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Contents

GRACE - IV

PREPARED FOR GLORY

## **GRACE - IV**

**2 Samuel 9: 11-13; 19: 24 & 30; 1 Samuel 25: 18, 27-31**

R.T. I thought we might be helped to see in these two persons of whom we have read how grace formed in them features that shine in declining circumstances. The background to Mephibosheth is well known. When David came to the throne he asked if there was any to whom he could show kindness. We see in Mephibosheth how he was well received, and the formative work of grace in him expressed itself in loyalty in a day of departure - something that is called for today. Though the public position meant that David was set aside, he remained king to Mephibosheth: he did not change his attitude though everybody else did. It shows how grace had formed him; he remained loyal. One of the features of which we read in Titus was awaiting the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us. I think Mephibosheth had a real sense of what grace had done and he was awaiting, not adjusting himself to the circumstances around. He says; My lord the king - rejected king publicly but he was the king to Mephibosheth. We see something of the same features in Abigail. When things have declined she maintains the ground, because she had in her heart some sense of the light of purpose. The purpose of God for David did not change, and she had some light of a coming day when the purposes of God would be effectuated. It did not look like it that day, but she embraced those purposes, and she shines in the grace that would be nourished as feeding on the purposes of God, that everything centres in Christ. Do you have something to say about Mephibosheth?

J.S. I think you have just set out one's thought about it, that he was one who not only had a tremendous appreciation of David's person, but I thought he required nothing more than this place at the king's table; in a sense morally he never left it. So anything else was superfluous.

R.T. Yes, he came into royalty, and that expressed itself in loyalty. Two features, he enjoyed were royalty and sonship; David said, Mephibosheth shall eat bread at my table continually. He enjoyed his royal position. That is like the Supper - privilege. We were speaking about privilege yesterday. He enjoyed his privilege and when he is tested he shines in loyalty. It is a very fine thing in our time, that grace has produced persons who are loyal when there is opportunity to take advantage of the situation. That has happened too: things come in and persons take opportunity to promote themselves. But Mephibosheth remained loyal, awaiting the return of the king.

J.A.P. Peter's committal in communion with the Lord did stand among the recovered brethren to which you referred, John 21, did it not, all his life in? In his earlier committals, he meant well. That is like us; the Lord has to bring us through to something in our committal. Mephibosheth did that.

R.T. He came to appreciate not only the grace but the source of the grace. We spoke of that yesterday, that we come not only to know the grace of God but to know the God of grace. That is what Mephibosheth came to: applying it to us, it is all centred in Christ. If all around deny Him, the depth of that appreciation remains and Mephibosheth is showing forth His death, you may say, until He come. It is very fine how far grace takes us; it says he dwelt in Jerusalem and did eat continually at the king's table; no mixed tables with him, the distinctiveness of the royal position laid hold of him and everything was measured by the king's table and the food on the king's table.

E.F.C. He seemed to appreciate, as you said earlier, the grace of David showing the kindness of God to him. Mephibosheth received it readily and rightly, and feelingly too.

R.T. A dead dog, that is what he says, "That thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" 2 Sam 9: 8. Have we touched that depth? There was nothing in us when grace met us - a dead dog such as I. If anybody warranted the vindictiveness, you may say, of

David, it was the house of Saul. But grace went that far, 'to look upon such a dead dog as I am'. Grace did not stop until he was dwelling in Jerusalem and eating at the king's table.

P.M. David said "as one of the king's sons" - nothing less than that.

R.T. Yes. Sonship does not have grades. "Ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus", Gal. 3: 26. Everyone resembles Christ; there is no disparity. It is wonderful to lay hold of that, that there are no grades in sonship.

E.F.C. The Syrophenician woman came into this too like Mephibosheth; she said, Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table (Mark 7: 28). She took a very lowly position. The Lord did not ask any more confession, the whole matter was settled for the Lord in what she said.

R.T. That is very good. There is a need to have a state that allows grace to operate. I think that comes out in what you say, that we appreciate how far off we were. Like the Samaritan and the man that fell among robbers: he went from that to the inn. He was in a half-dead state and grace met him. We need to allow grace to have its perfect work, not interfered with through law or the Galatian error or anything else, but grace in its purity to form something of these features, as we eat continually at the king's table.

E.F.C. From degradation to glory. Each member of the church too would appreciate that, would they not?

R.T. I think so. That is how far grace takes us: it does not stop. The king did not stop with Mephibosheth in a half-way house in the environs of Jerusalem, but he brought him right in to eat at the king's table continually. You could not deflect Mephibosheth with Egypt's food or what the world may offer; he measured everything by what was at the king's table. That is a guide for us as to things that come in to deflect us, in the lowering of standards that is abroad today. Things were measured in Mephibosheth's eye by what was set on at the king's table. He did not prepare it; it was all prepared. It was what was suited to the king's taste and that was what satisfied Mephibosheth.

L.D.P. Was Mephibosheth's loyalty tested by Ziba's slandering? All the time that the king was away from Jerusalem was in itself a challenge to him as to how to maintain himself, but now what Ziba has done. The enemy would be viciously seeking to cause us to fall from grace. But he was not successful – "let him take all".

R.T. The secret is that he was well nourished. We quoted Naphtali yesterday in Moses' blessing - "satisfied with favour. And full of the blessing", Deut 33: 23. He was satisfied. So, as you say, the features of Ziba come in to ridicule the saints as to why they trouble themselves, why they remain loyal when things seem broken, when there seems no hope, why remain loyal? It was Mephibosheth's appreciation of David and of his grace and of that food with which he was satisfied that helped him to remain loyal amid all the rebuffs of Ziba, as you have said.

D.M.W. Does Mica make room for us? It seems that provision in grace is made all the way to the end, even for the coming generation to enter in and eat at the king's table. What do you think?

R.T. I think Mica would grow in the grace that he would see displayed in Mephibosheth. So that it would extend into the family. What a change they would see in Mephibosheth from Lodebar, the place of no pasture - struggling to get by you may say. The family would be affected by the grace that was finding expression in Mephibosheth. Have you more to say?

D.M.W. We have the coming generation here. Mephibosheth had to pass through it all, you might say, but room is made all the way to the end.

R.T. So, as you say, the coming generation is to be affected by what they see in those who have been formed in grace and that helps them to have a taste for this food at the king's table that they may be formed by it. As Paul was passing on to Timothy, they were to pass on to faithful men what they were satisfied with, and enjoying themselves, to hand it on in integrity and in its fulness. We do not pass on the sorrows of the breakdown exactly but the full features of what has come to us in grace.

D.M.W. I think that is wonderful to see and to lay hold of. Thinking back to the previous reading, what was on the inside after the doors were shut was very precious; there was room made for real expansion. To get our eyes on the breakdown and to be occupied with that can be ruinous, as can even trying to bring in something from outside. What is on the inside is extremely precious and it is being held for the coming generation; whatever generation is here when the Lord comes it is going to be held.

R.T. What you are bringing up is important, that we are to live in the light of the coming of the Lord. We are not awaiting further breakdown, we are awaiting His appearing. That in type is what Mephibosheth was awaiting. You could see in the family day by day that he would be passing on to the coming generation that he was awaiting the coming of the king. That is what we are waiting for. The hymn writer says, 'The sky, not the grave, is our goal' (Hymn 238). There is something of that being passed on, but it is only passed on from satisfied hearts, is it not?

D.M.W. Would you call that the influence of grace? Younger ones coming on are to see the influence that grace has had on persons who have passed through deep waters, but they have kept their eye on the Lord. They have known what grace was, they have known the resources and God has brought them through. The same can be true for each of us.

R.T. Yes. We are to grow in it, and the warning in Hebrews is, See that there is not any one that lacks it (Heb 12: 15). If there is a lack of it, a root of bitterness springs up, and it says many get defiled by it. These things have been true, but the positive side is that he is living in Jerusalem, in the centre of God's thoughts and His purposes, the city of the great king; he is living in relation to that and eating at the king's table continually. If you offer Mephibosheth another meal and another company, he would not go. He measures everything by Jerusalem and the king's table.

J.S. Peter speaks about being begotten again. He says, "according to his great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through

the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead," 1 Peter 1: 3. Would that come into it? He had forfeited every right on the natural side but everything is restored in "from among the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance". Would that be the living hope that Mephibosheth had?

R.T. That connects with what was said. What Peter was passing on to those dispersed people was "an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens for you," (v 4). It is fine to be able to pass that on. How was Peter able to do that? I think he had Jerusalem and the king's table in his heart. He saw the mount of transfiguration. He was perhaps looking on others at that time but enshrined now in his heart was, "This is my beloved Son."

J.A.P. Do you have more to say about the Lord's supper in this matter?

R.T. I think it is an expression of our loyalty. That is what remains through the dispensation. 'This do for a calling of me to mind'. I think most in Jerusalem in Mephibosheth's time were against David but Mephibosheth in his manners and the way he was acting was awaiting David's return. So that as we are waiting the Lord's coming, the Supper is an expression of loyalty to the rejected one.

L.D.P. Is Mephibosheth not also an example of a person who is greatly restricted? He cannot get around but that allows him to become a trophy of grace.

R.T. He had restrictions, as you say, and we have them too, but grace rises above them. Our brother spoke about government and grace last night: these two lines go together, but as has often been said, he was not seen to be lame when he was at the king's table. Grace comes in to help us. So you may think Mephibosheth was disadvantaged but I do not think he would say that; he would say the compensation is far greater than the limitations - the king's table.

C.F.D. Speaking about Peter again, in John 6, after that chapter of glory, it says, "many of his disciples went away back and walked no more with him", v.66. So the Lord tested Peter, would he go away? And he says to Him, "To whom shall we go? thou hast words of life

eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God'. Does it show what Peter had been feeding on, what he had been getting into his soul, so that at a critical moment he can give an excellent lead to those that are nearby?

R.T. Yes. I think the shining out of grace leads us to its source, and as you say, Peter came to see the source and there was no-one else, "To whom shall we go?" He is in effect saying, Thou alone hast words of eternal life, it is nowhere else. That is what Mephibosheth comes to appreciate, that the one who is the source of that grace, the person, is precious to his heart. The circumstances were declining and yet he always speaks about David as the king; he never changes his thoughts - about him. Whatever the darkness of the day and the pressures of the way it says, "from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace", then he says, "my lord the king is come again". To put it in our language, royalty and glory and majesty belong to Christ. Rejected He may be, but all glory belongs to Him, and that is what the heart is led to as attached to this Person.

J.S. Peter speaks about a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2: 5 & 9). Do you think these two things are seen with Mephibosheth?

R.T. You had better explain that.

J.S. He had known the blessedness of the inside position and came out in features of royalty, do you think?

R.T. That is very fine. You may have said Mephibosheth was not very royal-looking here, but he is loyal in the reproach; it says if ye suffer in the name of Christ, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you (1 Peter 4: 14). What you say is good: he tasted royalty at the king's table, so he does not change his attitude as circumstances around change.

J.A.P. About nine times in those few verses in chapter 19 he speaks of the king.

R.T. Christendom is changing its views about Christ and the world is getting full of alternative religions. All these things are around us and the very name that was held and esteemed generally in Christian countries has become maligned. The sadness and sorrow of that should affect us. But to Mephibosheth, David remains the royal person age; he is ever the same. For Mephibosheth, he is still the king; there is no rival to David in his affections.

H.J.G. The Spirit of God says in verse 24, "from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace", and in verse 30 Mephibosheth uses the words, "since my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house." Would you say something about why peace is brought in?

R.T. How did he come again in peace to his own house? Someone kept it. Who is keeping the house today? Christendom is not keeping it, standards have gone; you may say, the true features of Christianity have been lost publicly in what is said about the Lord, and His work, and His birth. Who is keeping the house? It is Mephibosheth, is it not? So he comes in peace. Does not the Lord say, when He comes will He indeed find faith on the earth? (Luke 18: 8). I think He finds it in persons who have appreciated grace and who have come under the teaching of grace, so that He can come again to his own house.

D.W. So loyalty has its reward. We are in restful conditions here and enjoying the peace that we are reading about, and looking forward to tomorrow that we might raise that standard to a rejected Christ, put our hand to the loaf in unity and hold to it.

R.T. So there is a place to which He can come, the Lord's table. There is loyalty to the Lord's table and there is a place where He can come. He comes in peace, as we were reading in John 20, and brings in peace. But there is someone maintaining His rights in these declining circumstances in view of His coming in. It is maintained as accepting the reproach. He had neither washed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes: that means that

he became disreputable in the public eye as he accepted the reproach of the Christ.

E.F.C. Do you think he suffered more from the way David acted towards him here at the last? David seemed to misunderstand him; he accepted a wrong report about him. That must have affected Mephibosheth but it did not disturb him; he just stood his ground, in allegiance to the king.

R.T. Yes. I did not read these verses but it does just show that we may be misunderstood. David is not a type of Christ in that regard. Being misunderstood even by others who should know better does not affect Mephibosheth because the true David is enshrined in his affections. Whatever the circumstances may become it does not affect him because he measures everything by Jerusalem and the king's table and the king's food. So we need standards. I think Mephibosheth was maintaining the standard. He could have shaved, he could have trimmed his beard. People say it will not matter much if you lower things just a bit, a wider fellowship, but Mephibosheth says, No, that is not in accord with the king that I know.

L.McF. So he is esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense. That is said of Moses (see Heb 12: 26). There is a reward as our brother has been saying.

R.T. It may have seemed long in coming publicly, but on the first day of the week is there not a reward as He comes in; the King? "Arise, anoint him; for this is he" 1 Sam 16: 12.

G.D.R. You would say, would you not, that the only way in which the testimony is going to be maintained is loyalty to Christ? We would all say Amen to that. But then the test comes, we have here a beautiful example of it. Everyone together would be ready to say, Yes, we desire that the testimony be maintained, but this is the only basis for it.

R.T. The background to it is the teaching and the enjoyment of grace, is it not? His soul was thoroughly nourished and satisfied in

the grace that had brought him from a dead dog to the king's table. Do we appreciate where grace has placed us in the light of the assembly? It has placed us in Jerusalem. Grace has placed us in a place of great privilege. Now that privilege is maintained only as we are loyal in the declining circumstances that are all around us. As our brother says, we would all say it is right, and would seek grace and help that it may lay hold of us, that we do not trim our sails to the circumstances around or adjust our habits, but maintain what suits the king. He is still the same in Mephibosheth's eye though the public deride him. Although they say, We will not have this Man to reign over us, He is still the King in Mephibosheth 's heart.

J.Mcl. He was one who had real appreciation for the king. Barzillai could say, I will go a little way over the Jordan. That is not the standard, is it?

R.T. No. He had done well: it is the present that is the test.

E.F.C. Is it our regard for the assembly and what is proper to it as we meet together in the light of it that proves our allegiance to Christ? That is a challenge to us in these days of smallness and brokenness, is it not? The Lord is very jealous of His assembly.

R.T. Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem. Many others went away, as our brother says, in John 6. Will ye also go away? Mephibosheth could have found another place, but he stayed in Jerusalem. That would mean that he stayed in the light of the assembly. In a broken day he embraced the light that he had enjoyed in Jerusalem at the king's table: it remained in its preciousness in spite of the broken time and he was holding on to that until the king came again in peace to his own house.

D.M.W. We can be assured of the Lord maintaining us there, but not anywhere else, can we? David would tell Barzillai that he would maintain him.

R.T. That is a very fine word he gives to Barzillai, "I will maintain thee with me in Jerusalem." The offer was there for Barzillai - Mephibosheth laid hold of it with both hands, to be with him in Jerusalem. Barzillai felt his weakness and David is very sympathetic

with him, but Mephibosheth laid hold of the great privilege and he would settle for nothing less.

P.E.M. Where is the king's own house today?

R.T. Have you never been in it? "Since my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house." I think it is where the king is free, where he is seen, and is known. He is not known publicly, but I think he is known in His own house. I think it would come down to the local assembly where the King is free to speak of these royal things.

P.E.M. Would it involve, too, His rightful place in the hearts of His own?

R.T. That is what makes the house. It says, Whose house are we, if indeed we hold fast the confession firm to the end (Heb 3: 6). That was what Mephibosheth was doing, he was holding fast the confession firm to the end. So it is, Whose house are we. He comes in peace to his own house. He does not have to adjust things when he comes. Someone has kept it ready, has seen that there is a place for Him to be at rest, in peace. And that is where His heart is known and where His love is enjoyed.

G.D.R. While we await that glorious time there is activity needed. The end of Proverbs shows a woman of much activity, night and day; there are things in loyalty to him that need to be done.

R.T. Very good. And as our brother has said, she was looking after the coming generation. She set on food and clothing, all in keeping with the time. She would not be going in for casual things - no fast food with there! She was there keeping the house in view of the husband's return. She rose early, she was diligent to see that all was ready for his return. That is what is in our hands now as to keeping the place in view of His return. It 'is the effect of the teaching of grace that has formed us in a character that is steadfast and immovable as it says (1 Cor 15: 58), all maintaining the standard of what is suitable to Him.

K.N.P. Is there a link with faith and grace? There does not seem to be any doubt in Mephibosheth's mind that David would come back.

Is it grace that works that out having experienced it?

R.T. Yes. He must reign. I think that brings us to Abigail. She had some sense of what belonged to David in his true greatness. In type, she laid hold of God's thoughts about Christ. That is what Mephibosheth comes to enjoy, that God had anointed David. Did He make a mistake? Was God going to change His mind? We had a word on anointing last night, God had anointed David, and Mephibosheth knew something of that, and irrespective of what may have come in or how things may have been publicly, he was waiting the fulness of the anointing. God has anointed His king upon Zion, His holy hill, (Ps 2: 6) and Mephibosheth was awaiting the public display of that. And so with Abigail. I was struck with her words, "when Jehovah shall do to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning thee, and shall appoint thee ruler over Israel". She did not take her bearings from the public circumstances but she believed what God had said about David. She learned from Samuel I suppose, and though she did not see it publicly at the moment, she embraced in her heart God's purposes concerning Christ.

E.F.C. There are two women in this book of 1 Samuel who seem to look on to David. Hannah in her prayer in chapter 2 says, "Jehovah will judge the ends of the earth; and he will give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed", 1 Sam 2: 10. I was thinking of her long-range view of what was to come in: it would be a forerunner of David in her thoughts.

R.T. Very fine. The sisterhood was referred to yesterday. I suppose they would represent formation in grace. There is something formed femininely that holds the ground when the masculine side had broken down. In Hannah's case the priesthood had broken down; but femininely there is something formed in grace that lays hold of the purposes of God concerning Christ and those purposes are not changing.

J.A.P. In the same house there was a man who said, "Who is the son of Jesse?", but his wife knew. I was thinking of what you said

about the public disorder that is round about us. Men are saying, Who is the son of Jesse? but there are some that know. I think we are among them through grace.

R.T. I was thinking of that word in the Psalm, "I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness" Ps 2: 6. Abigail laid hold of that, that God had anointed His king upon Zion, but there is a whole system under Saul that rejects him. Abigail brings in this touch. When you come to the throne, she says, this shall be no stumbling-block.

J.S. While she was publicly linked with Nabal, she did not take on his character; she rather had - I was thinking of Peter's expression - the hidden man of the heart. That is what sustained her: while she had not met him up to this point she had taken on his features.

R.T. I think she is a very fine product of Samuel's ministry. The prophetic word, what God has said about Christ. "Whom, having not seen, ye love;" 1 Peter 1: 8. We await the time when we see Him, as the hymn says, 'And shall we see Thy face, And hear Thy heaven'ly voice, Well known to us in present grace? ' (Hymn 270). It was well known to Abigail, through Samuel's ministry. But what you say is interesting. The reason for it on the other hand was that she maintained a judgment about Nabal and that is a test for us today. She maintains her judgment about what is opposed to Christ and discerns the ugly features of it; she is able to name the kind of man he is. Though it is very close to her, she maintains a judgment about it. And we need to be sharpened in our judgments in view of appreciating the One that God has anointed as His King.

A.S.H. Is Abigail here speaking in a priestly manner in the way she says these things to David?

R.T. Yes, she is in the light of God's purpose. She is functioning in the light of what God has said about him. What she is able to say is very rich: it is grace formed in her, working to maintain the standard when things are falling below it. So she has a judgment of how God is going to deal with matters and she waits God's time. That is a very fine feature of grace, that she does not take matters into her

own hand to slay Nabal, she does not take up the sword to deal with the opposition, but in the confidence that God will bring about things in His own time, she rests in that and she acts in the light of it.

A.S.H. It is very fine. At the end of verse 31 she says, "And when Jehovah shall deal well with my lord, then remember thy handmaid." That is very striking.

R.T. It is. She does not take up to set things right publicly. She leaves God to deal with Nabal; she says, Jehovah will deal with your enemies, sling them out from the hollow of the sling, all to make room for God's king. He was already anointed. That was the spring in her affections that God had already anointed His king upon Zion. God has already anointed Christ and He has placed Him in this position awaiting the public display. The length of time or the opposition does not change God's thoughts or Abigail's thoughts or appreciation of David.

E.F.C. She helps David from besmirching the testimony by reason of his intention of coming with the sword. But then she says that he will deal with him from the hollow of the sling. I wonder if that refers back to the sling with which he slew Goliath.

R.T. I think she learned that.

E.F.C. Instead of the sword, he used the sling.

R.T. She learned that, but she leaves the judgment to God. We are not to set things right publicly but we are to maintain the light of Christ's exalted position and to judge and order things in relation to the exaltation of Christ.

G.D.R. In true feminine affection for Christ she is thinking of 'the young men who follow my lord'. How delightful that she has part in setting on something for their provision and sustenance of life! As many would know, in this city we had a brother who through conflict continued to feed the brethren - in the face of conflict go on with the truth.

D.M.W. Would there be an allusion in what she brought that would be a blessing, and be given to the young men, to what was set on,

as to the service of God that exists today?

R.T. It was very sustaining kind of food, two hundred loaves, two skin-bottles of wine. There are the skins and the wine there, of which we were speaking, both preserved together. And five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, raisin-cakes; there was nothing to be prepared. It was all ready 'Come and dine'. I think what has come up is good - the provision is there in the conflict to turn the edge of things, to stop the disaster. The inroads that the enemy is making are met in this rich supply of food, and in the appreciation she has of God's thoughts about Christ.

J.S. In this rich provision, does she herself become a channel of grace to set aside anything that might have besmirched the testimony? It is a very positive way that things are met, is it not?

R.T. It is. She made haste and took these things: she hurries to step into the breach. You see Paul coming in with these things; "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God", 1 Cor 1: 30. Think of Paul bringing in these things in the midst of the confusion, the sorrows that were there, to lift the brethren, to prevent the disaster, to bring in peace. Well, we need grace. What grace in the preparation of these things and to have them to hand when they are needed!

E.F.C. Is it not touching the many times in scripture that the goodness of God leads men to repentance? It is the goodness of God that softens and disarms a person.

R.T. That is true. But this is further on than the goodness of God and repentance. She has nourished her soul in the teaching of grace and this wine and those loaves I think are all part of the teaching of grace. There is something formed ready to hand. She does not have to go and look up the books and see what she is going to do when the crisis arises; she already has to hand what is needed to meet the situation.

K.A.K. Her formation is remarkably parallel to David's. We began looking at David as he was taken up and anointed of God, he was ruddy, and besides of a lovely countenance and beautiful

appearance. It says the same thing of Abigail when she is taken to be his wife. Could you help us with that?

R.T. It is what grace does, grace reproduces itself. The source is in God, it is in Christ and it must reproduce itself, the true grace of God. We are exhorted to "be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus", 2 Tim 2: 1. It must reproduce itself must it not? As you say, it is very fine that what comes out is a likeness to Christ. It is fine too the insight she has; in verse 30 she says, "when Jehovah shall do to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning thee". Do we know what God has said about Christ? Have our hearts been nourished in God's thoughts about Him? "This is my beloved Son", Matt 3: 17. God has arranged the whole universe to come to be centred in Christ, and Abigail had been nourished in that through the prophetic word. She had the light of the counsels of God concerning His Son.

C.F.D. This beautiful prophetic word and her vision involved in it results in the protection of David, does it not? He is protected by this sister with this prophetic word, so that the testimony is no way blighted.

R.T. She is a type of the assembly in its beauty and its discernment, "blessed by thy discernment". That is greatly needed these days, that the assembly can function in her true dignity discerning what the circumstances are. I think the discernment comes from appreciating what God has said concerning Christ.

J.A.P. She said 'he fights the battles of my Lord' but his proposed battle with Nabal would have been his own battle: she saved him from that. We often justify ourselves but it is the Lord's battles we should be concerned about.

R.T. Yes. Judgment belongs to God and the execution of the judgment belongs to God. She is not executing it, she had opportunity. It would have been a fairly easy matter when Nabal was drunk for her to have taken things into her own hand but she does not; she leaves the execution of the judgment to God. But enshrined in her heart is what has been said about David, all the good that he

has spoken concerning thee! How she had gone over Samuel's ministry: "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart", Acts 13: 22 and "Arise, anoint him; for this is he", 1 Sam 16: 12. She had fed her soul on these thoughts of God concerning Christ. I think we need to be nourished in that, "all the good that he has spoken concerning thee".

C.F.D. So she stands out as leaving the judgment with God. That principle still applies, does it not? The tendency might be for some of us to reach out beyond our boundaries, but she was prepared to leave the matter with God, having confidence in God that He would see it through.

R.T. Yes. The execution of the judgment is something that God is doing Himself. We have to have a judgment about things, but the execution of things is in God's hand and our position is to be nourished in how God has anointed His King upon Zion, the hill of His holiness.

H.G.H. So Abigail fulfils the word that Paul tells the Romans, "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good", Rom 12: 21. That is grace.

R.T. With Abigail, as you say, it is very beautiful, she keeps the positive things, she brings in this rich, strengthening food supply because her heart is formed in what God has said about Christ, concerning His King. He was already anointed. The coming out of it awaits God's time, but she is in the light that He has already anointed His King upon Zion.

R.B.H. I was impressed with how she was able to be like this when she is abiding in the conditions in which she is. She recognises that in Nabal folly is with him; but in these conditions she is able to have all this food. We can be overcome by what we see around us.

R.T. But does it not show that the very circumstances bring out grace upon grace. Her heart was nourished in it, in the most trying circumstances. As you say, folly is with him; he had never been anything else, but in these circumstances she found grace and received of His fulness, grace upon grace, as nourished in what God

had said, "the good that he has spoken concerning thee". You think of her in her own moments going over Samuel's ministry, over what God had said, that He had removed Saul and had found David, "a man after my heart". What meaning she must have read into those words, God said, I have found David my servant. He took him from the sheep folds to feed His people. Publicly things did not look like that, but she was nourished in God's appreciation of Christ.

E.F.C. Would you say she is a sister of influence? She had her young men, verse 18, and then she had her maids later on. I was thinking of the other two sets of young men in this chapter. Are they not something to take account of? Nabal's young men were faithful to a right report concerning David, and David's young men and then Abigail's young men.

R.T. That is a good subject. She had a good influence. A lot of disasters and sorrows have happened among us. Can we bring in a right influence that young people will be held rightly, in the presence of Nabal, to come under the influence of Abigail? I think it is largely effected on the one hand by the food supply and on the other by appreciating that God has anointed His King upon Zion.

G.D.P. Does she represent one who is prepared to come down: she is ready to take the iniquity on herself? "Upon me, my lord, upon me let the iniquity be", (chap 25: 24). I thought of being formed in grace and being like Christ the source of grace.

R.T. That is very fine. Can I take the blame? I think in the light of the anointing, that God has set His King upon Zion, we can afford to take the sorrow home to ourselves. It was not hers. She could well say, Oh, it was that man, I did not know what he was doing. She could have hidden behind it, rightly in a sense, but she takes the responsibility. Can we do that today? Are we in the light of the anointing enough to take upon ourselves the shame of Christendom and the breakdown in which we have had a part upon me let the iniquity be. What you are bringing in is very good. Then there is the food and the anointing; these things go together, do they not? The

shame and sorrow for the moment, and yet nourished in the appreciation of what God has established in Christ.

J.S. While God takes issue with Nabal, there is a point when he hears about this thing and it says "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone". Do you think the enemy is defeated by this action and his influence is negated, although a certain time elapses before God takes final issue with him?

R.T. God will make way for the marriage of the Lamb, will He not? He will make way for David and Abigail to come into the joy of the affinity there is between them and God makes way in His own time that these things are enjoyed. But there is a very strong secret link with Abigail and David, as has been said, both in their features and their likeness, and it is awaiting the public time. So that we are able to hold the ground in view of the day when there will be the time of the marriage. We feel tested by these things as to the teaching of grace, what it has formed in us, that holds the ground. Keeping the house for His soon return, presenting things in the light of what is true and what is proper to God's thoughts about Christ. She says, "and shall appoint thee ruler over Israel". He had already done it; for Abigail he was already king. Though Saul was still on the throne and a system that allowed Nabal to flourish, but her heart is full with God's thoughts concerning Christ - "and shall appoint thee ruler over Israel". I think there has been more than enough said to encourage our hearts as to the grace that is there that we may be drawn to be formed by it and to be loyal and faithful in this suffering time, while we await the time of His soon return. I think we should leave with that word that God has already anointed His King.

# **PREPARED FOR GLORY**

**Robert Taylor**

**Ephesians 1: 3-10; 2: 7,8; Revelation 21: 10,11**

One of the features of which we have been speaking as to the teaching of grace is that it leads us to await the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are awaiting that appearing. The precious fact is that when He appears we will appear with Him. That is what the scripture says, When He is manifested we will also be manifested with Him in glory (Col 3: 4). The scripture we have read speaks of the glory of His grace, which we are to be taking on now. In one sense, as believing on Christ as our Saviour we are fitted for glory. To the thief on the cross, who confessed his name, the Lord says, Today you will be with Me in paradise. We shall be there on the basis of His work of redemption. What He has done in shedding His blood, and has accomplished in that death that He endured, has made a way that the saints may be in glory with Him. But what we have been speaking of is how God's grace has come in to prepare us for glory.

We will not be there as strangers. The grace of God is working today in the riches of His grace to prepare us for glory. We are to be taking it on now. Scripture speaks of the way in which He has moved in His mercy and in His love; "that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory, us", Rom 9: 23. How beautiful that is, that God is preparing us for glory. It is not the time of its display yet; it is still man's day, but the saints are to be taking it on now. I think that is one of the great effects of the teaching of grace that the saints are taking on features of the Man who has already been anointed, features that are foreign to this world but which will be at home in heavenly glory. Mr Darby says in his hymn, 'There no stranger God shall meet thee'; he raises the question,

'Stranger thou in courts above! -  
He, who to His rest shall greet thee,

### Greets thee with a well-known love' (Hymn 76)

He is preparing us in His ways and in His grace to be at home in those courts above. It is a very fine thing that when Christ is manifested, when He appears, the saints will be with Him, adding to His glory, the assembly there with Him. When He comes into display the saints of this dispensation, vessels of mercy, who have been formed in His grace will be alongside of the anointed Man. God is working to that end, of the saints having their place in glory. The sufferings of the present time to Paul were very testing; he knew what it was to be alone in prison, chained, and afflicted. What sufferings he went through! What pressure came upon him, and yet he says, "Our way not entirely shut up" (2 Cor 4: 8). As he weighed these things up he says, it is not worthy to be compared with the coming glory. The Lord would encourage our hearts at the present time that He is preparing us to glory. He is bringing many sons to glory, He is bringing us to be at home in these circumstances that are suited to the enjoyment of His love. This book is very rich in how God has acted in His love that He may secure persons to be at home in the full display of what has come out in this dispensation.

So Paul speaks of how God has acted even before the world began. What wealth he brings into these verses as to the way in which God has moved of Himself, glory the end of His ways. What His ways are working out is what He purposed in Himself. Think of God's heart that He purposed in Himself before the world's foundation, before ever sin raised its head to seek to spoil what He was doing. God purposed and He chose us in Him before the world's foundation that there might be persons secured to display the glory of His grace. Nothing can change the purpose of God. What assurance it gives to the soul, as it did to these persons of whom we have been speaking, to lay hold of God's purposes. Indeed the scripture speaks of the unchangeableness of His purpose (Heb 6: 17). Whatever forces have sought to challenge Him, His purpose remains unchangeable because of the One in whom it is centred. He has found a Man in Christ and His work, by whom all His purpose will be effectuated and those chosen ones will be at home in glory.

So he says He has marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself. What movements of love that our hearts can never fathom, God moving of Himself and the great end and result of it will be to the glory of His grace when God will be glorified in persons formed in features of Christ.

We may speak first of all of the riches of His grace - we have been speaking of some of them - which He has caused to abound toward us in wisdom, intelligence, and made known to us the mystery of His will. What a touch of His grace that God should confide something hidden from the world and men, but in the riches of His grace He has made known to us the mystery of His will, and that all centred upon Christ, the Man of His choice, the One whom He has anointed, as we have been speaking of Him, in Zion upon His holy hill, His King. God has made known to us that the mystery of His will is all centred in Him. It is fine to be able to see how things are working out as we look at Christ. As you look at the book of Revelation you see scenes of confusion upon this earth, confusion in the world and in the air too, but John, in the midst of all these things, is led into the secret of all God's ways, that they are centred in Christ. The book of Revelation becomes intelligible as we see that everything in God's ways is centred in the Man of His choice; things in heaven, things on earth will all be set in their place in relation to Christ. What a touch of His grace that He should give us an insight into His eternal thoughts and purposes! The riches of His grace have come to us to form us so that we will be at home in those circumstances of glory. God speaks of these riches - we have been speaking of some of them too, that God should in grace reach out to settle our debt, and strengthen us by the gift of His Spirit. All these things come into the riches of His grace. But the great end of grace was not only to meet our need but that we will be at home in glory. What an ingathering it will be, the time of display. It is not yet the time of display but that is what grace will lead us into. Today it is being worked out in circumstances that are oppressive. The riches of His grace are forming overcomers, but the great end to which it is leading is "to the glory of His grace". Then there will be something

there, as the writer of old says, What hath God wrought! (Num 23: 23). What a wonderment it will be! It brings out the substantiality of those riches of His grace. As I say, it has come in to meet the needs but it has really come in to bring us to circumstances of glory. God is looking on to the time of display, awaiting the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Man who has been rejected - Mephibosheth's King - when he will come in peace. All nations shall adore Him, their gold and tribute bring. What a day it will be when He appears in His glory and in His majesty, when He who has been denied His rightful place will be seen and every knee shall bow before Him, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Well, dear brethren, we are looking on to that. Indeed the enjoyment of His grace would form us so that we are longing to see Christ publicly owned, to see the full result of His work in what He has done in redemption, what He has done for God and what He has done for men. Think of what He has done for God, that God in righteousness will bring in a scene where He shall dwell with men! It says the tabernacle of God will be with men. These things have all been effectuated by what Christ has done and they will be displayed. How full and rich will be the time of display! The apostle speaks of it time and again so that we should be looking for it. We should be longing that He will have His rightful place; He who suffered once must reign. The whole creation will break forth: Worthy art thou. It is beautiful that chapter in Revelation 5 when he is seen in His worthiness. The whole scene changes as Christ comes into His place, when He takes up His rights, when He is seen as the One who is the great operator, the One who has made a way for God to have His pleasure in men. It says that we are to be "to the praise of the glory of his grace". No one else could have accomplished what He has brought out of this scene of confusion, where sin has disrupted everything. What God is bringing out of it will be to the praise of the glory of His grace. God is awaiting it and we are awaiting it too. Soon it will be seen in display in this vessel of which we read in Revelation, having the glory of God. That display is not something that is going to happen miraculously. We sometimes think in relation to the day to come that there will be a sudden change; it will be that, but I think what comes into display is

being formed now by the riches of His grace. What John saw was the holy city, Jerusalem. Think of what Jerusalem had been in man's hands, what inroads the enemy has sought to make in that city. But here it is, the glory of His grace seen in this holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; a creature vessel - ever that - and yet it is unique, "having the glory of God". That is what the riches of His grace has effectuated, that there is a vessel there having the glory of God. As this chapter brings out it is a very substantial thing. It will be the wonder of the universe, not only will Christ be admired, but so will this city in which is displayed the glory of His grace. It says, "having the glory of God, Her shining...". There is something about her that is formed in the time of pressure, in circumstances of sorrow producing character that is suited to the time of display. God will not display anything of man, what will be displayed in a creature vessel is something that is entirely heavenly in character. I think the precious stones speak of some of the riches of His grace in the foundations. It says, "and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb". The riches of God's grace were seen in the apostles, in what was formed in them that bore something of the character of Christ. Think of Peter and these others, what they endured in the way of suffering when here as despised men. Paul speaks of himself, and it would be true of the others, regarded as the offscouring of the world (1 Cor 4: 13). Despised, set at nought by men and the enemy's forces against them, but here they are displaying the glory of His grace as their names are in the foundations, the twelve apostles of the Lamb. How like Christ they were and how like Christ is every feature in this city, in these stones of which we have been speaking and too in the gates. Think of the administration of the city, and then the pearl and the precious stones, something there that is the shining in glory. But my point is that it is being formed now. It is not something unreal, it is something that His grace is forming now that will be at home in the time of display.

Well, it is not far off, dear brethren. We already have some insight by the Spirit into what it is to be at home in scenes of

heavenly glory and to taste something of the sweetness of that love. It is very precious that John writes about the dwelling of God before he speaks of the display of grace. In the order of it, the latter part of the chapter historically would come before the beginning of the chapter, but John is speaking of the preciousness of the assembly's portion as the dwelling place of God. It is the way, I think someone has said, a lover would write; it is far more precious to a lover to be thinking of dwelling than of the time of reigning. How great an influence this vessel is going to have in the day to come when God will be known in the city! The glory of His grace will be seen as God will be known in her palaces and in her gates, "Her shining was like a most precious stone, as a crystal-like jasper stone". Then it says, too, that the nations shall walk by its light. I bring in these things to show the greatness and grandeur of what is being formed in the present time by the glory and riches of His grace, that will shine in the day of display, when the world to come will be enriched by what God is doing today, "the nations shall walk by its light". We walk today in the light of Christ and what has come in in the revelation of God in His grace, but here those nations are going to come into things through the assembly enjoying her portion - they will walk by its light. It says its gates shall not be shut at all by day; the position that the assembly will fill in God's administration will benefit the whole earth as enriched by the outshining in display of what God is doing today. May it encourage our hearts. As Paul says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory". Paul knew the sufferings far deeper than any of us, but he also knew something of the glory. He said, "I know a man in Christ", 2 Cor 12: 2. He had some insight into those courts, as to the place that men were to have in glory through the riches of God's grace, and it was far more to him than the present suffering, so he was awaiting the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we be given strength, dear brethren, to be awaiting the appearing. As it says, When He is manifested we will appear with Him in glory (Col 3: 4), a suited companion. There will not be the King and His subjects exactly, there will be the King and His consort, there will be Christ and the assembly - appearing with

Him in glory. I think that is the great culmination, that there is a vessel being formed to be His consort, to be alongside Him, to be with Him, all to enhance the glory that belongs to Him because the Man is not complete without the woman - Christ and the assembly. The place that the assembly is to fill in this chapter opens our eyes in wonderment that the whole universe will be enlightened by her shining. But the first thing is that Christ is to have His joy in His assembly. What a joy it will be to Him! The marriage of the Lamb has come, the bride is there, as the Lamb's wife, in all her beauty enriched through what is taking place in the present time.

May our hearts be encouraged. In the days in which we are we are apt to look on them and be discouraged by the sufferings of the present time, but may we be enriched and strengthened to endure. That is a great feature of the Lamb's wife that she is able to endure, and be faithful in the time of His absence so as to be, as I have said already, a suited consort in the time of display. May we be waiting, proving grace upon grace. "For of his fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (John 1: 16), and here is a vessel in which that fulness is resident. It speaks about it like that, "the fulness of him who fills all in all", Eph 1: 23. We are being filled at the moment, dear brethren. May our hearts be capable of taking it in so as to have a true valuation of our calling, so that the enemy may not discourage our hearts through the weakness and pressures and the sufferings of the present time; but may we be encouraged to be looking for the glory to see that what is being formed now is something that is taking on these heavenly features. The assembly will not be strange to those courts or to the glory because we are taking it on now; it says, "having the glory of God, a creature vessel still but a glory that is her own. It has been spoken of as a reflected glory, and it may be, but it is her own, it is her glory, she has something that belongs to herself. The fruit of the Spirit's work and the fruit of grace, is something that is unique, that all points to Christ, her Husband, the heavenly Man.

May we be encouraged thus to take on something of it now that grace may have its perfect work so that we are suited through those

riches and administrations of love to those heavenly courts in which through grace we will soon have our eternal part. For His Name's sake.