

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 351

June 2002

CONTENTS

[DIVINELY DRAWN](#)

[PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD](#)

Edited and Published by:

E.C.Burr

50 Red Post Hill London SE24 9JQ

DIVINELY DRAWN

Hosea: 11: 1-4; John 6: 60-64; 17: 22-26

G.C.McK. I was thinking of the way that divine love has drawn us, drawn us out of the world to Christ, and draws us into a realm where divine love has its own satisfaction. The scripture in Hosea alludes to the drawing of the people out of Egypt. Whether they would realise at the time that love lay behind that might be a question.

The prophet says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son". They were drawn with "bands of a man" – we know something of that – and "cords of love". We have been drawn, drawn to Christ. The reference to a man would refer typically to Christ, and allude, I suppose, to the service of Moses and Aaron. The people were affected so as to be drawn out, and caused to eat too. The service that proceeded towards them was to draw them from Egypt and to sustain them and give them a sense of divine care: "I gently caused them to eat". These are wilderness matters, experimental matters. There was a time when they murmured and Aaron had to speak to them. I suppose it was the "bands of a man" that operated then. Moses spoke to Aaron, and Aaron spoke to the people and they turned toward the wilderness and saw the glory of Jehovah (Exod. 16: 10), and the manna was provided, the manna that is alluded to in John 6. The people were thus helped and served.

We have to link that kind of exercise with the deeper and more profound matters, the heavenly and spiritual matters that the Spirit of God would draw us into, especially in a day like this, so that we have in John 6 the Lord speaking of the Father's activities. No doubt we can get help together as we make way for the Holy Spirit as to how the Father has operated, drawing to Christ, involving a direct dealing with us. Persons have heard, it says here, from the Father Himself (v 45). Jesus then goes on to speak not only of the manna, but also of the Lord Jesus Himself, His flesh and His blood. There seems to be leading-on here. There is the food to sustain life. Life has come into this gospel and now there is food to sustain life in regard to a

living order of things. The “living Father” is mentioned in verse 57, and it leads on to “the Son of man ascending up where he was before”. It is a question of how far we might be drawn in our affections and intelligence, whether we might be drawn into what is beyond flesh and blood, beyond what is natural, and whether we might be ready for heavenly things, “the Son of man ascending up”. You can see the leading that is there. Others are going away, but “If then ...?” It is a kind of challenge to us. John’s gospel generally has that trend in it, the way that our affections are gathered up by Christ and moved towards the Father.

His prayer in the seventeenth chapter came to mind because clearly as the Lord prayed in the audience of His disciples, as they listened to that priestly prayer, it must be that their affections were drawn into another realm, because the Lord Jesus, as He proceeds, deals not only with the question of how the saints are to be preserved in the testimonial sphere down here, but also from where we read He begins, I think, to speak of the heavenly things.

It would be good to have some sense of this, that divine love is constraining us and helping us, tenderly helping us, to move, wherever we might be. If we are still in Egypt, the Lord would help us to move out of Egypt into the wilderness and then into the land itself.

J.D.G. It would be of interest to us all here: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son”. God takes account of us in that way: “for ye are all God’s sons by faith in Christ Jesus”, Gal 3: 26. “But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father”, Gal 4: 6. He had something in mind for you, had He not?

G.C.McK. Yes, exactly, “by faith in Christ Jesus”. You might say “faith in Christ Jesus” is an initial matter but immediately the thought comes in that God has sonship in mind, not simply our salvation. He has a status for us in mind, and then, as you say, the Spirit given as power that we might enter into that relationship and enjoy it. The

Spirit is active in this, moving our hearts towards the Father, both in Galatians and in Romans.

J.D.G. What you have drawn attention to is the great matter of His love. He loved him. God loves us as sons. That is why He has given us “the Spirit of His Son”.

G.C.McK. Quite so. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him”, before the divine operations had proceeded far, you might say – when he was just a child. It shows divine consideration and I think we ought to encourage one another. The young people might feel sometimes that these things seem beyond them but those of us who are older feel that very much too, but there is a tenderness, a consideration and a comfort in knowing that divine love will draw us into this, as we are amenable.

J.M. Is the Lord so attractive that He draws us? I was thinking of the disciples when they came in contact with the Lord, it says, “leaving all they followed him”, Luke 5: 11.

G.C.McK. Well, it is a question of attraction. Of course, from one point of view the gospel is a question of compulsion. We have to be compelled to come into the house because naturally we resist, but divine grace has its compelling way with us, and then our affections become engaged. As our affections become engaged, I think the power of attraction begins to hold us, begins to draw us.

J.M. It says in the Song of Songs, “Draw me, we will run after thee!” (ch 1: 4). I feel it is impressive how you are drawn and then you start to run. That is a fine matter. Peter speaks about those that run “to the same sink of corruption” (1 Pet 4: 4), but we do not run in that way.

G.C.McK. Divine drawing is going on all the time. It is a whole process: divine activity is all to that end. It is all leading upward and into this realm. We are drawn to the Supper by affection for Christ.

The scripture you are quoting in the Song of Songs raises the question whether we are ready to be drawn. Do we come to the Supper as drawn by love, or is it some kind of formality? It would be a poor thing if it were just a formality. There must be some drawing

power there, and then we are tested as we are present. Just how ready are we? “Draw me, we will run after thee!” How quickly do we run?

W.M.G. Would you say a little more as to what you said about Aaron in regard to this passage? It says, “but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love”. You were thinking of the “bands of a man” relating to Aaron?

G.C.McK. God used vessels to appeal to His people. He used Moses in a peculiar way and, together with him, Aaron; they would typify Christ. There was a mediatorial side of things which would bring the truth to bear on the saints The Lord Jesus is the great Mediator. Then there is the priestly side in Aaron that would consider for us and appeal to us. There is an affectionate touch in the thought of a priest, I think. What Moses and Aaron were personally had an effect on the people. They conveyed something of divine thoughts and compassions and feelings, and so the people were drawn. They were considered for by persons who were leaders among them and who drew them, and I think they typified Christ. Would that be fair, do you think?

J.D.G. Yes, I think so. It is good to see it set out in type for us because we can understand the features of humanity and expressions of love in these persons.

G.C.McK. We can. Moses is a type, of course, but still we can dwell on him and think of what came out in him, not simply as a type but what was formed in that man in his humanity, because it was after Christ. He says an extraordinary thing – God would raise up a prophet unto them like him (Deut 18: 15). What an honour accorded to someone in scripture that could so represent Christ.

D.S. It says here, “I gently caused them to eat”. That is what Moses did in the wilderness. That is what the Lord does at the Supper perhaps. You get a little food and that draws you back week after week, feeding on Christ.

G.C.McK. Very good. The yoke is taken off the jaws. We do not want to be in bondage. We want to have a sense of liberty and the

gospel and Christ Himself would bring us into that. Then being caused to eat is very important. Divine Persons would *cause* us. It is part of the attraction, part of the divine operation in the drawing, that we are given to eat food that attracts us and builds us up in another constitution.

G.A.B. We have been looking at Exodus in our city readings and these early chapters, perhaps up to about chapter 16, might, do you think, represent the period when Israel was a child? There is abundance of grace to meet the early experiences in the child.

Responsibility comes in further on, but there is something very precious about these early days when the manna is provided and every need is met – the springing well, and so on.

G.C.McK. Yes, in infinite divine grace. They murmur and it is not taken up against them. Later on things are taken up against them because they have become men, you might say. They have taken on responsibility and God cannot pass things by, but when we are young, God is gracious with us and would help us to enter into things, help us to walk. Think of God teaching Ephraim to walk. We might say, how am I going to be a Christian, how am I going to move in this pathway that is leading out of this world to the Father, how am I going to take up the pathway practically? Well, God will teach you to walk. Romans teaches us to walk. Other scriptures help us to walk in the power of the Spirit.

D.C.B. I was thinking of the earlier reference in this prophet, “I will allure her” (chap 2: 14). That is the greatness of the attractiveness of the Person, and especially that is by way of recovery so if there has been any failing or any falling back to what we were previously, there is still the attraction, the allurement that is in Christ to bring us back.

G.C.McK. Very good, yes. I thought of reading that scripture. What a powerful word, “allure”. We often speak of the allurements of the world, but think of the allurements of Christ! Think of the attractiveness that is in that Man that would lead us into the wilderness where there is nothing to cater for the flesh. “Speak to

her heart” suggests that there is affection there and God can work with us in recovery, and bring about a result “as in the days of her youth”, chap 2: 15.

G.B. “For the love of the Christ constrains us”, 2 Cor 5: 14. It was the fact that He died. I was thinking of what you referred to yesterday as to the manner of their going out as fortified with the lamb.

G.C.McK. Quite so, so we can take into our minds all that transpired at that time, not only the destruction of Egypt, Egypt coming down in the judgment, (really, I suppose, in their own souls and consciences Egypt was destroyed in that sense) but they were being built up too by the ministrations of Moses and Aaron and, as you say, given good food. That would be the beginning, I suppose, of being gently caused to eat such food as the Passover lamb.

R.T. The yoke is removed in view of that, not of saying something or saying a lot but of eating? Would there be a moral order in that?

G.C.McK. I do not suppose an animal can eat too well if it has a yoke on its jaws. So it is preparatory. Go on.

R.T. It says of Isaiah that he “saw his glory and spoke of him”, John 12: 41.

G.C.McK. I think that is what it is, the yoke drawn off, so we have liberty. There is no sense of burden in our spirits and we are able to eat. Isaiah did more than that, as you were saying. He was stirred in his heart to speak of Christ. Isaiah is quoted in John’s gospel. It is interesting to see the affinity between writers of the books of the Bible. In John’s writings in the gospel he shows great affinity with John the Baptist, for example, because of the place that the greatness of Christ had assumed in John the Baptist’s view. He also quotes Esaias in a most sympathetic way as if understanding the feelings of a prophet who was appealing with all the compassions of God to a people who were resisting. It is interesting to see that scriptures are one whole in that way, not only in the letter and terms, but in the spirit of them. It is the same Spirit that indited them and the same Spirit that helped the writers.

J.T.B.(Ed.) It was one of the great points of His crucifixion: “I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me”, John 12: 32. Is that ever a point of magnetism, do you think, that Christ draws us in that way?

G.C.McK. Yes, He does, whatever our need and our state. What a sight that is, divine love expressed and expressed in such a way as to make it possible for me to be drawn and not repelled even though I am a sinner, because that One who is lifted up is the One who is dealing with my sins.

J.T.B.(Ed.) I think too of the cords: He was bound, was He not? That the cords might be released from us required that He should be bound: “bind the sacrifice with cords, – up to the horns of the altar”, Ps 118: 27. Very affecting that, is it not?

G.C.McK. It is indeed. He was bound. What a sight that was! Men laid hands on Him. That is touching. We should go through these scenes, I think, in our affections as to how men treated Christ. Then, of course, He was bound too in the sense of the constraints of divine love.

J.T.B.(Ed.) I wondered as to the sacrifice being bound up with cords – up to the horns of the altar, He was really bound to the will of God.

G.C.McK. It was like the ram caught by its horns in the thicket (Gen 22: 13). He was committed fully. So the altar had horns, speaking of its power, but the sacrifice bound there would suggest complete devotion to the will of God. It would test us: a sacrifice tests us enough, but what about a sacrifice bound?

J.R.C. I was thinking of what you said about John the Baptist. He did not resent the fact that these two disciples of his were attracted to Christ.

G.C.McK. Quite so. It must have been a peculiar experience he had because he was looking into and admiring something that personally went beyond what he had part in. He belonged to another dispensation. Yet he saw others, and was glad to see others, attracted. We have the privilege of entering into these things. “But

he who is a little one in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than” John the Baptist, Matt 11: 11. What a privilege we have! Are we going to remain outside all this? Are we going to kick against it?

J.R.C. The Lord just said very gently to them, “What seek ye?” (John 1: 38), so they spent the rest of the day with Him.

G.C.McK. Quite so. They come into a settled realm: “Come and see”, John 1: 39. I think there is a directness about God’s dealing with us. “Come and see” comes into John’s gospel more than once, does it not? You have to find out for yourselves. Not only did the woman in John 4, for example, say, “Come, see” (v 29) but the men of the city eventually said, we have heard Him for ourselves. Things in John are learned directly. We get that in John 6, hearing of the Father Himself. That is an encouragement that God would have direct dealings with us.

J.D.G. Open up John 6 to us, what you have in mind: “No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him”. It is a wonderful day when you learn that secret.

G.C.McK. Quite so. Of course, you might say I was drawn to Christ by my need, and that is the way we come. We come the road of need, of necessity, seeking a Saviour, seeking mercy, but then John says there was something more happened than that. There was something to do with divine counsels and *divine* need. If the Father is drawing to Christ, would it be that lying behind that is the Father’s love for Christ and what He wishes to make of Him?

J.D.G. I was thinking too of the Father’s affections towards sons, “out of Egypt I called my son”. Here He is drawing them. It is sonship that is in mind, is it not? “The Father himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for me”, John 16: 27. The Lord was indicating there that sonship was in mind for them.

G.C.McK. Quite so: sonship was in view. Not that, as we know, John develops sonship on our side but you can see the whole movement is in that direction as we begin to see what the glory of sonship is in Christ and what the divine thought was. “The Father who has sent me draw him” is a direct divine intervention.

G.A.B. Does the Father draw us so that He might give us to Christ? In chapter 17 He says, "They were thine, and thou gavest them me", v 6. It is one of the last remarks Mr Darby made before the Lord took him: 'I have dwelt much on the fact that I am the Father's gift to Christ'.

G.C.McK. That is divine ownership and these transactions you speak about are very precious and very profound: "They were thine". We are His as redeemed but that is not what that scripture is speaking about: "They were thine". That is, they were the Father's in purpose, and then the great transactions have proceeded in view, as you say, of being drawn to Christ and then Christ bringing them to the Father. It is very wonderful to think of the two divine Persons thus operating, ourselves the objects of divine operations.

M.C. Is there a touch of sovereign grace, the Father's own touch, in this: "Every one that has heard from the Father himself, and has learned of him, comes to me". It seems a very intimate thought. Could you say more about it?

G.C.McK. Yes, the Lord Jesus quotes the prophets to reinforce what you are saying. He says to the Jews, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God" so you can see clearly that what is in mind is that there is going to be a dispensation in which divine Persons are having to do with individuals. That feature marks John's gospel: the glory of divine Persons comes out in it most wonderfully and yet how They have to do with individuals comes out. "Every one that has heard from the Father himself, and has learned of him, comes to me". You might say you would find it hard to explain how you know certain things and how you were drawn to Christ, but you learn that the Father has really been operating in your heart and mind.

T.L. I know the setting is slightly different but is this a similar thought to being "taken ... into favour in the Beloved", Eph. 1:6? The "taken ... into" would be drawn to all the Father's appreciation of Christ and then your place of standing there. Would that be right?

G.C.McK. Yes; that section in Ephesians 1 gives, I think, the divine objective, what is destined for us. It runs along with some of the things we have read, "that we should be holy and blameless before him in love" (v 4), and then, as you say, "taken us into favour in the Beloved". I suppose what we are saying about sonship would help us as to that – the Beloved. *He* is the Beloved and we are taken into favour in Him; we have sonship in Him.

J.D.G. I was wondering whether "comes to me" is more than initial. We come to Christ, speaking practically, as a Saviour, but do you think the Father still draws us to that blessed Man as we go on in our Christian experience and there are glories that we never thought about before we come into their blessing, such as the One who is building the assembly?

G.C.McK. There is the impossibility of anyone coming except the Father draws him, which would seem to include what is initial, because otherwise no one could come at all, but then you can see that the whole matter of drawing is something that proceeds. It is not just one event. There is a constant drawing and I think you see in the Lord's teaching in this section that kind of thing. How far on are we going to move? I am sure the Father would operate in that regard, the living Father.

J.D.G. That is what I was thinking. In this chapter there are persons who go away back. They really went out of the area of the Father's drawing.

G.C.McK. Exactly

J.D.G. The Father would helpfully keep drawing us to Christ. He would do that, would He not?

G.C.McK. I think He would. He would attach us to Him. Indeed, that comes out in Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" The question arose, What else could you do? You get the impression when Peter speaks that he is more attached to the Lord than ever through this experience.

D.C.B. Is the Spirit part of the process in drawing? I wondered if Genesis 24 gave us an example of it, if we can think of Rebecca individually. It is the father who institutes the whole matter that there should be a person secured for the son.

G.C.McK. Yes, I think that in itself would be a fruitful area to enquire into. The Spirit in type does that there by describing something of the attractiveness of Isaac, including his place in his father's affections. That comes into it too, does it not? And then his wealth and everything has been given into his hand and so on. I think it is on the line of receiving of mine and announcing it to you (John 16: 14). I think the Spirit is occupied in that kind of activity, the Father being behind it, but to attract us to Christ. Then as to what was said as to the spirit of sonship, the Spirit active in drawing us out in our affections. You took part to the Spirit this morning. Have you any more thoughts as to it?

D.C.B. No, but if we just see the attractiveness of the Spirit's operations in that chapter and His knowledge. We sang:

Thou dost know the Father's feelings (Hymn 121).

The Father's feelings are behind *all* that we have here, His feelings of affection for the Son that He would draw persons that the Son should be magnified by these persons attached to Him.

G.C.McK. So that everything that the Spirit does would have these feelings in mind so that what He engenders in *my* heart is bringing about what is suitable in view of the *divine* heart, the divine affections. What a level of things He is operating on, you might say, because these are holy matters when we speak of divine affections.

E.W.J. It is interesting what is being said about the Spirit. There is a peculiar blending of what God is doing behind the scenes – is that what you have in mind? – in *causing* us. Some of us know what it is to be caused to come into things. I was thinking about the servant.

The servant came to the household of Rebecca in Genesis 24: “And her brother and her mother said, Let the maiden abide with us some days ...” and in type the Spirit says, “Do not hinder me” and she is in accord with the Spirit: “Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I

will go” (vv 55,56,58). I think there is a beautiful cohesion, the work of God and the result of it in my soul. Do you think that would be right?

G.C.McK. So the work of God is beautifully co-ordinated. We know our experience is mixed. We know the ups and downs and the failures and all the rest, but there is a progressive line in our histories that will come to a conclusion, and in that I can see that the divine operations are co-ordinated. You find the servant praying and being so thankful too that he had been led to the house of his master’s brethren. It is co-ordination. But then the other side is, is there something in us that is responsive? Are we ready for it?

E.W.J. I was thinking about Hosea, “And I it was that taught Ephraim to walk”. We go back and think of Ephraim and Manasseh. His name means ‘double fruitfulness’ as if there was a result for God from the heart. I think there may be results with us here. We think of the young people here. Do they sit down and consider, what is for God in my life?

G.C.McK. Well, that is very good, ‘double fruitfulness’, that is Ephraim and that is really in type the Gentile saints, the saints of the assembly. That is very fine.

G.A.B. This attraction is related very much to the question of food, is it not? The “gently caused ... to eat” in Hosea, I suppose would be the manna initially, but what we have here is something further, but it is what keeps you coming back, the satisfaction that you can derive from eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood.

G.C.McK. Yes, we come to what is “truly food” and what is “truly drink” and then in that eating as we know – I could not expound the section – there is a certain progression. What it is really doing is helping us to see that there is a realm beyond death because Christ has died, and strengthening our affections in view of entering into what is beyond death. In fact, as we know, the section ends not with eating His flesh and blood but *eating me*, He says, so that really the whole movement is towards a risen and glorified Christ. The question is how far do we go, how far are we being drawn?

J.R.C. It would be right, therefore, to think of a measure of responsibility on our part: "he that eats".

G.C.McK. I think that is right. Would you say a little more?

J.R.C. The food is there; it is available, but we could bypass it. "He that eats": that calls for submission on my part too.

G.C.McK. It does. One side of it, of course, is developing a taste for good food, for what is right, a taste for Christ, we might say. They came to loath the manna, "this light bread", so it is a question of acquiring taste. The manna would no doubt help us in that as rightly appropriated, but there is responsibility, as you say. It says in the Proverbs that the sluggard will put his hand in the pot and He will not even take it up to his mouth again (Prov 19: 24). It is all there: he will even put his hand to it but he will not actually lift it to his mouth. But that is nature: we find it difficult to go in for the thing responsibly.

J.T.B.(Gr.) Does eating then involve not only the appropriation of the manna but the appropriation of the victuals to give us the power to go through the Jordan, but also right on to the old corn of the land, to enjoy the Christ which is indigenous to heaven? The superiority of Christianity is that we have what is even greater because we have Christ personally.

G.C.McK. Well, you are covering a lot of ground there as to food. We have had the manna and then the victuals, as you say, and then right through to the old corn of the land, so there is teaching in that. The manna speaks of Christ here. We carry that with us, of course, what Christ was here, but really in the service of God we are occupied with another realm. We would not be alluding so much in the service of praise to what Christ was in His pathway of flesh and blood because we are occupied with Him and we are with Him in another realm of things, the old corn of the land. I wonder if we realise that and experience that after the Supper we move into another realm, not that in which we broke bread because we break bread in the wilderness. We move into a spiritual realm and we need the food to move.

G.B. I was going to say in relation to what you were saying earlier that Jesus says, "Work not for the food which perishes". There was that in Himself that had to be laid hold of. Would that be right?

G.C.McK. Yes, that is right, "the food which perishes". Working for food seems to suggest the idea of responsibility that has been brought up, because our responsibility must run along with this.

While there are divine operations and divine attraction and drawing us, we have to be amenable to this. We might rebel against it as persons did here. They said, "This word is hard". It might enter into our hearts: this is too hard. That is what the flesh would say: I am not able for this, eating His flesh and drinking His blood. I am not able to move into what is beyond flesh and blood, beyond what I know and touch here, a realm that involves that I have to accept death.

J.R.C. The danger always is that we drop back from the level the Lord would have us at, like going into the land. There were those that settled down instead of going into the land. That shows what we are naturally.

G.C.McK. Yes, there is what we are naturally, so the Lord Jesus said, "the flesh profits nothing". You are not going to get any profit from the flesh, but what about the Spirit? "It is the Spirit which quickens". We want to get on to that side of things. It is a chapter of life. The food here is to sustain life. It is the living Father who has sent Christ and we are to live on account of Christ so there is to be life in the saints, life on account of Christ.

D.S. Say something about this living on account of Christ. The footnote says a little about it: 'by reason of what the Father is and his living;' 'I live by reason of his being and living' (note 'e' to verse 57).

It seems to link very much with what you are drawing us on to in John 17.

G.C.McK. It is attractive to my heart that it is connected with the Christ here: "I live on account of the Father", how His whole life and being was bound up with the Father's and then there seems to be correspondence to that; as we appropriate Christ, our life is related

to that blessed Man, the One that went into death and who is now on high. The whole principle of life in my soul is connected with me appropriating a Christ that has risen.

D.S. I wondered if it linked it with what J.T.B.(Gr.) said as to the old corn of the land – he that eats Me. It is Christ according to divine purpose before the worlds were founded, that blessed Man, in His own realm.

G.C.McK. Well, life is in us and it has to be sustained by such food. It involves the acceptance of death but the whole matter goes on to a living Christ on high: “*he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”; and then we are glad to understand that the Spirit quickens and the words the Lord Jesus speaks are “spirit and are life”. We want to get into the spirit of things.

J.D.G. Would the touch to the affections of Christ coming to us give us a sense that we are linked up with a Man who is living in another world and He would draw us over to that world, not only in the service of God but to seek Him out there all the time?

G.C.McK. Very good, so that you might say it is not an alien world to us where He is. We belong in that world and our life is bound up there and that would apply in the whole week. We have a life that does not really subsist in what is down here in what is material and natural.

J.D.G. The Lord Jesus says, “I live on account of the Father”. I liked your touch about that: that is how He lived when He was here, when He sought the Father’s presence, went out to pray, for instance.

G.C.McK. It brings out the perfection of His manhood. Of course, He is a divine Person. What can we say? Here in manhood He takes this subject place of being bound up with the Father in His life here, the living Father. What a lovely touch, “the living Father has sent me” as if to say there is a realm of life and He is living in connection with a living Father. Are we connected in our affections with a living Christ?

E.W.J. You begin to wonder where your faith is, speaking to a Person that has called you, and you have had to judge yourself. I wonder in what respect the feelings of the living Father, and His interest in you or me personally are real to us. Do I believe that? You can draw from that quarter. Is that what you mean?

G.C.McK. Well, I think faith is essential to this. I do not think there is any entrance into it apart from these things being in the faith of our souls and then, as was remarked, the help of the Holy Spirit. It is remarkable that each of the divine Persons would operate the Father and the Lord Jesus and the Spirit, to help us into these things.

I was wondering whether we could look a little further because it seemed to me this morning that the affections of the brethren were being really drawn into a realm of divine affection. It was as if our hearts and minds were just commanded by divine love. I felt that before the Father. I felt the Spirit was helping us as to divine affections so I thought of John 17 because it is the intimate speech of the Lord to the Father. He mentions love: "thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me" and so on. He goes on to, "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". He is touching on the realm of love towards the end. Earlier in the chapter it is a question of responsibility and being preserved and kept and sanctified, but at the end of John 17 He is moving into more the realm of love, is He not?

W.M.G. I am thinking of verse 22: "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one".

G.C.McK. Yes, it has been said – we have been well taught, I think – that the glory in verse 22 is the glory of sonship. It is not actually defined. That is interesting: the Lord does not define it, but He speaks about it a glory given to him. That would lead to some spiritual enquiry in our minds. Sometimes things are not spelled out in scripture for the reason that we have to explore them and find out what the reality is so that it is not just that sonship is a kind of doctrine; it is a glory.

G.A.B. Love essentially attracts. Even, as has been pointed out – Mr Raven pointed out – the lake of fire was a necessity of love because everything that brought in distance has to be totally banished so that love can operate and draw to itself.

G.C.McK. Quite so, so love has its own necessities and that was one solemn one, what you have quoted, that evil must be restricted to its own place. Then there is this other place, this heavenly place, this place of privilege for us.

J.T.B. (Gr.) He says in chapter 14, “I am coming again and shall receive you to myself”, v 3. Is this the area to which He receives us where this love can flow freely and unhinderedly?

G.C.McK. Well, it is the Father’s house, I suppose, in the scripture you allude to in chapter 14. It is the realm where He is for the pleasure of the Father and I suppose that would be included in what is in mind here in the sense of privilege although I wonder just how far this scripture goes, that “they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me”. It seems as if it takes us to the threshold of eternity, to the threshold of what a creature can touch.

W.M.G. So would the next glory you are referring to relate to Christ in glory that we experience and that would be beholding His glory: “that they may behold my glory”. Could you say something about that?

G.C.McK. Well, it is Christ’s distinctiveness. Although this section is full of our privilege and the privilege that we have as with the Father and as given sonship, the summit of it seems to be that we have sight of a glory that we do not share. We often speak about this but I wonder how much we really understand that: “my glory which thou hast given me”. It is distinctive to Christ; we do not share it. It is not what we are associated with with Christ; it is what is distinctive to Him: “which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”. I think it must connect with Christ as the One who has accomplished all God’s purposes, everything seen shining in Him.

E.W.J. Mr Darby uses the expression – I have come across it – ‘before He became man’. He goes right back as you say, “that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father”. There is almost mystery in that. He is unique, is that so? and we are drawn to see that.

G.C.McK. I think so. We are drawn to that. It is not in connection with our need or what has been effectuated exactly in connection with us. It is what is for divine satisfaction. I was wondering about the scripture in Chronicles that speaks about the ark being brought into Solomon’s temple. It says there was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone (2 Chron. 5: 10). There would have been manna there, the pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod and there had been very precious matters in regard to Christ’s service to His own and the provision that has been from the divine side, the cords of a man, but in the end that is not there. Would that connect a little with this thought of just the original purposes of God carried through, rather than our side of it?

J.D.G. I have often wondered whether we get some glimpse of the glory that was in eternity “for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”, whether there would be some expression of that.

G.C.McK. The love with which Christ was loved before the foundation of the world in some way is reflected in that glory that we see.

J.T.B.(Ed.) Would that link with the half cubit in the ark, just what you are referring to that there is something that can be contemplated but which shall ever be beyond us, do you think?

G.C.McK. Yes, each of the dimensions of the ark has the half in it as if you cannot approach that holy subject of Christ and His humanity and what He has effected for God and encompass it from any angle.

J.T.B.(Ed.) So you referred to Chronicles: the ark in its place and it is the ark really in its place according to the divine pleasure.

G.C.McK. I think that is what it is. Go on.

J.T.B.(Ed.) Everything in His pathway is swept up there but also, as you were saying, the extra half cubit brings in an impression of what is eternal as well.

G.C.McK. I think that goes beyond what has to do with our sustaining and our feeding and so on and how we have been drawn into things. No doubt the way we have been brought in is integral with the divine pleasure, but still the thought in mind there is not what was catering for us but what is for the heart of God, His counsels accomplished.

D.S. The wonder of it is that the Lord says, "I desire that ... they also may be with me" as if there is going to be eternal satisfaction for the heart of Christ that those that the Father has given Him will be with Him in this realm which is close to what is inscrutable, as Jim Brown is suggesting, and yet the saints are there sustained because they have the Spirit, which, of course, is inscrutable.

G.C.McK. Very good, so it is divine desires here. It is Christ's desire: "I desire". We might say we could not have formulated that as a desire in our own hearts. There is what is in Christ's heart for us, but do you think, as He discloses in this prayer what His desires are, we get instruction that might draw our hearts out to be in keeping with His desires, to see what satisfies His heart?

J.R.C. I was just going to ask, how would you describe glory.

G.C.McK. It is clearly the outshining of the essence of something.

J.R.C. I wrote that some years ago at the front of my Bible from Mr Stoney: 'The glory is the expression of divine satisfaction according to all its attributes, resting on a Man'.

G.C.McK. Very good, 'resting'. That is divine satisfaction, every divine desire and purpose satisfied in Christ.

J.R.C. We might think glory is beyond us but we are brought into an area where we can appreciate the glory.

G.C.McK. Well, I think that is right. May we be helped! May our desires be in that direction appreciating what glory is!

EDINBURGH

1 April 2001

Key to initials

G.Bailey, Edinburgh; D.C.Brown, Edinburgh; G.A.Brown, Edinburgh;
J.T.Brown, Edinburgh; J.T.Brown, Grangemouth; M.Cowan,
Kirkcaldy; J.R.Cumming, Edinburgh; J.D.Gray, Edinburgh;
W.M.Grosse, Edinburgh; E.W.Johnson, Edinburgh; T.Lock,
Edinburgh; G.C.McKay, Glasgow; J.Marshall, Edinburgh; D.Scougal,
Edinburgh; R.Trotter, Edinburgh

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Gordon C. McKay

John 1: 29-47; 3: 1-3; 8: 1-11

I was wanting to speak about persons who in some way or other came to Jesus. We know, of course, from the gospels that great crowds followed the Lord Jesus and great crowds, at certain points, came to Him. On one occasion great crowds even came to Him up on a mountain and brought their sick and lame to Him that they might heal them. They were energetic. A large crowd came in that way wanting to get help and blessing from Christ. John does not give us that kind of thing so much. John gives us individual persons getting blessing and help. They are both true. Myriads have received blessing through Christ and He is available to all, but John would say, as it were, you have to come yourself, you have to have your own experience, you have to prove this for yourself. Of course, two of the persons we read of came together so there is some variety of experience in this, but the great thing about them all is that one way or the other, they found themselves in the presence of Christ, and each one of them got some blessing and some help.

My desire would be that you might fit in somewhere, maybe not exactly into the history of any of these persons, but you have to fit in somewhere. There is a divine record being kept in heaven and persons are getting saved and blessed. They are being brought to Christ one way or the other. They are being brought to Christ and they are finding blessing there and it is going down in heaven's records, each individual. Wonderful thing! Think of heaven's history. Men write history books and they perhaps highlight the history of certain distinguished persons and certain examples that they might find, but they cannot write the history of everybody. Heaven records the history of every believer, every transaction.

And so this is one of the days in heaven's diary, if I can use that expression reverently. This is one of the days when there is a record being kept as to persons who might hear the glad tidings and how they received it. You think of heaven noting what happens today,

what happens in this meeting. Heaven is far more interested than you would ever think in what is proceeding now and what you are thinking and what is going on in your heart. We know that heaven keeps records. There are names being inscribed in the book of life.

How precious that is, to think of heaven having such a book! And the deeds of men, too, are said to be recorded and in the end, even at the great white throne, books are opened. How solemn that side of things is, but how wonderful to think of heaven's records! So do you have your name in that record? Have you found a place there, you might say, in the annals of heaven because you have come to Christ and found blessing?

It is individual, and so John points out that people come individually. John is interested in individuals. Peter preached and there were three thousand saved in one day. How blessed that is!

But John wants to point out the wonderful quality that is secured in persons, in individuals, who come into contact with Christ. Of course, Christ found certain persons too. Some did not come to Him. He came to them. In fact, where we read as to John the Baptist in verse 29 of John 1, Jesus came to him. "On the morrow he sees Jesus coming to him". John the Baptist was baptising the devout and godly in Israel that were responding to his preaching of repentance for remission of sins. He was preaching Christ; he was preaching repentance and he was speaking faithfully and looking for Christ to come in and then the time came when Jesus came to him and he said, "Behold the Lamb of God". Jesus associated Himself in grace with these persons that were going to be baptised by John the Baptist. He Himself had no sins, the blessed, holy, sinless One, the Lamb of God, the One who was going to be the *sacrifice* for sins, the One who knew not sin. But He associated Himself with these persons. They were on the right path. They were going to be baptised and they came to John the Baptist confessing their sins.

The Lord had none to confess but He lent a certain dignity and ratification to the whole thing; He associated Himself with these godly persons who were going out to John the Baptist.

What a thing that was that He came to John! John was taken aback, as the other gospels record, that he should baptise Christ. The Lord Jesus coming to John the Baptist to be baptised was really a figure of Him going into death. Baptism speaks of that and in the Lord Jesus coming to John the Baptist to be baptised there was an indication that He in fact was going to die. So He comes to John the Baptist and immediately there is this wonderful testimony, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." That He is the Lamb of God would suggest that He is going to do things sacrificially, but He is also going to do things in power. He is taking away the sin of the world through the sacrifice of Himself and He is going to take it away in power. Sin is going to go. We are very much occupied with what is in the world and all that side of things and all the sinfulness that exists too. It might oppress the spirit of the pious person to think of the sinfulness of the world, how awful it is, but it is going to go. Jesus is going to remove it. He is the taker-away of the sin of the world. That is how great He is. He laid the basis for it in His death, for removing the sins of believers and the sins of the rebellious. The whole of sin is going to be removed from the sight of God, so He is the taker-away of the sin of the world, and John delights to bring out His greatness. How great the Lord Jesus is! John was impressed by it. He said he knew Him not. He was not taking account of Him as someone who was related to him, as He was by nature. It says, "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him". Oh, the Lord Jesus is worthy of contemplation by us! This had never happened before. I know it speaks in the Old Testament of the Spirit of God coming on certain persons, Samson and Amasai and others, so that the Spirit of God has been active over the dispensations, as God Himself has been, to bring about a result for Himself, but never were the heavens opened nor did the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven and abide on anyone. Not only did it descend upon Him, but it abode there. What did that mean? What John brings out in what he says is the fact that the Spirit coming on the Lord Jesus was a testimony that this was the One who would Himself baptise, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit and he also bears testimony that this blessed One was the Son

of God. The Spirit coming upon Him also was a great testimony to the perfection of His manhood. The Spirit came upon Him and it abode upon Him. Heaven's complacency was expressed in Jesus at this point.

So He becomes a centre. I thought to read some of these sections in chapter 1 because of what we are often told, that section (I think it was Mr Raven that possibly first said it), is like a kind of astronomical system; and Jesus is the centre and everybody that moves moves in connection with Him. And that is what I would like to ask you: has He become your centre and in some way are you beginning to move in connection with Christ? He is going to be eternally the centre of God's universe and everything is going to find its place in connection with Him, and everything outside of that is lawless and will go to its own place. And so the question is, have you begun to find your place in connection with Christ, *your place, individually?* Have you come into relation to Christ? Everything is going to come into relation to Christ. The whole universe is going to be governed by Him. He will be the centre and focus of everything for God. But then the point in the glad tidings is that you, poor sinner, should come into connection with the Lord Jesus.

These persons we read of may help us a little. One of the features that comes in verses 35 and 36 and 37 is that John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speaking" and they left John the Baptist and they followed Jesus. When he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", this was the witness of John the Baptist. He was fulfilling a certain testimony; but when he says in verse 36, "Behold the Lamb of God", he was not ministering, he was just speaking in appreciation of the Lord Jesus. It was just coming from his heart. How effective it was what came from his heart: "Behold the Lamb of God". "Looking at Jesus as he walked". It is just Jesus in His pathway here. There was something attractive about Him, something about His walk that had never been seen before. I know there were glimpses of the humanity of Christ in Old Testament saints, pre-figurings of what was going to be, but here was the Lamb

of God Himself walking here in this scene of sin. He was going to clear that scene for God, and He was going to do it sacrificially. In Himself He was so attractive, the Lamb of God. How great He is! How attractive He is! Think of Him coming in sacrificially in view of securing us and securing you, I would say that, securing *you* for God, clearing you of your sins, taking away *your* sins. He is the taker-away of the sin of the world. Has He taken away *your* sins? That is how to get at it. Have I still got sins or have they gone? You have either still got them or they have gone. Well, if you put your faith in the Lord Jesus, then they have gone. He has borne them. He went to the cross to do that. He suffered the wrath of God to do that, to take away your sins.

Well, these two persons heard John speaking and they were influenced. Many persons have come into blessing in that kind of way. They meet someone who loves Christ and they become attracted. The beautiful thing about this is that they followed Jesus.

It would be very sad if some gospel preacher came along and preached a wonderful gospel and all you could say afterwards was what a wonderful preacher that is! No, the great end in the glad tidings and the end that every true preacher would desire is that persons would go away and say what a wonderful Person Jesus is. How wonderful He is! And so these two persons followed Jesus.

Jesus noticed it. "But Jesus having turned, and seeing them following, says to them, What seek ye?" Now, are you going to make a move? They were beginning to move, in a tentative way, in regard to Jesus, they were following Him. It does not say they spoke to Him but they just turned in that direction. Are you turned a little in that direction? How is your life? What is there in your mind and your heart? Have you turned towards Jesus? Are you beginning to follow? It is all right if there are two persons together, it seems.

Somebody else might encourage you. In the Old Testament you get four leprous men who get blessing and they talked about what they were going to do among themselves and came to a right decision and came into salvation. So you can speak to someone about it.

Nevertheless, the matter, the transaction in your soul, relates to your individual place before God.

And so they came and Jesus speaks to them. He turns round and He notices. Heaven will notice today, Jesus will notice if you just begin to make a movement towards Him. He turns and asks them what they are looking for. "Come and see", He says. He does not tell them where He abides, but He says, "Come and see". He wants to draw them near to Him. Think of the Lord Jesus in His grace wanting these persons to come in and abide with Him and be near to Him and to find something, not only to find that He is the Lamb of God, not only to find that He could take away the sin of the world, but to find very wonderful things in His heart and mind. The rest of the gospel is needed to start to bring out some of these things that were in the heart and mind of Christ. "Saw where he abode", how restful the Lord Jesus would be here as a man! We speak of His activity and Mark's gospel brings that out, His blessed, continuous service, but here John says He abides. What peace there would be where Jesus is! He was abiding in the love of the Father. He was abiding in the sense of what He was going to secure for the Father. I suppose if you go into someone's house you find out something about them, you get close to them and you begin to find out what they really have in their hearts. Think of the Lord Jesus wanting these persons to come in to where He abode so that He might disclose something to them and draw them into His own thoughts!

Well, these two persons clearly were attracted and one of them was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. "He first finds his own brother Simon". As soon as he finds there is something precious there in Christ and that He is the Christ, he says, I will need to bring my brother into this. In other words, he is evangelical, and I suppose many have come that way too, someone that has found Christ has said, Look, I have found Christ. He is the Messias. We have found Him. You do not need to look any more. You do not need to wait any more. There is no one else to come; there is no other salvation to come; there is nothing else. It has all arrived in Jesus. He has

come into this world and He has dealt with sin and death and He is available.

Simon came to Jesus as led by somebody else, and Jesus was able to point out to him that he was going to be something spiritually. Jesus looked at him. When you come to the Lord Jesus, you come in the sense of your need. How blessed to find the Christ, the One who does everything for God, removed the sin of the world for God, removed your sins, secured God's pleasure. He is the Christ. He is the One that acts for God in wondrous power and yet also the One that suffered: "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" Luke 24:26. But then, as coming to Him, Jesus looked at him. Jesus looks at you. What is He looking at? Your sins? No! If you are coming to Jesus as a repentant sinner, they are gone. He is not looking at your sins; He is looking at you, looking at you even naturally. He says, "Simon, the son of Jonas". I know about your father, your parentage, Simon, the son of Jonas, but He says, there is going to be something else in your life, "thou shalt be called Cephas (which interpreted is stone)". What He was really saying in a condensed way was that he was going to be part of what He was doing in the way of building something for God's pleasure. What an attractive thought that Jesus would look for a person coming and would say, I see something in you potentially that is going to be for the pleasure of God; you are going to be a spiritual person. "Thou shalt be called Cephas"; Simon son of Jonas is often called Peter, but it is Cephas here. I understand that the thought is that he was going to become spiritual. This blessed One you are coming to is the One who baptises with the Holy Spirit. He is going to bring in what is for God's pleasure. That is what it means. He baptises with the Holy Spirit. He is going to bring in a scene for God's pleasure and He does it by baptising with the Holy Spirit, so there is nothing else to be seen as it were, everything else is overtaken by this, that Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit. And so He gives the Holy Spirit and we can come into that and become pleasurable to God and we can become spiritual.

Well, the Lord Jesus is in movement in verse 43 and now He finds Philip. Sometimes in this gospel He finds a person. He “finds Philip, and says to him, Follow me”. There is nothing else said. That is all: “Follow me”. You might say it is a very, very brief entry in heaven’s record, but perhaps that is all that is needed. Things can be very simple in the glad tidings. Things can be very protracted, of course. You could spend endless nights, sleepless nights, over the question of your sins and you can kick against things for weeks or months or years if you like, but, you know, things can be very simple. You just have to surrender. That is all: you surrender your own will. “Follow me”, He says to Philip. Well, Philip was immediately taken on. He was enlisted, you might say,

And then Philip is from Bethsaida. It is interesting that these persons come from the same town. “Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter”. They came from the same place and, as far as we can understand, the kind of persons that were then in Bethsaida were feeling persons, it seems, and perhaps they were evangelical persons because Andrew found Simon his brother of Bethsaida and now Philip goes and he finds Nathaniel from Bethsaida too. There is something proceeding here, there are persons accumulating. People come individually but then something is accumulating, the persons are coming to Jesus and He is going to make something of them. And so Philip finds Nathaniel. Now, Nathaniel is a difficult case. He may be one of the hardest ones in this chapter in a way because he is so good and so religious and yet there was something very fine about him that Jesus identified. Philip finds Nathaniel and says, “We have found him of whom Moses wrote in the law”. You do not need to look any more. There is no question about it. There is no more delay: “We have found him of whom Moses wrote in the law, and the prophets, Jesus, the son of Joseph, who is from Nazareth”. They identified Him. And Nathaniel is sceptical. Now, that is one feature of the human heart. You might say, you are not sceptical, but it is a feature of the human heart, scepticism and unbelief. The human heart is not naturally marked by faith. It is something that God gives us in His grace so that we go

against what would be natural to us in scepticism and in unbelief.

And so Nathaniel said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" It was a place of reproach to him and this is a thing that is going to arise too if you receive Jesus. "Jesus ... who is from Nazareth".

Philip did not hide that. He said this blessed One whom we have found, that Moses wrote of, is Jesus and He is the son of Joseph and He is from Nazareth. That was a test to Nathaniel. I suppose Nathaniel was much concerned with the Jewish system and he was no doubt well taught in that. Nazareth, out there in Galilee, someone from there? There is a reproach attached to it, you see. And if you want to receive Jesus, you have to accept this that He is from Nazareth. He is the One that is under reproach here. He was not One that is distinguished by the men of this world and the institutions of this world. No, He is the One that is in reproach, "Jesus, the son of Joseph, who is from Nazareth". So he says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Well, if you feel like that, here is the answer. Philip says, "Come and see". You prove the thing for yourself. Come to Jesus for yourself.

Now, this involves exercise. You need to get on your knees. Have you ever been on your knees? You have to get to Jesus in the faith of your soul. It means you are going to have to come under some exercise. Well, Nathaniel came to Jesus – "Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and says, Behold one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile". He was leadable. He was coming to Jesus and he was "one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile". That is something else as you come to Jesus that I might make bold to mention, that you should come without guile. Just come in simplicity. It is a kind of prerequisite for getting blessing. You cannot come with all your previous religious training or all your intellectual qualifications and all the rest. You cannot come with any hidden motive. You have to come in simplicity, "one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile". The way to that is through repentance.

Persons come that way as they repent and have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need cleansed, purified hearts. It says in Acts that the hearts of the nations were purified by faith (Acts 15: 9), these dark, wicked heathens, indulging in terrible idolatrous practices and all the moral darkness associated with it. How could they come into blessing? Well, even then their hearts were purified by faith and they came under the shelter of the blood of Jesus. So it does not matter how bad is your history. God will take that up. Indeed He has taken it up in the death of Christ and He has dealt with it. In 1 Corinthians 6 it speaks about terrible people, fornicators, adulterers, covetous, drunkards, and so on, and then Paul says, "And these things were some of you" (v 11). Imagine actually saying that to the saints of an assembly! He says, you were some of these things, "but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God". How completely the work of Christ deals with state and guilt!

The blood deals with guilt and the water that flows from His side deals with state. Persons are sanctified, set apart for God, "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus". You understand the strength and the certainty of this as you become a believer and you are "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus". What other name can arise against that? What challenge can arise? "Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God", that is, I take it, you receive the Holy Spirit and in that sense it is seen that you are a person in whom God has wrought, a person who is justified and a person who is marked by sanctification. And so we might become something like Nathaniel, "one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile".

Well, I could not go through all the persons who have to do with Jesus in John's gospel, but Nicodemus came. He was an unusual case. It was really the Father drawing them to Jesus. Behind it all, it must have been. Certainly as to Nicodemus and these other persons, you can see something was drawing them. Do you feel a drawing power in your soul? That is what happens in the glad tidings. There is a drawing power, a divine drawing power, that you might resist. Do not resist it! Be drawn! Allow divine grace and the attractiveness of Jesus to draw you so that you might make the

move and come to Jesus! Now, Nicodemus was afraid. He was a ruler of the Jews and he had much to lose if he was going to cast in his lot with Jesus. The Jews were very bitter in their persecution.

They sought to kill Jesus eventually. Nicodemus was afraid and so he came to Him by night. Well, at least he came to Him. You might think it did not look a very honourable matter for Nicodemus to be afraid to come by day *but he came anyway*. Thank God for that!

How is a person saved? I do not know how many different ways persons have been saved. Some persons will give you their testimony and tell you how they were saved, in different ways. The great matter is to get to Jesus. Thus he came and Jesus set him back. The Lord Jesus wants to deal with you in a *real* way.

Nicodemus came and he told Him what he knew. He acknowledged that the Lord Jesus was a Teacher come from God. That would take him so far. God must be with someone who did such signs. And then Jesus set him back and He said, "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God", and Nicodemus could not understand it at all. What is the idea of being born again, being born anew? And so he has to be taught that God has to operate in him in a fresh way. There has to be something called new birth take place. There has to be a divine operation, a secret, deep divine operation, "born of water and of Spirit", God working and operating to bring about a *new* state of things in a person's soul. "Born of water" would suggest the cleansing character of the transaction that is in accord with the death of Christ and then the Holy Spirit too is operating.

How wonderful to think of that happening in a person's soul! Oh you almost bow your heart to think of that! The preacher can preach the glad tidings but only God can work – it just bows your heart to think of that – silently in someone's heart, God is working. May it be so here now that God is working if He has never worked before or, we might even say, as He has never worked before, in our hearts. And so it happens that something comes about in a person's life, a new birth so that they might see the kingdom of God and come into it and understand what the power of God is in His kingdom and what a realm of protection and blessing it is. So Nicodemus had to come.

The point is you cannot come as man in the flesh. You cannot

come equipped with all these natural things. If you come with man's intelligence, come with all that side of things, then it is a closed book, but then, God has to work secretly in you and you have to understand that you have to be born anew. Thus you must give yourself up, what you are naturally, and you see that you are cast on God so that He might operate.

I thought we should not miss out this woman in John 8. She did not exactly *come* to Jesus. In a sense she did: she was brought in a most peculiar way, she was led as a sinner. She was led to judgment really, surrounded by judges and led almost, as it were, to execution by the Jews. What a terrible experience for her, poor sinful woman surrounded by persons that were pointing out that the law says such a woman should be stoned. There she is, brought in in the presence of Jesus. The scripture is quoted: "Moses has commanded us to stone such" and the question is put to Jesus, "What sayest thou?" She is in the presence of Jesus. She is a sinner and she cannot deny it either. How shamefaced she must have been! What a position to be in! And Jesus answers; He answers silently. He is not answering her; He is answering these accusers. It is quite easy to accuse and condemn: the law could do that and you can quote Moses and there it is, true enough, she was guilty of death under the law. The law had come in and it condemns us all. You say this was a terrible woman. What am I? What are you? We have committed sins; we are sinners; and the law is there. It says if we have broken one point of the law, we have broken it all.

You say, Well, I have not done what this woman did. Is there any other point of the law you have broken? Well, you have broken it all. You have broken the law of God, God's will has been rebelled against by you; the guilt has been incurred by you.

Well, there are the accusers, as Jesus calls them, and Jesus' answer is He stoops and writes on the ground with His finger. And when they keep at Him, He lifts Himself up and He points out their own sinnership: "Let him that is without sin among you first cast the stone at her". He addresses the conscience of everyone. That happens in the gospel preaching. Really the conscience of everyone

is to be addressed. And so He again stooped down and He wrote on the ground. Moses could write. He could write what was right, the law of God given to him, inscribed by the finger of God, indeed (see Deut. 9:10). But the finger of God is here in this scripture. The Lord Jesus is stooping and writing on the ground and He has a new law; He is going to be bringing in a new covenant; He is going to bring it in on the basis of His own death and the shedding of His blood. He is going to bring in a new covenant on the basis of which there can be forgiveness of sins. How precious to think of the Lord Jesus bringing in a new order of things in which a person can be forgiven, He stooped into manhood and He stooped into death itself so that He might write and there might be a new legislation in which there could be forgiveness for a woman like this. "Has no one condemned thee? ... No one, sir. ...Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Some of the scribes that copied the scriptures left this scripture out. They could not write it. They said, this could not be right, that a woman in such a condition could be treated thus by the Lord. They misunderstood the greatness of divine grace and they misunderstood what these stoops meant. The Lord Jesus' work was providing the basis for the salvation and forgiveness of any sinner.

Well, what a way to come to Jesus, but still she was there and she received a word from Him. I do not know if she fits in with the others, but certainly I can see this, it is a wonderful thing to be in the presence of Jesus. It is a terrible thing to be in the presence simply of the accusers. You know, Satan is the accuser. It is one of the things Satan does: he is the accuser of the brethren, and he will accuse you. When it comes to settling your matters in the presence of God, he will want to be there. These accusers were there. What a situation! When you seek to settle the matter of your sins eternally by coming to Christ and putting your faith in Him and confessing you are a sinner, Satan will want to be there to accuse you and point up the terribleness of your sins. He will want to turn you aside. But here the accusers all go out. You can settle your matters in the presence of Jesus alone and you can understand that there is provision in Him for salvation.

Well, may we be blessed in these things and helped in them for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

1 April 2001