

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

FRIENDSHIP

ANOTHER MAN

MEMORIALS

THE CHILDREN'S GARMENTS

FRIENDSHIP

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Beloved brethren, the concern I have is - I think from the Lord - to speak about this relationship of friend. The believer is set in several relationships with God and with his brethren, with other Christians. Perhaps we can, with profit, think of this relationship of friends and how these passages speak of it, and how it is to be entered into and experienced by us. The writer in John's third epistle says "Greet the friends by name" (v 14): the last words of his epistle. He does not say, Greet the brethren, which he might have said, but "Greet the friends by name". If you had received such a letter from John, who would you extend greetings to? Friendship involves moral integrity with God and with one another, and it involves, I need not say, affection. The scripture says "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov 18: 24), and that is the Lord Jesus; I hope that everyone here, young and old, knows that there is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother. Maybe you have not thought of that, but from that point of view the friend is a *nearer* relationship than the brother, and that is a relationship which Jesus has taken up and is ready to take up with every one of us. He sticketh closer to us than a brother.

Have you put your trust in Jesus? You say, Yes, I was converted and came to know the Lord and He died for me. But that is not exactly the question; have you found Him as a Friend? He says in John's gospel: "Ye are my friends", but there are qualifications for that. "Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you". In the great church crisis Peter failed, so Paul says "I said to Peter before all", Gal 2: 14. But there was One who stood by Paul in all his sufferings; he said "the Lord stood with me" (2 Tim 4: 17), and that is a great matter that you learn in your soul, that there is Someone who will stand by you; He will not stand by your sins, or support you in your sins, but He does stand by, and He does

not leave us. We sometimes sing 'What a Friend we have in Jesus'; it is a wonderful thing to know the friendship of Christ. I think we need to explore this relationship, dear brethren, not only the relationship of brethren. Peter finally says "our beloved brother Paul" (2 Pet 3: 15), but the relationship of friends is a matter that comes forward in John's ministry; it involves love, which endures.

In our first passage God is speaking of the history of Israel and refers to Abraham, calling him My *friend*: "Thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, my friend". Are you a friend to God? God said as to Abraham: "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?", Gen 18: 17. It means that Abraham is a believer, a man of faith, and Hebrews 11: 8-19 enlarges on Abraham, not on Adam. Abraham is the great man of faith, the father of the faithful, and he was a man who took sides with God and who entered into the feelings of God and the thoughts of God. "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?". So we do not need to have things hidden from us. Abraham, speaking reverently, was in the know when Sodom and Gomorrah fell. There are thousands of people in Edmonton tonight, who when God's judgment comes, as it surely will come, will be in despair; there will be no notice to them. There was no notice to the men of Sodom. The only notice to the men of Sodom was that God came into that wicked city and took a righteous man out of it, and we have to come out of what is corrupt. Abraham knew the great things of God - His judgments, His righteousnesses, His purposes of love. What God gave to His friend was this: "in Isaac shall thy seed be called", Gen 21: 12. As you become a friend of God you begin to see His thoughts and He confides in you, and the subject of His thoughts is that in Christ shall all be blessed and in Christ shall all be glorified.

Now Abraham had to go through exercises as we do, he had to be helped in his prayers as we do. We do not want to come to the prayer meeting and pray against one another. He came, as we say, to the prayer meeting, and even went so far as to say to God: "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!", Gen 17: 18. That is how far we go, put our hands on the wrong thing, the wrong persons, and even

pray to God that it might stand; nevertheless God did not forsake His friend Abraham and He helped him. God helps His friends. You may aspire to be one of His prophets or to be one of His preachers, you may aspire to other things which are right. We are to desire earnestly the greater gifts - there is nothing wrong with that - but think of what it is to be a friend of God, that He can confide in you, that you can be on friendly terms with God because of what Jesus has done! The Lord Jesus has settled every moral issue between you and God, and Abraham was one who laid hold of it by faith; it says that he believed God, and righteousness was imputed to him because he believed. Abraham began to think of things as God thinks of them, and so it was as to the judgment of Sodom. Dear young people, dear brethren, God's judgment is surely coming on Sodom and on Gomorrah, the wicked fruits of it are showing themselves everywhere; the friend of God knows that and he is seeking to secure his brother out of that condition. It does not say that Abraham ever went into Sodom to get Lot. What did he do to secure Lot out of it? He prayed to God, he interceded with God. We are to intercede with God about our brethren who are caught up in things; many have drifted away from fellowship and are worldly. Maybe there is some worldliness amongst us; we must not trifle with it. The Bible speaks of friendship in that area too; "friendship with the world is enmity with God", Jas 4: 4. But Abraham was a friend of God and he interceded for his brother. Let us not fail to intercede for our brethren in the prayer meeting. O dear sisters, you may be weary with your work in the day, in your families - I know what it is - but let us get to the prayer meeting and intercede with God for our brethren who have been lost, that God may recover them and our children that have gone away. Abraham wanted to save the city perhaps, as there were righteous there, but what was God concerned about? To save the persons. What was Abraham concerned about? To save the persons. He was in agreement with God, he was a friend of God. Figuratively God looks down from heaven, looking for His friends. Who is on His side? Who can He entrust with His thoughts? He has great thoughts. To Abraham He entrusted Isaac, and Isaac speaks of Jesus. God will have no other

Man but Jesus before Him, and it took Abraham time, as it takes us time, to come to that. We put our hands on the wrong order of man in ourselves and in others, and God is all the time seeking to bring us to His thoughts. Finally the word comes into Abraham's house: "the son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son - with Isaac", Gen 21: 10. Is that not fine? It is as when some sister stands up in a household and stands for God; she says, I want the work of God to stand in my house, not the works of the flesh. God is saying to us that He will send His word to us through Sarah, like Priscilla of whom we spoke this afternoon; she is like Sarah, she was able to bring in the word of God and do it gracefully, and that is what is desired at the present time. I know the brothers take part in the readings, but we want to hear the prophetic word from the sisters. They are standing for the truth of God in the households and they are seeking to establish what is for Christ.

The second scripture, in Samuel, is in a broken day, as we are at this time. David was driven from Jerusalem. Who was he driven away by? It was his own son. That is how things have come to us, brethren, very near to us. It has not been through the powers of government, they generally are not persecuting the saints at the present time. Where is the persecution? It is coming from very near to us, from our own families, from our own brethren. When the apostle speaks of his sufferings he includes "perils among false brethren", 1 Cor 11: 26. How he suffered from them! Mr Taylor said that assembly exercises caused him more suffering than any other area of suffering in his life, and I believe that is so. So in this chapter the king is driven away; and that is what it is at the present time, dear young people the Lord Jesus has been displaced publicly in Calgary and Edmonton and in every one of our cities. He has been displaced, the features of the man of sin are showing themselves; that is what Absalom represents and he seems to be getting the upper hand religiously, economically, politically, I want to say this for our encouragement, that the kind of man who overthrows the power of this world is a friend of Jesus. What I want to bring out in this passage is this, that friendship with Christ here is the secret service

of a friend. We walk down the street, we wear the same clothing as everyone else; we go to our work, outwardly not much different in that sense, but the great thing is that in our hearts we are true and loyal to Christ. It is the secret service of a friend of Jesus.

In the court of this wicked man this friend stood up and turned aside the evil that was determined against David. That is a wonderful thing! The passage is obscure in a way, but Hushai was the king's friend. That is the title he had. You read earlier in this book and in Chronicles that Hushai was the king's friend. That was his name. He was a cabinet minister without portfolio (see 1 Chron 27: 33), not the war minister or defence minister or the finance minister; no, he was the king's friend, but he was in the cabinet. You may not have all the ability of someone else, but you may be a friend of Christ, and you are in the cabinet, and He is going to use you in this day of difficulty. How are we going to get through, brethren? Even in an assembly crisis will you be a friend of Christ? David could not send his army to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, the enemy had a very wise man there; but I will tell you this, David had a friend, and the Lord Jesus has His friends in Edmonton that will stand by Him and will confess His name, and preach the gospel, and will not be swayed by the principles of the man of sin which is rolling in on this world. The man of sin may be living now, he has not been manifested yet, but the spirit of antichrist is all around now, and how are you going to stand? That is why John in his epistles speaks of the friends, because they will stand against what is anti-Christian, and what is against God. That is what we are facing, beloved, we are facing what is against God. He is not wanted in the business world, the trade union, the schools, and not wanted anywhere in this world. Why? Because they said at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, We will not have this man to reign over us (see Luke 19: 14). They passed the verdict. John's ministry is dealing with the day when the man of sin is about to appear. Anti-Christian features are everywhere, but will you be a friend of Christ? And will you be a friend of the brethren? because that is involved too. Thus this man stands here in the presence of Absalom and you can study his

words, very carefully chosen. He says: "as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence". But he was not going to serve in the way they thought. Beloved, we are serving Christ and His rights are first. His rights are first in the local assembly, His rights are first in my house, His rights are first in my heart; and Hushai is standing for that in the court of this man Absalom. And why was he there? Because David sent him there. Why are you in Edmonton? It is because the Lord sent you here. Why are you in Calgary? Because the Lord sent you there to be a testimony for Himself, to hold the ground in a day when publicly everything is in the hands of Satan, and to stand in the area of Satan's ministers and maintain the truth at the present time in friendship to Christ. Look what it says as he came to Absalom: "Hushai the Archite, David's friend". Did he cease to be his friend? When you go out to work in the morning do you cease to be a friend of Christ? You have to go into the world, you have to go to your business, you have to go to school. David said, I want you to go there. God has not taken us out of this world, we are left here. The Lord said in His prayer; "I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world", John 17: 15. We are here: why are we here? As friends of Christ. In our business, do I forget to speak about Christ all day? Do I forget to think about Him all day? Do I forget to pray to Him? When I go into a restaurant do I bow my head? Yes, I am a friend of Christ, I stand by Him and I confess Him. See the skill with which this man moves in the presence of Absalom. You say, He was deceiving Absalom. Yes. Beloved, the ways of God are a mystery and things are hidden from the eyes of men, and so are the saints, they are here in mystery. The apostle said to Timothy; "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion", 2 Tim 1: 7. Notice it is wise discretion - that is Hushai; he is the friend of David and he is acting very wisely in the presence of Absalom; he is overthrowing that power and he is witnessing to what was right. It is all hidden from Absalom. So I would say, beloved, that there is much hidden from this world. When the Lord Jesus was here, men said to the Lord Jesus, His own brethren said to Him, "manifest thyself to the world", John 7: 4. We are not in the business

of showing ourselves to the world. We need to watch our dress and deportment; we are not living on the world's side, we are living before God, we are living before the saints, and piety involves that I have to be righteous in all those matters.

So I just refer to this matter of friendship, that it is the secret service of a friend being true to Christ in the place that will not have Christ. The Lord Jesus has gone up on high. David is on the mount of Olives, his friend is down with Absalom and he is holding the ground for David with skill. Another thing: this man Ahithophel was a very wise man and Absalom had him, and sometimes we cannot just do certain things. So what do you do? You pray. What did David do about Ahithophel? It says he prayed (see 2 Sam 15: 31), and the word to Hushai was: "then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel" (v 34).

Dear brethren, in any crisis we need to be on our knees that the counsel of Ahithophel, wherever it is, and in whatever form it shows itself, may be defeated. Just pray about it. We cannot do much about it, but pray about it and God will bring down what is against Christ and against His assembly.

I close with the reference in John's gospel where the Lord says "I have spoken these things to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy be full" (v 11). The Lord Jesus wants to have joy in you and me. Sometimes we give one another sorrow; I suppose we have all done that at one time or another. Peter said: "For the time past is sufficient for us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles" (1 Pet 4: 3), and he gives us a list of things. He says, The time past in your sinful history - that is enough. You may say, The iniquity of the Amorites is full as to my history, I have been bad enough, I am going to cease from sin. Make up your mind that God is going to help you to do that; "cease to do evil, learn to do well", Isa 1: 17. Then the Lord says; "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends". In this passage we learn that the Lord Jesus regards us as His friends. He lays down His life for His friends. He looks at the persons for whom He is laying down His life

as His friends. He has the right to do that. He has the right to view us as His friends, and He says, I want this spirit among you. Tell me, dear brother and sister, are you ready in this locality to lay down your life for your friends? Are you ready to stand by the truth? the glad tidings? the truth of the assembly? these two precious ministries that have been given to us? This is what the Lord is saying. How attractive it is!

Then He says "Ye are my friends if ye practice whatever I command you". There is the qualification for friendship. I know some brethren here, I can say they are my friends, and I am their friend - in the truth. There is no friendship existing before God except what is in the truth, and the truth is in Jesus, and He is the link and the bond between the friends, the Holy Spirit the power of it. So John writes: "Greet the friends by name", 3 John 14. Oh beloved, these are great matters, and are we friendly with one another? Are we friendly with our neighbouring localities? I believe it is so here. We were reading at home the other day a very remarkable scripture in the book of Zechariah (chapter 8: 21): "the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to supplicate Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts"; and do you know what it says? "I will go also", that is the response. Is that not fine - to have friendly feelings with our neighbouring gatherings? We should have friendly feelings for one another in the truth. I think we should be encouraged to see that David had in his cabinet a minister who was his friend. Will you not come into David's cabinet today? Will you not be one of the friends of Jesus and stand for him in the day of his rejection in which we are? The devil will be overthrown along these lines, and that love is amongst us, beloved; "that ye have love amongst yourselves". You lay down your life for your friends. That is what we have to do in our localities, lay your life down for the brethren. It is here put as the friends, and if we do, beloved, there will be victory for God, victory for His people.

Well, may we enjoy these things, for His Name's sake.

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

20 May 1983

ANOTHER MAN

E.Palmer

Esther 6: 1-10; Acts 8: 26-39; 13: 21-24, 29, 30, 37-39

I have a very simple impression. I believe, dear friends, that it is a very important one - I want to speak to you about another Man - another Man. I would like to take my place with you so that we are together listening to the word. I do not apologise for reading Scripture; I think it is beautiful; I think it is powerful. I believe the Spirit of God has given words to the translator in our English version and has selected them so that they are calculated to penetrate into our consciences and our hearts. I take my place with those who hear the word because this matter of another Man has tremendous implications. Do you know that if the testimony of another Man is received it will set me completely aside, and so it will you, dear friend. Are you ready for it? Am I ready for it? The man of the world is not ready for it; man, apart from the workings of God's Spirit, the Spirit of grace, is not ready for it. The schools and the colleges are not ready for it; no! In them there is a desire to push forward the kind of man that God has set aside. Who is going to be top of the class? Who is going to be first in the sports? Why, they say, You are! That is the whole spirit of the world. Dear friends, God has another Man, and I want to speak to you about Him. He is despised and left alone of men and people do not immediately speak to you about Jesus unless they are believers; they might then. Even some believers are disinclined to speak about the Saviour to whom they owe their all.

Now Haman was an Agagite; you may say, What does that mean? Well, he descended from that element of man that is the most refined, cultured in the arts and in the sciences, educated according to the standards of this world - Agag: Hammedatha the Agagite was his father. This incident is recorded in this remarkable book of Esther. It has often been said that the name of God is not mentioned in it; moreover prayer is not mentioned in it; neither is

there mention of what is priestly or of priests - a truly remarkable book. Now it says that the king Ahasuerus, who represents I suppose the supremacy of God, had the power to exalt or abuse whatever man he wished. It says earlier in the book that he promoted Haman: "After these things king Ahasuerus promoted Haman", chap 3: 1. He had the power to promote what kind of man he pleased, and what is more, he had power to dispose of what kind of man he pleased, and that is precisely what belongs to God. There is only one Man, dear friends, whom He will exalt and promote, and that Man is Jesus, and every other man is totally eclipsed. Would you receive that? I say in my heart, Would you receive it? It does not concern man according to flesh, the gospel of God concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In this wonderful book of Esther this incident is brought forward; Haman virtually says, I am going to get rid of Christ. You say, But there is nothing said about Christ. No, there is not, but in the principle of it that is what he says; and what is more, I am going to get rid of all that is Christ's, not only Mordecai the Jew, I will not stop at one man, I will deal with them all. Haman shows the power of Satan operating in a man. But God is behind all these circumstances, and one night the king could not go to sleep; he has the chronicles read before him and he finds that Mordecai has been his personal deliverer, and he says, "What honour and dignity has been done to Mordecai for this? The king's servants that attended upon him said, Nothing has been done for him". Dear friends, let me ask you, is He your Deliverer? He certainly is mine, He is my Deliverer. What honour and dignity has been done to Jesus by us? They said, Nothing. The king virtually says, It cannot be like this, if nothing has been done for him, I am going to do something for him. And there was Haman waiting in the court, waiting to make a request to the king that Mordecai should be hanged on the gallows that Haman had prepared, fifty cubits high. The king calls him in and he says to Haman; "What is to be done with the man whom the king delights to honour?". The king did not say, I want to honour Mordecai and what shall we do for him? God does not put things to

us like that; He raises in His questions what is morally inherent in the human heart. What is that? Pride; it is me. That is what it says, does it not? "Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to me?" - me. You say, Who is that? It is me. Dear friends, I respectfully say, it is you also. Oh, if only we could arrive at this, that God will not have that man whom He has set aside in the cross of Christ, He will not have him in His presence. "The end of all flesh has come before me", He said to Noah (Gen 6: 13) - the end of all flesh, and He has never gone back on it, never. "To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to me?" Oh, I say, the pride of my heart that thinks I should merit some favour from God, some honour from Him. I expect most here have come to a point where they have been profoundly glad that God has set aside completely, and in a judicial way in judgment, the man who is marked by this horrible pride. I am profoundly thankful, dear friends, I confess, because who comes into view? The Man after God's own heart, Jesus.

So Mordecai is honoured. Of course we immediately think of Philippians 2 when we read this: Jesus, "becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (vv 8-10). This is now proclaimed before Him! The greatness of His Person, the glory that is His, the wonder of His work, and not only His official glory but those wonderful tender feelings that have the sinner in view that such might be delivered from the man that is under God's condemnation and brought, in Himself, into the present and eternal favour of God.

I refer to the eunuch because he was a man who arrived at another man practically. He was a great man and he was an Ethiopian. There is a scripture which says: "Can an Ethiopian change his skin, or a leopard his spots", Jer 12: 23. This Ethiopian was changed through the testimony of the gospel, the testimony of Jesus; in that sense he changed his skin. You say, He was still an Ethiopian. Oh, yes, but he had changed his man, he had changed

for another Man, changed for Jesus. I believe he was an honest man; he must have been because he was in charge of all queen Candace's treasure: "a man in power under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure". God takes account of honest people, an honest heart. This Ethiopian was a man of integrity and had come to worship at Jerusalem; that is, he had come to recognise that there was something due to God. He was returning and sitting in his chariot reading the prophet Esaias; at the same time the angel of the Lord had His eye upon Philip the evangelist and spoke to him, and told him where to go; "go southward on the way which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza: the same is desert. And he rose up and went". The Spirit of God also had His eye on this Ethiopian for there he was, reading the holy writings. Philip heard him reading the prophet Esaias and said: "Dost thou then know what thou art reading of? And he said, How should I then be able unless some one guide me? And he begged Philip to come up and sit with him". He was reading that touching scripture in Isaiah 53, speaking of the One who was despised and left alone of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But in that wonderful passage, before it comes to the part that is quoted here, it says of Jesus (I expect the eunuch had read that): "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (vv 4-6). Ah, dear friends, how could we preach the glad tidings without speaking about the cross of Christ? How could we proclaim glad tidings concerning the Lord Jesus unless we spoke of His death? How could we tell you of that other Man, save it be that we should tell you that He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, and that God has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all? Does He become attractive to you? Could anybody name another man who has undertaken to do what Jesus has done, and to do it in a way that is satisfying to God? Every one of us is guilty; there is none righteous no, not even one; Scripture

says: "not so much as one", Rom 3: 12. I believe that in this world the enormity of sin in the sight of God is rapidly and steadily being written down. I would say to every heart, every person with whom this subject comes up, that sin, lawlessness, evil, lust, are abhorrent to that God to whom we sang this morning: 'Holy, holy, holy, blessed God we praise Thee' (No.100). The whole earth is full of His glory, and still is, and every sinner will have to say to Him. I am sure that everybody here has had to say to Him, but if there is the slightest thing that you feel is not quite right, you have to say to Him about it, because Jesus has had to say to God on behalf of the believer and He has had to say to Him in all the detail of our responsibility towards God. "All we like sheep have gone astray"; I once gave a man a tract 'All we like sheep have gone astray', and he said, That is true enough anyway. I said, Are you a believer? No, he said, I am not, but that is true. You see, people know that, they have the personal consciousness that they have gone astray. But God has laid upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. What does it mean? I believe it means that the righteous judgment of God that is due to that iniquity has been laid upon Him and He has borne it according to all that God requires in regard of it. You say, What then? The believer is free of it, free of the burden, the burden of sin. Wonderful, is it not? This is this other Man, Does He attract you? It is good to call attention to Him, this other Man.

So Philip hears him reading; and "the eunuch answering Philip said, I pray thee, concerning whom does the prophet say this? of himself or of some other?" He was not only an honest man, he was an enquiring man. It is good to enquire, for if you have a problem and do not enquire you remain with the problem; if you do enquire you will get an answer. This man said: "concerning whom does the prophet say this? of himself or some other? And Philip, opening his mouth and beginning from that scripture, announced the glad tidings of Jesus to him". I believe what Philip had to say was so attractive; it was the glad tidings of Jesus. As the sin Bearer? Yes. The reason that He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, Yes? He was delivered for our offences; led as a sheep to the slaughter, as a lamb dumb

before its shearers, thus He opens not His mouth. He did not say a word; He bore it all; He went that way of subjection to the will of God. He made no complaint; not that He did not feel it; He did. You remember that scripture in John where it speaks of the Lord Jesus saying "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?", John 12: 27. What a moment it was when He said "Father, save me from this hour". Oh, the feelings of Jesus, the reality of His manhood, dear friends. "But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name". You remember the answer from heaven, that voice; people said it thundered, but it was a voice from heaven, a voice to Him.

"The glad tidings of Jesus": it included His glory; I believe that Philip would speak not only of what He had undertaken to do as a sheep that was led to the slaughter. It goes on: "In his humiliation his judgment has been taken away, and who shall declare His generation? for his life is taken from the earth". He spoke the glad tidings that, although He had gone this way, God had highly exalted Him; He was an available Saviour. He "announced the glad tidings of Jesus", that Man, to him. What was the effect? They came to water and there this Ethiopian says, I would like to be identified with Him, but I can see that if I am to be identified with Him I must go out of sight. These are wonderful things, and they are things, dear friends, that make for the reality of Christianity to be practically known in the hearts of people like you and me. If there is an allowance of the man that God has set aside, by so much as that man is allowed, by so much is the enjoyment that properly belongs to the believer taken away from him. When He is given His place, and that place is supreme, the Spirit delights to bring the believer into the blessedness of that link with another Man. We often hear that that Man is the centre of another world, and thank God it is the truth.

So it says: "And as they went along the way, they came upon a certain water and the eunuch says, Behold water; what hinders my being baptised? So he commanded the chariot to stop. And they went down both to the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he

baptised him". They both went out of sight. Philip the preacher in his action would say, I recognise with you that God has another Man. But notice: "But when they came up out of the water" - not when the eunuch came up, but when they came up out of the water - "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no longer, for he went on his way rejoicing". What do you think made him rejoice? I think he was occupied with another Man; the Ethiopian had changed his skin. Wonderful, is it not? I believe he had the Holy Spirit and he went on his way rejoicing. I have an impression that somehow or in some way by God's own operations the testimony that he carried back to Ethiopia has continued until this day; I think there are believers in Jesus in Ethiopia at the present time.

When we come to Acts 13 the people addressed are religious; but religious people have to change their man too. These are Jews, but the apostle Paul is speaking to them; he spoke about that king whom the people desired, Saul, but it says a very significant thing about him; although God gave them Saul it says "And having removed him". How was he removed? He was removed, dear friends, in the cross of Christ; that is where he was removed, removed in judgment, and that judgment remains, the judgment of God on the man that is removed. These are the fundamentals of God's gospel, but how liberating! Are you not glad to be free from the man that could never ever please God? We should be profoundly glad to be occupied with another Man. Then it says: "he raised up to them David for king, of whom also bearing witness he said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart", and it is in this scripture that David, the man after God's heart, is linked with Jesus: "God brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus". Paul speaks about what they did to Him, and then he speaks about what God did to Him. God raised Him from among the dead. What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour? He raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, as Peter says in his first epistle: "who has raised him from among the dead and given him glory, that your faith and hope should be in God", chap 1: 21. A

glorious gospel, is it not? The One whose precious blood has made atonement, that precious blood that cleanses from every sin; the One in whose death the man after Adam's order has been terminated judicially by God, God has raised from the dead and given Him glory. I believe I can catch something of the spirit of exultation in this. "But he whom God raised up did not see corruption. Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this man remission of sins is preached to you".

Who is this Man? He is the other Man: "that through this man remission of sins is preached to you, and from all the things from which ye could not be justified in the law of Moses". Now what? "In him". Oh, I say, let us take account of this: "in him" - that is the other Man - "in him every one that believes is justified", every one who has faith in Christ, faith in the Man that is risen from among the dead. Having completed that wonderful work of redemption He is raised and glorified, and in Him every one that believes is justified. What does it mean? It means that judicially, before God, the believer is as clear of guilt as Jesus is. It is as if God, the Judge of all the earth, has had regard to all the facts, the facts of the sinnership, the facts of the state of the sinner, what is inherent in his heart; He regards all the facts; then He takes account of that wonderful work at Calvary's cross and that glorious Person who did the work. All the facts are before the Judge, and He says in the light of what has been done, you are as clear of all that once belonged to you as Jesus is, the Man who is in My presence. You say, then I can be free? Absolutely free! No wonder the apostle said to those Galatians; "be not held again in a yoke of bondage", Gal 5: 1. Do not get under bondage any more, just live in the light of the liberty God has for us; and then, let us remember that that liberty is in another blessed Man. These are truly glad tidings and I say there is nothing like them, they are magnificent glad tidings, and the focus all the time is upon the Person of our blessed and glorious Lord. The Spirit is given that the reality of these things might be known by us; and as they are known by you and as they are known by me, we shall be regulated by what

is pleasing to Him, to walk together in the light of the assembly, of which He says, My assembly! May God bless the word to us.

CROYDON

15 April 1984

MEMORIALS

The following may be familiar to many but they "yet speak".

First: Mr.Darby's first impression of another brother: Mr Darby's first impressions of Mr.Wigram - about 1827. (Extract of a letter).

Such a saint as Miss F. brought in to take tea with me this afternoon, a Mr Wigram, not more than 22, preparing for the ministry. Whilst his spirit and conversation have laid me in the dust, his weighty words and sentences, I pray God I may never forget. So much is given him of the Spirit, one felt our Lord's sanctifying presence amongst us.

He read to us, during tea, Psalms 67 and 23 with such a holy solemnity of voice and manner as if he felt every word was God's word. Our conversation took the following topics: -

That we did not simplify prayers enough.

That it is the lifting up of the heart all the day long that we may be assured, walking with God as a friend, telling Him everything.

That we lose much by not waiting on Him in following up petitions - suppose the salvation of a friend to be ours, to turn the mind to that point during the day.

That we may be assured the closer we walk the more the light of His countenance we shall enjoy.

That ejaculatory prayer, the lifting up of the eye and the realising the eyes of God continually upon us, is the great secret of spirituality in social intercourse.

That the deeply spiritual mind cannot be a great talker because such are watching and cherishing the visits of the Spirit, ascending at intervals in all the secret acts of faith and love and praise.

That the expression of the eye tells those breaks off, whilst those around them are taken up with present things.

You never find a spiritual Christian lie late in bed. Mr Wigram sees such a want of spirituality in this interior state of things as to communion, with busy active people - the soul starving amidst the sense of duties.

Mr Wigram came and sat with me 1½ hours yesterday. I can give you no idea of his prayers, every word filled with the realising of His presence before whom the angels cover their faces, so hallowed, so happy, as if in the presence chamber. The savour of his two visits I feel at this moment and never can forget the messages the Lord commissioned him to speak to my soul. Oh how much did he dwell on the privilege of cultivating the continual presence of Jesus, as living in the spirit of prayer all the day long.

(J.N.D. was about 27 when he wrote the above).

Second: the following published by Morrish on a card (which has come to me having been used to mount a photograph: Ed.)

(Extract from a letter from the late Geo Eade, of Brisbane, to S.J.B.C.).

I well remember, many years ago, that a deep impression was made upon my heart when privileged to be present at a large Reading Meeting of well-known brethren, including the late J.N.D., who soon afterwards entered upon his well-earned rest. The subject before us had been the Melchisedek priesthood, and many deep and precious thoughts were brought out about it, much of which I have forgotten. But one thing I have never let slip. At the close of the meeting Mr Darby, who had said very little all through, remarked: "Brethren we have heard and enjoyed many blessed and profound things this afternoon, but some of us who are getting old find the simplest truths are becoming the sweetest. Perhaps some of us may soon be on a deathbed, and then we may feel how precious it is to pillow the soul on some simple scripture such as, 'The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin'. I have studied and loved many scriptures and I value all, but if I die, let me rest my soul, my eternity, on this one - on the precious blood".

THE CHILDREN'S GARMENTS

I have often wondered if the first children born into the world enquired, as they grew up, about the beautiful coats of their parents. You will remember reading that when God came down to commune with Adam and Eve they were found naked, in fear and trying to hide from their Creator. They had sinned and at once acquired a bad conscience which, mercifully, was tender. Then, so as to make them fit for His presence, God made them coats of skin and clothed them. The coats were costless to them but the price was the sacrifice of an animal, type of the offering up in death of our Lord Jesus so that the believer on Him should have His righteousness and be fit for the holy presence of God.

The prophet Zechariah had a vision of a very religious man, indeed a High Priest, standing before the Holy One, clad in filthy garments. To make matters worse for him Satan appeared so as to condemn him. As you should know, Satan is a real person, one to be dreaded as the fulness of evil and wickedness. His name is thus given with a capital letter in the Bible. But the infinite resources of God in mercy were shown in the majestic words "Take away the filthy garments off him" and "See, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee". God never overlooks or forgets sins, which would be weakness, but He takes full account of them and, for the believer, will remember them no more, which is power. Words may be easily spoken but to take away sins and iniquities required that they be borne by someone else. By the gospel we can believe that Jesus has borne our sins and their penalty. More even than this, we are given a righteousness which is of God and which we could otherwise never have. The High Priest's filthy garments were not just laundered and put back on him, but he was clothed with something new and entirely different - festival robes!

The festival itself is beautifully portrayed in the parable of the so called prodigal son. I prefer to call it the parable of the wealthy father, which gives the prominence to the one who had such great resources of love, mercy, clothing and joy. The young man was

clothed in the best robe - type of the Lord Jesus Christ - before he entered the house, and the calf that was offered up represents the sacrifice of Jesus which answered all questions of sins and sin that arose and was to the glory of God. The father in the parable said "But it was right to make merry and rejoice". Do you join in?

J.C.Evershed