

A
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THE GROUND OF GATHERING

**2 Corinthians 6: 14-18; 7: 1; 2 Timothy 2: 19-22; John 10: 14-18;
11: 45-52;
12: 31-33**

E.F.C. I thought, for the profit of us all and the younger brethren too that we should review the ground of our gathering together as brethren, the basis of the collective position which we appreciate and value so much, which becomes our salvation currently and our life here, as well as the basis of the sphere of things where God's service can be carried on. There is not only the basis of our gathering in the first two passages we read in Corinthians and in Timothy, but in John's gospel we see the power that effects the principle of unity in being able to gather our selves together rightly.

We cannot do it of ourselves; I think it works on the principle of attraction. I thought these scriptures in John's gospel would show us the power of attraction that is seen in Christ – first the good Shepherd; then the Man who was to die for all the people in order that the children of God that are scattered abroad may be gathered into one; and then what the Lord Jesus says "And I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me". Think how essential it is to have a right understanding of His death and what it has effected for us, as well as Himself personally and how it becomes the gathering point.

He gave Himself in death in order that we might be brought back to God ; that we might be gathered in from among the masses of mankind on the face of the earth. There were certain ones that could be gathered together into one from the time in which the Lord was here, until now. Then we need to understand what is the moral basis of our being together, the term of the fellowship which is the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mr Darby has made this basis very clear in that well known article, 'Separation from evil, God's principle of unity', as well as in the subsequent article a few years later in which he said that 'grace is the active power of unity and gathering'. He did not minimise anything that he said in the first article, which stated that separation

from evil was God's principle of unity. We need to have this basic truth before us, not in any legal kind of way, but just in love for God and love for Christ, so as to work it out with the help of the Spirit.

There is such a pathway that becomes an attractive one for us, and the Spirit is the power which is going to move us into this circle of love. It is as we sang in our hymn – 'Our Head in heaven' – how attractive He is as the centre of everything for God, and He it is personally who draws us to Himself. He it is who strengthens us and attracts us, along with the Spirit's help, to Himself, and into a circle of affections all Divine – a circle which we might say has no circumference; it broadens out to include every one of God's children scattered abroad.

J.N.G. It seems that, being what we are in the weakness of departures and the deficiencies that mark us all, it is necessary for us to go over and over and over the basis of our fellowship together.

E.F.C. That is why I thought it might be profitable for us who are older as well as for the younger brethren, feelingly and affectionately to consider these basic things. How often we let them go by for weeks, or months or years before we review them. We want to know why we are where we are at any time, and why we meet together as we do; and what is the basis for it. We have to have a platform – not a legal platform – but a platform that is founded on truthfulness and holiness.

C.B.S. The Scriptures are the authority, and the scriptures you read in Corinthians and in Timothy lay a basis in our souls, but it is no use unless Christ is enthroned in our hearts, and attached there by faith – He is the centre.

E.F.C. Yes, He is the attractive centre for gathering, and as Mr Darby put it, the grace of God is the power for unity and gathering.

The grace of God, as I understand it, is God's love in operation away from home (as someone has said) and as operating in a sphere that is not congenial. Think of the Lord Jesus coming down into this very scene where sin and woe are and making God known, bringing God to man, and then think of the Holy Spirit being here in

individuals and in the assembly, in a sphere of things where sin is on every hand. Yet God's purposes are going through: He is going to secure a result in such conditions for Himself and for His glory.

B.F. Would you say something as to Hebrews: He "suffered without the gate; therefore let us go forth to Him", (chap 13: 12,13).

E.F.C. We are identified with Him in the suffering position and while we are down here we are not to shrink from it or be afraid of the reproach that is linked with such a position, as having the ideal before us of pleasing divine Persons. If we have that ideal before us, the narrowness of the path and what we might think of as limitations that come upon us, such as having to leave off this or take on that, will not be difficult for us. It becomes an easy matter for us in love for Christ, and in love for God, and if we see that He has gone that way, then that is the way for me. Have you something to add to that?

B.F. What you say is important; it all resolves around the Person; anything of legality is set aside because of the glory of Christ and what He is to your soul.

E.F.C. The working out of it and our being brought into the joy and liberty of it, involves the principle of attraction to Christ, and the thought of divine regulation which we cannot overlook. We must be subject to the law of God – the law of God's house. We cannot ignore the principles that govern the house of God.

C.B.S. Is the working out of it to be secret? The woman you read about in John 12 really apprehended the glory and the attraction of the Lord secretly, did she not, and that is to be held in our hearts.

We know how subtle the devil is to divert us from Christ, but He is the one that is to hold us, so this is to be worked out secretly is it not?

E.F.C.. Yes, and if it is worked out secretly and formed in our souls, we will be immediately active in the testimony of our Lord. In the case of the woman in John 4, she went out preaching – "Come see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ? " It may have happened that very day (I do not know), shewing how

quickly the work of God can proceed in our souls. I think she would be one that Jesus would include in the flock that he had in mind in John 10.

A.M.D. John 10 refers to folds, it is like a system of things that hold us. We do not need that, but the centre of things is Christ.

E.F.C. If you are in orbit around Christ, you will be held by the power of attraction. Just as the solar system operates where all the planets are held in their course absolutely by the attractiveness of the sun, so it is in spiritual things. I know of no better illustration than that. There are laws that govern the physical universe, just as there are laws that govern the spiritual universe.

G.W. Would you say something about the things in 2 Corinthians 6: 14-16 – things that are opposites. What do these things mean to us morally?

E.F.C. In considering the detail of all these we know that unbelievers are persons who do not appreciate the truth and resist the word of God. They are not sympathetic with the word of God or the mind of God. What participation is there with such, how can we be yoked with them?

J.N.G. This is not understood by a good many, and perhaps you could help us further as to this, because questions seldom arise between an unbeliever and a believer; but there are persons who take the profession and ground of Christianity who are not marked by the principles of law that you spoke of. Now how are we to operate in respect of such persons, who confess the Name of the Lord Jesus, and yet we cannot walk with them? Why is that?

E.F.C. Many are not prepared to be obedient to the Lord's commandments. The Lord said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments", (John 14: 15). That is the simplest way of looking at it, but Paul sets out the things that are inconsistent with the holiness of God's house and God's presence, and brings in what is positive, so that we have believers not to be yoked with unbelievers, and then what participation between righteousness and lawlessness, what fellowship of light with darkness, what consent of Christ

with Beliar, or what part for a believer along with an unbeliever. A yoke is something that binds persons together – a legal yoke of men, such as marriage, which we would not enter into with unbelievers. It may also involve other believers who are not prepared to be believing believers, who are not prepared to go the whole way in relation to the terms of fellowship. It may involve suffering and reproach, and I hope that the attractiveness of what is normal to the Christian position will be taken on by us afresh today.

C.B.S. There is no affinity with unbelievers, but then we are in the gain of the Spirit so that we all ought to be able to discern these things and have a judgement and turn away from them.

E.F.C. Well, naturally a believer and an unbeliever could get on together for a while but when it comes to talking over the thing of God, and how God is to be served and worshipped, the unbeliever would not be able to enter sympathetically into the matter with the believer, and what sorrow would come in! I was thinking of persons in a mixed marriage, but then there are other types of links, such as business links, and other things in which we may become involved about which we ought to be concerned. We want to be able to feel our way through according to the law of the house, and I think this is pretty well presented here by the apostle. He sums up all these contrasts in a very effective way. He first speaks about not being diversely yoked with unbelievers; then in verses 15 and 16 he speaks about God's temple. That is what we want to have before us, not just a legal, Pharisaical line. We want to have God's temple before us, and what is the standard of God's temple, the place where He can be served and worshipped and His light can freely flow as we are together conversing over the holy scriptures. That should be our ideal and Christ of course is the One that attracts us into that position, and the Holy Spirit is the power.

L.H.B. Before Paul brings these things forward, he writes the saints up pretty well as in 1 Corinthians 1: 2 and in 2 Corinthians 1: 1, and he links them on with all the saints. Whatever we are doing, it involves all the saints universally, as well as involving the Lord, so we do well to think for God, do we not?

E.F.C. We can have a very broad view of things today as to how these scriptures apply, because the Corinthians, I suppose, were the only believers in the city of Corinth; they represented the assembly of God in that place at that time, and the apostle was concerned that they hold assembly ground rightly. But Mr Darby in that article, 'Separation from evil, God's principle of unity', which I would commend to the brethren to read again and again along with the next article – 'Grace the power for unity and of gathering': in the latter he says that if a person does not receive what he said in the first article about separation from evil, they are not really on Christian ground. If you read it, you will see that it is supported by the scriptures. He did not have to alter it at all when he was asked to comment on it later on in life, but maintained the integrity of what he said as being the truth. Some persons were helped into the power of unity in gathering by the subsequent article and that is all I have in mind today – to help us on to see the attractiveness of being gathered out rightly for God.

L.H.B. It then becomes very practical in everything we do, does it not?

E.F.C. Yes, it is very practical and yet it assures us of the privilege side of the assembly.

C.B.S. What you are saying applies to us experimentally. We can hold all these things doctrinally but that will not keep us in this path of separation. What is vital is this attachment to Christ in our hearts by faith.

E.F.C. Well, we have to follow Him outside the camp. We have to keep near to Him and not let Him get out of our sight. We need to follow Him outside the camp bearing His reproach and then follow Him into the Christian circle, where He is the centre.

C.B.S. I say this because there are brethren who have been leaders and sadly they are not with us today. The doctrine will not hold us; it is only the person of Christ.

E.F.C. He is the truth as He says "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14: 6), and the truth is our bond. Of course that raises

immediately the question – what is the truth? It is one whole, yet there are many facets of the truth.

R.F. Would it be right to say that separation is in view of holiness?

E.F.C. Yes it is, and holiness is getting into the presence of God, and enjoying His love and allowing His love to operate towards me, and it affects me in such a way that I am able to discern every pollution of flesh and spirit, as 2 Corinthians 7: 1 indicates. Our spiritual sensibilities get more keen as we are in the presence of God, and then we are able to perfect holiness in God's fear. But the objective here is in verses 17 & 18 of 2 Corinthians 6, what He says through Moses (see Leviticus 26: 11,12). Paul quotes therefrom, saying "I will dwell among them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they shall be to me a people. Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you;...." (Vs. 16 & 17). What a proposal, what a request, what a promise and blessing for us if we do so!

J.N.G. In all that is involved in these verses, and as we face the exercises of separation (which sometimes are pretty keen), the reward really is the enjoyment of family affections.

E.F.C. Yes, v 18 "And will be a Father unto you" etc. clearly shows that, and as doing it unto the Lord, Eph 6: 7. We have many passages about practical things as doing them unto the Lord. Well, if we do it as having His pleasure before us, and what satisfies His heart and the heart of God, we just cannot do otherwise. So you say, that is the way I must do it: I cannot go any other way, but follow in His footsteps, and be where He is! Where the Lord is to be found would become the test of a right place to gather at the present time, as others have said, so we are responsible to discern where the Lord is. He is not going to be in unholy conditions and linked with people who are unbelievers. I do not think the Lord would be pleased with any of the negative things mentioned in our scripture.

C.B.S. Would you say something about the end of verse 17 – I will be to you for a Father and ye shall be to me for sons and

daughters,... " It involves an individual relationship, does it not?

E.F.C. It is the Father's own sovereign action in drawing us to Himself through Christ – the pleasure that the Father has in His many sons, just as the Lord Jesus has pleasure in His brethren. It is a scripture quoted from Leviticus 26, but Paul just gives it a New Testament bearing and wording, in accord with what we are to enjoy in Christianity.

A.V.W. The scripture Paul uses in Verse 17 from Isaiah 52: 11 refers to those that are to be clean, that they bear the vessels of Jehovah.

That is a very dignified position to have, is it not? God has a positive result in view for those who follow these exercises.

E.F.C. Yes, the holy things of God, you mean, as priests, and we are all constituted priests of God. We should all have priestly instincts and be able to discern with the help of the Spirit any thing that is unclean, because we are bearing the holy vessels of Jehovah. That is another very pertinent scripture, along with 2 Timothy 2 which has often been before us in recent years. I think it is a question of submitting to the knowledge of God. The Lord knows those that are His; there is no question about that. That is one side of the coin, as someone has said, and the other side is let every one who names the Name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity. So if we are going to be worthy of being identified with the Lord Jesus as being one of His, we have to withdraw from iniquity and what would be displeasing to Him. The working of it out is very profound and testing to us.

A.V.W. It is important that we understand these two words in these times in which we live – unclean and iniquity. It is not just the world but the religious side of things comes into it too. In this great house in which we are there are vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour. If we follow out the practical suggestions in 2 Corinthians 6, does that make way for the Spirit to give us power to discern?

E.F.C. Yes. I was thinking of that scripture in Leviticus 21: 1-3. It speaks about being unclean in touching persons, except your natural relations – "There shall none make himself unclean for a dead person among his peoples, except for his immediate relation who is

near unto him – for his Mother and for his Father and for his son and for his daughter, and for his brother; and for his sister..." I think there is some principle set out in that scripture that will give us some light as to how to proceed at the present time, particularly – in the matter of necessary care and duty – with natural relationships, which we all have and which are of God. But we are not to mix socially in an unpriestly way with persons not walking with us in the truth, whether natural relations or others, because it only defiles us and hinders us so that we are not free spiritually to serve God. So we need to take care as to what we touch as we go through life – even our own business matters where we have to do with fellow men in our occupations. You are to serve your masters as faithfully as you can, serving them well as unto the Lord, but if there are extra curricular things that may be unnecessary and from which we could keep ourselves, that would be part of our being vigilant as to what is pleasing or displeasing to divine persons.

C.B.S. Would the verse in Numbers 19 apply, he that toucheth the dead body of a man shall be unclean seven days, (v 11)?

E.F.C. I suppose the principle of judging our selves and becoming cleansed again and set up would be set out in that passage and that would bring in the water aspect of the death of Christ although the blood is mentioned. I think the water aspect is stressed in that section – the water of purification – so we need to be in the gain of both the water and the blood each week and indeed each day as we go through this scene in order to be suitable for the service of God on Lord's day.

R.F. Do you think we each need discernment in the days in which we live, and to get discernment we must go to God.

E.F.C. So the more responsible you are held to be the more sensitive as to defilement we need to be. That section in Leviticus 21 goes on to speak of the chief among his peoples (v 4) and the high priest (vv 10 and 11) on whose head the anointing oil was poured. The matter becomes more urgent and more narrow shall we say, for one that has a great place in the things of God. A prince, if

he sins, is to bring a larger offering than a common person, Leviticus 4: 22. Then in Christianity, we all must come the same way, we all must judge ourselves in the light of the death of Christ and get right and thus become available for the service of God again, whether we be great or small. It is interesting how the Old Testament scriptures give us various gradations of things which we can rightly take account of.

L.H.B. Does this involve the thought of having our senses exercised for discerning both good and evil. We need to be very keen in relation to that, do we not?

E.F.C. Yes, we certainly do. We do not want to be like those who are just receiving milk for nourishment, (Heb 5: 12-14). We want to be those who are growing up and becoming more discerning, and more mature in our spiritual outlook.

J.N.G. One of the difficulties in the time in which we are is that things are not clearly defined; there is such a mixture that we live in, a terrible mixture of Christianity and ignominy. But there is no mixture in these scriptures. The one you started with speaks of righteousness and lawlessness, and there is nothing between. I feel we are very slow to come to things and name them as lawless, but if it is not righteousness it must be lawlessness. Righteousness is what you spoke of at the beginning as keeping the commandments of the Lord, and keeping His word, is it not?

E.F.C. Yes. The four things mentioned in 2 Timothy 2: 22, that we are to follow namely, righteousness, faith, love and peace, are the practical working out of it, are they not?

J.N.G. If we take this attitude of trying to say we will go so far, but it is too testing for the rest of the journey, it just means that we are lawless. I think we are very slow to recognise that, sometimes in our actions, and in our thoughts too. But to name it as lawlessness would be a great help to get rid of it, I think.

E.F.C. If we repudiate a thing as God repudiates it, and we take sides with God in every matter, it would help us. But if we view it

from our own natural assessment and view point, we do not arrive at *God's* view-point of evil.

J.N.G. The thing is made so attractive when you see what the writer says about the Lord (He b. 1: 9) "Thou has loved righteousness and hast hated lawlessness". It becomes attractive does it not?

E.F.C. Yes. Christ was smitten on the cross; He bore the judgement of God against sins and sin. The man that sinned was judicially dealt with in the cross of Christ. He was forsaken – just think of that, God having to forsake His Son, who was made sin for us, He who knew not sin. (See 2 Corinthians 5: 21).

A.W.P. We speak much of unbelievers and what is of the world but I wondered if wrong doctrine coming in amongst us, by such men as 2 Timothy 2: 18 speaks of – "who as to the truth have gone astray" – needs to be discern ed. We have to come to a judgment of that as in this chapter.

E.F.C. Just so, and we are to read scripture contextually, for what precedes these well known verses 19-22 is undoubtedly what moved the apostle by the Spirit to say what he did. I suppose this iniquity here would include spiritual iniquity, not just the immoral side of things, the worldly side of things. We need to have a judgement of spiritual and religious iniquity, resulting at the present time from clericalism in the religious system of men as it is an offence to the Spirit. We have to see how the clerical system, and religious iniquity of all kinds, is an offence to divine persons; and if we could see that, then we would take sides with God and withdraw from it.

A.V.W. The Lord gave in the recovery of the truth in the early 1800's, following the light of Christ the Head in heaven, and the body here; light that the notion of a clergyman was dispensationally the sin against the Holy Spirit. It was one of the first things arrived at.

E.F.C. Yes, and in the 1500's some had pretty well judged the Roman system but carried elements of it over into Protestantism.

This clerical idea of one person carrying on most of the service is wrong, whereas God has in mind that His people should be free and happy in the service, and so He says "But youthful lusts flee, and

pursue righteousness", (2 Timothy 2: 22). Timothy was a young man, and I suppose Paul mentioned youthful lusts on his account.

"But youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". This scripture has often been said to be our charter for collective gathering.

C.B.S. Is the principle of attraction worked out in this verse in the statement "those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". That is the assembly, but we are not saying today that we are the assembly, and we are very humble about that. What I am enquiring about is this matter of attraction among us in a broken day such as we are in. We should attract souls to Christ, as seen in Naomi. Ruth was not attracted by Boaz, but she was attracted by the work of God in Naomi, and she was brought into the wonderful blessing that we are in today.

E.F.C. Yes, it shewed how Ruth moved on the principle of attraction, and it is very important to see that, and so you find others that are calling on the Lord out of a pure heart and we are all brought on to common ground, to one common centre. "Calling on the Lord" – it does not say His Name exactly. It is just calling on Him.

L.H.B. In this part of the world we seem to feel we are very isolated in our localities, but there are others who are pursuing this course, and we are to link on with them in a particular way, who are calling on the Lord out of a pure heart; so that brings in the whole of the position universally, does it not?

E.F.C. It only takes two or three, as the Lord indicates in Matthew 18, to be able to work out 2 Timothy 2: 22. Whether it be two or three, 20 or 30, or 200 or 300, it makes no difference; it is all workable today. The Lord foresaw the reduction that would come in, and if He foresaw it, who are we to question it, or be discouraged by it.

B.F. Do you think we forget sometimes the feelings of God involved in the separation at the cross in application to our lives and our gatherings together. The death of Christ is really related to every

facet of our lives, and then we are to understand that our affections are to be involved in it as God Himself was affected at that time. We should see this more clearly for our blessing.

E.F.C. Our affections must be brought into it, and will be brought into it as we think of what the death of Christ meant to God; and what it cost Him to give up His Son and make Him sin for us – He who knew not sin, that holy, righteous, sinless One!

I thought that John's gospel should be more attractive to us. We have touched on the principles of gathering set out therein already – the Lord presenting Himself as the good Shepherd and His leading us to the right place, the place where Jehovah is free to place His Name. That is mentioned over and over in Deuteronomy, the place where Jehovah has been pleased to place His Name; it is not exactly a position taken up humanly, but it is a place the good Shepherd will lead us into – a sphere of life and blessing, and protection too. I suppose that persons in our day have fled (John 10: 13), and were unable to protect the sheep. We all have been unfaithful in our gatherings more or less in this connection. We need to judge that, and to take pattern from the good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep.

B.F. The Lord is testing us as to whether we are really attached to Him, as He tested Peter. He asks him, art thou attached to me, lovest thou me more than these? (John 21). It brings out in the way of protection, in a shepherding way our feelings for what is Christ's here.

E.F.C. The Lord would comfort us in Peter's experience – in that he would be made equal to feeding His sheep, and shepherding the sheep, and feeding the lambs. Though Peter had failed two or three times, the Lord was stirring him up, and Peter as judging himself, was now becoming more and more ready for the service that he was to render.

R.F. Just going back a bit, is it right to say that the pathway today is individual, and if you find others walking according to the word here, you would join yourself to them?

E.F.C. That is how 2 Timothy 2 presents it – the individual must see to himself. Then we do not shut ourselves up in our room, and just say I and the Lord; you would be unhappy in that position. The Lord would say to you that you need others to gather with who love Me too so as to call upon my Name.

A.W.P. Do you think that having "other sheep that are not of this fold" (v 16) would refer to the Gentile being brought in? All who believe on the Name of Jesus and have the Spirit come into the assembly.

E.F.C. I think so, and it would remind you of Ephesians 2 where it speaks of the middle wall of partition being broken down between Jew and Gentile, so that all are now brought into one flock, under the control of the one Shepherd.

J.N.G. The principle of separation is not a scattering one, is it? It involves the Shepherd's care, and we will not find the flock unless we come by way of 2 Timothy 2; and if we do, we find that 2 Timothy 2 is not a scattering pathway, but a pathway of bringing together those who are true to Christ.

E.F.C. I hope we see that, that divine Persons have in mind to draw us to themselves. The Lord says, No one can come unto me except the Father *draw* him (John 6: 44). That is God's sovereign operation in drawing us to Christ. Then He also says that no one comes to the Father unless by Me, (John 14: 6).

MELBOURNE

22 March 1986

Key to initials

(All Melbourne unless otherwise indicated)

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JESUS AS SAVIOUR, LORD AND TEACHER

J.Renton

Luke 1: 46,47; Philippians 3: 7,8; Mark 10: 51,52; John 20: 16,17

I have read of a person who spoke of my Saviour; another person who spoke of my Lord; and two persons who spoke of my Teacher; there is a moral order in these expressions. I wonder if we can all identify our Saviour. There is only one Saviour; every man, woman, and child needs a Saviour, and there is only one Saviour, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. The glad tidings are concerning Him, and we present Him to each person here this evening as Saviour. He is the Saviour of the world, that is true, He has saved many, that is also true, but what I would be concerned about is that every one here this evening would be able to say 'my Saviour'. That is personal; the gospel is a very personal matter. God desires that all men should be saved, and God has made provision that all men should be saved: Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all but what about each one of us personally? Can you say genuinely, 'my Saviour'? Did you ever think what it cost the Lord Jesus that you might be able to say 'my Saviour'? It cost Him untold sufferings that He might be your Saviour. The One whom we present in the glad tidings as Saviour is God. John's gospel tells us that. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" John 1: 1.

What could be clearer as to the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then John tells us the "Word became flesh" (chap 1: 14). The greatest thing that has ever happened in the universe of God is that One of the blessed Trinity became a Man. Think of the immensity of that step, that stoop, into manhood. Paul tells us in the Philippian epistle, that he emptied Himself (see chap 2: 7). This is, dear friend, part of the cost that you might be able to say 'my Saviour'. Not only did He come into manhood, but He suffered. He took the sinner's place. He suffered in the sinner's stead that you might be able to say, 'my Saviour'. The gospel is a very blessed message, but it is a very serious matter, because when we hear the gospel we are responsible to answer to it. Persons who have never heard the

gospel are not as responsible as persons who have heard the gospel over and over again. Do not let it be regarded as common; realize, dear friend, what it cost the blessed Saviour that you might be able to say, 'my Saviour'. He suffered as if He had been the sinner. He was forsaken of God; sustained God's righteous wrath, which was the portion that belonged to me and belonged to you. He entered into death, the awfulness of what death meant for the Lord Jesus; He poured out His precious blood; He was buried. Such was the cost that you might be able to say 'my Saviour'. Now, He has been raised from the dead, God's testimony to His satisfaction in that finished work, because the work that the Lord Jesus undertook is finished; there is nothing left of that work to do. He is available, dear friend, if you have never been so far able to say, 'my Saviour', you can say it now because He is available for you. You need to repent, to own that you need a Saviour. The great difficulty with some people is to convince them that they need a Saviour. Maybe they have been religious; maybe they think they have been good, but every one needs a Saviour; if anyone were good enough without a Saviour the Saviour need not have sustained the cost that I have tried feebly to speak about, He need not have sustained the suffering if you were righteous enough for God's presence. No one is, every one needs a Saviour, and that blessed Saviour is available to you, you can claim Him now, and you will be able to say, 'my Saviour' tonight before you leave this room.

Now I would like to say a few words about how full is; His service as Saviour. If you claim Him as your Saviour, you can be assured that you will never come into judgment, your sins are settled for ever; they will never rise in your lifetime here, they will never rise in the hereafter. What a Saviour He is! The consequences of those sins have been met by the Saviour. That does not give licence to go on sinning for this wonderful Saviour will not only save you from the consequences of your sins, but He will save you from your sins, save you from a sinful course. He is able to save you in situations of temptation and danger, whatever circumstance of sorrow or suffering that you may have to undergo, the Lord Jesus is sufficient to save

you, dear friend, He will save you daily. You need a Saviour, we need salvation daily and the Lord Jesus is available to save us every moment, every day, "For every one whosoever, who shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved", Rom 10: 13. As you own Him as your Saviour and Lord He will dispense the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit, making the believer independent of the world around: imparting a sense of joy and satisfaction that makes him independent of this world's system and all that goes on in it. He is able to change our taste. When we are young, we have tastes for the world; I was once young, many here can say that, worldly things appeal to you, but as you know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and are committed to Him, as you trust Him you find your tastes change and the world appeals less, and less, and less, and He and His interests appeal more, and more, and more, that is experience to which many can bear witness in this room.

Is that all? That is not all. Paul tells us "we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who will transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory", Phil 3: 20, 21, that might be spoken of as the last act of the fulness of the service of the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Do you know what it means? We shall no longer have bodies subject to disease and suffering and weakness, we will have bodies of glory like His body of glory. Paul tells us He is Saviour of the body which refers to His interest in our bodies down here, but includes the fact that He will change our body of humiliation, for it is indeed a body of humiliation we have now, we will have bodies of glory like His. What a prospect is before the believer who is able to say 'my Saviour'. Those who sleep in Jesus, whose lives of testimony are over, who in their life-time here were able to say 'my Saviour' and whose bodies are now in the grave will hear the same blessed Saviour shout the triumphant shout and every one will rise from the dead. This is the Saviour we are commending to you in the glad tidings. I would ask, Do you trust Him? Is He not worth trusting? One who undertakes to be our Saviour all the way through? At times we do not trust Him sufficiently. I tell you He is well worth trusting as Saviour; may we

increase in our appreciation of Him. I trust every one here will be able to say 'my Saviour', if not, I trust you will be concerned and exercised to claim such a Saviour for yourself personally.

Now we come to another person, not only was he able to say, my Saviour, but he said, my Lord, "Christ Jesus my Lord". Now it maybe that you know the Lord Jesus as Saviour¹ and maybe trust Him as Saviour, but I wonder if you are committed to Him. as Lord.

This is a further and fuller exercise. Paul could say, "what things were gain to; these I counted, on account of Christ, loss. Now I understand that verse 7 of Philippians 3 to refer to Paul's conversion; when he was converted, he *counted* all these things, these assets he at one time thought he had to be loss. "As to circumcision, I received it the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the assembly; as to righteousness which is in the law found blameless"; these are things that he could have boasted about, but when the Lord appeared to him on that Damascus road, what conclusion did he come to? "What things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss". He got a glimpse of the glory of the Lord Jesus which eclipsed everything else in his life and he was never the same man again, his outlook was different, his whole life was revolutionised instantaneously, and he counted these thing he was self-satisfied with on account of Christ, loss.

Then he says, "But surely I count also all things to be loss", I count; the conclusion that Paul came to, on the Damascus road when he said, "Who art thou, Lord?", and when he said "What shall I do, Lord? " Acts 22: 8,10, the committal was maintained, "surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". I wonder if we can all speak of Jesus as 'my Lord'; every one committed to Him as the writer was here. What a life of devotion was the life of the one who had been called Saul of Tarsus, the big self-important man; but he becomes Paul, which means little; he speaks of himself as the less than the least of all saints.

If we are not committed to Jesus as Lord, it may be because we do not trust Him; it may be because we think we can do better for ourselves in going our own way, we may think we will be happier going our own way than being committed to the Lord Jesus. That may be the reason why some of us are not as committed as we ought to be. I would like to tell you, dear friend, that you can trust Jesus as Lord. Paul would tell you this, he says, "on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all"; did he regret it? Did he regret suffering the loss of all? No, he said, "and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ". I wonder if we are all committed to Jesus as Lord, which means that our own wills are not active; that we are here for the will of God; we are here for the pleasure of our Lord Jesus Christ, and are committed to Him and His interests. The Holy Spirit will help us in this, He will give joy and satisfaction in doing the will of Another. If you have not committed yourself to the Lord up till now, dear friend, I would entreat you to trust Him. You will be far happier, more satisfied, doing the Lord's will, doing God's will than doing your own will. You may not believe that. Young people especially do not view things that way, but, dear friend, it is the truth, I can tell you.

Doing your own will eventually will bring sorrow, it could even bring disaster, but doing the will of God, committing yourself to Jesus as Lord, you will never regret. I have never known any one regretting committal to Jesus as Lord, and to His interests. The most satisfying life you could have is to be here for the will of God. It speaks in Romans of presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service. Then it goes on to say, "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God", (chap 12: 1,2). I commend this step to you.

Saul of Tarsus took it. It is a step some here could tell you about; it is a step never to be regretted; full committal to the Lord Jesus. Is He not worthy of your trust? Give up your ideas that you are happier doing your own will; decide for Christ. You do not need to *decide* to do your own will, you do not need to *decide* to go into the world, that does not call for decision that happens because there is not decision for Christ. It is lack of decision for Christ that leads into the world.

To go into the world does not necessarily call for decision, but you need to decide for Christ; that is where decision is essential. The enemy is pleased if he can divert us from decision and committal because he knows that he can then have his way with us. The answer to it, dear friend, is definite decision and committal to the Lord, to say, 'my Lord'. Then you will be with others, because you will find in the Scriptures not only the expression 'my Lord' but very often 'our Lord', our Lord Jesus Christ. That involves companionship, you are not alone; you find others who also say, 'my Lord', and you can be with them and say 'our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Now, we read of two persons who said, Rabboni, and I am told that Rabboni means, my Teacher. There would be a moral order in this; you begin by saying 'my Saviour', and I trust we have all reached this decision to say 'my Lord', then you will find that you need the Lord Jesus as your Teacher. There was a blind man in Mark 10 who sat by the wayside begging; he could not see his way.

Let us face it, we live in difficult times when the church publicly has failed to be a witness to Christ; the church publicly is in ruins, not only breakdown, but publicly in hopeless, un-mendable ruin. There are various companies, various groups; how do we find our way?

Dear friend, say, 'my Teacher'. The Lord said to this man, "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?". The Lord may be saying that to some person here. What would you answer? A bigger salary! More opportunity in the world? This man said, "Rabboni" – my Teacher – "that I may see"; see where to go, see where the Lord is, see what the Lord is doing. Jesus said to him, "Go, thy faith has healed thee.

And he saw immediately, and followed him in the way". He had to see to follow, he could not see when he was blind. O, how we need the Teacher! I believe that if any one who has genuine exercise, is not governed by prejudice, or by preference, but is simply subject to the Lord's leading as Teacher, he will be guided rightly; it must be so. I am not saying where He would guide you to, I am commending Him to you as your Teacher. Say 'my Teacher', be subject, be leadable.

You could not say 'my Teacher' unless you have first of all said 'my Saviour', and then said 'my Lord'. There is a great need to have the

Teacher who will guide you aright, who will open your eyes and you will see, and be able to follow Him in the way, in the midst of this public ruin. People speak about this group and that group and splinter groups, we ought to be deeply sorrowful that these things have happened in our own time but 'my Teacher', dear friend, is the answer. There is a need to repudiate and judge prejudices and preferences, and simply commit yourself to 'my Teacher', and you will see, He will let you see where He is and you are able to follow Him; it is a practical matter at the present time.

Now there is another person who said "Rabboni", Mary of Magdala. She knew and appreciated the cost to the Lord Jesus that He might be her Saviour and Lord, and Teacher. She was bereft of the Saviour, the last place that she knew Him to be was in the grave; she passed through that sorrow of being without her Saviour and Lord. You could have offered Mary of Magdala the best business proposition this world could offer, or tried to interest her in the best investment possible, she would not have been interested because her Lord was in the grave. But when the Lord said, "Mary", O, that quickening life-giving word, the personal interest of Jesus, she said "Rabboni, which means Teacher". This Teacher is not only available in the labyrinth of ruin in which we are publicly, but He will also initiate us into new relationships, divine relationships. What does the Lord say to her? "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father". Think of that! You would have thought, that as the Lord Jesus rose from the dead the first thing He would have done would be to go to His Father. But no, He is thinking of His own. He said, "I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". The Lord would teach us these wonderful divine secrets, family relations. The Lord Jesus said "my Father"; no one could say 'my father' like the Lord Jesus, how He knew the Father. He said in the consciousness of sonship "my Father", but He also said, "your Father". He is distinctive in sonship, but believers are brought into the same relationship as He is as man, sonship. Then He said, "my God", He said that as Man of another order. Think of Him saying

"my God", and then "your God", that is we are brought into the same order of manhood as the Lord Jesus is. These are wonderful divine family, privileged, relationships that the Lord would teach us and initiate us into the enjoyment of. On the public side we need guidance, we need 'my Teacher', but we need Him to bring us into the enjoyment of eternal relationships. It says in this same gospel, "If therefore the Son shall set you free, ye shall be really free". John 8: 36. That is really free in the area of privilege in all the wealth and fulness of the blessings which were in divine purpose, to be enjoyed now, not only individually but to be enjoyed with others.

May the Lord make these suggestions attractive to us. Do not trifle, dear friend. If there is any one here who cannot say 'my Saviour', I appeal to you, do not leave this room until you can, there are plenty here who could help you. If you cannot in reality say 'my Lord' face the matter honestly, come under the blessed divine authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is nothing more blessed, nothing more happy, nothing more satisfying. And then, may we all know and follow the Lord's own teaching for His Name's sake.

GLASGOW

10 November 1985

EXTRACT

We must not be afraid of the word exclusive, because it is a very good word, one to be treasured, having its own significance in the minds of the spiritual. This chapter brings out that the brethren, as restored, were exclusive, they were exclusive in the sense that they would not accept unhallowed support. They would not have anything to do with any associations or fellowships that were not divinely accredited. That is a most important item in our position.

Exclusiveness in itself is a negative thought, and what you find in this fourth chapter is that the adversaries continued to harass the saints, and were successful in their efforts, showing that exclusiveness by itself is not sufficient; and so much did the enemy succeed that the work of God actually ceased. The adversaries wrote a letter to the king, saying everything bad they could about the people of God. If we are *merely* negative and people speak thus of us, they are pretty sure to incite successful opposition. We must have more than exclusiveness if we are to be effective in our service; there must be a positive side to the position or the enemy will have an advantage, and hence what you find here is that the work ceased. The enemy was successful in his great effort to blacken the people of God, by relating what the history of Jerusalem had been, what a rebellious city it had been, and how damaging to the kings, and so on; a long tale of accusation, with the result that the king was persuaded to authorise the adversaries of the people of God to prevent the work by force and power, which they did immediately.

Now, chapter 5 is over against this; it is a prophetic chapter, and that is why I read it, because the Lord, I believe, is encouraging us in regard to this kind of ministry. Prophecy brings God in, as I shall show presently, from Haggai and Zechariah. What we see is the kind of ministry that was given and how effective it was. What we call *meetings for ministry* may often come very short of ministry that would set in motion the people of God. The intent of prophetic ministry is to set the people of God in spiritual motion. Someone will say, God is not moving, but then perhaps you are not moving and yet

work to be done is by your hand; you cannot expect God to move if you do not move, if it is your responsibility to do so. If you should do something, do not say God is not doing it; God is saying you are not doing it. If the thing has to be done, do it. Do not talk sentimentally about waiting on God. Piety is most essential with us, but what we call piety may be merely Judaism, and hence we need the word of exhortation, as here, when the prophetic word stirred up the leaders, and they began to move, the prophets of God helping them. The prophets of God do not start the work, they *prophesy*, and the responsible persons begin to do something, then the prophets of God work with them.

(From "Glory the end at the work of our Hands", J.Taylor. Vol. 41, pp.456-7).

THE CHILDREN, ATTACHED TO CHRIST

I remember, as a boy, being much impressed by reading one of the so-called 'Railway Tracts' entitled 'Is the link on? ' At that time some trains while still travelling used to 'slip' a coach for an intermediate station. One passenger, unaware of this arrangement and intending to go to the journey's end, was sitting in the slip coach. Of course he became greatly alarmed and anxious when, in due course, he saw the rest of the train continuing its way and himself left behind! The gospel message is clear. The reader of the tract could not help realising the vital need of having a living link with the Lord Jesus on the journey of life.

No doubt the maintenance of simple faith in the Person and work of the Lord answers to the 'link' referred to in the tract, as Jesus said "He that believes on me has life eternal". Faith is of itself not the power but is essential if the soul is to continue to enjoy the virtue that is in Him. The justified believer lives on the principle of faith, and his attachment to Christ is confirmed by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Scripture even has the remarkable words "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit".

Read through the Book of Ruth and you will learn how a young woman, a stranger to Israel, came to know Boaz a great and wealthy man and type of the Lord Jesus. In speaking of Ruth it is often said that she first became *acquainted* with Boaz, was *attracted* by him, and thus became *attached* to him. No doubt she had heard Naomi speaking of the great kinsman. Then it was so ordered as if by chance that she should not only hear him speak of blessing to all, but heard him speak to herself personally. The Lord Jesus has become known to us in just this way. We may well feel unworthy of the interest and blessing of One so great, even as Ruth felt towards Boaz, but the soul becomes attached to Him by the very grace shown. This is pleasing to Him, are you?

J.C.Evershed