

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

(i)

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I want to speak to you about the trials of the second man. There are two men in the scriptures, the first man and the second man. 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of “the first man out of the earth, made of dust; the second man, out of heaven” (v 47); John 3 speaks of “He who has his origin in the earth ... He who comes out of heaven” (v 31).

I want to speak to you about the Man who is out of heaven, and about the trials and testings of that Man. God would give you an assurance that the Man whom He is commending in the glad tidings can be trusted. What He has secured, God will honour; that is what God will have you to understand. He is presenting to you His Christ, the second Man out of heaven. He is commending Him to you as a Saviour for sinners, and He would have you assured through the glad tidings that your confidence is real in that blessed Man. It is not going to be undermined; what He has promised, what He has secured will come to you, all the blessings that Christ has for you will be assured to you. Your eternal welfare is assured through Christ because He is tried and tested. Adam was tried and tested too. Adam was the lord of creation when he was brought in on the sixth day of creation. God put him in that place, but He tried him because He put him in responsibility. God never put the beasts in responsibility, He never took any of the cattle, or any of the beasts, or the fishes of the sea and put there responsibility, but He put Adam and Eve in responsibility. He told them that they were not to take of a certain fruit in the garden; it was a moral responsibility. Adam did not know evil, he knew only good, and Adam failed and brought his posterity down, that is he brought every one of us down, we are all children of fallen Adam. We inherited the awfulness of his fall; that is obvious; the state of the world at the present time shows that.

Now when the Lord Jesus came, God also arranged for Him to be tested and tried, His Christ, and that is what I want to speak to you about, His testings and His trials, and how He overcame, blessed Man. He is a worthy Saviour, I can tell you that before we begin.

I began with John the baptist's ministry. There were persons in Jerusalem and Judea who answered to the preaching of John the baptist, telling them to repent – "Voice of him that crieth in the wilderness: prepare ye the way of the Lord", Matt 3: 3. He was preparing the way of the Lord, he was a forerunner of Christ, and there were persons who answered to that, persons in Israel who answered to that at that time; they were alive then and they came out to John and they were confessing their sins. The Lord Jesus identifies Himself with such a company, He goes to the Jordan to John to be baptised. Did Jesus need to be baptised? Those who were there might have said, Well here is Jesus coming to be baptised: does He have sins to take account of? No, my friend, He did not. Things do not always appear what they are on the face of them; Jesus came to identify Himself with those who were confessing their sins, because He found pleasure in that. He was attracted to them. He was not attracted to the rebellious Jew seen particularly amongst those in Jerusalem, the chief priest and the Pharisee, but He was attracted to those, whether they be Pharisees or Sadducees, who were coming and confessing their sins and being baptised by John. He was attracted to the remnant in Israel, to the godly ones, the pious persons in Israel, and He identified Himself with them in humility. I said to you that Adam was the lord of creation. I have said to you that he failed, but now we have the One who is the firstborn of all creation coming in as the chief of creation, coming in as the One who created everything, not as Adam who was created, but coming in as the Creator of everything. The Lord Jesus was the Creator of everything; He comes in and takes His place as a humble man, with the meek and lowly on earth. Blessed Saviour! He says to John, "it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness". He was going to take it all up on the cross anyway. He was going to take all

the matters of their sins upon Himself on the cross, but in lowliness of heart He comes in as a blessed Man and takes His place with the lowly on the earth, those who desire to confess their sins and be suitable for the divine presence. They had a sense of conviction of their sins. It is a good thing to start that way, to be convicted of your sins.

The Lord Jesus came in in righteousness and He identified Himself with these lowly people. What does heaven do? It opens to that blessed Man, "This is my beloved Son", Matt 3: 17. It does not say, 'thou', in this scripture: "Thou art my beloved Son", is a direct address to Christ. It says, "This is my beloved Son". It is drawing attention to the One upon whom the Spirit of God came in the form of a dove. He is distinguished at His baptism, heaven's delight in Him. Heaven delighted in the place that this lowly Man had taken, the One who was the chief of creation.

Now comes this remarkable matter of His trial. God would have that humanity tested to let you and me see how foolproof it was to the approaches of the devil. He bound the strong man in this chapter: He was going to plunder his goods. He did that in His lifetime here, He secured persons for God. He goes into the wilderness and He is tempted forty days. Another has said that He was not with God exactly in those forty days; He was in the presence of the enemy, the presence of the tempter. He never ate during those forty days, He fasted, and He was hungry because He was a man. His humanity was real. The Lord Jesus hungered after these forty days because His humanity was real, and the devil seeks to take advantage of His weakness, as he thought. He says, "If thou be Son of God, speak, that these stones may become loaves of bread. But he answering said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth", Matt 4: 3,4. He came to do God's will. He was not going to take any commandment from the devil. If He had spoken He would have taken Himself out from the place of obedience to God's will, He would have used His own will to secure His own needs, and He would not do that. How different from Adam was the Lord Jesus

Christ. He did not use His power or privilege to secure amelioration of His hunger; He was prepared to suffer rather than yield to the temptation of the devil. What a glorious and blessed Saviour! Humanity that the devil could not penetrate; "In him sin was not", but He was prepared to be here for the will of God. He waited for a word from the Father, from God, as to His needs. He was not prepared to take the devil's commandments. The devil in his craftiness and his wile used the scripture. The devil knows the scripture. The Lord used the scripture, and then the devil used the scripture. The Lord Jesus was proof against Satan; he was not prepared to take Himself out from the hands of God. The devil asked Him to cast Himself down from the edge of the temple saying that God would take charge of Him to prevent Him from falling and damaging Himself. He says, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God", Matt 4: 7. He trusted God; He did not have to prove God by throwing Himself off the edge of the temple. He trusted God, He knew that God would protect Him, but He did not take Himself out of the divine hand, He did not yield to the wiles of the devil to prove anything.

Then the devil shows Him all the kingdoms of the world. All those kingdoms were going to be Christ's kingdoms - "all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory, and says to him, All these things will I give thee if, falling down, thou wilt do me homage" (v 9). That was the Lord Jesus' inheritance, but He was not going to take it the way the devil wanted Him to take it. If He had taken it this way what disaster there would have been. He may have got it without suffering, but what kind of kingdom would He have got? A kingdom of lawless men. He says, "Get thee away Satan" (v 10). He resists the devil, He drives him away, "for it is written, Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve" (v 10). There was the humanity that was proof against every aspect that the devil could devise, worthy Saviour! The reliability of His humanity against all the wiles and the strategy and opposition of the devil to God, He did not yield to any of them and He commands the devil to depart. A blessed Man who came to do the will of God, how perfect He was.

The Lord Jesus was ministered to by the angels, they brought Him food. He waited the divine time and His hunger was satisfied. I am speaking literally, His hunger was satisfied, blessed Saviour!

“Repent for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh” (v 17), that is His preaching, Repent. You need to repent to come into the blessings of the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens is drawn nigh, the way in is in repentance, to confess your sins - just as those who went to John at the Jordan to confess their sins. That is your access in to the kingdom of the heavens. If you come under the sway of a glorious and blessed Man, you enter the kingdom of the heavens. What a blessing is in the glad tidings! It is a new preaching; it has never been on the earth before. It says, “From that time began Jesus to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh”. The devil was bound, Jesus could exploit his goods; the strong man was bound, and He could preach the glad tidings and there would be results. The Lord Jesus is the great liberator, to preach glad tidings of the kingdom of the heavens. What a thing that is, to come under the sway of God, the influence of the kingdom of the heavens, as over against what had been on this earth, darkness and distress, wars and rumour of wars. Here were glad tidings that were bringing in the sway of God into the heart of men and women, bringing them to know Christ as their Saviour and to have their sins forgiven.

In chapter 26, the devil comes back again. The testings of the second Man were not yet complete. You wonder what His thoughts were in those forty days when He fasted. The Lord Jesus would not be in a vacuum; what were His thoughts in the beginning of His ministry, His public service when He was going forward to the cross? He must have thought of the glad tidings of the kingdom of the heavens that was going to be preached through His faithfulness. He had come in to do the will of God, and He knew that it involved His death. If He was to secure the kingdom for Himself it involved His death; if He was to secure persons for that kingdom, it involved His death. He came in to take up the question of sin and sins. He exploited the goods of the strong man. He had delivered persons

from Satan in His preachings. What preachings the gospels bring out of Christ. Now He comes to the cross and what was before Him. It says, "Then Jesus comes with them to a place called Gethsemane, and says to the disciples, Sit here until I go away and pray yonder. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and deeply depressed", and then He says to them, "My soul is very sorrowful even unto death; remain here and watch with me. And going forward a little he fell upon his face, praying and saying, My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt". A holy Man; the Lord Jesus. It would be no light matter for Christ to go to the cross. I will say one thing to you, He is not deviating in this scripture; He never deviated, His face was set to go to the cross, but the scripture brings out how He felt. What was death to Christ? I was impressed by the poet who says:

I pause - for in Thy vision,
The day is hastening now,
When for our lost condition,
Thy holy head shalt bow.

Christ felt the matter of the cup that He was to drink. What cup was that? It was the cup of the wrath of God, and He had to drink that cup. He was prepared to go forward, He who knew not sin; He was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He was made sin, not made to sin, but made sin. It was fixed on Him, something that was abhorrent. How Christ abhorred sin. The expression in man and woman and boys and girls of their own will, of lawlessness, fixed on Christ. God condemns sin in the flesh in the death of Christ. Jesus knew that He was going forward to that, forward to the forsaking, forward to take that cup that would involve the forsaking, and His spirit shrank from it and His soul was depressed. How real was the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and here was His testing. He had been tested already, here He is tested again, and He goes forward in complete submission to the will of His God and Father. He will not take the cup from any other hand than the hand of His Father. What a moment that is to consider, that the cup of wrath was given to Him by His God to drink - no other.

Instruments were used to crucify Him, but He takes the cup as from the hand of God.

He is tested here and He goes three times in prayer, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as / will, but as *thou* wilt". One of the hymns says:

No act of power could e'er atone,
No wonder-working word
Could from the brightness of the throne,
Make love's sweet voice be heard.

If sinners ever were to know
The depths of love divine,
All Calvary's weakness and its woe,
Blest Saviour, must be thine.

He had to go this way, God had to be glorified, "I have glorified thee in the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me that I should do it". He went forward to the cross with a determination to finish that work. John's gospel tells us that when He bowed His blessed head, He said, "It is finished; and having bowed his head, he delivered up his spirit". What a work it was, what a trial it was, what testing for His humanity. The second Man out of heaven, tested and tested in a way that the first man was never tested. The pressure of temptation on His spirit, the pressure of the death on His spirit, two things it says, "He watched and prayed". He watched because Satan was there, He was on His guard lest Satan should get an inroad, but he never interfered with His communion. The Lord Jesus was in full and complete communion with His Father in His prayer here. There was no thought of distance here in this scripture. The devil was there but He could not penetrate to affect that blessed Man, he never affected Him in any way. His soul was deeply depressed and He was sorrowful on account of what He Himself had committed Himself to, to the will of God that involved Him taking up the matter of sin and sins on behalf of humanity, on behalf of God. There are two matters in the death of Christ, the propitiation and the substitution.

Propitiation involves that God is satisfied. The glad tidings can go forth then and tell you that God is satisfied in Christ, and God will be glorified in that even if there was never one soul saved. The other side of it is the substitution side, that Christ bore my sins in His body on the tree. That side brings us into the blessing. Propitiation is the basis that God has for proclaiming the glad tidings to all men; Christ “gave himself a ransom for all”, involves propitiation. What a Saviour! So we come into the blessings that He has secured.

On the cross He says, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” I read that just to bring home for the younger persons here the awfulness of the moment when it came. What a moment for Christ to cry, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”. The testimony given to an audience who had taunted Him, who said “He saved other, himself he cannot save. He is King of Israel: let him descend now from the cross, and we will believe on him. He trusted upon God; let him save him now if he will have him” (vv 42,43) – in the face of those taunts the Lord Jesus cried that God had forsaken Him. What a humiliation for the Saviour, what reproach for the Lord Jesus, tested and tried. Then at the close, He having “cried with a loud voice, gave up the ghost”. That is the Lord going out in triumph, having exhausted the wrath of God, drunk the cup to the last dregs, blessed Saviour, glorious Saviour! He is worthy to be believed in. I should also say to you, concerning all the happenings of the time they show that it was a miraculous matter. The things that happened; the earthquake and other things, it affected persons.

Romans 6 tells us “He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father”. God’s delight in Christ, “Man of the Father’s choice, faithful and tried”, God’s delight in Christ. I want to show you how God delighted in Christ, that He would have Him. It says, “He trusted upon God; let him save him now if he will have him“, God says, I will have my Christ. He was in death for three days and three nights, but God says, I will have my Christ and He raised Him from among the dead by His glory. All the divine power and affections entering into that blessed moment when the Father raised Christ from the grave. He would have Him and the proof of it is that He is

made Lord and Christ, and the tangible evidence is that the Holy Spirit is come, come from Christ in glory bringing proof to the believer, "God has made this Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ".

In Romans 5 Paul is saying that man might have a motive to die for someone. It says, "For scarcely for the just man will one die, for perhaps for good man some one might also dare to die", speaking about humanity; but then he says, "God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". There is no merit in us to induce Christ to die for us, from our side, we were sinners, but Christ died for us. What a love! What a blessing the believer has that He comes into touch with the Lord Jesus, "faithful and tried", to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge. At the Lord's Supper you drink into the cup, a cup of blessing, an expression of the love of God in Christ, and the love of Christ, that God has given His Son, "the just for the unjust", that Christ has poured out His blood, "this is my blood which is poured out for you". What blessings come to us, all the blessings that Christ has secured are real, because the Man Christ Jesus has been faithful and tried.

It says, "Much rather therefore, having been now justified in the power of his blood, we shall be saved by him from wrath". There is no wrath going to come on the believer. Cast in your lot with the people of God, cast your lot in as one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ; there is no wrath going to come on you. John the Baptist says, "Who has forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath", and then Thessalonians says, that they trusted in the Lord Jesus as Son of God, awaiting Him from heaven, the deliverer from the coming wrath. Christ is the deliverer for us from the coming wrath. Wrath is going to come upon this ungodly scene. When Noah went into the ark and the ark was shut, there was nothing but wrath for those outside, no mercy, only wrath. Mercy was shown to those in the ark. God will execute wrath upon this scene, but, thank God, for the believer, He gets relief from that through trusting in Christ. There is nothing that can be charged against him, he is saved by Christ from

wrath and more than that, “being enemies have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son”. The work of reconciliation was done on the cross, apart from you and me. That work by Christ on the cross involved reconciliation of man and God, distance removed. So as trusting in Christ we come into the blessing of the reconciliation. That is when the son came back from the far country in Luke 15, he was reconciled. Reconciled involves that I am no longer in Adam, but I am in Christ, another order of humanity, laying hold of Christ as my Saviour, I come into an order of humanity that belongs to Christ. “For being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of his life”. I wonder if you have proved what it is to be saved in the power of His life. What life is that? That is not His life in flesh and blood condition. That is Christ’s life presently, the risen and ascended Man. The believer is saved in the power of His life as going through this world, walking in newness of life, another kind of life exhibited, Christ’s life exhibited in this world where Christ once was. You are in touch with a Man in heaven, a Man in the glory, and you are saved in the power of His life, you come under the influence of the life of Christ in glory. What blessings are these that the believer has?

All these things are assured. I want to leave with you an impression that the Man whom God is presenting to you has been fully tested and tried, and what is secured is an absolutely firm foundation that nothing can shake and God is going to honour it to all eternity.

May it be our portion for His Name’s sake.

EDINBURGH

10 December 2000

(ii)

Andrew Martin

John 1: 14-18; 3: 13-15; 13: 36-14: 3

I was struck with the words of the hymn we started with this morning which referred to the Lord Jesus as 'in our place'. I was thinking of Him as the One who took our place and of the way the Lord Jesus came in. He came in and took our place and took our place by going into death. He has also gone into glory and in glory He has prepared a place for us. You remember when Solomon built the temple, he dedicated it and in that long prayer referred to what he had built; Solomon was obviously impressed with the greatness of God, and he said, "behold ... the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built!" 2 Chron 6: 18. Solomon had an impression of God in His infinite character as being completely beyond anything created, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee".

John the writer begins this gospel by speaking of the Lord Jesus as being in the beginning, "In the beginning was the Word" (chap 1: 1). That One whom John referred to as the Word is the full expression of the mind of God; He was in the beginning, before time was. I think that is involved in that expression. When John writes His epistle he speaks about One who was *from* the beginning, that is from that time onwards, "That which was from the beginning", but here in the gospel he goes back before that, "In the beginning was the Word", as far back as you can go, Jesus was there. In His infinite Person He was there, needing nothing, needing no-one, self-existent as to Himself, requiring not to be ministered to by men, as any creature is, but self-existent. His only need (there was a need) the need which was produced by His nature, love. That created a need that there should be an object on which it could settle.

There He was in all His greatness, the One whom the heaven of heavens could not contain and yet in need of an object, and that object was you and me. John is writing this filled with the greatness

of that One and he says "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". John does not describe the coming into manhood of the Lord Jesus as Matthew or Luke who describe it in a way that men could take up as a historical record. John does not do that. As filled with the greatness of the Person he speaks of the wonder that that One should become flesh, that He should come into such a condition as you and I are in and dwell among us, that He Himself should be found dwelling among us in nearness to men, that He Himself should be found as a Man dwelling among us. We know in some way from the other gospels how the Lord Jesus lived; there are hints as to it, how He was found dwelling among us. There were those who knew Him in that context as the One who dwelt among them, they said "Is not this the carpenter?", in another place, "Is not this the son of the carpenter?" They knew His circumstances. He dwelt among us and I am quite sure that the Lord Jesus dwelling among men as a Man, was known by men as One who was different. Men would have seen that He would never have been involved in anything disreputable; they would have respected that. But also in the fact that He dwelt among them, that he was available for men's needs. The things that He did, how perfect they were in every respect! Men could take account of that. I am quite sure that anybody who went to Nazareth (you can imagine, Nazareth was a little town, it was set in the hills), someone taking his horse and cart over the hills to sell something at the market, and something goes wrong, perhaps a wheel on the cart broke as it drew near to Nazareth, might get out and walk into the town, and ask somebody, Can you point me to a good carpenter, someone who can mend my cart. I am sure that people would say, There is nobody better, no-one whose workmanship is better than this One, His workmanship is perfect, everything He does is perfect, the materials He uses would be the best materials that were available and no-one will do a better job than Jesus. Nor would the Lord Jesus Himself have said, Give me the measurements, He would have gone out to where the trouble was and say, Show me what needs to be done. He would have gone to where the problem was. That was the kind of Man that Jesus was, and the apostle says, He dwelt among us, He was

available. He came into men's own condition. How the other carpenters in that area would have been put to shame as they would have taken account of the way in which the Lord Jesus was there in perfection, and in every way available to them. If someone had called at night, He would have got up; He would have attended to their needs. He would have said that it was no trouble; as men say today, it is all part of the service! That is the way in which men would have spoken about the Lord Jesus, that whatever needed to be done, there was one upon whom you could rely and He would have done it, and He would have done it well, and He would have done it whatever the cost to Himself.

He "dwelt among us". Think of the Lord Jesus as being here amongst men, and displaying such goodness. The apostle says here, "dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth". The way He did things would have been full of grace and truth, and the Lord's contact with men would have been like that. Think of the Lord's words, the way in which He spoke to people, full of grace and truth. How it would have imparted something to the souls of all with whom He came in contact. They would have said, there is nothing about Him that is inconsistent, you never see another side to Him, He is always the same, He is full of grace and truth. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth". That blessed One in all His lowliness and grace, His meekness, His going along with men. He was the One who the heaven of heavens could not contain, so great was He. He was the One who could speak and the words come to pass. How great He was! He came here full of grace and truth. John here was impressed with the greatness of that One. He might well review His pathway. Somebody once commented that, as John wrote about the Lord Jesus as the One by whom "All things received being ... and without him not one thing received being which has received being" (v 3), John might well have just put his pen down and said, "To think, that He washed my feet". The One who gave being to everything, became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He served His own in that way. John says, "for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace".

The grace of the Lord Jesus was flowing throughout His life here. It is still flowing. Do not let anybody think that grace is not flowing today, grace is flowing today. The Lord Jesus is heaven, but grace is flowing today, let no-one try to tell you otherwise. The supply of it comes daily. Every day there is grace for the day. You might say, How can I be sure? It is true. As each day comes there is grace for it, and you might say, Why do we worry about tomorrow then? But that is because of what we are, but we can rest assured that there is grace for it, “grace upon grace”.

The Psalmist in Psalm 23 says, “goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life” (v 6). A brother once told me that that is the proof that it comes every day. It is not going before, but it is following you. That means that you look back and you see that it has been there. You might say, what about tomorrow? If you cannot face tomorrow, look at yesterday, and you see that goodness and loving kindness were there. Every step of the pathway you can look back, goodness and loving-kindness have been there. They have been there every day and here it is, “grace upon grace”. Every day there is a fresh supply of grace. It came in the life of Jesus here, and it comes today. It is just as true in the year 2001. Whatever the circumstances, whatever the pathway has to offer there will be grace for the day. Never doubt it, there will be grace. And John says, “of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace”. He then says, “For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”. In that One, grace and truth subsists. Why does John say that? What does the law give us? “The law was given by Moses”; why did John bring that in here? He is occupied with the Lord Jesus in all His greatness and perfection. What the law gave us was a sense of guilt. The law showed us that we are sinners; it made the fact that we are sinners manifest, nobody could argue with that. God has set a standard, He has articulated it in a code of law and what it showed was that every man was a sinner, no one could keep it. What was the answer for that? “Grace and truth subsist in Jesus Christ”. The answer for the

sinner does not lie in the application of the law, the answer relies upon grace.

So the Lord Jesus came into this condition where men were sinners, He came in to be found amongst men. Not Himself to be found as a sinner, far from it, He was perfect in every respect. Did the law condemn Him? Not at all. He magnified the law and made it honourable, He came here to bring in what was greater than the law, He came to bring in grace. How could He do that? We sometimes sing:

God could not pass the sinner by

The sinner had offended so He could not pass him by, the only answer is in grace. God could not have come in in judgment upon man, because He had set up man to be here for His glory and if He had come in in judgment upon man it would have been saying that what He had set up was impossible and could never be accomplished and He would have failed of His purpose. There has to be another answer and that answer is in grace. The Lord Jesus stood in our place.

In chapter 3 He is speaking to Nicodemus and He refers to the way in which He has to go in order that grace should have its answer. He brings in Himself, the greatness of His Person, "no one has gone up into heaven, save he who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven". I wonder what Nicodemus felt about that? The Lord Jesus had already set what to Nicodemus was a puzzle: He had said, "Except any one be born anew", and Nicodemus had said that he did not understand. It brings out that it is not a natural activity at all. If you are listening to the gospel and you have an interest in the gospel, it means that the Holy Spirit has some work in your heart. Did you know that? There is a Person who is interested in you as an individual. If you find the gospel interesting at all, the Holy Spirit is working in your heart, it is He who is making it interesting to you. That is what the Lord Jesus means when He says, "Except any one be born anew". There must be a work going on in the heart and the Holy Spirit would do that. If you

find anything to do with divine thoughts pleasing, and they have an appeal, and you want to know more, you feel after it, that is evidence that God is working in your heart. It is something that you should really speak to Him about, because He would love to develop that work.

The Lord Jesus has spoken to Nicodemus about that, and now He sets him another thing which Nicodemus would find hard to understand - "no one has gone up into heaven, save he who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven". Think of the Lord Jesus speaking about Himself in this way. "He who came down out of heaven" - the greatness of that One who came down in the incarnation, the Son of Man who is in heaven. It brings out the greatness of who He is that He cannot be confined. In coming into manhood He accepted restriction - what restriction He accepted! He accepted restriction in coming into manhood, He who is infinite in Himself, but although He accepted restriction in coming into man's circumstances, He Himself could not be limited. He is the Son of Man who is in heaven, He is there as the object of divine pleasure. In a sense He was there as the One in whom God had His pleasure before even time was. Not that He was the Son of Man before He came into manhood, but God had always had His pleasure in Him there and that blessed One who is found here as the Son of Man is the One who is in heaven, the One who is the eternal object of heaven's delight. Here He presents Himself to Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, as "the Son of man". He says to Nicodemus, I know that you are going to be looking for the One who is going to redeem Israel, and you are asking about the kingdom and all that Israel will enter into, but the One who is going to bring in blessing for Israel is the Son of Man. He goes wider than Israel to One who is available to all men. So as He says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up, that every one who believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal". Think of that! Remember how Moses was in the wilderness and the children of Israel had sinned against God and God sent a plague of serpents among them. They were biting the children of Israel who

were dying from it, and the plague was there. They cried out and Moses spoke to God about it. It is all a figure of what sin is and the evil that is in man, and the evil that is in his system. The poison was working through men's system. People were dying and God said, 'Make a fiery serpent and put it upon a pole'. How good God is! He says, take the very thing that you can see, make a fiery serpent, and put it upon a pole, and lift it up for all to see. Think of the Lord Jesus, He came in the likeness of sinful flesh - not that he was sinful, but in the likeness of sinful flesh, in order that He should be lifted up that all may believe on Him. I love to think of God telling Moses to put it upon a pole. He might have said, Tell those people to go somewhere and look at it, but He did not say that. He said put it upon a pole, lift it up! Let everyone see it, let the whole camp look at it. God was not willing that men should die, God did not want the serpents to have the advantage over men. He said, put it upon a pole, let everyone in the camp see it. There would no excuse - all you had to do was look, just look at the One who was there, come into our condition, but was lifted up as the answer to the terrible question of sin that has ravaged humanity, that we find in our souls and hearts, and there He is lifted up there as the object for our faith. Imagine that word going round the camp, people saying, all you have to do is look at the serpent. It says, 'they gazed intently at it'. Everyone who gazed intently at it was healed. Have you seen the Lord Jesus there, lifted up upon the cross? He was lifted up for you! If that serpent had not been lifted up upon the pole the poison would have done its work, there would have been no hope for man, there would have been an end of it, and that is what sin is like. It says, "thus must the Son of man be lifted up, that every one who believes on him may not perish". That is the natural end of man that he should perish. That is what man will do. It matters not how good or how bad a man is, that is the natural end of man, and indeed of everything, that it perishes. He says, "thus must the Son of man be lifted up, that every one who believes on him may not perish". Do you believe on Him? It is a simple thing to do. Just to take account of the fact that He was there lifted up upon the cross for you. Why was He lifted up there for you? How was it that He was lifted up

upon the cross for you? It meant that you should never perish but have life eternal. It was because, as lifted up upon the cross He was lifted up to bear your sins, to take them away from the sight of God for ever, that He should be there as made sin, that He should be forsaken of God, that He should bear the sins of many there upon the cross. Look on Him there, take account of Him there as the One who was there for you. He was there in order that you should never know God's wrath as under sin, He was there in order that you should never have to answer to God for your sins at all. He was there to bear them as if they were His own. Think of that! The Psalmist speaks about it, "mine iniquities ... are more than the hairs of my head", Ps 40: 12. The Psalmist spoke that, prophetically of Jesus, as taking the sins of many upon Himself as if they were His own, and God's wrath was poured out upon Him there upon the cross. God has no more to say about sin, as Jesus has borne the wrath of God against sin and borne it forever. "Thus must the Son of man be lifted up". No one else could do that, as lifted up on the cross He bore our sins and then He laid down His life and shed His precious blood. The precious blood is there as the witness of that perfect life that was so acceptable to God, offered as a sin offering for God.

He says to Peter, "Where I go thou canst not follow me now". You can understand that. He went into death as death truly is. I was recently looking for a type of the Lord going into death itself as a sphere. The Psalm speaks about Him going into Sheol. It struck me that the figures of death in the Old Testament are largely figures of a way through, rather than the terrible termination that man thinks about. Now, for the Lord Jesus it was absolute. He knew the awfulness of death and He went into it knowing fully what it involved, what it was to God; the One to whom death was abhorrent, He went into it as knowing that. He went into it as being the judgment of God against sin, He went into it too knowing the power of Satan because of man, not that Satan had any power against Him, but it was the realm that Satan had taken to hold over man and keep man in fear. He went into it and yet in His going into it, He has made it, for us, a

way through. That is what the children of Israel found at the Red Sea and the Jordan; it was a way through. It was a great barrier while it was there, but God made the way through and the Lord Jesus says, "Where I go thou canst not follow me now". He alone could undertake the work He was doing. "But thou shalt follow me after. Peter says to him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee". There is no doubt at all in my mind about Peter's devotion. When Jesus says, "Thou wilt lay down thy life for me", I do not think that was said in any ironic way, certainly not in any mocking way as men might. It could be read that way, but I do not think the Lord Jesus would say that. I think it was just the affirmation of the fact that, "Thou wilt lay thy life for me". He knew that Peter would do that. But then He says, Peter you are weak, at the moment you are going to prove your weakness. He says, I know you love me, I know you would lay down your life for me, but as man you have to learn that you cannot go on in your own strength, you are going to deny me, "The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice". Think of those words coming from the lips of the Lord Jesus. What a shock that would have been to Peter; what horror would have registered on his face, what a shock to the other disciples too. It is a dreadful thing to think that the one who was so devoted to Jesus should be told that he would deny Him thrice. The Lord Jesus would have seen the looks on their faces and immediately He says, "Let not your heart be troubled". What grace that He should immediately say that!

If you go to Luke's gospel, the Lord Jesus says to Peter, "Satan has demanded to have you ... but I have besought for thee ... and ... when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren". He gave him that message first, you are going to be restored; that is grace. He says, I am telling you that you are going to be restored. What grace the Lord Jesus showed. Well here immediately He says, "Let not your heart be troubled". Surely the Lord Jesus Himself was the One whose heart might be troubled. This was part of His way, part of the place that He was taking. He has taken our place in manhood here upon the earth, He was about to take our place here

on the cross, but He says My pathway is not ending there. In John's gospel the Lord's pathway is not a path from the manger to the cross; it is a path, the way that led from God and returned to God, knowing that He came out from God and was going to God. That is the pathway of Jesus in John's gospel.

He says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe on God, believe also on me". That again was something quite new to the disciples. They had been brought up doubtless as God-fearing Jews and there was One who was to be honoured and venerated, and He says, "believe on God", that is right. He says now you have a Man as an object of faith, "believe also on me". Then He says, "In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place; and if I go, and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be". I think the Lord Jesus was preparing His own here for the fact that our place is not here upon the earth. We are here as strangers. The Lord Jesus was here as a stranger. I remember some months ago a brother came to us in Redbridge. As he gave thanks for the loaf, He said, 'Lord, this earth was a strange place to thee'. There was no commonality. The Lord Jesus was a heavenly Man there is nothing in common with the earth and a heavenly Man, the earth was a strange place to Him. It is to be strange to us. He says, "I go to prepare you a place". In the synoptic gospels you read that Peter says, "we have left everything", and the Lord Jesus says, nobody will leave their home without getting their reward, He says, "I go to prepare you a place ... In my Father's house". The disciples must often have wondered about the Lord and His relations with the Father. He says, My Father has a house, a place where He dwells and you have a home there. You say well, that is something in the future: yes in its fulness it is, but it is something that we are going to enter into soon, and it may not be far in the future. We trust it is not far, we trust it is very soon. "In my Father's house there are many abodes ... I go to prepare you a place", but even if it is in the future, I tell you that place is yours. I might say, it has your name on it. The Lord Jesus said that, "Your

names are written in heaven", there is a register of those who belong to that place, a list of names there. He says, "I go to prepare you a place", a place is prepared for you there. "If I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself". Think of that attitude. He has gone up on high, the Holy Spirit has come in order that we should receive our direction and our light the Holy Spirit gives us, our impressions of that place and indeed our impressions of the Lord Jesus Himself, and enjoyment of any spiritual blessing at all, until He comes. He says, "If I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again". It does not say, If I go and shall prepare you a place a day will come when I will return, but He says, "I am coming again". It shows His attitude to us that He is always, in that sense, in a state of readiness, "I am coming again".

He gives me the sense of His presence
He cheers me with touches of love.
But soon it will be
In truth, I will see
My Saviour as with Him above.

Oh what will it be to see Jesus
And to gaze on His face evermore.

(A selection of Christian Verse p156 vv 3,4)

He says, You have a place with me within my Father's house. We are here in this scene ... but our place is above. May we constantly find ourselves resorting to Him there, finding the grace that flows Him every day, finding our enjoyment in that place where He dwells. For His Name's sake.

SUNBURY

11 February 2001

(iii)

Richard Brown

Matthew 18: 1-3

I would like to say a few words as to coming to know Jesus as Saviour and as Lord. Coming to know Him as Saviour is essential for the great question of our *eternal* salvation. It has to do with our sins, the judgment to come, heaven and hell. Coming to know Him as Lord has to do with our *present* salvation here in this world. I would like to suggest that coming to know Jesus as Saviour includes understanding that He has given His life for you, whereas coming to know Him as Lord involves more the side in which we are called upon to entrust our lives to Him.

I would use this scripture to simply speak on that. I connect coming to Him as Saviour with what the Lord says as to 'being converted'; and then knowing Him as Lord with what He says as to 'becoming as little children'.

I will speak firstly of Him as Saviour, because clearly there can be nothing more important than the question of where we stand before God in relation to our sins. No matter is more important than where you and I are going to spend eternity. I would therefore ask whether you have ever been converted. I do not ask whether you agree with the gospel, or whether you are in fellowship, but have you ever been converted? That simply means 'changed'. Have you ever been changed by the word of God - changed perhaps in the way in which you view God, changed in your opinion of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, changed as to your judgment of yourself? I suppose the first point as to conversion is that we come to realise what we are in God's sight. Have you ever discovered that there is distance between you and God? I wonder if there is. Have you ever spoken to God? Or if you have, when was the last time you did? If you have never spoken to Him, or if it is a long time since you did, that would indicate that there is distance between you and God. What is it that brings in the distance between God and us? It is our sins. Because

God is holy. He cannot tolerate sin in His presence, so that if we sin it brings in distance between us and God. But I would suggest that that in itself is not sufficient. If you think about it, it is quite easy to say that we are all sinners. We have often heard it said. It does not, of itself, seem to have much effect on persons. But I wonder if you realise that whenever you have sinned you have offended God; and because you have offended Him, you are responsible to remove the distance between Him and you. To put it simply, you owe Him. If you are a guilty sinner you owe God. That is what is so serious about having sinned, that as having offended God, you and I are responsible to remove the distance that stands between us and Him. It is a principle that we are familiar with, (we were taught it by our parents) that if you injure or hurt somebody, if you take something that belongs to somebody else, you are responsible to make it up to them; and if you cannot do so you must bear the consequences. Well in a far greater and more serious way that principle applies in our relations with God. The fact is that we owe God because we have sinned against Him and if you cannot offer what will satisfy God in respect of your sins then you must suffer their consequences. Scripture tells us that "the wages of sin is death". If God does not judge sin He is less than righteous. Thus the predicament that each of us finds ourselves in, as persons who are guilty of many sins, is that we are responsible to God to remove the distance that has come in between us, by offering what will satisfy Him with respect to the passing by of our sins; because if it does not we must suffer the consequences of what we have done.

Now I think we know that there is nothing that we can offer to God as satisfaction for our sins. We have often heard it said, that not all the gold and silver in the world would be sufficient in God's sight to atone for even the smallest of our sins. But it is not simply that. The fact is that you and I, as guilty sinners, are incapable of understanding how offensive to God our sins are. As one man of God has said, "One sin of ours is more horrible to God than all of the sins of the world are to us". Sin has impregnated even our minds, and we are not capable of understanding what our sins are in God's

sight, let alone what would be required by Him if those sins were to be removed. Consequently, you can see that there is nothing we can offer to God. Therefore we are dependent on God's willingness to show us mercy. Unless God is prepared to show us mercy we must suffer for what we have done, and that can only mean eternal judgment. What a solemn point that is to come to in our souls. I wonder if you have come to it, dear friend? An important step if you are to be converted is the realisation that you *are* nothing and you *have* nothing that could ever satisfy God with respect to the passing by of your sins, and unless He is prepared to show you mercy, you must suffer the consequences of them.

If there is anyone in this room who feels the need of God's mercy, then you are the person we need to speak to about the Saviour. If you are feeling a need of mercy from God we want to tell you about one blessed Man who has taken up your cause with God and has undertaken to answer to God for your sins. Think of that for a moment, one Man - He is a real Man, this person, Jesus, of whom we speak - has undertaken to offer God a satisfaction for your sins. You say, How could He do it? The truth is this, He understood, as we cannot, what our sins are in God's sight because *He is God*. Glorious, is it not? He understood what would be required from God if our sins were to be put away to God's satisfaction because He is God. The glory of the gospel is that He came into the world with the specific object of saving sinners. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". He understood that the sentence of judgment lay upon you and me, and He was prepared to suffer that judgment in our place. He understood that the penalty of sin was death, and He was prepared to die in our place. He understood that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins and He was prepared to shed His. How glorious! Think of this glorious Saviour, a heavenly Man, coming down out of heaven to take the place of guilty sinners like you and me. I wonder if you know Him? One purpose of the gospel is that, if not already, you may be changed in your view of Christ, to understand what He has done for you, to lay hold of Him as your blessed substitute, the One who has answered

to God, and satisfied Him with respect to the passing by of your sins. So He says, "Unless ye are converted". Have you been converted, have you exercised personal faith in the Saviour and in His precious blood? Have you spoken to God about your sins? "Unless ye are converted".

Perhaps to illustrate we could look at Isaiah 53, which is a classic conversion chapter with very sweet and precious touches of Christ in it. It recounts, if you take its strict interpretation, the conversion of the remnant in a day to come. It speaks of the way in which the remnant of the Jews will have their eyes opened as to Christ. The Jews know about Jesus. If you ask them you will find that they know about Him, they know the things that He said, they know what claims are made in respect of Him; but as it says in verse 4, "we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted". The Jews looked at Jesus on the cross and thought He was suffering under the righteous punishment of God for things that He had done. They regarded Him as an impostor, as a blasphemer, as a rebel. They looked at the cross and said, We thought He was being punished by God for sins of His own. But then here comes the moment of conversion, "But he was wounded for *our* transgressions". What a moment! What an eye-opening to understand that He was suffering for them. Even as they thought in all their hatred towards Him that He was being punished for the things that He had done, in fact He was suffering in their place. What a glorious Saviour He is!

I love to look to the cross and see there, not the guilty sinner, not me, the one who was due to die, the one who had offended God, the one who had tried God's patience and deserved nothing but the severest of His judgment, but I see a blessed heavenly Man *in my place*, and I see that "Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all". What a point it is in our souls when we come to that; to see that the cross is the place where I should have been, but instead of me the guilty sinner, there I see a blessed Man who has offered to answer to God for my sins and to receive from God's hands everything that I deserve. Sometimes I sin so lightly, and yet Jesus

had to bear the burden and the pain of every single thing that I have done. He “bore our sins *in his body* on the tree”. All the burden and all the pain of the things that I have done was borne by Jesus personally while alive on the cross. God meted out upon His head His just judgment of sin. You say, Was there no mitigation because it was Jesus? Did God not hold back because it was the One who so pleased to Him? No, if He was to be a substitute for guilty sinners it required that He should bear the unmitigated wrath of God, *until God was satisfied*. Think of that tremendous cry that went up from the cross, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Can you understand, dear friend, that even as He uttered that cry He was receiving from God what you deserved as a guilty sinner? What a Saviour! I trust He means something to you. He has so exhausted the judgment of God, that God is able to freely forgive all those who put their trust in Him. I hope that we all have. That is conversion that we have to do with God as to our sins, that we turn to Him in repentance and in faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

So He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and was buried and rose again the third day. I think the truth is that Christ on the cross is what meets my conscience; Christ in the glory is what assures my heart. I understand that by raising Him from amongst the dead God is telling me that He is satisfied with Jesus. I see that in receiving Jesus with honours God is telling me that because He is completely satisfied with the work that He has done He has given Him the highest place. “We see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour”; God’s great testimony to His satisfaction with this blessed Person in His work. It assures my heart. You say, How can I be sure that all my sins have been dealt with? How can I be sure that maybe the smallest one or two have not been overlooked? I ask you, dear friend, Is God satisfied with Jesus? Well He must be, look at the place He has given Him. Would Jesus be there if one or two of my sins had been overlooked? Absolutely impossible! I look up and see my Saviour there, crowned with glory and honour, and I say God must be satisfied with Him; and if God is satisfied with Him then my sins have gone. And for those who put their trust in Him we can

be assured of this, on the testimony of God's word, that once our sins have been forgiven by God they can never be raised again. We have been forgiven, justified, and we shall never come under judgment. God gives us the blessed hope of going to be with the Lord Jesus when He comes or when we die. A precious hope for those who have put their trust in the Saviour.

If that is where it ends nothing more need be said. We would be in the same position as the malefactor on the cross who, in the eleventh hour of his life, was converted and went straight to heaven. It is not so with most of us. Most of us discover that after conversion we have a few years to go, and that we remain in this wicked world where Jesus died. We need salvation from it. We need salvation from the judgment to come, and we can be assured of that through the work of Jesus on the cross. But the simple fact is that we are still here in this wicked world, what is described in the Scriptures as an "evil world", and we need salvation from it. Therefore I would like to suggest to you the importance of coming to know Jesus as Lord. I give thanks if you know Him as your Saviour; I say again, that your eternal salvation hangs on it. In a sense there is nothing more important than that. But I would like to present to you this idea of knowing Him as Lord as the means by which you can be presently saved, saved here and now until that moment when He comes to take us to be with Himself.

The Lord Jesus speaks of 'becoming as little children'. I would like you to think about that in connection with knowing Him as Lord. It is true to say that knowing Him as Lord involves the subjection of our wills, involves coming under His authority - all these things are true, we cannot avoid that. But the Lord Jesus here speaks of becoming as little children. Children are meant to obey their parents and do what they say; but if you think of a child's relationship with its parents, we are not always emphasising obedience and authority. It is a relationship of love and affection normally, one in which a child would simply depend upon its parents. I would like you to think of that in connection with knowing Jesus as our Lord. If He is your Saviour, if you understand that this Person

who has died for you is now living in heaven, the question is, are you prepared to entrust your life to Him? If you have trusted Him with the eternal salvation of your soul, why should you not entrust Him with the direction and the planning of your life? I believe that the Lord Jesus would put in His appeal, put in His claim upon you afresh in the gospel preaching; because you will find that sooner or later you will have to make the decision for yourself in any case, and He would desire that you might make it now as He has your best interests at heart.

He speaks of becoming as little children and entering into the kingdom of the heavens. I would turn to a passage in 1 Samuel 22 to illustrate this thought of entering into the kingdom of the heavens. It is an incident in the life of David. It says, "And David departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And his brethren and all his father's house heard it, and they went down thither to him. And every one in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one of embittered spirit collected round him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men" (vv 1,2). I would like to use this scripture to illustrate what the Lord Jesus has in mind when He speaks of entering into the kingdom of the heavens. We know the background to this chapter is that Saul was the king of Israel, and he was a hard and unscrupulous man. His rule was hard. The Israelites were going through a hard time under him. The passage speaks of persons who were in distress and in debt and of an embittered spirit. That is like the world in which we live. It is governed by the will of man; which is what Saul represents. It is Satan's kingdom. Although outwardly it may have a fair appearance, it is still the place where Jesus died; and if He were to come back today and men were given the opportunity, they would again put Him to death, because men and women morally have not changed. In the midst of that - if you think of Israel under Saul as a picture of the world - was this cave where David was. David was a fugitive, he was on the run; but remember that some time before this he had been anointed by Samuel. And that is a picture for us of the Lord Jesus' present position, that He has been anointed by God.

Peter says in his preaching of Jesus that, “God has made Him both Lord and Christ”. This is a crucial point, because there are many believers who say they are looking forward to the day when the Lord Jesus will establish His kingdom on the earth, when He will reign a thousand years – what we speak of as the millennium – and truly it will be a very blessed time. But the fact is that He is king *already*, “God has made Him, both Lord and Christ”. David illustrates that, he had already been anointed by Samuel, as God’s king. These persons were feeling the harshness of Saul’s reign, the harshness of the world, and they collected round David. I would like to suggest to you that in that cave they entered into David’s kingdom. In a private, unseen, very small scale way, they discovered the principles on which David lived. They discovered in that cave the principles which David would one day apply to his reign over the whole of Israel. They were not the cream of society - debtors, distressed persons, bitter persons, persons who were conscious of having a need. They came to David and it says, you note the word, “he *became* a captain over them”. You might say, Why should they come to David? If you were a debtor in Saul’s kingdom, why should you go to David? David was on the run. But they discovered under David care and protection that could not be found anywhere else. I believe that illustrates in a simple way what it means to enter into the kingdom now.

You might say, What has this got to do with the glad tidings? I believe what it has to do with the glad tidings is this: there is salvation in it. There is present salvation in coming under the authority and the sway of Christ. I would illustrate the point further like this: only four hundred people gathered in the cave of Adullam; one person was not there who should have been. If there was one person who should have been in the cave of Adullam it was Jonathan. Think of his love for David; if ever there was a man who should have been with him it was Jonathan. Why was he not there? I present to you the case of Jonathan as perhaps a negative example of the fact that there is salvation in coming to know Jesus as Lord. Think of the life of Jonathan – he first came into contact

with David after David had killed Goliath, when it says, “his soul was knit with the soul of David”. He appreciated what David had done, and he represents a believer who has come to know Jesus as their Saviour. For a while David and Jonathan deepened in their link together. But it was not long before it became obvious that there was a distinction between the house of Saul and the circle in which David moved. Eventually David had to leave Saul’s house for fear of his life. This presented Jonathan with a terrible dilemma. The time came when David would have to go into rejection. The time came when Jonathan had two paths before him. Either he could follow David as a fugitive and an exile to be hunted like “a partridge on the mountains”, or he could return to Saul, his father’s house, where David was hated, but where nevertheless he, Jonathan, had a place. What a decision! Jonathan had the light of what David would be, he said, “Thou shalt be king over Israel and I shall be next to thee”. Jonathan knew what David was going to become, and here he was presented with this decision: should he follow David though the prospects did not look good or should he return to his father’s house? Dear friend, that decision that Jonathan had to make represents the decision which you and I and every believer is called upon at some point in their lives to make. Is it to be the world or Christ? At some point or other you will be called upon to make that decision. We urge you to make it tonight, and we urge you to make it for Christ. It says in 1 Samuel 20, “And he [David] arose and departed; and Jonathan went into the city” (v 42). That was Jonathan’s decision; he was not prepared to follow David into rejection. He returned to Saul’s house and he ended his life slain on Mount Gilboa. He lost his life as a result of this decision. That is why I say to you that coming to know Jesus as Lord involves your practical salvation. You will never lose your eternal salvation if you are trusting in the precious blood. Nothing can change that, no amount of back-sliding, or whatever circumstances may come into your life can change that, because it is based on the finished work of Christ. But your present salvation depends on entrusting your life to Christ in the assurance that He, and He alone, has your best interests at heart. So in the gospel He puts in His claim. Think of

this, if you have entrusted Him, this blessed Man, with the eternal salvation of your soul why should you not trust Him with the details of your life? Has He not proved by what He has been prepared to do for you, that He has your best interests at heart? Who has done more for you than He? I believe that the Lord Jesus would put in His claim for you in the gospel, and on His behalf we would urge you to make your decision for Him. If you have not made a decision before, or if you have made the wrong decision, we would urge you to make the decision for Him tonight, and discover for yourself that there is present salvation in it.

I press upon you the importance of coming to know Him as Saviour and as Lord. I make one simple point more before I close. I think you will find that invariably, wherever those two titles are put together in the Scripture the title 'Lord' is put first, "Lord and Saviour". I think the simple reason for that is this: you will never fully appreciate Jesus as your Saviour until you come to know Him as your Lord. I think some of us have proved that. Some of us, from our little experience, have proved that as a result of surrendering ourselves to Him we have grown in our appreciation of His glorious work, His precious sufferings, and the joy of knowing what He does for us in His present position, living on high for us. I trust that increasingly it may become the portion of each one of us here, for His Name's sake.

WALTON

20 May 2001