

A
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Contents

THE SIN-OFFERING

"JESUS MANIFESTED HIMSELF"

THE SIN-OFFERING

Leviticus 4: 1-12, 27-35; Psalm 22: 1-4, 21-26

J.N.G. Some of us have been looking at the offerings in Leviticus as typifying our approach to God, and connecting them with the Psalms. While Leviticus gives us the various offerings, the feelings of Christ in relation to them are set out in the Psalms, and I think it is helpful to connect them because otherwise we may be somewhat doctrinal as regards the truth. The Psalms would give us the feelings of Christ in relation to these holy things. Elsewhere we looked at the burnt-offering, what that was for God, presenting the perfections of Jesus, so acceptable to God; then the meat-offering, referring to the life of Jesus, and the savour of that, a memorial of which was put on the fire. We should now think of the sin-offering.

The earlier references in Leviticus are sweetsavour offerings and would show in those types that the sufferings of Christ and the testings of the cross are not so much the matter of having to do with sin; the word used in regard to the burning is to bring out the excellence and sweet savour of what Christ was and is to God.

Now we have to do with another side of the truth, the sin-offering, which is equally important because it forms the basis of our communion with God where that has been interrupted. Maybe it would be helpful to say, for the benefit particularly of the younger ones, that in Leviticus we are not dealing with a sinner coming to God in relation to the forgiveness of his sins initially but with a people in the midst of whom God is dwelling, and, communion having been interrupted, how that is to be met. What comes out in the types is the immense resources God has to meet every situation. To get the full bearing of the death of Christ in relation to God dwelling among His people we would have to go to Leviticus 16, the day of atonement; that has to do with the majesty of God and how that had to be met in regard to the intrusion of sin in the universe. What we are dealing with now is God dwelling amongst His people, and He wants them to draw near. He loves to have His people in communion with Him, and if that should be interrupted there are

immense divine resources in the death of Christ so that communion should be restored; we should enjoy it and God would enjoy it. That is simply what is in mind to speak of together. The sin-offering and the trespass-offering link very much together. The sin-offering has to do with how sin affects the holiness of God; if any one of us sins, communion is interrupted. The trespass-offering, I think, refers to the damage that is caused by our allowance of sin. But in both instances the wonderful resource is with God to meet it, and there ought to be an enrichment in the service of God as a result of the exercises that we pass through.

F.G.M. Would you say something as to "sin through inadvertence"; there is no suggestion of any wilfulness here under these conditions.

J.N.G. No; there is no forgiveness for a sin of wilfulness. But the wonder of it is that when you come to Christianity the greatest sin of will is treated as a sin of ignorance. That is the God we have. Peter stands up and says to the Jews in relation to the death of Christ: "I know that ye did it in ignorance", Acts 3: 17. How wonderful that is! But if will is active in Christianity it would really point to apostasy.

There is no forgiveness for that. It is a terrible thing to contemplate, but it is the truth that as far as Christendom is concerned and the rejection of the testimony - the gospel of the glory of Christ - there is no forgiveness for that: the smoke of Babylon, it says, "goes up to the ages of ages", Rev 19: 3. But we are not in that time; we are in the time when God is viewing everything from the point of view of the forgiveness of sins - "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 34. Stephen did not say that because his stoning was really a sin of wilfulness on the part of Israel, and for the moment Israel has been given up as a nation. Not that the individual Jew is given up; he can come in on the ground of "all men", but for the nation it is for the moment the sin of wilfulness and our God, the kind of God we have, says, Well, I will use this to extend the glad tidings in blessing to all men, and the Jews can come in on that ground. However, that is not exactly what is before us in this chapter.

F.G.M. I think what you say is very helpful; it was just that this word 'inadvertence' seems to be emphasised through this chapter.

J.N.G. That means that our wills are not to be active. We are on dangerous ground when will comes into it. I suppose in some sense will always comes into it; we cannot excuse ourselves on that ground at all, but immediately our wills become active we need to get back to the cross.

E.P. What would you say about those two children to whom the father says, "go ... work in my vineyard", Matt 21: 28? One says, "I will not; but afterwards repenting himself he went".

J.N.G. That is like you and me, is it not?

E.P. Exactly. The other one says, "I go, sir, and went not". Which did the will of the father? These are the words of the Lord, are they not?

J.N.G. That is right. That is why I referred to the tremendous resources that God has now through the work of Christ and the presence of the Spirit. I doubt whether we realise very much the immense resources - Christ on high and the Spirit here, as a result of the work of Christ. God is just free to do as He likes and no one can challenge Him. He is not imputing trespasses; His eye is on Christ.

C.G.H. Earlier you made a fundamental point which reminded me of a remark of Mr Darby in the Collected Writings where he said that the groundwork of all God's dealings now is sin but as dealt with in Christ.

J.N.G. I cannot enlarge on Mr Darby's remarks; some of them are too profound for me. But we read from Psalm 22 because the more we ponder the sufferings of Christ and what was involved in that Psalm, the more there will be in the way of praise and worship from our hearts. It deals with the forsaking of Christ and His feelings in regard to the whole matter.

V.E.W. It is a Psalm of David.

J.N.G. What have you to say about that?

V.E.W. I cannot say much, but you get a sense of the depth of feelings that entered into David's soul.

J.N.G. I think that. Of course the Psalm itself, you would have to say, is uniquely referring to Christ. No one but Jesus could have an experience of what that Psalm portrays because no one has been forsaken of God but Christ. But in David's soul there was some appreciation of that. I think that, speaking broadly, it gave colour to the whole of David's activities in his reign.

J.M. It is God's disposition to forgive, and there are infinite resources available to clear the whole matter of sin, but we should always carry that the taking away of sin has been an extraordinarily costly matter.

J.N.G. That is why I read from that Psalm. It needs to penetrate into our souls. Then we have in Leviticus 4 the procedure laid down by which a soul that sins should be restored to communion. But in the working of it out, and the exercises of our souls, I think it involves deep exercise before God. Is that what you were thinking?

J.M. Yes, it involves a deepening understanding of what sin is to God, and what it has cost God to remove it, and what it has cost Christ to remove it. I think that would help us in our histories and our relations with God in regard to the whole matter of sin.

J.N.G. I think that is right. The Psalms themselves, I think, give us a penetration into the feelings of Christ, but then also penetration into the feelings that are proper to us. So, if you think of Psalm 51 for instance, David comes to the point where he says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (v 4). David reached something in his soul, did he not? Certain exercises raise their heads amongst us because of the flesh being with us all the time and unchanged, and the tendency for the world to creep in amongst us. Somebody said to me just recently that worldly tendencies are getting in amongst us.

How are they to be met? They are not to be met by rules and regulations; the only way they can be met is by penetration, as you say, into what sin means to God, and that is seen only at the cross.

J.M. It is a remarkable thing, is it not, that not only was sin measured fully by God at the cross, but sin was measured fully by a Man and met fully by Him? I think that is a contemplation that ought to come into our inwards; it would save us from the things that you were referring to.

J.N.G. I think that is the way that salvation will come in, particularly as we think of the younger generation growing up, and the awful corruption and violence and seduction that is in the world at the present time. What is the answer to it? The answer to it is in the souls of the saints, and the young people ought to realise that, that God's answer to all the corruption that is in the world at the present time is an appreciation in their souls of Christ and His sufferings.

E.C.M. As to what you said about David and what he went through, he says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart ... thou wilt not despise", Ps 51: 17. Do we need real inward conviction?

J.N.G. We do, and that should be maintained. God will listen to a contrite heart.

C.G.H. Your remarks are most important; statements of Scripture which are perfectly plain are ignored, and things which are an abomination in the sight of God are spoken of publicly in an equivocal way.

J.N.G. I think. it all comes back to our communion, whether we are maintaining personal links and communion with the Lord, because we can have a knowledge of Scripture, we can have a knowledge of the ministry, but that is not life; Christianity is life, as I understand it, in the power of the Spirit.

C.G.H. I did not mean to imply that that is the way things are spoken of among the saints. I only say it because I think it is a shame in a country which is so-called Christian that such things should be made way for when Scripture is perfectly plain. I think myself that whenever we come across anything of that sort, we should openly say, That is not according to Scripture.

J.N.G. That is so, and we would also have to keep in mind to thank God for so many of our brethren who, even though we are not able to walk with them, are faithful to the light they have, and God has access through them to places to which we have not access. There are persons I know (I am thankful for them) who stand up against these errors, particularly in the rejection of Paul's ministry. Take, for instance, women being ordained in priesthood. The same thing, of course, in character, is the introduction of the world amongst us, with the ignoring of Paul's instructions - women as to short hair, and so on. Let us make no mistake about it, these things have the same character, if not in the same measure.

C.G.H. I do feel for myself that the more we are attracted to the value and glory and blessedness of the Person of Christ we shall be preserved, and if we are preserved in communion, as you have said, we shall not sin; no one sins when they are in communion.

J.N.G. Well, no, that is where Psalm 22 ends, with worship and praise. That is where we shall finish up if we accept these exercises and penetrate a little bit more by the Spirit into the sufferings of Christ.

Ques. Do you think it would help us to recognise more that God is holy - "thou art holy"?

J.N.G. I think that, and, therefore, while we speak of Leviticus and of the Psalms, we would carry the thing forward, because Leviticus, teaching as it is, is only shadows. I think we always ought to keep in mind the profound teaching in the Old Testament as to the truth, but all the time what it speaks of are only shadows, and to get the reality of the truth you must come to Jesus, and you must come to the cross. I think if we contemplate that it will have a very profound effect upon our lives in separating us from the world and all that belongs to it.

Rem. So the first words spoken about the Lord is, "the holy thing", Luke 1: 35.

J.N.G. Yes, very good.

E.C.B. Do you think, in regard to what you were saying about God, that the two references to the Lord's soul in Isaiah 53 should affect us? It says "thou" - evidently referring to God - "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (v 10), but "he hath poured out his soul unto death" (v 12).

J.N.G. I wondered about those scriptures. I find that I cannot get very far in relation to them but they cause my soul to bow in the presence of Christ.

E.C.B. We have often referred to Mr Darby's remarks about Hebrews 9: "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God" (v 14). Mr Darby says, And when He offered Himself, what did God do? He made His soul an offering for sin.

J.N.G. He made His soul an offering for sin. I can understand Peter saying, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet 2: 24), but when you come to the scripture you refer to it requires penetration by the Spirit to get any impression at all of what sin is to God.

E.P. It is very touching, is it not, that in this very book of Leviticus God says to the people, "for the soul of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar", chap 17: 11?

J.N.G. I have been wondering lately in just reading through these passages in part, why it says "the blood was poured out" - "and poured out the blood at the bottom of the altar". What do you think of that?

E.P. My mind immediately goes to what has been referred to, because He has poured out His soul unto death, and the life of the soul is in the blood - poured out, nothing held back, everything given up.

J.N.G. Everything. When it became a question of the whole sin question being met, there were no reserves with God or with Christ; He poured out His soul. The idea of pouring out in Scripture means that there is nothing left, and I think that is something that we could ponder over.

A.J.E.W. Do we do well as to that to keep in our minds the end of Hebrews 9? "The Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those that look for him the second time without sin for salvation" (v 28)?

J.N.G. You mean it has been done once and for all, perfectly. This is what I thought we might come to, the tremendous resource God has in that death to deal with the whole question of sin. So there should not be any shadows left with us, not only in our communion with God but in our relations with one another; that is where the shadows come in.

E.C.B. In regard to your reference, more than once, to the great resources God has, is it of interest that in prescribing the sin-offering God alludes to other elements of the system as well - the altar of incense, the altar of burnt-offering and the peace-offering? God alludes to all of them in the context where perhaps we would never have thought of speaking of them.

J.N.G. So the end that God has in mind is not just a question of the clearing away of the matter of sin but the results in the service of God. I think that is important.

F.C.M. Would there be a link between the references to the praises of God in Psalm 22 and the first case here in the priest that is anointed? Is that the first context in which I am to have a judgment of sin, that it will interfere with and weaken and rob God of the service due to Him?

J.N.G. That is very helpful, and so the bringing in of the priest firstly in this chapter indicates the extensive effect of sin coming in amongst us. It does not only affect me - that is the idea of the priest, is it not? - but it affects the whole service of God as amongst His people. That is a very serious thing. But there are resources in the death of Christ to meet it and to clear the whole situation. There should not be any shadows amongst us whatever; that is what I am trying to get out of these scriptures. It is because of our lack of appreciation of the cross, and the way that God has dealt with sin, that we do not deal with things sufficiently in our own souls.

S.D.K.R. Would you say another word about those shadows that come in among us? What is the antidote to it, please?

J.N.G. The cross of Christ, the contemplation of Christ. The work has been so complete that there should not be any shadows between ourselves and God; we have free access, boldness to enter the presence of God, to come to the throne of grace. If we have that I do not think there will be any shadows amongst us. Now that does not mean that we are all going to be agreed on everything.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace does not mean that we are always going to have the same mind - I am almost quoting from Mr Taylor on this - the brethren will know that but it does mean that your mind is in the same direction as mine, and it means that finally they will converge in Christ and there will be no shadows at all.

C.G.H. Is not the difference that you speak of due simply to growth? As we grow we come to different conclusions and different thoughts about things, and that surely accounts for the sort of differences to which you refer.

J.N.G. Well, it may, and of course, there may be actual things that have to be faced with one another, and there is grace in our hearts to do that. If I have a difference with you and I come to you and make the thing plain to you, tell you my exercises, then I have discharged my conscience, but it does not affect the brotherly relations between you and me. I think we are coming now not to the sin-offering but to the trespass-offering which we did not read about, because the trespass-offering is met, not by a bullock but by a ram, and as we have been taught, that refers to a maturity of things in our souls.

D.E.B. You have spoken about the resources with God; there are also to be certain resources with the sinner, are there not? In these two sections you have read in Leviticus 4 it supposes that the priest and one of the persons has a bullock or a goat of which they can make use.

J.N.G. We see all the resources that God has at His disposal; they are here in the Spirit, that is where they are - Christ in heaven,

equivalent to the Spirit here. There is God here and God in heaven. Maybe we do not lay hold of that sufficiently. We are having to do with God because the Spirit is here, and as long as the Spirit is here the dispensation will be maintained in the face of the rising apostasy, and that is what God is looking for; He is looking for an answer, not in orthodox understanding of the truth but for life amongst the saints by the Spirit.

E.C.M. Does the word in Corinthians bear on what you are saying, that the One who knew not sin was made sin for us (see 2 Cor 5: 21)? Should that not deeply affect us - the perfection of Christ in manhood, and yet God made Him sin for us that we should become the righteousness of God in Him?

J.N.G. That is another profound scripture of which I have not yet seized the full implication.

E.C.M. It is to affect us, is it not, that the One who was sinless, holy, perfect, was made sin by God?

J.N.G. These are the things that should bow our hearts in worship when we take account of our Lord.

C.C.I. What would you say as to Paul resisting Peter to the face? Evidently a very serious matter was met, but there was not a shadow between those two men.

J.N.G. I am glad you refer to that. There was not only the truth but his conduct in relation to the truth, the dissembling; that is what Paul says (see Gal 2: 13), but it did not affect their brotherly relations. I think this is the testimony, love coming into evidence amongst ourselves. That is the testimony according to what the Lord said: "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine", John 13: 35. Is that not right? Now this is testing, but I think that the prime, fundamental truths of Christianity are involved in our relations with one another - remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and Paul's ministry in the gospel, repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I think the gospel for the saints is exactly the same as the gospel for the sinner. My own impression is that that is where we fall down.

P.M. Would the priest laying his hand on the head of the bullock and slaughtering it form a constitution that would help us in working things out together?

J.N.G. Yes, complete identification with these things. I think that comes back on our side, to our faith. We are weak in faith as to whether the Lord has every one of His own under His hand, whether the Lord has direct relations with His people, whether He has control of them; and on the other hand whether the work of Christ is sufficient to meet everything.

J.W. Does what John says in his first epistle bear on the working out of things amongst us together, for fellowship with one another? "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin", chap 1: 7. But then on our side we need to confess our sin.

J.N.G. That is so, and therefore to the trespass-offering there is a fifth part added. It is something that we have to think of too when I say something that is wrong. Am prepared not only to have the thing out with God but to see that there is no damage left amongst the saints; that is the trespassoffering.

F.C.M. Is there not some such implication that the priest brings the bullock to the entrance to the tent? The whole issue is manifestly publicly cleared; nobody can have a shadow of doubt that this priest is now morally clear; there is no hangover.

J.N.G. That is what we want to get at I am sure, that is what the entrance to the tent of meeting means; and the altar of burnt offering means just that; that is where this was brought to. The whole public position is completely cleared. Why? Why? Because of the work of Christ. Is the work of Christ great enough to meet every situation?

Is it? Is our faith strong enough to lay hold of that? Or do we still think we must put our finger on something or someone? I think it is the simple terms of the gospel that will hold us together, dear brethren, in the face of a world of increasing corruption and apostasy - and it is going to get worse.

J.M. The question of laying his hand on the bullock's head and slaughtering the bullock before Jehovah bears on that, does it not,

that he is, manifestly making the matter his own?

J.N.G. That is right, making the matter his own. Well, that is testing. If I sin - which we hear about in the common person - that is a very testing matter, the recognition of that sin, but then the priest is looking a bit wider afield about it. I think he is looking for the effect, the effect of sin on the whole of the service of God, and for us it would be the whole of Christendom. Let us not be too narrow in our thoughts of taking up the matters of sin before God. You and I are responsible for the sin of Christendom. Can we take that up?

J.M. It raises the question whether we are priestly persons and can carry these things before Jehovah, and carry them feelingly. Then again we are driven back to Christ, and the way that He carried the matter vicariously, but He carried it before God in a feeling way.

J.N.G. That is very searching, but what you say is just the truth - it must carry us back to Christ and our relations with Him. Has my appreciation of Christ not been sufficient to meet the whole thing, or are there shadows remaining? Well, we do not want those in our relations with one another or in our relations with gatherings. There are sufficient resources in the death of Christ and the presence of the Spirit to clear everything away so that God should be rightly served, joyfully; and that is the answer in Psalm 22. That is the answer, the feelings of Christ.

J.C.E. Do you think this priest would get so immersed with God's great resources and the detail - of them that his sin would recede as being covered?

J.N.G. I think that is the priest, yes, I do. I think he would be so sensitive as to what has come in. There is less said of the priest than there is in regard to some of the others, as to whom it says, if he sin, and, when a sin comes to his knowledge. That is not said about the priest. He is sensitive that relations have been broken with God: the effect of his sin has been extensive throughout the whole of Israel. I think we get too much occupied with our selves sometimes because of the light that God has given us, and the matter of separation; it is 2 Timothy ground anyway, but in relation to the

whole of the testimony. One thing that God is seeking to do is to involve us, in our thoughts and affections, in the whole of the testimony ere the Lord comes.

J.M. In the book of Revelation John opens with a doxology, and it is "priests to his God and Father", chap 1: 6. Would that involve persons who can carry in their spirits and souls the whole burden of the dispensation and yet be free in their spirits for the service of God?

J.N.G. Can we do it? In that section it says, "I John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience" (v 9). The note says of those three things that you cannot separate them - "tribulation and kingdom and patience". Now that is rather testing as to whether we involve ourselves in regard to the testimony. We often fail with the first one. Who is there here that likes tribulation? Nobody standing up! But you see what it is in John, one person in the isle of Patmos who can carry the whole thing through; and what the Lord gives him in the way of revelation to his own soul - one man! Yet we get more about numbers in Revelation than anywhere else, do we not?

C.G.H. As to the detail of what you say, would Daniel help us at all? He took up all that was obnoxious and a sorrow to God in connection with His beloved nation Israel.

J.N.G. Yes, he confesses it all, his own sin and the sin of his people, but he was morally clear of it all. That is where the Lord wants us in 2 Timothy, to withdraw from certain things, and then what are we going to get? We are going to get fellowship with one another, two or three; we will not get the numbers but we will get the quality that really belongs to assembly life. It is available for us now. Why? Because the Spirit is here, God; the source is in the Spirit.

B.W.W. John precedes the passage referred to by expressing his very present consciousness of the love of Jesus, and what He has done; "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood" (v 5).

J.N.G. A very affecting reference, is it not? - "him who loves us"; not 'loved us' but "who - loves us". He has not changed, has He? "And has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father". Let us never forget the blood, and the blood was poured out at the bottom of the altar.

There have been no reserves with God in the way He has dealt with sin; so that there should not be any reserves with us, dear brethren, in our relations with one another.

C.J.H.D. It is wonderful that at the Supper the Lord says, My blood which is poured out for you. We might have thought that He would have said, Poured out for God, but it is intended to affect our souls together, is it not?

J.N.G. Where is that given to us?

C.J.H.D. In Luke.

J.N.G. And in 1 Corinthians: "in my blood", chap 11: 25.

C.J.H.D. I was just thinking pleasurably of the soul character of Luke's gospel, because it starts with a woman saying, "My soul magnifies the Lord", chap 1: 36. Does not the use of the word here bring in the feelings of God? It is said in Genesis, All flesh would expire together, and the souls that I have made. It might have said in Leviticus 4, a man, or a person, but it says, "a soul", and God wants that soul back again.

J.N.G. Very good. How feeling God is in relation to His people! He wants them near Him and is that not Leviticus? Jehovah called, He called to Moses and spoke to him out of the tent of meeting. He wants His people near Him, and He does not want any interruption in the communion of His saints with Himself or with one another.

E.C.B. In alluding to 1 Corinthians 11, after the reference to Luke, were you thinking of the new covenant?

J.N.G. Yes. How much do we take these things in is what I am concerned about. We speak about them, we speak of the doctrine, the truth; if the blood of Christ is an indication to us of the way God has come out in His love towards us in the new covenant, it means

that He has come out without any reserves. The blood speaks of that; there have been no reserves with God in His love towards us.

E.C.B. It has affected me recently in reading Mr Raven that he said, We care ten times more about doctrine than we do about Christ.

J.N.G. I think if we cared more about Christ we would care more about one another; that is my impression. He is a blessed living Man with all the affections and compassions and feelings of a man, and that is what God wants represented in us in our relations with one another.

E.P. When the Lord says, the new covenant in My blood, would it help us to see that the heart of God is at liberty and free with us, and He wants to bring us into the joy of that?

J.N.G. He does, and that is assurance, that God comes down to our level of things to assure our hearts. It is not the full level of Christianity, because the full level of Christianity is sonship. But this is the way that God has come out to assure our hearts, that we should not have any doubts or fears or shadows whatever in our relations with one another or with God.

E.P. Do you think it would be right to say that a characteristic feature of Christianity is liberty?

J.N.G. I think that is true because that is what was seen with the Lord.

P.M. Is it to affect us that the One who is the administrator of the new covenant is the same One who has poured out His blood that there might be a righteous basis on which the new covenant may be entered into?

J.N.G. I think so; you come back to our Saviour in everything. There is not one feature of the truth that you do not have to come back to Christ to learn the blessedness of it.

E.C.M. What has been said about the covenant is very affecting. I was thinking of Matthew where the Lord says, "For this is my blood, that of the new covenant, that shed for many for remission of sins",

chap 26: 28. The way is clear entirely for us to approach God in the liberty that His love would afford, do you think?

J.N.G. Yes. I suppose you could connect Matthew and Mark with the sin-offering and the trespass-offering. The basis laid in Matthew's gospel is the forsaking that is referred to in Psalm 22; the ground is entirely cleared. Then Mark, I think, would affect us, or should affect us, as to the trespass-offering, because he had failed.

How is that failure going to be met? It is met first of all by a presentation of the death of Christ; very similar to Matthew, but with this exception that there are no compassions, He is alone in the universe at the cross. This is Mark's account of the death of Christ, and I think it is Mark's presentation of the trespass-offering.

He is going to see that nothing that he had done could be left in the way of damage amongst the saints. He would say, Well, I was unbelieving; now I am going to present the death of Christ in a way that has met the unbelief of every heart. That is how I understand it.

E.C.M. That is very helpful, I am sure.

C.G.H. Would you distinguish for us between sin and trespass.

J.N.G. I think sin has relation to the holiness of God. Of course, you have to take the types in their setting. Leviticus 16, which is the day of atonement, deals with the majesty of God's throne, and how the intrusion of sin into the universe had to be met; the blood was taken into the holy of holies and put on the mercyseat. It is the basis of God's outlook on the whole universe. I think sin has to do with the holiness of God, and these offerings deal with that and our communion. The trespass, I think, has to do with the damage that was done by our sin. How is that to be met? And it has to be met. It is to be met by the way we on our side are prepared to go to the limit and beyond the limit, I think, to see that nothing is left in the way of damage amongst the saints.

C.G.H. That is very helpful and interesting. Sin is lawlessness, but trespass is more than that, it is something, as you point out, in the way of what is left as the result of sin. But if I sin inadvertently without, of course, wishing to do so, if I offend a brother by

something I say, for example, that is not lawlessness, but it is something which I suppose I have done because I am not too careful how I conduct myself.

J.N.G. Well, love lies behind all this. How far am I prepared to go? The Lord went all the way. Whether it is the sin-offering or the trespass-offering or the burnt-offering, the will of God, what came out in Jesus, was that He went the whole way. I think in all our exercises the trouble is that we are not prepared to go all the way; we will go as far as perhaps others think that is required of us; but I do not think that is Jesus. He went the whole way.

R.W.F. Is the sin-offering for the restoration of communion and the trespass-offering for the restoration of the enjoyment of fellowship?

J.N.G. Yes, I think that would be right; that helps.

Maidstone

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KEY TO INITIALS

D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr, London; C.J.H.Davidson, Dorking; J.C.Evershed, London; R.W.Flowerdew, London; J.N.Grace, Melbourne; C.G.Hitchcock, Ealing; C.C.Ikin, Southend; F.G.May, Maidstone; P.Martin Colchester; J.Mitchell, Bexley, E.C.Muggleton, Colchester;. F.C.Mutton, Redbridge; E.Palmer, London; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; B.W.Ward, London; A.J.E.Welch, Sunbury; V.E.Wraight, Gillingham

"JESUS MANIFESTED HIMSELF"

J.N.Grace

John 21: 1-4, 9-17, 20-22

Beyond all the rest of the brethren I think that the brother who speaks is the one who needs the ministry, he needs the help; at least that is the way I feel. John, we have been told, was reserved for the day in which we are: his writings bear particularly upon us, but finish with such a good note. Our meetings should always finish with a good note; it is a great service to leave the brethren feeling better than when they came. That is what John does. I suppose he is one of the greatest enthusiasts of Scripture. He says, "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written" (v 25). There are a lot of books being written today but they are not great enough to contain the things that Jesus did. Those are written in the hearts of the brethren. Think of the myriads of those who love Christ, the myriads of those who have gone before us and the myriads of those who live now, who have come under the influence of Christ's love, and there is something written in their hearts. That is what the Spirit of God is doing; He is not writing the law in our hearts, He is writing Christ in our hearts, that blessed living Person, written by the Spirit of the living God.

That is life, dear brethren; life is what belongs to the assembly.

There is nothing like the enjoyment of assembly life. It has been a great privilege to be amongst some of those who love the Lord and just get a little taste of assembly life. This is open to two or three, as the Lord says, "two or three ... gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" Matt 18: 20. You can depend upon it, if the Lord is there, there will be life because He is the Prince of life, the Originator of life. So if you are in the company of someone

who loves Jesus you will get something of the enjoyment of life; not as the world thinks of it. The world goes on its way which is proceeding to death - but not the believer.

So it says here in John 21: "After these things"; there had been some good things in the previous chapter, fine things when Christ rose from the dead. There was a bit of unbelief with Thomas, just like us; perhaps we could say there is more unbelief in our hearts than there was with Thomas. But the Lord adjusts it, which He will do if we make way for Him. What is the use of a meeting, dear brethren, if Christ is not among us? I think the life of the assembly will be the comings and goings of Jesus; that is my impression of the life of the assembly. We have not to wait for that, He comes and goes now; that is what this gospel says: "Jesus came and stood in the midst", chap 20: 19. Well, He comes and goes because He is still the same, the same blessed Lord, the same blessed Head of the assembly, and that is because of His love. We love Him, we want Him and we want one another, but, dear brethren, we do not want Him as much as He wants us. He is awaiting the day when the Father gives the word and He will take the assembly to be with Him. He will come with a shout. I have often thought of that, what an exuberant shout that will be when the Lord gives expression to the joy of His own heart to gather the assembly to Himself! We shall all hear it; it does not matter whether we have our normal hearing or are hard of hearing, it will not make any difference when this shout comes; we will hear it. The dead in Christ will rise first and they will hear it.

Well, that is not this chapter exactly. It says, "After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples". Beloved brethren, we want the manifestations of Jesus. It is good to be together and get an exposition of the truth - that is fine food for our souls, to get a stir too in our consciences - but beyond everything else when we come together we want a manifestation of Jesus. Nothing will satisfy the heart of the believer but the presence of Jesus. It will be our portion eternally but it can be our portion now because of the presence of the Spirit of God. What a favoured day we are in! In

spite of all the breakdown and the scattering there has been, the blessed Spirit of God is still here, and His service is still the same; it has not diminished one iota. Maybe we do not get the gain of it but that is because of our state, but from His side He is here to take the things of Christ and show them to us, and because of the Spirit of God being here the Lord in his activity loves to manifest Himself, Himself. What He will do is one thing, but beyond what He will do, always look for a manifestation of Himself, the Person. I think that belongs to these last days. "I Jesus" He says, that is the Person; that is the Lord's answer to the breakdown. There is no change with Him, but rather there is an intensification, I think, in the Lord's love for His own, that He would give us some touch of the blessedness of His Person and His love for the assembly.

So it says, "And he manifested himself thus". We do not always get the gain of manifestations. You say, The brethren seemed to have a good time but I did not get much out of it. You missed the Lord. I suppose you would not be the only one. How many times when we are together we miss the point of what is said; we do not want to miss the point of what the Lord says, nor do we want to miss the manifestation of Himself, and He is constantly doing that. It is just like the sun, dear brethren, coming up every day, a fresh view of the sun coming over the horizon every day; that is how Christ comes in amongst His own. What a day it is when Christ comes in and sheds His light upon any situation! And He will do it.

There are no clouds in Christianity. We were speaking of this the other day; He went up with a cloud and He is coming with a cloud, but there is not one cloud in Christianity, it is a light above the brightness of the noonday sun. That is Paul's ministry. Let us attend to Paul's ministry and keep by it, and we will find the shining, the clear shining of Christ will be in our hearts, and what is proper to the assembly. That is our portion in this day of breakdown; there is no change with Him, you can rely on that. If there is any change it is with us, and I hope there is, because so long as we are here we will need to change, but we can only change by looking on the glory of the Lord. You do the looking, there is no effort with it; you get into

the presence of Christ to look on the glory of the Lord and the Spirit will do the changing - "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit", 2 Cor 3: 18. So there is nothing arbitrary about that. I do not think there is anything arbitrary in Christianity at all. If we need adjustment the Lord will do it in His own blessed way; discipline is the last resort of the Lord. He will see to it that we get the blessings that belong to us, but our wills get in the way, and sometimes the Lord has to say, It is the only way I can teach you; I have tried every other way, and I have had to send this little bit of discipline in order that you might get the gain of what is in My heart. What is in the heart of the Father is Christ. Here they were, one, two, three, four, seven of them going off on a fishing expedition, and they did not get anywhere. How often we go on a fishing expedition and get nowhere! They went on board and that night took nothing: nothing. "And early morn already breaking": dear brethren, the early morn is breaking. Are we aware of that? We are at the end of the dispensation, and if we have ears to hear, if we have eyes to see, we will see that the early morn is breaking; the light of the Lord's coming is becoming clearer and clearer in the hearts of His own, and Jesus is standing on the shore. Difficulties arise in your household, or in the local gathering, or universally; just remember, Jesus is standing on the shore, He is on firm ground, He is in control of the whole situation, nothing disturbs Him. We might get disturbed but the Lord does not get disturbed, He has everything under control, particularly in this gospel, from beginning to end you will find, if you read through it, that He has everything under control.

He stood on the shore and they had to get to Him. They did not know it was Jesus, but John evidently knew. And Peter, he girded his overcoat on and threw himself into the sea. What a time he must have had! And as they went out on the land they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it. Peter was determined to get to Jesus; he had come to the point where he knew that they had lost control of the situation; they could fish as much as they liked and would get nothing, all night long, but the early morn brought Jesus into view.

Has Jesus come into your view in any fresh way? Be alert, dear

brethren, the Lord's coming is very near, and He is standing on the shore and the dawn is breaking, and that means that Christ is coming into view in a fresh way in which you have never seen Him before. Now, watch for Him! Watch for Him in His movements amongst His own; they are worth waiting for.

So it says, "they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread". The world may be getting cold but not the circle of the saints; where Christ is known and loved you will find warmth is increasing. "A fire of coals ... and fish laid on it". Some hand did it, I do not know; it does not say that the Lord did it, but anyway, He saw to it that it was there - "fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread". John finishes his gospel with a good supply of food, and that is what we need to see to in all our local gatherings, whatever the situation that might arise, the food supply goes on. That is John's ministry, and it should be, dear brethren, should be our outlook, whatever the situation, that food is made available for the people of God wherever they are. If you meet a soul anywhere who loves Christ, can you impart a bit of food? Can you? You can criticise what they are going on with, and point out all the defects of this, that, and the other, but can you give them a bit of food? That is what the Lord is after in John, that situations are met, and met by food. You say, How are we going to deal with the evidences of worldliness that are coming in? How are you going to meet it? You will meet it, dear brethren, by food in some way or other, the presentation of Christ, and in no other way. You will not meet it by the condemnation of certain things. You may have to speak plainly about certain things, but you call the attention of a brother or sister to Christ, and you will find they will be ready to follow Him. That is the Lord's last word in this gospel - "Follow thou me". Do not follow a certain line of things connected with any group of brethren or any church, or any evangelical revival - "Follow thou me", and that brings us back to 2 Timothy 2. The pathway we are on is one which stands related to our individual relations with Christ. I would just like to emphasise the fact that we are in the time when every ecclesiastical connection has gone. There is nothing left of what is official connected with the

church in this world, it is gone; but what is left is Christ and the Spirit. So the word in 2 Timothy 2 is to depart from iniquity. That is one thing, but you follow "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". Righteousness, faith love and peace, where do you find them'? You find them in Christ, and you will find them, and enjoy them, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. They take no name, they have no ecclesiastical position in the world, they have no organisation. I think the Lord has delivered us, dear brethren, from organisational things as well as ecclesiastical things.

He has delivered us from everything that stands related to what the religious world is going on with, and He has brought us back to our relationships with Himself. If you have departed from iniquity and are calling upon the Lord out of a pure heart, the next thing you will find is that there is someone alongside you who is doing the same.

You are going down this road of 2 Timothy, and to your surprise maybe, you find there is somebody else going down the same road and you can link on with them, and if you link on with them you will find the Spirit is operating to bring you into the best, the very best that love can afford. Do not think that anything in regard to the assembly has been given up; every thought of God concerning the assembly is maintained, but on unofficial lines - maintained in the power of the Spirit of God. Therefore the crux of every situation that we are in, and will be until the end, lies in our recognition of the Spirit of God in a practical way in our relations one with another.

So when you get up in the morning, turn to the Spirit. He is here, He is available, you can turn to Him at any time, He is available all the day long. What a wonderful Person the Spirit of God is! Just as Jesus was in the world available to every one, now the Spirit of God is available. That is why the Lord said, Another Comforter. He is another Comforter just like Jesus. How wonderful it is, therefore, to recognise the presence of the Spirit and to get His interpretation of the Scriptures! When we come together in our gatherings to read the Scriptures it is of all importance that we recognise the Spirit of God in our conversations together. You say, We are reading chapter 2 of so-and-so, and what is the teaching of that? Well, it is a good thing, I

think, in our private lives to look up the ministry, and get the interpretation as our fathers have given it to us - get all the gain of it. You young folk, begin at Volume 1 and read right through and you will be thrilled by what the Lord will give you. But then when we come together we come together in the recognition of the Spirit of God in the temple, and it is not a question of what is written in the books; it is what is written in the hearts of the saints, and, therefore, we may get an impression that we cannot get individually at all, because God is amongst us, the habitation of God in the Spirit. We get an impression, maybe, that will take us out of the chapter, but it is what the Spirit of God would see is needed for the moment in the temple. What I am saying is no opening up of a book, but it is just practical things, dear brethren, that affect us in our lives. I have come to the conclusion that whether it be individually or collectively, what is pleasing to the Lord is to see the evidence of life, of life amongst us. A young brother wants to ask a question and he is afraid, maybe, to ask the question because he thinks it will be too silly, and if he would only ask he would find that there are other hearts in the room that are so glad that he has asked that question. They are afraid to ask it because they thought it a bit too simple. This is what the Spirit of God is after, liberty amongst us, liberty in the Spirit, so that what can be opened up is what is current in the mind of the Spirit at any time. He is the living God, He is the Spirit of the living God, and this is what we need by way of practice, dear brethren.

I do not know how that comes into this chapter, but anyway, the Lord says to them, "Come and dine". Think of what must have been in the minds of these disciples as having gone astray! The Lord brings them back in such a simple way. They find that the Lord is on the shore standing there; He has everything under control; and not only had He everything under control, but He had the best; after all their diversion He had the best in store for them. He said, "Come and dine". They did not have to do a thing but come and enjoy what divine love had provided for them, and that was the best - fish and bread. I cannot go into what that might mean; there are welltaught

brethren here that know far more than I do and could open up that far better, but He did say, "Come and dine", and they did. He takes the bread and gives it to them and the fish in like manner, and that was already the third time that Jesus had been manifested. How many times has Jesus been manifested to you, dear brethren? I do not know, but that little word 'already' is a very fine word - "This is already the third time that Jesus had been manifested", as if there was much more to come, and although we are in the last days He is still manifesting Himself. John puts things in a characteristic way, he does not give us literally the ascension of the Lord into the heavens, but He is the One who ascends; He is the One who comes; He is the One who gives the living water. So it makes you dependent upon the Lord all the time. That is experimental Christianity, and it is what we need. We need it in our relations with one another, dear brethren, so that we can impart something to one another. We meet with one another, we can say what the weather is like, perhaps what is happening in the world, but can we impart something to one another of the impressions that the Lord gives us by the Spirit for our enjoyment individually but they are also for our enjoyment collectively, what we gather up as we are together.

So this is the way the Lord adjusts His own. He says to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?". Have you ever been tested as to your love for Christ? Have you? Have you ever been in the presence of the Lord and found the Lord saying to you directly, Do you love Me? Do you love Me more than the rest of the brethren? Do you? We would not say it, would we? A lot of these things we would not say, but maybe we think them, and the Lord can read our thoughts, and He will probe us because He wants to get right to the root of things with us in order that we might be free with one another and on positive lines.

So what the Lord leaves them with in this chapter is their care for the sheep. Shepherd the sheep but feed them, and feed the lambs; the feeding is to go on. You do not feed on difficulties, you do not feed on problems, that is not Christianity. You must feed on Christ. What a wealth of food there is for us dear brethren, the very

best! We have the passover in Egypt, we have the manna in the wilderness, we have the venison, we have the old corn of the land, we have the very best that love can provide. What can you tell me about that food? What could you tell me as to the old corn of the land, Christ indigenous to where He is in heaven? How little we know of it! Well, it is there for us, the very best. So we need to be able to convey these things to one another. You think, Well, I would like to get something tonight out of the meeting. Is that the way we come? That is good enough in one way, and not good enough in another; it is that we want to be thinking of one another and not thinking of ourselves. The Lord always thought of others, and so did Paul, that great servant of Christ; he would go on even though he was being less loved; he was prepared to spend and be utterly spent (see 2 Cor 12: 15). How much are you prepared to spend, dear brother and sister, on the Lord's interests in the assembly? How much? You say, I spend myself to get to the meeting, that is not spending; you are only getting something for yourself, spending means you are thinking of others. Paul says that he was prepared to spend and be utterly spent in view of the saints at Corinth being brought into the full enjoyment of Christianity. What do the brethren mean to you? You think of those you know, you think of those in your own gathering; think a bit wider, think of all the saints loved by Christ. Let us not be narrow in our thoughts of the assembly and those who belong to it, let us be prepared to spend and be utterly spent in view of what the Lord Himself can find in those who belong to the assembly. Let us pray for recovery more. Why are there not more recoveries? Perhaps it is because there are not sufficient longings in our hearts, but more than longings, perhaps it is because we are not prepared to spend and be utterly spent in view of the recovery of our brethren. Think of the Lord, the shepherding in Luke 15, think of the woman in Luke 15. It is all recovery; but someone was prepared to go over the hills until he find one sheep, "until he find it". You think of someone lost to the testimony, you send them a bit of ministry, you get in touch with them and you get no response whatever. Well, the shepherd went after the sheep until he found it. So do not give up; do not give up the recovery of our brethren because what you enjoy belongs to

them as much as to you. The woman swept carefully until she recovered that lost piece of silver. Perhaps we do not do the sweeping carefully enough and therefore the piece of silver is not recovered, not secured in relation to what is for God.

Then, of course, the outlook of the father. I think there is plenty of room amongst us, dear brethren, for fatherly feelings and fatherly operations. The father ran. I do not know that I can say much about that, but that is what it says, the father ran when he saw the son.

What a wonderful time they had in that house! What a wonderful time we can have, dear brethren, when one soul is recovered. It should bring joy into our hearts. We are a bit staid I think, a bit stiff at times, about expressing our joy, our joy over the return of one of our brethren. Well, heaven is not restrained in any sense; there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over a sinner repenting. I do not mind going back to the fundamentals of the gospel; I think it underlies the whole truth of the assembly. I think we can sometimes get occupied with higher truths in relation to the assembly and forget that it is all based on what is fundamental. We carry it with us, we leave nothing behind in respect to the gospel. In fact we live, I think, in the terms of the gospel in our relations together. That is the lack.

Well, the Lord says, "Shepherd my sheep", and then He says, "Feed my sheep". I would like to be on those lines, I would like to be preserved on the line, if I can, of just giving something to others, not criticising, not pointing out faults. Maybe, in the outlining of the truth, we have to be faithful with one another, but when things seem difficult, just bring in a little bit of food; give them a good meal, and you will find that they respond. I think there will be a response to a bit of feeding on Christ. You may be feeling not too well, feeling a little weak, and you go and have a meal and you feel much better.

That is just the same spiritually. Someone gets a bit cold, someone gets a bit distant, and you bring the coals of fire and get the fish and the bread, and then say, Come and dine. There is no patronising in that but the warmth of love that could bring a soul to the full enjoyment of what is proper in the assembly from Romans to Ephesians.

Well, Peter says, "what of this man? Jesus says to him, If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee?". The Lord has His own direct relations with every servant and we have to leave them there, with Him. Our responsibility is to follow Him - "Follow thou me". I think, dear brethren, if we did that we would have a lot more joy amongst us, a lot more closer links in fellowship and communion with one another. Let us keep on the feeding under the Lord's direction and hand and we will find there will be great results for Himself. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Maidstone

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