention to by the Father, surrounded in these circumstances of light, had the character of majesty. Peter refers to this experience, and in this particular way, in an epistle addressed to believers who were beset by those whose purpose was to cause them to stray from the Christian way. Before addressing the detail of these threats, he refers to this experience of light and the word which accompanied it.

We have read in John’s epistle because he had a significant part in the establishment of Christianity. Very early in his gospel he speaks of light in direct reference to the Person of Jesus, introduced as the Word: “in him was life, and the life was the light of men”, chap. 1: 4. On two further occasions he records Jesus saying, “I am the light of the world”, chap 8: 12; 9: 5. These two references may convey something of the extent to which he had been impressed by his experience with the One who was “the light of the world”. John was writing in a day in which heretical views were already abroad. He refers to “every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh” (1 John 4: 3), for example, but, before he turns to difficulties of this kind, he speaks of how we may be kept and maintained. Very early in his first epistle, he speaks of the practical support we find in fellowship, and it is related to light, following the statement that “God is light”, in verse 5. “But if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”. This fellowship is not a membership system but a common lot in which we walk together, with spiritual and moral characteristics derived from walking in the light as He is in the light.

The Old Testament has a reference to Jehovah dwelling in “thick darkness” (1 Kings 8: 12), while the New Testament accounts of His dwelling as “unapproachable light”, 1 Tim. 6: 16. While recognition would have to be given to the different contexts, I think that the contrast in these two references emphasises the significance of light in Christianity. It has pleased the God who dwells in unapproachable light to make Himself accessible in the Person of Jesus Christ and to make us suitable to Him by Jesus' work.

We have some awareness of the present distresses of our fellow men and their fears of what may follow. What blessing we have in this Christian pathway, to live in an ambience of light and to have the communications of the current mind of heaven for us by the Holy Spirit.

May we have some fresh sense of the blessing of this and may the Lord bless the word.

Word in meeting for ministry - Dundee

16th August 2016

BANNERS LIFTED UP

Bob Gray

Isaiah 59: 19-21

1 Corinthians 1: 1-9

Ephesians 3: 14-21

We have been speaking together and enquiring as to the matter of the living God being in our midst. In Isaiah 59, we have God speaking through the prophet. He says, "they shall fear the name of Jehovah from the west, and from the rising of the sun, his glory. When the adversary shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Jehovah will lift up a banner against him". This scripture gives some indication of how God has His eye on the testimony. This is an Old Testament scripture, but it applies to God's doings with His people at all times; "When the adversary shall come in like a flood". The Lord Jesus knew that this would happen after His departure, as we see when He spoke of His assembly, "on this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it", Matt 16: 18. The enemy has been constant in his attack to try to spoil or at least dilute the truth that God has entrusted by the Holy Spirit to each one of us. Nothing that God has said will fail. Nothing that He has set on in your life and in mine will fail. Scripture tells us that, "he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day", Phil 1: 6. Could we say that of everyone here: "he who has begun in you a good work"? Do you have the sense that God has worked and is working in your soul? "He who has begun in you a good work will complete it". There is no doubt about the second part, "will complete it". It lies with each one of us responsibly to have to do with the blessed God in relation to our soul salvation and our links with our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is not a gospel preaching, but the gospel is always current. The teaching of it, the substance of it, should be with us at all times. It says, "they shall fear the name of Jehovah ... When the adversary shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Jehovah will lift up a banner against Him". When did that happen? It has happened many times. There was never a lifting up like the lifting up at Calvary. The Lord speaks about it three times in John's gospel, "thus must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3: 14), "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth" (John 12: 32), and, "When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man", John 8: 28. What a testimony; that stands! It does not suggest at all in this scripture that if a banner is raised up it is removed. God does not remove His

banners; when they are lifted up they mark a step forward in the testimony. The finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ is towards us all; "righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those who believe", Rom 3: 22. If we look backward in the history of God's testimony, time and time again the enemy has brought in difficulties, attempts to overthrow the truth and light of Christianity, and God in His own sovereignty has withstood them. I refer for instance to the Reformation. The truth of Christianity that had been entrusted to men had largely become diluted, and the profession had largely become the preserve of one particular body in Christendom. What did God do? He raised up a banner. How great that was. The children will know the history I am sure. Remember Martin Luther, that man, who was a fully active member of the Roman Catholic church, who was enlightened by God as to the truth which says, "the just shall live by his faith", Hab 2: 4. Was that a banner? Yes, indeed it was a banner. It was something that was lifted up by a man who felt his own weakness. He is reported to have said, 'Here I stand, I can do no other'. It was there; he had taken a stand in relation to the truth of God as he understood it and he was supported. Not everything that was done in the Reformation was right. There was a call to arms which was not of God, but the fact remains that God raised up a standard then that has never been withdrawn and cannot be.

We can speak of later instances. We speak of a recovery to the truth which began in the early nineteenth century. After the Reformation, decline and complacency came in and God lifted up a standard again. We should know a little about church history because what we have now is a treasure; it is not an invention of man. We do not have a creed; it is the result of the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and it is the result of the gift of the Holy Spirit. You say these are wonderful gifts; yes, they are. They are also the result of a suffering testimony. In these days, we have the Scriptures; no one molests us in this and many other countries; we have liberty to gather and move about. Where did these liberties come from? Saints of God have in a sense paid for them. In the recovery as we speak of it He raised up a banner. What was the banner? The Head is in heaven; and His body on earth is united to Him by the Spirit. This truth has never been removed or modified. It is a fine thing to have a sense in our spirits of what God has done and is doing. It does not require to be modified; it does not require to be improved. What God has said is final and complete. What has come out in the life and exaltation of the Lord

Jesus Christ is final and complete; and the epistles amplified what has appeared in the ministry of Christ. What God did through Christ is perfect, complete and full and He anointed it by the giving of the blessed Holy Spirit.

We have come in to all that. God has maintained that testimony and He has done it in the manner described here: “when the adversary shall come in like a flood”. Have you ever seen a really serious flood? It is devastating; the surge and power of countless thousands of gallons of water which will stop at nothing, which surround or throw down whatever is in the way. A real flood is one of the most destructive things on the earth. What does God do? It says, “the Spirit of Jehovah will lift up a banner against him”. God did that; He did it again at the beginning of the recovery - and I would say in passing that it was not the recovery of the Plymouth Brethren. I do not want to confuse persons, but the recovery had repercussions all through Christendom. Godly persons in the churches were exercised as to what had come in and what was being allowed and God caused them to move. Persons came out from churches, left godly relatives behind and godly clergymen, no doubt, and others; they left them behind and they came out in a way like Abraham not knowing where they were going. They came out in answer to a divine call. All of that underlies what we have now. The testimony that we have our part in and enjoy is based on suffering for the truth by persons. Some suffered as martyrs; others in the recovery as we speak of it did not suffer martyrdom; but they suffered greatly in regard of their families, livelihoods and so on. God did that in order to bring about completion. God has in mind to complete His thoughts as to Christ and the assembly. He needed room, and scope in which to operate so as to bring His thoughts into fruition. We know the history of the testimony in measure. There have been conflicts all through; the enemy has assailed. I do not want to over-emphasise the side of suffering, but I do want to leave this impression that what we have has been paid for by persons who have suffered in the testimony in order to maintain the truth as it is in Christ. That is true. What we have so pleasantly (and thank God for what we have, I would not belittle it at all), liberty to gather, liberty to move about, liberty to read the Scriptures, liberty to preach in the open air - every one of these liberties has been paid for as a result of the Spirit of God lifting up a banner.

It goes on to say, “the Redeemer will come to Zion”. This teaching is in relation to Israel particularly, but it goes on to say, “My

spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and for ever". What God has embarked on He will not change. Scripture bears ample testimony to the fact that what God has embarked on, in setting on in this dispensation this great mystery as to Christ and the assembly, Christ among the Gentiles, "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col 1: 27), He will bring to a glorious completion, and He will show it in the day of display. What He has asked us to do is to "hold fast what thou hast", Rev 3: 11. What do you have? In Grangemouth we have quite a large meeting for which we give God thanks, but there are small meetings, there are difficulties, there are exercises. God has not changed His thoughts by one iota. You say that is all very well, how do we work that out?

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians in our next scripture, and we know the state of things in Corinth was difficult. I would appeal to you, especially to our younger brethren: I know things are difficult sometimes. I do not say that in any critical spirit, but I say to you young ones, with affection and respect, hold on to what you have in your knowledge of Christ, hold on to what has become part of you in your faith; and to your committal to the Lord Jesus: He values that.

It says, "Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ, by God's will, and Sosthenes the brother". What does this brother Sosthenes have to do with anything? Why include him? I think Paul saw that one of the things that had suffered most at Corinth was the brotherly relation. They were riddled with divisions and sects and various groups. You say that is not the case now. No, but what it does show is that there was a state in Corinth that was not according to God and if left would do damage. So he spoke of "Sosthenes **the brother**". That in itself is a commendation. Others he commends; here he just says "Sosthenes the brother". Are you a brother or a sister? Who to? The brother next to you? Am I a brother? It is all very well looking at others and pointing the finger; the point is, am I a brother in my local meeting? What is a brother for? One thing is he is "born for adversity", Prov 17: 17.

God has set us together; we did not gather up our local meeting: God did it. The Father plants and the Father has planted. Paul says, "the assembly of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours". We have spent quite a bit of

time already speaking about the local assembly and the value of it, but I think at the present moment it is almost impossible to over-emphasise how important local companies are in God's arrangements. They must be held together, not by rules, not by looking up page so-and-so of some book or other. I do not decry ministry; we need it and it is helpful, but local assemblies are the sphere in which God is operating and what Paul was saying here was that he had God's view of this sphere. We might not have written this about Corinth, "the assembly of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints". That is a dignified address, "the assembly of God which is in Corinth". How about the assembly of God which is in Sunbury? We cannot claim to be the assembly. If you want the assembly in Sunbury you would have to find every single Christian in Sunbury and put them all together somewhere. That would be *the* assembly in Sunbury, but what you can do is look around your local meeting and see those whom God has placed there and work out with them the truth that is proper to a local assembly. Paul respects them; he treats them as dignified, although their behaviour was anything but dignified, but Paul held them in his heart with the view that God had of them. And so he says, "called saints, with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ". Is that not fine? Could we say that to our brethren as we come in amongst them, gather with them? "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ". That is how we should view each other and salute each other as we come together.

It goes on, "I thank my God always about you, in respect of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye have been enriched in him, in all word and doctrine, and all knowledge". Local assemblies are furnished by God with what is needed to maintain them. There may be conditions in which local assemblies, because of weakness, call on help from a neighbouring assembly. That is perfectly acceptable but we view our local assemblies in principle as having in them the wherewithal to maintain things for God's pleasure. I think this scripture would bear that interpretation. It says, "ye come short in no gift, awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you to the end, unimpeachable". "Unimpeachable"; could we say that of every one in all our local assemblies?

Paul had that in view. He was not ignoring the difficulties and

the exercises there; he was clinging tenaciously in the power of the Spirit to God's view of the local assembly in the place and working in relation to that. It was like the pattern of old. Moses had a pattern of the tabernacle; David was given a pattern by the Spirit. In both cases these patterns were filled out and worked out completely and I would respectfully suggest that we should carry the pattern of the local assembly in our hearts, God's pattern. It says, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". Here is the key: "God is faithful". We have spoken about the living God. Do I trust Him? Oh yes, of course. Do I really trust Him; trust Him to bring an answer in to current exercises? Oh well, things are difficult. Do I trust Him? It is His assembly, God's assembly and Christ's assembly. It speaks of "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own", Acts 20: 28. That in essence applies to my local meeting and to yours. I know it is not the whole assembly but the features of the assembly are worked out there and God would appeal to us through His word to work out His thoughts as to the assembly. If you cannot find anyone to work them out with, carry them in your own heart; maintain them. It says, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord".

I go on briefly to Ephesians because there it speaks of the fulness of things. "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, 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". How great these things are. Paul, that great servant, that man who served His Master so well, says, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". He brings to bear the most dignified and the most elevated thoughts in connection with the Father and with Christ, "of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, in order that he may give you according to the riches of his glory". Could we measure that, "the riches of his glory"? So he says, "to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love".

How much God has expended on each one of us as individuals, but how much he has expended on local assemblies. There has been much suffering, and no one is pretending that there are no difficulties and there are no problems. There are, but God has not given up His

thought as to the Head in heaven and His body here; the truth worked out in local assemblies. There is an answer; “Hereby shall ye know that the living God is in your midst”, Josh 3: 10. Is the living God in our midst? Let each answer for himself: is the living God in our midst? You say you do not see any change; things seem to go on and on. Is the living God in our midst? Will He bring in a solution? Yes, He will, in His own time, when I have learnt what I have to learn (and that may be part of the hindrance). So Paul goes on, “being rooted and founded in love, in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height”. What is the apostle talking about? It says, “breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. Do you ever have the sense, particularly at the time of the Supper, and then the service of God, that you are involved in something that cannot be measured; waters to swim in, and along with it, perfect peace?

These are real things, these are things that are open to us and I know it is all too easy to speak from the height of superiority, but my simple desire is to occupy your hearts with God and with Christ and with what God is doing, “to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. We have spoken about completion and fulness. Here it is, “filled even to all the fulness of God”, filled so full that there is no scope for anything else. The worry is gone, the moral question settled; the difficulties gone. Can we taste and touch these things. Yes, we can, because it says, “to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which works in us, to him be glory in the assembly”; “according to the power which works in us”. What power is that? That is the power of the living God who is in our midst. He is the one who has the power to put things right. He is the one who has the power to bring all to completion and, believe me, He will. When that day comes when the Lord Jesus comes for His own, there will be no debate then, no argument, and no discussion. It will be like the voice in Revelation 4: 1, “Come up here”, and every matter will be complete. And Paul is moved to add, “to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages”.

I would desire to encourage the saints to go on according to the pattern with what Christ has set on in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to maintain what is due to God in our local assemblies. I do not say as far as we are able; I just say to maintain what is due to God in our local

assemblies, and to leave the outcome to Him. May the Lord bless the word.

Sunbury

22nd October 2016

“TO WHOM THEN WILL YE LIKEN GOD?”

Andrew Martin

Isaiah 40:18 (First sentence)

This question has been in my mind as I have been considering this occasion: “To whom then will ye liken God?”. How well do you know Him? There are many people who say they do not believe that He exists. That is Satan's attempt to dull the conscience so they will not think about Him. Every one of us is going to meet Him; you are going to meet Him; I am going to meet Him. We are going to meet Him soon; I am sure it will not be long; we are going to meet God. I might say as the prophet did, 'What will He be like?'

For many years some of us did not want to think about that. We wanted to put that out of our minds. We did not want to meet God. Why did we not want to meet God? Because, in the depths of our hearts, we knew that we were sinners. We were not fit to be in the presence of God; we were not fit to appear before Him. And we knew very well that the last thing that we wanted to do was to meet God. But the fact is we will have to. I can tell you now, my friend, that there are many here who are not afraid of meeting God now. God has met us; He has met us in grace; He has met us in the Person of His own Son. What a wonderful thing it is to think that God should come out in such a way. What is He like? What is God like?

Well, this word came through the prophet Isaiah. Some of us were speaking earlier today about Isaiah, and there are many chapters which are quite dark. There are chapters of burdens and there are chapters of woes, but through it all, and after them all, comes the brilliant light of the glad tidings - the gospel - God's glad tidings. He prophesies like none other of the fact that there was One coming, who would be the answer to everything that has come between God and man, the One who was coming who was going to take it all upon Himself.

In the days in which Isaiah lived, God was known as a righteous God. I suppose right from the outset He was known as a holy God. Right from Adam's time, when Adam was driven out of that garden of Eden, the way to the tree of life was guarded by the cherubim and the flame of the flashing sword. Who could go that way? Did God ever give up on man? A brother once helped me to see that the way to the tree of

life was never closed; it was not taken away: it was guarded, guarded by the cherubim and the flame of the flashing sword. God's holiness was preserved. God always intended that man should come to the tree of life and partake of it, but His holiness prevented man in his sins from coming there. The flame of the flashing sword was there and none could pass that way. Israel saw the flame of the flashing sword. They came out of Egypt and they were in Sinai and they came to the foot of the mountain and the whole mountain quaked and was on fire and there was "the sound of the trumpet, exceeding loud", and the people were terrified: think of that. Six hundred thousand men plus their families - probably two million people - and they were terrified. What could terrify two million people? The flame of God's flashing sword was there. His holiness was being maintained; His righteousness was being maintained. These attributes of God will never go away. They are maintained and maintained forever. And Israel was terrified. What did they do? They said to Moses, 'You go up the mountain but we will not come near it'; and God actually spoke to Moses and He said, 'Do not let them come near because they will perish', Exod 19. But you know there was one man and he went up that mountain. It says later, that "Moses drew near to the obscurity", Exod 20: 21. One man was able to go up to the presence of God.

Think of how that speaks of our Lord Jesus, does it not? The One who came down here into this very scene in which we are, as a real Man, taking his place amongst men. What wonderful grace! This is what God's circumstances were like. Grace was being displayed. It had been displayed through every dispensation of time: even the law contained grace. Think of it; that is what God is like. "To whom then will ye liken God?" The law provided a way through for man, but man could not keep it. But the Lord Jesus came. He came - the One who magnified the law and made it honourable. It is not just that He fulfilled it to the letter, but that He was the spirit of the law; the spirit of it was seen in Him. In that wonderful and perfect life He displayed all that God had in mind in relation to man. He displayed the heart of God to man; He displayed perfect manhood to God: wonderful life of Jesus! Think of the greatness of what was set out in that life. He came *near* to people; He came near to the lowest of man. Even as to His incoming, as to the circumstances into which He came, He did not come in as you and I have. Normally we have come from loving parents. We have been taken, nurtured and cared for, and the best provided. When the Lord Jesus came there was not a roof over His head. There were no

comforts, no crib. No, He was laid in what had been constructed for animals; that was where He was laid. This was the Son of God! These were the circumstances into which He came! Why did He come so low? He came so low in order that you and I should be able to reach Him, that He should come into our circumstances. None was below the circumstances into which He came. He said, "the Son of man has not where he may lay his head", Luke 9: 58. Nobody was poorer than He was: He made Himself poor. There is a verse in the Proverbs which says, "There is that feigneth himself rich, and hath nothing", chap 13: 7. Think of that; that is the whole world system, what man is: he "feigneth himself rich, and hath nothing". Then it says, "there is that maketh himself poor, and hath great wealth". Think of the Lord Jesus.; He made himself poor; He came into such circumstances. "For your sakes he, being rich, became poor". Why? "That ye by *his* poverty might be enriched", 2 Cor 8: 9. Oh beloved, what a wonderful matter for our contemplation. Think about it dear friend; think about it when you are alone. If you wake up in the night, what do you think about? Problems perhaps; I know what it is like. Learn to train your mind upon the Lord Jesus, and think about Him. Think about the things that concern Him. You will find that you will sleep easier afterwards; you will find that the things of life have changed.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus!
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

Helen H Lemmel (1922)

These are precious words and how true they are. 'Turn your eyes upon Jesus'. Well, there He was beloved, the Object for all who would come to Him, available to all for the feeblest cry. We have been speaking of Him at the mount of transfiguration, Matt 17: 1-8. When He came down from that mountain, what He encountered was a young person who was under the power of Satan, v 14-18. The Lord Jesus came from the greatest elevation right down to the lowest depths of humanity. This boy was helpless and Satan's power was active there. What was His reaction? Just the same as if He had not been glorified on the mountain; He was coming to bring salvation to men.

Think of the wonder of salvation. Do you really know salvation? You may say, 'I know my sins forgiven'. Yes, but do you know salvation? To be free. That boy was released from the power of Satan:

how precious that is. Saved: we need to be saved from our sins; we need to be saved from the power of Satan; we need to be saved from the world. Ultimately believers will be saved even in relation to these conditions. Salvation is a wonderful thing - full salvation. And that is what God has in mind for us. "To whom then will ye liken God?" Who could have thoughts like this in relation to man? Well, it involved that the Lord Jesus must go and suffer and die. He went to the cross, beloved. Even as going to the cross, He still considered for His own, did He not? Remember He came out of Jericho and He heard a cry. He had the cross before Him; He was going up to Jerusalem; the next thing on the divine calendar was that Jesus was going to be rejected and taken and crucified. That was what was immediately before Him, and He heard a cry from a poor blind man. And it says, "Jesus stood still", Luke 18:40. He stood still. And beloved, He will stand still for you tonight; this afternoon: do not put it off till tonight. He will stand still for you just now if you cry out in your heart to Him; He will stand still. There are many here in this room who can say that He stood still for them. Because when you turn to the Lord Jesus in all your need, what you find is that He is occupied with you alone, and nobody else can intrude. He is just occupied with you, because He has died for you.

He went that way for you, my friend. He suffered there upon the cross in order to free you from your sins. He bore the terrible judgment of God against sin there upon the cross, and everyone who puts their faith in Him can know what it is to have their sins forgiven and to be free of sin, to be justified. Everyone who puts their faith in Him can know what that is. He suffered there, and He went into death. He shed His precious blood. It is a wonderful witness, is it not, to the maintaining of every divine right? God's righteousness, God's holiness that I spoke about, the flame of the flashing sword, Sinai: He bore it in its fulness. You and I could never bear it. He bore it in its fulness. There was the Lord Jesus, upon the cross, and He shed His precious blood and that was the witness that every divine claim has been met. And it is the witness that the way is now open for you to come into the presence of God where He is. That is, the great eternal witness is the ground on which you stand before God.

You remember in Leviticus the blood was taken into the holy of holies and it was sprinkled upon the mercy seat, sprinkled once upon the mercy seat, chap 16: 14. Divine claims have been met once and for all, but then it was sprinkled before the mercy seat. Typically, there

upon the ground the blood was sprinkled for you. Was it sprinkled once? Once, twice, three times, four times - seven times there before the mercy seat; so you should have full assurance that you have a way into the presence of God and your standing before God is based on the blood of Jesus; that precious blood. When we speak about the blood of Jesus, we feel compelled to use the word precious because it is so precious - precious to God and precious to us. And the blood is the basis of our standing before God. We can stand there in all boldness and suitability because the blood of Jesus has been shed. And our faith and our joy is in the greatness of the One who shed His precious blood.

And then He was buried; He was placed in the tomb. It says in Isaiah 53 that "men appointed his grave with the wicked", v 9. They would have put His grave at the foot of the cross like they did with criminals. God saw to it that that did not happen. The Lord Jesus was not put into a grave; He was laid in a tomb. The difference is that a tomb has a door. The angel said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay", Matt 28: 6. "See the place"; He was put in that new tomb, a place that had never seen corruption. He was placed there but He could not remain there. As soon as that third day arrived, He was raised. He was raised by the glory of the Father. What does that involve? Everything that God is was involved in the resurrection of Jesus; God's love was involved. He could not leave His Son in death; His love was involved. He had to have His Son with Him. His righteousness was involved; He could not righteously leave Christ in death, the One who had established righteousness for Him, the One who had met every claim of the throne. He could not leave Him there. It was a matter of divine righteousness that He should be raised. His holiness was involved. He could not remain there: "neither wilt thou allow thy holy One to see corruption", Ps 16: 10. Every attribute of God was involved in this, that Christ should be raised, that He should be brought out of death.

And think of the greatness of what took place that morning when Christ was brought out of death. He was on new ground entirely. And the believer's portion with Him is on new ground. So there was that dear sister, Mary; she came to the tomb. She had nothing here apart from Jesus. If the Lord Jesus was not here, what did she have on earth? Nothing! She came to the tomb in all her affection, and He met her there. He entrusted her with the greatest message that was ever given to anyone. Why? Because she was there in affection. She was there in affection for Him. Have you got real love for the Lord Jesus? I

ask you - have you? It is a challenge. There are those whom we love according to nature, and if we love them then we are prepared to sacrifice for them, are we not? We give them things; we sacrifice. Have you got love for Jesus? Have you got love for the Lord? You see what He has done: He has suffered for you; He has died; He has shed his precious blood; He has been buried, indicating that all that we are according to nature has removed from God's sight. He has now been raised, He has now been exalted in heaven, and He is there now a blessed living One. Do you love Him where He is? You may be glad that you can see the work that He has done upon the cross, but, oh beloved, the One who holds the heart is a Man who is now in the glory. He is no longer upon the cross, but He is now the centre of another world, a world of glory, a world where we belong. We belong there because we belong to Him! We are united to Him. How can I say we are united to Him? Because all those who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit are united to Him. The Lord Jesus having ascended up on high, the Holy Spirit has been given. And here is another milestone in your life: have you received the gift of the Holy Spirit? He is available. Ask the Father in all sincerity, be in exercise before God, be earnest before God. Let us never be casual before God in relation to divine things; things relating to our souls. Let us be in real earnest about them. God is ready to give; God is a giving God, and He would give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him, to those who obey Him. God is willing to do that; He is more ready to give than we are to ask. That is the kind of God He is.

"To whom then will ye liken God?" You see what He has done? You see the lengths to which He has gone? He has sent His own Son, who has taken this way, who has been delivered up and has settled the whole matter of sin and sins for time and eternity, and is now exalted in the Father's presence. Soon He is coming again; and He is the One, beloved, who is the Centre of God's world and He is to be the Centre of our world. We do not know how long it will be until the Lord comes. We do not think it will be very long at all; we hope not! But in the meantime, is He the Centre of your world as He is the Centre of God's world? God would have Him to be; God would have *you* to have the same thoughts of the Lord Jesus as He has. That was made clear on the mount of transfiguration. Peter had great thoughts of the Lord Jesus, but also of Moses and Elias, and the Father intervened and, in effect, He said, 'Peter, I want you to have my thoughts about Him. I want you to share in my appreciation of my Son'. Beloved, let us increase in our

appreciation of that One. Let us be here as those who are held in relation to Him. That is God's desire that we should be here as held in that way, so that we are here walking by faith and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, there is a power here to walk here apart from evil. There are temptations around but we do not have to give way to them. I remember a brother years ago saying in the meeting that the believer has power, for example, to see a newspaper headline and just turn the page; He does not have to read the article. The believer has the power to do that. That is the power of the Holy Spirit, to be able to avoid evil, to keep ourselves in relation to Christ, in relation to God, to hold ourselves in relation to divine things; the believer has the power to do that. Beloved, what a wonderful thing that is, and if you have the Holy Spirit you have that power. And what is more, if you have the Holy Spirit you will find yourself as part of the most glorious thing that has ever been created, the assembly: the most glorious vessel - you are part of it! And everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus and has the Holy Spirit is part of this most wonderful entity that exists in the whole creation. And that is your part and it will be your part eternally.

Well, beloved, all these things are in God's mind. Who is a God like this? 'To whom will ye liken me?', says God. The whole of man's world, the whole of men's systems, the whole of men's careers, whatever it may be, what is it compared to God? Everything down here is going to be rolled up and done away with, and what will go through is your link with God, your link with the Lord Jesus. That will go through and that is the only thing that will see you through, beloved. The work of God in you is going to keep you and will preserve you to all eternity.

May the Lord bless the word.

Preaching of the glad tidings, Kirkcaldy

6th November 2016