

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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A ROCK, A TOWER AND A CITY

Andrew Mutton

Exodus 33: 21; Proverbs 18: 10; Hebrews 11: 13-16

I would like to speak about three things, a rock, a tower and a city – these three things can give you the greatest stability. If you walk into a room full of people, say you are five minutes late for a three day meeting, fellowship meeting, or a big conference, as you walk in everyone who is sitting down can probably see at least twenty chairs you could sit on, and as you walk in the door, you cannot even see one! Someone will say, there is one right up here on the platform, but you think, I do not really want to walk all the way up there. Someone else will say, there is one over here, and it is in a row of people you do not know very well. Then someone you know says, why do you not just come and sit here by me. That is why I have started with this scripture because the glad tidings gives you stability, and it gives it to you in a way that draws you so near to the God whose glad tidings they are, that you could not be nearer. It makes you feel at home. The words that we have read in Exodus are, “Behold, there is a place by me”. You might think that God is up there in heaven and He looks down here: He has a word for me tonight and He wants to speak to me, but He is up there and I am down here. He is either going to tell me to go somewhere else or to travel a distance, or He is going to tell me of a promise that is some way off. But, you know, the God who announces these glad tidings says to you “there is a place by me”. What is that place like? What does it feel like? Would you feel as comfortable as in the situation I described at the beginning? Is it a place that you can fill without second thought? Is it a place that is easy to reach? The answers to all these questions can be difficult, but I can tell you one thing, it is a place that God wants you to fill – “there is a place by me”. As He announces His glad tidings it is to draw you, dear friend, into the closest relationship with God Himself, draw you in to a place where you can know the full privilege and the full force and atmosphere of the love of God – “a place by me”. You cannot get there in your own

strength, however fast you might be able to run, or however high you might think you can jump or how far you can travel, you cannot get to that place in your own strength, and thus the second part of the verse says, “there shalt thou stand on the rock”.

That is the first thing that I want to speak of, the rock on which you stand to find your place near to God. What does that rock refer to? We spoke in the reading of scriptures that are hard to interpret, but I can tell you – this is one of the easiest! What do you think or who do you think that rock is, on which you can stand to find your place near God? I tell you, it is Jesus. Why do you need a rock on which to stand? Because if you were to stand there in your own strength, firstly God could not even look at you because you would be in your sins, and secondly, you would be like the man who built His house on the sands, and the storms would come and at the first threat of water you would be washed away because your foundation would not be secure. There is a rock on which you have to stand, on which your faith and hope has to be firmly founded before you can come into this place beside God. I would that everyone here knew what it is to stand on the rock of knowing Jesus as their Saviour, and of trusting in His precious work. It is simple in the glad tidings as God says to you, here is the rock, place your trust and faith in Him, here is His work, look upon it, is it sufficient for you? Of course it is. It is sufficient for a holy God to look upon. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; He cannot look upon you if you stand in that place without the work of Jesus. Without the precious blood of Jesus having washed you from your sins, how can you stand in a place like this? “There is a place by me”. God does not just let any one in, but He has chosen, and let us just concentrate on the few of us here, He has chosen that you and I should have the opportunity of filling that place that is near to Him. What a God you have. Often in the glad tidings, we use it as an embrative call, What a God we have! And indeed we have, but I can tell you, what a God you have, because He says to you, “there is a place by me”. It is very individual, the glad tidings *are* individual; find the rock on which you can place your faith and trust. You know how transient the things in the world are

that you may place your trust on. There are those in this room who know how easily circumstances, employment, health and conditions and all these things that we have to do with change. How transient they are, how quickly they can be taken away and how easily they change and change totally. There is One who never changes, One who places you on a rock that will never falter. Some in this room know what it is to be in a place where the rocks move, where the greatest sections of rock which lie across the globe move, and they can cause whole cities and areas of the earth to shake and move.

Jesus is not like that. This is one rock which will never move. This is something, the like of which you will never have had in your life before, and that is why God has chosen Jesus to be the foundation on which your faith can be laid. Why would He choose someone or something that is likely to move in a few days or years time? Why would He do that? He has a place for you, He wants you to fill it, He never wants you to leave it. He wants you to place your trust and faith in the blood and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. I trust everyone here has done that. What a shame it would be for even the youngest one here, having been in several preachings, (and as you go up through our ages, how many more, hundreds and thousands of preachings have we listened to), what sadness that God, throughout all those preachings, has been calling to you and saying, "Behold, there is a place by me" and you have ignored that call.

Take up that place, dear friend, place your trust in Christ, know what it is to place your feet on the rock of the work of Jesus and trust in Him forever.

Others will tell me if I am wrong, but it seems to me that you will not know anything of the tower unless you have placed your feet on the rock. You have got to know the rock first. If you do not know what it is to have your faith in Jesus, if you do not know what it is to have your sins forgiven and your acceptance before God, you will not come to the tower. If you have been washed in that precious blood, you can know what it is to run in to a strong tower. It says, "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe". If you have not had to do with Jesus, do you think

you can call yourself righteous? Scripture puts us straight immediately as to that, "There is not a righteous man, not even one", Rom. 3: 10. Those ideas can be banished from our heads, our minds and our thoughts immediately, there is not one who is righteous. Another scripture says, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags", Isa 64: 6. The place by the side of Jehovah, that place that you can know because He loves you so much that He wants to bless you in all the fulness of the blessing that only God can give, that place is yours if you put your trust in the righteousness of Jesus. He has established it in going to the cross and suffering and dying there, and *then* as you place your trust in that work, and you take on the righteousness of a Man who is heaven, One who has risen and been accepted up into heaven, you *then* are righteous because He is righteous. Thus you can run into this tower, the tower that is the "name of Jehovah ... the righteous runneth into it, and is safe". As you find your life here, as you find your way, the lot of the believer and of a Christian may be a little bit difficult. It may be that you face opposition, indeed it would be strange if you did not face opposition if you were here as one confessing the name of Christ, but as you face that opposition or in some small measure what the Lord Himself faced when He was here, the rejection and casting out by men, you are able to find that, "the name of Jehovah is a strong tower". We do not use this word Jehovah so much these days, this was in the Old Testament times, but let us use the name of Jesus. Let us put in the name of Jesus here, that the name of Jesus is a strong tower.

Confess it, dear friend. There is nothing to prove your faith like confessing the Name of Jesus. It is relatively easily, I speak simply, to sit in your chair here, or even to go home and to place your faith and trust in Jesus, and many of us would have to bow our heads at being silent Christians or being secret disciples, but to confess the Name of Jesus in a public way, what a thing that is! You have already done it to some degree, the fact that you came in from a day like this and walked in to hear the gospel, that is confessing the Name of Jesus, because it means that you want to hear about Him.

Is that why you came to the glad tidings? Why did you come to the preaching? Because you want to hear about Jesus? I may preach

Him very poorly, but God will preach Jesus in a way that you will never have heard before. The name of Jesus – it is a strong tower – prove it. Prove it as you are in the world. That does not mean that every day you have to bombard everyone in the office with your beliefs; it does not mean that you always have to make a nuisance of yourself constantly putting people right; it is your manner of life, it is the way that you seek to live according to the way Jesus lived and according to the way that God would have you live now, as one who is redeemed and justified before Him. It does not mean that you have to spend every spare moment voicing your opinions or thoughts; what it means is that your life has to be consistent with the pattern that has been set by our blessed Saviour Himself, and it means that you speak to people as He would, you hold them in your affections as He would, you hold your brethren, you hold all men in the widest way as God would with a heart that is full of love desiring that they should come into repentance and know what it is to have their sins forgiven. What a tower this is! Often we think of it as somewhere that maybe gives you a defence, a strong tower – it speaks of it as a high tower in the Psalms, “Jehovah will be my high tower”, Ps 94: 22. That may be the idea of defence, but one other thing about a tower is that everyone can see it, and if you are in the tower that bears the Name of Jesus, that is not that you are setting yourself up above other men, it is not that you are giving yourself a place that is above everyone else, it means everyone can see where you are, that you are sheltered in the work of Jesus. We read, “His banner over me is love” (SofS 2: 4). I like to think of this tower not as a bleak and stark object, but as something that has banners waving from it. It speaks of Jesus. People would look up and might say, So and so is in that tower that has the Name of Jesus over it, that is where he has found his refuge. It is not an escape, no, it is something that speaks loudly of the One who has secured you and saved you, the One in whom you have placed your life and your trust, “the righteous runneth into it”. Maybe you run there because you do want protection, but maybe you run there because you love to own the Name of Jesus because it means so much to you. What a Name, the name of Jesus is! I was looking through the hymns and

there are many that refer to the name of Jesus. In some countries in the world, the name 'Jesus' is a very common name – I think we have an advantage in this country in that the name of Jesus stands out as unique. You rarely, if ever, other than someone who has moved from one of the Spanish-speaking countries, find anyone in this country whose name is Jesus. That helps us, it marks out that precious Name. That same Name that is the rock on which you place your faith and trust and is the same Name that is the tower into which you can run.

So we move on to the city – if you have found what it is to know the rock and the tower, I would suggest to us all that we should be looking for the city. Maybe you can see the city better from the top of the tower, maybe away from the difficulties and the problems that entangle your life, as you get up to the top of the tower, maybe you have a better view of the city. Not only does God have a place for *you*, (the rock and the tower have been individual, that is something you can do on your own), others have found those places and God wants you to find them. The idea of a city is that it has lots of people in it – maybe from the top of that tower you can see the city. In the end of Revelation in the first city that is mentioned there, the eternal city, it speaks of a city that has many characteristics and they are so different from any city you will know here. It is a transparent city, a new city, a city that has someone who is always with you. It is very reminiscent of the scripture in Hebrews because it says that God will be with them, their God. There are things that are absent from that city and they are things that are definitely not absent from any earthly city; grief, cry, distress, tears, these things shall never be any more. What a city God wants you to come into! He wants you to come in and share with Him in that city. I was thinking as I looked over this scripture of the Queen's Jubilee year, because as the papers have reported where the Queen has been, there were places where she had not been for twenty five years, even in a small place such as the United Kingdom. There were places that she visited that she had *never* been to, and it says as to the eternal city that God will be with them, their God. Even on a small island like ours, the

sovereign can never know every person, can never have been to every place, but in the Holy City, the city that you can find your place in, the city that God will prepare for you – “for he has prepared for them a city” – He is with you. He is not ashamed of you, no not any more. Why is that? Because you have been bought with a price that was paid by Christ. He looks upon you and He sees Jesus. He looks upon you and He sees how you have been redeemed by the precious work of His Son. He is not ashamed of you; it says, “God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city”. He has provided a rock, you have got to come by way of the rock: He has provided a tower, what you can find in that tower, I have suggested a few things. He has also prepared a city. Are you living in the city already? Are you by faith and by the Spirit living in that city already? “The lamp thereof is the Lamb” (Rev 21: 23), the One who was slain, where all things are settled, where there is nothing to intrude on your enjoyment. Obviously the actuality of it is yet in a day to come, but now you can enjoy what it is to be in a city with others who have placed their faith and trust in Christ, with others who love to be in the presence of divine Persons and with divine Persons who love to be in your presence too. What a gospel we have to announce! May you know what it is to come to the Rock, to find the place by God, to find your place in the tower if you need it either for refuge or for getting the divine view of many things. May you know what it is to have the hope, and certainty of a city that is prepared for you by God. For His Name’s sake.

SUNBURY

28 July 2002

GOD KNOWS

Christopher English

Joshua 7: 0-26; Mark 15: 20-28

This chapter in Joshua is perhaps an unusual one to read in the gospel. We read it at home some months ago and I wondered as to it and it was commented on in the reading. As we prayed at the outset this is the gospel of glad tidings concerning God's own Son Christ Jesus – good news. But we need to realise what we are as individuals and I feel very strongly about this, perhaps just for myself – the realisation of what we are. Here in Joshua there had been a sin which had been committed, theft, something which had been committed which God was exceedingly unhappy about. God said to Joshua to do what we have read. God knew the whole time what we were reading about in the chapter, God knew from the very outset who the guilty party was, and who was wrong, what the guilt was, where it was, where the mantle was, where the gold bar was, God knew. Nothing is hidden from the sight of God. I wish to say that solemnly; nothing is hidden from God's sight. We are all here today under the sound of the gospel again. Recently the preacher has spoken about the amount of times in which we can come under the sound of the gospel, the many hundreds of times we can be brought together every Lord's Day at this time to the preaching. But, how much of it actually affects us – that is a test. God knows. Nothing is hidden from His sight. Your state of soul, I say again solemnly, God knows, He knows what is burdening you, what there is of trouble in your heart, He know what burdens you bear, He knows everything about you. Scripture says, "but of you even the hairs of the head are all numbered", Matt 10: 30. God has a record of everything, He knows. How often we come together in life and treat things so lightly. This man here did just that, he treated things lightly and wanted these things for himself. There may be persons whom we can put into that place; there maybe persons that you yourself could say that you could think of someone who is guilty like this. God said, bring them forward as a tribe and still this guilty person did not come

forward and say. That is what we read, and as I was reading it, that is what struck me, our brother saying in the reading, this guilty party, this person, did not come forward the whole time. The family came forward and still he did not confess. Again, I wish to repeat that perhaps there is someone you and I can put into that position, someone perhaps even in this room, or someone we know whom we can say is like that, they are harbouring something in their hearts, holding something, that you know is not right and yet they are not bringing it forward. Still man-by-man they step forward and still this person is in the hope that what he has in his tent can be hidden.

Finally, when he has nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, when he realises that himself, this brother, this son, as Joshua calls him, "My son", when he is put into a corner he confesses, "thus and thus have I done ... I coveted them and took them ... they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it". Beloved, there is a great deal of seriousness in what we are saying; there is a great deal of seriousness in being here at the gospel tonight. Tonight might be the very last time that we have to do in grace with a God whose arms are outstretched to bless. Make no doubt about it. I feel very strongly about it tonight that we need to know God and who He is because He becomes close in the Person of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Do not underestimate the gospel, do not underestimate the power and what Christ can see and what God can see because He knows everything about you, regardless of how old or young you are. We often focus on the young, I wish to say to the older ones here as well, God knows. The reality of the gospel is very powerful.

I feel very tested in what I am speaking of, for Christ Jesus came here once, He came here. Once He was faced with a similar thing. There was a woman caught in the very act of adultery. It is similar in that she had nowhere to go, nothing to hide, it was already seen. She had been caught in the very act; she could not hide it, the very same thing as this man here. He did not confess, she had been caught, faced with her own Creator at that time. The Lord Jesus bows down and writes with his finger upon the ground (see John 8:

6). If you know someone like this, if you can picture someone who is like this, who is guilty and yet hides it, you are the same as me in that we do not wish to face up to the fact that that person is us individually. Beloved, do not put anyone else in that box, do not tick the box for them, that person, if we admit it to our own hearts and souls, is us individually and I the preacher am no greater than anyone. Just because I am on this side of the desk means nothing, I am a sinner and I am no better than this man who we read of in Joshua. Let the realisation of that soak into your soul and understand, because if you were truly honest with yourself you would say that that is true. There are some things in our lives we would not want to uncover to others, we would want them to remain private, strictly for ourselves, something we hold or have done in our past, and at times these things come to haunt us in our minds, our conscience can work. Sometimes we can hold off – beloved there is a door here that we came through, and if by the grace of God we finish here tonight, by that door we will go back out again. Do not put off confessing that you are a sinner.

Again I wish to stress very powerfully that that is not to be trifled with, you cannot trifle with time, you cannot trifle with anything. We have come in here tonight to hear of Jesus and to hear of Him being spoken of, but we need to have a realisation in our souls of what we are. This person did not confess until the very last minute.

The last minute, perhaps, is now, there may never again be another gospel preaching. This person we read of was stoned and died and yet in the gospel we read of the Person who took *my* place. I am no better than this man. If we honestly realise it in our own hearts none of us are any better than him; and yet what he went through, going into death and dying for his own sins, is something that we do not need to do for ourselves. Beloved, there is One who has done it for me, He has done it all, everything which I owe, that huge debt of the things which I do in my life, that enormous debt, the debt which we cannot pay, was paid by One who did not owe, and that is Jesus.

Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour came here two thousand years ago and He came here with one goal and that was to save me.

Beloved, can you say the same? I feel very powerfully and strongly, can you say the same from your own heart? You have come through the door tonight: do not leave, do not put it off for another Lord's Day, do not put it off for even another half an hour, do not put it off. Do not trifle with the realisation in your own heart that you need a Saviour. We all do. Every single last one of us, we are all exactly the same, none of us are any different. Jesus came here – why did He come here? Why did He do it? Because He loved me and He loves me; He loved me in that He came here two thousand years ago and died for me. But that did not end, not only did He die but His blood was shed because God, the great and terrible God whom we have, the One who created us, requires that blood must be shed before sin can be washed away, and that blood was given by Jesus. He died and His blood was shed. The order is correct, He died and His blood was shed, the terrible reality of death came upon my Saviour, the terrible reality of what He was about to do came upon Him, speaking very carefully of the Lord Jesus, just prior to Him being delivered up and that was because of His great love for me.

The very place which I deserve Christ took for me. Beloved, each one of us needs to know that for ourselves, to understand it. There is no other way. Teachers of the children will tell them that there are persons who have done great works and as a result go to heaven: there is only one door and that is Jesus. He is the door. He says Himself, "I am the door", John 10: 9. Beloved, there is no other way, if you do feel the reality of your burden of sin upon you tonight, that in itself is very positive, the gospel is a time of good news, and if you do feel that burden of sin, your conscience working with you, that is positive. Give that burden to Jesus. The Lord says, pass it over, give it to Jesus, confess it. Confess as this man did not do until He was put in a corner – perhaps that corner for you is tonight, perhaps you have been put in that corner tonight. Do not put another in the position, do not think of anyone else who is worse than you, think of yourself and confess the name of Jesus. Not only did He go into death, and the horror of death itself was there for my Saviour, not only that but now by the grace and might of my God and Father He is raised victorious and the Person whom I present to you tonight in

Jesus is not One who is dead, but One who is alive and living for evermore, ascended at God's own right hand. Jesus is there and He is listening with very great attention, not so much perhaps to the preacher, but to how you respond, to how I respond to the word which He is saying, which is Come.

O come to the Saviour, He's calling today;
How long wilt thou linger? His voice now obey. (Hymn 324)

Beloved, accept, all we have to do is believe. We often say in the preaching, the gospel itself is very simple, we need a Saviour, we are sinners and we need a Saviour, Christ Jesus is that Saviour and all that is left for us to do is believe, simply believing:

Why unbelieving? (Hymn 217)

Do not leave here this evening without that knowledge in your own heart that Jesus is your personal Saviour. That being the case then you can also ask of your heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit, Christ's own Spirit. It says, descending as a dove, and coming upon him" (Matt 3: 16), the very self same Spirit has access to each one of us and all we have to do is ask and we will be blessed. So whilst you can have your sins forgiven and know that your future is entirely safe with Christ, by having the power of the Spirit we can be preserved whilst here because the temptations will always remain. The temptations that this man went through in Joshua will always remain for us, but through the power of the Spirit we can be preserved from them. Beloved, believe these things – I wish to say very strongly – in your own heart, in a feeble way perhaps, but beloved believe them, this may be the last time that we are together. May the Lord bless the word. For His Name's sake.

KIRKCALDY

25 May 2003

THE MARRIAGE FEAST

David Hutson

Matthew 25: 1-10; 22: 1-6, 8-10; 24: 44

I saw an advertisement near us at home which said, 'They are ready, are you?' I thought that was a good gospel text, 'They are ready, are you?' and also of course we have been thinking about a wedding.

So these scriptures speak about a wedding, but it is a very different kind of wedding from what we have had. Our brother here has made a wedding feast for his daughter but the remarkable thing about the weddings in the gospels is that, so far as I know, they do not speak about the bride. I suppose one thing we were anxious about yesterday was to see the bride, but here a King made a wedding feast for his son and nothing is said about the bride. The gospel is all about one glorious blessed Man and God wants you to come and enjoy Him with Himself. He is the One in whom God has found His infinite delight, our Lord Jesus Christ, and He wants you to come to this wedding feast. He wants you to enjoy Christ as He enjoys Him. We sometimes sing:

And to know the blessed secret
Of His preciousness to Thee (Hymn 277)

So that you might know why Jesus is so precious to God, so precious to His Father, and that He might become precious to you, and so He is inviting you. Most here were invited to a wedding feast yesterday but this is a wonderful wedding feast that God is saying that He wants you to come to because it is a wedding feast for His Son; He wants you to give place to this glorious Person, even as He has given place to Him as the centre of heaven's delight, and He would say to you that all things are ready. There is nothing to keep you away, everything is ready. Do you know how it has been made ready? He speaks of what is prepared. That is a word that comes somewhere else in the Bible. It speaks about the things that have not entered into the heart of man, things that God has prepared for those who love Him (see 1 Cor 2: 9). Do you love God? If you love

God you can have part in this wedding feast and all that He has prepared for those that love Him, but the preparation in order that you might be there is that everything that would hinder you from being there has been dealt with to God's absolute and eternal satisfaction by the One who is the centre of the wedding feast. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the One of whom we have spoken earlier today, the One who was in the form of God, and as to His Person it says, "God, blessed forever" (Rom 9: 5), came into this world that His hands had made, for He Himself, let us all realise, is the Creator of the universe. It all enters into the glory of His Person; we were speaking of it earlier. The One who "spoke, and it was done; *he* commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps 33: 9), came here into this world and took upon Himself a bondman's form and learned obedience.

He did not learn to obey; you and I have to learn to obey. You children, you young ones here, we older ones; we are all the same, we all have to learn to obey because naturally we are disobedient, self-willed. It was said in a preaching once, that there was a competition for children at a Sunday School to say what they liked doing best, and the one that got the prize said, 'What I like doing best is doing just what I like!', and that is how we are; we are not obedient, we just want to do our own thing as they say, to exercise our own will and we have to learn to be obedient, but Jesus did not.

He learned obedience, He learned what obedience involved and He knows what it is for you to be obedient. As you come to know Him as your Saviour, the scripture speaks of Him as our great High Priest, and you find He can support you and help you in the pathway of obedience because, "becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. Oh, the obedience of Jesus!

Why did He go that way? Did He have to go that way? No, not for Himself, dear friends, not for Himself, but for you. He went that way and there bore the sins of all who put their trust in Him, all those self-willed persons like you and me who put their trust in Jesus, all their sins were laid upon Him. The Lord Jesus "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God", 1 Peter 3: 18. That is that we might have part, may I say simply in the words of this parable of Jesus, in the wedding feast, to share with God in His

delight in His beloved Son. Are you delighted with Jesus because of what He has done for you? Can you say, He bore my sins in His body on the tree (see 1 Peter 2: 24)? It does not say that He bore the sins of all; it says He was, "once offered to bear the sins of many", Heb 9: 28. The question was asked of Jesus once, "are such as are to be saved few in number?" (Luke 13: 23). He did not answer exactly, He said, "Strive with earnestness" (v.24). That is, make sure you are one of them.

That is the word in the gospel. The word is 'make sure you are one of them', make sure you are one of the many whose sins Jesus bore; He is available to you. He has satisfied God and His judgment against sin, His wrath, He has satisfied Him completely in the work that He did when He suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, on the cross. As another could say, "*he* is the propitiation for our sins; but not for our alone, but also for the whole world". That is why we can put a notice board outside and invite anybody in to hear the gospel and tell them that Jesus has satisfied God in relation to the whole matter of sin and sins. Have you put your trust in Jesus?

Can you say, He bore my sins in His body on the tree? Can you say that He was made sin for me, Him who knew not sin? That holy spotless sinless Lamb of God, made sin. I am sure all who serve in the gospel here would say that they hesitate when they use that expression, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us", 2 Cor 5: 21. Can we understand, can we penetrate it? We have been speaking of things today that we cannot penetrate or understand but we believe it; that is the thing about the gospel, it is too wonderful in a sense to understand; but the whole root question of sin, that poison which courses through the veins of the human race, has been solved and settled, never to be forgiven but condemned in the Person of Jesus; how wonderful! But a penalty was due; God had said, "in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die" (Gen 2: 17, and "the wages of sin is death", Rom 6: 23. So the Lord Jesus bore the penalty that was due to you and to me, having borne the sins of all who put their trust in Him, having been made sin. "God ... has condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8: 3), in the Person of Jesus

who bore the penalty, He died. He suffered for sins alive upon the cross. Can we penetrate what it means for my sins would have involved an eternity of suffering and banishment from the presence of God for me, yet the sins of all who put their trust in Him were born by Jesus in the three hours when He could say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Mark 15: 34. The God who delighted in Him, the God whom He had glorified on the earth, for the kindness and love to man of a Saviour God appeared in Jesus. Then He says, "Why has thou forsaken me?", He was forsaken because of my sins, because He was made sin, then, having exhausted the judgment of God, He died. He gave up that life in that condition; His precious blood was shed, "and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from every sin", 1 John 1: 7. Have you put your faith in the blood of Jesus? It speaks of putting faith in His blood, that precious blood speaking of the life laid down, for the life was in the blood; what a gift!

Of all the gifts Thy love bestows,
Thou Giver of all good! (Hymn 1)

God says, I have given it to you upon the altar for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. God can come out in perfect righteousness and forgive the sinner who puts his trust in Jesus, not now on the cross but in the glory. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, so that God can view the sinner who puts his trust in Jesus, can view you if you put your trust in Jesus, as clear of sin as that blessed Man is in His presence; it is wonderful! It is all ready.

We spoke in the reading about what God has done, He has done it all Himself; God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing trespasses, (see 2 Cor 5: 19). When He came down here how near He came to men and He has wrought this great work of salvation Himself in the Person of Jesus. Some of these men who have taught us in the past have said things that some of us would not have dared to say. Mr. Raven said that God Himself came under man's judgment, an amazing thing; it was God Himself who did it in the Person of Jesus. Blessed glorious Man, He became

a Man to do it and now He lives a Man in heaven, glorified at God's right hand able and willing to save all who put their trust in Him. Have you? Will anyone go out of this door without having put their trust in Jesus, however young you are?

All things are ready, come to the wedding feast. Are you going to make light of it? You say, I have heard all that before and it is still being preached but when I get a bit older, when I have enjoyed myself a bit more, I will think a bit more about it. You make light of it. "and went, one to his own land, and another to his commerce". It did not say they were wicked people, it did not say they were going on in sin, just the ordinary things of life for their own pleasure and satisfaction, but "none but Christ can satisfy". The only way of satisfaction is to come and accept the invitation to share with God His thoughts of Christ, to accept Him for yourself as your own personal Saviour. Well, he says again, "The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy; go therefore into the thoroughfares of the highways, and as many as ye shall find invite to the wedding feast. And those bondmen went out into the highways, and brought together all as many as they found, both evil and good; and the wedding feast was furnished with guests". Will you be among them? Are you going to accept the invitation to come to the wedding feast to give place to Christ, to give Him the place in your heart as your Saviour which God has given to Him in glory?

In chapter 25 again we have a wedding feast. I have spoken about God being ready and everything being ready; there is a word, a solemn word that would not be right to overlook in the preaching; it is not exactly glad tidings but Peter tells us in his epistle that God is ready to judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4: 5). He is ready; there is no reason why God could not close this time of grace when the gospel is being preached and you are being invited to the wedding feast. He has a basis for it in the fact that Jesus has died and settled the question to His own satisfaction and glory, He has a basis to come in in judgment on the world that has cast Him out and He is ready to do it, He is ready to judge the living and the dead. But here we have persons who are ready and again there is nothing

about the bride, it is the bridegroom, and the word is, "Behold, the bridegroom", and that is the gospel, "Behold, the bridegroom"; look at Jesus. None of us can say much as to ourselves. I suppose we have all grown heavy and slept. Wake up, it is a wakening call, "Behold, the bridegroom"; the Lord Jesus is being presented. It does not say, Behold the bridegroom is coming, it says, "Behold, the bridegroom"; that is the great thing. Yesterday I suppose everybody was saying, behold the bride, but it is "Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him". Will you be ready to go forth to meet Him? He is coming. A dear brother, Dr Roberts said, the last time he was at a meeting, 'Lord, we are expecting Thee to come tonight'. Our brother is now with Christ. Is that how you feel, on the tiptoe of expectancy? "Go forth to meet him"; if you have put your trust in Jesus, the love of God is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit and you have oil in your vessel and you are ready to meet Him. Some of them were foolish; outwardly they appeared the same. May I put it simply, outwardly they all came to the meetings, they looked just the same; you see them going down the street, coming in the door, they all looked the same, but they had not got oil in their vessels; they had not put their trust in Jesus, they had not received the Holy Spirit, and the time came when it says, "the door was shut". There will a time literally one Lord's Day when that door will be shut and there will not be a gospel preaching here and there may be somebody who had seen that notice board and they say, I will go tonight, and the door will be shut. Will it be you? Father and mother, where are they? Gone to be with Jesus. These things are very real. A brother was preaching locally at Plumstead and he said he remembered coming down one night when he was a little boy to make sure father and mother were still there. It was so quiet that he thought that Jesus had come and had taken them and he was left. It would be terrible if that happened to you. You come along and you think, I will go to the meeting, but they have gone. I do not want to frighten anybody but these things are real; we want to realise that the gospel is real and we are speaking of matters not only of life and death but of time and eternity. Will you be ready when the Bridegroom comes? Will you

have oil in your vessel? These other five foolish ones were not ready and it was too late and the door was shut.

Forgive me telling stories, but there are a number of young ones here and they might just help to bring the thing home to them.

A brother was travelling in a railway train and he had a way of just putting in a brief word; a man came in just as the train was about to go, slammed the door and sat down, and all this brother said was, 'and the door was shut'. That was all he said. Some years later they met again and this man recognised the brother and he said to him, I have accepted the Lord Jesus as my Saviour through that word you gave, 'the door was shut'. It had impressed him. Somehow I suppose he had read this scripture, he had read it in the Bible, the time when the door was shut. He was now like Noah, God shut him in. We are all going to be shut in one day, the door will be shut.

Dear friend, accept the Lord Jesus, be ready for Him so that you might have the joy of sharing in the wedding feast. A wonderful time is coming, the marriage of the Lamb; He is going to have His Bride and she is going to be ready. It says that she, "has made herself ready ... clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (Rev. 19: 7); the saints with oil in their vessels, the righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in them, walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit of God is here so that we might be ready with oil in our vessels and ready for when the Bridegroom come, "Behold, the bridegroom"; that is the word in the gospel, look to Jesus. As the hymn says:

I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done. (Hymn 248)

Look to Jesus.

I read the previous chapter, "ye also, be ye ready, for in that hour that ye think not the Son of man comes". A wonderful thing as to the place into which He has come as a Man is that there are

things that He says He does not know. It is a wonderful mystery of the Person of Jesus that of that hour He does not know. The Father has reserved it in His own authority. Do you know God as your Father, having the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of His Son, so that you can cry, Abba Father? The Father knows the hour: we do not know. It is the hour that we think not; we need to be expectant, waiting for Him, looking for Him so that we are ready for when He comes. Everything is ready on God's side; He has done everything, He could not have done more, but such is the wonder of the love of God that He would not do less. He has given "his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", John 3: 16.

Those who are outside the door when it is shut will perish. God wants you to have life eternal. The wonderful gift of eternal life is being offered through putting your trust in Jesus and in the work that He has accomplished and His precious shed blood; "all things are ready; come to the wedding feast". The word to you, dear friend tonight is, "be ye ready". It is an emphatic word, "Wherefore ye also, be ye ready, for in that hour that ye think not the Son of man comes". May everyone here be ready for Him and come into the present enjoyment and blessing of sharing with God in His delight in His beloved Son. For His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

10 August 2003

FROM THE BOOKSHELF:

ASSOCIATED WITH CHRIST

A FRAGMENT

What wondrous terms does the Holy Ghost apply to the Believer in Scripture! to the believer since the day of Pentecost!

1. *Co-plant* in His death and life (Rom vi.6)
2. *Co-heir* with Him of suffering and glory (Rom viii.17)
3. *Conformed* to Him in humiliation (Phil iii.10) and in glory (Rom viii.17; Phil iii.20)
4. *Crucified together with* (Rom vi.6)
5. *Dead together with* (2 Tim ii.11)
6. *Buried together with* (Rom vi.4; Col ii.12)
7. *Quickened together with* (Eph ii.3; Col ii.13)
8. *Made alive together with* (Rom vi.8; 2 Tim ii.11)
9. *Raised up together with* (Eph ii.6; Col ii. 12; iii.1)
10. *Seated together with* (Eph ii.6)
11. *Co-workers* (1 Cor iii.9; 2 Cor vi.1)
12. *Fellow citizens with* (cf Eph ii.19, and Phil iii.20)
13. *One body with* (Eph i.22, 23, and iii.6)
14. *Partakers* of the promises *with* (Eph iii.6)
15. *All of them compacted* (Eph iv.16) or *knit together* (Col ii.2, 19)
16. *Fitly framed together* (Eph ii.21, and iv.16) in the body of which He is head.

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