

A
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CONTENTS

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

MINISTRY IN EDINBURGH

(i)

(ii)

(iii)

(iv)

(v)

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PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

David Wright

Acts 2: 21-23, 37,38; 3: 1-11; 4: 11, 12

We started our meeting this morning with the hymn:

All hail the power of Jesus' Name (Hymn 9)

The power of that Name is seen in the One who is mighty to save. In the early Acts the Lord Jesus was no longer here, but His Name was presented. His Name was still there, and His Name is still here today, and it is a Name that is mighty to save. They said, "When will he die and his name perish?" The Lord Jesus died but rose again and His Name has never perished and it never will. The potency of that Name being proclaimed in the streets of Jerusalem days after the Lord Jesus was publicly crucified, and the fact that three thousand souls were converted by Peter's preaching underlines the power of the Name. Peter says, This Jesus whom ye have crucified, God has made both Lord and Christ (see Acts 2: 36). Where we began reading in chapter 2 it says, "And it shall be that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved".

That comes in three or four times in scripture and it is a wonderfully positive verse, because there is not a shade of doubt in it. Anyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved. I trust everybody here has called upon that Name, and knows what it is to be saved in the power of that Name. There are many persons who may have been on their deathbed and have called upon the Name of the Lord, and if they have done that, have been saved. We may not know how many, who or what they are at the present time, but the day of display will show how many persons have called upon that Name and been saved. It may be somebody who has led a completely godless life, but if at the end there is something that causes them to call upon that Name, then they are saved. We have that on the authority of scripture.

This is Peter speaking in Jerusalem, the first preaching of this dispensation, and he says, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus

the Nazaraean". The Name of Jesus the Nazaraean is referred to, the despised, rejected, lowly One who traversed the streets of Palestine and was ultimately hung upon a cross. It is in the power of that One who is now living and glorified at God's right hand, that the gospel goes out and the Holy Spirit has come. Peter was talking to persons who had had part in the current events – it was not a matter of history, it was a current event in Jerusalem at this time – and he reminds them, "a man borne witness to by God to you by works of power". He says, you cannot gainsay it; you had it in your very midst, that the works of power were wrought through Jesus the Nazaraean. That could not be gainsaid; it was witnessed to. He says, "the wonders and signs, which God wrought by him in your midst, as yourselves know". It was irrefutable, it was there, persons who had been blessed through these works of power were there, the effects could be seen. Then he says, "him, given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain". There are the two sides there. Men thought it was their hour – He was allowed to be committed into the hands of lawless men who put Him upon the cross – but that would never have been allowed if it was not in the first place in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. It was in the foreknowledge of God that the Lord Jesus should die and that He should suffer for your sins and mine, that He the One who knew not sin was made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him. It was in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God that man might be recovered to God through the finished work of Christ. Man was incapable of recovering himself, but God moved from His own side with a view to recovering man for Himself. What love, what grace that is! Everything that we have come into is on the basis of sovereign grace and mercy, nothing attaching to ourselves. If we repented it was the goodness of God that has led us to repentance. The gospel would make nothing of you, nothing of me, but it will make everything of the Lord Jesus, everything of Him, the One who has secured everything for God.

Think of the greatness of His Person and yet being prepared to be led as a Lamb to slaughter; that was involved in “ye by the hands of lawless men have crucified and slain”. The public position in this world remains the same in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ, in relation to the One who bears that Name of Jesus. He has been given a Name which is above every Name “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” Phil 2: 10. A day is coming soon when every knee will bow, there will be no question about it, but in a day of grace the gospel is presented to us in order that we bow the knee to Christ now, we own Him as our Lord. Paul could say, “who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col 1: 13), that is he was delivered from one order of things, but he was translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. God has placed authority where it is most attractive in the Son of His love. I often think that when Paul wrote that verse in Colossians he put in a nutshell his conversion, that is that on that Damascus road he was delivered from the authority of darkness, but not only that, he was translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. He was led into Damascus, he was blind, but what he found there was a representation of Christ Himself: Ananias who was a vessel prepared by the Lord Himself in glory went to Paul and said to him, “Saul, brother”. There was a true representation of Christianity, Paul never forgot that, the greatness of the mercy that had reached him remained with him: even when he speaks of the greatest truths in Ephesians he speaks about redemption and God who is rich in mercy. We can quote those scriptures, but Paul wrote them down out of his experience. He had experienced that there was a God who was rich in mercy.

Further on in chapter 2, Peter’s words were powerful because they were spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit. “Having heard it they were pricked in heart”, that is they were convicted sinners. Have you ever had a sense in your soul of being convicted of sin? Then they ask a question, “What shall we do, brethren?” Convicted sinners often ask questions; the gaoler says, “What must I do that I may be saved? ... Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be

saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16: 30-32). But what if there was no answer to those questions? What if you were a convicted sinner and there was no answer to those questions? How terrible it would be. It underlies the greatness of the dispensation of grace in which we are, that as you feel you are a convicted sinner there is an answer to it. The first word of Peter here is "Repent". That involves on the one hand coming to a sense of our own unworthiness, like the malefactor on the cross who said, I am suffering here justly for what I have done (see Luke 23: 41. He saw things as they affected God, the prodigal Son saw things as they affected God. On the other hand repentance also brings you to the sense of the worthiness of Jesus. This man, the thief says, has done nothing amiss. That is what repentance would bring you to. It will not just leave you with a sense of your own unworthiness and the depths of sin and depravity that you may have descended into, but it will lift you up, take you from the dunghill and set you among princes. It will lift you up and put you in relation to the One in whom there was no sin – "this man has done nothing amiss". That could not be said of anyone else; it could be said only of Jesus. I offer Him to you as an Object for your heart's affections and belief. It says, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ". The Name comes in there again: that is why I read this verse. Salvation is accomplished through the power of that Name. "Be baptised, each one of you". It brings in the individual side in the gospel, that we do not come into salvation *en masse*, but by an individual transaction with the Lord for ourselves, "each one of you". The gospel is not a time to put it on to the person sitting next to you; it is a time to take stock of yourself, where you are in your relation to the Lord. He is knocking on your heart that He might find entrance in there, and that you might prove the power of salvation, and the joy of it. Think of the joy that came into the gaoler's house having believed on that One.

Peter says here, "in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". What a wonderful gift that is, as well as knowing that your sins are forgiven. Is there anything else that this world can offer that can compare to that? Can

anybody else forgive you your sins as God can? The good news is that He is ready to impart that forgiveness on the basis of repentance towards Him and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It just requires an action of faith on your part to embrace all that has come within your reach through the finished work of Christ. Embrace it and make it your own and set yourself up here in relation to the Lord and be brought into a circle where He is the centre, where everything is related to Him.

Are you conscious of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit? You say, How can I be sure? Scripture says, “the Father ... give the Holy Spirit”. It also refers to those that ask Him (see Luke 11: 13). On the other hand, looking to your own experience, is there a sense in your heart that you desire to do what is right? Maybe you do not feel that you have the power to do it, but if there is a desire in your heart to do what is right; it is the working of the Spirit but He will give you the power to do what is right, and to hold in check all that would hinder your being here for God. That is a simple way in which we can test the Holy Spirit in our hearts, He will help you to do what is right.

In chapter 3 it was in the power of that Name that this man was made to live. Peter and John went up together “into the temple at the hour of prayer” to pray. I believe they have been spoken of as ‘heaven’s best on earth’ – I think what that means is that there was what was sovereignly wrought in their hearts and it was radiating from them. I think that Peter and John would have been approachable men. This man was carried each day to the temple, unable to help himself. That is what we are in our sins, unable to help ourselves. He was taken to the temple each day and he begged there. What a sad state of affairs that was! He sees Peter and John about to enter into the temple and he asked to receive alms, “Peter, looking stedfastly upon with him John” – he had asked Peter for alms – but Peter looked upon him and he had something that he was able to impart to him that was much better than alms, that he would not have to go and beg for alms any more as he had done. He said, “Silver and gold I have not”. What we have to present in the gospel is priceless. The world system is made up of

silver and gold. If you have silver and gold, if you have money, it will give you many things, influence, status, but it cannot give you salvation. Peter says, "Silver and gold I have not; but what I have, this give I to thee". What did Peter have? Peter had Christ dwelling through faith in his heart, he had the gift of the Holy Spirit, he had the enjoyment of Christianity, and he said that is what I want to give you. Could he give it himself? He could not give it himself, but it was in the Name of Jesus Christ – "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean rise up and walk", power in the Name.

All hail the power of Jesus' name

Jesus Christ the Nazaraean, the lowly, despised, rejected Man, yet now in the position of power and authority at God's right hand, there as a Prince and a Saviour available to this poor man. Peter would seek to attach him to that Man in what radiated from his own heart, attach him to the Man in the glory. "Taking hold of him by the right hand" – the hand of power – "he raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones were made strong". He is mighty to save, "And leaping up he stood and walked", he did not just get up, "leaping up", the fulness of life coming into that poor man's heart and his bones, made him responsive to God where there had previously been no power to respond at all. Have you ever responded in your heart to God, to the Lord Jesus? If there has been no response before, He is looking for a response now. I can point you to the Man in the glory, as Peter did: He is the One who is able to bring in life. It says, "leaping up he stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God". He had part in the service of God; it went back to God, the glorious source of all. He had part in it in a living way, just as Peter and John did; he was brought into the same portion. Think of that!

God desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. What is available to you is available to the poor drunkard out there in the street, it is available to anybody – it was available to this poor man who up to now could not even walk, but his ankle bones were made strong. "All the people saw him, walking and praising God"; it could not be gainsaid. They had

witnessed the works of power of the Lord Jesus when He was here in manhood: there was a work of power here in the full power of Christianity, Christ on high and the Holy Spirit here. The effect of grace is still affecting men's hearts today in this poor benighted world in which we are. They saw him walking and praising God. But it does not say they saw him leaping. I think the gospel experience in conversion is a through-and-through thing; leaping was an inward thing, responsiveness to God. God could take account of that, but these people could take account of one who was walking and praising God. What a witness that was! I feel tested as to how much I am a living witness to Christianity. What can people take account of in me? Am I maintained in the joy of my salvation, or do I get bogged down? The enemy would seek to take the joy of our salvation away, but being maintained in a living link with a living Man in heaven would cause us to be maintained in the joy of our salvation and therefore to be a living testimony here to others of what the joys of Christianity are. It radiated out of Peter and John, it radiated out of this man. You are on safe ground if you speak from experience. We see that in Saul of Tarsus, how he went over his conversion and the power of his words. The man in John 9 says, "One thing I know, that, being blind before, now I see" (v.25). He had experienced that one thing in his soul. Nothing could shake him from it because he had experienced it. Martin Luther experienced the truth of justification by faith and withstood the whole power of Rome. How could he do it? Because he had experienced it in his soul, he was justified by faith and not by works. Oh that we might have a greater sense of the enjoyment and conviction of Christianity and be able to present it in power. I feel tested by it, but the resources are here.

One thing I have been burdened about this weekend is to take account of the resources that are there for us in Christ on high and the Holy Spirit here, and that we can have our part effectively, as Peter and John did. They were apostles – you say they were special – but we can share with them in the experience that they had, and the experience that this man had. It goes on to say, "they recognised him, that it was *he* who sat for alms at the Beautiful gate

of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him". In persons who have led a godless life and have been converted, there has been a complete change. That is a powerful witness in this world to the power of the Name of Christ, what it can affect in the souls of men, women and children.

In chapter 4 another impression we had this morning was that the Lord is the centre of an order of things the other side of death.

Here he says, "*He* is the stone which has been set at nought by you the builders, which has become the corner stone". The Lord Jesus is still rejected here, but as brought to Him, brought to the living stone, you are connected with another order of things where everything takes character from Him, where everything is measured by Him. From the corner stone of the building everything is measured in Christianity where it finds its measurement from Christ and you can find your relationship in it as related to Him. It says, "salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved".

There is no alternative; if you want salvation there is no alternative but through the Name of Jesus; it is the only way. There does not need to be another way, there is no other name given amongst men by which we must be saved. That poor woman who had the flux of blood tried everything, physicians, this and that, but eventually she came in touch with the Lord Jesus Himself who was able to cure that flux of blood and life came into her soul and being. It would be the same with you, the same with me.

I thought as we sang that hymn this morning how it is very much related to the power of the gospel, how it proceeds, how it goes out and the effect that it has in men's hearts. May each of us here know the power of that Name for ourselves. Do not rely on the experience of anybody else; you cannot rely on that, it must be your own experience, the power of the Name that is able to cleanse you from every sin, so that you can stand before God completely justified in Christ. What a wonderful truth that is! May we be maintained in the enjoyment of it and know the power of it for His Name's sake.

WALTON

16 June 2002

MINISTRY IN EDINBURGH

(i) James Cumming

Luke 24: 13-16, 26-31, 40-43

I have read these verses – the whole chapter is very full and very encouraging and very helpful for us. It covers a tremendous range of truth (all chapters do); nevertheless there is something very attractive in it and I have a desire to say a word or two for help and encouragement about some of these parts that we have read. The chapter ends in the Lord Jesus going up from Bethany, “carried up” – a wonderful end result in Luke’s gospel, the Lord carried up into heaven. We have been singing about Jerusalem above. Christ is there, the glory of that Man is in the excellent glory, everything completed for God’s pleasure and how worthy He is of that position in which He has been placed. That is what we would desire to be more marked by. It is a kind of corporate idea, Christ has gone up personally and the saints are going to go up corporately into that position. His position in the centre of everything is unique.

This chapter is about the day that Christ rose from among the dead. Think of what was involved in that and the Lord Jesus no doubt had much to do, but the time is spent in regard to these two persons. Two of them were going off the same day, that is the resurrection day – “two of them were going on the same day to a village distant sixty stadia from Jerusalem, called Emmaüs” and He joined them. I think they may have been a husband and wife, and they were talking about all the things that they had heard of what had happened on the resurrection morning; and here they were walking away from Jerusalem, the centre of God’s activities on this earth.

They were disappointed about things, a bit upset over them. The great thing is that Jesus went with them, “Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them”. There is something very precious about that. I would like to be able to convey some impression of this scripture to all of us; here they were, these two persons, they knew what had happened, the word had gone around and yet they were disappointed and they left and went away to Emmaüs. It says the

Lord went with them. It is wonderful when you see that they came near to where they were going and it says, “*he* made as though he would go farther”. Think of the Lord Jesus in the might and the glory of all that He had established through His rising from among the dead taking this position towards two people because He loved them. Let us all, even to the very youngest among us here, get a sense that we are not just left to ourselves to think of what we should do and do it; we have One who is able to guide us and help us in regard to every feature of our lives. There they were, disappointed, not knowing how it had all happened; they had their own minds about things, but the Lord shows them. There is a shepherd touch in how the Lord comports Himself. He looks after them, He goes after them – I think we would all have a sense that it shows how He values those who love Him. They have a place in His heart that He makes sure that they understand what they are doing and what they should be doing.

They say, “Stay with us”. He took the loaf (it was like a supper, it was not the Lord’s Supper) and it says, “it came to pass as he was at table with them, having taken the bread, he blessed, and having broken it, gave it to them”, and it opened their eyes. What the Lord Jesus did here was recalled into their minds, the glory of the One who had established everything before He went into death. They realised who He was. I wonder at it: there they were, He takes the house-father’s position here. He has been like a shepherd to them and now He is like the house-father. He broke the bread, but it opened their eyes and at that moment the test comes as it comes in to us all, “he disappeared from them”. I think this was the biggest test for them; He disappeared. Think of it happening! There they were in the house, they had walked all that way – I do not know how far it would have been there, but they were seven miles from Jerusalem, and the Lord joined them on the way. What begins to work there is the homing instinct of these two; they knew that they had left what was there and they knew to go back. You say, go back seven miles when it was in the evening now? Yes. Where do they go? They go amongst the brethren. They were all talking about it,

speaking about what had happened, and they related what happened on the way and how He was made known to them in the breaking of bread. They contribute to what was confirmatory in regard to the Lord Jesus and at that point, “as they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst, and says to them, Peace be unto you” (v.36). There is a development here that shows us that individual action is not wholly in accord with what the Lord would have. That is what we have to learn, that the truth being worked out amongst us is a corporate matter. He comes in amongst them here at this point and says, “Have ye anything here to eat?”.

The simplicity of the language of this chapter is immense. Imagine, there is the Lord Jesus, the glorified One, the One who was out of death that very morning, and He asks, “Have ye anything here to eat?”. What does it mean? It means that He is looking for something in the centre of things where His affection is. He comes into a place where there is affection for Him, and He makes the most of it. “And they gave him a part of a broiled fish”. There is some connection with that with the appreciation of what we have had that Christ has died, but then it goes on to say, “and of a honeycomb”.

The honeycomb is made locally and the Lord Jesus wanted to get a taste of that. It says, “he took it and ate before them”, they did not eat. He took these two things and He ate, He was showing His single delight in having a place where coming on the heels of the glory of the risen Christ there was a place where He knew there was affection for Him. I think we want to learn a bit more – at least I feel it for myself – that we have to appreciate what the Lord finds amongst the brethren and to preserve that at all costs. That is not like soldiers, it is like those who can expend themselves in love in relation to what is for His pleasure. May our hearts have a sense of the glorious climax here at the end of the chapter where it speaks about the Lord Jesus being carried up into heaven, taken up there.

It has been described as the victorious One, carried up into heaven. The moment is going to be soon when we will go up. Let our hearts be outgoing in affection for one another and in the fact that as we do that we look after the interests of Christ. He is in heaven, and the body is here, and therefore there is a responsibility with all of us that

the Lord is looking for something. He would come in amongst us here and ask the same question, are we all mutually held in regard to that? May it be so. For His Name's sake.

23 July 2002

(ii) Jim Marshall

Acts 9: 17; 1 Corinthians 12: 31; 13: 13

One would just seek help to say something about the way, “a way of more surpassing excellence”. It is a blessed thing to be in the way.

In Isaiah it says, “when ye turn to the right hand or when ye turn to the left, thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it” Isa. 30: 21. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death” Prov. 14: 12.

That is very solemn. That was the way that we were in. As Isaiah says, “All we like sheep have gone astray and turned every one to his own way” (53: 6). I think people who have had that experience appreciate another way. We should be thankful that there is another way and that is why I read in Acts because there was a man who was on the wrong way, just as you and I were. He was in the wrong way and the Lord intervened and appeared to him in the way. What a thing it is! Have you ever experienced the Lord appearing to you? Is that something foreign to you, the Lord appearing to you. He appeared to Saul of Tarsus. Why did He appear to Saul of Tarsus?

Because he was persecuting the saints, he was violent, he was an insolent, overbearing man. That is the kind of man he was, but the Lord stopped him. That is what the Lord can do to you if you are in the wrong way tonight. Saul was violent with his activities towards the saints, but you can persecute the saints in other ways, you can persecute the saints with your own lips. It is a solemn thing that this can be so. We can use our lips in regard to the service of God, and yet the same lips, the same mouth, we can use in regard to the detriment of the saints. It is very solemn. But, the Lord stopped Saul of Tarsus. Saul was going into the city, Why? Because he was told to do so “and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (v.6). It is not only that he was stopped in the way, but he got direction as to what to do and where he would find wisdom. There is a way that is wrong, there is a way of wisdom. This man received that.

That is why I read in 1 Corinthians because he is speaking about “a way of more surpassing excellence”. He had the qualifications to

speak about it because he had known the One who had expressed it, a way of more surpassing excellence. This directs our hearts to the Lord Jesus. I do not want to speak about Saul of Tarsus, I want to speak about the Lord Jesus and the way of more surpassing excellence which is expressed in that blessed Man in perfection. At this juncture one is thinking of the Hebrew bondman, how He came in, and how He went out. He came in saying, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free" Exod. 21: 5. That is how he came, the way of love, the way of more surpassing excellence.

Jesus could have gone out free, but He superseded the law, He did not go out free, He gave His all. That is what comes before us every Lord's Day morning, "This is my body which is given for you" Luke 22: 19. His body was a prepared body. I love to think of how the Lord Jesus came in. It is not only that He came in as a babe, but what surrounded His coming in was inscrutability. There is not only inscrutability in regard to His Person, but there is inscrutability in regard to His birth. These are wonderful things, a prepared body – it was not only a prepared body, but a prepared place. I feel that the manger was a prepared place because there was room for Him there, there was no room anywhere else. It is the same today. We need to know what it is to have a prepared place for Jesus to come to. We should know what that is, that He can come. John 20 is a wonderful chapter, it says, "Jesus came and stood in the midst" (v.19). He did not knock at the door, He had free access. I am impressed with the grandeur of the Hebrew bondman because he speaks of Christ, he speaks of his love, of his bondmanship. Are you a bondman? You say, I know the Lord Jesus as my Saviour, I know Him as my Lord. Do you know Him as a bondman? If you know him as a bondman, you will know Him as your Master. I think we have a wonderful Master! A Master who has laid down His life for us, "This is my body which is given for you". That is the kind of Master we have. Owning Jesus as your Master is something that you feel thankful for and rejoice in, especially if you have an experience of the other master. There are only two masters, one is the Lord Jesus and the other is Satan, and the question is who am I

faithful to? Who am I serving? Is it the Hebrew bondman, the One who is our Master?

In Corinthians 12 we have this beautiful expression, “yet shew I unto you a way of more surpassing excellence”. That is why I referred to the Hebrew bondman. We should be thankful not only for what we hear, but for what we can see. We have been shown a way of more surpassing excellence, and it is all in connection with the functioning of the body.

We had a word on this chapter a few weeks ago and it is impressive what is said about it. It would promote love amongst us, “a way of more surpassing excellence”. Paul goes on to analyse love and what he says is very searching – if you have not love you are nothing (see 1 Cor. 13: 2). For the function of the body love is a necessity. It is a figure of the human body, the arms, the members, and we are members of Christ’s body and that is the sphere of love, love for one another, the working of the body. How can the body work if love is not working? Love must work, wisdom must work and there is plenty of instruction in regard to the wisdom of love. Then Paul adds this beautiful touch at the end of chapter 13, “And now abide faith, hope, love; these three things; and the greater of these is love”. It is the greatest. You wonder why it says it is ‘the greater’, because we all know what it is to have faith, we know what it is to have hope, but the greater is love. Love is what goes into eternity, and I think we should experience eternal conditions now amongst us, but love must be there. How can you experience what is eternal without love, without eternal life? I think of that scripture which says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133: 1), their God commanded the blessing, life for evermore. We want to go in for what is pleasant, what is eternal. We sometimes regard these wonderful matters as just something that is said, but I can remember Mr. Dickson saying in regard to eternal life, referring to Timothy, “Lay hold of eternal life” (1 Tim. 6: 12) – we need to tighten our grips for what is eternal. I think that would be a fair thing to say, we are so prone to be loose,

disregarding this thing and the next thing, but let us tighten our grips on what is a way of more surpassing excellence.

6 August 2002

(iii) Geoffrey Bailey

1 John 4: 19-21; Matthew 7: 17 (to "...fruits")

Our opening hymn to the Holy Spirit desired that we should be stimulated by touches of His love (Hymn 97). I think we have had the experience in what has come before us already of that love, the love of the bondman exceeded the law; it went beyond every natural claim, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free" Exod. 21: 5. How comprehensive it is. Jesus loved his Father.

This Man here loved what was the product of His life and His dying, what has come to light as a result of it, and He loves those that make up the assembly. He loves each one of us; He has died for each one of us. Never let us forget that the price that was paid for me was paid for the brother or the sister next to me. It is very searching what our brother has said and I think we can recognise the Lord's voice in it.

These verses I have read in John's epistle are written by one who was particularly marked as a loveable person, John; he not only was loved, he knew the love of the Lord Jesus. But he expresses love in what he communicates to us. He says, "*We* love because *he* has first loved us". Each of us is here, dear brother and sister, because Christ has loved us, He has given His life. He had you in His mind, He had me in His mind for blessing and He has gone into heaven carrying our names. Our names are there. Jesus says to the disciples when they were full of their own achievements, their own accomplishments, "rejoice not, that the spirits are subjected to you, but rejoice that your names are written in the heavens" (Luke 10: 20), your name, my name. John who was very conscious of the love of the Lord Jesus says here, "*We* love because *he* has first loved us", but then he goes on to say these solemn words, "If any one say, I love God, and hate his brother". I suppose everyone here would say that they love God, but there is a test, "If any one say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" I think the words of scripture are fully expressive without

seeking to develop them; he goes on and says, “this commandment have we from him, That he that loves God love also his brother”.

Three times the Lord Jesus speaks in the gospel of John of His new commandment “that ye love one another”(see 13: 34; 15: 12,17); that is His commandment. If we love Him we keep His commandments: that is very simple. We cannot advance any reason for not coming under such a commandment, “That he that loves God love also his brother” or sister; it is there, it is simple, it is plain, there is no escaping the burden of it.

We have been reading Matthew at home and our brother referred to the assembly gospel and its word, and Matthew is the assembly gospel and I just read the phrase that impresses me, “So every good tree produces good fruits”. If you want to read on you are at liberty to do so, but all I want to leave is that, “every good tree produces good fruits”. May the Lord bless the word.

6 August 2002

(iv) David C.Brown

Acts 7: 55, 56; 23: 11; 2 Timothy 4: 17; Revelation 1: 17

I simply had in mind that the way in which Jesus acts shows what He is; it shows His character. I was impressed by that on Lord's Day, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you" John 14: 18. That is a wonderful thought, the Lord Jesus coming, but it is not only what He is doing and what He is promising, but the fact that He has made that promise and that He acts on that promise shows the character of the manhood that is in Jesus. Quite simply it shows the kind of Man He is. That is wonderful! The believer not only knows what the Lord Jesus does, but He knows the kind of Man.

I wondered whether these scriptures would give us a continued impression of the kind of Person the Lord Jesus is, the character that belongs to Him as displayed in what He does. These refer to our present dispensation. You could, of course, read through the whole of the gospels and every movement of the Lord Jesus would be a display of what He was. We have had the reference tonight "Let love be unfeigned" Rom.12: 9. How wonderful it is to think of a Man who in everything that He did displayed in truth what He was. Nothing of the activity of the Lord Jesus was feigned.

We have the time of Stephen, a time of great sorrow and great pressure. He had been faithful to the Lord and he had been rejected for it. The people were against him, the people were stoning him, he was cast out of the city. That was their attitude towards him. At the time of this pressure and suffering, the Lord Jesus presents His glory in a distinctive way to Stephen. Quite simply, what else do you expect Him to do? What else do you expect the Lord Jesus to do for a person who is in suffering and pressure for the testimony, but to give them a sense of His glory? You know Him as I know Him, you know the kind of Man He is and how He responds and how He acts and the impressions that He gives us. It is wonderful that we know.

The One we know, the Lord Jesus, is a Man like this who would give such a presentation of Himself at the time of the greatest suffering, the greatest sorrow, for Stephen.

Later in the book we have Paul. We could say Paul was in this position to a degree because of his own failure and his own weakness. We could point to various things in this chapter where he is not up to the highest standard, and that of course would be the case if you look at anyone apart from the Lord Jesus. But here, at this time of pressure and need, you again get the Lord Jesus coming in, “But the following night the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good courage”. That is the kind of Lord that you know, that is the kind of Man. You have had, no doubt, some impression of that, the Lord stood by you at a time of pressure and a time of sorrow. You know by experience, as Paul knew by experience, not only what He does and what He says, but the kind of person that the Lord Jesus is.

The history of the testimony continues and we find in the end of Timothy that there is pressure on Paul. Things publicly are gone astray and things are breaking down, all in Asia have turned away from him, things are in difficulty. No one else can be fully depended upon, but we know the kind of Man that Jesus is as One that can be depended upon. So when that time comes and all else had turned away from Paul he can tell us, “But the Lord stood with me, and gave me power”. It is just what you would expect of the Lord Jesus, because you know Him. This is the kind of things He does because this is what He is like. It is very good to think of it – it is not just what He does, it is what He is, it is the kind of manhood. How wonderful that He would come in in His blessing like this.

Again in Revelation, things are difficult and things are unusual and the Lord Jesus presents Himself in an unusual way. But then there is one of His lovers here, John, one who had known Him, one who had had experience with the Lord Jesus, “and he laid his right hand upon me”. You have experience of that. I think we have had experience of this in this city – at a time of sorrow and pressure, the Lord Jesus gave us that word particularly, “he laid his right hand upon me”. In such circumstances we learn of Him. As we have these experiences, as we know His touch and we know His word, as they come to us, do not just leave it at His word or at His touch, but

learn the Man, learn the glory, the moral worth that belongs to Him, the kind of Man, what is characteristic of Him, the kind of love that is characteristic of Him. May we be helped to learn of Him in these things. We know Him, we have experience. I think that is a wonderful thing to look round a company of persons who have experience with the Lord Jesus, they know what to expect of Him. May we be helped to grow more in this. For His Name's sake.

13 August 2002

(v) G.Allan Brown

Genesis 1: 3-5; John 1: 4, 5; 1 John 1: 5

We have been singing together about a vessel of light which will come down one day out of the heaven from God having the glory of God, shining like a precious stone, showing something distinctive about the assembly as the vessel of light (Hymn 221). I just want to speak briefly on these verses we have read as to the distinction between light and darkness because whilst we look on to that eternal day of which we have sung, we remain still in a scene where there is moral darkness. It is of great importance that God made a distinction at the very beginning. God said, "Let there be light. And there was light" and then "God divided between the light and the darkness" and He gave them names. Darkness is morally the same thing as sin. We see it all around us, the whole scene is enveloped in moral darkness. Into that scene the Lord Jesus came. That was God's intervention. The light was manifested in One in whom there was no sin, there never could be sin; not only that He did no sin, but it says, "in him sin is not", 1 John 3: 5. Perfect light shone in the darkness. How sad, therefore, that the darkness apprehended it not. That is the current situation. We live in a world where moral darkness prevails and where the light is not apprehended. It is not apprehended by the world as such nor to the nation to which He came. It says, "He came to his own and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God" John 1: 12,13. There is something happening even in the midst of such darkness. There are persons who are being attracted to the light and who come under the influence of grace. All that we were, our sinful state, our sinful history, is met in the death of Christ, so now we, through grace, come into this vessel of light of which we have been singing. What we sang about is future, but this vessel is here upon the earth at the present time and she is the witness in a dark world to what is heavenly – heavenly light should shine through each one of us here. I have to ask myself is it in me?

Is it in each one of us? It is a beautiful hymn we have sung and I have to say, How do I measure up to that?

Paul speaks of appearing as lights in a dark world. You have to represent God. That is why we are here in testimony, to represent God, that is why I felt it necessary to read the verse in 1 John 1 where it says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all". This is very testing, and I am tested myself as much as anyone would be, but if I am going to represent God in a dark world, can it be said of me practically that there is no darkness at all? This raises the question of motive. The brethren can only determine actions and words, but motive is something that God can see and He knows what is behind my actions and my deeds and my words. We have said this before and thought of it, that unless love is the motive power behind anything I do or say, then it is not only worthless, but it is harmful (see 1 Cor 13). Could that be said of me or you, dear brother or sister? There is no darkness at all? Is there an ulterior motive somewhere, is there a selfish motive somewhere? Is there something that would promote myself, my interests over against the interests of Christ? From the beginning God made that distinction.

He gave a name to it, it is either darkness or it is light. Let us just look at ourselves, I do not want to sound depressing to the brethren because this is a glorious matter we have before us, this vessel that is reflecting the glory of God, it is going to come out one day ere long and display to a wondering universe that there will not be any darkness about her at all. It says, "her shining is like a stone most precious", what a vessel she is! She is made up of persons like you and me and it is in this time that the refining process is going on and the darkness is being dispelled. John says also "the darkness is passing and the true light already shines", (1 John 2: 8), may it pass practically. It may sound that we are aiming at something very high when we say this, but I believe it is the divine intent. Could it be said that in each one of us that there is no darkness at all? May it be so for His Name's sake.

20 August 2002