

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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CONTINUANCE

Cecil Elliott

Acts 8: 1-8, 26-40

Isaiah 53: 1-12

We have been helped so far in these meetings with the thought of continuance. It is a very good thought because we all want to continue to the end. We have heard of Demas. It says, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved the present age", 2 Tim 4: 10. We want to continue to the end, and we must keep our eyes on Jesus. The scripture says, "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith", Heb 12: 2. It is not looking on anything else, or anyone else, but "looking stedfastly on Jesus". That is the Man who we are to have before our gaze; all others have failed, including ourselves. But the Man who has not failed is Jesus, who is perfect in every way, and did everything pleasing to the eyes of the Father. He never failed. He could say, "I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it", John 17: 4. There was no thought of turning aside, and we do not want to turn aside. It says, "that no one take thy crown" (Rev 3: 11); do not detour, make no deviation, but let us continue to keep our eyes on Jesus.

In the scripture in Acts, it is good to go back to the beginning of things. The Spirit came and persons were affected. They cast in their lot with those who were going on, and then the enemy attacked. The apostles were put in prison for speaking in the Name of Jesus, chap 4: 3. Then later we have Ananias and Sapphira (chap 5: 1-10), through whom the enemy attacked to weaken the position; then later we have Stephen. It speaks of him as "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6: 5), taken up by the Lord in His goodness for a reason. He was a first martyr for the testimony. In chapter 7 it says, "And hearing these things they were cut to the heart, and gnashed their teeth against him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God", v 54. That is where we are to keep our gaze. We need to fix our gaze on Jesus, the One who trod this scene, took all our sins upon Himself and bore them on the cross; and was laid in the grave, the silence of death. He could say, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt" (Matt 26: 39); what an obedient Man! It says of Him that He was "obedient even unto death, and that the death

of the cross", Phil 2: 8.

So Stephen suffered for the testimony and at the end he was stoned. Even at the end he says, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", Acts 7: 60. The enemy thought he would overthrow everything, but that was not to be. So the scripture says, "on that day there arose a great persecution against the assembly which was in Jerusalem, and all were scattered". As a result of the enemy's activity in the stoning of Stephen the Lord had greater scope; persons were scattered and the testimony with them. The enemy was defeated right at that point. "All were scattered into the countries of Judaea and Samaria except the apostles. And pious men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul ravaged the assembly". In the next chapter the Lord brings Saul down.

It goes on to say, "Those then that had been scattered went through the countries announcing the glad tidings of the word. And Philip, going down to a city of Samaria, preached the Christ to them; and the crowds with one accord gave heed to the things spoken by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he wrought. For from many who had unclean spirits they went out, crying with a loud voice; and many that were paralysed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city". It is one thing to be maintained in the spirit of joy; that will keep us going; not murmuring, but marked by a spirit of joy. The Lord says, "your joy [may] be full" (John 15: 11); not just limited joy, but full joy for the believer.

The next scripture says, "the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Rise up and go southward on the way which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza: the same is desert. And he rose up and went". The thought here is of reading. We have had some of that earlier today; we were reading the scriptures. It is a good thing to read the scriptures; even if you do not understand, it will come. I read of one man who wanted to be saved. He was conscious of his condition and he read the gospel, and when he came to the part of the Lord being crucified, he felt that was the end of it. But then someone directed him, and he went on reading and he came to the part where the Lord was risen: He is alive, and He lives to die no more. Then also the apostle exhorted Timothy, "give thyself to reading", 1 Tim 4: 13. It is an excellent thing to be occupied in, "give thyself to reading". I would suggest that we make a point of reading church history. It is excellent to see something of the battles that were fought in the past, the principles that were established,

and how the Lord came in for His people and steered a way through many difficult issues which had to be faced over the years. Faithful men had love for the Lord and they stood up for the truth and the Lord vindicated the stand which they took; so, "give thyself to reading". If you do not understand, continue to read, read the scriptures, and get something into your souls, especially at the end of the gospels, what the Lord Jesus went through - they spat upon Him, buffeted Him - who could stand that? But the Lord bore it. Devote time to reading the scriptures, the ministry, the light that has come down to us at the present time, church history, so that no one can turn you aside. We can easily be turned aside; it speaks of some who "turn their minds to fables and interminable genealogies" (1 Tim 1: 4); we do not want that. Just read the scriptures and seek the Spirit's help to understand and to continue in it. The enemy would like us to give up, and read all sorts of material which does not help the soul. But "give thyself to reading". Do not just read casually, but read with a purpose, 'give thyself to reading'. What an exhortation to a young man. We have young men here with us, and young sisters. I just want to encourage them to give themselves to reading, to be alert, and to be alive as to what is happening, and do not let the enemy get an advantage.

So, the eunuch was reading the prophet Esaias, and the section he was reading was about Jesus being led as a sheep to the slaughter, "and as a lamb is dumb in presence of him that shears him, thus he opens not his mouth". What a Man! He never found another man like that. It says in the gospels when all the accusations were hurled at Him, He said not a word; what a Man! He suffered "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God", 1 Pet 3: 18. That draws our affections to Him, such a lovable Person.

It goes on further to say, "He was led as a sheep to slaughter, and as a lamb is dumb in presence of him that shears him, thus he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment has been taken away, and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth". The reading of that affected the eunuch and he says, "I pray thee, concerning whom does the prophet say this? of himself or of some other? And Philip, opening his mouth and beginning from that scripture, announced the glad tidings of Jesus to him". Luke's gospel says, "glad tidings of great joy" (Luke 2: 10), no greater tidings. There is lots of news in the world, mostly bad news, but the glad tidings of Jesus are always good news. So, on the way they came upon water and the

eunuch said, "Behold water; what hinders my being baptised? And he commanded the chariot to stop. And they went down both to the water ... and he baptised him ... the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no longer, for he went on his way rejoicing". The Man whom he had heard about, the Lord Jesus, had now got the prime place in his life. That is what we would like for each one of us, "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts" (Eph 3: 17), *dwelling* in the heart, not just a casual visitor, but Christ *dwelling* in the heart "through faith". That is going to preserve us; we have a Man before our hearts: that is going to keep us going.

The passage in Isaiah fills out in a greater way what the Lord Jesus went through. Isaiah is referred to as the evangelical prophet, and how much this scripture has been used in the glad tidings. The Lord Jesus grew up before God as a tender sapling; think of His early years, contemplate His time in Nazareth. He went down, subject to His parents, Luke 2: 51. We have young persons here, and the Lord spoke of "my Father's business". He knew it early, He spoke about it, and that was ever before Him; and the more we have the Father's will before our hearts, the more we will be preserved. If you give your ears and your eyes to what is without, the enemy can cause you to detour, cause a falling out. Many have fallen out by the way. So many have started, but they took their eyes off the Lord and put them on man. They have lost their way. We pray for many who have turned aside to the ways of men and have lost their way, but we want to be preserved in the testimony until the Lord comes.

It says of the Lord Jesus, "as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor lordliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and left alone of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". Think of when He came into this world; there was no room for Him in the inn (Luke 2: 7), but there were willing hearts and ready hands to receive Him. Think of Simeon and Anna, persons prepared of God to receive Him into their hearts and into their arms, Luke 2: 25-38. But the world came to it that they did not want this Man to reign over them; they said, give us Barabbas, Luke 23: 18. The condition of the world has not changed; they will have everything else but Jesus. My simple desire is to help us to hold to that blessed Man, "looking stedfastly on Jesus". Think of Him where He is at the present time: He is in the glory, seated at God's right hand. Nothing of this scene can touch Him where He is; He has overcome

everything.

It says, “*he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all”. Think of the weight and the burden of what He bore, but it was for you and for me, and He bore it all in love. “Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him”, 2 Cor 5: 21.

It says of Him further, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, but he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth. He was taken from oppression and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living”. He tasted death for everything, Heb 2: 9. Here is a Man who had every right to live, wholly spotless, perfect in every way, but He “bore our sins in His body on the tree” (1 Pet 2: 24); the question of sin had to be settled before God. He bore it all before a righteous and a holy God. But thank God it says of Him, “He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul”. The fruit is right here at the present time, persons who love the Lord Jesus, appreciate Him for the work He has done, and for who He is. At the present time, He is in the glory, but think of Him being interested in this little gathering, this little town of Villa Grove. The Lord is looking on, He is looking into our hearts, our hearts ready to crown Him. He needs to be enthroned in our hearts; He wants to have the first place - “see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied”. Later on it says, “Therefore will I assign him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and was reckoned with the transgressors” - the word “poured” I link with what the Lord Himself said, “in my blood, which is poured out for you”. The way that the Lord faced this matter of sin and sins was unstinting. His blood was poured out so that the will of the Father might be met and persons secured for the pleasure of God. So, on the morrow, as we have to do with the Lord at the Supper we think of, “This is my body which is given for you ... my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22: 19, 20); there was no holding back with Jesus.

My simple desire was to help us to see the attractiveness of Jesus. If you take your eyes off Him then you are in deep trouble, but we must keep our eyes more on Him, “looking stedfastly on Jesus”. Do not take your eyes off Him, look stedfastly at Jesus.

It says he, “was reckoned with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors”. I did not read the section in Acts, but in chapter 9 Saul of Tarsus was brought face to face with the Man in the glory; he said, “Who art thou, Lord? And he said, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest*”, v 5. He was there in the saints in Damascus. Wherever Saul had gone in the houses he was dragging out persons, having persons put in prison, persons who loved the Lord; but you can imagine the prayers that went up in relation to the condition that the brethren were passing through. And the Lord heard, He says, “my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it”, Matt 16: 18. For our part we need to keep our eyes on Jesus.

That is my simple message, keep your eyes on Jesus to be preserved: young men and women, keep your eyes on Jesus! Read the scriptures, read the ministry, keep company with those who are going on and can help you, and have a heavenly outlook. Everything in this world passes away, but have your eyes on Jesus; that will preserve us until He comes.

May the Lord help us; for His Name's sake.

Villa Grove

30th August 2008

“SOMEWHAT TO SAY TO THEE”

James Alex Gardiner

Luke 7: 36-50; 10: 25-37; 15: 13-24

These scriptures, beloved, are often used in the glad tidings, and used very successfully, the Lord using them to bring about blessing in persons' souls. I trust they will be used at this time to effect blessing in all our souls. I came to them by way of what the Lord says to Simon; He says, “I have somewhat to say to thee”. He may have somewhat to say to each one of us at this time. He is having to do with a Pharisee in chapter 7, a lawyer in chapter 10, and Pharisees and scribes in chapter 15, and they are standing athwart the activities of divine grace and divine blessing. I hope there is nobody in this room like that - no Pharisees, persons who feel they are far superior to other people - here. The glad tidings come to us, beloved, in order that we might be blessed, that we might be relieved of the burden of our sins, that we might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; and that we might make way for the love of God to be shed abroad in our hearts, with all the fullness and blessedness of what is involved in that. We need to be in reality; real about things.

Here is a Pharisee in chapter 7 who begs Jesus that He would eat with him. There is a certain urgency about this, 'You must come and have a meal with me', as though he really wanted the Lord to be there. The Lord Jesus takes His place at table, and then something happens which would have been an embarrassment to the Pharisee, an intrusion as he would have thought. This section has to do with love for Christ, manifest in wisdom's children in their love for Christ. Now ask yourself, 'Are you one of wisdom's children?' - am I one of wisdom's children?. People may think they are very wise, that they have got a fair bit of common sense. They may think that they can judge things, can assess things and so forth. It is only natural to fallen man. Well, there is a woman here who has great desire to be in the presence of Christ, and nothing is going to stop her. Is that you, beloved? This is her conviction. The glad tidings has in mind that persons should be convicted. And they should be so convicted that nothing is going to stop them getting to the Lord Jesus. This woman was not coming to confess her sins or anything like that, she is showing an appreciation for Christ. That is very remarkable, and it has been mentioned over the centuries as an example of reality and an attitude that receives divine

commendation; how blessed that is! The Lord comes in to the house, sits down, takes His place at table, and if this woman had not come in you would have thought that was all right, you would have thought this Pharisee was a very genuine fellow: he begged Him to come into his house. Appearances do not mean everything. Maybe they do not mean much, and instances happen which manifest the real motivation, the real attitude of the Pharisee. Here is a woman, who comes into the house; could you cope? "A woman in the city who was a sinner". I suppose that is past history: she "knew that he was sitting at meat in the house of the Pharisee". She is a very intelligent woman, she knew where the Lord was, and she locates Him and nothing is going to stop her coming to Christ. She was a sinner, but not now; I do not think there is anything of the sinner about her. She comes into the house, and "having taken an alabaster box of myrrh, and standing at his feet behind him weeping, began to wash his feet with tears; and she wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the myrrh". She is making everything of the Lord Jesus. This Pharisee's house is cold and austere. They really give the Lord the impression, 'We have asked you in here, but we do not really want you'. Have you ever been in any place like that? 'Oh yes, you must come', and then when you go you get a cold shoulder; that is what the Pharisee did to the Lord. And this woman comes in, and the Lord Jesus says to Simon, 'See this woman, she has furnished me with everything you should have furnished me with'. How does this bear upon you, beloved? Has it any reaction in your heart? Simon begins to speak to himself; he says, "This person if he were a prophet would have known who and what the woman is who touches him, for she is a sinner". "This person if he were a prophet". That is all he thinks about Him, 'this person'. "This person if he were a prophet would have known who and what the woman is who touches him". Now this is the part that impressed me to read these scriptures: Jesus says, "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee". Beloved, He may have something to say to you. He may have something to say to me at this time. "I have somewhat to say to thee". 'Oh' Simon says 'Say on, say it, Teacher'. Not the prophet now, 'Teacher, say it'. He says, "There were two debtors of a certain creditor: one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty; but as they had nothing to pay, he forgave both of them their debt: say, which of them therefore will love him most?" This creditor must have been a very wealthy person, if he could write off debt like that. The Lord Jesus is indicating how divine love acts, how grace acts.

Think of God writing off your debt. Could you estimate your debt? Could I? You would never have any hope of counting up the amount of sins and the things that you have done, militantly against divine grace and against God. Beloved, you are a sinner, 'Simon, you are a sinner, you might as well accept it.' What are you going to do about it? Do you know Him as your Saviour? Has your debt been written off? Have you got a clearance? You may be a fifty pence debtor, or a five hundred pence debtor or a thousand pence debtor; it makes no difference. You are a debtor, you are a sinner, and as a sinner you have to do with a holy God. And He is prepared, beloved, to write off your debt, to free you: "he forgave both of them their debt". "Forgave ... them." Jesus, beloved, at this very moment is prepared to forgive you your debt. God is prepared to forgive you your debt. He would write it off: He is wealthy. He has got an abundance of grace. How great God is, known as the Father, and He would write off your debt now. He would let you know that you are forgiven. Have to do with Him. What does He want? All He wants is repentance; all He wants is for you to admit the fact that you are a debtor. Do not play the Pharisee part; that is only fatal. It will get you nowhere - in fact, it will end up in judgment. You go on to chapter 16 and there is a man in hades and he is looking upward. He says 'Go and tell my brothers; this is an awful place; all I need is just a drop of water'. Oh, it is fixed; there is a great gulf fixed. How urgent the glad tidings are, beloved. How urgent they are, because the day may finish at any time; who knows when the Lord is going to come. He could come now; He could come later on this evening. His lovers are waiting for Him, and when He comes the day of grace is finished. But now you can have your debt forgiven. It can be written off: complete clearance. "He forgave both of them their debt." Simon - he is hesitant he is a Pharisee, he will not come clean he says, "I suppose". What a foolish thing to say, was it not, "I suppose"? Why does he say, "I suppose"? "I suppose he to whom he forgave the most". Well, that was obvious was it not? Have you got a reserve about this? Have you? Are you Simon? "Turning to the woman", she is an example. 'This is an example of persons who love me and who have had their debt forgiven'. Take a look at her, find her in the scripture, see what she does. She does not speak, she does not say anything. The Lord Jesus manifests divine approbation for this woman. He tells Simon what she has done. 'Why did you not do that, Simon?' 'She did this, why did you not do this?' 'I came into your house, you treated me in the most awful inhospitable way, but this woman was full of hospitality; look what she did'. He says

'You did not give me water on my feet, she washed my feet with tears; you did not make me comfortable, Simon. In fact you made me feel most uncomfortable'. Is that how you are, beloved, when the Lord Jesus speaks to you? But maybe you are uncomfortable when He speaks to you - "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee". Think of that. "Thou gavest me not a kiss, but *she* from the time I came in has not ceased kissing my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but *she* has anointed my feet with myrrh." See how the pronoun is emphatic, *she* has done this, *she* has done that, *she* has done the next thing, and 'you have done nothing'. That is a very sad matter of condemnation over against this great matter of approbation. This woman who *was* a sinner, a woman of the city who *was* a sinner, and this is how much she loves Christ; this is one of wisdom's children. This is the wise thing to do. "*She* has anointed my feet with myrrh. For which cause I say to thee, Her many sins are forgiven; for she loved much; but he to whom little is forgiven loves little. And he said to her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that were with them at table began to say within themselves, Who is this who forgives also sins?". They do not come out with it; they think it, they turn it over in their minds, 'Who is this? Who is this person? If He knew ...'. They have no appreciation or apprehension as to the greatness of Christ in His dispensing divine grace.

This is the mercy seat here. Christ in Luke's gospel is the manifestation of the mercy seat. You can go to Him at any time, and speak to Him; He will answer your questions. He says to the woman "Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace". Would you like Him to say that to you, beloved? He would say that to you as you go out of this room, "Go in peace". Not a care in the world - your conscience is clear, the burden of sin is off your shoulders, you are going out perfectly happy, and in right relations with God. How blessed that is. Well, Simon did not get the gain of it. That is sad. And those at table with him, they did not get the gain of it. They think these things in their own way. What is going on in your mind at the moment? Go and tell the Lord. Tell the Lord what you are thinking about Him at the moment. He will listen. I remember an old sister on her death bed, and it was most affecting. We were talking and she said, 'You know, there is nobody like Him; you can tell Him anything you like, and he will listen to you, any hour of the day or night'. That is how available Jesus is, beloved. And He is available to you now.

I read in Luke 10 because here is a lawyer. He is wanting to

justify himself. In Luke 10, the Lord tells them about somebody going away, and in Luke 15 He tells them about somebody coming back, and divine grace in its fullness and blessedness has met every need. Is that not wonderful? You have not got a need, beloved, but divine grace will meet you. The Lord is able for it. Not only will He meet the need, but he will furnish you with an abundance of wealth and knowledge of Himself, and joy and blessing in your heart. Well here is this lawyer and he is tempting the Lord, asking the Lord, "Teacher, having done what shall I inherit life eternal?". Well, you cannot do anything to inherit eternal life - it is a gift of God. All this 'What shall I do?' business is really fatal. You cannot do anything. You are cast on God. So the Lord says 'Well, you are a lawyer'. "What is written in the law? how readest thou?". And he goes over the commandments, the first commandment, the second commandment, loving thy neighbour as thyself, and Jesus says to him, "Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live". Then he wants to justify himself. How we love to justify ourselves. It is innate in every heart. Justify myself, prove that I am right you see, and you are wrong. That is man; that is how he feels with God. He is right and God is wrong. Well, He tells him about who his neighbour is. Jesus in this gospel has come in as a neighbour. He came in as a baby in Bethlehem's manger, grew up at Nazareth. We see him as a boy of twelve about His Father's business. And then we see Him about thirty years old going out in service, and no matter what the cause, what the trouble is, He is able to heal. Luke is healing; He heals people, He makes them whole. Well, He is telling this man about somebody who has gone away. Who is my neighbour? Well, He says, "A certain man descended from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who also, having stripped him and inflicted wounds, went away leaving him in a half-dead state". I might say that Jerusalem in Luke is different from Jerusalem in Matthew. There is something very creditable about Jerusalem in Luke. There was a man in it and the Holy Spirit was upon him and he came in and he took the babe in his arms. There would be quite a few babes getting circumcised at eight days old, but he takes Jesus in his arms and he makes a prophecy, chap2: 25-35. And then there is an old woman there, and she knows people who are waiting for redemption in Jerusalem. She goes round and talks to them chap 2: 36-38. That is how Luke presents Jerusalem. At the end of the gospel it becomes a city of refuge; they went back to Jerusalem and preached the gospel. That is what happens in the Acts. Well, this man is leaving a place of privilege and is going down, is going into the world. How sad that is;

you fall amongst thieves. The world is full of thieves, beloved. Perhaps they are not going to rob you physically and materially, but there are an abundance of moral robbers around today, more than there has ever been, and what are they robbing you of? They are robbing you of your time. You do not have to go to the picture house; you do not have to go to the football match; you do not have to go to the theatre now: it is all at your own fireside if you want it. You see the computer and all that sort of thing is very useful, but it can be so very dangerous. You can tune in to whatever you want, pick it up on the internet and all that, and you will lose a taste for Jerusalem. You are being robbed. You may be very lively, full of life, but you are being deadened: the quickening, the power of Christ is being deadened in your soul. You are being robbed of what is proper to you, what belongs to Him, and these things do it. Spend your time with other things, and naturally it is ideal; nature loves it. This man was going down to Jericho, and he fell amongst thieves, and I think these are among the thieves today that rob people of their time so that they do not give the same time to the scriptures, they do not give the same time to prayer, they do not have the same time for reading the truth or the ministry and all that is good and consequently there is the evidence of barrenness. How sad that is, wounded need healing. Well, the good Samaritan is going around, beloved, in the power and wealth of His grace, not charging anybody with anything; not Him - He is too big for that. How great He is. He comes up to the case, with no condemnation; He pours in oil and wine and He brings in healing. He makes Himself so attractive, so that all these other things are left behind. He puts you on His own beast; you have got something, you have got a power now. You are still wounded; you are all bandaged up, and you are going to the inn. The inn is a privilege and a place. J B Stoney said that it is not like a hotel: it is "*while he is a stranger and a pilgrim here*" (Letters Vol 3: 160), on the way. You are left in there until you can find your feet; how very fine.

And then you are able to go on with what is normal. You are able to go to Bethany. Luke writes methodically, with moral method. Once you come out of the inn you can go to the next section into the house of Martha, v 38-42. In application Martha had been in the inn, she had convalesced and got well, but this is just a recurrence of the trouble. She says, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?". What does it say? "Now Martha was distracted with much serving". She has got herself out of focus, Christ is out of focus to her. "Dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?"

Speak to her therefore that she may help me". Well, Martha your illness is coming back again, you need some oil and wine. And the Lord says to her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but there is need of one, and Mary has chosen the good part, the which shall not be taken from her". That is good health, beloved. When Jesus came Mary went and sat down at His feet, putting everything aside. She is going to listen to what He says; "Mary ... having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word". That is the full result of the current lesson period, restored to good health. Sit at the feet of Christ and listen to His word, preferring *that* above everything else.

Well, I come to chapter 15. They are well known chapters, and here is somebody coming back. In chapter 10, somebody was going away and he is brought back. Here is somebody coming back. "There arose a violent famine". He went out to a land a long way off. It has been linked with the gentile position, "ye who once were afar off", Eph 2:13. He "dissipated his property, living in debauchery". Then there arose a famine in the land. Well, beloved, we are surrounded by "a violent famine throughout that country". I do not know that the famine has been more violent than it is today. I think last week or the week before we had three murders in our city. How violent the famine is, not to speak about desperate drugs, and muggings and all that sort of thing that's the world, beloved. Jericho is where you go to. Well, "he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country". He cannot put a foot right, one step after another, worse and worse and worse, right down to the very bottom. Then he comes to himself. I think that coming to himself is a result of the woman sweeping the house, finding the piece of silver. He does not know that, but the work of God is beginning to assert itself. "Coming to himself". So he says that he is going back home, going back to his father. That is the service of the shepherd. He is going to walk back, but really he is being carried back on the shoulders of the shepherd. Luke's moral method is very wonderful. Divine Persons are serving this man, he is going to God. But the shepherd is there, and the woman is there, and he has been found, the piece of silver has been found, and he is going back to his father. He thinks of all that he is going to say, 'I am going to say this, and I am going to say the next thing, and if I can just get a low place within the door that will suit me fine!' I have said this before in the preaching; I was speaking to the man in the seaman's mission, and he was telling me about a business man who has been very good to the mission. He has contributed a lot of money, and he has helped them in

arrangements, and the superintendent said to me, 'I spoke to him about his soul, and he said he thought perhaps he would get a place just inside the door'. The superintendent said, 'You have got no chance whatsoever', and he was shocked. He was one of the top business men in his city. He said, 'He looked at me, sort of stunned' 'No', he said, 'You will not get a place just within the door; there are no places just within the door, none at all. To get into heaven you must come the divinely appointed way, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. You have got to come to Christ, have your sins forgiven, be clear of yourself, come under the shelter of the blood of Christ, and you are saved'. Well, what do you think of that? The man said, 'I suppose that is right'. This very affluent business man was kind hearted and so forth, but he was putting his trust in good works. The mission superintendent said, 'You have got no chance'. That is not where to put your trust; you must put your trust in the blood of Christ. Believe in Christ, put your trust in God.

Well, this son is going to say a lot of things, and he comes back. He is a long way off and his father sees him and runs to meet him. "His father ...was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck, and covered him with kisses". That is a welcome for you! Jesus is saying this to a group of Pharisees and scribes, who are criticising the Lord saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them", v 1. So He speaks these parables. The woman's reception of Christ in Luke 7 is a reflection of the father's reception of the son. Marvellous expression of divine grace "ran, and fell upon his neck, and covered him with kisses". He made him feel at home, made him feel wanted. How did he know it was his son? Because he was his father, that is how he knew. You know, God knows everybody; He has got creatorial rights over every single person on the face of this earth. And he is not abrogating them. He is keeping them, holding them, and He is exercising His redemptive rights. So the father has a right to run, fall on his neck and cover him with kisses. The young man says that he had "sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no longer worthy to be called thy son" and he is interrupted. "Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it". This is God, beloved, this is God's heart of love going out in grace to a sinner. It has been said that nobody ever went into that house without being clothed in the best robe. Bring it out, clothe him in it. And then "put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet: and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry". Would you like to be in that position? It is available for every single person in Kirkcaldy this very minute. Reconciliation has been effected, "bring the fatted

calf", 'we have been keeping this for you'. "Kill it, and let us eat and make merry".

Well, beloved, that is the glad tidings: "they began to make merry", and there is no end of the merriment. Why? "For this my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found". Heaven is rejoicing over repenting sinners. What a place heaven is, a place of joy and happiness; sinners are repenting, persons are coming to Christ. I often say in the preaching, you have no idea the number of persons, this very moment of this very day, who are coming to Christ in repentance and having their sins forgiven, genuine, real persons who will be converted. What about you? You can answer that for yourself, beloved. I can say for myself that I am a repenting sinner. Never, ever get away from repentance. I could not get away from repentance because if I think of my past history I am humbled to the dust. What do you think about that? Is that you? Maybe still some of the Pharisee about you, maybe still about me, but a repenting sinner is a person who is of great value to heaven.

May it be true of us all for His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy

30th November 2008

A WORD IN ITS SEASON No. 23

Concern has been expressed as to certain remarks, accurately quoted in the second Reading on Fellowship, which was published in the above issue. It has been suggested that they could, in the mind of the reader, weaken the necessity of separation from evil - stressed elsewhere in that article: no weakening was intended.

Turning to the notes: the statement on Pages 13 and 18 '...is not separation from evil...' (on page 13 this was in italics) would have been better rendered '...is not *only* separation from evil...'. Similarly on Page 22 '...the act of separation is not our ground of gathering...' would be better rendered '...the act of separation, *as essential as this is*, is not *alone* our ground of gathering'.

G John Richards

Malvern

May 2009

REPENTANCE

David J Willetts

Acts 17: 27-31; 2: 37-39; 3: 19-21

2 Kings 5: 1-14

I would like to address you personally, dear friend, in the glad tidings. I wonder if you have found the key to blessing yet. There is only one way to get God's blessing. God has chosen it and everyone needs it. The question I ask is, 'Have you got it?'. The three passages I read in the Acts each refer to this word, "repentance". If you have never repented, you have never begun on the path of blessing. It is a big word, and it can have a very profound effect on the life of anyone. Now, I have to tell you, without it you are lost. These are not my words, they are God's words. God would address you today personally. Have you ever been conscious at any point in your life that God has spoken to you personally? He would address you now, and what He is saying is, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", Rom 3: 23. Dear friend, He does not want you to remain that way, but you need to accept the fact that you are lost, eternally lost, and, according to the first scripture we read in Acts 17, subject to the judgment of God. How serious a position to be in! Notice how accurate Scripture is. It says, "he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth". In other words, God has marked a point on His calendar and He has said, 'That is the day that I have set when I am going to judge the habitable world'. The second thing God says is, 'I am going to do it in a particular way', and that particular way is in righteousness, and He says, 'It will have a particular scope' and you cannot exclude yourself from it. It also says, "by the man whom he has appointed"; so the Judge is also appointed. He is selected by God Himself and just waits the time to take up His commission, and that means that you will have to appear before Him for final judgment unless, of course, you come to God in repentance.

So that is what Paul says, "God ... now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent". I like that word, "enjoins". It is not a common word in the English language, but it is of particular effect. It means that God will come very close to you - come just beside you; and God has done that in Jesus. God has been manifested in flesh -

... O wonder of His universe!

(hymn 400)

God has come down to the very sphere which He has created, and He has come alongside men in the Person of Jesus, and He is coming alongside you tonight, but not as a Judge. The day has been fixed when He will judge the world but the very One who will be the Judge is the One who has gone into death in order that He might take your place, that that judgment may not fall upon you. Wonder of wonders, dear friend, the way into the blessing - so that you do not come into judgment - is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way is through repentance. Now what I understand by repentance is not just that you are sorry for what you have done; it involves that, but it is far deeper than that. Repentance is that you take sides with God against yourself about your whole history; so that you begin to think about the things that you have done in your life the way He thinks about them, and see the awfulness of them before a holy God. You say, 'Oh, I thought God was a loving God. How could He bring man into judgment?' It is true that God is a loving God but you cannot accept God just in His love. If you accept God in His love you must accept Him in His holiness too. Therefore it is an absolute necessity if God is to have your company that you must repent, and that means there is some point in your life where you come to that for yourself. Do you want it? Would you like a blessing?

It is a wonderful thing to have peace with God, to know that the judgment that you deserved has been taken on by Jesus. That is called substitution, and if you accept the work of Jesus, and you have faith in Jesus, that will be true for you. God cannot ask for the penalty twice. So if Jesus has borne the penalty of your sins you will never have to, John 5: 24. He cannot ask for it twice because He is a righteous and a holy God. What a wonderful thing the gospel is! I would like to appeal to you, dear friend. He would enjoin men everywhere to repent. He would draw near to you; He would draw near to you in the gospel. He would use every means at His disposal to appeal to you. "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us", 2 Cor 5: 21. The One who was holy, undefiled, who knew not sin, in whom sin was not, was made the very thing that He hated. We think of the way Jesus recoiled from being made sin. He says, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt 27: 46. We can understand that men rejected Him and forsook Him. What a sorrowful picture, "all left Him and fled", Mark. 15: 50! But He says, 'My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?', the One who was so pleasurable to Himself. It was because God had made that blessed Man the Sin-bearer. Can you measure it? I do not ask you to

measure it. God does not ask you in the gospel to understand it. All He asks is that you accept it. He makes it as simple as that. Oh, dear friend, if God made it complicated He would exclude some, and the gospel is for everybody. Have you received it?

I have just been impressed lately that repentance is always connected with something else. If you repent, according to this scripture, you will be free from judgment, and it says God has given “the proof of it to all in having raised him from among the dead”. Now, dear friend, do you believe in the resurrection? I have to tell you that it is the key to the gospel that God could not leave a Man who had satisfied Him in regard of sin still in death, and the power of God in all its concentrated energy came down into that grave and raised Him from among the dead. Why? Because in every way He had satisfied God, and God had every satisfaction in His work. The proof of it is that He raised Him from the dead. The proof that God had such satisfaction in Jesus is that He not only raised Him from among the dead but received Him into heaven. He “ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things”, Eph 4: 10. The attestation of the satisfaction of God not only in the work of Jesus but in Jesus Himself is that He says to Him, “Sit at my right hand until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet”, Heb 1: 13. What a wonderful thing it is; the heart of a Man beats in heaven. He is there today. He is a Saviour God and has come out in blessing towards you because of His work. The word in the Scriptures is “propitiation”. It is a big word but it means that God has been satisfied in regard of sin and that He has come out in favour towards His creature in all the fullness of the blessing of His heart, in the grace and the fulness of His Person not holding your sins against you but forgiving them. Do you deserve it, dear friend? What you need and the sinner can ask for is mercy, and mercy is dispensed by God in perfect righteousness and in richness because God is rich in mercy, and He is rich in grace. Do you know God? Do you know God in that character? Do you fear God, or are you going on in fear of the retribution of God for your sins? Oh, dear friend, you can be freed from your guilt; you can have a clear conscience now, simply by accepting Jesus as **your** Saviour, as if there was no other sinner in the world. Jesus died to take your place. Will you accept it tonight?

In chapter 3 Peter says to the Jews, “Men of Israel”, v 12. He addresses the ones who had been guilty of casting Jesus out saying, “Crucify, crucify him” (Luke 23: 21), and he says, “And now, brethren, I know that ye did it in ignorance, as also your rulers; but God has thus

fulfilled what he had announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer", v 17, 18. What a wonderful thing that the grace of God should come to the Jew. In the very place where man did his worst, God comes out with His best. That is characteristic of God. He comes to you when you do not deserve it, when you are an enemy of God. Oh, dear friend, do you realise that? Your sins have made you an enemy of God. They have brought you into distance from God and yet God would approach tonight in Jesus because He is satisfied in His work and He wants to bless you. He wants your company. Oh, dear friend, He does not only want to forgive you your sins, He wants your company. So Peter says, "Repent therefore and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins". That is beautiful, is it not, "the blotting out of your sins"? They are effaced from God's memory for ever. That is wonderful, that God in His mercy has the power to forgive and to forget. When we talk about forgetting it is a sign of our weakness, but with God it is a sign of His power, that He can positively decide to forget all your sins, to wipe the whole slate clean. You say, 'That seems too good to be true'. So it does, my friend, but it is still true that God can do it. It is called in Scripture, "justification", washed whiter than snow, Ps 51: 7. Is that not wonderful? Well, he says, "so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord". What is your life like? Are you miserable, downcast, fearful, sorrowful? Repentance will bring you the times of refreshing that will come from the only place where it is possible, from the presence of the Lord. It is a wonderful thing "the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and he may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you". I know this was particularly for the Jew. If they had repented their Messiah would have come, but they rejected Him, and they even rejected the testimony of the Spirit through Stephen. When the gospel comes as under Paul it comes from the glory and it no longer speaks about bringing refreshing to the earth, but speaks about bringing persons to glory, "bringing many sons to glory", Heb 2: 10. Wonderful thing! There is an advance in the gospel, not only the forgiveness of your sins and times of refreshing, but He wants your company; He wants you to be a son before Himself.

Hence this other scripture I read. "And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". You see that word, "repent". It keeps coming in because that is the key to opening up your blessing, for having taken sides with God against

yourself, it opens the floodgates of blessing. It says, "and be baptised". You say, 'Well, why would I need to be baptised?' It is so that you are publicly seen to be disassociated from your previous conduct. That is the first point of baptism. It brings you through the waters of death and brings you out onto new ground, and, as accepting that, you are totally disassociated from any past history. That is the viewpoint of baptism. But, he says, "and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". You notice the little word, "and". Repentance is not a thing alone in itself. It brings you into something else. We have spoken about freedom from judgment and times of refreshing. We are now going to speak about something else, the gift of the Holy Spirit. You say, 'Well, this is going to be a radical change in my life'. I trust not only that will you be forgiven your sins but you will live a new kind of life where God is the Centre of it instead of yourself. You say, 'I need a new power'. God has foreseen that. Because Jesus has been glorified, God has sent His Spirit that He might be in you and with you. The Lord says to the woman in John 4, it "shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life", v 14. Dear friend, if you have repented and found remission for your sins, do you enjoy it? To enjoy the forgiveness of your sins, to enjoy the presence of the God who gave it to you, there is only one means, and that is the gift of His Holy Spirit. You need something inside, the One whom the Scripture speaks of, "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world", 1 John 4: 4. Dear friend, do not dally with the world. It has great power and influence and it is possible to be a believer and still be entangled in the world. The devil is not so concerned if you are a believer so long as you do not enjoy it in the presence of God, because his whole intent is to rob God. So he would tie you in knots and the more you struggle, the tighter the knots get. What a wonderful thing it is, the gift of God's Spirit, "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world". So if you open your heart and ask for the Holy Spirit and God gives you the Holy Spirit, you will have a power that is superior to all that is around. All those knots will lose their hold upon you and you can become as free as a bird. It is a wonderful thing the gift of the Holy Spirit. Scripture speaks of it as God's "unspeakable free gift", 2 Cor 9: 15. We all like free gifts but there is nothing to be compared with the gift of His Holy Spirit, and once you receive Him, He will never leave you. Something may come in to bring a shadow over your life and the consciousness of His presence may be hindered in you, but He will never leave you. Throughout eternity He will be with God's people, those who have believed on Jesus. He will be there that they might

enjoy eternity, an eternity of bliss with God. Do you look forward to it? The One who is “to judge the habitable earth in righteousness” is the One who is coming for those who believe. Wonderful thing, He is going to return and He is going to take out of the world every one who has faith. “The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air”, 1 Thess 4: 16, 17. What a meeting that will be! Dear friend, will you be amongst them? Do you want to be amongst them? What a moment that will be when the Lord Jesus receives every vestige of what is His own for Himself to be with Him for eternity. I am looking for that moment. Are you? You say, 'Well, I am conscious my brethren are, conscious my brother is, conscious my sister is', but are you? Nobody else can make the transaction for you. It is intensely personal. You must, for yourself, repent,

I will speak briefly about Naaman, sufficient to say that one poor maid had intense faith. What had never happened as far as I can see in history before, she proposes for her master: that he should be free from his leprosy. Leprosy speaks in Scripture of the working of sin in us, the powerful present working of sin, and she proposes that Naaman should go to the prophet and receive his blessing. What did he do? The first thing is the king of Syria sends him to the king of Israel. There is only one way, “for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4: 12), and that is the name of Jesus. Blessed be His name, what a Saviour! Eventually Naaman says, “I thought”. Dear friend, if you have been held up in coming to repentance, it is because at some point in your life you said, “I thought”. 'I thought tomorrow would be a better time', 'I thought I would have my foot in the world first', 'I thought I would do this first' or like Naaman, 'I thought he would do it this way'. You may think that your way is best but God is the arbiter of His own affairs. He has arranged the way of salvation and there is **no other way**. You have to seek God on His own terms and I tell you something, when you accept God on His own terms, the burden rolls off. You feel freed from the burden of your sins and you are conscious that your conscience is clear as before God. So Naaman goes away in a rage. You see, he brought gold and silver: he thought he could buy salvation, he thought there was something that he could do. We think maybe that something without repentance is a way to blessing. How many times have persons drawn alongside you and said, 'Dear friend, are you saved?'. And you say, 'I wish they would not keep asking me that question', but they ask you because they have

your soul welfare in mind and they want you to come into the richest of blessings. So they draw near to him and they say, "My father"; very gracious, "My father, if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" And he goes down and he plunges himself seven times in the Jordan. You can see him now, a great man in Syria, and God had given deliverance to Syria by his hand. He must have been a brilliant warrior and you can imagine him going down with all his armoury and all his medals into the Jordan, first time, second time, third time, fourth time, fifth time, sixth time, seventh time; he finally comes out. What it represents, dear friend, is that he accepts God on His own terms and he finds a complete cure. It says, "And his flesh became again like the flesh of a little child". A baby's skin is so soft and tender. If you look at my hands that have done years of labour, there are scars, cuts and hard skin, and I expect a military man would be much the same, but it says, "his flesh became again like the flesh of a little child". What man cannot do, God can do; He can make a complete change in your life.

Do you want it? If you want it, dear friend, you can have it and God would enjoin you tonight to repent. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Malvern

24th February 2009

JORDAN TURNED BACK

G Allan Brown

Joshua 3: 14-17

I think, dear brethren, there was a note of triumph in our opening hymn (No 291). I just have an impression to follow that up, and perhaps others might go further later; but what we have here is the triumph over death. It is interesting that the reference is to the waters which flowed down and “stood and rose up in a heap, very far, by Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan”. Now Adam, quite evidently, is a geographical location, the city, but surely it is more than a coincidence that the Spirit of God brings that in here, Adam, because it was in Adam that death began. God said to Adam in the garden as to the forbidden tree, “for in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die”, Gen 2: 17. That is where death began. However, Adam did eat of that tree and all Adam's progeny came under that penalty. That river, Jordan, as it were, flowed with uncontested might. Every man from Adam onwards came under the penalty of death. Think of the force of it - it says here that “the Jordan is full over all its banks”. It is a force, a power, which is beyond the ingenuity of man to overcome. Man has become very, very clever, and has accomplished a great many things. He has made cures for many ills, but he has never been able to overcome death. That current flows right down from Adam, right down to this very day, but the Lord Jesus met it. That is the triumph, I think, that enters into our souls as we just consider this. When “the feet of the priests who bore the ark” (that is all one blessed type of our Lord Jesus) “dipped in the edge of the water”, it says, “the waters which flowed down from above stood and rose up in a heap”! One of the Psalms says, “What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan that thou turnedst back?”, Ps 114: 5. Jordan turned back! Think of it, that mighty river that had consumed every man up to that time. Its force was unstoppable until Jesus went into death; then it stopped, turned back, stood up in a heap. It is something that is beyond human comprehension to think of these mighty waters of that river that was in full flood, at its very height in the days of harvest. It just stood up like that. Death, if I might put it that way, had not only met its match but had met its superior. Never before had death been contested by anyone, but when Jesus went into death it stopped in its tracks and turned back, and it went right back to Adam. That is the ground on which all our blessings stand. The Lord Jesus has broken the power of death, and all that that involved for us means

that our blessings are in Him.

That is just my simple impression, dear brethren. I would just like to leave that with you, the immensity of the triumph over death, and all our blessings flow now from the fact that He has gone in there and in the power of who He is has opened up a way of blessing for us.

May the Lord bless His word!

Edinburgh

17th March 2009

BY HIM, IN HIM, TO HIM, WITH HIM

Jim D Gray

Acts 4: 10-12

2 Corinthians 5: 17-18 to “Jesus Christ”

Hebrews 13: 10-15

1 Thessalonians 4: 16-18

I have an impression as to what is achieved by faith in “the name”, what it is to be “in Christ”, to “go forth to him without the camp”, and then to be with Him.

Our brother has referred to the Lord having been victorious over the power of death. He is exalted. In this passage in the Acts He has been made Lord and Christ, but He has acted down here and He is in the testimony, “And, by faith in his name, his name has made this man strong”, Acts 3: 16. He deals with persons in whom sin has been active, and affected them in mind, body, soul and spirit and He heals them. This man is healed. He stands before them a testimony, “by *him*”, that is by the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the Man who has come into all our lives. It is “by *him*” that we stand here tonight, “sound in body”. We are here together, “sound in body”, morally sound, spiritually sound, persons who have the gift of the Holy Spirit; and we are able to be here for God and for Christ, having proven what salvation is. “And salvation is in none other” - that is none other person - “for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved”. That is an appeal you can still make in the glad tidings, and that is an appeal that has affected every one of us here tonight. We have been saved by the power of that blessed Name.

In 2 Corinthians 5 you find out after your conversion that something else has taken place in you - “So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation”. How do you become “in Christ”? Well, you become “in Christ” by trusting Christ as your Saviour. If you trust Christ as your Saviour you come in for the blessings He has secured. Reconciliation was effected on the cross apart from us, while we were enemies; the scripture says, “we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son”, Rom 5: 10. So you come into that blessing and God regards you now as “in Christ”; no longer in Adam but “in Christ”, and “if anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation”. It is a real matter, conversion, a real thing. It means the work of God has begun in the soul of a person

and there is something there that is called new creation. "The new man" is spoken about, "which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness", Eph 4: 24. That is true of every believer when they come to Christ as Saviour. The work of God in you and me will be true to itself if we make way for it. That is true of every believer, so that it says here, "So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" - that is what I was speaking about: "reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ". What a joy to God to receive repenting sinners. The young man, the prodigal in Luke 15, came back reconciled. It does not say that in Luke 15, but that is the truth, he came back reconciled, he came back in another Man; that is why the Father could run and greet him. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no longer worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15: 21), but he was worthy because of the work of reconciliation. Then you can say, 'Well, there is a work of God in me and it is called new creation'. That is "in Christ".

Then I want to come briefly to Hebrews 13. "We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle". The scripture says in chapter 10: 9, "He takes away the first that he may establish the second". The first that is taken away is Judaism and what He has established is Christianity; so now the Jews have no priority. In the Old Testament times they had a priority amongst the nations because God recognised them as His people, but now they have no priority. Christianity is established by God and Judaism is set aside; so "We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle". Then it speaks of the Lord Jesus having "suffered without the gate" and it says, "let us go forth to him without the camp". When you are converted and you come to Christ and come into the gain of the truth of reconciliation, you need to go "to him". Where is He to be found? Well, we live in a world which is religious in the main in various ways throughout the world. Man is a religious creature. Go forth to Christ without the camp. What does that mean? Well, it involves for us, in this part of the world anyway, that Christendom exists all around us. The name of the Lord is there in various ways amongst men, and there is public breakdown in the church. Persons, true believers are going on with things like the clergy - which sets aside the Spirit of God - sacraments and orders and services. That is all related to the camp. If you want to find Christ you have to go forth to Him without that camp. He is speaking in Jewish terms here because the writer is writing to the

Jews in Jerusalem that they might flee before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and he is telling them to “go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach”. It would be a reproach to leave Jerusalem at that time. It is a reproach for us to find Christ outside the systems of men. Many believers are caught up in the systems of men. We need to be thankful for the light of the assembly, we really need to be thankful for that, but you only find it by going forth to Him. If we go forth to Christ we find a few believers like we have tonight “without the camp” yet “bearing his reproach”. It is a reproachful situation. In the city of Edinburgh, it is a reproach to be identified such as we are together in relation to naming the Name of the Lord (2 Tim 2: 19) because we are apart from all that marks Christendom. What are sacraments, orders, vests, crowns, robes? What does that mean to Christ? Nothing. It is a reproach to Him. It is the reproach of Egypt. What does it mean to us? What does it mean to be identified with such things? It would deprive us of the living character of the word of God, dear brethren, to be identified with such systems. The clergy sets aside the presence of the Holy Spirit acting in the body of Christ. It says in Hebrews 10, “For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified”, v 14. That is a company of persons (all the saints) secured by one offering, “perfected in perpetuity the sanctified”. Does a sanctified person need robes and gowns and crowns and cathedral windows and cathedral domes? He does not need any of such things; it is a reproach. What he needs is Christ. So “let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach”, and we will find one another on that basis as going forth to Christ without the camp. “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of the lips confessing his name”. That is not confessing Christ's name in reproach, as I understand it; that is confessing Christ's name in the presence of God. It says, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of the lips confessing his name”. I am not saying the other thing does not come into it, but as far as I can see confessing His name in that situation is confessing in the presence of God. What a delight to God to hear persons confessing the name of Christ, offering the sacrifice of praise continually to God!

And then finally, to be with Him is the final hope of the believer. The triumph of Christ in going through the Jordan is to have us with Him. It was at that time to have the people with Him in the land of promise, the land of Canaan, in the heavenly land. Here it is to be with Him finally, having bodies of glory like unto His own body of glory, Phil 3: 21. So it

says, “for the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; ... then *we*, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them” - that is the believers who are raised from the dead - “to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord”. That is the final thing, “with the Lord”. That is the great triumphant final rallying point, the trump of God sounds, the saints taken to be with Christ to come out, as we sang in our song when “Israel's race shall then behold Him” (Hymn 291), not alone, but He will have his saints with Him.

May the Lord encourage our hearts with these few thoughts.
For His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

17th March 2009

WHAT IS BY, THROUGH, AND IN CHRIST

Terry Lock

Colossians 1: 16

Hebrews 1: 3

John 1: 17 from “grace”

Ephesians 2: 5-6

I think it is a very fine time we have had this evening. The words that we have had have pointed us to Christ, wonderful Man that He is, the Man who has accomplished everything for God, the One, indeed, who is the Hope of our hearts. But I read in Colossians 1 because the One with whom we have to do is no less than God, “because by him were created all things”. We find at the beginning of Scripture that “God created the heavens and the earth”, Gen 1: 1. Here in Colossians the scope of that opens out in relation to the workings of God. It says, “because by him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth”. It says elsewhere in Scripture, “without him not one thing received being which has received being” (John 1: 3), which brings out the wondrousness of Christ and who He is Himself; He is no less than God. Beloved brethren, the Man whom we know that has saved us is no less than God Himself, worthy of all the honour, and all the praise, and all the glory, and all the worship, that we can give Him; glorious Man!

But then we have in Hebrews in relation to what He has done, “having made by himself the purification of sins”. We have had a word tonight in relation to the Jordan, the priests' feet touching the Jordan and it standing up in a heap and going away back. Think of this, the wondrous glory and might of this blessed Man as He goes into death, the power that was there in the One whom we know as Jesus, the power that was there in that blessed Man that would accomplish this. This is what was by Him. We have the things that were done by Him in the creating of the world, and we have the things that were done by Him in relation to purification of sins. They could be done by no one except Christ. Here we have, “having made by himself the purification of sins”. What did that entail? Beloved brethren, what did it entail for God that Christ should work in such a manner and exercise His power that there should be “by himself the purification of sins”? What did that entail? It entailed the work of a wondrous, glorious Man who had at His disposal the power, the *moral* power, to be able to accomplish such a work for God. These were the things done by Him. There are many other things

in Scripture done by Him; these are two that have come to me this evening, the things done by Him.

But then we have in John's Gospel what is done through Him. It has often amazed me the way this is put in John's gospel, and this is true now through Jesus Christ: "grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ". I think that the way that "through" is used here is distinctive. In relation to Christ, it is the only time it is used and it is an act of power. What comes from heaven comes **through** Christ. It does not come any other way. Here "grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ", through that Man who has accomplished everything for God, through the Man who has accomplished everything for man, the One who has exercised His power, the One by whom the worlds were made, the One by whom you are made, the One by whom we are here tonight, the One who has removed your sins, "having made by himself the purification of sins"; **through** that One grace and truth subsists. It is a wonderful thing to think that the Word comes from heaven. We had a touch of that on Lord's day in relation to what comes from heaven. Well, I tell you, what comes from heaven is grace and truth, and it comes through Jesus Christ, and it is towards us subsequent to this access that we have. We have many blessings - and all these things, such as the light that we have - and we have had a measure of that tonight in relation to the assembly, all the truth, all **this** has come "through Jesus Christ". Wonderful! What a wonderful Man He is! Not only are things done by Him, but things are done through Him. God operates through Jesus Christ, so that what shines to us shines in that Man. So what you take account of is not theology; it is not something that is just sacraments. It is not creed; it is not any of those things. It is a living expression of what has come from heaven, and it is seen in a Man and enjoyed there. So "grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ". The note to that is very interesting: the expression 'supposes its continuance'. So it began when Christ was here. When Christ went back into glory the Spirit came. It continued, and it continues all the way to our day, and it will continue to the end of this dispensation, the end of the time in which we are, and we have this word that comes towards us, "grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ". It is a constant flow that comes from heaven through Him to us. Wonderful, absolutely wonderful!

These things lift us up. We had a reference as well on Lord's day in the reading to this scripture, "has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus". Now that

is different again. We have had what is by Him, we have had what is through Him, but then it is a case of what we are as “in Christ Jesus”. Wonderful thing! You know, the things accomplished **by** Him, the things accomplished by Christ are outside of us. The things we receive **through** Christ are enjoyed by us, but where we are as **in** Christ is ours to understand; that is unalterable. Our brother has made reference to “he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified”, Heb 10: 14. That is an unalterable state of the believer before God, and the place that is also unalterable before God because it is established “in Christ Jesus”. It is your place in the heavenlies in Him, not by Him but **in** Him. What an area this is! What wondrous blessings have come, beloved brethren. It should quicken our hearts, indeed it should, to think of this wonderful matter. We are established in glory, seated there in Him. He has done everything for us. He has done everything for God. He has established the scene in which we are. He has established the area that God has used to save persons for Himself; He has done that. God has also shone out in that blessed Man - what His own desires are in relation to the blessings of the saints here, and in relation to the opening up of the whole scope of the things that God had in His mind for men. All of that has been opened up through Christ, but then the wonderful thing is, it has set you “in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus”.

Well, may we all be encouraged by it and know our place with Him there, seated “in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus”, for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

17th March 2009