

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 49

April 2011

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John A Brown

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JAB What I have in mind, dear brethren, as a subject of conversation and enquiry is the blessedness of the relationships into which we are brought as Christians, and to think of them, not primarily from our side of the relationship, but from the divine side. I read a very interesting definition of Christianity in Mr Raven's ministry recently. He said that Christianity is twofold: first of all it is the complete deliverance of a person from bondage to sin or the world or the law or whatever it might be; and then the establishing of the believer in relationships, and setting of the believer up in the affections proper to these relationships, vol 20 p3. These two things go along together. There is the side of responsibility, what you might call the regulatory side, and I should like to speak about regulation later on if the Lord might help. The way in which I think sometimes leads me to want to start with the responsible side and work up to the purpose of God, but I have been encouraged to begin at the top, as it were, with sonship: "because ye are sons". Every believer who loves the Lord Jesus has been brought into that relationship by God Himself, and I would like to start there in Galatians. Really it is in response to revelation. God has revealed Himself in this dispensation, as Father, the name of relationship, a wonderful thing, and we will come to that in John 20. Why has He done that? Because He *wants* persons in relationship to Him. We get a lot of blessing out of it. It is wonderful for us to be in relationship to God. But what I want to enquire about - because I feel the need of this for myself - is what does God feel about these relationships? Why has He done this, that every believer is a son? Because He wants men in relationship to Him.

We have read in Galatians about sonship; we have read in John 20 about a woman who had a very powerful relationship with her Lord. She says, "they have taken away my Lord", and then He gives her this wonderful message, which we are very familiar with, as to His brethren and "my Father and your Father" and "my God and your God". I feel limited in thinking about that, but the brethren will help.

And then in Philemon we get a very interesting touch about how this widens out, because the relations that we are brought into are not only with divine Persons, although primarily they are, but then Paul can

write to Philemon. It is a very attractive letter. First of all in the section we read Paul talks about God as “my God”. That is a *personal* relationship with his God, and I desire some help about that. Then he speaks about Philemon’s “love and the faith” which he has “towards the Lord Jesus” and then “towards all the saints”; so as we are in the enjoyment of our relationships with divine Persons, it broadens out in what we sometimes talk about as a horizontal way.

Then 2 Corinthians 6 reminds us that if we are in the enjoyment of relationships with divine Persons, and if we have the affections by the Holy Spirit which are appropriate to these relationships, there are other relations which are not appropriate. I do not want to get to 2 Corinthians 6 too quickly, but I think we take our ground from the glory of the relationships into which we have been brought, and we are reminded of what they are at the end of that section, after that reference to the Old Testament: “I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”, Lev 26: 11-12. So Paul, and through Paul, the Lord Jesus, is reminding the Corinthians that there is a relationship they have with God as their Father, and reminding them that there are other relationships, associations, whatever we want to speak of them as, which are not appropriate, and so we keep away from them.

I wondered if we might be expanded in our thoughts, primarily on the view that divine Persons have of the relationships that they have set us up to enjoy, but for their enjoyment. Will that be all right?

JDG I am sure it will be beneficial for us all. I was thinking, as you were speaking, in chapter 3 it says in verse 26: “for ye are all God’s sons by faith in Christ Jesus”. That might be light that comes in, but then this other remark comes in chapter 4: “but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son ... that we might receive sonship”. This is something further than just the light of sonship.

JAB I wondered that. We really begin with the revelation of God. In a sense, revelation precedes all of this. It precedes relationship; it precedes regulation; and response really too is the end in view: “the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father”. But God has come out: “God sent forth his Son ... that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship”. That is what God wants. Is that what you have in mind?

JDG Yes, it is. It seems to me that it is the way we come into the

enjoyment of the relationship, so it goes on to say, as you were pointing out: “But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father”. Divine Persons could never be satisfied short of that.

JAB I am glad of what you say. It opens it up. Why has God done this? He has done it because He wants men in relationship to Him. That is why Jesus came here, to redeem those who were held in bondage under the principles of the world. He cannot have a relationship with people who are held in bondage under the principles of the world. That comes home to me, too, in relation to how I am in my links with God. This is why He has done it.

JDG So sending “forth his Son, come of woman, come under law” to redeem us clears the whole ground morally with a view to *God’s* heart being satisfied.

JAB Exactly. As I said earlier, I often think of my blessings as a son of God and they are very real, and they are very wonderful, and they *are* to be enjoyed. But primarily God has brought us into relationship with Himself so that He might have His heart satisfied with the response of sons.

JTB The Father was so pleased with the way the Lord Jesus fulfilled every relationship of sonship that He desires others to be like Him to share that place, do you think?

JAB I am glad you have brought that in because we see this in the Lord Jesus. Say a bit more about what you mean by that. All that God had in that blessed One in relationship to Him; He receives from those made like Him brought into the same relationship, always guarding the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus. Is that what you have in mind?

JTB Yes, “when the fulness of the time was come”: God looked down through the dispensations, did He not, to this ultimate moment when the Lord Jesus was begotten, and then fulfilling in every detail what the Son should be in every relationship and every feature of His manhood, do you think?

JAB So in the Old Testament God desired this, did He not? Israel came into it to an extent but could never come into the fulness of God’s thoughts that He might have men in relationship to Him. The priestly system was a system of barriers. The outer court, the inner court, the curtain, the veil, the Old Testament system has much to teach us, but it

was a system of barriers, and now the veil of the temple is rent with the death of Christ, and God has come out because He wants men in that relationship. That is very fine.

TWL Is that seen in that “God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father”? That is for the Father's heart.

JAB That is the impression I have of it. I am glad of what you say because God has done this, “sent forth his Son”, that persons might receive sonship and then “because ye are sons”. Why has God sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts? Because He desires an answer. He is looking for that. He is looking for an answer. As far as I am concerned, this is for me. He is looking for more of an answer as a result of our conversation today, that we might see what God desires. He has given us the Spirit. The term “Abba, Father” is a term of affection, and I was struck by what Mr Raven said, that He brings us into relationships with Him, and He gives us the affections which are appropriate to these relationships. I think that is tremendous.

TWL Yes, it is, because it is not just 'the Spirit into our hearts', but it is “the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” in relation to what our brother said about what the Father saw in Christ that was so pleasing to Himself. Then it is the Spirit of that Man that brings in accord with us and that answers “Abba, Father”. It is the relationship at the level of what Christ is to God.

JAB It is. I am glad of what you say. The parallel passage in Romans 8 says, “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God”, v 14. Mr James Taylor, in a very memorable remark, speaks of the Spirit of God opening the door that is leading us into eternity, vol 33 p29. We are not talking about relationships here for time only, although they are to be enjoyed in time. What we are talking about are eternal relationships with God. That is tremendous, that we will know God in eternity in the way we know Him now - through this relationship, sonship, through our relationship with the Lord Jesus, through our relationship with the Holy Spirit; these relations define us as believers in time and eternity. And so Paul says, in Romans also, “ye have received a spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father”, chap 8: 15.

NJH This is the only place that the Spirit could cry, “Abba, Father”. Is that right?

JAB Say more about what you have in mind.

NJH It is only those that are in relationship.

JAB Yes. I feel the importance of that. The Holy Spirit cannot be limited in His work and neither can God, for He is God, but the way God operates is in conditions that are brought into consonance with His heart of love. Is that right? Is that what you have in mind?

NJH Sonship is for God, and here it is really for the Spirit. God gives the Spirit an area, that is those in sonship, whereby He can cry, "Abba, Father".

JAB So that blessed name is the name of relationship, is it not? God is known by many names and many titles, but "Father" brings us into the nearest place of relationship. Our relationships with divine Persons are measured by God's thoughts for us; not by our thoughts about these relationships, but by His thoughts.

GAB Do we see it illustrated in the well-known passage in Luke 15? The younger son was prepared to accept a relationship as a hired servant, rather similar to the bondman in the beginning of this chapter, but the father's thoughts were far greater and he says, 'The best robe is all that is going to be good enough for my house'.

JAB That is fine. When we use that scripture in the gospel, which we often do, we are thinking of the younger son and the journey that he travels, but we sometimes do think of the Father's thoughts in Luke 15; how much he missed that relationship with the son who was no longer there. He had gone away and now he comes back, and it is the father's delight that comes before us in what he provides, is it not? It is the expression of what is in the father's heart, in terms of the parable, the resumption of the relationship on a new basis of repentance and being brought right in.

GAB Would it be right to say too that the best robe had been there all the time? The father had no other thoughts for his son.

JAB That is fine.

WMP Can I just ask about the reference to "the fulness of the time", and your reference to the Old Testament? We had Enoch who walked with God, and Abraham, a friend of God. Moses saw the divine glory from behind and so on; so what is it that marks this relationship out so distinctively?

JAB I think it is really the incoming of the Lord Jesus, because it is in

the death of the Lord Jesus that we can enter into these relationships into which God would bring us. The Lord's death is the foundation for them. God desires to bring us into nearness. Israel could function, and no doubt God got great pleasure in much that proceeded in the Old Testament, but there was almost always a distance. But when we come near - in Christianity we come near on the basis that on the death of Jesus the veil was rent - the way in to the very heart of God is opened up and relationship with Him can be on that basis, and it will be for all eternity. Is that in line with what you were thinking?

WMP Yes, so what we have in the relationship of sonship is a family relationship. That must involve that intimacy that you have spoken about, and also everything is established on the basis of righteousness, is it not?

JAB Certainly, and we see that in the death of the Lord Jesus. It must be the case that these relationships that we enjoy with the Father and with the Lord Jesus and with the Holy Spirit are all on the basis of righteousness that has been established there. In relation to what you have just said, I was thinking of that verse in John 17, "And I have made known to them thy name," - that is the name of Father - "and will make it known; that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them", v 26. To me that just encapsulates the matter.

RG Do you think in the light of what you are saying that verse 25 of Galatians 3 is important: "faith having come". We might have said faith existed in the Old Testament, and it did, but would this underline the special character of what was brought in, really an environment in which these thoughts of God could be developed?

JAB That is fine. I would be glad if you could say more about that: "faith having come". Do you mean we are ushered into a new dispensation? Everything is on a new basis.

RG Yes, there is a thought in the world and in Christendom that Christianity sprang out of Judaism, but the truth is that God brought in something entirely new. As it says later, "the fulness of the time": that is the time we are in, in which these things can blossom, do you think?

JAB Yes. We speak about the dispensation of faith, and we speak about grace marking it, and these things are true, but to me this dispensation is marked by persons in relationship, in nearness to God. I have been thinking of what defines us. What makes you who you are? It is not your natural history; it is not your forebears; it is not exactly what

you have done; it is your relationship with God. I feel the need to grasp that, that God desires to bring us nearer to Him because what we learn of Him now and what we enjoy and what He enjoys is eternal. It will *not* change.

RG Do you think that emphasises the importance of this dispensation? We will not develop these relationships in eternity. We will enjoy them, but we will not develop any further in them. God is doing something now in this time, something He has not done before, nor will do again, and we then should seize this opportunity.

JAB That is just what is in my heart, that we need to see the greatness of what God has in mind for the satisfaction of *His* heart. We will come into blessing, but it is for the satisfaction of His heart.

NJH Is it good to be reminded that Christ came into the relationship of sonship at birth? I think the whole thing is protected. My mind went to Luke where it speaks of Joseph being his “supposed” father (Luke 3: 23), but it is “come of woman” here. Speaking simply and reverently, He only had one Father. We have had fathers according to flesh; we have had that. We are taken up in Christianity on the principle of adoption; but with Christ there is uniqueness in how He stood in that blessed humanity in relation to His Father.

JAB That is good. We had that on Lord's day. We began to read Luke's gospel: “*He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Highest*”, chap 1: 32. The Lord came into that relationship. How perfectly He fulfils it!

JDG I was going to say what our brother said, that He was in sonship from His birth: “this day have I begotten thee” (Heb 1: 5), but it was the sending forth of the Son from the point of view: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”, Matt 3: 17.

JAB That is fine. As He entered into His pathway of service, you mean, and coming under the public eye in that way?

JDG And it was in view of securing others like Him. That was the divine objective.

JAB I have occasionally misquoted what the Father said at the Jordan. He did *not* say ‘in whom I have found all my delight’ (which is in Psalm 16: 3, of course). So what God had in mind, what the Father had in mind there, was His beloved Son coming up to the entire satisfaction of the Father's heart, even before He had entered on public testimony,

yet there were going to be others like Him.

DCB We began this week considering the reference, “thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine”, Job 42: 2. This is God’s thought, and a thought which is secured and is secured eternally, God having secured it already in Christ.

JAB I am glad of what you say. It opens up the scantiness of my own thoughts about it, about what God has secured in Christ. From His point of view it does not depend on us. God has found what He wants in His beloved Son, but He is also finding what He wants in those who have been made like Him. What I would like as a result of our enquiry today is for everyone in this room to realise that more, that this is what God desires. He wants us to know Him better. He wants us nearer to Him because this is the time when these relationships with divine Persons are developed, and we shall enjoy them eternally.

DCB This word “because” is very important: “But because ye are sons”. He is not raising any question at all about that. Even to the Galatians in the condition that they were in, He is not asking that question. He is saying, ‘That is what you are’, and then, because of that, He is expecting that there should be the behaviour that is appropriate to sons.

JAB Well, we will maybe come to that in the address because as we come into relationship with God, we come into a sphere of regulation. We know that, in our experience, we come into the blessedness of what we are speaking about through what we call the kingdom, but God starts at the highest point. God starts with sonship.

DJH It is a great relationship to enjoy. What I have been impressed with in what is being said is the wonder of it, that they are eternal relationships. There will be no change in the relationship. There will be a change in the condition, and we will be more suited to the relationship because we shall be like Him, but the relationship remains.

JAB That is the impression I have. I have been impressed with the blessedness of it, but the challenge too. There is the challenge as to responsibility and we will come later this afternoon, if the Lord helps, to what is suitable for this on the grounds of moral responsibility. But then too, with the Holy Spirit’s help, deepening in our appreciation of what you have said, that the relationships we are brought into and enjoy now for God’s pleasure are eternal and they define who we are. People go round trying to define themselves in relation to their careers, or the

amount of wealth they have, or how brilliant they are. None of that will subsist. The only thing that will subsist is our relationship with divine Persons. Is that right?

DJH Yes. I am much impressed with what you drew attention to: “because ye are sons”. It is not something that we work up to from the responsible side. The responsible side has to be met but “because ye are sons” it can be filled out.

JAB So the Holy Spirit would say this to everybody in this room who is a believer in the Lord Jesus: you are a son of God. You *are* in that relationship. You may not have thought about it much; you may not be in the enjoyment of it; but that is what you are if you have faith in Christ. He would attract us into the blessed enjoyment because that is how God gets His portion.

AMB Do you have anything to say about these words that are the result of the Spirit's prompting in our hearts, “Abba, Father”?

JAB The only thought I had is that, to go back to what impressed me in Mr Raven's statement, we are brought into new relationships and given the affections that are appropriate to these relationships. I think the term “Abba, Father” is a term of great affection. That is the only impression I had of it, but you could say more.

AMB It is the expression that the Lord Himself used to the Father, expressing the intensity of affection and intimacy of relationship, but then, by the Spirit, the believer can take these same words on his or her lips. It can only be by the activity of a divine Person, the Holy Spirit, in our hearts, but it is a tremendous matter, and that is what God has in mind, that there should be an intensity of expression of affection and intimacy towards Him.

JAB I think what you have brought out is very fine. So the relationship God has with His beloved Son is extended. We always, of course, in our minds, guard the uniqueness of Jesus, but we do not need to keep on saying that in a company like this. He is distinct and unique as God in His own Person, but nevertheless what you say is true, that we can take on our lips, with the Holy Spirit's help, the same words that Jesus did in relation to His Father. It is a wonderful thing.

Maybe that would take us on to John 20, because the Lord Himself discloses this to a woman who loved Him. This woman had been delivered from the bondage to sin that she had been under. Mary

had had seven demons (Luke 8: 2), and the Lord had brought her out of that bondage and now she is there in the purity and intensity of her affection for a dead Saviour. In verse 2 she says to the disciples, "They have taken away the Lord", but in verse 13 where we read, "She says to them, Because they have taken away my Lord". This does come down to what is personal. It is enjoyed collectively, and sonship is enjoyed collectively as well as being an individual relationship with the Father, but here is one woman saying, "they have taken away my Lord". Her affection for Him was such that she was drawn into nearness to Him, and she is given this wonderful message, which really is all about relationships. I was just impressed by the truth that she was given. Mr Stoney said a remarkable thing about it; he said that the truth that she was given was the kernel of the epistle to the Ephesians, vol 4 p173. The whole of the epistle to the Ephesians, at least the first three chapters, Mr Stoney suggests, is really Paul bringing out the meaning that the Lord Jesus had in His mind here, and it was given to this woman who loved Jesus. That was the basis of her relationship.

DCB Could you say why this is as the Lord is in resurrection?

JAB Well, I think that is important to bring out. It is not on the previous basis. It is on a new basis and it comes back to what we said earlier about the death of the Lord Jesus. God has been revealed in the death of Jesus, the veil rent, our way in, but the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the basis of our relationship with Him. It is really a heavenly Man, not part of this world at all. Although He was still in this scene, and He would remain in it for a period of time before He ascended, yet He was in a completely distinct and different condition.

DCB What you say brings to mind that His attitude is "I ascend"; it is a Person in that attitude that would introduce us into the actuality and the enjoyment of these relationships.

JAB That is what I had in mind, and I am glad of what you have brought out; so the Lord is looking to His ascension: "I have not yet ascended to my Father". Of course, much could be said about these verses; much has been said. But what interested me was that Mary is an example of what we are talking about. She did not understand much, but what she had was a love for someone she called "my Lord". That was the relationship in affection, and then everything else came. The intelligence was granted to her in order to carry this precious message, but what she had was affection.

JTB The Lord Jesus must also be the centre of our enjoyment of sonship, do you think? She says here that “she had seen the Lord,” - that was the first thing she said - “and that he had said these things to her”. Pre-eminently in her heart was the fact she had seen the Lord. That really is the blessed basis on which our enjoyment of sonship is reached and enjoyed.

JAB I wondered that. It is really in association with a Man who is now in heaven, the blessedness of that. “She had seen the Lord”. Our relationship is with that blessed One, where He is now. You cannot enjoy relationship at a distance. In a way you can *know* it, you can know that it is true at a distance, but you cannot really *enjoy* it at a distance. This involves being brought near to the blessed One where He is now. Is that what you have in mind?

JTB “Having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself”, Eph 1: 5.

JAB Very good. I am glad of what you say.

NJH It says in verse 16, “She ... says to him in Hebrew”. Why is that?

JAB Have you got a thought about it?

NJH Is it becoming more intense with her? It is, “Rabboni, which means Teacher”. What do you think?

JAB Are you free to talk about the Lord Jesus as “my Lord” and about God as “my God”? I think we should be. That personal dimension to the relationship must underpin it. I know that much of it is enjoyed collectively, and I am not setting that aside at all in what I say. She goes to the disciples, and I am sure she stayed with them. I am sure someone who was brought into this nearness to the Lord Jesus did not then go away. I cannot say it definitively but I have the feeling that she was there in the upper room. But “my Lord”, that was the axis of the relationship that she had, and she held to that and everything else was added to that, “Rabboni”.

JDG Christianity hangs on the personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, my Lord, my Saviour.

JAB Yes it does, and would you say it hangs on our personal relationships with each divine Person? I want to make clear that in personal prayer I would not address God the Father as 'my Father'. That is distinctive to Christ. But in thinking about all that God has done,

and how He has come out, and in thinking of the Holy Spirit, there is a personal aspect to these relationships with divine Persons that must underpin everything else. Is that right?

JDG Well, I have been thinking about it as you have been speaking of it. I do not think I have ever addressed the Father as 'my Father'. I think that is distinctive to Christ; He does not say 'our Father', but "your father". But I think 'my God' can be addressed, because it is a personal matter between the Creator and the creature.

JAB Yes, we have that liberty in personal prayer. This is a wonderful passage in John 20, the way in which Mary moves from saying "the Lord" to "my Lord". Now, everyone here would talk about the Lord Jesus, but is He Jesus *my* Lord? Is Jesus *your* Lord? That is what I really have in mind.

RG Do you think the fact it was twice recorded that she was weeping bears on this? Does it give some indication of the kind of ground, for want of a better word, into which the Lord would plant these thoughts that He does bring in? I am thinking of the fact that so many of the brethren are under pressure in their health and for other reasons, but we will not be under pressure in heaven, and it prepares the ground for these revelations which *are* of heaven, do you think?

JAB I do. I could not add to what you say, but I think it is very important to see that. Mary had to go through a transition, if I might call it that, in her relationship with the Lord Jesus. Although she had known Him after the flesh and she wants to resume that, He says, "Touch me not". But He gives her the basis of the new relationship with Him, and that is key to understanding the basis of *our* relationship with the Lord, but it all hinges on affection, personal affection, for this blessed One.

DS Do we understand these relationships you are speaking of by recognising the Lord as our Teacher?

JAB What do you have in mind?

DS I think you could help us as to it. You were speaking as to the personal relationships we have with each divine Person, the Lord, and the Spirit, and the Father. I just wondered if Mary as speaking to the Lord as Teacher here is recognising One who is able to open up to her in a new relationship that which she is going to enjoy. The Lord is now out of death. As you say, she has recognised Him as "my Lord" and now she is saying 'my Teacher'. Is there something there that the Lord is

able to open up to us, something of the glory of relationships that He enjoys that we can enjoy?

JAB I think that is good. I am glad of what you say because really if there is love for the Lord Jesus, then a soul that has affection for Christ is teachable. As you were speaking, I thought of Mary of Bethany, the other Mary, who was not here. It has been said in ministry that she understood that the Lord would rise. As she had sat at His feet and listened to His words, she knew Him as her Teacher, Luke 10: 39. She had absorbed something from Christ that maybe Mary of Magdala had not. But I do not like to criticise Mary of Magdala at all because she is here in affection, and she gets the most wonderful message that has ever been given to anyone, even the apostle Paul or any of the other apostles. This is the most wonderful message that was ever given to anyone, and she is teachable because she is a lover of Christ.

PAG I have been thinking of the time coming when every tongue will "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory", Phil 2: 11. Your exercise is about what is for the heart of divine Persons now. Is there something special that persons are confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, not because they are obliged to, but because they want to, and that is what marks this dispensation.

JAB Exactly. I think that is very important. Mary of Magdala had come under the subduing power of the love of Jesus and it shows, and it is to show with us too. That is a challenge to me even as I say it. But I think what you say is right. There is something about what happens in this section; I am thinking about what happens to Mary. There is tremendous depth and teaching in the words the Lord Jesus uses. But what happens to Mary here? To me she is an epitome of someone who is brought nearer to Christ, and her understanding and her appreciation expands in that way, and the result would be what you say.

Maybe we could go to Philemon because our brother was referring to the way in which Paul speaks of his God. I do not want to make too much of it, but Paul does use this term quite often in his letters. He speaks about God Himself as "my God". I know there is a particular aspect to the letter to Philemon. Paul is adjusting, and he is adjusting in love. It is one of the most powerful and effective letters that has ever been written, this short letter, because Philemon got the benefit of it. It is tremendous the skill Paul uses in speaking to Philemon. There is a relationship between Paul and Philemon. You can see it. First of all Paul speaks about his God, and I just wondered if

that would affect us and cause us to see that God wants us in personal relationship to Him in this way. Would that be all right to say that?

JDG I am sure that is right. Every person has a relationship with God, initially as Creator, but then He becomes a Saviour God, so that you have a relationship with Him to all eternity.

JAB And that relationship, would you say, colours and controls our relations with one another? Paul is writing to Philemon and he credits Philemon with his love and the faith which he has towards the Lord Jesus. That is Philemon's relationship with the Lord Jesus, "and towards all the saints", and I just thought that we see there the principle of relationship widening out towards all the saints in an instructive way.

JDG He addresses more than Philemon in this epistle. It has been pointed out, that it does not include the thought of mercy because of the fact there are others here related to the assembly. It is nearly an assembly epistle.

JAB "The assembly which is in thine house"; so, we remember it is addressed to several persons, Philemon and Apphia, whether that was Philemon's wife or not, we do not know, but it is addressed to more than Philemon. That is good. We know each other quite well and we develop relationships with each other. Why do I have a relationship with you? It is because of our relationships with divine Persons. It works out horizontally, but it has its source in the Lord Jesus and in His death.

JSp I was thinking of the scripture in Corinthians, "But if any one love God, *he* is known of him", 1 Cor 8: 3. Would that be the basis of it?

JAB That is good. Are you referring to the personal dimension of the relationship with God? "*He* is known of him". Say more about that, please.

JSp Well, God knows every one, of course, as His creature, but there is a special bond that is formed, and God works through that and it spreads to all the brethren.

JAB I think that is good. "But if anyone love God, *he* is known of him". That comes as a challenge to me. How much do I actually love God? It is possible to know God without being in the freshness of affection. We all know that. But I think "if anyone love God, *he* is known of him" implies something that is active and is really flowing in response Godward. Is that what you have in mind?

JTB Just for clarity, in the service of God, it would be appropriate to refer to 'our God', do you think?

JAB Yes, I am glad you make that clear. In what I have said about our personal relationships with God, I am thinking of individual prayer and speaking to other individuals about God. If I was speaking to someone about my relationship with God, I would be free to say He is my God. I had an Israeli man who worked for me, and it was very interesting working with a Jew. He had no conception of God, no belief, but what he said interested me. He could see that I had a relationship with God, and he was interested in that and he wanted to know more about it. That is more the context in which I am speaking now.

JTB I thought perhaps the end of Philippians illustrated the point. In chapter 4 verse 19 Paul says, "But my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus", but in the next verse, he says, "But to our God and Father be glory to the ages of ages". When the ascription of glory is concerned, it is "our God", do you think?

JAB I think that is helpful and I am glad you have brought that in for clarity. In speaking of God, he would speak of "my God", but in addressing Him in worship, it must be "our God". That is good.

DCB I was thinking of Daniel, where Darius can say, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will save thee", Dan 6: 16. He *knew*.- there was a testimony - that Daniel had a relationship with God, and really that would be something that would flow out from what you have said.

JAB That helps to bring out what I had in mind. If someone has a relationship with God, that is what defines them. Daniel was defined as a man who prayed three times a day with his windows towards Jerusalem. Daniel was many other things. He was the prime minister in a powerful empire, but what defined him in the eyes of heaven, and also in the eyes of some of those with whom he had to do, was his relationship with God. I think that is a very important thing that we need to think about more.

DCB I was thinking too that Paul himself could speak of "the God, whose I am and whom I serve", Acts 27: 23.

JAB I wondered if we might see that what we are speaking about now, which is not at such a high level as what we were speaking about in Galatians, is to take its cue, as it were, from the fact that I am one of

God's sons. I remember Paul Martin telling me about a brother he visited in India for the first time, and he spoke to him for an hour, and all the brother spoke about was the blessedness that he was one of God's sons. In the fifteen million people in Mumbai, that brother was just full of wonder that he had that relationship with God, and I think that is important for us to think about.

PAG If we do desire to have our part in the service of praise, is what you are saying as to "my God" essential? I cannot say 'our God' if I cannot say 'my God'.

JAB That is what I had in mind. I am glad of what you say. The personal relationship underpins everything else, and the enjoyment of it. God desires men in nearness to Him. Now, that very quickly introduces us into what is collective, but it is based on that personal relationship that we have with One who is our God and Father.

NMcK Regarding the matter of sonship, I have been thinking how Solomon sets the matter out. He says, "I was a son unto my father", Prov 4: 3. He was one who knew how to fill out that relationship. It maybe links on more with what you were reading in Corinthians, but he filled out that relationship under his father, and see what gain there was: he became like him and grew in wisdom and in all that David was marked by in the substance that he had.

JAB That is very helpful, because it fills out what I had rather sketchily in my mind, that all of the relationships that we enter into are to be marked in their dignity and their character with our relationship as sons of God. Is that what you have in mind? The relationship I have with you is imbued with that dignity. We might or we might not have similar tastes naturally or similar interests, but as enjoying the blessedness of what we were speaking about in the earlier part of the reading, we are to be encouraged to see that that really imbues everything.

That is what I had in mind in turning to 2 Corinthians 6, just before we close. We often think of this scripture in terms of the need for separation, and that is absolutely right. "What participation is there between righteousness and lawlessness? or what fellowship of light with darkness?" Relationships bring us into fellowship with one another, but I was thinking of the way in which we approach these things. We do things because we see the rightness of them, and we do not do things because we see their incompatibility with the relationships

we enjoy with divine Persons. Would it be right to say that?

JDG I think everything springs from my love for my Lord and my God.

JAB I was affected by the way in which, at the end of this section, Paul brings in this quotation from the Old Testament, which is really about relationship, is it not? It does not rise to the height of what we have been speaking about. “Sons and daughters” is not exactly sonship, but nevertheless, it shows us that, even in the Old Testament time, God desired His people in relationship with Him, and that gets spoiled when sin comes in.

TWL Is there a link between what you are bringing in now and the end of John's first epistle when he says, “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ”, chap 5: 20? Is that why we do what we do?

JAB Exactly. I think it is important to understand that Christianity is not, emphatically not, a system of rules and regulations. I was speaking to a sister recently who said that when she was young she thought that being a good Christian was doing what you were told you could do and not doing all the things you were told you could not do. That is not what Christianity is at all! It springs from love for God, and then, as we enter into the sensitivity of that relationship with divine Persons, it becomes clear what we are able to do and what we just do not want to touch.

TWL That is what I wondered, whether that is the “understanding”, because the understanding “that the son of God has come, and has given us an understanding” is the understanding of the relationships between Christ and the Father. It is the understanding of that, and what is appropriate to it, and what part of that is being “in him”. Is that right?

JAB Very good. I am glad of what you say, and the scripture you bring in is good. In looking at the scripture in 2 Corinthians, we would remember the relationship we have with the Lord Jesus as the Head of the assembly. We have not spoken about that relationship, but it is an important one too and, as a member of His body, there are things which I do not want to go anywhere near, and that is what should govern us. The blessedness and the dignity and the glory of what we are brought into now and what we shall enjoy eternally makes these things so simple.

TCM In Galatians we touched on “that we might receive sonship”, but here we have at the end of verse 17, “and I will receive you”. Do you think that is really the end in view from God's side, that He may receive us? Galatians is like the status that is put upon us, but this involves state.

JAB That is very good. I am glad of what you are emphasising: “and I will receive you”. God wants man in nearness to Him. He did at the very beginning in the garden when He set man up in relationship, and sin came in and spoiled it. You might say, sin brought disaster for man, but what did it do for God? It spoiled the enjoyment of the relationship that He wanted to have with man in innocence. You could say much about that, but I think what you have said as to “I will receive you”, that is, God's feelings coming out there, is fine.

RG What follows immediately on is, “and I will be to you for a Father”. He does not say, 'I am your Father' - that is true - but “I will be to you for a Father”.

JAB What distinction do you make there?

RG I am enquiring as to whether that would involve instruction. It is a living, operating system: “I will be to you”, and, as we recognise the Father's hand even in our circumstances and in the service too, it would strengthen the relationship we have, do you think?

JAB That is fine. I had not thought of that. “I will be to you for a Father”. The Father is towards us in the operation and grace of His love, is He not? It is an operative thing. What we are speaking about in terms of relationships, they operate, they are living. They are living in the power of the Holy Spirit and they are living in the power of the love of God, the love of the Father, and that operation comes out in what you have said: “I will be to you for a Father”. He will do the things that a Father would do.

JSp Would that be seen in John's epistle: “See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God”. And then he goes on to say, “For this reason the world knows us not, because it knew him not”, 1 John 3: 1. That should convey a very clear line of demarcation from that very exalted aspect.

JAB The world cannot even begin to enter into what we have been speaking about and, as in the enjoyment of this; we just keep ourselves in the love of God. I think what you say is very good.

NJH In Genesis 15 it was when Abraham felt the need of sonship that the Almighty comes in. It is interesting it is the Lord Almighty who says, "I will be to you for a Father" as if it is for the protection, the eventual protection, of what true sonship is as coming out in Isaac and so on.

JAB I think we come to that, that as we are held in the closeness of these blessed relationships, we are in a place of protection. There is the darkness: "what fellowship of light with darkness? and what consent of Christ with Beliar?". We are held in an area of tremendous protection really in the love of God, are we not?

GAB In that connection, verse 17 is "Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated". That exhortation is between the reference to God being their God and His being to them for a Father. That keeps us clear of legality, does it not? It is a matter of affection that prompts these movements in separation.

JAB It must be so, and we have found in our experience that that is the only thing that works: the love of God, nearness to Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit and our relationships with Him. These are the things that give us the strength for what you are speaking about. It is not command; it is the power of attraction in these blessed divine Persons, and the relationships to them into which we have been drawn.

Edinburgh

8th January 2011

List of Initials:-

AM Brown, Grangemouth; DC Brown, Edinburgh;
GABrown, Edinburgh; JABrown, Grangemouth;
J T Brown, Edinburgh; J D Gray, Edinburgh; P A Gray, Grangemouth;
R Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; D J Hutson, Edinburgh;
T W Lock, Edinburgh; N McKay, Glasgow; T C Munro, Grangemouth;
W M Patterson, Glasgow; D Spinks, Grangemouth;
J Spinks, Grangemouth

“ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE”

John A Brown

Romans 3: 21-26; 6: 1-6; 8: 1-4

Galatians 5: 1 to “therefore”

I think it is a wonderful thing that what God has in His mind for men, He has in mind for *all* men. When you think of what that means, it is a remarkable statement. Even with the power of modern communication, there is no way that men can even count the number of people that there are in this world. They know roughly how many there are. I used to say there were six billion, but there are now seven thousand million people in this world. But men cannot actually know who they all are at any one time; so it is a most remarkable statement that Paul makes here, and it is still true. I do not know how many people were alive in the world when Paul wrote this, but God knew, because it was true then, and it is still true, “righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all”. And another thing that Paul says here and which is true for everyone, whoever they are, wherever they live in this world, is “for all have sinned”. It says “all” twice here. “All have sinned” - you have sinned and I have sinned. And God is “towards all” in righteousness by virtue of what He has done to save everyone in this world. That is the tremendous thing about the gospel. No matter how many people there are, seven billion now, or however many people there were when Jesus died, what God did and what the Lord Jesus did in His work on the cross, it was done for *all*. God had blessing in mind for all men. And He has blessing in mind for *you*, because, whereas the gospel is available to all seven thousand million of the people in this world today, God is not speaking to them all as a group; He is speaking to each person individually, and He would speak to you in a meeting like this. He would speak in many different ways. You might say, 'I have heard the gospel before. I have heard God speaking to me in the gospel before; so I do not need to listen tonight'. Well, you do, and I do too. I need this as much as you do. I need to listen to what God might say to me in these scriptures, because I need the gospel just as much as you do.

There are two categories here. In one case all men have sinned, and God is towards all, and that is a blessed thing - “Righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all”. That is an absolute statement, not towards all those who will listen, not towards all

those who may be elected for blessing. This shows us that God does not elect for eternal damnation. That could not be the case. This is the power and love of God in righteousness, based on what Jesus has done, towards every single person; so that we all stand before God as sinners and God is "towards all". And then there is a comma, "and upon all those who believe". I simply want to ask you, dear friend, have you believed? That is different from, 'Have you heard before?' or 'Do you know the truth of the gospel?'. Everybody here might know the truth of the gospel down to the youngest child of intelligent years. You may have all heard it before, but God is towards you and the question is, have you believed? You remember when the jailor came into the prison that the earthquake had shaken, and all the prisoners' bonds had been loosed, and Paul and Silas were there. That man came in with his drawn sword, ready to commit suicide, because he knew what would happen to him if the prisoners escaped, and he cried out to Paul, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?". There was one word, "Believe on the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16: 30-31). I want to ask you, have you done that?

What does it mean? It means, dear friend, that you put your trust in the Saviour that we speak of in the gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you come to it that you cannot do without Him. It is not believing in a doctrine, it is not believing the terms of the truth or even in the terms of Scripture, although to some extent it is that. What I mean is that merely knowing the terms of Scripture will not save you. I have come across persons who knew the Scriptures better than I did, and yet they did not believe in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. I would like, dear friend, to ask you sincerely, have you believed? Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Because, if you are, it changes you. God counts you righteous. This righteousness of God that is spoken of here is available to you "by faith of Jesus Christ". Now, I cannot give you faith: only God can give you faith, but I can ask you, have you believed in what you have heard again and again and again at these gospel preachings? Dear friend, I would urge you, open your heart to Christ tonight by believing in Him as the only One who can save you. You need Jesus. Have you ever come to that - that you cannot do without Him, this blessed Saviour that is spoken of here, "by faith of Jesus Christ for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". Have you come to that? That is part of what believing in Him means. That jailor had come to the end of himself. He knew that there was no other outlet for him, "what must I do that I may

be saved?" He did not say to Paul. 'Where are you?' or 'What happened?' He knew he needed salvation. Have you ever come to it, dear friend, that you need Christ, you need the Saviour, the One in whom God's righteousness is personified, the One whose work on that cross was the basis for righteousness of God to be displayed there, and in His precious blood too. We will come to that in a minute, but have you come to it that you are a sinner, not just that "all have sinned", but that *you* are a sinner. I am a sinner. 'Oh', you might say, 'I am not as bad as some people. I have lived a good life and I have been brought up in a Christian household. I have come to the meetings'. That is good, but it will not save you. I would urge you to think about what believing in the Lord Jesus means. It means changing your man, putting your trust in Jesus because you realise that only He can save you. I would urge you to do it. If you have not done it before, come tonight to open your heart to this blessed One who is towards you in blessing. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God". The Philippian jailor realised that in some way in his heart, and he cried out because he knew he needed a Saviour, "what must I do that I may be saved?" Dear friend, I would urge you to come to that, to repent and believe. What a wonderful thing it is! The gospel is simple and God has done nearly everything. God has provided a Saviour, and the Lord Jesus, in dying on the cross, has done all that has needed to be done - except you *must* put your trust in Him. You cannot go on what you know, you cannot go on what you can do, or who your father or mother are, or what your circumstances are. You can only depend on a personal link with a living Saviour, the One who died for you. Oh that you might come to that if you have never come before! It is a very important matter.

We were hearing in the gospel last week of the way in which men like to categorise themselves, and I was struck by it. The story was about the Titanic. When the Titanic sailed from Southampton to America, there were three classes. There was first class, and some passengers could afford that; and then second class which was still very good and many passengers could afford that. But many could not, and they went third class, down in the lower decks of the ship. Some could not even afford third class, but they had appealed to get on and they were sleeping in the boiler-room and the hold of that ship. There were four categories of people, and then - we know what happened. The ship hit an iceberg and it sank, and many, many people were affected by that. This what the preacher said to us in the gospel: there were four categories of people in the ship, but after it sank there were

only two categories, saved and lost. There are only two categories of people in this world. There are only two categories of people in this room; there are those who are saved, who believe through personal faith in the blessed Saviour, and if you do not have that, you are lost. It is my responsibility to tell you that. Charles Spurgeon once, when he was preaching, warned his hearers of what would happen to them if they did not believe, and he said to them, 'I do not want you to be able, after the Lord comes, to say to me, You remember that preaching I heard from you; you played with your subject, you did not emphasise the importance, the seriousness of the gospel'. The gospel is a joyful message. I do not want to be gloomy, I do not want to frighten you because these scriptures we have read in Romans, although there is an element of seriousness about them, are very, very wonderful scriptures. But what I have to do is put it to you that unless you believe in this blessed One, you are lost. I do not want anyone in this room to go out of here not having believed. You may have believed - I know that most of you have done that, but I cannot assume it. I have spoken to people who have gone to gospel meetings, to church services, who know the Scriptures, and you would look at them and say, 'That person is a Christian', but they did not have a living link with the blessed Saviour who died for them. That is the only thing that can save you.

But, blessed be God, salvation is available to you tonight. Oh, that you might come in response to the attractiveness of the appeal that God would make to you! This is available towards all, and it is "upon all those who believe", righteousness of God. What a wonderful thing it is, set out there at the cross, God's righteousness proclaimed. Sin had come in and disrupted the relationship that God had with man, but everything was set right there at the cross. The Lord Jesus went that way, and so we can be comforted by that. Although "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", those who believe in this blessed One are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus". That is where it is, that is Who it is in, and God would have you come and take it for yourself, just reach out and take it. I cannot make you do it, your parents cannot make you do it; but you can believe, you can decide that you need Christ and you cannot do without Him, this blessed Saviour. "The redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Do you know what redemption means? It means purchase. The Lord Jesus has paid this price that you could not pay and I could not pay. I do not know how many times I have sinned, I have forgotten most of the sins in my life, but I do know that there is One who suffered on that cross

for me and shed His blood for me, and every one of my sins is gone from the sight of God because of what Jesus did there on that cross, because He shed His blood for me. I thank God I can say that. Can you say it? Can you say in the reality of your living affection for Christ and in your link with Him, 'He did that for me. He paid that price. It was a price that I could not pay, a burden that I could not bear, a load that only He could carry, He bore that load for me'? Oh, what a wonderful thing it is. The believer in Him can be justified freely. There is no middle ground. Men like to graduate things from one extreme to the other. That does not happen in God's system. You are either saved or you are lost. You cannot be partly justified. If you put your trust in Christ, then the good news is that you are justified freely by believing in Him "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus ... through faith in his blood". Oh what a wonderful thing it is to be able to speak of that blood!

Not only did Jesus take a Bondman's form in coming here to this earth; not only did He have to walk here for thirty-three and a half years - how His holy sinless soul must have suffered as He walked among men and saw the effects of sin on the race - but He was rejected by those to whom He had come. Think of what it meant for Him, "He came to his own, and his own received him not", John 1: 11. Not only did they not receive Him, but they rejected Him. How much He suffered in His public testimony from men, and then in the hall of Pilate. You have heard the sufferings of the Lord Jesus described before. I just want to remind you of all that the Lord Jesus suffered from men, and then not only that, but He then endured these three hours of darkness on that cross. During that time He bore my sins. The Son of God bore my sins, the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Oh what a power He has to save you, dear friends! The Son of God in all His greatness, and yet for three hours the consciousness of the relationship He had with His Father was interrupted. The Son of God, the One who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal 2: 20), He endured during these three hours the forsaking of God, and not only that, He then yielded up His spirit. Then, as Jesus was hanging there dead on the cross, the soldier pierced His side, and immediately there came out blood and water. Why did that man do that? It was just wanton brutality, just the same as the Lord's scourging. It says, "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged him", John 19: 1. Why did he do that to the sinless One, the spotless One? An even greater question is, why did Jesus suffer on the cross? Why was He forsaken? He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt: 27: 46, Mark 15:

34. Can you answer that question? He was forsaken for me, and if He had not been and if I had not put my trust in what He has done for me, I could not stand here because I would be lost. But I am not, and I do not want you to be, and God does not want you to be. He wants you to be among those who are justified by the faith of Jesus, “through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”, justified through faith in His precious blood.

You might say, 'But what a stain my sins have left'. They stain deep; Isaiah speaks of the crimson stain (chap 1: 18); it stains into the core of a person, into their memory, into what you are. But the blood of Jesus blood washes it all away. And so you come before God and you know that He does not see these sins any more. They have been washed away by the precious blood of Jesus. What a wonderful thing it is that this is “for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins“. Oh, these words of Jesus on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23: 34) show the spirit of the gospel, the spirit of the whole dispensation since then. God can forgive you because of what Jesus has done for you, but to get the blessing of it you must believe. Oh, that you would come to Him tonight in belief, “for the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time so that he should be just” - so that God should be just - “and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus”.

Dear friend, I would just appeal to you again. You have heard what I have just said many times before, and maybe you have not responded. If you have not, just open your heart to Christ and ask Him to save you. Put your trust in Him. Repent; own that you need Him, that you cannot do without Him. You may have sung the words: we have all done it,

I could not do without Thee,
O Saviour of the lost,
Whose precious blood redeemed me (Hymn 220).

How many persons have sung these words, and not been in the good of them? I have, at one time, and maybe you too, but surely not still. If you are still singing the gospel hymns and you know the words, you have heard the message, but you do not have this living link with a Man who lives in heaven for you, a Man who died for you and shed His blood for you, get it tonight. Do not wait any longer. Change your life, change your whole reason for being. Come and accept the Saviour into your life; give your life to Christ. You will never regret it. You need Him.

Come to that first and foremost. You cannot do without Him and, in repentance, put your faith and trust in Him.

Now Romans 6 where we read brings something else before us. I have said that there are two categories of people, lost and saved, and that is right. I say again, I trust that everyone here is in the category of the saved and that no-one will go into an eternity without God, remembering the words of gospel preachings that they did not answer to. That would be terrible. You have an opportunity now to be amongst those who are saved. But I remember when I knew that my sins were forgiven, but I still was not free. I was under the bondage of sin. I knew that Jesus had borne my sins, but I was still under the bondage of sin. I come back to that description of Mr Raven's as to what Christianity is, vol 20 p3. The second part of what he said was that Christianity establishes us in new relationships with God and gives us the affections that are proper to them. But the first part of what Mr Raven said was that the Christian is delivered entirely from bondage. Now, you might be under the bondage of your sins. I trust you are not - we have spoken about that. But you still might be under bondage to the principle of sin, of the world, of the law or even of self. In the gospel God would present to you the opportunity of getting free, and that is why I have read these scriptures, and the hymn -

Captivity is captive led,
Since Jesus liveth who was dead.

The hymn speaks of our sins, and it speaks of the wondrous work that Jesus has done, "The victory is won". But this scripture speaks of something else. "Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Surely not. That is what is called a rhetorical question; you know what the answer is even as you ask the question. Surely not, "Far be the thought". But I would just ask you, and the reason I do so is that I remember a time when I needed to be asked this question. I knew that Jesus was my Saviour, I knew that when He comes I would be with Him for ever, and yet I was not in the enjoyment of my Christianity because I could not help myself. I was in bondage to the principle of sin. "We who have died to sin, how shall we still live in it?" Is there anyone here under the bondage of sin, the principle of the thing? You want to do what is right, you know Jesus as your Saviour, you know you should not keep on doing it. You say, 'I will not do it again, I will try to do better', and then you do it again. Oh, I would like to speak to any soul in this room who feels that that is their experience currently. "Are you ignorant that we,

as many as have been baptised unto Christ Jesus, have been baptised unto his death?”. He died and was buried that we might be saved from our sins and that we might be saved from the principle of sin, and that is part of the gospel. The only way to get free of that bondage is to find the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have spoken about the Lord Jesus. I trust that everyone here has Him as their Saviour. There is something that affected me a long time ago, that God's gift of the Spirit is just as great as the gift of His blessed Son as your Saviour. The gospel is about salvation. For salvation from your sins, you need Jesus. You cannot do without Him. For deliverance from the bondage that the enemy would keep you in, of course you need the Lord Jesus, but you need the power of the Holy Spirit of God in your life. Have you experienced that power to help you? You have been baptised, but have you come into the truth of your baptism. That is what Paul is speaking about here, “We have been buried therefore with him by baptism unto death”. We had in the reading the significance of the burial of the Lord Jesus. Why was He buried? Was it not enough for Him to die? We might think that God could have raised Him to glory from the cross. Jesus could have done the work on the cross and died there and saved me from my sins, and God could have raised Him immediately. But no, He was buried. Loving hands took the body of my Saviour and laid Him in that tomb. He was buried for me. He died for me, He was buried for me, He was raised too. What a blessed thing it is! I am speaking about a living Saviour.

I could not do without Thee,
O Saviour of the lost.

You can only say that if you know Him as living, but do you know the help of the Holy Spirit? Here Paul is speaking to these Roman believers of this One who “has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father”, and he says, “so we also should walk in newness of life”. Then he writes in verse 6, “knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin”. I would just appeal to anyone here who does know their sins forgiven but feels that they are in bondage to sin. Ask the Father to give you the Holy Spirit, ask for the Holy Spirit's help. I want to take these two scriptures together. In Romans 8, “There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus”. I have been in bondage to the principle of sin and not been able to help myself. I once

asked a brother, 'How did you know when you got the Spirit?', and he said, 'I knew because things that I had not had any power to deal with in my life; I found that I could deal with them'. Now, this is where we get into the moral exercises of the believer, but it is part of the gospel, that not only has God made provision for your salvation from your sins, dear friend, but He has given you the power to "walk in newness of life". That is a wonderful thing, so that not only is your eternal destiny secured, but you have the power in the Holy Spirit to be here for the pleasure of God and to know the satisfaction of being delivered from sin, the world, self, the flesh, the law, whatever it is. It is the truth of baptism, and Paul brings it before these Roman saints in chapter 6, "even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father". He has been! That is the foundation of my faith. I trust it is the foundation of your faith, that the Lord Jesus has been raised up from among the dead. When Mary went to that tomb, it was empty. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the fact that He is alive, that He is not here, He is living, is the keystone of Christianity. You know what that means in architecture? You have an arch with stones all holding each other up, and in the top there is a wedge-shaped stone that holds the arch up, and if you take that out, the whole arch falls down. If Jesus had not been raised from among the dead, Christianity would be a mockery, a theory, an empty religion. But He has been raised, and He is living. Someone once challenged a believer 'You speak about God, but God is dead', and that dear person said, 'He cannot be. I was speaking to Him this morning'. That is how real it gets, a living relationship with the blessed God, a living relationship with your Saviour. Someone who is alive, Someone you speak to, Someone who communicates with you. That is what the Holy Spirit brings you into, walking in newness of life. Oh, that you might know it for yourself. If there is anyone here struggling under bondage, then receive the Holy Spirit into your life. Ask the Father for the Holy Spirit and know that blessed power. I know we are tested, but I also know that the Holy Spirit is the power for these things and, "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free". God would bring you into liberty in the gospel. If you are still under the dominion of your sins, God would set you free by belief in Jesus as Saviour. If you are still struggling under bondage and you need deliverance, God would give you deliverance in the power of the Holy Spirit, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death". There is "what the law could not do", but God

has “condemned sin in the flesh”. He has done it in the death of Christ, “in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit”. Walking in newness of life is having communion with the Spirit every day, knowing that living link with the Saviour, but knowing too a living link with a divine Person who is in you. It is a wonderful thing, that there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.

Well, in Galatians, Paul writes that “Christ has set us free in freedom”. That is God’s objective in the gospel, and Paul is speaking to those who have come into the blessing of liberty. “Christ has set us free in freedom; stand fast therefore”. I did not go on to read the last part of the sentence, “be not held again in a yoke of bondage”, but it is there. These Galatian saints to whom Paul was writing were in danger of slipping back into bondage, and I know what it is to slip back into bondage. Once you have believed in the Lord Jesus, no-one can take your salvation away. Be absolutely sure of that. That is true. If you put your trust in the work of Jesus, no-one can take that eternal blessing away from you, but we need to be maintained in this. “Christ has set us free in freedom; stand fast therefore”. Do not slip back. You can know the liberty of the Spirit, you can walk in newness of life, but you need the Spirit every day. You need to be kept in the blessedness of deliverance. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is, “Christ has set us free in freedom”, not only freedom from the guilt of sin, blessed as that is, an essential first step, but freedom from everything that would hold us in bondage. God has perfect liberty in mind for you, and I can tell you, dear friend, it is a blessed matter to know the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. There are fruits that are apparent in those who are walking in this way, walking in newness of life. That is what God has in mind in the gospel. May you know the blessing of it in your own life.

For His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

9th January 2011

