

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 143

February 1985

Contents

BEING AVAILABLE FOR THE LORD AT THE MOMENT

THE LORD LOOKING

THE CHILDREN'S RANSOM

BEING AVAILABLE FOR THE LORD AT THE MOMENT

J.Renton

John 18: 4-9; Genesis 3: 8-10; Samuel 10: 20-23; 13: 5-7; Isaiah 6: 1-8

It is in mind to say something about being available to the Lord for what He has in mind for us at the present moment. We are in a time of difficulty and public ruin, but the work of the Lord is going on; the Spirit is here - 'The Spirit all the truth sustains', we sometimes sing (No.436) - and the Spirit is available to help any who are committed to the Lord Jesus and to the testimony. In 2 Timothy, when the ruin of the church publicly came in, Timothy was discouraged, and Paul's word was "God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion. Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner", 2 Tim 1: 7,8. The testimony of our Lord is still here, and the Lord would have every one of us committed to Him and to His testimony at the present time. There is public failure; it is a day such as the prophet Zechariah spoke of: "the day of small things", chap 4: 10. It is a day of small things publicly, but a day of great things secretly and spiritually, because we are near to what we speak of as the rapture, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ when the Spirit and the bride say, Come, when the Father's perfect time will be completed and the Lord Jesus will come for all His own. What a moment that will be! We do well to dwell on the greatness of the moment that is before us. We do not wait for an event exactly, we wait for a Person, but it will be a very great event nevertheless. All the Old Testament saints, from Abel who was the first that we know of to have died all those centuries ago, are going to be raised. The Lord Jesus rules over dead and living (see Rom 14: 9) and the dead in Christ are going to rise. Think of what that will mean, what a moment it will be! All the New Testament saints, those who sleep in Jesus, will be raised at that same moment, and, as Paul writes; "we, the living who remain shall be caught up together with them ... to meet the Lord in the air", 1 Thess 4: 17. We wait for the Lord Himself who will make all this an

actuality. The coming of the Lord is imminent. It has been said for many years that His coming is imminent, but it is more imminent than ever it was. Among believers there is a stirring of heart expecting the coming of the Lord. Then look out on the world around us, there is hardly a nation where there is not trouble. On the one hand there is expectancy among believers, on the other hand there is the imminence of the great tribulation and judgment. From both points of view, the coming of the Lord is imminent.

The Lord is therefore looking for persons to have part in His testimony according to His thoughts at the present time. I desire to speak first of all about the Lord Jesus and how available He was at the critical moment in the history of the world when He took upon Himself the great work of redemption. He was available. In Leviticus 16, in connection with the scapegoat, or the goat that was for Azazel as in the New Translation, we read "and Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the living goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, and he shall put them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away to the wilderness by the hand of a man standing ready" (v 21). Who could answer to the man standing ready except the Lord Jesus Christ who was available to undertake all that was required for the securing of God's will and God's pleasure as well as the blessing of our souls? Thus as we read: "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth". Think of that movement on the part of the Lord Jesus, all in view of the will of God and all that that will had in mind! Think of the greatness of divine purpose before the world's foundation and who was going to accomplish it! The One who undertook that great work was the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing all that was coming upon Him, knowing the suffering involved, knowing the darkness He had to go into, knowing also the One who was going to save Him out of death (for He was going into death): all this was before Him along with all the mocking and animosity of men: "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him went forth". The Lord Jesus was the Man standing ready in view of accomplishing the great work of redemption, in view

of securing a universe for God, in view of men recovered for God's pleasure. "Jesus ... knowing all things that were coming upon him"; He knew it all, He faced it all in Gethsemane according to Matthew, Mark and Luke, agonising with His Father regarding that matter and here He "went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazaraean. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go away; that the word might be fulfilled which he spoke, As to those whom thou hast given me, I have not lost one of them". The Lord will not lose one of His own; knowing all the things that were before Him He went forth alone in view of their salvation. We do not know what is before us, but we need to commit ourselves in our measure. The Lord's committal was full and perfect, but we need to commit ourselves according to our measure to have part in the testimony of our Lord at this time. What a model He is! He is more than a model here, He is an object for our affections. He said "if therefore ye seek me, let these go away". He is the I am; when He said "I am he, they went away backward and fell to the ground". The Lord could have dismissed all the opposition in the power of His Person; but no, He went forth into the suffering way and all that that involved.

Some of the scriptures read speak of persons who hid themselves. The great danger is that when the call comes to be available to the Lord and His testimony we tend to hide ourselves for different reasons. Adam and his wife hid themselves because they had something on the conscience and therefore they were afraid.

That might hinder any one of us. When the woman was deceived and Adam disobeyed, they acquired a conscience. By partaking of the tree they acquired the knowledge of good and evil; therefore because of their sin they were not happy with God. It says: "And they heard the voice of Jehovah Elohim, walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And Man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim, in the midst of the trees of the garden". They hid behind the very trees which had been of God's provision.

We can hide ourselves instead of being available. The reason here was because of something on their conscience. You can understand

Adam and Eve fearing the presence of God, but there is no reason why any of us should have anything on our conscience to be a hindrance to our committal to the Lord and His testimony, because there is a way in which anything on the conscience can be settled.

"If we confess our sins he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins"; and not only forgive our sins but "cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1: 9): to cleanse us, to justify us, to be as clean and pure as if we had never sinned. That is what God offers us in the glad tidings. So we should have nothing on our conscience. Some of us may, like Paul, have some things in our memory to keep us humble, for Paul never forgot that he had persecuted believers, but it was not on his conscience; he was free with God because he had confessed it all, he had had to do with God about it; it was no longer on his conscience, but it was in his memory to keep him humble, and some of us have things in our memory to keep us humble. But there need not be anything on anybody's conscience. One of the gospel hymns says:

'Conscience now no more condemns us
For His own most precious blood
Once for all has washed and cleansed us
Cleansed us in the sight of God' (No.410)

Because of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ because of the work He accomplished, because of His going forth, knowing all that would come upon Him, to clear the ground so that no one, no man, or woman, or child need have anything on their conscience, we therefore need not fear the presence of God but be available for Him, for His service, for His pleasure for His will at the present moment.

Now we come to king Saul who hid himself. King Saul had been given every advantage. If you read the preceding chapters you can see how great advantages were given to him because he was called into a place of responsibility; he was selected for it and he knew he was selected for it. He was given special food by Samuel the prophet; he was given the shoulder: "And Samuel said to the cook Bring the portion that I gave thee, of which I said to thee, Set it

by thee. And the cook took up the shoulder, and what was on it and set it before Saul", 1 Sam 9: 23,24. Saul had that advantage; he was given the shoulder to strengthen him for the responsibility that he was to take up. The Lord will not ask us to take up any responsibility that He would not support us in and would not give us strength for. Saul is given this special food, and then he is selected by being anointed, God even giving him another heart (see 1 Sam 10: 9); the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, he had every advantage, and now the word comes for Saul to go forward; but what do we find? He is hiding among the baggage. Among the baggage is not a very dignified place for one who was called to a place of responsibility.

Each one of us is called to take some responsibility, we are hardly in Christian fellowship if we do not take some responsibility. It was special with king Saul, but each one of us, whether young or old, has some responsibility to fill at the present time. Saul was found hiding in the baggage and was not available when he was needed. It says: "And they sought for him, but he was not to be found", not available at the very moment when he was needed. This is a moment when each one of us is needed to fill his or her part in the testimony and service of God. This is the time. Saul was not found, and "they inquired of Jehovah further, Will the man yet come hither? And Jehovah answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage". Saul was timid, backward, it was not true humility for true humility is not thinking of self at all. Saul was thinking about himself and therefore was not available. Imagine a man who was called upon in this way hiding himself among the baggage! He had to be fetched: "they ran and fetched him". Now is the time for each of us to be available, now is the well-accepted time, now is the day of salvation, now is the time to commit ourselves to the Lord Jesus personally, to His testimony, to God and His service and His will. The flesh, in timidity and backwardness hindered Saul from being available when he was needed.

In chapter 13 we find an extension of this: "And the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were distressed);

and the people hid themselves in caves". These people were uncertain, and many are like this at the moment, they are not available because of uncertainty. "The people hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in cliffs, and in strongholds, and in pits".

There was a great variety of things in which to hide; there are a great variety of things to hide in today where there is uncertainty.

Saul was uncertain himself, and to follow any man would cause uncertainty. In chapter 14 Saul said to the priest "Bring hither the ark of God" (v 18), then in the next verse "Withdraw thy hand"; he did not know what he ought to do. The people here are called men of Israel, they ought to have been confiding in God. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, prince of God, dignified person, but the men of Israel saw they were in a strait, the people were distressed, and the people hid themselves as many at the present moment are hiding themselves because of uncertainty. There is no need to be uncertain; our great Leader is to be the Lord Jesus personally, He is the great Leader; we are not to be following any human leader no matter how big he is, like Saul here who was head and shoulders above all the people and who would stand out above them all; that is not one to follow, follow the Lord Jesus.

We sometimes sing:

'It is not with uncertain step
We tread our desert way;
A well-known voice has called us up
To everlasting day' (No.244)

The Lord said, Follow Me. Our salvation depends on being disciples of the Lord Jesus and following Him. As we desire to follow Him the Holy Spirit will be our support; He will help us, He will indicate the way. We need to be in dependence as to the right way at the present time. The Lord knows the right way; the Shepherd leads the flock the right way; the Spirit leads the right way: "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God", Rom 8: 14. We need to be led by the Good Shepherd, led by the Spirit, so that there is no uncertainty. Let us thus commit ourselves. The men of Israel hid themselves in caves (natural caves, I suppose), in thickets; cliffs

would be high places; and strongholds (it is very difficult to reach persons who are in strongholds); and some were hiding themselves in pits. We are in times when many are hiding themselves, not available but hiding themselves because of uncertainty. Let none of us be uncertain.

Isaiah was available here in chapter 6. It begins: "In the year of the death of king Uzziah, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple". He had a view of something going on normally. It was the year of the death of king Uzziah who had been presumptuous and therefore a leper, but now Isaiah had another view; "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Seraphim were standing above him: each had six wings; with twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he flew". This is the kind of spirit, and these are the features we need to desire to have, not hiding in thickets and caves and strongholds. They had six wings, with two to cover the face, with two they covered the feet; they are not advertising their movements, they are not making themselves prominent, but they are able to fly, with two they flew, and they would not fly with any uncertainty, they would move with certainty under the Lord's direction. O, to be like one of these Seraphim! "And one called to the other, and said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" Would there be such a thing as this going on at the present time? Would there be persons like this on the earth at the present time? If there are I would like to be among them. This is true humility; this is not thinking of self at all, it is not the backwardness of the flesh, but covering the face and covering the feet, all to exalt the Lord who is high and lifted up. "And one called to the other and said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory! And the foundations of the thresholds shook". And Isaiah said "Woe unto me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips". He was impressed by what he saw, by a service going on acceptable to God, in principle under the Lord Jesus in the power of the Spirit. As soon as he says "Woe unto me! for I am undone; for I am a man of

unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ... one of the seraphim flew unto me, and he had in his hand a glowing coal ... and he made it touch my mouth, and said, Behold, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin expiated". Isaiah had right desires to have part in this service and he is made suitable. So the call comes; the Lord says "Whom shall I send ...?" That is what the Lord is saying at the present time; who is going to be available for what He has in mind? It is not what Isaiah had in mind, or what any one of us has in mind, but what the Lord has in mind. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I". I wonder if we are all saying, Here am I, send me. The emphasis is on send not on me - *send* me. O, what a privilege it is to be sent, not undertaking anything on our own initiative but under the Lord's initiative to be sent, to act under Him, to have part with Him and in His testimony. May every one of us be available for this!

Isaiah was sent to a very difficult people, as the chapter indicates: "Go; and thou shalt say unto this people, Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive"; their heart was fat, their ears heavy, their eyes blind, but the chapter goes on to speak of a tenth part, and that tenth part goes through great testing; it is eaten, but what remains is the trunk: "as the terebinth and as the oak whose trunk remaineth after the felling: the holy seed shall be the trunk thereof". We are in the days, dear brethren, of remnant conditions; we have to work with a few available, but let us be among the remaining after the felling: "the holy seed shall be the trunk thereof". There is to be fruit and the pleasure of the Lord sustained in a few, as Isaiah had part in the testimony in smallness and remnant conditions, but under the Lord and for His pleasure. May we all be available! May we all be ready to say, Here am I, in view of the Lord's appeal to us now, and be assured of the Holy Spirit's support in this great work that is going on at the present time, a day of small things publicly but a day of great things in this time of the finishing touches of the Spirit to His nearly two thousand years of assembly formation. May we have part in it for His Name's sake.

CHRISTCHURCH NZ

26 May 1984

THE LORD LOOKING

J.Renton

John 1: 40-42; Mark 10: 20-27; Luke 22: 60-62

I would like first of all to give each one here some idea of God's purpose in the preaching. For nearly twenty centuries there has been the preaching of the word of God; it began at Pentecost with Peter nearly two thousand years ago and has gone on ever since.

What is God's purpose in the preaching? What is God's purpose for us here as gathered? God has in mind to make us happy, satisfied, to give us a knowledge of Himself, to have us in communion and intimacy with Him, to be conscious of being loved by Him and to respond to His love. God has the very best in mind for each one of us. He would have us brought into His kingdom, forming part of His house where He dwells. He would have us satisfied individually and linked on with other satisfied persons serving Him. God proposes in the gospel that we should be committed to His will. God can do far better for us than we can do for ourselves. God's catering for our happiness is far beyond any catering we can do for our happiness.

God has the very best in mind; the very best that God's heart could devise in His love and power and wisdom is available to us in the glad tidings now; even to form part of the first of all the families, the nearest to God eternally of all the families. This is some idea of what God has in mind in the preaching of the gospel.

The gospel is preached to sinners who are far from Him, but God has made provision for that matter to be settled immediately.

The matter of your sins, of your guilt, stands in the way, but God does not begin by telling us we are sinners. When the Lord approached that woman at the well of Sychar He did not begin by asking for her husband; He did not begin by reminding her of what a sinner she was; He says "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water", John 4: 10. He secured her interest in the divine blessings that God has in mind,

and when she asked for the living water, then He says "Go, call thy husband, and come here". The first thing He did was not to raise the moral question; the first thing He did was to attract her by the greatness of what God had in mind for her, and then He raised the moral question, and it is easily solved when we are attracted by the great blessings that God has in mind for us. We are sinners; it is a step in the right direction when we realise that we are lost, guilty, hell-deserving sinners; that is the first and most important step towards coming into the bounty and blessings that God has in mind for us. When we own our true state before God in repentance He points us to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His finished work with which God has been so satisfied that for two thousand years He has been offering forgiveness to every repentant sinner no matter what a sinner he has been. Murder is one of the grossest sins we could think of, but persons who have committed murder have been converted, have been forgiven, have been justified as if they had never sinned. That is the gospel, that is what God has in mind for the guiltiest of sinners. What a wonderful message the preacher has to present! What wonderful blessings God has in mind for us! He would have us secured for His will and His pleasure. Just think of the blessedness of being here for God's pleasure, of being conscious of being here for God's pleasure; that is not beyond anyone here, that is what God proposes in the glad tidings.

It has cost much; it has not been without infinite cost to our Lord Jesus Christ; He undertook the work, the suffering, being forsaken of God, entering into death itself, pouring out His precious blood, going into the grave. Think of what that cost the Lord Jesus! It has not been without infinite cost that such glad tidings should be proclaimed, that God should make such blessed proposals in the gospel; it has not been without tremendous cost. To make light of what has cost God so much is an insult to God. When the message went out in the parable to persons invited when the king made a feast, it says "they made light of it" (Matt 22: 5); think of making light of what has cost so much; how offensive to God to make light of, not to regard seriously, what God is saying in the glad tidings. I am

endeavouring to give some impression of what God has in mind to secure through the preaching of the gospel - to set us up for His will and to give us the Spirit to fulfil His will. God wants us for His will, and He gives us His Spirit that we might fulfil His will; not only fulfil His will under obligation but loving to do His will, to delight in the will of God; that is what God proposes to give us, a heart like that, to give us desires like that. God intends to reach our *hearts* by means of the glad tidings, not only our *minds*. He will reason, if reason is necessary, because the most reasonable proposition in this world is what is proposed in the glad tidings; "Come now, let us reason together, saith Jehovah", Isa 1: 18. Paul entered the synagogue at Thessalonica and reasoned with persons (see Acts 17: 2). There is nothing more reasonable than God's proposals in the glad tidings. I wonder if we are all sufficiently interested in God's proposals.

I have read these scriptures which speak of the Lord *looking*, looking on persons; that is the Lord's attitude tonight. As we are met here let us be conscious that we are under the Lord's look; He is looking upon each one of us. There is something about a gospel preaching, where God is speaking and the Spirit is active, that would give us to be conscious of the Lord not only looking upon us but looking into our hearts. He knows the very secrets of our motives and our thoughts; the Lord is looking upon each one of us now. We began with Peter. It says "Jesus looking at him": that was a look of interest, of special interest in Peter. The Lord would look with a look of interest on each person here. He is interested in you. He looked at Peter as a potential for God's pleasure and for God's service, because it says "Jesus looking at him said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (which interpreted is stone)".

There is no indication of Peter being committed here, of Peter saying anything, he is just under the Lord's interested gaze as a likely person, as potential for what God has in mind. 'Stone' would refer not only to what is individual, for Peter himself speaks later about being built up a spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (see 1 Pet 2: 5). This is what the Lord had in mind, and what He has in mind for every one of us here,

consciously to form part of His house, His dwelling place where He is known and served. The Lord looked with intense interest at Peter - the note indicates 'looking carefully'. The Lord looked carefully at Peter with intense interest as He would look with intense interest on each one here as potential for what He has in mind in regard to God's house, God's will, God's pleasure, God's service. Peter makes no response here although he must have been conscious of being under the Lord's interested gaze. We would have to go elsewhere to find any response on the part of Peter. In Luke 5 the Lord went into the synagogue, I suppose the local synagogue, and Peter was apparently unaffected, and then He went into Peter's house where his mother-in-law lay in a fever; the Lord healed her and still Peter does not seem to be affected; but when the Lord came nearer still and into his boat, as near as He could to him, Peter was affected; he said "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord" (v 5). He owned he was a sinner and became a follower of the Lord Jesus; he began to answer to the Lord's looking on him interestedly as potential. The Lord would view each one here as potential in view of being for God's will and pleasure and having part in His service, and being part of His house. Men do not make stones, it is God's work; it is a question of what God is doing. Peter became a follower of the Lord Jesus, he became a learner in view of filling his part in the spiritual house of which Peter himself tells us later in his first epistle. He speaks of the "living stone", Christ, and of "living stones", believers, being built up into a spiritual house. That is God's mind for us in the glad tidings. I would like each one of us to be conscious of the Lord looking on us, looking at you, dear friend, looking at me, in view of potential, for all that God has in mind.

In the gospel of Mark we find the Lord looking on a man who is self-righteous. He seemed interested; he asked: "what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (v 17). He was outwardly upright but had his own ideas. It says: "Jesus looking upon him loved him". This was a look not only of interest but a look of love. I would say to each one here that not only is the Lord looking upon you with interest but He is looking upon you with affection. "Jesus looking upon him loved him,

and said to him, One thing lackest thou". There was one thing which prevented this man from coming into the blessing of serving God, of having part in a spiritual house to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Think of the blessedness of having part in response that is acceptable to God! One thing hindered this man: "One thing lackest thou". How very solemn if this man was not blessed because of one thing! Would one thing hinder anyone here I wonder? If there is one thing, friend, the Lord knows what it is, and you would know what it is; the preacher would not know but you would know. Is there one thing preventing you from coming into the fulness of what God has in mind for you? "Jesus looking upon him loved him"; this man turned away from that look of love: how solemn! Divine love was towards that man, divine appeal was there: "looking upon him loved him", and he turned away from it. He went away sorrowful. He might have followed Jesus joyfully.

Many in the gospels glorified God, "But he, sad at the word, went away grieved", because he did not face the one thing that the Lord knew about and that he knew about. How solemn that one thing hindered this man! Then "Jesus looking around says to his disciples, How difficultly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" With this man there was this one thing; would there be any other things that hindered others? Dear friend, the one thing that hinders you might not be the one thing that hinders me, or the one thing that hinders anybody else. The one thing might be peculiar to you as it was with this man here: "One thing lackest thou"; but "Jesus looking around says to his disciples"; would another thing hinder another one? Then He says "Children, how difficult it is that those who trust in riches"; how difficult it is for persons who trust in anything else but the Lord Jesus, who trust in any other one but God. How difficult it is! But how simple, how blessed, to trust in God! "Blessed are all who have their trust in him", Ps 2: 12. That psalm says "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way". That refers to the world to come, when the nations will come and own allegiance to the Son, but the psalm ends; "Blessed are all who have their trust in him". That applies now, all who have their trust in the Lord Jesus, the One who will publicly reign, the One to whom all the

nations will own their allegiance; they will have to, it will be compulsory, but now there is the appeal of love: "Jesus looking on him loved him". Jesus is looking on you, dear friend, loves you, that one thing may not hinder you, that you may trust in Him and come into the fulness of the blessing of the glad tidings. It says "they were exceedingly astonished, saying to one another, And who can be saved? But Jesus looking on them says, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God". That one thing may be impossible as far as you are concerned; that one thing may be so part of you that it appears impossible, but it is not impossible with God; it is not impossible with His help; it is not impossible with the grace of the Lord Jesus; it is not impossible with the power of the Holy Spirit, "for all things are possible with God". It says "Jesus looking on them says". He would look on us, this company here, and He would say it is not impossible. It might seem insurmountable, dear friend, to you, but it is not with God; there is power with Him, there is grace with Him. Remember He is looking upon you, loving you in view of His appeal having effect, and that you might be committed to Him as these disciples were.

In Mark 11 the Lord looked round on all things: "he entered into Jerusalem and into the temple; and having looked round on all things" (v 11). The Lord is taking account of all that is going on, especially in Christendom, the Lord is looking and surveying all; this is a look of scrutiny; nothing escapes His scrutiny. There is a look of interest in Peter in John 1; there is a look of affection for this man in Mark 10; there is also this scrutiny, you cannot keep anything from Him.

Then in the scripture in Luke the Lord, turning round, looked at Peter. He had been a follower who really loved the Lord Jesus but he got himself into a difficult situation which he was not able for, into company that he was not able for; he was warming himself at the fire where the soldiers were; he was among them and he sinned, he denied the Lord. "Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he was yet speaking, the cock crew. And the Lord, turning round, looked at Peter". The Lord is able to make

things coincide. There was Peter active in this departure from the Lord, and there was a cock crowing and the Lord looked at him at the same time. He is able to make circumstances coincide in order that there may be a result for Him. It says 'the Lord', that was Peter's Lord, the One whom the believer owns as Lord. Very often the gospel writers record what Jesus did but here the Lord is spoken of: "And the Lord, turning round, looked at Peter". I wonder what kind of look that was? It would certainly be a look of interest; it would certainly be a look of affection sufficient to be a rebuke. Peter remembered the word of the Lord; He was deeply affected. It may be that the Lord is looking at some one here. "The Lord turning round", it says, "looked at Peter". There certainly was love there because the Lord had previously prayed for him, the Lord knew what was going to happen. "The Lord said Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to have you, to sift you as wheat" - that was the whole company - "but I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not" (vv 31,32). Simon Peter who was about to fail was the subject of the intercession, the personal intercession of the Lord Himself. Dear fellow believer, you are the subject of the personal intercession of the Lord Jesus; He is Priest on high and He is Patron or Advocate, taking account of you. He knew beforehand what Peter was going to do; Peter did not believe it in his thinking of self. He failed miserably, but "the Lord, turning round looked at Peter". What that look conveyed to Peter! The poetess speaks of the look that melted Peter; it melted him; the cock crowing and the Lord's look coincided just at the very moment of Peter's greatest need. The Lord is perhaps looking at some one here who has departed; we can all depart but the Lord never takes His eye off us. He looked at Peter; again the word means looked carefully; He looked intently, purposefully, interestedly and affectionately; "and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said to him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice". The cock crowing was circumstantial, but the Lord's look was not circumstantial, it was direct and purposeful, and there was a result. It says "And Peter; going forth without, wept bitterly". He had failed the Lord, and we have all failed the Lord at some time, but the Lord has not failed us and never will fail us. Each

believer is the subject of the personal intercession of the Lord Jesus; He will never fail us even if we have failed Him, but He would look carefully, even now, that we might be recovered, that we might repent. The Lord is looking in order that there may be repentance, a change of mind, a change of heart, that He may have His full place with us, and that the potential that the Lord saw in Peter in John 1 might be fully realised in each one of us. It was fully realised with Peter for He served in the power of the Holy Spirit for God's will and pleasure. Peter was recovered and speaks later of a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, of which he was part and he encourages others to come into it. I trust each one of us will be encouraged to come into the fulness of what God has in mind. I would like to be assured that no one here misses what God has in mind. It is my responsibility at least to endeavour to give some impression of what God has in mind for each of us. May each one answer to it for His Name's sake.

CHRISTCHURCH NZ

27 May 1984

THE CHILDREN'S RANSOM

It is a good thing if children ask questions of their parents and of others who can help them about the great things of God. One of the instances of this in Scripture relates to the Passover. This feast recalled the time when God as a judge passed over the houses in Egypt that were under the shelter of the blood of a lamb as a ransom. Children in later years were expected to ask at the Passover "What is this?". The last part of the answer was "Every firstborn of my children I ransom". If you are an eldest child you should be especially thankful that One has taken your place in judgment. Actually the Lord Jesus gave his life a ransom needed by everybody, and known gratefully as such by those who believe in Him.

The wonderful fact of One taking, through love and mercy, the place of another in judgment is illustrated by the story of a young Roman. He had been a traitor to his country and his judges condemned him to die. As judgment was given, an elder brother who had been severely wounded in his country's wars stood up before the tribunal. He held up the stumps of his arms which had been cut off in battle and pleaded for his brother's life. It was mercifully granted because what he pointed to was that which he himself had done and not, of course, anything that the younger brother could ever do. How thankful the young criminal must have been! It was when we were still sinners and without strength to do anything to help ourselves that Christ died for us, the ungodly ones, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities".

No doubt when young we think of our sins - the wrongs we have done, disobedience and selfishness - mainly because they have led us into trouble and given us a bad conscience. As we grow up, however, and learn more of the holiness of God we realise what an offence these have been to Him. We sometimes sing of the Lord Jesus in the words 'Blest Substitute from God, Wrath's awful cup He drained; Laid down His life, and e'en the tomb's reproach sustained'.

The word 'substitute' is not a scriptural word but its meaning is plain. Jesus, the sinless One, knew more than any other ever could what sin really was in the light of divine holiness. Do you know Him as your Substitute?

J.C.Evershed