

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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THE FEET OF JESUS

J.N.Grace

Isaiah 61: 1,2 (to "Jehovah"); 53: 1-6; Luke 10: 38 -42

I want to say something about my Saviour. His name is Wonderful, and I trust you come to know Him that way too. How much there is to be saved from - our sins, our temptations and our weaknesses, the world. We have a wonderful Saviour in Jesus. If you know Him, thank God! May you come to know Him better and trust Him more! I have little doubt that all of us do not trust Him enough. God trusts Him; He has put everything into the hands of Jesus. You should put yourself in the hands of Jesus because no one can take you out of His hands, no one - the wonderful hands of Jesus. Now I want to speak of His feet, the feet of Jesus, the feet that the prophet speaks of, the beautiful feet of the One on the mountain that brought glad tidings (see Isa 52: 7). We read in Luke 10 of someone who sat at His feet, a wonderful place to sit, just at the feet of Jesus, and listen. There is a lot of movement in the world, hastening here and there, all over the place, but the best place is just to sit down at the feet of Jesus and listen to His word.

He is prepared to journey to find one lost sheep. "I have found the sheep that I had lost" - not the joy of the sheep but the shepherd who had lost the sheep; we are not told how it came to be lost but He found it. What rejoicing when he found it, his lost sheep. The woman found her piece of silver, her piece of silver. A piece of silver cannot tell you anything but the woman in that house could say how she felt about the lost piece of silver. It refers, of course, to someone who had known Christ, had some appreciation of Christ and the work of redemption, but now was out of circulation. The gospel is to bring such a person back into circulation and the testimony. The younger son, it was, the *father's* son - "was lost and has been found" (Luke 15: 24) - the father's son. O, if we could only get something of the feelings of God in the gospel. To relieve you of your sins? Yes, thank God! To meet the need of your heart? Yes,

thank God! To deliver you from the power of the world? Yes, thank God! But to bring you into an area where you will know the feelings of His heart, that is the gospel. The Father, the Son and the Spirit, are all engaged in the work of recovery for their own joy, and your joy is bound up in that. The elder son would not have it, he said (Luke 15: 29) - "this thy son" - O, how the father's heart must have felt that. How the father looked out to see that son coming back and ran to meet him. O, the feelings of the heart of God in the gospel! How little we understand our Saviour God.

Isaiah says, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to announce glad tidings unto the meek...". Think of the wonderful simple way in which our Saviour came near to us: looked up the Scriptures, found the place and read them and said "To-day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4: 21). That is extended right down to today. The Spirit of God says, "as long as it is called To-day", Heb 3: 13. It is your opportunity and mine today, just to come to Jesus. Maybe you know Jesus as your Saviour. Very good; well, just give Him a little bit more room in your heart. Just make a fresh committal tonight to Jesus, and open your heart to Him, and perhaps you will find in some way you will prove Him as a Saviour as you have never proved Him before. There is nothing in this section but what would appeal to every heart here. I do not know your heart of course, I do not know your experiences and your situations, circumstances, but God knows, and He has provided for them in the glad tidings. He who made our hearts searches the hearts, and He has provided in Jesus a Saviour that you need. Is He yours? There is a hymn that says that - 'The Saviour who died our salvation to bring.' It goes on to say, 'Is He yours? Is the Saviour who loves you yours?' Not only a declaration of God's attitude towards men, but the personal service of divine Persons in regard of you and me. The Spirit of God is carefully searching, searching, sweeping. It may be what I say or what the Scriptures say, might stir up a lot of dust in your soul: I suppose the sweeping would do that. She kept sweeping until she found the lost piece of silver - I have found the piece I had lost. O, may it be that

there will be some pieces found today and put back into circulation for the testimony of God; to have part in the wonderful service of proclaiming the glad tidings, the glad tidings of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. It is all bound up in the Person of Christ. There is no other Name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved; every knee shall bow presently at the glorious name of Jesus. The simple word tonight is, reach Jesus. There is what He has done, and He has undertaken a wonderful work of redemption to remove the liabilities of every man if they will have Him. A ransom for all! that is the greatness of this price that has been paid to cover all their liabilities. The work of redemption has been finished long before you ever committed a sin; long before ever you came on the scene, that work of redemption was finished, and the blood of Jesus was shed. The blood was put on the mercy-seat in the figure of old, and God now approaches men in Jesus. He is the mercy-seat. It says, "whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood", Rom 3: 25. Have you faith in the blood of Jesus? God was not just thinking of you, but the blood on the mercy-seat was in order that God should be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. It is to set forth the righteousness of God, so that God can exercise His righteous mercy towards men and no one can challenge it. Not a power in the universe can challenge the rights of God to extend His mercy, because of the blood on the mercyseat. How simple it is - 'through faith in His blood'. Nothing else, no works, no merit, 'Nothing but the blood of Jesus'.

Well, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to announce glad tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted". Have you a broken heart? There are many broken hearts in this world today; hearts broken because of the will of men. Disappointed hearts; promises broken; ambitions dashed to the ground, all that their affections had been set upon gone. What is left? What is left is Jesus. Do you know why Jesus has been sent as a Saviour to the broken-hearted? Because He has been broken-hearted. There was not any failure on His part that brought that about, it says, "Reproach hath broken my

heart", Ps 69: 20. He knew what was in our hearts and the need of them, but He also knew what was in the heart of God. What He felt was the awful rejection of the testimonies of God in His goodness and grace, and it broke His heart that God in His goodness should be rejected, and He was rejected in the perfect ministry of Christ Himself. All the testimonies that had gone before had been refused by men and they were against them; finally God sent His Son, His Son. What a perfect ministry of grace Jesus brought. It says of Him that He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil for God was with Him (see Acts 10: 38). There was not a cry went unheeded to Jesus, He healed every one. What a Saviour! He was broken-hearted because of the reproaches. It says, "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen on me" (Ps 69: 9), and He carried it all. Jesus carried all the reproaches that men levelled against God. They blamed God for all that had come in, and Jesus carried it all when He went to the cross, to show that God is greater than our hearts. It says in one gospel that Jesus went out bearing His cross (see John 19: 17). He bore the whole load - the deliberate movements of Jesus, the feet of Jesus carrying Him where you and I could never go. He bore our sins in His body on the tree.

You think of these expressions of Scripture. They are intended to clear the ground in our souls of everything that might oppress us.

Why did He bear our sins in His body on the tree? Because you committed those sins in your body, and it required that somebody should bear those sins in His body on the tree, the body of Jesus.

The work of redemption had been done. Ere He died He said, It is finished. What was finished? You can explain one thing and another about that, but I say it is all covered by those words - It is finished.

O, the wonder of the blood; the precious blood of Jesus was not only the basis of your blessing and mine, but the basis on which God has come out freely as a Saviour, and no one can challenge His right to bless.

So that is what this passage means - "the meek", "the broken-hearted" to bind them up; "liberty to the captives, and opening of the

prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of Jehovah". We think of our needs, we think of our troubles, we think of all the experiences we have gone through, and how someone has treated us wrongly, bringing bitterness to our hearts. It never brought any bitterness into the heart of Jesus; there was no vindictiveness with Him when they did all that man's heart could think of in the way of hatred and the expression of it. The form of crucifixion itself was reserved for the time of Jesus. When that fourth imperial power, the power of Rome arose, that is when the death of the cross was introduced. What the devil had in mind was the cross of Jesus. When the Roman soldier, after Jesus had died, plunged the spear into His side in vindictiveness, what did it bring out? It says, "and immediately there came out blood and water", John 19: 34. All that was needed to meet the claims of the throne in the blood: all that was needed to meet the state of the human heart in the water. Everything has been done, dear hearer. Do you trust Him? Is there something in the way of reserve that you are holding back, when He as your Saviour has held back nothing, not a thing? He has given Himself; that is the wonder of the glad tidings. How full and how free has been the expression of God's love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son", (John 3: 16) - What more could He give?

"The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me ... to proclaim the acceptable year of Jehovah", and then the Lord stopped at those words in Luke 4. He did not go on to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. That is a coming day, but this is a time when the glad tidings of Jesus are being proclaimed, and it is your opportunity to accept Jesus as your Saviour and bow at His feet. How wonderful those feet are, feet that have brought glad tidings. Well, you say, I have accepted Christ as my Saviour. Well, Where are your feet then? Where are they? The feet of Jesus took Him to the cross.

Where is He now? The feet of Jesus have gone to the glory. We preach Jesus crucified, but we preach Jesus glorified: blessed, living, glorious Saviour, God has made Him both Lord and Christ.

He could not be holden of death, that worthy Man; He must rise

from the dead, said one enthusiast of Jesus, 'He must rise from the dead'. He did rise from the dead; He burst the bands of the grave and has ascended into heaven. It is wonderful. Is the Saviour who loves you yours, yours? Can you say my Saviour? Can you use those words? appropriate Him for your own needs: if there is anything wanting in your life, if you are feeling a bit down, if you feel that something you have set your heart on has suddenly gone - turn to Jesus. You will find He is the answer, and if He allowed something to be taken out of your life, Why was it? Well, it was in order that He might fill the void. He wants a place in your heart, a little more place in our hearts. Let me ask you to give a little more room to Jesus tonight. There was no room for Him in the inn, no room for Jesus. What is your answer? Is there room in your heart? 'Have you any room for Jesus? Him who bore the load of sin'. Some of these old hymns are very expressive of the truth, and they challenge our hearts. If you make a little bit more room for Jesus you will find room in your heart for everything that Jesus values. The interests of Christ down here; His assembly that He died for. You say I do not know much about that.

Well, He thinks it is very precious because He died for it; He gave Himself for it, the assembly. Are you prepared to give anything up in order that you might enjoy what Christ enjoys, and have some little part in furnishing joy for His heart? O, He has gone that way; He has done so much. Mary, at this point that we read of, was sitting at the feet of Jesus. It is a wonderful place to sit. If you have never tried it before, I would say, Come into the presence of Jesus and just sit at His feet. You do not have to do anything, that is the wonder of this. "Martha was distracted with much serving", but Mary, "having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word". So it comes within our range: you do not have to do anything. "And it came to pass as they went that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, Martha by name, received him into her house". Perhaps you have done that, received Jesus into your house, and you think there is a tremendous lot to do that rests on your shoulders. I say this, that the best thing to do, first of all, is to sit down at the feet of

Jesus. Presently you will get your directions at His mouth and at His word. Sit at His feet, that is the good part, that is what the Lord Himself said. You will find it out by way of experience, I can assure you of that; if you are prepared to sit at the feet of Jesus you will find out experimentally that that is the best place to be, at the feet of Jesus. Not at the radio; not in the world with its entertainments; not at the sports; you might feel that you need that, but the best place for your enjoyment is at the feet of Jesus listening to His word.

So we come along and sit down at the preaching; thank God for the glad tidings! We get the matter of our sins settled for ever.

That is a wonderful thing. I go back to that - the blood of Jesus settling every question as to our sins; so that we repeat those words, that He alone can say, Thy sins be forgiven thee. That was said to a woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Have you heard that from the lips of Jesus. Thy sins be forgiven thee? Get into the presence of Jesus and put your trust in Him as your Saviour; get the matter of your sins settled because that is fundamental. Do not go out of this room tonight, any of us, unless we have the question of our sins settled. I am not taking anything for granted in any persons in this room, no one - get the question of your sins settled and bring it up-to-date.

You trust in the Saviour and His precious blood, a greater sense in your soul of what a Saviour Jesus is and then sit at His feet. He will settle all your problems, He will, He has the power to do that, being the Saviour. There is only one Saviour and that is Jesus, but what a Saviour!

It says, "and his name is called Wonderful", (Isa 9: 6). That is not a title on the wall, that is a title God intends that you should prove in your own experience, that you put your trust in Him - you have had some problem, something here that you needed to be delivered from - you found He was Wonderful. What a wonderful thing it is to get that experience of the Saviour! He did not take the way that you thought, He has taken His own way and we need to follow, and what you find is that instead of the way that you thought, His way is wonderful because that is His name. That is Jesus, my Saviour, and

I trust He will be yours. Mary, it says, sat at His feet. How often we get occupied with somebody else and what they should do or should not do? So Martha was troubled, troubled about her sister, and there she was, Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, the best place, and the Lord said, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but there is need of one". O, if I could get this into your soul tonight, just this one thing, that the best place to sit is at the feet of Jesus, I think we would have got something out of this meeting.

Where will you find Him? That is the question, is it not? Where will you find Him today? Find the man with the pitcher of water and follow him. That is not any particular person: the persons that are walking down the road of 2 Timothy, apart and separate from the evil of this world and making room in their hearts for the Spirit of God.

The searchings, the purity of His ministry deals with every moral problem that comes into our hearts. Where He leads is into the house where Christ is at home. O, may you find Jesus; I am not going to tell you where He is, you find that for yourself. I am not preaching any group of Christians; I am not preaching any church. I do not belong to any church except one; there is only one church that I want to belong to, the church of God, the assembly of God.

Every believer who has the Spirit belongs to the assembly, and I want to fill out my place in that. You say, Where is it? Maybe not a big congregation; - "For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I" - "there am I" - "in the midst of them", Matt 18? If you want to find Jesus you pay attention to what is due to His name. Find persons who are walking down that road in keeping with His name and you will find Jesus.

It is a wonderful thing to find somebody else with whom you can sit down at the feet of Jesus and listen to His word. May it be so for His Name's sake.

CHRISTCHURCH NZ

10 August 1986

THE COMING OF THE LORD

R.W.Flowerdew

1 Thessalonians 4: 15-18

I was impressed with the words of our opening hymn, 'Awaiting thy shout would we be' (No 131). We look, in an occasion of this kind, for the word of the Lord, and there is reference to it in this section: "this we say to you in the word of the Lord", and I think we can say that we have already heard it. We give thanks to Him continually that He still speaks. It is for us simply to be ready to hear. It says in verse 16, which was particularly in mind, "the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God".

The Lord is speaking now, in the day in which we are, to those whose ears are rightly attuned, morally and spiritually.

Characteristically He is speaking, as we have been reminded, in a soft, gentle voice; as the Authorised Version says, "a still small voice" 1 Kings 19: 12. There is also what the Spirit says to the assemblies, which is spoken with definiteness, with insistence and clarity and, I repeat, it is for us to hear. "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies".

The Lord's shout is in prospect. I suppose our ears are to be ready, at all times and at any time, to hear the Lord's shout. What power there will be in it! "The Lord himself, with an assembling shout". All the differences, the difficulties and the divisions in Christendom will be removed. This will be the effect of the Lord's shout. It will be an assembling shout. There is little prospect for us if we, in an attempt at co-ordination or perhaps by compromise, seek to bring about unity among the saints. It lies in the Lord's power, and in His power alone, to bring the saints together in full unity. What power there will be manifest in His shout! But that power may be

known now, because the One who will shout is the One who now speaks, and He is attuning our ears and alerting our senses to receive, to hear and to heed His voice, in whatever tones He may speak. We hear the soft, gentle voice. There may be tones of rebuke: the Lord is able and ready to rebuke, because of His love for the assembly. I suppose His shout will be not simply of power, but also of love, because the Lord will be working to bring together rapidly all those for whom He has given Himself. It will be a shout of love.

What we hear characteristically in a meeting for ministry is words for edification, for upbuilding. Indeed, I question whether a word is prophetic unless there is what is up-building in it. A word also comes for encouragement: the end of this section says "encourage one another with these words". It comes for consolation. What consolation has been found in this scripture at many burial meetings, when attention has been called to "the Lord himself".

There is opportunity again now to call attention to "the Lord himself", One who is to be before us without peer, to be the object of our attention without distraction, "the Lord himself" (pending His shout of power) for edification, encouragement and consolation. He is able to bring rebuke and able to bring that which sets the saints together.

But we do not look for a future day to be set together in our localities: the Lord is speaking that we may be set together now, so that we may be alert to hear together the shout which will be uttered, the assembling shout.

Then it says "with archangel's voice". I suppose that that suggests to us the power that there is to deal with the opposition of Satan himself, "the devil and his angels", Matt 25: 41. I wonder also if it suggests the power now operative to deal with circumstances.

We prove angelic care in our circumstances, if we are alert to realise it. The children have their angels in the presence of the Father, see Matt 18: 10. We prove angelic care in our circumstances from hour to hour every day, and we can well give thanks for it.

There is to be no hold exerted by circumstances, we are to be ready to go.

"With trump of God": what a rallying call the trump of God is.

We prayed at the outset, simply, that there might be clarity of speaking. What clarity there is in the sounding of the trumpet; it rises, unmistakable, above the din and turmoil of battle. It alerts us to movement, but not retreat. There is no thought here of sounding the retreat. This is forward, upward movement. The trumpet sounds as the prophetic word is uttered and heard. There is a note to be discerned in it. We may dismiss it as an overtone, but there is a particular note to be discerned in the prophetic word, spoken faithfully and truly, which is characteristically a sounding of the trumpet. The prophetic word alerts us to the final sounding of the trump of God.

Then it says "the Lord himself ... shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first". Theirs is the privilege of first association with Him. "We, the living who remain": we expect to be living, truly and in every sense we do not expect to die. We know that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6: 23) and "death passed upon all men" (Rom 5: 12), but we do not expect to die. Believers, and the saints together, are to expect what we are reading to occur very soon, and accept in faith that it is imminent. "We ... shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air". Are we ready to meet the Lord in the air? "And thus we shall be always with the Lord". When we are younger we may feel that it may be preferable not to be always with the Lord, because there is what is of interest to us in this scene. The prophetic word comes with clear strains to it so that we may be disengaged, and further disengaged, from what would hold us here so that there is no hindrance in our circumstances, our lives, our thoughts or in our affections, to the desire to be for ever with the Lord. I trust we find that in these occasions and in this occasion, there is an experience of the Lord's voice and, more than that, of His interest and of His presence. He is close enough to us, in affection, to speak in such a manner that His voice may be heard readily.

The work of preparation goes on. It is in view of seeing, meeting, and for ever being with, the Lord Himself, when there will

be a final disengagement. I sometimes wonder as to that. Perhaps we think rather unready of disengagement from what holds us and props us up and in some way succours us, but what is in prospect here is final disengagement. It will not be for loss: it will be entirely for profit; "Thus we shall be always with the Lord. So encourage one another with these words". The words are the words of Scripture. I hesitate to add to them because they are so decisive, so clear, so compelling. There is love manifest in every phrase in this parenthesis. Let the parenthesis be in the secret of our hearts.

Without making an exhaustive study of parentheses in Scripture, we can find very readily, I think, that they are not a declaration of outward events but they convey to us what we are expected to know inwardly. Let it be that the word of the Lord is known by us inwardly. Let the Lord Himself be our prospect; the Object, the sole Object without distraction, without second thought, the Object of our affection. May we hold Him thus. We can be assured from these words of Scripture that we are surely the objects of His affections.

He is able to express His own love for the saints, whether or not we are together. He knows whether we are in liberty or to some extent circumstantially tied: He knows perfectly the condition and the position of the saints; He is able to assure all of His love. Let our love, as the word of the Lord is heard among us, be quickened toward Him in expectation of His coming, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

7 October 1986

THE WILL OF GOD

The definition of an ideal life:

"A man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfil all My will."

The object of life:

"I come to do Thy will, O God."

The first thing you need after life is food:

"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."

The next thing you need after food is society:

"Whosoever shall do the will of My Father in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

You want education:

"Teach me to do Thy will, O my God."

You want pleasure:

"I delight to do Thy will, O my God."

A whole life can be built up on that vertebral column, and then, when all over,

"He that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever."

From an old tract

THE CHILDREN YEARNED OVER

The apostle Paul, though an unmarried man, wrote as a parent to the believers at Thessalonica, exhorting them as a father comforts his own children. Also he had been gentle amongst them "as a nurse would cherish her own children". Indeed he "yearned" for them in connection with the glad tidings of God which he had imparted to them. Those saints, young in the faith, had become beloved of Paul and they must therefore have answered in a very real way to the affection bestowed upon them. All these words such as to exhort, cherish, impart, comfort and yearn are little used in the world of today, but the deep feelings which they describe should mark those who know the heart of God, our Father.

Paul looked for no benefits such as money from those for whom he spent himself, but he sought the joy - another rare word nowadays - of their bearing fruit to God. He was like the servant who, according to the law of Moses, "yearned after his hire". We are all inclined to accept the benefits of the work of the Lord Jesus and to forget to return thanks. True, where all is freely given to us we do not exactly owe a debt, but the words of a well known hymn put the matter very touchingly: -

'I gave My life for thee:
What hast thou given for Me? '

We might perhaps apply the word 'yearning' to God in connection with an answer for all His benefits. He even spoke to His people through the prophet, saying "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money"! Instead of this He had been made to toil with their sins. Nevertheless, His mercy overshadowed this with glory saying, "I, I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sins". This looked forward to the atoning work of Jesus. Have you submitted yet to divine grace?

J.C.Evershed