

A
WORD
IN ITS
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CHRIST AS LORD, AS SON OVER GOD'S HOUSE, AND AS HEAD
RECOVERY

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

CHRIST AS LORD, AS SON OVER GOD'S HOUSE, AND AS HEAD

Acts 2: 34-36; Hebrews 3: 5,6; Colossians 1: 18,19

P.v.d.B. I thought we might consider the place that Christ has as Lord in relation to the kingdom, as Son over God's house, and as Head of the assembly, His body. It is a great thing to come under the authority of Christ. We are in 2 Timothy days. "The sure foundation of God stands"; it relates to the purpose of God and "the Lord knows those that are his". The truth of that epistle is to bring us into the light of the assembly, the house of God. The house of God is the house of God: the breakdown has not affected that. In 1 Timothy it has not become the great house, it is where God dwells by the Holy Spirit. The kingdom is in view of the house of God. Publicly we are all part of the great house, which is the present situation of Christendom, but through the kingdom we come into the light of the assembly. It has been said that we should lay it well to heart that the idea of the assembly as a corporate responsible body is in view from the outset in 2 Timothy. God has not given up His thoughts as to the assembly, and in the grace of God the recovery has brought us back to it. No doubt the Lord anticipated the breakdown and He has provided for it. Particularly in John's ministry we have the family conditions in which these great truths can still be worked out in the midst of that public breakdown. So that in 2 Timothy we have the calling on the Lord out of a pure heart, involving the kingdom. The Lord appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus, He said "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord?", Acts 9: 4,5. He recognised Christ as Lord, and the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest". What a touch of the body he received there. I thought we might come to that in Colossians, that Christ is the Head of the assembly, His body. We might first consider the kingdom. The leading principle in the kingdom is righteousness, "a king shall reign in righteousness", Isa 32: 2. It is not publicly established yet, but it is here in the power of the Spirit. We pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those

that call on the Lord out of a pure heart and it leads on to conditions of peace. The kingdom was finally established under Solomon in conditions of peace.

R.T. In the settings of these scriptures is there a beautiful combination of both His authority and His love, and the spheres where that is to be enjoyed?

P.v.d.B. I am sure: we have been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

D.J.H. It has been said that authority has been placed where it is most attractive?

P.v.d.B. Yes, it is wonderful, is it not, to be in the light and warmth of the sun. Mr Raven spoke about light, atmosphere and rule.

D.E.B. You have begun with the kingdom, and are referring to lordship in relation to the kingdom. It might have been thought that the significant influence in the kingdom was the King. Is there difference between the King and lordship?

P.v.d.B. I do not think there is very much. You get an impression of the King in Matthew's gospel. The thought of administration is more connected with the King. The kingdom involves the rights of Christ, the rights that He has in His lordship. They will soon be established publicly in the world to come but "we see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour", Heb 2: 9. The administration will be in His hand and the church will come out with Him in the administration. He has been given "to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body" (Eph 1: 23), and the assembly will share with Him in administration in the world to come.

R.E.T. Does the kingdom bring in light and protection?

P.v.d.B. It is very important that there should be light and protection in the assembly. The enemy has no place or power in the kingdom, where we come under the benign authority of Christ. In Corinthians, Paul says that what he writes to them is the Lord's commandment (1 Cor 14: 37); it is very important to recognise the Lord's authority, the Lord's rights in relation to each local assembly.

S.D.K.R. Would the kingdom bring out in connection with lordship that He has complete control over us above every other control?

P.v.d.B. That is right.

S.D.K.R. That would help us in relation to the assembly.

P.v.d.B. Yes, it says of Joseph that no one was to lift up his hand in the kingdom without him; he was lord in Egypt. Everything has been given into the hand of Christ, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. Think of "the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col 1: 13). Everything is in the hand of Christ, and we are not to go outside of that in our administration. We are dealing with the Lord and the distinct rights that He has over us.

S.D.K.R. So that righteousness is not only paying what is required, but it is owning the Lord's rights.

P.v.d.B. That is right. In the world to come the saints will be seen as God's righteousness, "Him who knew not sin he had made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him" (2 Cor 5: 21).

That bears on the world to come. God will display His righteousness in His saints, and the church will be seen as the Lamb's wife and clothed in fine linen which is the righteousnesses of the saints (see Rev 19: 8). It will be a display of righteousness.

What will be displayed then is here in the assembly now. It is important to be governed by His authority. As has been remarked, it is a very attractive authority.

R.E.T. Is righteousness the ruling power in the kingdom?

P.v.d.B. It is the leading principle in the kingdom: we need to see what governs in the kingdom. It is not a kingdom like the kingdoms of this world. The Lord said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18: 36). He stood there as giving witness to the truth.

R.T. The entrance into the kingdom involves being "born of water and of spirit" (John 3: 5), does it? The understanding of that would prevent the allowance of anything that is out of keeping with the principles of the kingdom.

P.v.d.B. Very good. That is how God works, and it leads on to the assembly. It is a great thing to see the assembly in relation to the kingdom.

R.T. Yes; it is not that we come into something to subdue us exactly, but we are already subdued through the appreciation of the work of Christ, so that we become amenable and righteous persons.

P.v.d.B. Very good.

M.W. Would the thought of subjection come in here?

P.v.d.B. Yes. Finally the kingdom will be handed over to God the Father, and subjection will enter into the eternal state in that the Son will be placed in subjection to Him who put all things in subjection to Him that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15: 28). That will be the final setting; the kingdom will be given up to Him who is God and Father in view of God being all in all, and the Son's subjection will give character to the eternal day.

J.W. Was Peter seeking to get his hearers on to the line of righteousness when he said, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", Acts 2: 38? "Each one of you". Do we come in on that line as individuals?

P.v.d.B. That is right, as individuals. The kingdom involves righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, (Rom 13: 17); it is a happy kingdom, a kingdom where love prevails. 2 Timothy 2 does not leave us as individuals, it has in mind to set us up in relation to the assembly. In the kingdom we own the Lord in the authority that He has as Lord and as Christ.

D.E.B. In the last chapter of John's gospel, when things were a bit out of order, it is "the disciple whom Jesus loved" who said, "It is the Lord" (v 7). I wondered if our love for Him, and His for us, is the basis of the recognition, so that we could say, "It is the Lord, and submit to Him.

P.v.d.B. I think so. It was a question there of nearness to the Lord. There is always a tendency to departure, but the Lord is faithful and

ready to recover the situation. Later He was probing Peter as to his love for Him, "lovest thou me more than these?" (v 15). John was very close to the Lord, He was in the Lord's bosom, leaning on His breast. He had, as it were, the breast of the ram of consecration.

The Lord was about to go into death in His devotion to the will of God, and John was very close to Him. When there is departure, what will recognise that it is the Lord, the element that discerns the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate? (see Numbers 27: 21).

E.F.W. How would you recognise the Lord? I was thinking of Saul's conversion, to which you have referred. He himself had authority, did he not, but he recognises that there is One who has supreme authority. Then in John 21 they recognised that it is the Lord; but how do we recognise His movements in that way?

P.v.d.B. There is what is sovereign in it, of course, and the sovereign work of God in new birth as was remarked earlier but along with that is our responsibility, the two go together. God's sovereignty is His side of the matter, and responsibility is our side. Saul recognised Him as Lord, "Who art thou, Lord?". He had been under the authority of darkness, and now he was translated into "the kingdom of the Son of his love", and straight away he preached Jesus in the synagogues that He is the Son of God.

R.T. Light seemed to have a great part in that setting of Saul recognising the Lord, did it not? He speaks time and again about the greatness of that light. Would not that be a great thing in the kingdom that the whole thing is illuminated: we have not only principles but we have light to walk by?

P.v.d.B. Quite so. 'Light, rule and atmosphere'. There was light, and then there was rule, "What shall I do, Lord?", Acts 22: 10. The Lord will not leave us in doubt as to what we are to do; then Paul was to come into atmosphere, "Saul, brother", Acts 9: 17. He came to the local company in Damascus, he came into the right atmosphere.

The Lord gave him that distinct ministry in relation to the assembly as an elect vessel to whom He would commit the truth of the mystery, the whole extent of the counsel of God, all that it involved.

We need to see that we are in days of public departure, and there always is a tendency to departure from divine principles, but "the firm foundation of God stands" (2 Tim 2: 19). Whatever there may be in the way of breakdown, the sure foundation stands and it is related to the purpose of God and "the gifts and the calling of God are not subject to repentance" (Rom 1: 29). There is to be no uncertainty as to divine principles in matters that may come up. Peter's ministry bears on the kingdom, and priest hood goes with it. He speaks of what will give us an "entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ", 2 Peter 1: 11, and he refers to the mount of transfiguration. He was an eyewitness of His majesty. It was very powerful with Peter at the end of his course when he was about to put off his tabernacle. The Lord had said that there were some standing there that would not see death until they had seen the Son of man coming into His kingdom (Matt 16: 28), and Peter saw it. He saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom, and the voice out of the cloud was, "This is my beloved Son, hear him", Matt 17: 5.

D.J.H. You referred to the city coming out in display. It says that is measured with "a golden reed as a measure", Rev 21: 15. Is that the divine standard, and is that what we are to maintain even in days of brokenness?

P.v.d.B. I think that is important, that we have the pattern of the house as in Ezekiel 43 and measurements in relation to it, its goings out, and its comings in, and all its forms and all its statutes (vv 10,11). It is to be maintained at all cost and not compromised in what governs us in the assembly. There is nothing greater than the assembly next to divine Persons.

D.E.R. In 2 Timothy days, to which you have referred, I think we can see afresh the importance of what you are bringing before us, because we shall not find our way rightly if we are not in the gain of His lordship and of His headship, both His rule and His influence.

P.v.d.B. That is important.

G.C.B. I wondered if the maintenance of divine principles, which we often speak about and are quite clear as to it, would include the willingness and humility needed to review things if necessary.

P.v.d.B. What we need to see is our position in the public breakdown in the church, and the breakdown there has been amongst brethren, too, in the history of the recovery, resulting from not holding the Head. Mr Darby said that the brethren were speaking about the kingdom, and that we would be a testimony in holding the Head, but that it has been because of not holding the Head that the brethren have become a testimony to failure and breakdown; and publicly we have to say that we are a testimony to the breakdown. Inwardly the light of the assembly is to be maintained, and it will be maintained in those that are true to the Lord in the midst of all the public breakdown. In Numbers 18 the sons of Levi were to unite with the priests in bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary. The Lord is the One supremely who bears the iniquity of the sanctuary. Aaron was to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary. It is in that way that things are to be maintained.

S.D.K.R. The principles would have a universal aspect, would they not, in the assembly?

P.v.d.B. Surely. We are not independent units. The tendency when we depart from the truth is perhaps to confine ourselves to evangelical activities and the like, but God's prime thought is the assembly. That is what the Lord had in view in the recovery, that He might have His people in the light of the assembly, and He has brought out the truth of it in our day. The Holy Spirit is the bond between all believers, but we are not able to walk with all. If all the believers in Barnet were in one place, how would you work that out?

R.T. We would be very happy to try it!

P.v.d.B. Yes, but we need the kingdom, divine authority. If you are to have the saints together it must be in the recognition of divine principles.

R.E.T. Is that why the Lord preached the kingdom?

P.v.d.B. The announcement of the kingdom was very attractive in Jesus. The kingdom was amongst them in Himself.

R.T. The verse you alluded to in Peter is very beautiful, "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ", 2 Pet 1: 11. So that in the kingdom the Person becomes the attracter; that brings out the influence of the Person. There is only one kingdom, but the influence of the Person pervades it, does it not?

P.v.d.B. That is right.

P.M. Is the establishment of the kingdom in order that there might be one will in the universe? And are not divine principles in view of the working out of that will in the assembly?

P.v.d.B. That is good. Would that be seen in the pattern? It says that Moses made all things according to the pattern. We cannot afford to deviate from the pattern. If Moses had deviated from one of the items of the pattern that was shown to him on the mount, the glory would not have filled the tabernacle. Seven times it says in Exodus 40 that Moses did as Jehovah had commanded him. The gate was the last thing to be set up, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle, consequently the divine speaking is no longer on the mountain, but from the tent of meeting, the order of things that had been filled by the glory of Jehovah. We must never deviate from the divine pattern in days of breakdown. The truth is the truth. The Spirit of God is here, there is One Spirit and there is one body, and that is unaltered.

R.T. It is of all importance what you say, so it was the man who was on the mountain with the pattern who took the tent and pitched it outside the camp. It was only in the light of that that he was able to take that position, was it not?

P.v.d.B. Very good, he had right instincts.

R.T. The danger is that there have been many tents set up without the pattern and without being on the mountain, and it has brought in the confusion you speak of, but it was the man who was with God who pitched the tent outside the camp.

P.v.d.B. Very good, and God confirmed it by His presence, speaking with Moses face to face, Exod 33: 10,11. There was a young man there, Joshua, and it says that he did not depart from the tent of meeting. That is a word for our younger brethren, and a word for us all, not to depart from the tent of meeting, and that so much more as we see the day drawing near. The day is drawing near. We have the prophetic word, as a lamp shining in an obscure place. There is prophetic testimony in the Old Testament which bears on the kingdom and the establishment of the kingdom publicly, but the morning star is rising in the hearts of the saints. It is the outlook of the assembly. We anticipate the setting up of the kingdom publicly, but we have the rapture immediately before us, the coming of the Lord.

J.W. Could you help us as to how we get this view of Christ as Son over God's house?

P.v.d.B. I think it is in the recognition that in the assembly we are on divine territory. The house of God is not an independent believers' meeting. Mr Stoney said that in a believers' meeting I come to enjoy myself and I may have a good time, but when I come to the assembly I meet Christ as Son over God's house, and I may not have such a good time.

C.J.B. What makes up the assembly?

P.v.d.B. Abstractly, it includes all the believers who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, they are the redeemed company and they form the assembly. It will include finally the saints who have gone to be with the Lord, and all those that may yet be added. But when it comes to the working out of the great thoughts of God in relation to it you find that not all your fellow believers are available. God has given a distinct recovery in the time in which we are in which He has brought us back to these great thoughts that so little known among our fellow believers, and the charge has been given to those who have responded to the truth to maintain the testimony. We are responsible persons because of the light that has been given.

J.W. As Son over God's those things are there according to God's mind, are they not? He has built it all, has He not?

P.v.d.B. Yes, Timothy was to know how to conduct himself in the house of God which is the assembly, the pillar and base of the truth. The truth is upheld in the assembly, and we need to have great regard for it, great regard for the local assembly because we are in very small days and we are vulnerable in the sense that there are very few available in many localities, as in Nehemiah's days. The people who were on the wall were few, and we are in such a day, the day of small things. Inwardly there is a glory that we apprehend that is very distinct as we near the end of the dispensation. It is seen in the part that the saints are taking in the service of God. I think we can take account of something that is moving among them that was perhaps not so evident when there were bigger numbers. The responsibility that has come in in smaller meetings has brought something of what we are speaking of.

R.T. You have said a few times that the house of God is the house of God; it is not the great house. Would you distinguish that for us please?

P.v.d.B. The great house is the public profession of which we are all part and we have humbly to take a place in the corner of the housetop if we are to work out what we are speaking of in relation to the assembly, what would govern us in the house of God according to 1 Timothy, because the house of God still is the house of God.

The truth of the local assembly comes out in 1 Corinthians, the assembly of God in Corinth, the local assembly, and although breakdown has come in it does not alter the principles that are set out there. It is the Lord's commandment.

S.H. Does it not make the meetings very important?

P.v.d.B. Our comings together are very important, we need to be in family relations, together in the enjoyment of eternal life. We are in a dispensation in which grace is reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. The kingdom is the moral rule of grace; it is through

righteousness that it reigns. Grace in the priesthood goes together with righteousness in the kingdom.

D.E.R. The house is where God dwells, is it not?

P.v.d.B. It is where He dwells here. It is not in heaven, it is here.

D.E.R. That would make it a very attractive yet a very sobering consideration.

P.v.d.B. Yes. The kingdom is here and the house of God is here, but when you come to the body you come to relations that are beyond death. Christ is Head of the assembly. He is Lord in the kingdom, He is Son over God's house, and He is Head of the body, the assembly.

P.M. Are we always in the house of God, not just when we are at our gatherings?

P.v.d.B. Twenty-four hours in a day, we are always in the house of God.

C.J.G.B. Does your reference then to 1 Timothy show the importance of that, "how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth" (chap 3: 15)?

P.v.d.B. Yes. It goes on to the mystery of piety, "confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh" (v 16). The presence of God was here in Christ and now the assembly is here where He was. It is connected with the mystery of piety, God manifest in flesh.

R.T. Does it bring us into family relationships which the kingdom supports, that Christ as Son over God's house brings us to enjoy the family atmosphere?

P.v.d.B. Yes, quite so.

R.T. Would the lack of the family being enjoyed point to lack in the kingdom? The kingdom helps us that there is this family atmosphere and Christ has the liberty to act as Son over the house.

P.v.d.B. That is very good, you can see what God has given us in the distinct ministry of the apostle Paul. Peter relates to the beginning of the dispensation and gives us more the kingdom, and in John you get the end of the dispensation and the family relations, Paul's ministry gives us the distinctive light of the whole counsel of God, the mystery, sonship, what the saints are in the purpose of God. Sonship is our heavenly place in association with Christ in glory. The kingdom is to lead us to it. In John in the end of the dispensation, in which we are now, we get family conditions in which the truth that is set out in Paul's ministry can be worked out in the smallness in which we are.

R.E.T. Would the sensibility that we are always in God's house be through Christ?

P.v.d.B. Yes, in our deportment we need to be in the consciousness of that. We are not of this world. So in Colossians we have the distinctive glory of Christ, Christ as "the head of the body, the assembly". You could not think of a greater Head as a resource for wisdom, power and food, One in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells. That goes beyond the kingdom. The body operates here from what our position is as set out in the land, in our heavenly relations. It is through the work of Christ that we are reconciled to God, we are set together in one body.

R.T. In speaking of these things as we are, they are not separated, isolated compartments but they all flow together into one great thing?

P.v.d.B. It is all in the same Person. He is Lord in the kingdom, He is Son over God's house, He is Head of the body, it is the same Person, the same Jesus.

G.C.B. Say a bit more about this being beyond death.

P.v.d.B. It proceeds from an order of things that is beyond death. The assembly in union is one with Christ where He is, and our place in sonship, too, is over Jordan. Matters in responsibility here should work out from what our position is in the land. I think we are very much behind in entering upon the purpose of God, eternal life, what

we lay hold of in that area, and how that operates in a practical way in meeting matters as they come up amongst us in responsibility.

Responsibility is equal to privilege, and our privileges lie beyond Jordan in the part we have with Christ beyond death. The land and the wilderness go together, they run parallel in our experience.

J.W. Is this more the hidden, secret side of things which supports the public aspect?

P.v.d.B. I think so. The body is for the expression of Christ.

J.W. Our privilege is something that cannot publicly be taken account of, but it is something to be enjoyed secretly, is it not? But it would give power and support to what is public. The house of God may have a more public bearing, but it gives support to the privilege side.

P.v.d.B. That is right. When the Lord came in amongst His own in John's gospel, He said, "Peace be to you" (chap 20: 19).

Reconciliation being effected, the result is peace, and the Lord comes in amongst His own and He says, "Peace be to you", and "he shewed to them his hands and his side". His hands had served His own in washing their feet in order that they might have part with Him in that realm of privilege, and His side involves the assembly, what is of Him in union where He is. "He said therefore again to them, Peace be to you: as the Father sent me forth, I also send you" (v 21). That is responsibility, you proceed in responsibility in the sense of what you are in privilege.

J.W. We are speaking of an area of things where Christ is supreme, and it brings out the necessity of the exercises of Colossians, that we are dead with Christ and risen with Him, that He is supreme there.

P.v.d.B. That is it. The Colossians were in danger, they were turning to human wisdom, to another head, to man's wisdom, philosophy and vain deceit according to the teaching of man, all that was threatening, but the apostle shows how all that had been dealt with in the death of Christ. He is Head of the body. We need to

recognise the headship of Christ; it is only as holding the Head that we can be together in the light of the one body.

R.T. Does the Lord's supper, the first day of the week, emphasise what you have said as to going into responsibility from the sense of our place in privilege? In the service of God and the Lord's supper we have a sense of our place in privilege, and then we proceed in the week in responsibility filling it out at that level?

P.v.d.B. That is very good. It works out from our heavenly place and privileges, and then we would be effective in meeting matters in responsibility.

D.E.R. The Colossians were in danger of not holding fast the Head, and does all disunity flow from that? Would this cause exercise with us all that we might ever be under the influence of Christ in that way?

P.v.d.B. That is the thing. If we do not, there will be a moving away from the light of the assembly. We may go on with gospel activities and other things to make up for it, but you cannot make up for it.

What God has in His mind supremely is the assembly, it is the greatest vessel in the universe. Next to divine Persons it is the greatest of what there ever will be, a creature vessel, nearest to the Deity; one with Christ and every other family will be in relation to it, not only in the world to come but in the eternal state when the tabernacle of God will be with man, everything will be in relation to that. This is not just something to be a wonderful outlook for the future, what eternity will be, and what the world to come will be in the display of all these wonderful truths, but these things have a practical bearing on the present time in the working out of things in the assembly now (see Eph 3: 20).

J.H. What would help us to hold fast the Head? It is perhaps an individual matter, but is it laid upon us all?

P.v.d.B. It is laid upon us all. It is the truth that the Lord brought out at the beginning of the recovery, that Christ is the Head of the assembly, and it was in answering to that truth that light was given, prophetic light was given and the saints began to see what a distinct

vessel the assembly was as over against Israel in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament God had dealings with man here, but now we are in unique dispensation. In the Old Testament God was in heaven and man was here, but in the New Testament God is here in the assembly in the Person of the Holy Spirit, and Man is in heaven in the Person of Christ.

P.M. Could you help us practically? How do we hold fast the Head?

P.v.d.B. It is not something that is given to us: it is our responsibility to hold Christ as Head. He is the Head of the assembly, we do not turn to any other source, we do not turn to human reasoning or natural feelings, as our tendency may be; we hold on to Christ, as Head of the assembly, and as holding Him, the Head, we can draw on Him for wisdom, power and food.

R.T. Was there an example of the working out of it with Ananias in Damascus in the way in which Saul was received? Ananias had his own thoughts about this kind of man, but did not the Head tell him what kind of a man he was, and he was helped as under the influence of the Head to receive him?

P.v.d.B. Very good, that is where the adjustment was. The headship of Christ goes beyond the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit's leading is mainly in the wilderness, but in the headship of Christ you touch the land.

R.E.T. Is it not the recognition of lordship?

P.v.d.B. That is on the way to it. The kingdom is on the way to it, but the headship of Christ goes beyond authority. In the body you come under the direct impulse from the Head in glory, it goes beyond the leading of the Spirit.

P.M. The reference to Ananias is helpful because his relations with the Lord were such that he could tell the Lord exactly what he felt, and he was adjusted in the presence of what the Lord knew.

P.v.d.B. Very good. You get in a nucleus what Paul's ministry would be in that chapter in Acts, the kingdom, the body, and the way he was to go into the city to the street called Straight, and how the

brother met him, "Saul, brother", the atmosphere that we have spoken of, and the way Paul preached Jesus "that he is the Son of God". You can see how it all bears on what that vessel was going to be in the Lord's service, a distinct vessel, and how much he was to suffer.

S.D.K.R. In the working out of the headship of Christ, is it not important to keep the whole assembly before you?

P.v.d.B. We must always have the whole church in our affections and in our outlook. We have, for instance, to have feelings just now in relation to our fellow believers in China who have now been forbidden to come together in the houses. There has been a long history of suffering there and elsewhere, too, and I think we should have an outlook in relation to these things. Whilst we seek to maintain what is extremely precious and distinct in what the Lord has given us to maintain, in going the narrow path we must have a wide outlook as to the Lord's people, and maintain the truth that applies to them all, and it is maintained for all. We are not claiming to be Philadelphia, but what is maintained in Philadelphian conditions is maintained for the whole church on earth.

J.W. Would holding Christ as Head involve that we have before us His interest, as bound up with the body? Holding fast the Head connects with the increase of the body and we become a joint of supply in that way.

D.E.B. Is not the use of the word 'fast' significant? I can never really say that I have reached a permanent position of holding the Head, because I might be tested and find that I am not holding fast. It is an ever-continuing pressing exercise, is it not, that we need to be secure in that position and not let go?

P.v.d.B. That is very important. We are also exhorted to "hold fast the confession", Heb. 4: 14 and the Lord says to Philadelphia, "hold fast what thou hast", Rev 3: 11. These things belong to our responsibility.

D.J.H. Is it the same as what the Lord Jesus Himself said, "Abide in me", John 15: 4?

P.v.d.B. That is the secret of it, "for without me ye can do nothing" (v 5). We could not do it without Him. We have His priestly grace, and we have the help of the Holy Spirit to do it.

G.C.B. Would it be good to remind ourselves that we do these things if we really appreciate Him? Is that why He is presented in the first chapter in His greatness and His attractiveness as Head?

P.v.d.B. It is the secret of it, the place that Christ has in our affections. The Spirit would help us to have the Father's affections for Christ, that these affections might be in us too, "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them", John 17: 26. Everything flows from that. The Father's Spirit would strengthen us, that Christ may dwell through faith in our hearts, that we may be rooted and founded in love, and that we may come to an apprehension of these great matters in purpose, "the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God", Eph 3: 19. And then it goes on to say, "to him that is able". You are cast back on God who is able 'to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us" (v 20). These things are not impossible, not beyond us. They are there for us.

D.E.R. In the human body the head exercises an influence everywhere. Is it not important to realise that rightly the Head is to influence us individually in every aspect of our lives every minute of the day, and that should apply to each one of us?

P.v.d.B. And to be in body feelings in relation to one another. If you hold Christ as Head and I hold Christ as Head, I shall be in the current of the body, but if I do not hold Christ, where would I be? It is in holding Christ as Head that we come to the practical working of the body. It has been secured in reconciliation, the distance removed. There is no distance in the body of Christ. We tend to have feelings one way or another, but we have to see what has been drastically dealt with in the cross, the enmity has been slain, what

stood in the way has been removed in the death of Christ. We have been reconciled to God in one body.

R.T. The end of the verse says, "that he might have the first place in all things" - very testing, but it makes room for this very blessed relationship of the Head and the body, does it not?

P.v.d.B. Very good, Christ is to have the supreme place, and He has His own ways to effect that, that He may have the place that is due to Him.

BARNET

12 February 1994

Key to initials

C.J.Brown, Barnet; C.J.G.Brodie, Ealing; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; G.C.Bywater, Buckhurst Hill; D.J.Hutson, London; J.Harvey, Barnet; S.Hewison, Darking; P.Martin, Colchester; D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; Dr.S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; R.E.Turner, Bexley; A.Taylor, Barnet; P.van den Berg, The Hague; M.Ward, Bexley; E.F.Woodford, Darking; J.Wright, Redbridge

RECOVERY

Pieter van den Berg

Luke 24: 28-35; John 21: 12-14; Revelation 3: 19-22

I would like to say a few words on recovery. We are in a day of recovery, we are here as recovered persons, and God is securing His own thoughts in the way He is going on with His purpose. He has never deviated from it. Whatever may come in, whatever challenge there may be, God is going to have His own thoughts secured, and He will have them secured in this present dispensation on the basis of recovery. From the moment sin came into the universe the rights of God have been in question. There is what took place in the rising up of Satan and the judgment that followed in the scene which God had created. "The earth was waste and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep" (see Gen 1: 2). It was a state of things that was there as a result of judgment. God operates in recovery, and the first thing He brings in is light and He eventually secures His thoughts in relation to man, the man and the woman.

God has great thoughts in relation to man, and He will carry them through into eternity, the tabernacle of God will be with men, and God will dwell complacently with men, as the result of what He secured in the various dispensations in which testimony has been rendered. Failure has come in, but God has never deviated from His purpose. All things serve His might; God cannot be hindered in any of His thoughts, He will carry them through to completion. We can rely on the faithfulness of God, that what He has begun He will see through. The question for each one, for you and for me, is whether we are going to be with Him in it, whether we are going on with Him in His great thoughts for us, because very great things are on hand.

We can trace the history of things that have happened and see how failure came in, one thing after another, the way the flood had to come in, and other things, God took Abram up and eventually He took up David. Everything seemed to be lost at times, but God will see things through. He had David in mind, a man after His own

heart, and God is going to carry the line of David through. He will carry it through: regardless of all the failure He will carry His promises through, through Abraham, through David. Even in the captivity the royal line was carried through and in the return from the captivity He took up Zerubbabel, and eventually everything leads on to Christ. God has one Man in mind and that is Christ-thank God for that! Christ, the Man of His purpose.

And so we are reminded in this present dispensation of David, the Lord presenting Himself as "the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star", Rev 22: 16. Paul says to Timothy, writing in difficult days, "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David", 2 Tim 2: 8. That is the line of things that will be carried through, the Lord is the One who has the key of David (see Rev 3: 7). The Lord has the key of everything, He has the keys of death and hades too and hades' gates will not prevail against the assembly. The Lord will see to that, He will stand by it. And so it is that God will eventually have what is for Himself eternally in spite of all that has happened, as the hymn says,

"Evil's challenge long permitted
Met by God's supremacy".

God takes a way that is unsearchable. The way that God takes is just beyond us but God will have His own thoughts secured; He will see them through in perfection and not one item will have failed. He will have it according as He desired it, according as He purposed it, according to what was conceived in His counsels, and He secures it in the way He takes. So we have come to the fulness of the times, this wonderful dispensation of grace, when, as in every dispensation, there has been failure from the outset, but God is going on with His own thoughts.

In Luke's gospel we get a wonderful touch of the grace of the dispensation. Grace is reigning through righteousness unto eternal life (Rom 5: 21), and the priesthood of Christ is able to sustain us in priestly grace in relation to the calling of God. "The gifts and the calling of God are not subject to repentance" (Rom 11: 29), and God

has provided in grace to see us through in spite of our failures, in spite of our breakdown. In Luke 15 we have a wonderful chapter of recovery and the way divine Persons are moving in relation to what is lost in order that it might be recovered, and you come to the height of divine grace there. The lost son is set up in the dignity of sonship in the Father's house. So I thought of Luke 24, how the Lord in His priestly grace drew near in conditions where there was a movement away from Jerusalem. There is need for priestly discernment and we can count on the priesthood of Christ to help us in relation to the present situation in which we are. The Lord is no stranger in Jerusalem; He knows things, He says to each of the assemblies in Revelation, "I know". He knew Peter too. Peter says, "Lord, thou knowest all things" (John 21: 17), and we can count on One who knows everything. You may not know even what is in your own heart; there are many things we do not know, but we can leave all to the Lord because He knows all things, and He assesses all things according to the shekel of the sanctuary. We see Him in His priestly grace drawing near to persons who were disappointed because of the things that had been happening, and the Lord joins their company and He has His own way with them, as He has with each one of us. Oh what a Saviour we have! What a Priest we have!

One who is able to save to the uttermost those that draw near to God by Him (see Heb 7: 25). We need to be on kingdom lines to get the gain of the priesthood of Christ, because the priesthood of Christ is not for disobedient persons. The priesthood of Christ is for persons who are subject. If you desire to walk in obedience to the truth you find out your weaknesses, and the Lord knows all about our infirmities. His priesthood goes along with the kingdom, and if there are subject minds the Lord will in His priestly grace come in in aid of the weak and help in whatever need there may be, and give us a touch that would meet the situation. We may have certain thoughts in relation to matters, but the Lord would meet them with a manifestation of Himself. His priestly service is available in order that matters might be resolved for His own pleasure and for His own glory. And so it is that in Luke 24 they were moving away from Jerusalem and the Lord drew near. There was no happiness with

them, they were downcast but the Lord came in in His own way, and opened the Scriptures to them. He gives them ministry, and what they needed was the manifestation of Himself. He would have gone on if it had not been for them asking Him to stay with the. The Lord is going on, He is going on in the testimony. If He is refused in one place, as the Samaritans did, He will go to another place, and they will have the blessing of His presence (see Luke 9: 55,56). The Lord is moving in His own sovereign way. In Mark it says that He would have passed them by Mark 6: 48). Did they really want Him? It is a question of our affections, Do we really want to have Him? And so the Lord in speaking to them, and they drew near to the village where they were going, "and he made as though he would go farther". This is a critical point. Are we going to miss the manifestation of Himself? It says, "they drew near to the village where they were going, and he made as though he would go farther. And they constrained him, saying, stay with us: for it is toward evening and the day is declining. Their hearts had been burning, the Lord gave an opening up of the Scriptures, but they needed more than that, they needed to have their eyes opened.

In their affections they would not be without Him, and the Lord entered to stay with them and He took the house-father's place. He was the one they were now to be in relation to. You would not go to a brother's house and take the house-father's place. You would recognise his headship, but the Lord is here taking the house-father's place, and they were to be in relation to Himself. And then He broke the bread as only He would do it and gave it to them. It is not exactly the Lord's supper, it is the way the Lord would sup with us in our circumstances as He did at Bethany where He came into the circumstances of His own, weeping, going through the sorrow with them, loving them, allowing things to come to a point that was beyond any hope from their point of view. He felt with them as He does with us in our circumstances. It is all in view of our being with Him; that is the great thing the Lord has in mind. He is going to sup with us in order that we might be with Him. Maybe we have to have our thoughts adjusted, we may need to get another view of things.

In the Song of Songs, the bride invites the north wind and the south wind to blow upon her garden, but that was not enough. What the Lord has in mind is that we might be with Him in His garden (see Song of Songs 4: 16). That is what the Lord reached in Bethany.

They had attached Him to what they were going on with, and the north wind blew upon the garden. Exercises came in, death came in, corruption came in. The Lord has His own way. He stayed away deliberately to allow things to come to a point, and then He intervenes in His own power. He bore with them in His spirit, and then He acted in His power. The Lord is able for that. In the meantime He is bearing with His own, He is feeling with them in their exercises, in their thoughts, as He did here and then the south wind blew, "Let my beloved come into his garden" (chap 4: 16), you recognise that it is not your assembly, it is His assembly. It is not my territory, it is not for me to have my way there, it is His assembly, and it is a question of being with Him. I think that is the point we have to come to.

So the Lord gives them the manifestation of Himself. The Scriptures had been opened to them, and now their eyes are opened and they recognise the Lord, and they return and come to the company, they were recovered from this movement away from Jerusalem, and they came back to Jerusalem, and there they found the confirmation that the Lord had risen indeed and had appeared, and the Lord Himself manifested Himself in their midst and He opened their understanding. What an opening up you get in Luke 24! What an opening up we have had in the recovery! and the Lord is still opening up things to us.

When you come to the end of John's gospel there is another movement away under the leadership of no one less than Peter himself who was first amongst the apostles; he gave a wrong lead and the Lord in His own way comes into the situation. He does not interfere immediately, He allows them to come to poverty - they caught nothing. He allows things to go as far as they did, and then He came in. He stood on the shore and His word is, "Children, have ye anything to eat?", John 21: 5. Peter had been called away from

the fishing, he was called to follow the Lord and what was he doing now? He was putting the fish-gate before the sheep-gate. The sheep-gate was built first in Nehemiah, in days of recovery, and we need to be concerned that the sheep-gate is there when we have the gospel. The gospel goes forth from the house. How rich Paul's glad tidings are, the mystery, the ministry of the new covenant meeting every need on our side, reconciliation. What a ministry it is. We need to be concerned to maintain assembly conditions, a ground for the sheep to go in and out and find pasture, prosperity in local meetings. The Lord is not failing us in giving ministry, and He has the key to every matter. The Lord is still speaking and He will continue to speak until the end of the dispensation. And so it is that the Lord's voice was there enquiring as to whether they had anything to eat. That is something we need to be concerned about. We may go through exercise but we need to recognise the Lord. The assembly is the Lord's matter, it is His assembly, Peter was moving away and there is the voice, and there is John. We have referred to it in the reading, John discerning the voice. We need to discern the voice. Where is the Lord in a matter? What is the Lord saying?

Where are we? They had been heading for a Laodicean condition, and we may do that. With the light we may have we may be heading for Laodicea if Christ is not supreme. The Lord is to have the supreme place and He will have His own way in securing that.

Christ was everything to Philadelphia, but He had no place in Laodicea with all the light that might have been there, whatever they might boast in. He had His own view of the matter, He stood at the door and He was knocking. He says, I rebuke and discipline as many as I love. It is not because the Lord is against us, He loves us, and He will love us to the end in spite of all that has happened. He is concerned in His love that He might have a response for His own heart from His own.

He is standing at the door and there is the voice behind the knocking. Everybody may be hearing the knocking, there are concerns, there may be sickness, other things in which the Lord has His way as in Corinth; the Lord has His own way in things because

He is entitled to have the assembly. The assembly is His. And so it is that the Lord in Laodicea is standing at the door, and there is no suggestion of the Lord ever going away from that door. You might go away if people do not open the door for you. You ring the bell or knock at the door, and nobody opens the door, and you might be going away, but not so the Lord, He stands at the door - it is His present attitude. The Lord stations Himself in a certain position, as He did in John 21, and as He does here, He stations Himself in view of there being a response as to whether they would have Him. He says, "Behold I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice..." Not, "if any one hears the knocking"; "if any one hears my voice". It is the Shepherd's voice, the voice the sheep would follow, the voice that Mary recognised when the Lord said to her "Mary", the Shepherd calling her by name, the Lord's own voice is there and He is appealing in order that we might open the door to Him. Not that He would open it, it is a door that we have to open and let Him in. He says, "I will come in unto him and sup with him". The Lord will come into your circumstances in His wonderful recovering grace, as He did in Emmaus He will come into your circumstances and He will sup with you, feel with you. The Lord is fully acquainted with all that is going on. He knows what is going on amongst the saints. Do we ever think of the present love of Christ in operation, in shepherd-service, in priestly grace, serving with the water of the word? These are activities that the Lord in His love for us, His love for the assembly, is exercising right now at this very moment. The Lord is concerned about the assembly, and He has the means to meet matters by His word, by His priestly grace, by His shepherd service, all in view of having us according to His own thoughts with Himself and He is able to meet everything on our side, H will sup with us, and He says, "and he with me". I do not think there is any greater privilege than to be with Him, to be with Him in His own realm. The Lord would come into our circumstances, but what He has in view is to have us in His circumstances. His desire is, in speaking to the Father, that those that had been given to Him might be with Him where He is that they might behold His glory, that they might be in the enjoyment of their heavenly privileges, their

association with Himself, their being in union with Him, in the consciousness of it, in the reality of it, in the blessing of it, as it will be eternally, the Holy Spirit giving us this enjoyment now. We may grieve the Spirit in such a way that we are not in the enjoyment of it, but the Lord would come and help us, remove the obstacles as only He could do, roll away the stone from the well in order that the sheep may be watered; Gen 29: 10, in order that the saints might be prospered. That is what the Lord is concerned about, in order that He might have a full response for His own heart and for His own praise. And then He says, "He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne". What a promise that is! The Lord is now in the Father's throne. In this wonderful dispensation of grace He is sitting in His Father's throne. Soon the Lord will have His own throne, and we are going to reign with Him. The Lord says, "to him will I give to sit with me in my throne". If we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him. What a portion that is, to be with Him, to be with Jesus. What a privilege! The Lord says, "if any one serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall be my servant", John 12: 26. This is a great privilege, dear brethren, it is open to us all to serve the Lord and to be with Him. Oh that we may have intimate relations with Him, that we may have His mind about things, that we may feed on the breast and the shoulder of the ram of consecration, that we may have a sense of the love of Christ, the breastplate of judgment, that we may have a right judgment about things as being with the Lord in the nearness to Him in His love for the assembly. And so the final word is, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". May it be so, for His Name's sake. ·

BARNET

12 February 1994

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Kenneth Robinson

Numbers 24: 15-17; Romans 5: 7-10; Hebrews 12: 2

I believe it would be right to say, dear friends and fellow believers, that one of the effects of the gospel is to open our eyes. There is a very interesting expression used as to Balaam on more than one occasion. He is described - and I think it is unique in scripture - as "the man of opened eye". I believe God's intent in the gospel is to open every man's eye in relation to His well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. What a precious privilege it is to speak of Him, in the gospel to draw your attention to Him! My desire would be that everyone here could be described like Balaam as a man or woman of an opened eye, a clear vision regarding what God has presented in Jesus, no doubts, no uncertainties, no blurred vision with you regarding Christ. Paul in the gospel is another who could be described as a man of opened eye. "There fell from his eyes as it were scales", it tells us in Acts 9: 18 and what you find immediately thereafter in the synagogue is that he is preaching "Jesus that he is the Son of God", v 20. He is now a man of opened eye regarding the glory of Jesus. What a precious thing it is to come to be like that!

I want to draw from these verses in Romans 5 to show how the gospel clears our vision, and our concern regarding our history. I would like you to look at Romans 5 as one example of a chapter in the Bible written by a man of an opened eye. He is boasting "in hope of the glory of God", v 2. He has peace with God and in these verses in Romans 5, he deals with Christ dying for us, justification, reconciliation, and the power of a present life that is great enough to save us while we are down here. Wonderful things these are: one

thing "much rather" than another he is saying, and it is going on through the whole chapter. He is a man of opened eye bringing the gospel to souls. Oh, dear friends, first of all, "God commends his love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". What a moment it is when you can write that across your history. You now see that God commends His love to you in that while you were just a sinner. We sang:

"All men have sinned and short of glory come;
The Scripture saith, None righteous, no not one!" (Hymn 275)

In the sight of God all men are sinners, away from God, and as far as God was concerned, these sins would never be by-passed. God is a holy sinhating God and His standard of righteousness required that one day He would judge these sins and take account of the personnel who had committed those sins, but oh the story, the wonderful news in the gospel, written by Paul as he brings it forth to these Christians in Rome, is that, "but God commends his love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". What a view they were to have of their history! What view do you have of your history? Can you write across it, if we are to make it personal, 'God commends his love to me, in that, / being still a sinner, Christ has died for me'? We have a roomful here of people most of whom could say 'Amen' to this verse. If you can say 'Amen' to that, I commend to you that you are a person with an opened eye. You have a view in the sight of God of your history that it has been dealt with righteously and removed because of the work at Calvary's cross of Jesus Christ the Saviour. Go is not commending the love of anybody else. He is not commending the work of anybody else. There it is, the work of Jesus. His work on Calvary's cross is the sacrificial basis that has been laid. "Christ has died for us" is the One who did not need to die, the One against whom there was no penalty, the One who had never committed a sin, the One upon whom judgment never had to fall was the One in whom "God commends his love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us".

Do you believe that once you were a sinner? Do you have that feeling that, yes, you know you were a sinner, but through the gospel and the commendation of the love of God and the acceptance of that through faith, the judgment that was due to you has been borne by Another? And you look at Calvary's cross and the precious work of the One who was there and you can look at Jesus and the perfection and efficacy of all that work to meet the claims of a righteous and holy God and you can say, 'Yes, Lord Jesus, for me'. You think of the greatness and glory of Christ and His work and reach a moment in time when your vision becomes clear regarding your history, your history. May I press that upon you for a moment? Has God reached your conscience? We were talking about the heart in the reading and we will talk about the heart, but in the gospel, I think you aim at the conscience and exalt Christ, you aim at the conscience of a person and then provide Christ as a Saviour to meet the answer of the longing that is created. Once the conscience is reached, and the guilt felt, in the presence of a Saviour God, repentance is arrived at by God's goodness. When you realise you are a sinner deserving nothing but judgment, go into the presence of God with a heartfelt need. Saviour of you a sinner, whose conscience has been reached because of God bringing to bear upon you your state of a lost condition before Him and have been brought to the point where you are ready to give up. You feel your helplessness, like the tax-gatherer in Luke 18 who "smote upon his breast, saying, O God, have compassion on me, the sinner", v 13. What would the words "God commends his love" mean to such, in that while that poor soul, like you and me, was just a sinner, Christ died for me? It is an important point when you face up to your history! In the presence of God you face up to your history and it comes to you that God commends His love to you in the value of the work of Jesus. You get a view of Christ's work and what it meant for God.

Your soul goes out in adoration that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, has been shed and He is the propitiation for your sins "but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. The basis has been laid for God to recover man to His own glory,

and the blessing is there for every man, woman, boy or girl, irrespective of colour or place in society. The work of Jesus Christ is great enough for that. It stands there in all its glory. In the type of old the mercy-seat in Exodus 25 is placed in all its royal glory on top of the ark and God says, "And there will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee", v 22. What would He tell you? He will tell you that I commend my love to you in that my wellbeloved Son has died for you. His precious blood has been shed and placed on the mercy-seat as in the day of atonement in Leviticus 16. The blood was placed once on the mercy-seat and seven times before it. What a sight that was! God is now commending His love based on the righteousness of Jesus. In the value to Himself of the precious blood, God tonight is ready to say to every soul, I commend my love to you in that Christ died for you. Precious thing! O, dear friend, I trust that you are among the "us" in this verse. I trust we can go into this verse together, we may say, and come out of it together, that God has commended His love to us, "in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". Whether you are ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, years of age, let us go into this verse together and come out of it together as having a shared commendation, based on a view with an opened eye, that you can look at your history and see it as covered because Christ has died for you and your faith is in the precious blood of Jesus.

Do you have a doubt? Has anybody here a doubt about their history? Is there any nagging doubt? Oh, I want you to be sure, before you go out of that door, to go out with an opened eye. You can look at your history and in the sight of God it has gone because your faith is in the finished work of Jesus. That is the only way you will have an opened eye, a "man of opened eye". God will never bring up my history again because my faith is in the precious work of His well-beloved Son. I trust everyone here can say 'Amen' to that.

Hallelujah! what a Saviour! You are not cloudy, you are not muddled in your vision; you are not worrying about an event let's say, ten years ago, that God might bring back on you. You are not taunted by memory. Every time the enemy brings up something in

your memory to cast doubt on that assurance, you have an opened eye, your faith is pinned upon the finished work of Jesus. If Jesus were to come tonight, there is not a soul here but is absolutely sure that they would go to heaven because their faith is in the finished work of Jesus. "and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain..." 1 Thess 4: 16,17. There may be souls at a gospel preaching that will claim Christ as the gospel is going forth; the Lord could come and that soul would go to glory. These are the realities that are in the gospel! This is the word of God saying to you through Paul in the preaching, that "God commends his love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". The precious blood has been shed. Christ has been into the grave for three days and three nights and "having been now justified in the power of his blood, we shall be saved by him from wrath". There is another company to whom Paul in writing says that they "had turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens ... Jesus", and he adds, "our deliverer from the coming wrath", 1 Thess 1: 9,10. After three Lord's Days and three preachings Paul is writing to these Thessalonians and describing them as looking for Jesus, their "deliverer from the coming wrath". It is important to have some sense that you have been saved from wrath, and saved from judgment. The type of old, the passover lamb, was shelter from the impending judgment that was going to go through every household in Egypt, and this shelter from judgment was to be the portion of every household where the blood of the sacrificial lamb was upon the door-post and upon the lintel. It had been put there by the head of the house. One may have done it in trembling faith, wondering what to do or whether to do it; another might have done it with greater assurance. What was the difference? As another has said they would both be saved because it is God that said, "and when I see the blood, I will pass over you", Exod12: 13. God has forgiven your history because of your faith in the finished work of Christ. It is because of what He thinks of the work of Jesus and the value of that precious blood. I trust, therefore, that all here have opened eyes regarding their history. You can look at it and know that it is gone:

"My sins - Oh the bliss of this glorious thought
My sins - not in part, but the whole -
Were borne on the cross, and are gone evermore.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!" (Hymn 238)

"Having been now justified", he says, "we shall be saved by him from wrath". Think of the great glory of justification, in that Christ has been into death for three days and three nights, but then "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father" Rom 6: 4. I trust everyone here has an opened eye regarding the truth of the resurrection of one Man out of death. He has been "delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification", Rom 4: 25. My history is completely removed in His sight and God looks on me as He looks upon Jesus. Do you have that view of yourself? What a wonderful thing! What an elevating thing! You say you were talking a minute or two ago about me as a sinner and bound for judgment; now, you are talking about me being looked at in the presence of God as Christ. That is the gospel! That is the gospel and the glory and victory of justification is that my history has totally gone and in the sight of God He has justified me in another Man in view of another world altogether. Precious thing! The old story has often been told of the little boy with the two sticks. He tried to do better and better but every time he did something wrong his father said he would put a mark on that stick and a nail went in. When he was bad again another nail went in and this went on. When the little boy came back and said he was sorry, the father said he would take the nails out. Still the little boy was upset and when the father asked what was wrong with him, 'Ah, Dad,' he said, 'you have taken the nails out, but the marks are still there.' Justification removes everything. In the sight of God you are looked at as in Christ. You are looked at in the One in whom God's pleasure is centred and your whole history is gone. Oh would that we could open someone's eyes tonight a little to the victory and glory of justification!

In reconciliation you are reconciled to God through the death of His Son. We were enemies, enemies according to God, and the distance is there between God and man. Man is at enmity. How is

God going to do it? Is He going to bridge it? You cannot remove the distance. God has removed the distance. God has not bridged it.

He has removed that distance completely by the death of His Son and I have been reconciled. The younger son coming back is a fine example of it. The younger son saw a bridge between himself and his father. How was it going to be covered? The only way the younger son could see was, Well, get me back into the house and make me a hired servant. That is the only thing he saw. In the light of his history that was all he was entitled to. But read on through Luke 15. How is he received? What does the father do? As Mr Stoney said, love travelled faster than necessity. Necessity brought the younger son back; love took the father out and he ran and embraced him, "fell upon his neck, and covered him with kisses ... Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it...", v 20,23. The younger son said, 'make me as one of thy hired servants', v 19. That would be his answer to the distance. God removed it and tonight is ready to invest returning sons in the good of reconciliation with the joy of the privilege of sonship and the retention in the Father's house for the Father's pleasure eternally.

What a gospel it is! this is Paul's gospel. This is Paul, you may say, preaching as a man of opened eye as he touches on the greatness of what God has done in the gospel for Gentiles such as you and me, for objects of mercy like Himself, "Pharisee of the Pharisees" - one brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and now he counts all these things loss. A man of opened eye says, "on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", Phil 3: 8. Oh, to be able to open eyes! Oh, to be able to speak in some sense with a measure of conviction! I wish I could do it more, as a man with an opened eye having a view that the gospel has removed my history, giving me a link with a blessed Man now in the glory, and God having not only removed my history, but invested me with the truth of justification, reconciliation and sonship. So we can be "saved in the power of his life". Dear friend, let me tell you, Jesus is alive in heaven and in the power of that life above I can be saved down here in virtue of the power of the life of Jesus and my

attachment to Him there as a result not only of the work He has done, but God being pleased to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit. I will never be saved in the power of my life, my own life. I am saved in the power of a link with a Man who is living in heaven. Christ glorified above, the Spirit indwelling the believer, sustains me day by day to go through in the power of another life altogether. What a thing it is to be sustained day by day as we go through. Mercies are proved from God the Father, but also the inward resource of a link with Jesus in the power of the blessed Spirit. We need present salvation. We need eternal salvation from our history but we need present salvation from the world that is all around and then finally we need salvation from place by the rapture that will take us out of this place into heaven. "Saved in the power of his life" is a conscious enjoyment of a precious link with a Man who is living in heaven.

And so to Hebrews 12 where the exhortation is to us all. "Let us also therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight and sin which so easily entangles us ... looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith...", Heb 12: 1,2. Then he stops. Then he describes what He has done, "who in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". I want to leave you with this impression: "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith". There is then a *selah*; there is a pause there, in one sense in case you run the whole thing together. The exercise, I think, is to keep our view on Christ. The next clauses are the description of what He has done and His present position, but it is the Person that you look stedfastly on. His work enhances what He has done, but the object for me and for every believer is Jesus, crowned with glory and honour in heaven, "the leader and completer of faith". And so Paul is exercised that these Hebrews really are looking stedfastly. To look stedfastly and, as the note says, look intently: to look away from other things and fix your eye exclusively on one involves opened eyes, clear vision, by faith, upon Christ. I trust everyone here has a personal link with the Man glorified in heaven and I trust everyone here by the power of the

Holy Spirit will be sustained to look stedfastly on that One as an object for your life, an object through every exercise. His precious sustaining grace as the One who is now on the throne will hear you through sorrow, pressure, an anxiety, or a disappointment. Weight and sin will drag you down, make you look other ways.

And so to come back to Balaam, a man of opened eye, it says, "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh". Very precious words, those, "I shall see him", by a man of another dispensation. "I shall see him, but not now". Everyone of us would say it in the assurance as being believers, with opened eyes that we shall see Him. We shall see Jesus. Eternally we shall be with Him.

At the rapture "the dead in Christ shall rise first", as I said earlier, "then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air". We shall see Him and we shall be with Him the One "whom, having not seen, ye love" according to Peter, 1 Pet 1: 8. The man of opened eye, the eye of faith, looks on to see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and has that as a vision and a hope. I desire that we are all believers in the truths that are in the gospel and so have Christ glorified in heaven before us and the Spirit indwelling our hearts to sustain and help us to go through triumphantly in the daily path of this life. May these things just encourage us for His Name's sake.

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