

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 54

September 2011

CONTENTS

Peace

Roland H. Brown

Page 1

A Sacrificial Spirit

Ron D. Plant

Page 10

The Lord Jesus as Creator and Saviour

David Spiers Jr

Page 20

Our Hope

Douglas F. Hugill

Page 27

PEACE

Roland H Brown

John 14: 27

Colossians 1: 19, 20 (to “his cross”)

Philippians 4: 4-9

We have had our attention drawn to two of the great basic matters in Christianity, the matter of faith, which is fundamental; and the matter of hope, a living hope and a blessed hope, as we sang -

O bright and blessed hope (Hymn 160).

May it become more so, dear brethren, as a result of our time together. Would that that bright hope might become brighter and more blessed to us, and result in greater thanksgiving to the God who has secured for us such a wondrous portion eternally. What we have had has encouraged me to speak a little as to another great feature of Christianity, which is peace, something that people strive after in the world. All of us, I suppose, have said at times that we wanted a bit of peace and quiet, and would like to turn aside from a troublesome and tumultuous world and the cares and burdens in it, for a little peace. That might be, of course, a very selfish desire, but what I want to speak about is something much more noble than that, the peace of Christ and the peace of God, as referred to in these passages that I have read. And they are to be ours, dear brethren. The peace of God Himself is to be our known and enjoyed portion.

I referred to this verse in John because the Lord says, “I leave peace with you”, and then He says, “I give *my* peace to you”. The Lord left something here before He went on high. He left a little circle here on the earth, persons that were very different from one another naturally. If you read the gospels you will see, for example, that Peter was a very different character of man from John, but they were all united around Him, and as Peter said, “we have left all things and have followed thee”, Matt 19: 27. The Lord never contradicted that. What men they were! Men who had left family and business and domestic comfort to follow the Man of sorrows. What He had to offer them was not outwardly a comfortable life such as most of us enjoy; it was a life of hardship, it was a life of suffering. Have you ever thought about that? What was it that caused these men to leave their comforts, their business, their family, their circumstances, to follow the lonely Man of sorrows? It was a little circle, few in number, but the nucleus of what God is going to tabernacle

with eternally, the nucleus of the assembly. And in that circle He left peace. He did not leave them at odds with one another, He did not leave them each insisting upon their own will, He left them at peace. What a blessed service that was! How skilfully the Lord worked with those men that were the product of His own personal ministry, His own personal craftsmanship! There was peace left with them. Before He left, the traitor was exposed. The Lord was going to leave peace in the circle. It could not have been left with the son of perdition there. The Lord in His grace humbled Peter, who was to become the spearhead of the Spirit's activities in the Acts. He prayed for him, and in His ways with him Peter discovered his own weaknesses. He would appear to have been an impulsive man. A man like that in this circle would not have been very peaceable to live with, but the Lord served him in His grace and in His love. Satan demanded to have him, Luke 22: 31. There was in Peter, as with us all, what Satan could claim. He had the flesh in him but the Lord served him so that, as He left, this little circle was prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and He left peace with them. No doubt He laboured with them all. There were the two who wanted a place on either side of Him, and immediately that aroused the indignation of the others because secretly they wanted a place too. So He spoke about Himself and He spoke about anyone that would be chief among them being their servant, Matt 20: 26. With what grace the Lord had served these men; how tenderly He washed their feet! He left them an example that in His absence, they should be at peace with one another. That was His desire.

It was Paul's desire, too, as he wrote to the Corinthians, "be at peace". He says, "rejoice; be perfected; be encouraged; be of one mind; be at peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you", 2 Cor 13: 11. You see that what disrupts peace, what brings in disorder, what brings in anxiety, destroys the enjoyment of the love of Christ. It does not alter His love towards us, but it affects our enjoyment and experience of it. We need to be in restful conditions to receive from the Lord, and the Lord would serve us as He served His own, that the features of the order of man that would bring disruption into the Christian circle might be excluded.

So He says, "I leave peace with you". But then He says something much greater than that, "I give *my* peace to you", '*My* peace'. What a peace that was! As you think of the Lord as the true ark approaching the waters of the Jordan, you think of all that lay before Him, the awfulness for Him of becoming a sin-offering! What peace

marked that blessed Man in those circumstances! John records how He opened His heart to the Father: He said, “the hour is come”, chap 17: 1. What an hour that was, the great focus you might say, of eternity, all depending on one blessed Man; everything for God depending upon Him, everything for us, dear brethren, hanging upon Him. In that momentous hour He speaks to His Father about His own. With what affection, with what love He speaks to the Father! He commits them to the Father, that they might be kept in His name, that they might be sanctified by the truth, in order that these conditions of peace might be maintained among them. He is thinking of them and not only of them, but in that momentous hour He was looking down the dispensation to those who would “believe on me through their word”, John 17: 20. Think of the Lord Jesus in that momentous hour looking down to the present day, looking down to each of us in this company who have believed on Him through the word of His apostles, who through faith, as we have been reminded, have embraced the testimony of God concerning His Son. You think of His desire “that they may be one, as we are one” (v 22), that everything that would disrupt and divide and disunite might be excluded. We know how successful the enemy has been. The Lord spoke of the wolf coming that he might scatter the flock, and I suppose the flock of Christ has never been more scattered publicly than in the day in which we are, but His desire remains the same. As we gather together and give Him His place He would ensure that these conditions of peace might be known by us - “*my peace*”, the peace that can never be broken through the sorrows of the testimony. What the will of God involved for Him! “I give *my peace* to you”. Dear brethren, what do we know about these things? As I read a verse like this I am measured more than any in this room as to what I know about the peace of Christ. As we have read of the peace of God, it surpasses every understanding.

I read that passage in Colossians because it tells us how the peace of God has been secured. This is not simply having peace towards God (that is one of the great blessings in the gospel, that we can have peace towards God, no longer afraid of God as a Judge; we can have peace towards Him in the knowledge that everything has been met righteously to His eternal satisfaction), but this passage that I have read in Colossians I think refers to the peace of God, the Godhead. It speaks of One in whom “all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to itself”, by Him! What language this is! May it not just remain remarkable language to us but may the Spirit of God convey to us something of the immensity of

what is contained in these verses, that all things should be reconciled to God by one blessed Man. Paul says here, "having made peace by the blood of his cross". There could be no reconciliation of all things to God without that. That is how it was done, dear brethren. Men, as we have already remarked, strive to reach peace through compromise, through negotiation. They have tried it in Ireland, they are trying it in the Middle East, and it can never be successful, and the Scriptures tells us why. Peace is the fruit of righteousness; it is not the fruit of compromise. Peace is never brought about through compromise or agreeing to differ, or to settle differences half way. Peace is the fruit of righteousness, and if all things were to be reconciled to the Godhead it was necessary that righteousness should be established, and established on an unchallengeable basis. The expression that is used here is a very remarkable one; He has "made peace by the blood of his cross". Of course, what the apostle is referring to is the blood of Jesus, but that is not how it is put; it is put as the blood of *His cross*. So the blood and the cross are presented to us. Now I think when it comes to the question of our sins, Scripture teaches us that it is the *blood* of Jesus. I trust that everyone in this company is sheltering under it, but as far as God is concerned righteousness has been established through the shedding of that blood. God said, "when I see the blood" - 'when I see it', Exod 12: 13. I do not know what your appreciation of the blood of Jesus is. I would have to confess that mine is very small. I am thankful that it has grown a little since I first came to know Him. That is why I feel at the Supper week by week, the Lord and the Spirit would help us to grow in our appreciation of Him. He speaks of "my blood, which is poured out for you", Luke 22: 20. That is intended to come home to us personally, week by week. That was the Lord Jesus speaking on the night in which He was delivered up; He was speaking about the pouring out of His own life blood and it being poured out for them. Every time we partake of that cup I believe we are to be freshly impressed by it. The great fear is that through familiarity with both the Supper and the words that I have just quoted they could become a ritual. The feasts of the Old Testament were established by God, but they are spoken of in the New Testament as the feasts of the Jews. You see, there was no longer anything for God in them because His Son was rejected and left out, and I think it should be a concern with us all as we gather for the Supper that there might be a true calling of Him to mind, and that as we partake of the emblems our hearts are impressionable. I believe we can ask the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit to increase our appreciation of that blood. But whether our appreciation of it is large or whether it be small, God says,

when I see it, when I see the blood. Think of God the Father looking at the blood, the blood of His Son, as the apostle Paul puts it so affectingly, "the blood of his own", His own! What an affecting thing that is, "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own", Acts 20: 28. That was the basis on which the peace of God was established as regards mankind. How it behoves us then as we think about these things to be at peace among ourselves, not to introduce anything of a discordant nature into that circle which has cost God so much. But then it is not only the blood that is referred to here. What is spoken of here also is the cross and what I learn from Scripture is that when the cross is particularly spoken about it is not so much a question of our sins but it is a question of our sinful state. It is not a question simply of the offences, but it is a question of the offender, and God has had to deal with both. There could be no peace without the removal judicially of the order of man that has caused offence to Him from under the eye of God. The truth of that is to come home to us constantly, so that in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit we disallow what belongs to that order of man. We are to disallow it in the family setting. We often forget, you know, that our testimony begins in our households where the persons are who know us best, and in that circle, what I am as after the flesh is to be disallowed. In the local meeting, in ministering a word to one another, all that belongs to that order of man is to be disallowed, because it brings into the Christian circle what God has removed in order that His peace might be established. He has "made peace by the blood of his cross".

Now in writing to the Philippians, Paul says, "Rejoice". I believe if what we have had in these two readings laid hold of us, the reality of faith and the reality of hope, it would bring great joy into our souls. The apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always", not just sometimes. What a challenge it is, is it not? He could write to the Romans that they might be full of "all joy and peace in believing", chap 15: 13. I would have to say that I am not always like that. Those that know me best would say, very often not like it, but there it is, "Rejoice in the Lord always". There are no sorrows of a personal character, there are no sorrows testimonially or in our circumstances however great, that should take away our joy in Christ. 'Rejoice in Him always', Paul says, and he says it again. There is no idle repetition in the Scriptures. As we were reminded in the reading, "Every scripture is divinely inspired", 2 Tim 3: 16. I think our brother who quoted it said, 'God-breathed'. You would not expect to find any idle repetition in anything that was 'God-breathed'! He says it twice, "Rejoice", because we need it. We need to

be reminded that in Christ we have a portion secured at great cost, which should be a source of inward joy and satisfaction to us, because He is the One in whom God has found His joy. He has found great joy in Christ, both here in the days of His flesh and in the accomplishment of the will of God, even to the laying down of His life. God's pleasure also entered into the raising of Christ. God has found good pleasure in one blessed Man and He is going to find His pleasure eternally in men that are like Him, "good pleasure in men", Luke 2: 14. Now God desires that we should each of us find our joy in Him, and this becomes an anchor for our souls in the day we are in, a day when apostasy is increasing on every hand, and pagan influences are sweeping across parts of the world where the light of the gospel has shone. Also, the militant character of atheism is peculiar to the day we are in, where there is a rising in the western world of hatred, a visceral hatred of anything to do with God or faith in Him. These are the conditions in which we are found, dear brethren, but the Lord said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear", John 14: 27. However dark the day, however difficult the conditions, and they may yet get much more difficult, the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice". He says, "The Lord is near. Be careful about nothing". I do not think that means that we are to be care/less, he is not suggesting that, but we are not to become agitated, we are not to become careworn like Martha. She became careworn with the burdens that were upon her, and she missed the good part. In fact her cares and her anxiety about them caused her to get out of her place and to speak to the Lord in an irreverent and unsuitable way, but the Lord loved her. He did not love her any less because she did that, but He served her in grace. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but there is need of one, and Mary has chosen the good part", Luke 10: 41, 42. Then we read of Martha serving in another setting. Lazarus was one of those at table "and Martha served", John 12: 2. There is no suggestion of her getting out of her place; she was restored to the peace and the joy that is proper to the Christian circle.

Paul says "in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God". What a wonderful thing that is, is it not? How much there is that presses upon the hearts and spirits of the saints but, "let your requests be made known to God". It was what one man of God described as 'faith's outlet in pressure'. You can always go into the presence of God, into the sanctuary. This has been spoken of as going into the immediate presence of God. In the tabernacle of old there was the veil. Behind it

was the Holy of holies where was the ark that was never seen save by the high priests. To go in beyond that veil was certain death. The high priest had bells on his robes (Exod 28: 33, 34) so that their sound could be heard, so that the people outside knew that he was still alive. He went in once a year and then not without blood. There was no drawing near to God without some reminder before Him of that great sacrifice, the basis on which everything had been established. How solemn was the presence of God in those days, but you and I have a greater privilege: we can go in behind that veil. We have the privilege to enter into the immediate presence of God and, unlike the Israelite, we are privileged to take account of the ark there. There could be no greater privilege for the creature than that, to enter consciously into the presence of God and take account of His complacent love resting upon His beloved Son, to enter into a place, the peace of which has never, ever been intruded upon, nor could be. It is preserved through the intrinsic, inherent holiness of God. Dear brethren, that is what is presented to us as we are burdened and careworn. We can make our requests known to God. I do appeal, that as we pray to Him we might be sure that we are in the divine presence. Even in the simple matter of giving thanks for food, it is said that the very food itself "is sanctified by God's word and freely addressing him", 1 Tim 4: 5. Such is the effect of the presence of God. Be sure that your prayers do not become a ritual. When you kneel down at night, that is a good custom. Paul had customs like that. "I bow my knees" (Eph 3: 14), and he says, "making mention of you at my prayers", Eph 1: 16. Daniel did it three times a day, Dan 6: 10. I believe that is the sense of the presence of God. The Lord said to His own, 'You could not watch with me one hour'. At that momentous time when He took His disciples with Him, they were not able to watch with Him one hour. He puts it as though that was the very least that might have been expected! How challenged we are, dear brethren, as to what we can sustain in prayer in the presence of God. But not only praying for an hour, but *with* Me, "watch with me", Matt 26: 38.

So Paul says to make our requests and supplication with thanksgiving. How important it is to remember the thanksgiving! We go in to God with requests but we have to remind ourselves, however burdened we are, that we have much more to thank God for than we have to ask Him for. How easy it is to forget the thanksgiving; so the apostle says, "with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God". Then he says, "the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts". Our hearts

and our thoughts are very feeble. "Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts?" (Luke 24: 38), the Lord says. Something happens and, oh dear, what are the consequences! Let me get on the phone to somebody else and see what he thinks about it, and we run here and we run there. What about going into the presence of God? What about telling Him about it? What about pouring into His ear the fears and doubts in my poor heart? What a blessed thing it is as you do that, to find that peace entering your own soul, "the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding". It is for our safety, dear brethren. Our hearts and our thoughts need guarding. The best of us is weak; weak, mortal man. We get things out of perspective, we tend to go to extremes one way or the other. How blessed to get into the presence of God and find everything measured at its true worth, but above all to find that peace that has never been intruded upon, the peace of God's presence, the peace of the sanctuary, guarding our hearts and our thoughts. These are very blessed things, dear brethren, and they are the property of believers.

And then the apostle says - and I touch on it briefly in closing - "For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true" and so on, "think on these things". That is a very practical word. Our peace is often disturbed by what we read, by what we give our minds and our thoughts to, and the apostle here tells us what to think about. God has provided an Object for our affections, for our hearts. But there is also provision for our minds, that they should not run wild, that they should not be lawless, that we should not think "high thoughts above what we should think" (Rom 12: 3), but that our minds might be renewed and that we might give them to these things. There are very blessed things that are worth thinking about. You say, well, 'I read the ministry', and that is good because that will bring these thoughts into your soul. But I would urge that in reading you give time to think about it. Do not just gallop through the books so that you can say you have read this number or that number, but allow what you read to lay hold of your soul. The apostle says, "think on these things". Then he says, "What ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me". It was not only the apostle's teaching - we are very thankful for the teaching of the apostle Paul - but along with the doctrine there was a working model. If we open a book, especially when we are young, we like to see the pictures in it. There is the reading, well, we will look at that, but a picture is much more vivid. You can look at a picture and get the sense much quicker than ploughing through the written word. Now there are no pictures in the Bible as such but, in a very wonderful way, there *are*

pictures in the Bible. In the Scriptures you will find not only the teaching of the truth but God has provided for us in giving us pictures, and these brethren, whom the apostle says were “beloved and longed for” (v 1), had a picture in the apostle. In Acts 27 he was in a storm and he was at peace in it. An aged brother in the locality where I came from said that he thought that Luke must have been a painter as well as a doctor, because the way he wrote of that shipwreck was so vivid. He wrote as if you were almost standing on the deck. You could hear the wind in the rigging, you could hear the howling wind and the creaking timbers and feel the desperation of the sailors as everything was jettisoned to save the ship, and then the whole thing breaking up and about to sink in the raging waves. And in the midst of it all there was a man who could speak about the God “whose I am and whom I serve” (Acts 27: 23); the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, incomprehensible to the people around him. It surpassed all understanding and it was guarding his heart and his thoughts in that crisis. He says, “what ye have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me”! How extensive it is! Along with the teaching there was an example of a man who knew something of the things of which he wrote in this chapter. He knew the sanctuaries of God. The psalmist was very concerned about the wicked and how they were prospering and he thought that doing the will of God did not get much reward, “Until I went into the sanctuaries of God”, (Ps 73: 17), then everything fell into place for him. We are encouraged to approach. “Let us approach”, Heb 4: 16. A way of approach has been established through the blood of His cross. It has been established at immense cost to God so that we should be able to go in freely at any time and open our hearts to Him about our simple matters here, none of which is too small to escape His notice, none of which is too great to exceed His power, but as we go in with our matters to that holy presence, the peace of God will garrison our hearts and our thoughts. We need them garrisoned, never more so than at the present day. May each of us prove these things, for His Name's sake.

Toronto

24th September 2010

A SACRIFICIAL SPIRIT

Ron D Plant

Revelation 11: 1, 2

Hebrews 9: 24-28

Genesis 13: 10-18

Romans 12: 1-5

What I have in mind, beloved brethren, is the need of a sacrificial spirit to mark those at the end of the dispensation. I have been impressed with the thought of the altar in scripture as bearing upon this matter of what is sacrificial. As thinking about it, it seems to me that the altar in scripture is viewed in different ways. You get the altars in Genesis which, as we have been taught, do not have dimensions; they are not prescribed. The Old Testament saints in Genesis built altars, but there was no prescription as to what size they should be, or what they should be made of. With the coming of the law in Exodus, the specification comes in as to the altar and it becomes a principal feature of the tabernacle system; the service of the altar, the altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense, all this is very carefully set out as to what should be. But later in the scriptures there are references which I do not think are to a literal altar. I think they refer to the principle of it, and I think the principle of the altar, beloved brethren, is what is sacrificial; the principle, you might say, is surrender. It is the means whereby something is given up. And of course the setting in the scriptures would involve that it is not something given up in view of what is better here, but something that is given up in relation to God. The principle of sacrifice, I think, is precious to the heart of God.

Psalm 50 speaks about God gathering His godly ones, "those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice!", v 5. If you look at the content of the Psalm, it speaks of a whole area of things in which there is a ritual of sacrifice and of burnt offerings, and God will not say anything against it (I am paraphrasing, of course). He says "the cattle upon a thousand hills ... are mine: If I were hungry, I would not tell thee" (v 10-12), but He speaks about gathering to Himself those who made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. I think there is something to be seen at the end of the day, beloved, not exactly in any literal offering but in the spirit of what is sacrificial, which is precious to the heart of God. The ritual goes on in the days in which we are. We have seen huge pomp and ceremony recently in England, and according to the colour pictures

in the newspapers, all in glorious array, the occasion being the process of apparently making a long-dead churchman a saint. I hope it stirred something in those who saw it, beloved, as to the incongruousness of it all. You see these personages, and I do not say anything about them personally, and some of the things perhaps that they say may be very apt in the day in which we live, but seeing all the pomp and the ceremony I thought of the days here of the Lord Jesus, and I thought of Mr Darby's hymn -

No eye was found to pity,
No heart to bear Thy woe,
But shame, and scorn, and spitting:
None cared Thy Name to know.

And the religious systems of the day stood in all their glorious array when Christ was denied even a place here. He was not even given a grave by the establishment of the day. What things these are, beloved! I would urge the younger ones to be developed in feelings as to divine things, and be affected by the movements of the One who came here and became the Sacrifice and the basis for everything that God is doing. He came in in silence and obscurity as far as the world was concerned. It is very affecting that, according to Luke's gospel, as the whole world was being registered at the census by the Roman empire, there in the manger at Bethlehem the kingdom of God came in silently, chap 2: 7. He came into the world in obscurity but as He came in He was wrapped up in swaddling clothes, and He goes out wrapped up after His death, Luke 23: 53. You are thankful for those who cared for Him like that, but as far as the world was concerned He was nothing: He was a felon. Do these things affect your heart, beloved, as man and man's religious systems go on in all their glory? I hope these things affect you, beloved, because if the divine work in you and me is to be worked out it must be as we are moved inwardly in relation to the One who is the Centre of divine things.

Now I think that God was always affected by what is sacrificial. I was noticing that when the children of Israel were seeking to leave Egypt, Pharaoh would not let them go at first, he flatly refused, and then as the plagues came he gradually released his hold. At one point he said that they could go but they were to leave the cattle behind, Exod 10: 24. Remember how Moses insists, "Our cattle also must go with us: there shall not a hoof be left behind", v 26. It is an interesting thing that the cattle went with them; the cattle were for sacrifice. I think it was

always intended that the people should be marked by what was sacrificial. You may remember that when they came to cross the Jordan into the land some of them had accumulated so much cattle that they decided that they would be far better to stay on the wilderness side of the Jordan than to go over, Num 32: 1-5. So Reuben and Gad proposed to remain. The cattle, that which had been provided in the ordering of God and had come out of Egypt to be for sacrifice, had become a snare to them because they centred all upon themselves and built up huge herds, and the sacrificial side of things was missing as a result. As a consequence they did not go into the land. They were ready to go across and help their brethren to inherit, and to settle in the land, but then they went back across the Jordan and settled down with their wives, families and their cattle on the other side. What does this teach us, beloved? I think if the sacrificial side had been maintained with them they would not have had the hindrance of large herds that stopped them going into the land. And later, sadly, you find they built a special altar by the Jordan, and they said it was not an altar for sacrifice. It was an altar of grand appearance (Josh 22: 10) but it was not for sacrifice. Beloved, let not our Christianity be of a kind where there is nothing surrendered in relation to divine things and nothing surrendered for God. I think if we are to be preserved, if we are to go in for the fullness of things, it will be on the basis of a sacrificial spirit.

So I refer to these things. I think that all of us here have been baptised, and that is a public committal. We have all made a public committal in baptism. It may have been made on our behalf but I hope that those of us of mature years have come into the good of that baptism, and that baptism really has placed us outside of this world's order of things. What is appropriate to baptised persons, and what marks them, is the spirit of surrender in relation to what there is down here.

This scripture in Revelation, which is very interesting to me, is speaking about one of the darkest days in the history of the world. It is after the saints of this dispensation have gone, when the Lord Jesus will have come at the rapture and He will have taken His own to be with Him, all of them, all of those who died in Christ, going back to Adam, all of those who had faith; and what will descend upon this world, beloved, is a time of terrible, terrible, happenings. Foretold in the scripture, it will be a time when evil will become unrestrained upon the earth. All the standards of civilized behaviour will be broken down and gone, and all

order will have disappeared. The Holy Spirit will be gone, the saints will be gone, and such an evil day that never has been in the history of the world will descend upon this earth in this time, before the Lord Jesus comes publicly and the millennium is established. And in the vision of that time that the scripture refers to, John was told to measure the temple and the altar and them that worship in it. At such a time there will be something of a sacrificial character which can be measured by God.

One of the things that is measured is the altar - "the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship in it". The temple, I think, involves divine light. It seems there will still be that feature in that day. I cannot explain how that will be. The temple will be there, the mind of God will be there in that day somehow, and there will be those who will be worshippers, and we might say that, in between the light of God in the temple and the worshipper, is the altar. It is the principle of surrender. We know there will be persons who will surrender their lives, they will lay down their lives for their faith. We do not know much about the detail of how this will be, but what a remarkable thing, beloved, that such a thing will be measurable. The devil does his worst and, in the darkest day, still there will be that which God can measure for Himself. It will be on the basis of what is sacrificial. Then John was to measure the temple. A very searching thing, beloved. Supposing the measuring came today and the measure of the light there has been was taken, and then the measure of the aggregate of surrender that there has been in relation to it in you and me! And then he was to measure the worshippers; not measure these people as to what they are in their careers, or about their families, or the size of their houses, or their abilities as far as this is concerned. No, he is to measure the worshippers. What has there been for God? I find that very testing, beloved. I trust you do as well. He is told not to measure the court without the temple for it has been given up to the nations and the holy city has been trodden under foot. Reference was made earlier to the aggressive atheism of the day in which we are. I think it is something that we should think about, beloved. There has always been, we may say, scepticism about the things of God, but the day that we are in seems to be marked by a new phase of aggressive opposition as to faith, and I think we should be before God as to it. But John is told, "measure it not; because it has been given up to the nations". The outward thing is not, as far as God is concerned, worth measuring, but is there something today on the basis of what is sacrificial? I plead with us all as to this. We have never been in such a material day. We have

something of the truth of God that has been recovered to us, we have in our hands the Holy Scriptures which contain the revealed mind of God, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit but, beloved brethren, what is the degree, the aggregate of the surrender and the answer in relation to it? I ask the question; in this day in which we live, when you can fill your time with pleasure, fill your time with all the things that this world offers, how much is there being given for God, how much is there being surrendered in relation to what is for God?

I cannot speak of sacrifice without speaking of the Lord Jesus, and what the scripture in Hebrews refers to as "his sacrifice". Hebrews contains some of the most glorious truths and some of the grandest language of Scripture. It is a book that is marked by words like "greatness". We have, "set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high" (chap 1: 3) and "the greatness in the heavens" (chap 8: 1), and "consider how great this personage was", as to Melchisedec (chap 7: 4), and so on. But what I wanted to just bring out from it is this reference here to "the putting away of sin by his sacrifice" - *His*. The whole of the Jewish system of sacrifice, the animal sacrifices, was completely superseded when Jesus offered Himself. The stupendous character of what He did is to fix itself upon my soul, because what is sacrificial in the death of the Lord Jesus is fundamental to everything that we have by way of blessing. I read these words, not that I can explain them to you, but they set out the difference between the Jewish order of worship and Christianity. I am not able to go into all the detail of that, but offerings were made every year in relation to sins, and the priests could not continue because they died; and then you get this wonderful scripture, "now once in the consummation of the ages he has been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice". What an affecting word that is, beloved! You notice it does not say the putting away of sins, it speaks a few verses down of that fact, that He bore "the sins of many", but the Lord Jesus in His death has not only dealt with the matter of the sins of the many, including mine and I trust including yours, but He has dealt with the whole matter of sin, the root cause, by His sacrifice. And sin, not applying just to my day, and not just to this dispensation. You may say, 'You mean going back as far as Adam?'. It goes back before Adam; it goes back to the inception when Satan brought sin into the world, and the Lord Jesus by His sacrifice has taken up the whole matter of the offence of sin as it entered into the universe, and He has cleared it forever in the sight of God. Hebrews 9: 22 refers to remission which is a powerful word; it is more in a way than

forgiveness. Remission involves that the thing is completely cleared away and the Lord Jesus Christ, that precious One, "has been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice". Think of the words of John the baptist as he saw Him coming to him: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", John 1: 29. There must have been something that John recognised in Him - not by any outward signs - to cause that utterance. There are these 'beholds' in John's gospel, one of them is by John the baptist and the other is by Pilate. Pilate says, at the end, "Behold the man!", John 19: 5. I would far rather hear the words from the mouth of John the baptist who looked upon Him with admiration and affection as the One who came to give His life. "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21. Pilate thought he could do as he would with Him as he says, "Behold the man!". He had Him beaten, he had Him scourged, he allowed the soldiers to put a crown of thorns on His head, to display Him in a purple robe, and to give Him blows on the face; and then he says, "Behold the man!". And still today, men in their aggressive atheism are pouring scorn and shame upon the person of the Lord Jesus. He was the Lamb of God. It is not the idea of a little lamb, immature, but the idea in the word is the fullness of maturity; it is the One who had full knowledge and full intelligence, and who bore the whole weight of sin before a holy God. I think it is very affecting. I hope you are affected by it, by "his sacrifice". It is the basis of everything that we have, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. And I hope all of us, and especially the young ones here, might be encouraged to read these glorious scriptures that speak about the perfectness and the preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I wanted to speak from these other scriptures of the principle of sacrifice that comes out in them, because I think there are certain challenges in our day which can only be met by it. I read in Genesis 13 of Abraham. It seemed appropriate because Abraham sets out the principle of the walk of faith. Jehovah speaks to Abraham and tells him to go out of his land and out of his kindred and from his father's house "to the land that I will shew thee" (chap: 12: 1), and he went out "not knowing where he was going", Heb 11: 8. The obedience of faith marked him. In Genesis 11 you have the world of Babel where men had made a decision to exclude God from their thinking, and they said, "let us build ourselves a city and a tower, the top of which may reach to the heavens; and let us make ourselves a name", v 4. You may remember that God scatters them over the face of the earth, and He confounds

their language; and then in chapter 12 He calls a man out of the world. I think the divine intent was to call men out of the world. So the whole course of faith begins. It is very interesting that God does not say to Abraham, 'Go out from Babel, and go out from all the wicked things that men are doing'. He does not say that. He says, "Go out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land ... ". The immediate obstacle, we may say, to the movement of the man of faith out of the world was not exactly the wickedness of men, but the claims of nature; and it is still so today. Abraham, the man of faith, is tested, as we will be tested. He is tested as he goes down to Egypt, which I suppose would speak about the world. You may say there was a famine; that is why he moved there, but I do not think the scripture says that. I do not think there was any famine in Bethel initially when he moved. Some people say that there is no food amongst the people of God. I think if they say that, you will find that their steps have already moved away from the divinely appointed path as Abraham's had. I think if you are moving in the divinely appointed path there will always be food for your heart, always. God brings him back again through mercy and establishes him in the old place where his altar was at first. And then you get this chapter and the man of faith is here. In chapter 13 he has Lot his brother, whose heart really had been left in Egypt. One of the solemn things, beloved, is that if we deviate from the path of faith, and if we find our feet straying towards the world and so on, we may find in God's mercy He brings us back, but Lot's *heart* was left there. These things are testing. Lot was not really a man who walked by faith. He was a righteous man, Scripture tells us, but he did not walk by the light he had, and he is tempted by the plain; he sought the plain of Sodom and Gomorrah. He is tempted by the world and its hinterland and its apparent richness, and he is confused in his thinking, and I believe it is possible to be confused today. He thought it was just like the garden of God, like the land of Egypt. Do you think perhaps, dear younger one, that there is a close connection between the world as it is today and the garden of God? Let me assure you that there is no connection at all but Satan can make you think that way. It says of Lot that he "chose for himself" to remain in the plain in the vicinity of Sodom. Abraham watches him go, and I think you may say it must have been a very sad moment for him, to see Lot go. Lot had left him for the ease of the present day; he goes for the apparent richness of the pasture land, he goes for the environment of the city, he goes for all these things; but God's work in Abraham was sustained and a sacrificial spirit was in him.

He does not follow his brother. He did not stop loving him. We find in the next chapter there was a time when he went to war to save his brother, but he was not going to go with him. He had the call of God in relation to another place; but for the moment he had lost his brother. It says of Abraham that "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker was God", Heb 11: 10 (AV). Go for that, beloved; go for that, beloved young one. You may hear the blandishments of the world and all its careers and all its opportunities and its music, its sport and all these things; but open your eyes to the truth of God, that there is a city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God. So Abraham has to watch his brother go; I think his heart would have been filled with sorrow. It would have cost him something.

So, now Jehovah says to Abraham, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that thou seest will I give to thee, and to thy seed for ever", and "walk through the land according to the length of it and according to the breadth of it; for I will give it to thee". I just had this impression, beloved, that if we are marked by a sacrificial spirit in relation to all that the natural and earthly side provides, our vision will be broadened in relation to the things of God. It says of Abraham that he "moved his tents, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron". Now those oaks were very old; Hebron was a very old place. Hebron was a place that the scripture tells us had been built before Zoan in Egypt, Num 13: 22. It really typically speaks of the purpose of God, and Abraham went and pitched his tents there. Can I make a plea, especially to my younger brethren, to pitch your tents, your life, your dwelling circumstances relative to the purpose of God? He deliberately picked up his tents, and he pitched them by the oaks of Mamre. That was not just for himself, not just one tent but all of them. It was his family, it was his family circumstances, and he set his life, and he lived his life, in relation to the purpose of God. Pray to God for all of us, beloved, that the enemy is not successful in this day in which we are, in which, I believe, the attack is against the possession of the heavenly inheritance. I am sure of this that if he could turn everyone here away from what is heavenly, he would. It is a great thing if you not only stand by the oaks of Mamre, but you pitch your tents there, set your life there. I do not know whether what I am saying is acceptable to you, but I trust it is.

I go on to Romans to finish. I love the epistle to the Romans.

We sometimes speak about the recovery of the truth and that is a wonderful subject. The epistle to the Romans is the recovery of man, I think. It is a book where you can trace where man begins as lost and far away from God, and it works through moral exercises and the provisions that God has made in order to take up man from that lost condition and to raise him up to the very entrance to the fullest thoughts of God. I have often said, it is a quotation of course, that a good Roman, one who is steeped in the truth of Romans, can go anywhere in divine things and God does not fail to provide somewhere to go. The good Roman can go into the truth of Ephesians, JT vol 90 p38. But the teaching of this book is essential. It progresses from man in his wretchedness and his distance from God, until the whole thing is laid bare as to his condition, and until it says, "There is not a righteous man, not even one", Rom 3: 10. The law could not help, tradition could not help, nothing could help; everything was lost and gone. Then the scripture says, "now without law righteousness of God is manifested" (Rom 3: 21), and it brings in the way that God has intervened in man's lost condition through the Lord Jesus Christ, and raised him up from the dunghill where his sin had put him and stage by stage brings him into the fullness of the love of God in its expression. Romans 5 is a glorious chapter of the expression of the love of God. The believer is filled with the blessedness of all that God has done for him, meeting him when he had nothing to pay, when he had no resources, and bringing all the resources of His grace and giving him everything in Jesus. That is chapters 1 to 5 of Romans. He never asked for anything from you. He has poured upon you grace upon grace through believing in the Lord Jesus. He has given you everything in Christ. Wonderful! Those are the early chapters of Romans. Then we get in chapter 6, "Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Far be the thought" (v 1, 2), and there is the beginning of a response Godward. He resolves to take the members of his body that had been used in pursuance of sin and in bondage to lawlessness, and resolves to give them in bondage to righteousness. That is the way that Christianity begins to find its way in the true believer, not through external ordinance but from internal conviction.

Chapters 7 and 8 set out the exercises that flow from that, and the greatness of Christ as the Deliverer as we feel our weakness, and the Holy Spirit as the new power of the believer's life. Then in chapter 12 where we read, he says, "I beseech you ... by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice". My simple impression

here today is that chapter 12 is the basis, the beginning of the Christian company. No longer is it just individual exercise but you find that there are others, and the coming together of the Christian company is in chapter 12; but the basis of it, I believe, is the offering of your body a living sacrifice. I believe you will never prove the joy, the blessing, the privileges and the opportunities of the Christian company unless you are marked by the sacrificial spirit that chapter 12 speaks of. I have passed over a lot of ground but these are wonderful things to me. The Christian company comes together as one body in Christ, "thus we, being many, are one body in Christ". There is something there working inwardly. That, beloved, is the one precious thing the believer has here upon the earth. He is a member, he is a part of the Christian company. Someone likened it to the tabernacle, and you learn in the rest of this chapter how it all fits together, how persons use what God has given them in relation to each other and in relation to the completion of the whole. In the construction of the tabernacle, all those huge boards had two tenons, two feet, and each one of the tenons was in sockets of silver, and each one of those boards could have stood up on its own. It is like the believer, individually set there. But the boards were never designed to stand up on their own. You may remember the tabernacle was established and the boards set side by side to form the walls of the structure and then there was a ring in the centre of each board and finally one bar that was fed through the rings in all the boards. That is something like the way we work together in our local places. You know, if my board is a little bit out of level, a little bit out of line, it is going to be very difficult for the bar to go through. It speaks about the unity of the Holy Spirit. But in Romans 12 the Christian company comes together. We are given grace that we might each one of us find our part in it, but we shall not find this without what is sacrificial.

These two things, the heavenly inheritance and the privileges and opportunities of the Christian company, are being attacked by the enemy at the present time amongst others. And I believe that what is sacrificial is essential if we are to know the blessing of them today.

May God bless the word for His Name's sake.

Toronto

25th September 2010

THE LORD JESUS AS CREATOR AND SAVIOUR

David Speirs Jr

John 1: 1-3

Luke 2: 25-32

John 14: 1-6

Acts 7: 54-56

Matthew 22: 10-12

The gospel preaching comes out from God, comes from heaven. The one who is asked to preach stands here to convey the message and would pray it may go out in power and by the Holy Spirit's help because it comes from heaven. It comes from God, your Creator God. We sang a hymn this morning, 118, and I just thought about verse 2. It says:

As we view the vast creation,
Planned with wondrous skill,
So our minds would move to worship,
And be still.

You look around at the creation of this world and just wonder at it. Many persons in this world do not like to think about a Creator God. It is very sad. But just look around this world and see even in the works of creation how great a One God is! The planet we live on is quite unique. There is nothing else like it for as far as man can see in the universe. God designed it. As it says in the hymn, 'planned with wondrous skill'. God in His ways has plans and He has planned this, designed this earth even, and created it in such a way that it is made suitable for us because He had you in mind too, dear friend. God, the Creator God, made this world, and what a variety there is in creation too. It is not just by chance. What a variety there is, what skill and planning went into it! Who could enter into the depths of these things? Scientists keep discovering new things and many, sadly, try to keep the glory for themselves; but God already knows all about these things, and they are just there waiting to be discovered. It should cause worship. Persons who come to realise there is a Creator God should worship when they see these things. But I should just like to draw attention to the fact that He made this world as a Creator God, and He made you. He placed us in this world for Himself because He wanted you. He wants each one of us in this room for Himself. In the beginning of the Bible we can read that He put man in the garden, beautiful area, an area of pleasure.

Eden means 'pleasure' (see note 'a' to Gen 2: 8). He put man there and He would come down and speak to man in that garden. God had desires in His heart. God is a God of love. What a wonderful thing that is too, the desire to share His love with you, dear friends. That is what it goes on to say in this hymn 118:

But, our God, how great Thy yearning
To have sons who love.

That was God's original thought in making man, to have a company for Himself, and that includes you and me.

But, how distance came in through sin. What a terrible thing that is! It was not very long before we read of that at the start of the Bible. Satan, that terrible, powerful, evil, fallen angel, what a one he is! He is the enemy of God. We just need to be simple about these things. There is an enemy of God coming in to try and mar what God is doing, but we must remember too that responsibility was placed on man in that garden. God just said, thou shalt not do this. At one particular time man chose to listen to that subtle serpent there in his wily ways. That is the way the devil works. He still works that way, and persons still prefer to listen to him. It is very sad, but that is how sin came into the world. Through one man's disobedience we are all sinners, and a sinner can have no place before a righteous, holy God, because where God dwells there is no sin. God is a righteous, holy, sin-hating God. We must remember that, and you must come to realise that you are a sinner. That is a very simple fact in the gospel preaching. You must come to realise that you are a sinner before God and you can do nothing for yourself. That poor man on the Jericho road we spoke of today was "in a half-dead state", Luke 10: 30. He could not do anything for himself. That is the way the devil would leave you. He is very subtle in the way he works. He drags people down and he just leaves them. That is the way the devil would leave you. He would attract you to things of the world, and then leave you. There are many parables where we read of it. Luke 15 especially tells of the son that went away to the attractions of the world and then he was left with nothing. What a sad thing to be away from God in your sins! We sang in our hymn:

God waits in grace with hands outstretched to bless (123).

God has not changed His attitude towards men. He still loves you, dear friend. He hates the sin but He still loves you and He has moved from His side.

That is why I read from John's gospel because it speaks here about the Word: "the Word was with God, and the Word was God". That speaks of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. What a One, who came from a place of glory. From glory's highest heights He came into this world for you and me. I was just affected by that this morning, how great a One He is! What movements of love brought Him here from an area of glory! It says here, "the Word was God". The Lord Jesus is God in Himself, and He moved in love towards men when He came in as a man. What a wonderful thing that is and, in doing so, He remains a Man! Think of that! He moved in love and He remains a man. What does man mean to God, dear friend? What do you mean to God that He is prepared to do this for you, prepared to move from His side to have you for Himself? Think about these things! It says here, "not one thing received being which has received being" without the Lord Jesus. What a One He is, the Creator of the universe, instrumental in creating the universe!

We read here in Luke's gospel where a man called Simeon had heard about this One who was coming in to save persons from their sins. He had heard about Him. It had been "divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit". It says here, "that he should not see death" until he saw this One. What a privilege for this man to hold the Lord Jesus! Think of that, the baby, Jesus, the Creator of the universe, coming in here in such a way that He could be held like this! How near the Lord Jesus has come, dear friend, that this man could take Him into his arms, and then could say, "for mine eyes have seen thy salvation". Oh, dear friend, have you seen God's salvation for sinners in the Lord Jesus? Have you read through these gospels of the way the Lord Jesus moved amongst men, the way He showed forth God's love towards men, the way He undid the work of the devil? What love was shown there! He did not turn any away. I do not think there is anywhere you can read where the Lord Jesus turned anyone away. He did not turn the children away; He did not turn those with terrible diseases away; He did not turn away the ones who cried out to Him. The poor blind beggar at the side of the road amongst the crowds, He heard him. The Lord Jesus heard persons who were in their sins and crying out for help. It has often been said in the preaching that the Lord Jesus is passing by this room today. If you have a need and you know where you are, cry out to Him today, and He will stop. The Creator of the universe, it has often been said, stopped for that one blind beggar on that road. What a One! What feelings He had for men! We read too of His feelings in relation to sin.

Think of the man Lazarus. It says He loved Lazarus, John 11: 5. He was a friend of the family, we might say, and He often went into their house with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. He heard that Lazarus had died, and the Lord Jesus went to the tomb. He could see these persons round the tomb, weeping and upset, deeply upset because their friend had died. The Lord Jesus was able for the matter of death. He was “the resurrection and the life”, John 11: 25. He had the power for that, but what He saw, and He wept on account of it, was the effect that sin was having on these poor people, “Jesus wept”. What a thing! The Lord Jesus felt these things. He felt the whole matter of sin and sins as He walked amongst men here.

We read on in John 14 that another thing He spoke about was His Father, “my Father’s house”. This is also a wonderful thing, the way that God has been revealed in such a way, a Father and a Son, wonderful relationships that have been opened up from God’s side. The Lord speaks about His Father’s house and “there are many abodes”, and He speaks about going “to prepare you a place”. The Lord Jesus would prepare a place for persons who love Him, and it says, “I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be”. That was God’s desire, to have persons where He is. The Lord Jesus came here and He told persons about the Father’s house. He told persons about the Father’s desires and He came here to draw them back, to take them back to that place. But I must be very clear that the only way into the Father’s presence is through the Lord Jesus. It says here, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me”. There are many poor souls in this world who are disillusioned by how to get to the Father’s house. They feel they have to go through some minister or some priest or some other way, or through some sacraments, or other things to get to heaven, but the Lord Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me”. Be very clear on that, dear friend! The only way into the Father’s presence is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we read on, we see how this can be so because His pathway took Him straight on into death. We know there came a point in the life of the Lord Jesus when He gave Himself over into the hands of these wicked men. It was said again in the reading today that He set His face “like a flint”, Isa 50: 7. There came a point in the life of the Lord Jesus when He had to go to the cross to meet this whole matter of sin that lay

between God and man. The Lord Jesus had that on His mind all the way He walked here. To speak simply, think of what the Lord Jesus had in His mind as He walked amongst men. He knew what was ahead of Him. He knew what was involved between a righteous God and man in this matter of sin. No one else knows it, but the Lord Jesus came to a point where He gave Himself as a sacrifice. He knew what was required and He gave Himself into the hands of men who took Him and nailed Him to the cross. He gave Himself. It says, "but this is your hour and the power of darkness", Luke 22: 53. He gave Himself over into the hands of these men who took Him and nailed Him to the cross. And on the cross the Lord Jesus, as He hung there, had forgiveness on His lips for them, and we know in the three hours of darkness on that cross that the Lord Jesus bore what was due to you and me. Only the Lord Jesus could do that. He was the holy One, the sinless One, different from every other man. God could only accept perfection. We can see in the types in the Old Testament that God required the best, "without blemish", and all these things look on to the Lord Jesus. He was the perfect One, the only One who could satisfy God, the One who was "sin apart" (Heb 4: 15) and able to lay down His life to satisfy God. Think of the wrath of God being poured out on that One. There was a cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt 27: 46. The Lord Jesus cried that on the cross, forsaken of God. He was alone. There was never anybody else like that, alone like that, like the Lord Jesus on that cross. One of the Psalms says, "thou art holy", Ps 22: 3. The Lord Jesus knew what was required from a holy, righteous, sin-hating God. He knew what was required there and He bore it, dear friend. What a matter! And then it was finished. He says that too: "It is finished" (John 19: 30), and then He delivered up His spirit and He died on the cross, the judgment finished on the cross.

Then we read of the soldier who pierced His side and the blood flowed out of that Man's side on the cross. What a wonderful witness! We read again in the types of the blood, what God required: "when I see the blood, I will pass over you", Exod 12: 13. What else could the Lord Jesus give, we might say? He has given His all, and God is satisfied: "when I see the blood". What a matter, dear friend!

And then He was taken, put in the tomb for three days and three nights. The stone was rolled there, and then we hear the wonderful message, "He is not here, but is risen", Luke 24: 6. The Father raised Jesus from the tomb. He was satisfied with that One, the work finished, raised by the glory of the Father. It says that too, "neither wilt thou allow

thy holy one to see corruption", Ps 16: 10. What a thing! The Father would not leave that One in the grave. He raised Him and He is in heaven tonight. That is where He is. He is raised and He is ascended and He is in heaven tonight. Dear friend, the work has been done. What a message! They could not proclaim this message two and a half thousand years ago, but I can proclaim it tonight. It is a wonderful message that the work had been done and the word to each one is, only believe. It is a matter of faith. You know, persons cannot see God, and the Lord Jesus seated at the right hand of God. It is a matter of faith. Dear friend, these things are real. Put your faith in the work of Jesus, believe what He says, only believe. Remember the words to the jailor: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house", Acts 16: 31. What a simple matter! Just accept you are a sinner in need of a Saviour and have faith that the work has been finished. What a wonderful message!

And then we read here about this man Stephen. He was a believer in the Lord Jesus. He loved the Lord Jesus. Persons who have their faith and their trust in the Lord Jesus can also have this wonderful power of the Holy Spirit. He is a wonderful divine Person, a gift of God, a gift from God's side again, the power and the Person of the Holy Spirit. It speaks here of this one, Stephen, who really loved Jesus. He was like Jesus here. He was being stoned because of his preaching. Thankfully that does not happen now in this country but think of this poor man being stoned because he loved Jesus. What a faithful man! But it says here, he was "full of the Holy Spirit". I might say what was around him was incidental because by the power of the Holy Spirit, he could see his Lord and his Saviour standing there at the right hand of God and you too, dear friends, can have the power of the Holy Spirit to see Jesus at the right hand of God. What a wonderful thing that is! The power of the Spirit would give us some touches too of eternal life. The Lord Jesus spoke about that too when He was here, an area which is beyond death or fear which can be touched upon by the power of the Holy Spirit. Each of us in this room can have these experiences. That is God's desire for you, to live in an area of His love, in an area where you can be at liberty and free, you might say, in the Father's house. Think again of the parable in Luke 15, the music and the dancing, an area of joy. That is what God has in mind for you, on the other side of death, because the Lord Jesus has broken its power. We are reminded of that in Revelation 1 where we can see ahead to what is going to happen. There was one there who could say, "I am the first and

the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades", v 17, 18. What a message! What a matter, dear friend! Do you know Jesus as your Saviour? He is a man. That is a wonderful thing: He is a Man in heaven. He has been here and now He is a Man in heaven. Put your faith and trust in Him tonight, dear friend.

I just read finally here in Matthew's gospel. It is a well known passage and has different applications but it speaks of a king who made a wedding feast for his son and certain ones made excuses, but then he went out again and invited others in "and the wedding feast was furnished with guests". But then the time came when the king came in and there was this man there "not clothed with a wedding garment", and he asks him the question, "My friend, how camest thou in here not having on a wedding garment?" You might say he was not suited for the occasion. I would like to say this as a warning: do not appear before the King in heaven not suited, dear friend. Provision has been made; the best robe is there; the Lord Jesus has been provided. Do not appear before the King as a judge. We do not want to think about these things, dear friend, because there is no need for that. The man did not have anything to answer. It says, "he was speechless". What a thing if you have heard the gospel and refused it. What would you say then? Why are you not suited? You would be speechless. Dear friend, there is no need for that. Just put your trust and your faith in Jesus tonight and know some of these wonderful blessings that God has in mind for you. For His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

12th December 2010

OUR HOPE

Douglas F Hugill

Romans 4: 16-25; 5: 1-5; 8: 18-25; 15: 8-13

I have selected these passages from Paul's epistle to the Romans to say a few words on hope. It seems to permeate Paul's writings to the Romans, the thought of hope. We know that according to what he says to the Corinthians, "now abide faith, hope, love; these three things; and the greater of these is love", 1 Cor 13: 13. Love is eternal; it is the nature of God and that will abide eternally. But here in this scene, faith and hope are essential matters, matters in which we are all well instructed. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11: 6), and without hope we would be despondent and tend to give up. It says of those who are without God that they have no hope (Eph 2:12), a very hopeless and sad condition. We see in these scriptures that Paul weaves the thought of hope into what he has to say, beginning with righteousness. That is Paul's main theme in Romans, "righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ", 3: 22. It says, "whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood", 3: 25. So righteousness comes first, as we follow Mr Raven's teaching, and I commend that to all the brethren, especially the younger ones. Someone said to me when I was in my twenties, read Mr Raven; and that was very sound advice. It does not mean we neglect the other ministries because they all lead into each other; they all speak of Christ and the assembly, but if you read Mr Raven he will help you in the fundamentals. He will show you that Romans 3 is righteousness; Romans 4 is power, the power of God to raise Christ from among the dead; and Romans 5 is the love of God "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit", FER vol 1 p184. It gives you these thoughts just to give a structure, an outline, something that you can build on, something to get into your soul, and something that will stay with you your whole life through, the very fundamental principles of God's kingdom.

Chapter 4 is Abraham's faith, how it was tested and how it shone. Abraham had God's promise of an heir, a son, and he hung on to that promise when everything in nature pointed to the fact that that promise was very unlikely, impossible according to nature. We think of one a hundred years old, his wife Sarah ninety years old. But it says he "hesitated not at the promise of God through unbelief". It also says, "before the God whom he believed, who quickens the dead, and calls

the things which be not as being; who against hope believed in hope to his becoming father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, "So shall thy seed be". I think we see in chapter 4 what is characteristic of faith, this wonderful matter of hope. Abraham believed God despite every evidence to the contrary; he held to the promise and God was true to His word, and Isaac was born. He had to do with the God of resurrection, the One we know who has raised the Lord Jesus from among the dead, "who has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification".

When we come into chapter 5 there are some wonderful matters of hope. It is a great matter to have peace with God and everything settled between you and God through the glad tidings, but then it says, "by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God". It is a wonderful position of favour that the believer finds himself in, and what an outlook, "we boast in hope of the glory of God". Do you have that outlook? Is that your boast; is that what you are proud of? Is that what you expect? That is what Paul lays out before us, "access by faith into this favour in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God". It is assured that the glory of God will come in publicly. The prophet says so in the midst of a passage where he pronounces woes against many sins: he pauses to say, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea", Hab 2: 14. The prophet has looked on to it but we are in the time when it is very near. By the Holy Spirit come down from an ascended Christ, we are in the position where we "boast in hope of the glory of God". We are looking for the glory - Mr Darby has a verse on that -

I am waiting for the glory,

Are your thoughts with me too?

Spiritual Songs p60

If you have been attracted, as we have had in the readings, if you find the Lord Jesus attractive, is He the hope of your heart? I think that is the burden of what I have to say in these scriptures, that we might find that we are drawn heavenward where He is. Christ is not here, but He is in the glory of God. We are waiting for great matters, for God to be known fully in His creation. Paul holds that before us here.

Then this next section speaks of the trials of the way that we all go through at one time or another. It is "not only that, but we also boast in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works endurance; and

endurance, experience; and experience, hope; and hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us". We start out happy and fresh, perhaps, in the Christian pathway, but it is a pathway of experience, and often tribulation; distresses come in. If in our health, our relationships, our employment, brethren departing from the faith, what sorrow that brings in. The sorrows of the pathway where the enemy breaks in upon the sweetness of Christian fellowship, these divisions that we have known in our lifetime, we carry the sorrow of them with us yet, the sorrow of separation from brethren. These are real tribulations, they cause real tears and many are going through deep sorrow. Paul is realistic here about the Christian pathway, "tribulation works endurance". That is the great matter, that we are formed through our experience to be more like Christ and then to take on more of these features of manhood that we have been pondering over together in these readings. So that we acquire in type the acacia wood, the enduring wood that was seen in the wilderness - "endurance, experience; and experience, hope". I think hope shines brighter through all these travails, all these experiences of the way, all the sorrow, all the tears. Hope here is the end of a pathway, the end of an experimental process, and it is a glorious end, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit". You can always hope in God and He can do the impossible, He can work a miracle, but often we have to exercise patience, and we have this wonderful outlook that the glory of God is before us. It is not only that we are waiting for these things, we have this wonderful present recompense in the Holy Spirit, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us". What assurance that brings into our hearts, what blessing, not only to know objectively that God loves us and has given His Son for us to die on the cross, but to know that love as it is conveyed into the very innermost parts of our being - "shed abroad in our hearts". To have the confirmation of God's wonderful love, what consolation and encouragement that is when we go through the trials of the pathway and when we go through days of sorrow, days of loss, days of confusion perhaps. But at the end of this road there is hope, "endurance, experience; and experience, hope; and hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit".

In chapter 8, hope has a universal bearing. Paul speaks of the whole creation here. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be

revealed to us. For the anxious looking out of the creature expects the revelation of the sons of God", and then "in hope that the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now". This is Paul's reckoning, born of experience, and what sufferings he endured! We could not compare our experience in any way with his but we can gain from what he says here, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory". How Paul was buoyed up, not only through his faith but also in a living hope in a living Saviour; and the coming glory was always before him. The whole creation is looking out for this, "the revelation of the sons of God". We might say that we are sons of God now by faith, and that is true, but this speaks of the revelation of the sons of God, when they will appear in glory, when God's full thought for man in Christ will be realised, men in sonship in eternal and glorified conditions. That is the revelation of the sons of God. Paul says, "we also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body. For we have been saved in hope; but hope seen is not hope; for what any one sees, why does he also hope? But if what we see not we hope, we expect in patience". However privileged we are - and we are at this present time, we enjoy many things, many privileges - yet we are still waiting the full consummation of blessing at the coming of the Lord when we will experience the redemption of the body. These bodies, so prone to failure and weakness and disease, will finally be redeemed in power. They already belong to the Lord Jesus, but He will redeem them in an act of power, "the redemption of our body". We are to exercise patience in the meantime. The hope is not seen, Paul makes that very clear; if it was seen it would not be hope, but he adds, "But if what we see not we hope, we expect in patience". I think the Lord would encourage our hearts in this great feature of patience. We sing -

O patient, spotless One,
Our hearts in meekness train (Hymn174).

That is another wonderful feature of Christ that Paul helps us here to take on, to await the time in patience.

I read in chapter 15 where the scripture we had in the reading in Isaiah is quoted. It says, "There shall be the root of Jesse, and one that arises, to rule over the nations: in him shall the nations hope. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that ye should

abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit". It is a wonderful thing that God is called "the God of hope". It is our God. There is a passage in Isaiah where the prophet says, "this is our God; we have waited for him", Isa 25: 9. They proved that in waiting on God they had the joy of salvation. Paul says "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that ye should abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit".

I would just suggest that these passages show something of this matter of hope. One beloved servant of God said it was very scarce among the saints (JT vol 70 p10), but I feel that in our day it has come forward and it is a very real matter in our hearts. God would have us to abound in it, as He does in many things. We are reading in John locally, and the Lord says, "I am come that they might have life, and mightily have it abundantly", John 10: 10. That is what the Lord has in mind in the way of life. Here Paul says, "so that ye should abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit". It is all made good as the Spirit strengthens us in our hearts so that it is not a faint hope, a feeble hope, something that perhaps will happen; on the contrary, it is an assured hope.

I commit this to the brethren: Paul seems to weave this element of hope all through his writings. It is one of the three essential ingredients of Christianity at the present time, "faith, hope, love; these three things; and the greater of these is love".

For His Name's sake.

Denton

22nd April 2011