

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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JESUS ALONE

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1 Timothy 6: 17-19; Luke 7: 40-43; John 20: 11-13

The Lord Jesus says in John 10, “I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly” (v 10). Paul calls it “really life” in the scripture we read. This is what I would like to speak about.

There is no more miserable person than a believer who is backsliding, and I have a scripture for that. Jonah was a backslider. He was a prophet whose word had come to pass. He had prophesied and what he said came to pass (see 2 Kings 14: 25).

Then God told him to go to Nineveh, but he did not want to do that, he had someplace else to go. He headed to Tarshish – I think Tarshish is in principle the world. It is thought to be toward Spain in the Mediterranean. That is where he was headed; Nineveh was to the east, but he was going west!

He became more and more depressed and miserable the longer he was on that ship. God sent a great storm – He was going to have His way with him. Jonah had to confess to the men on the boat. He did not want to, but finally he had to witness, but then he was more miserable than ever. He came to the point where, we could say, he was ready to commit suicide, because he said, “throw me overboard and then it will be well with you”. What a point for a believer to come to! I trust there is no one here today whose Christian life has backslidden so far.

I read about these two women (they may be the same woman). Simon invited Jesus into his house for a meal, but was not at all sympathetic with Jesus; he wondered who this Man was. He did not know who He was, but this woman knew who He was. She slipped in when Simon was not looking. Something had touched her heart about Jesus. Something had transpired with her before she came in there. It says of Mary of Magdala, “from whom seven demons *had* gone out”, Luke 8: 2. This may be what happened before she went into the house. She brought this ointment; she

planned and premeditated what she would do. She had one person in mind, and it was not Simon, much to his disappointment. She had Jesus in her affections. She had only Jesus in mind. She came into the house for one specific purpose. Jesus tells us why. He says that “Her many sins are forgiven; for she loved much; but he to whom little is forgiven loves little”, Luke 7: 47.

How much do *you* love Jesus? Have you had many sins forgiven? This woman came in here because she loved much. She was prepared to do anything to be near Jesus. The burden of my exercise is that each of us gets through to the kind of life that is found in Jesus alone. The life of faith, that is the life that is found centred in Him. He must be first in our lives.

The subject of these meetings is stability. This woman, in John 20, is an example of one who gets through to stability. She goes to the tomb. She did not understand everything, but she went and wept. Put yourself in her position, standing at the tomb. It was the place where Jesus had lain. He was everything for her! She was nothing without Him, so she stood there weeping. She says, “... they have taken away my Lord”.

Peter had come and stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloths lying folded in their place. He had seen the order of the tomb. John came and stooped and went into the tomb, and he believed. He saw and believed. He and Peter went to their homes. Anyone of us might be like Mary, not fully understanding, and yet Jesus was everything to her. She did not want anything else! She said later, when she spoke to Jesus as the gardener, “tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away”. She could not have done it, but that is how she thought. Jesus was everything to her, and like the woman in Luke 7, the world was nothing.

What is it with us that causes us to hold on to the world? We continue to keep the world inside. It is attractive to us. Timothy was enjoined to speak to those who are rich in the present age. He is talking about being physically rich. It is true that there is no one in want here. In varying degrees we are all rich in the present age.

What committal will we make, or how will we change as having been to these meetings? What did we come here for? Was it for a good time, or to see our friends? Was it to get more for our heavenly deposit; something more to be laid up in heaven? We will find, if we put Jesus first, that He will become the whole reason for our life. It took her a few seconds to realise to whom she was speaking, and we can understand that. That is the way it was with Mary, but she got one of the most wonderful messages from Jesus.

Many times we come down hard on Mary, saying she was not intelligent. Through her tears she did not recognise Him, even though He was all she wanted. She stood and wept! He said, "Mary". When He says your name, you will know who He is. The tears disappeared as she turns around again and she said, "Rabboni" (my teacher). Then she understood. He says to her to carry this message, this wonderful message to "my brethren".

Paul says, "to do good, to be rich in good works, to be liberal in distributing, disposed to communicate of their substance, laying by for themselves a good foundation", 1 Tim 6: 18. Are we doing this, dear brethren? Have you put any gold bars in your heavenly treasure lately? Paul goes on to say, "that they may lay hold of what is really life". I would like to encourage you that there is that which is "really life". Jesus desires that we might have it "abundantly". There is a life that is outside of the world, and I would like everyone that is of accountable age to taste it. Go in for this kind of life – lay hold of what is "really life".

The writer of Hebrews uses the words "on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil", Heb 5: 14. That is, we have to form good habits. We talk about habits and about what is habit-forming. We need to form good habits – work at it! It is not all going to happen this weekend. We need to work at forming good habits. We spoke about weeknight meetings; they are a good habit. Prayer is another good habit – how important it is to have our continuing links with Jesus.

I trust what has been said will have touched us in relation to Jesus. The martyrs were mentioned in an earlier meeting. They have had a great place in my life. To think of persons who would burn at the stake for the name of Jesus. They were required by the church, or 'bishop somebody' to recant their faith in Jesus. Would they regard this as sound advice? They stood firm in their faith – that is the resolve we need today. When Mary was standing by the tomb nobody could have dragged her away. She wanted Jesus and nothing, nor no one else.

After today, I hope each of us will decide to commit ourselves to Jesus – no one but Him. I trust that would be so, particularly for the young people. It is so important because as being young you are forming habits and tastes now. The blurring of good and bad is ever more prominent, and in this environment you are developing tastes for things, which in the end will not be 'life'. If there is something that interests you trace it to its end. You may be amazed where some things end. Particularly music; Nebuchadnezzar used music to elevate himself to be an idol. The world uses music in the same way. It is very invasive and momentarily satisfying. I would urge you to think of the way you are going – what course your life is on. Is it leading you into a pursuit where Jesus can always be first? May it be so for His Name's sake.

CALGARY

July 2001

THE CROSS

David C. Brown

1 Corinthians 1: 18, 22-24; Galatians 2: 20; John 12: 32-33

At the preaching on Lord's Day the cross of Christ was brought before us. I was thinking of the significance and the importance of the cross. Scripture mentions the cross in a number of ways, and our brother who has just spoken referred to it as the place where we would learn God's heart. We sing that sometimes,

O the cross of Christ is wondrous!

There I learn God's heart to me

(Hymn 212)

But it is also the place of shame. Galatians refers to "the scandal of the cross", and from what the apostle says it is important that the scandal of the cross should remain. He says that if he preached circumcision "then the scandal of the cross has been done away", Gal 5: 11. There is shame related to the cross that has been part of the enemy's work throughout the dispensation to try to remove. We get gold crosses or ornamented crosses that would take away what belonged to it in a distinctive way in shame. The scripture mentions Jews and Greeks. They had their own ways of execution. They did not use the cross. But when the Lord came to be before the judgment seat, crucifixion was what was demanded. It would be a mark that the Jewish people did not recognise Him even as of their nation. It was not the normal way in which punishment would be inflicted on one of the nation, but their cry was "Crucify, crucify Him".

There is something that is particularly the answer to man in the flesh, which has been demonstrated on the cross. In the shame and the indignity of it that man is totally condemned in the sight of God. Think of the extremity of what there was in the cross. No-one in natural thinking, Jewish or Greek, would give any place to the cross. It is God's way, "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness". You could think of those who surrounded the cross – many categories and characters of persons surrounded the cross – to whom it seemed only an evidence of the foolishness of the

One that was there. That is what the Jews would think. That is what the Romans would think as they saw what to them was the end of everything that could be hoped for in that blessed One who was there. To them it was an end, foolishness. But it was in that place that He “bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2: 24); He took that place. Crucified “on wood” (Acts 5: 30 footnote) refers to the weakness and the indignity of it. We might, according to one way of thinking, the Jewish, religious mind, ask for signs, or from the Greek kind of mind we might ask for wisdom, but they are all ended at the cross. So that “we preach”, Paul says, “Christ crucified”, to our Jewish, religious minds an offence, and to nations, foolishness.

There is nothing in it for man unless God has acted in him. The weakness there was, and the degradation, “but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks” we have one Man, “Christ God’s power and God’s wisdom”. God is able to call persons out and indeed, to make both Jews and Gentiles one by the cross, as Ephesians presents it. So you can see what had been presented in answer to the self-aggrandisement of the saints in Corinth. In the wisdom of God Paul’s ministry prior to all these things coming in was “Jesus Christ and *him* crucified” (1 Cor 2: 2), that character of Man and Him crucified. “For I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and *him* crucified”. How wise God had been in providing such a ministry *before* the decline and *before* the turning aside that there was in Corinth.

Paul then, in Galatians, relates and applies the cross to himself, and each one of us needs help to do this. God, of course, has condemned sin in the flesh. He has done that, and He has done it at the cross. But that is not only to be a theoretical matter to us. I know I need help in this, “I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, *I*, but Christ lives in me”. What there had been, what there was that was according to man and according to flesh ended there, condemned at the cross. So that Paul was not looking for anything of that man to be of any pleasure to God. And not only not of pleasure to God, but not of any good to himself. Nothing positive would come out of that man, the man that had been finished and

crucified with Christ, “and no longer live, *I*, but Christ lives in me”, a risen and a glorified Man lived in him. He could speak with such depth of feeling, “I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me”. How he would value the Son of God who “has loved me and given himself for me” increasingly as he appreciated the effect of the crucifixion, “I am crucified with Christ”.

He ends up this epistle by saying, “But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world”, Gal. 6: 14. He had connections with both the Jewish religiousness and the Greek philosophy. He could have been great in the world, but he says, “the world is crucified to me, and I to the world”. In his mind and his heart he gave the world that extreme treatment that had been meted out to Christ.

But the cross is also the place and area where the Son of Man was glorified. I think that is related to what we read in John 12, “and I, if I be lifted up out of the death, will draw all to me”. In the next chapter, “When therefore he” – that was Judas – “was gone out Jesus says, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him”, John 13: 31. There was never another man glorified in this way. There is a distinctiveness in the glory of Christ which is seen at the cross, and that is what attracts, “will draw all to me”. It is not drawing what is Jewish or what is Greek, it is drawing what is according to His own mind, a whole new, living order of persons who are drawn to Christ, who have a centre in Him. We have spoken of the scandal of the cross and we have to remember that, but we know what has been said, that it was morally impossible for Him to die on the earth on which He had glorified God. He was lifted up, lifted up out of the earth. He emphasises, “out of the earth”, and in the sufferings and the sustaining of the judgment of God, and the sustaining of all that He had to bear there, there was a distinctiveness of glory that would draw all to Him.

Well, how full and great the cross of Jesus. I can only bring a few thoughts and impressions, but I do so, as feeling for myself the

need that the cross should have its full impact upon me. I trust there will be help in it for each one of us. For His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

12 June 2001

BUILDING

Tim VanderHoek

1 Corinthians 1: 18, 21; Genesis 2: 18, 21-24; Matthew 16: 15, 16, 18

(to assembly); 1 Peter 2: 3-5; Matthew 7: 24-27

I have before me the thought of building. It is a great thought of what God is building and how He is building it. I began with that verse in 1 Corinthians 1 which is not on the theme of building, but I was thinking about it as to how God is building. He is building by the preaching of the word of God, the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour of sinners, and this gives us how it is received. It is received in one of two ways: we either receive the message of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and are saved, brought into the knowledge of the Lord as Saviour, brought to God, or we view it as foolishness. We know how that, as it is presented to men, they would view the preaching of the gospel as foolishness and if they do not come to know the Lord as their Saviour, that view takes them into a place of eternal judgment.

I thought the verse in 1 Corinthians was introductory to the thought of how we would go about in God's way of building and of how God is building: He is building by the preaching of the word of God concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness". It is "the word of the cross", the first thing that we have to come to as we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, come to the realisation that the Lord Jesus in His death on the cross was the sacrifice of sin. We would come to know Him as our Substitute, as the One who went into death for me. We have to be able to say that the Lord Jesus Christ died for me, otherwise the preaching of "the word of the cross" is but foolishness. So in what He is building, God is bringing us to the beginning point of blessing, that is, our introduction into blessing is by hearing "the word of the cross", hearing of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

I would begin speaking of what God is doing in building in the great type that we find in Genesis 2. We have Adam being alone, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we see in God's purpose, how He would bring in a helpmate. A helpmate would include those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. We see in this type that there is a need for "a helpmate, his like", someone who would be consistent with Him, someone who would be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

So here we have Adam who was caused to go into a deep sleep and as he slept, one rib was taken and his helpmate was built. It is a very interesting expression that "Jehovah Elohim built the rib that he had taken from Man into a woman". It is the initial thought of building, what has been built and what God is building. It is in contrast, of course, to what man builds later on. We know that what man builds would not be for God. In fact, it is said of Cain that he went out and built a city. He went out from the presence of God.

But here we see God's purpose, in type, of building what would be a companion to the Lord Jesus Christ, Adam a type of the Lord Jesus Christ going into this deep sleep, no doubt a type of the Lord Jesus Christ going into death. We would think of that time when the Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross into those three hours of darkness.

The world was clothed in darkness. It was such an awful scene that man's eyes had to be shut out. We think of that time as that deep sleep. The Lord Jesus Christ went into death and was laid in the grave, but we know Him as living Saviour and that is what gives us the ability to speak to Him as our Saviour, that He is not in the grave, but He is risen and we can speak of Him as our Saviour, *my* Saviour.

So it is like Adam here, the type of the Lord Jesus Christ who went into this deep sleep but did not stay there and when he awoke from this deep sleep, God could bring to him "a helpmate, his like". It is such a great thought of what is built and what is being built. We know it is a current thing: the Lord Jesus Christ has not yet come for us; His companion, His helpmate is still being built. The word of God goes forth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour of sinners and we are thankful we know that ones are still coming to know the Lord as Saviour. We have no knowledge as to the time when the

message will no longer go forth because the house will be full. The Lord Jesus Christ will come for us and we will be taken up to be with Him but as to our knowledge at this time, we know that we would still go on in the preaching of the word of God whether it is in a public place like this room or to co-workers or neighbours or companions at school or whatever. The work is still going on and God is still building this companion, this "helpmate, his like". He brings to Adam here this one that was taken out of his side, the woman, and Adam says, "This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh". Just think of that as a type of how the Lord Jesus Christ views the One who is being built, that bride for Himself.

And we see the strength of the words, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh". That is a strong word, "leave his father and his mother": it is not just go away for a time, but "leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh".

Think of the greatness of the thought that in type here we have the Lord Jesus Christ and His bride as being "one flesh". There is no one else in this relationship spoken of here. He has left his father and his mother and he cleaves to his wife; "and they shall become one flesh". Think of the greatness of the thought of the Lord Jesus Christ and how He would cleave to His wife, how He would have His bride before Him as being one. We think of what God is building in this way, back to that expression, "Jehovah Elohim built the rib that he had taken from Man into a woman"; and so that building in type is still going on today through the preaching of the word of God.

We see then perhaps another aspect of building in Matthew 16, another expression where the Lord Jesus Himself says, "And on this rock I will build my assembly". Well, there is quite a bit in this portion. I will not attempt to say that I understand all of the portion, but we know how we even referred to it recently where Peter answers this question, "But ye, who do ye say that I am?" And Peter was given this revelation of the Father, and Peter's response was, "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God". The Person of Christ was before him. He could make this statement: "*Thou* art the

Christ". He was the anointed One. The Lord Jesus Christ was the One who came into this world, was walking amongst men. He was the only One who could satisfy God in His righteous requirements. He was that perfect Man.

Divine perfection in a Man! (Hymn 20)

It is an expression that I hold very dear because it expresses who the Lord is:

Divine perfection in a Man!

And here Simon Peter could express that, "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God".

Well, that brings before us this thought of living, the living God. We do not speak of a Lord Jesus who is in the grave. We speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as ascended and on high, at the right hand of the Father. This is a living matter that we speak of. The Lord Jesus is still building His assembly. He speaks of it: "on this rock I will build my assembly". The assembly is not complete and we can be very thankful for that. The assembly is still being built and it is this testimony as to the Person of the Christ, who He is, that the Lord Jesus could speak of – "on this rock I will build my assembly".

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is before us in this testimony as to His Person and the belief on Him as our Saviour is how this is being built: "I will build my assembly". There is no one else before us but the Lord Jesus Christ. We think about that expression, "my assembly". We think of the feelings of the Lord Jesus and how He would have His assembly before Him – it is "my assembly" – and the nearness that there would be to the Lord Jesus. When we say that is my something-or-other, there is a thought of possession, that comes into it, and the assembly is for Christ. Think of what is being built through the preaching of the gospel and souls coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour! This is what is being built. It is His assembly. And when we think of how He would view the assembly, how He would value the assembly, His love goes out to the assembly, how we would reciprocate with our own love because we are His assembly: "I will build my assembly". There is a sweetness

when we think of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and how we have been brought to Him and know Him as our Saviour.

Peter was in the good of that. It is touching to read his epistles from that standpoint. We know, of course, his failures and yet Peter brings before us someone who was very feeling. Perhaps his emotions got him in trouble but he was very feeling and you can see in his epistles how he would have a real sense of this living entity that was being built: "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God". And so in 1 Peter 2 when he is writing, he speaks of who the Lord is, "that the Lord is good" – "if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good". The way we do that is to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. We would not know the Lord Jesus in any other way as good unless we come to know Him as our Saviour. There will be a time when He will be the Judge and it would be a terrible thing to have to stand before the Lord Jesus as Judge. But now we can stand before Him as His own if we accept Him as our Saviour.

We have in 1 Peter 2, "To whom coming, a living stone", speaking of the Lord Himself, "cast away indeed as worthless by men". This is how the Lord Jesus was received in this world and it is a very sad comment. When the Lord Jesus comes back in the future, He will be rejected again. It is very sad when all the activities of men so often bring His name in and yet it is done in a very commercial way. We think of the season just passed and how commercialised things have become, using the Lord's name, and yet He is the One who was "cast away indeed as worthless by men".

Well, those of us who have come to know Him as our Saviour can value Him, to know Him as "the preciousness" and it is put here in verse 7, that the living stone is our Saviour. Now those of us who have come to know Him are referred to as "living stones". We think of what is being built, a house, a spiritual house. It is a different thought from the assembly, but my thought before us this afternoon was just to have what God is building and how He is building it: He is building it through the preaching of the word of God so that we might come to know Him, the Lord Jesus, as Saviour and we might then be

referred to as “living stone”, those that “are being build up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”.

Think of the greatness of that house! In a sense you could say that there would be nothing else capable of bringing these spiritual sacrifices to God except as those living stones who have come to that place by Jesus Christ. Through knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, we then can look on to that time when God will be all in all. There is a hint here of eternity when we will be able “to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God”, in a complete way, unhindered. We do that today, as having come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we “offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God”. It is a living thing. I think this thought of life is a very important thought to get hold of. It is not something that is abstract.

It is not something distant from us but something that we live, something that is our every day thought-process, that we are living stones as those who have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

I thought of this parable – from the youngest to the oldest we can understand this building that is spoken of in Matthew 7. We are building on a rock or we are building upon the sand. These two different ones are put in contrast to one another. Ultimately the message of the word of God goes out, the testimony as to the Lord Jesus Christ goes out, and each one of us will make the decision to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. And so we have these two persons that are building, building in different ways. This is not from God’s side now. What we have had before us has been from God’s side, but this is from our side. What are we building and where are we putting our foundation? We have this one who built his house upon the rock. Well, in type, and I would like to apply it that way, we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. We have come to know Him as that One who would be the living stone.

We have come to put our trust by faith in Him. We know Him as our Saviour. We know Him as the One who went into death and was our Substitute. We can say, He is my Saviour, and so that is the rock

upon which we will build. So this one who built his house upon a rock stands. Think of all that will occur in judgment. As to the preaching, we take up this type as our salvation and that which would secure us a firm foundation. We have in one of our hymns that we have a secure foundation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But here it is in contrast to those that reject the Lord Jesus Christ. What they are building on is sand. We have all been at the seashore, I am sure, and built sandcastles and perhaps in other ways know that sand is not stable. So when the judgment comes, there will not be the ability to stand. I think that is what is indicated when the Lord says, "and its fall was great". There are really no other words to describe what the lost soul will come into – "its fall was great". It is really beyond words in a sense. I would like to apply it just in that way. But those that do not accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour will come under a great judgment, be cast into the lake of fire. Now the person who is a great hope that we hold out to lost souls is the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The place of eternal judgment was, as we read, prepared for Satan and his angels. So there is a way of escape: the Lord Jesus Christ went into death that there might be a basis for the forgiveness of sins. So the good news of salvation goes out to every soul in this world so that there would be the ability to come to know the Lord as Saviour and come into eternal blessing, to become part of what God is building in type in Genesis 2, "a helpmate, his like", to become part of what, we might say, the Lord is building in these living stones, built upon Himself as the great foundation, the building being that which could offer up acceptable praise, and then become that great display in the millennium. And then in the eternal day in Revelation 21 it speaks too of God tabernacling with men. We can only get to that point as having come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

At the end of Ephesians 2 we have what we can enjoy today, as being "built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit", (v 22).

Perhaps we should read from verse 19 for the full connection because this is a lovely thought of building as well, "So then ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the

saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the cornerstone, in whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit". Just think of the greatness of what God is building in this day and how we have the privilege of speaking of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. The One who is the basis for the place of blessing as we are brought into this building, and as a living entity, we are being "built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit". The greatness of what God is doing now we can be part of as having come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

So we are encouraged as we speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and that we in some way contribute to that building, contribute to what God is doing, building that which would be not only pleasurable to the Lord Jesus but a habitation for Himself. May God bless His word!

DENTON

14 March 1999