

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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PREACHING

"MY ASSEMBLY"

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W.L. In the first reading we were looking at the thought of two, and two and three. I thought it might be appropriate to consider a parallel thought of two, two men, and in Sardis, a few names. We know that Ezra wrote before Nehemiah. Ezra gives us God's sovereignty, what He can do from His own side, whereas Nehemiah presents the work from the standpoint of man's faithfulness. Here was a man who had come to seek the welfare of Israel. Sanballat the Horonite, Tobijah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian who is added later. It is again two and three; Sanballat and Tobijah, two men, and it expands to Sanballat, Tobijah and Geshem. It speaks to us of the way the enemy would seek to meet what is of God and would represent the administration, the gates of hades, typically, the opposition that would be against a man who would seek the welfare of the children of Israel. There is a lovely blend in this chapter of what is individual and what is collective. It begins with one man, a man seeking the welfare of the children of Israel. I suppose that would be a feature that would mark the saints especially in these days, that we seek each other's welfare, welfare spiritually. It goes on to the influence of a faithful man, how he is able to influence others, and would link with what was said, not only what is built but "let each see how he builds" (1 Cor 3: 10).

So Nehemiah came to Jerusalem and was there three days. I think it would bear an application to the history of the recovery, the ruinous condition that was in Christendom publicly and still exists, but there were men who sought the welfare of the people of God, men who had a secret with God. That is the key. We should be persons who have a secret with God, not selfishly but prepared to share it with others. Nehemiah says "but I told no man what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem". It was not to think about Jerusalem simply, but to do for Jerusalem, a day for spiritual activity, a day for spiritual building, to consider for one another's welfare. I thought that the "few men with me" is linked with the Lord's words,

"Where two or three are gathered together". It expands in this book, They were all at the work and right through the book the work was opposed. The enemy is set against every spiritual activity of the saints. Then I thought we might touch on Sardis representing Protestantism. "A few names" in Sardis, not many but "a few names in Sardis that have not defiled their garments". We would love to be among those few.

L.McF. What is characteristic of Nehemiah is his feeling; how he felt the breakdown, he wept, he had genuine feelings how the saints are getting on. Would that be the character of things for which we look in the few?

W.L. I am sure that is helpful. We should be as persons who feel the breakdown in a real way. He came to Jerusalem, and was there three days; I wonder whether that would suggest the death of Christ - three days. It was quite an extended period, three days. It was three nights also with the Lord but three days - Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, he felt the whole thing. We should feel the condition of Christendom and our own part in it. Do you think it would be right to say that we have brought probably more disgrace on the testimony of our Lord than almost any in Christendom. We need to humble ourselves as to that.

L.McF. Dear Mr Renton remarked that, that we should be the humblest company in Christendom. I am sure that is true. We all have to confess how we have contributed to the breakdown.

W.L. And yet the work has to go on. That is what is brought out here.

J.A.P. There is a governmental side that we have to accept in this matter of being few. Is that right?

W.L. It is very important to see that and to confess it. We let the Lord down. We would never forget that. In the days in which we are, very positive days, the Lord is working in a very precious way and what He has in a few is very precious; in divine grace He will credit to all what has been held by a few. So here was a man who had something very positive, "there had come a man to seek the

welfare of the children of Israel", a man with a definite aim in life.

That is important, a definite aim in life, to seek the welfare of the saints. Then that activity revolved around Jerusalem in the rebuilding. It is really the recovery. We are in days of recovery when there has been so much disaster but it is a day of building.

K.N.P. It says in the first chapter when Nehemiah first heard of it, he wept, and mourned for days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of the heavens (chap 1: 4). I wondered if there was some significance in the prayer. Is that how we get God's mind about things and then can go on with the building in accord with the plan?

W.L. That is helpful. Verses 4 and 5 bring out the kind of man he was. Paul could say, "By God's grace I am what I am" 1 Cor 15: 10. There is no room in the divine system for self-made men. Even men who study the Scriptures and the truth may have themselves before them; that is a sad thing. But these verses to which you refer bring out what kind of man he was. He felt the conditions in a very real way and turned to God about them. That is important; we have continually to resort to God about matters.

C.F.D. Do you think that the way that God was moved in relation to this man is very instructive? He says, "I told no man what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem". That is really a reference to his personal, private, intimate, link with God, that God is operating in putting something in his heart to do for the assembly.

W.L. I thought we should see that; a personal link with divine Persons is an absolute essential. I suppose we have all the experience of meetinggoing. I think it is in The Steps of Faith by Mr Stoney (who, by the way helps us as to that first reading, "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit". Mr Stoney speaks much of union with Christ as bearing on the individual, we may have neglected that a bit); he says, There are three classes of persons among the saints: one - those who go to the meetings as persons would simply go to a church; two - those who come along because they know it is the right place to be; and three - those who are there by faith. I would like to be in the third category. As assembled here we are persons who are

here by faith, our resource is in God and we bring God into every circumstance. That is what this man did in his prayer, in his fasting and in his beseeching God. The man was in earnest and he brought God into these circumstances. What a difference it makes when we bring God into our circumstances.

C.F.D. The scripture to which our brother referred brings in fasting, as you have just done. It seems to me that that is an area where we need a lot of help. I wonder how many of us here today know what it is to fast. Maybe you would say a word about fasting that would help us.

W.L. It is a private matter, is it not? The Lord indicates that; it is private, not something you publicise. Fasting is a denial of what is legitimate. You might say, Well, I could do without that - maybe a luxury of some kind - and never miss it. But fasting is that we do without things that are legitimate. Would you agree with that?

C.F.D. Yes. In Scripture power in prayer is linked with fasting. If our localities are anything like each other we need power right now in prayer in order that things might be brought about, because God is able.

W.L. That is very fine. It has been said - how accurate it is requires a lot of thought - that fasting deals with the flesh and prayer brings God in. I think it is quite a good definition.

L.McF. In Acts 13 there is prayer and fasting, then the introduction of the liberty the Spirit had among the saints. That is a point we need to understand too, how room is made for the Spirit as there is this state with us.

W.L. Yes. Again could I quote Mr Stoney - If I myself deny where I could gratify, I suffer bitterly, but sweet is liberty - that is fasting. It is well put. These exercises cost something: that is what comes to light in Nehemiah, his exercises cost him something deep down in his feelings, it was no selfish matter with him.

G.D.P. Nehemiah was concerned about Jerusalem when it is in ruins. He does not wait until it is all built up.

W.L. That is a fine thought. I think Nehemiah would portray the right feelings we ought to have in our day. We may speak about the ruin. The recovery begun by the Lord in the 1820s has been the subject of division. How many different groups there are in this city and in other cities. It is something to think about. And those are the conditions that are portrayed in Nehemiah, the wall is broken down, its gates are broken down - almost total destruction. That is what the enemy is at. The enemy is represented in these men, "mocked us and despised us". That is Galilee to which we referred at the end of Matthew and we are to be prepared to accept the mocking and the despising. It is the day we are living in.

K.N.P. What do you say about the way he went - he went out by night by the valley-gate?

W.L. It would be a lowly and humble way. These gates are not of much repute, the valley-gate toward the jackal-fountain. The jackal is not a very nice creature. And the dung-gate - he went that way. "I viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were in ruins, and its gates were consumed with fire". I think he is like. Daniel; he fully identifies himself with the conditions extant at that time. He did not take a stand-offish view and say, Well, this has nothing to do with me. That is a common attitude in Christendom. We sometimes say it ourselves - I do not want to be bothered with that, it has nothing to do with me. But this man accepts full personal responsibility for conditions that existed and we should accept it. We might say that past divisions have nothing to do with us, but what we have to realize is that the root of all these things is in our hearts and must be judged there.

K.N.P. If we are going to be occupied in building the wall it takes us back to what we had in the first reading, does it not? - "my assembly" and the delight He takes in that. That is something of the view, do you think, that Nehemiah had?

W.L. That is good. I thought that Jerusalem would link with "my assembly". It is obvious what Nehemiah had in his heart, "what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem"; right at the beginning

he had God's view as to Jerusalem, what Jerusalem was and ought to be in God's sight. He laid hold of that and I think that what we had is essential, to lay hold of the purpose of God and of the pattern, not the ruin. We have to face up to that but we need to lay hold of God's great thoughts as to Jerusalem, as to the assembly, and work from that standpoint because the ruin is not our standard. Sometimes a kind of fatalism can come in and we say, Well, that is how things are, we just have to accept them. Nehemiah does not do that; he says, We are going to rebuild in view of this whole structure that is for the glory of God.

J.A.P. Where we started this morning, the Person of Christ, is so important, is it not, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God".

As I understand it Mr Darby really protected the Person of Christ, the humanity of the Lord Jesus, in the Bethesda matter. Is that right?

W.L. That is important. Error had come in as to the Person of Christ and persons took a neutral stance as to it. The Lord would not have it, God would not have it. Then Nehemiah goes on to the fountaingate - we were referring to these gates - and to the king's pool. These are very positive matters. He comes back and entered again by the valley-gate and returned; he is maintaining that spirit of humility. He did not come in by the fountain-gate again, he returned to it and to the king's pool, but he entered again by the valley-gate and returned. He maintained that spirit of humility that is most necessary with all of us; it is the only kind of spirit that God will support. I trust this exhortation will be comely and timely. "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem".

J.A.P. This thought we have about few men, verse 12, "I and some few men" - he was carrying some with him, was he not; it was not just a one man matter. Is that right?

W.L. That is fine. I thought it gave a lovely blend of the individual and the collective. One thing that has emerged in divisions that have occurred in the history of the recovery is a pronouncement that there is no longer what is collective; it is an individual day. I say it is a day

for both, Scripture clearly indicates that. It is a day for persons who have a secret, personal link with God and who work together with other persons who likewise in their own lives have a secret link with God. That is 2 Timothy 2; you take an individual action, then you find you walk with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

Nehemiah was a man with a pure heart, pure motives. That is another very important thing that in all things our motives are pure.

There was no self-interest with this man, his motives were pure through and through.

Now just to touch on Sardis. We were reminding ourselves that the last four addresses go on together to the end, running concurrently, and in each of them the overcoming comes before the hearing. I think Nehemiah was an overcomer. It requires faith for overcoming and we overcome as individuals. It is clear from the Lord's word to these churches that the way into the enjoyment of what is collective - all these wonderful thoughts of God - is individual on the principle of overcoming, and as we noticed, and we should stress it, it is only the overcomer that hears. When matters have arisen persons say, I do not see it. Why do they not see it? It is because they are not overcomers; they have allowed their sight to become beclouded by something else. Often it is like that man who had the first touch in Mark's gospel. He opened his eyes and saw men as trees walking. He required that second touch to see all things clearly (Mark 8). One would covet to be among those who see all things clearly.

L.McF. We can be unduly occupied with personalities.

W.L. Never let us again give undue place to man.

C.F.D. Maybe you would open up a bit what is an overcomer.

W.L. You can help us. Give us your impression of it?

C.F.D. The enemy is set to keep the overcomer from Christ, and from all that Christ has in His mind for His people. The enemy cannot stop a believer going to heaven - eventually a believer is going to go to heaven, he will be with Christ - but he is bent on stopping and robbing God at the present time and does that in

individuals. Overcoming requires that I get back to 2 Timothy to which you referred earlier, because that is individual. We know what it is to walk with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, but you have to move individually first, do you not?

W.L. That is right. "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". You are put then on an overcoming basis.

C.F.D. The principle of separation begins there.

W.L. It does indeed. You then can take your place among those "thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments". Our garments are what surrounds us. This links with 2 Timothy 2. There is a very important article, following a series of readings Divine Names, on Unspotted Garments, in which Mr Taylor speaks about the warp and the woof (Vol. 50 NS) and the danger of leprosy in the warp or in the woof. Leprosy getting into that pure fabric destroys it and contaminates everything else. But here are persons which have not defiled their garments.

C.F.D. And that constitutes them morally able to walk with Christ. "Walk with me in white", purity. They are able to walk with Christ. This is an overcomer, is it not?

W.L. It is indeed. I think these are persons who are anticipating Revelation 19, "And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" v 8. I think the Lord has great delight in seeing persons who are practically showing forth the features now of what will be seen in the wife, and the linen bright and pure, because they are worthy. That is a wonderful thought. Later on we get, "Worthy is the Lamb", (chap. 5: 12), but before that the Lord speaks about persons who are worthy. How gracious He is.

NEW YORK

THE LORD'S CARE - 1

R. Taylor

John 17: 12, 15-20; 14: 18

I refer to these scriptures as they convey some impression of the Lord's present service to us. We are apt to think a great deal of the Lord's service historically and rightly so, what He did in going to the cross and the expression of His love in dying for us. But the Lord would have us to be up-to-date in the sense of His love for us. He said, "When I was with them I kept them..." How well they were kept! Criticised by the Pharisees, because they ate on the sabbath, the Lord took up the question. What a sense they must have had of His protecting love and care for them. "I kept them in thy name". He kept them in relation to the Father's name, the Father's love and grace. He says, "I have guarded". How full that service the gospels tell us about!

In this chapter they heard Him pray. He leaves them with the impression that they were going to be as safe in His absence as they had been in His presence. That is what He would convey to us in this time in which we are, a sense of His protecting love in the circumstances that we pass through. In sorrows and family exercises and local exercises He would give us a sense of His love and priestly service of love and grace. He says, "I sanctify myself for them". It simply means that He is fully engaged in serving His own, whatever circumstances come into our lives in weakness of body and other things that cause doubts and fears in our minds. Think of the Lord speaking to the Father about you and me. He reminds the Father of His children and their needs. The Lord says "for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things", Matt 6: 32. The Lord speaks there about clothing and our need of food and all these things and He says, "your heavenly Father knows".

Here the Lord is saying, "I sanctify myself for them". What an occupation! Think of Christ being received up in glory, His service on earth completed, and while He is awaiting His public vindication,

He has sanctified Himself to serve the saints. It tells us more about it later on in Ephesians, what He has given in view of the edifying of the body, in view of that time when He will receive us to Himself, not jaded, not having the marks of the world about us. He says, "They are not of the world". That is what will be seen when He receives us to Himself, a heavenly company, fruit of His gracious service, through this long dispensation, suited to be with Him in the realm of glory where He is. May we be helped to know more and count in faith on the Lord's present service, as He has sanctified Himself for us.

As I have said, He leaves them with the impression that they were going to be as safe in His absence as they had been when He was with them. Well, we do not always believe that, but I believe He left that impression, and these disciples had a real sense of that. In the Acts when they were persecuted, Peter in the prison, the prison gates open and the angel led him out. That was the Lord's service, sending an angel. Paul was stoned and the Lord raised him up.

These were outstanding circumstances maybe, but we could all point to having known something in our own lives of the Lord's real, present service to preserve us. The Lord's movements in resurrection were wholly connected with His own. He was not then feeding five thousand, raising dead or cleansing lepers. He was engaged in the forty days with His own and that has continued through the dispensation, that he is serving His own so that they are not overcome but are sustained in the grace, and the joy that He represents as being there for them before the Father. That is the great point in John 17, I think, that the saints may have some knowledge of the joy of our place in Christ before the Father and He has sanctified Himself that we may be maintained in that place.

And then He says to them, "I will not leave you orphans". What a sense of loss they must have felt as they heard the Lord speaking about going away! Peter, when He spoke to them about it earlier said, Lord this shall in nowise be. He did not want Him to go. The Lord says, "I will not leave you orphans". He has loved us too much to leave us in an orphan condition, however much we may think it at

times. We all pass through exercises when we think that nobody has ever known the depths and sorrows that we are tasting. You are never without a friend. You are never without a Father in this sense. The Lord takes a fatherly place, the great Provider: "I will not leave you orphans". How precious these words! Then He says, "I am coming to you", coming with all the wealth and the grace of heaven to us in the circumstances in which we are. May we make room for Him! I am sure this is largely collective but it also has an individual side. In verse 21 it says "I will love him and will manifest myself to him". That is you in your individual circumstances, at work or school or family life, whatever it may be.

Well, I believe there is a need for faith operative in our hearts to know something of the wealth of what is flowing from Him as ascended above and what He would bring to us collectively and individually. May it encourage our hearts for His Name's sake!

KIRKCALDY

THE LORD'S CARE - 2

W.Wallace

Hebrews 13: 5,6; Proverbs 30: 7-9

I have read these scriptures which have come to me while our brother was speaking, to confirm our hearts as to what he has been saying as to the Lord's care and His service to us at the present time. He serves us in relation to what is spiritual, but He serves us too in relation to our circumstances here. What a system of support there is for us in this scene of contrariety and the Lord Jesus has been here in these very circumstances in which we are found, indeed for Him much more testing and trying, the opposition against Him much more severe than any opposition that we have or are likely to experience. So He knows what the saints need in the way of care and protection and support and He is ever ready to provide it. If there is any difficulty, it is on our part and the lack of dependence.

It says of the Lord Jesus, in John's gospel, as He was about to depart to the Father, "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end", John 13: 1. "I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee", Heb 13: 5. Wonderful promise that we can rely on!

We make promises and others have made promises to each one of us at some time, I am sure, and they have failed in the execution of these promises. But the Lord Jesus will never fail in the execution of His promise. These are promises we can rely on. And so, as to circumstances here, we can be restful: "Let your conversation be without love of money, satisfied with your present circumstances".

We can leave these things with God. Another said in his early life, as most of the brethren know, that he came to it that God could look after his circumstances better than he could, so he left them there.

The cattle upon a thousand hills are His. Wonderful resources of God! so that we need not fear as to our circumstances and being taken through them. How many saints are being tested at the present time in relation to lack of employment and in other ways and yet God is not unmindful of it all. It is all part of His ways in discipline and there is a result in mind: as exercised by it, there may be fruit for God.

So He says, "I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee".

As the footnote shows it is a quotation from both Joshua and Deuteronomy. How God's earthly people proved this! There was

much lack of faith with them as there is with us, but we can rely on God, we can rely on divine Persons because the Father, the Son and the Spirit personally are serving us. And there is angelic service too and there are the prayers of the saints, all these things active on our behalf for our encouragement. So it says, "So that, taking courage..." There is much in the world to discourage, but we need to be overcomers. The Lord Jesus is the great Overcomer. "I have overcome the world", He says in John's gospel. So we need not fear and we can take courage with the assurance that He will see us through. Of God's earthly people, for forty years of their wilderness journey it says, they lacked nothing (Deut 2: 7). "So that, taking courage, we may say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid: what will man do unto me?" How often we lean on natural resources, help from resources here in this world, but the writer here says, "The Lord is my helper". We need to rely on Him, beloved brethren, knowing that He will never let us down. So he says, "What will man do unto me?" We can be restful, whatever the circumstances are, however trying they might be, we can be restful that the Lord Jesus will never forsake us or leave us.

I read these verses in Proverbs as to the exercise of this man. It says, "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh", whoever he might be, but he is asking for two things. He has what would be for God's pleasure and glory in mind so that he asks that he may not experience extremes, that is he might not have poverty - that would be the one extreme - but that he might not have riches - that would be the other extreme. The one is just as likely to bring in difficulties as the other and he gives the reason why he asks this. He says, "Feed me with the bread of my daily need" - that would be daily dependence. One of the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray and this is what he taught them: "Give us our needed bread for each day", Luke 11: 3, just sufficient for the day. What we had yesterday was sufficient for yesterday; what we get for today is sufficient for today; and we can leave tomorrow with the Lord knowing that He will come in for us whatever the circumstance. So he says, "lest I be full and deny thee". Many believers have been

hindered in their soul's history through affluence. The man in Luke 12 prospered materially - it is a word for us all - but he did not bring God into his calculations and God has to say to him, "Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee", v.20. We need to be preserved independence and in faith and not in any way dishonour God or deny Him. As it says here, "lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? or lest I be poor and steal, and outrage the name of my God". This man is thinking of God: oftentimes we are thinking of ourselves and our circumstances instead of thinking of God as the One who, if He wished, could change these circumstances. But, as another has said, it is a much greater thing for us to be changed in the circumstances than for God to change the circumstances, to be preserved and brought through whatever the circumstances, brought through in triumph and in superiority to the circumstances because Satan would use our circumstances to cause us, as this man was concerned about, to deny God or to outrage God, either by being rich or by being poor.

Well, may we be encouraged, dear brethren, just to have our confidence and our faith in God and in the Lord Jesus and in the Holy Spirit, these divine resources ever available to us. The Lord Jesus in the gospels could say "Consider the lilies how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I say unto you, Not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these", Luke 12: 27. So we need not be concerned as to our circumstances here but rely on God. May we be helped for His Name's sake!

KIRKCALDY

7 March 1995

PREACHING

Ron Campbell

Titus 2: 11; Acts 8: 26-40; 9: 1-6; 16: 23-31

I would like to say first of all, friend, - I suppose many realise it, but some may not - that we are living in the greatest dispensation of all time. There was never a dispensation like it before and there will not be in the future. This particular dispensation is the time of the outshining of divine grace. Before, the people of God were under law, they were under prophets, but these did not express what God really had in mind for men. It awaited this dispensation so that God might be free to come out towards all men in blessing. He is a Saviour God. I like to tell you that. You have often heard it, but I like to emphasise it again that God is a Saviour God. People have different thoughts about God. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God", Ps 14: 1. But I can tell you that there is a God and He is a Saviour God and He wants to bless you. Where you are, in your seat, in this room tonight, God has nothing in mind for you but blessing. He has wondrous thoughts, wondrous blessings available for you and He would seek to arrest you at this particular time. The whole dispensation is governed by divine activities in the glad tidings in view of the securing of people from their sins through coming into touch with the Lord Jesus as their own personal Saviour. This dispensation is so great that it has been called God's dispensation.

In this scriptures it says that it is "God's dispensation, which is in faith", 1 Tim 1: 4. God has Himself taken charge of this dispensation in view of people coming in faith to know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and, as I have said, into all the blessings that God has in mind for them. In this dispensation, through the work of the Lord Jesus on Calvary's cross, the shedding of His precious blood, there has been the righteous discharge of everything that stood against man, not only his sins, but the whole sin question settled by Jesus on that cross at Calvary and His precious blood shed so that God may be righteously free to come out towards all in blessing. What a Saviour He is. God would seek to attract you to this glorious Man. It is God's glad tidings concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that Man that God is setting forth in the glad tidings, the wondrous work accomplished on Calvary, His precious

blood shed, setting you free if you know Him as your Saviour. He is available to all men. God has set Him forth; God has made Christ available to all men. It is "towards all, and upon all those who believe" Rom 3: 22. These are those who have come to appreciate the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour, who appreciate that He was their substitute on Calvary. I should have been there. You should have been there. But Christ went there, and I can say He was my Substitute. He settled the whole sin question for me before God:

"My sins - not in part, but the whole -
Were borne on the cross, and are gone evermore." (Hymn 238)

What a sense of relief to know your sins forgiven, to lay claim to the efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus, and know God's disposition towards you! He is not on the cross now, nor is He in the grave. He went into the grave. You think of the depths to which the Lord has gone to settle the whole sin question and remove the man that sinned from before God forever. He has gone right down into the grave. But He is out of the grave now. What a Saviour He is:

"Out from death, His work completed,
Burst the portals of the grave;
High at God's right hand now seated,
He can e'en the vilest save." (Hymn 414)

What a Saviour. I wonder if you know Him. Do you really know the Saviour for yourself? I speak to the little ones too. Jesus wants you. He said Himself, "Suffer the little children to come to me", Mark 10: 14. Think of His desire, desire for the youngest, that they might come into personal touch with Him. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God and what has come into expression in this particular time, as I have said, is the outshining of divine grace. It is not judgment, God does not have judgment in mind for you. He is graciously approaching you in this present day. It has been well said that grace is on the throne. What is outshining tonight is God's glad tidings, coming, flowing towards men. I thought of this, "For the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has

appeared". What an appearing. What a difference when Christ came in! What a difference when He took up His public service!

Think of the appearing of the grace of God coming in in Jesus, approaching men, making Himself available for men. Think of Him in Luke's gospel. I think you can write over Luke's gospel "the outshining of divine grace". Luke particularly sets out the activities and the movements of divine grace. It appeared in Jesus and it was available for all. Think of Him in the temple in Luke 4, standing up, reading that scripture, the scripture referring to Himself and His own activities. Think of Him being anointed "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord", Luke 4: 119 "to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered". Grace had appeared. It had come in in Jesus.

Wonderful! Think in Luke 5 of the leprous man, grace appearing in relation to a leprous man, a man full of sin, and grace was there for Him in the person of the Lord Jesus. He says, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou art able to cleanse me", v 12. It is not only the fact that the Lord is willing to save you, but He can effect salvation. He can bring in recovery, the freedom of man from all His sins and His sinful state and bring him into the liberty and enjoyment of divine grace that is flowing at the present time. Think too of the man with the withered hand in Luke 6. I would like to encourage you to go through Luke's gospel and see the experience that persons had of the outshining of divine grace in Jesus: grace had appeared in Jesus. In Luke 7 there is the raising of the dead man, the young man carried out of the city of Nain, dead, his mother weeping. Think of the condition in which that woman was bereft of her only son. What grace: the Lord touched the bier and the dead sat up. The shining had appeared. It had come in in Jesus. In Luke 10, we have the good Samaritan.

Think of that young man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, turning his back on all that was of God, his heart and mind set on the world. He did not get to Jericho. He was robbed. He was assaulted on that road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Think of the priest and the Levite. Had grace appeared in them? It had not. They could do nothing for the man. Grace appeared in Jesus: "But a certain Samaritan journeying...", v 33. Where was He going, friend? What was in view in His journey? His journey was in view of the

outshining of divine grace. Think of it, right through Luke's gospel, even on the cross! Think of Him there, suspended between heaven and earth on that Roman cross. Amid all the taunts and jeers and hatred of man, the Lord says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 34. Grace, abundant grace, there had never been an outshining like it, never, the Lord there saying in connection with those who had put Him on that cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". In Luke 24 the Lord says, Go to Jerusalem and preach the glad tidings there first. What grace, friend, the very city that had cast out the Lord Jesus as worthless, put Him on that cross at Calvary, put Him to death! And the Lord says the glad tidings are to be preached first in Jerusalem. That is divine grace!

I read in the book of the Acts because it speaks of the grace of God appearing and carrying with it salvation for all men, moving towards men in divine grace. Think of what was available, from the coming down of the Spirit, for all men. In the Lord Jesus, grace appeared but because of the physical limitations into which He had come it was only persons who came into touch with Him who received blessing. But the glad tidings of the grace of God, since that moment when He went on high and the Holy Spirit came down, was carrying salvation with it for all men. Think of Peter preaching, speaking of the Lord Jesus in glory, "... God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ", Acts 2: 36. He is there in the glory, and from that point the Holy Spirit has come down here and from the beginning of the Acts you sense that divine grace is carrying with it salvation for all men. They were converted in Jerusalem. Think of these men saying "What shall we do, brethren? And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptised, each one of you ... and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", Acts 2: 37, 38. What conviction there was in these men, grace flowing out to them, the Saviour that they had waited for, the Messiah had come and they had crucified Him! You can understand them saying "What shall we do, brethren?" Christ was available for them, friend, and

Peter says, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you ... and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit".

I have read these three scriptures, just to touch on them lightly, to indicate that divine grace carried with it salvation for all men.

There is a coloured man; a Jew, and a Gentile, representatives of these races; and God has salvation in mind for each one of them.

Think of this Ethiopian eunuch, having gone up to Jerusalem and coming back unsatisfied, and I can say to you if you are looking for something for your soul, do not go to the outward religious order of things. Come to an area where divine grace is flowing, where things are available for you, where persons are available for you. This man had gone to Jerusalem and coming back was reading the scriptures, trying to find something for his soul, and the word to Philip is, "Rise up and go southward on the way which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza: the same is desert. And he rose up and went. And lo, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a man in power under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to worship at Jerusalem, was returning and sitting in his chariot", v 26-28.

Philip had been on an evangelical mission. There was wonderful blessing from the preachings of Philip, many, many persons saved, great results. Here he is told to go to a desert and what God had in mind was the securing of one man and that was this Ethiopian eunuch.

Grace can come down to you personally, friend, down to your very circumstances and meet you where you are and bring in all the resource that is available. Grace would do that. The word to Philip was "Approach and join this chariot". You sense Philip, with the glad tidings in his soul, Philip the evangelist, running alongside this chariot and the Ethiopian eunuch sitting in his chariot, reading the Scriptures, you sense the energy of Philip, grace carrying with it salvation for all men. It appeared to this man. He was reading the scripture and he did not know who it spoke of, who was written about, and Philip, it says - I like the authorised translation - it says, he preached Jesus unto him. Wonderful! You think of this great preacher drawing alongside this chariot and getting in with this man

and talking over the scriptures with him, and Philip is saying that this glorious Man he was reading of had been, indeed, "led as a sheep to slaughter, and as a lamb is dumb in presence of him that shears him". Think of the grace of the Lord Jesus, the submission, his disposition, no retaliation, no vindictiveness, grace, grace all the way. Philip says, You will not find Him here, His life has been taken from the earth. Where has it gone? Where has the life of Jesus been taken to? It is right in the divine presence tonight. That is where He is living tonight, there before God and available for all men. Think of Philip here, as I have said, carrying divine grace with him, bringing salvation in for this man on the way that he was, and he says, If that Man has gone that way, if His life has been taken from the earth, I want to go that way too. What salvation for the man, not only saved from his sin but saved from the whole system of things, the whole order of things that belongs to man's world, whether it be religious or political or whatever it might be. The eunuch says, I want to go the way that Man has gone, and he says, "Behold water; what hinders my being baptised?" Think of it! And it says, "... he went on his way rejoicing". Divine grace would set you up, friend. It would set you on your way, reaching you where you are in your lost condition, grace carrying salvation to you. It would meet you where you are and set you up with a divine resource to be for your satisfaction and joy on your journey.

Well, this Ethiopian eunuch, is secured for Christ. The grace of God had carried salvation right to this one man. How gracious of God to take Philip away from an area where there was obvious blessing and put him into the desert where you would not expect anything to be. God had in mind that divine grace should be carried to this man, he is secured and he goes on his way rejoicing.

I wonder, friend, if there has ever been such an activity of divine grace as in the securing of Saul of Tarsus. Think of the power that he had. Saul was a Jew through and through, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Think of all that was his in that Jewish order of things, a man with tremendous authority, and then seeking authority from the chief priest to go down to Damascus, to take followers of the Lord

Jesus and cast them into prison. Oh! the hatred, and murderous spirit that Saul had. He said later that he did it ignorantly, but Saul was bent on the destruction of the Christian testimony and what there was of Christ in this scene at that time. Think of him going down this road with others, and this light shone out of heaven. You say, it must come in judgment. There must be judgment on Saul.

He cannot continue in this way. God must bring in judgment. It is the very opposite, the grace of God carried with it salvation to Saul.

You think of him, stricken down, "and falling on the earth he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" Think of the intensity of feelings expressed in that from the Lord Himself: "Saul, Saul..." Divine grace was flowing, carrying it to this man and the Lord is intent on his blessing. You will find that wherever the name of a person is repeated twice in the scriptures, God has something significant in mind for these persons, and this was the Saviour in the glory apprehending Saul of Tarsus on that Damascus road. What an example, of the outshining of divine grace! The Lord says, "Saul, Saul. why dost thou persecute me?" Think of these words, ringing in Paul's ears, that Pharisee of the Pharisees, Hebrew of the Hebrews, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" And Saul says, "Who art thou, Lord?" He says, / am Jesus, whom thou persecutest". The name of Jesus involves the outshining of divine grace, that precious Name, that One of whom it is said that "he shall save his people from their sins", Matt 1: 21. That is Jesus, grace securing that basis on which everyone could be relieved of their sins. He says, "/ am Jesus, whom thou persecutest". What grace! It is all out in the glad tidings. God is out in grace in the glad tidings, "His hand, His house, His heart are free" because the work of Christ is done (Hymn 431). He is out in the glad tidings in divine grace and tonight, that flow, that tide of divine grace, carrying with it salvation for all men, is coming through this room. That is what is happening.

That flow of divine grace has never stopped. It has continued right down the dispensation. Think of even in the dark ages - what choice hymns there are from the dark ages, persons intimately attached to the Lord Jesus, persons secured for Christ. Think of all that God has done, grace operating right down the dispensation, and tonight grace

is still carrying with it salvation for all men. And that means you. God wants to bless you. He wants to secure you for Himself and He is not bringing you into submission to Him not in any hard, autocratic way. The way He is doing it is through divine grace, and it is intended to affect us. It says, "the goodness of God leads thee to repentance", Rom 2: 4. You think of that: God's gracious activities are intended to bring us into attachment to Christ to own Him as Lord and to find all the salvation that there is in that glorious Man and also in His Name. Well, this is the Jew secured for Christ. The grace of God carrying with it salvation to all men had appeared and Saul knew that that was what had arrested him on that Damascus road.

I have read of this jailor, often spoken about in the glad tidings. Think of these two men, Paul and Silas, being cast into prison, their feet fast in the stocks. Were they downhearted? Did they think their service was temporarily suspended while they were in prison? No, even in this prison divine grace was carrying with it salvation for men, for this one jailor. The glad tidings was operating in these two men, even in these circumstances, singing. How superior they were! I believe they had been singing of God's righteousness and His grace and His outpouring of blessing on men. What songs would be in Paul and Silas's heart, and the prisoners listened to them, and there was an earthquake. The earthquake was not in judgment.

God was bringing in this activity, this movement from His own side, bringing about an earthquake in view of arresting this Philippian jailor. And there in these circumstances the gates were opened, none of the prisoners fled, but this man was about to take his life.

Naturally, you might have said, Well, he has done enough damage. Think of what he has done to Paul and Silas casting them into the inner prison, putting stripe upon them. Look what he has done.

There should be judgment on that man. Again it is divine grace.

Think of that activity, that earthquake, bringing this man to the realisation of his sins and crying out to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?" Divine grace came in carrying with it salvation: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved..." Wonderful, divine grace outshining, carrying on right down this

dispensation. You think of the Ethiopian being secured; you think of Saul of Tarsus being secured; you think of the jailor being secured, all secured by divine grace, carrying with it salvation for all men.

Well, friend, I appeal to you. What are you going to say tonight to divine grace? Are you going to be affected by it? Think of that hymn we have sung. God is propitious towards you. He wants to bless you. His grace has come to you in the glad tidings, the presentation of a glorious, risen, living Saviour, His work completed and giving God a righteous basis in view of coming out to you in blessing and in grace. So this "mighty tide is still flowing". I appeal to you. God has nothing in mind for you, as I said at the beginning, but blessing, and this grace has appeared and carries with it salvation for all men. As I have said before that includes you. If you do not know Christ as your Saviour, I appeal to you, draw near to Him tonight, realise the sinful state in which you are, and what you will be met with is divine grace, every sin, every act of unrighteousness, covered in the precious blood of Jesus: "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin", 1 John 1: 7. You need not be troubled again by your sins, these sins that burden you. Divine grace would lift them from you, remove them and set you up here in all the liberty of Christianity with a living, personal link with the Saviour. I appeal to you: surrender to divine grace! God wants you to have your own personal trust in the Lord Jesus and, as I have said, prove the joy of salvation. Wonderful sense we can have of salvation, salvation from our sins, salvation from the world, salvation from ourselves. Think of that!

God wants to save us completely and divine grace is carrying with it salvation for all men. May you prove it tonight for His Name's sake!

KIRKCALDY

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