

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

THE ENEMY DEFEATED THROUGH THE SUFFERINGS OF THE
SAINTS

BEARING FRUIT

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PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Edwin Mutton

Luke 12: 16-21; 23: 39-43; 15: 24 (end)-28; Revelation 3: 20

Hymn: 354

The Word of God contains the most wonderful message that the world has ever heard. We sang in our hymn about the grace of our God:

We speak of the grace of our God.

What a subject that is! The grace of our God – a God who has made Himself known, who has made His love known, who has brought His love within the range of those who need it. One of our hymns says:

Sinner, see thy God beside thee. (Hymn 112)

That is God coming right to where you and I are in our lost state away from Him, deserving and about to receive judgment if we do not believe; and God comes and speaks to us in His grace.

We speak of salvation and love.

Part of God's wonderful gospel, part of the way of His grace, salvation for me. Remember Paul's preaching: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved", Acts 16: 31. That message has not changed, it has not lost its effect, it has not had any 'ifs' or 'buts' added to it since Paul preached like that – "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house".

Salvation and love – think of the fulness of God in His love for man wanting to bring you into a place of infinite blessing. Some of us learned when we were very young that grace meets us where we are, because love wants us where it is. God wants men and women, boys and girls, to enjoy heaven with Him, not only in a time yet to come. We used to sing that hymn:

There is a happy land, far, far away.

No, God wants you to enjoy the happy land here and now. He wants you to enjoy a happy land with Him and enjoy His love.

We speak of the Saviour's great Name.

The centre of everything that God has for men is in Christ, in the One whom we have been speaking of these past days, the One who will have a magnificent place in this very world where we are. Within a few years this world could be a place where everyone knows the Lord from the least to the greatest. If the Lord were to come today, that reign of millennial glory would not be a long time away and, as the Lord came in, as Jesus had the place that is so rightly His and is acknowledged, there would be those who would rejoice in the knowledge of Him: "they shall all know me, from the least ... unto the greatest", Jer 31: 34. I trust, though, that no-one in this room will be here on earth then. The gospel is to be answered to now in the day of God's grace. God is going to have His way on the earth in those thousand years. Things are going to happen before then which are of unspeakable awfulness. Think of sin as it appears on the world now. What do you think it is going to be like when the church and the Spirit are gone? Men think things are bad enough now. If the Lord were to come today, tomorrow they will be ten thousand times worse. He that restrains and that which restrains will be restraining no longer and men will suffer the reality and awfulness of sin. But this afternoon in this room, we are preaching and speaking of the Saviour's great Name.

We are speaking of the blood of the Lamb: "Without blood-shedding there is no remission", Heb 9: 22. The Saviour has been here, He has been to the cross, He has shed His blood – and:

We speak of the blood of the Lamb,
Which frees from pollution and sin.

If you are under bondage to sin, if you are polluted with sin, you can have your freedom, washed in the blood of the Lamb. There is power in the blood, the cleansing power of the blood, and you know why it is so certain? It is because that blood has been accepted by God: "When he sees the blood ... Jehovah will pass over ...", Exod.

12: 23. Dear aged saint, you may have a very real appreciation of Jesus, you may have valued it through a lifetime of salvation, but

your salvation rests not in what *you* think of that blood, but what *God* thinks of it. That is the security of your eternal place with God.

We speak of the glory to come.

Do you want to have part in that, do you want to have part in the glory that is to come?

Of the heavens so bright and so fair.

Well,

But, unless thou'lt in Jesus believe.

(the hymn is quite true in what it says),

Thou wilt not, thou canst not be there.

Now, the men that we have read of in the gospel were very, very near, and yet some of them missed the blessing; and that is my message this afternoon. We have been very, very near the great things of God and my exercise is that no-one may miss them. We read of the elder son, he heard the music and the dancing – (we have heard the music and the dancing; we have heard the enjoyment of the saints in the great things of God) – yet he would not come in. If there is anyone listening to this preaching who can hear the music and the dancing and has not come in, God in His grace is saying 'Come in'. The door of God's grace, the riches of His mercy are open and unhindered and you can come in. It is not good enough to hear the music and the dancing; in the earlier verses where we read there was the younger son and it says, "they began to make merry". God wants *you* to be part of His world; He wants you to come into the music and the dancing. He does not want you outside listening to it and saying you will not come in. God wants to use His grace in the gospel to break down those barriers in your heart.

Just as I am – Thy love, I own,
Has broken every barrier down.

(Hymn 446)

Are there some barriers here this afternoon? Let them be broken down by the love of God.

The scripture we read is very solemn. Do you realise you are nearer to eternity than you have ever been in your life, and so am I, and when eternity will begin for you, you know not. The man in Luke 12 made plans and he was so near eternity that really he needed to make no plans, because God said, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee". Remember that occasion of the preacher in North America who said that if anyone had been unaffected by his preaching they could come back next week? Someone walked out of that preaching and was killed by a tram and that dear preacher said that never again would he give persons time to make up their minds as to God's gospel. Dear friend, if you are not assured of the salvation of your soul, if you do not have Jesus as your own personal Saviour – dear young people, your mother and father may know it, your brothers and sisters may know it, *you* can know it too, by putting your simple faith in the Lord Jesus and owning Him as your own personal Saviour. No-one else can do it for you. God would love to have that personal link with you, and let none of us trifle with it – we know not what a day may bring forth. Eternity for you may begin today and it could be a lost eternity for you. Think of that, think of someone sitting here, maybe someone who has sat on the platform, and they are plunged today into a lost eternity. You say, 'Well, he was a good brother, he made good remarks', and so on. He did not have a personal link with the Saviour, he was not washed in the blood of the Lamb. No, I am not predicting that of anyone sitting behind me here on the platform, but as a preacher I cannot afford to abrogate my responsibility by thinking that everybody here is saved. The preacher has that responsibility – there could be *someone*, it might even be the preacher. Have you ever thought of that? A preacher himself being saved? I am sure that has happened over the course of the testimony, a man preaching to others and suddenly being convicted by what he was saying himself. These things are real, you know; do not delay, eternity for you could begin today, and it could be a lost eternity.

Thank God, I would say that for the majority in this room, it will be an eternity with Jesus. I say again, we are nearer eternity, all

of us are, than we have ever been in our lives. What a thing for believers! Nearer to the moment of seeing our Saviour! I had a grandfather who had a gun held at his head and was told that if he did not join the union he would be shot, and he said 'Well, you will just help me to see my Saviour sooner'. I do not know whether I could do that in those circumstances, but this is the reality of our link with the Lord Jesus, that we are waiting to see Him. Does that rejoice your heart, that you could see the Lord Jesus actually, be raptured, changed, and be with Him today? But the awfulness of the other side of that is that there could be someone, if the Lord came, who was left behind in this room. Would that not be sad, to think that you had been here, maybe all three days, and if the Lord came you would be left behind? There is no need for you to be left behind. You can accept the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, you can accept the saving power of His grace, you can accept the efficacy of His blood, you can embrace the mercy and grace of God.

The only claim you have on God is His mercy. "God, have compassion on me, the sinner" (Luke 18: 13), and you know that of those that have cried, the millions that have cried to God in their need and asked Him to save them on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus, not *one* has been refused! No!

Thousands have fled to His spear-pierced side. (Hymn 169)

And not *one* of them has been denied, not *one*, and God will not make an exception for the cry of faith and the plea of mercy from you. God points you to Christ, the preacher points you to Christ, if he does his job properly. That is what the evangelist did in Bunyan's book: Christian met him and he said, 'Do you see yonder light' and that is all the preacher can do. He cannot save you, no, no-one can save you but Jesus, but a preacher can point you to Him. That is all a preacher can do, but let it be that as we preach we point persons to the One whom we know and love and with the reality of love for souls too.

On Monday or Tuesday we will go back to work and we will be working alongside persons who do not know the Lord, people we have worked alongside for years. Do you feel in your soul that there are persons there who could face a lost eternity at the same moment as you are ushered into an eternity with Christ? Do you *feel* that? It is God's sovereignty, of course, as to salvation and there are those who refuse the gospel and will not have it. Men generally have said, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19: 14), "Away with him", (Acts 21: 36), "When will he die, and his name perish?" (Ps 41: 5), but we should have feelings for men, especially those He brings us into contact with day by day. This man in Luke 12 was nearer to eternity than he realised. These things are very real; do not put them off, put your faith in the Saviour.

When we come to Luke 23, how close these two men were to the blessing. They could not have been closer. They had both lived lives of debauchery, they had both been wicked men, so wicked in fact that their fellow men had condemned them to death. Think of the grace of God that had followed these two men through a lifetime of wickedness and arranged that when they were put to death they would be alongside the Saviour of the world! Think of a God like that, taking two hopeless men, two men who had spent their lives in a godless way and arranging it so, that at their crucifixion they would have this blessed Man between them! That is God's grace, God's grace to the most wicked of persons. Men have a real sense sometimes that persons are too wicked for the gospel; dear friend, if you remember that *one* of your sins could blot you out from the presence of God eternally, I think you would have to put yourself in the category of being too bad for God, but not for God's grace. God can arrange things in your life; God may have arranged that you are at this meeting, He may have arranged that you have come to this preaching. He may have arranged that you have come to Malvern for these three days specifically to speak to your soul in the preaching. God can do that and God loves to do it, to arrange circumstances so that you cannot miss the blessing.

God arranges things, you know; He arranges things for believers: “all things work together for good to those who love God”, Rom 8: 28. Even a blow-out on the motorway can work together for good to those who love God. I am sure our brother here spoke to those who helped him about the One he knew could help him; I am sure he told them that he had been praying for help and God had sent some angels to look after him on the motorway! If our brother had done that and if someone had received salvation through our brother’s word, God would say, ‘I think that is something that will bring me glory eternally, and well worthwhile missing the first ten minutes of a three days meeting!’ You see, these things work together for good to those who love God.

Now, these two men illustrate that you can be very near the blessing and you can miss it. One man got it, of the other man it is not recorded that he got it. Do not go beyond scripture. I have heard it said that one man was saved and one was lost. Scripture does not say that. It says one man got the blessing; it does not tell us exactly what happened before the other man died, but I think we can use it as an illustration that you can be so near the blessing, and you can miss it. What a gospel preaching this was! It was short: “This man has done nothing amiss”. That is really what we have been having in these days: “This man” – “Wonderful, Counsellor ...” (Isa. 9: 6) and so on – these two men were by Him. The Lord Jesus did not preach, it was the malefactor who preached: “This man has done nothing amiss”. And then that cry: “Remember me, Lord” and it was answered immediately. Redemption’s earliest trophy, by the grace of God! Dear friend, you are near to the Lord Jesus by the eye of faith as this man was. The Lord Jesus is near you:

Sinner, see thy God beside thee,
In a servant’s form come near. (Hymn 112)

You can put out this plea, *you* can have this appreciation of Jesus.

What was in this man’s soul I do not know. What he knew about Jesus we are not told, but he saw the perfection of Jesus and he saw that his salvation was in Him and in none other. He put out the cry of faith and he was taken into the blessing of God’s grace. He

was taken to where love wanted him and he was next to the One who was going to bear his sins in His body on the tree. Think of the issues that were about to be resolved at Calvary, the resolving of the whole question of good and evil, the solemnity of God abandoning His own Son because He had been made sin; and yet God in His grace had time for one malefactor to bring him into the blessing of the gospel. That is what God will do for you, you are *so near*. It just calls for that cry of faith and all the blessing of heaven that is suggested by the thought of paradise can be yours.

Now, I refer to the elder son in Luke 15. Perhaps there are some here who are not in the fulness of the joy of what is proceeding amongst God's people, who are on the periphery. We hear things, but we are not prepared to commit ourselves. We think we have been pretty good – the elder son had never transgressed a commandment of the father. He was near enough to hear the music and the dancing. Think of what is proceeding among God's people; think of the music; think of the activity, the dancing; think of these wonderful things that are happening, as we were saying in the reading, within Jerusalem, this peace and prosperity that is among God's people, and you are going to stand on the outside? You are going to go away angry? You are going to miss the opportunity of coming into the fulness of what is being enjoyed? You are going to say that your own sphere of activities, your hobbies, your sports, your job, is going to keep you from fully participating in the music and the dancing? He was there, he was a son, he had as much right to be in the music and the dancing as the younger son, but his self-will, his self-opinionation and his self-righteousness – “never have I transgressed a commandment of thine” (v 29), came between him and the blessing. He did not enjoy the music and dancing. Again, we have to be careful in what we say about scripture, because we do not know the end of this story, and in another sense, as beloved Mr Darby says, the real application of this scripture is to the Jew, and God is going to bring the Jew in. This man would not come in. The nation, on whom there is a veil at the present time, God is going to bring into blessing. What wonderful grace that is! But he missed the

present enjoyment. As we were saying in the meetings, dear young people do not leave your enjoyment of Christianity until you get old.

Enjoy it now and bring life and vitality into the situation and the locality where you may be.

You say, 'Well, you do not know the problems there are in my locality, all the brethren are old and the meetings are sometimes difficult to understand and I do not think the older brethren really understand my exercises'. You just try joining in the music and the dancing and it may be that some of us older brethren start singing and dancing, too! What life it brings into a meeting when a young brother gets on his feet and just says something simple, but real, from his heart. It does us good, and I think God delights in it. As we said yesterday, and it has often impressed me, in the temple there were all these half-opened flowers, as though God has particularly in mind in His service that there is what is developing. How often we have exhorted one another to make the situation better by one. You young people, you can do that, you can cheer us older ones up, you can cheer some old brother or sister up by a visit. Just bring in something of this music and dancing, but make sure you are in it yourself. Make sure you do not go away in self-righteousness. You want to be part of what is proceeding on earth for God's pleasure and as you participate in it you will find that you will enjoy it. Do not be a spectator.

God would have you in the centre of the music and the dancing. It is something that is done together, this is not individual.

Your salvation is very individual, your enjoyment of the things of God can be individual, it can also be in the company of those who love Jesus. I thought of that this morning as we gathered, (a slightly bigger company than I am used to) with all these persons who love Jesus to make much of Him together. You make much of Him in your own prayers and in your own relations with Him, but we gathered together, a company of some fifty people, all of whom love Jesus and had gathered with a specific object of calling Him to mind and having a real sense of His presence. That is music and dancing, that is prosperity, that is peace, and you and I do not want

to miss it. It is so near and yet this man was so far away from the enjoyment of it.

I just touch on Revelation 3. This is a word perhaps to those who are more responsible, that we may feel we have what is real and yet we may find that the Lord is outside. But He is very near: “I stand at the door and am knocking”. I appeal to anyone here who feels that in these meetings, in this preaching, the Lord is knocking at *their* door. This verse addresses the individual – “if any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him” – it was not Laodicea as it were responding as a whole. The Lord came into this condition through individuals being exercised and opening the door and proving the fulness of His love. Maybe you feel you are not as committed as you should be, maybe you feel you are not giving the Lord enough of your time, maybe you feel that other matters are flooding into your life and spoiling what is for God. If you just stop and listen, you will hear the Lord knocking at the door. Open the door, dear friend, the Lord is *so near*. He is not forcing Himself on you, He is not forcing you into committal, no, He is waiting for that knock to be answered and He will come in. It does not say He will present you with a list of things He wants you to commit yourself to.

No, He will sup with you, He will give you a sense of the fulness of what there is in Christianity and appeal to your heart that you might be committed to Him. So near – you are surrounded tonight by persons who have answered to the call of the Lord Jesus, you are surrounded by a very sympathetic company, sympathetic to God and His overtures in the gospel and He wants you to be committed in reality; not in pretence, no. Laodicea was marked by pretence.

They got into a situation where they thought they were all right. Oh, get to the Lord, dear friend, if you have any sense of distance from the Lord, and see whether you have any of this pretence about you, and then just quietly listen and hear the Lord knocking. Our lives are so busy, are they not, that perhaps we do not make time to listen to whether the Lord is knocking. Perhaps, He is just saying, ‘There is just something I would like to draw your attention to just open that door’. You could enjoy so much more of communion with me, so

much more of the richness of what I have got if you just open the door and listen to me and what I have’.

Well, these are simple thoughts, but the Lord would attract our hearts. It would be a very, very sad thing if any of us went away from these meetings unaffected in some way or other. You may need a Saviour, you may need to prove the reality of the music and the dancing, you may need to open the door to the Lord and to find out that your committals are perhaps not as real as you thought they were, to get the Lord’s mind: “What shall I do, Lord?” Just open that door, make time to listen for the knock. How near divine Persons are to us, how near they are in the gospel. Do not leave these things, do not forget how near eternity may be, it could be today that the Lord comes for His own. It would be heartbreaking, would it not, to think that anybody in this room were left in their seat if the Lord were to come now. It would be heartbreaking, would it not, that *any* soul should be left behind, but especially those that had sat under the sound of the gospel perhaps for weeks and weeks and weeks – God’s grace towards them continually – and to find that they had no link with the Saviour. What a precious thing a link with the Saviour is; dear young people, do not start off in life without a link with the Saviour. You may be unfaithful to Him, you may let Him down, He will never let you down. He is a “friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov 18: 24), but it begins with a personal link with Jesus.

May we all be helped in these exercises, for His Name’s sake.

MALVERN

28 August 2005

THE ENEMY DEFEATED THROUGH THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SAINTS

John Mitchell

Esther 4: 1-3; 9-5: 2; Daniel 6: 10-11; 16 (middle)-22

I have read these two passages to seek to say a few words about the way in which the enemy with all his machinations is overthrown.

It is often said, and I think it is right, that the enemy is always active, and I get the feeling that as we stand at the close of the dispensation, when the actual coming of the Lord for His own to rapture His assembly to Himself is so near, the enemy is increasing his activity. I often think of what Mr Stoney said about these matters; in his ministry you find a thread that goes through about what is near to the heart of Christ and it is that which the enemy is absolutely set against. Mr Stoney goes so far as to say that the enemy does not unchristianise anyone, of course he does not. If he did that, his guile would be apparent to even the simplest. But what he does is to seek to take away from Him that which is nearest to the heart of Christ. In other words, putting it simply, he seeks to attract us away from the high level of the truth to what is ordinary. Then, you might say, you can still have the truth, if you have, and what he is really doing will not be apparent. Now, over against that the Spirit of God is active, and I might say powerfully active, in order to maintain what is due to the heart of Christ and, in maintaining what is active, in order to maintain what is due to the heart of Christ, in doing that, He maintains in His saints here. That is how He does it. It comes out very beautifully in the book of Esther that the enemy is overthrown by what is here, indeed by what is even in the king's palace. It is very beautiful to read it, but the essential matter is that the Spirit secures His end in the overthrow of the enemy through the suffering of the saints. Now, you might not think that that is the way, but it is so, beloved. Christianity was founded on the basis of suffering – the sufferings of Christ lie at the foundation of Christianity. The testimony has been carried on through the ages on the basis of suffering and it will continue on that basis right until the very end. I

sought to say a little about this a couple of weeks ago elsewhere and I remarked that in an economy such as we have in this part of the world at the present time there is not much scope for suffering. I think that is right, beloved. Some of us who are a little older now can look back to days when things were quite different, when it was a struggle, literally a struggle, to get food and raiment, and you could see a good deal of suffering. There is not much of that today, indeed you might say what there is today is luxury, but that does not mean that there is no suffering. Beloved, there is far more suffering among the brethren, among the saints, than we may think. In one way, there is a good deal of physical suffering.

My time among the saints is relatively short but I do not think there has ever been the character of suffering physically that there is at the present time. It is not only the severity of it, and it is very severe and we do not need to go far from this locality to see it – but it is something that brings out the body feelings among the saints and you are thankful for that. At the same time, the Lord would raise the question with us, or He would put it in our minds that we ourselves should raise the question. Why is He allowing these things, why does He allow these matters? I need hardly say that the Lord makes absolutely no mistake; that is the situation at the present time among the saints and that is of His ordering, or at least His allowing. I should think it is of His ordering. We need to be sobered about these matters. Persons are suffering, and you might well say ‘Why?’. I believe they are suffering in a certain sense vicariously in view of the need to protect the testimony and to maintain the truth amongst those of us who are left at the close of the day, that it might come home to us that that, beloved, is our responsibility. There is another side of suffering. Many of us who are older remember a period when there was a good deal that is humbling and sorrowful, but God has gone on. The Lord goes on, the Spirit goes on; the Spirit never leaves the saints. Did you ever think about that? He has never left the saints, His abiding character was maintained. I remember someone saying to me, ‘I do not know how you can continue in the testimony with all the background that there is’. Well,

the background is certainly humbling, but I will tell you that through it all there has been suffering among the saints, particularly among the sisterhood. There have been persons who carried the whole thing, with all that was wrong and everything of a wrong character, in their spirits sufferingly. Now I think, beloved brethren, that the character of suffering at the present time is largely that, suffering in our spirits.

We remarked, as we were looking at this sort of thing a couple of weeks ago, that it was said of Joseph, that they afflicted his feet with fetters. That is the physical side and it was very severe with Joseph, but how severe it was with Christ! Think of it, and what it meant physically to Him, but it also says of Joseph that "his soul came into irons", Ps 105: 18. That is the suffering in the spirit, dear brethren, and the suffering in spirit is far deeper, far, far deeper than the physical suffering. I believe there is a good deal of that among the saints at the present time. We might think of the inroads of worldliness, worldly things coming in to what is nearest to the heart of Christ, the assembly for His heart. The enemy is seeking his utmost to despoil that with the things of the world. Christ can never go on with the things of the world. The things of the world are in opposition to what is for the heart of Christ and I believe there is a good deal of suffering in spirit about that matter; and about the tendency for a drift away from the main line of the revival of the truth. Let us be quite clear about it, it is the enemy that lies behind that. I go back to what I said about Mr. Stoney and you will find as you go through his ministry, and I certainly commend it to the beloved brethren, that that is what he carried all the time. What had been recovered in the revival of the truth through beloved Mr Darby and others was in danger of being lost. I believe it is a very necessary thing to be reminded of that at the present time.

So we come to this book of Esther where I have read. It is a very unusual book and there might be a good deal of confusion about it. I suppose you may wonder about it having a place in the scriptures. As we well know, God is not even mentioned in the whole book, prayer is not mentioned once in the whole book, and yet God is unquestionably there. Publicly He may be hiding Himself, He

may be withdrawn somewhat in a public way, but God never gives up the testimony. He never gives up the defence of the testimony.

Let us be assured of that. Another feature of the book is that God's things are held very largely by two persons, Mordecai and Esther.

Mordecai is referred to more often than not as "Mordecai the Jew".

Indeed, apart from only two references in 2 Kings, the thought of "the Jew" appears for the first time in this book and there are more references to the thought here than anywhere else in scripture. The "Jew" here is a derogatory term, a term of reproach. Earlier, of course, it was the "Hebrew": "Abraham the Hebrew", but here it is "Mordecai the Jew" and he is there alone, absolutely alone. One thing you have to say about him is that he was concerned about the rights of the throne and he was prepared to die for the rights of the throne. Now, I ask oneself the question: 'Am I prepared to die at the present time for the rights of the throne, the rights of Christ?' Mordecai was. Another feature about him, which is very attractive, is that he was a man of affection.

The second character is Esther: Esther was an orphan. Think of that, she had no father and no mother alive, and Mordecai, who was her father's nephew, took her to take care of her. It says he "took her for his own daughter", Esther 2: 7. She became a member of his family. He was an affectionate man, he was a family man, and that, I need hardly say, is John's line of ministry which is appropriate at the present day. But, while he is a family man and an affectionate man, he is a man who stood rigidly by the rights of the throne. He never gave anything up, and had no intention of giving anything up, even though it meant putting his own life in danger. Where we read it says that "when Mordecai knew all that was done, Mordecai rent his garments, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry". Think of what it meant to Mordecai, that for a time the Agagite had sway over the throne. Think of the awfulness of that, the enemy's direct representative could have sway over the throne, and the result was that the Jews were to be wiped out entirely. Let us make no mistake, beloved, about what is in the enemy's mind. There is no

mercy, there is nothing of that sort with Satan, he would have obliterated the Jews, God's people. They were under discipline, under very severe discipline, they had been unfaithful, extraordinarily unfaithful, but there is a man, Mordecai, who has them in his affections. He was a Jew himself and the extermination of the Jews would have meant his extermination, but I do not think that Mordecai was concerned about his own life, because he was prepared to sacrifice his own life. What he was concerned about was the continuation of the divine thought: God and His people. And so he comes, as it says, "even before the king's gate", and the law was clear. He was a law-abiding man, but where the law offended his conscience in relation to God's rights, God's rights took charge. He was prepared, then, to come to the king's very gate, in garments of mourning, as feeling keenly what the situation was – one man.

Think of that, against the whole power of a tremendous kingdom.

The Agagite, Haman, had sway over the king, and the Jews were to be obliterated entirely, and one man carries that in his affection, he suffers in spirit. Would you do that, dear friend? Could I do it? I think the Spirit of God would raise that issue with us and give us the help needed that we take these matters up and take them up feelingly and yet positively, determinedly, in order that what is of God and what is of Christ may continue as long as the dispensation continues. But then he needed help: I do not want to go into the complication of it – there are quite a number of young people here – but Mordecai would suggest the responsible side among the saints, a man who could take up matters that belong to God and give a lead in them, and he certainly gives a good lead here. Esther would suggest the subjective side and it is necessary in the overthrow of the enemy that the subjective side is brought into the conflict, that is that the saints, the brethren, putting it simply, are brought into the matter. It does not become entirely the matter for one man, but it becomes a matter for all the brethren. I would say in passing for our younger brethren here, that Esther was a young woman, she was not an old person. You might think, 'What you are saying is very good, but it is for the elder brethren'. It is not for the elder brethren alone, beloved, it is for all of us, young and old. We were speaking

of that, as I said, a couple of weeks ago. We were thinking of Joseph, seventeen years of age – think about that, seventeen years of age – and he held to what was right, what was true. It is a matter for us all, young and old, and Esther is brought into it. At first, she is not very sympathetic with Mordecai, she does not like his garb. It is not the kind of garb that she thinks is suitable, and at any rate she realised that he was clothed in sackcloth and in the king's gate his life was in danger. Bear in mind that this king Ahasuerus was a ruthless king. There was very little mercy: seek no mercy from Satan, there was very little mercy from Ahasuerus; so she sends raiment to clothe Mordecai and take away his sackcloth from him, but there is no changing of the raiment of Mordecai. His mind is fixed, in his spirit he is carrying the whole matter sufferingly: think of that, “a bitter cry”, it says. It came right home to his inwards as he carried the awfulness of the position and carried it sufferingly in himself. But he is a good leader and he pleads with Esther, where we read – He approaches in a most beautiful but nevertheless faithful way and he says to her, “Imagine not in thy heart that thou shalt escape ... For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there arise relief and deliverance to the Jews from another place” (vv 12-14). He was quite sure about that, you could not shake his confidence in his God. Now that is a great thing, beloved, that no matter what may come in, to be maintained in our confidence in God. As I say, God does not appear in this book, yet He is there all the time, working behind the scenes, and you can see that. He is watching every move, both Satan's moves and the moves of Mordecai and Esther, and coming in where it is needed in His own way. It is marvellous the way that God comes in to affect the complete overthrow of Haman and all that attaches to him. Mordecai goes on to say, “And who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (v 14). Well, beloved, this is our time. It is not the time of others, and if the Lord may spare us there may yet be times ahead of us, but this is our time. You might say, ‘Why am I in fellowship?’ That is a good question. You have to answer that sovereignty comes into that, but the other side is that you are here “for such a time as this”, for the maintenance of the

truth that is precious to the heart of Christ in a difficult day. That is why you are here and let that come home to us. Mordecai brings that home to Esther and the result is that Esther says she will go forward with it, “and if I perish, I perish” (v 16). In this address we have read of three persons, Mordecai, Esther and Daniel, who came near to death and they did not value their life above the maintenance of the truth.

Now these are things that are written in the scriptures for us. You might be going your own way gaily: that is an Agagite feature, if you remember, the Agagite came to Samuel “gaily” (1 Sam 15: 32). The enemy is in that, beloved. It is a day of sobriety, not that we do not have joy. As you go on into the next chapter, what Esther proposes is two banquets. You might say, in the face of the fact that at any moment the Jews are going to lose their lives, you are going to have banquets? Yes, God goes on with what is positive, what is enjoyable, what is for the joy of the hearts of the saints, and the banquets were banquets of wine. You might think that is strange being put in the scriptures, but elsewhere it says that it cheers God and man (see Judges 9: 13). In the midst of these committals, sobering as they are, the Lord is putting out His hand upon us at the present time, and saying, ‘Are you committed to this? Are you committed to the maintenance of the truth, whatever it may involve?’ But alongside that He is saying, do not forget the wine, that is necessary; keep the hearts of the saints up, a very necessary thing. We need to keep up the joy. I think that the Spirit of God would help us. As we commit ourselves to what is necessary in a sobering way for the maintenance of the truth, that we are maintained in the joy of Christianity, the joy of a Man who has been through all the suffering and is now enthroned at God’s right hand. He would draw us into it, the great system of blessing of which He is the Sun and the Centre, for the enjoyment of it. I think that is very necessary and I think that the Spirit of God would help us, so that while there is the side of suffering and soberly carrying the state of things amongst the saints even unto death, alongside of that there is this banquet of wine. I do not go into the detail of it, the brethren know the passage, but Esther,

taking her life in hand, goes into the king and she is received by the king. That is why I say, though God's name is not mentioned, nevertheless He is here and not only is He here, but He is active. If we take up our responsibilities in the maintenance of divine matters, God will be with us and He will act in His own time, make no mistake about that. Never think that God will be tardy, He will not. He will act when the time comes, but He would be glad to find a warrant, if I may use that expression, the state among us, that justifies His acting. He acts here, and even in the next chapter, "sleep fled from the king" (6: 2). He sent for the record book and, in the record book, he came across the record of what Mordecai had done earlier for the protection of the king. He asks, "What ... has been done to Mordecai for this?" I do not go into it, but really what it means is the beginning of the overthrow of the Agagite. Even Haman's wife says to him that if he is beginning to fall in the presence of the Jews it is the end of him. And it was. So that God comes in in His own time, beloved, but he looks to us to take on the responsibility of it.

Now I turn to Daniel, not to say much about it, because the prophecy of Daniel is well known and this particular story is well known. We remember it as little children, Daniel in the den of lions.

Where I read it says, "And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed". There, as in Esther, the decision as far as the men of that day was concerned was completed, and it could never be reversed.

That is what they say to the king. The king was a weak king. It suggests, does it not, the present time, where kingship is on the wane publicly and democracy is on the increase. But the king is powerless. Think of that. These Gentile monarchs were powerful kings, but in this matter he is absolutely powerless. Think of the grip the enemy has, and was there any way in which it could be reversed? So it says, "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed", he did not go and hide somewhere obscure to protect his life: it says, "he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime". Now this was the custom of Daniel's. Paul speaks about

“at my prayers”, Eph 1: 16. These would be specific times each day when he turned aside from the things of the day to be alone with God, engaged with the things of God. What would the subject be as he spoke to God? It would be the assembly, would it not? You think of Paul, the greatest apostle of the assembly, and that is what he would carry feelingly before God at his prayers. In type, that is what Daniel carries here. His windows were open towards Jerusalem and he prayed three times a day. I have often thought about it. You could say that in the beginning of chapter 1 when he refused the king’s delicate food, ‘Why trouble yourself, Daniel? Jerusalem is a heap of ruins, the house of God at Jerusalem does not exist, the whole city has been burned with fire, there is nothing to be seen in it all’. ‘Ah’, Daniel would say, ‘not for me. I carry it in my affections just as though it was all there’. We are in days of brokenness, but do you carry the assembly in your affections? I often find that persons are quick to say you are sectarian, but we should seek to carry in our affections the whole truth of the assembly. You might say it is like Jerusalem, it appears to be shattered in ruins, but that does not hinder us carrying the whole truth of the assembly. I think that is one of the things that Mr Taylor encouraged us to do – to think whole thoughts. When you think about the assembly, think whole thoughts, not partial ones. We used to speak about the remnant, and Mr Taylor was helped to say it is not a remnant, it is persons in the present day who are carrying whole truths as to the assembly and seeking to work them out. That was Daniel in type. The service of God, as far as Daniel was concerned, would never be hindered by what these jealous people had wrought. Their action arose from sheer envy, that is all that it was. There was no principle lying behind it. It was just pure envy, and they knew they could not get a point at Daniel except concerning his God. They knew also that they could quite easily get a point concerning his God, because he was a man who, in his testimony, exhibited the truth as to God and what belonged to God. So he opened his windows three times a day, and, of course, as to be expected, they came in a band and they took him away and they presented him to the king. There was a man high in the realm, Daniel, and yet he was going against the king’s decree

and there was no way out. The king had no way in which he could cancel that decree, so there was no answer for Daniel, but to be put in the den of lions: “Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions”, and they put a stone there, and Daniel did not raise a finger, but God beheld it all. He may have publicly cast off His people, and we may be in days of great ruin, and they certainly are, and it is perfectly right that every one of us should carry the responsibility for the ruin. We should feel these things beloved – that is suffering in spirit – and feel the tremendous disorder that has come in publicly to the assembly of God. Daniel is not overcome by that. I have no doubt Daniel felt it, but he is not overcome by it, he goes on with the service of God, and the result is that he is released, the lions had no power.

I trust that what one has said might find an inlet into our hearts. Let us think of what is so pleasurable to the heart of Christ, what is so pleasurable to the heart of God, and as you see the enemy exercising all his power against it, let us seek to be committed to the maintenance of it, whatever the cost may be.

May it be so, for His Name's sake.

MALVERN

26 August 2005

BEARING FRUIT

Kenneth Walker

**John 15: 4, 5, 7, 8; Psalm 1: 1-3; Genesis 26: 12-19; 22, 32, 33;
Joshua 14: 6-15; Psalm 92: 12-14; Ephesians 3: 17-21**

In this brief time together I had in mind with the Holy Spirit's power to speak about bringing forth fruit with patience. I believe it is something that is very much needed at the present time. This current dispensation is the time for bearing fruit, bringing forth fruit.

We have had a good two days together, I think we would agree that. We have discussed some of the most wonderful things, the glories of Christ, the One who is Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace (see Isa. 9: 6). What wonderful things they are to discuss, what wonderful things have come down to us! I think it was in the reading yesterday that our brother touched upon the grace that has come out towards us. Think of the grace that has come out towards you and me and brought us into the most wonderful things! God has blessed us, "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", Eph 1: 3. He has blessed us with the most wonderful things, He has blessed us in Christ, He has given us that Man, the Man who has been here for the pleasure of God, who has done His will in its fulness – no other man was like that Man. He has been here for the pleasure of God, He has laid down His life, shown love in its fulness, like none other.

He has died, He has given His all. What a Person to be occupied with! One who as I have said is risen, glorified, a Man in the glory, what an occupation we have as Christians, dear friends! We have been brought into the most wonderful things, to be occupied with things that are wonderful, things that are superlative, things that are beyond comprehension. Think of the grace of God that He has moved to bring you and me into these things. I feel the exercise as speaking about fruit: we are in the time when God is looking for fruit. The question would be whether we have enjoyed these things, whether we have enjoyed all these wonderful things. (I trust from these occasions we have all had a greater apprehension of Christ,

we have had another glimpse of His glories), what will be the yield? What will be the yield for God out of it, that is my exercise: what will be the fruit out of this occasion in your life and in my life for God? If the Lord will and we are left here for another day, or another week – we may be left here in the Lord's will and we will go back to our localities. What will be the difference, what will be the fruit in our localities? What will be the fruit in our lives? If we are left here until tomorrow morning we will be involved in a wonderful service, remembering our Lord Jesus then having part in the service of God, a wonderful time. What will be the result? Will there be a greater increase, greater fruit out of it for God? God has blessed us, He has brought us the most wonderful things, and I would bring it before us that fruit is for God. Fruit is for God: what is in our life for God? We were affected recently in Dundee in reading in Luke's gospel of a man who had much fruit; and what did he do? He said, "I will take away my granaries and build greater" (Luke 12: 18) – for himself – there was no mention of God in it at all. The man was concerned about himself and it goes on to say, "Fool ..." and it speaks about certain consequences that will come about because he was "not rich toward God", Luke 12: 21. My simple exercise in this time together is that there may be riches for God out of it. I leave it with each one in this room and with myself: life is so hectic, life is so busy, things take up our lives so much – we have mentioned that – but what will be in it for God? Dear young one, dear old one, what is in our lives for God? Will there be a response for God out of our lives? Maybe some young one here is saying, 'What can I bring for God? I do not have very much'. I am sure I am right in saying the only thing you can bring for God is what is of Christ. What is of that blessed Man is all you can bring: you cannot bring anything else, you cannot bring anything of yourself, you cannot bring anything of your natural prowess, you can only bring what is of Christ, what is of that blessed One. I venture to suggest that if you have an appreciation of Christ in your heart, an appreciation of love (the children sing – Jesus loves me), if you have an appreciation of that love, the love that has moved towards you, I believe that you can respond, you can bring something for the service of God, you can bring something for the

heart of God, you can bring something for Christ, I believe you can.

Christ is all that is acceptable, nothing else. You cannot bring anything of yourself, you can bring only what is of that beloved One, that is all that is acceptable to God. Think of that!

That is why I read in John's gospel, to get that before us. It says there, "for without me ye can do nothing" (v 5); without that blessed One we can do nothing in God's things. Men in the world build up their empires, they spend a lot of time in building up things for themselves – where is it going to end? Dear friend, it ends in destruction. We get caught up in these things ourselves: we may get occupied with our jobs, our houses and our cars and all these things, and in a way some of it is probably right, but these things do not compare with what we have in Christ, what we can draw upon in Christ. What fruit are we bearing towards God? What will be for the heart of God? We are often told that God's purpose in the gospel is that He desires men for Himself, worshippers for Himself. He desires souls to be brought to Christ, He desires souls to know the power of the Holy Spirit, but He desires that men and women, boys and girls, may be brought into relationships in nearness with Himself, that He may have them for His pleasure eternally. He will have it so, there is no doubt about it; Christ has been here, and as I could have read, "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit", John 12: 24. That glorious One has come and died, He has been alone in death and out of His death has sprung, as we often sing:

Out of Thy death has sprung,
A wondrous living throng (Hymn 152)

Only part of it is here, perhaps one hundred and sixty people in this room, only a small part of that wonderful living throng. Think of the hosts, the millions, the myriads that belong to Christ, all the fruit of His death; they will be there in that eternal day. Each of those as putting their trust in Christ, as accepting Him as Saviour:

Can point to the atoning blood
And say, This made my peace with God. (Hymn 357)

They, as you, have access to Christ, can go into His presence fully justified. Think of that, wonderful thought: you can be brought into the most wonderful things, and there will be fruit out of that for Christ, but my exercise is, what is the fruit we are bearing, because I believe there is a need for exercise at the present time. Fruit does not just happen, there needs to be exercise, there needs to be the right soil, the right roots, the right watering, and it is all available. But you and I have to go in for these things, we have to make it an exercise in our souls to go in for these things and take it on for ourselves. So, it is only as abiding in Christ you can bear fruit, it is only as centering your life around that One. What does abiding mean? I was interested to read the book on the last meetings in this place; in one of the first readings there was quite a conversation around abiding in Christ, I think, around this actual scripture. One brother brought in the matter of communion and dependence and I just want to bring that before us, how often do we depend on that blessed One? How near are we to that One: abiding in Christ? We have spoken about Him as a Counsellor, we could speak about Him as a Friend, I suppose that is fairly similar, “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”, Prov 18: 24. One you can come near to, One you can open your heart to. Only in that order of manhood can fruit be provided for God. It says, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, thus neither can ye unless ye abide in me”. You cannot bear it of yourself, you have to link on with that One, have a close relationship with that One, but of that order of manhood that is like that One. We are of Him and like Him and for Him: What a thought!

“He that abides in me and I in him, *he* bears much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing”. We can do nothing without that One; I would just like to leave that thought with us. Then it goes on to say, “If ye abide in me” (abiding is walking with Him, talking with Him, praying with Him, being near to Him) there is exercise in that, “and my words abide in you” – it is not just walking and talking with Him, it is hearing what He is saying as well. He is communicating things at the present time, the Lord Jesus is speaking, He continues to speak.

We had that scripture in the Revelation about speaking to the assemblies, and the Holy Spirit would be there delighting to speak.

He delights to communicate things at the present time, things from heaven, not ordinary things, and the words are to abide in us. I feel the exercise of these thoughts for myself, to take in what is being said – do we put ourselves in the way of the speaking? Do we put ourselves in the way of His words, do we have attuned ears to hear what Christ is saying at the present time? Then it says, “ye shall ask what ye will and it shall come to pass to you. In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit”. It is in view of the glory of the Father. Christ would delight to bring us before the Father that there may be results for that blessed One. May we just be encouraged by this thought, that without that One we can do nothing. You cannot bring anything before God without it being in that One. Dear young one, dear old one, what are you going to bring? Are you bringing anything at the present time? The scripture in Leviticus 1 encourages me. It speaks about different sizes of offering, a bullock and other things, but it speaks about a turtle dove and a young pigeon (see Lev 1: 14). You may have a small appreciation of Christ; others may have a large appreciation of Christ but what I would say is, if you have an appreciation of Christ bring it forward into your local gatherings. I feel often I may not have moved forward, but think of the service of God! What a rich service, all these blessings have come to us, the cost has been great. Is it worth something to respond and give fruit to the Lord Jesus and to God, indeed to the Holy Spirit, too? What cost has gone into the movements of divine Persons and the way they have operated. It should touch our hearts, we should be able to bring something. What are you bringing? I would just leave that thought before us.

In Psalm 1 I wanted to bring before us being “planted by brooks of water”. In the second Psalm Christ is presented to us, “I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness” (v 6), that distinctive One, distinct from any other. But here, in Psalm 1, I would just like to apply it to the Christian, to you and me, as a tree planted by brooks of water. You need to be planted by brooks of water. You are planted there, God in His ordering has put you there, but I believe as I have said there should be an exercise to draw the water,

to draw upon the resources we have in the Holy Spirit of God. I think that would be the allusion in the water, something there to draw upon. There is a similar scripture in Jeremiah which speaks about a man like a tree planted by waters, "and that spreadeth out its roots by the stream" Jer 17: 8. I just wanted to bring that thought before us. In God's ordering He has placed us by the water, but how exercised are we to draw upon the Holy Spirit? How near are we to Him? We need the Holy Spirit; without Him, as we were reminded in the reading yesterday, we can do nothing. You cannot go on without Him. As has been said in ministry, He is the best Friend we have down here. That Man in the Glory is our Friend above, but the blessed Holy Spirit here, One who is our best Friend down here. Do we commune with Him enough? Do we depend upon Him enough?

I feel the exercise of that myself. In verse 2 of Psalm 1 it says, "in his law doth he meditate day and night": that is an exercise for us all, meditating in Jehovah's law; that is Christ's things, God's things, the things that belong to our Lord Jesus Christ. How many have meditated on the things of Jesus Christ day and night, been exercised about these things, you think over them and go over and over them. There is much to meditate upon. I trust that as we go away from these occasions there may be something to meditate upon. I believe it is one of the habits a Christian should have. I came across a booklet the other day which spoke about four habits that belong to a Christian and one of them was meditation. (Just for the interest of the brethren, the others are prayer, praise and conversation). These are the normal habits of a Christian: are these the things that occupy our lives? I feel the exercise of meditation, how often do we mediate? Life is busy and I believe there is a need for taking time and sitting down in quietness, maybe at the start of the day or in the night season. One of our brothers speaks about the night season, he cannot sleep and he is up and reads the scriptures or some ministry. How often do we do that, or do we just turn over and go back to sleep? It is an exercise for me. I lay these thoughts on my own heart as well as on the hearts of the brethren. I trust we may be exercised to draw upon the supply that is there in the Holy Spirit: "which giveth its fruit in its season". I trust there has been fruit

out of this season together and as we go back to our localities, if it be the Lord's will to leave us here, there will be fruit in its season. In the gatherings together in the week ahead of us, what will be the fruit out of your locality in the prayer meeting, or the ministry meeting or the readings. What is the fruit out of all our times together? Are we just coming along in a casual manner, a bit like those in Laodicea that we talked about yesterday, neither cold nor hot, a bit half-hearted about things; is that what we are like? Dear friends, I trust we are those who are bearing fruit, we are those who are drawing from the Holy Spirit, "whose leaf fadeth not; and all that he doeth prospereth". The world is a sad place, sorrow and pressure are found in it, but in the Christian way we have been brought into the most wonderful things, an area of prosperity, an area of safety, an area where things can be vitally enjoyed together. May we just be encouraged to think on these things.

I move on to Genesis, and as thinking over what has been said in some of the readings, I thought about Isaac and of him coming to the wells that his father had dug, and I thought maybe we could take the liberty of applying it to what has gone before us.

There is much exercise – our brother talked about that in the address and it has been mentioned quite a bit recently – the much exercise that has gone on over the years into the recovery of the truth, Paul's ministry and what has come out of it, the truth of Christ and the assembly, the Head in heaven, the body here, many other things have come out, ministries of the recovery in the 1800s, 1900s, wonderful ministries. But have human thoughts come in and our minds perhaps blocked them up? That is like the Philistine, he would think in human terms. In the world today there has been a lot of talk about the Person of the Christ and a lot of wrong teaching. I trust it has not come in amongst us, but I just feel the exercise that those that have gone before, those who have been exercised to bring things before us, have dug wells. They have made way for the Spirit so that the truth was kept flowing. They have brought out truths from each of these wells, but I trust we can all be exercised to dig a well, to be exercised to go through each of these wells, to have

a look at them. As I say, much has come out in ministry on various features of the truth and I feel exercised as to how much I have looked into the teaching over the years, but, dear brethren, there is much there. They are not to be changed, the names are to remain the same, it says, "he called their names after the names by which his father had called them". There is no change to the names, the same principles are there. I think that is something that has been brought before me recently, that God has set things on and, although centuries may pass by, different governments come, things change in the way we do things and the age of technology has come in: but God's things have not changed, God's principles remain the same, He has still the same Man in His thoughts. That is something we should lay hold of, the assembly is still here, He still has Christ and the assembly in mind.

So Isaac came, think of his feelings as he came. In natural terms he may have thought 'They have filled up the wells, what shall I do?' But then he is exercised: 'I am going to dig them again, I am going to find out what was there', to allow the Holy Spirit, we may say, to give a fresh living touch for the present moment, fresh ministry to come through. May we be exercised to bring it out. The servants dug in the valley "and found there a well of springing water". Dear brethren, you cannot go in for these things in any natural way, you have to be exercised to dig and find the Spirit's voice and mind in the matter. May we just be encouraged, it is in view of being fruitful in the land. It is in view of his fruitfulness, but in view of him providing much, as in Genesis, for the heart of God.

In Joshua I was encouraged to read of Caleb. We often speak of him but what drew me to him was that he "wholly followed Jehovah my God". We read yesterday about Laodicea, I was touched by that, "neither cold nor hot", Rev 3: 15. A bit lukewarm, you could say they were a bit half-hearted or casual about things.

Not Caleb – he was whole-hearted. He was not a half-hearted Christian, he was wholly in things, think of the exercises he went through. He had been to the land, he had an appreciation of the fruit of the land, the heavenly inheritance was before him. I do not think

he was caught up with the troubles of the day. He would have had exercises like everyone else, but I am sure he would not have got too caught up in the thoughts of the day. He wholly followed Jehovah his God. As we know, he had brought back Eschol's grapes. I think he had had a taste of the fruit of the land. Are we like Caleb, have we had a taste of the land? There have been many meetings recently, much ministry, have we had a touch of the fruits of the land?

The heav'nly land we love (Hymn 50)

Do we love it? Do we appreciate it? Are we like Caleb wholly following Jehovah? We have seen many before, many beloved brothers and sisters who have wholly followed Jehovah, they have been committed and had another land before them, another thought before them, they lived in another place. They went through this scene down here and came along to the meetings, but they brought out what was of another land, they brought out the fruits of another land, they were like Caleb, and what did he get? He got a reward for this exercise and I would like to commend that to us, that if we are whole-hearted I believe we will be rewarded. It says of Caleb, "Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance". What does that mean? I believe it means he enters into the purpose of God, does it not? Hebron was before Zoan in Egypt, before anything of man's thoughts, God's purposes were there and it is a blessed thing to get an insight into that. I feel exercised as to it, do we look at things from God's viewpoint or do we look at it from our viewpoint? I would like to look at things from God's viewpoint, be like Caleb, to look upon and be in the enjoyment of Hebron. As one has said, it is the treetops of eternity, that is a wonderful thought, I cannot say much about it, but it is an elevated thought without a doubt – above this scene down here. We are drawn into an eternal scene, a heavenly land, an area of prosperity and enjoyment. Think of the land that the children were brought into, a land flowing with milk and honey. I do not know if it is a similar thought, Hebron might have that in mind as well, it is living and vital, the purpose of God. It is the enjoyment of God's things, of

relationships with God. I trust we could say that, it is the enjoyment of God, just to be there with God. May we just be encouraged to go in for these things.

I make a similar connection in the Psalms; “those that are planted in the house of Jehovah shall flourish in the courts of our God”. Caleb was whole-hearted, but this would perhaps be like a local meeting. There are those who we know who are planted there, their lives are in the things of God and Jesus. We have seen brothers and sisters who have gone before; it speaks about those who are “vigorous in old age”, those who are feeling the burdens of the body, illness, weakness comes in, even at a fairly young age we feel it, and we have seen many older brothers and sisters who struggle physically; but, dear friend, when they came into the courts of God you see them “vigorous in old age ... full of sap and green”, living in another scene, “welling forth with good matter ... touching the king”, Ps. 45: 1. Their hearts were full. (Many of the brethren will remember Mr. Gaskin in Aberdeen, now with the Lord, I remember much how, although aged, you could see something in him; he would come in amongst the brethren and delight to speak of the things of Christ. In the service of God he had fresh energy, fresh vitality, something welling forth in him that was of another order).

May we enjoy these things, may we appreciate our older brethren, may we all take something from them, those who are “full of sap and green”, those who are “planted in the house of Jehovah”, who have an appreciation of the things of God, those who have an appreciation of the testimony, who are determined to carry it through and have carried it through over many years, those who have had an appreciation of the assembly, of the wonderful service of God, of God’s things, who have maintained things. We look round this room, how many localities are represented here, many small localities, some large localities, there are those there who are “full of sap and green”. There are those who have gone before, we could name them, I am sure. Everyone in this room could look around and see someone or could speak of someone who they gleaned something from. We spoke about fathers in the reading, those we have gleaned

something from, those who have provided a word of encouragement, a touch, a word, a scripture, a thought for the moment, which helped you on the way. May we be like them, those who in a way were like Christ, they came out like Christ. May we take on these features like Caleb, whole-heartedly moving forward, like our Lord Jesus without a doubt – what a model He is, what an occupation He is! May we just be encouraged to yield something from our lives for God. I feel the edge of these thoughts myself, dear brethren.

I read in Ephesians – I feel tested in speaking of Ephesians, it is such a wonderful book. It starts with the doxology, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ”, (1: 3). What a thought! “Taken into favour in the Beloved”, what an elevated thought! What can we say about these things? We are blessed in another Man. I think that would be in view of divine pleasure, we are “taken into favour in the Beloved”, we are in that standing before God. God would look upon us like He looks upon Christ; Christ distinct, of course, but He would look upon and love those sons like He loves Christ! The assembly is being built up at the present time, too, we read of that “glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages”. I can hardly take it in, the breadth and length and depth and height. What things: “to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge”; I cannot say much about them but I think they are to be enjoyed by experience, rather than having a knowledge of them. It is not mental knowledge, it is an inward knowledge: “that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. What can we say about these things?

I trust we may be encouraged by these few simple thoughts. If we are left here and gather again on the morrow to remember our Lord Jesus (what a precious occasion on the Lord’s Day, a privileged day), gathered together to show our allegiance to Him. I trust everyone in this room will be there in love and affection for that One, who has done so much. Can you do something for Him? Remember Him in the breaking of bread. Think of the service: He comes in His glory, and as we are exercised He comes, as has been

said, where love is. Where love is, those who love Him, He would come in and manifest His glory and He would lead us on into the Father's presence. What will be your response? He will have a response eternally and He will have a response on the morrow: will we be part of that response, will *you* be part of that response? Will you be exercised to provide something different, or will it be the same brothers taking part, the same sisters involved in things.

When you go back to your locality, will it be the same brothers and sisters carrying things on? Of course, there is the matter of respect and you respect older brothers and sisters who have carried things, but I am sure the older brothers and sisters would like to see you take part if you are a young one, would like to see another evidence of life and vitality and fruit coming out.

May we be encouraged to go in for these things, to abide in Christ, to draw upon the supplies in the Holy Spirit, to enjoy the things of Christ. I think it was in one of the prayers at the start of these meetings, somebody said, He has opened the windows of heaven and He has poured out a blessing. I think we could say that in these times together, in these gatherings together, there has been a blessing poured out from heaven. We have enjoyed things that no-one out there in the world can enjoy; any ordinary gathering of men may gather together in their football teams or whatever it may be out there, but nothing like that can compare to the things of Christ. May we enjoy them and may there be a real and true response to the heart of Christ and the heart of our God and Father.

May He bless these thoughts, for His Name's sake.

MALVERN

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